

EUGENE LEGACY TREES



Photo: Phil Carroll

The dawn redwood next to Cascade Hall on the University of Oregon campus.

Legacy Tree Number 2 *Cascade Hall* *Dawn Redwood*

Metasequoia glyptostroboides

Location: East of Cascade Hall, University of Oregon Campus

Height: 75 feet

Crown spread: 54 feet

Trunk circumference: 10 feet

Age: approximately 55 years

Thomas Condon, renowned pioneer, first State Geologist of Oregon, first professor of Geology and the University of Oregon, and Chair of the UO Natural Sciences Department until 1907, first discovered fossils of redwood-like leaves in the John Day basin of Oregon in the 1860's. The fossil beds in central Oregon have been intensively studied in the intervening years, of particular note by Ralph W. Chaney (1890-1971), professor of paleontology at UC Berkeley and perhaps the most respected paleobotanist of the 20th Century.

It was presumed that these redwood-like fossils were ancient forms of today's Coast redwoods. However, in 1941 a Japanese scientist created a new genus for these fossils, *Metasequoia*, justified by differences in cone shape and foliage, not the least of which is that Coast redwoods are not deciduous, as are Dawn redwoods. Only two years after receiving its new name, living *Metasequoia* were discovered by a Chinese forester, Chan Wang, in a remote village of central China. Mr. Wang could not positively identify the tree at the time and filed his samples away. After a few years of fortunate coincidence and sporadic communication among several Chinese scientists, news of the discovery of living *Metasequoia* reached Dr. Chaney.

Chaney, hailing the find as one of the most important paleontological discoveries of the century, organized an expedition to visit *Metasequoia* Valley in central China. News of this journey and the story of the "living fossil" created great interest in the U.S. and elsewhere, and was reported in the national media. He was the first Westerner to see these trees, though dawn redwood seed had already been sent to the U.S. from China by the time of his visit. From this seed, thousands of Dawn redwoods were grown and distributed worldwide.

Ralph Chaney planted a Dawn redwood on the University of Oregon campus south of Condon Hall, but this tree was lost, possibly a casualty of transplantation stress when moved for the construction of Prince Lucien Campbell Hall. The Cascade Hall Dawn redwood was planted as a seedling from the original seed sent from China, in front of what was then the University Herbarium.

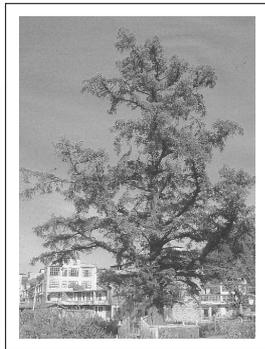


Photo: Jinshuang Ma

The tree first sampled and identified as a living *Metasequoia*. Found growing next to monastery in 1943, it lives today in more urban conditions. It is estimated to be 400 year old.



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