

EUGENE LEGACY TREES



Skinner Butte white oaks, circa 1915.
Photo: Courtesy Lane Historical Museum



Skinner Butte white oaks, 2005.



Legacy Tree Number 9 *Skinner Butte* *White Oaks*

Quercus garryana

Location: Summit of Skinner Butte Park
Height: south tree, 40 feet; north tree, 42 feet
Canopy spread: south tree, 59 feet;
north tree, 54 feet
Diameter: south tree, 38.3 inches;
north tree, 37 inches
Age: estimated to be more than 200 years old

From the summit of the west end of Skinner Butte two old Oregon white oaks mark the siting of the center line of Eugene's First Avenue. The city's founder, Eugene Skinner, built his cabin on this side of the butte in 1846, just west of and below these trees. In 1929, Skinner's daughter, Phoebe Kinsey, then 79, wrote of the "several small oak trees in the center of the top of the butte" in a letter describing the historic location of her childhood home. These oaks, so perfectly situated atop the butte, framed the view of the west end of town in countless photos and postcards.

White oaks were common in the Willamette Valley, growing mostly as individual trees and small clusters due to summer wildfires and the burning practices of the native Calapuya people. Tree removal for agriculture, grazing of seedlings, and encroachment of Douglas-fir have all contributed to a decline in numbers of oaks since the arrival of Euro-Americans.

The Oregon white oak, sometimes known as the Garry oak or Brewer oak, is deciduous, slow-growing and drought tolerant. The hardy Skinner Butte white oaks, exposed by their rocky, elevated location on the butte's summit and afforded excellent drainage, were able to survive many decades of harsh wind, rain, drought and sun.

The Skinner Butte oaks, estimated to be more than 200 years old, may be viewed by taking a short walk along the pathway west of the public parking area at the top of the butte.



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To view all the Legacy Trees, go to www.eugenetreefoundation.org