

TENNESSEE LANDMARK AND HISTORIC TREE REGISTER

NOMINATION APPLICATION

I. Type of designation: Landmark* Historic**

***A Landmark Tree must meet one of the following requirements (please mark which)**

The tree(s) is/are commonly recognized as an established and familiar feature of the community, or can be confirmed as a significant part of the community's heritage.

The tree(s) was/were planted by, or as a memorial to, or associated with, a nationally, regionally, or state recognized individual, group, event, or cause, **and** is confirmed to be more than 50 years old.

****A Historic Tree must meet the following requirement (please mark)**

The tree(s) was/were a direct witness to a historic event or cultural movement that was significant nationally, regionally, or within the state and can be confirmed to date to that time.

II. Application is for a: Single tree Group of trees

III. Location (give street address if available and include directions to the tree)

Street Address: Overton Park (bounded by East Parkway, North Parkway, Poplar Avenue, and Kenilworth.)

City: Memphis, TN Zip: 38104 County: Shelby

GPS coordinates if available Latitude: 35.1461286 Longitude: -89.9883414

Directions to tree (attach a map if possible): Please see attached.

IV. Historic or landmark narrative

Attach a historic narrative that gives a factual account of the history of the tree or group of trees and the surrounding area, which gives the tree(s) its significance. Include important dates, people, events, legends, activities, etc. associated with the tree. *(attach additional sheet if necessary)*

Overton Park is a 342-acre park in Midtown Memphis. It was created in 1901 as the city's first public park, and was designed by the renowned landscape architect George E. Kessler. Overton Park was listed on the National Historic Register in 1979. The park contains a variety of cultural amenities including the Brooks Museum of Art, the Memphis College of Art, the Memphis Zoo, the Levitt Shell, Veteran's Plaza, the Greensward, two playgrounds, and the Overton Park Golf Course. The park also contains the city's only documented tract of old growth forest, known as the Old Forest, which covers approximately 150 acres. The Memphis Park Services Division recently commissioned a comprehensive botanical survey of the forest and information from that survey is the basis of this application.

The Old Forest is an ecologically diverse upland forest that has never been cleared or farmed despite its location in the center of a major urban area. It is known to contain more than 330 plant species from 85 plant families, including 60 species of native trees. Many of the largest trees are estimated to exceed 200 years of age, meaning that they are older than the City of Memphis. The forest canopy is dominated by tulip poplar and a variety of oak and hickory species. Eleven oak species and five hickory species are known to occur in the Old Forest. Other common trees include black cherry, sassafras, sweetgum, hop hornbeam, American hornbeam, red maple, box elder, redbud, sugarberry, American elm, flowering dogwood, red buckeye, hazelnut, and pawpaw. A list of native trees known to occur in the Old Forest is attached.

In addition to its trees, the Old Forest hosts eight native grape species and 13 fern species. Common shrubs include spicebush, common hydrangea, and hearts-a-bursting. Herbaceous plants include prairie trillium, celandine poppy, wild ginger, white avens, cut-leaf toothwort, Solomon's seal, black snakeroot, Jack-in-the-pulpit, inland sea oats, smooth yellow violet, woodland phlox, Virginia knotweed, tall bellflower, jewelweed, poison ivy, cut-leaf coneflower, arrow-leaved aster, Jacob's ladder, and mayapple. Two state-listed plants are also known to occur: goldenseal and oceanblue phacelia.

The Old Forest contains a network of public trails. Free guided nature walks are provided twice each month by the nonprofit Citizens to Preserve Overton Park. Trail maintenance days are organized several times each year by Park Friends Inc., a nonprofit support group for all Memphis city parks. Volunteers with the Tennessee Ornithological Society have identified 160 bird species that inhabit or regularly visit the Old Forest, including nesting Mississippi kites and a rich array of songbirds, owls and woodpeckers. Known mammal species include: raccoon, opossum, gray squirrel, flying squirrel, gray fox, and coyote. Copperheads are among the dominant reptile species.

Overton Park is an important remnant of an old growth ecosystem that has largely vanished. By the turn of the 20th century, much of the virgin forest that once covered the Chickasaw Bluffs had been cleared for timber and to create farmland. Overton Park's 342 acres were owned by Overton & Ella Lea of Nashville and the tract was known as "Lea's Woods." Overton Lea was a grandson of John Overton, who founded Memphis in 1819 with Andrew Jackson and James Winchester, and for whom the park was named. The tract's old growth forest covered 200 acres at the time it was purchased by the City of Memphis (on November 13, 1901, for \$110,000) and was widely recognized as a civic treasure. The park's designer said:

"In Overton Park you have saved the other chief characteristics of this region by preserving in the forest conditions of the virgin forest upon that property. Nowhere in the United States, except in the Pacific Northwest, will you find tree growth as luxuriant as in the Western Tennessee and Eastern Arkansas forests, and in the two hundred acres of virgin forest in Overton Park you have a property which, as a heritage to the public for the enjoyment of nature, equals in value the cost of the entire park system to the present time." —George E. Kessler

Although the Old Forest has been reduced to approximately 150 acres today, it remains a high-quality ecosystem and a priceless cultural resource for our community and region.

V. Ownership of tree (If organization, corporation, government, or non-profit, include contact name and title)

Name: City of Memphis

Contact: Cynthia Buchanan, Director of Park Services Division

Address: 2599 Avery, Memphis, TN 38112

Telephone: 901-576-4200 Email: Cindy.Buchanan@memphistn.gov

VI. Name By Which Tree is Known: The Old Forest of Overton Park

Why is the tree so named?

It is the only documented tract of old growth forest that survived the early development of the City of Memphis, so it became known to our community as *the* Old Forest.

VII. Tree(s) Description

1. Health of tree or group of trees

 Excellent (no visible or known defects or health problems)

 X Good (appears in good health with only minor defects)

 Fair (appears in average health with some obvious defect)

 Poor (trees in noticeable decline)

 Bad (tree is in severe decline)

2. Species (include at least the common name, and genus and species if possible, i.e. Black Walnut, *Juglans nigra*)

Below is a small selection of some of the larger trees (for their species) that occur in the Old Forest. There are many additional trees in these size ranges that have not been measured.

	DBH (inches)	Height (feet)	Crown (feet)
Black oak (<i>Quercus velutina</i>)	45.1	105	80
Cherrybark oak (<i>Quercus pagoda</i>)	62.7	125	105
Hop Hornbeam (<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>)	11.6	60	33
Pawpaw (<i>Asimina triloba</i>)	8.7	50	30
Shumard oak (<i>Quercus shumardii</i>)	62.7	125	105
Tulip poplar (<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>)	57.2	115	65
White oak (<i>Quercus alba</i>)	52.2	110	75

3. Land use: Residential Commercial X Woodland Farmland

4. Photographs (A set of non-returnable color prints of the tree(s) is required with the application). Maps or diagrams of locations are also helpful.

Please see attached.

VIII. Applicant Information

Co-Nominators:

Name: Cynthia Buchanan

Title and Organization: Director, Park Services Division, City of Memphis

Address: 2599 Avery, Memphis TN 38112

Telephone: 901-576-4200 Email: Cindy.Buchanan@memphistn.gov

Name: Martha Kelly

Title and Organization: President, Park Friends Inc.

Address: 1780 Autumn Ave, Memphis TN 38112

Telephone: 901-278-1216 Email: Martha1Kelly@aol.com

Name: Naomi Van Tol

Title and Organization: President, Citizens to Preserve Overton Park

Address: 618 S. Cox, Memphis, TN 38104

Telephone: 901-278-2396 Email: naomi@spiny.com

Date of Application: November 19, 2009

ATTACHMENTS (photographs, maps, pertinent documents)

Below is a list of native tree species known to occur in the Old Forest. Maps and photos are attached separately.

Acer negundo - Box elder

Acer rubrum - Red maple

Acer saccharinum - Silver maple

Acer saccharum - Sugar maple

Aesculus pavia - Red buckeye

Asimina triloba - Pawpaw

Betula nigra - River birch

Carpinus caroliniana - American hornbeam

Carya cordiformis - Bitternut hickory

Carya illinoensis - Pecan

Carya ovata - Shagbark hickory

Carya texana - Texas hickory

Carya tomentosa - Mockernut hickory

Catalpa speciosa - Catalpa

Celtis laevigata - Sugarberry

Celtis occidentalis - Hackberry

Cercis canadensis - Redbud

Cornus drummondii - Rough-leaf dogwood
Cornus florida - Flowering dogwood
Cornus foemina - Still dogwood
Corylus americana - Hazelnut
Diospyros virginiana - Persimmon
Euonymus americanus - Hearts-a-bursting
Fraxinus americana - White ash
Fraxinus pennsylvanica - Green ash
Gleditsia triacanthos - Honey locust
Ilex decidua - Deciduous holly
Ilex opaca - American holly
Juglans nigra - Black walnut
Juniperus virginiana - Eastern red cedar
Liquidambar styraciflua - Sweetgum
Liriodendron tulipifera - Tulip poplar
Maclura pomifera - Osage orange
Magnolia grandiflora - Southern magnolia
Malus coronaria - Wild crab apple
Morus rubra - Red mulberry
Nyssa sylvatica - Black gum
Ostrya virginiana - Hop hornbeam
Platanus occidentalis - Sycamore
Populus deltoides - Eastern cottonwood
Prunus serotina - Black cherry
Robinia pseudoacacia - Black locust
Quercus alba - White oak
Quercus falcata - Southern red oak
Quercus muhlenbergii - Chinquapin oak
Quercus nigra - Water oak
Quercus pagoda - Cherrybark oak
Quercus palustris - Pin oak
Quercus phellos - Willow oak
Quercus rubra - Northern red oak
Quercus shumardii - Shumard oak
Quercus stellata - Post oak
Quercus velutina - Black oak
Salix nigra - Black willow
Sassafras albidum - Sassafras
Tilia americana - American basswood
Tilia heterophylla - White basswood
Ulmus americana - American elm
Ulmus rubra - Slippery elm
Viburnum rufidulum - Southern blackhaw

