

Duval County Urban Forestry Fact Sheet

Jacksonville's Treaty Oak

by Larry Figart, Urban Forestry Extension Agent

One of Jacksonville's oldest landmarks is the **Treaty Oak**. It didn't always have that name. Years ago it was called "**The Great Oak**." In the 1930's the tree was threatened by development. In order to save the tree, Times Union reporter Pat Moran wrote that a treaty between native Indians and white settlers was signed under the tree and its name was changed to "**Treaty Oak**." The story must have worked because the tree still stands.

There used to be five large oaks in Jacksonville. They were the **Timucuan Oak** at NAS-Jax, the **Episcopal Oak** on the campus of Episcopal High School, the **Bartram Oak**, on the campus of the Bartram School, and the **Cummer Oak** at the Cummer Art Gallery. Only the Cummer Oak and the Treaty Oak remain.

The Treaty oak is located on a 7 acre city park off Prudential Drive between Main Street and Flagler Street. In the early 1900's the land surrounding the tree was known as the Dixieland Amusement Park. It was quite the attraction with slides, ostrich races, electric fountains, a band shell, and theater productions.



The Great Oak at Dixieland Park
Photo : Florida State Archives

The property was donated to the City of Jacksonville in 1964 by Jessie Ball Dupont with the stipulation that the park remain a public park for the use and enjoyment of the general public.

The Treaty Oak is not the largest live oak in the state. That distinction belongs to the "Ceylon Oak" in Alachua County. At its last measurement, the Treaty Oak stood 70' tall, with a diameter of 8 feet and a crown spread of 147 feet.

In 1994 the City of Jacksonville built a boardwalk underneath the canopy of the Treaty Oak. The landscape architect in charge of the project, James Turner, designed the boardwalk with the sole purpose of improving access without disturbing the tree. The footers are supported by piers that were set in the ground using water pressure. If a root was encountered, the footer was moved to not disturb the root.

Spend any time at the tree you will discover that it is impacting a diverse group of people. In the mornings hundreds of commuters walking from a nearby parking lot walk along side of the tree. Families spend the day exploring the tree under the shade of its branches. Visit the tree on a weekend and you may be able to see a movie in the park. Also, you will find it is a popular spot for outdoor weddings.

There have been many estimates as to the age of the tree ranging from 200 to 800 years. In his research of the site and the tree, James Turner found that up until about 275 years ago the ground where the Treaty Oak now stands was river marsh. This puts the age of the tree to be around 250 years. With continued care and attention, the tree should make it another 250 years.



View from under the canopy of the Treaty Oak



Image taken from the boardwalk entering the tree canopy