

CORK ELMS  
HISTORIC LANDMARK OF LAKESIDE  
by Florence Beadle

The beautiful archway of Cork Elms at the west entrance to Lakeside on State Highway 67 is believed to be the only lane of these huge old trees in the United States. They were planted on Arbor Day in 1893 by the pupils of the first school in Lakeside. The trees had been imported from Australia by the El Cajon Valley Land Company, which had founded Lakeside seven years previously.

For over sixty years the wide spreading branches of these historic old cork trees have formed an archway of scenic beauty over Woodside Avenue. Their cool inviting shade has welcomed the traveler to Lakeside since the horse and buggy days.

In their native country, Australia, the cork bark grows much thicker and is used commercially. Only a limited area of bark is harvested periodically and the harvest does not injure the tree.

Since about 1917 a large nursery in Oneca, Florida has been importing these Cork Elms from Australia and they are being planted throughout the south. However, it has been learned that these trees do not grow to the size of our Lakeside Cork Elms.

The cork trees are unique in the fact that they bear no flowers or seed, but propagate themselves by offshoots from the roots. If left alone they would soon become a veritable jungle. A few of these shoots have been planted in Lakeside and are growing into fine trees. A plan is being formulated at the present time whereby this growth can be saved and given to those who will plant them in their yards.

In the past these cork trees have been mutilated and threatened with destruction many times. For many years it had been the practise of the Gas and Electric Company to top about ten feet from the south lane of trees, giving them a hedge-like appearance. However, in 1946 the citizens of Lakeside, with the aid of public officials, persuaded the Gas and Electric Company to move their power lines to a different location. Since then the cork trees have again grown into a beautiful archway.

Originally there were about fifty trees on each side of Woodside Avenue and today only about half that number remain. On February 6th, 1956 seven of these beautiful old shade trees were cut down from the south lane for entrance to a proposed shopping center. Previously the promoter had made many promises that "Lakeside's historic and beautiful archway of trees would be preserved as an asset to the shopping center."

The Women's Club of Lakeside and the San Diego County Federation of Women's Clubs have no desire to hinder "true progress" but do believe that the removal of so many of these historical trees was unnecessary, especially as a County road adjoins the property on the east. The Women's Clubs believe that the remaining cork elms should be preserved as a San Diego County historical landmark. Therefore they are asking the assistance of all groups, clubs and organizations in obtaining this historical placque.

Sincerely,

County Chairman of History and  
Landmarks for the San Diego County  
Federation of Women's Clubs.

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