

45. WHEAT BARGE TREE (Valley Oak) Tuolumne Regional Park



Landmark Preservation Commission Resolution: May 18, 1998
Designated by City Council: July 14, 1998

Description: This large Valley Oak is located in Tuolumne Regional Park on the east side of Tioga Avenue north of the Tuolumne River.

Cultural Significance: The Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*) is native to the San Joaquin Valley and grows naturally in the Modesto area. The Wheat Barge Tree is one of a large grove of oaks that fill the flood plain along this stretch of the Tuolumne River. Because of its relationship to the river and the deep, silty sand soil, it has grown majestic in size. The tree grows in an open area with little competition. This enabled its branches to spread and expand to 50 feet or more in each direction. It is an ideal specimen of the species and is estimated to be the second oldest naturally growing tree within the city limits. As with many beautiful and majestic specimens, the tree became a landmark through the ages of valley development the tree is estimated to be over 150 years old.

Historic Significance: Folk history has it that this tree was possibly the site where barges tied up on their way down river while transporting wheat from Waterford, after 1891, or even earlier after steaming upriver from Paradise City in the 1860s and 1870s.