

How To Own A Piece Of History

You can't have the trees that George Washington stood under while farming at Mount Vernon, but you can buy seedlings from them. The Historic Tree Program at the non-profit American Forests organization sells 1 to 3-ft. tall trees that have a direct connection to famous people from Washington to Johnny Appleseed, Ulysses S. Grant, Mark Twain, Elvis Presley, and many more.

"Most of our trees are from seed collected from the original tree, but a few, like our Johnny Appleseed Apple and Tidal Basin Cherry trees, come from cuttings," says Seth Menter, American Forests. "The original trees are viewed as witnesses of historic events and people."

Available selections can be viewed online or by contacting American Forests. Collections include American Presidents, American Revolution, Environmentalists, Native Amer-

icans, African Americans, Civil War, Famous Women, Authors & Artists, Landmarks and more. Texas has its own category, including the Texas Treaty Live Oak. Believed to be 500 years old, the tree had been revered by Native Americans for centuries before it was the site of the Council of Oaks. It's the lone survivor of oak trees under which Stephen Austin signed a treaty with area Native American tribes.

Information on trees includes price, growing zones, spread and height, soil moisture and soil type needs. Most trees are priced at \$39.95 with the exception of the Tidal Basin Cherry Tree (\$45.95) and the Johnny Appleseed Apple Tree (\$49.95).

Trees may be ordered throughout the year. Menter suggests ordering in spring or fall according to your planting zone.

"Our trees come in plastic pots and can be



One example of a tree that provides seedlings to the American Forests Historic Tree Program is the Angel Live Oak in South Carolina, thought to be about 1,500 years old.

kept inside and next to a window for a long time with weekly watering," he adds.

He warns that some trees, such as the Pearl S. Buck Mimosa, Stratford Hall Black Locust, Williamsburg Wisteria and Wilderness Kentucky Coffee Tree, are in short supply.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Seth Menter, American Forests Historic Tree Program, 734 15th St. N.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20005 (ph 202 737-1944, ext 219; smenter@amfor.org; www.historictrees.org).

"Slow Speed" Tractor A Real Conversation Piece

You've never seen anything like this "slow speed" tractor, painted all yellow and equipped with a crosswise-mounted engine. It was built by Iky Wipf of Huron, S. Dak., who used components from 4 different tractors to come up with the strange looking unit.

The frame, rear axle and rear end is off a Deere B; the single front wheel, worm gear steering sector, and bolster are off an International Harvester F12; the 4-cyl. industrial engine — bolted crosswise on the Deere frame — is off an International Cub; and the fenders came from a Massey Harris.

"I built it about 10 years ago so I could enter a tractor 'slow' race. I could walk alongside the tractor and hardly see it move, yet I still didn't win. But I had a lot of fun building it," says Wipf.

He shortened the tractor's length by cutting 2 ft. off the front part of the frame. He also cut

1 ft. off the axles on each side of the tractor.

Wipf replaced the Deere's original rear wheels with smaller ones off an Allis Chalmers 100 self-propelled combine, building new hubs to fit the Deere axles.

The tractor's slow speed is made possible by a big 18-in. dia. sprocket mounted on the Deere flywheel, which chain-drives the Deere rear end. Wipf also bolted a smaller sprocket on the Cub's clutch.

"The 18-in. dia. sprocket is much bigger than the Deere flywheel, which really gears it down. The small rear wheels also help. When I put the transmission in low gear the tractor just creeps along."

A few years ago Wipf sold the tractor to John Morley of Forest Lake, Minn. "I may paint the tractor 4 different colors — green for the Deere B frame, gray for the IH F12 front steering sector, red for the IH Cub Cadet



Iky Wipf used components from 4 different tractors to build this "slow speed" tractor. The 4-cyl. industrial engine — bolted crosswise on a Deere frame — is off an International Cub.

power unit, and red for the Massey Harris wheels," notes Morley. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Iky Wipf, 616 Nicollet Ave. S.W., Huron, S. Dak.

57350 (ph 605 352-7090) or John Morley, 21661 Fondant Ave. N., Forest Lake, Minn. 55025 (ph 651 464-2778).

Cemetery Investigator Finds "Missing" Grave Sites

When a headstone was dumped on a Tulsa, Okla., sidewalk, city officials knew whom to call. A decade ago, novelist and former private investigator, Dale Whisman started Lost Grave Locators to help families find "missing" burial plots. After several days of research and legwork, he found the cemetery where the 12-year-old girl, who died in 1913, belonged. The bottom of the marker matched perfectly with the foundation from which it had been broken.

Whisman notes that his part-time business is primarily focused in the Oklahoma region. He offers his services for \$10/hour with a \$50 minimum. If he needs to travel he charges 35 cents/mile.

"You can do a lot of things over the phone, through the mail or at libraries or historical societies," Whisman says. Clients hire him because they live in other states or don't want to take the time to do the legwork.

As an insurance fraud investigator for 11 years, Whisman knows who to talk to and what to ask. Name, death date, death location and a social security number make the process go easier, he says, though the people who died decades ago didn't have social security numbers. Military records can also be helpful. He starts with an obituary if he can find one and then makes his way through public records.

Whisman, 70, started his cemetery sleuthing when he realized he didn't know where his relatives were buried. His mother made a list of cemeteries and family members, and he tracked down great-grandparent headstones

on his own.

Some cases have unexpected endings. When a headstone was found under a porch of a house the city planned to tear down, they hired Whisman. Fortunately for the city, no body was buried there. A husband had purchased a marker for his wife. After he died the family purchased a double headstone and, for a lack of a better place, threw the single headstone under the porch.

In another case, before buying land for a housing project, a building contractor hired him to check out the rumor that it was an old Indian burial site. Whisman located a single private grave about a mile away.

Most of his cases are for individuals looking for family, Whisman says.

"One family was looking for a young relative for a long time, and I found the plot," he explains. "They were so grateful they hired me to find two more relatives."

Another older friend was concerned that one of her relatives didn't have a marker. After he found the burial plot, Whisman helped her arrange to purchase a headstone.

Successes like that make the job rewarding, but there are times when he can't help.

"One problem is that there are a lot of private, family cemeteries," he notes. "There are no records, and it's very difficult with no headstones."

He discovered one case where a rancher piled up headstones because they were in his way.

Within the first five hours of research, Whisman finds the gravesite about 70 to 80



Photo courtesy, Charles W. Sasser

Former private investigator Dale Whisman started Lost Grave Locators to help families find "missing" burial plots.

percent of the time. If he hasn't, he tells the client the odds of finding it and how much time it will take. For the fee, Whisman provides photos of the plot, cemetery name, map and directions to it and occasionally an aerial view. Sometimes he can provide other information surrounding the death and

personal details.

"Primarily I do it to help people," Whisman says, admitting he's lucky if he covers his costs.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Dale Whisman, The Grave Locator, 3436 S. 96 E. Ave., Tulsa, Okla. 74145 (ph 918 630-9293).