

LANDSCAPE AND  
**ARBORETUM**  
PROGRAM AT BARD

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*Red and silver maple hybrid at Blithewood. Photo: Bard Archives and Special Collections, 1950's.*

**THE HISTORIC TREES  
OF BARD COLLEGE**

# THE HISTORIC TREES OF BARD

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### 15. American Sycamore

This American sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*) stands in the center of a meadow on North Campus, which has undergone various uses over the last several hundred years. It may once have been used as a sheep field, but during Ward Manor's time as a children's camp, it was used as a vegetable garden and as a baseball diamond. Now, however, it has returned to an open space with naturalized grasses, shrubs, and trees.



*American sycamore in fall, North Campus. Photo: Amy Foster, 2005.*

### 16. Oak Grove, North Campus



*Boys at summer camp harvesting vegetables. Photo: Bard College Archives and Special Collections, 1940.*

The white and red oaks (*Quercus alba*, *Q. rubra*) that remain standing at the Fisher Center for Performing Arts are part of a natural grove on the Ward Manor Estate. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, they served as shade trees near the vegetable garden that was part of the children's camps. Many of these historic trees were preserved when the Fisher Center was built in 2003.

### 17. Maple and Oak Allée

Just south of the oak grove on North Campus, white oaks (*Quercus alba*) and red maples (*Acer rubrum*) were planted to replace the allée that once lined this historic road. Although little is known about the historic allée that once stood here, these trees were chosen because they reflect the native landscape of the mid-Hudson Valley region.

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## HISTORY OF THE BARD LANDS

The land that Bard College inhabits has a long history, predating the arrival of European settlers in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The Bard Arboretum is a reflection of this historical diversity, with the natural, agricultural, and estate eras all present in the current tree collection.

The Hudson River Valley is mostly populated with mixed deciduous-coniferous forests, and many of the important trees on the Bard Campus—particularly the different varieties of oaks, maples, and white pines—are a reflection of the natural ecosystem of the region. It is estimated that groups of American Indians began living in the region over 9,000 years ago, and the trees in the region were certainly an important natural resource. Additionally, the banks of the Hudson River, where Bard resides, was an important landmark for seasonal migration movements.

In the early 1600's, the first Dutch settlers arrived in the region, which led to the eventual disappearance of Native Peoples in the Valley. The settlers received a land grant from the King of England in 1688 and began clearing the land for crops, which were tended by tenant farmers. Some of the meadows and younger forest stands are a result of the land-clearing associated with the lumber trade that occurred in this era.

Beginning in the 1800's, the land which would eventually become Bard College was parceled into two main large estates, Blithewood and Ward Manor. The resulting changes in the environment continue to be apparent today, as the former agricultural areas went through intensive changes and saw the introduction of exotic trees such as Norway spruce, allées lining carriage roads, and the clearing of wooded areas for gardens or meadows. Most of the trees that are typically recognized as “historic” were either planted during this period, or were older trees that were preserved by designers at the time.

### 13. White Oak on Annandale Path, Annandale Road

This tree on Annandale path is one of the largest white oaks (*Quercus alba*) on campus, with a diameter of 152cm and an impressive canopy spread of 85ft. It is estimated to be over 300 years old.

## WARD MANOR



*View of Robbins House and Ward Manor. Photo: Bard College Archives and Special Collections, early 1900's.*

The grounds of Ward Manor have a long and rich history. Originally a private estate, it has been used for a number of different uses throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, housing a summer camp, as well as a home for the elderly. Ninety acres of this estate, along with what is now the Manor Gatehouse and the Robbins and Manor dormitories, were acquired by the College after 1960 to accommodate a growing student population.

### 14. Norway Spruce Allée on Robbins Road, North Campus

This allée of Norway spruces (*Picea abies*) was planted to line the carriage road from the Manor Gatehouse to Ward Manor. The Norway spruce was selected for the allée because, as an exotic species, it represented the high status of the residents of the estate. For this reason, this tree is one of the very few non-native historic trees on campus.

## 9. American Elm



This American elm (*Ulmus americana*) stands as the last of a historic allée that lined “Elm Walk”, connecting the historic buildings on the ridge to the Chapel and Bard Hall. Each graduating class of the College added a new tree to the allée in order to create a V-shaped tunnel of elms. Remains of the elms can be seen by the stone markers still lining the walk. Tragically, all of the trees except one succumbed to Dutch elm disease, and were removed in 1954. The fact that this tree was not affected may indicate that it has a rare genetic resistance—estimated to

occur in only one of every 100,000 elms.

This shows an elm donated by the Class of 1886 being removed due to Dutch elm disease. Photo: Bard College Archives and Special Collections, 1954.

## 10. European Beech

Located in Henderson circle, the European beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is a popular tree in landscaping throughout Europe and North America, and is easily identified by its smooth, gray bark and red-tinted foliage.

## 11. Red Oak, Stone Row Courtyard

The red oak (*Quercus rubrum*) is estimated to be about 200 years old. It was probably recognized as a significant tree during the early growth period of the college—it sits in one of the first historic courtyards, and appears on a college map dating back to 1930.

## 12. American Beech Grove, Woods Road

The American beeches (*Fagus grandifolia*) are found throughout the natural woodland area between the Stevenson gymnasium and the Admissions office. They are part of an ecological microclimate that is favorable to the growth of this species, which explains the large population of beeches in this area relative to the rest of campus.

# BLITHEWOOD

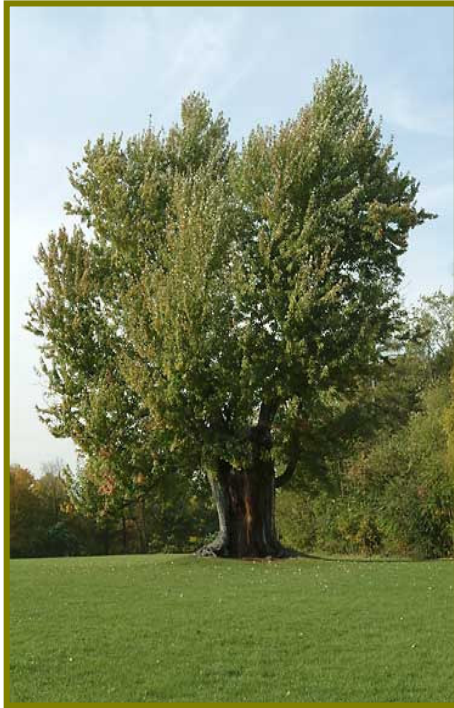


View of the Hudson from the lawn at Blithewood. Photo: Bard College Archives and Special Collections, 1888.

Built on land acquired from the American Indians in 1660, Blithewood estate has long been heralded as a masterpiece of landscape design. Andrew Jackson Downing described the estate as “one of the most charming villa residences in the Union” in his 1841 *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*. Downing, in collaboration with designer Alexander Jackson Davis and Robert Donaldson (the owner of the estate from 1835 to 1853), is credited for the original architecture and landscape of the estate. The estate was purchased from Donaldson by John Bard one of the founders of St. Stephen’s College, in 1853 and renamed it “Annandale”. In 1897, John Bard sold the estate to the College, but it was sold again two years later to Andrew C. Zabriskie, who commissioned Francis Hoppin to redesign the house and garden—which is close to the design that we now see today. In 1951, the College acquired the property, using it for many years as a women’s dormitory and now as the location of the Jerome Levy Economics Institute.

## 1. Former New York State Champion Tree

This majestic red and silver maple (*Acer rubrum x sacharinum*) has one of the richest histories of all the trees on campus. As part of the original landscape of the Blithewood Estate, estimated to be about 350 years old, this tree formerly served to shade the tennis courts situated nearby. In 1985, it was recognized as the New York State champion Red Maple, measuring 70 feet high, with a circumference of 21 feet 7 inches. This title was later lost when the tree was struck by lightning, greatly decreasing its size and exposing the tree's interior. The cement visible near the top of the trunk is the result of a later attempt to stabilize the tree. Then, in the spring of 2005, the tree survived further trauma when it caught on fire under mysterious circumstances. The damage from this event can still be seen throughout the inside of the trunk. Yet in spite of all of these events, the tree remains one of the largest and most beautiful on the campus.



*Red and silver maple estimated to be about 350 years old. Blithewood. Photo: Amy Foster, 2005.*

## 2. Black Birch, Drill Hall

Little is known about the history of this black birch (*Betula lenta*). It lies at the east side of the historic Drill Hall which was originally John Bard's Coach House. Until recently, this tree was hidden by the undergrowth in the area, but has since been uncovered. Interestingly, black birch wood can be easily identified by its wintergreen scent.

## 7. London Plane Trees, Annandale Road

These two London plane trees (*Platanus x acerifolia*) stand in a pair along Annandale Road across the road from Campus Path. They are remarkably hardy trees, and are often used as street trees. They are also in the same family as the American sycamore—*Platanaceae*.

## 8. Oak Grove



*Early commencement ceremony, held under oak grove. Photo: Bard College Archives and Special Collections, 1915.*

Before the founding of St. Stephen's, this area was a natural woodland. The white oaks (*Quercus alba*) that remain were preserved after the founding of the college in 1860 and incorporated into the new landscape. Many of these trees are estimated to be around 150-200 years old. For as long as the College has existed, these trees have been central to the campus, and formerly served to shade the campus tennis courts. For much of the college's history, this grove was also the site for the commencement ceremonies until the student body outgrew the space.

### 5. White Pine Allee, Blithewood Avenue

The white pines (*Pinus strobus*) lining Blithewood Avenue were planted along the original carriage road from the Blithewood Gatehouse to the historic estate. Over the years, as the trees grew and the road widened, the trees were pruned back, explaining their unusual shapes. They have slowly declined due to road salt and old age.

## MAIN CAMPUS

Bard College was originally founded in 1860, under the name St. Stephen's College. The current main campus lies along a north-south axis from Ludlow to the President's house. The buildings were built on a natural ridgeline, and look down the hill to the Chapel of the Holy Innocents and Bard Hall.



View of the elm allee and original buildings of St. Stephen's, looking east. Photo: Bard College Archives and Special Collections, 1915.

### 6. Shagbark Hickory, Campus Center

This shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*) is in the landscaped area to the south of the Chapel, and just north of the Campus Center. At an estimate of 250 years having weathered many years, the tree has lost much of its crown.

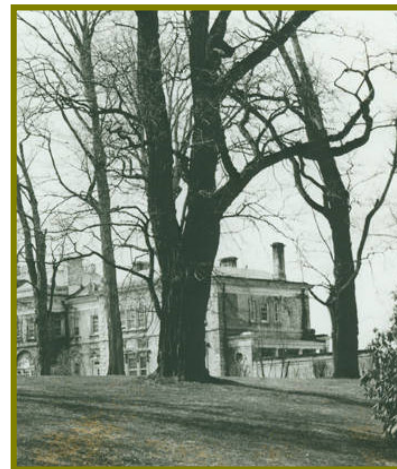


Black maple overlooking Blithewood steps. Photo: Doug Baz, 2005.

### 3. Black Maple

This black maple (*Acer nigrum*) is estimated to be 250 years old, thus predating the redesign of the garden by Francis Hoppin in 1899. At one time, a matching maple once stood on the opposite side of the steps. The tree's prominent location between the manor house and the garden indicates that the outstanding presence of the tree may have been influential in the new design.

### 4. Black Locust



The exact age of these twin black locusts (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) is unknown, but it seems likely, given their girth, that they may date back to the same era as the red and silver maple. There has been an ongoing effort to preserve these trees, including cabling on the north tree and fertilization injections in their roots.

The twin black locusts at Blithewood. Photo: Bard Archives and Special Collections, early 1900's.