



FALL CITY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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## Historic Walnut Tree

by Jean Irene Parmelee Pike

How many times have you driven past the Fall City Grade School and noticed the lovely old gymnasium standing there? Have you ever noticed the great big walnut tree growing in front of the gym? Have you wondered how old it is and why it is even there?

Probably not. I have not because I was always told that the tree was planted there by my dad. That was a fact of life and I never questioned it.

My dad, Eugene Parmelee, was janitor at the school in the early 1930s and I guess I just figured that it was the janitor's job to keep up the grounds and plant trees. I can remember, as a little girl, going to school with my dad in the morning and sitting on the big old window sill in the boiler room with him, waiting for the recess bell to ring so I could go out and roller skate on the sidewalk with the school kids.



I never thought much about the walnut tree as I watched it grow, over the years, but lately I got to wondering about the tree and wished that I had asked my mother some questions about it. I figured that it was too late for that, until recently, I was going through a bunch of my dad's belongings that my mother had placed in an old wooden box after his death in 1937. In the box I found copies of correspondence exchanged between my mother and the American Forestry Association. In 1932 the Forestry Association had an ad in *The Country Gentleman* magazine telling about a program for Boy Scouts to plant historic nut trees all over the United States to "increase the number of nut trees and become living memorials to American history." The seeds, which had been gathered from historic grounds around the US, such as Mount Vernon, Gettysburg, Arlington, Shenandoah Valley and Vicksburg, were sent for and were mailed, on May 15, 1932, to my brother, Glenn Parmelee, who was a boy scout. He received 10 seeds which he planted, on May 24, on the parsonage property where we lived on SE 43rd Pl (back then it was 3rd St). Two trees grew from these seeds.



In February of 1937 Glenn was no longer a scout and he decided that he would like to give his trees to the school which were then transplanted by my father. Evidently, only one survived. Those particular tree seeds were from Gettysburg so we can claim that we have a piece of Gettysburg growing on our school grounds.