

Historical Register

- Jack Davis Garry Oak Tree



ADDRESS: Near 7525 Old Hwy 99, Tumwater, WA 98501

AMENITIES:

- None

CATEGORIES:

- Historic Properties

The tree is significant as a specimen tree of the Garry oak species, believed to be approximately 400 years old. The Coastal Salish Indian people managed the landscape by burning the prairies to provide open areas where plants, most notably Camas, could thrive. This helped the oak tree by eliminating the over-canopy of fir trees for the sun-loving oak. The Coastal Salish Indian people baked the acorns or ate them with salmon eggs or pounded them up and ate them with fish. Americans settled here because of the open prairie.

The Coastal Salish also used oak for digging sticks to harvest root foodstuffs and to manufacture yellow face paint made from the decaying bark of the oak tree as well as for hide scraping tools, braces for dip nets and firewood.

The tree is also on the historic northern branch of the Oregon Trail, the Cowlitz Trail. Although various stories about its being the "Meeker Oak" have been circulated, no direct connection with Ezra Meeker has been established. Other accounts about its being an Indian gathering site have not been verified.

In 1984 a community effort lead by environmentalist Jack Davis saved the tree when the highway was being improved in this area and the right-of-way was re-routed and a barrier installed to ensure its security. The tree name honors his work.

Listed on the Tumwater Register of Historic Places.