

Can an Indian Trail Marker Tree Be Found At Malabar Farm?

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Trail trees, trail marker trees, or Crooked Trees are hardwood trees throughout North America that Native Americans intentionally shaped with distinctive characteristics that convey that the tree was shaped by human activity rather than deformed by nature or disease.



These distinctively shaped trees have been photographed and documented in the Great Lakes Region by scientists and historians since the early 1800s.



Wikipedia describes the Trail Tree phenomena as a massive network of constructed pre-Columbian roads and trails has been well documented across the Americas, and in many places remnants can still be found of trails used by hunters and gatherers. One unique characteristic of the trail marker tree is a horizontal bend several feet off the ground, which makes it visible at greater distances, even in snow.

Even today, modern hunters look for horizontal shapes while hunting deer, elk, and moose. Large trees that exhibit deformed growth and distinctive forms bent in a vertical plane are sometimes labeled trail trees, marker trees, thong trees, or signal trees by enthusiasts. Historically, these unique trees were commonly known as Indian trail trees. Proponents of trail tree lore claim these unique forms are culturally modified trees used to mark trails or important places. Distinctively bent trees have long been noted throughout the Temperate Deciduous

Forest of eastern North America



We spoke with the people at Malabar Farm. We wondered if it was possible that they formed the tree for some purpose. Nobody really knew anything about the tree nor how it formed. The one gentleman who had been on staff the longest did mention that the tree was Cherry tree and they do grow fast.

So the mystery remains! Do we have our very own historical trail tree right out in the open at one of our historical landmarks? Head down to Malabar Farm to see and decide for yourself.

Photos Credit: James Pennington

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