

Beechtree nursing home namesake is dying

Written by Franklin Crawford

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TINY TOWN, N.Y. — The landmark copper beech on South Albany St. is fighting for its life.

The enormous tree which stands on the grounds of the Beechtree Skilled Nursing Facility (formerly The Reconstruction Home) has been a fixture in this neighborhood for decades. During a flea market held outdoors at Beechtree on July 11, it became clear to reporters that the once noble *Fagus sylvatica* is unwell and may be making ready for the chipper shredder.

A wide disfiguring canker runs down the trunk splitting the smooth gray bark and exposing the tree's innards. Upper branches appear to be dead and a spring windstorm brought down a large, lifeless limb.

In speaking with a local tree expert who asked to remain anonymous, TinyTownTimes.com's arboreal unit learned that the trouble with the beech has to do with groundskeeping. The copper beech desires acidic soil and creates its own perfect environment by shedding leaves and dropping nuts beneath its canopy. The constant clearing away of leaf debris and duff destroys the eco-niche this lonely tree creates year after year.

And so, it is failing.

Should the tree be destroyed it will cause quite a bit of grief in this neighborhood, for more reasons than one.

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When the former Reconstruction Home added an Alzheimer's wing in the late 1980s and early 90s, plans were altered to save the copper beech. Original specs called for delivery of food and removal of waste to be handled on the S. Albany St. side of the building, which meant the tree would have to go. Protests over the removal led to a change that put a delivery dock and dumpsters on the Fayette St. side of the building, disrupting an otherwise quiet street with loud, noxious garbage removal trucks, early morning deliveries of food supplies and exhaust fans that run through the night.

The loss of the copper beech after all these years then would not only be sad, it would be the source of resentments as bitter as the soil it requires for life.

— *C. Penbroke Handy*