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Living Witness: Historic Trees of Texas

Ralph Yznaga

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In a beautiful tribute to the natural heritage of the Lone Star State, photographer Ralph Yznaga celebrates the strong connections between Texans and their trees. Inspired by the old Texas Forest Service book, *Famous Trees of Texas,* Yznaga has captured the continuing attachment we have to these magnificent reminders of our culture and history. Stunning images, stories, a detailed map, and driving directions to thirty-seven famous (and infamous) trees help us appreciate how entwined the lives of people and trees are:

- The Treaty Oak, memorialized in Texas lore as a meeting place for Native Americans and also as the site of Stephen F. Austin's first boundary treaty with local Indians;
- The Burnt Oak, standing witness to the dramatic events leading up to the Battle of the Alamo, one of the largest known specimens of *Quercus virginiana* var. *fusiformis;*
- The Sam Houston Kissing Oak, said to occupy the location of a Houston campaign speech near San Marcos, where the "Old Hero" kissed local young women who presented him with a flag;
- The Great Goose Island Tree, believed to be more than a thousand years old; and many others.

The photographs in *Living Witness* premiered at the groundbreaking of the Mollie Steves Zachry Texas Arboretum at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. Set to open in 2012, the centennial of Lady Bird Johnson's birth, the arboretum will feature descendents of historic trees in the Hall of Texas Heroes.

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