

THE EAGLE TREE FALLS – 1863 by Leslie Korenko

“Every one remembers the grand old monarch that formerly stood near the center of the Island. The pride of the neighborhood, the wonder of visitors, and the trysting place of young people who came in from the county. The following interesting sketch, in memory of the good old tree, is taken from our exchanges.

The Eagle Tree is one of the things past, for it now no longer towers above its neighbors but lies low upon the ground. We all dreaded to see it go, for it seemed like the relic of the past, standing alone unchangeable, while every thing around it changed as the years sped away. A great many have wondered how high the tree was. As it was probably as tall as anything on the Island, it may be interesting to some of you to know how high it was.

It was measured just 84 ft. up to where it was burned off last fall. The part that fell was 20 ft. up to the next, and the limbs were still higher. The nest therefore was 104 feet from the ground. If you have ever been to the foot of the tree and looked up, you can imagine how high were the walls of Babylon, as they were 100 ft. high.

The nest was a great curiosity to many and for their benefit we will say that when it fell, there was rubbish enough upon the ground to have filled a good sized wagon. Some of the largest sticks of which the nest was made were nearly as large as your wrist and about two ft. long. Some of the smaller ones were longer. The birds must have worked hard and patiently, more so than any of us would have done.

The old eagles had not been to their homes for some time before the fire and woodsman’s axe tore it down. They only stopped now and then to rest their weary wings and perhaps to mull upon their once bright and happy home. If such a thing were possible for his lordship to do which is very doubtful.”

Eagles built several nests over the years. One nest was a tourist attraction as a map from the 1960’s shows. The nest was built in almost the same area as the one mentioned above. Eagles became threatened by pesticides in the food chain and this nest also fell victim to neglect and the elements. In September 1963, the school newspaper, The School Spirit, reported that “one of our Island landmarks is no longer a scenic attraction. The old Eagle Nest near the E. Quarry fell from the tree during a severe storm in June. This nest, however, has not been in use for a number of years. One nest still remains and the Eagles have been around here all summer.” That second nest was later abandoned.

Eagles returned to the islands in 2003 and a pair began incubating eggs in a nest on Middle Bass Island. In 2004, 2005 and 2006 a young nesting pair unsuccessfully attempted to breed on Kelleys Island. However, Islanders were hopeful that a new nest, started in 2008, would be successful for these magnificent birds and in 2009 the first Eagles in over 50 years successfully fledged their offspring from a nest just north of the Seaway Marina. Tom Bartlett does a winter bird count each year and in December 2024, he counted 30 Eagles on the Island, most on Long Point. This is an incredible come back.

From the book Kelleys Island 1862-1865 The Civil War, the Island Soldiers, & the Island Queen.

Few old pictures exist showing island Eagle trees and the few that survive do not do the nests justice. They were huge.



An Eagle Tree was one of the island’s attractions shown on a souvenir map from Miller Marine from the 1960’s.



