

# FIFTY-FOUR YEARS OF TREE WORK<sup>1</sup>

by Archibald Enoch Price

My father, a professor of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, had orchards. He was quite a student of fruit tree culture so I had my very first tree care training with him. I was 16 years old when I started trimming trees, in the year 1920, making to date some 54 years of tree work.

My first "pay job" was under the name of Doering and Price. I was the boss, although my name appeared last. We worked for the Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds for the Academy of the New Church and for the Borough of Bryn Athyn in Pennsylvania—this while we both were still in high school. Our pay was 35 cents an hour. We had other students work for us. One of these students got a bad case of poison ivy. This was our first use of Workmen's Compensation. Thank heavens we had it. He was in bad shape for five or six weeks before he was to graduate from high school, but being a bright student he got his diploma.

While going to school, doing tree work, I also sold for Stark Brothers Nurseries of Missouri. Their stock was shipped freight. It was good stock.

One summer I worked for Raymond Pitcairn, a multi-millionaire, living in Bryn Athyn. I really worked under his superintendent. My job was picking the yellow leaves off of six Bay trees by standing on a stepladder. When I was through with tree number six, I started again on tree number one. This went on, and on, and on. I asked the superintendent for variety. He said, "Boy, what I tell you to do, you do." Being the nervous type, I quit.

The summer of 1923 I worked for Swain Nelson & Sons Company, Glenview, Illinois. All of the work was for a park district account. The park district paid for completed work in \$500.00 sums to avoid the asinine bid method.

In June 1924 I was introduced to David Poe who was in charge of tree work for Bartlett Tree Expert Company in the Philadelphia area. I was hired at 55 cents an hour, five cents more than

other new starts due to my previous experience. *New starts* were called *rabble* back in 1924. I wonder if that word is still used in the East—I liked it. We just refer to them as *new starts* in the Midwest. We worked a 10-hour day, a 60-hour week, weather permitting. For many years David Poe and his wife, my wife, and I had many pleasant visits together at Shade Tree Conferences. At one of the meetings, in later years, David (then a salesman) said he "sold a \$5.00 job and two little ones". This quote you still hear today.

I learned to use a rope and pole saw during the summer of 1924. With Bartlett, we had ladders, but it was something special to throw a rope through a crotch, and then go up that way. On some jobs ladders were not taken on the trucks. And, of course, we still use the ropes today.

In September 1924, Donald Hicks, who managed a Tree Expert Department for Swain Nelson & Sons, asked me to come to Illinois to do tree work for 75 cents an hour. This was still a 10-hour day and 60-hour week. I worked then for Swain Nelson at various job levels for 18 years and 6 months.

At this time, the spray materials we were using were lime sulfur, Black Leaf-40, and arsenate of lead. Lime sulfure had a smell like rotten eggs. We had to carry the spray hose up into the tree, or the hose was hauled up by a ground man after the rope was crotched. No high-powered sprayers then.

With Swain Nelson we did every type of tree work: trimming, feeding, bracing, bolting, removal, and lots of cavity work. In Pontiac, Illinois, we filled a cavity in a giant black oak that was 9 inches wide, 1 foot deep, and 30 feet tall. We shudder to think of this type of work today. We were licensed to use Bartlett's Newood for cavity filling. Newood had a cork facing and both the squirrels and ants liked it. Our organization has not done any cavity work

1. Presented at the 50th International Shade Tree Conference in Atlanta, Georgia in August, 1974.

since 1946. Norman Armstrong was against cavity work many years before most of us stopped.

My Swain Nelson road-gang worked in many towns in Illinois and along the Mississippi River in towns on both sides of the river from Keokuk to Dubuque. In Peoria a man was hired. He was just no good. I let him go after a day-and-a-half. We discovered later that he was working ahead of us along the river saying that he was an experienced Swain Nelson tree man.

In Peoria every Sunday night we left the boarding house for a high-class restaurant and had an excellent T-bone steak with all the trimmings for 75 cents. In Canton, Illinois, we had excellent room and board for \$9.00 per week.

At this time I was given the title of Soliciting Foreman. I not only sold the job, I worked as foreman on the job. I sold the cavity job in Pontiac, Illinois. While in Pontiac I had the first taste of the penitentiary system. I was asked to train some of the inmates to work large trees. I thought the convicts would like this type of work for it would make the time go faster. This was not so. They hated my guts and did not care for the work.

In 1930 I became a full-time salesman. My drawing account was raised from \$30.00 to \$35.00 a week. Until January 3, 1972, except for six months, I never received a salary. I received either hourly pay or a drawing account against commissions.

In September of 1926 Marjory Burnham proposed to me on top of a stalled ferris wheel. We were married July 2, 1927.

In August 1920, I went to my first National Shade Tree Conference. It was in Cleveland, Ohio. I joined in 1927. I remember two important things about this Conference. One was the Charles Irish Company transplanting giant trees in full leaf. The trees were kept watered with large sprinklers in the tops of each tree. The other was meeting and listening to the very famous entomologist, Dr. Ephraim Porter Felt. At lectures and in the field he could speak our language and he gave us a lot of practical knowledge. We still use parts of Felt and Rankin's book today for reference work.

Here are two of my favorite depression stories. One time in Iowa I bid \$5.00 per tree to trim about 100 white oaks. Oscar Falk, a landscape salesman who traveled with me, said I was a nut for bidding so low. Someone got the job for \$1.00 per tree. We found out from one of our regular customers that the low bidder worked for six months and then went on relief for six months. The other story was about a well-to-do widow. She gave me quite a sizable job. Her lawyer would not let her spend the money. His cancellation order beat me back to the office.

During my last years with Swain Nelson, I had complete charge of the Tree Expert Department. At this time, to my knowledge, I sold the largest residential tree job in the Midwest to date. We kept this job year-after-year until the owner died. While this time and material job was in progress, I would regularly report to the owner. I lied to the butler and said that I had an appointment. He was often playing billiards by himself. We billed him for many thousands of dollars over the years he paid "overnight", but once deducted \$5.33. This was the amount our billing disagreed with his accountant.

In September of 1945, I started my own business named Archibald Enoch Price, The Care of Trees. I used my full name on the advice of the late John R. Nicholson, a corporation lawyer, and a good customer. He said, "Use your name in full, people won't forget it."

In 1945, cars and trucks were hard to get. I was able to buy a new three-quarter ton International pickup. We used this truck for everything—hauling the men to work, handling equipment, materials, and debris, and for my sales during the day and evenings, sunshine permitting.

One good customer was 98 years old the last job I did for her. As I was selling this job she requested that I have a foreman familiar with her estate. She said, "I just can't traipse around anymore."

Another pet customer is a retired surgeon now 85 years old. A few years ago I asked him to walk around with me to look at his trees. He said that he was too busy and that I should look around and report back to him. When I reported

back, I found him washing windows.

Once a phone call came on a Sunday morning from a lady in distress with her pet cat high in a tree. She wanted a tree man to come and get it down. She had already called the fire company and the Anti-Cruelty Society, and they could not help. I told her I would get a tree man over. She asked, "How shall I pay you?" I said, "Just tip the man." He got the cat down safely. His overall time, including travel, was an hour. She tipped him \$30.00 and this was many years ago before inflation.

During my 54 years of tree work we have done work for three generations in at least two different families.

When I first started regular tree work, the new starts, greenhorns, or rabble were paid seven times less per hour than the starting rate today.

A slogan often heard on the radio is "We sell to sell again." We work to work again. Our customer list is at least 50 percent repeat customers. Another 25 percent of our work is subcontracted from sources such as garden shops, landscape gardeners, nurseries, and others.

I have taught courses in basic and practical arboriculture at a local high school and at the Morton Arboretum near Lisle, Illinois. Nine years ago, with much help from my associate L. R. Hall, the University of Illinois, the Morton Arboretum, and others, I began a course at the Illinois State Penitentiary at Stateville. This class was a success. It was given once a week for 2-hour sessions. We started with 17 inmates and increased in number over the years to 140. This work was contributed as a public service.

Early in 1973 I sold my business to L. R. Hall who had been in my organization for 23 years. He changed the business name slightly. It now is Archibald Enoch Price, The Care of Trees, Inc.

In closing, I thank you for bearing with me. Old tree men never die, they just get in the way.

*The Care of Trees, Inc.*  
Glenview, Illinois

---

## ABSTRACT

Kozlowski, T. T., W. J. Davies, and S. D. Carlson. 1974. **Transpirations rates of *Fraxinus americana* and *Acer saccharum* leaves.** Can. J. For. Res. 4: 259-267.

Experiments were conducted in the greenhouse and under constant environmental conditions on transpiration rates and stomatal aperture of intact seedlings and excised leaflets or leaves of *Fraxinus americana* and *Acer saccharum*. Leaf surfaces of both species were studied with scanning electron microscopy. Transpiration rates on a leaf area or dry weight basis were consistently higher for *Fraxinus* than of *Acer* seedlings. The higher transpiration capacity of *Fraxinus* was associated with larger (but fewer) stomata, less efficient stomatal closure, and less effective cutinization than in *Acer*. The paramount importance of control of stomatal aperture in influencing internal water balance of plants is emphasized.

On a conduit, dans des conditions ambiantes constantes en serre, des expériences sur les taux de transpiration et d'ouverture des stomates de semis intacts et de folioles ou de feuilles de *Fraxinus americana* et *Acer saccharum*. La surface des feuilles des deux espèces a été étudiée par microscopie électronique à balayage. Les taux de transpiration par unité de poids ou de surface foliaire étaient toujours supérieurs chez les semis de *Fraxinus*. La capacité de transpiration plus élevée chez *Fraxinus*, comparativement à *Acer* était liée à des stomates plus grands (mais moins nombreux), une fermeture stomatale moins efficace, et une cutinisation moins effective. L'article met l'accent sur l'importance primordiale de contrôle de l'ouverture stomatale sur l'équilibre interne de l'eau des plantes.