

The stories it could tell

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METAMORA – A century ago, at the end of Shack Road just east of Metamora, a hickory tree and a barn were the only visible structures, neighbors told Elmer and Sarah Stone, who bought 87 acres and that barn in 1936. Now their daughter and her husband, Inez and John Kolb, live on the property, where the shellbark hickory has a claim to fame – the largest tree of that type in Indiana.

With an estimated age of 200 years, how has it survived that long? According to her, “I have heard that as tall as the tree is and as far down as the roots go, it can get water” from the adjacent Whitewater Canal. “That probably helps it.” The funny thing is, the tree was around for probably 33 years before the canal began to be built in 1838.

In the late 1990s, Inez Kolb entered the hickory in a regional competition for size, winning \$100 and dinner for two. One of those organizers suggested she enter the towering specimen in the 2000 Indiana Big Tree Register. The publication arrives every five years, and the hickory also made 2005’s list, the only Franklin County tree to be singled out for bigness.

It reaches a majestic 111 feet in height and boasts a crown spread of 103 feet. Its current circumference at 4.5 feet above the ground is 142.8 inches, 6 inches more than five years ago. Those three measurements were added together to get a point index. Ninety-one native species out of a possible 112 can be found in the newest register. The champs are determined by the greatest point indexes.

According to the register,



Staff photo by Debbie Blank

Shady: The shellbark hickory tree, which is located very close to the new Whitewater Canal Trail, has been struck by lightning, Inez Kolb (right) says, “I guess hickories are really tough.” Husband John bets, “It will probably stay another 100 years or more.”

“Big trees work hard for us. They provide more cooling and shade, more carbon dioxide uptake, trap more pollutants and purify more water. Enjoy and treasure them.”

Treasure it they do. The hickory is John’s best-loved

tree. Inez Kolb reports her favorites are down by the Whitewater River.

In addition to beauty right in front of their home, the tree has given them five bushels of nuts so far this season. “We sell them or give them away, mostly give

them away,” she says. Her husband laughs, “She tries to give them all to the squirrels. They can’t eat them all!” Inez cracks the tough shells with a hammer, picks the nut meats out, then uses

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