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Roger Q. Landers
Iowa State University

Dolores Graf
Iowa Wesleyan College

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The Oldest Iowa Tree, II: Eastern Red Cedar on Cedar River Bluffs

ROGER Q. LANDERS¹ and DOLORES GRAF²

When Anderson (1938) described the oldest tree in Iowa, he was using wood from an eastern red cedar, *Juniperus virginiana* L., which had originated *ca.* 1516 and died *ca.* 1885, presumably near the Schramm family cottage on West Lake Okoboji. Our sample, also from eastern red cedar, is a core from a tree growing on a steep limestone bluff overlooking the Cedar River in Palisades-Kepler State Park. The 16 cm (6¼ in.) core, taken in April, 1965, by Graf and R. Wm. Poulter, was set aside then because the slender tree showed little outward sign of old age compared with gnarled trees nearby (Graf, 1969). The tree was marked with a numbered brass tag. When the study was renewed recently to work on dendrochronology and weather patterns in Iowa, the core was examined and 438 growth rings were counted, well above any age determined previously for a living tree in Iowa. The rings were unusually clear for eastern red cedar despite their

narrow growth increment. The severe drought year of 1934 is readily apparent on this core, as it is on other tree samples from this area. This suggests that cross-dating will be successful.

We relocated the tree on January 25, 1975, by identifying it from photographs taken in 1965 and by the numbered brass tag; however, the slope was too icy and steep to take another core. The tree is now ten years older or approximately 448 years old, giving an establishment date of 1523. Because the core was taken *ca.* 50 cm above the base of the tree, it is suggested that an additional several years may be added to its age, corresponding very closely to the possible date of establishment of the Anderson tree. Studies on Iowa's oldest trees are continuing, and even older specimens are anticipated.

LITERATURE CITED

¹ Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50010.

² Division of Biology, Iowa Wesleyan College, Mount Pleasant, Iowa 52641.

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