

TO THE OLD PEAR TREES OF DETROIT

Poème de W.H. Coyle, 1849; publié dans Silas Farmer, History of Detroit and Wayne County and Early Michigan, S. Farmer & Co., 1886

An hundred years and more ye have stood
Through sunshine and through storms,
And still, like warriors clad in mail,
Ye lift your stalwart forms.

Proud in your might ye challenge the winds
As in your palmy days;
And ye laugh in scorn at the howling blast
And the lightning's lurid blaze.

Ye have seen the boy in his childhood play
In your cool shades, blithe and brave,
And have moaned with the evening's summer breeze
O'er the old grandsire's grave.

From your lofty tops o'er the river blue
Ye have looked, long, long ago,
As the savage leaped on the shining sands
With scalping-knife and bow.

'Neath your leafy boughs the painted chief
Has pitched his peaked tent,
And the council fire through your quivering leaves
Its silver smoke has sent.

From the frontier fort ye have seen the flash
And heard the cannons boom,
Till the stars and stripes in victory waved
Through the battle's glare and gloom.

When the ancient city fell by the flames,
Ye saw it in ashes expire,
But, like true sentinels, kept your posts
In the blazing whirl of fire.

And where tall temples now lift their spires
And priests and people meet,
Ye have seen the giant forest oak
And the wild deer bounding fleet.

Where the white-sailed ship now rides the wave
Ye have watched the bark canoe,
And heard in the night the voyager's song
And the Indian's shrill halloo.

The lingering few "vieux habitants"
Look at ye with a sigh,
And memory's tear-drop dims their gaze
While they think of times gone by.

Oh! those were honest and happy times,
The simple days of old,
When their forefathers quaffed and laughed
And lived for more than gold.

One by one, like brown autumnal leaves,
They are falling to the ground,
And soon the last of that honored race
'Neath the yew-tree wil be found.

Live on, old trees, in your hale green age!
Long, long may your shadows last,
With your blossomed boughs and golden fruit,
Loved emblems of the past.