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SALEM'S PARK OF ONE TREE TURNS UP WORLD'S SMALLEST

By LANCASTER POLLAND

A few weeks ago the Saturday Evening Post published a story stating that the up-and-down village of Mill Valley, California, contained the smallest public park in the world. The Post's research staff slipped up on that. The city of Salem, Oregon has the world's smallest public park.

It's a tree, just one tree "surrounded by a cement curbing" and named "Waldo Park" in memory of William Waldo, a prominent citizen of the city of Salem, Oregon. That from the official records of the city of Salem, resolution 3645 of the common council.

Ex-Governor Oswald West, who gave Oregon its biggest park--the seacoast--has written, no doubt with regret, that Waldo was a Democrat who turned Republican. He came to the Willamette Valley in 1843 and died on Mill Creek in 1906. He was a lawyer and served as a Marion County judge. Waldo Hills are named for the family.

The tree-park is, to return to the Salem records, "a certain redwood (Sequoia gigantea)...located on the westerly side of North Summer street immediately north of Union Street". That's across the sunken gardens north of the capitol. The tree was planted in 1872, and was purchased "from a traveling salesman" who sold trees to several Salem residents. There is something fantastic about a traveling tree salesman making any sales in western Oregon.

In area Waldo Park is 12 by 20 feet.

Walter Wirth, superintendent of the Salem Department of Parks and Recreation, points out that the tree has outlived one state Capitol and a county courthouse. When Judge Waldo planted his tree on a corner of his property it was almost in farming country.

Since this is a matter of world significance, it probably should be put in print that the Salem Common council after two "whereases" and one "be it resolved" further resolved "That said Waldo Park shall be at all times hereafter under the control of the Salem Park Board, together with any sign or marking to be maintained on said tree and park."

That to an reasonable person settles the matter. Oregon has the littlest public park in the world.