

AXMAN INVADERS MALL

Rare Old Trees Cut Down on Site of National Museum.

MANY IMPORTED FROM ABROAD

Like a Tragedy to Solomon Brown, Aged Negro Employee at Smithsonian Institution—He Saw Them Planted Nearly Half Century Ago—Preparations for Beginning Work on Structure.

In making ready for the new National Museum in the Smithsonian grounds, some of the finest trees owned by the government are being sacrificed. Yesterday a force of men began clearing the site for the building, and a large number of the handsomest and rarest trees in the city were felled.

Some of the trees were imported from abroad more than half a century ago, and are, or were, the only specimens in the United States. After receiving the fostering care of Uncle Sam's forestry experts for fifty years, the magnificent trees set cut originally with the idea that they would remain where planted until old age laid them low have been chopped down. Most of the trees cannot be reproduced without going abroad for others of the same varieties.

The old-time retainers of the Smithsonian Institution and the oldest inhabitants of South Washington bordering on the Mall, who have seen the trees grow from saplings to mammoth, towering growths, yesterday viewed the destruction of the trees with emotion, and even the men armed with axes who did the work said they hadn't the heart to see the old trees go.

Famous Mulberry Tree Felled.

One of the first trees to fall was a huge mulberry, one of the Capital's landmarks for years, located a short distance from the Tenth street entrance to the northern Smithsonian grounds. For half a century it had stood there, furnishing each year a crop of berries which fed thousands of feathered songsters inhabiting the big park. Now it is gone, root and branch, and the birds will have to seek another market for a food supply.

Just south of the mulberry there stood, until yesterday, a handsome pine, tall and straight as any juniper in North Carolina's forests. Now it looks like a cord of kindling wood. The greatest tragedy connected with the felling of this tree lies in the fact that when it crashed to the ground there came down with it no less than five of the handsomest crows' nests to have been found in Washington. For years the crows had staked out their claim on this tree, but they will have to look for new apartments now.

On Tuesday Secretary Langley, of the Smithsonian Institution, turned the first spadeful of earth for the new Museum. Assistant Secretary Rathburn turned the second spadeful, and Miss Carrie Henry, daughter of the late Prof. Henry, of the Smithsonian, dug a sod from the site of what is to become the handsomest building in the city. Another to assist in the brief ceremonies was Solomon G. Brown, an old colored man, chief of the shipping division of the Smithsonian, who went there under Prof. Henry the day the institution opened, and who has been there ever since.

He Saw the Trees Grow Up.

The destruction of the great trees surrounding the Smithsonian building is felt keenly by this old man, who has seen them grow from tiny saplings to mighty trees. He knows them all, and yesterday he said that it "hurt his heart" to see them go.

Most of the trees were set out in the grounds about 1850, under the direction of the late Andrew Jackson Downing, to whose memory a stone monument in the form of a vase stands inside a little iron fence in a secluded portion of the park, where few if any passersby see it. Mr. Downing had charge of all the work, and planted the trees. Himself a native of Scotland, he went to that country for many of the trees, and imported them to Washington.

They took to the soil readily and stood the storms of fifty years, to fall at last under the ax of a wood-chopper.

Close to the Tenth street entrance a towering English cedar was felled yesterday. It was three feet in diameter, and with one exception was the only tree of the kind in Washington, and perhaps in the United States. There is one other tree of this variety in the park, but it is located within the bounds of the proposed new museum, and the woodmen will hew it to the earth to-morrow. These trees were brought to the United States from England by Mr. Downing in 1850.

French Cherry Tree Cut Down.

One of the handsomest trees chopped down is a magnificent flowering French cherry tree. It stood in about the center of the new building site, and for years it attracted the admiration of strangers and native Washingtonians by the beauty of its symmetrical lines and the fragrance of its blooms. It was the only tree of the kind in the city, and it is regarded as a great pity that after living for half a century on foreign soil it could not have been spared. But the tree was of too great root to be removed. This tree never bore fruit.

Two peculiar trees imported from Japan are among those to be sacrificed. They were located in the forbidden zone. These trees bore a purple blossom of wonderful fragrance, and were the pride of all the nature-lovers in the city. There are other trees of this variety in the park.

"When I came to the Smithsonian Institution when it was opened," said Solomon Brown yesterday, "there was not a tree in the grounds surrounding the building except two persimmon trees which stood at Twelfth and B streets southwest. Now the park is one of the handsomest in the world, I suppose. It is full of trees. It seems a pity that any should have to be cut down. When I came here the old canal ran along B street on what is the site of the new Museum. The paper factories of the city used to burn their shavings on the Smithsonian lot, which was bare and ugly."

"I remember well the first tree that was set out, a tree from Scotland imported by Mr. Downing and Prof. Henry. Other trees were added, until from a vacant lot the grounds became the park they are today."

Small Shrubs Transplanted.

Yesterday Mr. George H. Brown, superintendent of the Propagating Gardens of the Department of Public Buildings and Grounds, had a force of men at work, and several of the smaller shrubs and bushes were dug up by the roots and transplanted. But none of the trees could be saved.

That portion of the Smithsonian grounds selected as the Museum site, stretching from near Ninth street to near Twelfth street, on B street northwest, presents a picture of desolation, with the handsome trees strewn over the grounds, and the grass being plowed up in preparation for the builders. Only a few of the trees which must go have been attacked so far, and it is said that hundreds of others will have to be sacrificed, all of more or less

rarity, and all among the most beautiful trees in the city.

The last remaining strip of the old canal that once traversed the city, and made the southwest section "The Island," has been filled. For several years there remained in the Agricultural Department grounds, from Fourteenth street to Twelfth street, a small lake, which was once a part of the old waterway which ran back of the market. This has been drained within the past few days and filled up. The greenhouses of the Agricultural Department are being removed to this site, and a large force was employed there yesterday on this work.