



by Julie Thompson Adolf

Standing resiliently through hurricanes, wars, feast and famine is **Angel Oak**. Originating from a mere acorn more than 1,400 years ago, Angel Oak grew and flourished in Johns Island, S.C., to become one of the largest living oak trees in the world.

The species *Quercus Virginiana* is found throughout the Lowcountry, particularly in the sea islands. While live oaks do not grow into especially tall trees, their wide-spreading canopies often result in massive limbs that actually rest on the ground. Such is the case with Angel Oak, an enormous testament to nature's ability to withstand the elements to produce a tree rich with history.

The immense size and impressive girth of Angel Oak draws Charleston-area visitors and locals alike. More than 65 feet high with a circumference of 25.5 feet, Angel Oak provides more than 17,000 square feet of shade. Its largest limb measures 11.25 feet in circumference, stretching 89 feet in length.

Many individuals believe that "Angel" refers to a species or type of live oak with limbs trailing to the ground. However, Angel Oak acquired its name from the Angel family, descendants of Abraham Waight, the original owner of the land on which the tree grew. The property

passed from generation to generation of Wights, acquiring the Angel name when Martha Waight married Justis Angel in 1810. In 1959, Mutual Land & Development Corporation purchased the property, but the South Carolina Agricultural Society leased Angel Oak for \$1 per year, caring for the tree.

S.E. Felkel purchased the tree and the surrounding area in 1964. The Magnolia Garden Club tended the tree and grounds until the late 1970s, when vandalism forced the owner to fence the tree. The City of Charleston acquired Angel Oak and surrounding property in 1991, with Angel Oak Park opening to the public on Sept. 23, 1991. The park provides more than an acre of shade for visitors looking to escape the summer heat.

Today, Angel Oak continues to stand watch over Charleston, providing a cool retreat for visitors, a gathering place for families, a playground for children and an expansive shelter for history.

*Angel Oak has become a favorite spot for picnics, family reunions and weddings.*



IF YOU GO...  
Angel Oak, 3688 Angel Oak Rd.  
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843-559-3496