In the 1890s when Ohio State University was young, five stately elm trees stood in the center of the Oval. Known as the "Five Brothers," they served as an area of quiet repose for students to study and meet. They became a special and well-known campus landmark.

Through the decades the elms fell victim to disease and had to be removed.

The landmark has been returned to Ohio State. Five Eastern red oak trees with colorful ribbons tied around them will be dedicated during ceremonies at 2 p.m. Friday (6/5) on the Oval.

On Friday, the site will be renamed Commencement Grove. The ceremonies will feature speeches by President Edward H. Jennings; Ohio Staters president Kris Brockmann, a junior from Cincinnati; and Bill Wahl, manager of Community and Visitor Relations and co-chair of the 300th commencement celebration.

Commencement Grove is a project by Ohio Staters Inc., a campus service organization. Ohio Staters had the five red oaks planted this spring in honor of the university's 300th commencement, which will be held June 12 in Ohio Stadium. The organization selected the red oaks for their disease resistance.

For more information, contact Chris Cole of Ohio Staters at 294-3147.
Program

Master of Ceremonies  Chris Cole  Ohio Staters, Inc.
Guest Speakers  William Wahl  Manager  Community and Visitor Relations  Dean Ramsey  Assistant Vice President of Physical Facilities  Kristin Brockman  President  Ohio Staters, Inc.  Edward H. Jennings  President  The Ohio State University

A Brief History of the Grove

As part of an Arbor Day celebration in 1890, a tree was planted by the class of 1891 in the center of what is today the Oval. With the help of Professor William Lazenby, two students—Frank Hane, a native of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and a horticulture student; and Frank E. Pomerene, a future University trustee—selected an English Elm. Each class member participated in the planting ceremony by putting in a handful of soil, giving the class yell or song, and finally tying the class colors to the tree.

In the spring of the following year, six more trees were planted by the graduating class. Two of the trees were reportedly destroyed by lightning soon after the planting.

The remaining five trees came to be known as the Five Brothers. They stayed healthy through the first half of the century despite a plight of Dutch Elm disease that destroyed many elms on campus. But even with meticulous care, one of the trees eventually contracted the disease in 1970 and was cut down in an effort to save the rest of the grove. The effort was to no avail, and the final tree was cut down in January 1972.

The planting of these five Eastern Red Oaks restores a time-honored campus landmark while celebrating the 300th Commencement of The Ohio State University on June 12, 1987. This Commencement Grove is dedicated today with the hope that the young trees flourish and grace the Oval for many generations of students, faculty, and staff to come.

Special thanks to Bertha Ihnat, Dean Ramsey, John McCoy, Raimund Goerler, Ruth Jones, and Julie Karovics.

The Commencement Grove  Dedication Ceremony  June 5, 1987
Strong saplings

A DEDICATION CEREMONY June 5 of "Commencement Grove" commemorates the planting of five oak trees on the Oval. The grove replaces the Five Brothers, elm trees that were destroyed by disease. The planting is one of several events in conjunction with the 300th commencement.
Five Oaks Replace Campus Landmark

by Patricia Mroczek

A campus landmark, lost through time, has been returned to Ohio State. Five Eastern red oak trees were planted on the Oval this spring to replace the "Five Brothers," five stately elms that for 80 years served as a favorite spot for students to study and meet.

The Five Brothers represented Ohio State's living history, said Bill Wahl, director of the Office of Community and Visitor Relations and an unofficial University historian.

The story began in 1890, Wahl said. Professor William Lazenby and the Class of 1891 planted an English elm during Arbor Day ceremonies on the Oval. The class yell and song were presented as each of the 35 students tossed a ceremonial handful of soil during the planting.

The next year, the same class added six more elms at the site in the middle of the Oval. Two of the trees reportedly were destroyed by lightning shortly after planting, Wahl said.

The five remaining trees thrived. For many years, the elms offered the only shaded retreat on the sun-drenched Oval. Wooden benches beneath the elms seemed to beckon students to gather for study or even a romantic interlude.

The site became a favorite campus landmark.

"As the trees got older, people who saw them realized they were the living heritage of Ohio State," Wahl said. "You could touch and feel the history of Ohio State in those elm trees."

When Dutch elm disease began infecting trees on campus, the elms received special care. Despite that, the trees fell victim to the disease and were cut down one by one between 1970 and 1972.

A plaque was erected to tell future generations of the importance of the site. A grove of trees was later planted near the Main Library as a tribute to the brothers.

Then, in 1986, students in the campus service organization Ohio Stater's Inc. began searching for a way to mark the University's 300th commencement, which was conducted June 12 amid a gala celebration.

The students planted the five Eastern red oak trees and called them Commencement Grove. The oaks were selected for their disease resistance. The grove was dedicated June 5 on the exact site where the "Five Brothers" once stood.

"Commencement Grove not only recognizes an important tradition, but propagates a new one through the turn of yet another century," Wahl added.