

Tree topples Western Military Monument in Alton during severe storm

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ALTON - Western Military Academy played a significant role in shaping the history of Alton from 1879 to 1971. A city monument on the campus of Mississippi Valley Christian School is now located, was seriously damaged in Monday night's storm.

A historic tree fell over the monument and toppled it, causing the damage.

Charles Jackson, who played a role in the monument being constructed and dedicated on May 25, 2013, also had a long history with the school as his family once owned and directed Western Military Academy. Charles Jackson said he and others in the area like Mike Doucleff of Duke's Bakery, were startled and sad at the damage of the statue. Both men and many others hope to repair and rebuild the monument after the large tree is removed.

"It was a wonderful effort on behalf of Western alumni and the community to get the monument in place," he said. "The tree hit both the monument and the signage. My family was involved with the school since the 1800s. A lot of people contributed to the monument. When we get it cleaned up, I hope it can be saved. It is now a city monument and I hope insurance will cover the repairs. We will work to get it repaired and cleaned up."

Edward Wyman opened the school in Alton in 1879. In 1887, Wyman hired Albert M. Jackson, a Princeton grad, to be a member of his staff, ownership of the school passed to Col. Willis Brown and Jackson in 1888 when Wyman died. Jackson was then principal. When Brown retired, Jackson and George D. Eaton purchased the school.

Some of the most known from the academy were Edward O'Hare, a decorated World War II pilot, and Paul Tibbets, who piloted the plane the Enola Gay to drop the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.