

## Aged But Vigorous



"Henry Clay Oak" still stands mighty and proud in the yard at the former A. B. Andrews home on the corner of Blount and North streets here. There are many other big oaks in Raleigh, but this one is considered the prize of them all.

# Raleigh's Giant Oak Wins New Historic Recognition

## "Henry Clay Oak," City Landmark, Subject Of Special Article In Book On Trees

By SUSAN IDEN

Raleigh's big tree, the "Henry Clay Oak", at the home of the late Col. A. B. Andrews, corner of Blount and North Streets, has won widespread notice and is to appear in a book on historic trees by Miss Barbara Bayne of Los Angeles, California, which is to be published shortly.

About 15 years ago the ax threatened the old oak which it was thought was on the way of a new building to be erected next door. At that time I wrote a story of the old tree in protest against its sacrifice. The story and picture of the old tree found its way across the country and had been preserved all these years by Miss Bayne. Recently she wrote to the University of North Carolina for some help in getting further information and to get a picture of the tree for her book. The request was referred to Alex B. Andrews, Raleigh attorney and I was able to furnish him with the picture taken so many years ago, that had been preserved in one of my many scrapbooks.

One of the few that are left of the giant oaks that gave Raleigh its name "The City of Oaks" the Henry Clay oak stands on the lawn of the former residence of the late Col. A. B. Andrews, close to the side walk on North Street. For fully five hundred years it is estimated, it has stood there, growing from a little sapling to its present mighty size, a companion in age and majesty to

the two red oaks on the adjoining lot, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. J. Andrews.

It was during the heat of the presidential campaign of 1844, when the Whigs had committed themselves to Henry Clay for the presidential nomination that Clay visited Raleigh, spending an entire week as the guest to a son-in-law of the late Col. Wm. Polk, Mr. Raynor, whom Clay had met in Congress. It was a gala week for Raleigh and the city was full of visitors.

Though Clay's visit was avowedly non-partisan he made an address while in the city that was an exposition of Whig principles, a plea for tariff for revenue with incidental protection, sound money through a bank of the United States and distribution.

It was toward the end of his visit on April 17 that he had his chair and table moved out of doors under the old white oak and wrote his famous litter against the annexation of Texas. The sun shines warm in Raleigh usually on an April day; there are birds and flowers and a breath of fragrance on the spring breeze that makes it a joy to be out of doors and it is easy to understand why Clay wanted to be out of doors.

The effect of the letter that Clay wrote under the old oak on his political fortunes is well known as it probably cost him the presidency of the United States.

At the time of Henry Clay's visit to Raleigh the city was bounded by North, East, South and West Streets. The residence of Col. Polk, where Clay was a visitor stood across Blount Street at the northern boundary. It was about 1814 that Colonel Polk, a Revolutionary patriot, bought a tract of land north of North Street and east of Halifax and erected his residence there. Old prints of the city show the residence standing across the street where North now intersects Blount.

Early in the seventies Stanhope Pullen purchased the house and for a number of years it was used by Professor Hobgood as a Baptist School for girls. Later it was used as a boarding house. About 1903 the house was bought by the late Wm. H. Williamson, much of it torn down and the frame moved to Pilot Mill where it served as a Junior Order hall and community building.

As an expression of the patriotism of Colonel Polk and showing something of the time that the house was erected there was a spread eagle scroll over the parlor mantel with the words of Commodore Perry, at Lake Erie "we have met the enemy and they are ours." When the home was moved the scroll, which was in plaster was torn down and thrown out in the yard where it went to pieces in the weather. Colonel A. B. Andrews bought the site of the Polk homestead in 1872, shortly after the house was moved opening up Blount Street, and erected the handsome residence there that after the death of Colonel and Mrs. Andrews was bought by Mrs. Pearson.

Henry Clay, Colonel Polk, Colonel Andrews have gone on, but the mighty oak still stands a monument of history and beauty in the city.

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