

BEE GEE'S CORNER

THE OLD WILLOW

Three miles north of Brevard, on the west bank of the Old Asheville road, stood an old willow tree that has been admired by the passerby for a half-dozen generations. This tree's life extended back close to if not beyond the Revolutionary War, and has witnessed a wonderful variety of events, during its life of about a century and a half.

I say the tree "stood." It no longer stands. The weight of the accumulated ice from the recent freezing rain split the old tree into several pieces, and all that now remains is part of a splintered stump sticking up a few feet. At various times branches have been broken off by lightning or wind or ice. The tree has been topped several times, but there was always enough of the old trunk left to bud forth again, and in a short while to grow and spread and assume the usual appearance of a well grown weeping willow. The heart of the trunk had been decaying for many years, and when the final crash came, there was only a thin shell to support the branches.

The main trunk, a couple of yards above the ground, was more than fifteen feet around, giving a diameter of about five feet. It must have been several inches more than six feet through at the ground. For a kind it was a giant of a tree.

From the early days a line of "gunnocks" was laid from a spring to the cave, that supplied a flowing pool and watering trough. It was a favorite stopping place, whether the traveler was traveling the Old Cherokee Trail, the Western Turnpike, or the Old Asheville Road. The road in turn bore these various names, and doubtless, ere long, will be a link in a paved highway between Brevard and Asheville.

The lands in this vicinity were granted by the State in 1796 or before, and about the same time a log cabin was built beside the little stream that flows a few yards from the willow. Shortly afterwards an

old hatter's shop was erected in front of the cabin. The hatter made the old fashioned hand-made felt hats, and was well known as a good hatter over Western North Carolina. A number of the old and prominent citizens of Asheville and vicinity kept standing orders with him for two hats a year. Some also from the Pigeon Valley and from the section around what is now Hendersonville.

Before the hatter's shop, beside the road, stood two large willows, one on either side and a few yards from the stream. They were large trees at the time of the first auction sale of Cherokee lands in what is now the western part of this county, in 1820.

The hatter prospered, and in course of time planned a new house, one that in its time was one of the most pretentious of this section. The house still stands beside the old willow stump. The date inscribed on the chimney by the old chimney builder is 1830.

Whether these two willows were set out by the old hatter, or whether there was a willow thicket here, and he cleared all except the two trees, we will probably never know.

But regardless of the origin of the trees, the old watering trough beneath the willow has had many visitors. In its early days, the visitors were an occasional Indian, trader, or settler. When the Indians were moved farther west, there was an occasional settler and his family on the way to take up lands farther up the valley. Some of those who attended the Cherokee land sales, on the Toxaway in 1820 doubtless stopped here. A member of the militia company from this section watered his horse before starting to help escort the Cherokees from North Carolina to the Indian Territory in 1836. In all likelihood the same young soldier left to go with his company to the Mexican War in 1846. The younger generation did the same in

1861 at the outbreak of the Civil War. The main travel passed this way during the stirring times of the Civil War. It was only within times easily remembered that the travel along the road from Brevard to Hendersonville outdistanced the travel from Brevard to Asheville.

The tree on the north side of the stream was cut down many years ago. About the time of the Civil War, I have been told. The old hatter's shop, and the cabin back of it had disappeared a few years earlier. With time and dry rot they were about ready to fall to pieces, and the timbers went into firewood or into other farm buildings.

About 1905 a shoot from the old tree was set out beside the road about 15 or 20 yards south of it. This shoot has now grown to a large tree, and in shape and beauty bids fair to rival the old tree.

The relocation of the Old Asheville Road in 1928 moved the road about 10 yards east of the old location.

The old pump log and watering trough has been succeeded by iron water pipes.

The old hatter went to his reward nearly a hundred years ago, and his lands passed through various hands. They were acquired by the late Geo. C. Neill several years before the Civil War. In dividing his lands, he conveyed this portion to his daughter, Elizabeth, who was the wife of James W. Morris. Their son, John L. Morris, now owns the place.

By the date in the chimney, the house has now stood some ninety-nine years, and the greater part of that time has been in the hands of the same family, through three generations.

The old willow, through it all, has looked on during many changes. The fire arms have changed from the old flint lock rifle, through the days of the percussion cap, the breechloader, and the magazine rifle — similar changes in shotguns and pistols.

Travel has changed, on foot, horseback, wagons, carriages, through their general changes, to the modern railroad, automobile and aeroplane. Education, from no schools, and only the "slight learning" that could be obtained at home, through the small private schools, the small public schools, gradually enlarged and developed into our modern educational system. Mails have developed from an occasional carrier to bring mail to bring the occasional letter from Asheville, to the modern delivery system, including rural delivery at the farmer's door. As numerous and as far reaching changes have occurred in practically every line of endeavor. But no changes have been greater than in the manner of life. In the old days, one had to be fairly expert in at least half dozen trades, or more. When this tree was young, the farmer and his family grew, raised or made practically everything they ate, wore or used. Now, they buy nearly everything they eat, wear or use, except part of their rations and feed.

There was Samuel Dav's consulted with the building committee about the location of a church in 1800. Here Bishop Asbury watered his horse in 1814. Here was a discussion as to the election on the location for the county seat of Henderson county in 1838. Here was one of the meeting points to discuss the measures in 1860 to secure the establishment of Transylvania county, of "Christian Reid" (then Miss Frances Fisher—later Mrs. Tiernan) Here was a favorite stopping place about 1872, as she was gathering information to write "The Land of the Sky"—the book that gave this name to Western North Carolina.

The old willow is gone, and appears to be gone forever. It will take some time to tell whether what is left of the old stump has life enough left to bud forth again, and continue to give joy to every passer by.

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EXECUTOR'S NOTICE

Having qualified as executor of the estate of Polly E. Frady, deceased, late of Transylvania County, North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of the said deceased to exhibit them to the undersigned at my home on Brevard, N. C., Rt. 2, on or before the 14th day of February, 1930, or this notice will be pleaded in bar of their recovery. This 8th day of February, A. D. 1929.

WILLIAM LASALLE FRADY,
Executor of Estate of Polly E. Frady, deceased. 6tpF14&M21

NOTICE

North Carolina
Transylvania County.
IN THE SUPERIOR COURT
O. H. Orr, Trustee.

J. B. Neal, and Rhoda E. Neal.
The above named defendants J. B. Neal and Rhoda E. Neal, will take notice that an action entitled as above has been commenced in the Superior Court of Transylvania North Carolina, for non payment of note executed by the said defendants. Said defendants will further take notice that they are required to appear at the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court in said county and State at Brevard, and answer or demur to the complaint in said action on the 4th day of April, or within thirty days thereafter, or the Plaintiff will apply to the Court for the prayer in said complaint.

This 6th day of March, 1929.
ROLAND OWEN, Clerk Superior Court of Transylvania County.
4tc psgahb 7-14-21-28 \$5.54



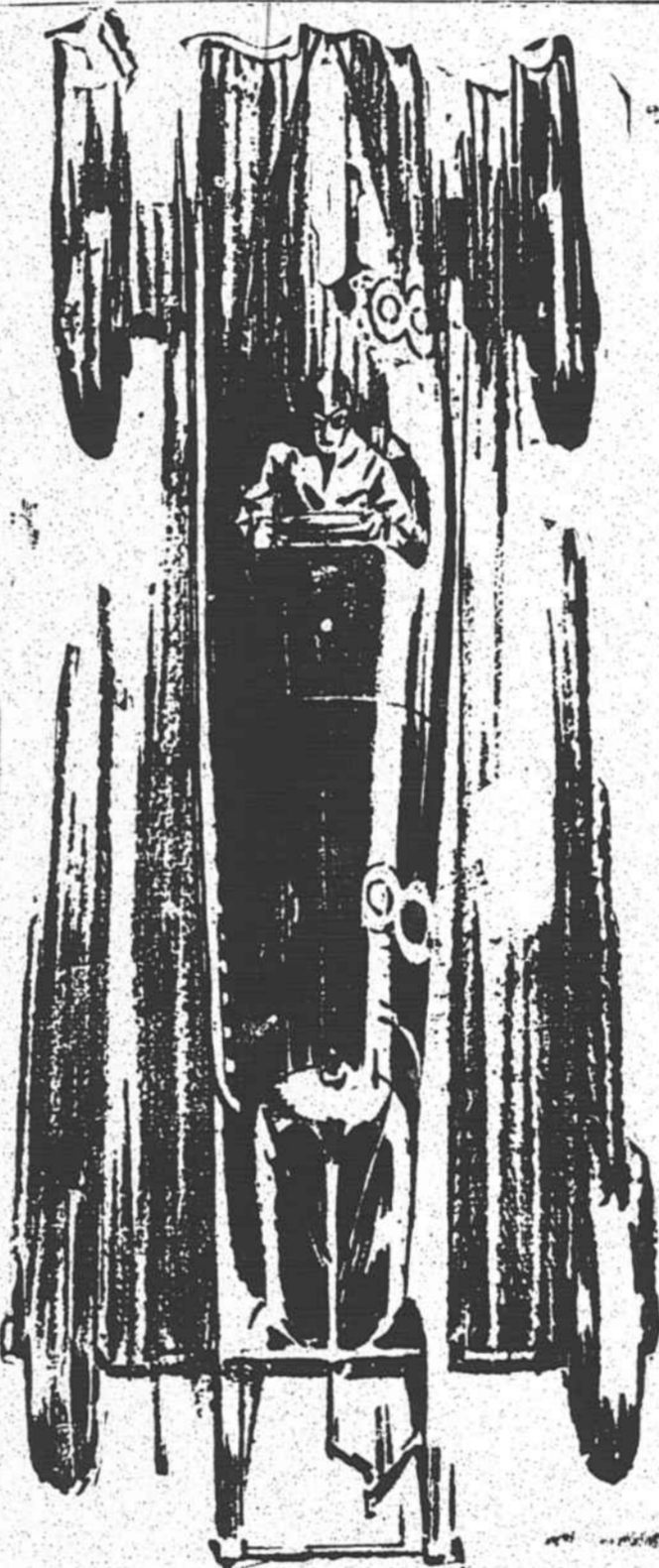
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