

Ceremony Noted Gravestone's Return

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By LOUISE PETTUS

In early March of 1931, a stranger drove into the yard of the Old Waxhaw Presbyterian Church in Lancaster County. He asked J.H. McClintock, an elder of the church, to show him the location of the grave of Andrew Jackson Sr., the father of the president. McClintock graciously showed the man the unmarked granite stone that was said to mark the grave.

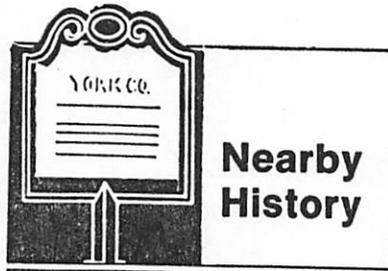


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The stranger told McClintock he was a former governor of Tennessee and that he had been commissioned to return a stone that had been for years at The Hermitage, Andrew Jackson's home near Nashville. The stranger went back to his car and carried the large stone to the grave, deposited it and then drove away.

The "stranger" had delivered the last fragment of the original grave marker. The previous fall, a larger piece of rock had come from Tennessee along with the story that when Andrew Jackson was buried in the cemetery in 1767, the granite rock used to mark his grave had been dropped and broken. One of the men had taken the broken pieces to Tennessee where they were kept as a family heirloom.

When the Tennessee people heard that the Catawba Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution was celebrating the 150th anniversary of the Battle of



the Waxhaws with the unveiling of a marker identifying the grave of Andrew Jackson Sr., they returned the larger missing piece of the boulder.

The man who brought the rock in the fall "stepped off the distance from the large oak tree ... (and) after digging for about ten inches, the other half of the rock, which was placed at the grave in 1767, was found." The two pieces of rock fit exactly. This was the proof that the correct marker had been found.

Joseph G. Sassi, a Rock Hill stonemason, cut the inscription, which reads: "Here lies the buried Andrew Jackson, Sr., father of the seventh president of the United States. Born in Ireland. Died in February, 1767. Erected by Catawba chapter, D.A.R., Rock Hill, S.C., April 9, 1931." The old rock boulder was used as a footstone.

An overflow crowd was at the church on April 9. The presiding officer was Mrs. C.K. Schwrar of Rock Hill, who introduced two speakers, R.E. Wylie of Lancaster and Prof. John McCain of Winthrop College. Wylie gave a biographical sketch of the elder Jackson and McCain, a native of the Waxhaws, gave a historical setting of the section, a history of the church and an account of the Bat-

tle of the Waxhaws.

Andrew Jackson Sr. had died, at the age of 29, after straining himself lifting a log only a few days before the future president was born. His neighbors sat up all night with the coffin, as was the old-world custom. A whiskey-filled gourd passed from hand to hand through the long night.

In the early light of morning, Jackson's body was placed on a mule-drawn sled. Mrs. Jackson and her two small boys, Hugh and Robert, rode in a wagon through snow and ice. The men had whiskey and fortified themselves at every creek. The procession stopped at the McKemey and Crawford relatives' for refreshment. It was twilight before they crossed the ford at Waxhaw Creek.

When the sled was pulled into the Waxhaw Presbyterian Church cemetery, it was discovered that the coffin was missing. The disconcerted pallbearers retraced their path in near-darkness and located the coffin snagged on a branch on the steep bank of Waxhaw Creek.

After Andrew Jackson Jr. became the hero of New Orleans, both North and South Carolina were eager to claim him as a native son. In fact, four states and Ireland have all claimed to be his birthplace. The debate still rages, though Andrew Jackson himself never had any doubt but that he was born in Lancaster District at the home of his Uncle Robert Crawford.

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