



Emerald Hill

High on a windy hill overlooking the confluence of the Red and Cumberland Rivers there stands the Alumni Center of Austin Peay State University. For generations this had been the home of members of the Henry family.

It was here that the "Eagle Orator of Tennessee," Gustavus Adolphus Henry, had lived and it was this property that his great-grandson, Patrick Henry Cross, had conveyed by his will to A.P.S.U.

The property is listed in the National Register of Historic Sites, not because of the building but because of the owner, G. A. Henry. Attorney and civic leader, holder of public offices in the State of Tennessee, he had been one of the two men chosen to represent this State in the Senate of the Confederate States of America. There his power of oratory was most persuasive in hours of crisis.

Successive generations had held title to the old homestead until Patrick Henry Cross inherited it. Having no children, he and his wife, the former Mary Frances Pennebaker, deeded the property to A.P.S.U. with the understanding that as a memorial to the earlier owner it would continue to be known as "Emerald Hill."

The house represents three phases of construction: the original simple farmhouse of the 1820's, the improved Gothic structure of the late 1800's, and the addition of the neo-Greek section of 1909. Structural changes were made and the elegant front addition was designed and constructed during the lifetime of Miss Marion Martin and her sister, Mrs. Susan Martin Cross (Mrs. Martin L. Cross.)

Restoration and renovation of the historic building has been undertaken; there is yet more to be done and under the encouragement of an active alumni association the building and grounds will again be wisely and widely used.

The formal garden is yet to be replaced. It has been laid out in a simple plan: two wide flower-bordered walks intersected, making four large squares. In two of these were majestic Norwegian pines; in the other two were magnificent magnolias whose branches swept the earth. Such lush growth was found in nearby flower beds and vegetable plots. Nearby orchards and grape arbors provided fruit in season.

Truly, the name given by Gustavus A. Henry was appropriate. It was an emerald hill. The native beech trees and towering oaks shielded the house from storm and provided shelter and food for the squirrels which abounded there. In autumn the children and adults gathered the beechnuts, relishing the sweetness therein; they shared with the squirrels storing these nuts and acorns for winter food.

Birds sang and nested in the area, known to all as Henry's Grove, as when the Confederate Veterans met in convention in Clarksville. The social life of young and old was a gracious part of the heritage of Emerald Hill.

Who was this historic gentleman, Gustavus Adolphus Henry? He was born in Kentucky, October 8, 1804; educated at Transylvania University, he served as representative of Christian County, Kentucky in the Kentucky Legislature. Following his marriage in 1833 to Miss Marion McClure, he removed to Montgomery County, Tennessee. Here he became active in the legal profession as well as in the state political arena. Successful in several elected offices, he was later defeated in 1853 when his opponent for the office of governor was Andrew Johnson.

Despite his belief that the Union should be preserved, when there came the call for troops to represent Tennessee in the Federal forces, he cast his lot with the South. It was then that he was chosen to represent Tennessee in the Confederate government.

Following the war, he returned to his old home where he died September 10, 1880, ending a career of many services to his community, his state, and his country. He sleeps, with generations of his family, in Greenwood Cemetery, Clarksville.

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