HISTORY OF THE MEMORIAL TREES
AT COURTHOUSE PLAZA

On February 23, 2009, an arborist from Treesplease®, evaluated the health of the two willow oaks on Courthouse Plaza which have historic plaques; the “Memorial” plaque dated 1923 and the “Mother” plaque dated 1924. From his assessment of the trees, Mr. Milhous observed that the Memorial tree did not appear to be the size of an 80+ year old tree as the date of the plaque indicated. In his report The Memorial Tree and the Mother’s Tree, dated March 25, 2009, he wrote this observation:

“The Memorial Tree is a relatively young willow oak. While the plaque near it indicates it was planted in 1923, its size suggests that it is significantly younger. I understand that Ms. Probus located an aerial photograph from the early 1970s that shows the area graded and possibly a small tree there. Given the rapid growth rate of willow oak, it would be quite plausible that a tree planted in 1973 is today 35 inches DBH.”

Luis Araya, Planning Supervisor, Arlington County Department of Environmental Services, collected a number of aerial photos and copies of old site plans and pieced together a timeline of the history of the Memorial Tree.

* A plan sheet for 15th Street North, surveyed in January 1952, shows a 13” elm tree in close proximity to the site of the current Memorial Tree (See Attachment 1).

* Arlington County in Virginia: A Pictorial History by Nan and Ross Netherton – p. 170-171 shows a picture of the Arlington County Courthouse in 1954. The Mother tree is large at that time and the Memorial tree appears to have a different shape and is smaller than the Mother.

* A 1974 aerial photo of the Courthouse with both its wings and with building additions behind it shows the plaza area where the two trees should be located. The crown of the Mother Tree is easily visible at the corner but the area where the Memorial tree should be located is bare soil and the tree is not visible (See Attachment 2).

* A 1983 topography map of the same plaza area shows a 42” oak and concrete tree monument in the same location as the Mother tree is today but shows a 15” oak and concrete tree monument in the same location as the Memorial tree today (See Attachment 3).

It is clear from the photos that the Memorial Tree in the plaza today is not the original tree planted in 1923 by the Women’s Civic Club of Clarendon. The Willow Oak there today was planted in the mid-1970’s.
Trees and locations shown on sheet dated for 15th St. N. Surveyed in January 1952

13" Elm

O" Spruce

5' Concrete Sidewalk (inpl.)

G-Conc. Wk.

G-Conc. Wk.

Stone Monument

O-Conc. Wk.
ATTACHMENT 3

1983 Topography Map of Courthouse Plaza
(Elm and Spruce from 1952 Site Plan drawn on map)