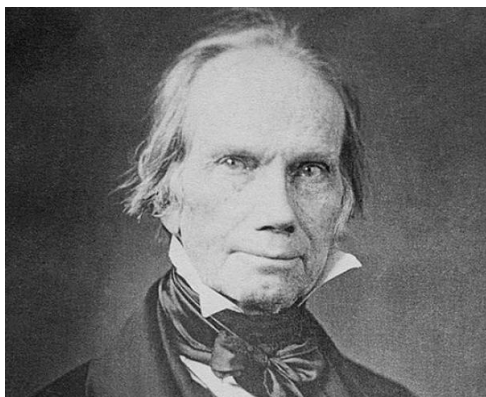


Feats of Clay



There are many great people whose lives and accomplishments continue to have impact upon our lives today. And yet, they stand on the precipice of being forgotten by a fast-paced, self-absorbed world. One of them, I just discovered, sits upon a branch of my family tree.

Henry Clay was a Kentucky politician and statesman who was once named as one of the five greatest senators of all time. Here's a little taste of what he did:

1. Called "The Great Compromiser," he skillfully navigated around the opposing and heated viewpoints of the 1800s. His compromises quelled regionalism and balanced states rights and national interests. His arguments managed to hold the union together until a Civil War could no longer be avoided. But by his delaying the inevitable, the union was able to gain enough strength to survive that terrible war.
2. Not only did he actively participate in the War of 1812, he served on the committee that drafted the Treaty of Ghent which effectively ended it.
3. He served as Speaker of the House of Representatives and in many ways defined the role, shaping it into the powerful position it is today. He served in this capacity longer than any other (with the exception of Sam Rayburn.)
4. He supported the emerging South American republics,

helping many to find their way to becoming independent nations. As a result, he became as beloved a figure there as Simon Bolivar.

5. He argued many times in front of the Supreme Court. He was the first to introduce the concept of the Amicus Brief. His arguments continue to be cited to this day.
6. As a farmer, he was respected as a breeder and one who utilized scientific data. He introduced Hereford Cattle to the United States and was a prominent provider of mules to the South.
7. He influenced many politicians who came after him, including Abraham Lincoln who described him as being his "ideal beau of a statesman."
8. He left a family legacy of which we are a part. Henry Clay was the 8th great grandfather of the man who married my niece.

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