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New York Today: A Proud Tree's Second Life

By [ANDY NEWMAN](#) APRIL 22, 2014, 5:51 AM [Comment](#)



The ancient Robin Hood tree of Richmond Hill, Queens, is gone now. But its offspring has been planted in the same spot.
Left, Eileen Whitsett; Right, Daniel Avila/N.Y.C. Parks

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That would have been the end.

Good morning on this mild Tuesday.

But a man on the block showed the city a red oak sapling in his yard.

Happy Earth Day.

The city determined it must have hatched from an acorn of the Robin Hood tree.

There are 600,000 trees growing along the streets of this city.

It was the only other red oak in the vicinity. And you know what they say about the acorn not falling far.

This is the story of one that died and was born again.

The owner, Clark Whitsett, offered the city his Robin Hood sapling.

It was a gigantic red oak in Queens — 5 feet across, 8 stories high and approaching 300 years old.

The tree had presided over 84th Avenue in Richmond Hill since before there was an 84th Avenue. Since before there was a Richmond Hill.

“If I leave it on my property, someone who buys my house can just cut it down,” Mr. Whitsett said.

It was on the [New York Tree Trust](#)’s list of about 100 [Great Trees](#). People called it the Robin Hood tree.

“If it’s planted on the street, no one can: It was a way of protecting the tree.”

In 2010, it was toppled by [a tornado](#).

The parks department tended Mr. Whitsett’s sapling for three years until it was ready.

The mighty oak was chopped, chipped and hauled away.

And on April 9, workers dug it up and planted it in the very spot where the Robin Hood tree had stood.