



# Monuments & milestones

VOL 7 NO 1 SPRING/SUMMER 2011

## An Unexpected Guest in Nashville's City Cemetery: Admiral Paul Shirley

by John Allyn, Nashville City Cemetery President

Nashville is about as far as one can get from salt water – so why is City Cemetery the final resting place of a Civil War Federal naval officer? That officer is Admiral Paul Shirley, who is buried in Section 28.52, just across the path from Captain William Driver's monument.

Paul Shirley was born in Glasgow, Kentucky, on December 19, 1820, the son of transplanted Virginians Paul and Sarah Caperton Gibson Shirley, who later moved to Nashville, where the elder Mr. Shirley died on April 16, 1834, and was buried in City Cemetery.

At the age of 19 the younger Paul Shirley was appointed a midshipman in the United States Navy, the conventional route to becoming a naval officer in those days. (The Naval Academy was not established until 1845, six years later). Although promotions in the peacetime Navy came slowly, by 1863 Shirley had been promoted to Lieutenant Commander and was the commanding officer of the U.S.S. *Cyane*, a sloop-of-war based in San Francisco Bay, where he would play an important role in the capture of the Confederate privateer *J. M. Chapman*.

In late 1862 Confederate sympathizer Asbury Harpending had travelled from California to Richmond, Virginia, where he received a letter of marque, a license from the Confederate government to act as a privateer. When Harpending returned to San Francisco, he joined Alfred Rubery and Ridgley Greathouse in buying the 90-ton schooner *J. M.*



The U.S.S. *Monocacy*, sister ship to the U.S.S. *Sewanee*, which Commander Shirley sailed through the Straits of Magellan to the Pacific.

*Chapman* and outfitting her as a Confederate privateer.

They purchased guns, ammunition, and uniforms and packed them in cases labeled as oil, merchandise, machinery, and quicksilver. William C. Law, who had a somewhat erratic history as a packet captain, was hired to captain the *J. M. Chapman*, with its crew of sixteen.

The Confederates' plans were ambitious. First on their agenda was the capture of one of the Pacific Mail steamers sailing from California to Panama carrying gold bullion to finance the Federal war effort. After the successful capture of the steamer, they proposed to cruise across the Pacific to the China Sea and Indian Ocean, seizing American ships as they went.

The Federal authorities learned of the plan through an informer and set up a 24-hour watch on the *J. M. Chapman*. A nearby steam tug kept her steam up and fires banked, ready to

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### MEMORIAL DAY DASH

MONDAY, MAY 30  
BEGINS AT 8:00 A.M. AT GREER STADIUM  
REGISTRATION FEE: \$25 (\$30 ON RACE DAY)

Register online at <http://www.active.com> or at the stadium on race day. Prizes in many age categories. Runners and walkers are welcome. (More info on page 2, inside)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE NASHVILLE CITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION HAS ACCOMPLISHED MUCH SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER. First, the October Living History tour was a spectacular success. Over 1,200 persons attended, nearly tripling the previous attendance record. The weather was absolutely perfect. Association officers, board members, and volunteers made sure that the event went as smoothly as possible – nothing that we could do about those lines! From an educational standpoint, the many presenters did an excellent job of informing the public about who are buried (or in my case, used to be buried) in our beautiful historic Cemetery. Board members Bill McKee and Terry Jackson did a tremendous job putting this event together, and they were honored as the Association's Volunteers of the Year at our December annual meeting. I was very pleased when Bill agreed to head up this year's event, which will be held on September 24. Yes, we checked – no conflict with Tennessee, Vanderbilt, or Tennessee State, or (in deference to Bill) Auburn football. He'll be looking for volunteers to help out again this year.

New officers were installed at our annual meeting in December. I moved up from President-Elect to President, and Winder Campbell, a retired banking executive, has succeeded me as President-Elect. Jill Meese will serve as Secretary, and Lyn James is our new Treasurer.

On April 9 we celebrated our first ever Mayors' Day to honor the fifteen former mayors of Nashville who are buried in City Cemetery. (Our current mayor, Karl Dean, had not been to the Cemetery prior to the Living History Tour, but that one afternoon made him our biggest fan!) We placed docents at each of the mayors' graves to tell their stories, and we dedicated a new grave marker for Thomas B. Coleman, who was mayor during the early 1840's. When Mayor Coleman – the second Mayor Coleman, by the way – was buried, he had a cedar board as his grave marker, but that marker disappeared long ago, due to the ravages of time. Recently your Association has had a cedar headboard made and hand-carved for him, which, while not an exact replica, is in keeping with what was originally there.

And we have many more events scheduled through the rest of the spring and summer! Take note of our calendar on page 4, and join us as often as you can.



**John B. Allyn**  
NCCA President



A local craftsman carved Mayor Coleman's headboard during the Living History Tour last fall.

## Monuments & milestones

P.O. Box 150733  
Nashville, TN 37215-0733

### NASHVILLE CITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### AUXILIARY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:

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Alice Swanson, Webmaster  
Jeff Thorneycroft, Newsletter Design



Runners of all ages and abilities come out for the Memorial Day Dash.

## 12th Annual Memorial Day Dash

All runners and walkers are welcome to take part in this popular 5K Run/Walk – participants traditionally include serious runners in many different age groups, as well as walkers with dogs and baby carriages out to enjoy a pleasant walk on a beautiful spring morning. We expect to see 400 runners this year. The race begins on Monday morning, May 30, at Greer Stadium (534 Chestnut St.) at 8:00 a.m. The course winds around the stadium, through Fort Negley, past the Adventure Science Center, and along the paths in the lovely City Cemetery. Volunteers and direction signs will help you find your way through the course. One of the major fund-raisers of the Nashville City Cemetery Association, this family-friendly event will help fund cemetery restoration and repair. The registration fee is \$25 (\$30 on race day). Pick up a registration form at local running stores, register online at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com), or come early on the morning of the race

to sign up. Awards will be given in 5-year increments from 9-and-under through 80+.

We are grateful for the assistance of the Nashville Striders, who partner with the NCCA for this event. Free T-shirts for all runners, with food, awards, and door prizes at the finish. There are eighty veterans buried in the City Cemetery — soldiers from the American Revolution, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Civil War, and the two World Wars. This is the second year the Nashville City Cemetery Association has placed flags of remembrance on the graves of our fallen soldiers. Watch the NCCA website for further information ([www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org](http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org)).

**Monuments & Milestones** is published two times per year by the Nashville City Cemetery Board of Directors, P.O. Box 150733, Nashville, TN 37215-0733.

The Nashville City Cemetery Association is a not-for-profit organization founded to preserve and protect the history and memory of those who are laid to rest there.

visit us at: [thenashvillecitycemetery.org](http://thenashvillecitycemetery.org)  
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**NASHVILLE**  
**City Cemetery**  
1001 FOURTH AVENUE SOUTH

stop the privateer the moment she set sail. Not far away, the *Cyane* kept careful watch as well.

The *J. M. Chapman* raised anchor at dawn on March 15, 1863, and sailed slowly out from the wharf. Only two officers were visible on deck, and the vessel looked as innocent and harmless as any craft that ever left the port of San Francisco. When she was about 300 yards from the dock, however, two boatloads of armed seamen from the *Cyane* drew even with the schooner and boarded her without resistance. The steam tug had held back because the undependable Captain Law, having arrived too late to catch the ship after a night of drinking, was still on the wharf calling for the *J. M. Chapman* to come back for him.



Gravestone of Admiral Paul Shirley, died 1876.

Rubery based on his age, his citizenship, and a request for his release from pro-American British parliamentarian John Bright. Harpending and Greathouse were released in February 1864 after taking an oath of allegiance to the United States.

The *J. M. Chapman* was sold and the money divided between the U.S. government and the informer. Lt. Shirley and the crew of the U.S.S. *Cyane* objected and brought suit for a share of the prize money, contending that the *J. M. Chapman* was a pirate ship and thus a prize of war. However, the court ruled that the *J. M. Chapman* was not a pirate ship as defined by the laws of nations. The vessel was seized pursuant to the First Confiscation Act of 1861, which provided that any person who supplied information leading to the arrest and conviction of traitors would be entitled to share equally with the United States in any property so acquired. (This case was cited in a 2010 case dealing with Somali pirates.)

Lieutenant Commander Shirley was commended for his actions by the commander of the U. S. North Pacific Squadron. In 1863 he was promoted to Commander and given command of the U.S.S. *Paul Jones*. This ship served in the area of Ossabaw Island, Georgia, patrolling the Georgia littoral zone for smugglers

and blockade runners.

In the fall of 1864 Shirley was given command of the U.S.S. *Suwannee*, an ironclad wheeler gunboat then under construction at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. Once commissioned, the *Suwannee* was ordered to find and destroy the C.S.S. *Shenandoah*, currently wreaking havoc with American shipping in the South Atlantic. Informed that the *Shenandoah* was headed to the Pacific, Shirley sailed the *Suwannee* down the coast of South America and through the Straits of Magellan in pursuit.

The intelligence was half right: the *Shenandoah* was headed to the Pacific, but by a different route, around the Cape of Good Hope to Australia and thence to the whaling grounds in the Sea of Okhotsk, the Bering Sea, and the Arctic Ocean. The *Suwannee*, reaching Acapulco in July 1865, was ordered to find and destroy the *Shenandoah*. However, by that time the Confederate raider had learned that the Civil War was over, and that it might be treated as a pirate vessel if caught on the high seas. The *Shenandoah*, carrying a crew of Southern officers and British and Australian sailors, completed her circumnavigation of the globe without further landfall until she docked in Liverpool, England, in November 1865. The Southern Confederacy came to an end at the moment the *Shenandoah* lowered her flag.

Shirley remained in the Navy after the war and was promoted to Captain in



U.S.S. *Cyane*, later commanded by Lt. Cdr. Paul Shirley, bombarding a Central American fort, 1854.

1870. He died "as the result of a severe cold" on November 26, 1876, on a train from his home near Philadelphia to Memphis. According to his grave marker in City Cemetery, he had evidently been brevetted as an Admiral. Before his death he resided in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Margaretta Quinn Stanley.

In addition to the elder Paul Shirley, three other family members are buried in the Shirley plot. Paul's mother, Sarah C. Shirley (79), a resident of Kentucky, died in 1876 of "old age"; Paul's brother James Shirley, "a son of Temperance," died at 22 from diarrhea and was interred in 1847; and his sister Camilla J. Shirley, listed as a resident of Arkansas, died at 90 "of old age" in March 1918.

## coming up in future issues:

Learn about the partnership between the Nashville City Cemetery Association (NCCA) and Hands On Nashville.

Find out more about some of the volunteers and staff members who make the NCCA an effective organization.

Did you know that Nashville City Cemetery is the site of a new Civil War Trails marker?

Go to: [civilwartraveler.com](http://civilwartraveler.com) for information about this fascinating historical program

Visit our website at [www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org](http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

The Nashville City Cemetery is open to visitors every day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**General information:** The free tours begin at 10:00 a.m. on the dates listed below and last about 45 minutes. In case of unfavorable weather (i.e., tornado, drenching rain, hail, or piles of snow!), a cancelled tour will take place the following Saturday.

**Friday, April 29, 2011, 4:00 p.m.**

## HIGH TREE PARTY

The 24th annual awards ceremony for the Nashville Tree Foundation's Big Old Tree Contest will be held at the Nashville City Cemetery. Foundation president Pat Wallace finds "The 189-year-old cemetery with its majestic trees – some more than 200 years old" to be "an ideal location for a celebration of trees in the Foundation's 25th anniversary year." Judges will describe the winning trees in each category before awarding certificates to the owners and nominators of each winner. The Victor Johnson Award, named for the late CEO of Aladdin Industries who helped set the standard for tree-friendly developers, will be presented to an individual or business demonstrating a special reverence for trees. Everyone is welcome at this charming event, which includes a reception featuring tree-related foods.

**Saturday, May 14, 2011, 10:00 a.m.**

## MASTER GARDENERS' TOUR

The Davidson County Master Gardeners have created those lovely, historically appropriate plantings you see throughout the cemetery. Their popular cemetery tours instruct and inspire amateur gardeners of all levels. Come and celebrate the arrival of spring. Free.

**Saturday, May 30, 2011, 8:00 a.m.**

## 12TH ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY DASH

This annual 5K Run/Walk has drawn more runners and walkers every year. The race begins at 8:00 a.m. at Greer Stadium (534 Chestnut St.) and follows a lovely historic path that ends at the City Cemetery. Come early on May 30 to register, or register online. Visit the Nashville Striders website for registration forms and information. [www.nashvillestriders.com](http://www.nashvillestriders.com). Entry fee required for all participants.

**Saturday, July 16, 2011, 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

## CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL TOUR

"**What Were They Thinking?**" – Join us for a fascinating excursion through City Cemetery lore that examines some of the odd military decisions we have always wondered about. Free.

**Saturday, September 17, 2011, Time TBD (afternoon)**

## CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL TOUR

"**African Americans in the Civil War**" – Black Southerners played an active role in gaining their own freedom. Learn about their many contributions on this inspiring tour. Free.

**Saturday, September 24, 2011, Time TBD (afternoon)**

## LIVING HISTORY TOUR

Make plans now to attend our most popular City Cemetery event, where costumed reenactors bring the history of Middle Tennessee to life. \$5 for adults; \$10 for families.

**Saturday, November 12, 2011, 10:00-11:00 a.m.**

## CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL TOUR

This annual tour of military burial sites in the City Cemetery is led by John Allyn, battlefield preservationist and NCCA Board member. No matter how much you know about the Civil War, you will always learn something new on these tours. Not to be missed! Free.

## VOLUNTEER CLEAN-UP DAYS AT THE CITY CEMETERY

**9:00-11:00 a.m.**

(Register with Hands On Nashville: <http://www.hon.org/>)

**May 21      July 9      September 1**

**June 16      August 20      October 15**

**Have you seen our website lately?**



[www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org](http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org)

Visit the Nashville City Cemetery Association on Facebook!

**View photos of our events!**

**READ ABOUT THE REMARKABLE  
186-YEAR HISTORY OF CITY CEMETERY**

**LEARN MORE ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER BURIED AT CITY CEMETERY  
BY STUDYING THE RESOURCE MAPS, OBITUARIES,**

**AND TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS.**

Connect to the 19,745 Interments on the Nashville Public Library website.

**share your family history**

**AND BE SURE TO JOIN THE NASHVILLE CITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION!**

# Living History Tour Brings Record Crowds



Reverend Nelson Merry, from Charlotte Robinson to Charles Dickinson.

Whether first-time guests or frequent visitors, everyone who came expressed their delight with the event. Mayor Karl Dean, intending to stay for half an hour, was

Saturday, October 2, 2010, found the City Cemetery bubbling over with visitors, as the largest crowd in history – 1245 people! – lined up for the annual Living History Tour. They were greeted by reenactors portraying significant individuals in Nashville's history, from Major Jeffrey Lockelier to the

still there two hours later, assuring the crowds lined up along the Oak Street that the Tour was well worth the wait.

Many people stopped along the paths to chat with craftspeople working beneath the stately trees or to admire the restoration work that has revitalized the cemetery in recent years. Even the weather cooperated, remaining pleasant and warm until late in the day. The NCCA Board is grateful for the community's willingness to support our efforts to preserve this beautiful symbol of our past.



Legendary Nashville minister Nelson Merry is portrayed by a reenactor. (photo courtesy of Kathy Lauder)

## THEN & NOW

From the Nashville Room photo archives at the Nashville Public Library, a glimpse of the City Cemetery from the past and how it appears today.



Fallen trees and overgrown weeds made City Cemetery a sad and unwelcoming place in 1955. (Photo courtesy of the Nashville Public Library, The Nashville Room.)

Damage to the obelisk on the right is significant and holes in the posts prove that iron railings have been missing for years. (Photo by Jeff Thomeycroft)

## Former Mayors Honored at City Cemetery

Saturday, April 9, 2011, was the date of our first Mayors' Day celebration, organized to honor the 15 former mayors of Nashville who rest in City Cemetery. A lovely ceremony to dedicate a new grave marker for Mayor Thomas B. Coleman (1842-1843) saw the placement of a hand-carved cedar head-board on Coleman's grave, replacing a marker that was lost many years ago. [Visitors to the Living History

Tour in October may have watched a local craftsman carving the Coleman grave marker that very day.] Guests were given maps of the cemetery so they could visit the graves of all 15 mayors at their leisure to hear a brief biographical sketch of each man. Thanks to Mayor Karl Dean, the musicians, historians, descendants, and all who joined us to honor these former Nashville dignitaries.



Robert Mather  
Davidson County Master Gardener  
and NCCA Board Member

### SPRING GARDEN TIP

Spring has arrived and there are lots of projects waiting for you in the yard and garden. Now is the time to prune those spring-flowering shrubs like forsythia, weigela, Japanese quince, and lilac, but only if they need shaping. Fertilize and prune azaleas and camellias after they have finished blooming. You should also prune any semi-woody perennials like Salvia, lavender, and sage. You can begin to stake tall perennials that tend to fall over. Add well-rotted manure, peat moss, or compost to your annual plant beds. Remember to wait until after April 15th to plant your annuals!

Master Gardener and NCCA Board Member Robert Mather provides a seasonal gardening tip in each issue of the NCCA newsletter.



P.O. Box 150733  
Nashville, TN. 37215-0733  
[thenashvillecitycemetery.org](http://thenashvillecitycemetery.org)

**Address Correction Requested**

## Coming In May!



**Monday, May 30, 2011  
8 a.m. - Greer Stadium**

(details inside)

## JOIN OR RENEW YOUR NCCA MEMBERSHIP TODAY!

Please take the time to become a member of the Nashville City Cemetery Association this year. Your membership is valuable to us and helps the NCCA offer such programs as **Descendants' Day**, the **Memorial Day Dash**, and the **Living History Tour**. So sign up today and help support our effort to restore and preserve this invaluable historic resource.

- Join  
 Renew

### NCCA Membership Levels (circle one)

Individual	\$20	Preserver	\$150
Family	\$35	Conservator	\$500
Protector	\$75	Restorer	\$1000

(All members receive the newsletter and invitations to special events.)

I would also like information about:  
(check all that apply)

- NCCA Membership  
 Tax Letters  
 Volunteer Opportunities

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Names of ancestors buried at Nashville City Cemetery (if applicable):

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Fill out this form, clip out and mail to:  
P.O. Box 150733, Nashville, TN. 37215-0733.