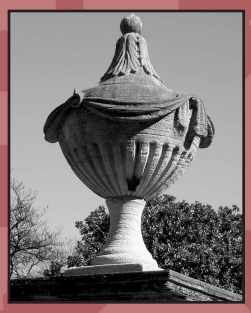

NASHVILLE CITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

Monuments & milestones

VOL 4 NO 1 SPRING 2008

Master Plan Becomes a Reality

by Fred Zahn, Metro Historical Commission, on-site historic preservation supervisor

VISITORS TO THE CITY CEMETERY immediately notice the important work that has taken place on the grounds since last spring. Monuments and stonework have become markedly brighter and more imposing. At the present time workers are making extensive structural and cosmetic repairs to the **Johnson Mausoleum**: replacing the front columns, grinding out and re-tuckpointing all stone-to-stone joints, cleaning the limestone, repairing the heavily damaged white marble doors, and treating all the deteriorating and delaminated stonework with a consolidant. Inspired by the changes, the grateful heirs are exploring the possibility of purchasing and installing an iron fence on the perimeter of the family plot, since there is good evidence that such a fence existed there at some time in the past.

Masons grinding out and tuckpointing damaged joints. (Photo by Fred Zahn)

Many family plots in the City Cemetery are bordered by some type of curbing, either of cut limestone or poured concrete, which in some plots acts as a retaining wall to help level the grave sites. Nearly all the curbing is in a state of disrepair, and we are repouring and replacing large sections of it as we work through the site. Such replacement can involve not only a huge amount of digging, but also stump removal where volunteer trees have pushed through, broken, or otherwise disrupted the borders.

Curbing all over the cemetery is being replaced or repaired. (Photo by Fred Zahn)

At this writing, a crew is still working to remove some of the most badly stained marble monuments, and also to "point" areas of loose and delaminating stone with a color-matched mortar. This work is an important final step in conserving our many tablet-style markers since it is in these areas of cracked and delaminating material that we face our greatest problems of water infiltration and accelerated decay.

Another crew is working on all three faces of the 2000-foot stone wall running along Fourth and Oak. This is a substantial effort, which requires removing and replacing all loose masonry joints and resetting every loose stone. Although the wall cleaned up very nicely, the cleaning efforts highlighted the attention required to maintain its shape and stability.

See "**Master Plan**" on Page 5)

INSIDE:

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE p.2

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE . . . p.3

CALENDAR OF EVENTS p.4

REPLACING TOMBSTONES p.5

PresidentÕs Message

ÒThings alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designedly.Ó

Francis Bacon

A FAMILIAR ADAGE SAYS that life is for the living, not for the dead. And one might logically assume that a cemetery is a site for the dead. However, the Nashville City Cemetery is a special place where the living are giving the dead new life and honor. Thanks to the 2007 MayorÕs Capital Budget project, the Metro Historical Commission, and hundreds of volunteers, the Cemetery is being restored, refurbished, and repaired. From small tombstones that have been mended and reset to major monuments that have undergone significant work, this is a time of excitement and anticipation. Walking through the Cemetery today, you can almost hear a whisper, ÒThank you for not forgetting us.Ó

This was not the case when I joined the Nashville City Cemetery Association in 2002. Appropriate descriptions of the Cemetery at that time would have included the words vandalism, disrepair, and neglect. We discussed fundraising ideas; we considered security issues. Founding board member Fletch Coke told cautionary stories of other dedicated groups who had gathered, every 50 years or so, to save the old City Cemetery and urged us to match their commitment.

We rallied around her words and pulled together under FletchÕs leadership, assisted by Board President Nick Bailey and many other committed individuals. Since those early meetings, over 2000 tombstones with legible inscriptions have been transcribed, photographed, and posted on the NCCA web site. A treasury of obituaries of people buried at the City Cemetery has been collected and indexed there as well. The 19,745 entries from the City Cemetery Interment Books can now be found on the Nashville Public Library web site. The Metro Council agreed to fund the Master Plan for restoration, repair, conservation, security, lighting, and signage. The Historic Nashville City Cemetery Endowment Fund has recently become associated with the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee, a collaboration that will ensure a safe future for the Cemetery. (These and other important websites are listed on page 4.)

What a difference a few years makes! Although there is still much work to do, we do know who our heroes are. At the AssociationÕs Annual Meeting in December 2007, the first NCCA Volunteer-of-the-Year Award went to Peter and Bill Coke, in honor of their dedication, determination, and devotion.

Those fundraising ideas of a few years ago have also grown and blossomed. The Memorial Day Dash is eagerly anticipated by runners and walkers alike. Bursting forth in the early morning hours on Memorial Day, race participants start at Greer Stadium, continue up to Fort Negley, thunder past the Adventure Science Center, and end at the City Cemetery to receive congratulations, commemorative T-shirts, and unique awards created by Hunt Memorial. A few months later, the Living History Tour captures the spirit of Nashville as our stories come alive. Join us for a tour on Saturday, September 27, as ÒresidentsÓ return to life and offer their insights into local history. Proceeds from both events provide funding for our ongoing preservation needs.

There are thousands of locations around the South where old graveyards are under siege. Fortunately, the Nashville City Cemetery is a place of activity and accomplishment. Plan a trip to the City Cemetery for the Second Saturday Tours and special events. Become a member of the Association. Discover our website at www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org. You, too, can be a living link to this true Nashville treasure.

Lynn Maddox McDonald
NCCA President

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NASHVILLE City Cemetery
1001 FOURTH AVENUE SOUTH

ÕTil Death Do Us Part

Love and Devotion at City Cemetery

by Carol Kaplan, NCCA Board Member

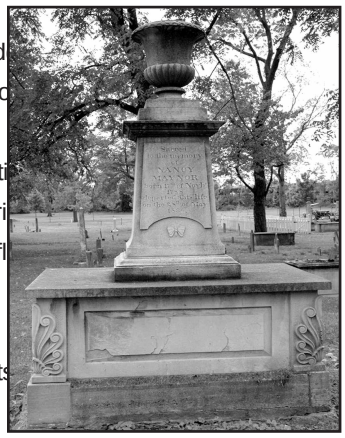
The tales of political & military leaders abound at City Cemetery Ñ these influential citizens are often the focus of our research and knowled However, beyond the public and civic life of Nashville, private stories sho us another more personal life of love and devotion, loss and memory.

Two married couples may be found on the Foster family plot in secti 29.2. The more famous pair is Ann Robertson Johnson and John Cockri fell in love as they traveled with John DonelsonÕs party on the flatboat fl bringing settlers to Nashville in 1780. Ann, the widowed mother of three little girls, and bachelor John Cockrill were both 23 years old when they were married at Fort Nashborough, where AnnÕs brother James Roberts performed the ceremony. Despite the threat of Indian attacks, everyone celebrated the wedding with feasting, dancing, fiddling, and bear meat on that spring day. Both Ann and John received land preemptions, and they settle where Centennial Park stands today. The parents of eight children, they enjoyed a long life together - Ann died in 1821 at 64 years of age; John lived until 1837. They were originally buried near their home, but due to encroaching development, they were brought together to City Cemetery in the early 20th century.

The final resting place of Ann Cockrill who, with her husband John Cockrill and brother James Robertson, was one of NashvilleÕs early settlers.

Ann S. Hubbard Foster and her husband Robert C. rest nearby. They had been married 51 years, 6 months and 12 days when he died in 1844. Ann lived until 1850, when she was 80 years old. Her husband's vault was reopened so that the couple could be buried together as she had wished.

True love sometimes needs a helping hand, as Margaret Nichol discovered when she fell in love with Robert Armstrong, an aide-de-camp to Andrew Jackson. Her wealthy banker father, Josiah Nichol, forbade their marriage, insisting that the life of a soldier's wife was not what he and Margaret's mother wanted for their daughter. Not to be denied, Margaret and Robert eloped in 1814, asking for help from the couple they knew would be on their side: Rachel and Andrew Jackson. At The Hermitage, where the future president and his wife were still living in a log cabin, Old Hickory took command, sending for a pastor to perform the marriage and writing to the bride's father. Jackson reminded Nichol of their own "lack of fortune" when they had first come to Nashville together, and vouched for Armstrong's character. He encouraged smiles, tranquility, and acceptance of the marriage . . . and then invited everyone to a festive dinner party at the cabin.


A butterfly adorns the face of Nancy Maynor's marker.

Two of NashvilleÕs prominent architects designed monuments at City Cemetery. Adolphus Heiman, just beginning his career in Nashville, carved the marker for Nancy Bailey Maynor in 1836. She and her husband, painter Pleasant Maynor, had been married only eight years. Heiman marked the stone with a butterfly, symbolizing a brief, beautiful life.

Grieving husband John W. Walker commissioned William Strickland to design a monument for his 28-year-old wife, Sarah Ann Gray. Strickland desc the monument as Òvery elegant . . . c structed of pure white marble from Baltimore . . . the lachrymal vase is an copy of vases found in the ruins of Pompeii.Ó It was completed in July 18

The elaborate marker of Sarah Ann Gray.

These stories remind us of the importance of recording the inscription and caring for the tombstones of City Cemetery. Without these markers, mu enjoyed we know about these people would be lost. The purpose of the monuments, as created by those left behind, was to ensure that their loved ones would always be remembered. Our care of the cemetery keeps that hope alive.

Note: Readers can view tombstone photographs and inscriptions at the City Cemetery website www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Note: The Nashville City Cemetery is open 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.

Second Saturday Tour, May 10, 2008, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

ÒThe MasonsÓ

The Masons were an influential organization in 19th century Nashville, and they left their mark on the City Cemetery. Cumberland Lodge No. 8 purchased an 80Õ x 50Õ lot in 1845 as a burial place for members. Two Nashville descendants will tell us about their ancestors: William R. Cooper will unveil a replacement tombstone for his ancestor Washington Cooper; Duncan CallicoatÕs ancestor Wilkins Tannehill, was mayor of Nashville, as well as a prominent educator and a publisher. One of the highest-ranking Masons in Tennessee history, Tannehill wrote the Masonic standard manual. Tombstones for many other Masons will also be pointed out during the tour.

May 26, 2008, 8:00 a.m. (beginning at Greer Stadium)

The Annual Memorial Day Dash

All runners and walkers are welcome to take part in this 5K Run/Walk. We begin at Greer Stadium at 8:00 a.m., wind through Fort Negley and around the Adventure Science Center, and end at the City Cemetery. Our biggest fund raiser, this family-friendly event will benefit Cemetery restoration and repair. Entry fee is $20 through May 22, 2008; $25 thereafter. Entry forms and info are available at www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org and www.nashvillestriders.com. An awards ceremony follows the race, featuring our unique headstone trophies from Hunt Memorials, a $100 gift certificate to the runner with the Best Patriotic running outfit, T-shirts (also fruit and bagels!) for all finishers, and dozens of door prizes. DonÕt miss this popular event!

June 14, 2008

A Celebration of Flag Day

A Celebration of Flag Day, led by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Check our website for time and other details.

July and August: NO TOURS SCHEDULED

September 27, 2008, 3:00-6:00 p.m.

The Annual Living History Tour

This is one of our few events that does involve a small fee: $5 for adults; $10 for families. Come and meet some of NashvilleÕs earliest settlers, uniformed Civil War soldiers, prominent citizens, and simple folk of all eras. This is a wonderful event for the whole family!

Second Saturday Tour, October 11, 2008, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

Ò19th Century CemeteriesÓ

Kathy Lauder, teacher, archivist, and NCCA board member, will answer some of the questions our visitors, including children, ask us about 19th century cemeteries - the leading causes of death, the cost of burials, the types of clothing people wore to a funeral, and much more. An enlightening look at matters of life and death one hundred years ago.

Second Saturday Tour, November 8, 2008, 10:00-10:45 a.m.

ÒCivil War SoldiersÓ

John Allyn, battlefield preservationist and NCCA board member, will tell us about the lives of Civil War soldiers buried in this cemetery. Some of the individuals featured will be Confederates Henry Fogg and White Turpin, Union Lieutenant John R. Henry and others. Not to be missed!

Websites with useful and interesting information about the C

http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org/
(our own website, managed by the phenomenal Alice Swanson)

https://givingmatters.com/viewAnonymousReport.do?organizationId=19487
(the Community Foundation website)

http://www.nashville.gov/mhc/nashville_city_cemetery.htm
(Metro Nashville Government)

http://www.dcmg.org/custpage.cfm/frm/15687/sec_id/15712
(Master Gardeners)

http://www.bonps.org/tour/oldcitycem.htm
(Battle of Nashville Preservation Society)

http://www.blueshoenashville.com/citycemetery.html
(Blue Shoe Travel Guide)

http://www.nowplayingnashville.com/org/detail/31545
(Now Playing Nashville)

http://0-www.library.nashville.org.waldo.library.nashville.org/cemetery_graves/sea
(Nashville Public Library grave search - incredible resource for researchers!

http://freepages.history.rootsweb.com/~nashvillearchives/citycemetery.html
(part of Metro Archives website, a Nashville goldmine overseen by Debie C

http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~webmouse/NashvilleCityCem
(An independently maintained website by WebMouse)

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.

1955

A Nashville Banner newspaper photo shows the Duncan Robertson marker as it stood in 1955. (Photo courtesy of the Nashville Public Library, The Nashville Room)

2008

Across of the monuments currently under restoration, plans include replacement of the three missing urns. (Photo by Jeff Thorneycroft)

Replacement Tombstones Restore Our History

One of the major concerns of any cemetery is dealing with the destructive effects of time and vandalism. Last year, when Nashvillian Joe Price became concerned that the graves of two of his ancestors lacked appropriate headstones, he spoke to preservation maven Fletch Coke about replacing the stones. One of the graves had no marker; the other stone was broken in half. Price and Coke put their heads together with Fred Zahn, historic preservation supervisor for the Metro Historical Commission, and developed a plan that would apply to anyone wishing to provide replacement stones for their ancestors in the Nashville City Cemetery. In a remarkably short time, the work was done Ð by February of this year, the graves of Joe PriceÕs great-great-grandfather Levi Price (1815-1896) and his eldest son, JoeÕs great-grandfather Joseph Walker Price (1844-1867), were marked by elegantly simple white stones. Price has been delighted with the results, not only personally, but because he believes that preserving the City Cemetery Òis important to the whole city Ñ thereÕs a lot of our history Óthere.

Joe Price stands proudly next to his great-great grandfather LeviÕs newly replaced headstone. (Photo by Fred Zahn)

Master Plan (from page 1)

Finally, we are concentrating on reclaiming land on the west side of the cemetery where a neighboring business had encroached on cemetery property. The offending loading dock and blacktop paving have both been removed; the misplaced (although historic in its own right) chain-link fence has been removed; and our new pressed-face/poured concrete retaining wall is going in truckload by truckload. When the wall is finished and back-filled, a new steel security fence, similar to the one along the railroad but somewhat shorter, will be installed along the newly redefined property line.

(Photo by Fred Zahn)

In summary, although some major items remain to be completed (e.g., paving, lighting, reworking of the two buildings, and the interpretive signage program), we have nevertheless accomplished a great deal in the space of a year. Not only has the work produced many much-needed improvements in the City Cemetery, but it has also involved craftsmanship of the highest quality. It is an achievement for which the city and the workers involved can take enormous pride.