

ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION, INC.
718 Jackson St.
Thibodaux, LA 70301

ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2020 NEWSLETTER

MORE TOMBS RESTORED

St. John's Church and its Historic Cemetery are celebrating their 175th anniversary. Generous grants from The Peltier Foundation and from Marion Lifsey of Atlanta enabled the Cemetery Association to assist St. John's Vestry in additional tomb work this past Fall.

Teddy Pierre of New Orleans has completed the restoration of the tomb of a St. John's founder, Dr. Thomas M. Williams, native of the District of Columbia. Nearby work still is underway on three other badly damaged tombs of Williams family members. All of the interred died soon after the Cemetery was established. Dr. Williams moved to Thibodaux in the 1830s and occupied a residence and office fronting on Jackson Street near the corner of St. Mary, a block away from St. John's.

A fifth restoration is to the Ryder family tomb, alongside the Cemetery's center "street." The damaged brick corners and sides are being stabilized to prevent the tomb from collapse.



Teddy Pierre working on the Williams family tombs

FENCE REPAIR

Assisted financially by the Cemetery Association, St. John's Vestry, guided by Junior Warden David Cassard, oversaw the repair of the 103-year-old cast iron fence bounding the Cemetery on W. Seventh St. Several sections were damaged by autos backing or running into it. One hole was large enough for a loup-garou to fit through it.

TOURS AT ST. JOHN'S

The "Louisiana's Cajun Bayou Tourism" visitor center at Matthews down Bayou Lafourche is organizing small bus tours coming out of New Orleans to Thibodaux. The three destinations for the day-long tours are the Jean Lafitte Acadian Cultural Center, the Edward D. White Historic Site, and St. John's Episcopal Church. Tours should begin this Spring and include the Historic Cemetery when weather and time permit. For separate tours of the Cemetery contact the St. John's office, 985-447-2910.

*St. John's Historic Cemetery Association, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code.
All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

2019 DONORS TO ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

This past year saw great support from our long-time members; but we also are blessed with some new supporters whose help was invaluable. Thank EVERYONE for pitching in and enabling the Cemetery Association to help St. John's afford the restorations, repairs and improvements, and maintenance. Please share our "secret" with other friends and relatives.

Angels: Azby Fund, Nell T. Boersma, Richard Bourgeois, June Butler, M/M Paul H. Dué, M/M Robert H. Ells, II, Levert Foundation, Marion C. Lifsey, Diane T. Martin, Peltier Foundation, M/M David D. Plater

Cherubs: M/M John Lanier, M/M Wes Magee, III

Spirits: M/M Alvin Badeaux, M/M Harold Block, William Borskey, M/M David Cassard, Jonathan Durocher, Agnes Esteve, Quincy Ewing, III, M/M Clyde Foust, Diane Frost, Patricia Gaubert, Caroline W. Goddard, Olivia Ann Gresham, M/M C. J. Guillory, M/M Leo Hebert, M/M J. Roderick Heller, III, James & Courtney Jackson, James Koontz, M/M Walter Lanier, Jr., Rosemary Lovell, M/M Malcolm Mackenzie, M/M David Middleton, Patsy Powell, Anne Lovell Rienets, M/M Franz Segger, M/M Charles Shaver, M/M Clifford Smith, Kristi Smith, Sons of Confederate Veterans, Alice Strausser, Alice Walther, Stevia Walther, Lorriane Wise

Friends: Olie & Sylvia Adams, Martha Ayo, Henry F. Brownlee, Virginia Casse, Richard Ewing Combes, Janice Crisp/Elizabeth King, Alfred Delahaye, M/M Cam Herpel, D. Leonard Hingle, Patricia A. Hoehing, Mary Anne Hoffmann, Addie Joy Kearns, Ann McDonald, M/M Marshall Martin, Jr., John McInerney, Mary D. Musso, M/M Murphy Rogers, Pat Szush, M/M Richard Weimer, Toby Wise

THE BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HOLDENS: A STORY

One continues to be amazed at the number and variety of out-of-staters, as well as foreigners from the British Isles and European states, who settled in Thibodaux during the nineteenth century. They exuded enthusiasm, hope, and energy. Among them was Benjamin Franklin Holden, of the Ohio River town of Ripley, Ohio. Born in 1807 in Topsam, Maine, he died in 1878 and is interred at St. John's Historic Cemetery along with a wife, Abigail King, from Georgetown, Ohio. The Holdens married in 1838 and moved to Thibodaux in the 1840s. As told in 1890 by "Uncle Silas" Grisamore, the long-time editor of *The Thibodaux Sentinel*:

The merchants of Thibodaux [in 1840] supplied the people with nearly everything that was necessary for their use and comfort, and did a thriving business. They received their goods, not as they now do, every day, as their demand calls, but generally laid in their supplies twice a year, and consequently often had immense stocks on hand.

In the winter a large trade was conducted by western men who brought flat boats down the river loaded with corn, meat, potatoes, apples, whiskey, flour &c., which were sold to the planters, and took sugar and molasses in exchange for their merchandise.

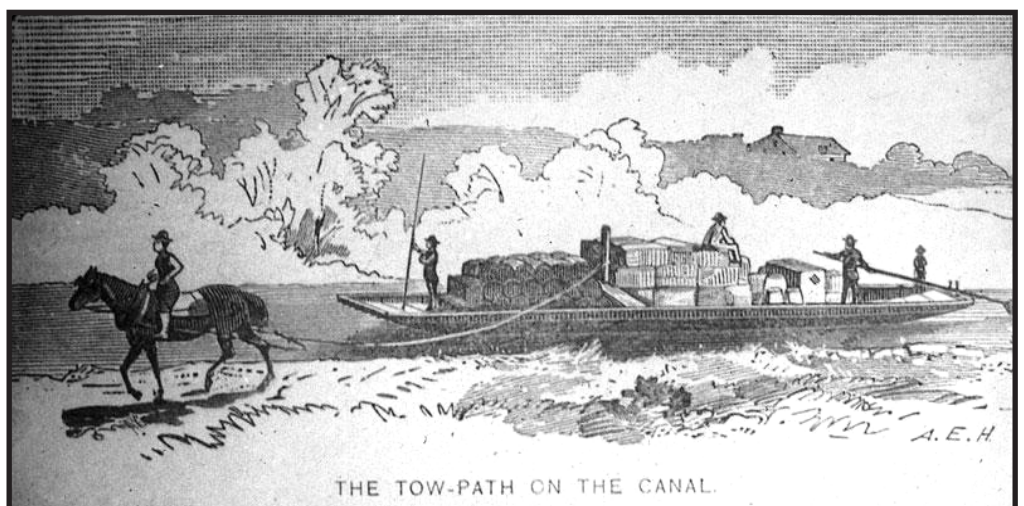
These boats commonly called broad horns came principally out of the Ohio River. Some of them

would dispose of their loads, tow their boats to Donaldsonville, where they would reload them with produce brought by steamboats in the town, and, thus, dispose of two or three loads in one session... Benjamin Franklin Holden, who built the Franklin Hotel, first came to Thibodaux as the captain of a "broadhorn" which he floated from Ripley, Ohio, some fifty miles above Cincinnati. Subsequently he settled in Thibodaux and became a useful and prominent citizen.

The Census records tell their own tale: In 1850, Holden, then age 43, and termed a merchant, was married to Abigail, or "Abby," and lived with the children Emma, age 11, born in New Orleans, Fanny, age 9, born in Ohio, and Victor and Charles, ages 4 and 1, both born in Thibodaux. They resided adjacent to John and Mary King Fulford, about whom a Cemetery Association newsletter story was written

earlier and who was a sister of Abigail Holden. Holden's real estate holdings then were valued at \$12,000. By 1860 the Holdens had moved to a different house; their three additional children were Malvina, 8; Thomas, 5, and B. F., Jr., 1. By then, too, Benjamin F. Holden had become a "steamboat captain" whose real property value was \$60,000 and who owned \$10,000 in personal property. He evidently was enterprising, hard-working, and thrifty.

After Abigail's death in 1860 and the Civil War's end, Holden remarried, to Fannie Nelson, born in Mississippi and 36 years younger than her husband. A history of the First Presbyterian Church in Thibodaux, where Fannie and Mary King Fulford (a girl friend of Ulysses S. Grant in her Ohio River home town) taught Sunday School, records them "keeping alive" their church through hard years in the 1870s when it had no regular minister. According to the 1870 Census, Holden then was occupied with a "stage line" (perhaps, too, part of the Hotel Franklin business?).



THE TOW-PATH ON THE CANAL.

A floatboat similar to ones used by Benjamin Franklin Holden and other merchants on Bayou Lafourche