

ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2018 NEWSLETTER

IN MEMORIAM

Our long-time board member and former vice president, Mike Strausser, died unexpectedly on November 25, 2017. He contributed to our newsletter and Cemetery signage project and chaired the committee for the Art at St. John's show in April each year since 2014. He supported St. John's Episcopal Church as a member of the choir and recently as the Junior Warden. We much miss him. We gratefully dedicate this issue of the Newsletter to Mike. Our prayers are with Alice and their sons.



Mike Strausser 1947-2017
Photo courtesy Alice Strausser

LIVE OAK TREE SEMINAR

On Saturday, March 10, classes on the care of live oak trees will be held at St. John's Episcopal Church Parish Hall. The sessions will begin at 9 AM and continue until 11 AM, followed by a tour of the live oaks in the Church campus and the Cemetery. The instructors are Dr. Hallie Dozier of LSU and Mr. Dave Leonard, an arborist from Versailles, Kentucky. The seminar is free and will include refreshments. Please let the church office know if you plan to come, 985-447-2910.

CHANGES TO THE ST. JOHN'S "CAMPUS"

Our last Newsletter stated that the entranceway to the Cemetery will be paved and transformed into a walkway instead of a vehicular entrance. That project, to which our Association will contribute, will be part of an overall Church Campus revision. Other changes will enlarge and resurface the parking area behind the Parish Hall to provide 22 car spaces including two for handicap use; re-fence and re-size the play yard between parking and the Hall; add two handicap spaces off of W. Seventh Street; close off Jackson Street from autos, changing that driveway into a walkway from the street; direct all vehicles to the W. Eighth Street parking entrance; and finally, re-align and re-surface the walkways between the Hall and parking to and from the Church structure. The changes will add safety and convenience, better care for the increasing numbers of visitors, and reduce compaction on the old live oak tree roots. Donations to the Campus improvements are invited, c/o St. John's Episcopal Church.



January 2018: Once in a generation. Photo courtesy David Cassard

ART AT ST. JOHN'S

Scheduled for Sunday, April 13, the event has been cancelled. Mike Strausser, the event committee chairman, could not be replaced timely. The Cemetery Association will let our members know when it will be held in 2019.

LAWN CRYPT CLEANING

Perhaps for the first time ever, the 1960-era "lawn crypt" in the west corner of the Cemetery is being washed. Funded by our Cemetery Association, the work will be done by Teddy Pierre of New Orleans. Experienced with restorations in our Cemetery, Teddy is applying D-2 Biological Solution. Unlike such chemicals as bleach, this cleaner is not harmful to stone surfaces. Do visit the crypt and see it!

VISITS

The entrance gate is open dawn to dusk. Feel free to stroll about, and if you have questions, please contact us through our web site, www.stjhca.org.

ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

The meeting of members will be at 5:30 P. M. on Wednesday March 21 at the St. John's Parish Hall, 718 Jackson St., Thibodaux. After the board election, there will be an open meeting to conduct Association business.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ASSOCIATION, 2017

Many people and foundations assist with the preservation and care of our Historic Cemetery. We are ever grateful. **PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR SUPPORT.**

Angels: Azby Foundation, Levert Foundation, Peltier Foundation, Nell T. Boersma, M/M E. Ells II, Marion Lifsey, M/MD. Plater

Cherubs: Kristi Smith, M/M J. Dennis, Debbie Powell, Mary A. Hoffman, Joan Knight, M/M J. Lanier, M/M W. Hitch, Jane Lovegrove, M/M W. Magee

Spirits: M/M Paul Due, Lorraine Wise, M/M M. Strausser, J. McInerney, James Koontz, M/M L. Hebert, Ann Gresham, M/M M. Forrest, Quincy Ewing, Juanita Claudill, Carolyn Boudreaux, Alice Walther, M/M F. Sollars, M/M J. Shaver, M/M F. Seggar, M/M J. Mullane, M/M M. Martin, Jr., M/M M. Mackenzie, Rosemary Lovell, M/M W. Lanier, Jr., Ann Iverson, J. R. Heller, III, M/M C. J. Guillory, Virginia Gayle, Patricia Gaubert, M/M C. Frost, Jonathan Durocher, M/M D. Cassard, M/M A. Caldwell, M/M J. T. Butler, William Borskey, Charlotte Bollinger, M/M H. Block, M/M W. Hitch

Friends: M/M Lee Shaffer, Patsy Powell, Marguerite Knight, M/M Ed Blackburn, M/M R. Shaver, M/M P. Coates

SHUBAEL TENNEY: A STORY

The Merrimac River Valley of New Hampshire holds the village of Dunbarton, New Hampshire, founded in 1765. According to its modern web site, it was in the geographic center of New England. There, on May 12, 1804, a child of one of the village's early families of Scottish descent, named Tenney, was born. He was called Shubael (or Shubal), after a father or grandfather. Tenneys apparently migrated to eastern Massachusetts Bay Colony towns like Haverhill and Bradford in the mid-1600s but began to spread elsewhere in New England by the early 1700s. Tenneys were Presbyterians.

In the late 1840s, probably following the lead of his younger brother, John, who arrived in Thibodaux in the early 1840s, Shubael learned of opportunities in the bayou town and moved. He earlier had lived in Georgia and Tennessee: the 1850 Census listed three of his children – Charles, John, and Eugene, born in Georgia, and a child, Laura, age 4, born in Tennessee. John Tenney, a carpenter age 40 in 1850, had a wife named Elvira and a seven-year daughter named Elnora born in Thibodaux.

After his arrival, Shubael Tenney founded the Thibodaux Female Institute in 1847. Located a half-mile below town fronting on Bayou Lafourche, the school housed fifty girls. The school's "principal study room" was "large, well ventilated, and conveniently arranged for one hundred pupils." Tenney solicited business across south Louisiana. The Franklin Planters' Banner of October 4, 1849, for example, advertised it extensively. Tenney, who taught "Mathematics, Natural and Moral Philosophy," was one of seven teachers. Others included three ladies of the Ligon family, who lived with the Tenneys and one of whom instructed "in Embroidery and Fancy-work;" Mrs. J. Rouvert taught French; Miss C. Redfield taught piano and guitar; and John Thuer was "Professor of Vocal and Instrumental Music, and Lecturer in the Elemental Principles and Science of Music."

The Institute cost parents tuition and board of \$70 (today at least \$2,000) for each of two five month stays; additionally, they were charged monthly \$1 for washing, \$1 for bed and bedding, \$2 for French lessons, \$7 for "Music on Piano," \$1 for using the piano to practice, and \$3 for "Drawing and Painting, Embroidery, and Monochromatic Painting, each." For those who wished to take them, "Calesthenics and Sacred Music" were free. The school prided itself as being "liberal and extensive, embracing all those branches of female education, both solid and ornamental, usually taught in female academies."

The presence of a Protestant school (as well as the new public Guion Academy on Jackson Street) upset the Roman Catholic priest in Thibodaux, Father Charles Menard. In the 1850s, he established both Mount Carmel Academy for girls and the St. Aloysius Academy for boys. For the latter, located "near the Canal [now Canal Blvd.]," the lot cost Menard "800 dollars." St. Aloysius boasted two professors and fifty pupils, among them twenty-five "transfers from the protestant school." [The building was moved in the 1970s and became the home of our Association members Mr. & Mrs. Jack Wise.]

Shubael Tenney served devotedly as an elder in his Thibodaux Presbyterian church. Among co-church goers were the three Ligon ladies, who eventually married and moved away. In addition were Martha Ann and Louisiana Scudday Goode – both buried in St. John's Historic Cemetery. Perhaps because of the high death rates in the region during the yellow fever epidemics of the 1850s, Tenney took his family in 1859 to Fayette, Jefferson County, Mississippi. He returned after the Civil War, re-opening the Institute in 1867. His death on March 30, 1870, came from paralyzing injuries after having been thrown from his horse-driven buggy. Shubael Tenney is buried in St. John's Cemetery, apparently the only member of his immediate family to be interred there. [Tenney's monument states his

birth year as 1800, differing from other research sources.]

Shubael and John Tenney of New Hampshire initiated a family of Tenneys some of whom still live in Thibodaux. They are in medicine, dentistry, construction, and on. They exemplify the talented and ambitious people from afar who populated this early 19th century south Louisiana town.

[Sources include *The Planter's Banner of Franklin, Louisiana, October 4, 1849*; *Caleb Stark, A History of the Town of Dunbarton, Merrimack County, New Hampshire, from the Grant by Mason's Assigns, in 1751, to 1860 (Concord: G. Parker Lyon, 1860 [Google search February 14, 2018]; <http://www.dunbartonnh.org/> [February 14, 2018]; Eddie "Bush" Bernard, *A History of the Presbyterian Church of Thibodaux*, <http://www.lafourche.com/presbyterian/narrative.htm> (12/6/2017); *Excerpt from Charles M. Menard, 'Annals of the Church of St. Joseph ...', 122 (Courtesy Lorraine H. Wise); U. S. Census, 1850 and 1860; Records and Recollections of Thibodaux, Louisiana (The Woman's Club of Thibodaux, Louisiana, n.d.)*]*



*Shubael Tenney monument St. John's Historic Cemetery
Photo courtesy David Cassard*