

ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY - MARCH 2022 NEWSLETTER

CHAIRMAN CLYDE FOUST'S REPORT

The Cemetery Association Board and St. John's Vestry are working on remedies for improved drainage in the Cemetery. A local civil engineer has been hired by the Vestry to assist with the plans. The Cemetery Warden, David Cassard, also has obtained estimates for additional work on the many live oak trees which were damaged by Hurricane IDA. The Cemetery Association will be asked to help fund both of these large, complex projects.

A CLEAN-UP FOR THE AGES

Following Hurricane Ida last August 29 the St. John's Vestry obtained help from a tree trim company almost immediately, to clear the Cemetery and fence line of branches and other debris. But much remained to do. On one sunny October Saturday many Cemetery volunteers gathered to work: Mickey Guillory, Alice Strausser, Peggy Baumann, David Cassard, Kathleen and Jim Koontz, E. J. and Brownyn Grabert, Melinda Ensley, Becca Galloway, Rev. Holly Burris, Ben Roth, Mary K. Blackburn, Kate Baumann, Gloria Hunter, Allen Alexander, Charles Clayton, Dora Mae Cheramie, Clyde and Karen Foust, and John Dennis. What joy! What a contribution!

LATE WINTER WORK DAY SCHEDULED

On Saturday March 19 there will be a work day in the Cemetery. Please come and enjoy the company and good feelings after assisting with a Cemetery cleanup and repair. Wear work clothes, bring tools, have gloves! 9:00 AM to Noon.

2021 DONORS TO ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

Your support this past year was outstanding and will be a great help in reimbursing St. John's for much work planned in the Cemetery. Thank you!

Angels: Azby Fund, Nell T. Boersma, Rev. Deacon & Mrs. Charles DeGravelles, M/M Paul H. Due, M/M Robert H. Ells, II, Olivia Ann B. Gresham, Marion C. Lifsey, M/M Bobby Marcello, Peltier Foundation, M/M David Plater

Cherubs: Agnes Esteve, M/M Clyde Foust, Dianne Frost, M/M Willard Hitch, Jr., Mary Anne Hoffmann, M/M David Lowe, Diane T. Martin (Albemarle, LLC)

Spirits: Dr./Mrs. Allen Alexander, M/M Harold Block, M/M Ed Blackburn, William Borskey, Rev. Holly Burris, M/M David Cassard, Dr. Susan Crawford, Janice Crisp & Elizabeth King, Dr. Jonathan Durocher, M/M Nicholas Fry, Patricia Gaubert, M/M E. J. Grabert, Mickey Guillory, Dr./Mrs. Leo Hebert, J. Roderick Heller, III, Patricia A. Hoening, M/M James Koontz, Judge/Mrs. Walter I. Lanier, Jr., Janet Lee, Dr./Mrs. Wes Magee, III, Dr./Mrs. David Middleton, Lawrence Pugh, Dr./Mrs. William Robichaux, Ben Roth, III, Marion C. Segger, M/M Charles Shaver, Kristi Smith, Alice Strausser, Alice Walther, Stevia Walther, Lorraine Wise, Billye S. Wood

Friends: Olie & Sylvia Adams, Irma Arceneaux, Henry F. Brownlee, Virginia Casse, Philip Darce, Rita Dickie, M/M Cam Herpel, M/M Luke Joseph, Addie Joy Kearns, M/M Marshall Martin, Jr., Ann McDonald, John McInerny, Lucie Morvant, M/M Nathan Musso, Anne Lovell Rieniets, Joy Rogers, M/M Murphy Rogers, Eugene Roth, Pat Szush, M/M Richard Weimer

A STORY - THE WINDER FAMILY OF TERREBONNE PARISH, LA

It is widely known that the large city block on which St. John's Episcopal Church and Cemetery sit was part of Ridgefield Plantation, the property of Caroline Lucretia Winder Guion and her husband George S. Guion. Obtained through inheritance from Caroline's stepfather John Davidson Smith, the land for church and cemetery was donated to St. John's in 1843. Less familiar to the background story of St. John's Historic Cemetery is that Caroline had a brother, Van Perkins Winder, born in Maryland, who with his Tennessean wife Martha Ann Grundy also migrated to Louisiana. Settling first on Bayou Lafourche and then in nearby Terrebonne Parish, by December 1845 the couple owned a sugar cane plantation at the time and to this day called Ducros Plantation. Purchased by the Winders from Thomas Butler for \$60,000, it is located near Schriever and fronts on Bayou Terrebonne. The Winder and Guion family properties adjoined "in the rear," between Thibodaux and Schriever.



Van Perkins Winder, 1809-1854



Martha Ann Grundy Winder, 1812-1891

Van Perkins Winder and Martha Ann Grundy married on December 7, 1828. She then only sixteen and he nineteen, the couple had become acquainted when he was a student at the University of Nashville and she attended Nashville Academy. The ceremony took place in Winchester, Tennessee, miles from the bride's home in Nashville, while her father Felix Grundy was on a trip and unaware of the marriage. The disruption caused by Martha's and Van P's elopement eventually was healed, family ties were re-established, and Van and Martha Winder often returned to Tennessee on visits, especially during summers, to escape Louisiana's heat and humidity.

Fifteen children were born of that union. Seven of the children survived to maturity. Of them, four - Felix Grundy Winder (who died June 1863 at the Battle of Vicksburg), George Guion Winder, John Bass Winder, and Sarah Guion Winder - are buried at St. John's Historic Cemetery. Van Perkins and Martha Ann Winder and many of their children rest in the "Old City Cemetery" near downtown Nashville, Tennessee.



Felix Grundy Winder, late 1860s

The Winder family has made its mark in the Lafourche-Terrebonne region ever since Van and Martha arrived. A visual reminder of the influence and wealth of Martha Ann and Van P. Winder is the large Greek Revival mansion that still commands a view to the west of LA 20, near Schriever. Now owned by Richard "Dickie" Bourgeois, a board member of the Cemetery Association, the house is used for weddings and other functions. Its 1850s architect remains unknown, but his identity may be within reach. While undertaking renovations some years ago, Bourgeois uncovered inscription on the back door frame revealing the identities of the master carpenters. Named Morgan Springer and Sciotha S. Evans, they continued to work on the house in 1861, some seven years after its commencement.

Our February-March 2019 Newsletter related some of the tale of Springer and Evans, but it bears elaboration here: In 1840 Springer came from Fayette County in western Pennsylvania to Thibodaux. He was accompanied by his friend James Frost, the latter a builder (with Absalom Kees) of St. John's Episcopal Church in 1843-44. Evans arrived in Thibodaux from Missouri later in the 1840s. After Frost's death during the 1853 Yellow Fever Epidemic, his Succession sale in early 1854 included two slave carpenters named Dan and Aaron. Van Perkins Winder, then preparing to build his home at Ducros, learned of the availability of the slaves and acquired Dan and Aaron for \$2,000 and \$2,650, respectively. Van paid well above their Succession value; he immediately arranged to sell the two artisans to the newly-formed carpenter partnership of Springer and Evans, just in time for them to begin the construction of the Ducros House. The new house very possibly enveloped the original one, in which the Winders already were living.

Van P.'s death in November 1854 at age 49, from yellow fever, did not stop the work at Ducros; Martha assumed the duty of overseeing it. After Morgan Springer died and was entombed in St. John's Historic Cemetery in the summer of 1861, his Succession inventory included half the value of the slaves Dan and Aaron; Evans owned the other half. And Martha owed money to Springer's estate and to Sciotha S. Evans for work on her house that remained unfinished even after seven years. No record exists whether Springer's heirs and Evans collected on the debt Martha Winder owed them. The fates of the artisans Dan and Aaron also are unknown.

Sources consulted: "Van Perkins Winder and Martha Ann Grundy," courtesy J. Roderick Heller, III, Franklin, TN; Christopher E. Cenac & Claire Domangue Joller, Hardscrabble & Hallelujah Legacies of Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana (2016); Lafourche Parish, LA, Records