

THE STORIES CONTINUE

He left us on edges of our chairs, but retired historian John Dennis now tries to give us an end to Minnie Williams's attempts at saving our oak trees and having an iron fence built. In next fall's issue, we hope to have Jane Suthon Lovegrove, now living in Roanoke, entertain us with the tale of a saintly relative named Georgina, who dwells in our Cemetery.

THE FENCE, THE TREES, AND MINNIE: PART II

by John Dennis, et al.

The indomitable Minnie Williams finally succeeded in getting the St. John's Vestry to approve a proposal for an iron fence around the Cemetery. By December 8, 1915, she obtained from the New Orleans contractor William Pierce a formal bid. For \$1,670, he would construct the iron fence measuring 299' 6" on two sides of the Cemetery and 310' 5" on the other two sides. Included were two gates each having ten foot openings, the gates to be equipped with "first class brass locks with two keys to each lock." The work was to begin within 30 days from signing the contract and be completed within 90 days after the contract was signed. Due at signing was \$200, with the balance payable at completion of the work. In an undated action, and represented by W. E. Howell, E. F. Pugh, and W. W. Jeffries, the Vestry approved the contract.

Yet another delay ensued, apparently while the work was underway. Pierce encountered trouble with the existing fence and limbs of the oak trees, which blocked his work path. He requested Minnie to have that fence removed. She directed the request to the Vestry and suggested that the funds from its sale to be used to add to the iron fence construction. Apparently also at Pierce's request, Minnie asked the Vestry to have trees trimmed to conform with ones that already were trimmed on one side of the Cemetery.

When rejecting Minnie's request for additional trimming, which she mistakenly informed Pierce would be done, the Vestry in June 1916 told Pierce that no one on the Vestry was "aware of the fact that these trees were to be trimmed before the completion of your contract," and that no changes would be allowed to the contract. The Vestry expected Pierce "to complete this work at once in accordance with this contract and your failure to do so will necessitate the members of this Vestry making other arrangements for the erection of the fence. . . ."

The issue somehow resolved, at the meeting of September 22, 1916, the Vestry approved the report of Howell and accepted the iron fence around St. John's Cemetery. Constructing the iron fence had taken nine years. By that time, nine members of Minnie's family occupied the Williams family tomb in the Cemetery.

A bit of additional family history is needed: Dora Louise Williams, b. 1867, one of Minnie's older sisters, married Henry G. Bush, who died 1911, and then remarried Charles Janvier, prominent in New Orleans and its postmaster from 1916 to 1925. Janvier died in 1927 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, New Orleans, presumably also the burial spot for Dora, who died in 1934. Daisy Williams, b. 1875, married Dr. Beverly Smith of Franklin, LA, who died in 1925; and Dr. Smith and Daisy, who passed away in 1952, both are buried in Franklin.

Soon after the fence saga, Minnie, her mother Eudora, and younger sister Ruby moved to New Orleans, where during the influenza epidemic in 1918 the latter two died, their bodies returned to St. John's Cemetery for burial. Minnie remained in the City, where she was listed residing in October 1923 after her brother William died. A person of wealth, Minnie invested in property, acquiring a lovely house at 3437 St. Charles Avenue in late 1924, for \$24,500—a handsome sum, 20 times or so that in today's dollars. She lived next door, at 3439 St. Charles, a block above Louisiana Avenue, and in 1925 her garden was shown in a city-wide garden contest. Society articles

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