

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

ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

FALL 2024 NEWSLETTER

ST. JOHN'S CEMETERY HAPPENINGS

Most recent cleaning and restoration projects are shared in Mother Holly's article as follows. Denis Gaubert has shared historical information in previous newsletters and information about Louisiana Scudday and Sidney Moore Goode as their tomb/monument was cleaned and preserved recently.

The SJHCA Annual Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 6:00 P.M. in the library of Hunter Horgan Hall.

INVITATION TO JOIN IN DECORATING ST. JOHN'S CEMETERY ON ALL SOULS' DAY

About a year-and-a-half ago, my sister made me aware of a website called Newspapers.com. It was about the time I had my first bout of Covid so while I was stuck in my house convalescing, I became quite obsessed with researching articles from the mid- to late-1800s and early-1900s that had anything to do with St. John's Episcopal Church. I became fascinated with reading all the obituaries for the people who are buried in the cemetery, many of whom were not affiliated with the church since St. John's was, for a time, the only protestant cemetery in town. Aside from the well-documented historical figures buried here, these obituaries included prominent citizens of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches, immigrant plantation workers who had no local family or church affiliation, and the heartbreaking accounts of so many who were simply listed by name, date, and place of burial because it was during the yellow fever epidemic of 1898 and the list of the dead left no room for more detailed obituaries.

There are many fascinating and amusing articles on the different community and social activities that St. John's hosted and/or participated in. One of the yearly observances that were mentioned year after year was that of decorating the cemeteries here in Thibodaux for All Saints' / All Souls' Day. The following article from The Thibodaux Sentinel dated November 6, 1880, documents one of the earliest All Saints' Day adornment of the tombs and graves at St. John's Cemetery.

"All Saints' day was observed in Thibodaux with the usual solemnity that characterises (sic) the return of that day set apart to commemorate the virtues of the dead. The graves were handsomely and lovingly decorated in both cemeteries and services were held in St. Joseph's and St. John's churches. There is no religious observance more sacred than the commemoration of the dead who repose in our cemeteries, and it is a source of gratification to see that Protestants are beginning to take an interest in the decorations and services peculiar to All Saints' Day. St. John's Cemetery was, for the first time, handsomely decorated and visited by large numbers of citizens."

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s the newspaper chronicles the event at both churches each year with this particularly lovely description appearing in the November 7, 1885 edition:

"This day was, as usual, in Thibodaux, dedicated to care and attention, paid by the living, to the silent homes of the beloved and revered dead... On Sunday morning, in St. John's Cemetery we saw a little ten year old girl, busily gathering moss and flowers with which to decorate and embellish the tomb of her father, whom she can barely remember. How beautiful and lovely she appeared! All alone, she was busily engaged in her pious work with no one to suggest or dictate, but when she finished her task, no tomb was more handsomely decorated."

The article then goes on to document one of the challenges that continues to this day: that of battling time and nature to maintain this beautiful and sacred space filled with artistic monuments that commemorate those who have gone before:

"With these affectionate proofs of devotion, and amid those lovely decorations, were also marks of decay and oblivion. Here and there were venerable tombs, and vaults falling into decay, graves that had sunk to the level of the soil, covered with sod, leaving nothing to indicate their location; silent facts that point to decay and forgetfulness."

Over the years, from at least 2011, Teddy Pierre provided the work of preservation and restoration of many of the tombs and monuments in the cemetery. His craftsmanship, passion, and his dedication to his vocation are appreciated and will be missed. May he rest in peace and rise in glory with all the souls of the faithfully departed.



Donelson Family Tomb

*St. John's Historic Cemetery Association, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) organization (Tax id # 72-6020733) under the Internal Revenue Code.
All donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

Through the efforts of David Cassard in finding suitable and qualified restorers, the vestry of St. John's has contracted with Cypress Building Conservation to commence work on the larger restoration projects, and with Brandy Brunet on smaller restoration and cleaning projects. At the time of this writing, cleaning has been completed on the tombs of Louisiana Scudday Goode and William James Donelson (at a cost of \$1,500), and restoration on the Rutledge tomb is scheduled to begin at the end of August or early September (with the estimated cost being \$14,900).

While I'm sure that there have been All Saints' celebrations more recently than the late 1800s and early 1900s, and while I know that many family members come on their own on or around November 1 to visit and adorn a loved one's final resting place, I, as rector here, would like to revive the tradition of having the Saturday closest to All Saints' Day be a day when all are encouraged to come and adorn the graves—even if you don't have a relative buried here.

So, on Saturday, November 2, 2024, from dawn to dusk, the cemetery will be open for all to come and adorn a grave with flowers. From 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. the Parish Hall will be open to provide the use of restrooms, and offer coffee and water. The church will also be open from 8:30 to 5 p.m. if you would like to come in and lift up personal prayers for those who have gone before or just want to look around. I am really excited to reintroduce this tradition and hope that there will be a wonderful turnout so that we can live up to reports given in the past such as this one from the Thibodaux Sentinel, Saturday, November 12, 1887:

"Never has the Cemetery of St. John's presented so beautiful a view as it did on All Saints' Day...During the forenoon gentle hands covered the tombs of the loved and lost ones, with flowers, immortelles, and loving decorations."

I hope to see as many of you as can join us on All Souls' Day to reinstate this lovely custom of remembering and honoring all who are buried in this beautiful and sacred space.

The Rev. Holly Burriss+

SIDNEY MOORE GOODE AND LOUISIANA SCUDDAY GOODE

St. John's Cemetery is the final resting place of a married couple whose lives had a decidedly western movement across the Southern United States. The husband, Sidney Moore Goode, was born in Georgia, grew up and married in Alabama, moved to Mississippi, then finally relocated to Louisiana. His wife, Louisiana Scudday Goode, was born in South Carolina. The inscription on his grave in the Cemetery reads:

SIDNEY MOORE GOODE
Born in
Elbert Co., Georgia
Jan. 18, 1797.
Died in
the Parish of Lafourche
Nov. 3, 1846.

According to a family history of the Goode family, *Virginia Cousins: A Study of the Ancestry and Posterity of John Goode of Whitby (Richmond, Virginia: 1887)*, Sidney Moore Goode, while still a boy, accompanied his father from Georgia to Clarke County, Alabama. While a teenager, he served as an aide on the staff of General Andrew Jackson during the War of 1812 and was present at the capture of Pensacola in November 1814. He became ill sometime after and was sent home, thereby missing the climactic Battle of New Orleans. He later studied law and was admitted to the bar. He married Louisiana Scudday on November 7, 1820, in Jackson, Clarke County, Alabama. Around 1827, the couple relocated to the town of Marion in Perry County, Alabama, where he set up a law practice.

Mr. Goode was public-spirited and actively involved in both the politics and civic affairs of his resident communities during his lifetime. While residing in Marion, Alabama, he was appointed in January 1831 to a Perry County committee to nominate a candidate to fill the office of governor, vacant due to the election of the sitting governor to the U. S. Senate. Later that year, prominent citizens of the county met

in the town of Marion to make preparations for the celebration of the Fourth of July. Mr. Goode and four other men were appointed as a committee to hire a contractor to provide a barbecue and to invite a religious minister to deliver an invocation. Mr. Goode was also elected "President" for the day of the celebration.

In 1838, having moved to Mississippi, Mr. Goode was elected as one of the directors of the Wahalak Bank in Macon, Kemper County, Mississippi, and was appointed by the board as the bank president. The following year, 1839, he was a member of the Mississippi State House of Representatives, representing Kemper County, and later served a number of terms in the State Senate. Mr. Goode later bought a sugar plantation in Lafourche Parish and the family moved here in the mid-1840s. They were no doubt influenced by the fact that Mrs. Goode's brother, Dr. James Augustine Scudday, had previously relocated here and married a local girl, Marguerite Aubert, in 1841, and was mayor of the town of Thibodaux from 1840 to 1845.

Mr. Goode resided on the family sugar plantation until his death in 1846. According to the Goode family history, one of his neighboring planters was Bishop Leonidas Polk. The family plantation home was unfortunately destroyed by fire around 1859, together with all of its contents, including the family bible with its family history.

Mr. Goode's last will and testament, probated in his succession in Lafourche Parish, reveals some interesting clues as to his stolid and practical character. He made and signed his handwritten will on January 27, 1842, in Kemper County, Mississippi. The first provision stated: "It is my will and desire, after my decease, that my body be decently interred in a plain coffin, and committed to the earth, in the grave yard, near Wahalak by the side of my little son lately deceased, after which it is my will and desire that my executrix [Mrs. Goode] ... pay and discharge all my just debts as early as possible."

The second provision of the will stated: "It is my will and desire, that each of my children have a good substantial [E]nglish education, believing as I do, the Latin and Greek languages to be almost entirely useless, it is not my wish that my sons should waste their time in the study of either. After completing their education should either of them, wish to study a profession I should like for them to do so; but if they have the means of supporting themselves without practicing I would recommend them to settle on a farm and cultivate the earth, avoiding a political life, all copartnerships; security-ships; and especially avoid going in debt. "The will

went on to set out Mr. Goode's desired disposition to his children of the proceeds of the sale of slaves owned at the time of his death, but "avoiding as much as possible a division of families."

Louisiana Scudday Goode was born on March 28, 1803, in the Abbeville District (later County) of South Carolina. She and Mr. Goode were the parents of seven children, one of whom died as a child while the family resided in Mississippi. In 1847, Mrs. Goode was a founding member of the Presbyterian Church of Thibodaux, along with her oldest daughter, Martha Ann Goode. The following year, Martha Ann married the Reverend Daniel McNair, the Presbyterian Church's founding pastor. Following Mr. Goode's death, Mrs. Goode continued to manage the operation of the plantation. In 1849, however, a family meeting was convened in connection with Mr. Goode's ongoing succession proceedings for the purpose of selling off the family property to settle creditors' demands. Initial efforts were unsuccessful and multiple family meetings and inventories of property were necessary before the succession was closed.

Mrs. Goode survived her husband by many years. She died at her home on September 19, 1883, at age 80. Her funeral took place the following day at St. John's Cemetery. The inscription on her grave in the Cemetery reads:

LOUISIANA SCUDDAY WIFE OF
SIDNEY MOORE GOODE
1803 - 1883

I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVETH

Thibodaux's Goode Street, located on or near property once owned by the family, commemorates their name.

Article provided by Dennis Gaubert

Denis Gaubert was born an "Army brat" and oldest son of Thibodaux natives. Born at an army installation where his father was stationed, his legal domicile was designated as his maternal grandparents' modest home in North Thibodaux, which he now owns and uses as a personal retreat, art studio, and "man cave." He attributes his love of history and historical locations to his father. Denis graduated from Thibodaux High School, Nicholls State University, and Louisiana State University Law Center. He retired from his law practice in 2019. He is married to Charlotte Danos Gaubert, who tolerates his idiosyncrasies, collections, cats, and dogs.

Denis is currently working on a book containing historical chronicles of Thibodaux. He is also the lead administrator of the FaceBook private group page, "Thibodaux Memories of Life on the Bayou."



Goode Family Tomb