

ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

FALL 2015 NEWSLETTER

A LETTER TO MEMBERS AND FRIENDS

Included with this newsletter is a message from the President of the Association.

PROJECT REPORT

The St. John's Vestry has asked New Orleans-based artisans for work estimates for repairs and renovation to the front and rear century-old cast iron gates and portions of the damaged iron fence on West Seventh St. In addition, the Vestry awaits estimates of more tomb restoration. It is anticipated that the work, which is funded partly by grants from two local foundations, and by our members, will commence in October.

The Cemetery Association also has agreed to pay for another four individual tomb signs and one large cemetery history sign, to match the present large map sign. The new tomb signs will feature Rev. Archibald Mackenzie, a pastor at St John's 1911-1926; Mary King Fulford, Thibodaux's first postmistress, appointed shortly after the Civil War; the builder of the Lafourche Parish Courthouse in 1861, Morgan Springer; and Rev. Daniel McNair, founding pastor of the Thibodaux Presbyterian Church in 1847. The existing signage already has received much positive reaction from visitors.

WEB SITE CHANGES

The Cemetery Association web site, www.stjhca.org, thanks to Susan Shaffer, is receiving some facelift. Under the link "Visit" there is information about the signage, and "Ancestors" soon will contain a listing of interments in the Cemetery, with lot numbers beside each burial. The Cemetery Map already has the Cemetery plotted.

MEMORIAL SERVICE NOVEMBER 1

There will be a memorial service beginning in the St. John's Historic Cemetery on All Saints Day, Sunday, November 1, at 10:30 AM. People of all faiths are welcome. It will be a great opportunity to share in prayer and memory for those ancestors and friends who have meant much to us and to this community.

THANKS TO RAY BOURGEOIS

Recently our long-time board member Honoré Bourgeois died. We will miss him. Thankfully, his widow, Bennie, was willing to replace him on the board.

ART AT ST. JOHN'S

Last April 11, twenty-eight artists showed their works at St. John's, earning the Cemetery Association over \$1,150 after expenses, to be used for Cemetery care.

The function, chaired by Mike Strausser, included a food vendor, music, and a children's tent, and volunteers gave tours of the Cemetery. Rain beginning at 2 PM shortened things, but the fun event will be held again in April 2016, on a day to be determined.

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

JOHN J. AND OLLIE SZUSH

Among the large family plots in St. John's Historic Cemetery is that of the Szush/Singleton/Ells family.

Born in the village of Bosco, Hungary, in 1894, John Joseph Szush's family migrated to America in 1895. The name is SZÜC in Hungarian, but the immigration authorities in New York spelled and recorded it as pronounced in the Magyar tongue, SZUSH.

John's parents moved to Pittsburgh, and later to Cleveland, where the father worked in steel mills. A restless youth, John left home early and found his way to Texas around the time of World War I. His intent was to become a cowboy—hence, his youthful portrait as one.



But he took up the machine shop trade, working for railroads in Houston and Beaumont. In 1920 he met and married Ollie Singleton, whose father worked on Bull Run Plantation near Chacahoula, Louisiana, next to the Southern Pacific Railway.

John took a job at the impressive brick West End Foundry on the edge



From left to right, John J. Szush, Jr., James W. Szush, Eunice V. Szush, and Pat Szush

As World War II approached, John Szush, Jr., joined Andrew Higgins in New Orleans. Higgins, who had designed boat and marsh equipment in the oil fields, produced the famous P-T and beach landing boats for the United States war effort. At a top-secret machine shop located in City Park, Szush made the first P-T boat shafts and became shop foreman for over 150 (mostly elderly) men and women. Visiting New Orleans, President F. D. Roosevelt personally congratulated John for his services.

Restless, Szush left Higgins to join the Merchant Marine in the Pacific. He once was pulled from duty to repair a disabled U. S. Navy ship carrying essential war materials. Retooling the ship's screw, he had it in service in days, a feat which none other could manage.

asking him if the young man intended to win the war by himself.

Both Szush Sr. and Jr. continued at the West End Foundry after the war, but John Jr. moved to New Orleans and, following employment at the Rheem plant on Jefferson Avenue, set up his own machine shop in Harahan. He maintained close contacts with St. John's and made candelabra and other effects for the church. Ollie and John Szush died in 1968 and 1977, respectively, and are buried in the Cemetery, along with other Singleton/Ells relatives. John Szush, Jr., survived until 2006 and is interred in New Orleans. The ancient West End Foundry, a symbol of Thibodaux's manufacturing past, burned in the 1970s. Only an old tin shed remains.

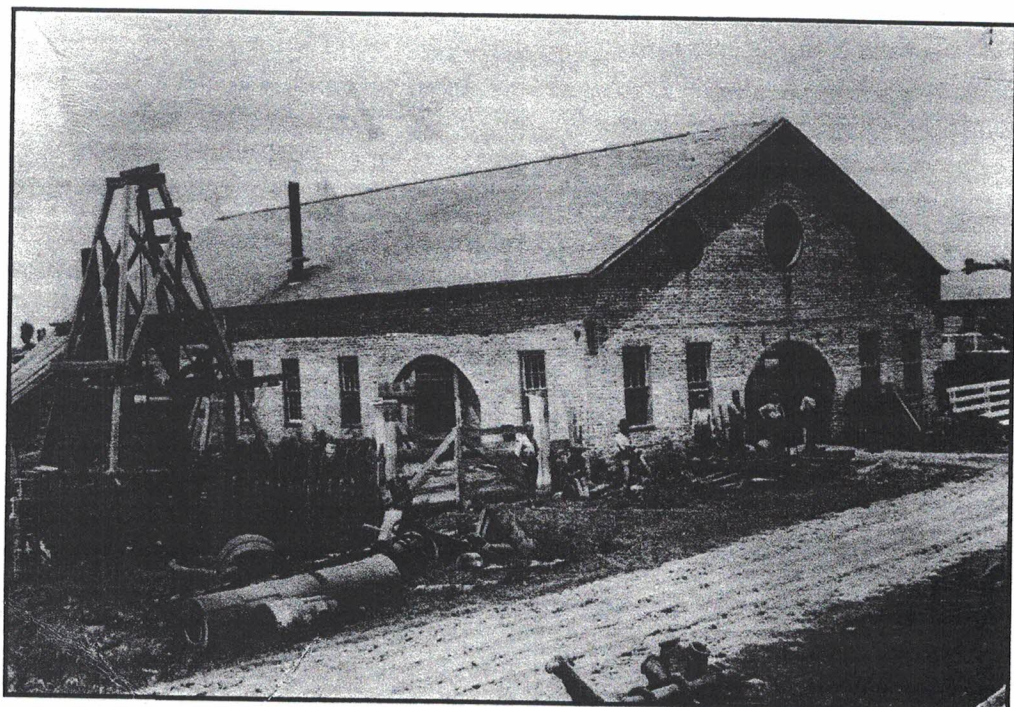
(Family photos courtesy of Pat Szush. Information for

of Thibodaux, built in the 1870s by Thomas Jeffries, of England (who also is interred in the Cemetery). It thrived making and repairing boilers, gearing, engine shafts, and the like for sugar mills and boats in the area. In time, John Szush became owner of the foundry, which survived into the 1970s.

Living near the shop, the Szushes had a son, John Joseph Szush, Jr., in 1921. The boy followed his father's model and, not caring for school, often played hooky. Instead, he ran the shop lathe. The Szushes attended St. John's Episcopal Church, and John Jr. frequently was drafted to pump the organ for the organist. By the time he was a teen, the youth was a master machinist; he worked full time following seventh grade. At age 17, he was married to Elsie Dantin. An inventor, in 1939 he received his first of many patents.

According to the family, President Roosevelt again sought out John Jr.,

the article from Pat and Michael Szush, Mark Naquin, and Ronald Berger and Terrebonne Life Lines, Winter 2010)



West End Foundry, courtesy of Nicholls State University Archives