

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

# ST. JOHN'S HISTORIC CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

## SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2022 NEWSLETTER

### SUMMER CEMETERY SLOSH

What a wet summer! Thankfully, St. John's was able to proceed with a long-awaited limestone "rocking" of the center aisle, named for George S. Guion. The cost was \$4,000 for materials, the work done gratis by Mitch Bourgeois, a member of the St. John's congregation. Grass eventually will cover it, but a firm, much-needed base will remain. YOUR contributions reimbursed St. John's Vestry.

### TOMB CLEANING

In addition, brick mason-restorer Teddy Pierre returned from knee surgery and has cleaned a number of stone and brick tombs. Blame our mold-productive climate! He also washed the lawn crypt, built in the 1960s in the Cemetery west corner. Pierre uses "D-2 Biological Solutions," a Massachusetts-made product that is recommended by the National Park Service. It is not harmful to wood, old brick, or stone, as are other cleaners. Again, the Cemetery Association is reimbursing the Church for the expenses.



*Newly rocked Guion Ave. and cleaned lawn crypt (courtesy of David Cassard)*

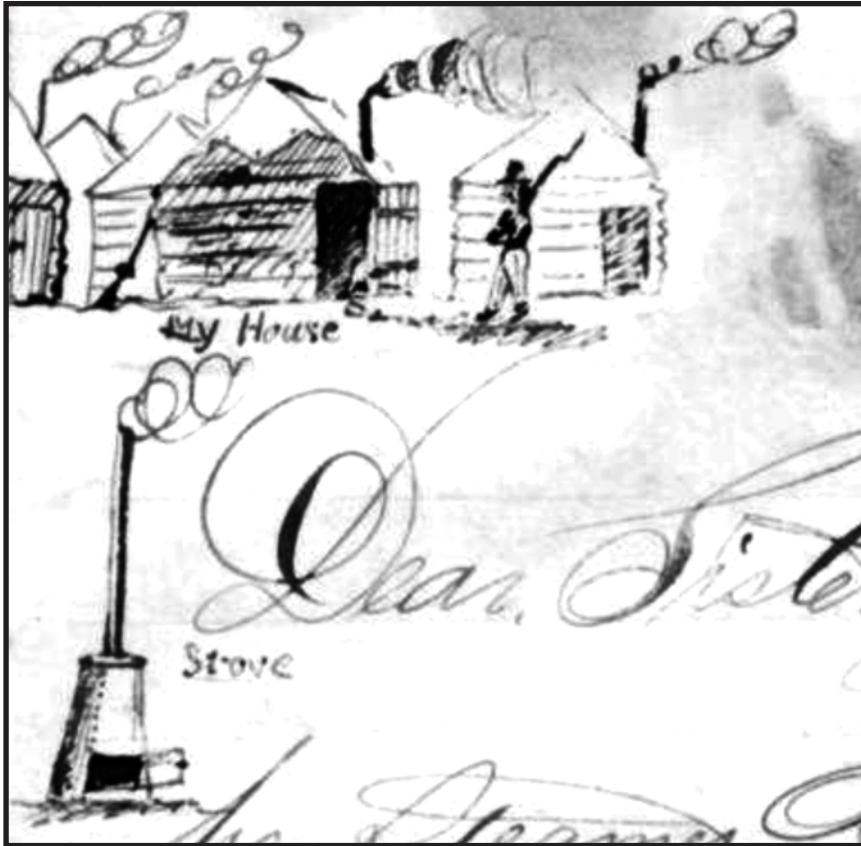
### FUTURE REPAIRS & TREE TRIMMING

Some years ago, informative signs were placed in the Cemetery to identify several dozen tombs and the persons buried in them. They constitute an important part of a self-tour for visitors. The signs have begun to fray from constant exposure to our harsh weather. The Vestry is arranging for edgings and clear plastic UV coverings on the signs, which should help preserve them. Perhaps in five or so years, they will need to be replaced. Remaining to do is Cemetery tree trimming after Hurricane Ida damaged many live oaks. The damage was extensive, the cost will be over \$20,000; funds are being sought now. Our Cemetery condition is not unusual: the Thibodaux area still is recovering from Hurricane Ida last year. St. John's roof has been replaced, and the damaged Church belfry now is receiving extensive repairs.

For these many and essential projects, we thank you for contributing to the Cemetery Association. Please pass the word along to friends and relatives.

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

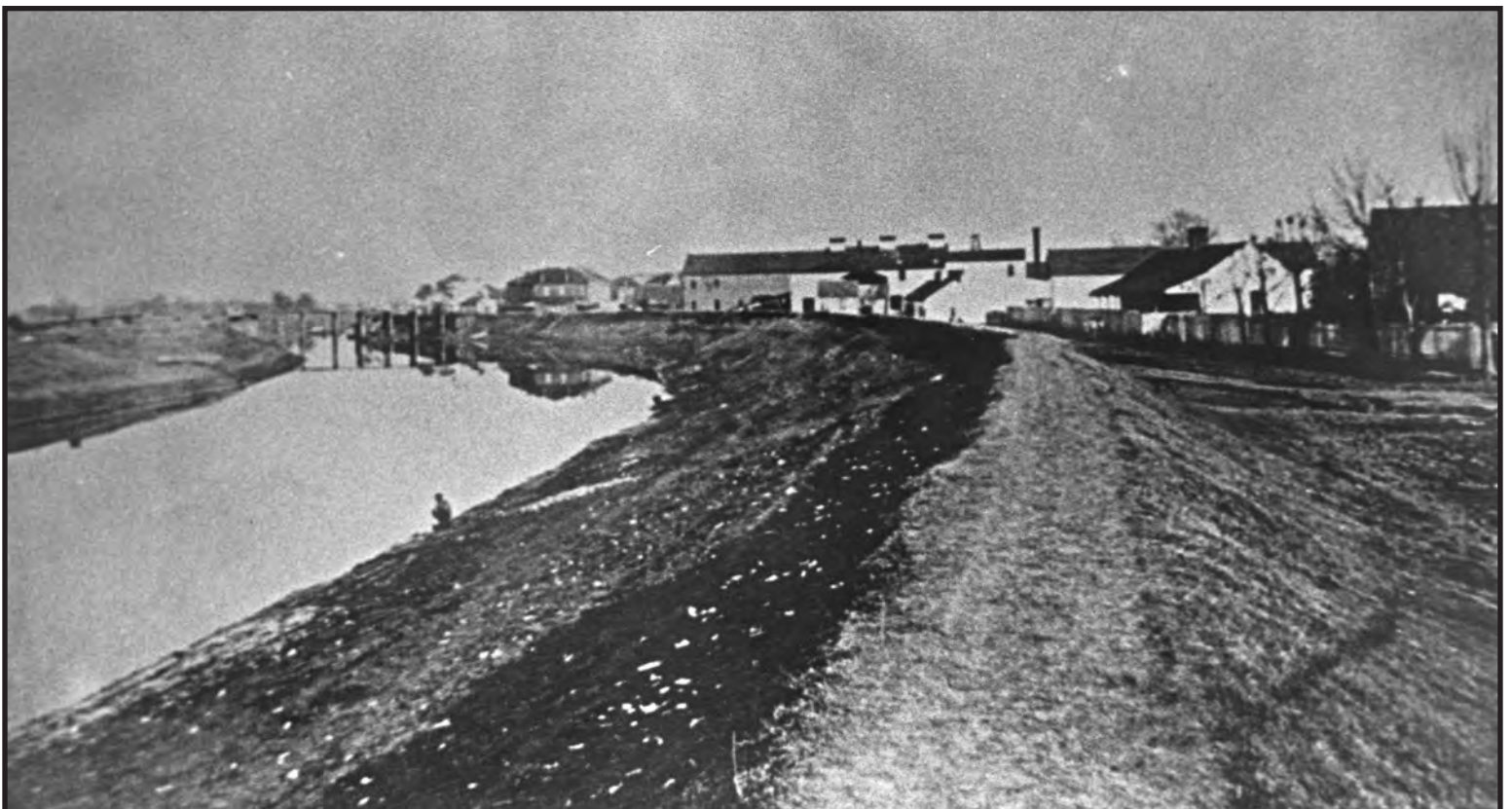
## A STORY - AN UNWANTED NEIGHBOR, 1863-66 - CONT'D



*Photo of NY regiment hut (courtesy of Hofstra University Special Collections)*

against-Yankee-soldier effort. At its end in 1865, the town's returning veterans found a shabby, dilapidated, and still-occupied environment. As observed by Silas Grisamore, the mayor chosen in 1865 and 1866 and the editor of *The Weekly Thibodaux Sentinel*, Union troops had taken over the Parish Courthouse and Jail and other buildings, as well as the Guion Academy public school. A number of private residences were used to house officers. "The citizens were down spirited and uncertain in their movements," and "as we [Confederate veterans] met upon the streets, or sat upon our galleries, talking over the scenes of our late journeyings, . . . the question would frequently be asked, 'What is going to become of us?'"

By late 1865/early 1866, Union troops commenced their departures, normal life slowly returned. The people of the community, wrote Grisamore, "began to cast sadness behind them." The unwanted neighbor was gone, at last.



*Thibodaux during the Civil War (courtesy of Nicholls State University Archives)*

*Sources consulted: The War of the Rebellion: Official Records Part 1, XXVI; Hart and Nichols Collection, Special Collections, Hofstra University; Christopher G. Pena, Scarred by War: Civil War in Southeast Louisiana (2004); William Littlejohn Martin (Philip D. Uzee, comp.), Records and Recollections of Thibodaux, Louisiana (1972); David D. Plater, ed., "The Remarkably Neat Church in the Village of Thibodaux": An Antebellum History of St. John's Episcopal Church (1994, 2016); Edward L. Molineux Photograph Collection, Nicholls State University Archives and Special Collections*

Among the several regiments at Camp Hubbard, the 2nd Rhode Island Cavalry had just returned from fighting along the Teche and before that the Battle of Port Hudson. Attrition had reduced its members, who had a reputation of being poorly disciplined. The commander of the U. S. Department of the Gulf, General Nathaniel Banks, dissolved the regiment and ordered its remaining enlisted men transferred to the newly formed 1st Louisiana (Union) Cavalry at Camp Hubbard.

The loss of their treasured regiment precipitated a mutiny by the Rhode Islanders. They would consent to join another New England regiment but refused to serve with the new Louisiana unit. Its two vociferous leaders, “Pvts. Richard Murphy (alias Richard Smith) and Frederick Freeman (alias William Davis),” remained adamant and rebellious, according to historian Christopher Pena, in *Scarred by War: Civil War in Southeast Louisiana*. Lt. Col. Harai Robinson, the commanding officer of the 1st Louisiana, gave the two men a chance to obey orders. They refused. Immediately Robinson had Murphy and Freeman executed on the spot. The mutiny dissolved.

The presence of Camp Hubbard, so close by one of Louisiana’s most predominant communities, at first was generally a relaxed and pleasant experience despite the occasional drama. The soldiers frequently obtained passes to go into the town or to plantations to buy food items. The presence of United States money circulating helped the locals, although there also were reports of occasional theft and drunkenness.

In early January 1864 Col. Edward Molineux of the 159th N. Y. Infantry arrived to take charge of the Lafourche District. He had over 3,000 United States troops to command, “garrisoned at Thibodaux, Labadieville, Napoleonville, Brashear [now Morgan] City, Fort Butler at Donaldsonville, Plaquemine, and along the [strategically crucial] railroad between New Orleans and Brashear City [at the Atchafalaya River].”

Letters to New York relatives from Col. Molineux were saved and made available, along with rare photographs of the time, to St. John’s for the 1994 book, *The Remarkably Neat Church in the Village of Thibodaux*. Many tents, erected to house the men of the various regiments and the steeples of St. John’s and of the First Methodist Church (1845) on Jackson St., are visible. Drawings in letters by Walter Nichols Hart, a private in the 18th N. Y. Cavalry, show not only Union Army tents but hand crafted huts that the men inhabited at Camp Hubbard, the latter probably during winters.



*Photo of CT regiment tents at Camp Hubbard with St. John’s in background (courtesy of Nicholls State University Archives)*

## A STORY - AN UNWANTED NEIGHBOR, 1863-66

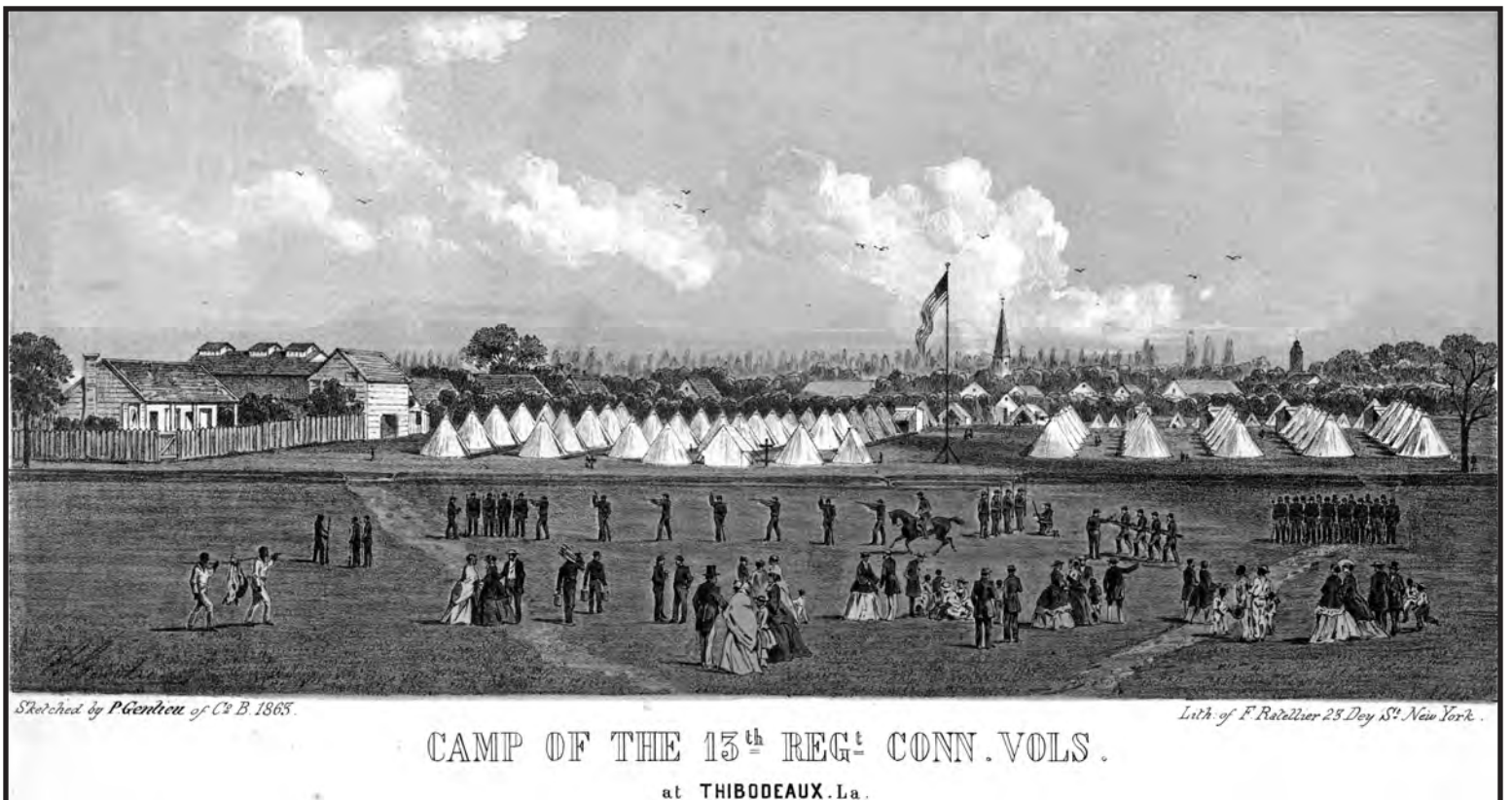
In the Civil War, from late 1862 to the spring of 1863, a number of Union Army regiments under Brig. General Godfrey Weitzel occupied Acadia Plantation just below the town of Thibodaux. The town, supportive of the Confederacy, found unpleasant the nearby presence of enemy soldiers. According to Rev. Charles Menard at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, most were "looters and drunkards." (Menard considered Confederate troops to be similarly undisciplined.)

Union soldiers were withdrawn from the U. S. Department of the Gulf's Lafourche District, of which Thibodaux was the headquarters, to fight in the Battle of Port Hudson and along Bayou Teche. The resumption of Confederate control of Thibodaux, however, was brief. By August 1863, new Union troops were back until the war's end, at least a brigade (about 4,000 men) in strength.

The volunteer Union infantry and cavalry regiments came from Rhode Island, New York, Connecticut, Indiana, and (newly formed) Louisiana. This time, they were encamped behind Cemetery of St. John's, along the front of Ridgefield Plantation and up the Bayou almost a mile, to the downstream boundary of Leighton Plantation. The Guion family had lost its Ridgefield property to confiscation by the United States, probably by reason of the late George S. Guion's role in supporting Louisiana's secession in January 1861.



*Photo of Camp Hubbard NY troops at dress parade (courtesy of Nicholls State University Archives)*



*Sketched by P. Gentou of Co B. 1865.*

*Lith. of F. Roteller 25 Dey St. New York.*

**CAMP OF THE 15<sup>th</sup> REG<sup>t</sup> CONN. VOLS.**

**at THIBODEAUX, La.**

*Print of Camp Hubbard – First Methodist and St. John's Episcopal Churches in background (courtesy of Denis Gaubert)*