

Silas Grisamore of Indiana was one of thousands of northern-born migrants who traveled down the Mississippi River to find their fortunes in the booming ante bellum South. Grisamore arrived in Donaldsonville in 1846 at age 21 and for a time tutored pupils and acted as an overseer on area plantations. In 1849 he began a life of a flatboat store salesman – somewhat akin to the later rolling stores which traveled along the bayous of the 1940s and '50s - but took up residence in Thibodaux in 1857 and eventually opened his own mercantile store. His business thrived. By 1860 he also had helped found Thibodaux Fire Company #1 and was chosen mayor of Thibodaux. He joined and remained for the rest of his life a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and became Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana.

The “bon temps” on Bayou Lafourche ended with the Civil War. Despite his personal opposition to secession Grisamore entered the Army of the Confederacy in what became the 18th Louisiana Infantry. He rose to the rank of Major and served as a valued Quartermaster, in charge of supplying troops with food, clothes, and arms, eventually under the command of General Richard Taylor. He participated in the bloody battles of Pittsburg Landing,

Shiloh, and Mansfield but miraculously escaped serious injury.

Following the War of the Rebellion Grisamore returned to Thibodaux and resumed his business and his mayorship but also became an editor of the Thibodaux Sentinel newspaper. He was elected often to the Lafourche Parish Police Jury and to the School Board. He joined St. John's Episcopal Church and seldom during the remainder of his life was he not serving on the Vestry and as Senior or Junior Warden. In 1878 he married Eudora McBride of Thibodaux (1844-1904), who with her mother and sister is honored by a stained glass window at her own church, First Presbyterian Church of Thibodaux. Although the Grisamores had no children, Eudora McBride Grisamore's relatives still live in the area. Her great niece, Betty (Mrs. Frank) Wurzlow, recently deceased, ardently supported the Cemetery Association. Grisamore's highly entertaining, informative Sentinel series, “Reminiscences of Uncle Silas,” has been published by LSU Press in a book edited by the late military historian Arthur W. Bergeron, Jr.

CEMETERY MAPS AND ITS PLAN

Because of the importance of the old maps of the cemetery, and the need to preserve originals, your Association recently undertook to sponsor copying the originals. Association Board member Honoré Bourgeois graciously covered the cost of the copying, which was done by Houma Map Company. Those copies now can be used as the “working maps” when needed for cemetery planning.

The Cemetery is divided by “streets,” each with a platted name – such as Crane, Polk, Guion, or MacKenzie – for persons prominent in the church's history. Burial plots are large, numbered squares, and each plot is subdivided into quarters or eighths. The locations of every tomb are marked on the plat, and most are identified as to occupant(s). About 20 years ago a conditions survey and identification of each and every tomb was prepared by the restoration scholar Thad Kilpatrick, and it remains a useful resource that is available in the library of Horgan Hall (parish hall).

St. John's Historic Cemetery Association, Inc., is a 501 (c) (3) organization under the Internal Revenue Code.
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