

Walking Tour of Old City Cemetery

Markers

1. Henry Hutchinson was buried here, with military honors, on July 17, 1839. He was accidentally shot by a companion while on a scout, pursuing Indians who had murdered the family of Green Hill Chaires in eastern Leon County. In May 1840, Henry's brother, Charles, hired George Proctor to "put a head and foot-board to the grave around which was put a paling of pitch pine." Although the grave is now unmarked, it can be easily identified because Charles sent a map, noting its location, to his sisters who lived in New York.

2. The earliest marked grave in Old City Cemetery is for Daniel Lynes of Connecticut. During the Territorial Period, most graves were marked with wood headboards and fences. Gravestones had to be ordered from distant places. This simple marble tablestone was probably carved in New York, where Mr. Lynes' family apparently remained, and then shipped to Florida.

3. The marker for Samuel Allen Sheppard (d. 1897) is made of zinc or "white bronze." White bronze was popular at the turn of the century, primarily for statuary and garden furniture. The Monumental Bronze Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut (with six foundries, including one in New Orleans), was the only firm that made gravemarkers. Exposure to air gives the marker a distinctive gray color.

4. Tallahassee was hit by a yellow fever epidemic in 1841. The outbreak began in May and continued until the end of October. Estimates of the deaths range from 230 to 400, although the exact number is not known. Death often came quickly and sometimes carried away entire families. There are only a few gravestones at Old City Cemetery that mark the graves of fever victims, but newspaper accounts and obituaries confirm that members of the Scott family were among those. Mary Ann Scott died of bilious contagious fever on a Sunday evening, and only a few days later, on July 3rd, Mrs. Rebecca Scott died of congestive fever. Burial records indicate that at least one other person is buried in this walled plot.



5. The obelisks at this plot mark the graves of members of the Brown family, including Thomas Brown, Florida's only Whig governor. Brown was a member of the Virginia Legislature from 1817 until he moved his family to Florida in 1828. He operated hotels in Tallahassee, served in various positions in the Territorial government, and in 1845, represented Leon County in the new state's first House of Representatives. He served as Governor from 1849-1853.

6. Dr. William J. Gunn was the first African-American in Florida to graduate from medical school (in Nashville, Tennessee). He opened his practice in Tallahassee in 1882 and according to a 1903 newspaper article, had "a large practice ... who have much confidence in his ability and honor." Dr. Gunn's office was on Duval Street, between College and Jefferson Streets, for many years.



7. This plot shelters the graves of John Proctor and members of his family. His father George, a free-man-of-color, was a master carpenter who left Tallahassee for the California gold fields in 1849. When he did not return, his wife Nancy and her six children were sold as slaves. John was owned by druggist Matthew Lively until 1865. During the Reconstruction period he served in both the Florida House of Representatives and the Senate (1873-1885). He died at his home on Old Bainbridge Road in December 1944, just a few weeks before his 101st birthday.



8. John G. Riley was principal of Lincoln High School and a well-known educator in Tallahassee. He was President of the Tallahassee Civic League and a leader of the Tallahassee Development Club, a black organization associated with the Chamber of Commerce. The Riley House, located at 419 East Jefferson Street, has been restored and is now the headquarters for the local NAACP chapter.

9. This area contains the graves of Union soldiers, believed to have been killed at the Battle of Natural Bridge. The battle took place in southern Leon County when an invasion by Federal troops was stopped by Confederate forces and local volunteers at the St. Marks River (March 5, 1864). The fighting resulted in 21 killed, 89 wounded, and 38 missing in action for the Union forces. Troops at Natural Bridge were black soldiers under the command of white officers. Recent research indicates that at least some of the bodies interred here were later moved to the National Cemetery in Beaufort, South Carolina.



10. Thomas Vann Gibbs was a founder of the Florida State Normal Industrial School. Today, the school, now Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU), is one of the nation's most prominent historically black schools.

11. The Rev. James Page was the first ordained black Baptist minister in Florida. He was born in 1808 in Richmond, Virginia and brought to Leon County in 1828 by his owner, John Parkhill. He was ordained at New Port in Wakulla County in 1852, and while still a slave formed his first congregation at the community of Bel Aire. It is believed to be the oldest black church congregation in Florida. Rev. Page served as a Justice of the Peace in Leon County and in 1870 was a member of the Leon County Commission. He was chaplain of the Florida Senate 1868-1870. His obituary reports that over 3,000 people attended his funeral in 1883.



12. Father Joseph Hugon, a native of France, was assigned to the Catholic parish of north Florida in 1877. He served the church of Tallahassee for thirty-five years, until his death in 1912. Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church (first located on North Monroe Street) was built under his direction in 1898. Father Hugon's gravemarker has a religious motif of a cross and wine glasses, with a Latin inscription on the back that translates, "This man, disdaining the world and earthly things, exulting in the riches from Heaven, molded with his teaching and his art."



13. Confederate soldiers who died during the Civil War are interred in this plot. Records of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, an organization that has tended these graves since the end of the War, report that 186 men—known and unknown—were buried in six grave lots; "Some were brought here after the Battle of Natural Bridge, some after [the Battle of] Clustee, and some died in camps and hospitals near here." The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans conduct services here each year on Confederate Memorial Day (April 26th).

14. The large monument soaring above the grave of Elizabeth Budd Graham reflects the type of funerary art that was popular during the late 19th century. It denotes the socio-economic status of the deceased and her family, and also reflects the esteem and affection that was accorded her. Old City Cemetery has no resident ghost, but stories about Elizabeth being a witch have circulated for many years. This is apparently because the inscribed face of the monument faces west instead of east, which some believe to be a sign of disgrace. However, positioning markers at the head of the grave, facing west, was once common, and there are many examples of this custom in Old City Cemetery. The religious design motif of "no cross" at the top of the marker provides further evidence of Mrs. Graham's good standing in the community.

15. The above-ground tombs for John Long and the R.A. Shine family are distinctive features of Old City Cemetery. The Gothic styled arches and the beautifully carved closure tablets of the Shine tombs are especially impressive. Tombs are common in New Orleans and other early settlements along the Gulf Coast, where climate and swampy lands made above ground interment a practical consideration. Since these conditions do not exist at Old City Cemetery, it is more likely that the tombs were built to replace the type of funerary architecture that was popular during this time period.

16. Old City Cemetery's collection of cast iron fences is an important element of the cemetery's historic character. Cast iron fences became popular in the United States during the mid to late 1800s. One of the most elaborate fences surrounds the Perez and Brokaw plot. Its fine ornamentation reflects the taste and wealth of Brokaw who operated a successful livery stable business opposite the Old Capitol, and built the Brokaw-McDougal House at 329 North Meridian Street.

Historic Tallahassee Preservation Board
and
City of Tallahassee

PLEASE — NO STONE RUBBINGS
Hours of Visitation: Sunrise to Sunset

Cemetery preservation has taken place in many cities because municipalities recognize their responsibility for the stewardship of their historic sites. They also know that, in today's world, old cemeteries have value as open space in urban environments and for heritage education.

Due to limited funding, not all of the gravemarkers in the cemetery were restored. However, the majority of stones damaged by vandalism and weathering have been restored, along with the major cast iron fences. This work was carried out by skilled artisans from New Orleans, New York, and Tallahassee.

In 1991, the City of Tallahassee, with financial support from the Florida Department of State, completed the restoration of Old City Cemetery. The project was sponsored and administered by the Historic Tallahassee Preservation Board.

Brochure text by: Sharyn M. Thompson

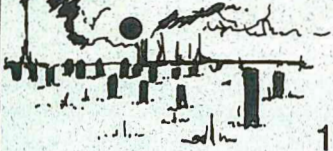
Old City Cemetery

Est. 1829

Macomb Street

Southwest Quadrant

9. Union graves



11. Reverend James Page



10. Thomas Vann Gibbs



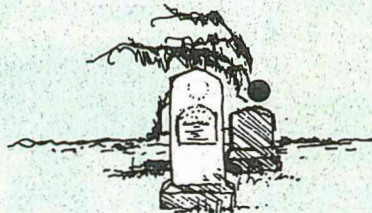
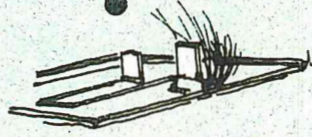
12. Father Hugon

Northwest Quadrant



8. John G. Riley

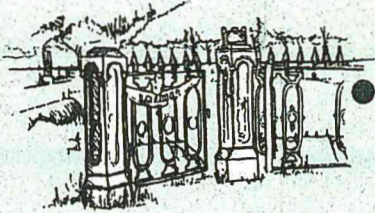
7. Proctor graves



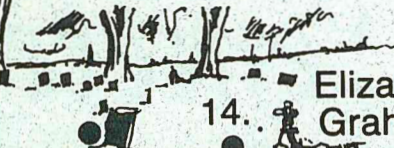
6. D. William J. Gunn

Southeast Quadrant

16. Perez Brokaw



13. Confederate graves



14. Elizabeth Budd Graham

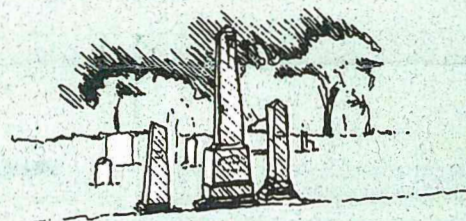
15. John Long



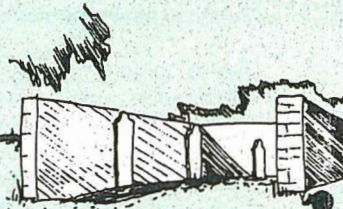
15. Shine tombs



Northeast Quadrant



5. Thomas Brown



4. Scott graves

3. Samuel A. Sheppard

2. Daniel Lynes

1. Henry Hutchinson



Park Avenue

Call Street

M.L. King Boulevard

History

Old City Cemetery is the oldest public cemetery in Tallahassee. It was established in 1829 by the Territorial Legislative Council and acquired by the city in 1840. The ground was laid out in its system of squares and lots in 1841 when a violent yellow fever epidemic swept the city and regulations were required to assure order and sanitation to protect the public.

When the cemetery was established, it was located outside the city boundaries on the far side of a two hundred foot wide clearing that surrounded the town to protect it from Indian attacks. Today, Old City Cemetery is one of Tallahassee's most distinctive historic sites. It is the final resting place for the women and men who contributed to the development of Tallahassee and the state of Florida. Because it was Tallahassee's only public burying ground (nearby St. John's Episcopal Cemetery was established for its congregation in 1840), Old City Cemetery represents a cross section of Tallahassee's people during the 19th century — slaves and planters, governors and store clerks, veterans of wars and victims of yellow fever are all buried here.

When established, the cemetery was segregated. White burials were restricted to the eastern half of the ground, and slaves and free people of color were buried in the western section. Various religious denominations had designated plots, although today there are few indications of the Presbyterian and Catholic areas. Most of the burials in the Jewish section have been moved to other cemeteries.

Tallahassee was a frontier town during its first years and residents had to "make do" with what was available to them. Many early graves were marked with wood head and footboards, which deteriorated over time.

The cemetery seems to have been a desolate place during the territorial and early statehood years. Contemporary newspaper accounts from the period remark about cattle and hogs running over the graves and often complain of the rough and unkept appearance of the site. In 1834, one Tallahassee resident was so dismayed about the way burials were conducted that he wrote a letter to the editor suggesting that the City Council provide a one-horse

hearse to replace "the custom of bringing the coffin in a rough cart."

The writer also deplored the "very insecure and objectionable manner of lowering the silent tenant to his last sad dwelling, by merely slipping ropes beneath the coffin. This practice must always result in distracting the attention from the solemn services of the grave, in exciting painful anxiety for the living and the dead, and sometimes in accidents agonising to the mourners and appalling to the spectators."

The gravemarkers in Old City Cemetery are memorials to those buried here. They are also artistic expressions that reflect changing cultural attitudes toward death and resurrection. Early markers are of marble and usually have simple designs and inscriptions that express grief and mourning. Later markers reflect the Victorian period's interest in classical art and architecture.