

# MAGNOLIA MESSENGER



The Friends of Magnolia Cemetery

*"Remove not the ancient Landmark"*

Fall 2007

## *The Magnificent Ketchums: Part II*

In a previous issue the fall of the house of Dr. George Augustus Ketchum was discussed.

The popular physician for whom Bienville Square's fountain was named left a beautiful Government Street mansion and a proud legacy behind. His only descendant, grandson George Gage, squandered what remained of the fortune and let the family mansion go derelict before a suspicious fire destroyed it.

Dr. Ketchum had two brothers in Mobile: Charles and William. Charles' daughter Mary Anna, married General Thomas Kilshaw Irwin and lived at Oakleigh.

William built one of the city's most enduring landmarks but like his brother George had a ne'er do well descendant, in this case his namesake son.

In a file found at the Mitchell Archives at Oakleigh was found a yellowed newspaper clipping from a Memphis paper which read:

*January 21, 1890: Memphis, Tenn.: SUDDEN DEATH OF A MOBILIAN.*

*W. H. Ketchum, aged about thirty-five years, died suddenly at the Greentree House in this city, this afternoon.*

*Ketchum came here from Mobile, Ala. several months ago and has been drinking heavily.*

*His father is a well known cotton factor of Mobile and his uncle one of the most prominent physicians in Alabama.*

*In back issues of the Mobile Register:*

*January 23, 1890: Mobile, Ala:*

### **The William Ketchum Mansion (Ca. 1870)**

*The Yankee Commander Chose it For His  
Its Mistress Had Other Ideas*

*Courtesy Historic Mobile Preservation Society*

### **NECROLOGICAL**

*A special to the Register from Memphis, Tenn. received yesterday announces the death of Mr. William H. Ketchum, Jr. as follows:*

*W. H. Ketchum, Jr. died suddenly of heart disease at the Greentree Hotel this afternoon.*



*The deceased was the son of major W. H. Ketchum and was born in Washington in 1853.*

*He was raised in Mobile and had only been a resident of Memphis a few months.*

*Notice of the funeral will appear hear after.*

Ironically the place of death of this Mobilian was the Memphis landmark hotel where that city began a lively Mardi Gras celebration in the 1870's.

### **January 24, 1890: FUNERAL NOTICE**

*The friends and acquaintances of William H Ketchum and family are requested to attend the funeral of William H. Ketchum, Jr. from Christ Church at three p. m. today.*

Just how many friends and acquaintances attended the funeral or followed the procession out to Magnolia Cemetery for the burial is unknown. His family consisted at the time of his father, stepmother, two sisters and four stepsisters.

Little could be found regarding the younger Ketchum's life. He was the youngest of three children born to W. H. Ketchum, a cotton merchant and his wife, the former Sarah Elizabeth Easton of Washington County.

### **Sarah Had a Dream**

The first Mrs. Ketchum had three children: Mary, Adele and W. H. Ketchum, Jr., who was born in 1853. After the birth of her last child she became something of an invalid.

The following summer Mrs. Ketchum took a nurse and her children to visit Tate Springs in northern Alabama. On the return trip they planned to stop and see her mother in Washington County. On the long trip south Sarah had a vivid nightmare and told fellow passengers about it. She said she would never make it back alive.

When the boat docked the next morning, her family coachman awaited the group. Sarah was not among his passengers. Her mother had put together a grand breakfast but what she got was a corpse.

Sarah's brother, Dr. Thomas S. Easton declared the cause of death to be arsenic. Oddly, no further investi-

gation was conducted, so just how Mrs. Ketchum ingested the fatal dose is unknown to this day. Family tradition has it that such an investigation was looked upon as unseemly.

Sarah Ketchum was buried in Magnolia Cemetery. A massive white marble shaft marks her grave. It is decorated with a trailing vine of roses and a medallion depicts the departed being carried aloft by an angel.

Two rambling paragraphs of prose also adorn the monument. One terms her "The good child, the devoted wife and mother... she has left behind a void that can never be filled."

William H. Ketchum soon attempted to fill the void.

### **The Second Mrs. Ketchum**



**Mrs. Willey Glover Creagh Ketchum**

Alone, with seven children in her care,  
she stood up to Yankee orders.

Courtesy Historic Mobile Preservation Society

Willey Glover Creagh was the widow of Alexander Creagh of Wilcox County when she met William H. Ketchum, Sr. She had four daughters: Clara (b. 1843), Amanda (b. 1847), Sarah/Sallie (b. 1850) and Willey (b. 1853). The Creagh family had emigrated from South Carolina and were planters in Wilcox County.

Alexander died in 1854, leaving a widow and four daughters under age ten. City directories in the 1850's indicate that William Ketchum worked as a cotton broker with offices at St. Louis and Water streets in 1852. His first residential listing was in 1856 when he was shown to be living at the Battle House Hotel. It could be speculated that he was living as a bachelor at that point, his children possibly upriver with their grandmother Easton.

By 1859 his address was given as "46 Monroe Street" and 1861 as "NW corner of Government and Franklin."

No record of a wedding between Willey Creagh and William H. Ketchum could be found in Mobile County. It is likely the wedding took place in Wilcox County. The 1860 Federal Census lists the married couple both in Wilcox County where Ketchum's profession was listed as "farmer" and Mobile where his profession was listed as "merchant." The family apparently moved between both counties.

### The Palazzo Ketchum

Ketchum built his new bride one of Mobile's grandest mansions in 1860. Completed in the Italianate style of architecture, the Ketchum palazzo is three stories in height with a basement. A winding stairway connects all four levels.

The front of the house contains double parlors which stretch sixty feet in length and feature ornately carved marble mantels and plasterwork. A musicians' bay allowed the space to be used as a ballroom.

The exact date of completion has gone unrecorded but according to letters held in the Manuscript Archives at Emory University, Ketchum wrote his wife on October 30, 1860 urging her to join him in Mobile where their new home was nearing completion. Reportedly the final furnishings for the mansion arrived on one of the last boats before the outbreak of the Civil War.

### Major Ketchum, C.S.A.

William H. Ketchum, a veteran of the Mexican-American War, obtained the rank of major in the Confederate Army. He saw action in the bloody battles

of Resaca, Cassville and New Hope Church, Ga. in May of 1864, and was in Meridian, Miss. at the end of the war.

Although New Orleans had fallen as early as 1862, Mobile held its own. The end came on the hot morning of August 5, 1864 with the Battle of Mobile Bay. Willey Ketchum and the seven children may well have been at breakfast when they heard bells tolling. First from the Guard House, then the market bell, and finally those of the Cathedral, Faces went white. The Battle of Mobile Bay had begun.

The battle may have been lost, but Mobile held out for nine months. On April 9, 1865 the last Confederate defenses left for Meridian. On April 12, Mayor Robert Slough surrendered the city, white flag in hand.

### Unwelcome Callers

That April found Major Ketchum still behind



**Maj. Gen. E R. S. Canby, U.S.A**

enemy lines. The home he so proudly built on Government Street held his wife, their seven children and an unknown number of servants. Like most of Mobile the family sat behind shuttered windows as Yankee troops marched by.

The quiet of that great house was soon shattered

with a pounding on the doors. The maid opened the door and several soldiers in blue brushed past her and began inspecting the house from the basement to the third floor. The group toured every room of the house before leaving in silence having never told the family the purpose of this mission.

On April 14, Mrs. Ketchum received a written order addressed to "*Occupants of Dwelling House, corner Government and Franklin streets*" stating "... *the present occupants are hereby required to vacate the premises without delay. Nothing must be removed except personal effects.*" The government would inventory the remainder of the contents and be responsible for their safe return it added. U. S. General E. R. S. Canby had decided that this would be his headquarters.

Willey Ketchum confronted the general. Where were they to go? She suggested that the general and his men take the house of cotton factor William Stewart, across the street. The Stewarts were in Europe and the house sat empty. She even offered to give over all but one room in her home to the general and his men. Canby would not be moved and Mrs. Ketchum returned home in a hopeless state.

The next day the general called. Perhaps his boyhood in Kentucky had made him a bit sympathetic to this southern lady. In any event a compromise was made. Canby and his aide would move in as Mrs. Ketchum's guests. The rest of his officers would be housed in the Stewarts' former home across Government Street.

### **The Major Returns**

It has not been documented how long this compromise had been working out before Major Ketchum found his way back to Mobile. He had no idea why a sentry was stationed at his front door but explained that this was his home. The soldier told him that no one was to enter this house without a pass and directed him across the street to headquarters where he was issued one.

With his return, the general quietly took his seat to the major's right, relinquishing his former seat at the head of the table. Willey Ketchum had maintained her chair all along. What must have at first been an awkward situation turned into a pleasant one.

Canby was obviously a gentleman and he got along very well with the Ketchums. A native of Kentucky, his father had been a slaveholder and he had cousins who fought for the Confederacy. He, like William Ketchum, was a veteran of the Mexican-American War.

Sadly, Canby would come to a tragic end. In 1873 the general was assigned to California where his peace-keeping commission was ambushed and murdered by Modoc Indians. The unarmed Canby was shot twice, and his throat slashed.

### **From Mobile to Paris**

The economy of Mobile faltered but cotton shipments slowly mounted for markets in Massachusetts and England. William H. Ketchum returned to the cotton trade and was apparently successful.

Although the Ketchums returned to some measure of prosperity, Mobile and the south were struggling with the misfortunes of Reconstruction. Every facet of Mobile had been altered by the occupation. Major Ketchum sent his family abroad.

Letters at Emory University indicate that Willey Ketchum was living in Paris between 1868 and 1869 where the children were placed in school. Only Clara Creagh was absent. She had married Jules C. Denis and was living in New Orleans. The Denis' would have two daughters, Aimee and Willey and a son, Louis.

Major Ketchum made visits to his family in Paris but generally stayed in Mobile, attending to business. Letters to his family written in the fall of 1868 indicate his worries about economic conditions in Mobile but also mention his plans to repaint the house on Government Street.

In March of 1869, Amanda Creagh married Charles DeFord in Paris. Just when Willey Ketchum returned to Mobile is not documented. Letters in July of 1870 find her in the fashionable watering spot of Saratoga, N.Y. while later that year correspondence came from her in New York City.

### **Willey Ketchum Returns**

By the early 1870's Mobile was slowly recovering and Willey Ketchum had returned to her Government

Street home. William's two daughters by his first wife were married in this decade. Mary married Benjamin DeLeon of Atlanta and made that city her home. Adele, known as Dellie to the family, married Z. M. P. Inge of Meridian. Inge was an older cousin of a man of the same name who arrived in Mobile in 1875 to practice law.

Mr. and Mrs. Inge are not found in the city directories for Mobile and they apparently lived in



The Creagh sisters were apparently ready to downsize when they built this house at 1202 Government Street in 1915. The C.P. Robinson home, just visible to the east, was converted into the Mobile Woman's Club House in 1929.

(Credit USA Archives)

Mississippi. Dellie's 1874 death coincides with their daughter Adele's birth leading to the conclusion that her death was linked to childbirth. Her body was brought back to Mobile and is in the Ketchum-Creagh lot at Magnolia Cemetery.

The Ingess' daughter is also here. Adele Ketchum Inge married Mobile attorney J. Blocker Thornton and her marker indicates she was just 22 years old at her death in 1896.

By the time of Adele Inge Thornton's burial in 1896, the Ketchum-Creagh lot held both Willey, William H. and the ill-fated William H. Ketchum Jr. Willey died in March of 1894 at the age of 70. Her husband died the next year aged 73 and an elaborate funeral at Christ Church preceded his march to

Magnolia Cemetery. The showplace on Government Street now became home to Willey's daughters, Sallie and Willey.

### A Home Fit For a Bishop

For eleven years these two maiden ladies wandered the halls of the Ketchum mansion. By 1906 the pair were in their mid-fifties and sold the house to the Catholic Diocese. Prior to this, Mobile's Catholic Bishops had resided in the Portier House on Conti Street. Edward P. Allen who had been appointed Bishop in 1897 was the first to move into the Ketchum house.

Sallie and Willey Creagh moved to Selma Street before hiring the architectural firm of Hutchisson and Denham to design a spacious stucco mansion which was completed in 1915, and still stands at 1202 Government Street. Just why two single ladies in their sixties needed such a large house has been lost with time. Perhaps though, in their eyes this was true downsizing when compared with their mother's house.

Sallie Walthall Creagh died in 1933 at the age of 83, and her sister Willey in 1944 at 91. Both funerals were conducted out of 1202 Government Street and both were buried in the Ketchum-Creagh lot at Magnolia Cemetery.

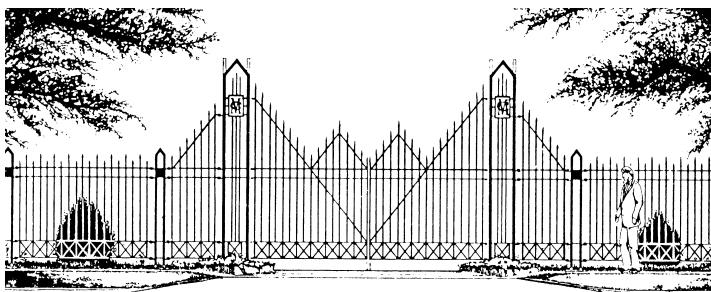
While the Ketchum and Creagh families have vanished from Mobile the architectural legacies of 400 and 1202 Government Street live on. The Ketchum house, while altered for use by the Archdiocese, is a well maintained landmark. 1202 Government Street remains a single family home, having been occupied by the C. Ernest Edgar, Jr. family and later by the Gordon Moultons.

Tom McGehee

### In Memorium C. Ernest Edgar, Jr. 1907 – 2007

Sympathy is extended to the family of the late C. Ernest Edgar, Jr., a former member of the board of the Friends of Magnolia Cemetery and a long time supporter of this organization. Mr. Edgar assisted on various committees, particularly in researching the ownership of lots to further the Perpetual Care Trust Fund.

*Board of Directors and  
Staff of the Friends of Magnolia Cemetery*



## Memorial Fence Sections

The list of memorial fence sections will now be listed annually in the Spring issue. This will allow the inclusion of new sections dedicated each December. For further information about donating a section of fence, please call our office. The amount is tax deductible and may be paid over a period of time.



## Looking for a Gift?

If you know someone interested in Mobile's history, why not give them a gift of a membership in the Friends of Magnolia Cemetery? Their membership will help preserve this historic site and provide them with a year's subscription to the Messenger with its historic insights.

## Grave Spaces for Sale

The following spaces are available within Magnolia Cemetery. Call us for further information.

Square 16 lot 74	3 spaces
Square 31 lot 16	4 spaces
Square 31 lot 18	8 spaces
Square 31 lot 85	6 spaces
Square 31 lot 86	7 spaces

## Lest We Forget

The Friends of Magnolia Cemetery is the sole beneficiary from the sale of Harry Myers' book *Lest We Forget*. All proceeds go into the Perpetual Care Trust Fund, due to the generosity of his sons who made it possible for the book to be published.

Order Form for *Lest We Forget* by Harry E. Myers

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / ST \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

- Books are \$25 when picked up at Magnolia Cemetery or \$29 when mailed.
- Make checks payable to Friends of Magnolia Cemetery.
- Mail your order to Friends of Magnolia Cemetery, P.O. Box 6383, Mobile, AL 36660. The Friends' office is located at 1202 Virginia Street. If you need additional information call (251) 432-8672.

## CLIP AND RETURN THIS FORM TO

Friends of Magnolia Cemetery • P. O. Box 6383 • Mobile, Alabama 36660  
(251) 432-8672

- Please find enclosed my tax-deductible membership contribution of \$25.
- I would like to make an additional contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to The Friends of Magnolia Cemetery.
- I would like to make an additional contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to The Perpetual Care Trust Fund.
- Renewal     I am a new member.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Square \_\_\_\_\_ Lot No. \_\_\_\_\_

- Please contact me to work on volunteer projects.

## President's Report

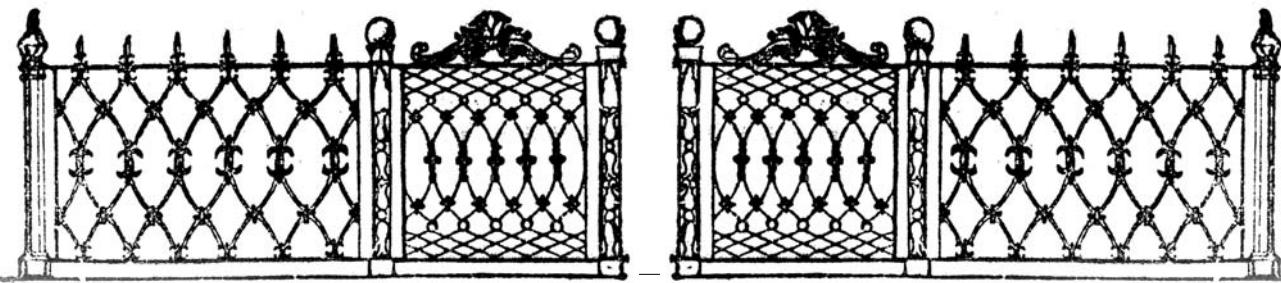
The **Chicora Foundation**, based in Columbia, S.C. has provided the Friends with the first segment of a condition report on Magnolia Cemetery. This non-profit organization is surveying the cemetery one section at a time, photographing monuments and ironwork in need of repairs.

The damaged marker or ironwork is studied and a short report is completed stating recommended conservation treatments as well as an approximate cost to complete them. This information can be passed on to lot owners or in the case of abandoned lots, our Restoration Committee for consideration.

The Chicora Foundation was founded in 1983 and has an outstanding track record. The information provided to the Friends will be an invaluable tool in restoring this historic cemetery.

Thank you for your continued support which makes this possible.

*George R. Irvine, III*



## Superintendent's Report

On July 28, 2007, we buried the remains of an unknown Confederate Crew Member of the CSS Alabama. This event was attended by almost 2,000 people. It was the largest gathering at Magnolia Cemetery in my lifetime. I would like to thank everyone involved for their time and effort in making this a truly memorable event. Special thanks go to all the members of Raphael Semmes Camp 11, for not only this event, but for all the volunteer work they perform for the cemetery.

Joe Ringhoffer, our treasurer, spent countless hours planning and coordinating this event. It was because of his efforts, that this major event went off without a hitch. I would also like to thank my crew for putting in the time necessary to showcase the beauty of Magnolia Cemetery. I would like to see more events of this magnitude in the future. We need to open ourselves to the public, and invite them in to experience the history and beauty that Magnolia Cemetery has to offer.

I am pleased to announce, that we are bringing the Chicora Foundation back to begin restoration work on some badly damaged headstones. We will be working with them this Winter repairing and restoring monuments. For a better idea of what they are, and what they do, please reference their website at [www.chicora.org](http://www.chicora.org). I would like to thank the restoration committee, chaired by Tom Van Antwerp, for their support. Tom's committee, which includes Ritchie Macpherson, and John Sledge, shares my restoration vision. They have all been wonderful to work with.

On August 23, Ceil and Tom McGehee hosted a wonderful sendoff for our retiring Executive Director Martha Greer. I want to thank Ceil for all her hard work. Tom is recovering from surgery on a shattered heel. I wish him a speedy recovery.

I was just informed that David Mader is resigning from the board. David was able to get a grant to help pay for our new brochures, as well as all the grunt work involved in putting them together. He was also instrumental in assisting Janet with the publication of the Magnolia Cemetery Burial Index. Thank you David, for everything you have done, and everything you tried to do as well. You will definitely be missed.

*Mark Halseth*

# THE FRIENDS OF MAGNOLIA CEMETERY, INC.

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*Magnolia Messenger*

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## Memorials to the Perpetual Care Trust Fund

### *In Memory of . . .*

Camille Corte  
Elwood Leon Hogan

Max McGill, Jr.

Agnes Foster

Robert & Floria Robinson

Ernest Edgar, Jr.

*In Honor of . . .*  
Sister McClure

### *Given by . . .*

Billy Walker &  
The Staff of Friedman's Fine Jewelry

The Friends of Magnolia Cemetery

Mrs. Guy C. Oswalt

Eleanor R. Foster

Mr. & Mrs. George A. Carwie  
Mr. & Mrs. John D. Peelbes  
The Friends of Maganolia Cemetery

*Given by . . .*  
Mr. & Mrs. Willson McClelland

*Have you forgotten something?  
Please send in your membership,  
new or renewal today.  
We need your support!  
Thanks.*

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