

Magnolia Messenger

THE FRIENDS OF MAGNOLIA CEMETERY
NEWSLETTER

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"Remove not the ancient Landmark"

Fall 2013

A Former President Visits the Port City



Ulysses S. Grant

On an April afternoon in 1880 the rooms of the Manassas Club on Royal Street were filled for a reception honoring former president Ulysses S. Grant. Ironically the club was named for a famous Confederate victory, and the gentlemen hosting the event were the leaders of Mobile's Cotton Exchange. The earthly remains of those men rest in Magnolia Cemetery.

The visit had been the idea of Lyman C. Dorgan, a Mobile native and past president of the Cotton Exchange. Grant had been touring the South following a trip around the world and Dorgan traveled to see him in New Orleans and extend an invitation to visit the Alabama's port city. Grant accepted and Dorgan hurriedly telegraphed the news home.

Not everyone was elated by the news. Joseph Hodgson, editor of Mobile's Register was an outspoken Democrat and no fan of the former Republican president. Hodgson had been a lawyer before turning to journalism. In 1877 he succeeded John Forsyth at the Register.

A Virginian by birth, Hodgson later moved to Alabama where he reached the rank of colonel in the Seventh Alabama Cavalry. At the end of the war he found himself in Montgomery and he entered the field of journalism. Hodgson has been credited with creating the epithet of "carpetbaggers" to identify "irresponsibles who enter new territory with the intention of controlling it."

Hodgson also published a history of Montgomery during the Civil War which he titled "The Cradle of the Confederacy." That the creator of the word "carpetbagger" and the author of such a book had no use for Grant would appear obvious.

In the April 7, 1880 edition of the Register, Mobilians were given a description of a dinner held for Grant at New Orleans' venerated St. Charles Hotel. The novelty of the event was that at the close of the festivities he was given a bound book filled with the autographs of the gentlemen he had shared dinner with.

The Register opined: When Grant as President or Emperor or what not, may have occasion to refer to the names of the illustrious of Louisiana, he has only to take down this precious autograph book and make some memorandum as this: Oglesby, gopher soup, excellent Secretary of the Treasury....It would



Louis Kennerly (1832-1900), a Missouri transplant who won the hand of Mobilian Mary Foote in 1866. He and four others would accompany U.S. Grant on a train trip from New Orleans to Mobile in 1880.

have been a happy inspiration if the autograph book contained leaves of tissue paper. The General could then have utilized it in making cigarettes.”

Hodgson was quick to point out that Grant was coming to Mobile purely on the invitation from the Cotton Exchange which he described as “a body composed of a comparatively small number of our merchants and not by the city or the citizens generally.” He then added, “The Board of Trade and the city authorities when invited to join in the invitation to General Grant, declined by unanimous vote to do so.”

On April 8 a group of five Mobilians traveled to New Orleans and the next morning boarded an east bound train with the former president. The Mobile delegation consisted of Lyman Dorgan, Albert Bush, Frederick Ingate, Julian Whiting and Louis Kennerly, all of whom were members of the city’s Cotton Exchange. Who was this “comparatively small number of our merchants?”

The Cotton Exchange

The Mobile Cotton Exchange had been formed in 1871, just a year after those of New York and New Orleans had been established. It was created by cotton merchants who sought to coordinate the rules and regulations for the sale, purchase and handling of cotton. Mobile’s exchange operated out of rooms on St.

Michael Street amidst the neighboring offices of countless cotton brokers and merchants.

Lyman C. Dorgan as previously mentioned had served as president of the Exchange and had been one of its organizers. A confederate veteran who reached the rank of major, he had chosen a Bostonian named James Lloyd Abbot as his partner in the cotton factorage firm of Dorgan and Abbot. The two lived side by side on the north side of Dauphin Street near LeBaron Street.

Albert Peyton Bush was born in Georgia in 1819 and came to Mobile in 1833 where he founded a cotton factorage firm. In 1867 he and his two sons had established A.



The Cotton Exchange and Chamber of Commerce Building, dated to 1886. Members of the exchange had formed a committee to invite U. S. Grant to Mobile in 1880. He accepted.

Mobile Public Library Photo Gravure Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.



Julian Wythe Whiting (1838-1917) was typical of the men who invited U.S. Grant to visit Mobile. Although all had fought for the Confederacy, they were also businessmen with stakes in improving Mobile and the cotton trade. Despite the past, they invited their former nemesis for a memorable visit.

Erik Overbey Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.

P. Bush & Sons Cotton Factors, and he would ultimately found the People’s Bank and preside over the Planters’ and Merchants’ Insurance Company.

A year after founding his firm, Bush built a mansion of dark red brick which stills stands at 254 St. Anthony Street. City directories indicate that it was occupied by Mr. Bush and his sons and business partners, John C. and Thomas G. Bush.

Cotton buyer Frederick Ingate was the principal in the firm of F. Ingate & Co. Ingate was the most international of the committee, having been born on the Greek Island of Zante to an English father and Greek mother. He had immigrated to New Orleans prior to the Civil War where he became involved in the cotton trade. He achieved the rank of captain during the war and afterwards made Mobile his home.

The 1880 Federal Census reveals that Ingate was then living on Spring Hill Avenue with his wife Emma, five children ranging in age from 5 to 12, a cook, a nurse, a “servant” and gardener. Their home stood on the north side of the avenue just west of Lyons Park.

Another cotton factor in the group was Julian Wythe Whiting. Born in Virginia in 1838 and a graduate of that state’s university, Whiting, like Ingate, had reached the rank of captain during the war and moved to Mobile where he was involved in the cotton trade. In 1880 Whiting was a member of Baker, Lawler & Co. but eventually would turn his interests to banking and serve as president of the People’s Bank for 29 years.

Whiting’s partner, Levi Lawler, was also his father-in-law. He and his wife, the former Susan Lawler, had two sons and two daughters.



The Manassas Club occupied rooms on the second floor of this building formerly on the north west corner of North Royal and St. Francis Streets. Grant was feted at a luncheon here. A boisterous crowd on the steps called for the former president to give them a speech; he declined.

The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.

The Kennerly-Foote Connection

The last of the five was another Confederate captain, Louis (also spelled Lewis) Kennerly. Born in Missouri in 1832, Kennerly had begun a career as a fur trader before being injured by unfriendly Indians. He joined the First Missouri Infantry which had joined Confederate forces in 1861 and was severely wounded at Shiloh.

Kennerly arrived in Mobile at the end of the war and entered the insurance business, becoming secretary of the Planters' and Merchants' Insurance Company. He married Mary Lyon Foote whose father, Charles, was one of the city's leading grocery and cotton merchants.

Charles Foote had constructed an impressive brick house on the north east corner of St. Louis and Conception streets. In a 1935 newspaper account of its impending demolition, a reporter recalled the Kennerly courtship noting "a tile on the big front gallery bears the heel imprint of a young Missourian, dug there the night he announced his determination to marry Mary in spite of numerous rivals for her hand."

In 1866 the Kennerlys were married in a double ceremony with Mary's sister Rosa marrying Hinton Smith. The event was described as "one of the most brilliant events Mobile society has witnessed in years."

According to the 1935 account, "Jefferson Davis was a friend of the household as well as Ulysses S. Grant, a former neighbor and faithful correspondent of Mr. Foote, who had invited him to be his guest here after the war." It is unclear if Grant ever visited the Foote home however and the 1880 news accounts make no mention of a stop there. The family connection could explain why Kennerly was included in the group selected to accompany former president Grant to Mobile.

Grant Arrives in Mobile

The train trip from New Orleans took just over what was described as a "fast" five hours. At 1:05 P.M. the train rolled into Mobile as a detachment of the Alabama State Artillery welcomed the former president with a salute of thirty-eight guns. The newspaper account noted that the Washington Blues attempted a volley but a misfire "burnt off the end of the United States flag that was floating in the front of the line. The colorbearer made some energetic remarks which are not altogether fit for our columns."

Grant climbed into a carriage pulled by four dappled gray horses and the group made their way to the corner of North Royal and St. Francis streets as a curious crowd looked on. Their destination was a Greek Revival temple dating to 1834 which housed the Bank of Mobile on the first floor and the Manassas Club on the second.

The club had been founded in 1862 and named for a celebrated Confederate victory. Its membership was limited to 100 men and until it was eclipsed by the Athelstan Club later in the century its membership list was a veritable who's who of Mobile. The club rooms consisted of a drawing room opening out onto the second floor gallery, and through an arch beyond a ballroom.

The president of the Cotton Exchange, William H. Gardner, offered the former president "a hearty welcome to Mobile." Gardner was a 48 year old cotton factor and insurance executive whose Government Street residence at the time had been built by Alabama governor John Winston. Like so many others in that room, Gardner was a Confederate veteran whose career had included being wounded at Gettysburg.



The former home of Cotton Exchange member Albert Peyton Bush was built in 1868 and still stands at 254 St. Anthony Street. A mystic organization which also dates to 1868 maintains it today.

Lively Entertainment

According to the newspaper account, the elegant event was interrupted when a boisterous crowd gathered on the front steps and called for Grant to make a speech. He finally stepped out onto the gallery, declining to give a speech and waived to the crowd whose attention the paper noted, "was somewhat diverted by an inebriated female who danced the fandango on the bank steps."

The members of the Cotton Exchange joined Grant in the club dining room where Richard Brown Owen officially welcomed him to Mobile and offered a toast. Owen had been elected president of the Police Board and Recorder of the newly formed



The Battle House (with its galleries to the right) was the setting for an elaborate banquet honoring U.S. Grant. The toasts did not begin until 11:00 PM.

Mobile Public Library Photo Gravure Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.

Port of Mobile when the City of Mobile was dissolved in 1879. His office was the equivalent of mayor.

Mobile had come out of reconstruction deeply in debt and with a growing list of citizens unable or unwilling to pay their taxes. Municipally owned debts topped \$3 million, a third of which was related to two fraudulent railroads. With the aid of the legislature, the city charter was repealed with the excuse that it would substantially reduce expenses and aid in re-establishing the city's credit.

Thus it was that a year later, members of the Cotton Exchange had taken it upon themselves to show hospitality to a Republican Union general in the hopes of improving business relations with the north. Ulysses S. Grant was rumored to be a contender for a third run at the presidency, a fact obviously not lost on his hosts.

A second reception followed the luncheon. The honoree and his escorts walked across St. Francis Street and entered a Federal courtroom within the U.S. Custom's House. There a large crowd of black citizens had gathered and lined up to shake hands with Grant and offer their welcome to the city.

Grant and his entourage left the building and traveled down the Bay Shell Road to the Magnolia Racetrack. The honoree being an avid and noted horseman, was shown the popular track as well as a horse named Kimball which was owned by famed local breeder William Cottrill. Four years later another of Cottrill's horses, Buchanan, would win the Kentucky Derby.

The men then returned to the Battle House to rest up for the evening's festivities.

The Banquet

At 8:30 that night the dining room of the Battle House was ablaze with light as former president Grant entered. Guests sat at three long tables placed in the shape of a "U" and a large horse shoe of red, white and blue flowers was the focal point. Flanking the honoree were William Gardner and Richard B. Owen.

Each place setting included a silk menu monogrammed "U.S.G." proclaiming the line up of that night's feast. There were oysters on the half shell followed by turtle soup. Then came a selection of pompano, flounder, shrimp, crawfish, beef tenderloin, veal, lamb and roast chicken. After a Roman punch was consumed came dessert consisting of meringues, macaroons, Charlotte Russe, jellies, cakes, fruits and ice cream adorned with fresh strawberries.

To wash all this down were countless bottles of sherry, claret, sauterne and finally Mumm's champagne. Toasts began at 11:00 P.M.

Grant addressed the assembled crowd and said "I shall not detain you with any lengthy remarks...I have been a little over two weeks in the Southern States...I have been saying something everywhere and it is getting a little monotonous, for it is pretty hard to say anything without repeating (myself), and this is a country where we have telegraphs, post-roads and the rapid mails and we are a people who read."

After thanking his hosts the room erupted in applause when he said "I am delighted to see that there is so much good feeling existing between this section and the section from which I come. I believe it to be lasting."

Following more applause came more rounds of toasts including one to "The Army and the Navy," and a final one to "the Postal Service, Handmaiden of Commerce." As the evening concluded, Grant and his party retired before heading back to New Orleans.

As the train departed the members of the Cotton Exchange must have been optimistic or at least hopeful about the future. While Grant had not spoken publicly about seeking a third term as president he made no secret about it to his most avid supporters. Historians have long held that his two years of world and national travels was aimed at rejuvenating his image.

Not everyone was smiling. In the next morning's newspaper, Hodgson condemned the honoree of the previous evening explaining that Grant "could not be separated from the errors of his administration, the outrages of his party, the oppression of the South and the fact that he appears not as ex-President but as a candidate for office."

While many of the members of the Cotton Exchange may have agreed with the local editor they surely saw the practicality of having someone in the White House with fond memories of Mobile. The city was languishing and they were doing their best to improve the situation.

The Aftermath

Two months after Grant's visit to Mobile, the Republican Convention was held in Chicago. Grant was narrowly defeated

by Ohioan James Garfield who would fall to an assassin's bullet a year later.

Grant's fortune vanished within four years after being swindled by his son's business partner. He died just a year later in the summer of 1885 after suffering from throat cancer.

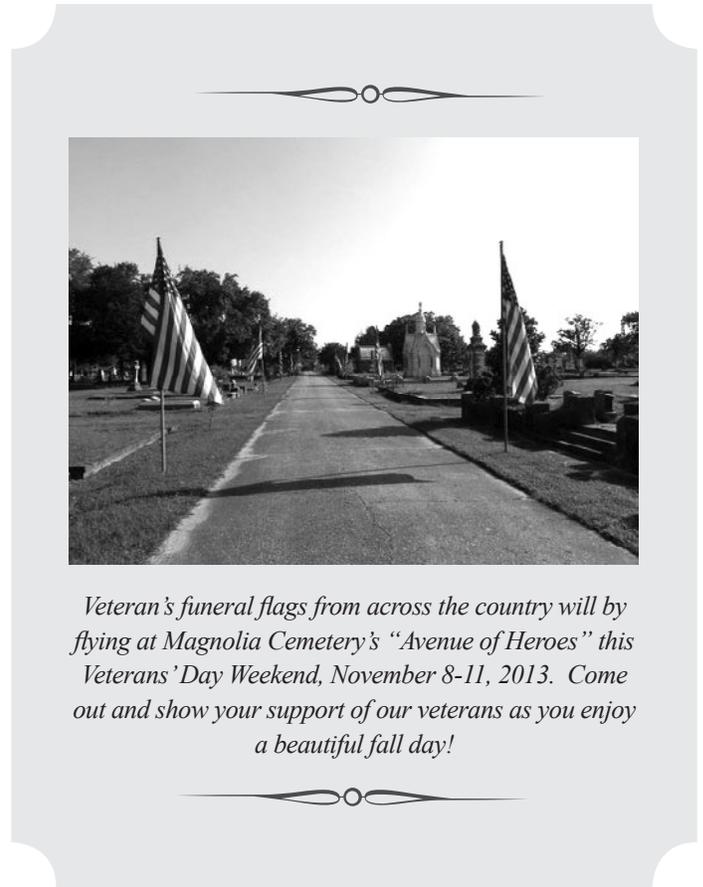
The efforts of the Cotton Exchange showed no slowdown following the election of Garfield. The group merged with the Chamber of Commerce in 1886 and built a palatial brick structure at the north west corner of Commerce and St. Francis Streets. Above the St. Francis Street entry was an enormous bail of cotton topped with a crown. Over the Chamber's entrance on Commerce Street was an allegorical female figure of commerce.

1886 was also the year that the Port of Mobile became the City of Mobile once more. The mayor of the re-established city was Richard B. Owen who had sat beside U. S. Grant at the Battle House six years earlier.

In August of 1888 Congress finally approved a project to improve Mobile's ship channel, dredging it to a depth of 23 feet at mean low water. The improved port was thus able to handle a great increase in timber exports as well as banana imports which ushered in a new wave of prosperity for Mobile in the 1890's.

In 1917 a fire destroyed the Mobile Cotton Exchange and Chamber of Commerce Building and the two entities went their separate ways. By that date most of the men who had enjoyed the festivities at the Battle House nearly 40 years earlier were in Magnolia Cemetery while the man they had honored had long rested within the largest mausoleum in the country: Grant's Tomb.

Tom McGehee



Veteran's funeral flags from across the country will be flying at Magnolia Cemetery's "Avenue of Heroes" this Veterans' Day Weekend, November 8-11, 2013. Come out and show your support of our veterans as you enjoy a beautiful fall day!

❧ PRESIDENT'S LETTER ❧

Mobile and Magnolia Cemetery were spared another hurricane this year with "Karen" turning into a non-event. Magnolia Cemetery has weathered many a storm in its 177 year history, some of which caused severe damage, so we can never let our guard down.

We continue to pursue grants for restoration projects around the cemetery. We received a grant from the Eichold Foundation which allowed for the replacement of the missing concrete urns flanking the historic George Street Entrance Gates.

Another generous grant, this from the Ben May Trust, paid to have gates and flanking fence sections placed in front of Hebrew Rest. The original fencing vanished during the early 1940's and may have been part of a scrap drive. Period photos show what the fencing looked like and it has been duplicated. We would eventually like this very historic section to be completely fenced as it once was.

And speaking of fences, donations permitted eight fence sections to be installed along Virginia Street. A space for just 21 sections remains before the project is completed, so please don't delay in

contacting us if you would like to participate. Call the cemetery office for further details. (251) 432-8672.

A project has also begun to install a similar fence and corner sections on the south side of Virginia Street. Donations from the Alletta Turner Trust have allowed this to begin.

I hope you will be able to take advantage of our fall weather and take one or all three of the tours being offered by Tige Marston in November. Remember to make a reservation.

And finally, you should have received your renewal letter in October and I hope by now you have received your 2014 Membership Card. If you haven't, we need you! Your membership dues and generous donations are vital to keep this organization going. If your original letter went astray, a form is included in this issue of the Messenger. Thank you for your continued support!

*Douglas Burtu Kearley, AIA, NCARB
President*

It's Tour Time Again!

Tours of Magnolia Cemetery are dependent on our weather so we conduct them from early October until the end of each March. On three consecutive Saturdays in November Tige Marston will again be conducting free tours lasting about two hours each.

Since the wide range of subjects cannot be covered in a two hour span, each tour will focus on a different element of our cemetery's history. Each tour will begin at 10:00 AM and are free of charge but reservations are required.

Tours are limited to 30 participants so reservations must be made in advance by calling (251) 208-7307 (Tige Marston) or (251) 208-7307 (Janet Savage)

The 2013 tour schedule is as follows:

11/2/13: BURIAL CUSTOMS AND VICTORIAN FUNERARY TRADITIONS

11/9/13: HISTORIC GRAVESITES IN MAGNOLIA CEMETERY

11/16/13: VICTORIAN FUNERARY ART AND SYMBOLISM

Make your reservations early! We look forward to seeing you.

In Memoriam

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The Board of Directors of the Friends of  
Magnolia Cemetery mourns the loss of long time  
board member and Friends' supporter

*Margaret Sue Adams Oswalt.*

Our sympathies are extended to her family and  
countless friends of all ages.

 **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 \_\_\_\_\_

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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.

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- Please find enclosed my tax-deductible membership contribution of \$35.
- 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.
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