

Magnolia Messenger

THE FRIENDS OF MAGNOLIA CEMETERY
NEWSLETTER

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"Remove not the ancient Landmark"

Fall/Winter 2014

The Goode Family: Two Celebrations and a Funeral



Dr. Rhett Goode (1852-1911)
Death would leave no mark on his face.
Courtesy of Mobile County Medical Society

Mrs. Goode greeted her guests in a silver embroidered white satin gown and wore what the newspaper described as "the groom's gift, a Tiffany collar of pearls and diamonds," while her hair was "adorned with a Paradise aigrette with diamond ornament."

Who were the Goodes and what became of this obviously prominent couple of Edwardian Mobile?

Rhett Goode

Rhett Goode had been born in Mobile in 1852, the son of one of Mobile's prosperous cotton factors, Garland Goode. The family's address in city directories ranges from "Spring Hill" to a home at the south east corner of St. Francis and Warren streets, to "Cottage Hill."

Goode finished at Spring Hill College before graduating from the Medical College of Alabama in 1871. That medical school, the first in Alabama, had been established in the port city in 1860. He began his medical practice and specialized as a surgeon while joining the medical school's faculty in 1885 as professor of anatomy.

The state's only medical school received no funding from the state of Alabama, relying solely on the tuition paid by students to survive. Any profits left at the end of a term were split among the instructors in lieu of a paycheck. Thus the entire teaching staff maintained private local practices to pay their bills.

Dr. Goode became dean of the medical college in 1906, following the death of George Ketchum, and the following year the college became a department of the University of Alabama. The state then provided funds for the renovation and enlargement of the building. Additional funds were allocated to the school but with a string attached. A student from each county in Alabama had to be admitted, tuition free, thereby eliminating any financial benefit realized from the gain in state funds.



The Medical College of Alabama.
A victim of up-state politics.

McCall Library/USA

On an October evening in 1911, horse drawn carriages lined up on St. Emanuel Street in the block north of Government Street depositing their occupants to the brightly lit residence standing at number 60. Guests entered parlors filled with an array of white roses and chrysanthemums where the host and hostess greeted them.

That couple was Mabel and Rhett Goode and the occasion was their 25th wedding anniversary. A lengthy newspaper account noted that the family coachman had previously hand delivered the engraved invitations upon a silver salver to each invitee's home. On the evening of the celebration the house and Goode's adjoining medical office had been transformed into a palm garden and ballroom complete with orchestra.



Mabel Hutton Goode:
*A physician's daughter
and a physician's wife.*

McCall Library/USA

Mabel Hutton

On October 27, 1886 Rhett Goode married Mabel Wylie Hutton in Mobile's Government Street Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Goode's father, William Hutton, had been a surgeon in the U.S. Marine Hospital Service and the family had moved with his career. She had been born in Morrison, IL in 1866, but by the time she was four the family was living in Dry Tortugas, 70 miles west of Key West.

Here the 32 year old physician had been assigned as the surgeon for the hospital at Fort Jefferson, made infamous in 1865 by the arrival of Dr. Samuel Mudd who had been convicted as a conspirator in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. By the time of the Huttons' arrival, Mudd had been transferred and was eventually released. The former home for prisoners of war was turned over to the Marine Hospital Service for use as a quarantine station.

By 1872, the Huttons and their two children had moved to Mobile where Dr. Hutton was assigned to the U.S. Marine Hospital on St. Anthony Street. The facility included housing for its director and city directories indicate that Dr. Hutton and his wife were living here until 1889.

That was also the year that their daughter, Mabel Hutton Goode, the couple's only grandchild, Mabel Rhett Goode.

In addition to being involved in numerous professional and political organizations, Dr. Goode had strong ties to the social and mystic fabric of Mobile. He joined the Athelstan Club in 1875 when that club was just three years old. He was also a member of the Manassas Club, the Mobile Yacht Club the Country Club,

the Gulf Fishing and Hunting Club and the Elks. Not only was he a member of the Strikers but he was reportedly an organizing member of the Infant Mystics in 1868.

In 1887 Dr. Goode purchased a home at 60 St. Emanuel Street in the block between Government and Conti streets. No photographs have been found of this house but according to Sanborn Fire Maps it was two stories tall and fronted with a cast iron gallery. Dr. Goode added a one story wing to the north to house his medical office.

Although St. Emanuel Street south of Government held a number of fashionable homes and Christ Church, the Goode's home was the sole residence in the block north of Mobile's grandest street. To the north of their home was Shanahan's Livery Stable and to the immediate south, the back of the Laclede Hotel. In 1896 Mobile's City Jail and Police Station arrived directly across the street.



*The site of the Goode Home on
St. Emanuel Street today.*

Dr. Goode's Room within Aladdin's Castle

While kept busy as the Dean of the medical school, Goode was active politically and had earned a seat on Mobile County's Democratic Executive Committee. He served as a city councilman, an alderman, and briefly as mayor pro tem.

He was a member and physician for the Can't Get Away Club, an organization founded to care for those unable to escape from Mobile's deadly yellow fever epidemics. Goode was a county health officer and was named president of the county's Quarantine Board.

As a member of the International Association of Railway Surgeons, Goode had the honor of being the Chief Surgeon for three local railroads: The Mobile and Ohio, the Southern, and the Mobile, Jackson and Kansas City.

In April of 1907 when the "New Union Terminal" (long known as the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Terminal) was dedicated, the newspaper devoted pages to its description. The grand structure was designed to be shared by three train lines: the Mobile and Ohio, the Southern and the Louisville & Nashville. The L & N pulled out of the deal and built another station at the foot of Government Street which was eventually undermined by the construction of the Bankhead Tunnel leading to its demolition.



New Union Terminal
Termed Aladdin's Castle when completed in 1907.

The opening of the terminal was considered so important that many businesses shut down early so that employees could participate. An estimated 15,000 toured the building which the Mobile Register termed “a veritable Aladdin’s Castle” on that spring day. They admired its marble wainscoting and glanced up at a glass dome 100 feet above the lobby at the center of some 64,000 square feet of Spanish Renaissance grandeur.

The first floor contained a newsstand, waiting rooms, two lunch rooms, a room to send telegrams and rooms to make telephone calls. There were offices to house the station masters, as well as various express companies which could be hired to collect and deliver luggage. Interestingly the newspaper account discussed a room which it described as “having tiled floors and walls, finished like an operating room in a hospital. It is intended for use as an emergency room for accidents and known as Dr. Goode’s Room, honoring the Chief Surgeon for the Mobile and Ohio Railroad.”

In 1911, just three days after celebrating his anniversary at what the local paper termed “one of the most delightful entertainments ever given in this city,” Goode left for Chicago. There within the Hotel LaSalle, the American Association of Railway Surgeons met and elected Rhett Goode as president. His presidency would be a short one.

An Unhappy Yuletide

On the morning of December 22, 1911 Mobilians opening their morning papers found the following item on the front page: *DR. RHETT GOODE CRITICALLY ILL*. Three physicians had visited Dr. Goode and termed his condition “very grave, though not alarming. Dr. T. H. Frazer stated that complications had set in when the patient contracted a severe cold, and that his condition was of a very serious nature.”

The following day the morning paper’s headline announced “Dr. Rhett Goode Called to His Eternal Rest.” A reporter noted that “Dr. Goode closed his eyes as if in sleep and passed peacefully into the Great Beyond at 10:45 o’clock Friday morning at his home, 60 St. Emanuel Street.”

After a career of 40 years as a physician and medical educator, Goode had touched the lives of countless individuals. The newspaper noted “Telegrams were received from the presidents

of the various health boards throughout the country, educators of different colleges, medical officers in the Marine Hospital Service and health officers of various cities, railway officials and friends.”

Members of the Mobile County Medical Society held a special meeting to draft “appropriate resolutions” and decided to attend his funeral together in a group.

On Christmas Eve, the late physician’s body “lay all day upon a bank of flowers in the parlor of his late residence, while hundreds of friends came and went. Death had left no mark on his face. He died as peacefully as when a little child sinks to slumber.”

The newspaper account went on to say that “On the lapel of his coat was pinned the gold emblem of the president of the Can’t Get Away Club,” and explained “it is the custom that when a member of that famous organization dies, the president sends his badge to be placed on the deceased until the burial hour.”

At 3:00 that afternoon, a brief service was held in the Goode home. The casket was carried outside past a sidewalk filled with onlookers as it was taken west onto Government Street between a double line of police officers while the city bell tolled mournfully.

By 3:30 the casket had been carried up the granite steps of the Government Street Presbyterian Church, “where every seat was occupied and many were forced to stand.” Dr. Carr described Dr. Goode “as a man who had devoted his best talents to the good of his fellow man, charitable to a fault and with a heart as easily touched as that of a child.”

A large entourage followed the procession to Magnolia Cemetery where Dr. Goode was buried beside his parents. The floral displays included what the newspaper described as “a floral chair sent by the student body of the medical department of the University of Alabama and a handsome wreath from Spring Hill College (which) was placed inside the casket.”



Government Street Presbyterian Church:
The setting for two weddings and a funeral for members of the Goode family.



*Mabel Rhett Goode at the time of her debut.
She would lead the Strikers as well as the
Dragons that season. She rests at Arlington.*

McCall Library/USA

Mrs. Goode and her daughter returned to live at 60 St. Emanuel Street. Young Mabel was 22 and had made her debut in the 1909/10 season. She had the distinction of leading the Strikers Ball in 1909 and the Dragons' in 1910.

Mabel Rhett Goode's Brilliant Nuptial Event

Mabel Hutton Goode kept busy with the Daughters of the American Revolution, serving that organization as State Regent in 1913 and 1917. The DAR headquarters are in Washington and during one of her visits to that city her daughter may have met her future husband.

In May of 1919 Mabel Hutton married Randolph Coyle, III, a major in the U.S. Marine Corps. According to the newspaper, the Coyle family had been residents of Washington, D.C. since 1801. Coyle boasted an illustrious family tree and his name appeared in the Washington, D. C. Social Register.

The rehearsal was held at Government Street Presbyterian Church and afterwards the group was entertained by Dr. and Mrs. P. J. M. Acker. Dr. Acker, like the bride's late father, was a physician. His Government Street home had been built by Dr. Henry LeVert, and like Dr. Goode, his medical office adjoined his residence.

A newspaper account noted that doors between the parlors where Madam LeVert had once held court were opened wide and joined with the library to make "a perfect ball room for the eve of the wedding."

The "brilliant nuptial event" took place at 8:30 the next evening with the interior of the church "garlanded with Southern smilax and decorated with a profusion of palms, ferns and calla lilies." The twelve ushers marched down the left aisle dressed in white tie. Included in that number were Dr. Acker, Frank Overall, William Buck Taylor, Sr., J. B. Davis and George Creary.

The bride carrying a bouquet of lilies of the valley was attended only by her mother. She was met on the right aisle and entered behind ten groomsmen in military uniform. Mrs. Goode, described as being "very handsome" wore the same gown she had worn to her silver anniversary celebration eight years earlier, as well as the pearl and diamond choker and white egret feathers in her hair.

Although the event was held in the city's oldest Presbyterian church and conducted by its minister, the newspaper noted that "the beautiful Episcopal wedding service was used."

The reception was held at the Goode home. The same parlor where a crowd had celebrated a silver wedding anniversary and funeral in 1911, now was overflowing with guests congratulating newlyweds. The dining room table had a bride's cake at one end, the groom's at the other and the bride used her husband's sword to ceremoniously cut hers.

Mabel and Randolph Coyle moved to Washington where the groom had purchased a house in Georgetown. A son, Randolph Coyle, IV arrived in 1920. Coyle's military career kept the three moving in the decades to come and they would never return to Mobile to live.

Mrs. Goode's Departure

Mabel Goode, no doubt found the house on St. Emanuel Street quite empty with the departure of her daughter. Visits to the newlyweds in Washington increased and by 1923 her name had vanished from Mobile's city directory.

By that time, her home on St. Emanuel Street was backing up to an addition to the YMCA and a steam laundry had taken the place of the stables to the north. Dr. Goode's office was occupied by a milliner in 1924 and Dr. Richard V. Taylor by 1929.

The last listings for numbers 58 and 60 St. Emanuel were in the 1933 city directory. An optical shop was in 58 and Joseph Baumer, a locksmith was operating out of number 60. The space today holds a parking deck behind the Laclede Building.

When Mrs. Goode died in December of 1929, the New York Times disclosed that she "had died at the club of the Colonial Dames" in Washington with her daughter at her deathbed. The article noted that she would "lie in state at Memorial Continental Hall," a D.A. R. landmark in the nation's capital. She was buried beside her husband in Magnolia Cemetery.

After a distinguished career in the military spanning two world wars, Lieutenant Colonel Coyle died in 1952. Mabel joined him in Arlington National Cemetery in the summer of 1968.

The End of the Line

Their only child never married. Following his death in Chevy Chase, MD in August 1987, Randolph Coyle, IV was buried in the Goode family lot in Magnolia Cemetery. His brief obituary listed no relatives.

A neighbor and friend of Coyle's mailed the Friends of Magnolia Cemetery a check for \$2,500 in 1988 covering the suggested donation to the Perpetual Care Trust Fund in memory of the Goode family. Her letter noted that Mr. Coyle was the last of the family line adding "I am pleased that he is buried with his grandparents, since he couldn't be buried in Arlington Cemetery with his parents. It is comforting to know that with the Friends' trust fund his plot will be maintained no matter what the future brings. Magnolia is a beautiful cemetery and will be more so through your efforts. Good luck with your hard work." —Mrs. S. Byron Tubbs.

Tom McGehee



The Goode family lot at Magnolia.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Fall has arrived at Magnolia Cemetery. The dry weather has allowed the staff to catch up on the mowing and the property has a manicured appearance as we enter our winter season. I hope you will take the time to drive through. I think you will be impressed.

November has been designated tour time for the cemetery. Tige Marston with the assistance of Janet Savage covered three topics. On three Saturday mornings in November three different tours were held.

November 8: Burial Customs and Victorian Funerary Traditions. Then on November 15, Historic Gravesites within Magnolia Cemetery and finally on November 22, Victorian Funerary art and Symbolism. The free tours are an annual event and as usual were well attended.

The Avenue of Heroes was set up the weekend of November 7 in anticipation of Veteran's Day, November 11. A total of 70 Veteran's Memorial Flags memorialized veterans and we always welcome more.

Did you remember to send in your membership renewal to the Friends? Letters were sent out in October and on behalf of the board, thank you to all you have renewed their memberships. Your financial support is crucial to this organization.

If last month's letter has gone astray, a tear off is included in this issue and we welcome your continued support. Many members also use this for a Christmas gift to friends who have an interest in Mobile's history. The Messenger tells the stories of families buried here – stories you will not find anywhere else. So keep us in mind for that history buff on your list or someone who enjoys a good story.

Thank you for your support as a member of the Friends!

*Tom McGehee
President*


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