Charles Saia places a flower on his mother’s tombstone at Magnolia Cemetery Saturday afternoon.

Cemetery flowers a holiday tradition

By VICTORIA L. COMAN

Jodi Scott spent Saturday at Magnolia Cemetery, keeping a promise she made to her late grandfather.

Scott and her family make it a habit to place fresh flowers on relatives’ graves—even on the grave of an uncle who died as a baby.

“That’s a promise I’m going to keep,” she said.

Each holiday, Scott and her mother, Jeannie Shaffett, place fresh flowers on the grave of 4-month-old Kelly Joseph Michelli, Scott’s uncle, who died of pneumonia in 1933, long before she was born.

Scott said the family spends about $125 each year on flowers. This year, she placed Easter lilies and tulips on the graves.

She and her grandfather, Joseph Michelli, used to visit the cemetery regularly, and together they would put flowers on the baby’s grave.

Her grandfather died two days after Easter in 1992 at age 81. The baby was her grandfather’s first born.

“After 61 years we all still refer to it as ‘the baby’s grave,’” she said.

Scott, her husband George and their two children packed into their minivan Saturday afternoon to make trips to Roselawn Memorial Park & Mausoleum and Magnolia Cemetery on Florida Street.

“My grandfather always said if anything happened to him he wanted me to put fresh flowers on the grave,” she said. “Now I bring my children with me because if something happens to me, I want them to know where the plots are.”

Charles Saia and his family have put flowers on family graves in Magnolia Cemetery for as long as he can remember.

The oldest family grave is dated 1926.

“It shows that you don’t lose respect for your family members,” he said. “It shows that they aren’t forgotten.”

Saia said he spends three hours a week cutting the grass around the graves with a lawn mower and then clipping weeds by hand.

“I’d rather do it myself. That way I know it’ll look good,” he said.

His sister, Jeanette Saia, said placing flowers on loved ones’ graves was something their mother always made a point of doing.

“My mother always liked flowers, so when she passed away I continued to put flowers on her grave like she always did for my grandmother and grandfather’s graves,” she said. “I figured she would like that.”