Protestant Cemetery Was Founded Here 95 Years Ago

Cemeteries are silent, yet eloquent historians of communities' past and their establishment provides a further insight into bygone days.

On May 18, 1924, an article, written by Miss Eliza Hopkins, "A Short History of the Protestant Cemetery" appeared in the pages of the DAILY ADVERTISER.

It recounted, "Ninety-five years ago Mr. Jas. Grieg died in the town of Vermilionville, now Lafayette, during an epidemic of Asiatic cholera. As everybody had a horror of the dreadful disease, it became the duty of two faithful slaves to bury their master. Not knowing the directions of east and west, the slaves buried him in a plot of land outside of town.

"Fifty years later, this small tract was donated by Miss Julia Cummings, for a Protestant cemetery; thus it became necessary to have a chartered association.

"The following fifteen citizens of Lafayette: S. F. Simpson, Thomas F. Webb, Williams Mathews, Dr. Thomas B. Hopkins, E. H. Vordenbaum, John Clegg, F. K. Hopkins, M. E. Girard, William Clegg, Sr., Dr. F. S. Mudd, Chas. Alpha, W. B. Torian, S. R. Willis, A. A. Morgan, and John Brunson appeared before Attorney Crow Girard who drew up a charter for the Lafayette Protestant Burial Ground Association, which was approved by R. C. Smedes, the District Attorney."

"The first officers elected were: Thomas F. Webb, president; S. F. Simpson, vice-president; Chas. Alpha, secretary-treasurer. The following composed the first board of directors: Dr. Thomas B. Hopkins, William Clegg, S. R. Wallis and W. B. Torian."

"The land was divided into lots and sold as needed to buy the dead, the money being used to defray expenses of beautifying and keeping the cemetery. Among the many graves are several soldiers who died in a battle fought here during the Civil War. Years later a flag staff, believed to have belonged to Gen. Bank's army, was found by a negro man who was ploughing near the cemetery; therefore it is believed the fight took place at or near here.

"Among the graves of interest is that of a gypsy queen, who with her tribe of fortune tellers camped on the outskirts of town, became sick and died. After burial a tombstone was erected to her memory by her husband with the following inscribed thereon:

HARRIET
BELOVED WIFE OF
WILLIAM HART
DIED
JANUARY 12, 1883
England was my place of birth, America is my place of rest. I am not dead only asleep. All my friends prepare your way and follow me.

"As years went on and the lots in the cemetery were fast selling and the board of directors found it necessary to buy more land adjoining, owned by Mrs. Sophie Erwin, which was divided into lots. Another tract was bought later from Alfred Hebert and also divided into lots."

The present officers of the association are Miss E. C. Hopkins, president; Dr. C. H. Masters, vice-president; F. K. Hopkins, treas.; Harold Demanade, Secretary.

Since this article was written, a large tract of land was purchased by the local Masonic order for use as a Masonic cemetery. This plot adjoins the original cemetery.

The only charter member of this organization now living is F. K. Hopkins, one of the most active members. During all of these years, he has kept a map of the cemetery and had charge of the sale of the burial plots.

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