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An Historical Goldmine:

The Tale of Two Hollywood Cemetery Ledgers

At the Virginia Museum of History & Culture, Friends of Hollywood Cemetery Executive Director Kelly Wilbanks looked over two large, leather-bound ledgers placed on a board room table. She gingerly turned the pages of one of the fragile books which revealed row after row of names of Confederate soldiers buried in Hollywood Cemetery, written in the same hand. According to the Museum's Curator Paige Newman, "From a genealogical standpoint, these are amazing records."



Paige Newman, Virginia Museum of History & Culture curator, holds newly acquired Hollywood burial ledger ("Ledger One")

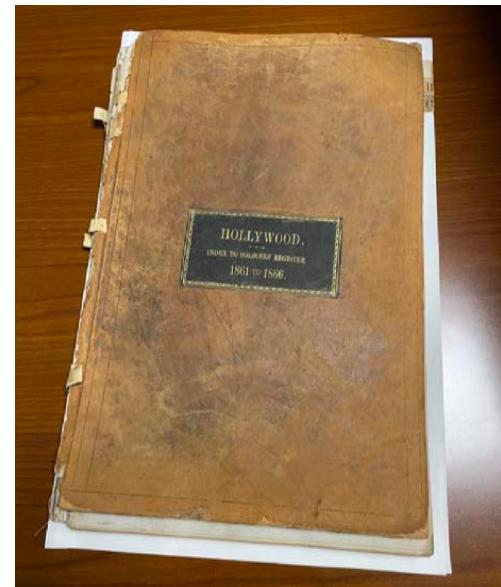
Newman receives countless papers and other records every year at the Museum. But even she is astonished by the near simultaneous arrival of the two ledgers, from two different sources. Has she ever seen anything like this before?

"No," she said. "This is a first for me."

The Tale begins

In November, 2021, a rare books dealer from Connecticut

approached the Museum offering the first ledger for sale – Hollywood Soldiers 1861-1866, collected by the Ladies Hollywood Memorial Association. The seller had purchased the ledger at an estate auction in Pennsylvania. The ledger ("Ledger One") was delivered to the Museum for closer examination and subsequently authenticated.



A second burial ledger ("Ledger Two") believed lost was recently discovered in a Hollywood Cemetery basement

Shortly thereafter, a long missing and second ledger (hereinafter, "Ledger Two") was discovered in the basement of the Hollywood Chapel office building by Mabel Toney, Hollywood Cemetery Administrative Assistant and her husband Donald, retired head of Hollywood grounds. Mabel was "out of ink" and had remembered a partially used printer cartridge in an abandoned printer machine that had been moved there

(continued on page 2)

Two
Ledgers

Pages 1-3

Hollywood's
Trees

Pages 4-5

Mary Catherine
Jeter

Pages 6-7

Hollywood
Buildings

Pages 8-9

Friends
Contributors
(as of May 31, 2022)

Pages 10-11

Two Ledgers (continued)

out of the way. Quite by accident, as Donald was poking around, he stumbled upon a box containing an old and suspicious looking volume. It was quickly determined that this was the old Confederate Soldiers Section burial book long believed to be lost or possibly destroyed in the Richmond fire of 1865. It was delivered for preservation and safekeeping to the Virginia Museum of History and Culture, repository of other valuable Cemetery records. Ledger Two lists burials in chronological order, by date of death from July 1861 to mid-1866, and including the location of their remains at the time. It was written during the Civil War and the year following, for those reinterred.

Enter Chris Ferguson

When Chris Ferguson of Winchester, Virginia, a long time Civil War historian, learned that two ledgers of interest had surfaced, he reached out to Kelly Wilbanks by phone. Excitedly, he said "I've got to know about these ledgers that you've found. There have been gaps in my research over the years, and I think these ledgers are going to help me find the missing information."

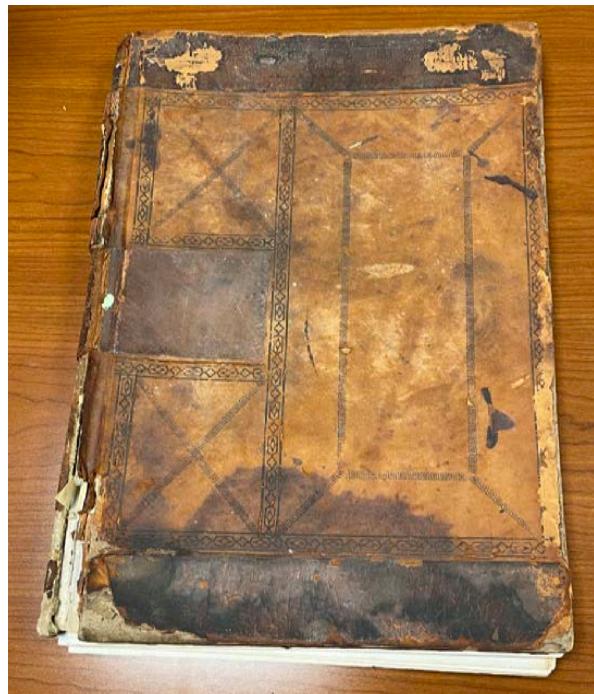


Chris Ferguson, Civil War historian, uses ledger discoveries to fill gaps in his historical database

Over the past 21 years, Ferguson has written two books on Hollywood's Confederate dead, the most recent being *Southerners at Rest*, a catalog of names, burial dates, and other information on the soldiers interred at the Cemetery. He also co-authored with Robert K. Crick *Gettysburg Death Roster: The Confederate Dead at Gettysburg*.

"Whenever the Hollywood staff receives a call from someone with a question about the Civil War soldiers that they can't answer, they call Chris," said Wilbanks. "He has great expertise on the topic and is so generous with his time."

After examining the first ledger, Ferguson recognized its significant historical importance. A sales price was negotiated, and Ferguson acquired the volume only to generously donate it to Hollywood.



Ledger One (Hollywood Soldiers 1861-1866) is in fragile condition, showing signs of water damage and deterioration

The Importance of the Ledgers

Speaking by phone from his home in Winchester, where he has a library filled with Civil War books, Ferguson talked about how he first became interested in the Confederate dead. "My mother-in-law took my wife and me to Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta [where he was born and raised] on a Christmas Eve, probably 30 years ago. The cemetery has a huge Confederate section, similar to that of Hollywood and that launched my interest in the war itself."

When his research led him to Hollywood, the only published works on the soldiers buried there were two by the Ladies Hollywood Memorial Association – an 1869 *Register of Confederate Dead* rife with inaccuracies and a ledger named *Our Confederate Dead, 1861-1866*, a simple alphabetized listing of names, with no other records.

"I have long felt that someone needed to do something above and beyond what was already published... They were, in my opinion, American soldiers just like anyone else who fought and died, many for a cause they believed in." Not all were volunteers. "Something many people do not realize: After March of 1862, Confederate soldiers were conscripted, just like the draft in Vietnam... And if you didn't go and fight, you were arrested," he said.

(continued on page 3)

Two Ledgers (continued)

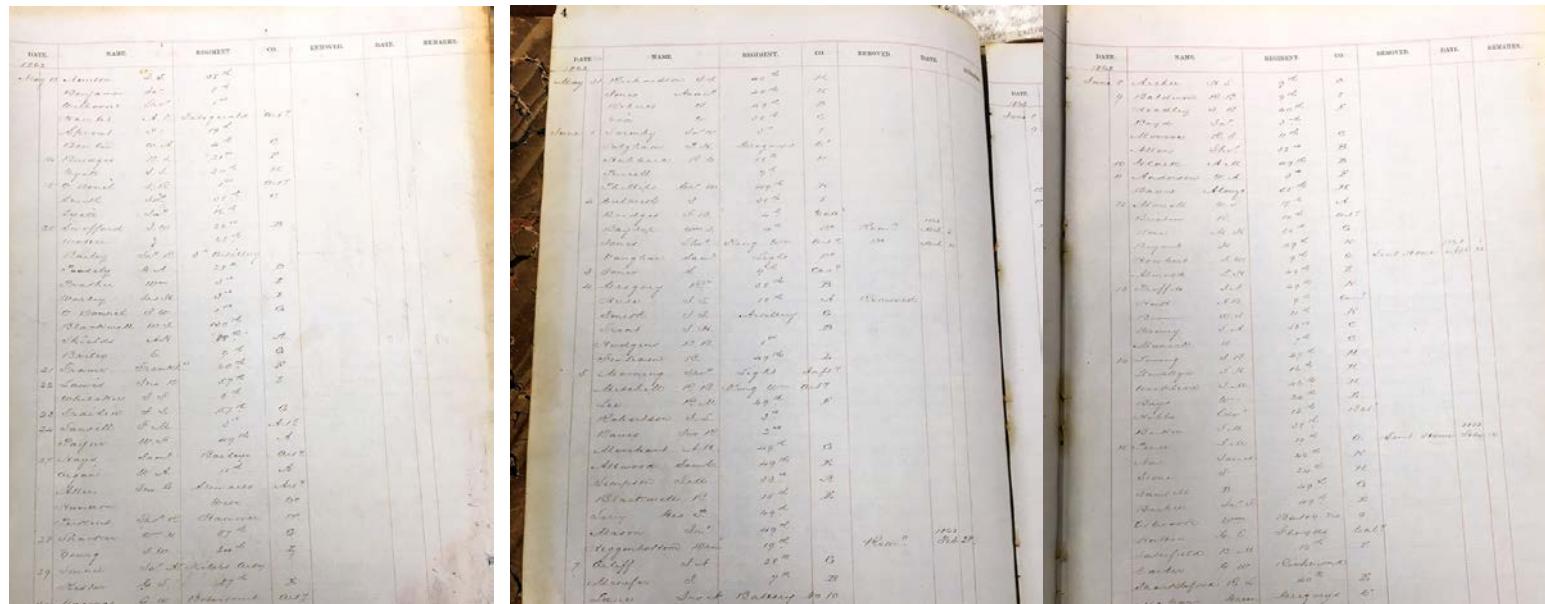
He has resolved to accurately identify the soldiers listed in the 1869 register and *Our Confederate Dead*, spending many hours at the National Archives reading regimental histories, which back then were not available online, and other records. In addition to counting the wartime dead, he expanded his project to include those who had survived the Civil War but were later buried in the Cemetery.

Ferguson is now going through Ledger One — a companion piece to *Our Confederate Dead* — using scans of pages sent to him by Newman and taking photos of it himself when he's in town. He's continuously adding and resolving new information on his spreadsheet. In addition

rest 18,000 Confederate soldiers. You see that number everywhere, and there's no way that can be accurate," he said.

The 1869 register lists 7,104 war dead; *Our Confederate Dead* has just under 8,000. In the Hollywood Cemetery minutes of May 1866, the President of the Cemetery at the time, Thomas Harding Ellis, says there were 11,994 buried in the war.

With the research Ferguson has verified, "everything you see add up on the high end of 8,000 or so names. So where are the other 4,000 names? In my opinion, the



Names and service affiliation have been recorded with excellent penmanship

to the names, the spreadsheet lists date of interment, company and regiment, including those from Virginia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. "Access to Ledger One has enabled me to solve a couple of hundred names thus far and to identify hundreds of soldiers whose remains were removed and sent home that we didn't know about. Until now."

Mysteries remain

Ferguson's work continues. He is committed to keeping an accounting of the most accurate information possible on the soldiers buried in Hollywood Cemetery. One puzzle he hopes to solve is the number of wartime dead, which includes nearly 3,000 from Gettysburg, disinterred and removed in the early 1870s and buried in the Soldiers Section.

“The plaque on the pyramid states that on the grounds

actual number Hollywood wartime dead is probably 8,500 or less.

When he completes going through Ledger One, he plans to start on Ledger Two (the “basement ledger”). “I’m ecstatic that these ledgers have surfaced after all these years. I never believed that they burned when the city was evacuated. It’s my personal opinion that there’s perhaps one more out there.”

The two new ledgers are being kept in an archival box with Our Confederate Dead at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture. Friends of Hollywood Cemetery will be raising funds to digitize and properly conserve the documents to save the wear and tear on the fragile documents and preserve them

Kelly Willard, author of *The Willard Way*, can be reached at www.kellywillard.com.

The Continuing Care of Hollywood's Trees

In April, just as the trees were beginning to bloom, we took a ride around the cemetery with the caretaker of Hollywood's trees, Jake Van Yahres. He pointed out some of the exciting new technologies being used to care for the trees.

Jake Van Yahres has Hollywood Cemetery's trees in the palm of his hands.

Sitting in his parked truck near Presidents Circle, the co-owner of the Charlottesville-based Van Yahres Tree Company demonstrated Hollywood's tree app on his iPhone. With one click a map appeared, showing the location of his car and nearby pins representing trees. We discussed Hollywood's successful designation as an arboretum. The cemetery received reaccreditation in March.

"Every single tree in Hollywood Cemetery is catalogued. It's all GIS-based," he said. By touching a pin, you can open a folder for each tree. "It will show you a photo of the tree, tell you how big it is, its condition, its work history—when we last did pruning, or added nutrients, for example."

He added, "We are much more efficient with this app. It gives Hollywood a great value."

Van Yahres co-owns the company with his sister, Shana Clarke. They are the third generation of their family to work as Hollywood's arborists. Their grandfather, Mitch, was the first to catalog the cemetery's 2,000 trees; their parents, Mike and Peggy, later oversaw the digitization of those records. After purchasing the company in 2020, Jake and Shana, along with lead arborist Jeremy Thompson, worked with a software team at Tree Plotter to create the customized app for Hollywood—similar to what the company did for the Apple Corporation, which has 9,000 apple trees on its new campus in Cupertino, California.

"I've seen their app, and I'm biased, but I think ours is superior," he says, with a smile. "It's pretty cool that Hollywood Cemetery and the small Van Yahres Tree Company has a little bit more of an advanced technology than Apple."

App news

In 2022, a ranking system was added to the app that allows the arborists to identify the most important trees in the cemetery so that their care can be prioritized. Some examples include monarch trees, and those located near popular spots for visitors, including the entrance, Presidents Circle, and Jefferson Davis Circle.



Every tree in Hollywood Cemetery has been entered in a mobile digital tree app including type, size, condition, maintenance history, and location

He also recently worked with iTree, one of the leading experts in determining the ecological value of the trees. "These trees at Hollywood sequester almost 300,000 pounds of carbon every year," he said.

Digital Tree Map

Van Yahres often works with VCU's Environmental Studies Department—recently the company taught a tree climbing class at the cemetery to students. He is excited that VCU is now creating an app to guide visitors to Hollywood's Notable Trees, something currently only available in paper format. When the app is completed, "as you're driving through Hollywood, the app will give you a pin for each notable tree. When you click on a pin, it will give you a ton of information about it," he said.

Fresh mulching

Driving through the cemetery, he stopped to greet Van Yahres Tree Company climbers wearing red shirts and noise-deafening headphones who had pruned some trees and were now chipping up the branches. As the grinding paused, he explained that the chips would be returned to the base of each tree—a process known as fresh mulching.

"It's super sustainable, and beneficial for a tree's health," he said. The fresh mulching program began at Hollywood this year. "They've started doing the same thing in Washington, D.C., for the cherry blossoms. I'm actually going to meet their arborist this afternoon."

He explained the importance of fresh mulching. "In a forest setting, trees get about 80% of their nutrients from their leaves and from their sticks and twigs that fall to the ground. So, in an urban environment, what happens in the fall when the leaves

(continued on page 5)

Hollywood's Trees (continued)



Nutrient (organic) deep root feeding of Hollywood trees has become an important part of ongoing tree maintenance and care

come down? Everyone takes them up—which deprives them of their nutrition.”

Applying fresh mulch, “is the next best thing. It’s basically recreating a forest floor,” he said. “[Hollywood’s original landscape architect] John Notman said, ‘I want to create a graveyard within a forest,’ and so we try to stick to that ethos.”

Custom nutrients

A few years ago, Van Yahres introduced the injection of eco-friendly nutrients, instead of fertilizers, into the soil of trees. This year, the company expanded the program by taking soil samples from all over the cemetery. Then, it worked with a lab to create custom nutrients specifically for the cemetery.

“It’s very prescription-based tree care,” he said. “The whole philosophy, is, how can we take as good care as possible of these trees to preserve them for as long as possible? All these ideas stem from that.”

Advances in hydration

As he continued his journey through the cemetery, Van Yahres stopped at the Soldiers’ Section, where the company had planted numerous new black gum trees. Frequent watering is critical to a young tree’s survival. In the past, the company had used green gator bags attached to the bottom part of the trees, to slowly disperse water.

“The problem with them is that in wintertime, when the water freezes, the bags get cracked and you constantly have to refill them with water. What we’ve done differently, starting last year is to use a new invention--and it was invented here in

Richmond--called a “Tree Diaper.”

Van Yahres pointed out the black, porous bag that ringed the base of a sapling.

“You soak this in water, then you put it around the tree, and you never have to water this tree again. What happens is, it collects rainwater through tiny micropores. When it rains, this thing fills up like an inner tube. And then underneath slowly the water comes out, it drips out [through pores on the bottom]-- keeping it moist but not oversaturated.”

He reached down and lifted a corner of the “Tree Diaper,” revealing damp ground underneath. “It’s like that even in the summertime,” he said.

With the old hydration system, “you had to fill up one of those five-gallon bags almost every week. We plant about 100 trees a year so that’s 500 gallons every week that is being saved.”

Green acres

Seeking the latest and most sustainable practices, “is constantly on our brains. ‘How can we be better?’ ...And when we make improvements, what we told the Hollywood Cemetery Grounds Committee is, ‘Hollywood gets them first,’ because we’ve been working closely with them for so many years.”

Van Yahres added, “And we couldn’t do it without [Hollywood General Manager] David Gilliam. We thank him for allowing us, and wanting us, to implement these new and sustainable ideas.”



Jake Van Yahres demonstrates new tree watering device (“Tree Diaper”) that captures and reuses rain water

Mary Catherine Jeter:

The Life She Lived - The Legacy She Left

Armintia Williams had three daughters and she described them by their characteristics: Indianna, my beautiful daughter; Marie Louise, my dutiful daughter; and Mary Catherine, my intelligent daughter. Armintia's husband possessed wanderlust; and in the 1820s, when there was little employment for women, she supported her daughters through her skills as a seamstress. She became the fashion designer for the wealthy women of Petersburg, Virginia.



Mary Catherine Jeter (1824-1887). Courtesy of the History Committee, Grace Baptist Church, Richmond, VA.

Mary Catherine - known by her friends as Kate - exemplified the early description given to her by her mother. She attended "the best schools" available for a young woman in Petersburg; and her intelligence would serve her well all of her life. She married a young Baptist minister, Christopher Jennett; but after barely a year of marriage, he died. Her second marriage was to Josiah Dabbs, a wealthy planter and an active Baptist layman. They lived at a country house on the outskirts of Richmond. It was called High Meadow but it became generally known as "Dabbs House". Josiah died in 1862;

and that summer, Gen. Robert E. Lee used "Dabbs House" as a field headquarters during planning for the defense of Richmond and through the Seven Days Battle.

Twice a Widow by Age Forty

As a widow in her late thirties, Kate moved into Richmond and lived in the home of the prominent Mrs. Archibald Thomas. It was Mrs. Thomas who introduced Kate to Dr. Jeremiah Bell Jeter, one of the leading Baptist ministers of America, who since 1852, was pastor of Grace Street Baptist Church in Richmond. He was smitten, "bewitched" by the Widow Dabbs and pondered whether - having already married and buried three wives - he should take a fourth. Twice widowed herself, Kate also may have questioned another marriage. They wasted no time; and in 1863, they married. He was 61 and she was 39.

Kate devoted herself to "church work" at Grace, serving as a teacher of "the Infant Class" which enrolled some 300 pupils below the age of 13. In 1865, she contributed the funds for a new venture. She and her husband along with another Baptist leader, Alfred Dickinson, purchased a newspaper, *The Religious Herald*, which had been published in Richmond since 1828. It was one of the leading religious newspapers in America. She wrote "The Children's Page", book reviews, poetry and articles of particular interest to women.

Initial Mission Interest

In 1868, Kate attended a gathering of Baptist women held in Baltimore. She heard the appeal of raising funds to support "Bible women" in China. It was the age of "foreign missions" and the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention was headquartered in Richmond. Upon Kate's return, she began to espouse the cause of China missions. She began sharing about missionaries in the "Infant Class" and within the women's missionary society of Grace. In April 1872, 150 years ago, she called a meeting of the women of five Richmond Baptist churches and explained the need to raise \$400 to send a "Bible woman", Edmonia Moon, to China. It was the beginning of the Richmond Woman's Missionary Union. They agreed to distribute mite-boxes in which pennies would be collected. They were emboldened when the boxes contained \$1,200. A missionary movement had begun!

Church Service & Mission Outreach

In 1873, Edmonia was joined by her sister, Lottie, and now there was a larger need: a house. Henry Allen Tupper, leader of the Foreign Mission Board, requested Kate to use her

(continued on page 7)

Mary Catherine Jeter (continued)

organizing skills statewide. In 1874, Kate published an appeal in *The Religious Herald* and enlisted the many scattered women's missionary societies across Virginia. They were to send their gifts to a Central Committee. The goal was met. Virginia Baptist women were united; and the Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia dates its beginning from that first mission project for the missionaries' home in China.

Today the WMU of Virginia remains "a relevant and viable movement" focused on missions support, education, involvement and camping experiences. Its success is part of Kate Jeter's lasting legacy. And there are others. Kate was chairman of the Board of Managers of the Magdalen Association of Richmond - whose motto was "they shall obtain mercy" - which founded Spring Street Home for Unwed Mothers which was located just beyond the gates of Hollywood Cemetery. In 1932, it moved to Broad Street and became known as "Brookfield", later relocating to Brook Road at the Henrico-Hanover county line. It became a residential facility for adolescents of both sexes and closed in 2011.

A Widow Again, Her Legacy Continued

Dr. Jeter died in 1880 and was buried in Hollywood along one of its streets which soon bore his name. The next year, Kate Jeter organized Richmond Baptist women to create a residence for elderly women - the first such facility operated by Baptists in Virginia - and was the first president of the new organization. When it opened in Richmond in 1883, it was known as The Baptist Home for Aged Women. Later, it was renamed The Baptist Home for Ladies. In 1978, it merged with the new Virginia Baptist retirement community in Richmond known as Lakewood; and its last residents moved into Lakewood and the Home's assets became a part of the new community. Today, Lakewood is one of the largest and most vibrant of the several retirement communities in Richmond.

The Dabbs House where Kate lived with her second husband still stands and has been used by Henrico County as an almshouse, police headquarters and now a county museum. Grace Street Baptist Church left Grace Street in 1923 but kept the name Grace. Today the congregation occupies a large Colonial-style building in Windsor Farms.

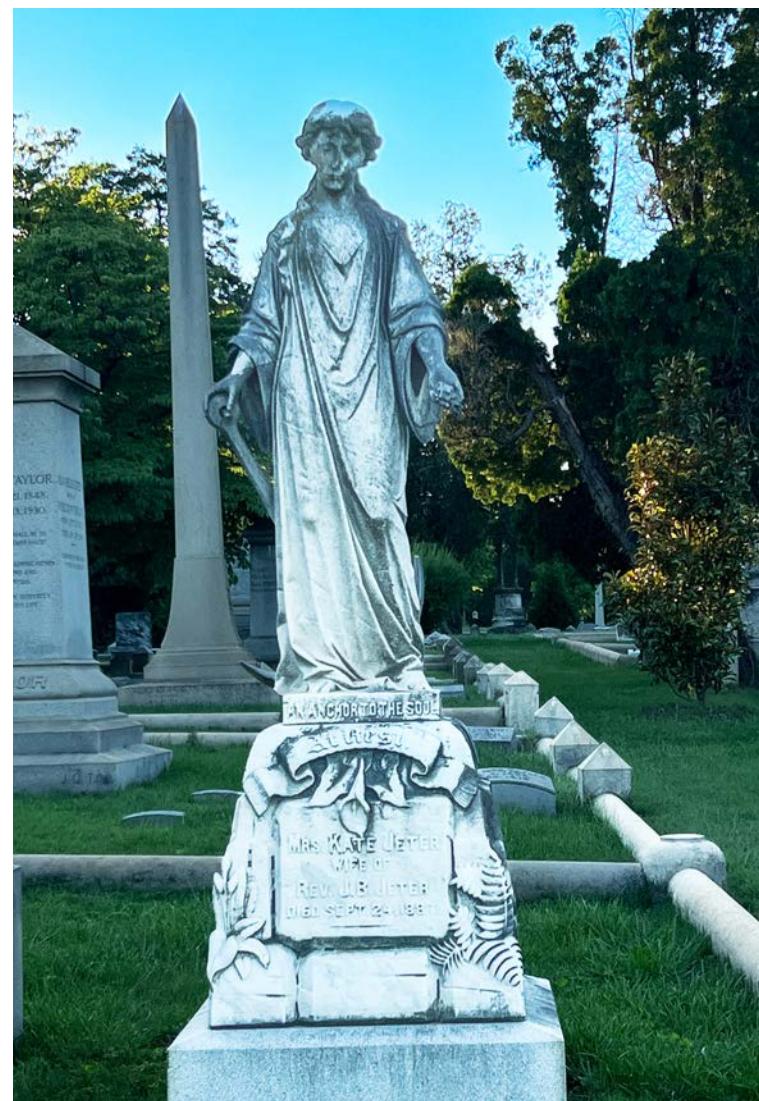
And what of *The Religious Herald*? The newspaper continued to publish until 2013 when it merged into an independent online news journal called Baptist News Global. In 2018, Mary Catherine "Kate" Jeter who left a legacy of good works was one of 230 Virginia women whose names were inscribed on the Virginia Women's Monument Wall of Honor at the Virginia State Capitol.

Seven years after the death of Dr. Jeter, Kate knowingly was approaching the close of her life. In the 19th century, there

were no proven cancer cures and little in the way of effective treatments. She wrestled with death. She told her pastor that "the tempter came and laughed at my hopes," telling her that fear would triumph over her. She claimed her faith and replied: "The Lord is my light and my salvation: whom shall I fear?" She told her pastor that she had "peace like a river." Her body was buried beside her husband and beneath the sculpture symbolic of the virtue Hope. On the tombstone was carved her name: "Mrs. Kate Jeter".

Her mother was right. Mary Catherine "Kate" was the intellectual daughter who recognized that true wisdom came in honoring God and ministering unto others.

*Contributed by Fred Anderson
Executive Director Emeritus
Virginia Baptist Historical Society*



Jeter Monument (intersection of Bellevue and Jeter Avenues, Section 2, Plot 99). The figure is a representation in human form of the virtue Hope

Buildings Reveal Connections to Hollywood's Past

Many visitors arrive to Hollywood Cemetery with a destination in mind...perhaps they want to see famous sights like the Pyramid and the Lewis Ginter Mausoleum or take in river vistas from an overlook. But even the most seasoned visitors may be unaware of the history of three buildings that once played different roles in the life of the cemetery. They were constructed during the time of Hollywood's visionary 4th president, Anthony Bargamin, a prominent local businessman who also served as head of the Richmond Mozart Association.

Superintendent's house

The superintendent's house was originally located by the old Cherry Street entrance in a white frame house that predated the cemetery. In September 1894, near the start of Bargamin's hiring, the cemetery company approved the construction of a residence for the superintendent, John Ritchie Hooper. The old house was demolished, and a new residence was built in 1895 by Wirt A. Chesterman.

That new superintendent's home is the Queen Anne house that sits just inside the cemetery gates. The brown frame house is 4,800 square feet, with a steep, gabled roof, a wraparound front porch, and a corner tower. Designed by the George Barber Co., the kit house arrived by train in pieces and was assembled on-site by the builder.

The house was occupied by several superintendents over the years. But by the 1980s it was vacant and in poor condition. The roof leaked, the plaster walls were cracked, and the porch was separating from the rest of the structure. The cemetery considered demolishing it.

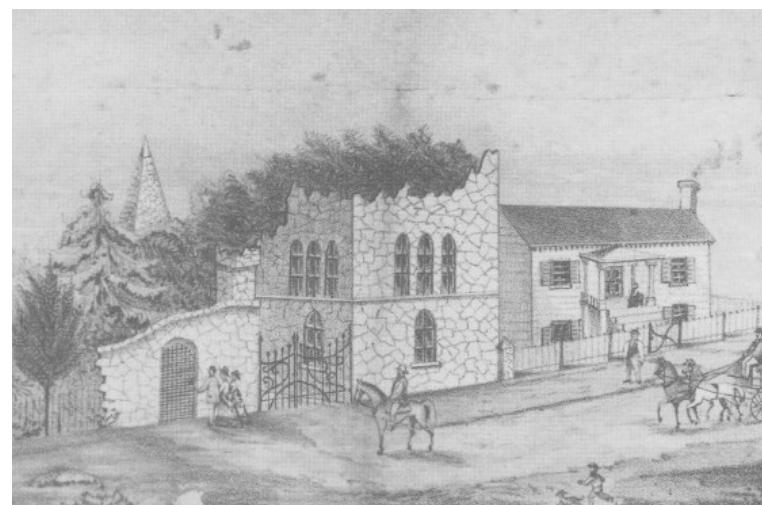


The Superintendent's House assembled from a catalogue kit in 1895

Instead, Historic Richmond offered to undertake a feasibility study of what it would take to save the house. After the study, it was renovated in 1991 by local builder Clark Glavé, and now includes four apartments. According to a 2015 *Richmond Times Dispatch* article, there is often a waiting list for the apartments, which come with "a 300-acre backyard with the quietest neighbors in town," said Glavé.

Original Gatehouse tower and cemetery entrance

One of the most unusual structures in Hollywood is the gatekeeper's house, a tower located next to the old entrance on Cherry Street. Mary H. Mitchell in her book, *Hollywood Cemetery: The History of a Southern Shrine*, tells the story



The Cherry Street cemetery entrance and gatehouse tower.

In later years (ca. 1898), the tower was enlarged and an adjoining chapel constructed (see photograph on page 12)

of the granite tower. Henry Exall was the likely designer for the tan stone structure, completed in 1877, "in the form and semblance of a ruined tower." Next to it stood a turreted wall, and between them, a wrought-iron gate that opened for carriages.

In 1897, the city undertook improvements that raised Cherry Street five feet higher and resulted in the relocation of the entrance gate to its present location. In the years following, under Bargamin's watch, the tower was heightened using blocks of granite from the James River and crenellated to match the nearby wall.

The Chapel

The cemetery also expanded the structure to include a chapel, receiving vault, and office space. Featuring Gothic-pointed, stained-glass windows and a vaulted ceiling, the chapel was completed in May 1898 and could seat a hundred people. This

(continued on page 9)

Buildings (continued)

was one of many projects completed under the direction of Bargamin, who “exhibited a marked fondness for construction,” says Mitchell.

The chapel and tower were renovated in 1972, and currently house the cemetery’s offices. Today, many of the stained-glass windows are covered up and there is no bell in the bell tower. Stabilizing foundational work was undertaken in December 2010.



The Chapel was completed in 1898 using granite from quarries adjacent to the James River. It currently serves as the cemetery office

According to David Gilliam, Hollywood’s General Manager, “At present, the plan is to continue to use the chapel as an office. I do hope that when we do a renovation one day that we can expose the vaulted wood ceiling in the building.”

The stables

Long before cars were allowed into the cemetery, horse-drawn carriages were the usual mode of transportation. Bargamin was given a company horse, buggy, and harness when he was hired in 1894.

Visitors who meander down the Hollywood’s paths not too far past the entrance may come across a restricted area. Tucked away in this area are a former stables/carriage house, which are now being used as a tool shed and barn. Bargamin oversaw the construction of the brick two-story structure in 1904, replacing “an unsightly old stable [that] had been a constant source of complaints from lot owners” according to Mitchell.

“I do not know how many horses were kept by the cemetery, but know they were used to pull trailers to sites for work by the laborers. I would think funeral homes had their own horse-drawn hearses at that time,” said Gilliam.

The cemetery renovated the stables in recent years, first repairing structural damage then replacing the roof. On the outside of the building, visitors can see a boarded-up doorway on the second floor. This is where workers would pull up the hay and bring it inside for storage. On the first floor, there are stables for at least four horses, with additional room for carriages. A wooden chute, which once delivered hay to the horses from the second floor, remains intact.

Looking around the old stables, it’s easy to imagine another time, when horses’ hooves clopped down cemetery lanes and President Bargaman sat high in his carriage--a twinkle in his eye for his next project.



Built in 1904, the brick barn with a second story hayloft was used originally as stables for cemetery work horses

2022 Contributors to Friends of Hollywood Cemetery

We are indeed grateful to the following donors for their generous support of Friends through May 31, 2022. You have enabled us to raise awareness of Hollywood and to continue vital monument and fence restoration. Thank you for helping us to preserve Hollywood Cemetery for generations to come.

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Old photo of entrance from turn of the 20th century showing the original Gatekeeper's House (with tower above), the adjoining Chapel, and in the right background, the Superintendent's House.

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