Monuments & milestones

VOL 8 NO 1 SPRING/SUMMER 2012

Two Brothers-in-Law at City Cemetery

by Carter G. Baker, NCCA Board Member

Buried near each other in the same lot on Oak Avenue are brothers-in-law John Patton Erwin (1795-1857) and Thomas Lanier Williams I (1786-1856). Their relationship was not always so peaceful. Erwin, two-time mayor of Nashville (1821 and 1834), was married to Thomas's sister, Frances (Fannie) Lanier Williams (1796-1872). Fannie is buried at Mt. Olivet with her daughters who lived to adulthood. Four other children who died young are presumed to be buried at City Cemetery with their father.

Both Erwin and Williams left significant marks on Tennessee history. John Patton Erwin was a newspaper editor, lawyer, banker, justice of the peace, and postmaster of Nashville. He was also the secretary of the Robertson Association, which was deeply involved in the American settlement of Texas while that region was still part of Mexico. His sister Jane's first husband was wealthy Nashville banker, Thomas Yeatman, under whom Erwin served for a time as cashier. After Yeatman's death Jane married the Hon. John Bell, Speaker of the House of Representatives, U.S. Senator, and Union Party candidate for president in 1860.

Erwin's brother married one of Henry Clay's daughters, while his cousin, also named Jane Erwin, was married to Charles Dickinson, who died in a famous duel with Andrew Jackson. Dickinson's remains, recently discovered, were moved from a long-unmarked grave near Whitteland Avenue to Nashville City Cemetery on June 25, 2010.

Thomas Lanier Williams was a lawyer, state representative and senator, and a justice on the State Supreme Court. His most lasting contribution to Tennessee was his long period of service as Chancellor of Tennessee, during which he became known as the father of equity law in the state. Less well known is the role he played many years earlier in the historic victory of the Tennessee Volunteers at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend in the War of 1812. He and his wife's uncle, Hugh Lawson White (an 1836 candidate for president), convinced his brother Col. John Williams (later a U.S. senator) to lead the 39th U.S. Infantry Regiment in bringing desperately-needed supplies and manpower to Col. Andrew Jackson. Jackson would give Williams and his soldiers great credit for their pivotal role in defeating the British-allied Creek Nation at the Horseshoe. This important battle set the stage for Jackson's success in the Battle of New Orleans and insured that Britain would never control the lower Mississippi River or the valuable ports of Mobile and Pensacola.

Unfortunately, John Williams and Jackson later became
PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

This year promises to be filled with activity for the City Cemetery. Since early January the NCCA Board has been hard at work planning both new and traditional events, all designed to showcase the 190 years of history within the cemetery's stone walls. This new issue of Monuments and Milestones, edited by Kathy Lauder, highlights these activities and provides additional articles of historical interest.

Board activities kicked off in February at the Metro Archives where Fletch Coke and Clyde Thompson gave a stirring presentation about the more than 6,000 African Americans buried in the cemetery. The audience learned the stories of some remarkable African Americans buried there and heard some of the information their burial records have revealed. Later in the month the Master Gardeners, under the direction of Robert Mather, trimmed the cemetery's boxwoods and pruned many other trees and shrubs. Lyn James began the process of selecting thirty of our unique trees to qualify the cemetery as an arboretum.

Our first scheduled major fundraiser, the 14th annual Memorial Day Dash Run/Walk, is scheduled for May 28. Last year we enjoyed record-breaking participation, and another big turnout is expected this year for this popular event. Throughout June, July, and August, the cemetery will host many local and out-of-town visitors, as well as frequent tours, in coordination with the Tennessee Sesquicentennial Celebration. The ever-popular Living History Tour is scheduled for October 13. Under the able leadership of Bill McKeck, re-enactors (including some board members) will portray a cast of famous and not-so-famous people interred in the cemetery. The subjects change every year, so each Tour is different.

Spring storms and sporadic vandalism bring fallen limbs and litter of all kinds to the cemetery, and tidying up its 28 acres is no small endeavor. We are appreciative of the efforts of Liz Parrott who coordinates the work of volunteers from Hands On Nashville (http://www.hon.org/), who meet one Saturday each month for cleanup. These efforts, along with grass cutting and general maintenance by crews from Metro Parks, has enabled the cemetery to become one of our city's best-maintained parks.

I encourage you to visit our website, http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org/, which is overseen by Alice Swanson and regularly updated by Danya Downey and Deborah Breighton. You will find there a continuing stream of newly developed historical information and a schedule of events. And, finally, if you are not already a member of The Nashville City Cemetery Association, please consider joining. A membership form is printed on the cover of this newsletter. We need your support, suggestions and encouragement as we carry out our mission.

Winder Campbell
NCCA President

It's Memorial Day Dash Time Again

This year, the Memorial Day Dash 5K begins Monday, May 28, at 8:00 a.m. at Greer (Sounds) Stadium in Nashville, loops through historic Fort Negley, and ends on the shaded paths of the Nashville City Cemetery.

Last year's race saw a record 450 participants, with age-group winners ranging from 7 to 81. Prizes are awarded in over 25 different categories, including age-group winners in 5-year increments and (one of our favorites) an award for the Best Patriotic running attire!

Refreshments, door prizes, and an award ceremony follow the race, along with an inspiring flag ceremony conducted by local Boy Scouts in honor of our fallen veterans.

Registration fee for pre-registered runners (through May 26) is $25, or you can register on the day of the race for $30. Race morning registration and packet pick-up begin at 6:30 a.m. on Memorial Day at the Sounds Stadium parking lot. Parking is free. (Nashville Striders members receive a $2 discount with pre-registration.)

A mail-in registration form is available online at http://www.nashvillestriders.com/race-calendar-2012/ or you can register online at www.nashvillesports.com/memorialdaydash5K . Call NCCA President Winder Campbell with any questions: (615) 269-9006.

The race will be managed once again by the Nashville Striders. Proceeds go to the Nashville City Cemetery Association and are used for cemetery upkeep and repairs.
Preserving Our History: 2012 Update

by Fred Zahn, Metro Historical Commission

It has been a very positive winter for the Nashville City Cemetery. Our many young trees, some of which had a particularly hard summer season last year, have benefited greatly from the exceptionally mild weather and a wet spring. They are putting out a banner crop of foliage, and our classic Dogwood Allee should be a sight to behold this year.

As it is now three years (2009) since many of the restorations that involved repairs were completed, we are proud to report that those efforts of our many fine craftsmen are holding up very well indeed. In the interim, there have been a few repairs necessitated by unavoidable storm damage, as well as the occasional damage caused by factors or persons unknown, but these should be viewed, along with monument cleaning, as a predictable part of an ongoing preservation cycle.

As satisfying as it would be to walk through the front gates one day and declare all work to be "Done," that approach would be patently unrealistic and would ultimately be doing the site a "grave" disservice.

All things require regular maintenance. Things that live outdoors require more maintenance. Things that are 150 years old, that were fragile even when new, and that live outdoors...well, it's a wonder that any of them have survived! The best approach to a site such as our cemetery is to be proactive rather than simply reactive. Ongoing care must be funded to allow for not only our anticipated regular service work but also the unanticipated repairs we have learned to expect, whether we prepare for them or not. Although the Nashville City Cemetery is owned and generally maintained by the Metro Parks Department, all supplemental landscaping, repairs prior and post-Comprehensive Restoration, and the expanded marker replacement program must be paid for through monies generated by our non-profit partner, the Nashville City Cemetery Association.

We continue to see increased interest in new interments at the Nashville City Cemetery, and we are also finding substantial interest and support from our many descendant families for remarking their ancestors' grave sites when a particular headstone has been lost to the ravages of time and the elements. Anyone interested in placing a new marker at the Nashville City Cemetery must first contact the office of the Metropolitan Historical Commission at (615) 862-7970 to obtain information on the procedures and requirements for adding new or replacement headstones. Since the cemetery is zoned as a Metro Historic Landmark, all work on the site requires both prior review and approval by the Metro Historic Zoning Commission and the issuance of a work permit. Happily, there is no fee for this permit, but work done without one may be subject to removal. Both real and artificial flowers may be planted and/or placed at gravesites at any time without a permit, but they should be tended regularly and not allowed to fall into an unsightly state, or they will be removed.

Although a few other cemeteries in our county are historically contemporary with the Nashville City Cemetery, this cemetery's greatest asset is that it is our oldest surviving Public cemetery. This special place from its earliest days has accepted everyone - blacks and whites, Christians and Jews, Union and Confederate soldiers, slaves and statesmen, and a thousand other blended variations in between! As much as a cemetery can at times look like little more than a field of stones, what we take greatest satisfaction in is the the finding and the telling of these many individuals' striking tales. Some rose to greatness, and some fell hard from grace, but all of them are part of our shared history. In contrast to a detached look at a sterile and distant narrative, what we find when we investigate the past is not only how rich even the most seemingly ordinary story can be, but also how often themes repeat themselves throughout time - how many of the challenges our ancestors faced are the very challenges we struggle with today.

We at the Metropolitan Historical Commission, through the generous help and support of our many friends at the Nashville City Cemetery Association, continue to "dig-up" a steady stream of research about those under our stewardship, and we look forward to continuing to celebrate the varied lives of many of Nashville's early residents and also to sharing their stories with you.
Brothers In Law (continued from Page 1)

political enemies, while Sam Houston, who had carried the regimental flag (designed by Thomas's wife, Polly McClung Williams) in the successful charge at Horseshoe Bend, remained close to Jackson. Houston wrote a vitriolic letter to President John Quincy Adams urging him not to appoint John Patton Erwin as postmaster. Adams did make the appointment, but Erwin challenged Houston to a duel over the matter. Although the duel never actually took place, Houston wounded Erwin's second.

Sometime in the 1820s John Patton Erwin declared bankruptcy, perhaps because of unsuccessful land speculation. Col. Joseph Williams, Fannie Erwin's father, dispatched his son, Thomas Lanier Williams, to Nashville to protect his daughter's interests and to make certain that Fannie's future inheritance was specifically shielded from her husband. Although this decision caused some animosity at the time, matters were eventually smoothed over.

The Erwins' home from 1831-1860 was named "Buena Vista." The house was located on the hill near Rosa Parks Avenue and I-65, where the St. Cecilia motherhouse now stands. Thomas Lanier Williams stayed with the Erwins on many of his trips between his Knoxville residence and Nashville, and he eventually died in their home.

John Patton Erwin's grave in City Cemetery is marked with a Nashville Mayors' gravestone, while Thomas Lanier Williams is honored with a V.A. marker reflecting his military service in the War of 1812.

Thomas Lanier Williams was the namesake of four other men named Thomas Lanier Williams. The most famous of these was playwright "Tennessee" Williams, a several-times-great-nephew of Thomas I and a great-great-grandson of Colonel John Williams.

The flag of the 39th, still owned by a descendant of Colonel Williams, is on temporary display this spring at the Tennessee State Museum's War of 1812 "Tennessee Volunteers" exhibit.

Digging For Gold Your Guide to the City Cemetery Website

Start here: http://www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org/

Many historians and genealogists have learned to make use of the historical resources available on the Nashville City Cemetery website, but if you haven't explored the site lately, you are going to find some delightful surprises! Here are some of the helpful items featured there.

At the HISTORY link, you will find the story of the cemetery from its extraordinary 1822 establishment as a completely integrated burying ground through its nearly two centuries of existence. At the same time you will also find photos and descriptions of the creative restoration work carried out over the past four years with the help of a grant from the city of Nashville.

The link called ABOUT US includes a list of the current Directors of the Nashville City Cemetery Association, as well as links to every issue of the NCCA newsletter, Monuments & Milestones, beginning with the Fall issue of 2005.

The INSCRIPTIONS section is perhaps the most beautiful and historically fascinating part of the website. Choose and click on a name from the alphabetical list, and you will be taken to a page which includes the location of that person's grave, his/her gravestone inscription, and photos of the grave, both before and after the recent Comprehensive Restoration of City Cemetery.

Local historians and genealogists who have never used the INTERMENTS link will be amazed by the exciting information there, a gift to you from the many generous people who have spent endless hours transcribing hard-to-find records. African American genealogists, who face so many roadblocks in their research, should find several listings that will open doors to new resources for you. The section titled "Interment Records 1846-1979" links to a huge list on the Nashville Public Library website, where you will find a searchable transcription of the 19,745 Interment Records stored at the Metro Archives. Burial information includes the name, age, sex, race, and residence of the deceased, along with the cause of death and, in many cases, the location of the grave.

The INTERMENTS section also provides helpful hints for researching this site; a glossary of terms and diseases; a list of African Americans known to have been buried here; a list of military veterans (from the American Revolution to World War II) interred here; and lists of Masons from Cumberland Lodge No. 8, Nashville Mayors, and even penitentiary inmates laid to rest in Nashville City Cemetery. Links on the page will take you to undertaker W. R. Cornelius's Civil War burial records from 1864-65 and to lists of individuals whose graves and tombstones have been relocated to other cemeteries.

One of the most fascinating sections of the website is the OBITUARIES area. This section not only provides the text of many obituaries and death notices from 1822 to 1876, but it also lists the death date and obituary date for each individual, providing helpful cues for further research. Some of our volunteers have also linked information from the OBITUARIES to relevant names in the INSCRIPTIONS section to help you move more easily between the two sections.

The NEWS section provides quick links, as you might expect, to current and archived issues of the NCCA newsletter, Monuments & Milestones. However, the two other links on the page may be even more useful to you. The link to "Articles about City Cemetery History" opens a chronological list of articles published in local newspapers—click on the dates to be taken to transcriptions of articles dating from 1811-1937. The link to "Articles about Individuals" leads to a fascinating series of entries about prominent citizens buried in City Cemetery.

The RESOURCE MAPS area can be very helpful if you plan a visit to the cemetery. If you are looking for a specific individual, find that person's entry in INSCRIPTIONS, and match the site information to the map.

And if that isn't enough to keep you entertained and enlightened, come back to the website soon. Exciting new entries appear frequently!
From Nashville's Post Five Legionnaire, July 1956, page 6

PRIEST ASKS CONGRESS TO APPROVE FLAG AT DRIVER'S GRAVE

U.S. Rep. J. Percy Priest has introduced a bill in the House of Representatives to permit an American flag to fly 24 hours daily over the grave of Captain William Driver in City Cemetery at Nashville.

The bill was introduced at the request of the Post 5 Committee for the erection of a shrine to Captain Driver, who named the American flag "Old Glory".

Burr Cullom, Chairman of the Post 5 committee appointed by Commander Lannom, introduced the original resolution last year at a Post meeting and forwarded the Post's request to Congressman Priest recently.

Congressman Priest's H.R. 12092, introduced on July 3, 1956, and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, follows:

A BILL

"To permit the flying of the flag of the United States for twenty-four hours of each day over the grave of Captain William Driver in City Cemetery, Nashville, Tennessee.

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That notwithstanding any rule or custom pertaining to the display of the flag of the United States of America as set forth in the joint resolution entitled "Joint resolution to codify and emphasize existing rules and customs pertaining to the display and use of the flag of the United States of America," approved June 22, 1942, as amended, authority is hereby conferred on the appropriate officer of the State of Tennessee to permit the flying of the flag of the United States for twenty-four hours of each day over the grave of Captain William Driver in City Cemetery, Nashville, Tennessee."

GARDEN NOTES

Spring came early this year, and you are probably thinking about some new ways to brighten your yard. You may even be trying to choose a good tree to plant at your home.

Having the right trees in your yard will benefit you in several ways. They provide cool air and shade, thus reducing your electric bills. They can reduce runoff and help prevent soil erosion during heavy rains. Studies also show that trees help us relax and recover from illness. So what trees should you consider?

The Red Maple — the official Nashville tree — is a great tree for your yard. You might also consider the Tulip Poplar (our state tree), an Eastern Redbud, the Yellowwood, a London Planetree with its beautiful bark, or a Willow Oak. Just be sure you properly plant and water your tree and choose a location away from power lines with plenty of room to grow.

Robert Mather
Davidson County Master Gardener and NCCA Board Member

Master Gardener and NCCA Board Member Robert Mather provides a seasonal gardening tip in each issue of the NCCA newsletter.
UPCOMING EVENTS

The Nashville City Cemetery is open to visitors every day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

General information: The free tours begin at 10:00 a.m. on the dates listed below and last about 45 minutes. In case of unfavorable weather (i.e., tornado, drenching rain, hail, or piles of snow), a cancelled tour will take place the following Saturday.

Saturday, May 12, 2012, 10:00-11:00 a.m.
MASTER GARDENERS' TOUR
The Davidson County Master Gardeners have created those lovely, historically appropriate plantings you see throughout the cemetery. Their popular cemetery tours instruct and inspire amateur gardeners of all levels. Come and celebrate the arrival of spring. Free.

Saturday, May 12, 2012, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

Tuesday, May 22, 2012, 5:30 p.m.
NCCA BOARD MEETING AT SUNNYSIDE

Saturday, May 28, 2011, 8:00 a.m.
14TH ANNUAL MEMORIAL DAY DASH
This annual 5K Run/Walk has drawn more runners and walkers every year. The race begins at 8:00 a.m. at Greer Stadium (534 Chestnut St) and follows a lovely historic path that ends at the City Cemetery. Come early on May 28 to register, or register online. Visit the Nashville Striders website for registration forms and information www.nashvillestriders.com. Entry fee required for all participants.

Saturday, June 9, 2012, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

Tuesday, June 26, 2012, 5:30 p.m.
NCCA BOARD MEETING AT SUNNYSIDE

Saturday, July 14, 2012, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

Tuesday, July 24, 2012, 5:30 p.m.
NCCA BOARD MEETING AT SUNNYSIDE

Saturday, August 11, 2012, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

Tuesday, August 28, 2012, 5:30 p.m.
NCCA BOARD MEETING AT SUNNYSIDE

Saturday, September 8, 2012, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

Tuesday, September 25, 2012, 5:30 p.m.
NCCA BOARD MEETING AT SUNNYSIDE

Saturday, October 6, 2012, 9:00-11:00 a.m.
VOLUNTEER WORK DAY

Saturday, October 13, 2012, 1-5 p.m.
LIVING HISTORY TOUR
Make plans to attend our most popular City Cemetery event, where costumed reenactors bring the history of Middle Tennessee to life. $5 for adults; $10 for families.

Tuesday, October 23, 2012, 5:30 p.m.
NCCA BOARD MEETING AT SUNNYSIDE

* ALL VOLUNTEERS MUST REGISTER WITH HANDS ON NASHVILLE BEFORE COMING TO CEMETERY WORK DAYS. GO TO THEIR WEBSTIE AT http://www.hon.org/ AND SIGN UP.

Have you seen our website lately?

www.thenashvillecitycemetery.org
Visit the Nashville City Cemetery Association on Facebook!

View photos of our events!
READ ABOUT THE REMARKABLE 186-YEAR HISTORY OF CITY CEMETERY
LEARN MORE ABOUT A FAMILY MEMBER BURIED AT CITY CEMETERY
BY STUDYING THE RESOURCE MAPS, OBITUARIES,
AND TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTIONS.
Connect to the 19,745 Interments on the Nashville Public Library website.
share your family history
AND BE SURE TO JOIN THE NASHVILLE CITY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION!
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We list them here with our gratitude.

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