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Subject: Magnolia Cemetery photo
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Attachments: [Lodge at Magnolia.jpg](#)

I sometimes get too excited over old photos of the Uptown when, in reality, probably no one else will ever look at them again. But I picked up what could really be a significant early photo showing an original building at the entrance to Magnolia Cemetery! I have spent the last two weeks chasing down every possible lead and have been unable to find any other image of this building anywhere in any form. And, it was designed by one of Charleston most important architects!

I'm very interested to hear your thoughts about the following analysis (which, I admit, is longish).

Magnolia Cemetery was created out of the Magnolia Umbra Plantation in 1850 and was immediately both a popular place to be buried and a place to stroll around out in the country. The cemetery had hired Edward C. Jones as the architect for the project, and he had laid out the grounds in a naturalistic, flowing manner with impounded water features and winding roads. The old plantation house from about 1820 remained at some distance from the front gate.

According to Mr. Jones' plat for the cemetery, a "Lodge" was added right next to the entrance. The "Lodge" was more specifically described as the "Porter's Lodge"—an entrance building where visitors would receive guidance and could shelter from the weather—when it was mentioned in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in June 1857 along with a chapel (that stood among a grove of oaks beside the central lake) and receiving tomb. Neither the lodge nor chapel survived.

The photo is likely the only image of Jones's Lodge. On the rear, a note in an old-style script identifies the scene as the entrance to Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston, South Carolina. Since there is no other known image of the Lodge, the accuracy of that description is left to circumstantial evidence, but the case is strong and the sleuthing to make that case is interesting itself!

First, of course, the note on the back of the image is itself at least some evidence. The description could be an error; however, given the following evidence, it would be a very great coincidence that someone would have misidentified a building that could so easily have been the Lodge.

Second, the photo itself is rather small, but that is actually good news. In 1854, a new photographic process was developed in France that produce what were known as cartes de visite. They were rather small photo (About the size of business cards/calling cards) and mounted on heavier cardboard. This photo is the right dimensions for that printing process which took off in 1859 but fell out of favor in the 1870s. Thus, the photo, although undated, can be reasonably pegged as having been taken and processed in the 1860s. Since Magnolia Cemetery was still new at that time, it is natural that someone might have photographed the entrance to the cemetery at that time.

Third, about the only information about the Lodge came in an 1868 newspaper article. The story reported that the cemetery directors had finally gotten back together after the disruption of the Civil War. The article noted that the Lodge was in such bad shape that it was completely demolished. (The lakeside chapel was also in bad shape and stripped of several features which were then burned, but the shell of the chapel remained in use at least a little longer.) The article recited that the Lodge had cost \$1800 to build, which in the 1850s would have been a fair amount for the mystery building.

Fourth, the cemetery had a wooden fence surrounding it; Mr. Jones ran ads in the newspaper asking for bids for the materials the fence would require. Thus, the fact that the mystery building includes a wooden fence is at least consistent with what one would expect.

Fifth, the design of the mystery building is very peculiar. The building has a partially detached bell tower on the front with a very low-pitched roof. Mr. Jones is known to have designed other buildings with that same oddball feature in the 1850s. Notably, the original building for Furman University had a partly detached bell tower with a somewhat flat roof. Mr. Jones' design for the main building at Wofford College also used square towers with flat roofs. So did the original Roper Hospital on Queen Street in Charleston. Those buildings were executed in masonry, but the mystery building was built of wood in the Carpenter Gothic style. But, the use of a flat-roofed, largely detached tower is exactly what one might expect from Mr. Jones. Therefore, since Mr. Jones is the known architect for the cemetery, that is another clue.

Sixth, according to a brief article of May 9, 1871, in the Charleston Daily News, the cemetery did not yet have enough money to replace the porter's lodge when it was demolished in 1868, but a new lodge was eventually added. An old photo barely shows the replacement building with a bell tower on the front. The replacement building in the later photo seems to be far plainer than the mystery building, but after the Civil War, one would have expected that. It is weak circumstantial evidence, but one might easily expect that a replacement for the original building might at least vaguely have been inspired by the first structure's design, therefore adding credence to the idea that the mystery photo does actually show that first Lodge.

Seventh, the replacement building likewise eventually fell into disrepair and was partly demolished. Although the bell tower of the replacement lodge was removed, the bell was saved and is on display today. That salvaged bell is stamped saying that it was cast in 1850. Since the first Lodge seems to have been an original building when the cemetery opened in 1850 and since the replacement lodge from which the bell was saved could not have predated 1868, the casting date of 1850 suggests that the earlier lodge also had a bell tower—like the mystery building does!

In conclusion, there are several pieces of circumstantial evidence to weigh: (1) the photo is labeled in an old script as showing the entrance to Magnolia Cemetery; (2) the photo itself is physically the sort of photo that was taken in the 1860s when the cemetery was new, (3) the mystery photo shows a wooden fence (which Magnolia Cemetery had in 1850); (4) the design of the mystery building shares a notable feature seen on other known designs by Mr. Jones; (5) the cost of building the Lodge could easily have been the price for the mystery building; (6) a replacement for the demolished, original Lodge itself had a bell tower; and (7) a bell salvaged from the replacement building was cast in 1850 when the original Lodge might have been built but at least 18 years before the replacement was built. Therefore, no irrefutable proof confirms that the mystery building is the original Lodge. But, there is a very strong circumstantial evidence to be made.

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