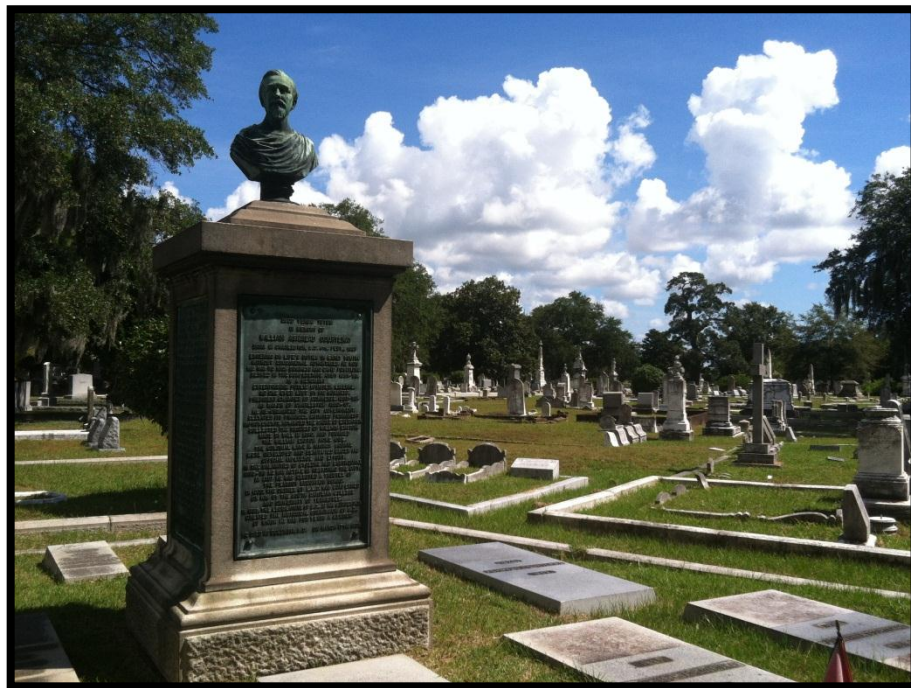


*Walking Among the Dead:  
Exploring the Urban  
Graveyard and Rural Cemetery  
in Charleston [FS3]*



Frances H. Ford  
Katherine S. Pemberton  
Ashley R. Wilson

# ITINERARY

**2:00pm:** **DEPART** Francis Marion  
Hotel  
387 King Street

**2:15pm:** **ARRIVE** at Circular  
Congregational Church  
150 Meeting Street

## ***PRESENTATION and WALK***

**3:45pm:** **DEPART** St. Philip's Church  
146 Church Street

**4:00pm:** **ARRIVE** at Magnolia  
Cemetery

**5:00pm:** **DEPART** Magnolia Cemetery

**5:30pm:** **ARRIVE** at Francis Marion  
Hotel  
387 King Street





## CIRCULAR CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH GRAVEYARD



A congregation for the Independent Church has met at this site since 1681. Four different church structures have occupied the site but the graveyard remains and is widely considered the oldest of Charleston's burial grounds. It is from the first structure, a small meeting house, that Meeting Street takes its name. The third structure designed by architect Robert Mills was burned in the Great Fire of 1861 and then the ruins stood until the Great Earthquake of 1886 knocked it down completely. The present church dates to 1892. The churchyard surrounding the building retains an impressive array of gravestones, mausoleum, box tombs, and monuments. More than fifty slate stones remain that were imported from New England. This constitutes the largest

concentration of these stones in the southeastern United States. They were carved by Boston and Rhode Island carvers and many are signed. In addition, the Simmons Vault, a barrel-shaped tomb of brick (c. 1698-99) is located here and is likely the oldest grave marker in the city.

The congregation of the Circular Church appreciates the importance of their graveyard and has worked to make sure that it has been the subject of extensive study and documentation. They also regularly work towards the conservation and repair of their markers.

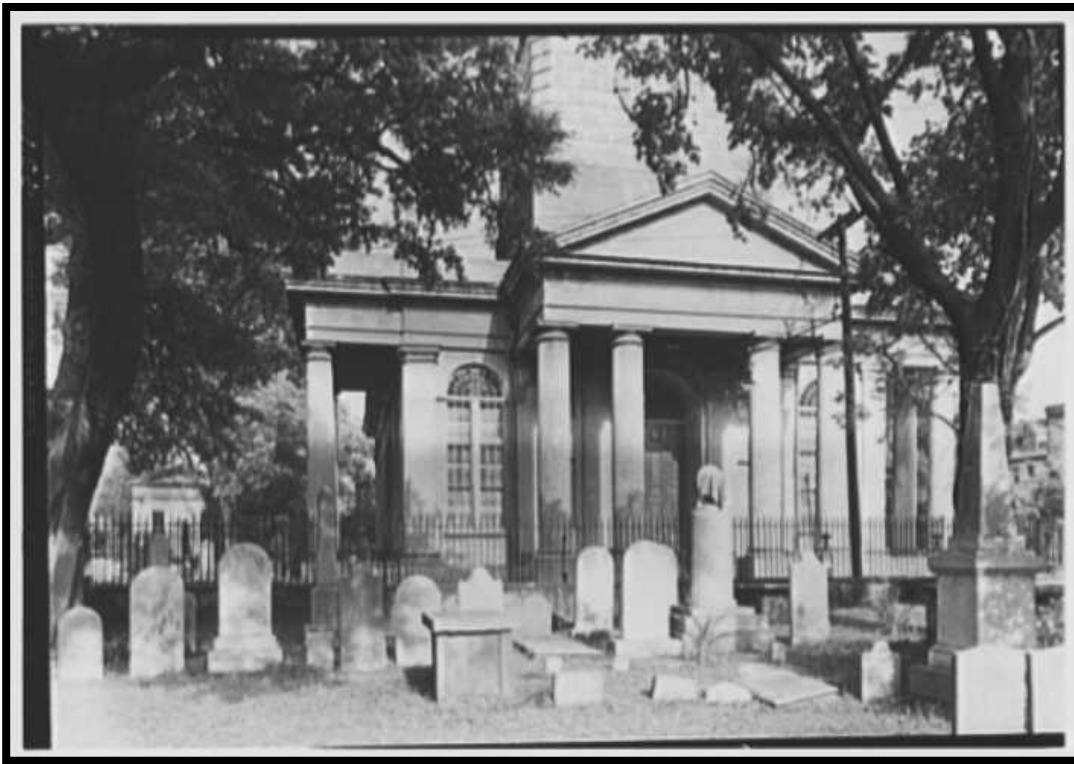


## ST. PHILIP's CHURCH

The west cemetery of St Philips church is older than the 1840 church building which juts out into Church Street. This second building, for a congregation which dates to the founding of Charlestown, replaced an early eighteenth century structure destroyed in a fire. Many well-known Charleston figures have this as their final resting place; Edward Rutledge, signer of the Declaration of Independence, John C.

Calhoun, US Vice President and more recent, Dubois Heyward, Porgy and Bess playwright.

The oldest stones still extant are from the 1720's and 30's, sand stone and slate, imported from England or sent down from New England. The material used for the majority of the eighteenth and nineteenth stones though is marble. Charleston being a semi-tropical



environment saves most stones from the damage of freeze/thaw but not from the universal problem of acid rain. Issues related to marshy/sandy soil causing sinking and unfortunate repair products from the 1970's account for most present day repairs.



PLAN  
OF  
MAGNOLIA CEMETERY.

CHARLESTON S. C.

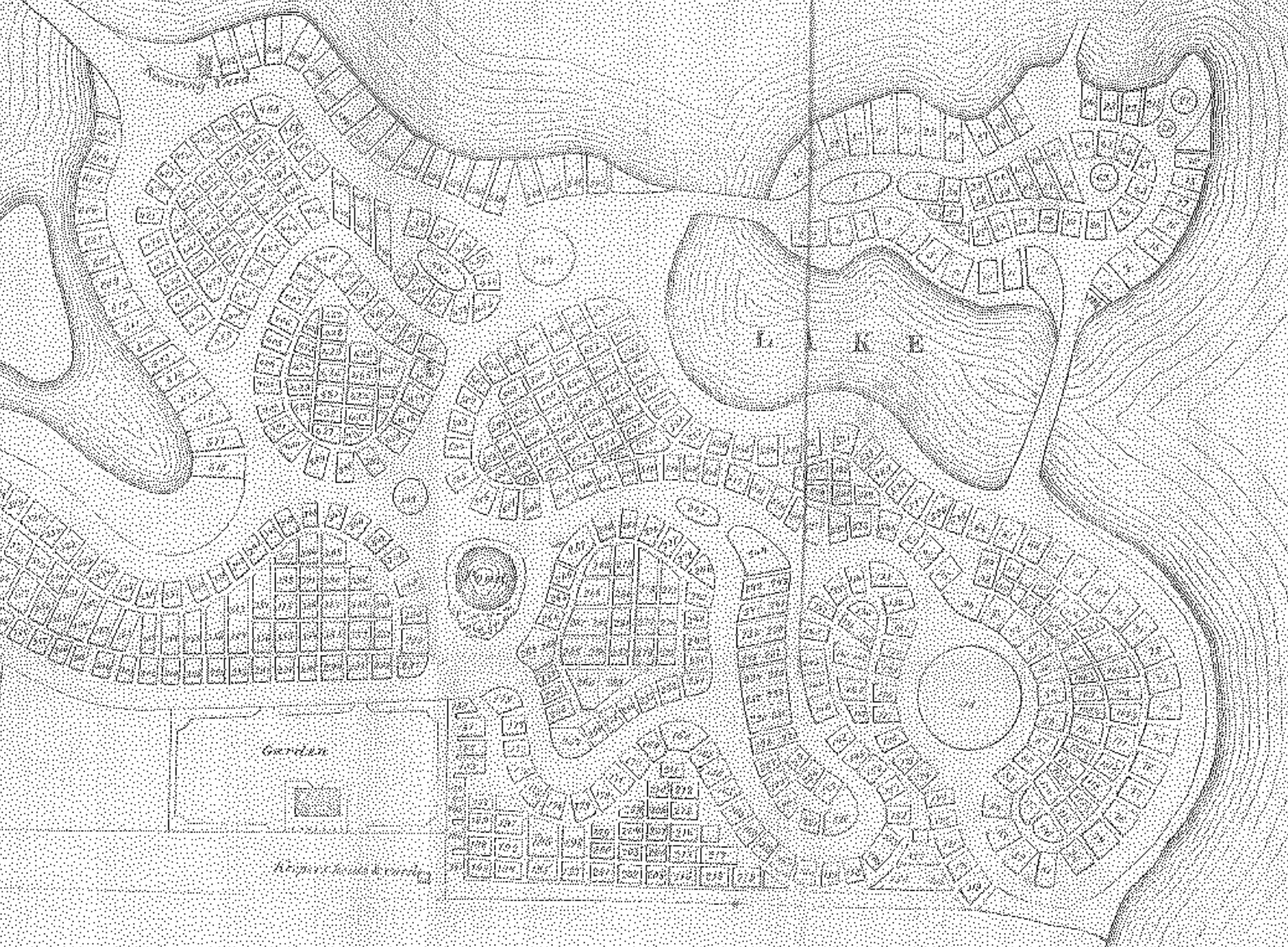
*Designed and Laid out*

*by*

*Edward C. Jones, Esq.*

1850.

*Scale 1/2 inch to 1 Chain*



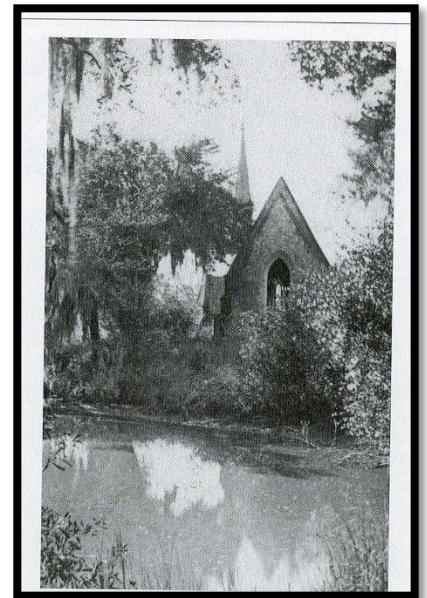


## MAGNOLIA CEMETERY

The site selected for Magnolia Cemetery was a tract of land approximately one mile north of Boundary Street, the northern boundary of the city. Thirty five acres of high land and marsh were sold to the Magnolia Cemetery Company on January 3, 1850. With the goal of creating “not only a secure, but a beautiful place of repose for the dead,” the Company hired local architect, Edward C. Jones to survey and design the cemetery. Jones partnered with Major Francis D. Lee to create the firm Jones and Lee. In addition to designing buildings, the two expanded their practice to include the accompanying landscape in

their submission for Magnolia. This holistic design practice reflected national trends for rural cemeteries.

Previous to 1850, the land designated for Magnolia Cemetery was partially covered by dense forests of grand oaks, magnolias, pines, and cedars. The design presented by Jones selectively manicured the forests, accentuating the natural beauty of the landscape. The 1850 plan also featured newly created small lakes with islands, bridges, and locks to control the tides from the Cooper River. An entrance to the cemetery was marked by two semi-circular gates at the east end of Cunningham Street. The fence encompassing the cemetery tract was five feet tall and composed of wooden boards while a twenty foot wide carriage road and smaller secondary paths continued into the grounds. Buildings designed to fit within this new landscape included a gate house or porter’s lodge, chapel, and a receiving tomb. Today only the receiving tomb survives. This small gabled stucco structure was designed to hold bodies until burial.





The cemetery grounds were dedicated on November 19, 1850 and Magnolia's first ten years were successful. Lots were continuously sold, the grounds maintained, and small parcels of land from the adjacent northern Belvidere plantation tract were purchased for expansion. Visitors described the burial lots as miniature gardens with small trees, roses, flowers,



cast iron gates and stone sculptures. In 1854, entrance via horseback was prohibited to discourage disturbances. Once the Civil War began, several instances of vandalism were recorded which caused the Trustees to require admission cards and tickets for entry in 1862. Despite rules prohibiting refreshments on the grounds, a tradition of pleasure parties developed at the site, as families caring for the graves of their loved ones took advantage of the natural beauty and park-like atmosphere of the cemetery.

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, cemeteries across America were becoming less relevant as places of commemoration and grieving, partly due to the transient nature of the modern family. In 1952 a non-profit organization named the Magnolia Cemetery Trust took over the property. This represented a period of transition in which care of graves and plots became less of an ancestral matter and more often a duty assumed by others. Magnolia faced a number of challenges in the twentieth century. Deteriorating materials and the high cost of maintenance continued the gradual decline in the physical condition of the cemetery. Over the years, much of the historic stone and iron work has been deteriorated, vandalized or removed. Damage from Hurricane Hugo in 1989 was also extensive and costly.

Even though Magnolia Cemetery has been challenged, it has also become more and more recognized as a place of historical, architectural and cultural importance. This recognition led to a cemetery-wide documentation project by the Graduate Program in Historic Preservation co-sponsored by Clemson University and College of Charleston.

***\*This material is included in an upcoming publication through the University of South Carolina Press. Please do not use without permission.***

# Points of Interest

## Gatehouse and Bell

The present cast iron entry gates and posts were installed in 1914 to replace the wooden pillars that originally marked entrance to this pastoral landscape. The Gate House was built in 1849 as part of the original design for Magnolia Cemetery. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, entry to the cemetery was limited to lot holders and their guests. Visitors were required to stop by the Gate House to obtain a guest pass. The gatekeeper would ring the bell to summon the Superintendent to greet the guests. The interior of the bell has deep indentations from the clapper hitting the sides after years of use.

The bell is inscribed "First Casting at the Jackson Monument Foundry at Washington 1850."



The building was severely damaged during Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and a significant restoration was subsequently undertaken. The Gate House received a Carolopolis Award from the Preservation Society of Charleston in 1994 its restoration.

The carpenter gothic gate house has wooden beaded clapboards and gable fretwork. The interior consists of one main room and a small privy off the eastern side of the building which currently serves as storage.



## Soldier's Ground and Confederate Monument

The area of the Soldier's Ground was appropriated by Magnolia Cemetery for the burial of over 850 Confederate soldiers. Among the fallen, are 82 South Carolina soldiers who died on the battlefields of Gettysburg. In 1871, the Ladies Memorial Association of Charleston, arranged for these men to be moved from Rose's Farm at Gettysburg to Magnolia Cemetery.

Each soldier is memorialized by a small marker made from stone remaining after the construction of the Capitol in Columbia, South Carolina. At the center stands the main



monument; a bronze soldier, situated atop a granite base, marching northward carrying the Confederate flag. This stone base was designed by G.T. Berg, an architect headquartered in Columbia, while the eight foot tall, 630 pound, statue and bronze reliefs were cast in Munich, Germany at the Royal Foundry by Ferdinand Von Muller II.

## **Magnolia Umbria Plantation House**

After passing through several ownerships, William Cunningham purchased 184 acres of land known as Magnolia Umbria in 1781. Cunningham subdivided the property into smaller farms and lots, selling some sections off to various buyers. During the Revolutionary War, the Field Officers of the Fourth Brigade purchased a small portion of the marsh land to be used as a parade ground.

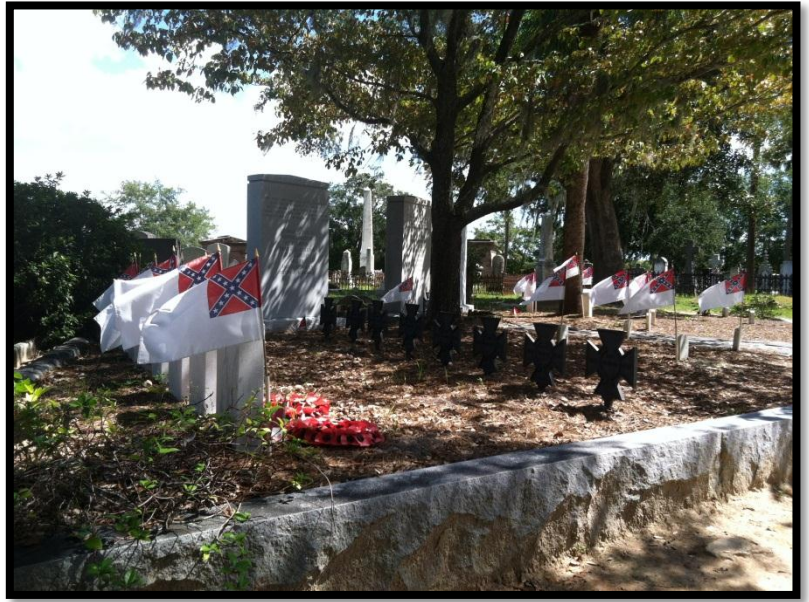
The two story plantation house was built between 1790 and 1800 by Cunningham. By 1809, the terms Magnolia Umbria Plantation and Magnolia Farm was commonly used to describe the property. In laying out Magnolia Cemetery, Jones and Lee intended the structure serve as the caretaker's residence. They also designed a flower garden around the existing plantation house. Currently, the house serves as administrative offices for the Magnolia Cemetery Trust.



## Hunley Plot

Discovery in 1995 of the wreck of the *H. L. Hunley* in Charleston Harbor, lead to its recovery in 2000 and the eventual reunion of all three Hunley crews at Magnolia. The *H.L. Hunley* was the first submarine to sink an enemy ship in warfare, sinking the *USS Housatonic* in 1864.

Two disastrous missions meant the deaths of thirteen men, including Horace L. Hunley, one of the project's investors and its namesake. The third and final voyage of the submersible in 1864 resulted in the death of another thirteen crew members.



Their remains and personal effects were retrieved along with the ship during the extensive conservation efforts which followed the raising of the *Hunley*.

The second crew of eight was buried at Magnolia in 1863, the first five-man crew was re-interred here in 2000. An elaborate ceremony in April 2004, involved more than 9,000 re-enactors making the four and a half mile trip from Charleston Battery to Magnolia, carried the

final crews' remains, bringing together all that served and perished on the *Hunley*. The new knee-high, white marble markers were selected to match the 19<sup>th</sup> century markers. Hunley Circle is one of the most popular destinations in the cemetery.



## Mausoleum Row

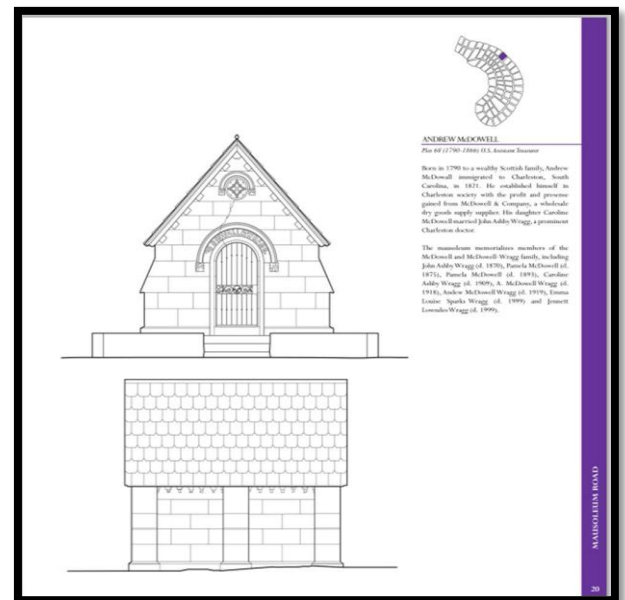


Located along the eastern edge of Magnolia Cemetery with stunning view of the marsh, the Wilkes, White, Vanderhorst and McDowall structures form an impressive row of mausoleums.

The simple temple-form Wilkes mausoleum is veneered in brownstone, an imported soft stone from the mid-Atlantic. Its appearance in Magnolia is noticeable since the warm brown color is striking compared to the marble, granite and sandstones that prevail. Since the

Lowcountry has no native stone, Brownstone became a popular building material in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. The inherent weaknesses in the stone which causes it to delaminate when exposed to the elements, contributed to its decline as a building material.

A tall yet narrow Grecian temple constructed of brick and clad with brownstone panels was once the final resting place of the White and Horlbeck families both prominent in the building trades. The greek motifs include the corner acroterion, the wreath and garland



in the pediment, the ridge cap on the low pitched gable and the

baseless Doric pilasters. A little over thirty years ago, the interred remains located in this mausoleum were removed due to the structure's deteriorating condition. Today the poor condition of the interior crypt allows the viewer to peer inside a normally inaccessible space. The depth of the crypt is estimated at sixteen to eighteen feet.



The Vanderhorst Mausoleum was built on one of the first plots purchased at Magnolia and was likely designed by the architectural firm of Jones and Lee, the same men responsible for designing the layout of the entire cemetery. Jones and Lee were well versed in the eclectic

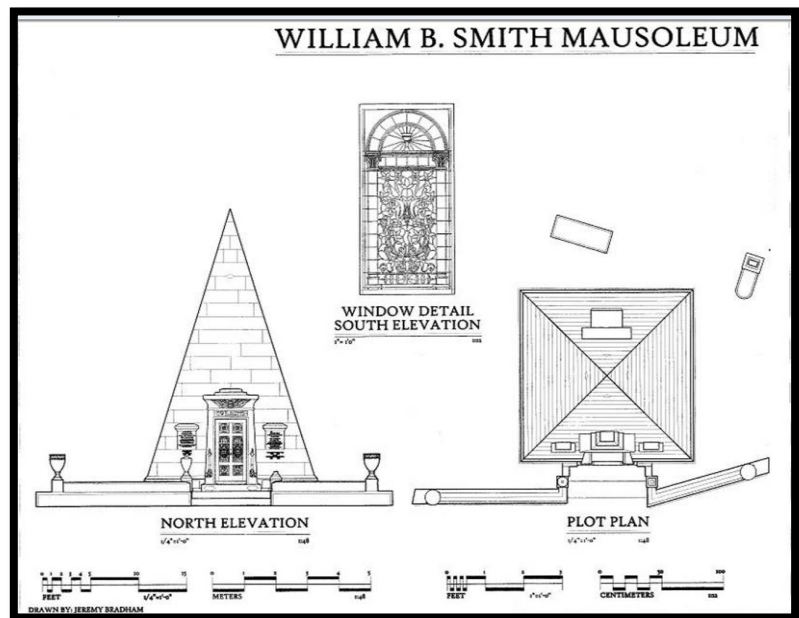
architectural styles prevalent in the mid-19th century and their body of work added significantly to the charming and eclectic feel of Charleston. Aware of national design trends, they here incorporated the design trend of Egyptian funerary structures that was the hallmark of rural cemeteries.

The style of the miniaturized fairy tale cottage may be a legacy of McDowall's European heritage. The small gothic mausoleum with stone shakes on the steeply pitched roof evokes a residential quality and feeling of permanence. The stucco is scored to resemble stone blocks and remnants of a deep umber patina can be viewed in protected areas indicating a polychromatic aesthetic no longer visible in the sun-bleached cemetery. Sited on a pedestal base with buttressed sides, the front three steps brings the visitor to a newly restored gated entry that allows a view in to the interior coffin shelves.

## Smith Pyramid

Charlestonian William Burroughs Smith was a successful businessman and banker. During his life, he was an active member of Charleston's society and took an active role in the delegation that asked President Hayes to remove Federal troops from Charleston more than a decade after the close of the Civil War. When Smith died in 1892, it was estimated that his net worth was over two million dollars.

The Egyptian Revival stone pyramid is considered the most sublime and iconic monument in Magnolia. Funerary art was perfected by the ancient Egyptians and the early Victorians embraced a similar fascination with death. The Smith pyramid has a protecting vulture wingspan over the entry to the mausoleum surmounted by two extinguished torches. On the pedestal above the vulture door surround once stood a nearly life-sized angel pointing skyward. The use of oversized cavetto moulding and lotus emblazoned designs is typical of Egyptian motifs. The pyramid also exhibits some of the most elaborate finishes in the cemetery. The mausoleum is entered through an antechamber with a black and white marble floor that is separated from the interior by copper gates. Within the tomb is a Tiffany styled stained glass window and large stone tablets with metal handles protecting the burial vaults.





## William Washington Monument

During the American Revolutionary, Major General Nathaniel Greene referred to “Light Horse Harry” Lee as his “eye,” while he described Colonel William Washington as his “arm.” He served as a cavalry commander and was George Washington’s second cousin, once removed.

The fluted column monument, wrapped with garland, features an ascending rattlesnake. The rattlesnake was a frequently used motif during the Revolutionary War illustrating the strength of Colonies united. The monument was designed by noted Charleston architect E.B. White, sculpted by Charleston’s stone carver, W.T. White and erected by the Washington Light Infantry. Each side commemorates the Colonel’s four decisive battles; Cowpens, Trenton, Hobkirk’s Hill, and Eutaw Springs.

The circular plot is encompassed by a cast iron fence with upturned stone cannons serving as entry pilasters signifying the extinguishment of a military hero. According to the inscription, the remains of Lieutenant Colonel William Washington and his wife Jane are not interred here but are located instead within her family’s cemetery near Rantowles Bridge. There are several such monuments in Magnolia Cemetery erected to memorialize a figure important to an organization or the area’s history.



## Elbert Jones Marker

Born in Kentucky, Jones traveled to San Francisco, California in 1846 as part of a mass migration of Mormons who arrived just before the 1849 gold rush. He was an entrepreneur, influential newspaper editor and politician. During his tenure as councilman, the city of San Francisco grew exponentially. In his honor, the city named a street after him.

In 1851, for unknown reasons, he and his family moved to Charleston where he died only a year later. His wife erected a monument as a “tribute of affection to a beloved husband”; it cost \$6500 in 1852. The gothic style monument with its stone spire is one of the most impressive in all of Magnolia. The four sides of the spire are depicted with winged angels within a gothic portal, one holding a bible, one with a cross, one weeping and one pointing heavenward. The marker was



illustrated in William Gilmore Simms's 1857 article, "Charleston the Palmetto City," in Harper's Weekly. The stone marker is signed E Greble, Philadelphia and the design is attributed to Charleston architect Francis D. Lee.

## Receiving Tomb

Designed by Charleston architect Edward C. Jones and his partner Francis D. Lee, the Receiving Tomb is the only structure remaining from the 1851 plan for Magnolia Cemetery. It was used as a temporary resting place for the dead, while a tomb or crypt was completed. Most nineteenth century cemeteries had similar public vaults that stored the dead for days, weeks, or months while permanent resting places were prepared.

This gothic style, stuccoed brick building measures eighteen by eleven feet, and boasts one foot thick walls, exterior buttresses, a barrel vaulted ceiling, and a slate roof, the only slate roof in the cemetery. As cemetery practices have changed, the structure has not been used since the early twentieth century. The basic size and shape of the nearby Mausoleums, the words "Receiving Tomb" are carved in a marble panel over the doorway. Marble slabs line the underside of the eaves on the gable end walls. The interior stone shelves span the buildings' interior width.

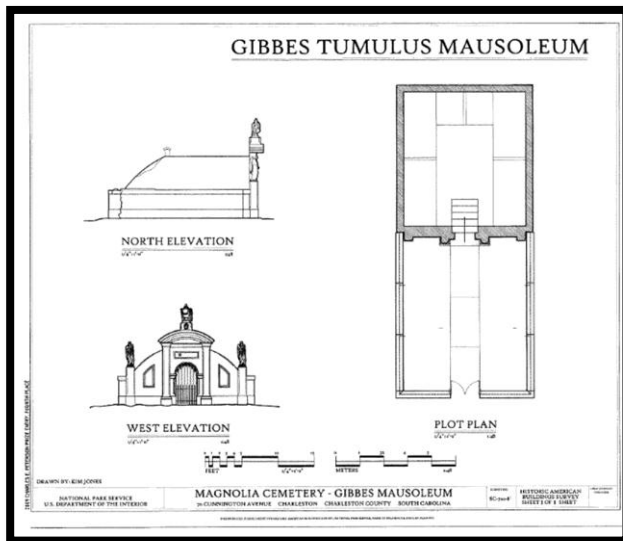
In 2011 the Preservation Society of Charleston picked the Receiving Tomb as one of their "Seven to Save" and they have since worked towards raising needed funds for its stabilization.





## Gibbes Tumulus Mausoleum

James Shoolbred Gibbes descended from proprietary governor Robert Gibbes, who served from 1709 to 1712. While James Gibbes made his living in business, his passion was art and he traveled extensively in Europe to pursue his interests. He was philanthropic with his wealth and he established the Soldier's Hospital at the corner of King and George streets. When Gibbes died in 1888, his financial worth was estimated at over a million dollars. His donation of \$75,000 made possible the building of the Gibbes Art Gallery, today the Gibbes Museum of Art at 135 Meeting Street.



This type of earthen mound raised over a grave can be found throughout much of the world but the stone tumulus of James Gibbes, is the only example of such a monument at Magnolia Cemetery. Gibbes had the two angels sculpted in Italy before his death. The classical Italian detailing and surmounting seraphic figures have recently been restored. James Shoolbred Gibbes is buried in his family plot with seven other members of his family.

## Aiken - Rhett Family Plot

The Aiken-Rhett plot contains the remains of two of the most prominent families in Charleston. William Aiken, Jr. and his wife Harriet Lowndes Aiken were married in 1831 and resided in their grand house on Elizabeth Street with their only daughter Henrietta. Members of the upper echelons of Charleston society, the Aikens entertained extravagantly, and they decorated their home in the fashionable Greek Revival style which appears here in a more understated



manner. Greek Revival elements, such as an Ionic column and acanthus leaves, are found on the several tombstones in the plot.

William Aiken, Jr. distinguished himself as both a planter and as an active politician. Aiken owned Jehossee Plantation, a rice plantation located on Edisto Island and home to more than 700 slaves. Despite his familial ties and his status as one of the largest slave owners in the South, former Governor Aiken was a strong, vocal opponent of the South's decision to secede from the Union. Despite his personal politics, Aiken supported the Confederacy financially after the beginning of the war, and he and his wife entertained Jefferson Davis, Confederate President, at their home. Aiken's sarcophagus is decorated with acanthus leaves and other classical symbols. It notes his most important achievements; governor of South Carolina, member of Congress, and trustee of the Peabody Fund for post-war education in the South.

Much of Magnolia Cemetery is similarly organized: immediate or extended family plots that are clearly delineated with iron fencing or stone coping.

## White Family Plot

The Raymond-White plot is the family gravesite of Blake White, Esquire, his wife Rosalie, several of Mrs. White's family members, and the couple's children.

More than any other, this family plot shows the unbearable everydayness of childhood death in the Victorian family. This passing of innocents was often cloaked in a romantic perception of rebirth. The death of children was seen as noble and unsullied, instructing adults on how to meet death. Many other mid-nineteenth century rural cemeteries provided a separate section for children and stillborn babies. In Charleston, families such as the White's could afford to memorialize their children in their family plots. The Whites had eight children, five of whom died in childhood.

Their infant daughter, Rosalie Raymond, who died in 1882, is hauntingly memorialized by a stone cradle with a carved baby portrait. Babies Stella and Hope, who both died before the age of one, have similarly shaped gravestones. Stella, which means star in French, has a star on her stone and



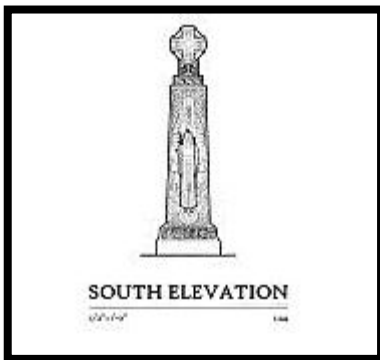


two small stars on her plot. Hope's stone displays an anchor, and like her sister Stella, has a decorative footstone. Their brother Raymond's gravestone has a scroll with a dove perched upon it. All of these burials were exhumed from St Philip's Church Yard and reinterred at Magnolia in 1895.

## Witte Marker

Upon his arrival in Charleston in 1847 from New York, Karl Otto Witte at age twenty-three changed his first name to Charles. Witte trained as a farmer once he arrived in America but became a successful businessman and banker in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. He died in 1908.

According to Witte's granddaughter, Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel, Louis Comfort Tiffany designed and crafted his tombstone. The styling is a rare mixture in Magnolia Cemetery of Arts and Crafts and Moderne movements. An Egyptian central figure stands in front of an optimistic sunburst. The sides are carved with

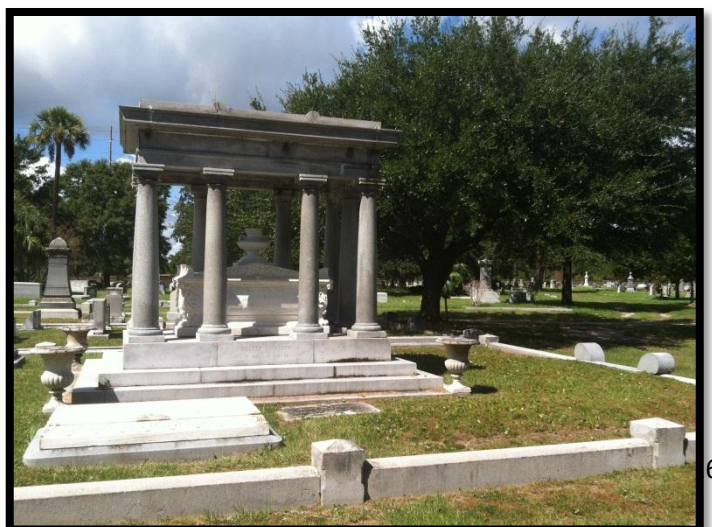


Celtic knots referencing the repeated crossing of the physical and spiritual which is appropriate but uncommon in funerary architecture. The more frequently used Celtic cross tops the marker.

The plot overlooks the lake on a bluff and is the final resting place for four of the six daughters. Buried with Charles at Magnolia are Beatrice Witte Ravenel (b. 1870, d. 1956), a prominent poet. Her daughter, Beatrice St. Julien Ravenel (b. 1904, d.1990) was the author of *Architects of Charleston*, the seminal guide on twentieth-century builders in Charleston.

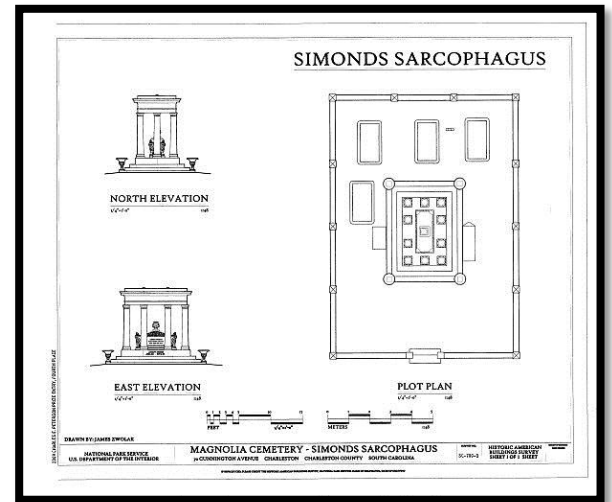
## Simonds Marker

The first president of the First National Bank of South Carolina established in 1860, Andrew Simonds, Sr. retained his wealth after the Civil War by investing in the emerging phosphate industry centered along the former Ashley River plantations. The mining activities extracted phosphorous marl that was used as fertilizer



Andrew Simonds, Jr. was known for his skill in leisure activities such as hunting and fishing. After marrying Daisy Breau of New Orleans in 1893, his father gave them a residence on South Battery but it did not suit the flamboyant Daisy. The Villa Margherita, at 4 South Battery, was built for her in 1895. Despite inheriting his father's position as President of the bank, Andrew Jr. continued a lifestyle of excess, had a nervous breakdown and was committed to an asylum far away in Washington D.C. where he died. Daisy married twice more, enjoyed a life of adventure but is buried alone in a plot nearby to the west with a surprisingly simple marker.

The marble sarcophagus inside of the granite tetra-style temple memorializes the parents. The son is marked as part of the protective temple. The overall scale and design project notions about the wealth and status of the two male Simonds. The temple has sheltered the sarcophagus from weathering resulting in extraordinary detail such as the life like griffin paws that are so well preserved that the texture of the fur is evident.



## Courtenay Bust



Born in Charleston, Courtenay's was a publisher and bookseller on Broad Street. As a newspaperman and writer he left a detailed account of the destruction caused by the Great Charleston Fire of 1861. He later resigned his duties at the newspaper to join the Confederate Army. In the fall of 1879, Mr. Courtney was elected mayor of Charleston. During his tenure as mayor, he focused on infrastructure improvements. His contributions were humanitarian as well as aesthetic as he rehabilitated the public hospitals, provided services for the sick and homeless and established a professional fire department. His mayorship was the most active and influential in the nineteenth century.

His memorial in Magnolia is a considerable granite base with bronze plaques, surmounted by a likeness of Courtenay sculpted by Edward Virginus Valentine, and cast by Henry-Bonnard Bronze Company in 1889. It is the only sculpture in Magnolia that directly resembles the deceased.



## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## **FIELD SESSION LEADERS:**

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**Ashley Robbins Wilson, AIA:** *Graham Gund Architect at the National Trust and Faculty, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, Clemson University/College of Charleston*



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