

Your Family Tomb: A Biography



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Presented to Learning Before Lunch
March 8, 2018

Introduction: Oak & Laurel Cemetery Preservation, LLC



Cemetery Restoration



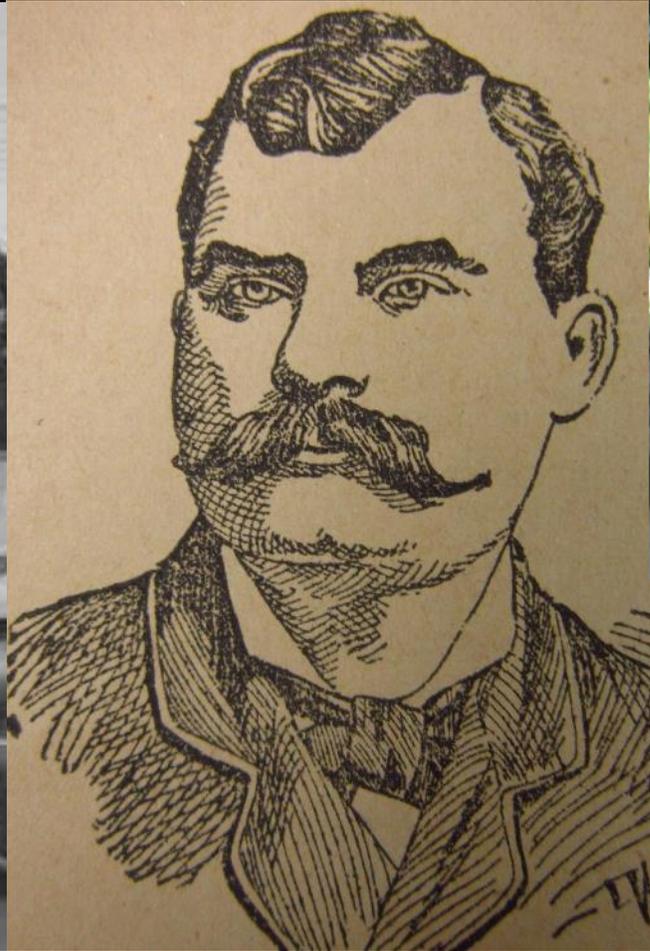
Historic Research

Consultation

Introduction: Oak & Laurel Cemetery Preservation, LLC



Odd Fellows Rest, 1958
New Orleans Public Library



Combining historic archives, architectural history, and other resources to better understand cemetery landscapes, history, and preservation.

Introduction



St. Roch Chapel, 1920
Wikimedia Commons

- ❖ History of Tomb Construction
- ❖ Community Interaction with Cemeteries
- ❖ Modern Shifts in Cemetery Landscapes
- ❖ Caring for Your Family Tomb Today

Cimetiere des Innocents, Paris (~1100 – 1780)

For centuries, death and burial in Europe was an unromantic affair. Burials were temporary. Remains would be exhumed and placed in ossuaries (charnieres) as *memento mori*.

By 1780, Enlightenment thinkers saw this mode of burial – urban, concentrated, austere – as detrimental to public health. L’Innocents was closed in 1780. The cemeteries of Montmartre and Pere Lachaise replaced it.



Cimetiere des Innocents, 1550
Wikimedia Commons

St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 (1789)

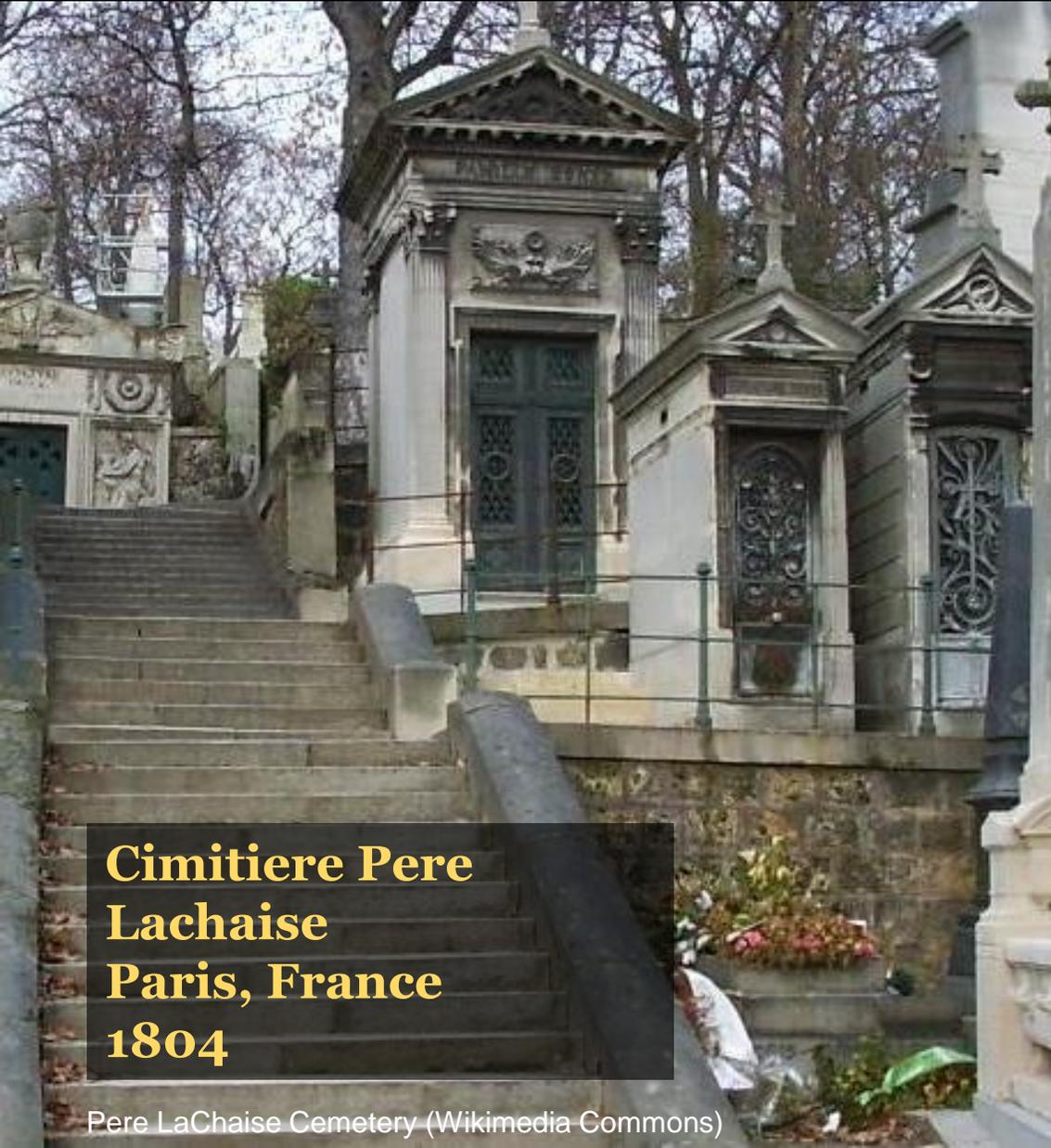
Even though the colony was assumed by the Spanish in 1763. French-speaking New Orleanians would have been very aware of the shift in death culture in France.

In 1789, St. Peter Street Cemetery was closed, and St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 was opened.

It would become the first above-ground New Orleans cemetery.



Origins of Above-Ground Burial



**Cimetiere Pere
Lachaise
Paris, France
1804**

Pere LaChaise Cemetery (Wikimedia Commons)



**Via Appia
Rome, Italy
312 B.C.**

Via Appia (Wikimedia Commons)

Origins of Above-Ground Burial



Argentina

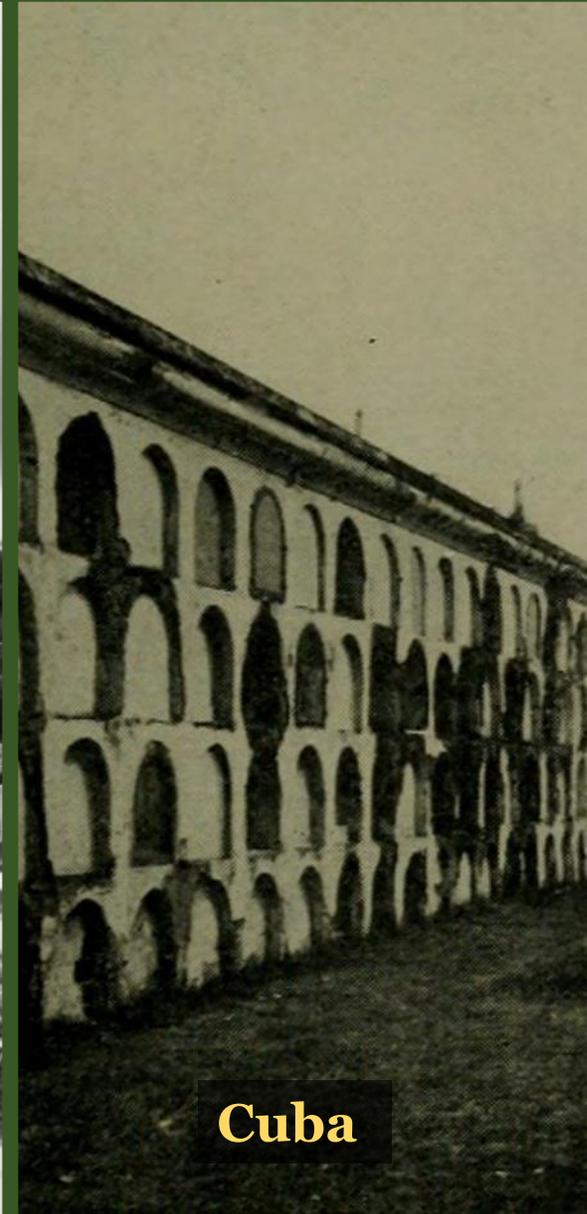


Philippines

Photo courtesy of Chuck Rand



Puerto Rico



Cuba

1800 – 1830: Step Tombs and High Style



The first above-ground New Orleans tombs were simple masonry structures. St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 is predominantly populated by these small, vernacular tombs.

In 1822, St. Louis Cemetery No. 2 was opened. By 1833, architect J.N.B. de Pouilly arrived from France with a pattern book of Pere Lachaise designs.

Jacques Nicolas Bussiere de Pouilly (1804-1875)



**Duplantier-Peniston
1842**



**Grailhe
1850**



**Livaudais
1851**



**Caballero
1860**

Building Materials in the 19th Century

Bricks were made by hand using clay from the Mississippi River (known as “batture”) or from Lake Pontchartrain and St. Tammany Parish. The bricks were known as “soft reds” or “hard tans,” respectively.

Lime was made by burning oyster shells, or imported from upriver kilns where limestone was burned.

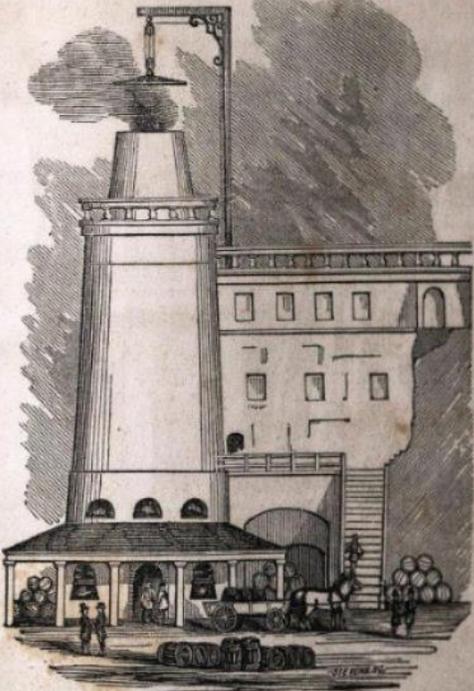
Tombs were painted using a mixture of lime and water, known as limewash.



ADVERTISEMENT. Aa

LIME.

RICHARDS' CAPE LIME!



The numerous testimonials of the purity and superior quality of the CAPE LIME, for the purposes of Masonry, and particularly for Planters' use in Sugar making, has induced the undersigned, proprietor of the "CAPE GIRARDEAU MARBLE QUARRIES" to extend and adopt such improvements in its production, as will insure a more perfect calcination, and enable him promptly to supply the increasing demand, and all orders for this lime.

All barrels of this Lime will be stamped "RICHARDS' CAPE LIME," and of a size equal to the Flour Barrel, or three Winchester Struck Bushels.

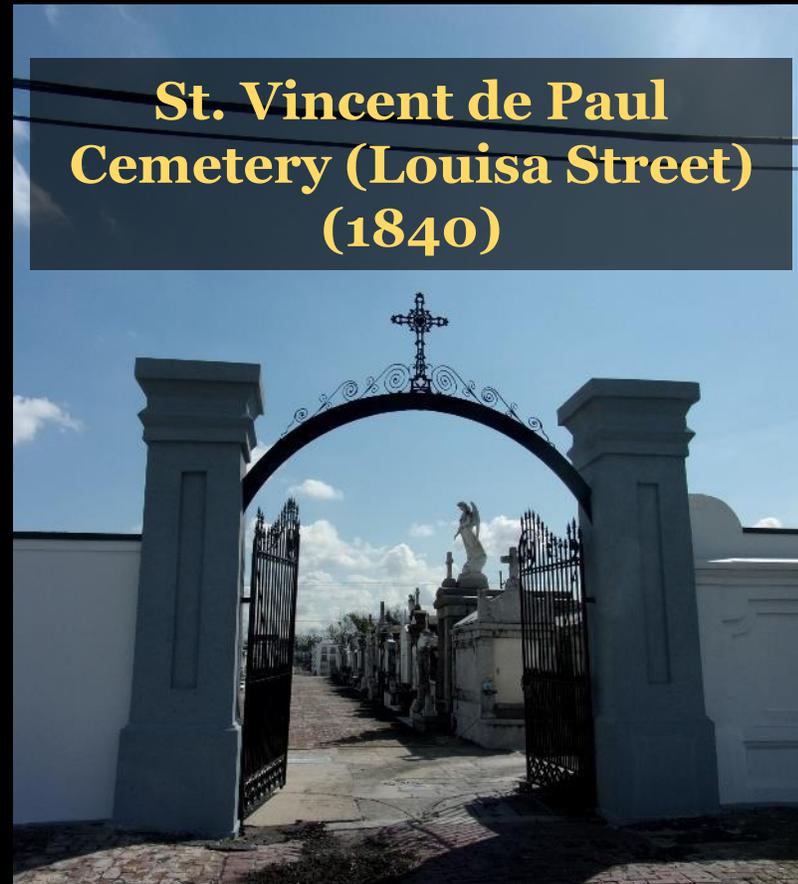
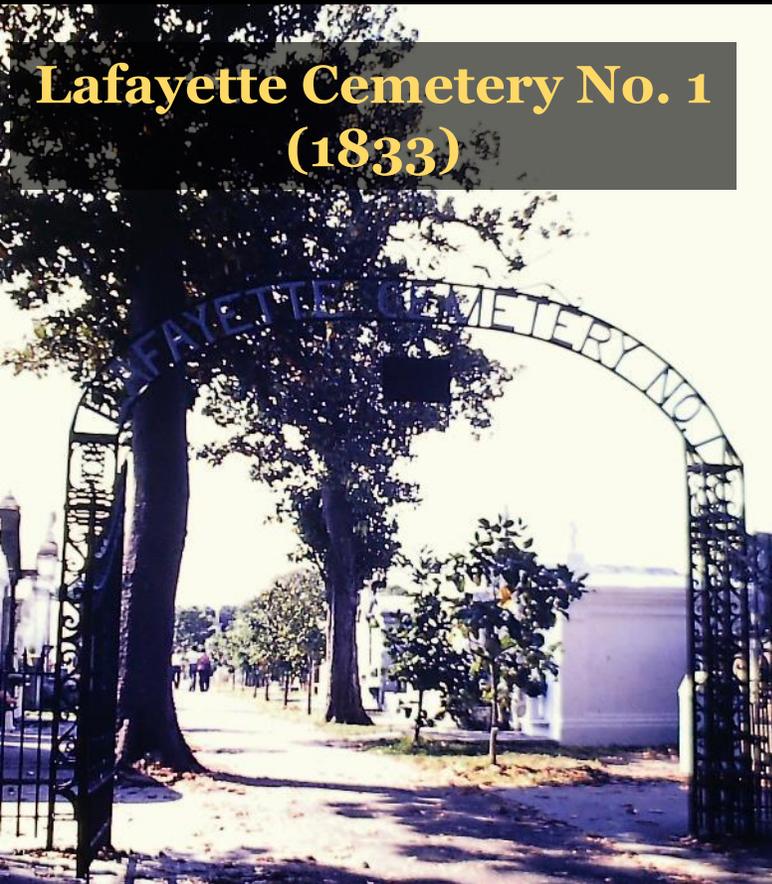
Country Merchants, Plinters, and Masons, by addressing the undersigned, through their Agents or the Post-Office in this City, with satisfactory references, may have the lime fresh from the Kilns, delivered at any designated landing on the river above New Orleans.

NEWTON RICHARDS,
147 Customhouse Street, New Orleans.

Building Materials in the 19th Century



Community Cemeteries



As New Orleans became populated with non-Francophone immigrants, they settled in their own neighborhoods and established cemeteries that predominantly served their communities.

In many cases, these cemeteries began as below-ground burial places.

Cypress Grove Cemetery

In 1840, the Firemen's Charitable Association established their own cemetery at the confluence of the New Basin Canal and Bayou Metairie.

As most of the FCA's members were northern-born Americans, they established a cemetery to resemble garden-style cemeteries back home like Mount Auburn (Boston), Laurel Hill (Philadelphia), and Green-Wood (Brooklyn).



Cypress Grove Cemetery



Mount Auburn Cemetery gate, 1930
Historic American Building Survey

Early Jewish Cemeteries

New Orleans first synagogue was established in 1827 with Gates of Mercy (formerly on Rampart Street). Dispersed of Judah was established in 1856.

Gates of Mercy established their cemetery at Jackson and Saratoga in 1829. It was demolished in 1957.

Dispersed of Judah Cemetery opened in 1856. Gates of Prayer synagogue opened their Joseph Street Cemetery in 1850.

As most of the pre-1840 Jews in New Orleans had either English-Colonial or Northern roots, their cemeteries reflected a more northern aesthetic.



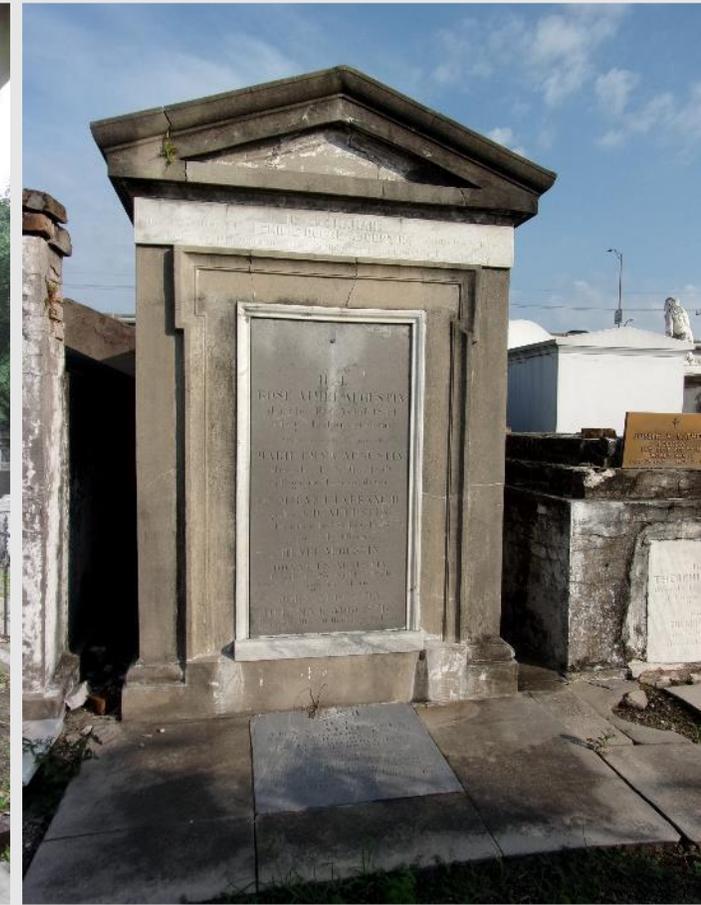
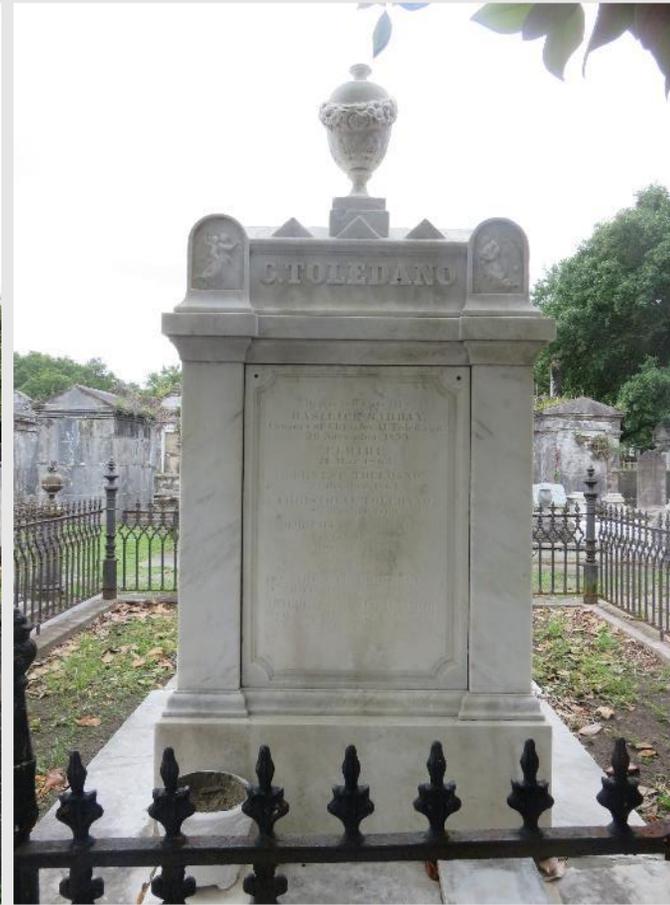
In memory of
ARTHUR
Beloved son of
Isaac Lionel & Myrtilla
CRAWFORD
Born October 29th 1861
Died Dec. 29th 1873.
*The Lord will open into my grave
and I will not be mourning.*

RACHEL PHILLIPS
BORN IN
Christon, S.C.
DIED
May 18th 1874
AGED
69 years

ARTHUR JACOB LEVY
MAY 7 1865 - 11 1 1874
AGE 9 YEARS 5 MONTHS
10 DAYS

WINE TRAYS?
WE GOT DAT!

Tomb Architectural Styles 1850 - 1865





MATT F. BOES JR.
BORN NOV. 6, 1927.
DIED APRIL 22, 1943.
MATTHEW F. BOES
JULY 12, 1903 - JAN. 16, 1968
SUSAN E. BOES
JAN. 13, 1909 - SEPT. 25, 1979
GARY J. BOES
JULY 8, 1944 - MAY 12, 2000

PHILIPP MEYER

WALTER WILSON

KANE

Early 19th Century New Orleans Stonecutters

Stonecutters tended to serve their immediate community, often living across the street from their respective cemetery. They often served as cemetery sextons.

- ❖ **Jean Jacques Isnard** (1798-1859)
- ❖ **Prosper** (1779-1854) and **Florville Foy** (1819-1903)
- ❖ **Paul Hyppolyte Monsseaux** (1809-1874)
- ❖ **Philip Harty** (1805-1861)
- ❖ **Anthony Barret** (1810-1873)
- ❖ **Americo Marozzi** (unknown)
- ❖ **H. Lowenstein** (unknown)
- ❖ **Horace Gately, Sr.** (1796-1867)



**Florville
Foy**



**Anthony
Barret**



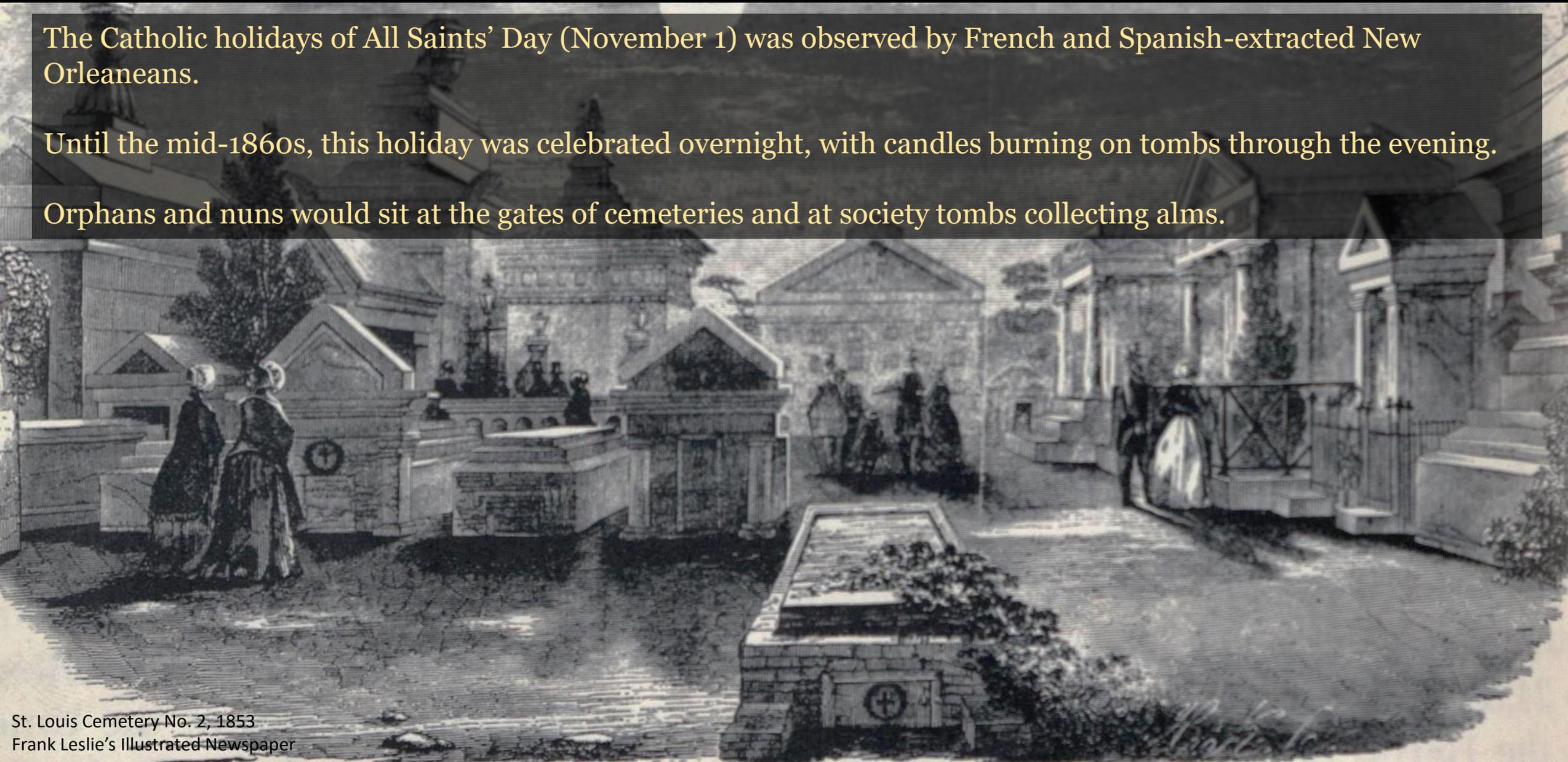
**Jean J.
Isnard**

All Saints' Day, 1800 – 1865

The Catholic holidays of All Saints' Day (November 1) was observed by French and Spanish-extracted New Orleanians.

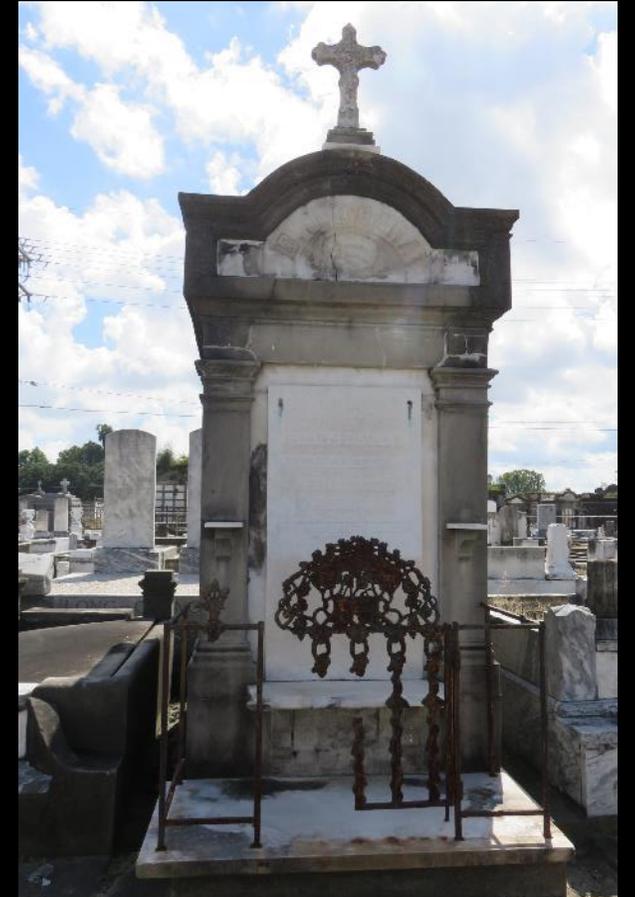
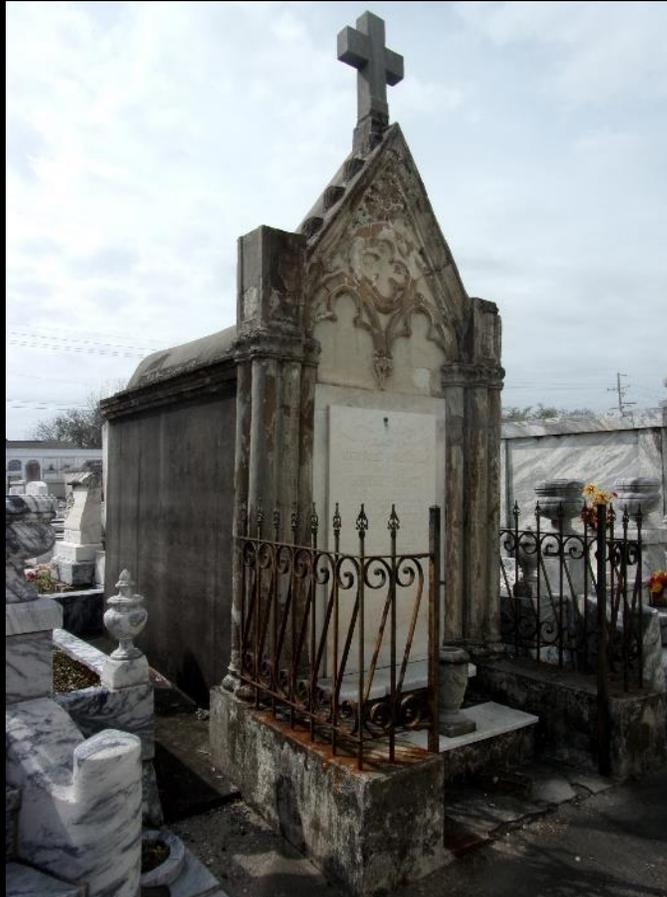
Until the mid-1860s, this holiday was celebrated overnight, with candles burning on tombs through the evening.

Orphans and nuns would sit at the gates of cemeteries and at society tombs collecting alms.



St. Louis Cemetery No. 2, 1853
Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper

Tomb Architectural Styles 1865 – 1900



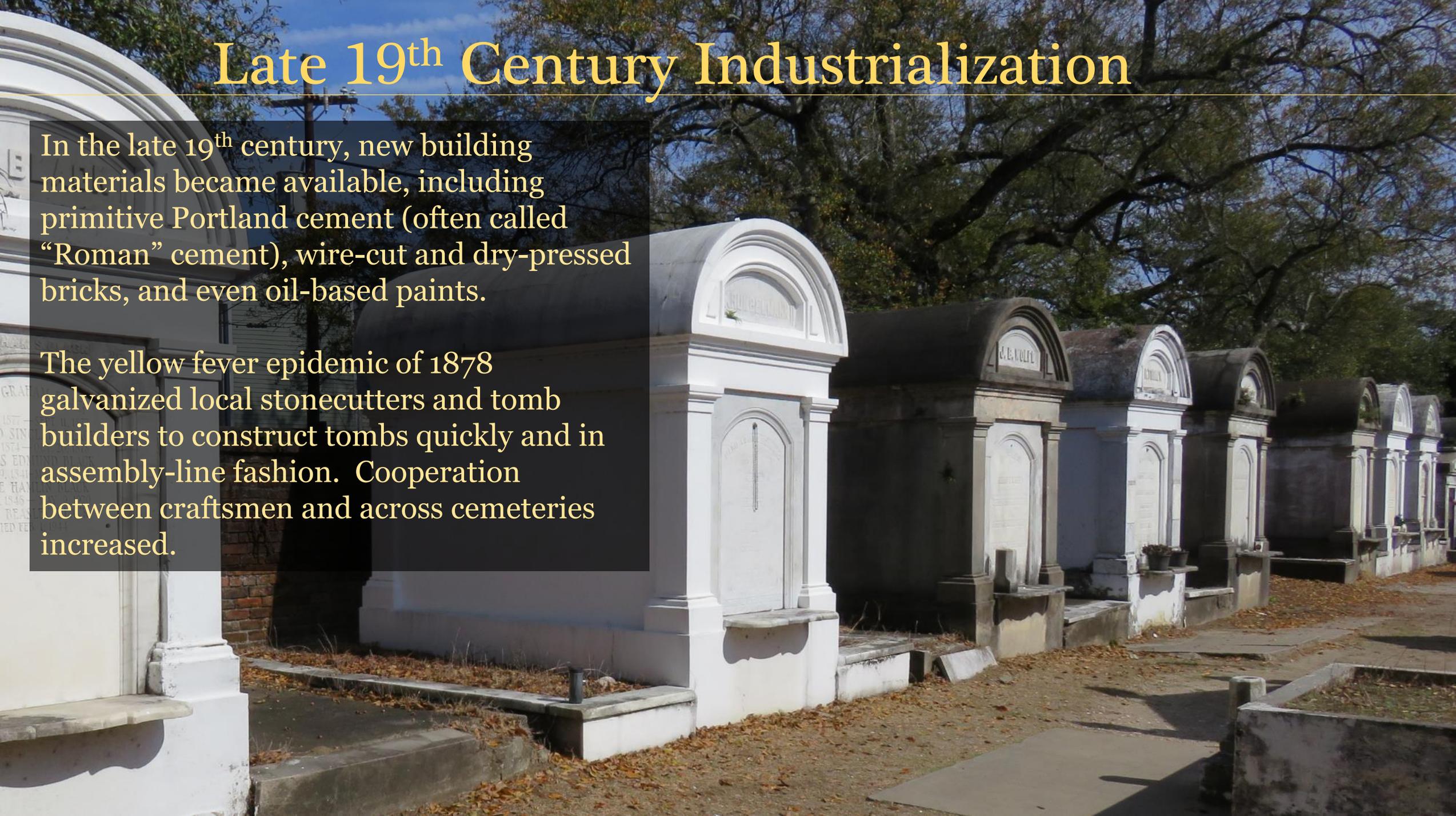
After the Civil War, architectural aesthetics shifted away from Greek and Egyptian influences to more eclectic revival styles.

Italianate and Gothic Revival styles became common.

Late 19th Century Industrialization

In the late 19th century, new building materials became available, including primitive Portland cement (often called “Roman” cement), wire-cut and dry-pressed bricks, and even oil-based paints.

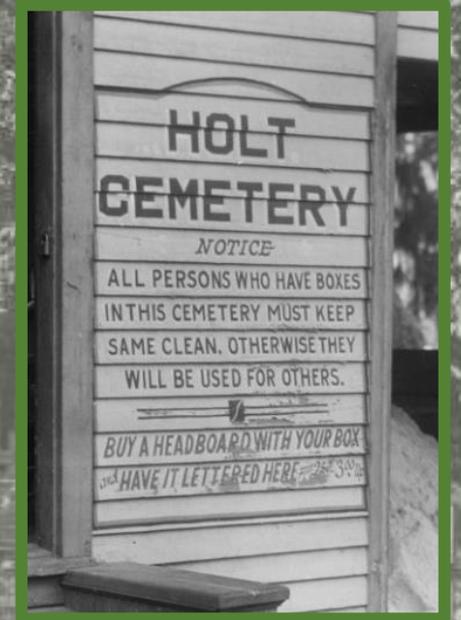
The yellow fever epidemic of 1878 galvanized local stonecutters and tomb builders to construct tombs quickly and in assembly-line fashion. Cooperation between craftsmen and across cemeteries increased.



The Canal Street Cemeteries

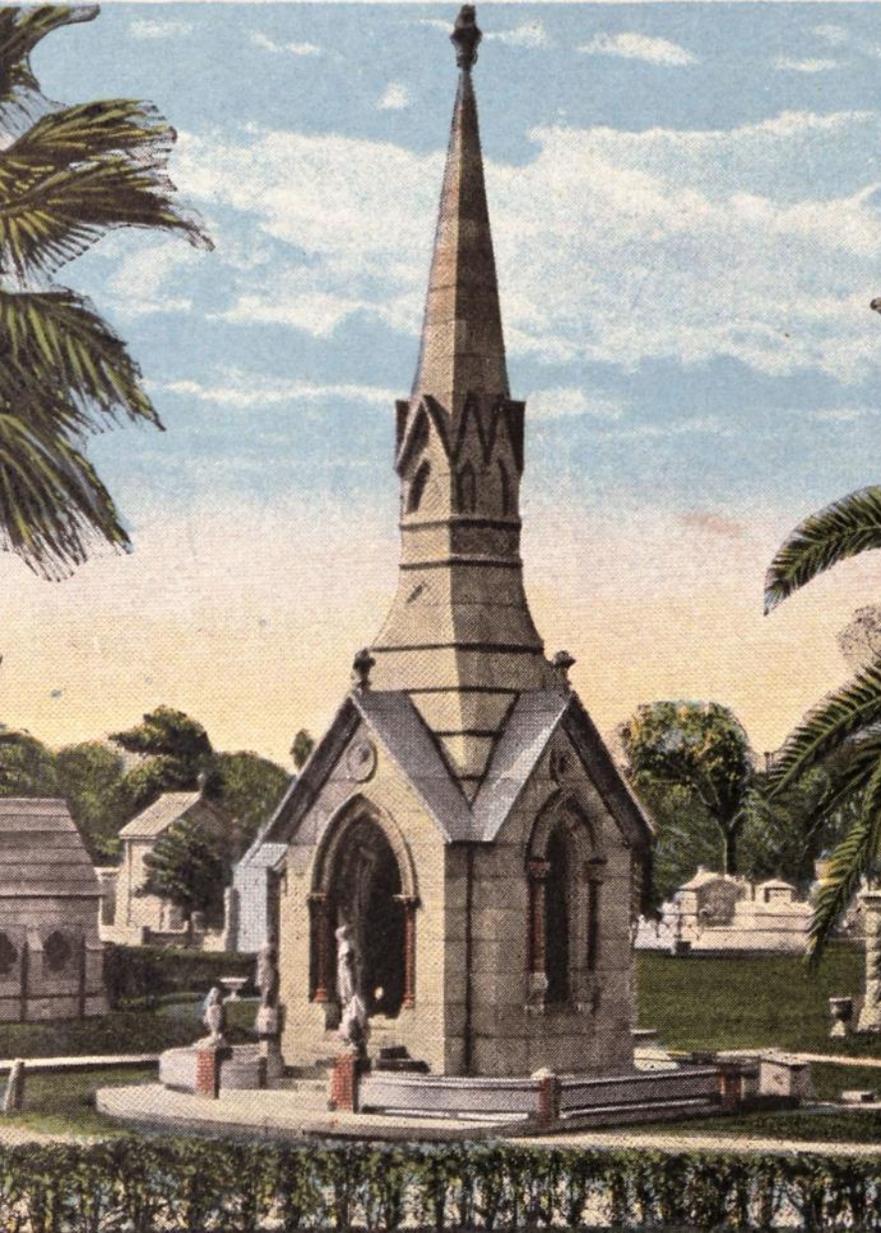
In the nineteenth century, eleven cemeteries opened at the confluence of Bayou Metairie, Canal Street, and the New Basin Canal.

They represented the rising 19th century sensibility that cemeteries be in a rural, pastoral setting.



After the 1878 yellow fever epidemic, the city's potter's field Locust Grove (near Washington and La Salle) was closed, and Holt Cemetery was opened.

Metairie Cemetery, est. 1873



Metairie Cemetery entrance around 1900
Tulane University Louisiana Research Collection

Late Nineteenth Century Stonecutters

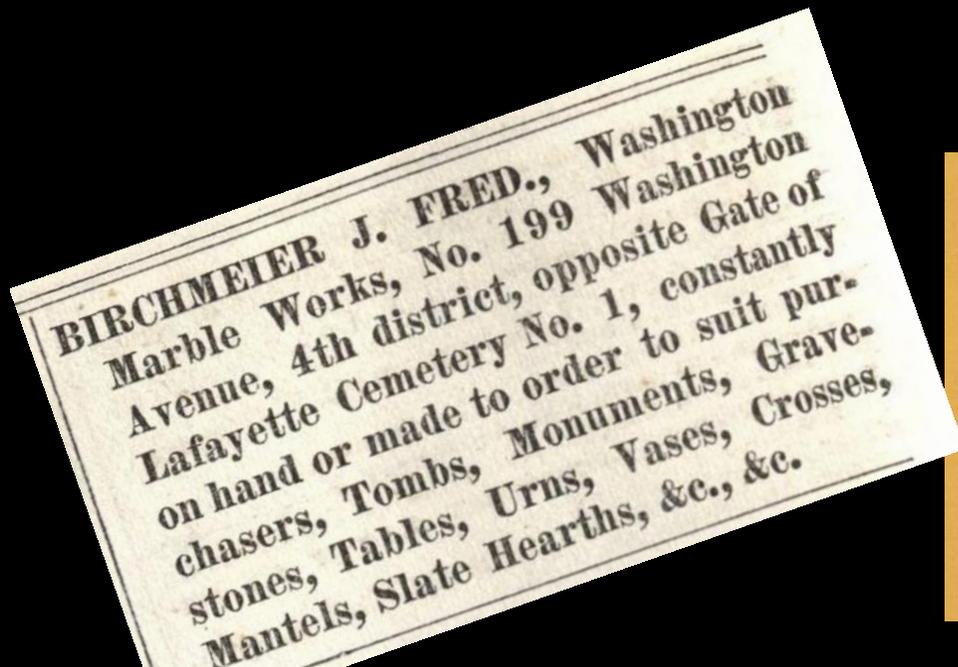
During this time, the stonecutters of the early 19th century trained their apprentices to pick up the trade.

Edwin I. Kursheedt (1838-1906) trained Albert Weiblen (1857-1957)

J. Frederick Birchmeier (1833-1889) trained Hugh J. McDonald (1852-1895)

P.H. Monsseaux trained Joseph F. Callico (1828-1885)

Around 1890, the Stewart Brothers established Acme Marble and Granite



FRANK B. STEWART, Vice-Pres. CHARLES B. STEWART, Sec'y.
ALBERT L. STEWART, Pres.

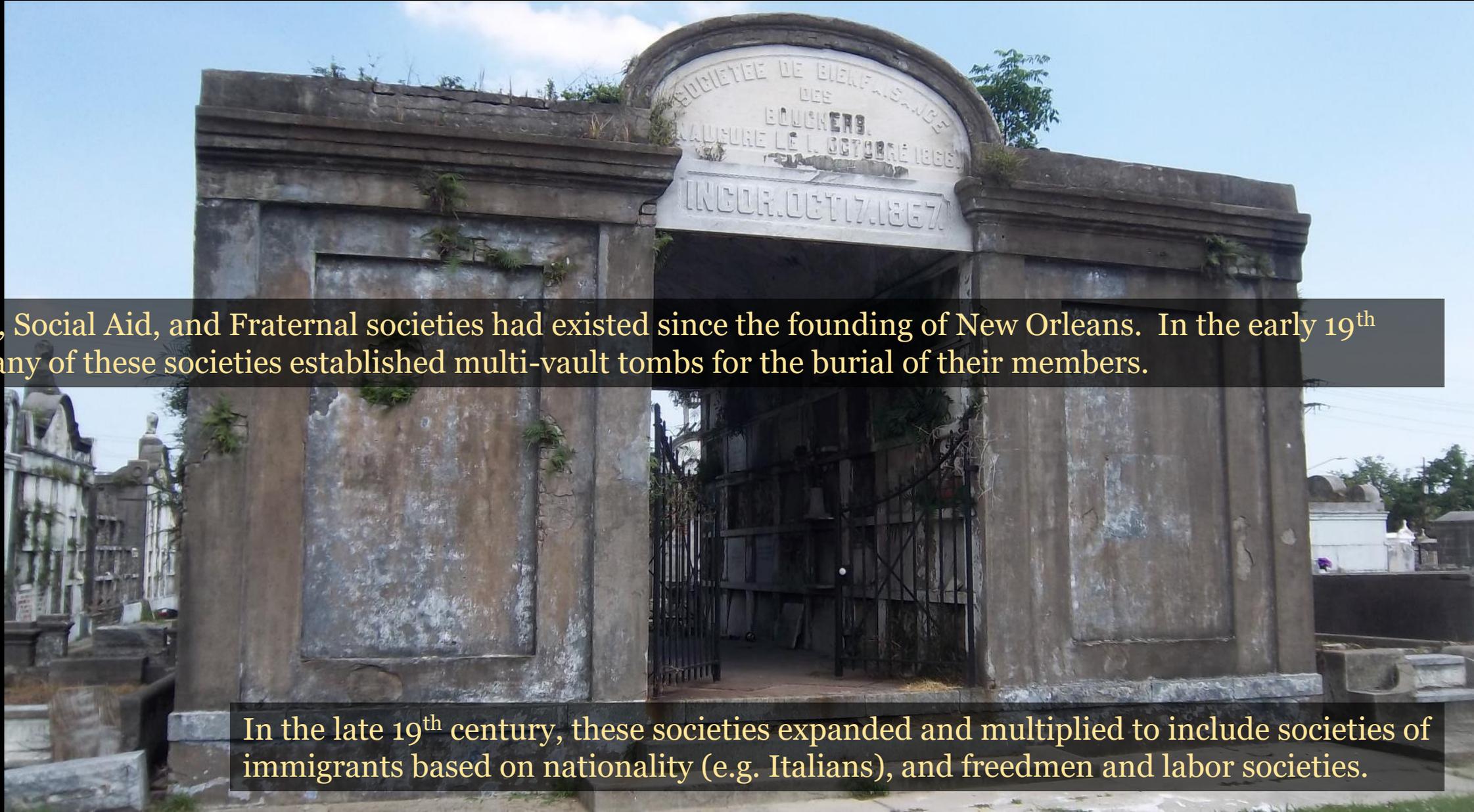
ACME MARBLE & GRANITE COMPANY

Foreign and Domestic Marble

NEW ORLEANS, LA.

OFFICE MARBLE WORKS
1110 New Orleans Bank Bldg. 1322 Louisa Street
Phone RAYmond 1811 Phone FRanklin 9012

Society Tombs



Benevolent, Social Aid, and Fraternal societies had existed since the founding of New Orleans. In the early 19th century, many of these societies established multi-vault tombs for the burial of their members.

In the late 19th century, these societies expanded and multiplied to include societies of immigrants based on nationality (e.g. Italians), and freedmen and labor societies.

All Saints' Day 1865 – 1900

The street cars did a thriving business and were taxed to their utmost capacity to accommodate the throngs that poured into the cemeteries in every direction, from the quaint Campo Santo of St. Roch's to the shades of beautiful Metairie. People forgot the yellow fever, forgot that flags were hanging from quarantined homes, forgot even that there was any possibility of contracting the disease, while engaged in such beautiful and heart-touching work...

- *Daily Picayune*, November 2, 1897



NO. 399: ITALIAN SOCIETY TOMB, OLD ST. LOUIS CEM

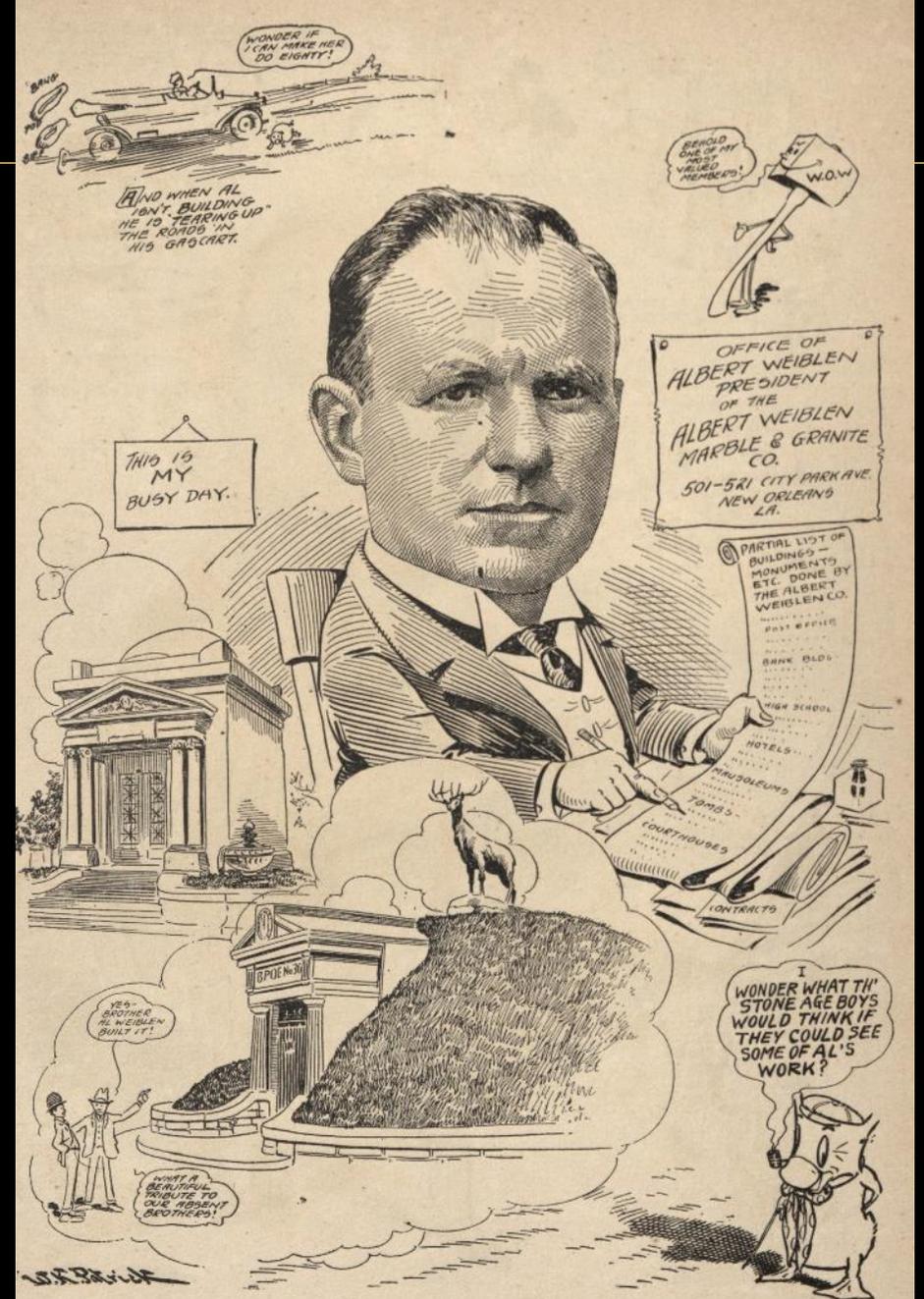
Albert Weiblen (1857-1957)

Apprenticed under Edwin I. Kursheedt, Albert Weiblen was not only in the right place at the right time, he was the right person to bring New Orleans cemeteries into the 20th century.

Weiblen took the role of New Orleans stonecutter from a neighborhood, family business to a nationwide enterprise. He constructed railroads to transport his product. He bought an entire quarry in Georgia to service his New Orleans clients.

Shortly before his death, Weiblen would buy Metairie Cemetery from the Metairie Cemetery Association.

from "Club Men of Louisiana in Caracature, 1917,"
by William Kevil Patrick.
Tulane University Louisiana Research Collection.



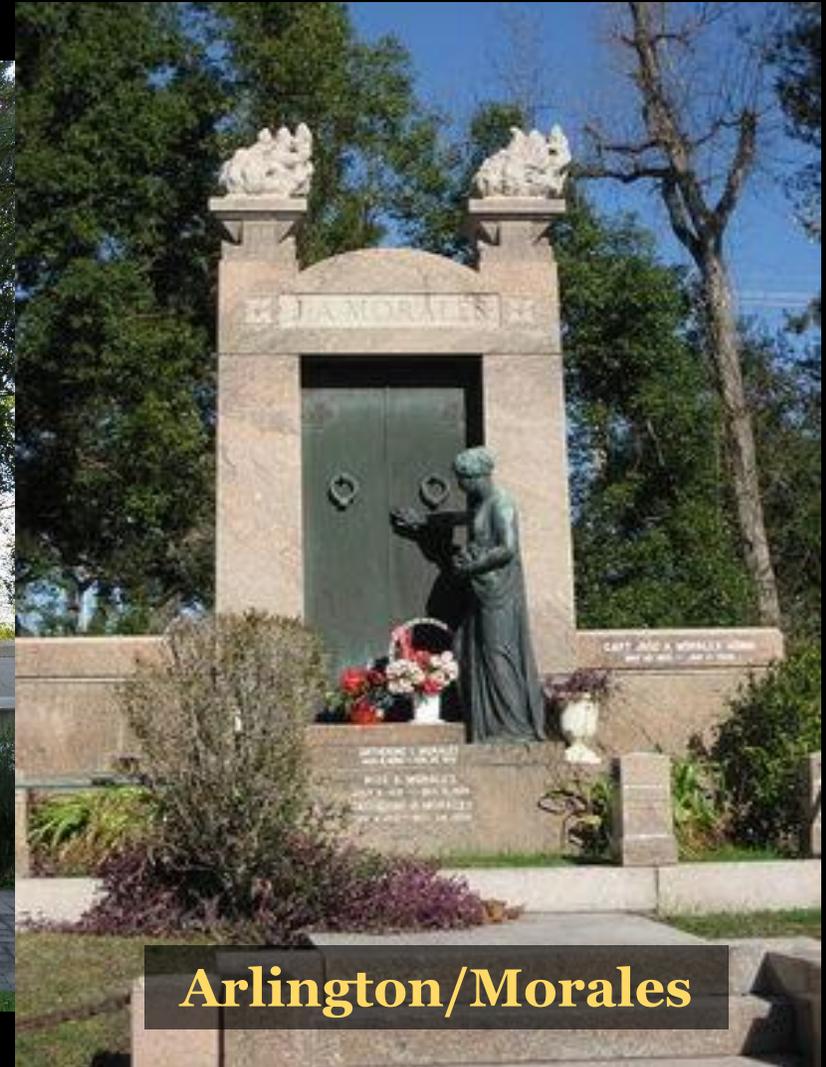
ALBERT WEIBLEN
President Albert Weiblen Marble and Granite Company, Inc.

Albert Weiblen (1857-1957)

Chapman Hyams



Lacosst



Arlington/Morales

Georgia "Creole" Marble



AGRISAFFI

MRS. J. DIMAGGIO

MRS. J. DIMAGGIO
BORN OCT. 15, 1845 DIED MAY 31, 1932
PETER DIMAGGIO
BORN CONGRESS, ENTELE, ITALY
AUG. 15, 1875 JULY 18, 1959
NATURALIZED U.S. CITIZEN

MRS. EUDIMAGGIO
BORN DEC. 10, 1861 DIED NOV. 11, 1960
BERNARD DIMAGGIO
BORN FEB. 26, 1899 DIED NOV. 11, 1967

THOMAS GIORDANI, JR.
BORN MAR. 1, 1899 DIED MAR. 2, 1959

SANTA GIORDANI
BORN JAN. 20, 1920 DIED JULY 4, 1995

THOMAS S. GIORDANI
BORN FEB. 16, 1915 DIED NOV. 28, 2004

MOTHER
A. G.

Twentieth Century Changes

Weiblen was not the only stonecutter to expand his business. Over the first half of the 20th century, many stonecutters would become monument agents and outright cemetery owners.

The image shows the exterior of a building with a white marble-clad entrance. Above the door, there are two signs: a smaller one that says "OFFICE" and a larger one that says "HOPE MAUSOLEUM". The door has the number "4841" above it. The building is flanked by green bushes and a concrete walkway leads to the door.

OFFICE
HOPE MAUSOLEUM

This began in 1931 when Victor Huber purchased St. John Evangelical Lutheran Cemetery from the church and built Hope Mausoleum around it.

Twentieth Century Changes

In 1945, the City of New Orleans moved maintenance of its six cemeteries to the Office of Property Management. This move effectively terminated the cemetery sextons, who had traditionally lived within or near the cemetery.

The last sexton of the Lafayette Cemeteries, Henry Alfortish, moved his family to Gretna and established their own cemetery and monument company.



Twentieth Century Changes

In 1958, the Stewart family completed Lake Lawn Park, a new for-profit community mausoleum.



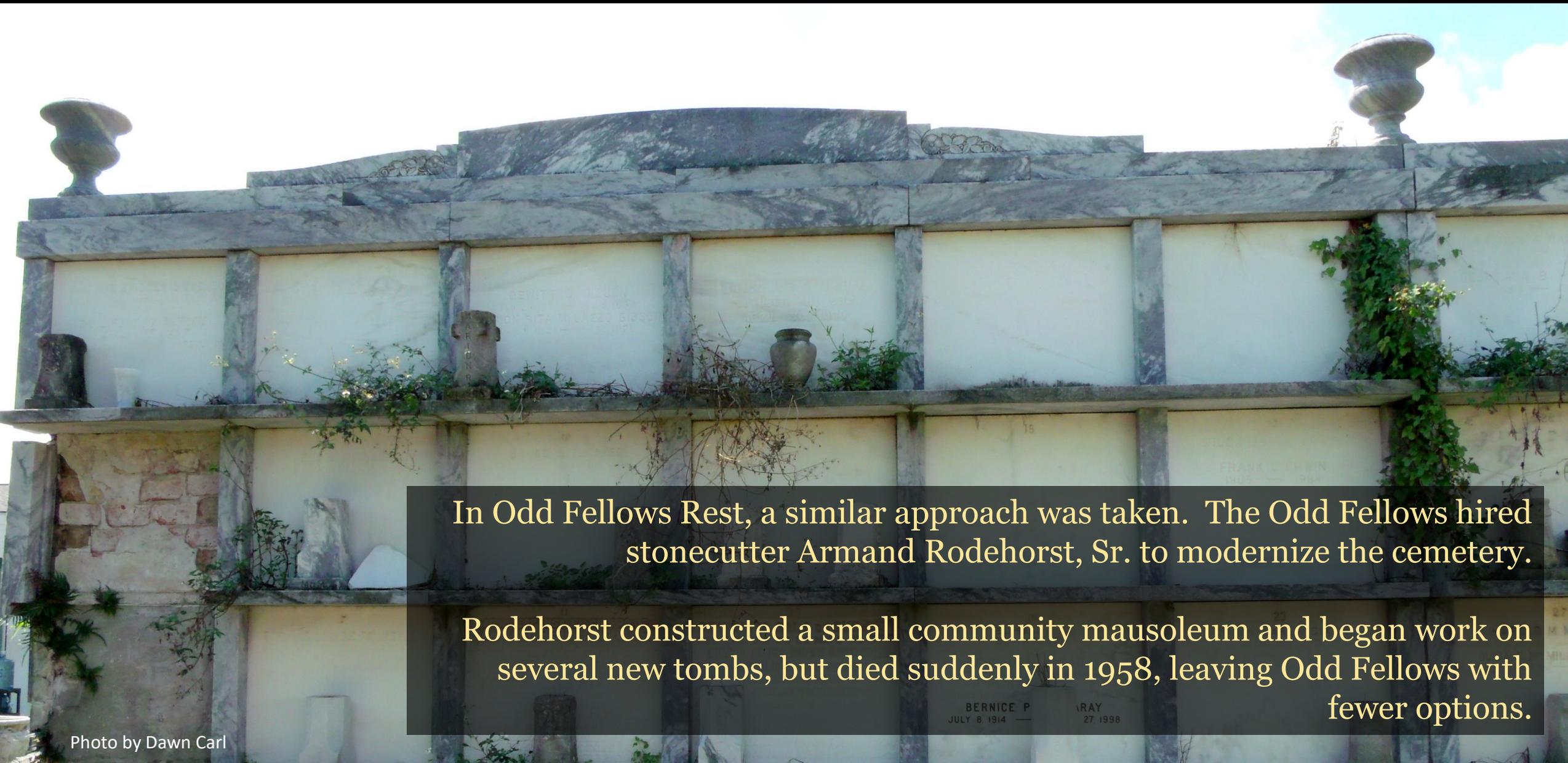
Twentieth Century Changes



In 1964, the various Catholic cemeteries which had to this point been owned by their respective churches (St. Patrick's to St. Patrick, St. Louis to St. Louis, St. Roch to Trinity Church, etc.), were conglomerated into a new corporate entity: New Orleans Archdiocesan Cemeteries.

In 1974, the Calvary monument at the rear of St. Patrick Cemetery No. 1 was demolished to build NOAC's first community mausoleum.

Twentieth Century Changes



In Odd Fellows Rest, a similar approach was taken. The Odd Fellows hired stonecutter Armand Rodehorst, Sr. to modernize the cemetery.

Rodehorst constructed a small community mausoleum and began work on several new tombs, but died suddenly in 1958, leaving Odd Fellows with fewer options.

Girod Street Cemetery (1822 – 1957)

Girod Street Cemetery, 1957
LIFE Magazine Archives



In the midst of this movement to modernize, in an era that disdained the old-fashioned, the Protestant cemetery on Girod Street struggled to stay relevant.

After repeated efforts by Christ Church Cathedral to save and preserve the cemetery, it was expropriated by the Federal and State governments for new Civic Center construction in 1957.

Materials and Maintenance Changes



THE LAFAYETTE CEMETERY No.1 IS GOING TO BE KEPT AS A LANDMARK

WE CLEAN AROUND TOMBS ONCE A WEEK,

AT YEARLY RATE OF \$21.00,

\$10.50 EVERY SIX MONTHS.

LESS THAN 40¢ A WEEK.

The technological and material advances made for wartime in the 1940s came home for domestic use in the 1950s.

“Cement paint,” “epoxy paint,” and latex paints joined ready-mix concrete and power lawnmowers to change how cemeteries were built and maintained.

These advances fostered a culture of permanent “no maintenance” solutions, eschewing yearly family care of tombs.

Concepts like “perpetual care” endowments were adopted by cemeteries.



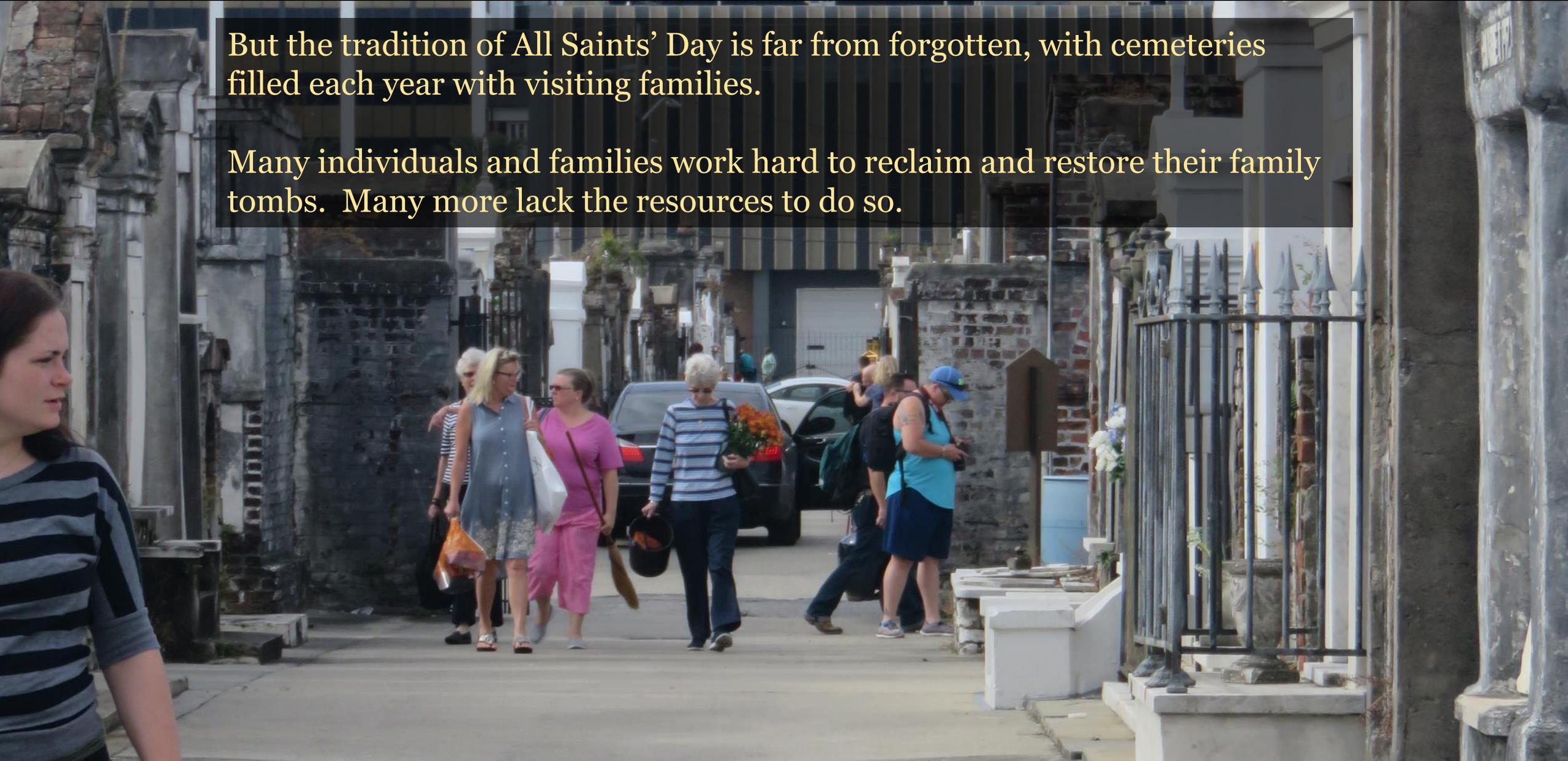
Materials and Maintenance Changes



Reclaiming and Restoring Tombs

But the tradition of All Saints' Day is far from forgotten, with cemeteries filled each year with visiting families.

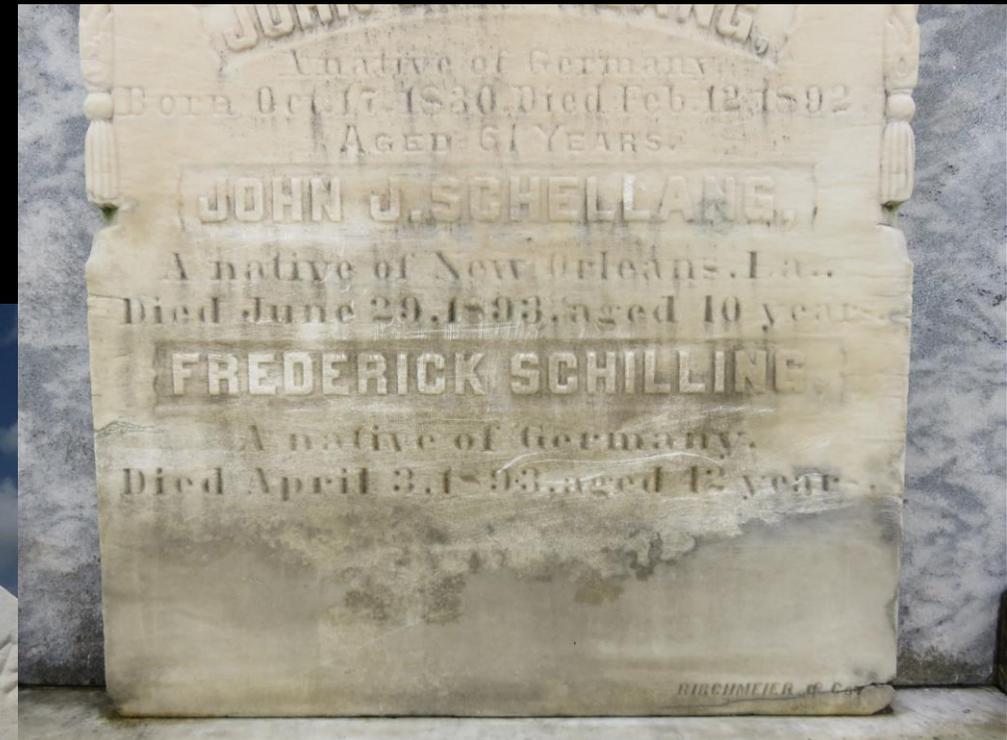
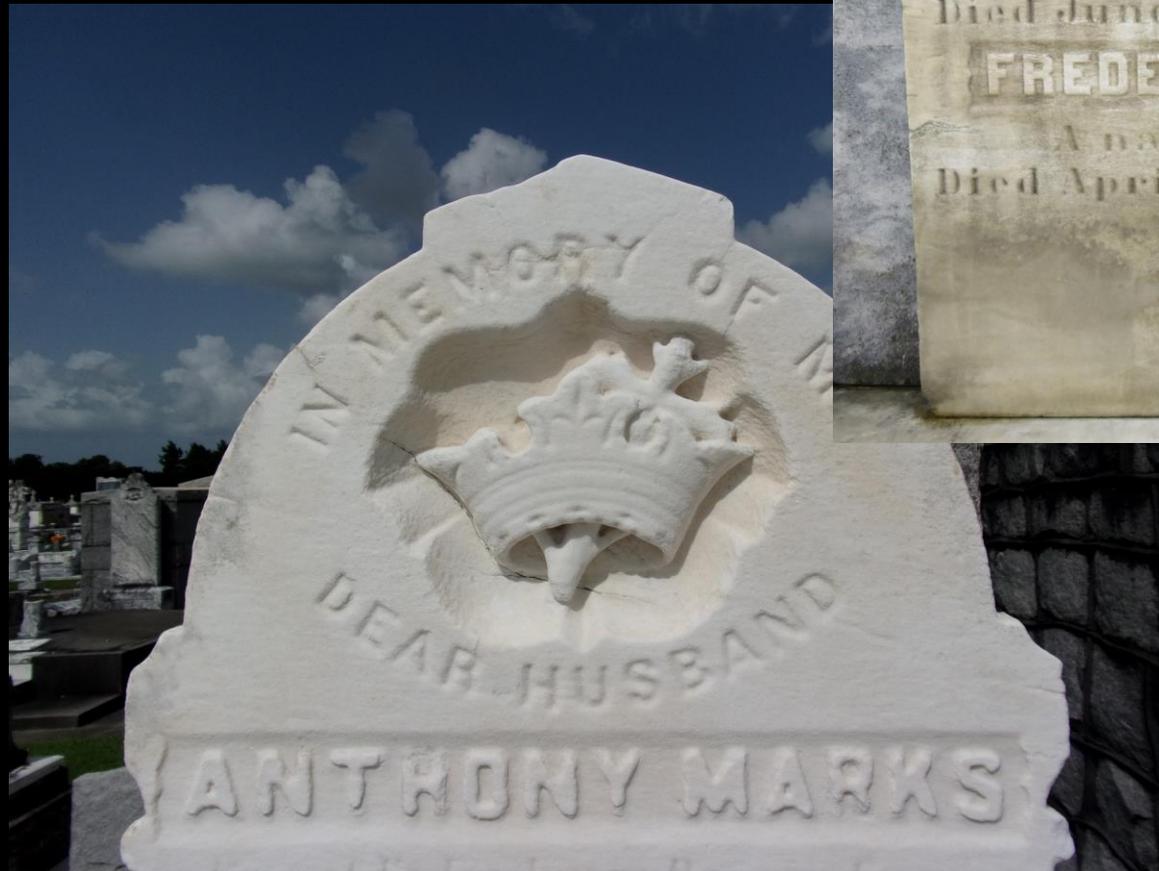
Many individuals and families work hard to reclaim and restore their family tombs. Many more lack the resources to do so.



Caring for Your Family Tomb

Cleaning:

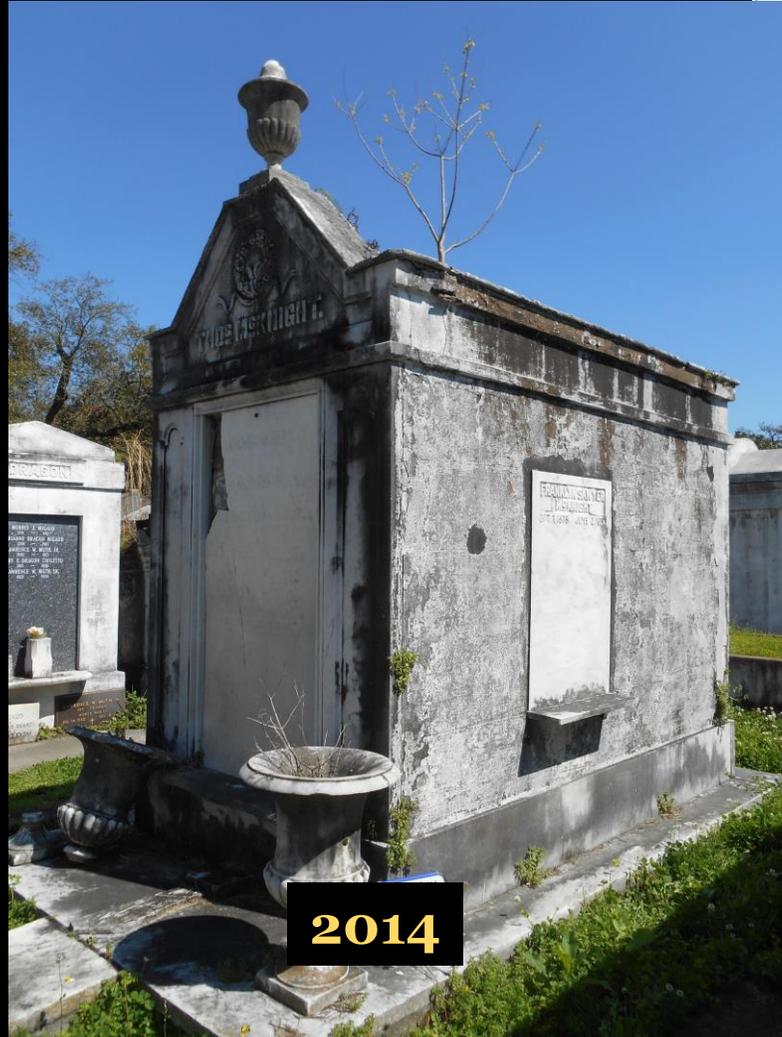
- ❖ Avoid bleach, pressure washing, or sandblasting
- ❖ Instead, use a gentle, unscented, non-acidic and non-alkaline cleaner like Simple Green



Caring for Your Family Tomb

Vegetation and Masonry Care:

- ❖ Pull weeds regularly (you never know when one will become a tree!)
- ❖ Be careful not to pull mortar along with the weeds
- ❖ Modern cement (like QuiKrete) can be very harmful to old tombs
- ❖ Instead, use a soft, lime-based material like Plaster of Paris



Caring for Your Family Tomb



Painting and Finishing:

- ❖ If your tomb is old, latex paint can trap moisture within and peel away
- ❖ Limewash recipes are available through ncptt.nps.gov or noladeadspace.com
- ❖ Avoid painting marble



Caring for Your Family Tomb

VISIT YOUR TOMB OFTEN

You don't even need to clean it or paint it. Just be part of its history.

Take regular photos of your family tomb.

Keep records in a safe place and share with family members.

Oak and Laurel's Resources page:
www.oakandlaurel.com/resources



Conclusion





Oak & Laurel
Cemetery Preservation, LLC

www.oakandlaurel.com

 /oakandlaurel