Greenwood Cemetery

ESTABLISHED 1823

November 2011

New Technology for Historic Ground

The Greenwood Cemetery Association is currently in discussion with the Center for Archaeological Research at Ole Miss over plans for a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey of the Old Cemetery. In the early days of the cemetery's establishment, burials were made in a haphazard fashion. Mayor John Oldham, in 1847, called for a survey of the cemetery in an attempt to lay out walks and driveways. The surveyor reported that the irregular size of lots made it impossible to run the walks directly East and West. Because there are few monuments from the early years, and the paper records of burials were destroyed during the Civil War, the locations of many of these early graves are unknown.

The GPR survey will determine where excavations have been made to place graveshafts. According to Ed Henry, Coordinator for Remote Sensing Applications at the Center for Archaeological Research, "If someone dug a hole for a coffin in the 1800's, we could see that today." This information will allow us to more accurately estimate the total population of Greenwood Cemetery and possible identify areas in the cemetery that are available for future Internments.
Ground penetrating radar works by sending electromagnetic waves from a transmitting antenna that travels through the ground bouncing off of buried objects before returning to the receiving antenna. Data collected will then be analyzed and a report will be written which will include a map of the GPR results, a GIS (Geographic Information Systems) map of known burials, as well as high, moderate and low potential areas for unknown burials.

Ed Henry has conducted similar surveys in other historic cemeteries with dramatic results. He will lead a three man team in conducting the field work. Volunteers are needed to assist in this process. If you would like to be a part of the investigation, please contact Cecile at 601-981-6776 or cecilewardlaw@gmail.com.

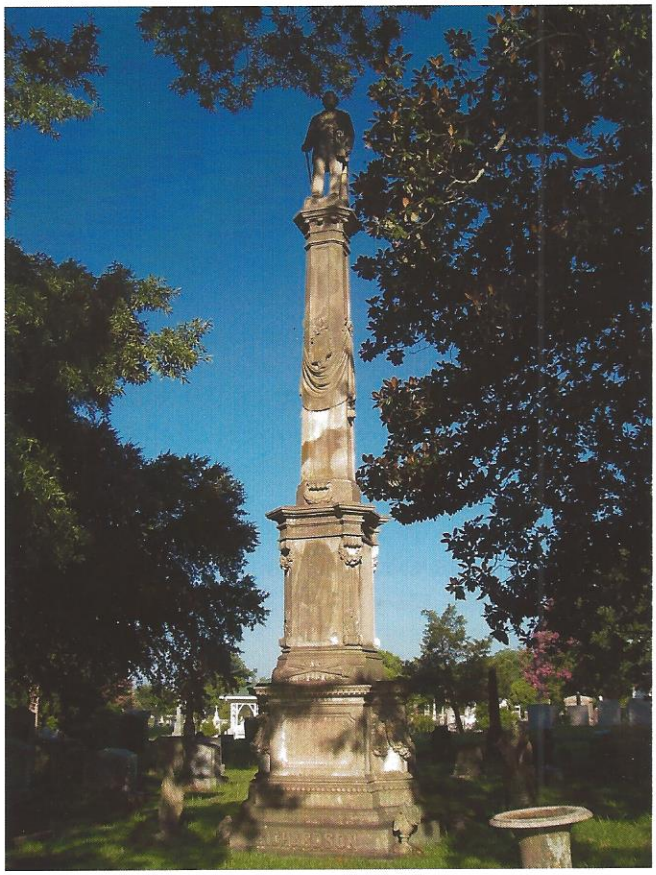
The bid for the initial survey, to cover the southwest section of the Old Cemetery, is well within the means of the Cemetery Association. Financial contributions would allow us to expand the area to be surveyed. If you believe this project is important for the historical record of early Jackson, or if you are interested in the possibility of identifying lots for future burials, please show your support with a donation before the end of 2011.

Monument Spotlight: Edmund Richardson "The Cotton King"

Edmund Richardson's gravestone, the largest and tallest in Greenwood Cemetery, is surprisingly easy to overlook. The twenty-five foot monument, described in his obituary as "one of the richest workmanship in the South, if not in the United States," now seems small and lost among the old oaks and magnolias.

Two ornately carved five foot angels that at one time were perched on the base of the three-tiered structure lay broken on the ground. The top tier, with its algae-covered garlands and wreaths, appears to fade as it rises into the shadows of the surrounding trees. And hidden on top among the branches is a life-size marble statue, usually unnoticed by the casual observer. On the base is a simple "Edmund Richardson 1818-1886."

His life is also easily overlooked. Only the most serious student of Mississippi history is familiar with his name. He never held a public office. He never commanded an army. But his accomplishments in the private sector were legendary. During the latter years of his life, his name was synonymous with cotton not only in Mississippi but throughout the world. In addition to growing cotton on his more than three dozen plantations located in Mississippi, Arkansas, and Louisiana, he spun the "white gold" into some of the finest fabric of the time in a mill located in Wesson, Mississippi. His "Mississippi silk" took first place in the Philadelphia Exposition of 1876. He owned the largest cotton commission house in the United States. His reputation among the cotton growers of the world led to him being named President of the New Orleans World's Fair and Cotton Exposition of 1884. At his death in 1886 he controlled more cotton than anyone else in the world and was worth well over $10,000,000.



Cotton wasn't the only endeavor of "the Colonel," as he was affectionately known. Land, railroads, steamboats, levee systems, and mercantile stores were all part of his financial empire. His name appeared with Presidents and international dignitaries on the society pages of New York City whenever he would visit; and his daughter, Susie, was the darling of both New Orleans and New York.

Sadly, the few written references to Edmund Richardson over the past century are not complimentary. His instigation of the prison contract labor system led to an ugly, dark stain on Mississippi.

Rumor has it that when the $30,000 Italian marble statue for his tombstone arrived, (His tombstone and monument were erected in the cemetery fifteen years before his death) there was a small chip on the base. He refused to pay for it, and supposedly the bill has yet to be paid.

-Thomas Wiley, M.D.

Contributions to Greenwood Cemetery Association

Please remember that contributions and volunteer service are what keep the association going. Without both of these we could not begin to assist in the maintenance and beautification of this historic Jackson landmark.

Contributions to the Association are tax deductible. We are classified as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization by the Internal Revenue Service. If you need a copy of our IRS determination letter please contact us at greenwoodcemeteryjackson@gmail.com.

Scenes from the Cemetery 2011 - THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!

Phi Theta Kappa members from Hinds Community College assisted Garden Club of Jackson members Charlotte McNeel, Elaine Chatham and Sarah Dabney Gillespie in planting trees in the cemetery. The GCJ chose Greenwood as the site for its Garden Club of America Centennial Trees Project.

The Parker Sisters, Babe Davenport and Sue Cumberland, and their husbands, Mickey Cumberland and Les Davenport, worked to clean and beautify an ancestor's gravesite.

Peter Miazza led two tours for Mississippi Department of Archives and History volunteers.

Paulette and Ed French weeded one of the box graves which bloomed all summer with native perennials.

Dede and Rick Holden found his great grandmother's gravestone which was broken and mostly buried. Earl Fleming and Peter Miazza helped them reset and repair the stone.

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