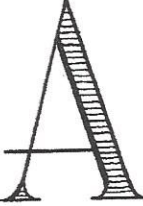


*Entrance to Montrose Cemetery*

## MONTROSE CEMETERY

fter the village of Montrose began to increase in population, it became evident to its founder, Cyrus Sibley, that certain provisions must be made to meet its future needs. Therefore, on October 20, 1856, he and his wife, Eliza, deeded to A. M. Elgin, A. E. Ledyard, John T. Taylor, Samuel Burns, and Thomas P. Miller, as Trustees, as follows: "Unto the trustees and actual possession now given and to their heirs and assigns forever, all the estate, right, title, interest, use, trust property, claim and demand whatsoever at law as well as in equity, in possession as well as in expectancy of, into and out of all and singular, viz; all that piece, parcel or lot of land as follows, situate at and in Montrose, County of Baldwin, State of Alabama - Square No. twenty-three (23), commencing at the intersection of Sibley and Fourth Streets .....(here followed the detailed description by metes and bounds).... for the purpose of being, and for school, church and burial place." All of which seemed to have everything taken care of. However, many things did, and did not happen, In 1859 Square No. 12 was deeded to a group of trustees for a school and we will take that up more fully in another chapter.

The trustees named in the first deed here mentioned, were men of high standing and business acumen and it is to be supposed that they did all that was required of them at that time. However, if they kept any written records, they have never come to light. Also, they apparently made no replacements of their Board members or it seems there would have been the continuance of a governing group. This

is said, not in the spirit of criticism, but as an explanation of the steps that were taken in later years. Of course, during and after the Civil War, there were many more urgent aspects of life that took the time, attention and financial resources of our little community. Also there were residents who had their family burial plots in Mobile or elsewhere. Only a few year 'round families continued to use the Montrose Cemetery and, as surely as the years passed, so surely did the woods' fires come each spring and sweep through it, burning all wooden fences that enclosed family plots and making the place desolate as well as vulnerable to the cattle that roamed at large seeking the fresh grass that sprang up after the fires.

For these reasons, and many others, a meeting of the residents was held and I will quote from the minutes of that first meeting on November 12, 1927: "At a meeting of the citizens of Montrose, held this date, it was decided to form the Montrose Cemetery Association for the purpose of fencing and watching over the nine-acre tract given to the village of Montrose as a cemetery. The following were elected as trustees of the association; Mrs. Annie M. Randall, Mr. Thomas O. Loftus, Mr. Prescott A. Parker. Record of this association was filed by Mr. Parker with the Judge of Probate (G. W. Humphries) of Baldwin County, Alabama, on November 22nd, 1927, and is shown on page 387, Record Book #2 of Corporations. Florence D. Scott, Secretary-Treasurer."

That was the beginning of years of effort to bring into some semblance of order all things pertaining to a place that had been given to us against a need that was inevitable.

The first step was to provide a fence around the entire square and this was done by contributions of money and by "ways and means" to make more money. Concrete posts were made, and labor donated, by Mr. Harold Graham, and the material for the posts was paid for by funds from the negro Mothers Club headed by Virginia Samuels. The wire fencing was secured through the efforts of Mr. Willard Gabel

and members of the Gable families whose forbears were among the original settlers in the village. Through the untiring efforts of Mr. Parker, and many others, the entire nine-acre square was fenced by May of 1930.

For a number of years after that, very little was attempted in the way of improvement. The first change in the trusteeship was occasioned by the death of my mother, Mrs. Annie M. Randall, in March of 1931; Mrs. Annie S. Oliver succeeded her as trustee. Later, Miss Helen L. Graham was selected to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mr. Thomas O. Loftus.

In 1942, because of Mr. Parker's failing health and the business demands upon both Miss Graham and Mrs. Oliver, a new group of trustees was elected by members of the association; they were Captain L. A. Scott, Mrs. Helen Stapleton and Mrs. Florence D. Scott, who was also to continue to serve as Secretary-Treasurer. Here World War II intervened and demands were made on our time for war work of many kinds.

By 1945, we were able to turn our attention to cemetery needs again and this we did. The secretary began a formal ledger in which were listed all burials insofar as she could secure names and dates from old headstones and from records kept by individual families. It is far from complete, for there were many unmarked graves and no family left to give information, but from 1945 it has been carefully kept.

The route by which funeral processions had to approach the cemetery, as well as the undergrowth within its confines, left much to be desired so work was begun in earnest. Clearing was of prime necessity and it was suggested that, at the same time, a more convenient entrance be established and roadways designed within the cemetery so processions might reach all points easily and continue on their way out with a minimum of confusion. To accomplish this, we were fortunate to have the offer of free engineering services from one Richard Scott and we availed ourselves of that offer from that time forward.

In November, 1945, in the midst of the tremendous task of road clearing, tree-felling, and its consequent disorder, we lost our valiant fellow-worker, Captain L. A. Scott, through an accident at his home. His vacancy on the Board of Trustees was taken by his daughter, Beverly ( Mrs. Quitman) Phillips. Shortly after this, Mrs. Helen Stapleton resigned her place as trustee because of ill health and Mr. H. W. Thomson was selected to succeed her.

During these years, many reports and letters were sent to the residents acquainting them with the work being done and soliciting their further assistance. At this point, it might be well to state that there was no regular income for cemetery use. All property owners in the village were entitled to space in the cemetery free of charge when needed. There was an effort to fix a fee, for general maintenance, upon those families who already had lots in use, but the proceeds were inadequate to the task at hand, so we were obliged to request funds from any and all in addition to putting on projects to make money.

In April, 1946, when the work began to take shape for the new entrance and driveways, the County gave us their assistance by grading Sibley Street that led straight from the main highway to the cemetery entrance; they also helped establish the new driveways inside the cemetery. It was our pleasure, at this time, to give in memory of our family, an iron double gate and the brick to make entrance posts. The negro Mens Club gave all the money in their treasury for the erection of the posts and Mr. and Mrs. Oliver gave the urns that sit atop the posts.

In April, 1948, Mrs. Phillips said her health necessitated her resignation and Mrs. Aileen Cospers was selected to succeed her. However, in October of that same year, Mrs. Cospers lost her life in an automobile accident, and Mr. Quitman Phillips was chosen to fill this vacancy. In the spring of 1949, I asked to be relieved of the post of trustee and my husband, Richard J. Scott, was selected by the other trustees to succeed me. I was to continue as Secretary-Treasurer and

agreed, also, to continue maintenance supervision.

Each year, since 1949, the Montrose Garden Club has spearheaded a drive for funds to be used in the up-keep of the cemetery and this has been the most heartening thing that has happened to the trustees during the thirty years since their responsibilities began. One especially wonderful year, 1957, the Ways and Means Committee of the Garden Club, with Mrs. P. L. Wilson as its Chairman, gave their entire year's proceeds of over six hundred dollars to the use of the cemetery. This enabled us to complete the clearing of the entire nine acres and begin with beautification; the first step in this direction being made when Mrs. Quitman Phillips gave many beautiful azalea and camellia bushes from her own garden. She was assisted in the placing of these by Mrs. J. Lynn Crawford of the Garden Club. Also, just in time for use in this project, a water supply at the cemetery had been established when Mr. and Mrs. John Thomas generously gave an electric pump and tank for a deep well provided by some of the funds derived from the Garden Club. So many kind things have been done for the welfare of our cemetery that it is possible I have neglected to mention them all; certainly it is not an intentional slight if I have failed to note them here.

It has been my privilege to work with each and every trustee during the past thirty years and, now that they have a five-man Board of Trustees consisting of Messrs. Quitman Phillips, H. W. Thomson, Richard J. Scott, A. C. Stapleton and Howard Rush, I have given into their capable hands whatever duties have been mine.

In Montrose Cemetery, within a wrought-iron enclosure, lies the founder of our village, Cyrus Sibley, after a long and eventful life and far from the place where he was born.

Years ago, even in its state of seeming neglect, our cemetery must have had its air of peace and repose for it inspired the following poem by one of our former residents:

IN MONTROSE CEMETERY

Time cometh late or soon  
When I must die,  
Sunlight or careless moon  
Here would I lie.

Sleeping as they who sleep  
High on this hill,  
Where matted briars creep  
Tangling at will.

Here is no shadowed lawn,  
No shaft of white  
To prate about a dawn  
After the night.

Roots might grow down to me  
Where cold I lie,  
Bear me back tenderly  
To see the sky.

Forgotten Death and Pain,  
Each vagrant breeze  
Would let me sing again  
With the tall trees.

Helen Gray Kyle

Some of the Earliest Graves in the Montrose Cemetery

1859	Mary L. Lee		#Fenced
August 7, 1862	John M. Stribling Lieut. Under Adm. Semmes; Son of Rear Admiral C.K. Stribling		#Fenced
June 6, 1877	Charles F. Graham 1 Sgt. 21 Ala Inf. C.S.A.		D23
February 28, 1879	Willie McAdam native of Glasgow, Scotland	<u>Age 24</u>	#38
November 20, 1879	Charity Jefferis Babb	Age 78	#37
October 5, 1889	George Ficklin	Age 54	#141
June 11, 1890	Thomas W. Marshall	Age 70	#36
January 26, 1896	Harriett Allen	Age 54	#134
June 1, 1898	Anna Patterson Gabel	Age 64	#73
July 1, 1898	Mary L. Taylor	Age 27	#128
1899	Delilah Jane Gresssett Johnston	Age 88	

William Bernard Kelly 1857   F. A. Goodwin   Magdaine H. Kelly Goodwin  
George Kelly   William Kelly   Emily Kelly Starke

\*\* August 1, 1867   Cyrus Sibley   Age 84 \*\*   Fenced,  
 Memorial Marker