

Bennett Cemetery Association

Goodbee, Louisiana

History of Bennett Cemetery

July 2021

FIRST BURIAL

Henrietta Leininger (Henrietta Elizabeth Christina), born October 4, 1880, who was the first burial in the Bennett Cemetery, was the niece of Anna Christine Leininger Gottschalk (w/o Frederick W Gottschalk) and Charlotte Leininger Bennett (w/o Leroy Preston Bennett). She was the daughter of their brother, Henry W Leininger. Henrietta is believed to have been sick and her family came over in 1884 from New Orleans on the ferry hoping the fresh country air would help her recover. They were staying with Frederick and Christine Gottschalk. Frederick had developed "Painters Colic", which was believed to be Tuberculosis, and had recovered after he had moved from New Orleans to the country for his health, so Henrietta's parents were hoping for the same outcome.

In 1884, the typical route from New Orleans to the Northshore was to board the Pontchartrain Railroad (The Smoky Mary) in Faubourg Marigny and ride it to Milneburg (now part of Gentilly), then transfer to the Pontchartrain Ferry to ride across Lake Pontchartrain to Madisonville. The ferry would navigate up the Tchefuncte River to the Bogue Falaya and then stop at the Columbia Street Landing harbor in Covington.

The New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad would send the first train across the lake to Slidell in 1884 [1], but it was not until May 16, 1888, that the East Louisiana Railroad reached the Old Railroad Depot at 503 N. New Hampshire Street in Covington. This would allow travel from the Southshore as an alternate to the Pontchartrain Ferry. [2]

Unfortunately, Henrietta passed away from her illness on December 6, 1884. As per an interview with Mrs Lottie Gottschalk Hoover (d/o Frederick W Gottschalk and Charlotte C Bennett), it appeared that Henrietta died from Yellow Fever (YF).

More than 41,000 people died from YF in New Orleans between the years 1817 and 1905 (New Orleans - last epidemic). The number of fatalities ranged from none in years that YF spared New Orleans to more than 1,000 in nine of the 88 years of the fever's activity. [3]

As a result, Kathryn Olivarius (a history professor at Stanford University) explains, a social hierarchy developed in New Orleans around who was "acclimated" (people who had lived through yellow fever) and "unacclimated" (people who hadn't). *"If you're unacclimated, you basically languish in professional and social purgatory,"* says Olivarius. *"Bosses will not hire clerks and bookkeepers who are not expressly acclimated. Women will not marry men not described as acclimated. You can't live in certain neighborhoods, and people will not rent rooms unless you're acclimated. Certain social circles will exclude you. And so this creates this hierarchy where you have people who are actively seeking to get sick."* [4]

The last large outbreak of YF was in New Orleans in 1878 with some 4,000 deaths. Once the role of mosquitoes was understood, controlling the YF epidemics became much easier.

At the time of her death, there was not a large outbreak in New Orleans, but there were other events that may have contributed to travel restrictions. The New Orleans World's Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition was being held from 1884 to 1885. This may have imposed quarantine restrictions

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on travel into the city. Also, there was flooding in and around New Orleans at the beginning of the year from the Mississippi due to high flow levels from the Ohio River as reported by the National Weather Service in February of 1884. The high water in the Mississippi caused a levee break in March 1884 that submerged a one-mile track of the Texas and Pacific Road. [5] The flooding may have impacted travel on the roads and rivers, and it provides an example of a weather pattern that may have remained throughout the year.

It is unclear whether it was due to quarantine restrictions in the state on travel or restrictions on the Pontchartrain ferry for transporting a deceased person or high water in Madisonville, but Henrietta's family were not able to bring her back to New Orleans and had to find a place to bury her on the Northshore.

All of which culminated in the family having to bury the body here in St. Tammany. Since there was no cemetery in the community, the acreage on the boundary between the two homesteads of Sara Mixon and Daniel Bennett and Annie Leininger and Fred Gottschalk was donated for a cemetery. This was the beginning of the Bennett Cemetery.

LAND DONATION

The cemetery was originally The Bennett Gottschalk Cemetery (according to Mrs Lottie Gottschalk Hoover), but the name Gottschalk was dropped in later years. The property was originally donated by Daniel Bennett and Frederick Gottschalk for a burial site in the community. The cemetery was later increased in 1956 when August Bennett legally donated one square acre to Bennett Cemetery Association, and then in 1987, Virgil White donated .33 acres to give more acreage to the cemetery.

BURIALS

Some of the earliest burials were Frederick W Gottschalk in 1887, Sarah Bennett 1881, Steven Willie 1889, and Daniel Bennett 1889. In June 1995, there were 144 graves in the cemetery, and in March 2021 there were 217 graves.

[1] *Traversing Pontchartrain: Memory and Movement Across the Busy Estuary*, Story by Meghan Holmes, photos by John Snell, June 4, 2015

[2] *Covington History*, <http://www.covingtonhistory.co.uk/Louisiana.htm>

[3] *Louisiana Office of Public Health - Infectious Disease Epidemiology Section - Annual Report, 1934*

[4] *How Yellow Fever Turned New Orleans Into The 'City Of The Dead'* by Leah Donnella, NPR, October 31, 2018

[5] *New Orleans, LA Levees Threatening To Break*, Submitted by Stu Beitler, March 1884, *New York Times*