

Lafayette Cemetery #1

Introduction

Directions: Lafayette Cemetery #1 is in the Garden District neighborhood of uptown New Orleans. By car, the cemetery is about 10-15 minutes south of the French Quarter. If you're driving, you can generally find free street parking along Prytania Street or throughout most of the Garden District. Public transit offers you two different ways there: you can take the St. Charles Streetcar or the #11 Magazine Street bus, both of which pick up on Canal Street at the edge of the French Quarter. Either way, the fare is \$1.25/person and the stop you want is Washington Avenue. From the streetcar stop, you want to go a block and a half south to reach the main cemetery gate; from the bus stop, it's three and a half blocks north.

The main gate of the cemetery is on Washington Avenue between Prytania and Coliseum Streets.

Access the [Google Map of the cemetery](#) with our tour coordinates.

Hello and welcome to the Free Tours by Foot self-guided audio tour of Lafayette Cemetery #1 in New Orleans' Garden District. I'm Andrew, one of the guides with Free Tours by Foot. Over the course of a little less than an hour, I'll help you explore this monument, which represents the classic above-ground burial traditions of south Louisiana. The cemetery is just one square block, so once you've arrived, you'll only be walking very short distances, and you'll finish the tour in the same place you started.

To take this tour, you'll need to make sure to visit the cemetery during its open hours, which in theory are from 7 am to 3 pm daily, although in practice it often opens a little late or closes a little early. The cemetery does close on major holidays.

Since the walkways in the cemetery mostly aren't named, I'll be directing you based on landmarks – mostly tombs and the names written on them. Look for photos throughout the tour to help you recognize where you are. Since the cemetery is still actively used, the markers and identifiers may change. We've done our best to give directions using points of reference that are likely to last, but it's possible that damage or renovation or new burials may result in tombs looking a little differently than you'll see in the photos in these directions.

It's also best to take recent weather into account. If there's been rain in the last couple of days, you'll find puddles and patches of mud in the cemetery that will make some areas hard to navigate. Most of the cemetery isn't paved, and the parts that are aren't in great shape, so it's best to come ready for variable conditions underfoot - some concrete, some grass, some rubble, some tree roots, and some earth. Because of this variability, it's hard to call the cemetery fully accessible to those who use crutches or a wheelchair, especially after storms.

As far as getting there: Lafayette Cemetery #1 is in the Garden District neighborhood of uptown New Orleans. By car, the cemetery is about 10-15 minutes south of the French Quarter. If you're driving, you can generally find free street parking along Prytania Street or throughout most of the Garden District. Public transit offers you two different ways there: you can take the St. Charles Streetcar or the [#11 Magazine Street](#) bus, both of which pick up on Canal Street at the edge of the French Quarter. Either way, the fare is \$1.25/person and the stop you want is Washington Avenue. From the streetcar stop, you want to go a block and a half south to reach the main cemetery gate; from the bus stop, it's three and a half blocks north.

The main gate of the cemetery is on Washington Avenue between Prytania and Coliseum Streets. You'll often find someone selling bottled water outside the gate, but besides that, the nearest amenities are in the Rink at 2727 Prytania Street. It's a large tan building at the corner of Washington and Prytania, just across from the cemetery, and there's a cafe, restrooms, a bookstore, and a few other shops inside.

The last thing you should know is that while it's a tourist destination, a film set, and a bit of a museum, Lafayette Cemetery #1 is first and foremost a working cemetery. It's possible you'll run into families of the deceased visiting their loved ones, and there's a small chance you'll encounter a funeral. If you do come across one of these very private and potentially very emotional moments, we ask that you give these folks their space. And since many of the tombs are in fragile condition, we ask that you not lean or sit on them, although of course take all the pictures you like.

With all of that out of the way - we'll start at the gate on Washington Avenue.

Cemetery Gate

The planning of this cemetery began in 1832 as part of the creation of the city of Lafayette, the core of which would later be known as the Garden District. The cemetery has been active since 1833. That makes it the third oldest marked cemetery in the city, with only St. Louis Cemeteries No. 1 and 2 predating this one. Lafayette 1 still takes new burials, too, if a family already owns a plot.

There are over 1,000 tombs in this single square block. How many burials that constitutes is an open and contested question - many of the earliest burials were in the ground and are now unmarked, and records often have been destroyed or were never well-kept in the first place. But we can say that many thousands of people are buried in this space, in large part thanks to the efficient way our above-ground tombs use space - we'll get to that.

The walls of the cemetery have a lot of character on their own - a mix of exposed, painted, and plastered brick, with sprigs of resurrection fern growing from the cracks. The name resurrection fern has nothing to do with the fact of it growing around a burial site - it's named for its ability to look curled up and brown one day and to spring back into green vitality after some rain - but there's still some poetry to it being here.

When you're standing at the gate, notice the two live oak trees that flank the entrance to the cemetery. Two trees were planted here in the 1850s, but during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the one on the left as you're facing the gate fell. The small one on that spot was planted in 2009 to replace the lost tree.

As the #1 on the sign suggests, this isn't the only Lafayette Cemetery in New Orleans - there's also Lafayette Cemetery #2, located just north of here in Central City, another neighborhood which used to be part of the city of Lafayette. When the film *Double Jeopardy* was shot here in 1999, the producers replaced the "1" on the entrance gate with a "3". There is no Lafayette Cemetery #3 - yet.

Take a step through the gates. If you look to your right and left as you enter, you'll notice rows of plaques on the walls themselves. These are burial spaces, called wall vaults or oven vaults. There are 496 wall vaults in the cemetery. They could serve as temporary resting places, or as more affordable permanent ones compared with building a freestanding monument. If you were on your own, weren't well off, or had a small family, this was likely where you'd be buried.

Continuing along the main path, you can see that most of the monuments in the cemetery are similar to each other - tall, narrow structures with plaques on the front that look sort of like small houses. These are family tombs, so named because a whole family is buried inside, often a large one. Notice how many names are on some of the plaques. Let's get into how this works by way of one of the most crowded monuments in this particular cemetery. Watch on the left side of the path for a small fenced plot with ground-level burials. Turn left just before it, then immediately right. Just past the fence, you'll see on your right side the Smith and Dumestre Tomb - a tall family tomb covered in names.

Smith and Dumestre Tomb

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On this tomb, you'll find the names of 37 family members - more names than any other tomb in this cemetery. All 37 people are buried inside this monument. It's easy to imagine cremation playing a role in fitting so many people in one small structure, but this system first came to be in late 18th-century New Orleans, which was mostly Catholic, and the Catholic Church banned cremation until 1963.

If you look behind you to the right, you can see a hint to how this works - the Dowty tomb has a broken closure tablet. Behind every tablet is brick or plaster sealing usually two vaults, one on top of the other, divided in the middle by a stone shelf.

Burial involves opening one of the vaults, placing a casket inside, and resealing it. The next burial will be in the other vault, and then the third burial goes back to the first one. The important thing is what happens between burials. The sealed tomb contains heat, which can reach extremes in a New Orleans summer, and this accelerates decomposition.

Different cemeteries have different requirements about how much time has to pass between burials in a single vault, but in general, a year is enough time for a body in these conditions to break down and only leave bone behind. So when a new body is interred, a previous body is removed from the shelf - any casket it may have been buried in is destroyed, and the remaining bones are bagged and placed in the back or the bottom of the tomb.

Many family tombs have a sort of basement, called a caveau, which is accessible from the lower vault and where the bones of family members are stored long-term. This sped-up compacting of bodies is why you can fit so many people into these tombs - everyone other than the two most recent burials is in the caveau, much reduced in size, but the bones still intact, in keeping with Catholic norms. And this system also addresses the logistical need to use space efficiently, since New Orleans is a small city surrounded by water.

This method of burial has been common in New Orleans since around 1789, when St. Louis Cemetery #1, the oldest cemetery in the city today, was founded. New Orleans was founded

in 1718, so that leaves around 70 years when above-ground burial would have been just as foreign to Louisiana as it is to much of the US today.

So while it's popular to explain above-ground burial as a necessity in New Orleans thanks to our high water table, it's not quite why we adopted the system in the first place - it so happened that France and Spain were making the shift to above-ground burial around that time, and so we imitated them as a matter of fashion, with the accidental benefit of cemeteries becoming more flood-proof.

From here, head back the way you came to the main walkway. On the opposite side of the path from you and a little ways to your right, you'll see a short, one-vault tomb.

Ferguson Tomb

Directions: From here, head back the way you came to the main walkway. On the opposite side of the path from you and a little ways to your right, you'll see a short, one-vault tomb.

The three Ferguson children - Sercy, Mary Love, and Edwin Given – all died over the course of two days in 1878. The cause of death for all three was yellow fever, a disease that took the lives of tens of thousands of New Orleanians. At its worst, in 1853 yellow fever killed nearly 8,000 people or about one in every twenty.

Those who survived the disease were immune for the rest of their lives, so the casualties were largely children like these and new arrivals not previously exposed - like most of the residents of Lafayette, who came largely from the upper Mississippi Valley, the northeastern United States, Ireland, Germany, and Eastern Europe.

Individuals and the city, of course, did what they could to fight the disease, but they did so on poor knowledge. The concept that diseases were caused by tiny, invisible organisms would have sounded strange and counterintuitive and frankly ridiculous to the early residents of Lafayette, and the idea that they were carried from body to body by mosquitoes wasn't even proposed until late in the 19th century.

In the meantime, people acted on the well-established and intuitively appealing concept of miasma – the idea that “bad air,” which is what “malaria” means in Italian, spread out from bad-smelling places like swamps and cemeteries, both of which New Orleans had aplenty. This led the city to prevention efforts like burning barrels of tar in the streets – which would have cleared out the mosquitoes for a while, at least.

As for the individuals in the Garden District, one of their strategies was to build their homes far apart, so as to give themselves plenty of buffer space from their neighbors, thinking the disease could spread by contact with the sick – but in creating huge gardens with cisterns and reflecting pools, they also created more breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

It wasn't until early in the 20th century, when New Orleans implemented ideas for mosquito elimination tried out in Cuba and Panama, that the disease finally vanished and children became much more likely to survive into adulthood.

Continue along the center path away from the front gate until you see two low brick monuments on your right under a magnolia tree. Turn right just before these - you'll be going

along the side of the Klein family tomb - then turn right again on the next row by the tomb of John Bartchy. Take the first left turn you can, by the Von Hoven tomb, then watch for a small tomb on your right enclosed with a low fence with the name Harry T Hays.

Harry T. Hays Tomb

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Brigadier General Harry T. Hays led a brigade known as the Louisiana Tigers during the American Civil War. Hays had grown up in Tennessee and Mississippi and studied law in Baltimore before he settled in New Orleans.

While the Civil War would pit north against south, the residents of Lafayette came from both regions and they managed to overlook the differences in their origins and focus on what they had in common.

First, they had all come to New Orleans looking to make a buck. The United States had bought Louisiana in 1803 hoping to own New Orleans in particular, and over the next few decades, lots of Americans moved here, looking to remake what they saw as a backwater full of unrealized money-making potential.

The second bond was their shared obstacle in this project: the Creoles, the Latin- and African-descended native-born population of New Orleans. The typical influential Creole was a French-speaking Catholic with aristocratic sympathies; the American newcomers were mostly English-speaking Protestants with tales of the American Revolution in their blood.

Both groups play a huge role in why New Orleans is the way it is today, but the Americans definitely succeeded in their mission: by the time of the Civil War, New Orleans, which by that time had grown to incorporate the city of Lafayette, was home to more millionaires than any city in the US.

But that engine of wealth depended on two things whose times were coming to an end: first, a water-centered system of shipping, which was soon to lose prominence to railroads, and second, slavery. Some of the Garden District's northeastern-born residents opted to return home when the southern states seceded, but mostly, they favored the Confederacy, the southern side that stood to protect their status quo. And Harry T. Hays was among them.

The name "Louisiana Tigers" came to Hays' brigade secondhand - it was a name applied to several different military groups from Louisiana, but across the board, it communicated their reputation as hard-fighting front-liners. Many of Hays' men would have been his own neighbors from the riverfront portion of Lafayette - Irish dock workers from what we now call the Irish Channel. In line with their rough image, Hays' regiment took huge risks - in one battle, the Tigers ran out of ammunition, but rather than retreat, they continued the attack by throwing rocks. The brigade also took huge casualties, and Hays himself was captured once and badly wounded twice during the war.

When the war ended, Hays, like many high-ranking Confederate officers, received a pardon and returned to his life in New Orleans, where he became the Sheriff of Orleans Parish. But in many ways, the war continued at home.

One of the flashpoints for conflict in post-war Louisiana was the state's constitution, which would end up being rewritten four times between 1864 and the end of the century. In 1866, a constitutional convention was held, drafting a document that would have given voting rights to black men in Louisiana. A parade of black Civil War veterans, marching with a band, met the convention representatives as they disbanded, but at the site, they were met by armed Confederate veterans, including Harry T. Hays, members of his police force, and some of the surviving men of the Louisiana Tigers.

Violence erupted and at least thirty of the black marchers were killed and three of the Confederate veterans. Word of events like this massacre helped spur support for the Reconstruction Acts, by which the federal government imposed tight controls over the south for a couple of decades to come.

Harry T. Hays lost his job as sheriff and went back to practicing law, and the Louisiana Tigers became the namesake for the football team at Louisiana State University.

Continue in the direction you were going until the path ends, then turn left. On your left will be the tomb of Thomas McKnight, in which a full-sized tree has grown.

MCKNIGHT TOMB

Directions: Continue in the direction you were going until the path ends, then turn left. On your left will be the tomb of Thomas McKnight, in which a full-sized tree has grown.

The McKnight tomb has a Chinese tallow tree growing from it, summing up one serious problem for this and every cemetery in New Orleans: maintenance.

If you wanted to build a tomb in a city-operated cemetery today, you would be buying not a piece of land, but the right to use a piece of land for ten years, at the end of which the right would have to be renewed. But this is a relatively new system.

In most cases, the tombs in Lafayette Cemetery 1 are the property and therefore the responsibility of the families whose names they bear. From the state of the cemetery today, it's clear that most families aren't performing any kind of regular maintenance. And while a tomb can be repossessed, it's a complex legal process and is rarely done.

For most of the history of above-ground burial in New Orleans, tomb maintenance happened in the lead-up to All Saints Day - November 1. Sometime in October, you'd do the work of cleaning and repainting your tomb, then, on the big day, you'd show up dressed in your new fall fashions, flowers in hand, ready to pay your respects. It was part private ceremony, part public display of piety.

All Saints Day was an important part of the social calendar, and the atmosphere would have been more like a festival than a funeral, with food and flower sellers, musicians, and hired hands available if your tomb needed some last-minute touch-ups.

A few families in New Orleans still celebrate this tradition - we'll see one such grave soon - but it's more active in rural than urban areas today. The small town of Lacombe, Louisiana, in

particular, is known for filling its cemeteries with candles on All Saints, making their graves glow against the surrounding woods as the sun sets.

On the front of the tomb, between the branches, you can see the emblem of a wreath - a Greek symbol for eternity, both for its circular shape and for the evergreen plants it was made from.

You can see a couple of other important symbols on the opposite side of the row on the Bernius tomb. At the top of the tomb is a Masonic symbol, the letter G with two of a mason's tools, a square, and compass, enclosing it.

On the bottom of the tomb is a metal plaque that commemorates military service. From World War I on, many of the cemetery's veterans are acknowledged with a plaque or stone like this.

Continue along this path, going away from the nearby wall vaults. Ahead of you will be a paved walk under magnolia trees. When you reach it, turn right toward the gate, then look to your right at the large Chalmette Fire Co. No 23 tomb.

CHALMETTE FIRE CO NO 23

Directions: Continue along this path, going away from the nearby wall vaults. Ahead of you will be a paved walk under magnolia trees. When you reach it, turn right toward the gate, then look to your right at the large Chalmette Fire Co. No 23 tomb.

As you might guess from its size and the lack of individual names, this is a different type of tomb entirely. While we've mostly seen family tombs so far, this is a society tomb - one owned and used by an organization for the benefit of its members.

In this case, the organization was a volunteer fire company, but others were owned by professional organizations, social clubs, or immigrant groups. This particular fire company was located just a few blocks away along Washington Avenue toward the Mississippi in a building that now houses a firefighting museum.

Toward the top of the monument you can see a very small plaque that says SOC. This stands for Save Our Cemeteries, the name of a nonprofit responsible for much of the preservation work that has been done here and in many other cemeteries across town. The plaque signifies that they either already have or soon will make improvements to the tomb.

From here, go back along the paved path, away from the gate. Just past the magnolia trees on the left, you'll see a white family tomb with a cast iron fence around its front. This tomb belonged to Jacob Payne, a Garden District resident in whose home Jefferson Davis, the one President of the Confederacy, died. The tomb displays a less common funerary symbol, the hourglass with wings, a type of memento mori or reminder of death.

When you're ready, turn back the way you came and head back under the magnolia trees. When you arrive at the spot where you met this path a few minutes ago, turn left to pass between the Richard Salter and J.T. Aycock tombs. Continue to the first tomb on the left, with the name C.B. Payne on top.

C.B. PAYNE TOMB

Directions: When you're ready, turn back the way you came and head back under the magnolia trees. When you arrive at the spot where you met this path a few minutes ago, turn left to pass between the Richard Salter and J.T. Aycock tombs. Continue to the first tomb on the left, with the name C.B. Payne on top.

Depending on the time of year, you may see different signs of life on this spot. The Gisleson family are regular visitors to this tomb.

Their ritual is to visit each year in the days following Mardi Gras to leave behind a Muses shoe - one of the elaborately decorated and fiercely sought-after high heels given out during the Muses parade on the Thursday before Mardi Gras. The shoe usually sits undisturbed until All Saints Day, when the family comes to remove it. Otherwise, they leave mementos through the year as regular signs of their affection.

As you may notice, their name doesn't match the one on top - look on the side of the monument to find the Payne surname. This happens when one family buys a tomb from another. Because of their potential for reuse, tombs in New Orleans not only look but also act like little houses - they're bought and sold, and size, design, condition, and location all play into their price.

Looking further ahead in the direction you were going, you can see a couple of tombs featuring a draped urn on top. These urns are another classical Greek symbol - although they would have stored the ashes of a cremated person, something that was, again, a mostly forbidden practice in New Orleans.

Head in that direction toward the second of the two visible tombs with draped urns, called the Clerc tomb. It also has a closure tablet on its side, in this case, moved by the original family so as to make room for more names. The side plaque features a cross passing through a crown - a symbol used by Catholics, Freemasons, and Christian Scientists.

Just past the Clerc tomb is the Feldner tomb, next to which you'll see what looks like a standing log. This is a memorial showing membership in Woodmen of the World, a fraternal benevolent society. In another New Orleans cemetery is an entire society tomb devoted to Woodmen of the World members.

Past the Feldner tomb, you'll see a family tomb with the name J.S. Smith, featuring overturned torches - a symbol for an extinguished life. On the front of this tomb at the bottom right is a small inscription reading "James Hagan, builder" - we'll see James Hagan and his handiwork again.

When you pass the Smith tomb, turn left and in a moment you'll see a large tomb on your right made of cast iron belonging to the Karstendiek family.

KARSTENDIEK TOMB

This is the only cast iron tomb in this cemetery. Cast iron tombs were introduced to New Orleans by Wood and Miltenberger, a local distributor of a Philadelphia-based iron company.

They were available in the same catalogs that sold cast-iron fences and balcony railings, and a family could choose prefabricated parts to be assembled into a custom tomb on site.

Wood and Miltenberger also sold the unusual cornstalk fences visitors see around a couple of houses in the Garden District and French Quarter.

The sellers claimed that their products were “designed...expressly for the South” - and Mr. Miltenberger believed in his product enough to be buried in his own cast iron tomb in Greenwood Cemetery.

But the fact is that in New Orleans, these structures rust. This one received a renovation thanks to catching a famous eye. Anne Rice, the novelist behind *Interview with the Vampire*, took inspiration from this tomb for the design of Lestat’s tomb in her book, and it also became the model for a prop tomb in the film version of the book, shot here in 1994.

A fundraising campaign targeted at vampire fans during the Halloween season of 2016 allowed Save Our Cemeteries to conduct a full restoration on this tomb, with the owning family’s bemused cooperation.

From here, continue along the same path for a few steps. On your left, there’ll be four raised plots for earthen burial, one sealed on the top and three with open soil.

COPING TOMBS AND FILMING LOCATION

Directions: From the KARSTENDIEK TOMB, continue along the same path for a few steps. On your left, there’ll be four raised plots for earthen burial, one sealed on the top and three with open soil.

For some new arrivals in New Orleans, above-ground burial was strange, so they opted for a compromise - raised earthen burial in what’s called a coping tomb. Six feet under runs a lot less risk of hitting groundwater if you start from a few feet above the ground. This method required bringing in additional soil from outside the cemetery to fill the enclosure, and in the 19th century, soil merchants found a market here, selling dirt shipped in from around the world, so you could be buried in a little piece of your homeland.

Go a few more steps in the same direction and you’ll see an open space on your right. This is one of the rare unused spaces in the cemetery. Today, no new lots are being sold here, leaving this space permanently empty - which makes it the perfect home for any temporary tombs built for Hollywood purposes.

In 1999, the movie *Double Jeopardy* was filmed partly in this cemetery and Ashley Judd had to escape from a fake tomb built on this site. Besides *Double Jeopardy* and *Interview with the Vampire*, the cemetery has also been a location for *NCIS New Orleans*. The TV show *American Horror Story: Coven* shot scenes in Lafayette Cemetery 2. And the TV show *The Originals* shoots many of its scenes on a huge fake version of Lafayette Cemetery 1, located in Atlanta.

Finally, you can watch the music video for *The Right Stuff* by the New Kids on the Block for all kinds of New Orleans scenery, including a hide-and-seek game in this cemetery. It’s worth mentioning that most things that movies, TV shows, and music videos show people doing in

these cemeteries are dangerous, illegal, disrespectful, or all three, so we counsel against modeling your behavior after any of the aforementioned characters.

Make a left turn here to pass between the Sherrouse coping tomb and the Negrotto family tomb. Take the second right turn by the Scott tomb, and spot the second tomb on your right, with the name T.J. Earhart on the front.

EARHART/FERGUSON TOMB

Directions: Make a left turn here to pass between the Sherrouse coping tomb and the Negrotto family tomb. Take the second right turn by the Scott tomb, and spot the second tomb on your right, with the name T.J. Earhart on the front.

This cemetery isn't home to nearly as many famous New Orleanians as St. Louis 1, but one of its more famous inhabitants appears as a sort of footnote on this tomb - towards the bottom right is the name of Judge John Howard Ferguson. He's not a household name himself, but he's the namesake for a landmark civil rights case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

In 1892, Judge Ferguson presided over a local case in which a mixed-race man, Homer Plessy, was arrested after refusing to exit a whites-only rail car. Homer Plessy was what the time called an octaroon - one-eighth African-descended - and he boarded the train as part of a coordinated effort at doing away with post-Civil War Jim Crow laws, which had segregated many previously integrated aspects of public life in New Orleans.

Judge Ferguson ruled that the Louisiana Railway Car Act of 1890, which declared that rail companies had to provide "separate but equal" accommodations for black and white passengers traveling within state lines, was constitutional. Homer Plessy appealed the case all the way to the US Supreme Court, where "separate but equal" was established as a precedent to be used over and over again across the country until it was overturned in *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954.

Homer Plessy is buried in St. Louis Cemetery 1, but that fact isn't the result of a segregation policy - most public cemeteries in New Orleans, including this one, never had a policy of segregation by race or religion.

Before you leave this tomb, notice the distinctive "no cross, no crown" image at the top on the pediment. This is a reference to the Christian belief that if one does not accept the burdens of life (the "cross"), one will not be able to accept the rewards of Heaven (the "crown").

From here, continue in the same direction toward a small magnolia tree. As you walk, watch on your left for the Betz family tomb. The closure tablet on this tomb is made of marble, and you can see from it what our climate does to such a porous stone. Tiny cracks throughout it cause what was once a straight tablet to warp and eventually break, and on the way, the surface of the marble gets a sugary texture and words engraved in it become gradually unreadable.

Creole and American New Orleanians shared a taste for the Greco-Roman classics, so importing marble was a favorite vice of theirs, but today, many new or renovated tombs are closed with granite - a material that will last and stay readable much longer.

When you reach the magnolia tree and the paved path beyond it, make a right. On your right, just under the magnolia branches, you'll see the Taylor tomb, which has a flaming urn on top - a variation on a symbol we saw earlier. Behind it is a headstone with the name Wetmore, on top of which is an image of a weeping willow, which has both Classical and Biblical significance. And to the left of that one, you'll see the family tomb of Kaspar Auch, a German immigrant, surrounded by rosemary - an herb associated with memory and with a pleasant smell that certainly would have improved the experience of the cemetery for 19th-century visitors. Two tombs further along the right side of the paved path, you'll see the E.M. Rasha tomb - this one has closure tablets on all four sides.

At the end of the path, by the gate, you'll see a small caretaker's shack. Turn left just before it. You'll see the Mullen tomb on your left - another one that jumps out for the number of names engraved on it. A little further down, you'll see on your left a high-elevated coping tomb - a whole raised graveyard - with a low, decorative fence around the top of the wall. Turn left just before this, then right to go around to the front of this monument.

MCLELLAN-FAYESOUX-SCUDDER TOMBS

The focal point of this miniature raised graveyard is a broken column – a symbol of a young life being cut short. It memorializes the 22-year-old son of the McLellan family, who was killed in action at the Battle of Richmond in 1862 during the Civil War. The CSA written on the column stands for the Confederate States of America and represents that he fought on the side of the South.

Several other members of the family are buried at the site, and the small enclosure opposite from it is owned by the family as well and was used for All Saints Day celebrations.

Facing the broken column, turn left and walk straight ahead. The first tomb on your left is topped with a broken-winged angel holding a torch downward - a variation on the overturned torch symbol we saw earlier and suggesting God's will in the ending of a life.

Continue along this row until the open space at the end. Take a look to your right and you'll see a tomb painted a salmon color. New Orleans saw a vogue for brightly colored tombs around the 1840s, and a few tombs have been maintained or restored to the look of that time. You'll also see a small cherub statue on the front. Then head inside the little enclosure of hedges known as the Secret Garden.

THE SECRET GARDEN

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The four tombs in the Secret Garden bear the names of four childhood friends. Their story is a mix of history and legend, but the story goes that as young men, these four formed a secret club they called the "Quarto," which survived into their adult lives as a kind of secret benevolent society, performing anonymous acts of generosity for people in need.

Their secrecy is supposed to have been absolute, even after death; the last survivor, Henry Ginder, is said to have burned their meeting notes and, being a jeweler by trade, turned the keys to the locked notebooks into brooches that he gave to the children of his friends.

Even though these are four family tombs, their separation from the rest of the cemetery and the shared history between their owners makes the Secret Garden almost like a society tomb - but innocuously so, suiting the four friends' taste for secrecy.

When you exit the Secret Garden, put Dupuy and Ginder on your right and Palfrey and Griswold behind you. There'll be two paths going straight ahead in front of you; take the one on your left, passing between a coping with the name Josephine Murphy on its headstone and the family tomb of August E. J. Egdorf. Then turn left at the next intersection, by the tomb of James Prest. Watch for a society tomb on your left.

DEUTSCHEN PRESBYTERIANISCHE GEMEINDE TOMB

Directions: When you exit the Secret Garden, put Dupuy and Ginder on your right and Palfrey and Griswold behind you. There'll be two paths going straight ahead in front of you; take the one on your left, passing between a coping with the name Josephine Murphy on its headstone and the family tomb of August E. J. Egdorf. Then turn left at the next intersection, by the tomb of James Prest. Watch for a society tomb on your left.

As mentioned earlier, many society tombs were created by groups of immigrants - in this case, German immigrants. Germans had an immeasurable influence on the culture of New Orleans and Louisiana.

Early waves of German arrivals in the 18th century moved to rural areas and became farmers; you can see this in the names of Louisiana towns like German Coast and Des Allemands - French for "some Germans." These people, in turn, had an impact on the Cajun culture of southwest Louisiana, introducing sausage-making - hence the andouille sausage you'll find in Cajun food - and accordion music - hence the sound of present-day zydeco music.

Here in the city, a 19th-century wave of German Catholics settled into the Irish Channel, and German and Slavic Jews came to what today is called Central City - all formerly parts of the city of Lafayette. German men were among the builders and landscapers of the famous mansions of the Garden District. And the number of German bakers in town becomes clear if you know some of the favorite local baked goods - Hubig's pies, Leidenheimer po-boy bread, and Haydel's king cakes.

To the left of the society tomb is a coping for the Nungesser family, the headstone of which shows a pair of clasped hands. While it may look like a handshake, this is a symbol of marriage and is usually used when a couple is buried together.

Continue the way you were going until the path hits the back of a family tomb, then turn right. You'll see a fenced tomb just ahead on your left. You'll turn left after this tomb, but take a second to look around first. On top of each post of this fence is the flaming urn symbol you saw earlier.

A little further along on the right side of the path, you can see a statue of a barefoot, weeping woman holding an urn. This image tends to be used in cases of a mourning mother.

Make that left turn to go in the direction the weeping woman is facing, then take the first right, by the Rawlins family tomb. Just behind the Rawlins tomb, on the right side of the path, you'll find a large, low coping with a headstone at the opposite end and the words "New Orleans Home for Incurables" written along the wall on the near side.

NEW ORLEANS HOME FOR INCURABLES TOMB

The New Orleans Home for Incurables was chartered in 1891 with an all-female board of directors to provide a place of refuge and comfort to people with severe mental or physical handicaps that were considered hopeless and whose families often had abandoned them. At first, the facility only took women, but it gradually added spaces for children and men. Residents of the home not buried by their own families would be laid to rest in this large society tomb in the coping tomb style. Today, the organization operates as the John J. Hainkel Home and Rehabilitation Center and is still located in uptown New Orleans.

Continue the way you were going. On your left will be four coping tombs in a row, then a large white tomb. Go around to the opposite side and you'll see the name of the society that owned it: the Society for the Relief of Destitute Orphan Boys.

SOCIETY FOR THE RELIEF OF DESTITUTE ORPHAN BOYS TOMB

Directions: From the New Orleans Home for the Incurables, continue the way you were going. On your left will be four coping tombs in a row, then a large white tomb. Go around to the opposite side and you'll see the name of the society that owned it: the Society for the Relief of Destitute Orphan Boys.

This society, formed during the years of devastating epidemics of yellow fever and malaria, still exists today as the Waldo Burton Memorial Home. The Civil War was also responsible for orphaning many children, and as the war also decimated many fortunes, one of the most emblematic sights for residents of how the war had changed their city must have been the transformation of private mansions into orphanages.

You can see from this that society tombs weren't always enormous - the size depended on the membership and resources of the organization, and this one has only four vaults. Visitors sometimes leave offerings and trinkets here, especially on All Saints Day.

If anything that would be enjoyed by a modern boy is left – like trucks, cars, or stuffed animals – a representative from Waldo Burton will bring it to the home, which provides care and services for boys ages 6-17.

Facing the boys' tomb, look to your right and you'll see the crossed paths that mark the center of the cemetery. Take a few steps toward that crossroads and you'll be able to see two more large fire company tombs on either side of the path.

FIRE COMPANY TOMBS

Directions: Facing the boys' tomb, look to your right and you'll see the crossed paths that mark the center of the cemetery. Take a few steps toward that crossroads and you'll be able to see two more large fire company tombs on either side of the path.

Two more fire companies built tombs on adjacent corners of this intersection. The smaller, twelve-vault tomb on the left belonged to Lafayette Hook and Ladder Company No. 1. This tomb was another source of inspiration for Anne Rice, who added the thirteenth vault to the top of this monument to make the design for the Mayfair family tomb, which figures into the plot of her book *The Witching Hour*.

The center walk also has some Anne Rice lore - when promoting her book *Memnoch the Devil*, she staged her own funeral along this walk, being wheeled into the cemetery on the back of a carriage in a glass-lidded casket wearing a lace wedding dress, accompanied, in classic jazz funeral fashion, by a band and procession. The bookstore in the Rink, across the corner from the cemetery, has photos of this occasion and tends to host her book signings when she's in town.

On the opposite side of the walkway, to your right, is a much larger, 28-vault society tomb for Jefferson Fire Co No 22. It was built in 1852, and the relief on the front is a horse-drawn fire engine from that era.

Past that is another large tomb which, despite its size, is a family tomb rather than a society tomb. It's the burial place of James Hagan, whose name might ring a bell - he was the builder of one of the more elaborate tombs we saw earlier, and here we see the peak of his career – the tomb he built for himself in 1870 from Texas granite. Just past that is a society tomb for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, another benevolent society.

When you're ready, turn around, putting the two fire company tombs behind you and the orphanage tomb on your right. Walk forward toward the rows of magnolia trees. On the left, just before the trees begin, you'll see a short family tomb with a cross on top and the name Leidenheimer. As mentioned earlier, this family produces much of the bread used for po-boys in New Orleans, all from a large bakery nearby in Central City. It's a local pleasure, if you're up early enough in the morning, to pass near the bakery and smell the bread baking; later in the morning, you can watch delivery drivers carry armfuls of long loaves of bread into restaurants all over the French Quarter.

Two tombs past the Leidenheimer tomb, you'll see the Koester tomb with a little lamb on top of the pediment. The lamb is often used on the graves of children as a symbol of innocence and gentleness and of Jesus in his sacrificial role.

Walk past a few more tombs and look for the Beauvais tomb on your left. There are lots of familiar decorative elements on these next few tombs - clasped hands on the first, the cross and crown on the second, bright rust-colored paint on the third, and a Masonic emblem on the fourth.

Continue to the end of the path by the gate and make a left turn. You'll go most of the way to the corner, passing another rust-colored tomb with a tall Woodmen of the World memorial next to it, then on your right a rare fully earthen burial. Then you'll pass four copings in a row on your left; a few tombs past that, look for the family tomb with the name Sarah E. Hester toward the top.

Sarah E. Hester

Sarah Hester was the mother of Henry Hester, who for 61 years was the superintendent of the New Orleans Cotton Exchange, one of the main centers of commerce in antebellum New Orleans. If you go toward the French Quarter after leaving here, you'll pass through the business district, where this and the workplaces of many of the other people buried in the cemetery were located.

The lowest name on the tomb belongs to a man who lived just outside the cemetery - Col. Robert Short, who owned "Colonel Short's Villa," an impressive mansion at the corner of Prytania and Fourth, which is a popular stop on walking tours. We'll be finishing momentarily, but afterward, if you'd like to get a taste of the Garden District and a sense of where some of the cemetery's residents lived, a walk down Prytania Street can be a great way to do it - we'll have directions at the end of the tour.

From here, continue to the end of the row and turn left. Straight ahead of you on the right is the gate you used to enter the cemetery. On the way to it, you'll pass a row of wall vaults on your right and a couple of society tombs on your left. And we'll introduce one last funerary symbol: the second to last tomb on your left before you reach the gate, belonging to Philibert Bernard, has an image on its right side of a flower with a broken stem, a simple symbol for something coming to an end.

The End

That's the end of our tour of Lafayette Cemetery #1. If from here you want to see some of the Garden District, a walk down Prytania or Coliseum Street will show you plenty of the typical houses of the area.

To get to Prytania from the cemetery gate, you'll want to go left and then turn right; to get to Coliseum, you'll want to go right, then turn left.

All the amenities in terms of water, restrooms, and so on are best found at the Rink, the tan building just a little to the left and across the corner when you leave the gate.

St. Charles Avenue, where the streetcar runs, is a block and a half to the left from the gate; Magazine Street, where you can find a city bus and plenty of options for shopping and dining, is three and a half blocks to the right.

We hope you enjoy exploring New Orleans - for more from us, including guided tours, self-guided tours, and articles, please visit www.freetoursbyfoot.com. We hope to see you again soon!