Save the Date! Join Us on October 9!
Every October, Ivy Hill Cemetery, the Historical and Preservation Society, and the Alexandria Fire Department hold a memorial service at the cemetery’s Circle of Honor to honor the sacrifices of our community’s First Responders. This year’s event, to be held on Friday, October 9, continues a long-standing tradition of cooperation between Ivy Hill and the Fire Department.
The Alexandria Fire Department has placed a wreath at the base of the Circle’s obelisk for many years which has become a more formal ceremony as time has passed. Each year, the solemn and special ceremony enjoys increasing public attendance. The entrance to the cemetery is framed by two ladder trucks, nose to nose, with ladders raised, forming an arch. The road defining the outer boundary of the Circle of Honor is filled with an array of First Responders’ vehicles and special equipment. Community leaders and Fire Department representatives give addresses honoring firefighters who have lost their lives protecting our community.
Did you know that the obelisk that is now part of the Circle of Honor is as old as Ivy Hill Cemetery itself? It was originally erected by citizens of Alexandria, probably in 1856, as a memorial to seven firefighters who died in a tragic fire on King Street in 1855. The Circle of Honor and the Friendship Fountain, featuring a fire hose nozzle, that you see today were dedicated on October 7, 1970. The fountain was rededicated on October 12, 2001, in a very somber service remembering the events of 9-11 and the men and women of New York City’s Fire Department. We are proud to act as host for this event and consider it a privilege to have this opportunity to acknowledge those who serve our community as First Responders. We thank all who have attended these services in the past for their interest and support. We encourage you to join us on October 9, starting at 11:00, to once again honor these men and women who dedicate their lives to keeping us safe.

Coming Soon! The Ivy Hill Cemetery Directory
In the Spring newsletter, we announced that we are working on a Directory titled "Ivy Hill Cemetery: Keeper of Our Community's Heritage." The publication lists the almost 9,000 burials at Ivy Hill and all marker inscriptions as of December 31, 2008. Individual chapters also highlight persons buried or memorialized at Ivy Hill who have been First Responders, members of fraternal societies, veterans of the Civil War and U.S. foreign wars, and national and community leaders. Biographical information is included throughout, much of it sent to us by families over the years. The data bases of burials and marker inscriptions are complemented by brief histories, photographs, and maps of cemetery sections.
We plan to have this beautiful Directory completed in time for the Firefighter’s Memorial Service in October. It will be a lasting memorial for those of you who have family or friends...
buried at Ivy Hill, or if you are simply interested in the cemetery’s central role in the history and heritage of our community. Each volume will sell for $50, with proceeds going to the Ivy Hill Cemetery Historical Preservation Society to help us implement future educational and preservation projects. You can place an advance order by sending a check to IHCHPS, 636 West Timber Branch Parkway, Alexandria, Virginia 22302. If you have already sent in a pre-order, we will contact you when we have the final product.

While the cemetery and the society have made every effort to verify the accuracy of all names and data included in the Directory, we recognize that there may be errors. When you receive your copy, please let us know of any corrections which we can print in future editions of the Directory. This has truly been a monumental task for all involved, and we thank all of you who have sent in biographical information in the past!

**Upcoming Projects**

As soon as "Ivy Hill Cemetery: Keeper of Our Community's Heritage" is completed, we will concentrate on the Adopt-a-Tree project. Its purpose is to maintain and preserve the many mature trees throughout Ivy Hill Cemetery, and provide opportunities for families and friends to adopt a living memorial to loved ones. We are in the process of getting proposals to establish an annual budget for keeping our trees healthy, which will guide our planning and fund-raising. We have called on professional help to create several walking tours of Ivy Hill, beginning with an overview and introduction to Ivy Hill for general audiences. This will be followed by a Civil War tour (hopefully in time for the Civil War Sesquicentennial starting in 2011), and a nature walk highlighting our flora and fauna. Any contributions you can make to assist us in funding these important educational tours will be greatly appreciated!

Our third project will be to apply to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources and the National Park Service to register Ivy Hill Cemetery as a National Historic Landmark. If we are successful, this honorary designation will qualify Ivy Hill for future state and federal grants and give us access to many of the DHR's experts.

It will be a busy fall for us. If anyone has a special interest in any of these projects, we would love to hear from you!

**Sarah Cornelia Tracy Herbert**

Protecting Mount Vernon During the Civil War

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association gained possession of Mount Vernon on February 22, 1860, at a time when sectionalism threatened the union and cast a pall over the nation. Despite the tense political climate, Ann Pamela Cunningham and her secretary, Miss Sarah Tracy of New York, moved in to begin the process of preservation. The house was completely empty with the exception of the key to the Bastille, which had been given as a gift by Lafayette, a globe in Washington’s study, and a bust by Jean-Antoine Houdon, a French sculptor who created the masterpiece from a mask made of Washington’s face.

Just a few months after settling into Mount Vernon, Cunningham was forced to return to her home in South Carolina due to the death of her father. Sarah Tracy remained at Mount Vernon with Upton Herbert, the superintendent selected at the suggestion of the Washingtons, and a handful of workmen and servants. Little did they know of the drama and adventure that would soon envelop their stoic little staff.

**Keeping Mount Vernon Safe**

In April of 1861 war broke out, affecting every aspect of life for the residents of Mount Vernon and preventing Cunningham from returning for six years. Just a few weeks into the war, Union troops stormed nearby Alexandria and moved within four miles of Mount Vernon. Confederate forces were almost as close to the south. According to legend, the cannon at the battle of
Bull Run actually rattled the windows of the Mansion, and individual rifle shots could be distinguished during the confrontation at Aquia Creek. Understandably, Ann Pamela Cunningham was insistent that George Washington's estate be sheltered. She persuaded Sarah Tracy to stay at Mount Vernon, believing that "... the presence of ladies there would be its greatest protection, even from the unruly." Herbert also agreed to stay, although Tracy wrote that he felt conflicted at refusing the command of several companies and not joining his brothers in the Confederate Army.

Even though Tracy wrote to Cunningham, "This war news has completely unnerved me," she showed no fear when it came to securing Mount Vernon, sending a letter to the National Intelligencer to contradict the newspaper's claim that Washington's remains had been removed since the start of the war: "Never, since first laid in this, his chosen resting place, have the remains of our Great Father reposed more quietly and peacefully than now, when all the outer world is distracted by warlike thoughts and deeds. And the public, the owners of this noble possession, need fear no molestation of this one national spot belonging alike to North and South. Over it there can be no dispute! No individual or individuals has the right, and surely none can have the inclination, to disturb this sacred deposit."

Tracy followed through on her goal to keep Mount Vernon a "national spot" free from armed conflict. She first demanded an audience with General Winfield Scott in Washington, who agreed to forbid his soldiers from entering the Mount Vernon grounds under arms. Tracy garnered a similar pledge regarding Confederate troops from the governor of Virginia. Still, Tracy was constantly forced to meet with both armies to remind them of the agreements when officers were replaced with men new to the region.

Surviving the War

Tracy also had to request special passes that would allow her to pass through military encampments simply to make ends meet. She raised cabbages on the estate, drove a wagonload to market in the nation's capital and Alexandria, and then returned with much-needed meat, salt, and pepper. Tracy frequently made these trips on her own, especially when it became evident that Herbert, a Virginian, would be in danger when crossing Union barricades.

Simply providing enough food for the table was a full-time occupation, and the continuing restoration of the house was all but abandoned when workmen had to be discharged after the Association could not pay them. Funds had dwindled severely because within weeks of the start of the war, the federal government seized both the Alexandria and Mount Vernon boats for use in the Union's efforts. With roads blocked and the boats seized, there was no way for visitors to come to Mount Vernon, and the procurement of regular, much-needed revenue essentially ceased.

Soldiers encamped around Mount Vernon were the only visitors Tracy and Upton entertained, and the two caretakers found themselves often occupied with showing them around. Typically, the soldiers were gracious guests, as reported by Tracy in a May 1861 letter to Ann Pamela Cunningham:

"Mr. Herbert told the Captain of the Company of soldiers stationed near here your wishes with regard to their not coming here in uniform or armed. They have behaved very well about it. Many of them come from a great distance and have never been here, and have no clothes but their uniforms. They borrow shawls and cover up their buttons and leave their arms outside the enclosures, and never come but two or three at a time. That is as much as can be asked of them."

Some soldiers even paid the admission fee of twenty-five cents, although Tracy noted, "... of
course the soldiers plead poverty – many with truth.”
There were times, however, when bands of soldiers did not adhere to the Association’s wishes. But Tracy always stood firm. In one instance, large groups of soldiers “refused to stack their arms, but were for over an hour straggling all over the place without any order, their guns in their hands. The Colonel said that if the men were to lay down their arms, we must have an order to that effect from General Scott.” Tracy recorded that she went directly to Colonel Townsend who relayed her concerns to General Scott. “He said I should have all I wanted. I received a pass and a written order, signed by General Scott, to show any of his officers who do not wish to obey our regulations.”
As the war dragged on, the boat was reinstated for a time, and in 1864 the Association’s itemized revenue amounted to $348.03, including slightly more than $230 from visitors, who never paid more than twenty-five cents each. Sales of potatoes, peaches, pears, tomatoes, cabbages, hay, photographs of Mount Vernon, and handmade bricks made up the rest. Ever careful with the Association’s money, Tracy reported that expenses for the same year totaled $243.30.
Taking Risks
Tracy handled a much larger sum of money on one particular delivery to Washington. On September 13, 1861, John Augustine Washington III, a member of General Robert E. Lee’s staff, was killed in a skirmish in West Virginia. Federal officers had learned that a large part of the money the Association had paid to assume ownership of Mount Vernon was left in the hands of an Alexandria banker [Burke and Herbert], and the Union had every intention of confiscating the funds as enemy property. The banker tipped off Tracy of the officers’ plans. She took the cash, tucked it snugly at the bottom of her egg basket during one of her regular runs to deliver fresh eggs, and hurried to Washington, D.C. to the bank of George W. Riggs, who served as treasurer of the Association. While Riggs counted out the eggs he wanted, Tracy rented a safe deposit box for the cash.
A few months later, Union officers forbade Tracy from crossing into Washington, saying that General George B. McClellan had deemed her pass null and void. When told that only President Lincoln could overrule McClellan’s order, Tracy skirted a blockade, talked her way into the White House, and convinced the president himself to write a note to the general kindly requesting an exemption to his orders. As Gerald Johnson noted, “with what astonished amusement the ungainly giant must have looked down upon this bit of femininity who had burst in upon him bristling with indignation against his field commander, and demanding that he order the United States Army to stand aside while she passed with her groceries.” Not only did Tracy receive a new pass, General McClellan offered to send a boat with provisions to Mount Vernon, which he did a few days later.
Sarah Tracy faced serious obstacles in her quest to keep Mount Vernon safe from harm. Fortunately, she wrote about many of her adventures in regular letters she loyally penned to keep the Association informed of events. Details of her crossing army lines and convincing officers to let her pass or escort her to the next company of soldiers are inspiring. It is because of Tracy and Herbert that George Washington’s house remained unsnatched, keeping the spirit of George Washington alive, even during the darkest of hours. In addition to the happy ending for Mount Vernon, there is a happy ending to the story of Sarah Tracy and Upton Herbert. The couple wed in 1872 after they both resigned their posts at Mount Vernon.
This information is provided courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association and we are grateful for their contribution to our newsletter.