

## NEWSLETTER



### Thomas Jefferson Page, a Confederate veteran in Florence and Rome

In a small ceremony last September we celebrated the restoration of the family tomb of Thomas Jefferson Page (1808-1899; Zona 1.12.22). He was a grandson of Thomas Nelson Jr., signatory of the American Declaration of Independence in 1776, and of John Page, a minor figure in the Revolution and a friend of Thomas Jefferson. His name is known also in Argentina for the maps of the local river-systems that he made for the US Navy in the 1850s. On the outbreak of the Civil War, Page joined the Confederate Navy and eventually crossed the Atlantic to Bordeaux to take command of the CSS *Stonewall*, an ironclad monitor which the Confederates had secretly purchased. Closely tracked by the Unionists, the ship that he commanded reached American waters just as the war ended. Page docked the *Stonewall* in Havana to avoid surrendering it to the Unionists.



Thomas Jefferson Page

With the Confederates defeated, Page left the United States, returning with two of his sons to Argentina. Wanting to commission gunboats for its own navy, the government sent him to Europe where he spent the rest of his life, moving between England, France and Italy while he represented the Argentine navy. It is in Florence that we first find traces of the Page family. Page's oldest son, Tom, had been badly wounded when fighting for General Robert E. Lee in the Atlanta campaign, but had managed to escape on a ship to Italy, where he died in Florence in 1864. His sister Mary also died there in 1871 aged only 22. Both were buried in the "English cemetery", but in 1975 were transferred to the family tomb in Rome - the freestanding marble column on the left commemorates them.

Their father, the naval commander, was living in Florence in 1889, by now an old man who had gone completely blind. But when he died ten years later, it was in Rome at his son George's house at

Lungotevere Mellini, 10. George was a director of the Banca Commerciale in Rome and it was probably he who commissioned the family tomb. His father was buried there, followed only a few years later by his mother Benjamina and his sister Elizabeth (Lily) who was the widow of an Italian marquis, Giulio Spinola. There lie also George himself, his wife Maria Luisa and their son George Nelson Page (1906-1982), a journalist who in the 1960s introduced to Italy American-style journalism in the weekly *Lo Specchio*. George Nelson Page was born in Rome an American citizen, and entitled his memoirs *L'Americano di Roma*.

The central feature of the Page family-tomb is a striking Art Nouveau-style figure of a woman who holds a wreath while standing in front of a sarcophagus and obelisk. Its designer was the Italian sculptor Ettore Ximenes (1855-1926). Among his best-known works in Rome are: the



Page tomb before restoration



Photo: G. Malorgio

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statue to 'Ciceruacchio' (1907) which was re-located to the Janiculum for the Risorgimento commemoration a couple of years ago; the marble group representing Law on the Victor Emmanuel monument (1908), and the Quadriga on the Palace of Justice (1911); and elsewhere in Italy the statues of Garibaldi at Pesaro and Milan and the monument to Verdi at Parma. His house-studio, the Villa Ximenes, is one of the Art Nouveau jewels of Rome.

The monument was the object of scientific analyses in 2008 (see *Newsletter* 7) and was in poor

condition. Atmospheric and biological pollution had obscured the colour difference between the white Carrara marble of the female figure and the grey Bardiglio of the obelisk.

This difficult restoration was entrusted to Gianfranco Malorgio and Sara Toscan of Il Laboratorio s.a.s. and was funded by the Sons of Confederate Veterans. Generous contributions from their chapters in Spain, Germany and the USA, all co-ordinated by Chris McLarren in Berlin, covered fully the project costs. On September 8 we celebrated its successful outcome with a short ceremony in the chapel and at the graveside.

As with the Ceccarini tomb (*Newsletter* 14), it is thanks to generous external funding, raised only after sustained effort, that the Cemetery can undertake these larger projects. But the results speak for themselves in the form of beautiful and more legible monuments, which therefore play more effectively the role of commemoration for which they were designed.

### ...and the story of Mrs Page's passport

It was to Florence that the Pages first moved from the United States. But a story set in Rome in 1862 or 1863 seems to be about Thomas Jefferson Page Sr's wife Benjamina. The journalist and artist William J. Stillman found himself posted to Rome as American consul in 1861. The post carried no salary; his main income came from fees that he levied on the issue of new passports to Americans resident in Italy. The Unionist government had cancelled all existing passports. Anyone requesting a new one had to take an oath of allegiance to the Union; and Americans could not leave papal Rome without a valid passport and exit visa.

Stillman, in his *Autobiography of a journalist* (1901) writes: "I was continually at war with the Confederate Americans, galled to extreme bitterness by the right I had of compelling them to take the oath of allegiance before renewing their passports. Amongst

them was a very beautiful woman, a Virginian, and the wife of a commodore in the navy of the United States of America, then on service in the Potomac. She refused to take the oath, and insulted me in the grossest manner and in public, as an insulter of ladies, etc., etc. But all the influence she could bring to bear could not get her passport from the police without my visa; and at last, despairing of escape from Rome, she came to make her peace, meeting me at the bank, but unwilling to accept the degradation of coming to the consulate. "You are not going to make me come to your dirty little consulate, are you?" she said; to which I replied, "Oh, no; my secretary shall administer the oath to you in your bedroom, if you choose;" but, in the end, she had to take the oath and sign it, as did many of her compatriots."

Nicholas Stanley-Price



### A Protestant burial in Rome in 1720

Professor Corp's research has established that Pope Clement XI allowed Protestants who died in Rome to be buried near the Pyramid (see *Newsletter* 21). The first one was Dr Arthur in 1716. After the arrival in Rome in 1718 of the Stuart Court in exile, people were waiting to see whether the Pope would allow another Protestant burial service to be held in public.

The moment came, writes Professor Corp, in 1723 when an unnamed English Protestant visitor was given a Protestant funeral service and burial, followed in the same year by two Protestant Jacobites.

However a report has come to light of an earlier burial, in 1720, of a visiting English Protestant. In *The Original Weekly Journal's* issue dated Saturday May 20, 1720, we read: "We have an Account from Rome, that the Corpse of the eldest Son of Sir John Pakington, Bart, was interr'd in Consecrated Ground there, and the Office of Burial was read by a Regular Clergyman of the Church of England, being attended by 15 coaches." Clearly it was a Protestant (Church of England) ceremony; the mention of "consecrated ground" probably refers to the ground allocated for the Pope for such burials. Significantly, the two Jacobites who died in 1723 were "buried beside the sepulchral Pyramid of Cajus Cestius, a place designated to be the graveyard of the English". So it had already acquired this status by 1723.

Sir John Pakington, fourth baronet (1671-1727) was a landowner in Worcestershire and a Member of Parliament. Of the four sons and three daughters from his first marriage, all but one daughter died before him. His eldest son, Thomas, was reported in April 1720 to be desperately ill of a fever in Rome, and he died the following month. He was thus one of the first Protestants buried in Rome with a funeral led by an Anglican clergyman.

The report in the *Weekly Journal* was spotted by Nicholas Steward of Salem, Massachusetts. I am grateful to him for this and other references, and to Stuart Handley for confirming the date of Pakington's death.

NSP

### Edvard Munch in Rome in 1927

In this year, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth, we record a visit to the Cemetery in 1927 by Edvard Munch, Norway's most famous painter. While there he painted the grave of his uncle, Norway's great historian P.A. Munch (see *Newsletter* 19). We reproduce it here thanks to the Munch Museum in Oslo with the help of Viviana Eriksen of the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Rome.



Edvard Munch, *P.A. Munch's grave in Rome (1927)*, Munch Museum, Oslo

## Who was “The Baby”?

If from the main entrance you head towards the large, square Andersen tomb, your eye will be caught by the sculpture of a child asleep on steps at the foot of a cross (Zona 1.4.6). Despite its immense human appeal, this sculpture has become an orphan – it has been moved more than once and has no name associated with it. When Sebastian Rahtz led the invaluable survey in 1984-86 of all the graves then existing (the Graves Database), he noted that it had been relocated several times. In 1987 it was reported to lie among the dismantled gravestones in the Zona Terza lapidarium.

On the home-page of the database, Rahtz posted a record photo of the anonymous sculpture under the caption “The Baby”. The one reproduced here shows his own daughter Matilde with the Baby. But, assuming the Baby under a cross once formed part of a grave memorial, to whom was it dedicated? I suggest that it formed part of the tomb of a young girl who died in 1850, named Kythe Jemima Watts-Russell.



“The Baby” with Matilde Rahtz (1994)

One of S.W. Fullom’s many books was *Rome under Pius IX* (1864). He writes that the Cemetery was one of the first places he visited in Rome. He was delighted with its peaceful beauty but less impressed with its tombs: “The monuments do not improve on closer observation, and are generally below what we expect, though two or three reveal the finger of art, and remind us we are on charmed ground.” Among those he does approve of is one that “... represents a sleeping infant, under a cross, and is also of white marble, beautifully and touchingly executed. It is dedicated to

Margaret, daughter of Robert Lloyd Jones-Russell.”

There is no Jones-Russell in either the Burials Database (the Cemetery’s own records) or the Graves Database. But in the handwritten chronological register of burials, there appears the entry: “Russell, Kythe Jemima Watts. (Age) 13. (Died) 29 October 1850. Inglese. Zona 1.5.3. Esumata.” Furthermore, attached to the wall of the lapidarium area in the Zona Terza is a memorial plaque (see photo) to Kythe Watts Russell, born October 31 1837, died October



“The Baby”  
(date, location and photographer unknown)

29 1850. The inscription reads “So soon passed she away and was gone”.

This new evidence suggests that Fullom copied incorrectly the name on the grave, while giving us sufficient clues to identify The Baby. It seems that the burial was exhumed and the tomb dismantled, with its components being transferred to the lapidarium. In response to complaints about its removal, the sculpture was returned to the Zona Prima not far from the original grave location (Zona 1.5.3) where other adjacent burials also date from 1850.



The plaque to Kythe Watts-Russell

Kythe, who died just before her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, was the daughter of Jesse David Watts-Russell, (1812-1879) who was for six years Member of Parliament for North Staffordshire in England. We do not know why she – one of four sisters – was in Rome, but her death and burial in the Cemetery were and are, once again, commemorated.

NSP



## The T.E. Lawrence story – a descendant makes contact

The story about the two pilots who lost their lives when their aircraft carrying T.E. Lawrence crashed near Rome (*Newsletter* 5, Autumn 2008) has attracted a lot of interest. It was reprinted in the *Newsletter* of the T.E. Lawrence Society and articles appeared in *The Times* and in *La Repubblica*. At the time we hoped that the publicity might lead to descendants of the two pilots, 2/Lt Frederick Prince and 2/Lt Sidney Spratt, making contact with us. This has now happened. Stephen Goodman in London was researching his family history when he came across the *Times* article reproduced on the website “PIREP, the aviation forum run by pilots for pilots”. Frederick Prince was the brother of his greatgrandmother. Stephen is now hoping to come to Rome to visit his grave.



Headstone of 2/Lt Frederick Prince



## WHO THEY WERE...

### Nathaniel Cobb (1879-1932)

Nathaniel Cobb was born in Danville, Vermont in 1879, the youngest of eight children. He was a descendant of Henry Cobb who was born in Kent, England, in 1596, sailed to America in 1629 and founded Barnstable, Massachusetts, on Cape Cod. Cobb's childhood was spent on a farm in northeastern Vermont and he attended St. Johnsbury Academy which had been established by the Fairbanks family to provide religious training and education for their own children. The Fairbanks brothers invented the platform scale and the success of that product enabled them to spread their wealth upon their community. Cobb had an early talent for drawing and when he could not find courses that challenged his ability, the Fairbanks family enabled him to attend The Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut, that had been founded with the objective of preparing young men for Yale University.

While at Yale as a member of the class of 1903, Cobb made two friends who had significant influence on his life. Serving as a tutor he befriended classmate Stephen Clark, the grandson of Edward C. Clark who, with Isaac Singer, formed the Singer Sewing Machine company in 1851. That invention transformed the manner in which clothing was produced and created a fortune for the owners of the company. Louis How, also an heir to great wealth, encouraged Cobb to leave Yale and go to Paris where he would have greater opportunity to pursue his love for art.



The Shen-Kan expedition party  
(Smithsonian Institution # SIA2008-3140)

Cobb's reputation as an accomplished artist grew during his early time in Europe. His college friend, Stephen Clark, had an older brother Robert Sterling Clark who graduated from Yale in 1899. In 1908 he organized a scientific expedition to northern China for the purpose of creating a detailed geographical survey of the area, and Cobb was invited to participate in the expedition. The members of the team (from right to left in the photo) were: Captain H.E.M. Douglas, doctor and meteorologist; George A. Grant, interpreter

and general manager; Nathaniel H. Cobb, artist; Robert Sterling Clark, leader; and Arthur de Carle Sowerby, naturalist.

The expedition was co-ordinated with the Smithsonian Institution and in 1912 Sowerby and Clark published a comprehensive book on the expedition entitled *Through Shen-kan: the Clark Expedition of 1908/9*. Many of the artifacts from the expedition are in the collections of the Smithsonian. After the China Expedition, Cobb and his sister Caroline settled in Rome where he maintained a studio at Via Margutta, 33. His skill in painting personal portraits provided a steady income and enabled them to travel extensively throughout Europe.

The painting shown here, entitled *Peace*, is now displayed in the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum in the town near his birthplace. It shows a mother, dressed in ancient Roman attire, and her young son looking out onto a desolate, ruined city. The absence of a male figure adds to the work's doleful tenor. Painted in the aftermath of World War I, the scene embodies the destruction and loss that war leaves in its wake.



Nathaniel Cobb, *Peace*, 1920,  
St. Johnsbury Athenaeum

It has been said that Cobb was quite an obscure painter, always being more thoughtful of work than of reward. He was represented in occasional exhibitions on the Continent, yet his work was little known in America. He exhibited in New York City in 1916, in St. Louis in 1930 and in Winter Park, Florida, in 1931. After his death in 1932, a memorial exhibition was held at Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts in Syracuse, New York. His lifetime friend, Louis How, was instrumental in arranging this memorial, where most of the 89 works on exhibit were loaned by the owners.

My grandparents were Julius Batchelder and Lizzie Cobb, the oldest sister of Nathaniel Cobb. They both died when I was an infant, and I never learned much about my great-uncle, the artist, until much later in life. The family of Nathaniel and Caroline Cobb are deeply grateful that the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome has become their final resting place. I have visited the Cemetery three times and am always overcome by the peace and serenity of that special place.

Contributed by Manse Batchelder of Atlanta, Georgia

#### HOW TO BECOME A FRIEND

This Newsletter is made possible by the contributions of the Friends of the Cemetery.

The Friends also help fund the care of the trees in the cemetery and the restoration of tombs. Please can you help us by becoming a Friend? You can find a membership form at:

[www.cemeteryrome.it](http://www.cemeteryrome.it)

#### THE NON-CATHOLIC CEMETERY IN ROME

via Caio Cestio, 6, 00153, Roma

Director: Amanda Thursfield

#### OPENING HOURS

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of the Friends of the Non-Catholic  
Cemetery in Rome

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