

# PASS CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## JULY-AUGUST 2018 NEWSLETTER

www.passhistory.org • facebook.com/passhistory • Society Building 201 East Scenic Drive, Pass Christian MS 39571

228-452-7254 • info@passhistory.org • passchristian.wordpress.com • Building hours: Saturday 11am-1pm

*Dear Members and Friends,*

Dedicated volunteers continue to arrange for our building to be open Saturdays 11:00 AM-1:00 PM. If there are those who would like to help with this project, please call the Society (228-452-7254) and let us know. We would like to have the building open on Fridays also and multiple volunteers would make that possible.

While our monthly General Membership meetings are not held during the summer, our monthly Luncheons continue to provide an opportunity to visit with friends, enjoy interesting programs and catch up on Society activities. Thanks to Clayton Hardy and Alice Perrier for delicious luncheon food and to our Program Chairperson, Wendy Allard, for arranging interesting and informative programs. Please note the upcoming programs in the "Events" section below and make your reservations to attend.

*The Board of Trustees*

**Are you receiving emails from the Pass Christian Historical Society?**

**We emailed this newsletter on Friday, July 20. If you did not receive it, and would like to be on our email list, please email us at [info@passhistory.org](mailto:info@passhistory.org) so we can update our records.**

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**Monday, July 23, 12pm: Luncheon. "Truman's Decision to Drop the Atomic Bombs on Japan."**



Speaker Horace "Topper" Thompson will present a slideshow as he delves into President Truman's decision-making process ahead of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

The cost for lunch is \$10 for members and \$12 for non-members. To reserve your spot, 228-452-7254 or email [president@passhistory.org](mailto:president@passhistory.org). Please reserve by July 20 at 3 p.m.

**Monday, Aug. 27, 12pm: Luncheon. "The Historical and Current Status of the LaPointe-Krebs House."**



Built in 1757 in Pascagoula, the LaPointe-Krebs house is the oldest structure in Mississippi. Speaker MC Wixon will discuss the property from prehistoric times up to the current day, including its archaeology, agriculture, restoration and even a little genealogy.

Cost for lunch is \$10 for members, \$12 non-members. To reserve, call or email by Aug. 24 at 3 p.m.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

**Monday, Sept. 10, 7pm: September Membership Meeting.** "The Artist William Woodward—his Gulf Coast Years." Speaker Dr. Judith Bonner.

**Monday, Sept. 24, 12pm: Luncheon.** Speaker To Be Announced (TBA)

**Monday, Oct. 8, 7pm: October Membership Meeting.** Speaker TBA

**Monday, Oct. 22, 12pm: Luncheon.** Speaker TBA.

**Monday, Nov. 12, 7pm: Membership Meeting and Annual Meeting.** Speaker TBA

**Monday, Dec. 3: Annual Christmas Party**

*Thank you to program chairperson Wendy Allard for the great speakers she brings us every month!*

# Field of Honor: Another Look at the Cuddy-Estlin Duel

By Becky Orfila

On a spring day in 1856, two men from New Orleans stood on the field of honor underneath Pass Christian's "dueling oaks" near Live Oak Cemetery. Michael Cuddy, 42, and Robert Estlin, 41, faced off with guns in a duel that stands out prominently in the history of Pass Christian.

The May 22, 1856, conflict is generally thought to be over a lady. As the old tale goes, Estlin insulted an unnamed young lady or debutante at a party in New Orleans. In her defense, Cuddy challenged Estlin to a duel.

The *Times Picayune* of May 23 reported that the principals met in Pass Christian and fought with pistols. Cuddy died, and Estlin was wounded.

The differences in personality between the two men were marked. Estlin was a frequent participant in duels up and down the Mississippi River and the focus of several lawsuits and business setbacks. Cuddy was described by newspapers as a modest, cordial man. Born in Ireland, he was becoming well known as a cotton factor\* in New Orleans at the time of his death.

Per the Baton Rouge *Daily Advocate* of May 23, Cuddy was "temporarily" buried in Live Oak Cemetery in a donated gravesite. Thomas Kershaw, a planter from Issaquena County, provided the grave for Cuddy and erected a statuesque family marker engraved with the duelist's name. (Note: Ground-penetrating radar studies conducted by the University of Southern Mississippi Gulf Coast's

Geography Department in 2013 show that the plot identified as Cuddy's returned no subsurface disturbance readings and no confirmation of an *in situ* burial.)

Estlin returned to New Orleans and in 1875 was removed from his position as a United States Commissioner. He defended his practice of extracting \$5 fees from each person posting bail because "it was the custom of commissioners to do so." Circumstances continued to erode until Estlin committed suicide in 1876 by jumping off a ferry. Advertisements were posted in the *Times-Picayune* offering a reward for the recovery of his body.

Thomas Kershaw, Cuddy's posthumous benefactor, was the father of four girls. Is it possible that Cuddy was defending the reputation of one of *Kershaw's* daughters? At the time of the duel, the oldest Kershaw daughter was Annie, age 15.

Annie Kershaw was educated in France and Italy. It was during that period she met Count Frederick Oliver Raimond de Montaignu of France. The Count held an impressive title, but no royal bounty. The couple married at her father's home. The Dec. 4, 1862, marriage ended in July of 1863, when the Count succumbed to illness.

In a 1903 interview with the Gulfport *Daily Herald*, Countess Anna Kershaw Montaignu recalled that men from New Orleans came to Pass Christian to fight duels. She did not mention the Cuddy-Estlin



*The Cuddy marker in Live Oak Cemetery*

duel, or any knowledge of the two men.

In conclusion, the familiar reason for a duel - for the honor of a lady - is poorly supported by evidence presented in period newspapers. As reported, Estlin was a hothead and prone to arguments and armed clashes. Lastly, three well-known newspapers reported that the duel was based on business matters and Estlin's insult.

*Becky Orfila is an avocational public historian with particular interest in local cemeteries and their residents, and unusual or forgotten history.*

*\* A factor was a businessman who served as an agent between the planter and the cotton purchaser. The results of these negotiations could and did affect the price of cotton. This may have been a serious issue between Cuddy and Estlin.*