

The next addition to Maple Hill was the substantial gift of Albert Russel Erskine. This was a complicated set of transactions which involved the City Cemetery Commission of Huntsville, which was created on September 7, 1922, to receive gifts of property for the cemetery, as well as to administer its growing development.²⁰ Probably prompted by his mother's death in 1915, Albert Russel Erskine, the great-grandson of Colonel Albert Russel and the grandson of Dr. Alexander Erskine, began to acquire a significant parcel of land to surround a handsome mausoleum which would contain the remains of his parents, William Michael Erskine (1847-1897) and his wife, Ursula Ragland (1850-1915) as well as Mr. Erskine (1871-1933) and his wife, Annie Lyell Erskine. Albert Russel Erskine had achieved international prominence in the automobile world as the president of the Studebaker Corporation as well as the one-time presidency of the Pierce-Arrow Corporation.

At the east end of the Bernstein Addition of 1881, Mr. Erskine began to acquire a large tract of land from the Chapman-Lee Addition of 1888. Beginning on February 12, 1916, through May of that year, Mr. Erskine acquired Lots 1-9 of Block 1.²¹ He deeded this property to the Cemetery Commission as the 1918 Erskine Addition to Maple Hill.²² The Cemetery Commission then deeded back a circular plot of ground, approximately 60 feet in diameter, where the mausoleum was built. Then on September 27, 1922, Mr. and Mrs. Erskine deeded all of the property, except the mausoleum and several plots to the south, reserved as gifts, to the City.²³

Thus, with a new entry to the cemetery constructed in 1916, a wide street continued eastward to the imposing Erskine Mausoleum and its twin circles. In 1920 three additional properties were purchased by the Cemetery Commission to complete the eastern portion of the Erskine Addition. This property, called the Church Addition, also part of the Chapman-Lee Addition, extended the Erskine gift to Wells Avenue with the exception of a small Cumberland Presbyterian Church which was later acquired by the City in 1936.²⁴

Maple Hill took its present form with the addition of the James B. Stevens property in 1924. On March 20, the Commission purchased 59 acres from Mr. Stevens and his wife, Elise Donegan Stevens, for \$12,000.²⁵ This purchase more than tripled the cemetery holdings. The deed is entitled "War Deed" due to the desire of the city to dedicate a portion of the new area for a military section to honor veterans of World War I. However, no action was taken on this until 1947 and after another World War.²⁶

With this major expansion, the Cemetery Commission was abolished by the City Council in 1930. In a deed of conveyance dated April 30, 1930, the Commission returned to the city its holdings. Included in the deed were the following properties:

The James B. White Property; Maple Hill Cemetery as received by the Commission; the Church Addition comprising Lots 10, 11 and 14 of Block 1 of the Chapman-Lee Addition; the Stevens Addition; and the Erskine Addition less the Mausoleum area.²⁷

Thus, Maple Hill Cemetery took its present shape over one hundred and eight years. Without adequate records, it is impossible to estimate the number of burials, but it is believed the number is more than 100,000.

On April 8, 1995, the Alabama Historical Commission held an important meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, to discuss the role of cemeteries in our history. Dr. Gregory Jeane of