

Today in Columbus History:

On November 4, 1853, an ad appeared in Daily Columbus Enquirer for "Muscogee Lodge No. 6 IO of OF" that mentioned G. E. Gager, N.G. George E. Gager was a Connecticut carpenter who came to Columbus in late 1850. The Muscogee Lodge No. 6 of the International Order of Odd Fellows was founded on November 17, 1843 and the anniversary was celebrated each year. The letters "N.G." after his name stood for Noble Grand, the presiding officer of the organization. He was active in this and many other social, political and business endeavors in Columbus over the next forty years.

Gager was the widower of Amelia Cherry Pease whom he married in Connecticut in May 1848. They had a child John Francis Gager in March 1849 but he died five months later. His mother Amelia followed in September of 1850. Gager left Connecticut soon after. He was in Columbus by October 26, 1850 when he appeared in the household of his brother-in-law, John W. Pease in the 1850 census. Pease was a successful bookseller in Columbus, having been here since 1843.

Gager's carpentry skills were recognized at the Muscogee and Russell Agricultural Fair in the category of Improvements in Mechanic Arts and Implements for his "ingeniously arranged carpenters tool chest" in November 1850.

Gager decided to try his hand as a merchant when he bought out the boot and shoe business of W. W. Robison in March 1854. He also decided to try another marriage, this time to Miss Virginia Salisbury, the only surviving sibling of William L. Salisbury in July 1854. Gager was secretary of the Columbus Guards that year, as well. The marriage worked out better than the shoes. Gager was out of the shoe business by the end of 1855.

In addition of business pursuits, Gager was becoming more politically active. He appeared in an announcement in 1856 as one of two secretaries of the Young Men's National Filmore Club. His brother-in-law, William Salisbury was on the executive committee. In addition to the national political activities, Gager ran for alderman of the 4th Ward of Columbus in December 1856 and won the seat. He returned to his carpentry roots as evidenced by his listing in the 1859 city directory.

Gager's mother moved to Columbus by 1860, when she was enumerated with her son and his wife. While no longer an alderman, he was the manager of elections for the 4th Ward in December 1862. His mother died in Columbus the next month and was buried in Linwood in January 1863. Gager was the manager of elections for the 4th Ward, again, in December 1864 and ran for alderman, again in December 1865 but lost.

Gager was "elected" by the city council to the post of city assessor (or appraiser) in 1866. He would hold position in 1868, 1875, 1876, 1877 and 1880, as well. Gager was known to have been a member of both Columbus Fire Company No.1 and the Columbus Guards in 1868. Tragedy also struck in July of that year when Gager lost his second wife Virginia. More on this shortly.

Gager went into the grocery business around 1870 and remained in that line for about twenty years. He sold out to alderman W. E. Marcrum in October 1890. The Columbus papers available through the Digital Library of Georgia end around this time leaving us to only imagine what Gager was up to afterwards.

He died in October 1897 and is buried in the Salisbury lot, along with his second wife's family. Here's where the story goes off the rails.

The lot contains an upright headstone with the name of Virginia Gager, died July 31, 1868, that also includes the name of Virginia's brother John Thomas Salisbury. John died in 1849 at age twelve. In researching this story, several anomalies arose about Virginia's grave.

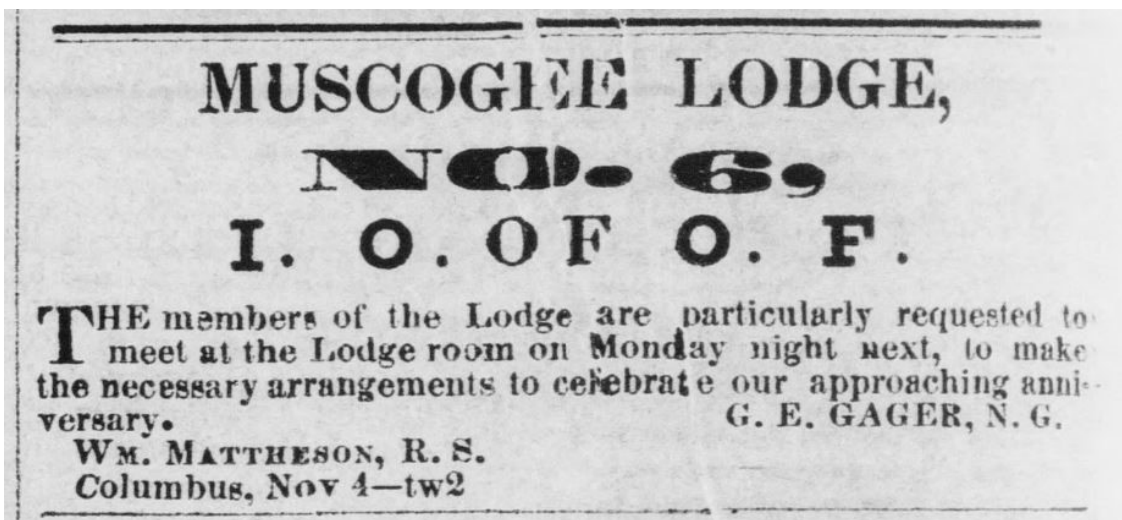
The Find A Grave memorial for Virginia lists her death date as 1865. However, a careful examination of the stone shows 1868. The Salisbury lot's page in Dolores Autry's book on Linwood burials does not list Virginia in that lot. Linwood Cemetery confirmed that their records do not show Virginia buried there. Apparently, her body is elsewhere. But where? The only Columbus newspaper in the Digital Library of Georgia for this time period is the Weekly Sun. It does not include an obituary for her in week after her death. The Genealogy Department at the Columbus Public Library was unable to find one in their collection of Columbus daily newspapers on microfilm.

She was the sister and wife of two aldermen and prominent businessmen in Columbus. She was born, raised and married here. What became of her? Was she drowned in the Chattahoochee and her body never recovered? Was she burned to ashes in a fire? If anyone has any knowledge of what happened to her, I would love to hear it.

Clipping from Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO).

Daniel A. Bellware

Our weekly snippets of Columbus history are usually based on a few days-worth of searching through the most popular sources for Muscogee County history. Meant to inspire readers to explore more about Columbus history, they are not exhaustive dissertations on the topic and may contain mistakes. If you have corrections or additional information, feel free to share them with the group.



Muscogee Lodge No. 6 was founded November 17, 1843. NG is Noble Grand or presiding officer.

Triweekly Times & Sentinel November 4, 1853, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>

BOOTS AND SHOES.

32 Broad street.



THE undersigned having purchased the entire stock of Boots and Shoes of Mr. W. W. ROBISON, will continue the business at the old place. I would respectfully solicit the continued patronage of his former customers and as many new ones as may please to favor me with a call, as I am determined to keep as good an assortment as can be found

G. E. GAGER.

Columbus, Ga., March 14, '54.

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Columbus Enquirer March 14, 1854, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>

NOTICE.

I have this day sold to W. E. Marcrum my grocery business, corner Tenth street and Sixth avenue, and bespeak for him the liberal patronage that has been bestowed upon me for the last twenty years.

G. E. GAGER.

Referring to the above, I beg leave to state to the public generally that I will continue to keep up the reputation earned by Mr. Gager, by keeping in stock the best of staple and fancy groceries, notions, wines, liquors, cigars and tobacco to be found in the Northern, Western and Eastern markets, and respectfully solicit the patronage of my friends and the public generally.

Goods delivered to any part of the city and suburbs promptly and without extra charge.

I take pleasure in stating that Mr. Charles Frederick will remain with me to welcome his many friends.

W. E. MARCRUM.

Oct 4, 90.

Columbus Enquirer-Sun October 5, 1890, <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>



G. E. Gager's grave at Linwood Cemetery (Photo: Daniel A. Bellware)



Virginia Salisbury Gager's monument at Linwood Cemetery (Photo: Daniel A. Bellware)