

John & Emma LeKies
Elmwood Cemetery
7th Alley East, Lots 22 & 24
(1840 – 1890) (1848 – 1914)



John B. LeKies was a French immigrant who arrived in Norfolk by way of Baltimore, Maryland in 1880. In Maryland, he met and married **Emma Jane Bowen** who was born in Maryland in 1848 and died in Norfolk on July 25, 1914.

Mr. LeKies was a lumber baron in business with Marilyn native, Samuel Quincy Collins. The two friends and business partners built identical homes in the Freemason district of Norfolk. The Collins house is on the south west corner of Bute and Botetourt Streets and the LeKies is at 419 Duke Street between Bute and Freemason Streets.

John LeKies died at age 51 leaving his wife, Emma, an estate estimated to be worth more than \$150,000, the bulk of which was her husband's interest in the LeKies and Collins Lumber Company. Emma commissioned John D. Couper of Couper Marble Works, to erect a mausoleum to entomb her husband. John D. Couper called on his son, William Couper, to design the great bronze doors and the ornamental bronze railings, gates and urns that adorn the mausoleum grounds. The mausoleum was completed in 1892. On the south side of the mausoleum is a stained glass window covered by a protective bronze screen. Louis Comfort Tiffany collaborated with William Couper on several projects so cemetery enthusiasts like to believe the window may be a Tiffany creation.

After Mr. LeKies's death, Emma became a local philanthropist. In memory of her late husband, she donated the organ and chimes for Epworth Methodist Church in Norfolk. Other charitable Norfolk establishments like the LeKies Memorial Church, the LeKies Home for Aged Colored People and Orphans and the LeKies Ward of the Norfolk Protestant Hospital also bore the LeKies name.

**Historical information courtesy of Mr. Tim Bonney*