

# The Ledger

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Bulletin of *The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative*



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## Editor’s Note

Welcome to the first issue of *The Ledger*, the online bulletin of The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative. Besides keeping readers up to date about news and events at Istanbul’s historic Protestant cemetery, *The Ledger* will present feature articles and research notes about the site. It seeks to expand on the Initiative’s recently published visitor’s guide and offer a continual medium to promote further study of the cemetery, its residents, related institutions, and other pertinent topics. Moreover, it intends to be a forum for communication, where views and ideas about the cemetery can be introduced and discussed. Public involvement is encouraged, and submissions, comments, and queries are welcome from all.

*The Ledger*’s debut also marks the recent authorization of the Initiative as advisory council to the cemetery’s diplomatic governing board. In February the board officially recognized the Initiative as its partner and consultant to help manage and care for the cemetery.

*The Ledger*’s name not only alludes to the cemetery’s oldest memorials in its most iconic space, the ledger stones of “Monument Row” (pictured above), but also reflects the bulletin’s chief aim, to serve as a record of “accounts,” past and present. The members of The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative hope you enjoy this inaugural issue of *The Ledger*, and we look forward to reporting to you regularly about the rich heritage site to which it is devoted.

**Brian Johnson**

## Before Kifidis, “Avellis”

“Kifidis” is a well-known name in Turkey. Founded in 1919, this major supplier of orthopedic and other health products claims to be the “first orthopedic firm established in Istanbul”—or at least (as it adds) the first “after the Hugo Avellis company that operated in the 1880s.” The earlier business, the Kifidis of its day, has been almost completely forgotten. Sébastien Ducongé brings it back to light in the following biographical sketch of its founder and namesake, who rests in the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery.

## Hugo Avellis: “C’est un brave homme”

### Sébastien Ducongé

Hugo Avellis (1855–1908) was born on 25 February 1855 in Wesel, in the northwest of Germany, where his parents, Jews from Silesia, had settled sometime earlier. He was educated in Berlin, first at a classical gymnasium and later (presumably) in the faculty of medicine at the city’s university. During the Russo-Turkish War (1877–8), he volunteered for the Red Cross as a surgeon, and though it is unclear on which side he served, he was apparently present at the bloody siege of Plevna in 1877.

Soon after the war, Avellis moved to Istanbul (1879–80), where he ran a shop that specialized in orthopedic and surgical equipment across from Galatasaray Lycée, on the city’s most important thoroughfare, the Grande rue de Péra. The store probably belonged to the well-known Italian Della Sudda family, which owned one of Istanbul’s foremost pharmaceutical firms. Though items imported from Europe were sold there, Avellis also manufactured and repaired medical instruments, billing himself as supplier and orthopedist for the Ottoman Empire’s army, imperial medical school, and hospitals.

During this time Avellis married Irma Nagy, a Hungarian Protestant, and the first of their four children was born in 1882, the same year he opened his own medical supply business. Located in the Grande rue de Péra’s Passage Oriental (today’s Şark Aynalı Pasajı on İstiklal Caddesi), the firm focused largely on production. Besides orthopedic and surgical implements, Avellis made items for

REVUE INDUSTRIELLE — PÉRA. 7

**MAISON SPÉCIALE**  
ORTHOPÉDIE — CHIRURGIE  
Grand'Rue de Péra, 210. (vis-à-vis Galata-Sérai).  
FOURNISSEUR & ORTHOPÉDISTE  
de l'Armée Impériale Ottomane, de l'École Impériale de Médecine  
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Typ. F. Leffler, Constantinople.

1. Advertisement for the shop Hugo Avellis managed for the Della Suddas (right)

2. Advertisement for his own medical supply house (far right)

REVUE INDUSTRIELLE — PÉRA. 36. C.

**HUGO AVELLIS**  
FABRICANT D'INSTRUMENTS.  
DE CHIRURGIE ET D'ORTHOPÉDIE

FOURNISSEUR ET ORTHOPÉDISTE  
DE L'ARMÉE IMPÉRIALE OTTOMANE, DE L'ÉCOLE IMPÉRIALE DE MÉDECINE  
ET DES HÔPITAUX.

FABRICATION ET RÉPARATION  
d'Instruments de Chirurgie, articles en Caoutchouc et Gutta-Percha,  
Percha, Bandages, Ceintures, Membres artificiels, Corsets  
orthopédiques, Appareils électro-médicaux.

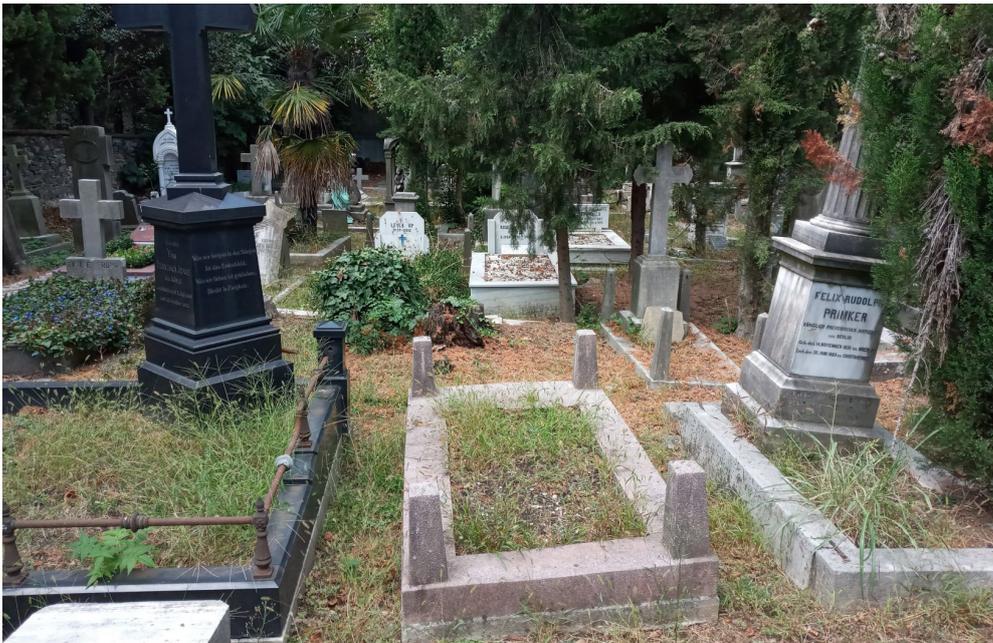
DÉPÔT DE PANSEMENTS DE LISTER.  
Application de Bandages  
et Membres artificiels tous les jours de 2 à 4 h. p. m.

**8, PASSAGE ORIENTAL,**  
GRANDE RUE DE PÉRA.

inoculation, including the smallpox vaccine offered by Dr. Jean-Baptiste Violi (d. 1928) at his celebrated private vaccination clinic also housed in Passage Oriental. Avellis was perhaps Istanbul's first modern medical supplier to produce a wide variety of equipment locally. In his book *Turkish Memories*, English journalist and writer Sidney Whitman, who knew Avellis personally, describes his friend's workplace:

I see him still . . . in his little shop, over the doorway of which a large signboard announced that he was "By Special Appointment Purveyor of Surgical Instruments to his Imperial Majesty the Sultan". . . . I follow Avellis upstairs into his old-fashioned, musty consulting-room, his sanctum—whither his patients of both sexes (veiled Turkish ladies with the rest) came to consult "Monsieur le Docteur"—with its mysterious bottles in which sundry medical viscera were preserved in spirits of wine, its cases of stuffed birds, and its aquarium. Two photographs of an Albanian peasant hung on the wall, one showing him deprived of his upper lip, the other with artificial nose and moustache supplied by Avellis by order of the Sultan. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Avellis was a polyglot who spoke Turkish, French, Russian, English, Romanian, Hungarian, and Greek. By Whitman's account, he had a keen mind and many interests and was also known for his compassion and generosity. Avellis's profession brought him into contact with all of late-nineteenth-century Istanbul's diverse communities, giving him exceptional knowledge of a broad spectrum of society. Moreover, he mingled with every class and rank, and Whitman was often amazed by the prominence of Avellis's acquaintances:



3. Avellis's unmarked gravesite in the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery

When driving or walking through the city on a Sunday afternoon with Avellis, it used to surprise me to see the number of people who returned his greeting. Among them were some of the highest personages in the land, and their marked cordiality was in striking contrast to the treatment usually meted out in Europe to those of an inferior class.

Sauntering along the Grand Rue de Pera with him one Sunday afternoon, we were passed by a State carriage, drawn by two magnificent black horses, with that rich gilt harness peculiar to the Imperial family. It contained the present Sultan of Turkey. . . . Avellis knew the Prince well. . . . Carried away by his admiration for the man, Avellis demonstratively took off his hat as the Prince drove past, who returned the unusual attention with evident satisfaction. . . .<sup>2</sup>

1 Sidney Whitman, *Turkish Memories* (New York 1914), 207.

2 Ibid., 207-8.



# Entwined Evangelical Establishments.

## The Chapel of the Palais de Suède in Istanbul and the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery

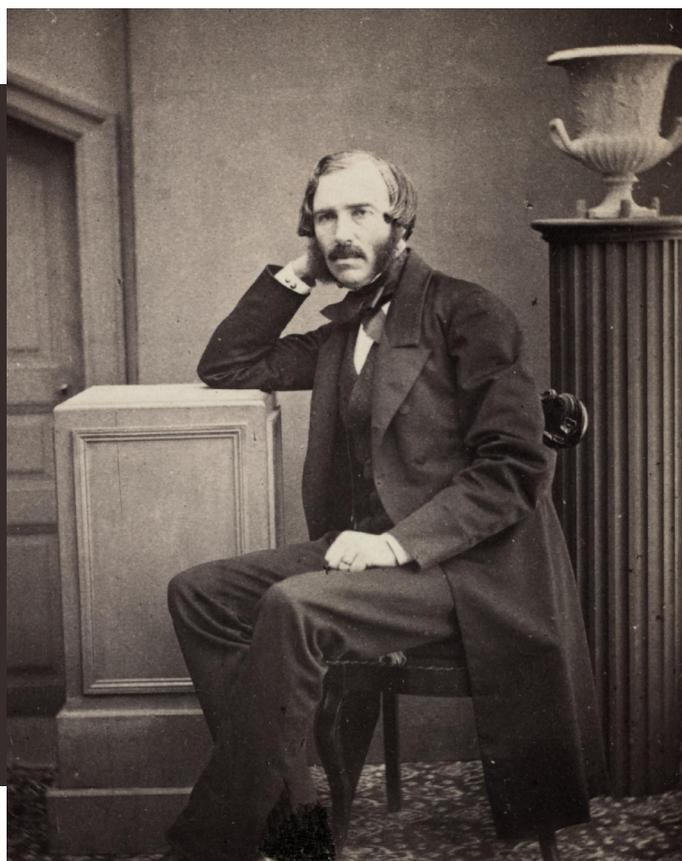
**F r e d e r i c k   W h i t l i n g**

The grounds of the Palais de Suède, the consulate general of Sweden and former Swedish legation in Istanbul's Beyoğlu (Pera) district, contain a modest chapel erected in 1858. This wooden building still stands, despite several local fires and attempts to sell or remove it in more recent times. The chapel provides a direct link with and a reminder of the religious background to the purchase of the property for the Swedish legation. It is also connected to the expansion of the foreign Protestant community in Constantinople in the period after the Crimean War, when the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery was also created.

The Palais de Suède, Sweden's oldest state-owned property abroad, was purchased in 1757 by the envoy Gustaf Celsing (1723–89), with funds collected in Sweden to erect a Protestant church in Constantinople as well as to free Evangelical (non-Catholic) Christians in Ottoman captivity. The property had an existing mansion, which became the first Palais de Suède, and a Protestant chapel was installed in the building to meet the religious requirements at least halfway. Yet, the palace succumbed to a fire in 1818, four years after the establishment of the personal union between the kingdoms of Sweden and Norway (1814–1905), and a replacement, the present Palais de Suède, was completed only in 1870.

In 1858, forty years after the fire of 1818, a wooden chapel was constructed on the legation property, in the lower garden. The erection of this timbered structure was initiated and overseen by the Swedish-Norwegian envoy Georg Christian Sibbern (1816–1901) during his brief, six-month tenure in Constantinople (June–December 1858), prior to his appointment as Norwegian prime minister (in Stockholm) in December 1858. Sibbern also set the wheels in motion for constructing a new main palace building (although it would take another two decades before it was completed) and administered repairs of other existing structures on the property.

1. Georg Christian Sibbern



The chapel, which can accommodate about seventy people, features Gothic-style windows, originally fitted with stained glass, as well as an apse and a small sacristy. Architecturally, it might be seen to represent a crossroads between Ottoman timber construction and mid-nineteenth century Scandinavian church designs with a Norwegian (or Swedish-Norwegian) component. The wooden chapel was partially protected by a stone wall at the end of the garden, and unlike most of the surrounding neighborhood, it rather remarkably survived various fires, not least the one in 1870 that nearly destroyed the new Palais de Suède.

The creation of the chapel in 1858 can be understood in the context of the Crimean War (1853–6) and its aftermath, which witnessed the establishment of new institutions for the burgeoning local foreign Protestant community, such as Christ Church (Crimean Memorial) and the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery. The Palais de Suède chapel served an immediate practical purpose, meeting the need for Protestant church services—in Swedish, Norwegian or German—for what Sibbern believed to be an increasing number of Swedish-Norwegian merchant seamen and other Scandinavian passers-by in the city in the wake of the war.



2. Exterior of the chapel of the Palais de Suède today

The construction of Christ Church, intended for the city’s Anglican community, also began in 1858. Its site, close to the Palais de Suède, was given to the British crown by Sultan Abdülmeçid as a token of thanks for Britain’s support in the war and as a memorial to its fallen soldiers. A year earlier, in 1857, the sultan had also donated land for a new cemetery to the joint Protestant political powers with representation in Constantinople: Sweden-Norway, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Prussia, Denmark, the federated cities of the Hanseatic League (which collapsed in 1862), and the USA. Located in the Feriköy district, next to the recently opened Roman Catholic cemetery, the Protestant cemetery replaced an earlier “Frankish” burial ground for European and other “Western” Christians (in the Grands Champs de Morts) near today’s Taksim Square, which was considered insufficient for present and future needs.

In October 1858, the same month in which Christ Church’s foundation stone was laid, Georg Christian Sibbern met with his Protestant diplomatic colleagues at the summer residence of the British ambassador Henry Lytton Bulwer (1801–72) in Tarabya, on the European shore of the Bosphorus, to discuss the organization and administration of the new Protestant cemetery at Feriköy. The burial

ground's division into separate sections based on the nationality of the deceased resulted in Sweden-Norway being awarded a common area, reflecting the two united kingdoms. Although this section was subsequently divided (probably later than the 1905 dissolution of the union between the two countries), the individual burials in place today physically represent the earlier political union. The cemetery officially opened in 1859. Graves and mortal remains were moved to Feriköy from the former burial ground at Taksim in 1863–4. Some of the graves transferred were those of the Swedish nobleman and poet Samuel Olof Tilas (1744–72) and the Swedish-Norwegian minister Uno von Troil (1788–1839) and his wife, Jacqueline, formerly Löwenhielm, née Gyldenstolpe (1797–1839).

Sibbern's Palais de Suède chapel profited from the resources of a mid-eighteenth-century fund for the benefit of Hungarian Protestants, which also supported the Lutheran church in Bucharest (in Ottoman Wallachia), with the Swedish envoy in Constantinople as a guarantor. Sibbern moreover possibly covered some of the construction costs himself. With the new chapel, the office of chaplain was reintroduced at the legation. Its first incumbent was the Norwegian Peter Blom (1828–1912), whom the envoy Oscar Magnus Björnstjerna (1819–1905) described as “a rather decent and intelligent man, with a young wife.”

Sibbern's successor as envoy, the Norwegian Peter Collett (1820–60), fell ill and passed away after only about a year in service, in the summer of 1860. His funeral was held in the Swedish-Norwegian chapel. Chaplain Peter Blom “delivered a lengthened address in the Norwegian language, which appeared sensibly to affect those of his compatriots who were present. Outside, a numerous infantry guard of honour lined the [Grande Rue de Péra] from the gate of the Legation to [James Missirie's] Hotel [the present Hıdivyal Palas on İstiklal Caddesi].” Collett's remains were then transferred to the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery for burial. The funeral procession was led by the British ambassador Henry Bulwer and his French colleague, Charles de La Valette (1806–81), followed by “one of the sultan's carriages” and “the whole diplomatic body, in full costume, and attended by their respective suites.” This assembly, in which Swedish decorations figured prominently, proceeded along the Grande Rue to “the cemetery at Ferikoui.” On arriving there, “the guard of honour of infantry of the Imperial Guard, which had marched at the head of the procession, formed in line on each side of the entrance, and presented arms as the body was carried in.” A short prayer preceded the lowering of the coffin into



3. Tombstone of Johan Linus Aspling, the last chaplain of the Swedish-Norwegian legation

the grave, ending the ceremony. According to the cemetery registry, Collett's remains were later removed and transported "to his fatherland."

Oscar Magnus Björnstjerna was keen to reclaim and, if possible, to increase Sweden's reputation as Protestant protector in Turkey, which involved early 1860s initiatives for the upkeep and vitality of the already by then seemingly slightly neglected Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, as well as revised regulations in 1868 (coincidentally the same year in which construction of Christ Church was completed). Printed copies of the new rules in French and English are preserved in the legation archives.

Nevertheless, chapel or no chapel, Swedish-Norwegian religious activity was soon on the wane, and the post of legation chaplain would shortly become vacant: its last incumbent was Johan Linus Aspling (1816(?)–79). The otherwise little-known Aspling succeeded the mariner missionary chaplain Per Johan Svärd (1845–1901), who was engaged for seamen missionary activities in 1869. After Svärd left Constantinople for a position in New York City in 1873, Aspling took over his task (1874), but fell ill on a return voyage from Sweden in 1879 and died in Constantinople. He was laid to rest at the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery.

4. Chapel interior, 1920s



A few years later, the chaplaincy was removed from the state budget, and the chapel at the Palais de Suède was instead used by a Greek Protestant congregation, probably linked to the Greek Evangelical Union, established in the early 1880s. During or after his visit to the Ottoman capital in 1885, Oscar II, king of Sweden-Norway, had allegedly given the Greeks permission to use the chapel. Services in Greek continued until at least the late 1970s: the longest continuous religious use since the property was purchased in the eighteenth century. The chapel subsequently served as an auditorium for the adjacent Swedish research institute. It was rented by the Evangelical Church of Finland after the turn of the millennium, and by the Korean Church of Jesus Christ between 2012 and 2015.

No longer in active use, the chapel's interior is now stripped to a bare minimum. Although the last religious tenant moved out several years ago, a modest gilded cross on the roof remains, a reminder of the chapel's early history, entwined with that of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery.

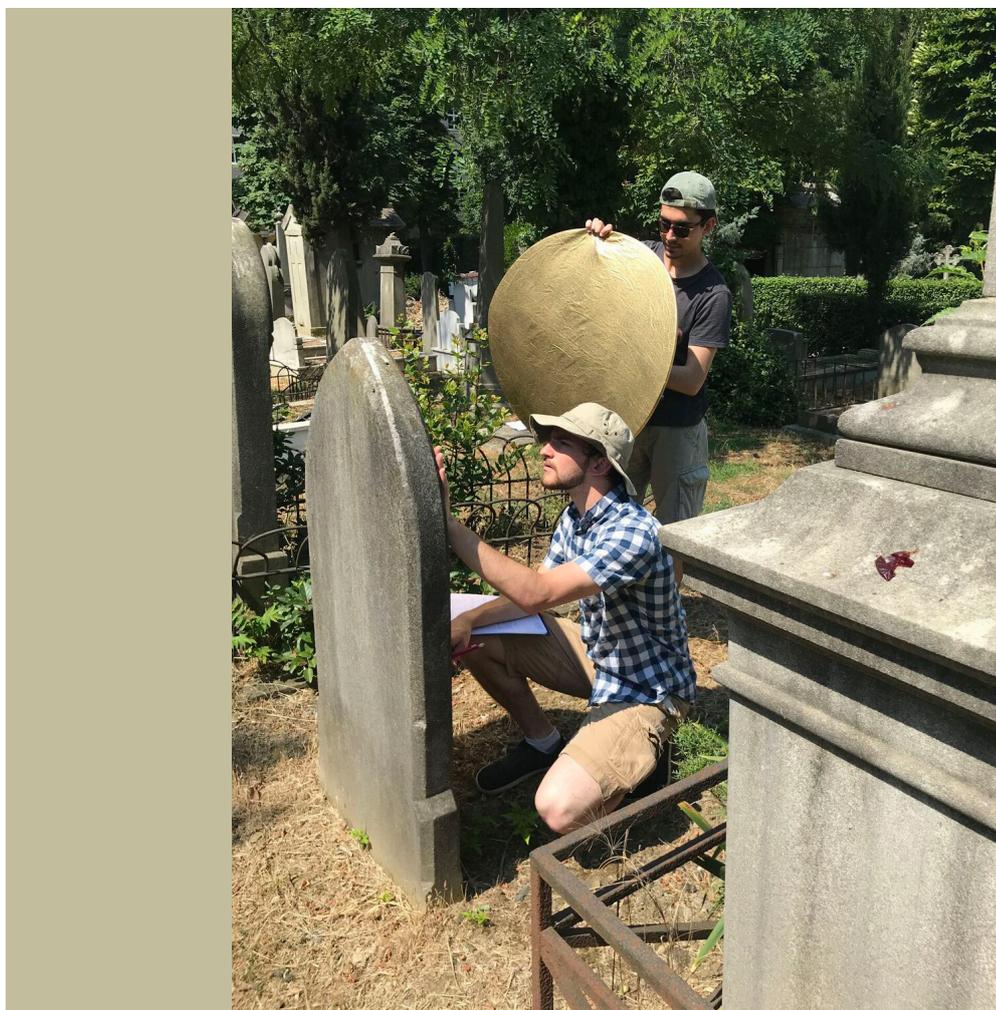
## Picture Credits

1. National Library of Norway
2. Erhan Arik, 2020
3. Frederick Whitling, 2020
4. Riksarkivet, Stockholm, Gustaf Oscar Wallenbergs arkiv, vol. 37c

**Frederick Whitling** ([Frederick.Whitling@alumni.eui.eu](mailto:Frederick.Whitling@alumni.eui.eu)) is an historian and a member of the collegium of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul and its program planning board. He is the author of a forthcoming history of the “Palais de Suède,” the present consulate general of Sweden in Istanbul. Research involving the former Swedish-Norwegian legation chapel, erected in 1858, inspired him to investigate connections with the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, founded in the same period.

## Cemetery Happenings

As a first step in the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery’s long-term preservation, The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative began to record the site in the summer of 2019. Student interns from the Initiative’s member institutes photographed monuments; documented their dimensions, composition, and condition; and entered the information into a database. By the end of the season about fifty percent of the work was finished, with the rest planned for completion the following summer. Unfortunately, the pandemic hindered efforts in 2020, and the task remains incomplete. Health conditions permitting, concerted fieldwork is expected to resume this June.



Student interns recording a gravestone, summer 2019

Despite cancellation of the 2020 summer recording program, Merve Köksal, a PhD student in art and design at Antalya's Akdeniz University and a visiting scholar at Orient-Institut Istanbul spent time in the cemetery last July and August sketching monuments and landscapes. Her depiction of Franz Carl Bomonti's tomb was published recently, as an illustration for an article about the cemetery in the 2020–1 issue of the *AGS Quarterly*, the bulletin of the Association of Gravestone Studies. Like many who visit the site, Merve became attached, remarking later, "I miss the serene atmosphere of the cemetery; I guess I got used to spending time there."

Though the pandemic hampered fieldwork in Feriköy, it allowed plenty of time for writing at home. In June 2020, the Initiative published a brief visitor's guide to the cemetery on its website. Authored by Initiative members Brian Johnson (ARIT) and Richard Wittmann (Orient-Institut Istanbul), the book was later translated into German and Turkish. A revised English e-edition was made available in March 2021 and an English print edition was published at the same time. Turkish and German print editions will be available soon. A presentation based on the book is planned for the 43<sup>rd</sup> annual conference of the Association of Gravestone Studies, to be held online in June.

Covid-19 did not deter special visits or customary events at the cemetery (though it demanded holding them in current "fashion"). In November 2020, Richard and Brian gave a private tour for Germany's newly appointed ambassador to Turkey and his wife, Mr. Jürgen Schulz and Mrs. Sheila Stanton. Besides covering the cemetery's history, the hour-long excursion focused on German and American burial sites and monuments. And on 15 March of this year, the annual day of remembrance for the Hungarian revolution of 1848–9, Hungary's consul general in Istanbul, Mr. László Keller, and his staff laid a wreath at the collective memorial for Hungarian revolutionaries buried there. Many of those who took part in the failed revolt against Hapsburg rule, including the renowned soldier Imre Csernátoni Cseh (d. 1882) and scholar Dániel Szilágyi (d.1885), found refuge in the Ottoman Empire, where they spent the remainder of their lives. They now rest in peace in Feriköy.



Drawing of a tombstone by  
Merve Köksal, 2021



Mr. László Keller and his staff in front of the Hungarian Memorial, 15 March 2021

One noteworthy private project in the cemetery during 2020 was the cleaning and resetting of the tomb of Benjamin Carn (d. 1943) and Helen Rawe (d. 1972). Undertaken at the request of a descendent in England, Mr. Timothy Rawe, it was carried out under the oversight of the American Research Institute in Turkey. Cleaning was done by Venizelos Gavrilakis of Ieri Parakatathiki Labs, a locally based restorer whose almost decade-long effort to preserve Greek Orthodox heritage in Istanbul was recently featured in the press. Straightening the monument and laying a new base was completed by Mermer İş, a Feriköy stone cutting company in business and working in neighborhood burial grounds for three generations, as affirmed by its slogan *Dededen Toruna*, “from grandfather to grandchild.” A new inscription was also carved on the tomb in memory of the first member of the family to reside in Istanbul, James Rawe, his wife, and one of his sons, who lie in the cemetery in unmarked graves. James, a shipbuilder and naval architect, arrived in Constantinople in the 1860s, served at the Ottoman arsenal in the 1880s and ‘90s, and died in 1917 while interned as a British subject during the First World War. *The Ledger* hopes to present his life story in a future issue.

Cleaning and straightening the Rawe tomb: before, during, after



Finally, this February, the cemetery's diplomatic governing board officially recognized The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative as its trusted partner and advisor for site administration and conservation. The Initiative looks forward to assisting the board with its management duties and other efforts and to working together to plan the cemetery's future both as an active burial ground and historic landmark.

## The Ledger: Bulletin of The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative

Brian Johnson, Editor

Murat Celep, Design

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*The Ledger* is published twice a year online by The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative. Written contributions are welcome. Queries should be addressed to the editor at: [bdjohnson62@gmail.com](mailto:bdjohnson62@gmail.com).

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Front page illustration: ledgers and sarcophagus covers in "Monument Row."  
Photo: Dick Osseman

Support for layout and design is provided by the American Research Institute in Turkey and web hosting by Orient-Institut Istanbul.

### A note on our logo

The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative's logo reproduces the design of the rose window on the facade of the cemetery's chapel, composed of trefoils and circles. These distinctive motifs evoke both religious and universal concepts, highlighting the cemetery's dual spiritual and secular dimensions and underscoring its function as an international burial ground not only for "Protestants" but also for foreigners of different backgrounds and persuasions, including agnostics and atheists. Besides representing the Christian Trinity, the trefoil is a common symbol of perpetuity, with the three lobes signifying past, present, and future. An emblem for God, the circle also invokes general notions of timelessness, infinity, and the endless cycle of life. For some, the three circles in the cusps of the largest (outer) trefoil—with winglike tracery on either side—might resemble cherubim, or souls reborn in heaven; for others, the same spheres simply appear as harmonious patterns in an aesthetically pleasing design. This inclusive, multilayered imagery embodies the Initiative's aim of safeguarding the historic role and heritage of the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery, in all its diversity and meaning.

Founded in 1859, the Feriköy Protestant Cemetery is the main burial ground for Istanbul's foreign Protestant and otherwise non-Catholic or Orthodox dead. It is managed by a governing board comprised of the consuls general of Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Hungary, Switzerland, and the USA.

The Feriköy Protestant Cemetery Initiative is a scholarly working group established in 2018 to document and preserve the Protestant cemetery at Feriköy as a heritage site. Affiliated with six Turkey-based international research centers (the American Research Institute in Turkey, the Netherlands Institute in Turkey, the Orient-Institut Istanbul, the Hungarian Cultural Center, the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, and the British Institute at Ankara), it serves as an advisory body to the cemetery's diplomatic governing board. For more information, please visit the Initiative's website: <http://www.ferikoycemetery.org>.



The Feriköy Protestant  
Cemetery Initiative