



## WHO IS THE FEMALE STRANGER?

The story of the Female Stranger has captured the attention of locals and visitors in Alexandria for over 200 years. While some claim she still haunts these halls, at its core, the legend revolves around the mystery of this woman's identity.

The story begins in the fall of 1816 when a gentleman and his sick female traveling companion arrived at the City Hotel. Here, at least one doctor and nurse attended to her; however, they were curiously sworn to secrecy regarding the identity of the sick woman. Finally, on October 14, she died, leaving the man heartbroken. He ordered a very fine, expensive table-top grave, then promptly left town without paying his bills.

The mystery of her identity has consumed generations and multiple theories have been suggested through the years. Some believe the lady was Aaron Burr's daughter Theodosia, who was lost at sea in early January 1813. To explain the two-year gap in time, some suggest she was kidnapped by pirates, held captive on a deserted island, and escaped only to die in Alexandria as the "Female Stranger." Another version suggests the couple was fleeing an accidental murder as they escaped the clutches of her elderly guardian. There is even a story involving two sets of orphans, a love triangle, and a kidnapping!

When there was discussion of tearing down these buildings in the 1920s, Alexandria residents argued Gadsby's Tavern should be saved and preserved due to its association with three people: George Washington, the marquis de Lafayette, and the Female Stranger. While we may never know the identity of the woman, she remains an important piece of the city's folklore.

You can find the exact location of her tombstone on Google Maps by searching Female Stranger if you would like to visit in person.



Photograph of the tombstone in St. Paul's Cemetery.