



SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Summer 2011 Newsletter

Photo-documentation of Headstones at Oakwood Cemetery Progressing by Leslie Wolfenden

I'm pleased to report that SAC volunteers have almost finished documenting Section 1 at Oakwood Cemetery. All that remains to be done in this section is the Old Grounds, which is being done by documentation experts Eva and Hal Mohrlök. The Old Grounds are particularly tricky to document as it is not on a grid system and many of the family lots are not labeled on the cemetery map. As Eva and Hal have accumulated extensive documentation experience, they valiantly volunteered to take on this more complex task.

We made a small dent in Section 2 before the sessions went on hiatus for the hot summer months. Many thanks to the terrific volunteers who

donated their time and efforts to Section 1, including Eva and Hal, Sunny Casarez, Charles Clinger, Laura Colwell, Dennis Darling and his son, Susan Ellis, Dale Flatt, Helen Fremin, Meg Frisbie, Andy and Jennifer Jones, Susan Lassell, Rose Matthews, Rosemarie Pavel, Beth Pickett, Kelley Russell, Owen Searfoss, Anne Shelton, Briana Smith, Beverly Soucy, Megan Spencer, Barbara Surles, Bob Ward, Roger Waguespack, Margaret Wardlaw, and Molly Wardlaw.



Guest Speaker Series: First Lady of Texas: Miss Ima Hogg by Leslie Wolfenden

Architect and preservationist Wayne Bell, FAIA, gave a terrific presentation on Miss Ima Hogg on June 25 at the Austin History Center as part of SAC's Guest Speaker Series. Titled **Miss Ima Hogg: First Lady of Texas**, Wayne shared his personal reminiscences about his decade-long friendship with Miss Ima, who was Governor Jim Hogg's daughter, philanthropist, patron of the arts, caring community leader, and long-time resident at Oakwood Cemetery. Wayne covered architectural topics of Winedale Historical Center, Bayou Bend Museum, Varner-Hogg Plantation, and the Governor's Mansion, as well as personal insights into Miss Ima including "carry the thought" and the Bayou Bender.

With over a half century career in preservation and architecture, Wayne attracted a crowd of some fifty people, including representatives from Bayou Bend House Museum in Houston, Friends of the Governor's Mansion, Heritage Society of Austin, Neill-Cochran House Museum, Austin History Center Association, Texas Historical Commission, Austin Genealogical Society, and architects. Wayne's career has encompassed the Texas Historical Commission, Texas Parks and Wildlife's Historic Sites & Restoration Division, UT's Preservation Program, Austin



Historic Landmark Commission, and Winedale Historical Center. He has received recognition from the American Institute of Architects, Preservation Texas, Texas Commission on the Arts, and was named Professor Emeritus at UT's School of Architecture. Wayne is thought by many as the father of Texas historic preservation. He credits Miss Ima as being an inspiration for how to enlist others to join in the charge and think positively to accomplish a vision.

This was a rare opportunity to have an uplifting glimpse into the personalities and philosophies of two Texas icons. Unfortunately for Texas, Wayne will be retiring in August and moving to Camas, Washington. Best of luck in your retirement, Wayne!

Guest Speaker Series: Jewish Death and Burial Customs by Megan Spencer

On Saturday, July 9, Congregation Beth Israel's Cemetery Committee Chairman Phil Baum repeated his excellent presentation on Jewish death and burial customs at the Austin History Center as part of SAC's Guest Speaker series. Phil described Jewish customs and funeral rites and related them to Biblical history and modern practice. One of the most interesting customs is *Shiva*, the seven days of intense mourning. In spite of the sorrow, visitors to a bereaved family's home during these seven days gather around platters of food to celebrate a long life or remember the loved one with affection and laughter. Friends bring gifts of food to sustain the family. In the orthodox tradition, close relatives of the deceased do not work, cook, or run errands. They go barefooted, refrain from showering and shaving, and do not wear fresh clothes. They sit in low chairs. Mirrors are covered and a candle burns around the clock. Friends gather to help the bereaved accept the death and resolve their grief. Other traditional elements include refrigeration of the body instead of embalming; a ritual washing by persons of the same gender as the deceased, which is followed by a dressing in a simple white shroud. Within eleven months after the burial, a grave marker or stone is dedicated.

The love and respect given to the deceased and the rituals surrounding the death remind us that death is a natural part of life and that living each day to the fullest and being present for one another is most important. Thank you, Phil, for your wonderful presentation.

City of Austin Cemetery Contract Update by Dale Flat

As many of you know, the City of Austin has, over the past year, been re-examining the cemetery maintenance contract between the Parks Department and the service provider, InterCare Corp. While a few people championed for the city canceling the current contract and putting the contract back out for open bid, the result of the review is a restated draft contract that more clearly defines responsibilities for the actions for which InterCare is responsible as well as things for which InterCare is not responsible. The City has also defined the allowance for the cost of water and has realized that a move away from St. Augustine grass to more drought tolerant grasses, such as Bermuda and Buffalo, will need to happen due to availability and cost of water. These actions are a positive move forward as the city realizes the cost of operating the five city cemeteries. To see a copy of the draft contract, go to the city web site at: [Draft Restated Agreement document](http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/document.cfm?id=155035). To read a briefing of the contract process, go to: <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/edims/document.cfm?id=155035>

On a disappointing note, even though the independent cemetery management study commissioned by the Parks Department and conducted by Dr. Longoria suggested that a Cemetery Advisory Committee should be established, the Parks Department has gone on record once again saying that they do not want to establish such a committee. There is some talk among us that perhaps we will approach the Parks Advisory board members as well as city council and see if we could become a sub-committee under their group.

Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Update by Leslie Wolfenden

On July 19, 2011, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) held its first public meeting for the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Rehabilitation project at the Carver Library. The meeting was to provide an opportunity for the public to provide feedback regarding this project. The City believes that its success depends on the support, assistance, advocacy, and enthusiasm of the public as stewards of their parks system. PAR encourages and seeks partnerships that allow community partners to raise funds and in-kind contributions to design and build park improvement projects at Austin parks and

facilities that are in alignment with PARD plans and strategic priorities. PARD recognizes the value of the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel and notes that the condition of the chapel has deteriorated and that restoring the chapel is in line with PARD's goals. SAC has presented a proposal to PARD to fund and implement a project to restore the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel.

After introductions and explanations by Brian Block, PARD's development administrator, Leslie Wolfenden, SAC president, gave a PowerPoint presentation on the chapel, which included photographs of existing conditions, historic and current architectural drawings, what progress has been made so far, and what structural and cosmetic issues need to be addressed on the building. This presentation is on the SAC website at www.sachome.org.

Leslie was followed by Ben Heimsath of Heimsath Architects who presented 3-D renderings of the exterior and interior of the chapel, showing what the chapel could look like after rehabilitation (the renderings can be seen on the SAC website). He also talked about the possible uses of the chapel, such as office space for cemetery contractor, receptions or small gatherings, meeting space for local groups, educational/interpretive uses, small musical performances, and congregational meetings or retreats. The cost estimate for the project is \$500,000.

The meeting wrapped up with a discussion session where the public was given the opportunity to voice input and concerns regarding the chapel project. One of the main concerns is that the use of the chapel by the public should be limited to appropriate uses for the chapel and the cemetery, and maintain respect for cemetery residents.

The public is encouraged to provide input and opinions to SAC at info@sachome.org or directly to PARD to Gilbert Hernandez at gilbert.hernandez@ci.austin.tx.us 512-974-6742 or Brian Block at brian.block@ci.austin.tx.us 512-974-6777. If you would like to be included on future communications on this project and have not already signed up for it, please let Leslie Wolfenden know of your wish to be included at info@sachome.org.

The next step in the chapel project is to get an official Parkland Improvement Agreement between PARD and SAC. Then SAC can start rustling up funding for the project.

If you would like to donate funds for this project, you can donate via

- the SAC website at www.sachome.org under the Donate tab,
- through the Austin Community Foundation website at <http://www.austincommunityfoundation.org/?nd=donate> under Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Fund or Save Austin's Cemeteries Fund.
- or send a check to Save Austin's Cemeteries, PO Box 16411, Austin, Texas 78761.

Book on Oakwood Cemetery Planned by Kay Boyd

A committee is studying the possibility of publishing a book on Oakwood Cemetery through Arcadia Press. Arcadia specializes in visual histories and this appears to be a format beneficial to Oakwood and all of the history it contains. If you are interested in working on this project or want more information, contact Kay Boyd at historian@sachome.org.

Free Genealogical Database by Kay Boyd

Looking for something to do in the hot weather? Stay home and try this free genealogical database <https://www.familysearch.org/> with ongoing new entries weekly. It includes genealogical data from around the world. Look at the "What's New" link every month or go to the list of countries and counties to begin your search. You will be surprised at what you may find: immigration information, Mexican church records, probate records, as well as Texas death certificates before 1976. If your family is not buried at Oakwood, the death certificates will state where and when they were buried. Of course, census records will tell you where they lived.

Have fun on the FamilySearch website (You will need to sign in, but there is no charge). If you have genealogy-related research questions, Kay will be happy to try and point you in the right direction. Contact her at historian@sachome.org.

Cemetery Symbolism by Sally Victor



Seen in both Christian and Jewish cemeteries, the dove is a symbol of resurrection, innocence and peace. An ascending dove, as pictured here, represents the transport of the departed's soul to heaven. A dove descending represents a descent from heaven, assurance of a safe passage. A dove lying dead symbolizes a life cut prematurely short. If the dove is holding an olive branch, it symbolizes that the soul has reached divine peace in heaven. This lovely monument at Austin's Oakwood Cemetery has a pair of doves for sisters Laura and Helene Buaas.

If your group is interested in learning about symbolism, please contact SAC to set up a presentation.

Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure Walking Tours

The fifth annual Murder, Mayhem and Misadventure Halloween Walking Tour is scheduled for Saturday, October 29 from 10:00am to 4:00pm at Oakwood Cemetery. This is the most popular SAC event of the year and we are looking forward to perfect weather and a great turnout. We will build on last year's success working with drama students from McCallum and Austin High, who will present the stories on location. Be sure to mark this date on your calendars! If you would like to volunteer, please let us know. We can use a hand with set-up and/or take down, staffing the information table, or docent duties.

<http://www.sachome.org/volunteer/volunteer.html>



SAC is on Facebook: 'Like' Us Today!

Some of you have already noticed that Save Austin's Cemeteries joined Facebook as a way to get our message out to other cemetery enthusiasts. It is a quick way to let our followers know about public cemetery meetings, SAC events, and other latest news. It also gives our followers the opportunity to let SAC know what matters to them, what they like, and to provide input.

SAC currently has 188 followers. Our followers tend to be aged between 25-45, which is a younger demographic than our regular Members. Our posts receive approximately 300-400 'impressions' each month with the more popular ones being SAC events.

SAC hopes that as time goes by, more people will become our followers and help spread the SAC mission of preserving historic cemeteries in Austin through documentation and education, and promoting them as cultural resources.

So if you are a Facebooker and haven't become an SAC follower yet, please go to our website at www.sachome.org and click on the Facebook button. SAC encourages our followers to 'like' the SAC postings in order to create more activity and get the word out there.

RIP Guardian Update from the Texas Historical Commission (Oakwood Cemetery is a RIP partner under SAC; due to the state budget cuts, the THC has experienced cuts throughout the agency)

As some of you know already, due to the state budget cuts, the THC has had to make some tough decisions about staffing, and as a result, my position as RIP Guardian Program Specialist has been cut. My last day with the THC will be August 12th. The RIP Network will remain, although it will change form because of these cutbacks. Anne Shelton will be in contact with you all soon to lay out the future of the network. The THC is still here and available to advise you all on issues with your sites, so please keep up your good work, and keep us informed.

It has been an honor working with all of you and seeing your dedication to your sites, I will miss visiting you, hearing about your hard work, and helping you with your preservation projects. Good luck, and I hope you will all stay dedicated! Anne will be contacting you soon in the early fall, but if you have any pressing issues, please contact her at anne.shelton@thc.state.tx.us, or 512-475-4506.

Regards,
Casey Gallagher

Casey, best of luck to you on your next venture and we appreciate your efforts for historic cemeteries in Texas!

New and Returning Members of SAC

As we wrap up the 2011 Membership Drive, we would like to thank new and returning members for their generous support of Save Austin's Cemeteries.

New Members

Jackie Caldcleough
Gwen Carter
Dennis Darling*
Meg Frisbie*
Dr. David Gracy II
Matty Greene*
H. W. Irby
Larry McGinnis
Jan Root
Suzie Salinas
Toni Silcox
Roger Waguespack
Floyd Ward
Margaret Wardlaw
Jacquie Wilson*
Christina Wilson*
John Wilson*

Renewing Members

Jo Peebles Adams
John Bormann
David Bowles
Kay Boyd
Agnes Buhl
Julie Byers
Danny Camacho
Edie Clark*
Pat Clark

Charles Clinger
Wallace Davenport
Melinda Ferrell
Sharon Gregory
Liz Hicks
Michael Holleran
Troy Johnson
Annette and Henry Lucksinger
Mary Lynn McDonald
Kim McKnight
Quita McMath
Terri Mirka
Eva & Hal Mohrlök
Larry Nale
Charles Page
Beth Pickett*
Anne Shelton
Barbara Surles
Margaret Taylor
Mary Thurston*
Bob Tieman
Sally Victor
Bob Ward
Alan & Kathleen Wolfenden
Leslie Wolfenden

Lifetime Members

Gene Bagwell (2006)
Dale Flatt (2005)

Terry Keel (2009)
Ida Miller (2010)
Christine Nalle (2006)
Connie Perdue (2006)
Ann Pieratt (2005)
Jim Ross (2009)
Suzanne 'Granma Suzy' Snyder (2006)
Megan Spencer (2011)
Anne Wheat (2008)

Jo Peebles Adams
Julie Byers
Jacqueline Caldcleugh
Wallace Davenport
Donna Flippin
Emily Little
Paul Sicard
Toni Silcox
Bob Tieman
Bob Ward

Donations

**indicates 2011 calendar photo winners who received a year's membership*

Upcoming Elections for Save Austin's Cemeteries' Officers

Mark your calendar for October 8th. It's an odd year! What does that mean? It is the year that we elect officers for Save Austin's Cemeteries. The present Board will offer a slate for officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. We will also present some changes to our by-laws that will need to be approved by the membership. The by-laws might not seem important, but they give the group guidelines to follow and stay on course.

You need to be a current member of Save Austin's Cemeteries in order to vote. If you're not sure you are up to date on your dues, please contact SAC at info@sachome.org.

Submit an Article to the SAC E-newsletter

If you would like to submit an article for the SAC e-newsletter, please send your article or idea to info@sachome.org.

Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events!

October 1	Photo Documentation Sessions resume after a hot summer 1:00 at Oakwood Cemetery
October 8	Elections and Volunteer Appreciation
October 29	5 th annual Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure Halloween Walking Tours 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Oakwood Cemetery

If you would like to stop receiving SAC emails, or if you have updated contact information, please respond or send an email to info@sachome.org.