



SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Winter 2012 Newsletter

Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

Beth Pickett, President
Kay Boyd, Vice President
Leslie Wolfenden, Secretary
Barbara Surles, Treasurer

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Six Degrees of Connection: Texas Heritage by Beth Pickett

We're super-excited to report that plans for Six Degrees of Connection: Texas Heritage event are zooming along. If you haven't heard, this is a new event that we're organizing to raise awareness of Austin and Texas history, as well as showcase beautiful Oakwood Cemetery and its historic chapel. The date is March 24 and it's cohosted by Save Austin's Cemeteries, City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department, the



German-Texan Heritage Society, the Heritage Society of Austin, the Neill-Cochran House Museum, and Preservation Texas. We're currently recruiting sponsors and seeking donations, both monetary and in-kind, so if you can help us out or know a company or individual who can, we'd very much appreciate hearing from you. Information on sponsorship will be available on the web page that we're setting up for the event: www.sachome.org/6degrees (Coming soon)!

Six Degrees of Connection: Texas Heritage will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. We'll have craft demonstrations, food and craft vendors, and exhibitors from history-minded organizations, as well as a lineup of impressive speakers who will give talks in the chapel. There will also be a demonstration of headstone cleaning. Also—this has just been added—we'll have actors in costume at various graves to bring the interred person's story to life, much as we've done for our Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure tours at Halloween. Yes, all of this in the cemetery! While our focus on this day will be Austin and Texas history, we're always eager to continue our mission of introducing Oakwood's rich history and fascinating stories. Make plans now to come to Oakwood on March 24th and join the experience!

Master Plan Presentation to Heritage Society of Austin by Leslie Wolfenden

On December 21, Leslie Wolfenden gave a presentation to the preservation committee of the Heritage Society of Austin on the need for a Master Plan for Austin's city cemeteries. The presentation was attended by approximately fifteen HSA members and two representatives from Rescue Austin Memorial Park (RAMP). Leslie was accompanied by Dale Flatt. The city cemeteries of Austin Memorial Park, Evergreen, Oakwood, Oakwood Annex, and Plummers

have suffered over the years from deferred maintenance due to economic climates as well as confusion about whose responsibility it is to do what. Some of the general issues that should be included in a master plan are: conservation issues such as documentation and preservation of monuments, facilities maintenance, infrastructure maintenance, circulation, vegetation plan, cemetery maintenance, and future programming, use, and recreation.

The Heritage Society of Austin wrote a letter to Mayor Leffingwell and the city council in support of developing a Cemeteries Master Plan and stressed how these cemeteries “are invaluable testaments to Austin’s unique roles in the building of Texas and this city. As such, these cemeteries are not just landmarks but treasured and sacred representations of the cultural diversity, character, and perseverance of Austinites from all walks of life. The care, protection and interpretation of these historic resources should be a top priority for our community.”

Many thanks to HSA for its public support of Austin’s historic city cemeteries!

Historic Cemetery Outreach Assistance by Dale Flatt

There are over 250 cemeteries of various sizes and ages in Travis County. Throughout Texas, historic cemeteries are increasingly threatened by development pressures, encroachment, vandalism, theft, and neglect. Two historic cemeteries in the Austin area are receiving help from SAC member, Dale Flatt. The **Hill Cemetery** in Manor is overgrown and in much need of cleaning and restoration. Dale is working with the land owner and descendants to clean the site and finish the documentation to complete the Texas Historical Commission's Historic Texas Cemetery designation process. This designation is important because it is official recognition of family and community graveyards and will encourage historic preservation.

Closer to town is **San Jose #2 Cemetery**, also known as **Montopolis Cemetery**, located on Posten Lane near Bergstrom Airport. This is a 4.5-acre site that has become a dumpsite for brush, old carpet, and household trash. Working with the few descendants that Dale has located and the City of Austin Code Compliance Department, this site will soon be cleared. Talks have started with some business owners, volunteer groups, and Travis County about how to best clean up and document this site.

If you have a historic cemetery that you're interested in preserving but don't know how to get started, contact Dale via the SAC website at www.sachome.org.

Everyday Things You can do to Help Raise Money for SAC by Leslie Wolfenden

Be a Good Neighbor. Shop at Randall’s using SAC’s Randall’s Good Neighbor/Reward Card. Our account number is **12790**. Fill out an application at any Randall’s, Tom Thumb, or Simon David grocery store. Applications are available at the courtesy booth. From then on, 1% of your grocery purchases will be recorded automatically to SAC’s Good Neighbor account.

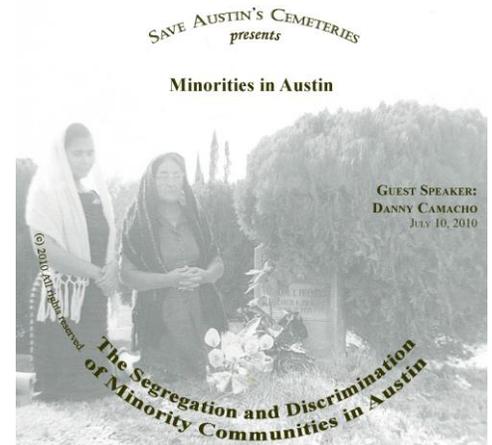


Do online searches or shopping. Save Austin’s Cemeteries is registered with **GoodSearch.com**, a company that helps non-profits like ours raise funds through everyday actions of our supporters. Here is how you can help: Use **GoodSearch** when you search the internet – they donate a penny to use every time



you do. Their search engine is powered by Yahoo! Use **GoodShop** when you shop online – they work with more than 2,500 major brands, have over 100,000 coupons with **GoodCoupons**, and donate a percentage of every purchase you make to us. Enroll in the **GoodDining** and they will donate up to 6% of every dollar you spend when you eat at one of 10,000 participating restaurants. Please join our community on GoodSearch.com and help us raise money for our mission. Get started by clicking the “Become a Supporter” button on our profile page at <http://www.goodsearch.com/nonprofit/save-austins-cemeteries.aspx>!

Do some more shopping! Buy SAC products from the Shop tab on our website at www.sachome.org/shop/store.html. Hosted by CafePress.com, a percentage of the sales goes to SAC. So buy yourself and loved ones some coffee mugs, tote bags, t-shirts, and notecards to show your support for SAC and earn money for SAC while you do it. Our most popular item is the SAC calendar featuring beautiful cemetery vistas of Austin’s historic cemeteries. These gorgeous photos come via our annual photo contest – always a popular event. Also available through the Shop tab are DVDs of two guest speaker presentations: Dr. David B. Gracy on *The Narrative of the George Littlefield Family*; and Mr. Danny Camacho on *Minorities in Austin*.



Other ways to help SAC. You can donate money or stocks through the **Austin Community Foundation** to the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Fund (all proceeds go to the \$500k chapel rehabilitation project) or the Save Austin’s Cemeteries Fund to support cemetery preservation projects. ACF has been the heart of philanthropic giving in Central Texas since 1977. Go to www.austincommunityfoundation.org for more information.



You can also donate directly to Save Austin’s Cemeteries by sending a check to Save Austin’s Cemeteries, PO Box 16411, Austin, Texas 78761. You can also send payment online through our website via PayPal at www.sachome.org/donate/donate.html. SAC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization so your donations are tax-deductible.

Guest Speaker Series: Sally Victor on *Symbolism in the Cemetery* by Megan Spencer

Do you look forward to Sally Victor’s Symbolism article in the SAC Quarterly Newsletter like I do? On Saturday, January 14th at the North Village Branch Library, we were immersed in symbolism. Sally shared her extensive knowledge of cemetery symbolism with a large audience, taking us on a virtual tour of (mainly) Oakwood Cemetery, but other cemeteries as well. There were a couple of well-traveled cemetery symbolism experts in the audience who shared their observations. Sally works for a transportation planning organization, investigating sites prior to construction. She looks for graves, relics, and historical markers among other things. She has a life-long interest in cemeteries.

Symbols have been used since ancient times to convey meaning and they may have a variety of connotations, depending on where you are and who you talk to. In cemeteries, we often see monuments with angels, cherubs, anchors, doves, and weeping willows, but what a variety of detail is found in the carving or metalwork, giving expression to the symbol and immediacy to the message being conveyed. Identifying a small detail like an acanthus leaf or a set of lion’s paws on a monument will direct us to a subtle message: it will be a thorny passage on the way to Heaven, but the spirit is determined. With some knowledge of cemetery symbolism, we can more fully realize what these monuments have to say. Every picture tells a story!

Cemetery Symbolism: The Orb by Sally Victor

The Hotchkiss family plot is located on Main Street at Oakwood Cemetery. It features a large stone orb with a wide band elevated on an elaborate pedestal. I found several references to the orb or circle. The orb can mean the reward of resurrection of the soul, the circle can mean eternity or earth. At the Heritage Society of Austin Dinner tour in November last year, a member noted that this particular monument symbolized universality and is elevated to evoke the heavens.



2011 Volunteer Report by Leslie Wolfenden

With 2011 wrapped up, SAC wants to let its volunteers know how much we really appreciate your time commitments and efforts on behalf of Austin's historic cemeteries. For 2011, our terrific volunteers contributed **over 2,150 hours, worth over \$45,830** (based on www.independentsector.org)!!! Volunteer projects ranged from watering trees, photo-documenting headstones, attending guest speaker sessions, participating in board meetings, research for tours, writing articles for our e-newsletters, updating Travis County cemetery maps and records, portraying historical characters at our MMM tour, cemetery cleanup sessions, participating in the City of Austin's public meetings, and day-to-day administrative chores. So please pat your collective selves on the back for doing a great job month-in and month-out and know that we appreciate you all! THANK YOU!!

2012 SAC Calendar by Leslie Wolfenden

A compilation of 2011's photo contest winning entries, the 2012 SAC Calendar, went on sale in November. We doubled our sales from the previous year (our inaugural debut) and raised almost \$100 in sales proceeds! These calendars are printed on high quality paperstock and feature twelve inspiring images of Austin's historic cemeteries. The 2012 calendars are still available through our website at www.sachome.org/shop/store.html. See the beauty unfold year-round with this fabulous calendar and have a conversation starter right at your desk or home.



If you missed your chance to enter last year's photo contest, keep a lookout for this year's photo contest (late summer), but don't let that stop you from getting out to the cemeteries to take your winning photographs now!

Photo-documentation Sessions

Photo-documentation sessions are held every first Saturday of the month at Oakwood Cemetery. Many of the beautiful monuments we see today may not be here in twenty years or even tomorrow, as we have seen this past year with occurrences of vandalism and wind damage. Save Austin's Cemeteries' goal is to photograph each headstone at the five city cemeteries of Austin: Oakwood, Oakwood Annex, Evergreen, Austin Memorial Park,

and Plummers. These reference shots will help us in the future when the headstones are impacted by time, weather, theft, or vandalism.

We are currently working in Section 2 at Oakwood Cemetery. Oakwood Cemetery has some 10,000+ headstones for over 23,000 graves, so as you can surmise, this is a daunting task, but SAC volunteers are getting it done! Come on out on the first Saturday of each month to participate.

Submit an Article to the SAC E-newsletter

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

Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events!

February 4	Photo-documentation session at 1:00 at Oakwood Cemetery
March 3	Photo-documentation session at 1:00 at Oakwood Cemetery
March 24	Six Degrees of Connection: Texas Heritage event at Oakwood Cemetery
April 7	Photo-documentation session at 1:00 at Oakwood Cemetery
May 5	Photo-documentation session at 1:00 at 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.