



SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Spring 2013 Newsletter

Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

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Inside this Issue:

It's My Park Day

Texas Heritage Day

Parks Department

Remember 311

Fannie Harris Tomb

Raising Money for SAC

Calendar of Events

Randalls Good Neighbor
Program

It's My Park Day by Barbara Surles

Save Austin's Cemeteries was excited to join the Austin Parks Foundation's biggest city-wide volunteer event, It's My Park Day, held the first Saturday in March. Each year, thousands of Austinites sign up to help improve their neighborhood parks all over the city, and Austin Parks Foundation, along with sponsors, provides tools, snacks, and supplies to aid in the process.

With the help of volunteers, SAC was able to remove litter, pull up weeds and invasive plants, and gather branches and other debris that had fallen due to recent (and much needed!) spring storms. Preservation is the heart of SAC's mission, and keeping Oakwood's trees healthy and its landscape free of weeds and trash aids in that mission. We had a super turnout this year and volunteers enjoyed a tasty lunch after the cleanup was complete. Many thanks to all of you who came out to help!

Don't forget! SAC has several volunteer opportunities each year including headstone documentation and walking tours. Please consider signing up to volunteer and help Save Austin's Cemeteries grow by becoming a member! Check out our website for more details.

www.sachome.org



Some of our volunteers lining up for lunch after working hard all morning.

Texas Heritage Day by Beth Pickett

March 23rd was the date for this year's Heritage Day event. As was the case last year, attendance was much lower than we hoped—perhaps the chilly, windy morning was a factor—yet our craft demonstrators, vendors, actors, volunteers, and speakers presented impressive displays and interpretations of Texas history. Our speakers this year were fifth generation Texan David Bowles, who discussed Austin and Texas history as recounted from his family's history and his books *The Westward Sagas*; folklorist and singer Ed Miller, who entertained with his wonderful songs and droll stories about his native Scotland and ties to Texas; and author Ralph Yznaga, who recounted connections between Texans and their heritage trees.



Young visitors learning about carpentry from Joe Rodgers

This was the second year for Heritage Day, which was launched last year as an experiment. Although we agree unanimously that the concept is excellent, the SAC board has decided that the event requires much more planning and coordination than it is worth for our organization at this time. So, our plan is to pass the idea along to other groups that we hope will be interested in taking it on. SAC would participate gladly, just not as planner, coordinator, and implementer.

The credit for the conception and smooth operation of Heritage Day goes to Leslie Wolfenden, who envisioned an event to fill a gap missing from the list of festivals and cultural gatherings in Austin—celebrating the making of Texas through the stories and work of immigrants and craftspeople, remembering how we all got here, no matter when and what it took. Thank you, Leslie, for your truly tireless effort in realizing your vision and inviting us to tag along.

Parks Department Jumps into Cemetery Business with Both Feet by Dale Flatt

On April 1, 2013, Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) assumed the maintenance and office duties for all five city cemeteries. At a minimum, PARD will operate the cemeteries until a new contractor can be found. The old Sexton's House at Austin Memorial Park (AMP) has been converted to new office space, allowing all of the office staff to work at one location. The grounds are being mowed and families are being helped with burial services. Old documents at AMP are being reviewed and the staff is learning the cemetery trade.

PARD still seems to be on track toward developing a master plan for all five cemeteries. Those of you who took part in the two-year stakeholder process and have reviewed the Request for Proposal (RFP) know that the scope of work was very detailed for all aspects of the cemetery operation. To my limited knowledge, no one bid on the RFP that was put out to the public.

PARD appears to be addressing the basic needs of the cemeteries, but we are losing ground at Oakwood. PARD decided not to staff the office at Oakwood, so once again the site is unmonitored in between mowing cycles. The sprinkler system is still not operational and we have had three known vandalism events. Two acts of vandalism occurred at the chapel. A window was broken and a door frame was damaged. These have not been addressed yet. The south side chain link fence was cut so a person could easily walk through the fence.

PARD plans to host a series of cemetery stakeholders meetings in June 2013 with cemetery advocates and surrounding communities. The objective of stakeholder meetings for the Cemetery Master Plan Request for Proposal process is to educate the community about the master plan process, highlight the history of City of Austin cemeteries, provide information about existing cemetery conditions, and gather community input and recommendations for the scope of work for the Cemetery Master Plan.

Introductory Community Meetings (two locations)

The meeting agenda will include the following three objectives: 1) offer a presentation on the history of Austin's municipal cemeteries, 2) provide an overview of the Master Plan process and timeline and 3) seek input or recommendations from the cemetery stakeholders about the master plan process. Following is a schedule for the two Introductory Community Meetings:

- Saturday, June 8, 2013 from 2:00-3:30PM @ Carver Branch Library Meeting Rooms 2 & 3 (1161 Angelina Street, Austin TX 78702)
- Wednesday, June 12, 2013 from 6:00-7:30PM @ Northwest Recreation Center Meeting Room 1 (2913 Northland Drive, Austin TX 78757)

Community Engagement Meetings (two locations)

The meeting agenda will include the following two objectives: 1) provide a review of existing conditions of each cemetery property and 2) seek additional community input for the scope of work for the Cemetery Master Plan. Following is a schedule for the two Community Engagement Meetings:

- Saturday, June 22, 2013 from 9:00-11:00AM @ Northwest Recreation Center Meeting Room 1 (2913 Northland Drive, Austin TX 78757)
- Thursday, June 27, 2013 from 6:00-8:00PM @ Carver Branch Library Meeting Rooms 2 & 3 (1161 Angelina Street, Austin TX 78702)

Kim McKnight, Project Coordinator and Cultural Resource Specialist, will be coordinating the meetings along with PARD Cemetery management staff. For questions or comments, please email cemeterymasterplan@austintexas.gov or 512-974-9478. A website has been established with information about the Cemetery Master Plan process: <http://austintexas.gov/department/cemetery-master-plan>.

SAC encourages you to attend the public meetings to hear firsthand what is going on and to provide your own personal input into the process. We also encourage everyone to stop by the AMP Cemetery office if you are local or call or email the cemetery staff to voice your concerns and stay informed about our historic cemeteries. For contact information, see the PARD website at <http://austintexas.gov/contact-information/cemeteries>

Remember 311! by Beth Pickett

From time to time, much more often than we would like, vandals or general misbehavers cause damage in or steal items from our cemeteries. If you are in a cemetery and notice that something is not quite right or is missing, or if you happen to see suspicious activity, please call 311 (for a crime that has already happened) or 911 (for a crime in progress). Also make a report, if you're given the option and are willing. Calls to these city phone numbers and reports help law enforcement supervisors direct resources appropriately and may help the cemeteries be more visible to police and less interesting to miscreants.

Fannie Harris Tomb Project Update by Megan Spencer

SAC volunteers, along with InterCare Corporation and PARD, completed the re-stabilization of the Fannie Harris brick box tomb. It looks as if it will last another century or so. This above ground box tomb was in desperate need of repair. SAC volunteers were able to contact the descendants for permission to start the preservation efforts and the entire process was thoroughly documented. There are many monuments in our cemeteries in need of this kind of attention. Slowly but surely, we are making progress. Our thanks go out to Dale Flatt for heading up this project.



Raising Money for SAC by using GoodSearch.com by Leslie Wolfenden

How would you like to earn money for Save Austin's Cemeteries without leaving the comfort of your computer chair?

By using the search engine GoodSearch.com every time you are on the Internet, money is donated to Save Austin's Cemeteries. Just go to GoodSearch.com, enter "Save Austin's Cemeteries" as your charity of choice, and off you go. With every link or site you go to, money is earned for Save Austin's Cemeteries at no cost to you. GoodSearch.com is powered by Yahoo, so you get the same quality results as you would by using Yahoo, Ask.com, or Google.

If you purchase something online through GoodSearch.com, the amount donated increases. By accessing your favorite websites for purchases, a certain percentage of your order is donated to Save Austin's Cemeteries. Go through the "Who do you GoodShop for?" button to find your favorite shopping websites and earn money for Save Austin's Cemeteries. The percentage varies by store. Stores include Barnes & Noble, Old Navy, Lands End, PetSmart, Home Depot, and many more.

How does it work? Advertisers pay a fee whenever Internet users click on a given link. Fifty percent of all ad revenue generated from the site is donated to the charity of the user's choice. Last year, search engines generated almost \$6 billion through such services. So, let's put some of that money to good use in our historic cemeteries.

For more information, go to GoodSearch.com and click on the "In the News" button for editorial comments by publications such as Oprah magazine, The New York Times, USA Today, Fortune Small Business, and others.

Randalls Good Neighbor Program helps Raise Money for SAC by Leslie Wolfenden

**Save Austin's Cemeteries is now a member of Randalls Good Neighbor Program.
The SAC Good Neighbor number is 12790.**

Randalls is committed to assisting non-profit organizations that are important to its customers and their families. Randalls offers its customers a way to direct its donation dollars to their favorite church, school or other non-profit organization. Since the program began in the fall of 1996, Randalls/Tom Thumb has donated nearly \$35 million to over 8,000 participating organizations.

Through its Good Neighbor Program, organizations sign up to have an exclusive account number. Members of an organization can then link the account number to their Remarkable card. You can link your favorite participating charity to your Remarkable card by completing a Good Neighbor Charity Addition/Deletion Form. You will find the guidelines for organizations participating in the Good Neighbor Program outlined in a link at the top of this Web page. Detailed brochures with applications are available at www.randalls.com – Community Caring button at the bottom of the page – Good Neighbor Program link. The more people who link their card to the organization's account number, the more money the organization will raise. Thank you for partnering with Randalls in helping the organizations that make our communities such wonderful places to live.

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!

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| July13 | Guest Speaker Series: Bob Brinkman of the Texas Historical Commission will talk about the history of Merriltown and its cemetery at Yarbrough Library at 10:30. |
| September | Annual Photo Contest: stayed tuned for details |
| Oct. 5 | Photo-documentation sessions restart (first Saturday of each month) at Oakwood. |
| Oct. 12 | SAC board elections and annual update meeting |
| Oct. 26 | Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure Halloween Walking Tours at Oakwood. |

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