



# SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

## Spring 2014 Newsletter

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### Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

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### Speaker Event: A House Divided: The Holland Family in Black and White by Megan Spencer

On Saturday April 12<sup>th</sup> we walked with R.G. Ratcliffe through the oldest sections in Oakwood Cemetery as he told us the story of the Hollands, a family divided by race while they lived. In death, they remain divided in Oakwood Cemetery. We started at the Rust family plot where Bird Holland is buried next to his white wife, Matilda Rust, in what is now the oldest section of the cemetery, referred to as the "Old Grounds." From there, we walked to the opposite side of Main Street where Bird's son William, the son of a slave, is buried next to his mother, also named Matilda. At the time, this section was called the "Colored Grounds."

Bird Holland came to Texas via Galveston from Holly Springs, Mississippi in 1837. By 1840, he was living in Travis County. He fought in the Mexican War, was appointed Secretary of State in 1861, and died in 1864 while leading his regiment in the Battle of Mansfield, Louisiana during the Red River Campaign. In 1865, his body was brought back to Austin where he was buried next to his wife, Matilda Rust. He had married Matilda in 1857, but their time together was cut short when she died in childbirth the following year. While in Mississippi, Bird fathered (possibly) several children by a slave, also named Matilda. Very little is known about their relationship. He sent the three oldest sons to live in Ohio with an abolitionist family and they were educated in an abolitionist school. At the time, it was an extraordinary act to send mixed race children north because it allowed them to be free.

Bird's son, Milton Holland, remained in the north. In June, 1863 when Black men were finally given permission to join the US Army, Milton joined the Fifth US Colored Troops. After all of the white commanders were killed or wounded during engagements in Virginia in September, 1864, Milton assumed command, was wounded, but led the troops to victory. For this, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, one of sixteen black soldiers to receive the honor during the Civil War. Milton was offered a rank of Major if would deny his race. He refused and never rose higher than rank of sergeant. He lived in Washington, D.C. and founded an insurance company. He died in 1910 on his farm in Silver Spring, Maryland and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

William Holland, Bird's oldest son, was an educator. He came back to Texas after serving in the Civil War with the Sixteenth US Colored Troops and attending Oberlin College in Ohio. He taught in several counties and in Austin city schools. In 1876, he was elected to the Fifteenth Legislature representing Waller County and he sponsored the bill establishing Prairie View Normal College (now Prairie View A&M University). He also helped establish the first school for the deaf, mute, and blind in 1887, a charity-sponsored institution for black children. Known as the Texas Blind, Deaf, and Orphan School, Governor Ross appointed William to be the first Superintendent. His wife was a teacher there as well. He died in Mineral Wells, Texas in 1907 and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery next to his mother, Matilda, whom he hardly knew.



## Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol by Barbara Surles

Save Austin's Cemeteries is excited to announce the release of its first book! In compiling this volume of narratives and photographs, we hoped to create connections from Austin's start as a 19th century wild outpost to the 21st century city we know today.

Our first opportunity to sell our book was at the Austin Genealogical Society's 2014 seminar in May. We received tons of positive feedback, and we sold several books, too! SAC will host an open house at Oakwood's chapel on July 12th to officially launch the book and to offer assistance with self-guided tours. Check our website, our Facebook page, and your email inbox for details.

You can order your own copy today here: <http://www.sachome.org/shop/store.html>

Thanks to all who contributed their time, photos, and stories, and special thanks to Kay Boyd, SAC board member, genealogist, and historian, for her dedication and hard work with this project!

**SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES**

PLEASE  
*join*  
US!

In compiling this volume of narratives and photographs, Save Austin's Cemeteries hoped to create connections from Austin's start as a 19th century wild outpost to the 21st century city we know today. If you've visited Oakwood, even if you've only driven through on Main Street, you cannot have missed the names Zilker, Kreisle, and Scarbrough on the monuments that line either side of the street. If you've explored a bit further, more familiar names appear along the shady lanes, and questions begin. Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol has the answers to your questions.

	Saturday // July 12th // 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
	Oakwood Cemetery 1601 Navasota Street // ATX 78702
	Official Book Release – Book Bash Special! Each copy is only \$15 (cash or check) at the event.
	snacks & coffee // small tours // self-guided tours

questions and information // [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org) // 512-917-1666  
Books can also be purchased at [www.sachome.org](http://www.sachome.org).

## Generations in Oakwood: The Luna and Fuentes Families by Danny Camacho

I have ancestors buried in three of the city-owned cemeteries: Oakwood, Oakwood Annex, and Austin Memorial. Six of them are buried at Oakwood. These Oakwood burials are examples of the segregated burial practices in Austin.

My Great Great Grandfather, Elojio Luna, who died in 1886, was the earliest ancestor to be buried in Oakwood. He was buried in what was known as the Mexican Grounds, a location that is now lost. The City Sexton Ledger had a column heading entitled "Color," which was sub-divided into two sections: White and Colored. Elojio was listed in the Colored column with the entry "Mexican." Of course, "Mexican" is a nationality, not a color, but this was how records were kept at this time.

The next ancestor was Toribio Fuentes, my Great Grandfather, who died August, 18, 1900. Spanish names were frequently misspelled in the City Sexton Ledgers. If I had not known his exact date of death, I would never have found him in the index. His name was spelled "Forbis Fucutis." According to the City Sexton Ledger, between 1900 and 1903 he and almost forty other Mexicans were buried in Section 1 Lot 32. Ground penetrating radar shows that this is not true. Why they were listed as buried there and where they are now is still a mystery.

The first family member to have a headstone was my Great Grand Uncle, Elojio Luna, Jr. - the son of Elojio, Sr. In 1910, he was buried in "city grounds," near the fence line on Comal Street – a space set aside for paupers. By this time new City Sexton Ledgers were in use. The "Color" heading was sub-divided into three sections: White, Colored, and Mexican. The City now acknowledged the Mexican American community.

My Great Great Grandmother, Pilar Nava Luna who died in 1918, was the first to be buried in Section 3 Lot 1054. Some Mexican Americans purchased lots located near the "city grounds" along Comal Street, which was one of the last areas of Oakwood to be developed. Pilar lived to be 105 years old and at her death, a newspaper article was written about her life. At the time, articles about Mexican Americans were quite unusual.

The grandson of Elojio, Sr., John (Encarnación) Fuentes, was buried in Lot 1054 in 1950. His funeral home record listed him as "Hispanic" which reflected a change in terminology, but the emphasis on color and race was still evident.

Carlota Luna Fuentes, who died in 1953, was the daughter of Elojio Sr., and is the last burial in Lot 1054. Her grave is the only one marked with a tombstone. Her mother and her son lie on either side of her.



Carlota Luna Fuentes. Courtesy of Danny Camacho

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## Update on Parks & Recreation and a Cemetery Master Plan by Megan Spencer

The Parks and Recreation Department will hold the second Community Meeting for the Cemetery Master Plan process on **Thursday, June 26, 2014** from **6:00-8:00 p.m.** at the **Northwest Recreation Center at 2913 Northland Drive**. This will be the second of five public meetings to be held as part of the planning effort for the city's five historic municipal cemeteries, which include Austin Memorial Park Cemetery, Evergreen Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery, Oakwood Cemetery Annex, and Plummers Cemetery. The City of Austin recently selected AmaTerra Environmental, Inc. to develop the master plan, which is expected to take a year to complete. The master plan will include recommendations related to historic preservation, tree care, and cemetery management issues. This will be the first planning effort for the city's five historic municipal cemeteries.

The second Community Meeting will present best practices and examples of how other cities handle signage, wayfinding, and interpretation in historic cemeteries. The team will also share from their ongoing outreach and community engagement efforts and receive additional input and feedback from the public. The team will collect written recollections of family traditions involving the cemeteries, and citizens are also encouraged to bring photos of their family's graves or cemetery traditions to be scanned by the project team during the meeting.



### Meeting Information

Cemetery Master Plan Meeting #2  
6-8pm, Thurs. June 26, 2014  
Northwest Rec Center  
2913 Northland Dr, Austin, TX 78757

For more information about the process see: <http://www.austintexas.gov/departments/cemetery-master-plan>

## Basics on Caring for Your Family Photos: Part 2 by Jan Root

Jan Root, board member and archivist, has written a four-part series on the Basics on Caring for Your Family Photos. This is Part Two.

### Albums

Some albums are better than others. If you have albums that were created prior to the 1970s and are adhered to black, construction-like paper, those should be removed and placed in sleeves in an archival album. The album paper is highly acidic and can promote deterioration.

They usually have those nice corner pieces that hold the photos in place. If bought when the album was constructed, those will probably have glue that is detrimental to photos. All kinds of unsafe chemicals were used in the production of the adhesive on the back of those corners. Archival photo mounts, or corners, can be purchased from archival supply companies and also at local big-box and craft stores. Just be sure that the package says that they are archival.

If mounting corners were not used and the photos were glued directly to the album pages, it is sometimes impossible to get them loose. Instead of trying to separate the photo from the paper, it is best to just leave them adhered to the album page. Irreversible damage can be done when trying to pull off a photo that has been glued to paper. If they have been glued and there is nothing on the reverse side of the page, then it is best to carefully cut around the photo and place in an archival album with the old album page still adhered to the photo.

Manufacturers came out with self-adhesive albums in the 1970s and 80s. While convenient since all you had to do was stick the photo to the page, they were not archival and the adhesive was bad for photos. Most of the time the adhesive did not last and the photo ended up slipping around the page anyway. Then you would have adhesive residue on the back of the photos, causing them to stick together and making it virtually impossible to write in pencil on the back of the photo. It is best to remove all photos from this type of album and transfer them to albums with archival sleeves.

The albums themselves were also bad for photos. Most of them were either leather or vinyl. Leather can dry out and eventually disintegrate, causing damage to the photos if they become loose. The vinyl albums were especially bad since the materials, which are petroleum by-products, could also produce off-gassing and if kept in a closed-in space would eventually build up and cause damage to photos.

### 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](mailto:info@sachome.org).

### Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events!

July 12	Oakwood Cemetery Book Bash and Mini Tours, Oakwood Cemetery, 9 a.m. to noon.
Sept. 21	Austin Museum Day, Oakwood Cemetery
Oct. 11	Guest Speaker session: Tour Guide Training, Oakwood Cemetery
Oct. 25	Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure Halloween Walking Tours, Oakwood Cemetery

*If you would like to stop receiving SAC emails, or if you have updated contact information, please send an email to [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org).*