

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Summer 2015 Newsletter

Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

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Inside this Issue:

Speaker Event: Cemeteries in
Travis County

6th Annual SAC Photo Contest

The 9th Annual Murder,
Mayhem, and Misadventure
Walking Tours

Generations in Oakwood

The Dale and Danny Traveling
Show

SAC Grants Program

Oakwood Cemetery: The Book

2015 SAC Board Elections

Speaker Event: Dale Flatt Talks about Cemeteries in Travis County by Megan Spencer

On Saturday, July 11, we gathered at the Yarbrough Branch Library conference room to hear Dale Flatt talk about cemeteries in Travis County. Dale got hooked on local history around 2000 when he started doing research at the Austin History Center. He always liked old stones and cemeteries, so researching local history and hanging around in historic cemeteries became the perfect hobby for him when he wasn't working as an Austin Firefighter. He has recently retired and his goal is to compile all of the many Travis County cemetery lists that he has found in his research into one digital file along with a map. This digital file will be stored at Texas Archaeological Research Laboratory (TARL) and at the University of Texas at Austin. Right on, Dale!

There are more than 250 cemeteries in Travis County and many old family cemeteries are located on farmsteads and other pieces of land. There is a lot of interest in documenting old family cemeteries these days. Dale uses Google Earth as his main tool for finding and documenting these old sites. The Joseph Beck Cemetery and the Berryman Cemetery are just two of about 200 cemeteries that Dale tracks using Google Earth. The Joseph Beck Cemetery is in the middle of a continuously developing area near the Galleria Shopping Center and it was in danger of encroachment due to sub-division development. Now it is a protected site, a pocket park setting, thanks to descendants who did the right thing. The Berryman Cemetery is located next to a private estate that is leased out as a vacation rental. Using Google Maps, Dale has tracked the unauthorized use of the adjacent cemetery property as a place to put up hammocks, have drinks, and watch the sun go down. He's working to fix that.

In short, Google Earth is "the right tool for the job." Google Earth allows you to use "push pins" to identify features and to save the map to your computer. Dale can quickly locate a cemetery when SAC gets a call from someone who needs help finding a cemetery. He uses "photo tracking" to note development in areas where cemeteries are located. Google Earth has measurement tools that allow him to get the length of a fence line. He can get the exact latitude and longitude of a cemetery and he can do all this without physically going to the site. Historical imagery and aerial views are available from different sources. I think families who attended this speaker event looking for tips on how to document family cemeteries left with some great information!

6th Annual SAC Photo Contest by Leslie Wolfenden

Get your cameras clicking! The 6th Annual Cemetery Photo Contest is underway. Send in your favorite photos of statues, flora and fauna, headstones, and scenic shots from Austin's five city cemetery (taken at any time, not just in the last year). Austin's five city cemeteries include Austin Memorial Park, Evergreen, Oakwood, Oakwood Annex, and Plummers. Entries will be accepted through August 31 at midnight. Shortly after that, the photo entries will be uploaded to the SAC website where you will then have a chance to vote for your top 12 favorites. The 12 photos with the most votes by the end of September will earn places in the 2016 SAC calendar. The winning photographers will win a one-year membership to SAC. The first place photo earns the calendar cover!



Raven (Oakwood Cemetery), Hal Mohrlok 2013

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES 2015

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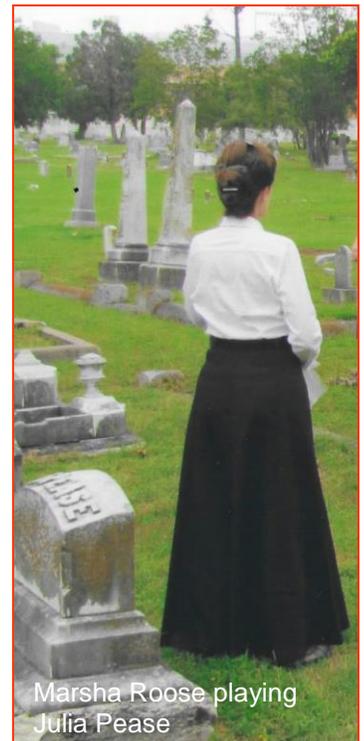
This Fall, we will have the 2016 SAC calendar available for sale. This will be printed in a limited quantity and will be available first come first served. Get yours while quantities last!

The 9th Annual Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure Walking Tours on Halloween Day, October 31st by Megan Spencer

Spend some ghostly time on Halloween in Oakwood Cemetery where the past will come to life before your eyes. Come prowl around and take one of our tours highlighting Oakwood residents whose stories reflect so vividly Austin's fascinating past. Costumed actors will portray residents whose stories remind us of how unpredictable life could be on the Texas frontier during earlier years. Tours begin at 10:00 a.m. and run continuously throughout the day. The last tour leaves at 4:00 p.m. Donations to benefit the city cemeteries are gladly accepted. Sturdy shoes (or some bewitching footwear) are recommended as the pathways are uneven and there may be stickers and ants lurking in the grass.

This year's stories will include:

- John Paul Miller, who drowned at Deep Eddy while trying to save his friend.
- Elias Olenick's widow, whose husband was murdered over the price of cloth.
- John Gaines, a policeman who was killed on duty.
- Joe Blunn, who was killed along with the police chief by a crazed man.
- The Engler family's unsolved murder case of the 1920s.
- John "RIP" Ford, who was grief stricken over the death of his wife and son.
- Maurice Moore, a Texas Ranger whose bad reputation caused people to say he deserved to be shot.



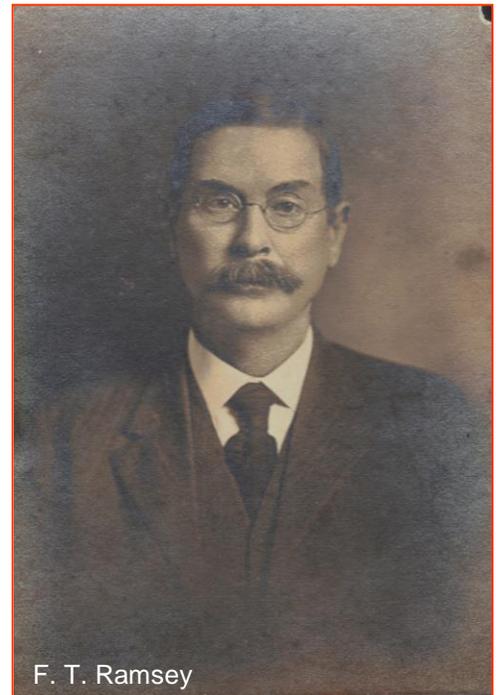
Marsha Roose playing Julia Pease

Are you interested in telling stories? Would you like to step into the shoes of one of Oakwood's illustrious residents, if only for a short time? If you would like to portray one of the people on our tour this year and tell their exciting story, let us know. Our volunteers help us make MMM happen in many ways. If you would like to help us make preparations before the event, sign in guests for tours, manage things during the event (information table/visitor sign-in), sell our Oakwood books and calendars, or pack-up after the event, just let us know. It sounds like a lot of work, but it's actually a lot of fun! To volunteer with SAC in any way, please contact Kay Boyd at info@sachome.org.

Generations in Oakwood: Frank Taylor Ramsey (1861-1932) by Cynthia Leggett Norwood, Great Granddaughter

The Ramsey plot located on Main Street of Oakwood Cemetery is the resting place of early Austin settlers and the ancestors of many who still live in the Austin area. The Ramsey Family had come from Scotland to Pennsylvania then Jackson, Mississippi and finally to Burnet County 30 miles north of Austin where in 1875 Alexander M. Ramsey established a horticultural nursery and sold trees and plants of all sorts around the state. Eventually his son, Frank Taylor, took over the business and along with his wife Annabella, and four children reestablished the nursery in Austin. It was their desire to be close to the newly established University of Texas so that their children might attend. They built their home in 1894 across from the Avenue B grocery at 45th Street and Ave B and bought 430 acres of land stretching from 45th and Guadalupe to Shoal Creek including what is now the State School for the Blind, the Rosedale neighborhood, and much of Lamar Street.

The Ramsey nursery specialized in new varieties of peaches, plums, and other fruits that would do well in Central Texas as well as pioneering the use of native Texas plants for landscaping. The F. T. Ramsey Nursery became the largest nursery this side of the Mississippi River and F. T. quickly became known as "fruit tree" Ramsey using his initials as inspiration. He traveled by train all over the Southwest, helping new settlers plan and plant their orchards and landscape their homes.



His talents were not all horticultural as he was quite the poet, musician, and philosopher. His instrument of choice was the fiddle and many a Sunday afternoon the family would gather in the parlor while he played the fiddle and his daughter, Jessie, accompanied on the piano and everyone else sang. One of his favorite songs was *Turkey in the Straw*.

He frequently composed poems and often they were included in the nursery catalog that reflected his gift for writing and his appreciation for beauty. The last verse of one of his poems is engraved on the back of the family monument at Oakwood Cemetery. It was written after the passing of his beloved wife. It reads:

"It's sweet to wander on this earth and gather flowers,
But sweeter still the thought, some day it will be ours
In Paradise to walk with her we here loved best
And gather fragrant, fairer ones for longer hours."

This verse is a cherished reminder of our family heritage and quoted often by family members.

The neighborhood of Rosedale was developed out of the nursery land by two of the Ramsey daughters, Jessie and Winnie, and the family names of Ramsey and Sinclair were used as street names. Besides Frank and Annabella, daughters Jessie and her husband Robert V. Murray, Winnie and her husband Hilliare F. Nitschke, and granddaughter Alice Anne and her husband Harry S. Wilder, Jr. are buried in the family lot.

The family also donated Ramsey Park to the city. The stories of the Ramsey daughters are worthy to be told as well but for another time. Mr. Ramsey's story is one of the many included in our book, *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery*, after Cynthia's name.

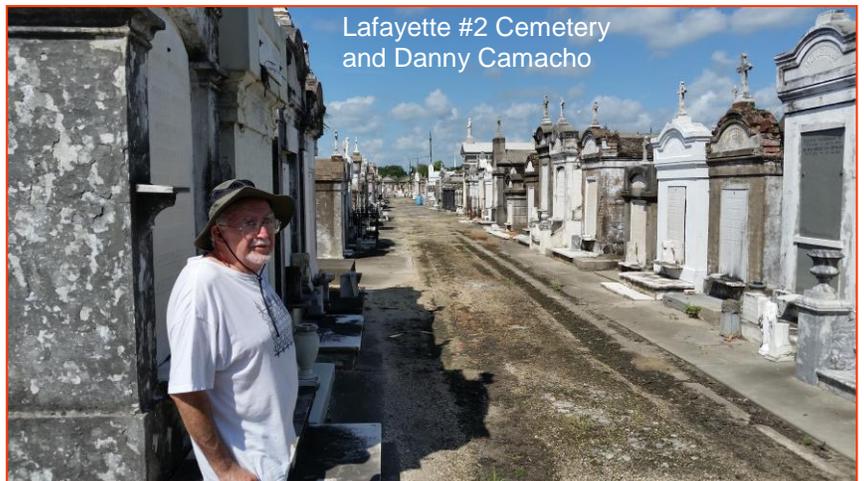
The Dale and Danny Traveling Show by Dale Flatt

The nice thing about retirement is that if an opportunity to travel to a nearby city for a few days to pick up some new skills and make new friends presents itself, the choice is easy – Road Trip! Danny Camacho and I had such an opportunity. On July 11th 2015, we each packed a bag and headed for the Big Easy.

New Orleans is just eight hours away from Austin and has a collection of some of the most interesting ‘above-ground crypts’ in the United States. “Save Our Cemeteries,” a local non-profit organization in New Orleans, raised some funds and obtained a small grant for preservation work. They were able to hire six brick masons to do repairs at historic Lafayette # 2 Cemetery. We learned a lot about tomb construction and the challenges the city of New Orleans must face.



We met some really nice folks including a graduate from Austin’s UT Historic Preservation program who went to school with Kim McKnight, City of Austin PARD Project Coordinator and Cultural Resource Specialist. It’s a small world! Several of the tombs had been broken into and the contents removed. We gathered loose bricks, soaked them in vinegar and water to hydrate them, which helped to loosen the old mortar. Then, we cleaned and rinsed them and carried them to their new home. I learned how to mix mortar the old fashioned way and I watched the masons seal up the open tombs. Danny spoke with several of the local reporters. The next day, his photo appeared in two local newspapers along with a plug for “Save Austin’s Cemeteries.” Of course, we ate at several local restaurants and spent some time in the French Quarter looking at the architecture and all of the tourists. Alas! We had to come home.



“Save Our Cemeteries” in New Orleans does some great work and is years ahead of us in many ways. We look forward to the next opportunity to visit. Perhaps next time, we will go when it is not so HOT!

SAC Grants Program by Sally Victor

SAC is really about many cemeteries, not just those under the aegis or umbrella of the City of Austin. Toward that goal, we have initiated a new grants program. By our way of thinking, almost every volunteer, non-profit group, and community organization can utilize some extra funding in the form of a grant.

SAC grants are for cemetery preservation, legal survey documentation, fencing, signage, repairs, construction, or other projects associated with cemetery public service projects within Travis County, Texas. Grants are for capital improvements only, not for general cleaning or maintenance.

Organizations seeking to repair, improve, or survey a cemetery within Travis County may be eligible to receive a SAC grant. An organization may be a 501c3 non-profit, a private owner or an organized family cemetery group, or a public institution (city, county, etc.).

To stretch our limited funds further, preference will be given to projects that provide their own monies and/or volunteer labor over projects that are not providing the same, because this shows investment in the cemetery. Two grant application deadlines occur annually, September 1st and February 1st. Applications may be submitted at any time and will be reviewed and considered for the next deadline. Grant information and application form will be added to the SAC website shortly. Stay tuned.

Oakwood Cemetery: The Book by Megan Spencer

Our book, *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol*, is still available. This little book is a treasure chest of stories of early life in Austin – of the pioneers, immigrants, businessmen, and extraordinary women who helped make Austin the exciting city it is today. *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery* will be on sale at our Museum Day and during the MMM tours. They are always available online. If you would like more information, visit our website: www.sachome.org. We will make arrangements to mail or deliver your books to you. They make great gifts!

2015 SAC Board Elections

It is time for SAC board elections in October. Voting day will be held at Oakwood Cemetery at the October 10th board meeting. All SAC members in good standing are allowed to vote. An email notifying members regarding the roster for candidates was sent out on August 10. If you did not receive this notification and believe you are a member in good standing, please let us know at info@sachome.org. If you are unable to attend the board meeting, please send in your votes by October 1 to info@sachome.org or Save Austin's Cemeteries, PO Box 16411, Austin, TX 78761

SAC Board Meetings

SAC Board Meetings are the second Saturday of each month, typically at Oakwood Cemetery at 10:00am. If you are interested the city's cemeteries, please join us. Contact info@sachome.org to confirm the time and place.

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!

Aug. 31	Photo contest entries are due by midnight
Sept.	Photo contest voting starts
Sept. 12	Board Meeting
Sept. 20	Museum Day at Oakwood Cemetery
Sept. 30	End of photo contest online voting
Oct. 3	Cemetery photo documentation session starts again at Oakwood Cemetery
Oct. 10	Annual meeting and board elections
Oct. 31	MMM Walking Tours at Oakwood Cemetery
Nov. 7	Cemetery photo documentation session at Oakwood Cemetery
Nov. 14	Board Meeting
Dec. 5	Cemetery photo documentation session at Oakwood Cemetery
Dec. 12	Board Meeting

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