

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Fall 2016 Newsletter

Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

Dale Flatt, President
Sally Victor, Vice President
Jan Root, Secretary
Kay Boyd, Treasurer
Karen Eshliman
Terri Mirka
Bobby Cervantes

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10th Annual Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure Tour by Megan Spencer

SAC celebrated its tenth year hosting MMM Tours in Oakwood Cemetery on Saturday, October 29th. We had more than 600 visitors who signed in and we raised over \$2,000. Our volunteers sold 88 copies of our book, *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery, Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol*. This year, we implemented "info spots" along the tour route to foreshadow the stories that are told at each stop. We also had a group of "sketchers" who captured scenes of this annual celebration of local history. The sketchers reminded us that we are continually surrounded by art!

Because the space in front of the Chapel was partially closed due to the rehabilitation project, we moved the "official" MMM entrance further east on Main Street. I don't think anyone had a problem finding us in our new location, though! We made new friends and were happy to see all the "usual suspects." This year's event went so well because of our wonderful volunteers and actors. We are grateful for the support of the Austin Tour Guides Association. Several of the MMM actors are from the group and we are happy to see them every year. The cast of Oakwood residents and the actors who portrayed them are:



- Hardy and Bettie Holman: Tana Rogers and Meagan Cavasar
- James W. Hall: Kevin McKenzie and Liza McBay
- J.P. Duvenage: Cat McGrath-Farmer and Laura Luna
- George M. Dolson, John R. Black, Gideon White: Beth Pickett, Kathleen Page, and Harrison Eppright
- Oswin LaFrance: Bob Ward and Elizabeth Garzone
- Charles Lamair: Patty Hundley and Vanita Tripp
- Charles Howard: Lana Davis and Terri Mirka
- Ben Thompson: Billy Brookshire
- Andrew and Constantine Hopkins: Brett Tribe and Daniel McCarthy

One of our volunteers included Jan Root, SAC Board Member, who staffed the first “info spot” on the tour. Knowing the history of the dams built to control the Colorado River during floods was a perfect starting point for the tour, because the weather played a key role in a few of the stories that were portrayed. Thanks to our knowledgeable tour guides, Warren Friedrich, Bobby Cervantes, Bob Ward, Beth Pickett, Karen Eshliman, Glen Roen, Megan Spencer, and Dale Flatt who did a great job leading groups through Oakwood. Industrious volunteers at the sign-in/information desk took care of visitors and stayed very organized! Our thanks go to Marie Holman, Cathy Andrews, Susannah Federowicz, Kathy Flatt, and Michelle Caddel. At the book table, Sally Victor, Barbara Surles, and Leslie Wolfenden sold nearly ninety of our books. Terri Mirka did all of the publicity this year. Great job! Our thanks go out to Dale and Kathy Flatt for the great photo of the Oakwood Cemetery gate, published in the *Austin American Statesman* on Thursday, Oct. 27, 2016. We are grateful for Hal and Eva Mohrlök, our ubiquitous photographers. Many thanks to Kay Boyd, Angie Ward, John Rodriguez, Amy Schweiss, and Mandy Young who worked behind the scenes to make MMM 2016 a success! We could not have done it without you.

See the photo collage for snapshots of our big day portraying many of the great actors (photos courtesy of Hal and Eva Mohrlök and Leslie Wolfenden).

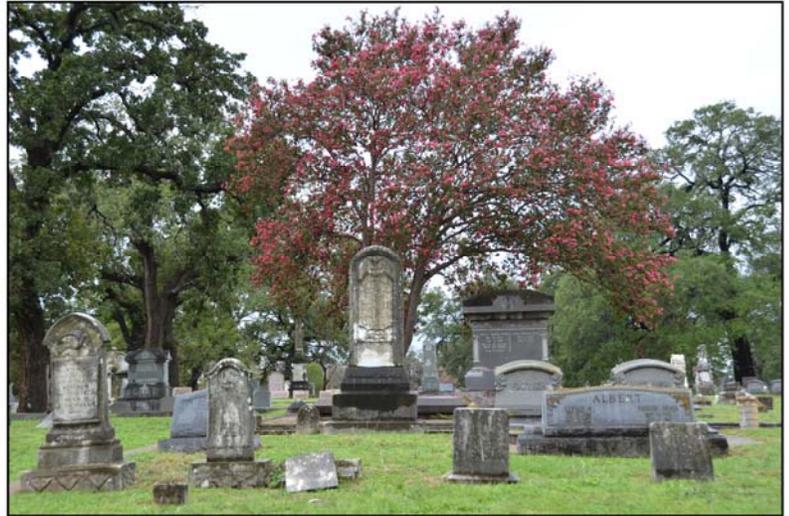
As this was our 10th MMM event, our SAC book – *Austin’s Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol* – is on sale for \$10.00 (\$10.86 including tax, \$14.00 including tax and postage). This price is good through the end of the year. If you would like to purchase an SAC book for your own personal library or give as a gift, please contact us at info@sachome.org or go to our website: www.sachome.org



On a final note, our friend, Danny Camacho, who passed away in April 2016, was sorely missed this year. As we all know, he was a real trouper at MMM, always dressed as an “interesting” character, tirelessly leading tour groups, and sharing Oakwood’s stories. SAC will always be grateful for him. I think everyone felt his gentle presence at MMM 10.

7th Annual Photo Contest and 2017 Calendar by Leslie Wolfenden

The 7th Annual SAC Photo Contest resulted in 143 photo entries featuring picturesque views of Oakwood, Oakwood Annex, Austin Memorial Park, and Evergreen. When the voting ended, the overall winner was Charles Freeman with his shot of Oakwood “In Bloom.” This image is featured on the cover of the 2017 SAC Calendar, now available through the SAC website for \$16.99 plus S&H for a limited time only. <http://www.cafepress.com/saveaustinscemeteries>



In Bloom @ Oakwood Cemetery © Charles Freeman

Other photo contest winners included Abigail Murray, Amanda Dotson, Harrison Saunders, Richard Gaines, Hal Mohrlök, Sally Baulch, Beth Pickett, and David Hawkins. Their photos are included in the 2017 SAC Calendar.

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES 2017

www.sachome.org

Many thanks to the contest photographers for showcasing the terrific views of our historic cemeteries. Thank you also goes out to all of you who voted on the photos.

Speaker Event: Chapel Rehabilitation Project by Megan Spencer and Leslie Wolfenden

The Oakwood Cemetery Chapel rehabilitation project is underway! You can see ropes and some orange cones in the area just in front of the Chapel. The road in front of the chapel is closed to through traffic. Please use caution in this area. The rehabilitation project is being done by Dallas-based firm Gadberry General Contracting & Construction with Scott Rider overseeing the project. Kim McKnight, PARD Cultural Resource Manager, and Kevin Johnson, PARD CIP Project Management, gave us the eight-month timeline for the project. Work began in October 2016 and (amazingly) the entire project will be complete in Summer 2017.



Funds for the rehabilitation project came from a 2012 bond along with a decision to make the Chapel a top priority. The total budget is \$1,077,000. Other good news is that the Chapel will be on a schedule of preventative maintenance provided by the city’s Department of Asset Management.

At press time, so far at the chapel, the windows and doors have been removed to have paint stripped and parts repaired (top left image). The old buckled concrete floor has been removed as has the soil underneath in preparation for drilling foundation pier holes. Some interesting things came to light during the rehab process, such as finding wall slots where wood floor joists would have been (so the chapel originally had a wood floor, rather than concrete; bottom right image) and an infilled arch above the existing large arch between the nave and the tower room (top right image). We are not quite sure what the purpose of this infilled arch was – perhaps a relieving arch, perhaps a design change. The interior non-historic walls have been removed, opening up the interior from front to back so the curved triangle window on the back wall is now visible from the front. In the alcove area (where the restroom used to be), the stuccoed wall ends at a sharp line, indicating the height of the former stage as well as where the stage steps used to be (bottom left image). These are just some of the surprises that makes working on historic buildings so interesting and potentially difficult.



We look forward to the transformation of Oakwood Chapel. A “ribbon cutting” ceremony will be held sometime next summer. This is becoming a reality because of volunteers and local experts who have long supported SAC’s grassroots efforts to preserve Austin’s historic cemeteries. How true the proverb: Good things come to those who wait.

Generations in Oakwood: Marie de Casis by Jon Todd "JT" Koenig

Marie de Casis, as she was known in her adult life, was born on October 22, 1832 in the city of Düsseldorf, Germany, which at the time was part of the Kingdom of Prussia. She was the youngest child of her father, Eduard Wilhelm Hieronimus Maximilian Sack (1794-1866) and his first wife, Dorothea Catharina Elisabeth Sack nee Ficker (1799-1832).

The Sack family was a well-to-do and well-connected family in Prussia; at the time of Marie's birth, Eduard was serving as the Regierungsrath and Justiziar to the Directorate of Köln, which was the equivalent of being Chief Counsel and Legal Advisor to the local authority of that region of the Prussian Kingdom. Immediately prior to Marie's birth, her father had served as the Chief Prosecutor for Düsseldorf. Marie's mother, who sadly died as a result of giving birth to Marie, was likewise from an important patrician family, the Ficker/van Hemmis family of Paderborn and Osnabruck, Germany.

Marie was one of twenty-three children of her father, by two wives, yet was deeply loved by her father, being the youngest child of his first wife. She was afforded a highly intense education in Düsseldorf, as were all of her many siblings, and like many of her sisters, of whom there were nine who lived into adulthood, she studied music, art, and literature. It would be some of those sisters who would later cause Marie to ultimately emigrate to Texas. Also like a number of her sisters, and as was deemed highly unusual for the time, Marie was also afforded the privilege of travel. One of those destinations was the island of Jamaica, and it is there in Kingston on February 23, 1867 that Marie married a native of Kingston, Jose Marie Salome de Casis (1822-1888).



Marie and Jose resided in Kingston through the full extent of their marriage, and were blessed with two daughters: Maria Louise Charlotte Lelia "Lilia" de Casis (1869-1947) and Josephine Ramona Wilhelmine de Casis (1873-1947), both of whom were born in Kingston. She was widowed when her husband died in Kingston at the age of 65 on June 16, 1888, and it was shortly thereafter in 1890 that Marie and her daughters emigrated to Texas via Galveston in August of that same year.

The reason for her emigration to Texas was due to the fact that she had family in Texas at that time as her eldest sister Otilie Sack Ploeger's family was living in Round Top, as was her closest sister in age, Theodore "Dorchen" Sack von Rosenberg (1829-1904) and her family. Marie first settled in Round Top and lived with her sister Dorchen and her husband Carl Eugen von Rosenberg (1830-1913), and then later she moved a few miles away, living in Warrenton in Fayette County, where she and her daughters taught lessons to the community's children. It was there in Warrenton that Marie passed away two years after her arrival at the relative young age of 59 on July 26, 1892.

After their mother's death, in 1894, Marie's daughters relocated to the thriving and bustling capital city of Austin, where they followed their mother's path and became full-fledged educators. Lilia Casis, as she was then known, became a tutor and then professor at the University of Texas, where she later became the school's first tenured female instructor. Josephine taught at Austin's Palm School for 33 years. Casis Elementary School in the AISD is named in honor of these two pioneer educators, and it was these two sisters who ultimately caused their mother, Marie de Casis nee Sack to be buried in Oakwood Cemetery. Lilia and Josephine are buried in the newer cemetery, Oakwood Annex, across the street.

Jon Todd "JT" Koenig is the current president of the von Rosenberg Family of Texas and a member of the Sack Family of America.

Remembering Danny Camacho at the Mexic-Arte Museum's "Community Altars" Exhibit by Megan Spencer

Our friend, Danny Camacho, is honored at Mexic-Arte Museum in an exhibit entitled, *Community Altars: A Celebration of Life*. It is the museum's 33rd Annual Celebration of *Día de Los Muertos*. This year, community groups, families, and individuals were invited to create an altar to remember a special Latina/o or Mexican who has passed away. I spent a rainy Sunday afternoon at the museum and took it all in slowly. Some altars were traditional and others very contemporary. Some of them made me laugh, but they all had something to teach. Every altar spoke to the heart, and when I left the exhibit, I felt I somehow knew these people.



Danny's traditional altar was built by Mexic-Arte with Danny's sisters, Dolly Camacho Watson and Darlene Camacho. It was covered in yellow, gold, and white and displayed many objects that told Danny's story. An informative placard next to the altar introduced Danny, mentioning his love for the forgotten stories of Mexican-Americans who came to Austin long ago, as well as his role as a strong advocate for Mexican-American families in East Austin.

What I thought was particularly touching was hearing Danny's voice and seeing his image projected on a screen near his altar, where he told the story of his Great Great Grandmother, Pilar Nava Luna, whose family (three generations) was one of the first Mexican families to live in downtown Austin. The video project was created by Mexic-Arte Museum in partnership with the Austin History Center & Photography Collection. *Austin's Mexico: A Forgotten Downtown Neighborhood* highlights a culturally important Mexican community. Danny's altar was a fine tribute!



“Urban Sketchers Austin” Check in at MMM by Beth Pickett

Attending MMM this year were about twenty members of Urban Sketchers Austin, a chapter of Urban Sketchers International. What is Urban Sketching? It is an interest shared worldwide by sketchers who want to capture the world as it is happening, in scenes small and large, especially in urban environments. Their motto is “See the world one drawing at a time.”

The Austin sketchers met at the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel to set a quick game plan, then they set off in all directions for a couple of hours to record the morning in their sketchbooks, using pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, or any other media they chose before meeting up again to share their work. Ellen Simpson, one of the group’s coordinators, captured the scene below at one of the tour stops. One of Ellen’s sketches of Oakwood is seen here.

For more sketches of MMM and the group’s recent work, find “Urban Sketchers Austin” on Facebook. To learn more about Urban Sketchers, go to urbansketchers.org. Internationally, Urban Sketchers chapters are loosely organized, but they do hold a symposium annually in a different country each year. The Austin group meets once or twice a month at locations in and around the city. Sketchers of all levels are welcome to participate, and, although most sketchers share their work, sharing is not required at all. The object is to see Austin in a new way, record our urban environment in sketches, and practice sketching skills with a relaxed group of people.

Like all of us, Urban Sketchers Austin had a great time at MMM. Not only did the picturesque monuments and beautiful trees of Oakwood make lovely subjects, but the costumed actors and enthusiastic visitors provided excellent practice for sketching people. As for me, I am a member of both SAC and Urban Sketchers Austin and had hoped to do some sketching myself at MMM. As I suspected, however, I put pen and brush to paper only briefly before being called to tour guide duty, which of course I was happy to perform. I think I can persuade Urban Sketchers Austin to join us at MMM again, so maybe I will work in a sketch next year.



Potential New Kiosk for Oakwood Cemetery by Sally Victor

On October 12, 2016, SAC Vice-President Sally Victor attended an Austin Parks Foundation (APF) Grant Information Class at Terrazas Library. John Rooney led the class of about fifteen people. During a meeting with the City of Austin concerning the renovations of the Oakwood Chapel, APF was mentioned as a potential source of funding for a new kiosk. Kim McKnight showed us some quick designs drawn by their engineering staff. She estimated that it would cost about \$6,000.

To my surprise, I found out that there is an Austin City Limits Music Festival Grants Program. A portion of each ticket sold goes to projects on parks and green space owned and managed by the City of Austin Parks & Recreation Department (PARC). The grants are for physical improvements to parks, including such items as playscapes, pavilions, benches, trees, trails, trash cans, and interpretive signage to name a few types of projects. Funding levels range from a minimum of \$500 to a maximum of \$100,000. Preference is given to projects with

a strong matching component, including volunteer labor as well as a substantial cash match from fundraising. There are two deadlines per year for grant applications April 30th and September 30th. Depending upon the renovation schedule, SAC can apply for either deadline in 2017.

Projects sponsored by Adopt-A-Park groups, neighborhood associations, and park stakeholder groups can apply for grants. A new kiosk at Oakwood Cemetery would fit nicely into Community Grants that are funded between \$5,000 and \$50,000. APF is looking for “shovel-ready” projects that include engineering drawings, landscaping, cost estimates, etc. SAC would have twelve months to complete the project.

During our recent MMM at Oakwood Cemetery, John Rooney visited and was able to see the public participation and volunteers that make our annual tours so popular. The SAC project may not be a slam-dunk, but it certainly fits the profile for an APF grant.

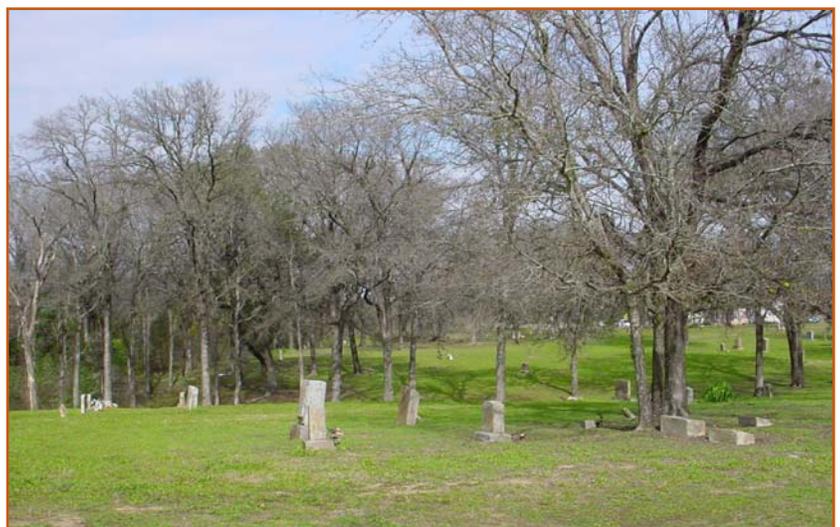
African-American Cemeteries: A Story of Neglect and Opportunity by Haile Eshe Cole, PhD

Efforts to commemorate, clean, and maintain African-American cemeteries are taking off across the nation. In the recent news, states such as Virginia, Florida, Georgia, and Texas, to name a few, have been recognized for their efforts to save these cemeteries. In addition to the emotional and familial ties to these places, preservation organizations and communities at large are also acknowledging their historic and cultural significance. On the one hand, there is the issue of the absence and erasure of African-American culture and history from the written historical record. On the other hand, we have contemporary economic, political, and social shifts occurring that increasingly displace African-American families from historically black neighborhoods. This being the case, African-American cemeteries then, become important locales of historic and cultural memory, and key sites in which their maintenance and existence become mechanisms to (re)claim black space. This is an important piece to all of the efforts to preserve African-American cemeteries but is also important right here in Austin, Texas.

With the changing demographic shifts in Austin, and the declining numbers of black residents, remembering the rich history of black East Austin remains increasingly important. Six Square: Austin’s Black Cultural District seeks to not only contribute to these national efforts to preserve African-American cemeteries with their upcoming “Homecoming” event, but also calls residents to remember the legacies of black East Austin and return home to celebrate these memories.



The Homecoming is a two-part event. The first part scheduled for November 4 will include a symposium with key scholars focusing on sacred burial places and African-American cemeteries. This event is scheduled to be held on the campus of Huston-Tillotson University. The second part of the event, scheduled to be held mid-to-late Spring, will include the ritual and physical cleaning of both Plummers and Bethany cemeteries and continues with a processional, concert, and “family reunion” picnic in Givens Park.



To those families and individuals who have left Austin, “Homecoming” offers an opportunity to come home to their cultural touchstone. To all, this event provides a space to help maintain significant historic and cultural sites and to honor and commemorate the rich legacies of black East Austinites. Although this is not the first community event aimed at maintaining the local black cemeteries, it is another opportunity in the wake of a rapidly changing East Austin, to be a part of a community that collectively asserts that locally, African-African sacred grounds will neither be abandoned nor forgotten.

For more information on this event or to help with the planning, please contact Donald King at donald@sixsquare.org. Families and friends with loved ones laid to rest at Bethany or Plummers cemeteries are also welcome to submit pictures or stories to be honored during the event. Please submit photos to eshe@sixsquare.org.

Permission to reprint this article was granted by Haile Eshe Cole, PhD, Anthropologist and Writer. The original article can be found at www.sixsquare.org.

Membership Drive by Leslie Wolfenden

It is that time of year again – time to renew your SAC membership! SAC offers individual annual (\$35), senior and student (\$25), family (\$50), and individual lifetime (\$500) membership levels. Membership term runs from January to December. Members receive the SAC quarterly e-newsletter, may vote in officer elections, and may hold office. **Best of all, members support SAC's programs and preservation efforts!** Read on to see what SAC accomplishes with SAC membership support.

- SAC has worked hard for over a decade with the City Staff, contractors, and master plan team to help craft the adopted Cemetery Master Plan and SAC will continue to monitor and assist with implementation and preservation projects. The preservation projects laid out in the Cemetery Master Plan will in the future require public bonds/Capital Improvement Projects funds that have to be voted on and accepted by Austin taxpayers.
- The Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Rehabilitation project is now underway. This is a CIP project. SAC paid for a Building Condition Assessment Report, materials testing (for lead and asbestos), a geotechnical report for assessing the type of soil under the chapel and foundation engineering in preparation for foundation stabilization, and led grassroots efforts to let the city know how important this charming building is to the history of Oakwood Cemetery and to the city itself.
- We become a point of contact for families who are out of the area and who do not know who or how to contact the City of Austin Cemetery Division.
- With our free tours given several times a year and our public outreach programs like headstone cleaning, lot documenting, and guest speakers, we help reintroduce the city cemeteries to the public, tell your family stories, and impress upon the visitors that our public cemeteries are outdoor museums.
- The city has a research fee. We do not. In many cases, SAC volunteers help with photos and research. We also collect family stories and photographs, and we highlight these family stories through educational outreach programs that remind us that the City Cemeteries occupy an important place in Austin's heritage.

The SAC 2017 Membership form can be found at the end of this newsletter or on our website at www.sachome.org. Please join us or renew today!

Interested in Using GPS to Locate Unmarked Graves in a Family Lot? By Terri Mirka

Save Austin's Cemeteries plans to have GPR (Ground Penetrating Radar) used to identify ideal locations for some improvements being planned at Oakwood Cemetery. GPR is a geophysical method that uses radar pulses to image what is underground and can be used to pinpoint where remains may be buried within lots.

Several SAC members have expressed interest in having GPR used in their family lots to determine locations of unmarked graves. If you are also interested in having this done in your family lot (and sharing costs), please contact SAC at events.sac@gmail.com. The date and costs will be determined at the beginning of 2017 after we are able to fully scope this project based on interest.

SAC on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter

You can follow Save Austin's Cemeteries on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. These links will take you to Save Austin's Cemeteries.

Facebook (link to: <https://www.facebook.com/SaveAustinsCemeteries/>)

Instagram (link to: <https://www.instagram.com/save.atx.cemeteries/>)

Twitter (link to: <https://twitter.com/SaveATXCemetery/>)

Submit an Article to the SAC E-newsletter

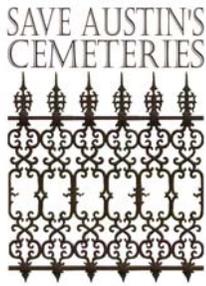
If you would like to submit an article to the SAC e-newsletter, please send your article or idea to info@sachome.org.

Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events!

Dec 3	Photo Documentation Day at Oakwood Cemetery at 1:00 pm
Jan 7	Photo Documentation Day at Oakwood Cemetery at 1:00 pm
Feb 4	Photo Documentation Day at Oakwood Cemetery at 1:00 pm

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



SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

2017 Membership (January to December)

Save Austin's Cemeteries is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution to Save Austin's Cemeteries.

- \$ 35 Individual
- \$ 25 Student (with copy of current ID)
- \$ 25 Senior (60+ years of age)
- \$ 50 Family
- \$500 Lifetime Membership
- \$ ____ Other (_____)

- My check is enclosed (please make check payable to Save Austin's Cemeteries and mail to PO Box 16411, Austin, Texas 78761)
- I prefer to charge my membership (go to <http://www.sachome.org/join/member.html> to use your credit card or PayPal)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone (optional; check preferred number)

Cell: _____

Home: _____

Yes No Do you have ancestors buried at any of the city cemeteries?
If yes, which ones?

AMP Annex Evergreen Oakwood Plummers

Yes No I am interested in more information about volunteering for SAC projects and events. I would like to learn more/assist with:

- headstone preservation/restoration
- multi-media
- video production
- newsletter stories
- photography
- tours
- website development
- historical research