

Save Austin's Cemeteries Summary of Accomplishments (2004-2018)

2004 – Dale Flatt organized and filed the charter to incorporate Save Austin's Cemeteries.

2005 – SAC installed the first kiosk posting maps and information about Oakwood and the Annex. SAC worked with the University of Texas on the detailed Oakwood/Austin Cultural Landscape Report which became the basis for the City of Austin Master Plan finalized in 2015.

2006 – SAC offered several tours at Oakwood including Remembrance Day, History, German families, and tombstone cleaning demonstration.

2007 – SAC began photo documenting all of Oakwood Cemetery tombstones. The Oakwood Chapel restoration project was initiated with SAC receiving a grant for a structural condition assessment from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. SAC introduced the first Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure (MMM) Tour highlighting the lives and dramatic deaths of Austin's early citizens. Other tours covered people of German heritage and specific topics for a genealogy class.

2008 – SAC continued the extensive tombstone photo documentation and conducted tours of prominent residents on Main Street, Texas Independence Day history stories and MMM. A storm tore through Austin, leaving downed trees and branches across Oakwood Cemetery and Oakwood Cemetery Annex. Volunteers converged on Oakwood Cemetery to clean up, bagging over 85 bags of debris.

2009 – SAC received a generous grant from "The Charles and Betti Saunders Foundation" and used the funds engineering design plans for the Oakwood Chapel. SAC also initiated a Feasibility Study for the chapel restoration with Heismath Architects – which completed this extensive work *pro bono* in 2011. SAC hosted a wide variety of guest speakers and events on headstone conservation, Juneteenth (with the George Washington Carver Museum), Jewish cemetery customs, and old-technique photography and held the 3rd annual MMM Tour.

2010 – SAC participated in our first participation in Austin Park's Foundation's "It's My Park Day" with a clean-up effort at Plummers Cemetery and Givens Park. Tours included MMM IV, Austin's Founding Families, and "Putting Their Mark on Austin--the people who built the places you love" with Austin's most recognizable places – Zilker, Bergstrom, Kerbey and others. We began the Inaugural Photo Contest and the SAC Calendar with the winning photos. SAC guest speakers covered the Mier Expedition, minorities & discrimination as seen in historic burials, video biographies, and the Littlefield Family.

2011 – SAC hosted a fundraising dinner for Inherit Austin at Oakwood and participated in its first Austin Museum Partnership's Austin Museum Day and our second "It's My Park Day." We also hosted a session of the Texas Historical Commission's annual conference. Our guest speaker included long-time preservationist and architect Wayne Bell, FAIA who discussed Miss Ima Hogg and Austin historian Phoebe Allen on the unique marble lot at Oakwood and its families. Tours included the 5th annual MMM event and an Abner Cook walking tour of Oakwood residents who had historic homes built by Cook.

2012 – SAC and the City of Austin received a grant to restore the historic building at Oakwood Cemetery Annex. We offered programs on symbolism in the cemetery, cemetery stone types, and research and preservation work at Bull Hill Cemetery and the work done for outreach to the African American Cemetery. Tours included the racially diverse Section Four of Oakwood, Texas Heritage Event, and the 6th Annual MMM tour. SAC again participated in the city-wide Austin Museum Day and continued with its fifth year of the Oakwood photo documentation project.

2013 – SAC helped fund the restoration of the Oakwood Cemetery Annex which got a new roof, windows, and door. SAC participated in “It’s My Park Day”, Museum Day, the 7th annual MMM Tour and continued with gravestone photo documenting and the calendar photography contest. SAC also presented its second annual Texas Heritage Day: Six Degrees of Connection showcasing heritage organizations, various skills, guest speakers, and walking tours.

2014—SAC continued to work with the City of Austin in the development of the Cemetery Master Plan and published the book “Austin’s Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol.” Our public events were a book bash, the 8th MMM, It’s My Park Day and Museum Day. SAC also introduced virtual tours starting with Black History Month by using sign posts with a short biography, photo, and QR (Quick Reader) codes for visitors to access additional information via a smart phone. SAC introduced “One Grave at a Time” cleaning and restoration project and continued with our annual photo contest, the 7th year of photo documenting all the gravestones at Oakwood, and our speaker series.

2015 – SAC was recognized for its significant contributions to the completed Austin Cemetery Master Plan after working for ten years with the City Staff, contractors, and master plan team to help craft the plan. SAC tours included a new Mother’s Day tour featuring women highlighted in the Oakwood book, Museum Day tours, and our 9th annual MMM tour. Our speaker series featured presentations on Susannah Dickinson Hanning and how to use Google Earth and other tools. We continued with our annual photo contest and monthly photo documentation sessions during the cooler months.

2016 – SAC’s public events were “It’s My Park Day” (at 3 cemeteries), Museum Day tour, the 10th MMM tour, and a self-guided tours with QR (Quick Response) Codes on Texas Independence participants. Our speaker series featured Bobby Cervantes on his preservation work of the Sneed Mansion built in the 1850s and Austin Cemetery Manager Tonja Walls-Davis on preplanning for a death. In May 2016, we celebrated the life of our friend and colleague Danny D. Camacho, who passed away April 27 and is missed every day. We continued with our 7th annual photo contest and 9th year of our monthly photo documentation sessions during the cooler months. SAC also conducted extensive tests with D/2 Biological Cleaning solution on our own family-owned headstones, and the initial results were very impressive

2017 – SAC’s continued our annual events with two “It’s My Park Day” events, the 11th MMM tour, and both guided and self-guided tours for Museum Day, our 8th annual photo content, and the 10th year of our photo documentation project. Our speaker series featured two screenings of the “Last of the Moonlight Towers” presented by Jeffrey Kerr. SAC also launched a comprehensive gravestone cleaning project using D/2 Biological Cleaning solution and has completed the cleaning of about 400 gravestones, with an initial focus on the Community Grounds area near the Oakwood chapel. We represented SAC at important meetings with the City of Austin on Oakwood chapel burials, cemetery rules revisions, and the conditions of gravestones at Oakwood. Our website was completely revamped and updated, and we’ve relaunched our Instagram and Twitter accounts!

2018 – SAC continued the same annual events and projects from 2017, developed content for a Texas Independence tour, and hosted Robin Grace Thompson-Soto of Flower Hill Foundation for the speaker series. We celebrated the opening of PARD’s newly restored Oakwood Chapel in August after we launched the project 11 years ago. The Oakwood photo documentation project is now 85% complete, and over 1,000 gravestones have been cleaned. SAC also developed a docent and volunteer program with the Parks & Recreation Department for pilot launch in 2019.