



# SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

## Fall 2011 Newsletter

### Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

Beth Pickett, President  
Kay Boyd, Vice President  
Leslie Wolfenden, Secretary  
Barbara Surles, Treasurer

### Inside this Issue:

5<sup>th</sup> Annual Murder, Mayhem &  
Misadventure Walking Tour

October 8, 2011 Annual Meeting

Inherit Austin Dinner

Austin Museum Day

Lakeway Antiques Club Walking  
Tour

2011 Photo Contest

Cemetery Symbolism

Littig Cemetery Dedication

Within Six Degrees of Connection:  
Texas Heritage

Photo-documentation Sessions  
Resume at Oakwood

### 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure Walking Tour by Beth Pickett

Indeed! On October 29<sup>th</sup>, over 500 intrepid souls braved our fifth annual Halloween walking tour, so aptly titled "Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure." The pleasant, sunny weather was to die for, and everyone was ready to be spooked by a tale of the famous Servant Girl Annihilator murders and an ill-fated seaside holiday, among other stories of the misbegotten. Danny "Beetlejuice" Camacho, Dale "Gravedigger" Flatt, Sally Victor, and Bob "Ben Thompson" Ward served tirelessly as tour guides, directing group after group of visitors from grave to grave, where each spirit was brought briefly back to life by a very talented actor.

Tours began at 10:00 a.m. and continued nonstop until after 4:00 p.m. At the check-in table, guests signed in and were invited to explore the chapel and the plans for its rehabilitation while they waited for their tours. As always, information about Save Austin's Cemeteries and other literature related to cemeteries and Texas history was available for browsing. At day's end, only crumbs remained of the array of delicious cookies and cupcakes provided by volunteers.

Each spirit on the tour was represented by two actors, one for the first half of the tours and one for the second half. The cast included: Bob Ward and Dave Sullivan for *Ben Thompson*; Anne Shelton and Julia Wall for *the Clarksons*; Monty Newton and Kevin McKenzie for *the Hopkins*; Peggy Schott and Madi Ward for *Elias Oelnick*; Mary Baughman and Laura Luna for *Susannah Dickinson Hannig*; Karen Jager and Danielle Ruth for *Susan Hancock*; and Iris Baughman and

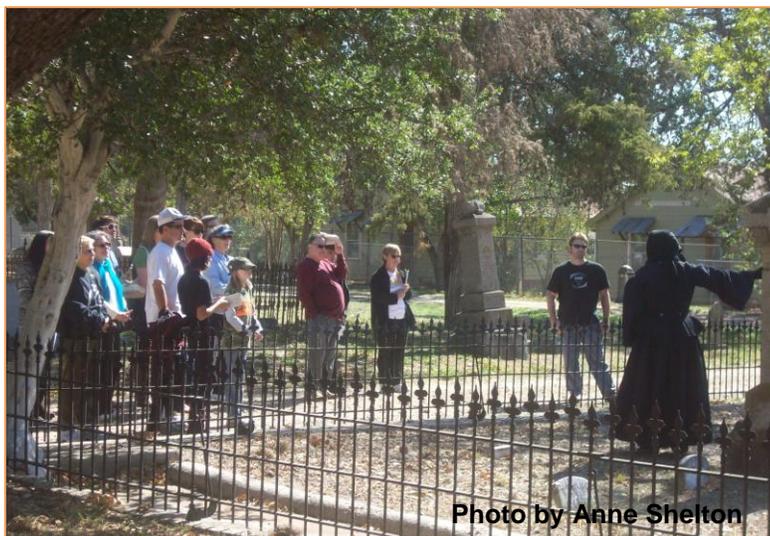
Dora Esquivel for *Clara Caswell*. Thank you to all of the actors for their outstanding performances, with a special nod to Bob and Angie Ward for assembling and managing the troupe. Danny Camacho and Kay Boyd researched and wrote the scripts.



Photo by Beth Pickett

Many thanks are also in order for the greeters at the check-in table and volunteers who baked or otherwise provided their unique talents: Alan Wolfenden, Angie Ward, Anne Shelton, Barbara Surles, Beth Pickett, Erin Williams, Jan Root, Kathleen Wolfenden, Kay Boyd, Leslie Wolfenden, Loretta Holland, Michael Guidry, Megan Spencer, and Melinda Ferrell.

Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure gets better and better every year and rightly holds its place as our signature event. Again, thanks to everyone, and we'll see you next year for a frightfully good time!



### October 8, 2011 Annual Meeting by Leslie Wolfenden

Save Austin's Cemeteries held its annual meeting at the chapel at Oakwood Cemetery on October 8. SAC members voted for a bylaw amendment, which allows the Board to set the due date and fees and membership levels without having to call for a special meeting or waiting for the next annual meeting. This was approved unanimously.

SAC also held Board of Directors elections. Two board members had to rotate out of their current positions as SAC bylaws state that the maximum a person can serve in one position is two consecutive two-year terms; this affected Dale Flatt (Treasurer) and myself (President). The newly elected Board of Directors is as follows:

- Beth Pickett, President
- Kay Boyd, Vice President
- Leslie Wolfenden, Secretary
- Barbara Surles, Treasurer

On behalf of the SAC board, I would like to recognize Dale's efforts on the board in various positions since 2004. Dale plans to remain actively involved in SAC so his experience and knowledge will still be around for SAC and other cemetery groups in the Travis County area. Thank you Dale for your time and commitment to SAC!

I gave a summary update of SAC events over the past year, which included the following events:

- Hosted a cemetery tour to Plummers and Oakwood cemeteries on 10/29/10 for the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** annual conference.
- Hosted the **Texas Art Educators Association** on 11/13/10 at Oakwood with a symbolism presentation by Sally Victor and tour for its annual conference.
- Hosted a photo-documentation how-to session for the **Texas Historical Commission's** annual conference on April 2, 2011.
- Hosted a **walking tour** featuring Austin's Master Builder Abner Cook, the homes he built, and the families who lived in them on April 30, 2011.
- Participated in the Austin Museum Partnership's **Austin Museum Day** at Oakwood on September 25, 2011.

SAC also recognized its volunteers who put in numerous hours over the year. For 2010, SAC volunteers contributed over 1,900 hours, worth almost \$40,000! For the first six months of this year, SAC volunteers have

done over 1,000 hours, worth over \$23,000. Certain volunteers went above and beyond the call of duty and these people were individually recognized for their efforts. These people are:

- Adam Levy of Round Rock Films for his video footage of the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Project and Save Austin's Cemeteries Volunteers.
- Bob Tieman for his transference of SAC's accounting system into QuickBooks.
- Danny Camacho for his continuing commitment to keeping history alive and well in Austin's historic city cemeteries.
- Eva and Hal Mohrlök for their headstone documentation efforts at Oakwood Cemetery and recordings of SAC events.
- Sally Victor for her public outreach presentations on cemetery symbolism and iconography.

These volunteers received a certificate of appreciation and had the chance to have their names drawn to win a *Stories in Stone* book on symbolism or a SAC tote bag; these items were won by Bob Tieman and Eva Mohrlök respectively.

### **Inherit Austin Dinner** by Dale Flatt and Beth Pickett

On Sunday, October 23, SAC helped host Inherit Austin's "Somewhere in Time" dinner event at Oakwood Cemetery. For the catered Halloween-themed fundraiser, the center of Oakwood was aglow with wine, food, and candlelight under a large tent on Main Avenue. Over one hundred guests attended. The highlight of the evening occurred before dinner, when all of the guests were treated to walking tours given by Bob Ward, Dale Flatt, Danny Camacho, and Sally Victor. This is the first time that an event like this has been held at Oakwood. It was a magical evening and Oakwood made lots of new friends in the Heritage Society.



Photo by Susan Roads

Many of the guests were long-time residents of Austin but had never visited Oakwood before. Many were surprised to learn about its rich history, as well as its maintenance issues and struggles. They were especially interested in the future plans for the chapel. Many agreed that developing the space for concerts, meetings, and educational programs is a wonderful idea. This kind of community buy-in and support is so important. SAC will benefit from a portion of the evening's proceeds, but more importantly, as we move forward, this event will serve as a precedent as we expand our programs to other groups in order to increase awareness and plant the seeds of preservation.

### **Austin Museum Day** by Kay Boyd

On a hot September 25 Sunday, Save Austin's Cemeteries participated in Austin Museum Day for the first time. Our name and location were listed in the newspaper along with many other venues around town that had

planned activities for the day. Knowing the cemetery tours were outside in the heat, several people came before the 10:00 a.m. opening time ready for a tour. Approximately 50 visitors signed in between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Almost everyone wanted to go on a walking tour. Some were eager to learn more about the chapel, while a few were looking for family burial locations. Bob Ward, Dale Flatt, and Kay Boyd led tours until the heat forced us to decide that it was time to quit. Beth Pickett and Leslie Wolfenden served as docents in the chapel. We were pleased with the turnout as we didn't quite know what to expect. Next year, we will probably offer tours at stated times to larger groups. This was another successful event for the group in 2011.

### Lakeway Antiques Club Walking Tour by Leanne DuPay

A gravedigger and a dapper zombie gave the women of the Lakeway Antiques Club a hauntingly good tour of Oakwood Cemetery on October 21. For their October meeting, the club asked if Save Austin's Cemeteries would host a tour and provide some tales of early Austin as well as interesting facts about the monuments. Everyone was delighted by Dale and Danny's costumes and "spirited" approach to the event. Lots of questions were asked and many surprising answers given. The phrases, "wow," "you're kidding," and "I just got the chills" were spoken throughout the morning.



Photos by  
Leanne DuPay

Leanne DuPay, president of the Lakeway Antiques Club presented SAC with a \$500 donation toward the chapel restoration project. "Our club believes in preserving and honoring the past," DuPay said. "SAC is a natural fit for our donation."

The club served their refreshments in the chapel as they learned about all of the repairs needed (whew, quite the punch list). Pumpkin muffins decorated with tombstones and cold water donated by Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Homes hit the spot after wandering among the monuments on a warm fall day in Austin.

## 2011 Photo Contest by Leslie Wolfenden

Save Austin's Cemeteries launched its second annual photo contest that ended on September 1. SAC received 72 terrific photo entries from seventeen talented photographers. Very hotly contested voting ensued, garnering 1,720+ votes! The brand new 2012 SAC calendar contains the twelve most popular photos, available now via the SAC website at <http://www.sachome.org/shop/store.html>. The top twelve winning entries will receive a one-year membership to Save Austin's Cemeteries. Iva Kinnaird entered the top vote-getter, which is featured on the cover of the 2012 calendar. Iva will receive a 2012 calendar, in addition to the one-year SAC membership.

The other winning photos were taken by Abbie Smith-Howe, Angela Stipe, Barbara Surles, Jacquie Wilson, and Susan Lassell.

THANK YOU to all those shutterbugs who entered the contest and CONGRATULATIONS to those photos that received the top votes. Thanks for helping SAC increase public awareness and appreciation of the artistic and cultural value of Austin's city cemeteries.



The Other Side by Iva Kinnaird

## Cemetery Symbolism by Sally Victor

One of the most noted symbols at Oakwood Cemetery is the pair of graves ornamented with shells. It has unfortunately been damaged by thoughtless vandals. The use of shell in burials is pre-Christian in practice and pre-dates even Egyptian burial practices. The shell is symbolic of fertility, resurrection, and pilgrimage. Shells, coins, and small stones are the traditional objects left at grave sites. There are several meanings given to this act. It may be a symbolic referral to the ancient custom of burying the dead under a cairn of rocks to protect the body from scavenging animals, or a reminder that the individual is not forgotten.



Photo by Leslie Wolfenden

If your group is interested in learning about symbolism, please contact SAC to set up a presentation.

## Littig Cemetery Marker Dedication by Bob Ward

On October 1, a representative of Save Austin's Cemeteries, along with members of the Travis County Historical Commission, was present at the dedication of a historical marker at the Littig Cemetery. The Littig cemetery is a historically African-American cemetery located in the east Travis County town of Littig, just east of Manor. Speaking for the Littig Cemetery Association was Willie Mae Martin who provided a history of the town and the cemetery. Her audience consisted of local residents and family members from the community, along with other interested parties.

Littig was an early Texas freedmen's town, founded in 1866 by Jackson Morrow, an ex-slave, who purchased a large part of the plantation from his former owner. The town was named for A. B. Littig, who surveyed the property for the Houston & Texas Central Railway. Mr. Morrow deeded five acres of land within the town of Littig to establish a railroad, a spur, and a switch right-of-way. By 1887, local land owner J. W. Bitting donated land for a church and school, which was funded through the Rosenwald Foundation. George Morrow, Alex Alexander, and Andrew J. Campbell purchased two acres of land for the cemetery on September 21, 1891, from Thomas B. and Mary E. Fowler, for the sum of \$40.00. The cemetery was originally associated with three African-American churches that once existed in the community

The earliest legible headstone is that of Abba Moore, dated 1840-1895. There are many marked graves inside the cemetery, including some with homemade tombstones and an additional number of unmarked graves. There are former slaves buried in the Littig cemetery, including the town's founder, Jackson Morrow, his wife, and other Morrow family members. It was designated a Historic Texas Cemetery in December, 2006 and continues to serve as a burial site for the community of Littig.

## Within Six Degrees of Connection: Texas Heritage by Leslie Wolfenden

Save Austin's Cemeteries has teamed up with several local history-oriented organizations to host a Heritage Day at Oakwood Cemetery on March 24. This event is titled "Within Six Degrees of Connection: Texas Heritage" that focuses on the settlers of Austin and Texas during the 1800s. The Six Degrees of Connection idea came from discussions where everything and everyone in Austin seemed to be connected in one way or another – akin to the "Six Degrees to Kevin Bacon." The organizations involved in the planning stages include Preservation Texas, Heritage Society of Austin, German-Texan Heritage Society, Neill-Cochran House Museum, and Save Austin's Cemeteries. The date was chosen to tie in with Preservation Texas' Preservation Summit, a biennial conference for those invested in preserving the historic places of Texas.

The basic premise of the event is to educate the public about our great Texas heritage, make the connections between historical sites and people to the cemetery, get in touch with descendants, and appeal to a wide range of folks. Tents and tables will be set up at Oakwood Cemetery where history-oriented non-profits can showcase their organizations and events. The chapel will have guest speakers presenting on a variety of topics scheduled throughout the day in the chapel. Demonstrations will be held in the cemetery that may include headstone cleaning, lacemaking, papercutting, quilting, etc. Small musical groups playing period music will provide atmosphere. Two scavenger hunts will be set up: one in the cemetery and the other that goes into the city to emphasize the connections between Oakwood and heritage sites.

Non-profit organizations tend to struggle in getting the word out to the public about their various events. By pooling our resources and knowledge, we hope to reach a wider audience, raise awareness of our groups, and educate the public while having a great time, resulting in a win-win for all participants.

If your history-oriented non-profit group would like to participate or if you know of a potential sponsor, please let us know at [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org).

See you on March 24 at Oakwood Cemetery!

## Photo-documentation Sessions Resume at Oakwood by Megan Spencer

After a brutally hot summer, photo-documentation sessions have resumed at Oakwood Cemetery. We mostly wrapped up Section 1 in the Spring; volunteers Eva and Hal Mohrlök are using their experience to finish Section 1 in the Old Grounds area, which is more difficult as the graves there are off the grid pattern seen in the rest of the cemetery. We are now working in Section 2. Volunteers have completed 25% of Oakwood Cemetery. The next documentation session is December 3<sup>rd</sup> at 1:00 p.m.

## 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!

December 3	Photo Documentation Session 1:00 p.m. at Oakwood Cemetery
January 7, 2012	Photo Documentation Session 1:00 p.m. at Oakwood Cemetery
January 14, 2012	Symbolism in the Cemetery: Guest speaker Sally Victor on symbolism 10:30 a.m. at North Village Branch Library on Steck Ave
February 4, 2012	Photo Documentation Session 1:00 p.m. at Oakwood Cemetery
March 3, 2012	Photo Documentation Session 1:00 p.m. at Oakwood Cemetery
March 24, 2012	Six Degrees of Connection: Texas Heritage Heritage Day at Oakwood Cemetery
April 7, 2012	Photo Documentation Session 1:00 p.m. at Oakwood Cemetery

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