



## Save Austin's Cemeteries Fall 2014 Newsletter

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### 8th Annual Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure Walking Tour by Megan Spencer

Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure? How about a little mischief too? There was some of that going on! It was a marvelous day, a little hot for a late October afternoon, but no one seemed to mind. We had more than 300 visitors and we received more than \$2,000 from donations and sales of our book, *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol* and our 2015 calendar. Residents of Section 4 were highlighted for the first time this year. Tour guides led visitors to seven gravesites where costumed actors shared poignant stories of life and death in early Austin. Oakwood residents and the actors who portrayed them included:

Mary Ramey: Rebekka Bryant & Stella Pullin

Nathan Elgin: Harry Eppright & Alvan Angelle

Henry Brock: Warren Friedrich

Ernest Bannerman: Billy Brookshire & Hal Schneider

Margaret Amelia Ankenman: Sandra Annell Fountain & Jackie Baldwin

Mary Heine: Lana Davis

J. Nelson Prowse: Cat McGrath-Farmer & Patty Hundley



Rebekka Bryant and Stella Pullin (left) and Harrison Eppright (right).

SAC could not put on events like MMM without our wonderful volunteers. Huge thanks go out to all of you! Our Tour Guides were Dale Flatt, Danny Camacho, Glen Roen, Karen Eshliman, Ellen Martin and Amy McSmith. Volunteers who helped us set up everything and "run the show" were Eva and Hal Mohrlök, Dorothea Adams, Sally Balch, Lawrence Morgan, Carol Castlebury, Warren Freidrich, Brian Crawford, Lawrence Morgan, and Angie Ward.



Some of our SAC volunteers (left) and the PARD Oakwood Cemetery Chapel drawings (right)

The City of Austin’s Parks & Recreation Department’s Kim McKnight had information regarding the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel’s rehabilitation project on hand, including drawings of the chapel’s elevations.

The SAC Tour Committee is already talking about the next MMM. It’s such a pleasure to meet new people every year who are interested in helping to bring awareness of the need to preserve our city cemeteries. We look forward to seeing everyone next year.

### Math Happens at Oakwood by Megan Spencer

We had a wonderful addition to our MMM event this year. Lauren Siegel, founder of Math Happens, set up a table and she showed visitors how math can be applied to shifting monuments in Oakwood. Supplied with pencils and plumb lines, children (and a few adults, too) collected and recorded data on monument shift. Lauren brought measurement devices (plumb lines) that she designed herself so children could figure out the tilt of the monument without touching it. The plumb-bob was a scary skull, making it even more fun to solve problems. Lauren probably gave away 100 of these devices as gifts! She also included an excellent set of instructions for using the plumb line so kids could continue taking measurements of different things at home. We were so happy to have Lauren there. What a fun way to experience math! Thank you, Lauren! Learn more about how math happens at <http://www.mathhappens.org>

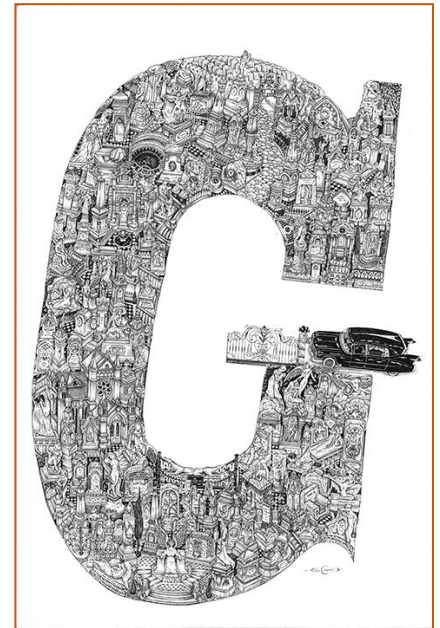




## G is for Graveyard by Kay Boyd

Austin illustrator Chris Celusniak's award winning art has been exhibited on both the east and west coasts. For the past twenty years, Chris has worked on a very interesting project where he is illustrating the alphabet. On a past MMM tour, he was inspired by the stories of the people who inhabit Oakwood and they became part of his latest illustration "G for Graveyards." The Murder, Mayhem and Misadventure walking tour has become a Halloween tradition for Chris and his family. He is fascinated by the actors who tell the story of the people who are interred beneath the beautiful markers and monuments. Just like the actors, Chris tries to tell stories of days gone by in his intricate illustrations. Some of the monuments in the top of the 'G' can be found in Oakwood.

Chris donated 100 of his prints to Save Austin's Cemeteries and we offer these prints to our friends and members at our events. SAC thanks Chris for his generous donation! You can see examples of Chris's work on his website: [www.chriscelusniak.com](http://www.chriscelusniak.com)



## 2014 Photo Contest by Leslie Wolfenden

The 2014 Photo Contest received many terrific images of our historic city cemeteries – many thanks to all the folks who entered. After a hotly contested voting period, Hal Mohrlök's 'Raven' received the most votes. 'Raven' is featured on the cover of our 2015 calendar. The other photo contest winners were Trina DeConcini, David B. Gracy II, David G. Hawkins, Eva Mohrlök, Cindy Nance, Beth Pickett, Barbara Surles, and Anne Wheat. The winners each receive a year SAC membership and the top winner gets the cover of the SAC calendar and a free calendar.

These calendars make great holiday gifts and are a nice way to see images of our historic cemeteries throughout the year. The calendars are available for sale but only as limited stock. Once they are sold out, that is it until next year. Contact [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org) to check availability.

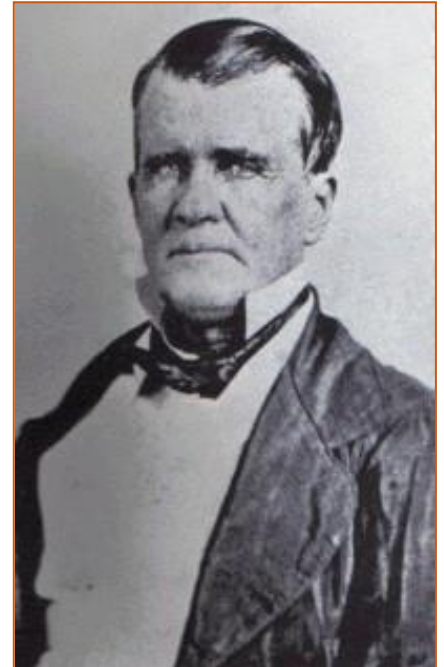


So when you are next out wandering around our lovely cemeteries, be sure to bring along your camera to capture scenic views for next year's photo contest.

## Generations in Oakwood: A Broken Headstone and the Man by Eva Mohrlök

This story begins with volunteers from Save Austin's Cemeteries repairing a broken headstone. The headstone is that of Thomas F. McKinney who is buried in Section Four of Oakwood Cemetery. His headstone fell over and broke in 2013 when gravity took its toll.

Thomas Freeman McKinney was born on November 1, 1801 in Kentucky and died October 2, 1873 at "McKinney Falls," Travis County, Texas. He was the fourth of eleven children of Abraham and Eleanor (Prather) McKinney. McKinney came to Texas in the early 1820s as one of Stephen F. Austin's first 300 colonists.



McKinney's broken headstone (left) and Thomas Freeman McKinney (right)

Thomas McKinney married his first wife Nancy Wilson in 1831, and his second wife Anna Gibbs in 1843. Anna was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1818 and she died December 27, 1896, in Travis County. She is buried next to Thomas in Section Four of Oakwood Cemetery in Austin. No children were born to either marriage of Thomas F. McKinney, thereby leaving no direct descendants. However, his brothers and sister provided plenty of indirect descendants.

McKinney and his business partner, Samuel May Williams, built the largest merchandising and shipping firm in Texas at the time. It also was the first banking institution in Texas. At one point, they owned one-fifth of Galveston Island and built the first pier there. He owned several ships used in the shipping business. When the Texas Revolution broke out, he allowed his ships to be used in the war. He is known as the "Father of the Texas Navy" and he helped finance the Texas Revolution against Mexico. A steamer named *Laura*, owned by McKinney, is thought to have fired the first shot of the Texas Revolution in September 1835. "Some say the schooner *San Felipe* commanded by Thomas F. McKinney fired first. In 1836 the *Laura* forced the first passage through Buffalo Bayou to Houston."



McKinney settled just southwest of Austin where he built his two-story home of limestone and cypress and cedar wood. The wood was found on his property and the limestone probably was quarried from nearby Onion Creek. The size of the house was approximately twenty by forty feet and was built between 1850 and 1852. On this property, he had a horse-race track and raised thoroughbred race horses. He also had his own grist mill.



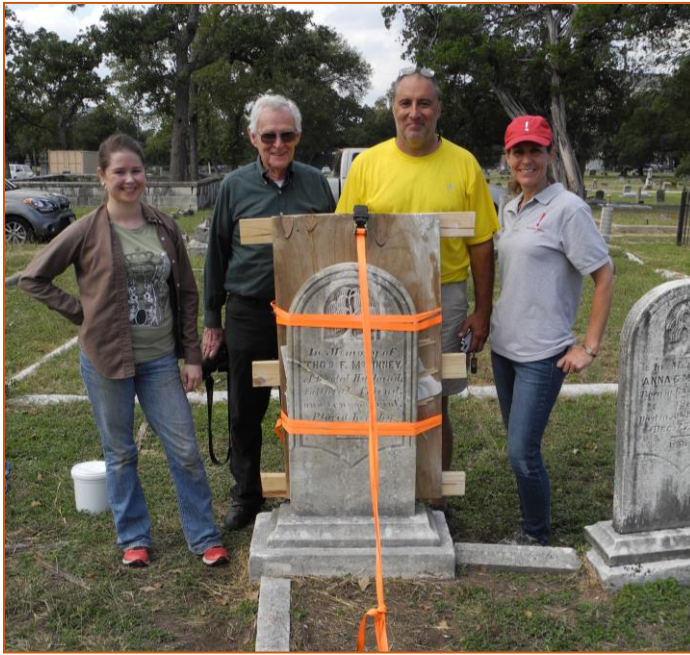
McKinney's homestead at McKinney Falls State Park.

After Thomas McKinney's death, the property was occupied by his surviving wife, Anna Gibbs. Before her death, most of McKinney's land and the house were sold to James W. Smith in 1885. Smith's grandchildren granted 682 acres to the state of Texas in 1974. It opened as McKinney Falls State Park in 1976. The former homestead was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. It has since been stabilized to prevent further deterioration of the stone structure.

Oakwood Cemetery and Oakwood Cemetery Annex are the final resting places for several of Thomas McKinney's extended family. This brings us back to the repair of the McKinney headstone. This project was directed by Kelley Russell, who received her Masters of Science in Historic Preservation from the University of Texas at Austin in 2011 and has experience in preservation in historic cemeteries. SAC volunteers who worked with Kelley on this project were Leslie Wolfenden, Dale Flatt, Charles Clinger, and Harold and Eva Mohrlök.

Repair of a headstone is a lengthy process. These are the steps we followed to complete the project:

- Gained permission to repair the headstone from a member of the extended family, Virginia (Miller) Wood, McKinney's great grand-niece with a signed authorization for repair.
- Removed broken headstone pieces from grave to a repair site behind the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel.
- Cleaned the headstone pieces with special solution for stone.
- Drilled holes for stainless steel rods to support the stone pieces.
- Levelled the headstone base at the gravesite.
- Applied adhesive substance to rods and stones' broken edges.
- Used backboard to support headstone while drying.
- Cleaned base and took base measurements.
- Installed repaired headstone at McKinney's gravesite.



From left to right: Kelley Russell, Harold Mohrlak, Dale Flatt and Leslie Wolfenden (left); repaired Thomas Freeman McKinney headstone (right).

We documented the whole process from start to finish with photographs and video in the hopes of creating a presentation to be posted on the website to assist other volunteers on the proper techniques of repairing old headstones. Stayed tuned.

Many thanks to Kelley Russell for leading this project and lending her conservation expertise.

## Oakwood Cemetery Annex Building Rehabilitation Project by Kim McKnight

The Oakwood Cemetery Annex building rehabilitation project was a joint effort by the City of Austin, Save Austin's Cemeteries, and the Texas Historical Commission.

Built circa early 1920s, the Hugo Kuehne-designed Annex building consists of a small rectangular block with smaller wings on either side. A historical photograph from the Austin History Center indicates that it was called the "Ladies Rest Room." This photograph was used to guide the rehabilitation work.

The Oakwood Cemetery Annex building has long been the focal point at the entrance into Oakwood Cemetery Annex. Designed by architect Hugo Kuehne, it shows signs of Bungalow influence with its overhanging eaves and exposed rafter ends, along with simple wood brackets on the entry gable. The symmetrical building is constructed of light brown





brick on a concrete slab foundation with darker brown brick detailing. Smooth-cut stone sills support the windows. Oakwood Cemetery Annex is an Austin Historic Landmark and a National Register District, of which the Annex building is major contributing resource.

The Annex building was in desperate need of a new roof as the shingles were worn and there were several large holes through the decking. Some of the holes were large enough to allow entry of an adult female vulture, where she laid an egg inside the building! The rafters and brackets had experienced rotting, some to failure.

Working with the architecture firm the Lawrence Group, the City came up with plans for deconstructing and rebuilding the roof structure with appropriate materials and detailing. Working in tandem with the Texas Historical Commission as part of the CLG grant requirement in order to ensure proper rehabilitation work, the dilapidated roof was taken down to its rafters with replacement of any rotted rafters. The rotted rafters were replaced as needed, while others were repaired. The existing asphalt composition shingles were replaced with historically accurate wood shingles, impregnated with fire retardants. Care was taken to replicate details, such as angled cuts on the corner rafters, chamfer cuts on the entry gable, and the replacement pair of brackets supporting the entry gable. The paint color was matched to paint remnants left on the fascia boards.

The City of Austin was awarded for a 2012 federal Certified Local Government grant for \$11,044.00 and also received a grant from the non-profit group Save Austin's Cemeteries for \$4,412. The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department contributed more than \$50,000, which included the expenditures for the hazardous materials abatement, design of a wood shingle roof, and the installation of new windows and front door. The City of Austin Historic Preservation Office managed the grant. Enough money was found towards the end of the project to fund replacement front windows and door, which were duplicated as closely as possible to the historical photograph. Many thanks to everyone involved in the project:



- Kevin Johnson, Project Coordinator, CIP Project Management, PARD, City of Austin
- Kim McKnight, Project Coordinator and Cultural Resource Specialist, PARD, City of Austin
- Alyson McGee, former Deputy Historic Preservation Officer, City of Austin
- Gilbert Hernandez, Cemetery Manager, PARD, City of Austin
- Marcus Watson, Certified Local Government Coordinator, Texas Historical Commission
- Leslie Wolfenden, preservation officer, Save Austin's Cemeteries

## Iris Moore Gravesite by Sally Victor

In 2002, I was working as a historian at PBS&J in Austin Texas when Mr. Devon Wood called in to say that the proposed route of State Highway (SH) 130 (east of Austin) would impact some cemeteries in east Travis County. Sure enough, one of the unmarked grave sites that Mr. Wood showed us was on a hillside adjacent to Moore Road near Elroy, covered with a wide bed of white iris plants. This particular variety of iris is not native to Texas and had to be specially brought in and planted. It is very hearty and can propagate from a rhizome (root). It can survive drought and heavy rain. When folks moved onto a farm or ranch, they often brought plants for landscaping around the homestead and at cemeteries. Iris and crape myrtle are two examples of plantings that often indicate previous human occupation.

PBS&J reported this potential grave site to the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) as a historic archeological site that required additional investigation. Several pieces of evidence suggested that this bed of iris could be a grave site. Although there were no headstones or visible markers, there was a piece of poultry wire fencing and a wooden fence stake. With TxDOT's direction, I began talking to people who still lived in the area and other folks who had once lived in the rural Elroy area. Several indicated that there had indeed been a grave marker at one time and they believed it to be a grave site. Note that Texas Health and Safety Statutes consider that even a single grave constitutes a cemetery.

Deed records, old maps, census records, and many other resources were scoured to identify the owners of this particular parcel of land. Owners were located, but no mention of a cemetery was ever recorded into the deed records. It seemed that this parcel was occupied by tenant farmers prior to and after 1900. PBS&J received permission from TxDOT to scrape the site seeking to delineate a grave shaft. A burial requires digging a hole and then refilling it. The different layers of soil, rock, etc. become mixed when the burial is covered. The decomposition of plant material can also stain the soil creating a distinctively colored rectangle in the soil. The PBS&J archeology team utilized a backhoe operator that had a particularly outfitted back hoe to scrape thin layers of an area, whether it be the remains of a barn, foundation, or other signs of human construction. A single grave shaft was located. At that point, the scraping continued with hand tools and brushes until a section of a wooden coffin lid was uncovered. Throughout the process of documentation, the location of the grave site was benchmarked and surveyed into the engineering plans for the proposed SH 130. Analysis of the grave site hardware indicated a burial from approximately 1870 to 1910. Later the grave of the woman found there was archeologically excavated and her remains were moved to a perpetual care cemetery in San Leanna, Texas. We referred to this unidentified woman as "Iris Moore" based on the bed of iris and the location adjacent to Moore Road.

The effort in the identification, documentation, excavation, and reburial is required by the Texas Health and Safety Statutes that were passed by the Texas Legislature with the assistance of several cemetery organizations, families of descendants, and others. The new grave site at Onion Creek Memorial Cemetery in San Leanna was donated to Save Austin's Cemeteries by TxDOT. Board members of Save Austin's Cemeteries Sally Victor and Dale Flatt were part of the team that located, documented, and reburied the remains.





## Speaker Event: Tour Guide Training by Megan Spencer

On a rainy Saturday morning on October 11, Dale Flatt and Danny Camacho shared their tour guide expertise with a group of about fifteen people who gathered inside the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel. Dale and Danny have been our fearless tour guides for many years. The training focused not on specific histories of the people buried in the city cemeteries, but on how to guide people through a cemetery safely. Dale and Danny discussed pacing, cemetery etiquette and regulations, and examples of how to tie in local stories or facts to well-known events in history.

Some excellent handouts were provided to help new tour guides get started and feel more comfortable as they take out their first or second group of visitors. The “FAQ for Tour Guides at Oakwood” is very handy and I’ve used it often to help me remember dates and names (I fold it and put it in my back pocket). Dale and Danny encourage those of us who want to be tour guides to take tours often to see how other people do it. A second training will be conducted in the future and it will include “practice runs” through Oakwood with support from experienced guides. If you enjoy telling stories and are comfortable speaking to groups, please consider becoming a tour guide!

## Photo Documentation by Leslie Wolfenden

Photo-documentation sessions continue at Oakwood Cemetery on the first Saturdays of the month. We are excited to report that in November we finished documenting Section 2 and will be starting in Section 3 in December.

We have a lot of fun doing this, creating hypothetical stories about our cemetery residents, finding interesting details on the headstones, and forming a general comradery that builds by working together. In the photo here, we are using a reflector (left) to bounce light onto the headstone to help bring out the letters and another reflector (right) to shade the camera.

With approximately 12,000 marked graves (23,000 graves total) in Oakwood Cemetery, we have documented approximately half – so about 6,000 headstones. In the past, it takes about 2.5 years to document a section – that’s a lot of time and dedication by our great SAC volunteers. We can’t do it without you so many, many thanks for all your hard work.



From left to right: SAC volunteers Dorothea Adams, Eva Mohrlök, and Leslie Wolfenden.

## One Grave at a Time by Kay Boyd

On October 4, ten volunteers gathered primarily to clean the monuments of Bird Holland and his wife, Matilda Rust Holland, in Section 1 of Oakwood. The group put in about twenty hours of work (combined) with significant results. Thanks to Dennis Darling for documenting the work.

In November, work continued on markers for the Holland family when Sally Balch worked on the stone of Bird's son, William Holland, in the "Colored Grounds." We also cleaned the monument of Elizabeth Williams and her husband, Hezekiah. Lizzie was known as perhaps the first woman to drive cattle up the Chisholm Trail. The stories of these people are included in our book, *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery*.



The Darling family hard at work, cleaning a headstone.

## Guest Speaker Session by Leslie Wolfenden

Please join us on January 10, when re-enactor Warren Friedrich, accompanied by Joyce Spivey Aldridge, portrays a snapshot of the lives of Joseph Hannig and Susanna Dickinson of Alamo fame in their presentation called "Finally, A Good Life In Texas!"

The presentation will be held at Yarbrough Library, 2200 Hancock Drive, 10:30 a.m. on Saturday, January 10.

## Descendants' Day by Kay Boyd

Plans are underway for the next Oakwood Tour and it will be the first of its kind – "Descendants' Day." We are looking for people who have relatives in Oakwood and who would like to tell a family story in about four or five minutes as visitors walk a route and make stops along the way. Family members will station themselves at the gravesite of a relative and groups of visitors will follow a route to hear the stories. If you would like to spotlight one of your family members, **please contact Kay Boyd via email by March 1.** The Tour Committee will select stops to build a workable course. If we get a good response for this type of tour, we will schedule a future one. You can email Kay Boyd at: [mkdb1405@gmail.com](mailto:mkdb1405@gmail.com).



## Basics on Caring for Your Family's Photos: Part 4 by Jan Root

### Supplies

There are many reputable archival supply businesses where you can order sleeves, album pages, storage boxes and pens. When ordering sleeves for photos, it is best to order the 2 mil. thickness.

Here are just a few of the online supply sources. This is not an endorsement or recommendation of any particular company.

Hollinger Metal Edge – [www.hollingermetalede.com](http://www.hollingermetalede.com)

Conservation Resources – <http://conservationresources.com>

University Products – [www.universityproducts.com](http://www.universityproducts.com)

Prices vary by company. In order to save a little money, you can purchase all of these supplies in bulk. Most companies will give a brief description of the product, explaining its archival uses.

## 2015 Membership Drive

SAC's 2015 membership drive starts soon. Membership runs from January to December. We offer several levels of membership:

- Individual \$35,
- Student \$25,
- Senior \$25,
- Family \$50, and
- Lifetime \$500.

Members receive our quarterly e-newsletter, may vote in officer elections, and may hold office. Membership fees go toward cemetery preservation projects. We will be sending out an email blast in the very near future, so be on the lookout for it.

## 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).

## SAC Board Meetings

SAC Board Meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month, typically at Oakwood Cemetery at 10:00 a.m. If you are interested the city's cemeteries, you are welcome to join us. Contact [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org) to confirm the time and place.

## Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events!

Dec. 6	Photo-documentation session at Oakwood Cemetery at 1:00 p.m.
Dec. 6	German-Texan Heritage Society's Annual German Christmas Market. SAC will be selling our Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery book. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. 507 East 10 <sup>th</sup> St, Austin.
Dec. 13	SAC Board Meeting 10:00 a.m.
Jan. 3	Photo-documentation session and One Grave at a Time cleaning session at Oakwood Cemetery at 1:00 p.m.
Jan. 10	Guest Speaker Session "Finally, A Good Life in Texas!" Re-enactors Warren Friedrich and Joyce Spivey Aldridge portray Joseph Hannig and Susanna Dickinson. 10:30 a.m. at Yarbrough Library, 2200 Hancock Drive.
Jan. 10	SAC Board Meeting at Yarbrough Library directly after Guest Speaker Session
Jan. 25	Final PARD Cemetery Master Plan meeting at 10:30 a.m. at Carver Library.
Feb. 7	Photo-documentation session and One Grave at a Time cleaning session at Oakwood Cemetery at 1:00 p.m.
Mar. 7	Photo-documentation session and One Grave at a Time cleaning session at Oakwood Cemetery at 1:00 p.m.

*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).*