

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Fall 2017 Newsletter

PO Box 16411, Austin, Texas 78761, www.sachome.org, info@sachome.org

Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

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

Inside this Issue:

11th Annual MMM Walking Tour

MMM in Sketches

8th Annual Photo Contest and
2018 Calendar

It's My Park Day

SAC Board Elections

Oakwood Chapel Rehabilitation
Project

Gravestone Cleaning Project

2018 Membership Drive

Texas Independence Walking
Tours

Travis County History Day

Cemetery Rules Meetings Held

11th Annual Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure Walking Tour by Megan Spencer

Blustery winds and chilly temperatures did not keep people away from Save Austin's Cemeteries' 11th annual Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure walking tour through Oakwood Cemetery on Saturday, October 28th. We highlighted seven stories this year that included a fatal fall from a Moonlight Tower; two murders, an accidental (although no one is sure) drowning; an explosion, a ship wreck drowning; and a woman who was captured by Indians when she was a little girl. Our friends, Lauren Siegel of *Math Happens* and a group of Austin Urban Sketchers joined us again this year. About 400 people attended. Our book, *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol*, and our 2018 Save Austin's Cemeteries Calendar were popular. We sold more than 100 books and calendars combined.

MMM organizers tried some new things this year related to tour organization, timing, and preparation and their efforts paid off. To provide "just in time" learning for visitors waiting for the next tour, we added one more info stop. Jan Root and Glen Roen staffed the two history stops where they provided the historical context for the tour through the cemetery.



We had many wonderful volunteers helping us this year. Some newer volunteers have recently moved to Austin. Welcome and thank you! Thanks to Bowie High School students and staff who attended and the teachers who gave their students extra credit for participating in MMM! SAC gratefully acknowledges Bowie High School educators. To quote Bobby Cervantes, SAC Board Member and Social Studies Teacher, "Involving young people is very important to our cause since young people will be taking over and continuing the work of education, preservation and restoration."

Our actors were stellar. They study the historical background information provided by our genealogist and historian, Kay Boyd, and bring these early residents to life. An actor may portray the Oakwood “resident” or he or she may tell the story from the perspective from a family member, a friend, or a bystander to an event.



Their roles and our actors were:

- **Louis Henna:** Billy Brookshire and Elizabeth Reid
- **John Rudd:** Vanita Trippe and Alexandra White
- **Clara Caswell:** Leslie Covington and Elizabeth Garzone
- **Richard Shirley:** Lana Davis and Laura Luna
- **Charles Jones:** Scott Myers and Marilena Crouchet
- **Thomas Markley:** Barrett Tribe and Matthew Dodds
- **Rebecca Gilleland Fisher:** Nancy Korzilius and Elizabeth Porterfield



Some of our actors (top to bottom, left to right): Alexandra White, Lana Davis, Barrett Tribe, Elizabeth Reid, Billy Brookshire, Elizabeth Porterfield, Leslie Covington, Laura Luna, and Matthew Dodds.

Our tour guides were Dale Flatt, Bobby Cervantes, Warren Friedrich, Terri Mirka, Karen Eshliman, Melissa Rogers, and Belinda Brouette. Beth Pickett, and John Rodriguez provided support as needed in many ways.

Volunteers who staffed the sign-in, information, book and calendar tables were Kay Boyd, Leslie Wolfenden, Sally Victor, Megan Spencer, Cathy Andrews, Susie Federowicz, Jacquelyn Graham, Sarah Harp, Amy Smith, Katie Long, Tricia Blakistone, Marie Holman, Victoria Myers, Liza McBay, and Angie Ward. Every year, Bob Ward does a great job recruiting and working with our MMM actors – and, in a pinch, he can act! Paul Habibi and Joe Mirka assisted with set up/take down of tents, signs, and actor stations and many other things! Thanks to all of you!

SAC is grateful for everyone’s help. Thank you so much! We could not have done this without all our friends and supporters!



Photos (left to right): Widows Beth Pickett and Jacquelyn Graham, volunteers Cathy Andrews and Susie Federowicz, and tour guides Dale Flatt and Bob Ward.

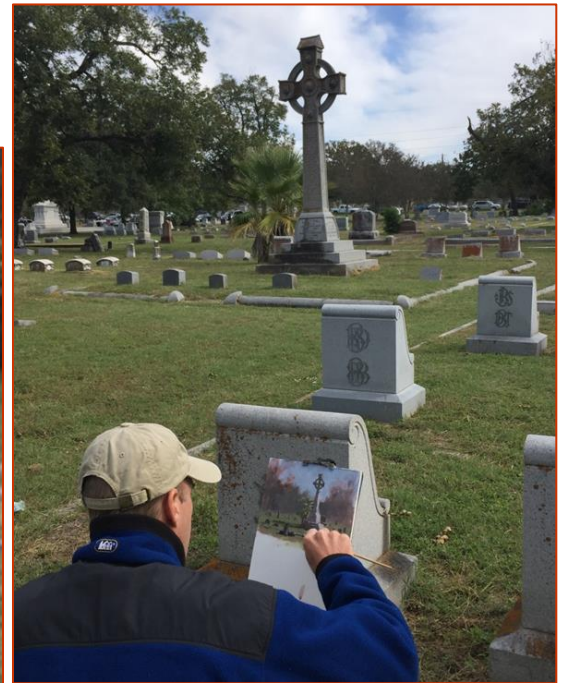
MMM in Sketches by Beth Pickett

Urban Sketchers Austin, the local chapter of Urban Sketchers International, made an impressive showing at MMM again this year. Ten or so artists braved the chilly conditions to capture scenes of MMM and Oakwood Cemetery in a variety of media, such as pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, and acrylic. The group attended last year’s MMM for the first time and was enthusiastic to return this year. I am proud to be a member of both SAC and Urban Sketchers Austin. Dressed as a blind 19th century mourner for MMM, I also joined the sketchers to do some 21st century drawing.

A non-profit organization since 2009, Urban Sketchers International began in 2007 in Seattle by journalist Gabriel (“Gabi”) Campanario when he posted his sketches on Flickr and has since expanded to 216 chapters worldwide. A symposium is held each year at a different location. Over 600 sketchers from around the world (including two from Austin) attended this year’s symposium in Chicago. In 2016, the symposium was held in Manchester, England; in 2018, it will be held in Porto, Portugal.

The Urban Sketchers’ mission is to show the world where they live and travel, one drawing at a time. They always sketch on location, in any media they choose, seeking to tell the story of their surroundings, and they share their sketches online. The Austin chapter meets at least monthly to sketch locations in and around Austin. For more information, find “Urban Sketchers Austin” on Facebook

And now, as it turns out, I am not the only urban sketcher with an SAC membership. Andrea Weissenbuehler, who is also relatively new to Urban Sketchers Austin and who sketched with us at MMM this year, has also joined SAC and has signed up to help Terri with headstone cleaning. Welcome, Andrea – maybe we will see you in costume with a sketchbook under your arm next year!



Photos (clockwise): Urban Sketchers participants, samples of their work, Stephen Williamson (with permission), and Beth Pickett (with Permission). Photos by Karen Eshliman and Leslie Wolfenden.

8th Annual Photo Contest and 2018 Calendar by Leslie Wolfenden

The 8th Annual SAC Photo Contest resulted in sixty 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 “Rainy Day.” This image is featured on the cover of the 2018 SAC Calendar, now available through the SAC website for \$16.99, plus shipping and handling for a limited time only: <http://www.sachome.org/shop/store.html>

Other photo contest winners included Angela Doetsch, Janice Jenkins, Khanh Le, Eva Mohrlök, Hal Mohrlök, Beth Pickett, and Harrison Saunders. Their photos are included in the 2018 SAC Calendar. As the overall winner, Charles receives a free 2018 SAC Calendar and a free one-year SAC membership. The other winners also receive a free one-year SAC membership.

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



Rainy Day, Oakwood Cemetery (Photo by Charles Freeman)

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES 2018

www.sachome.org

When you think about holiday gifts for people who love history, please consider a gift of our book, *Austin's Historic Oakwood Cemetery: Under the Shadow of the Texas Capitol*. For those who love photography, Save Austin's Cemeteries 2018 calendars make wonderful gifts! T-shirts, tote bags, and cups with the SAC logo on them are available as well. Why not be stylish while participating in volunteer projects like monument cleaning or documentation? Follow the "shop" link on SAC's website to order:

<http://www.sachome.org/shop/store.html>.

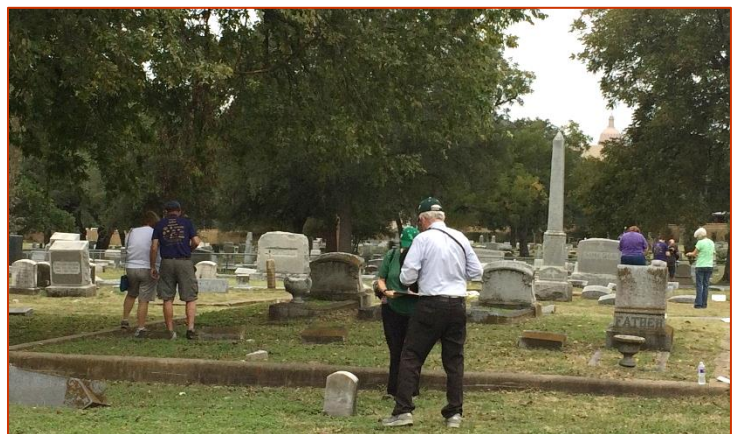
It's My Park Day by Terri Hoover Mirka

We'd like to thank the thirty volunteers who joined us at Oakwood Cemetery November 4th for a fun and productive day of work!

Every year, the Austin Parks Foundation holds two city-wide "It's My Park Day" events. One happens in spring and the other in fall. Thousands of volunteers work to improve parks and greenbelts throughout the city. Austin's five City Cemeteries are part of the park system, so it's a great time to welcome new volunteers to help with Save Austin's Cemeteries' existing projects, like documentation and cleaning. This fall, we split into two large groups to do a general clean-up of Oakwood and to continue the photo documentation.

The Photo Documentation group thoroughly documented twenty-two large burial lots as part of SAC's project to photograph and thoroughly document each headstone in detail at Oakwood Cemetery. These photo reference shots help us when the headstones are impacted by time/aging, weather, theft, or vandalism. Photo documentation sessions are held at Oakwood Cemetery the first Saturdays October-May, weather permitting. Over the past ten years, volunteers have completed Sections 1, 2, and 3, so Section 4 is the current focus. Please visit our "events" page at www.sachome.org or [Facebook](#) for the current schedule.

Please plan to join us for the next "It's My Park Day" event on March 3, 2018 to get a little exercise and a T-shirt. We will announce the opening of the registration when the Austin Parks Foundation is ready in February.



Our terrific volunteers; they walked all forty acres at Oakwood Cemetery and gathered a large pile of trash and fallen branches; or conducted photo-documentation in Section 4.

SAC Board of Directors Election by Sally Victor

Voting for Save Austin's Cemeteries Board of Directors was held at Oakwood Cemetery on October 7, 2017. Votes were also received by mail-in ballot. The event coincided with a SAC photo-documentation session and a board meeting and culminated in a delicious lunch with chips, cookies, bottled water, and lots of interesting conversation! Approximately twenty members and volunteers attended. We also announced the 2018 calendar photograph winners! Congratulations to one and all.

Newly elected officers include:

- Sally Victor, President
- Warren Freidrich, Vice-President
- Terri Mirka , Secretary
- Kay Boyd, Treasurer

Board Directors are:

- Jan Root
- Karen Eshliman
- Dale Flatt
- Bobby Cervantes

Oakwood Chapel Rehabilitation Project by Leslie Wolfenden

Late last November, the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel rehabilitation project quickly ground to a halt when bone fragments and several headstones were found below the worksite's soil inside and outside the chapel. Since then, the City of Austin held multiple public meetings to let the public know what happened and to get feedback from the public about what should be done with the remains – a very sensitive topic. The final recommendation was to exhume, reinter, and memorialize as many of the discovered burials as possible in close proximity to the chapel.

And that brings us up to now. The archeology team from Hicks & Company finished the exhumation of the burials from within the chapel footprint and completed its field work on October 21. The construction firm, Gadberry Construction Inc., has remobilized at the chapel worksite to regrade the site. The next step will be to complete the stabilization of the rubble stone grade beam under the perimeter walls. The foundation pier drilling is expected to re-start in mid-November; extreme care will be taken during this process, in order to maintain stability in the foundation and walls, and to ensure that no more remains are disturbed.

Assuming there are no further delays due to archeology or other unforeseen circumstances, the project is on track for a completion date in June 2018. The City will provide a comprehensive update on the entire archeological process and methodology, as well as information regarding commemorative and interpretive components of the project. The cemetery stakeholder group will be notified by the City when this information becomes available.

Gravestone Cleaning at Oakwood: An Update by Terri Hoover Mirka

In the Summer 2017 newsletter, we introduced our Oakwood Cemetery gravestone cleaning project. To help preserve our monuments, we are using D/2 Biological Solution, a well-tested cleaning solution that not only safely cleans the surface of gravestones, but also penetrates below the surface to fully flush out environmental toxins. Over 400 historical monuments have now been cleaned of the environmental pollutants like mold, mildew, algae, and lichens that were gradually eating away at the stones. Our initial focus was the Community/Public Burial Grounds that was referred to in early sexton records as the “Colored Grounds,” “Mexican Grounds,” and “Stranger (White) Grounds.” This area west and north of the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel is now fully cleaned, so that the gravestones of early Austin citizens who could not afford to purchase a burial place have a fresh look. Pauper monuments in other areas have also been cleaned.

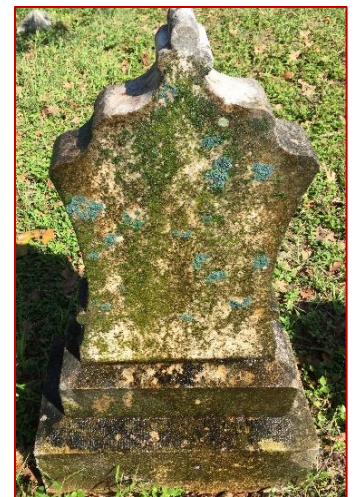


Before and After cleaning with D/2 solution.

A Special Gravestone Cleaning Thank You

... **To the small group of dedicated volunteers** who enjoy using their energy to make such a substantial impact in quickly preserving some of Austin’s oldest monuments. Weekend and weekday cleaning sessions are scheduled based on the weather, so we hope to make a lot of progress during our mild Texas fall and winter as we continue our work in both the “Old Grounds” where Austin’s oldest burials are located and all lots along Main Avenue in the high visibility area near the Oakwood Chapel. Let us know if you want to join us at info@sachome.org!

... **Our contributors who have donated \$1,090 to the Gravestone Cleaning project.** D/2 Biological Solution is an amazing, but expensive, product retailing at \$40 per gallon, which can only clean a small number of monuments, most of which have 100-150 years of toxins feasting on them! Please consider a year-end donation designated for “Gravestone Cleaning.”



Toxins thriving on a white marble stone ... Our gravestones need your help!

2018 Membership Drive: Please Join Us by Terri Hoover Mirka

It is once again time to renew your annual SAC membership to help support our programs and preservation efforts! Members receive the SAC quarterly e-newsletter, may vote in officer elections, and may hold office. SAC offers individual annual (\$35), senior and student (\$25), family (\$50), and individual lifetime (\$500) membership levels for the January through December timeframe. The SAC 2018 Membership form can be found at the end of this newsletter or on our website at <http://www.sachome.org/join/member.html>. Please join us or renew today!

Here's a summary of what SAC focuses on with your membership support.

- SAC has worked hard for over a decade with Austin city officials to help craft the adopted Cemetery Master Plan and will continue to monitor and assist with its implementation.
- The Oakwood Cemetery Chapel Rehabilitation project was initiated by SAC over ten years ago when we recognized the urgent need to restore the 1914 chapel. SAC paid for the initial, comprehensive studies and led grassroots efforts to get the project underway.
- With our free Historic Walking Tours, guest speakers, research work, and our outreach programs, we help share the city cemeteries with the public, tell family stories, and highlight that our cemeteries are outdoor museums and an important part of Austin's heritage.
- We have compiled an extensive repository of information about the city cemeteries, burial and gravestone records, bibliographies, and resources on our website.
- SAC documents and monitors the conditions of the gravestones, lots, and surroundings and is working to help preserve our historic monuments with the incredible help of our volunteers
- We are a point of contact for families who are out of the area who need help contacting the Austin Cemetery Division and those needing free help with photos and research.
- We represent the descendants of the "residents" of the city cemeteries by attending meetings with the Austin Cemetery Division to provide a voice for important topics like cemetery rules, rehabilitation projects, and issues needing resolution.

2017 SAC Accomplishments

- *Sponsored two "It's My Park Day" sessions at Oakwood, "Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure" Tours, Museum Day tours, self-guided tours for Texas Independence, and screenings of the "Last of the Moonlight Towers" film.*
- *Re-designed the SAC website and updated most of the content to make the information more accessible and useful at www.sachome.org.*
- *Continued the Oakwood photo documentation project began over 10 years ago, which is now 75% complete with over 10,700 monuments documented. Volunteers are working on the last section of Oakwood during monthly sessions October-May.*
- *Launched a comprehensive gravestone cleaning program in 2017 using D2 Biological Solution to prevent further deterioration of historical markers from environmental hazards. Over 400 gravestones have already been cleaned at Oakwood and another 100 are in process!*
- *Attended many meetings covering topics such as the Oakwood Chapel burials, Cemetery Rules Revisions, and other issues escalated by SAC on behalf of our SAC members. We completed a comprehensive research project on the burials in the area of Oakwood chapel and compiled a detailed report about the various burials we determined are located in the area near the chapel which include the newly located first "Mexican Grounds," first "Stranger Grounds" (white), and the previously designated "Colored Grounds."*

“The Rough Road to Texas Independence” Tours at Oakwood Cemetery - April 21, 2018 by Terri Hoover Mirka

Please join us at Oakwood Cemetery on the anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 2018, as we celebrate that many Oakwood heroes who helped Texas gain her Independence and establish the Republic of Texas during the Texas Revolution, October 1835 to April 1836.

The fight for Texas' Independence from Mexico is not well known or understood by many of today's Austin residents, since many people have moved to Austin from other states. For many native-born Texans, the stories of the frontier hardships and the people who fought for a new land and government free of Mexico is something they hold near and dear, for it was their ancestors who shed blood, so that Austin could become the city that it is today.



Some of the highlights we will be celebrating are Oakwood residents who:

- Participated in the opening battle of the Texas Revolution at the Battle of Gonzales
- Was one of the leaders at the Siege of Bexar and negotiated General Cos surrender
- Survived the Alamo
- Escaped from Goliad, avoiding the tragic Goliad Massacre
- Elected as one of 59 representatives to write and sign the Texas Declaration of Independence and risk being charged with treason
- Helped write the Texas Constitution
- Helped win the decisive Battle of San Jacinto
- Guarded Santa Anna after his capture

We hope to make the tours not only educational, but also filled with fun facts! We will need many volunteers to help us plan, market, and run this event, so please let us know at info@sachome.org if you would like to help.

Travis County History Day by Kay Dunlap Boyd

Save Austin's Cemeteries was invited to participate in the 10th annual Travis County History Day on Friday, October 27. The event was held inside the Hall of Government in the Travis County Administration Building located at 700 Lavaca. Travis County History Day is an annual event held in October that celebrates the history of Travis County. Each year, the event focuses on a different aspect of the county's history. **The event is free to the public.**

SAC had a two-table display with our activities, accomplishments, books, and calendars, as well as information on our upcoming Murder,



Mayhem and Misadventure tour, which happened the following day. The tables were staffed by Terri Mirka and Kay Boyd.

The theme this year was “Histories and Mysteries” with the spotlight on lost treasures, unsolved crimes, and haunted buildings from Travis County’s past. Commissioner Jeff Travillion was the emcee. Speakers included Dr. Jeffrey S. Kerr, author of *Austin, Texas: Then and Now*; J.R. Galloway, author of *The Servant Girl Murders*; and Michael Barnes, writer for the *Austin American-Statesman* and author of *Indelible Austin: Selected Histories*. The authors donated signed copies of their books that served as door prizes. Other prizes were Duck Tour tickets, a package from the Austin History Center Association, a Halloween candy bowl, and a gift certificate to Jack Allen’s Kitchen.



Actors and presenters from our MMM tours included Billy Brookshire, who told the story of Louis Henna’s death resulting from a fall from a moon tower. Warren Friedrich retold the story of John Henry Brock who was tried for murdering his mistress. Bob Ward told the story of Josiah Wilbarger who was scalped and left for dead.

The sponsors and partners of the day’s activities were the Austin History Center, the Austin Bar Association, and the Travis County Archives. The Austin Genealogical Society was also represented at this event. These groups had very interesting history displays placed around the room for viewing. During lunch, there was a screening of the documentary film, “Last of the Moonlight Towers,” by authors Ray Spivey and Jeff Kerr. The entire “Histories and Mysteries” program was filmed and is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2gdPKeMeO04&feature=youtu.be>

Cemetery Rules Meetings Held by Kay Dunlap Boyd

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PAR) held two opportunities to leave comments regarding the proposed draft of the Cemetery Rules. A draft version of the new Cemetery Rules has been posted to the Cemetery webpage. They can be reviewed at: www.austintx.gov/cemeteries.

Once finalized, the rules will be posted at the Office of the City Clerk for a public comment period before a recommendation is made to the Cemetery Administrator for adoption. To express your opinion or send your comments regarding the changes, contact any one of the following PAR staff via email:

Kimberly McNeeley, Kimberly.McNeeley@austintexas.gov

Kim McKnight, Kim.McKnight@austintexas.gov

Tonja Walls-Davis, Tonja.Walls-Davis@austintexas.gov

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.

SAC Board Meetings

If you are interested the city's cemeteries and would like to attend a board meeting, please contact info@sachome.org to confirm the time and place of the next board meeting.

Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events!

Dec. 2	Photo Documentation at Oakwood Cemetery, 1:00 - 3:00
Jan. 6	Photo Documentation at Oakwood Cemetery, 1:00 - 3:00
Feb. 3	Photo Documentation at Oakwood Cemetery, 1:00 - 3:00
Mar. 3	It's My Park Day and Photo Documentation at Oakwood Cemetery, 9 - noon
Apr. 7	Photo Documentation at Oakwood Cemetery, 9:00–11:00 or 1:00-3:00
Apr. 21	“The Rough Road to Texas Independence” Tours, Oakwood Cemetery, 10:00 – 4:00
May 5	Photo Documentation at Oakwood Cemetery, 9:00 – 11:00

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, PO Box 16411, Austin, Texas 78761. www.sachome.org