

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Spring 2019 Newsletter©

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Newsletter Editors:

Megan Spencer
Leslie Wolfenden

Texas Independence Tours at Oakwood Cemetery by Terri Hoover Mirka

Many thanks to all the volunteers, actors, and guests who made our production of the Texas Independence Tours at Oakwood Cemetery on April 27th a success! We had amazing actors, art, music, great weather, and many volunteers who helped on-site.



From left to right: Ron Moulton (musician), Joan Mead (portrayed Mary Rabb), Joyce Aldridge (portrayed Susanna Dickinson), Warren Friedrich (portrayed John Crittenden Duval), Elizabeth Reid (told story of Washington Anderson), Rene Kendall (told story of Francis Dieterich), Jacquelyn Graham (told story of Elisha Marshall Pease), and Stephanie Mueller (told story of John Milton Swisher). Not shown: Billy Brookshire (portrayed James Gibson Swisher). Photo by Terri Mirka



Musician Ron Moulton set the mood with music from early Texas days. Photo by Eva Mohrlök.



Billy Brookshire portrayed James Gibson Swisher and took advantage of art displays to show James' role in the Siege of Bexar and as one of the signers of the Texas Independence. Displays were included at each stop to provide a pictorial view of the events at the same time they were covered by the actors. Photo by Eva Mohrlök.

Thanks to the full Texas Independence Tours crew:

- Actor and student recruitment: Melissa Rogers
- Actors: Joyce Aldridge, Billy Brookshire, Warren Friedrich, Jacquelyn Graham, Rene Kendall, Joan Mead, Stephanie Mueller, Elizabeth Reid
- Displays: Texas flag collection by Warren Friedrich (also our tour advisor); tour displays for subjects with art and photos - Terri Mirka (also marketing and handouts)
- Info Table/Waiting Area: Karen Eshliman and Arro Smith for SAC info and tour overview; Ellen Garay for Texas Flags
- Music: Ron Moulton
- Oakwood Chapel: Jennifer Chenoweth, Emily Collins, Ruby Bruner
- On-site staff/runners: Robert Hoover, Joe Mirka, Andrea Weissenbuehler
- Photographers: Eva Mohrlök and Andrea Weissenbuehler
- Sign-in and donations table: Kay Boyd, Jan Root, Megan Spencer, Sally Victor, Bob Ward
- Tour Guides: Dale Flatt, Terri Mirka, Melissa Rogers and Mark Heep as timekeeper
- Tour subject research, script writing for actors, Infospots: Kay Boyd and Terri Mirka
- Everyone for tour set-up, food and equipment donations, and clean-up!



Warren Friedrich shared his Texas flag collection with tour guests. Photo by Andrea Weissenbuehler.

If you missed the tour and want to do a self-guided tour or just want more information, please see <https://www.sachome.org/events/Texastour.html>

Notable WWI Veterans Series, Part 3: Leaders & Heroes by Terri Hoover Mirka

This is our third and final article on World War I notables buried in the Austin City Cemeteries as part of the WWI Centennial celebration, which concludes in June 2019 – 100 years after the Versailles Treaty formally ended the war. See our Fall 2018 newsletter for Part 1 on WWI nurses and Winter 2019 newsletter for our feature on African-American soldiers and leaders at Evergreen Cemetery. <https://www.sachome.org/e-newsletters/e-newsletters.html>

Visit our WWI page at <https://www.sachome.org/events/TravisWWI-100.html> to see the lists of over 2,300 WWI soldiers buried in Travis County and research resources.

We will highlight a few of the many leaders and award recipients from Austin who also call the Austin city cemeteries their final resting place. Please remember all our brave men and women who have died while serving in the United States Armed Forces on Memorial Day!

Colonel Alfred Wainwright Bloor (1876-1952) was the commanding officer of the 142nd Infantry of the famous WWI 36th Division, U.S. Army made up of former National Guards of Texas and Oklahoma. He moved to Austin when he was four years old and was raised here. He graduated from college in 1895 and began his military service the same year. He later became a lawyer while continuing to serve in the National Guard. In 1917, he was appointed as a Colonel and was honored with the French Croix de Guerre for his “gallantry in action” in France. He remained with the U.S. Army after the war and later returned to his Austin law practice. Alfred is buried in Oakwood Annex F-2 near his brother Bertram who also served in WWI and beside his wife Lucille. They had no children.

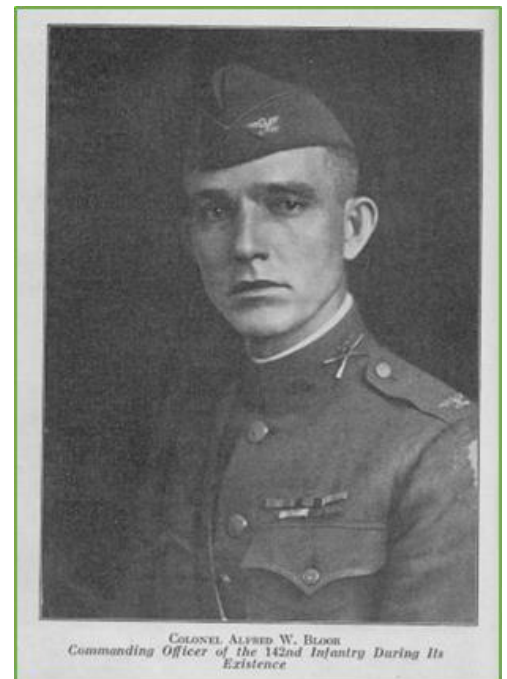


Photo sources: portrait from sandinorebellion.com, gravestone from findagrave.com (photographer postitnote)

Major Edwin Hutchings (1890 -1918), a career soldier and musician born and raised in Austin, was killed in action by an exploding shell October 9, 1918 while leading his troops as part of the 36th Division (141st Infantry) in the



Meuse-Argonne Offensive in France. He was the son of Brigadier General Hutchings and first enlisted in the Texas National Guard in 1907. He was awarded the French Croix de Guerre with palm, and a Veterans of Foreign War post in Austin is named for him. In an odd coincidence, Colonel John Hoover, commander of the 143rd Infantry and the great grandfather of the author of this article, witnessed Edwin's death and wrote about it graphically in his diary. Edwin was originally buried in France near where he died but brought back to Austin in 1921 where he is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in the Old Grounds (Brown lot). He has two military headstones in two different Brown family lots, likely because of confusion over his burial location.



Photo source: Soldiers of the Great War - Volume III. Washington, D.C. Soldiers Record Publishing Association, 1920.

Captain Wallis James Moore (1882- 1929) was awarded the prestigious Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), the second highest military award for members of the U.S. Army who display "extreme gallantry in combat." As one of only 135 Texans to receive the DSC during WWI, Wallis is our highest awarded WWI "resident" in the Austin city cemeteries. Wallis was recognized for extraordinary heroism near St. Etienne, France, October 8, 1918 while leading the 132nd Machine Gun Battalion in the 36th Division. "Captain Moore, although wounded by shrapnel, refused to go to the rear, and proceeded to reorganize portions of three infantry platoons, whose officers had become casualties, thus protecting the right flank of the 141st Infantry. We went to the rear only after he was severely gassed." (Source: General Orders No. 126, W.D., 1919)

He safely returned to the U.S. and was honored as a hero. He died 10 years later from heart failure on a hunting trip. Wallis is buried at Oakwood 3-796 and has no descendants. His tall marble headstone is sunken over half way into the ground and was almost missed during our search for WWI veterans since what did show was barely legible and his headstone was listed in a different lot. Shown are his headstone before and after cleaning.



(Photos credit: Terri Mirka)

Lt. Frank Murchison Moore (1894-1918) was killed in action in France September 2, 1918 while in aerial combat with eight German pursuit planes. He was awarded the French Croix de Guerre with palm and Silver Star and is buried in the Oakwood Annex, F-1. An airfield near Mission, Texas, is named in honor of Moore.

Photo source: Findagrave (Merrill Austin)



Lt. Eugene Doak Penn (1896-1918), a well-known Austinite who graduated from Austin High School and the University of Texas, was killed in a plane accident over Italy May 20, 1918 at the age of twenty-two. Penn Field in Austin is named in his honor. Eugene is buried at Oakwood 2-829 near his parents.

(Photo credit: Terri Mirka)



Parks and Recreation Department: A Cemetery Update by Jennifer Chenoweth



At Oakwood Cemetery, we have the opportunity to tell the history of Austin by collecting and sharing textured, and rich individual human stories. With great respect and appreciation for the community volunteers who have assembled this research, we look forward to adding resources that will help share these stories with a much larger audience.

Our essential, first priority at the Chapel is to serve as a Visitors Center. The hours of operation will be from 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm, Wednesday through Sunday. Chapel staff will be hosting tours, visitors, and events by reservation only; otherwise, these services will only be provided when staff is available during normal hours of operation.

Our next priority is to host memorials and funerals the citizens of Austin who request these services. The manner in which we grieve our loved ones and celebrate their lives evolves as our culture and population changes. Our goal is to provide a beautiful and transcendent place for honoring lives, and a connection to one another that is open and safe for all perspectives, traditions and practices. Any and all scheduling is to be coordinated between Cemetery Operations and the Chapel staff to best serve the family’s needs. Following these two priorities, staff will be able to open the Chapel for collaborations and community events that are deemed: respectful; relevant; inclusive; educational; historical; collaborative; inviting; healing; innovative and when appropriate, celebratory.

The Parks and Recreations Department (PARC) has a collaboration agreement with Save Austin's Cemeteries (SAC), and Chapel staff are able to host meetings in the Chapel, and support SAC's programming (i.e., *the Texas Independence Tour*). Chapel staff will collaborate in sharing events through our future website, newsletter, and social media; with a physical display on the side facing the street of the new kiosk, as well as with digital displays within the Chapel.

Chapel staff will assist in gathering information from descendants and visitors to the Cemetery, which will add to our collective knowledge, and to help us educate the public about the people buried at Oakwood. Staff is also planning to help recruit neighbors and the general community who are interested in sharing their valuable time by volunteering as tour docents or to become members of SAC.

The City of Austin will be providing tools and resources to staff to help them share the history of the founders of Austin and the State of Texas, in an effort to create awareness of the relevance of our cemeteries for the future. For example, one tool that staff is excited about using is the GIS (*geographic information systems*) mapping tool. This tool will help create a digital map of Oakwood with all its relevant information, and geo-tag it to the gravesites. This important information will be placed on our website and made available to the public. Citizens will be able to view this information on a computer, tablet or phone. The following link is an example of a historic cemetery that currently uses ESRI mapping to tell their story: [City of Marietta, Ga Cemetery](#).

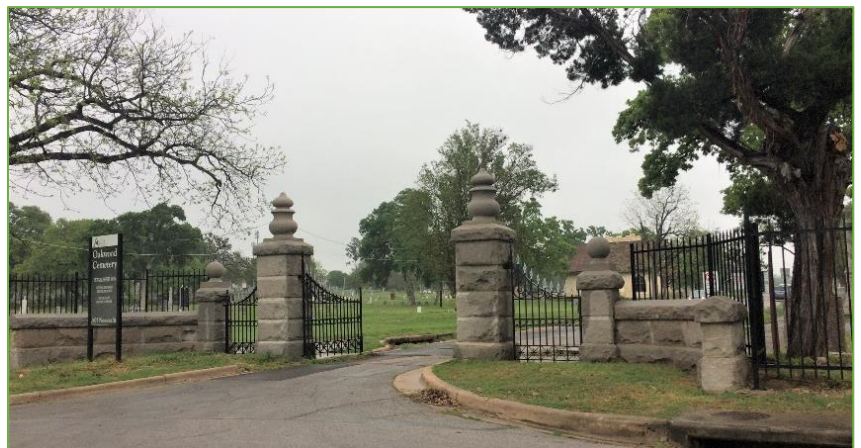
Chapel staff is in the process of tallying the feedback from the recent Community Engagement process and the Speak Up Austin pages. We will proceed with caution on scheduling events from outside groups and plan to form a focus group, which will be tasked to review any requests that are not obviously relevant to the cemetery.

As a curator, Jennifer Chenoweth has proposed a programming schedule for the Chapel space. As the Cemetery is very connected to nature and its changes, Jennifer is planning to collaborate with experts in the community on digital exhibitions with live supporting events that include programs beginning and ending with the seasons: spring, summer, fall and winter. The events will be scheduled on the Saturdays falling closest to the equinoxes and solstices, with the next event scheduled on Saturday, June 22, 2019. The Chapel's first exhibition, "*To Conserve*", will summarize staff's efforts to conserve Oakwood Cemetery, the Chapel, and the Gates with the use of photographs. This fall, staff is planning a video exhibition titled "*To Believe*" that explores practices of faith in East Austin churches and will be led by Ben Heimsath and Reverend Daryl Horton.

Restored Entrances to Oakwood Cemetery by Leslie Wolfenden

The restoration work on the gates at Oakwood and Oakwood Annex has been completed with the newly-refurbished gates installed and the stone entrance columns and wing walls on the west entrance rebuilt in place. The brick gate piers on Oakwood's east entrance and the brick gate piers at the Annex have been cleaned and repaired as needed. The former chain link fencing has been removed and replaced with tall spear-point metal fencing.

Work was funded by the City Council-allocated Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funding for fiscal year 2018.



Repair of Leaning Monuments – Swisher Lot 4-127 by Terri Hoover Mirka

Gravestones and lots are owned by Oakwood descendants and with that ownership comes the responsibility of family members to maintain the historical monuments. For many years, tall marble obelisks installed in the 1860s for James Gibson Swisher and two of his children were increasingly leaning in a variety of directions. See the before and after photos below and then see the next page to see how these over 1,000-pound obelisks were re-set.



Before - Left to right: James Swisher (leans forward – hard to notice at this angle; Edward Swisher (leaning backward) and Annie Swisher Lane (leaning forward)



After re-set. Also see contrast of before and after cleaning with D2 Biological solution in Governor Pease's lot to back left.

Obelisk Re-set Process

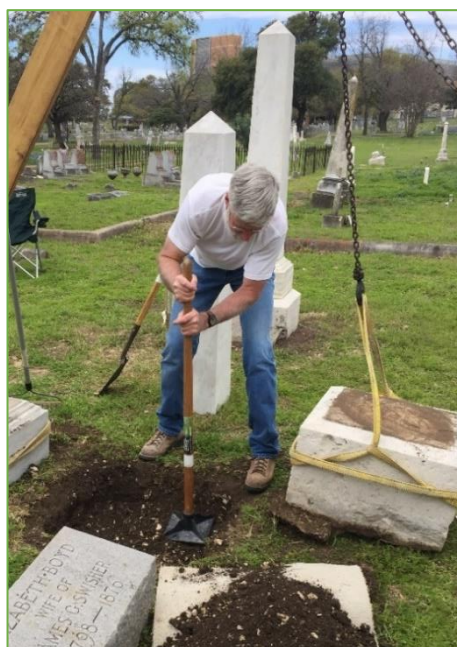
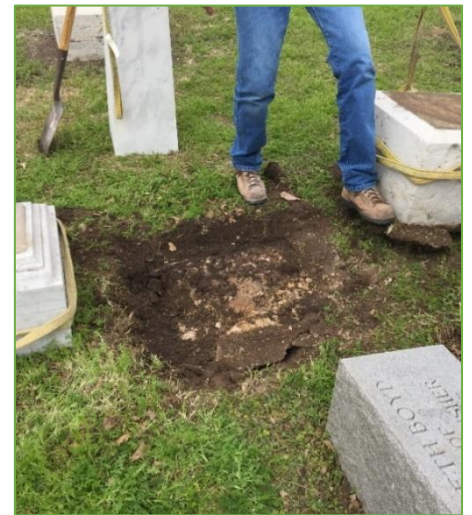
A two-day repair workshop was led by SAC Board of Director Lowell Herzog and coordinated by SAC founder Dale Flatt on March 15-16 at Oakwood Cemetery. Workshop attendees were able to learn about the proper methods to re-set and repair monuments while participating in the hands-on work. Lowell is a stone conservator who was trained by nationally recognized gravestone and monument conservator Jon Appell. He is a member of the Association for Gravestone Studies and the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works.

A hoist-and-pulley system was used to carefully move each very heavy piece off the foundation, such as the approximately 700-pound top piece.

Shown left to right: Nancy Castleberry and Terri Mirka (Swisher descendants and SAC members), Dale Flatt, and Lowell Herzog



After each piece of the three-level monuments was removed, we discovered what was causing the obelisks to lean. Underneath each monument was an uneven combination of bricks, limestone rock, concrete, and dirt, which resulted in the foundations being unstable.



The unstable materials were dug out and removed. The ground was then firmly packed down and leveled. Ground limestone was then placed as a bottom layer to give stability, packed down, leveled, and smoothed out. The monument pieces were then carefully replaced one at a time using the hoist-and-pulley system and leveled.

SAC Board Updates by Sally Victor

Our hard-working Vice-President at Save Austin's Cemeteries, Bobby Cervantes, has recently resigned his volunteer position in order to work on his PhD and to continue his work with the Travis County Historical Commission. Many thanks to Bobby for all the efforts and assistance! Never fear, Bobby will still be active in SAC working on the annual MMM Tour and other projects.

Melissa Rogers has agreed to take over for Bobby Cervantes until new elections in October 2019 (The exact date has not been set at this time). As noted in the Winter 2019 SAC Newsletter, Melissa has been fascinated with cemeteries since her childhood. She appreciates the unique historical perspective that cemeteries provide to a community. She has volunteered with SAC since 2016 as a member of the gravestone cleaning crew and as a tour guide for the MMM tours. Melissa is also a Volunteer Docent at The Bullock Texas State History Museum, where she specializes in the Comanche and early Native American trade routes with an emphasis on Jumano Trade Fairs. Melissa is committed to serving the community of Austin and is a Commissioner on the Municipal Civil Service Commission and a Volunteer Deputy Voter Registrar. She has a Doctorate of Jurisprudence degree, but is not currently a full-time attorney. Please welcome Melissa Rogers to her new post as Save Austin's Cemeteries new Vice-President next time you see her!

Long-time SAC board member Dale Flatt has resigned from the SAC Board of Directors in order to pursue other personal interests. We wish him the best and hope to see him often at SAC events. Dale is the founder of the SAC and has been an incredibly valued member and cemetery advocate for more than a decade.

Understanding Cemetery Symbols reprinted from Billion Graves website

Cemetery Symbol #1: Anchor

Sometimes an anchor was carved on the gravestones of seamen since it was their last resort in a storm. But more often, the anchor on a gravestone was a symbol of hope. The Bible references an anchor in connection with hope in Hebrews 6: 18-19, "... lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast . . ." Those without hope may be like a ship tossed on the sea, their emotions being carried in every direction. The anchor would remind family members visiting the grave to hold on to the hope of seeing their loved one again.



To members of Freemasonry, the anchor represented well-grounded hope, a life well-spent, and eternal tranquility.

Cemetery Symbol #2: Angel

Angels are some of the most common symbols found in cemeteries. They are carved on gravestones and perch on top as statues. Angels signify that the departed has taken flight into heaven. Some angels are weeping with wings that droop in sadness, denoting sorrow and lamentation. Others are in flight with a trumpet to proclaim the gospel to all the world. Some are walking upright, ready to escort the deceased into heaven.

Sometimes, specific angels can be seen in cemeteries, such as Saint George from an 11th-century legend, who rescued a princess from a dragon that required human sacrifices. Another is Saint Michael with his drawn sword, engaged in the war in heaven against Lucifer.

In older Jewish cemeteries, angels were forbidden, as were depictions of human faces. This was in conformity with one of the Ten Commandments, in an effort to thwart anyone from worshipping graven images. In later years, angels were allowed on gravestones if their faces were covered by their hands or arms.

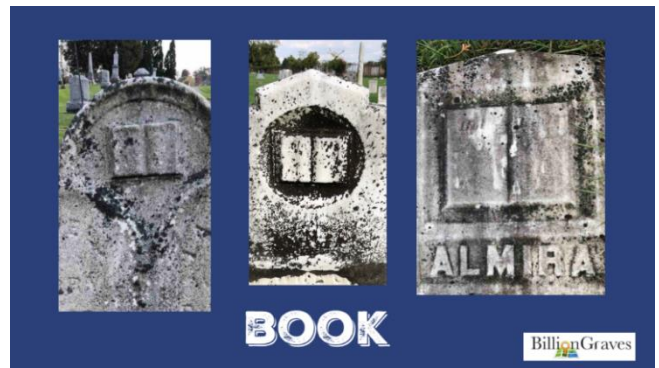
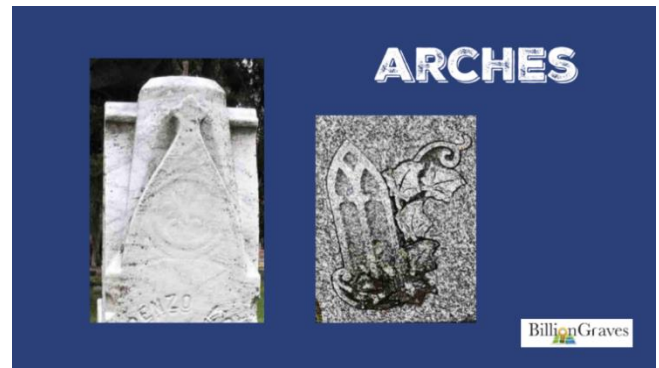
Cemetery Symbol #3: Arches

The Biblical prophet Ezekiel, escorted by a heavenly messenger, was shown a vision of a city that contained a temple with magnificent architecture. The temple included many arches. In fact, there are fifteen references to the arches in this temple in the book of Ezekiel, chapter 40. Arches on a headstone can signify a triumph over death and entry into heaven.

Cemetery Symbol #4: Book

A book on a gravestone can symbolize the good deeds of the departed, as recorded in the Book of Life. It can also represent the scriptures, as a sign of faith. Books may also indicate that a scholar or teacher is buried at the gravesite. An open book can signify an early death for someone whose life story was not yet fully written.

<https://billiongraves.com/>



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!

6/22/2019	Oakwood Cemetery Chapel: Video exhibition "To Conserve" opens
9/22/2019	Austin Museum Day; watch for tour and open chapel times.
10/26/2019	Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure Walking Tours 10:00 am - 4:00 pm. The last tour starts at 3:00 pm.
11/2/2019	It's My Park Day 9:00 am – 12:00 pm
TBD	Oakwood Cemetery Chapel: Video exhibition "To Believe"

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