

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

Fall 2020 Newsletter

Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

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Veterans Day Flag Placement at Austin Memorial Park by Melissa Rogers

On Veterans' Day, we honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country, and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good. This year, SAC volunteers placed flags on the graves of those men and women who served our country who are buried at Austin Memorial Park. Fourteen SAC volunteers worked over two days to place flags on graves in Sections 1, 2, 3, and 4 at AMP. These volunteers included Tom Anderson, Sally Baulch, Kay Boyd, Suzanne Faught, Warren Friedrich, Susan and Pablo Garcia, Mark Heep, Laura Heiligenthal, Scott Myers, Melissa Rogers, Jan Root and Richard Chaffee, and Sally Victor. We appreciate these volunteers and are pleased that we could participate in a meaningful and socially-distanced celebration of our veterans. The flags looked great!



Left: SAC board members Sally Baulch and Sally Victor; Right: some of the military markers with flags at AMP. (Photos by Melissa Rogers)

All Together Here Symposium by Arro Smith, PhD.

In 2016, thirty-seven unknown burials were discovered beneath the Oakwood Chapel during renovations. Since then, many hundreds of hours of research and forensic science has revealed some interesting data, including confirmation of a historical point of contention that Save Austin's Cemeteries has been advocating for years – that the “Colored Grounds” of Oakwood contain Austin's nineteenth-century poor and forgotten of *all* races.

In October of this year, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department hosted a thoughtful two-day symposium addressing the discovery, the forensic research on the remains, as well as the missteps that occurred during the process, and asking the community for input about how to respectfully reinter the remains and memorialize the discovery. Jennifer Chenoweth of the Oakwood Chapel worked with SAC throughout the planning of the symposium to make sure our voices were part of the conversation.

Panels over two days of the online symposium included archeologists who discovered and exhumed the remains, scientists who analyzed the DNA, historians and cultural anthropologists who discussed how societies remember, and community faith leaders who had ideas on reburial. Laura Esparza and her team at the Museums and Cultural Programs Division did a great job organizing the symposium and making it accessible “live” to everyone, and then archiving the panels and presentations for later viewing.

Two of your SAC Board Members, Sally Victor and Arro Smith, were panelists in separate sessions on the second day of the *All Together Here* symposium, advocating for a respectful re-interment of the dead, as well as a historical narrative that will tell the story of Austin, its oldest City Cemetery, and how we remember our dead.

The “All Together Here” digital archive of all the panels may be found at:

https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/d0b7ec88a46147ff835c3be602d72938/page/page_8/

Or you can jump directly to the individual panel sessions at:

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist...>



16th Annual Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure Virtual Tour by Kay Dunlap Boyd

Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure

**Save Austin's Cemeteries
Annual Graveside Tour**

The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request. For assistance please contact (512) 974-3914 or Relay Texas 7-1-1.

For the last fifteen years, SAC has asked the public to come near and hear the stories told by our actors. But 2020 has been an unusual year. The annual Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure tour was offered in a special manner this year due to the social distancing requirements. Save Austin's Cemeteries collaborated with Jennifer Chenoweth, Museum Site Coordinator at the Oakwood Chapel, to produce an outstanding and informative virtual tour. The stories included murders, a tragic fall, diphtheria, a shipwreck, and tuberculosis that took the lives of the residents of Oakwood. We went into our filing cabinets and sent her photographs, news stories, and scripts from some of our past tours. Voila! Jennifer turned them all into a great Storymap. If you have not seen it, please enjoy the tour here: <https://arcg.is/1zi1vz>.

Footstone Resetting Project Led by New SAC Board Member, Mark Heep by Arro Smith, PhD.

In the winter of this year, Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) Cemeteries staff introduced a new conservation program at Oakwood for SAC volunteers: the resetting of footstones in the oldest sections of the cemetery.

Many older Texas cemeteries also featured "footstones" to help mark graves, in addition to gravestones. Over time, these much smaller markers sink into the earth or become dislodged by mowers. Some even "walk" many feet from where they were first planted due to natural shifts in the soil over a century. They often bear the initials of the grave's occupant.

PARD trained SAC volunteers in February 2020 to carefully pry the footstones from the earth, to line the new placement with others in the lot, to lay a new foundation of coarse gravel and sand, and how to carefully reset the footstone to mark these historic graves. SAC and PARD put together four sets of tools, so four teams of volunteers could work independently to reset the footstones identified by PARD from a spreadsheet. We planned to establish a regular schedule for this project and we chose the fourth Saturday of the month to meet up, along with SAC volunteers. We wanted it to be an ongoing volunteer opportunity, much like the Photo Documentation Program; however, COVID-19 changed all our plans in the Spring.

After several months of waiting to figure out the “new normal,” volunteer Mark Heep decided to spend some time at Oakwood working independently on the footstones list. Mark had the additional responsibility of storing all the tools. Board President Melissa Rogers and Secretary Arro Smith kept in touch with Mark, and by mid-summer decided to restart the footstone project limited to just the original people trained by PARD in February. It could be a responsibly social-distanced activity and it would keep the program alive during this difficult period. We began to reset footstones in Section 1; however, the lion’s share of the work was done by Mark himself.

About this time, a SAC Board seat opened up, and the Board asked Mark Heep to fill the vacant seat. Please welcome Mark Heep to the SAC Board of Directors – he is an Oakwood Cemetery descendant and a prodigy of service!

New SAC Board Member by Mark Heep

I am very happy that SAC asked me to be a Board Member. I am a fifth generation Texan with close ties to Central Texas. After serving as an intelligence analyst in the Marines, I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and History at Stephen F. Austin State University. I have had several careers, the latest and most rewarding as a teacher in Round Rock ISD. History is my passion, and of course genealogy naturally has followed. I like to volunteer in lots of places, mostly cleanups of the beaches, parks, trails, and lakes of the area. I have been visiting my relatives in Oakwood and other Central Texas cemeteries for four decades, and I hope that I can contribute to the positive changes that Save Austin’s Cemeteries has made to the Austin cemetery landscape.



Mark Heep resetting a footstone. (Photo by Arro Smith)

Washington Anderson Gravestone Conservation Progress by Arro Smith, PhD.

Washington Anderson was buried in Section 1 of Oakwood on April 28, 1894, aged 77 years. He was known as “Wash” and was a true hero at the Battle of San Jacinto. His marker at Oakwood was found broken at its base while SAC prepared for the Texas Independence tour in 2017. After consulting with experts who deemed the entire gravestone to be beyond repair for returning it to an upright position, the pieces were put in storage by PARD while SAC worked with Anderson descendants and conservators about the best plan for the marker.

During this time of indecision on the Washington Anderson marker, I became interested in Oakwood Cemetery through work with the local Odd Fellows lodge, which has a lot in Section 4. One of the missions of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows is to help “bury the dead,” and this led me to join SAC, and ultimately become a Board member and officer.

Another historical intervention that I found particularly interesting is Augustus Porter’s 1878 broken marker, which is “cradled” in a concrete form to protect it from further damage. This conservation was undertaken by SAC founding member Dale Flatt to preserve Mr. Porter’s marker. The gravestone includes some beautiful fireman’s iconography, as young Porter died in service as an Austin fireman. I became interested in this

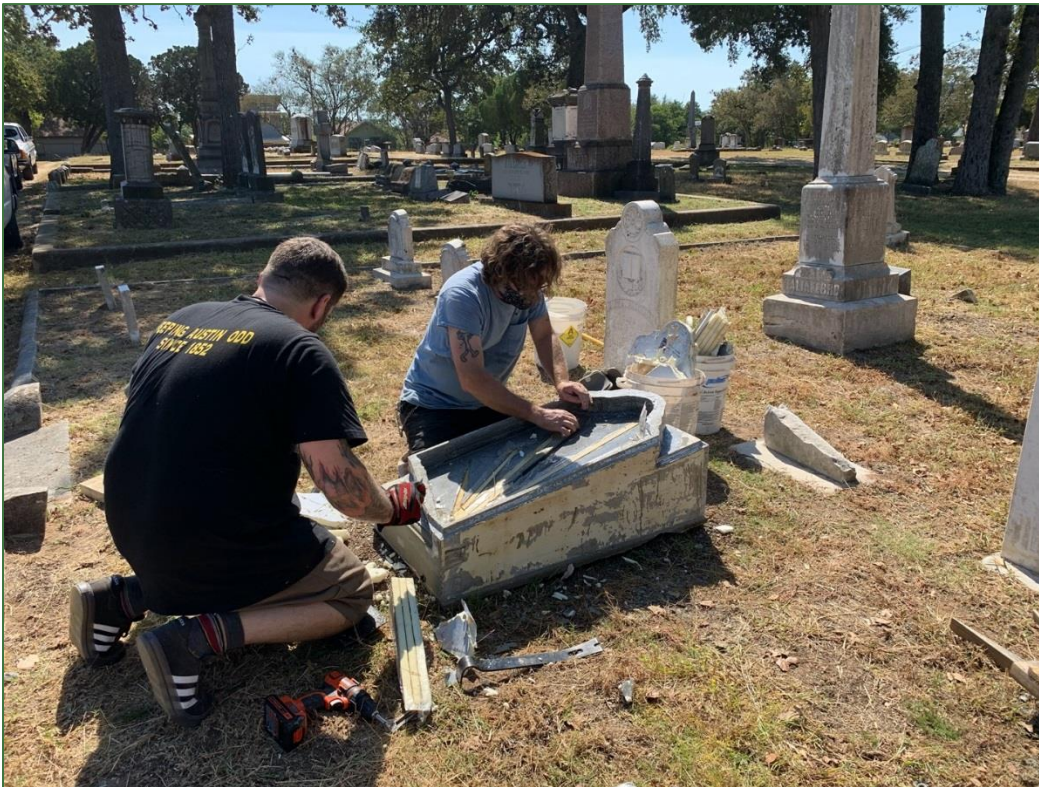
cradling conservation technique, thinking that my lodge of Odd Fellows brothers and sisters could learn how to execute the intervention as part of their charge to help “bury the dead.”

So, in the middle of our COVID-19 shut-down, SAC President Melissa Rogers and I met with PARD’s Jason Walker and Izabella Nuckels at the Oakwood Annex building to officially take possession of the Washington Anderson stone for conservation. It was carefully transported to Odd Fellow Keith Crippen’s East Austin workshop to be conserved by gravestone expert Lowell Herzog, and measured for a concrete cradle.

Keith Crippen made a template of the reconstructed Anderson marker and set to work building a re-enforced form for concrete. The concrete was poured into the form upside-down, next to the Anderson grave, cured, and then the entire form was carefully flipped over into position and removed, revealing the cradle. The concrete needs to fully cure for 30 days before being sealed and stained. Once the cradle is fully prepared, the Anderson marker will be gently seated – perhaps in early December.

SAC will hold an official dedication of the cradled Texas Revolution hero’s marker in the Spring, probably in conjunction with Texas Independence Day.

While waiting for the concrete cradle to cure before sealing and staining, its creator and engineer, Keith Crippen, was also working with Mark Heep on the Footstone Resetting Project. He noticed that Washington Anderson also had just a nub of a footstone showing in the plot, so he went to work resetting it. Mrs. Anderson is buried to the left of Washington, and Keith surmised that she, too, might have a footstone now fully buried. Keith went to work gently probing the soil and found her footstone as well!



Odd Fellows brothers Al Royer and Keith Crippen as they break the wooden form from the concrete cradle. Al’s Odd Fellow t-shirt says “Keeping Austin Odd Since 1852.” (Photo by Arro Smith)

Heritage Grant To Create a Virtual Tour of Evergreen Cemetery in 2021 by Melissa Rogers

We are pleased to announce that SAC is the recipient of a Heritage Grant from the City of Austin's Economic Development Department. SAC has been awarded \$13,267.00 to use to create a virtual tour of Evergreen Cemetery. The Heritage Grants are to be used to promote tourism through educational and marketing-related projects that enhance the understanding of significant historical places. We are excited to be able to focus on the history of Evergreen Cemetery and the important individuals buried there who contributed so much to Austin.

SAC has hired MultiMedia Maze to be the videographers for the project. Long-time SAC friend and volunteer, Harrison Eppright has agreed to be the narrator for the virtual tour. A committee of SAC volunteers and community members is currently working to choose the biographies to feature in the virtual tour.

SAC plans to have the virtual tour on its YouTube channel by Juneteenth 2021. There will be a video teaser or two on the channel in time for Black History Month in 2021. COVID restrictions permitting, SAC plans to have an in-person showing of the virtual tour during the summer of 2021.

Time to Renew Your SAC Membership by Sally Victor

Look at the date! We are nearing the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021. This is the time to renew your annual membership. I know I am writing that check at this moment and will send it to our treasurer via the US mail. Our membership levels are:

- Individual \$20
- Student \$15
- Senior \$15
- Lifetime \$500

To download our membership form, go to our website www.sachome.org, then click on to *Get Involved*, then *Membership* and fill out the form. You can mail a check or money order to Save Austin's Cemeteries, PO Box 16411, Austin, TX 78761. A SAC membership form is also the last page of this newsletter. Or you can pay online using Paypal from the membership application with your credit card.

Even though we had to cancel our usual outdoor events due to the COVID pandemic, Save Austin's Cemeteries has been very active in 2020. Now you can view our virtual tours digitally at our website www.sachome.org. Read more about our activities past and present throughout the newsletter. Please stay safe and we hope to see you in 2021.

We would like to welcome and thank our new members to SAC: Lorena Euler, Glen Long, Pamela Lynn, and Colleen Theriot!

We look forward to 2021 and (hopefully) plenty of opportunities to gather for in-person events in our City Cemeteries.

Oakwood Chapel Happenings by Jennifer Chenoweth, Oakwood Chapel Museum Site Coordinator

The Oakwood Chapel exhibits rotate quarterly, but we keep our previous exhibits posted on our website on the "resources" page. Our intention is to pair digital history exhibits with live, contemporary events to make history relevant to the present. However, with Covid-19 closures, most of our events have needed to move online to keep our community safe.

We do encourage people to visit Austin's cemeteries while maintaining safe social practices. We are excited that the West Gate off Navasota Street has been repaired and is open again.

Several of our upcoming quarterly exhibits were postponed, as we hope to have in-person events paired with the content, such as *To Fika*, which is about Swedish history in Texas. But in order "to fika" we have to be able to get together, talk, and spend time in person.

So to adjust, the Chapel's upcoming schedule is tentatively planned as follows:

- Fall 2020, "All Together Here", October-December
- Winter 2021, "To Elevate" and "To Remember", an expansion of the project presented at the "Growing Your Roots" symposium on the legacy of Huston-Tillotson University and African American Funeral Homes and Cemeteries
- Spring 2021, "To Liberate", April - June: A history of the residents of the Watson House, also known as 'The Chateau,' on The University of Texas at Austin campus
- Summer 2021, "To War," July - September: a history of military conflicts represented by Texans buried in Austin's cemeteries to honor our veterans and their families

We are also excited to continue creating digital maps of the cemeteries, and adding details and layers to the digital maps. The first map of Oakwood Cemetery was released as part of *All Together Here* and was created by staff member Ryan Piper, available through the Chapel's storymap and SAC's website.

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/eacb51b55ce945889c23f6f8ba62d186?item=8>

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/oakwood-cemetery-chapel-tours-maps>

Chapel staff are looking forward to working with SAC to create an accurate and searchable list of burial records for the public that is geo-tagged to the cemetery map.

The *All Together Here* symposium and digital exhibit featured the archeology of burials discovered in the rehabilitation of the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel. Forty speakers discussed this topic in a two-day symposium in October, for which 317 people registered. From October 1 through November 15, there were 310 views of the session videos posted online; the website was viewed 2,958 times; and the detailed digital exhibit has had 970 unique views.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLelTMMBW0YOQV6QssY0ufCEu2sm5n_zcX
www.Oakwoodsymposium.org/

SAC's New YouTube Channel by Marta Stefaniuk

Many causes and businesses use video as an essential format for storytelling. What might surprise you is that YouTube has one billion viewers per month and is the second largest search engine in the world (after Google). Now SAC will be able to utilize this tool to share our stories with a global audience and connect them with our cause and website. We need your help!

Please visit and SUBSCRIBE to our YouTube channel – an easy process if you have a gmail account.

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2vCE0SUyD_7QtWPIJqdh_g

We need 100 or more subscribers to get a custom URL – meaning our channel address will be [youtube.com/c/saveaustinscemeteries](https://www.youtube.com/c/saveaustinscemeteries) instead of a bunch of letters and numbers as it is right now. Also, I am working with Google to get our site approved for non-profit channel status, which will get us additional benefits.

The first video posted to the SAC YouTube channel is the *Murder, Mayhem & Misadventure* Virtual Tour 2020 introduction video. A huge thank you goes out to the City's Museum Department, PARD, and especially to Adrian Siordia for editing the video.

Oakwood Chapel's *To Vote* Speaker Series: *Voting Rights for Some or All?* A Panel Discussion by Megan Spencer

On September 12, I was one of six guests who attended the final event in the *To Vote* summer speaker series. It was a panel discussion with [Jessica Brannon-Wranosky](#), Distinguished Professor of Digital Humanities and History at Texas A&M Commerce, [Joy Diaz](#), Journalist for the Texas Standard and Producer of *100 Years*, and [Cecilia Gutierrez Venable](#) Historian for the NAACP and the Historian and Director of Archives for the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and *Mary Immaculate in San Antonio, TX*.

Oakwood Chapel Museum Site Coordinator, Jennifer Chenoweth moderated the session. Topics investigated during the discussion were suffrage, voting rights, and voting access. All of the speaker events in this series were tied in to the Oakwood Chapel's digital exhibit about Texas suffrage history, [To Vote](#).



Jennifer noted that a number of women buried in Austin's municipal cemeteries were very important in the Texas women's suffrage movement, including Helen Kirby and Maude Sampson Williams. Helen Kirby, a life-long educator originally from Alabama, was the first Dean of Women at UT (1903). Her family's plantation in Waller County became the first Black college in Texas – Prairie View A&M University. In Waller County, she became good friends with Elisabet Ney, who lived on a neighboring plantation. The friendship continued when both Helen and Elisabet moved to Austin.

Maude Sampson Williams, a native of Austin, attended Prairie View State Normal College, and moved to El Paso where she was a teacher at the Frederick Douglass School. It was in El Paso that she became very politically active. She was an important civil rights activist, a community organizer, and a leader of the El Paso

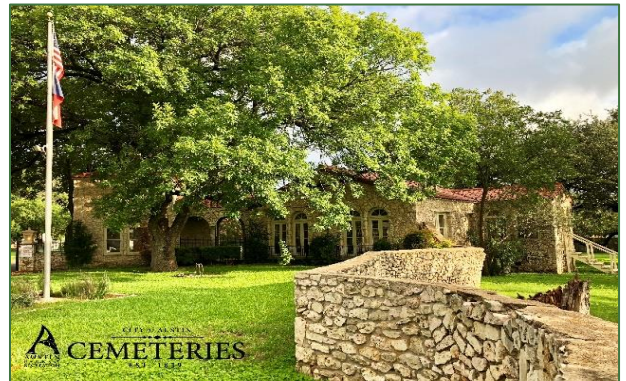
NAACP. I was surprised to learn how instrumental the people of El Paso were in securing votes for Blacks. The El Paso NAACP led two Supreme Court cases, which eventually brought about the end of the white only democratic primary in Texas (in 1927 and 1932). This is a fascinating story!

Conversation also centered on current barriers to voting, including the difficulty faced by grown children who have aged-out of the foster care system. They often lack the documentation required to register. Those with prison records may face problems registering as well. Barriers to voting also include lack of access to computers. Even a long, hyphenated last name that does not fit on a photo ID may cause a problem at the polls. Overall, the pandemic has caused economic problems and evictions. Hurricanes have contributed to recent displacement of people. Voting is obviously still a challenge for some.

The panelists grew up in very different places with different backgrounds, but they are all totally sympatico in their interests and motivations. I really enjoyed hearing them talk to one other about history, politics, gender, race, and their own lives and personal experiences. Please visit their websites by clicking on the highlighted links in the first paragraph for more about their research and activism!

Austin Memorial Park Cemetery Road Improvements by Kay Dunlap Boyd

Austin Memorial Park Cemetery will soon begin road improvements. The project's surveying (Phase I) began on October 26, 2020. The project intent will be to resurface the road system within Austin Memorial Park (AMP) and construct a curbing system to delineate between road and grounds surface. The resurfacing and curb construction (Phase II & III) will begin **November 16, 2021**.



- Phase I- Surveying
- Phase II- Resurfacing
- Phase III- Curb Construction
- Phase IV- Vegetation

***Traffic within AMP will be rerouted as necessary to avoid any disruptions to interments, visitations, and day-to-day operations. The estimated project completion: Spring 2021. All inquiries can be directed to (512)978-2320.

SAC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube

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/>)

YouTube (link to: [YouTube.com/SaveAustinsCemeteries](https://www.youtube.com/SaveAustinsCemeteries))

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

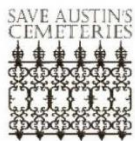
If you are interested the city’s cemeteries and would like to attend a board meeting, please contact info@sachome.org to confirm the time and place of the next board meeting.

Calendar

Please join us for these upcoming events!

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Oct – Dec | <i>All Together Here: Oakwood Chapel</i> |
| Oct 26 | Road improvements begin at Austin Memorial Park |
| Jan – Mar 2021 | <i>To Elevate and To Remember</i> symposiums: Oakwood Chapel |
| Mar 6 | It’s My Park Day |
| Apr – Jun | <i>To Liberate</i> Program: Oakwood Chapel |
| Jun 19 | Planned opening of the <i>Evergreen Cemetery Virtual Tour</i> |
| Jul – Sept | <i>To War</i> Program: Oakwood Chapel |

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

Membership Application (January to December)

Save Austin's Cemeteries is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization

Membership Year **2021**

Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution to Save Austin's Cemeteries.

- \$ 20 Individual
- \$ 15 Student (with copy of current ID)
- \$ 15 Senior (60+ years of age)
- \$ 500 Lifetime Membership
- \$ _____ Other (_____)

My check is enclosed (please make check payable to Save Austin's Cemeteries and mail to PO Box 16411, Austin, Texas, 78761)

I prefer to charge my membership (go to <https://www.sachome.org/join/join.html> to use your credit card or Pay Pal)

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Email:

Phone (optional: indicate preferred number)

- Cell:
- Home:

Do you have ancestors buried at any of the city cemeteries, if so, which ones?
(check all that apply)

- AMP
- Annex
- Evergreen
- Oakwood
- Plummers

I am interested in and would like more information about volunteering for SAC projects and events. (check all that apply)

- Headstone Cleaning
- Headstone Restoration
- Historical Research
- Newsletter Stories
- Photography
- Social Media
- Tours
- Video Production