

# SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

## Summer 2020 Newsletter

### Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

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### Newsletter Editors:

Megan Spencer  
Leslie Wolfenden

### Join Us for this Virtual Symposium - *All Together Here: A Symposium for Discovery and Remembrance* by Melissa Rogers

Many of us have been closely following the archaeology process from the restoration of the Chapel that started in 2016. The archaeology report and its findings, which were approved by the Texas Historical Commission, was published in May 2020.

<http://www.austintexas.gov/department/oakwood-cemetery-chapel-rehabilitation>.

The City plans to host a public symposium to discuss the report and findings, to inform the community about additional research and scholarship, and to seek community input on critical decisions regarding reburial of the remains and appropriate remembrance and memorials.

This symposium titled **All Together Here: A Community Symposium for Discovery and Remembrance** will be broadcast online and on social media channels on October 9 and 10. SAC board members Arro Smith and Bobby Cervantes will be panelists.

In August, Caitlen Hill and Jennifer Chenoweth of PARD reached out to SAC and shared the proposed content and schedule of the symposium. Interested board members, including Sally Baulch, Jan Root, Arro Smith, and myself, previewed the content and had the opportunity to provide feedback to PARD. It will be an exciting and interesting program with Calls to Action that require public participation and input. I encourage all SAC members to attend. If you cannot attend virtually on the October 9 and 10, the symposium will be recorded and published online so that you can view it later.



The current schedule for the symposium is as follows:

Day 1: Friday October 9, 2020, from 3:00pm – 8:00pm, **Discovery:**

Sessions will address the archaeologist’s report and what it means. We will hear from the team that did the exhumations and examinations at Hicks and Company and the Texas State University, plus the current archaeology team from Amaterra who are working to help the City of Austin on the current phase of the project. Archaeologists will present similar projects from around the country. Researchers at the University of Connecticut will discuss DNA analysis and how the community can contribute to learning more about potential ancestors.

Day 2: Saturday October 10, 2020, from Noon – 5:00pm, **Remembrance:**

Sessions will review the historical context of the cemetery, how we grieve and revere people we have lost, and how the City of Austin’s process can be improved in the future. We will be asked what we the stakeholders want at the site as a permanent memorial and processes to determine the locations of reburial.

In anticipation of the event, Save Austin’s Cemeteries is asking its membership and Oakwood families if they are aware of any empty lots or spaces to be considered for reburial, as SAC has clearly prioritized reinterring the burials in Oakwood Cemetery. *Please contact SAC at [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org) if you can help identify empty space at Oakwood.*

### SAC Honors Veterans at Plummers on Memorial Day by Melissa Rogers

Thanks to Terri Mirka and Bobby Cervantes, the 35 veterans buried at Plummers Cemetery were recognized this Memorial Day with flags placed on their graves. Although Memorial Day honors those who died while serving in the armed forces, SAC chose to honor all the veterans buried at Plummers.



## Impact of COVID-19 on SAC Events by Melissa Rogers

Due to the ongoing pandemic, many SAC events and activities have been impacted:

**Annual Photo Contest** – The Annual Photo contest has been cancelled this year. Conditions permitting, SAC will hold a photography workshop in the spring at Oakwood where photographers are encouraged to take and to share their photos of the monuments, the Chapel, and the bluebonnets! See Save Austin’s Cemeteries on Facebook for some previous photo entries from the past year.

**Murder, Mayhem and Misadventure** – SAC’s most popular event will be held this year, just not in person. SAC is exploring the possibility of presenting an online tour. Please follow SAC’s webpage, Facebook, and/or Instagram accounts to get updates about SAC’s plans for MMM.

**Photo Documentation** – Photo documentation is on its annual break and is currently on hold. Please follow SAC’s webpage, Facebook, and/or Instagram accounts to get update information of when Photo Documentation will restart. You can also send an email to [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org) and we will notify you of the status of this project.

**Footstone Resetting** – Footstone resetting currently has been cancelled due to the pandemic. SAC will periodically reassess whether conditions permit us to restart this project. If you are interested in receiving updates about footstone resetting, please send an email to [info@sachome.org](mailto:info@sachome.org) and we will make sure that you are notified of the status of this project.

## Oakwood Chapel Happenings: *To Vote* by Jennifer Chenoweth

I so enjoyed learning about the history of suffrage in Austin, Texas, and the inspiring women and men who did not accept the status quo for women. We identified suffragists buried in Austin’s five municipal cemeteries by researching the extensive Texas State Historical Association’s handbook biographies and reading the Handbook of Texas Women.

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/viw01>

<https://texaswomen.tshaonline.org/eac-members/>

When I attended the TSHA Annual Meeting in early 2020, I heard Dr. Jessica Brannon-Wranosky speak at the luncheon and learned about her advocacy for women of color to be researched and included in the narrative on suffrage. She spoke about Maude Sampson and the search to find her in records. I was very excited to learn that Maude Craig Sampson Williams was from Austin and is buried at Evergreen Cemetery. Then we learned where other suffragists are buried: Erminia Folsom is buried at Austin Memorial Park. At the Oakwood Annex, Mary Heard Ellis, Alexander Ellis, Anna Elizabeth Leger Walker, Pauline Lynch Evans Creighton, and Lala Fay Watts are buried. In Oakwood Cemetery, Jane McCallum,



Photo: Women registering to vote at the Travis County Courthouse in 1918; PICA 11669, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

Dr. Annie Webb Blanton, Helen Marr Swearingen Kirby, Nellie Gertrude Horne Doom, Anna Harwicke Pennybacker, and Julia Runge are buried.

Within the exhibit, we created a tour of burial locations and a history of suffrage. A biography of each of these individuals includes a map of each of their lives. This shows how they intersected and influenced each other, such as attending the same church or being neighbors in addition to being members of women's clubs. We included Elisabet Ney's biography, as she both inspired suffragists and strategized on finding allies. Additionally, I learned that she sculpted likenesses of twelve people buried in Oakwood Cemetery, for our future exhibit on art.

In August, we held an author talk with Dr. Angela Boswell on her book "Women in Texas History" and will publish that video soon. On September 12, we will have an online discussion with Dr. Jessica Brannon-Wranoski, Joy Diaz, and Cecilia Gutierrez Venable, "Voting Rights for All or Some?"

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/voting-rights-for-all-or-some-tickets-115255626682>

Dr. Brannon-Wranoski cautions how we use the term "celebrate" in recognizing the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment, as a celebration would be inclusive of everyone. From what I learned, we are celebrating voting rights for all, 100 years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, 55 years of the Civil Rights Act, and 45 years of the extension of that act that removed more barriers to voting for all women citizens.

I look forward to hearing your feedback about the exhibit that you can peruse online. The final tab includes a survey about your voting experience. All of our exhibits can be found through this link:

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

This link takes you to the *Texas Standard*, the national daily news show about Texas that can be heard on KUT Radio, highlighting Oakwood Chapel's *To Vote* digital book! Follow this link to hear an interview with Jennifer Chenoweth!

<https://www.texasstandard.org/stories/the-women-who-fought-for-the-19th-amendment-are-dead-an-interactive-digital-exhibit-brings-their-stories-to-life/>

## **PARD Cemetery Operations Programs Manager** by Caitlen Hill

I am Caitlen Hill and I am the new Programs Manager II with Cemetery Operations here in Austin. I say "new" because while I started in February, the rather unique circumstances right now have made it rather challenging to meet people that I would otherwise be working with quite a bit, like yourselves!

I come from a museum background with a focus in public programming. I spent the last five years in Houston working at the George Ranch Historical Park, a living history park where Texas history is presented for schools and for public visitors. Creating new programming and updating existent programming was a big focus there and I learned and developed programs to present information public and engage visitors.



I took a short break in 2015 to work for the National Park Service creating programming for the Big Thicket National Preserve in East Texas, where I was trained more directly in program development and public engagement. This is also where I really understood that we can all look at the same

forest and see different things. For example, I saw the insects and bugs that keep the ecosystem in balance and my fellow rangers did not readily agree with me that bugs were awesome.

From 2013-2014, I worked with Maxwell Museum of Anthropology when I was still attending the University of New Mexico as part of a team to create new and dynamic public programming for the touch carts we kept on hand for visitors to handle copies of the items on display.

As you can tell, getting the public interested and engaged with history and the world around them is my focus. I absolutely adore those moments when new information registers in a visitor's brain and you see the cogs turning as they assimilate it.

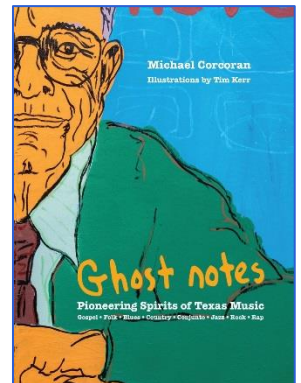
I really enjoy collaborating with different people to create the best programming possible and look forward to being able to work with SAC in assisting with the programs you already have in place, as well as helping to develop any new programs you'd like to get off the ground!

### Oakwood Chapel Book Talks: *To Hear & To Vote* by Megan Spencer

It has been busy at Oakwood Chapel – virtually! Four book talks were given via the Internet as part of Oakwood Chapel's *To Hear* and *To Vote* programs. Book talks started in April for *To Hear*. The *To Vote* series of events kicked off in early August. Meetings were conducted via the Zoom application, which allows us to see and hear one another...but only if we choose to be seen or heard!

### *Ghost Notes: Pioneering Spirits of Texas Music* written by Michael Corcoran and illustrated by Tim Kerr

The first book in the *To Hear* program was *Ghost Notes: Pioneering Spirits of Texas Music*, a recent book written by Michael Corcoran and illustrated by Tim Kerr, both Austinites. This is a large book and it is artistically rich. Images of the musicians are beautifully imagined. Michael's stories of these people's lives and their music fill out the portraits. Musicians covered in this work are mostly unknown, but the music they made left its mark.



The term “ghost notes” was used by recording people as a way to describe “sounds barely audible and unseen, a wisp lingering around the beat, yet somehow driving the groove.” Texas music’s earliest influence goes back to the 1920s when gospel, especially the music of the Pentecostal Church, was performed in churches and barrelhouses all over Texas and the surrounding states. It gradually transitioned into what we now call the blues. Of course, tied up with the music is religion, race, and the music business. You will learn how Texas music influenced not only the blues, but rock, soul, R&B, conjunto, psychedelic, and rap music.

Michael shared with us some his **Spotify playlists**, which are relevant to the Austin musicians profiled in his books. Some of these musicians are buried in Oakwood Cemetery! Here is the playlist from *Ghost Notes*. For more, see: [www.michaelcorcoran.com](http://www.michaelcorcoran.com) [Ghost Notes](#)

### *The Big Book of the Dead* by Marion Winik

In May, we talked with Marion Winik from her home in Baltimore about her work, *The Big Book of the Dead*. Marion is a former Austinite and was a contributor to the *Austin Chronicle* for many years. Her work, *The Big*

*Book of the Dead*, is a memoir unlike any memoir I have ever read. It is a series of short essays about the people Marion has known and lost. It begins with memories of people she knew from childhood. It is chronological, but it is also presented geographically, representing the places Marion has lived. Her language is familiar and in touch with the cultural context of these places. During our time together, she read essays aloud. Readers had questions about a person, a place, or about a time in Marion's life.

The idea to write these memories as very short pieces came from a writing residency that Marion attended where students were asked to write a memory of someone using no more than 400 words. In so few words, Marion makes you feel a strong connection to the people about whom she writes. These essays are melancholy, sentimental, touching, and funny. It is a pleasure to read them. For more about Marion, see:

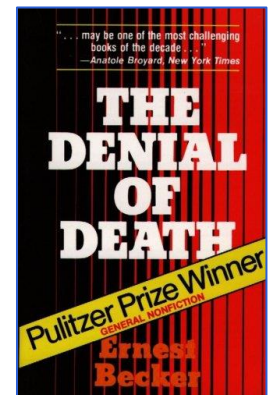
<http://marionwinik.com/>



*The Denial of Death* by Ernest Becker (1924–1974)

Ernest Becker was an American cultural anthropologist who served in WWII as an infantryman, was educated at Syracuse University, and taught at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, B.C. It is obvious from the title, *The Denial of Death*, (1973) that this is very heavy subject. There were only a few participants for this book talk, but what a fascinating discussion it was! Some had read the book many times. I was not familiar with the author or the book, but right away, the title got me. I wondered how does someone deny death?

Humans have death anxiety because humans, unlike other animals, are self-aware. Culture exists to provide reassurance that life has meaning and we have value. A person's "heroic project" in life may range widely from raising a family/pursuing a profession to making lots of money/gaining lots of power. Participants brought up guilt as a major theme in the book. Guilt comes as a result of the "unlived life." What must we do to live to our best potential? How do I live beyond myself? The book is philosophically wide-ranging in its approach to thinking and understanding.

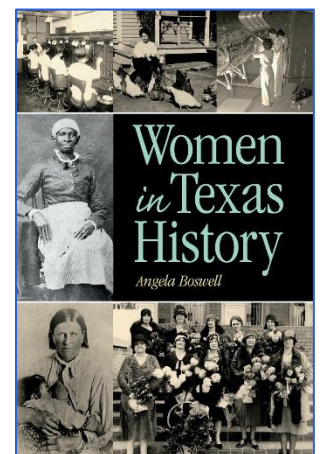


I did not get my hands on the book before the book talk, but I really enjoyed the discussion. I will definitely read it. I believe this book is highly relevant to what is going on today. Participants were from Arizona, Australia, Austin, and (briefly) a lady named Lyla, representing the Ernest Becker Foundation. This book won the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction in 1974. <https://ernestbecker.org/>

*Women in Texas History* by Angela Boswell, PhD

About twenty readers participated in a book talk given by Dr. Angela Boswell, author of *Women in Texas History*. From the Preface: "This book is based on a simple premise: what women did in the past is intrinsically worth knowing. Texas would not be Texas without one half of its population." Dr. Angela Boswell joined us via the Internet from her office on the campus of Henderson State University in Arkadelphia, AR.

Texas A&M Press approached Dr. Boswell about taking on a book project that would be one of a kind. It would be the first history of women in Texas to be approached from the woman's point of view. It weaves all previous histories about Texas women



into one complete narrative. Dr. Boswell’s goal was to write about women of all races, ethnicities, and classes. What started as a two-year project stretched out to ten years of work!

When families started moving to Texas during the early 1800s, women had to be very strong. They directed all the daily activities of the household, raised children, prepared the food, tended crops, wove the cloth, and made all the clothing. Sometimes husbands were gone for weeks. Later on, the women’s suffrage movement was hard-fought by early activists, Black, Latina and White, who organized themselves to make changes in their communities through church societies and women’s clubs. They embraced the idea of progressivism in the late 1800s and they did not give up. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act gave all women the right to vote without fear of discrimination.

### 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](mailto: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](mailto:info@sachome.org) to confirm the time and place of the next board meeting.

### Calendar

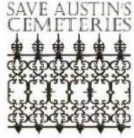
Please join us for these upcoming events!

Sept 12	Oakwood Chapel online discussion: <i>Voting Rights for All or Some?</i>
Sept 20	An online event: <i>Museum Day</i>
Oct 9-10	Oakwood Chapel online event: <i>All Together Here: A Symposium of Discovery and Remembrance</i>
Oct	SAC online event: <i>14<sup>th</sup> Annual Murder, Mayhem, and Misadventure Tours</i> at Oakwood Cemetery *
Nov 7	It’s My Park Day 9:00am-12:00pm **

\* Due to COVID-19, date and time to be confirmed closer to the date.

\*\* Due to COVID-19, this event may be cancelled.

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).



# Save Austin's Cemeteries

## Membership Application (January to December)

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

Membership Year 2020

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