

SAVE AUSTIN'S CEMETERIES

2021 Newsletter #1

Save Austin's Cemeteries Board Members

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Newsletter Editors

Megan Spencer
Leslie Wolfenden

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Gravestone Restoration Complete

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Love Across Cultures

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Texas Revolution Hero Washington Anderson's Gravestone Conservation Completed by Arro Smith, PhD

In our last newsletter, we reported that the local lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows were in the midst of “cradling” the Washington Anderson gravestone, buried in Section 1 of Oakwood in 1894. His marker at Oakwood was found broken at its base when SAC prepared for the Texas Independence tour in 2017.

Odd Fellow Brother Keith Crippen made a template of the 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. After the concrete cured for 30 days, it was sealed and stained.



Top: Keith Crippen prepared a template of the Patterson gravestone for a cradle.

Bottom: Odd Fellow Brothers Al Royer and Keith Crippen as they gently lower the stone into the new cradle.



In December, Odd Fellow Brothers Al Royer, Keith Crippen, and Arro Smith carefully lowered the conserved stone into the new cradle.

Eager to hone his cradling conservation skills, Brother Keith suggested working

next on James S. Patterson’s gravestone. Patterson (1799-1879) is also a Texas Revolution hero, whose gravestone had been previously mended. Patterson’s descendants contacted Kay Boyd at SAC about his toppled gravestone in the autumn as the Anderson conservation neared completion.

COVID-permitting, SAC will hold an official dedication for both of the cradled Texas Revolution heroes’ markers in conjunction with San Jacinto Day (April 21), as both fought at the decisive battle.

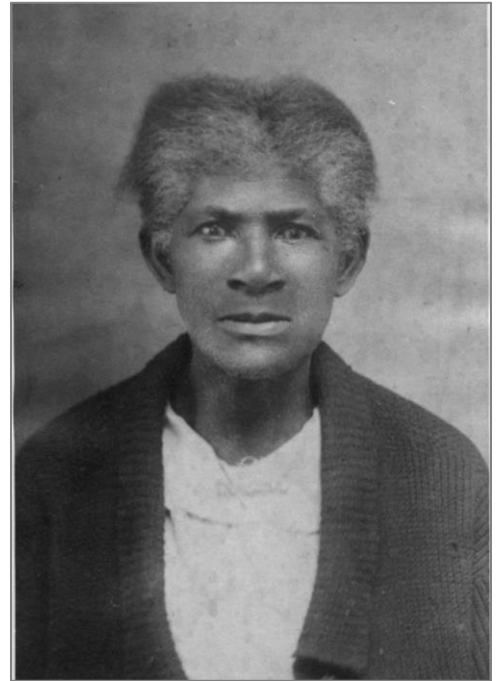
Odd Fellow Brothers Al Royer, Keith Crippen, and Arro Smith with the conserved Anderson gravestone. (Arro is also the Secretary for Save Austin’s Cemeteries.)



Nancy Mahala Coleman Thomas: Her Story - Research by Kay Dunlap Boyd; Written by Megan Spencer

Nancy Mahala Coleman Thomas does not have a grave marker in Oakwood Cemetery, but like everyone she has a story to tell. When Kay, SAC historian and genealogist, found Nancy’s photo, she knew it was time to share her story. Kay has uncovered some incredible information, including the transcription of an oral narrative with Nancy conducted as part of the *Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938*, which contains more than 2,300 first-person accounts of slavery and 500 black-and-white photographs of former slaves. These narratives were collected in the 1930s as part of the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) of the Works Progress Administration, later renamed Work Projects Administration (WPA). At the conclusion of the Slave Narrative project, a set of edited transcripts was assembled and microfilmed in 1941 as the seventeen-volume *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States from Interviews with Former Slaves*.

Nancy Coleman was born a slave in 1859 on the Meek Smith cotton plantation in Bastrop County. The exact month and day of her birth is unclear. Her father was John Coleman who died before she was born. Her mother Mary Clark was a cook on the Smith plantation. Nancy’s mother was brought to Texas by Meek Smith from Bowie County, Tennessee. In the narrative, Nancy says before her mother died, she wanted her children to remember where she was born and where she grew up. Mary Coleman was the mother of eleven children, two boys and nine girls. Nancy was a “house girl” during slavery, and became the special companion to the Meeks’ daughter, Polonia. Nancy considered herself sassy because she had heard that her father was independent and sassy.



Nancy Mahala Coleman Thomas.
[Source: Portal to Texas History website
<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph117420/?q=Nancy%20thomas>]

In 1879, at the age of nineteen, Nancy Coleman married Jerry Thomas, who was born in 1842. Jerry had served in the United States Colored Infantry from 1865-1868. She was baptized and joined Ebenezer Baptist Church in 1883. In 1918, Nancy became President of the Home Woman's Mission Society #4 in Austin and she was active in its work until 1930. Nancy and Jerry had three girls: Pearl, Ettie, and Bennie Eva. When her husband died in California in 1905, Nancy began receiving his military pension of \$40.00 a month.

NAME OF SOLDIER: <i>Thomas, Jerry</i>				
NAME OF DEPENDENT: <i>Widow, Thomas, Nancy</i>				
SERVICE: <i>10-9 U.S. Col 2-77 U.S.C. Inf M 10 U.S.C. Reva.</i>				
DATE OF FILING.	CLASS.	APPLICATION NO.	CERTIFICATE NO.	STATE FROM WHICH FILED.
<i>1895-7 May</i>	<i>Invalid</i>	<i>1167177</i>	<i>988237</i>	<i>Calif</i>
<i>1905-24 Feb</i>	<i>Widow</i>	<i>834540</i>	<i>613084</i>	<i>Texas</i>
ATTORNEY:				
REMARKS: <i>X.C. 2676849</i>				

THOMAS JERRY		Xc 2676849
Pvt A 77 U S C Inf & Bat M 10 U S C H A		K
1208 E 10 St Austin Texas		A
En	Died 7-22-05	T
Born - - 42		R
Enl 1-29-65	Dia 12-23-68	Cl
VETERANS ADMINISTRATION Form 7902—Rev. Sept. 1961		I WC 613 084
MASTER INDEX CARD		epo 15-708

Jerry Thomas' military pension cards. [Source: familysearch.org, "United States General Index to Pension Files, 1861-1934"]

In 1882, Nancy went to work for J. S. Hogg's family as the cook. When he was elected governor, she lived in the governor's mansion located at 1010 Colorado Street. In Nancy's narrative, she talks about how fond she was of the Hogg family.

Nancy owned her home at 1208 East 10th Street, Austin. She said that the Negroes of East Austin thought of her as their banker because she had a steady income. Whenever anyone needed a little money, he or she would go to Nancy.

Nancy died December 12, 1938 at the age of 78 and was buried in Oakwood Cemetery on December 15th. The sexton's record states she was buried in Section 4, Colored Grounds. Her story is barely touched on in this brief article. This woman's life story is one that needs to be told! Thinking about her life span is incredible – to be born a slave and live to be an independent woman with a family - and then living to see World War 1!

Sources:

- familysearch.org, texashistory.unt.edu, ancestryheritagequest.com, PICA-33132, Austin History Center, sachome.org, <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~txbastro/slave/slavethomas.htm>



Ebenezer Baptist Church choir (undated) [Source: PICA-33132, Austin History Center, Austin Public Library]

A Happy New Year. The Pastor's Compliments

AUSTIN, TEXAS, JANUARY 1, 1898.

Ebenezer or Third Baptist Church, East Tenth Street.



OUR CHURCH AND AFTERNOON CONGREGATION.

ORDER OF SERVICES

Sunday School, 9 a. m. to 10:40 a. m.
 Preaching at 11 a. m. & 3 p. m. & 8 p. m.
 N. Y. P. U. Prayers Meeting, 7 p. m. each Sunday.
 Communion first Sunday in each month.
 Devotional Meeting each Monday night.
 N. Y. P. U. Literary each Tuesday evening, 7:30 p. m.

Church Prayer Meeting each Wednesday night, 8 p. m.
 Business Meetings first Thursday night each month.
 Young Christians and Converts Prayer Meeting each Friday night.
 Teachers' Meeting each Monday night.
 Choir Practice each Thursday night.

Women's Missionary Society each Friday, 4 p. m.
 Star Lights each Wednesday, 4 p. m.
 Covenant each third Sunday.
 Bible Meetings each 2nd and 4th Sunday evenings.
 Baptist Boys' Brigade and Choral Class Thursday evening of each week.

What I Promised on Joining the Church.

A Covenant.

As we trust we have received, through divine grace, the Lord Jesus Christ, and given ourselves wholly to Him, and, on profession of our faith, we have been buried with Him in baptism, and thus united ourselves to His Church, we do now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other, and by the aid of the Holy Spirit, we engage:

That we will walk together with brotherly love, exercising a Christian care and watchfulness over each other, participating in each other's joys with tender sympathy, bearing one another's burdens and sorrows.

That we will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together at the communion, and other appointed meetings, but seek and pray for the spirituality, harmony and prosperity of this Church, to sustain its worship, ordinances and doctrines, and give its claims a sacred pre-eminence over all organizations of human origin.

That we will contribute of our means, as God has prospered us, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, for the relief of the poor, and for the spreading of the gospel over the earth.

That we will maintain private and family prayer, religiously educate the children committed to our care, and endeavor in purity of heart and newness of life, and good will toward all men, to exemplify and commend our holy faith, win souls to our Savior and hold fast to our profession till He shall come and receive us unto himself.



OUR PASTOR--REV. L. L. CAMPBELL.

What we Teach.

A Confession of Faith.

1. We believe in one God, maker and ruler of heaven and earth, revealed as the Father and Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in divine perfection.
2. In the Holy Scriptures as His inspired word, and the only rule of faith and practice.
3. In the fall of man and his condemnation as a sinner, and God's sovereign grace and love in the redemption and choice of His people.
4. In the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, who obeyed the law, suffered and died for the sins of men, and is risen, and exalted a Priest and King.
5. In the free offer of eternal life to all in the Gospel, and aggravated guilt of those who reject it.
6. In the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and the repentance toward God, and faith in Christ.
7. In the justification and adoption of the believer, through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.
8. In the divine institution of the Christian Ministry, and in the visible Church with its professed believers, with initiatory rites, baptism and the Lord's Supper.
9. In the sacred observance of the Lord's day for rest, worship and religious instruction.
10. In the final preservation of all saints, through sanctification of the Spirit, and obedience to the truth.
11. In the present life as man's only day of grace, and the soul's entrance at death into conscious wretchedness or woe.
12. In the resurrection of all the dead at the glorious coming of the Son of Man, and His just adjudgment of the wicked in everlasting punishment, and the righteous to life eternal.

P. S.--Introduce your friends to your pastor.

To Remember: Grief, Loss, and Love Across Cultures by Jennifer Chenoweth, Oakwood Chapel Museum Site Coordinator

To Remember/Recordar is the Oakwood Chapel's first quarter exhibit for 2021. Because of the pandemic, loss and grief are on all of our minds. In this digital exhibit, we look at historic photographs, video, oral histories, and maps for how we bury and remember our loved ones in Austin, Texas.

There are searchable maps of cemeteries in Travis County, which include links to Austin Genealogical Society data. We republished Dr. Arro Smith's article on African American Funeral Homes in Austin, and we have collaborated on a virtual 360° tour of the Chapel and the Historic Old Grounds at Oakwood Cemetery.

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

- **How We Remember Our Ancestors:** historic photographs and cultural practices of remembrance
- **To Bury:** how we bury our dead in cemeteries for remembrance and land preservation
- **Congregation Beth Israel Cemeteries:** understanding the history of Congregation Beth Israel in Austin and Jewish grieving practices, includes digital map of Oakwood Cemetery lots and Jewish cemeteries
- **Alberto Fuster:** Dr. Emilio Zamora discusses the influence of Mexican artist Alberto Fuster who died while traveling through Austin
- **Tejano Genealogy Resources:** updated Mexican American genealogy links shared by the Tejano Genealogy Society of Austin
- **Mexican American Cemeteries:** resources and commentary on Mexican American cemeteries in Austin with map
- **African American Cemeteries:** resources and commentary on African American cemeteries in Austin with map
- **African American Funeral Homes in Austin:** timeline and context of cultural burial services by Dr. Arro Smith
- **African American Genealogy:** presentation from Summer 2020 workshop by kYmberly Keeton of the Austin History Center and Danielle McGhee of Huston-Tillotson University
- **Travis County searchable map of cemeteries,** created by Texas Historic Commission's GIS data for cemeteries and Austin Genealogy Society information

Additionally, we enjoyed interviewing Robert Tieman and Kay Boyd about their headstone monument documentation that they produced over fifteen years ago. You can find this video along with newly published videos from other Chapel programs on the Parks and Recreation Department's YouTube Playlist for the Oakwood Cemetery Chapel: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLelTMMBW0YOSkETq3ZWPso2xFK-w9O2Oc>

Help us confirm veteran monuments to remember those who have served.

In upcoming projects, we are using SAC research on veterans' burials at Austin's municipal cemeteries to create a program in Summer 2021: "To Serve."

This spring, we will be creating a user-friendly phone app for SAC and community volunteers to help us walk about Austin's Cemeteries to confirm headstone locations for veteran burials. These will help create a walking tour of monuments for veterans. We will post a call for volunteers and information on the app in March.

In Other Austin Cemetery News... by Arro Smith PhD

In 2020, a City of Austin official with the Code Compliance division called Save Austin's Cemeteries and left a message asking about Bethany Cemetery on Springdale Road. As SAC Secretary, I got the call. A vehicle had damaged the fenced corner near Simms Elementary, and he was concerned about school children – and others – being tempted to enter the cemetery for mischief.

I explained that Bethany is an abandoned cemetery and not a city cemetery, and that no one but community volunteers maintained this early African American burial place. No one was truly responsible for it; however, there were several people that care strongly about its preservation – and I am one of them.



I told him that while Bethany was outside of Save Austin's Cemeteries purview, I was also Secretary of another local group whose mission is to "help bury the dead" – the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Capital Lodge #23. At our next Lodge meeting, I asked my Odd Fellows brothers and sisters to take up the repair of the Bethany fence as a service project.

The first Austin Odd Fellows lodge was chartered in 1852, and the Charter bears the signature of Anson Jones, the last President of the Republic of Texas. Our motto is "Keeping Austin Odd since 1852." The mission of Independent Order of Odd Fellows includes "bury the dead and educate the orphan," which is why you see so many IOOF cemeteries from the 19th century in the United States. In the 21st century, the Capital Lodge devotes most of its financial energy supporting two orphanages, the Helping Hand Home for Children and the Settlement Home.

Over the last two years though, my Odd Fellows brothers and sisters have worked on a number of SAC projects, including partially funding our Veterans Day and Memorial Day flags, working on footstone resetting, and most recently the cradling of the Washington Anderson and James Patterson gravestones at Oakwood.

Odd Fellows brother Keith Crippen took on the task of coordinating the Bethany fencing repair. Once the original corner posts were dug up and replaced, he realized that the chain link fencing to fix the corner could only be purchased in a quantity that was more than the just the corner required. On the other side of the Springdale Road gate for Bethany, there had always been another gap, which had probably been a second entrance, but that "road" had become overgrown and now any vehicle entering there would inevitably damage graves. The Odd Fellows decided to also set new posts and make the fence complete along Springdale Road.

Early this year the Odd Fellows completed the project and Bethany is now protected by a fence along the entirety of the Springdale Road frontage.



Installing the new fence section (left) and newly repaired/installed fence corner (right), work done by Odd Fellows brothers Joe Furtsch, Justin Schneider, Arro Smith, Keith Crippen, Jacob Hassell, and Bill Hansen.

Oakwood Cemetery Virtual Tours by Kay Dunlap Boyd and Jennifer Chenoweth

The City of Austin created tours as marketing pieces for visiting Oakwood Cemetery and to highlight a few people in each section as virtual tours. The drone photographer got footage for the marketing video and for the 3D model that we are building.

In one of the informative tours, Oakwood Chapel Exhibit Assistant Greg Farrar gives a tour of Oakwood Cemetery. Greg helped to complete an audit of over 5,424 records of people buried in community grounds, including the "Historic Colored Grounds," "Mexican Grounds," and other areas of the cemetery outside of family lots. In the 19th century, this area was designated for communities of color including African Americans, Mexican Americans, and anyone who was poor. He shows us the grounds, the chapel, and the handwritten records that did not often list the names or exact locations of people buried. You can enjoy this tour by clicking on the YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdHO8Uio53E>

Time to Check on Membership by Kay Dunlap Boyd

We send greetings to all of Save Austin's Cemeteries Members and Friends. Welcome to the Winter of 2021. First and most importantly, the board members of Save Austin's Cemeteries hope you and yours are safe and made it through the cold weather. We are not yet sure how many activities we can have on the ground or which ones will be virtual, but we are planning.

We are still accepting new and renewal memberships for 2021. You have four membership categories to choose from: Individual \$20, Student \$15, Senior \$15 (age 60+), and Lifetime \$500. You can go to our website www.sachome.org for a quick and easy way to send in your membership via PayPal or mail a check to Save Austin's Cemeteries, PO Box 16411, Austin, TX 78761. We thank you for your contribution, which is tax deductible as SAC is a 501.c.3 not for profit organization. If you are unsure if you paid your dues for 2021, send us a note at info@sachome.org. See the last page of this newsletter for a form.

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!

Jan – Mar 2021	<i>To Remember/Recordar: Grief, Loss, and Love Across Cultures – Oakwood Chapel Digital Exhibition</i>
Mar 6	It's My Park Day DELAYED UNTIL JUNE DUE TO COVID
Apr date TBD	Dedication of Texas Revolution heroes' restored markers
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