



RIP GUARDIAN UPDATE WINTER 2008

The RIP Guardian Update is the biannual communication of the RIP Guardian program, highlighting news and events important to cemetery preservationists across Texas.

Change in eligibility requirement for participation in the RIP Guardian program

Obtaining the Historic Texas Cemetery (HTC) designation is now a prerequisite for participation in the RIP Guardian program. If your cemetery has not been designated, please contact the RIP Guardian coordinator at 512.475.4506 or anne.shelton@thc.state.tx.us to schedule an HTC counseling call with program staff. View current HTC designation forms and samples online at www.thc.state.tx.us/cemeteries/cemhtc.shtml.

Volunteer power makes cents

Based on information submitted in RIP Guardian fall reports, volunteers spent over 3,750 hours from July to December working to protect historic cemeteries across Texas. Translated into dollars using an estimated industry standard, RIP Guardians contributed more than \$73,400 of in-kind contributions during the last half of 2008. Thanks to RIP Guardian volunteers, 9100 hours, or the equivalent of just over \$177,541, was contributed to the preservation of historic cemeteries in 24 counties.

Attention non-profit RIP Guardians

The Internal Revenue Service revised Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax, instructions and posted them along with three new background documents explaining the new form and instructions. The Texas Association of Nonprofit Organizations (TANO) provides an overview and explanation of the changes on its website at www.tano.org/en/rel/?26. TANO assists nonprofit organizations across Texas, no matter their size or budget. Its mission is to connect, strengthen and support the nonprofit community for the public good of Texas.

RIP Guardian groups on the web

Bookmark these sites to keep up with members of the statewide RIP Guardian network:

- Brownsville RIP Guardians www.brownsvillehistory.org/old_city_cemetery_center.html
- Navidad Baptist RIP Guardians <http://historic-navidad.com/index.html>
- Oakwood RIP Guardians www.sachome.org/
- Union Hill RIP Guardians <http://hmsjrhistorians.wetpaint.com/>
- Walker RIP Guardians <http://texaspioneer.blogspot.com/>

AROUND THE STATE

Brownsville City RIP Guardians, Cameron County

Submitted by Priscilla Rodriguez

- Continued guided Friday Walking Tour program at the cemetery.
- We've been working with Danny Montes, an old-time mason who was taught the traditional methods of brick and mortar making by his father and his grandfather before him. Mr. Montes' grandfather built the boundary wall of the cemetery, and his father helped build the Cameron County Courthouse.
- The first annual Sam and Chula Griffin Award for cemetery preservation was presented to Mrs. Kendall's class at Hudson Elementary and to Andrew Widener, the Eagle Scout who spent his summer recording and mapping the cemetery.
- Dia de los Muertos celebrations at the cemetery received recognition in the Brownsville Herald:
 - *Festival Puts Fresh Life in Dia de los Muertos*
www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/people_90937___article.html/brownsville_cemetery.html
 - *Dead Right: Tradition Guides Creation of Altars with Meaning*
www.brownsvilleherald.com/news/gomez_91025___article.html/zima_son.html

- We are working on an MP3 walking tour of the cemetery as part of a larger Preserve America grant project.

Cementario La Loma De La Cruz RIP Guardians, Val Verde County

Submitted by Diana Sotelo-Zertuche

- Val Verde County commissioner Ramiro Ramon has committed his work crew to hand-cleaning the cemetery every sixty days. He made this commitment in September and he has kept his word. He is also an active member of our committee.
- The local newspaper has published several articles about our volunteer work, especially in the archival investigation of the names, dates and other pertinent data we have gathered about who is buried in this cemetery.

College Memorial Park RIP Guardians, Harris County

Submitted by Randy Riepe



- Check out their new signage!
- Volunteers continue to attend maintenance events on the second Saturday of each month. The only participant at the September cleanup was a fellow named Ike – the rest of the work these past few months has been picking up after his visit. The city of Houston helped in that effort as well, and the waste removal department teamed with some community service folks to remove much of the trash that volunteers piled up over the previous months.

Decatur-Maxwell RIP Guardians, Collin County

Submitted by Ann Sielert

- We had a booth at the Murphy Merchant Market where we displayed photos of the cemetery, our book and what we are trying to accomplish in hopes of recruiting more members and generate interest. Twenty people signed up to help!
- Lowe's in Murphy, as part of their corporate Community Heroes program, installed panels of wrought iron fence and a new gate at the entrance. The installation was part of the History Blooms event held on November 1st. In addition, Lowe's presented the group a check for \$1200.
- The Murphy Garden Club and Classic Gardens and Landscape organization has been helping with identification of plantings and providing supplies for beautification projects.

Dunn's Fort RIP Guardians, Robertson County

Submitted by Keith Zamzow

- Excitement and energy levels were high during a maintenance activity that was participated in by fourteen 4-H club members and eleven parents. After the cleanup was completed, and the cemetery was once again well-groomed, several parents commented how they were pleased to see the effort and hard work the club members had put forth.

Lovelady/Evergreen RIP Guardians, Houston County

Submitted by Marty Cash

- We republished *Lovelady, Texas Centennial 1872-1972*, as a fundraiser for the cemetery. Family histories and old photos can be added to the book to personalize it.
- Over one hundred flags were placed on the cemetery fence on November 11th in observance of Veteran's Day.

Navidad Baptist RIP Guardians, Fayette County

Submitted by Iris Rose Guertin

- Members were asked to complete and return notarized affidavits verifying that their ancestors were buried at Navidad for a quitclaim deed to be filed in Fayette County. This is done in order to change ownership from the nonexistent Navidad Baptist Church to the Navidad Baptist Cemetery Association. The title company is in the process of filing the documents.

Oakwood RIP Guardians, Travis County

Submitted by Leslie Wolfenden

- Two quarterly meetings were held with quest speakers, the annual walking tour Murder Mayhem and Misadventure was held and volunteers participated in two gravemarker and cemetery feature recording sessions.
- A spreadsheet form was added to our website so volunteers may log their hours on a monthly basis. The information is used to match in-kind contributions for funding and grants.

Ranger RIP Guardians, Calhoun County

Submitted by Mary Belle Meitzen

- Volunteers met with the city maintenance crew to discuss ways to protect the gravemarkers from further mowing and weedwhip damage.

Union Hill RIP Guardians, Williamson County

Submitted by Ron Goins

- Students and sponsors are working with our Round Rock Independent School District Service Learning representative to secure funding for a digital camera to record interviews and upcoming events and group t-shirts.

Walker RIP Guardians, Washington County

Submitted by Linda Woods

- Communication was made by phone, mail and email to raise more funds for the new fence.

Young RIP Guardians, Collin County

Submitted by Candace Fountoulakis

- Our first maintenance event was held on December 6th. Using hand tools and muscle, the fence line was cleared of greenbrier and downed limbs and debris was removed from the site.
- We gave a presentation to 4-H group leaders using the powerpoint from the CD in the RIP Guardian Guidebook with Young's info added and a few photos from the site. This is the first formal introduction to the project the leaders and teens had seen.

Q&A WITH: OAKWOOD RIP GUARDIANS

Recording volunteer hours isn't just busy work. Looking at the number of hours spent, and how they are spent, provides a great deal of information about what the different RIP Guardian groups are accomplishing. By balancing efforts between planning, recording and sensitive maintenance events, volunteers can see how a three-pronged preservation approach for historic cemeteries makes a lasting impact.

In 2008 RIP Guardian volunteers across the state contributed 9100 hours of their time, equaling just over \$177,540 of potential match money for funding projects.

The Oakwood RIP Guardians of Travis County have a history of recording their volunteer hours. Oakwood RIP Guardian contact Leslie Wolfenden shares information about the methods they use to collect the information, how they share it and why it's important.

Q: When did the Oakwood RIP Guardians start recording volunteer hours?

A: I started logging my volunteer hours for tax purposes to track hours, mileage and expenses in 2005. Volunteers started tracking hours informally in early 2008. It became more formal in the fall and as of early November we started sending out monthly email reminders.

Q: Why did collecting this information become important?

A: It became important after I realized that volunteer hours could be used for matching grants. Also that Austin Parks and Recreation Department's (PARD) Adopt a Park program can use the tracked hours to show how much money is saved by not hiring employees to do the same work that our volunteers do and to show how effective their programs are or aren't.

Q: In your volunteer experience, what are the differences between collecting information from large groups vs. small?

A: SAC has about 130 potential volunteers between dues paying members and friends. About ten percent of these currently participate in volunteer events that we're aware of. I'm hoping that with regular email reminders more people will track and turn in their hours so the percentage will go up. Previously, we tracked hours by who signed attendance sheets. But there are so many more possibilities for volunteers than just attending our meetings, documentation events, etc.

I think one of the difficulties is getting people to realize what can be counted as volunteer hours (documenting, inventorying, cleaning, attending meetings, tour guides, baking goodies, writing letters, creating databases, research, making name tags stationery logos, updating the website, grant writing, advertising, etc). I think once volunteers are accustomed to receiving these emails we will be more effective at tracking the hours.

Q: Oakwood RIP Guardians spend a lot of time planning and recording. The cemetery is one of the original burial grounds for the city of Austin, and routine maintenance is provided by PARD and InterCare Corp. Even so, the Oakwood RIP Guardians have volunteer maintenance events/opportunities. How does the group coordinate these?

A: Most of our coordination is done by emails send out by the secretary Kay Boyd. It seems to be the most time efficient and cost efficient way to get the word out to our volunteers.

Q: Who gathers and manages the volunteer time information and how is it stored?

A: We send out monthly emails to remind people to fill out the volunteer form that is on our website and send it back to us either via email or snail mail. I like doing it monthly because it acts as a reminder to our volunteers that they are supposed to be tracking their hours and to turn them in. I log the volunteer hours into an Excel Spreadsheet, sorted on a date basis. I also log hours that I know people have contributed, but may not have turned in.

Q: Do the Oakwood RIP Guardians have a recognition program for the volunteer who's logged the most hours during the year?

A: We don't currently have a recognition program, but I think that is a great idea. We have purchased a new non-profit computer program called Giftworks, which tracks a bunch of information, including volunteer hours, donations, members, etc. We are still in the experimental stage and inputting information into the database.

Thanks to Leslie Wolfenden and all the Oakwood RIP Guardians! Contact Leslie at president@sachome.org with questions or for more information about volunteering at Austin's historic Oakwood Cemetery.

TELL US ABOUT IT

Showcase your groups' accomplishments in the RIP Guardian Update. Summer report forms will be emailed at the end of June, so look for the RIP Guardian Update section on the back of the form to contribute. Complete this section and share your group's achievements with participating volunteers around the state.

Thanks to all the RIP Guardian coordinators and volunteers for another great season of cemetery preservation!

2009 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES AND CONFERENCES

Remember – attending training events counts as accomplishing a measure!

- April 15-17 Cemetery preservation session at THC annual conference, Lakeway
Visit www.thc.state.tx.us/annualconference/cof2009.shtml for more information
- March 28 Collin County cemetery preservation workshop, Chambersville
Contact Lolisa Laenger, Collin County Historical Commission at lolisal@verizon.net for more information
- April 7-8 National Preservation Institute Landscape Preservation workshop, Austin
Visit www.npi.org for more information
- April 29 Texas Hill Country Trail Region Cemetery Preservation Workshop, Kerrville
Contact Ann Branson at hctrail@fbgtx.org for more information
- May 2 Acton Cemetery Preservation Workshop, Acton
Contact Karen Nace, Hood County Historical Commission chair at knace@co.hood.tx.us for more information

SPRING 2009 REPORTING

Report forms for 2009 spring volunteer hours and events will be distributed on June 23 and due July 2. The form will cover work performed from January to June. Please keep track of your hours and events. Call the RIP Guardian program coordinator at 512.475.4506 with any questions.

Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711
Phone 512/463-5853
www.thc.state.tx.us



**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

The State Agency for Historic Preservation