



# OAK HILL CEMETERY

Historic Preservation  
Foundation

## OAK HILL CEMETERY

3001 R Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20007  
Telephone: 202-337-2835  
Fax: 202-337-6481  
www.oakhillcemeterydc.org  
Email: info@oakhillcemeterydc.org

## Cemetery Hours

Office and Grounds:  
M - F 9:00 am - 4:30 pm  
Saturday 11:00 am - 4:00 pm  
Sunday 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm  
(Weekends and holidays walk-in gate only,  
no drive-in access. Gates will close, weather  
permitting. Please observe visiting tips at  
front entrance)

## Oak Hill Cemetery Historic Preservation Foundation Board of Directors

George G. Hill, President  
L. Richard Fischer, Vice President  
Judi Cochran, Treasurer  
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Thomas E. Crocker  
Clift A. Seferlis  
Michael R. Weaver  
David W. Jackson, Executive Director  
Lois M. Brown, Director of Development  
and Foundation Operations  
Liz Mizell, Director of Development,  
Communications and Individual Giving

## Oak Hill Cemetery Board of Managers

George G. Hill, President  
David C. de Vicq, Vice President  
Loretta Castaldi, Treasurer  
Patricia Berl, Secretary  
David W. Jackson, Superintendent

# From the President

Dear Friends of Oak Hill,

As we all have experienced, this year has been tumultuous in many ways. The Oak Hill Cemetery has weathered this crisis reasonably well, especially by comparison to many of our neighbors and friends. Our prayers go out to those who have been injured or suffered losses, and our fellow citizens are frequently in our thoughts. We have remained available as much as possible, keeping the gates open for friends and visitors, and responding to inquiries promptly. We sent all employees home with pay but soon found that we could work safely outside while maintaining minimal business office exposure.

We lost our friend Lou Krach earlier this year to cancer, which limited our ability to open some weekends. Dave and Darla have been very resourceful and helpful, as always. Unlike the pandemic one hundred years ago, we have not seen an increase in funeral services' needs. We did accept forgivable funds from the Federal Government from the PPP program, as we were unsure what our revenues would be. Recently we were given a long-term EIDL loan from the Small Business Administration. We thought it prudent to avail ourselves of these programs to ensure our financial strength. We intend to repay this loan when circumstances normalize. The funds will be used for tree maintenance and the historic Bigelow Iron Fence Along R Street restoration project.

Last September, work was finishing up on the grand set of old stone steps in Central Avenue's main intersection. Two monuments, magnificently decorated with beatific angels, have recently been installed on these steps. Many thanks to David deVicq and Andy del Gallo for their design and installation. Ricardo and Ernesto then turned their sights to Reno Hill. After careful planning, they removed a slippery slate path, created new burial spaces, installed drainage and an irrigation line, installed lengthy new guttering, reimagined several long paths, and restored dozens of monuments. They worked



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for eleven months on these projects, and the results are gratifying. Again, these talented gentlemen have transformed this area from neglect to beauty. Abraham, Jorge, Jose, and Scott have contributed enormously by seeding, planting, trimming, growing, installing, and maintaining this area and others. They have all helped us uplift the serenity and the function of this space and created several new burial options. I cannot express how grateful I am to our extraordinarily productive team.

In the past few days, Ricardo and Ernesto have chosen to focus their attention on the planning and reconstruction of the long path close to and which parallels R Street. This well-traveled path is often dangerously slippery with rain, snow, or morning dew. It is one of the primary walking connections between the west and east of our property. Re-contouring this path, installing new gutter, installing a new irrigation line, and other work is proceeding as we write. This work will make the passage safer for you and our staff. Monuments will be reset, and several new burial options will eventually be created closer to the Renwick Chapel.

We have finished the repair of three sections of the historic Bigelow Iron Fence Along R Street. Our contractors and we learned many things. We have now let a contractor repair an additional five sections of the fence and purchase a good portion of the base stones. Work has begun on that phase by Krug and Sons, with Lorton Stone as our general contractor. Each section will cost about \$25,000. Please help!

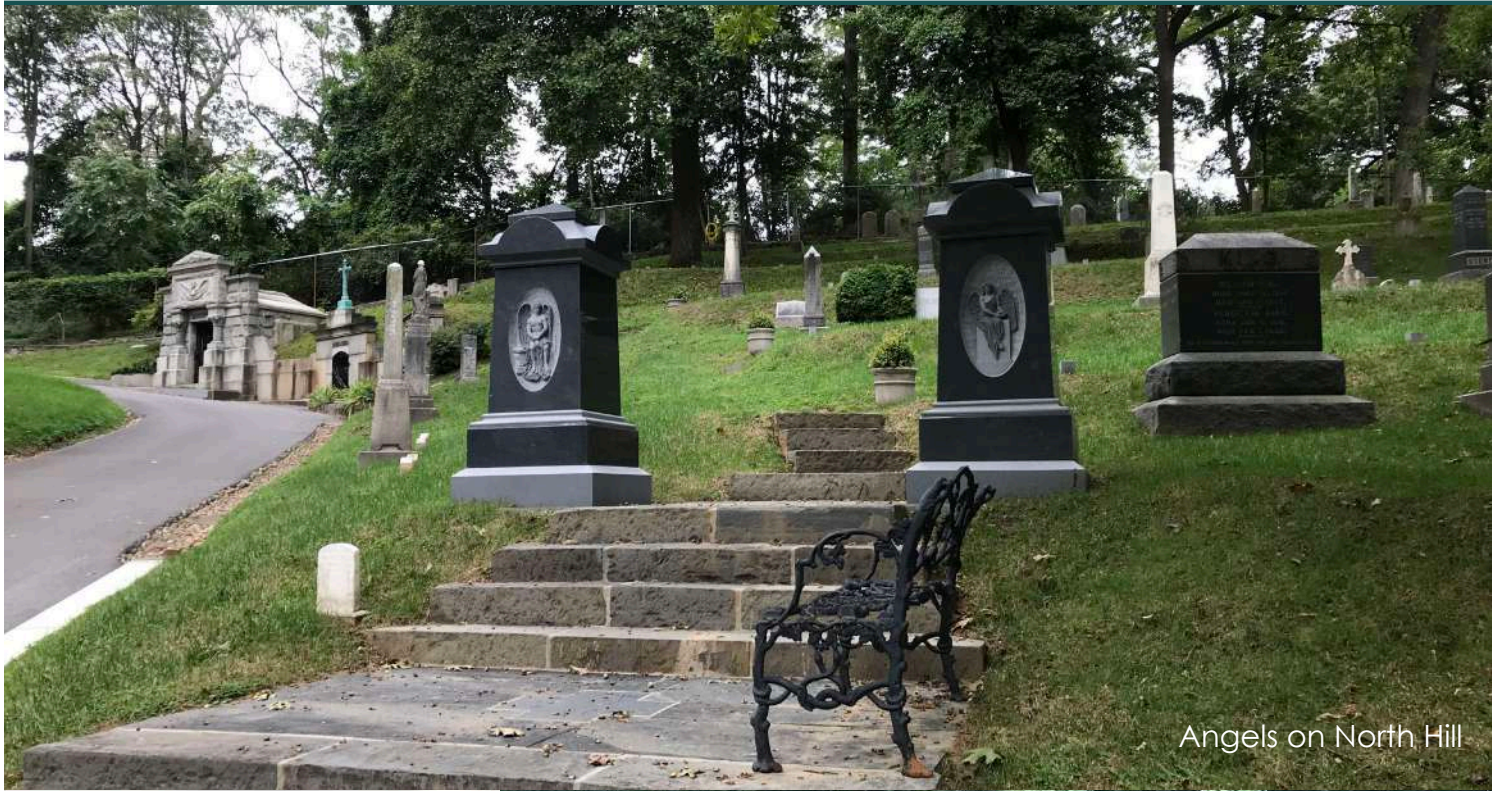
Please visit and see all that we are doing. Oak Hill has been especially necessary and available during these trying times to our friends and neighbors. Please support our ongoing maintenance and restoration projects, especially our historic Bigelow Iron Fence Along R Street restoration.

Sincerely,

George G. Hill, President  
Oak Hill Cemetery Historic Preservation Foundation

# OAK HILL CEMETERY

## Historic Preservation Foundation Newsletter



Angels on North Hill



R Street Path: old becoming new



## OAK HILL CEMETERY Historic Preservation Foundation Newsletter

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### Treasurer Report by Loretta Castaldi

Oak Hill Cemetery will finish the fiscal year ending April 30, 2020 with a \$171k loss from operations, the first loss in many years.

Oak Hill Cemetery started the fiscal year in good financial shape and then the COVID-19 virus arrived. Cemeteries were deemed essential businesses so Oak Hill remained open. To protect our staff, we maintained them at full pay, but we reduced their work hours and staggered their shifts to promote social distancing. Our sales decreased as families deferred gathering to commemorate the loss of their loved ones. This trend may continue until the community is confident that the virus is under control. On the last day of the fiscal year, we received funds from the Federal government through the Paycheck Protection Program to subsidize payroll in the upcoming weeks.

Although the funds were given to us as a loan, the government will forgive the loan if we meet employee retention criteria, which we intend to do.

To minimize the financial impact in the upcoming year, we've reduced planned expenditures and we've applied for financial assistance from the District government.

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### Executive Director Report by David Jackson

As I look back over the past year, this is the time of year that we would be hosting our annual Sunday Social for donors and friends of the cemetery. So much for that event in this era of Covid but never fear, we will host that event at some date in the future. We just don't know when. The pandemic has affected the business of the cemetery in ways that were foreseeable, fewer funerals and fewer sales of space for burials. Both of those activities are very quiet right now, even for Oak Hill which is pretty quiet anyway. We are, however, engaged in the work of the restoration of eroded areas and a major tree removal that threatened a significant obelisk in the Chapel Valley area. The tree was leaning and had a large vertical crack that

indicated it was failing. Luckily we intervened in time to prevent its falling and damaging not only the large obelisk but also a significant number of other monuments in its path.

As I have reported in the past most families are electing cremation interments and that has not changed. What has changed is the frequent decision to postpone the actual interment until a time when a family can gather to pay proper respects without the hindrance of limits on the number of participants, wearing of masks, and the other issues we are all living with today. The time will come, we just don't know when.

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The much traveled path from behind the Chapel to Reno Hill is undergoing a significant restoration. David deVicq and the crew of Ricardo Araujo and Ernesto Torres are re-working that path to eliminate an ongoing erosion problem and create new burial spaces. David estimates that over time, a train car load of earth has eroded from that area. We are replacing a portion of that eroded soil and then putting drainage materials in to prevent further erosion. This is vital work to the cemetery and extends the work already done on North Hill and in the Stuart Section to improve drainage and prevent erosion. It is amazing how much earth has moved over time in our cemetery!



A new water spigot using some of the old parts

so that we can do additional irrigation when we are planting new grass seed. It's working! We saw an increase in the amount of turf in lots of areas from last spring and will add to that this fall with more planting of seed. This is so much better than trying to add turf by way of sod. And it has the advantage of preventing erosion so all the better!

I invite you to visit the cemetery this fall. We received so very many positive comments in the past few months because we stayed open and provided a place for people to walk and "get away." There are many attractions in the cemetery, the terrain, the new work done on Reno

Hill and North Hill, the new angels installed at the NW corner of the main intersection are stunning to see. A good way to explore is with our "Arbor Tour" provided by a donation from the Georgetown Garden Club. Pick up the free brochure and follow the map to the various specimen trees and, at the same time, get a good tour of what is one of the most scenic landscapes in our city!



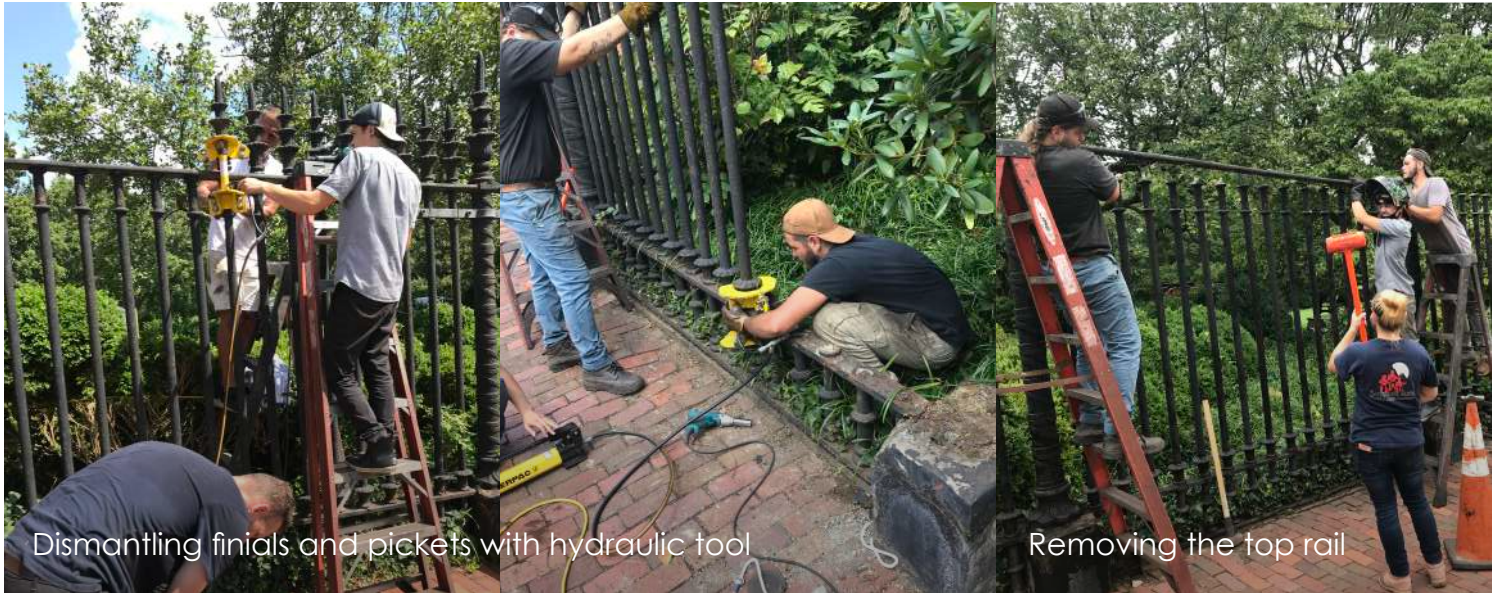
Pathway and Drainage work on Reno Hill



## OAK HILL CEMETERY Historic Preservation Foundation Newsletter

### Bigelow Iron Fence Update

The Board of Directors of the Oak Hill Cemetery Historic Preservation Foundation wants to give you an update on the progress of the Bigelow Iron Fence Restoration. Good news! We have received enough in donations to begin the first increment of the restoration of the fence. It will be done in five section increments meaning there will be 15 steps to do the entire remaining 77 sections of fence. Each increment will take approximately four months to complete. We started at the sections of the fence immediately to the east of the main entry at 30th Street and will work our way around the length of the fence to 28th street and beyond. The final sections will be the few that are east of the Gate House.



Dismantling finials and pickets with hydraulic tool

Removing the top rail

Each increment involves removing the top finials with a specially designed hydraulic tool to loosen each finial. (See the pictures) Next the top rail is taken off and the pickets are removed with the hydraulic tool to loosen them. Finally the bottom rail, the largest and heaviest part of each section is removed. The bottom rail removal takes three men and sometimes a woman as you see. The whole increment of five panels takes about four days to complete.

The pieces are taken to a sand-blaster to remove all the old paint and rust. Once sand blasting is complete, the rust pits and holes in the posts, pickets, and rails are filled with an epoxy material and a first coat of zinc primer is applied. The contractor tells us this is the most tedious part of the process. Once complete, there is a second coat of paint applied as a primer for the final coat. The last top coat of "Oak Hill Green" is applied in the shop before reconstruction. To reassemble the fence on site takes another three man-days for each increment.

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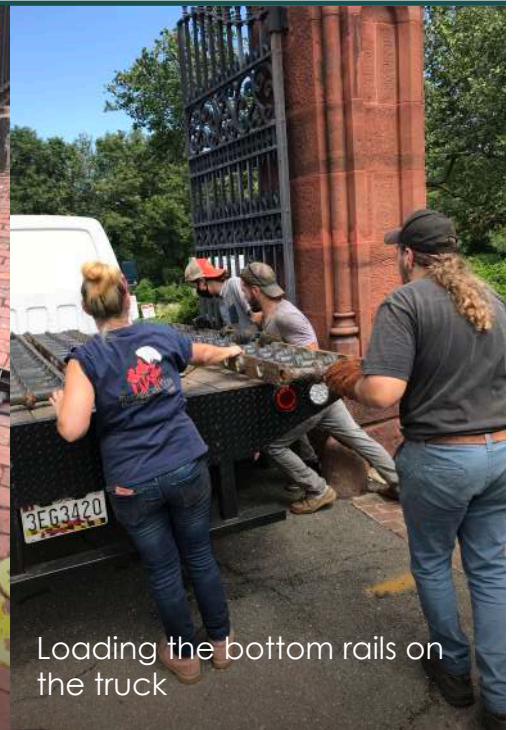
## Historic Preservation Foundation Newsletter



Picket finials removed



Two bottom rails removed



Loading the bottom rails on the truck

While the fence pieces are being restored, the stone bases under the posts have to be reworked. The top eighteen inches or so is cut off and a new top is epoxied to each existing foundation. (If you recall, we explored the condition of the foundations and found that they were in excellent condition. Only the top eighteen inches or so needed to be replaced which made a significant cost difference. ) Each new top and its accompanying bottom are then core-drilled to accept a stainless steel pipe that is installed in the center of each post. When the posts are reinstalled they are bolted onto the pipe using all stainless fittings that are built into the post at the restoration shop.

So now we come to funding for the project. As mentioned, we have received donations sufficient to do the first increment of five sections. Each increment will basically cost \$117,000 or about \$23,500 for each ten-foot section. We think it will take about four years to complete the project, if funds are available through your donations. There will also be add-ons for part of the fence to cover the cost of additional foundation work, if necessary, and unforeseen costs that invariably come up on a project like this.

Our second large donation will come from the estate of Lou Krach, our longtime weekend host/superintendent who passed away in January 2020 and left his entire estate to Oak Hill Cemetery Historic Preservation Foundation's Bigelow Fence Restoration. His gift will fund the second increment of five sections of the fence. We hope that additional donations will be made to cover the next few increments as we



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begin to do more of the fence next year. The first donation was from OHCHPF Board Member Rick Fischer who financed Phase 1 of the project.

And now, we ask that you consider a significant donation to our Historic Preservation Foundation to fund this project. The Historic Bigelow Iron Fence is the largest common asset of the cemetery (other than our roads). It is the “face” of the cemetery and has been for over 150 years. This restoration will preserve the fence for the next 150 years or longer since we are using more modern technology and materials to restore it. Your donations, be they a straight forward donation, a family foundation grant, a bequest, stock donation, or other means, will be used to forward the work on the fence. The result will be a lasting “face” of the cemetery within our community. Your donation may be set up over a period of four years, if you prefer. Significant donors, those whose donations cover a section of the fence or an increment of its restoration, will be recognized in a stone structure within the cemetery – a recognition that will last the equivalent of the life of the fence. Yes, you will be hearing more about funding this project, but why not make a significant donation early on so that we can proceed smoothly with the restoration? Please contact one of the Board members listed on the mast head of the newsletter or Dave Jackson or Lois Brown at 202-337-2835 to discuss your participation in the project.



Top rail removed and heading for the truck.

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## From the Grounds by Scott Staples

We are very happy to be wrapping up summer here at The Oak Hill Cemetery. Our favorite weather is up ahead, Autumn. We are getting in the last mowings of the year and getting ready for the rapidly approaching leaf season.

Because of our many oak trees, which tend to hold onto their leaves through the winter and drop them quite late, our leaf season will occupy us well into March. Our 23 acres of forested land produces an extraordinary amount of leaves to be disposed of, literally rivers of leaves. Without the pictures to prove it, it's almost impossible to imagine now how many leaves there will be.

Last year, in addition to the almost six months spent collecting the leaves, I spent about eight weeks chopping leaves in the lower intersection with a Honda mulching mower, producing a small mountain of leaf-mulch which the landscape absorbed quite handily.

We have been interested in purchasing a large leaf vacuum and leaf shredder (known in the trade as a "truck-loader") which will not only help in handling the leaves, but will turn them into a valuable product for us to use on the grounds. Last year, as part of our research, we took a field-trip around the corner to Dumbarton Oaks to see their newly purchased leaf vacuum in operation and learned how they are using it to great advantage. This year, thanks to a very generous cash donation, we have purchased our own machine, which we will pick up at the end of the month. I am personally very grateful for this kind gift. Thank you, Lizzie.

We will use the leaf mould we generate in the mulching of our trees, shrubs, and beds throughout the grounds. Instead of paying to dispose of leaves offsite, we'll use horizontal sheet composting to incorporate the leaf mould back into the grounds, thereby closing the carbon cycle and feeding the soil through nature's tried and true recycling system. Compost is valuable for buffering all sorts of soil conditions, from too dry to too wet.

As part of our continuous restoration of the cemetery grounds we are continuing with the rehabilitation of water lines throughout the cemetery. Over the past 170 years, the system has developed some issues and requires attention. Our grounds crew foreman, Jorge Robles, has taken the active lead in this project and we are very happy with the results so far, as we restore old water lines and fixtures and add new ones. We are looking forward to less hauling of watering hoses and more efficient water access for the grounds crew as well as guests.

Thank you for your continuing support to preserve, maintain, and restore this beautiful, unique, and meaningful landscape. We promise to use any financial resources wisely in our efforts to resist time, the elements, and gravity!

Our strategy to preserve and improve the cemetery monuments and grounds, as articulated so well by our President, George G. Hill, has been to address the areas most in need of restoration first, thereby elevating the condition of the grounds as a whole.



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In recent years, we have restored the Chapel interior and exterior, including the slate roof and stained glass; we are renovating the drainage system and installing new granite guttering; we are refurbishing and extending water lines; we have regraded and stabilized terraces; we've reset and re-laid flagstone paths (with many more to be done); and we've straightened and reset many monuments. We are also restoring the panels of our original 170-year-old 1849 cast iron fence, one by one as budget allows. None of this work has been cheap or easy. Thank you all for your continuing support.

We have been methodically and intensively restoring, renovating, repairing, and improving the cemetery section by section, and building our capacity to do more restoration work.

A 170-year-old cemetery requires constant care and dedication in resisting time and gravity, the two most inexorable forces in the universe. We could use your financial help in getting every stone standing on a stable base, repairing our drainage system, restoring the cast iron fence panel by panel, as well as many more projects, big and small. There's also a lot of pretty expensive tree work that needs to be done to ensure the continuing health of the cemetery.

In order to accomplish the long-term preservation of the cemetery, we have also set up a Preservation Fund for when the cemetery does run out of space, and we would welcome your contributions.

We are currently in the process of thinking about volunteer opportunities on the grounds. If you are interested and would like to be involved, you can email me at [Groundsmanager@oakhillcemeterydc.org](mailto:Groundsmanager@oakhillcemeterydc.org) with your contact details and perhaps indicate some areas of interest to you. Please put "VOLUNTEER" in the subject line. We have plenty of projects that may interest you, suitable for many levels of gardening ability and activity level, from container gardening the urns, to cleaning stones, to research and possibly giving tours.

I would also like to let all of our friends know that we do have a limited inventory of sites for sale, from very modest to quite grand. The supply is definitely limited — as our Superintendent likes to say, it's Georgetown real-estate and we can't order more inventory from the factory... so, if you or someone you know might be interested, please visit the office for a price list or make an appointment with the Superintendent to view available options.

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Rivers of leaves



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## In Memory of James O'Meara

### A message for our neighbor Mt. Zion Cemetery

James O'Meara lived life as an avid bike rider and often rode past three cemeteries; Oak Hill and its less privileged neighbors, commonly referred to as "Mount Zion" and whose story reflects the struggles of African Americans for freedom, justice, and equality. The Montgomery Street Methodist Church (now Dumbarton UMC) established the "Old Methodist Burying Ground" in 1808 for its white and black parishioners, free and enslaved. In 1816, more than 100 African Americans left the church to form Mount Zion United Methodist Church, the first black church in Washington, DC and obtained a long-term lease for the cemetery. Later in 1848, a mutual aid society of free black women, the Female Union Band Society (FUBS), bought adjacent land to bury their members. This sacred ground also served as a refuge for freedom seekers on the Underground Railroad. Whites started abandoning the Old Methodist Burying Ground in 1849 after Oak Hill opened. The Mount Zion-FUBS property began to fall into disrepair after burials ceased in 1950, and at that point was sought by developers. A fifth-generation black Georgetown native and the Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation intervened, won court rulings forestalling development and helped list the sites on the National Register of Historic Places. More recently, the property was designated as a UNESCO Slave Route Project Site of Memory. Today, the nonprofit Mount Zion-Female Union Band Historic Memorial Park aims to rediscover, preserve, and commemorate nearly two centuries of lost African American history.



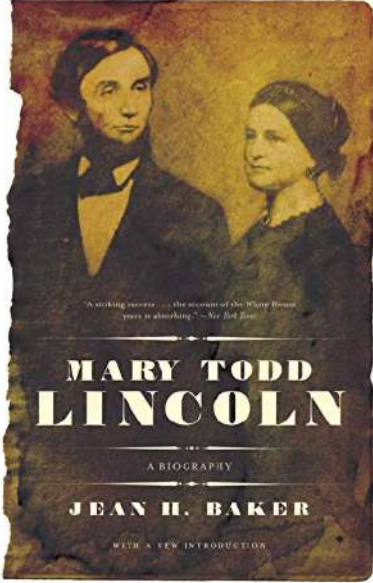
To learn more visit [www.mtzion-fubs.org](http://www.mtzion-fubs.org)

James O'Meara will be laid to rest at Oak Hill Cemetery. We want to thank his family for sharing our story.



## Social Distancing Did Not Get in the Way!

by Lois Brown



Social distancing did not get in the way of a good book, good friends, and good a time. The Chapel Café Book Club held their meeting virtually on Thursday, June 4th. Readers were excited about our book choice, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*: By (author) Jean Harvey Baker. A definitive biography of Mary Todd Lincoln, beautifully conveys her tumultuous life and times. A privileged daughter of the proud clan that founded Lexington, Kentucky, Mary fell into a stormy romance with the raw Illinois attorney Abraham Lincoln. For twenty-five years, the Lincoln's forged opposing temperaments into a tolerant, loving marriage. Even as the nation suffered secession and civil war, Mary experienced the tragedies of losing three of her four children and then her husband.

The book club also discussed the final resting place of many Civil War women whose stories are rarely told and buried at Oak Hill Cemetery. Judi Cochran, our Foundation Board Member, led the virtual discussion with the participants.

## A Special Winter Event!

The Chapel Café Book Club presents a special winter event, a virtual Fireside Chat with our President, George G. Hill, on Thursday, December 3, 2020. Look for an email invitation soon!

## Daughters of the American Revolution Return to Oak Hill

by Liz Mizell

We were delighted to have the Daughters of the American Revolution return to our grounds. These active ladies have been loyal supporters of our cemetery for many years and we thank them for their individual donations and community grants.

As part of a two-year initiative to honor our city's leading suffragists, the DC Daughters of the American Revolution (DCDAR) Chapters are partnering with cemeteries to highlight the legacies of the women laid to rest. On August 18, 2020 (100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment's Ratification) the Constitution Chapter

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placed sunflowers (a symbol of suffrage) at the graves of two of the Chapter's founders, Judith Ellen Foster and Ellen Spencer Mussey. Foster and Mussey were pioneering women lawyers, social reformers, and advocates for women and children. Mussey was the founder of what is now the law school at American University. On September 12, 2020, Regent Amanda Murphy and members of the Constitution Chapter held a ceremony remembering her achievements and celebrating the new DAR grave marker recently installed. In 2018, the Chapter marked Foster's resting place by putting a memorial stone at what was an unmarked grave.

Regent Ann Schaeffer and members of the Richard Arnold Chapter have adopted the grave of Mary Morris Lockwood, another passionate suffragist. The Chapter plans to clean and restore Lockwood's grave and remember her life with a special event in the future.



DAR Members honoring Ellen Spencer Mussey

## Connecting with YOU Online by Liz Mizell

As you may know, we are actively engaged on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and would love for you to follow us. A few things you can find on our portals are; our hours of operations, current restoration projects, and upcoming virtual events.

Be sure to check us out and subscribe/follow to get the latest updates.

### We can be found at:



<https://www.facebook.com/OakHillCemeteryDC>



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## *Celebrating Over 170 Years*

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## Congratulations Meredith and Ben! September 6, 2020

