

Spring 2015

News from Oak Hill

The NEWSLETTER of the FRIENDS of OAK HILL CEMETERY

Report of The President

May 2015

Regularly, as preparation for the writing of my President's letter to our Oak Hill community, I read again past letters. Partly not to be repetitive, partly to get a running start on writing the new letter, and partly to remind myself of what has been achieved.

Dear reader, we are guilty of being repetitive, for the Cemetery Company has again had a very successful year. Success as measured by our list of accomplishments, and from a financial viewpoint. The goal of our Company is to continue the tradition of the cemetery, to preserve its function and its beauty, to be a good neighbor, while running a prudent fiscal enterprise. We attempt to manage the present, while planning for the very long term.

We have actually produced a one hundred year projection of financial assumptions, though we know that no such document can be precise. We will however, revisit it periodically, to see how



Our strong sales of interment spaces have allowed us to save and invest at a strong level.

our assumptions and results are doing, and adjust accordingly. We have employed a new money manager, and have established an investment policy statement. We have established guidelines for various asset classes, and have broadly diversified our investment portfolio. We have reduced our investment expenses, and review our results with regularity. Our strong sales of interment spaces have allowed us to save and invest at a strong

level. But we are mindful of the fact that eventually, who knows when, sales of burial spaces will no longer be available, and we will by necessity transform into a museum, rather than an operating cemetery. We need to prepare for the future.

During the past fiscal year, we did:

Increase our outreach, continuing our weekend hours, and many thanks to Lou Krach, our weekend host. A year ago we

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OAK HILL CEMETERY

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www.oakhillcemeterydc.org

Email: oak_hill_cemetery@verizon.net

Cemetery Hours

Office and grounds:
9:00 am to 4:30 pm, M - F
Saturday 11:00 am - 4:00 pm.
Sunday 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm,
(weekends walk-in gate only
and no drive-in access) weather permitting.
Please observe rules posted at gate.

Board of Managers

George G. Hill, President,
John W. Gill, President Emeritus
David C. deVicq, Vice President
Marisa Bourgoïn, Secretary
Loretta Castaldi, Treasurer
David Jackson, Superintendent

Cemetery Publications

Available in the cemetery office

"Oak Hill Cemetery"

A brief history – contains a map of the cemetery, list of notable people buried in Oak Hill and a brief history of our founding. \$3.00

Oak Hill Note Cards

Set of eight note cards featuring four scenes of Oak Hill Cemetery through the seasons. Envelopes included. \$5.00

"Oak Hill Cemetery, Georgetown, DC Monument Inscriptions and Burial Data"

Two-volume set, including matching sleeve. \$175.00

All photos in this newsletter were taken by Oak Hill Staff, unless otherwise noted.

Memorial Trees

Establish a lasting memorial

From time to time, the Cemetery is asked to memorialize someone, a family member or close friend, who may or may not be interred at Oak Hill. The "Memorial Trees" provide a unique opportunity for Patrons to establish a lasting memorial and enhance the landscape. Patrons may select the site, the tree species (if there are multiple species designated) and the inscription for the stone monument. Trees and monuments will be installed each November. Commitments for trees should be made by the end of September each year. Here is how it works:

We will plant trees in the Cemetery in the fall to replace some lost over the years. With the counsel of Bartlett Trees, we are selecting sites for new trees, determining the best species suited for each site. Each site will be evaluated as to its location, available sunlight, and its effect on the surrounds over the long term. The majority of the native trees in the cemetery are White Oak and Poplar. Over the years many varieties were added but sometimes in their maturity, they became a problem due to root invasion or blocking sunlight. Our plan is that newly planted



"Memorial Tree" sites. These trees will be identified by a six-inch monument at the base identifying an honoree.

trees will enhance the Cemetery in the best possible way for decades.

We will designate many of the "Memorial Tree" sites. These trees will be identified by a six-inch monument at the base identifying an honoree. The monument will be carved stone and will be moved from the tree trunk as the tree matures, preserving the memorial aspect of the planting. The Memorial Trees will be ordered in October for November delivery and planting each year. Monuments will be ordered at the same time so they are installed at the plantings.

This will be an on-going program as the need for replacement trees will always be present.

If you are interested in being a Patron of a Memorial Tree, please contact the Oak Hill Cemetery office for all the details.



Treasurer's Report

The fiscal year ended on a high note with record setting sales.

by Loretta Castaldi

Oak Hill Cemetery ended the fiscal year on April 30, 2015 in stable financial condition. The Cemetery has no debt. The Cemetery has adequate inventory of saleable sites and financial reserves to fund Cemetery operations for many years to come. Moreover, the Cemetery has significant, untapped space that can be developed into additional burial sites as the current inventory is depleted.

The fiscal year ended on a high note with record setting sales.

During the year, the Board completed and implemented a thirty year capital reserve plan. The goal is to build reserves to a level that will allow the cemetery to continue operation for at least a century after sales cease. Thanks to the generosity of donors, and record sales in fiscal year ending April 2015, Oak Hill Cemetery more than doubled the scheduled first annual installment to the reserves.

Funds were also used during the fiscal year to complete phase one of a major drainage project in the Stewart section of the cemetery. Under the engineering guidance of board Vice President, David deVicq, most of the labor for the project was performed by in-house employees. This saved the cemetery money while and developed the employees's skill set.

In the upcoming year, we will continue work on cemetery improvements and contribute to the capital reserve fund.

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Thank You For Your Generous Donations To:

The Friends Of Oak Hill (Beautification) Fund - provides for the spring and fall annual plants, shrubs, and tree maintenance.

The Preservation Fund - contributes to cash reserves for current and future restoration projects, such as drainage and road repair projects and last year's restoration of the chapel.

Oak Hill Cemetery General Fund - subsidizes necessary day-to-day operations such as mowing, fall leave removal, water for irrigation and general repairs and maintenance.

The Joe Pozell Memorial - honors his long and dedicated service to the cemetery.



Through your continued support ...

Oak Hill Cemetery is building the endowment to support the maintenance of the grounds and facilities long after it ceases to operate as a working cemetery and becomes a museum.

Superintendent's Report

for the year ended April 30, 2015

by Dave Jackson

As I write this, the heavens have opened in a downpour and we are getting some needed rain. So far this year, the balance of dry spells with rain has been pretty good and our plant materials are appreciating the spring/summer cycle of growing. It has been a glorious spring, with colors of the flowering tulip magnolias and weeping cherry trees followed by dogwoods, azaleas, and rhododendrons. Even the pansies, which we normally have removed by mid May stayed colorful in front of the Renwick Chapel. For summer we selected a blue or lavender color vinca for those beds to accent the blue "kniessie" granite from which the Chapel is constructed. They are "picture" perfect.

The cutting and trimming of grass was slowed this year due to the demands placed on the staff for other duties. As noted elsewhere in the newsletter, we have completed the first of what will be three phases of a drainage project in the Stewart area near the Carriage House. Lot owners

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in that area may have noticed some disruption there and along Central Avenue directly above. The Stewart area was developed approximately a century ago by filling in what was a gully that led towards Rock Creek. It added 2-3 acres of much needed burial space. The assumption must have been that since it was

close to Rock Creek that drainage would take care of itself naturally. That is always the case, but "naturally" may not be the best way to protect from eventual erosion and the damage it can cause. An examination shows that water coming from the areas above Stewart was causing problems that were only going to worsen with time.

Our Vice-President David deVicq has devised a plan to address the area and insure that water is properly moved through it with no effect. He designed and then oversaw the efforts of our staff to open a way for pipe to be laid between grave sites and down to Rock Creek through our existing main trunk line, eliminating surface runoff. The plan includes two new drains set along Central Avenue to move water from Reno Hill and Chapel Valley directly to underground drains. Spring rains have proven the effectiveness of the new system. Phase two will be adding guttering along paths leading to Stewart and repairing



the paths which are damaged. Phase three will be installing additional lines on the western part of Stewart to remove surface water. We are adding grass and new plant materials in Stewart. When the project is complete it will be an attractive upgrade to Oak Hill.

Another much needed improvement will result from development of new spaces on North Hill re-paving Circular Avenue. Again, David deVicq has provided guidance and oversight to the staff as we have been exposing the existing historic cobblestone guttering and laying out plans for paving next to it. The new burial sites are attractive and have been well received by families who come to Oak Hill. Benches and landscaping will be added to this area, contributing to the pleasant, peaceful setting. See another article about the story at Fowler Circle.

What has become apparent to me, and the Board of Managers, is that our grounds staff has responded incredibly well to our requests to expand the scope of their jobs. With guidance primarily from Vice-President deVicq, they are laying and connecting drainage systems, have done the masonry to add necessary drainage connections, repaired cobblestone gutters, removed tons of waste asphalt from Circular Avenue, and moved tons of earth by hand

within the Stewart Section to re-direct grading for proper drainage. The work has been done professionally, with attention to detail and using newly developed skills in masonry and engineering to get it right. I mentioned "guidance" from David deVicq earlier. He has provided "guidance" but not supervision. Once instruction has

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been given, the work has been done without direct supervision. The difference, guidance vs. supervision, is significant. Our staff has performed terrifically through these projects.

Last year there were 39 interments at Oak Hill, a number a bit lower than recent years. The total number of interments stands at

19,601 in our roughly 25 acres over the 165 year history. I am often asked "Oak Hill is full, isn't it?" The answer is clearly "NO." Years ago, the Board of Managers directed that additional space, not in the original design of burial spaces, be developed for use. Walk-path space for casket and cremation spaces was added in several areas. Later, Willow Columbarium was added providing over 400 double cremation niches. In the year just completed, we sold more Willow Columbarium spaces than in any other developed section. This is a testament to the vision of creating and building it. The concept of creating a "sculpture display" there has begun to take shape. With such vision continuing for the future, I often tell people we will be an active cemetery for 50-100 more years, and then we will be a museum. Between now and then, more space will be developed in the ongoing service to our community. "Continuing to Serve" was the saying adopted by the recent Board. It describes us perfectly.

Respectfully Submitted
Dave Jackson
Superintendent

President's Report (continued from page 1)

hosted the Citizens Association of Georgetown meeting, and more recently we hosted 600 and some visitors during the Georgetown House Tour. Advertising in the House Tour guide, and other venues, lets people know the availability of burial options. So many visitors still assume that Oak Hill is not an available option.

Major drainage improvements are being made down near the Carriage House, above Rock Creek. We knew that this area, the most recently established large area of the Cemetery, was in dire need of new drains and drainage pipes, but the more it was studied, the more urgent the project became. We thank our Vice President David deVicq for identifying the issue and the solution. One third of the project has been completed, and the balance is on schedule. Captain deVicq designed the project such that we could employ our own grounds crew to install the twelve inch PVC drainpipe, along with several of the drainage inlets. Two major road cuts and heavy cast iron grated inlets required Metro Paving, but a surprising portion of the work was done "in house", saving tens of thousands of dollars. Our crew learned and then improved their masonry skills, and then re-graded, landscaped and seeded the area. An earthen berm to protect the hillside, and relaying some of the sidewalks, ensured that the flooding we had experienced would soon be a thing of the past. Because we used our crew, and because we saved great deal of money, we were able to properly compensate them for their extraordinary hard work and show our appreciation.

Repairs on the walk-in gates on R Street and on 28th Street were achieved by rebuilding several of the hinges, making access safer and easier for visitors. More work and painting on our historic and beautiful fence is being scheduled. Tree work is constant, and the arborists have been hard at work. The gatehouse is being painted as we write, and repointing on the three chimneys at the gatehouse

was recently completed. Estimates are being gathered for bathroom and kitchen repairs. During the winter, the grounds crew quarters were refurbished, and a bit of new furniture added.

All of this has been made possible by strong interest in Oak Hill, as evidenced by the sale of various burial spaces. The Columbarium niches have seen strong sales, as well as the green grass interment spaces at Fowler Circle on North Hill. Last year we were able to accommodate twenty spaces for cremated remains, and four casket burial spaces. The interest in this area of the cemetery highlighted the need to rebuild the small circular roadway on North Hill. In the past few days, our crew uncovered a cobbled stone gutter, in remarkably good condition, which we will put back into service. With Captain deVicq's engineering skills, we are measuring and designing the slope of the roadway which will need to be rebuilt. Within a few months, we hope to have another area of the cemetery returned to its finest appearance and functionality. We will also turn our attention to the major intersection on Central Avenue, the last remaining major section of road and drainage work to be done.

I look forward to writing next year that we have had another year of great achievements. Thanks to my fellow Board Members, Marissa, David and Loretta, and thanks to our Superintendent Dave Jackson, and Darla Jackson, for their hard work and thoughtful participation. And thank you to our wonderful Grounds Crew, whose achievements this year have been very worthy. It is because of all of them that Oak Hill is vibrant, flourishing and sacred.

Sincerely,
George G. Hill
President



Captain deVicq and staff member Ricardo Haraújo discussing the connection of cobblestone gutters and drains.



Staff member Jose Gurman working on the masonry catch basin.



Staff member Ricardo Haraújo building a masonry catch basin.

The Story of "Fowler Circle"

Mr. Fowler, having died at sea, may be buried in the circle, but records are unclear.

No one else has been buried in the circle.



Large monument, made from marble, that was erected in the 1850's to honor Mr. Fowler.



The inscription on the east face of the large monument.

One of the countless interesting stories of Oak Hill is the story about Joseph Fowler and how Richard Pettit honored him. We recently developed new spaces in what we are calling "Fowler Circle." These casket and cremation spaces lie in a circle around a lot that contains a monument to Joseph Fowler. It is a large monument, made from marble, that was erected in the 1850's to honor Mr. Fowler. The inscription on the east face of the large monument reads:

"To the memory of Joseph Fowler a native of Maryland born October 9, 1789 and died at sea August 23, 1850 aged 61 years: The deceased was a resi-

dent of New Orleans, La for the past 36 years. At the time of his death he was on his passage, via New York, to the District of Columbia to visit his relations who in honor of his memory erect this monument as a testimony to their high respects and regards for him."

Richard Pettit, whose wife was a niece of Joseph Fowler, bought three lots that make up a circle in the North Hill area of the cemetery. They lie at the center of Circular Avenue. Mr. Fowler, having died at sea, may be buried in the circle, but records are unclear. No one else has been buried in the circle. Mr. Pettit simply bought the circle

and erected the monument in honor of Mr. Fowler. The area we developed as "Fowler Circle" is the border around the lots that Mr. Pettit attained for his monument to Mr. Fowler.

Pettit, with other family members, was a founder of the then current Bank of Georgetown in 1851. He was among another group that was chartered to form the Georgetown Gas Light Company in 1854. He and others in his family are buried at Holy Rood Cemetery.



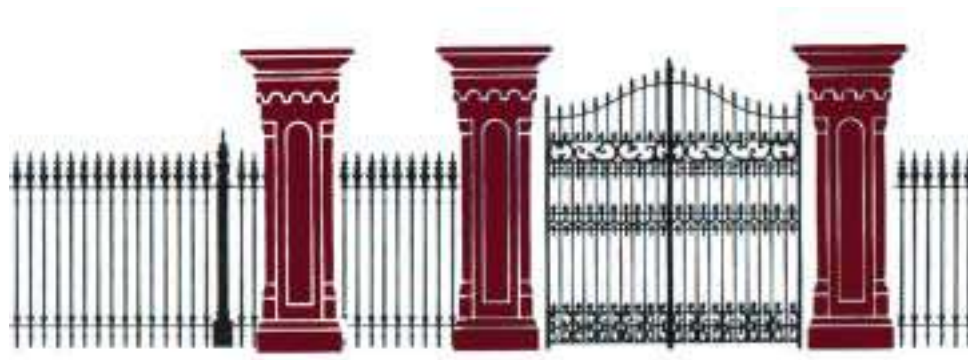
Walk-in Gates and Keys

Good news! And some caution!!

Lot owners who use the walk-in gates have recently found the gates much easier to operate. In March, Flaherty Iron Works was hired to improve the ease with which they may be opened and closed. On both gates, the one nearest the main entry at 30th Street and the gate at 28th Street received new ball-bearing hinges. The hinges were set at the base of the gate to accept its weight and make opening and closing much easier. The gates are so easy to open and close, we urge lot holders to use caution when coming and going. It is easy to lose control of the heavy gates swinging them open or closed with too much force.

Opening and closing the gates with the key also requires some attention. Before the repairs, the bolt of the lock was held in place by the friction of the gate in its old setting. **Now with the new "looser" hinge, as you open the gate, you will want to use two hands, one to gently move the gate forward or back and one to operate the lock.** The key may feel stiff and if so, take your second hand and gently move the gate until the bolt lines up. The key will easily work when the bolt is properly lined up.

The gates are used by a large number of lot holders. Unfortunately, two lot holders recently become impatient with the lock and broke keys off in the lock trying to open the gate. When this happens, the gate is inoperable until a lock smith can be scheduled to disassemble the lock and remove the broken key. This has occurred twice since the repairs, causing inconvenience to other lot holders and expense (about \$200 per service) to repair the lock. **So please, when opening and closing the gates, be patient.** The locks and the 150+ year-old gates are working properly but they require some gentle patience.



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September 17, 2014 - April 28, 2015

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