

OAK HILL CEMETERY

HISTORIC PRESERVATION FOUNDATION



Oak Hill Cemetery

3001 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
Telephone: 202-337-2835
Fax: 202-337-6481

Cemetery Hours (Office and Grounds)

Monday thru Friday

9:30 am - 4:30 pm

Saturday

11:00 am - 4:00 pm

Sunday

Office Closed

*(Weekends and holidays
walk-in gate only, no drive-in
access. Gates will close, weather
permitting. Please observe visiting
tips at front entrance.)*

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Autumn 2025

FROM THE PRESIDENT GEORGE HILL

A little over ten years ago we and our investment manager and financial advisor, Philip Chao, CIO at Experiential Wealth, went through the process of creating a 100-year projection of the financial status of the Oak Hill Cemetery. Although we knew that any projections were based upon many variables over which we had little control, we thought that it would be a helpful and prudent exercise to see where we were, where we might go, and to game out the necessary inflation adjusted annual contributions to our endowment. We also produced more than one estimate. The assumptions included various levels of inflation, portfolio returns, and annual contribution rates. We assumed that at some point in time, three decades along, that Oak Hill would convert from an operating cemetery into a museum. In the meantime, we have cautiously explored museum status for such a future scenario. We will continue to work in that direction as budget and staff time allow.

In our projections we set an arbitrary date of 2045 for the museum transition, but with recent pathway conversions, step projects and mausoleum construction, we are optimistic that we can extend this date. This allows two benefits, the first being that we will serve our community for longer and the second being that we can continue to add to our endowment, both with extra funding and with continuing growth in the portfolio. At some point our endowment fund will change from an accumulation vehicle to a distribution and support vehicle. We currently do not draw any monies.

We are pleased to report that after ten years we have exceeded our expectations, because we have contributed slightly more than budgeted and because markets have been favorable. In fact, in 2025, we have about fifty percent more in our endowment than our expectation. But we do not currently have enough to cover our expenses if we were to change status today. We must continue to accumulate and grow.

Obviously, we cannot know what future expenses will be, what market conditions will be for the next few decades, or how long revenue stays available, but we are confident that we are doing all that we can currently, and we are looking forward to a distant horizon.

We thank our team for making this possible. 🌸

Respectfully submitted,



Email: info@oakhillcemeterydc.org

Website: www.oakhillcemeterydc.org

SUPERINTENDENT'S LETTER, BY PAUL WILLIAMS

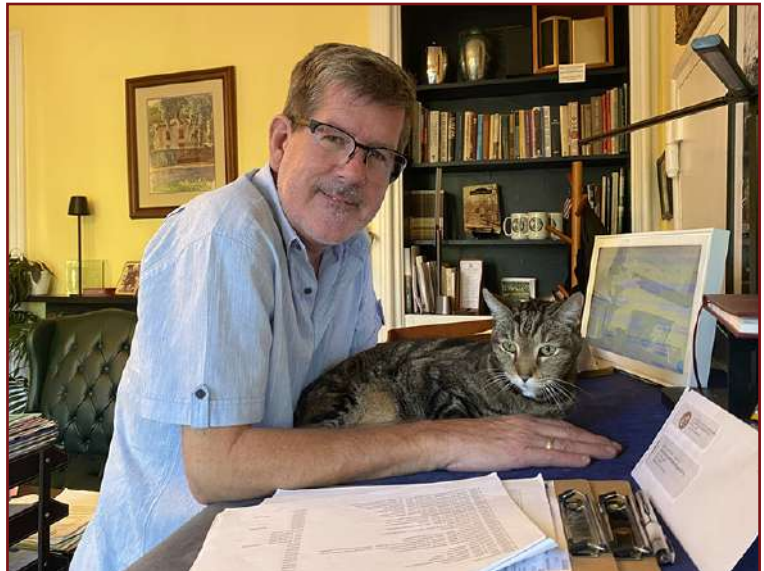
As the fall tolls we are beginning to see a slight change in color on our trees and preparing for the massive leaf removal that will begin shortly. Speaking of tolling, we had our bell tower and bell inspected as its ring was beginning to sound a bit irregular. It was set to toll automatically each day from 9 am (my reminder to get in the office) and each hour until 5 pm. I'm not sure anyone sets their watch to it, and the neighborhood is used to the toll on the hour – kind of like living near train tracks where you no longer hear the noise. The office always has a giggle when visitors were unaware of the toll and caught off guard, and my husband, whose office is on the third floor would always have to set his zoom meeting time starts appropriately.

The original foundry that cast the bell in 1892, McShane Bell in Baltimore, replaced the striker for a more soft ring using magnets to ensure the bell retains its integrity as it was beginning to show wear where the old and too large striker was hitting the surface. We also upgraded the control panel in the basement to an electronic version (no more daylight saving times trip to the basement) and now have an app to control the bell; I can simply toll the bell from the chapel as a funeral ends or a wedding begins from my phone. I've threatened to harass the staff from Thailand one day as the app will work from anywhere in the world!

We've increased our active funerals again this year, and just five months into our fiscal year have already hosted more than 30 funerals both small and large. Site sales are very strong, and I'm happy to report that two empty \$750,000 mausoleum sites recently sold that owners will soon construct a well designed structure upon. We're having an architect plan for additional cave mausoleums we will likely build ourselves on spec, one for individually owned casket crypts and two others for family purchase. They will eventually be located near the carriage house (maintenance) building.

The gatehouse backyard design was approved by the Commission of Fine Arts and the Old Georgetown Board after a year of meetings, and I'll keep you posted on the progress that should begin in October this year; expect some surprises! I'll post before and after pictures in the next newsletter. 🌸

Respectfully submitted,



Editor's Note: In our previous newsletter, several donations were missing from the 2024 Annual Report. While we do our best to ensure every gift is properly acknowledged, mistakes can happen. Please accept our sincerest apologies for this oversight, and expect corrections in the 2025 Annual Report.

REPORT FROM THE OFFICE, BY LAURA LAVELLE

Summer Travels and Reflecting on Grief

Greetings from the Oak Hill Cemetery office! While most summers at Hill are typically quiet due to neighbors summering out of town, the summer of 2025 has been busy, busy, busy here on the grounds! I am particularly excited about the newly-developed burial options in the Amphitheatre section of the cemetery, down by the gorgeous copy of St. Gauden's *Amor Caritas*. I'd love to offer a shout-out to our hard-working Masonry Crew (Ernesto and Rico), and the Grounds Crew (Abraham, Brenda, Jorge, and Jose) who always keep Oak Hill's grounds looking so beautiful and clean: We couldn't do this without you! If you see members of the crew during your visit to the cemetery, make sure to share a wave and a thank you!

I was able to step away for a summer break to Colorado during July, where I followed in the footsteps of Oak Hill Notable Julia Archibald Holmes: the first woman of European descent to ascend to the top of Pike's Peak. In August of 1858, Julia notably joined her husband and brother in the arduous climb while wearing a 'bloomer-dress,' which featured a pant-like bottom instead of a full skirt. Holmes was an abolitionist and was introduced to her husband in Kansas by the legendary John Brown. After experiencing domestic violence at the hand of her husband, Julia was granted a divorce and moved with her children to Washington DC, where she fought for women's suffrage. Following her death in 1887, Julia Archibald Holmes was interred in Oak Hill Lot 355E, where she rests forever alongside her daughters, June and Phoebe.



Julia featured at the Pike's Peak Visitor's Center.

As many of you know, my husband Michael Lavelle died about two and a half years ago from cancer. I, alongside so many other grievers, became a member of a club I never asked to (or wanted to) join: The Widow's Club. Forced to reckon with the loss of the person I loved most in this world. The pain that comes with a loss of this caliber was overwhelming and all-consuming. I felt like my body was here on Earth with everyone else, while my soul and mind were connected to me like an astronaut on a tether, floating out in space, drifting out towards Mars. Completely alone, drifting in the dark aimlessly like Sandra Bullock in *Gravity*.

Grieving while the world keeps spinning is a crazy feeling. Life must go on, even if it felt like my whole world stopped the day my husband left. The dog still needed to be walked, there were dishes to be done, and I had to return to work. I felt ostracized from the 'normal' world, and outsider in the life I had built to that point. The future I had planned for years crumbled around me like a destructive earthquake. I re-entered the world with what felt like an open, bleeding wound on my chest that everyone could see. I needed to rebuild: to plan a new future and slowly mend my broken heart. While this loss took so much from me, my hopeful heart kept beating. There had to be a light somewhere in this darkness.

Today, more than two years after Michael's passing, I'm glad to share that life has gotten a lot easier in many ways. The wound on my chest isn't open and bleeding anymore: I have cleaned and wrapped it to help the healing process. I've been working with the mantra, "be gentle with yourself," and taking lots of time to give my body and soul access to rest.

Continues on page 5

Linthicum Mausoleum



As previously reported and anyone who has visited the cemetery knows, the elaborate red Aquia stone Linthicum family mausoleum has literally been banded together for so long even the metal ties were failing after twenty or more years. Huge slate roof panels were beginning to shift and slide, so the time to address the situation was this spring. We had a team of professional preservationists conduct a survey, laser scan, and provide recommendations. We're fairly certain it was designed by James Renwick, Jr., but are continuing to research that aspect.

In the meantime, we had it half dismantled by Federal Masonry Restoration LLC under the direction of AEON Preservation Services and erected a large temporary roof structure to protect the remaining structure that was deemed safe and secure (and those five individuals interred inside). With our Superintendent's background in preservation, we were careful to store each

and all pieces of stone onsite so that they would not go missing in the near future. Plans and new stones have been ordered for missing or damaged stone, and the remainder of the structure is under contract to be rebuilt shortly. It's a massive project and the pictures make it look much smaller than it really is – we relocated just the massive (single stone) finial to the front entrance as a fundraising effort during the reconstruction, and everyone can't believe how big it is. 🌹

Fence & East End Gate

Progress continues with the fence restoration project and six sections should be removed soon for restoration by Lorton Stone and their subcontractor Krug Iron. They have made progress down R Street with thirty sections restored but will now be faced with a terrain issue and construction near family sites behind the chapel. Plans are in place, and they are also venturing into the worse aspects of the fence for restoration, literally held together by welded framing. However, we are happy to report the East End gate is back in place after being hit by a truck in July 2024! Missing pieces and parts were recast thanks to the \$65,000 insurance settlement, and it is both beautiful and functional again. Note to self – it is expensive to run through a 150 year old cast iron gate. 🌹



Meet the 'Newest Member' of the Staff



Okay, it's a truck, but you know what we mean. The Superintendent replaced a 25 year old small red pick up truck that had, shall we say, seen better days (you didn't want to see the inside of that cab). So the cemetery let the staff decide what was best, and we went with a much more substantial large diesel Ford dump truck for their many needs (think 50 days of leaf collecting and mulching). A larger cab for multiple employees and dumping capacity for their every need, especially dirt excavated for our double-depth burials which are dug by hand. 🌹

Gatehouse Gutters

Anyone that owns an old house knows that water is truly your enemy. After several years of observing the many gutters and downspouts on the gatehouse and staff building, it was clearly time to address sagging gutters and downspouts that could not handle the increasing heavy rains running from a very high pitched slate roof. Valleys and ridgelines also needed repair or were beginning to leak. Wagner roofing was brought in to install larger, six inch copper gutters and larger downspouts to tackle the problem of water simply flowing over the prior gutters onto the ground near the foundation. The transformation is nearly complete, with new gutters even installed on the bell tower to ebb the flow of water and ice headed directly to the two front doors. We like to do things right here, and these should last the next 175 years for generations to come. 🌸



Time for a Clock

Superintendent Williams penned a blog way back in 2004 about the mystery of a partial wrought iron fence at 11th and Florida Avenue, NW that then remained in front of a modern apartment building. Turns out it was the original fence surrounding Garfield Hospital which was torn down in the 1960's. Twenty years later the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church found the ancient blog and contacted Williams stating that they had a grandfather clock purchased from the hospital that needed a new home due to a renovation. It was valued at \$10,000, but the cemetery just had to pay to move it across town.



The clock was imported to the US from England in 1890 by a local jeweler that then sold it to the hospital. It is a massive clock, standing more than nine feet tall, with a lovely gentile Westminster chime on the hour and a single chime every fifteen minutes as well as a moon phase dial. It is a nice addition to the gatehouse, and we are proud this historical artifact will remain in the city for the foreseeable future. 🌸

REPORT FROM THE OFFICE

Continued from page 3

I've been blessed to receive support from family, friends, and the Oak Hill community, who have granted me a lot of grace as the dark days have gotten lighter. The storms that brought tsunami waves of grief have calmed, and the waters are easier to navigate. That's not to say that the grief doesn't break through, but I am better equipped to handle the waves.

Oak Hill itself has also played a big role in my healing. When I came back to work, I came in with a brand new perspective on grief, and a new connection to the cemetery. I often visit Michael at his final resting place in the beautiful Willow Columbarium, and have now planned to be here for eternity when that time comes. I'm also able to use my position in the cemetery office to help families who are grieving, offering an empathetic shoulder to cry on, and sharing insights from someone who has been close to where they are. No one should have to go through the journey of grief alone.

I cannot stress how important to be patient with yourself if you are experiencing a deep grief. There is no right or wrong way to feel, and no solid timeline to when you will feel better. You must try your best to find ways to rise above the darkness that grief brings into your life. Otherwise, the heavy weight of loss can cause your mental health to sink back into a dark abyss. I encourage people to get out of the house, where wallowing is very easy to do. Go to the library to read or browse the computer so you can practice being around people again in a peaceful environment. Dive into a new class or hobby, join a choir, or travel to somewhere you've always wanted to visit. The light will start to peek out, and joy can slowly come back into your heart when you give yourself the chance. 🌸

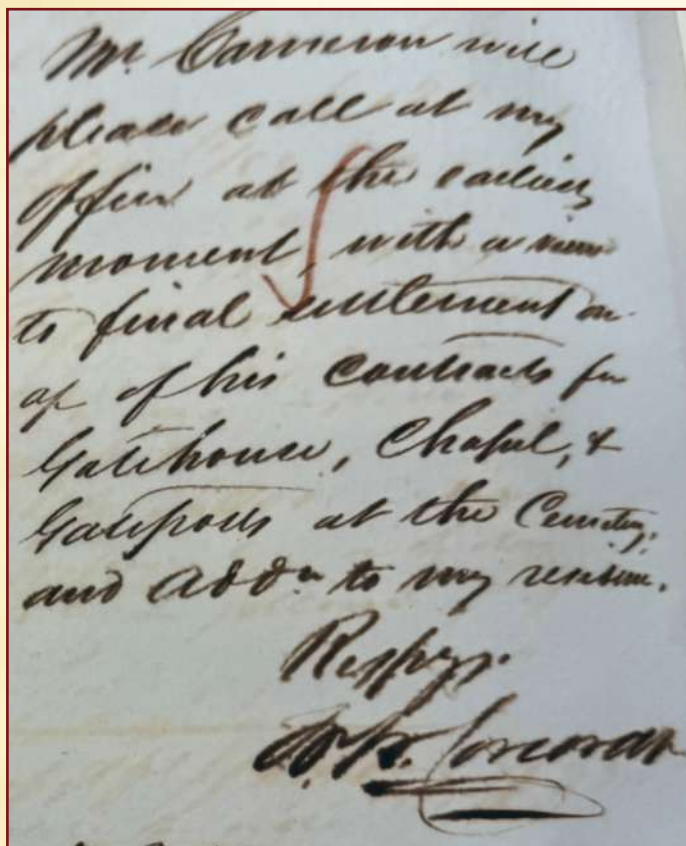


Laura Lavelle at the summit of Pike's Peak.



ARCHIVES UPDATE

BY LAURA THOMS, ARCHIVIST

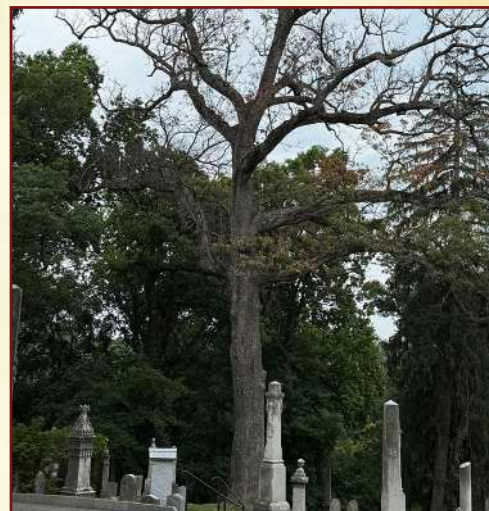


2025 has been full of activity and success in the Archives. I am pleased to announce that in late August 2025, the Oak Hill Cemetery Historic Preservation Foundation was awarded both grants I applied for for FY 2025-26, continuing our 100% success rate with our grant applications. We were awarded another NEH grant for the Archives– the \$50,000 National Endowment for the Humanities Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections Grant. This was one of only four 2025 NEH awards in Washington, DC. This grant is in direct response to the FAIC Collections Assessment for Preservation Report we completed in 2023. It is a planning grant that will reconvene our original CAP architectural/environmental team to plan to adapt an existing structure for the storage, use and long-term preservation of the cemetery's archives. Next year we will apply for the second part of this Grant for an Implementation award of up to \$350,000. When I pitched the idea of starting an archive to the Board in 2022, I promised that I would do my best to fund it through grants. We are now at nearly \$70,000 in grant funds awarded since 2023 and still going strong, despite the uncertain times for federal grants.

Our second grant is really exciting, and the most difficult grant I have ever written. We were awarded a \$1.5 million dollar grant for restoration work on the Chapel by the Save America's Treasures program administered by the National Park Service, Department of Interior. The purpose of this project is to restore over the next three years, the stained glass windows and stabilize the masonry in the Chapel. The standard of care to facilitate this restoration is of the utmost importance to Oak Hill, and this grant will provide the financial means to retain well trained conservation professionals for the project. The grant consists of \$750,000 outright from NPS, with a required \$750,000 match from our own fundraising over the 3 year period of work. In early December we will announce a targeted capital campaign specifically for the Chapel project, but if you would like to donate directly to the chapel restoration now, please make a note on your next donation or contact the office and we can help you. This grant is in direct response to the Sitewide Building Assessment Report we undertook in 2024. Writing a grant is a lot of work, but it is so valuable.

Oak Hill hopes to be a museum someday. Consistent preservation practice, documentation and diverse and long-lasting revenue streams will support the preservation of this special place long after that far-future date when site sales have been expended.

Now an update from the Archives itself. Use of the collection has grown so much this year. The main project of FY 2025-26 is preparing the collection for Digitization and getting materials online. So many times this year I wished I could just refer inquiries to a website, rather than emailing large dropbox links. Scholars and tours have been the main visitors to the Archives. I have been working with our neighbor the Mt Zion FUBS Cemetery on historic research and led more tours for the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art. The Association of Preservation Technology (DC building and monuments conservators) had a special private tour this summer and came back for a volunteer stone cleaning day in September. I participated in workshops with Lincoln's Cottage on Grief and Mourning at Historic Sites and attended the workshop preview of the Metropolitan Opera of Lincoln in the Bardo. I have been working with the Library of Congress reading the not-yet-digitized William Corcoran papers to confirm dates, provenance and gain extra insight on the early craft and development of Oak Hill. We will share some of our projects with the public in talks about Antonia Willard from the Library of Congress; a talk about our historic trees, including the 300 yr old Greeves oak, which is sadly dying, from tree historian Michael Gaige, and the first collaborative tour led by Oak Hill and Mt Zion FUBS Cemeteries together for the DC Preservation League. We will also share the Archives with the public by working with the Bloomberg Connects app team to create digital tours of our grounds that can be viewed/listened to on your phone. These digital tours will launch in Jan 2026 as part of our celebration of America's 250th Anniversary. If you would like to see an example of Bloomberg Connects app tours, the Phillips Collection, Tudor Place, Lincolns Cottage, Greenwood Cemetery, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY Public Library, and Central Park all use it for tours. Not only will these digital tours provide a deeper look into the cultural history of Oak Hill and its notable figures, but it will increase our accessibility in areas that are difficult to reach or normally closed to the public, provide audio tours for the vision impaired, improve wayfinding with digital mapping, and translate our stories into as many languages as we request. We are so grateful for the support of our wonderful Board and our engaged community of lot holders and preservation supporters. I could not do this work and win these grants without your participation, letters of support, great ideas and continued interest. With each new research project we discover more about Oak Hill Cemetery, with each new talk and tour, we engage new audiences and get to learn & share with our community, and with each new grant we position ourselves even more strongly to offer the highest level of care and financial stewardship for our research materials, buildings and landscape, to ensure we endure beautifully for another 175 years and beyond. Thank you for all you do to make this happen. If you have any questions about research, the Archives, getting involved with a specific project, donations or the future of grants, please write: archives@oakhillcemeterydc.org 🌸





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OAK HILL
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Estate Planning and Stock Transfers

Please consider including a gift to Oak Hill in your estate planning through your Will or estate disbursement. You can designate that it go toward any of our endowment, preservation projects, or where most needed. You can also transfer gifts of stock or real estate very easily and at any time. Call the office at 202-337-2835 and talk to the Superintendent Paul Williams for more information. 🌸