

Epitaph

"For those who came before"

Oak Grove Cemetery Society Newsletter

Volume 1 no.1 Winter/Spring 2017

*"Uniting the Community for the Restoration and Preservation of
Brunswick's Historic Oak Grove Cemetery, est. 1838"*

Epitaph Newsletter is a New Communication to OGCS Members

Oak Grove Cemetery Society proudly presents its first newsletter to OGCS members, *Epitaph*. It is OGCS Board's desire to communicate consistently with the membership. The goal is to publish quarterly: Winter; Spring; Summer and fall issues. OGCS will let you know how you can be involved by sharing its plans, accomplishments, upcoming events and Oak Grove Cemetery information. *Epitaph* is your connection to Oak Grove Cemetery.

If you have interesting stories about these early residents of Brunswick, or photographs, please send your information to OGCS. Photographs of Oak Grove Cemetery are especially important for OGCS restoration work.

It has been a desire since the beginning to publish this newsletter, but there has not been enough help. If you would like to volunteer to help with the newsletter, or you would like to contribute to future newsletters, please email: cemeteryoakgrove@gmail.com.

President's Message Robert Gindhart

Due to the generous donations from our devoted members, community leaders, and volunteer efforts, OGCS has invested to date \$21,850 in improvements and enhancements to Oak Grove Cemetery.

2016 was a year of many accomplishments for Oak Grove Cemetery Society. Major changes were made to the cemetery's electric and water infrastructures. At the Mansfield St. entrance, Victorian iron newel posts and eight fence panels were taken away, sand blasted, repaired, galvanized, painted, and reassembled; totally restored. An Octagon Brick terrace was placed at the entrance to Oak Grove Chapel. New Irrigation replacing rusted broken pipes, was added running along the north fence line from the west side of the chapel running westward to the corner of MLK Blvd. New flower beds were designed and planted with the help of volunteers under the direction of Jerry Spencer, OGCS Director of Landscape Projects. The Memorial Bench Program placed one "Victorian like" park bench with a bronze memorial plaque to Dr. Don Roberts on the terrace. With all of these accomplishments we have only just begun our work.

Oak Grove Cemetery stakeholders and OGCS Board members have developed a Master Plan of Projects that will enhance and improve Oak Grove Cemetery. All projects OGCS Board selects to fund and implement comes from that plan. The Master Plan drives all fundraising. The Master Plan and 2017 Projects will be fully explained in a future edition of *Epitaph*.

At the November 2016 and January 2017 OGCS Board Meetings eight projects for 2017 were selected from the Master Plan. One of those projects is restoring a "forgotten Victorian garden." Currently, the Board is looking at ways of funding all of these new projects. As of this writing three of the 2017 Projects have already been completed. Signage

is important to inform and educate the public and Oak Grove descendants. In January five new signs were added to Oak Grove. In February the Visitor Outreach Project was completed at the Mansfield entrance. (see article "Five New Signs"). In April the "Forgotten Victorian Garden" was planted.(see article "Magnolia Garden club Sponsors Project")

The Memorandum of Understanding OGCS shares with the City of Brunswick requires at least two meetings annually with OGCS President and Brunswick City Manager. OGCS can not make any improvements or enhancements to Oak Grove Cemetery without the approval of the City. Acting as OGCS President, I met in late January with Brunswick's City Manager, James Drum. I presented the entire Master Plan of Projects that will improve and enhance historic Oak Grove Cemetery and the eight projects selected for 2017. Mr Drum is a supporter of OGCS mission and was impressed with OGCS progress. The City is looking at the possibility of helping with several projects.

Oak Grove Cemetery Society is an extended hand to the community to organize and lead the restoration and preservation of Brunswick's oldest existing cemetery. OGCS does not receive any government funding. The financial support to advance these efforts comes solely from the membership dues, generous donations and grants. This is "A Community Effort for a Community Treasure."

In 2016 OGCS received many donations. Whether the amount is large or small, every cent grows together to make all these accomplishments possible. I do not have the space here to recognize all donations, but it is important to note each gift with no respect to amount was received with appreciation. Beginning in January, \$5,000 was given by the Bailey-Thompson Fund, a component fund of the Communities of Coastal Georgia Foundation. That donation funded the beginning of the Victorian perimeter fence restoration. Due to the large amount of fencing this will be an on-going project. In March OGCS hosted a workshop in Oak Grove Cemetery for the Georgia Municipal Cemetery Association. Thirty municipal cemetery managers from three states attended. One demonstration included a professional restoration by Savannah's Cemetery preservationist, Sam Beetler. The monument of Edith May du_Bignon had a three foot broken marble cross that was on the ground for years. Now, it is in place as good as new. Restoring monuments is our greatest work. April saw a donation of \$2,600 from Ernest Craft and Sandra Colhard that extended irrigation from the main entrance to the corner of MLK Blvd. In May we enjoyed a "Concert Under the Oaks" with a Victorian Picnic in Oak Grove. OGCS received \$550 in donations. Many thanks to the "Coastal Brass Choir" for providing this fundraiser. This was "Coastal Brass Choir's" third performance in Oak Grove. In November Lance Toland generously gifted \$250 and in December Martha and Horace Thom donated \$1,000. These donations will begin to fund 2017 Projects.

OGCS Board is doing all we can to advance the efforts of Oak Grove Cemetery Society. Our work is an important mission with a community vision. We need more members and volunteers to achieve these activities and our goals of preservation and improving community access to the cemetery. I urge all current members to renew quickly and consider a tax deductible monetary donation to further the goals of OGCS. Please encourage others to join OGCS as members and/or volunteers. We need volunteers in all areas of Cemetery activities: research, assistance to visitors, tours, gardening, membership, maintenance, etc. Please join in.

OGCS has identified Oak Grove Cemetery needs to be address in 2017. Now we must find the funding. Improvements and enhancements to "Brunswick's place of history and heritage" will be made possible by dedicated volunteers and generous donations. OGCS creates the framework for "all to work together with one plan for one purpose."

Five New Signs Added to Oak Grove

The Master Plan calls for signage to be posted that will inform Oak Grove visitors and descendants. Recently, it was discovered many visitors and descendants were not aware Oak Grove Cemetery is beneficiary of its own non-profit; Oak Grove Cemetery Society Brunswick Georgia Inc. OGCS Board believed Oak Grove Cemetery Society needed a presence in the cemetery for all visitors to understand OGCS work and how they can be involved. Additionally, visitors needed to know Oak Grove Cemetery is a historic site; an archeological site that is under the protection of the City of Brunswick Historic Preservation Board. You can read the Guidelines for Historic Preservation by going to the City of Brunswick Public Works: <http://www.brunswickga.org/pw/new/cem.html> OGCS played a

major role in writing those Guidelines.

These signs were the first project of 2017 to be completed. OGCS wrote the signs, and asked the City for their review. Following the approval of the City Manager, City Attorney, City of Brunswick Historic Preservation Board, and OGCS Board, the signs were printed and installed with the help of Gerald at Public Works. One sign is placed in a flower bed between the chapel and Mansfield Street entrance. It credits the completed projects are the result of the efforts of Oak Grove Cemetery Society including contact for those interested in joining our efforts.

The four remaining signs placed at the four entrances to the cemetery, explain the partnership between the City of Brunswick and Oak Grove Cemetery Society; OGCS role; declares Oak Grove as a historic site, adding "No items may be changed or removed without first contacting the City of Brunswick Historic Preservation Board."

Next came the second project of 2017, "Visitor Outreach." Attached to the post beneath the sign placed at Mansfield Street entrance is an all weather box. Inside visitors will find Oak Grove Cemetery Walking Tour brochures, a Visitor sign-in sheet, and OGCS membership forms. OGCS can now learn more about who is visiting, and why. Visitors will now have more information about Oak Grove Cemetery and OGCS. This will give visitors the opportunity to join our efforts. Many thanks to Sandra Colhard, OGCS Board Secretary, who installed the box and has volunteered to monitor.

Time to Renew OGCS Membership

OGCS membership runs January 1 to December 31.

I urge all to renew your membership as the funds are needed to continue our work to support the Cemetery. Monies raised through memberships, and donations support Master Plan Projects like head-stone repair, new gardens, maintenance and operating expenses. Currently Oak Grove Cemetery Society has 112 members! Your membership helps OGCS accomplish the charitable work of improving and enhancing Brunswick's place of history and heritage, Oak Grove Cemetery. Please renew today. I ask all to complete the new membership form attached so OGCS may have updated contact information of its members. It would be wonderful if each OGCS member found three new members. Please mail your membership form and tax deductible donation to:

OGCS
P.O. Box 3029
Brunswick, GA 31521

2017 Annual OGCS Membership Meeting

"A Community Treasure"

This year's annual OGCS membership meeting will be held in Oak Grove Cemetery on May 6 at 11:00 am. The program will include two dedications: An antique Iron Cross memorial was donated to OGCS for placement in Oak Grove Cemetery. The United Daughters of the Confederacy will dedicate that memorial during the annual membership meeting. The Project: Forgotten Victorian Circle Garden was sponsored by the Magnolia Garden Club. This project will also be dedicated. OGCS is very thankful to the garden club for their continued support of Oak Grove Cemetery. Following the meeting a light picnic will be provided. OGCS hopes to see many members this year.

Magnolia Garden Club Sponsors Project

The Magnolia Garden Club is a long time supporter of Oak Grove Cemetery. In the days before Oak Grove Cemetery Society, the garden club assisted the Colonial Dames with the restoration of Oak Grove Chapel by purchasing new windows. Over the years the garden club has donated \$5,500 to projects improving the historic site. Oak Grove

Cemetery Society is very grateful for the generosity and stewardship of the Magnolia Garden Club.

In March the garden club donated a total of \$1,850 for the OGCS Project: Restoration of a forgotten Victorian Garden including irrigation. The Magnolia Garden Club's 2016 Christmas Tour of Homes made this donation possible. This newly restored garden is located about in the center of Oak Grove. There is some evidence of a once existing garden inside the circle of cement. On early maps of Oak Grove this area is referred to as the circle. OGCS had this area examined by ground penetrating radar to make sure no one was buried there. In a very short time OGCS Director of Landscape, Jerry Spencer had a new 2 inch irrigation line to and inside the circle including a double faucet. On Tuesday, April 11 members of the Magnolia Garden Club and OGCS members met at the site and together planted this renewed area. "Victorians loved large leaf plants", commented Jerry Spencer justifying his inclusion of three large leaf philodendron. For color there are also agapanthus, and mondo grass. Antique hurricane lilies and daffodils for Spring and fall color will also be planted. On Saturday, May 6, at 11:00 am there will be a dedication of this new garden during the 2017 Annual OGCS Membership meeting.

Second Saturday Clean-up Days Huge Success

Thanks to the efforts of OGCS volunteers, Oak Grove Cemetery is looking better than it has ever! Monthly clean-up days began in November. Volunteers have put pine straw in the front flowerbeds, raked leaves and cleaned many plots. Ernest Jones OGCS Director of Grounds said, "these work days have really helped the cemetery. We have cleaned to date public areas and improved about forty plots. Keep it up!"

The next scheduled Second Saturday Clean-up Day will be on May 13 from 9:00am and to 1:00pm.

Second Saturday Clean-Up Day Schedule

May 13, 2017

June 10, 2017

July 8, 2017

Volunteers Needed

To continue our efforts OGCS is in need of helping hands. Protecting, restoring and preserving a historic cemetery is "A Community Effort for A Community Treasure." We need Membership and Volunteer Coordinators in addition to many volunteers to help with: Epitaph newsletter; Second Saturday Clean-up Days; Story tellers and tour guides. Please become involved!

A Life Devoted to Preserving History

Mrs. Eloise Yancey Bailey Thompson 88 of St. Marys passed away February 27, 2017 at her home on Mush Bluff. She was born in Brunswick, December 31, 1928 and graduated from Glynn Academy in 1946. This lady devoted her life to preserving local history.

In 2016 she gifted \$5,000 to Oak Grove Cemetery Society. Her gift was used to begin the restoration of Oak Grove's iron perimeter fence. Her handwritten response to OGCS letter of recognition was inspirational; supporting OGCS efforts. "Oak Grove Cemetery Society is preserving history which is an important endeavor."

OGCS Efforts Create the Vision: Oak Grove Cemetery; A Public Place to Encounter History, Heritage and Tranquility.

Follow OGCS on facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OakGroveCemeterySociety/>

REMEMBER THOSE YOU LOVE WITH GIFTS IN HONOR AND GIFTS IN MEMORY

Oak Grove Cemetery Society Brunswick Georgia Inc. is an IRS 501(c)(3) all volunteer non-profit organization.
All donations made to OGCS are IRS tax deductible!

