

FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

A newsletter sponsored by the
Athens Cemetery Association

Vol. 5

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NEW FENCE CONSTRUCTED



Thanks to the Friends of the Cemetery, the new decorative wrought iron fence shown above has been constructed along the southern boundary of the cemetery. It runs from the south gate to the western edge of the cemetery and replaces the old chain-link fence that had stood for many years and was showing its age. Its construction was completed under the direction and supervision of cemetery association board member Bob McDonald.

Our next Friends project will be to replace the remaining section of chain link fence that runs from the south gate to the eastern boundary of the cemetery. This section is considerably longer than the section just replaced and will cost approximately \$15,000 to complete. **Two benefactors have agreed to contribute one half of the cost of this project if the Friends of the Cemetery will raise the other one half.** This is a wonderful opportunity to finish the wrought iron fence, an opportunity that may not present itself again! So please consider contributing as much as possible to the Friends this year. Thank you.

A Beautiful Friend is Passing

As many of you have noticed, the beautiful black gum tree at the entrance to the cemetery is in serious decline. Generations of Athenians have admired this magnificent tree each fall as its leaves turned to crimson. No doubt that over the years it has been the most photographed object in Henderson County. But despite the best efforts of tree experts from around the state and the continuing efforts of the cemetery association, disease, old age and numerous lightning strikes have taken their toll. Sadly, it now appears doubtful that this magnificent tree can be kept alive very much longer.

Plans are already under way to plant several replacement black gum trees at the entrance to the cemetery. If you would like to help with this project and at the same time honor a loved one, simply make a donation of at least \$250 to the Friends of the Cemetery and indicate the name of the loved one you would like to honor. A plaque bearing your loved one's name (or your name if you wish) will be placed at the base of the tree purchased with your donation.

THE CELTIC CROSS

One of the earlier Friends projects was the construction of the Celtic Cross in the new section of the cemetery. A number of persons have asked the significance of this cross and have asked about its history. Following is a brief explanation.

The cross with a circle has been popularly known as a "Celtic Cross" since around 1850. The form itself evolved between the 4th and 9th centuries. Also known as "The Irish Cross" or "The Irish High Cross" this type of cross is now associated with Celtic heritage. Use of the phrase "Celtic Cross" is an acknowledgement that the form is not only Irish, but was and is shared by Scotland, Wales, and other regions that were influenced by early Celtic Christianity.

By the 1890s Celtic Crosses began to appear in cemeteries and churches around the world, wherever there was a Scottish or Irish population with pride in their origins.

In Ireland the majority of Celtic Crosses are created for Catholic patrons, but the Protestant Church of Ireland uses the Celtic Cross as well. Many other Protestants of Celtic heritage, especially those outside Ireland, also make use of the Celtic Cross.

Recognizing that many of the early settlers of Athens were of Scottish, Irish or Scotch-Irish descent, the cemetery association felt that the use of the Celtic Cross would be appropriate as a focal point in the new section.

HISTORICAL MARKERS

The cemetery now has five historical markers chronicling some of the interesting history of the cemetery and the accomplishments of some of the notable persons buried there. The inscriptions of these markers are as follows:

Athens Cemetery

After citizens petitioned for its closure, an unofficial burial ground in the area closed

in 1857. That same year, local residents buried prominent planter, Mason and school superintendent, William J. Brantley, here on one acre donated by Pleasant Tannehill to Masonic Lodge No. 165. Adjoining land was set aside for the interment of a girl named Ward, who could not be buried in the Masons' cemetery. The two adjacent burial grounds eventually joined, and further donations of land by Nathaniel Pope Coleman (1823-1887), Joseph Marion LaRue (1825-1887), added to what is now known as the Pioneer Section of this cemetery. An association established in 1922 bought an additional 12 acres from Matthias E. Richardson, Jr. (1855-1919), designating the front portion as a park. Chronicled here are the generations that forged the rich heritage of the City of Athens, along with veterans of the Indian wars, Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam.

Dulcinea Ann Holland Thompson Avriett 1834-1920

A native of Athens, Georgia Dulcinea Ann Holland came to Henderson County with her family in 1847. She married E. J. Thompson in 1851. According to local tradition she named the town of Athens after her birthplace. Following the death of her first husband in the 1860s Dulcinea married James Avriett in 1867. They were the parents of two sons. She was a founding member of the local Methodist Church and a dedicated civic leader.

Rupert Talmage Craig

Rupert Talmage Craig son of Henry Clay and Dana Moss Craig was born on November 17th, 1889 in Shiloh, Kentucky. He began setting type in a print shop at the age of ten and at the age of sixteen

became the youngest licensed printer in Kentucky. He worked as a printer for several major U.S. newspapers before coming to work for the Athens Review in 1907. He purchased the Kemp News a small town newspaper and became its publisher at the age of eighteen. Craig married Kentuckian Clara E. Rhodes in 1911 and in 1912 they moved to Chandler, Texas where he owned The Chandler Times newspaper. He purchased The Athens Review in 1916. The Athens Review became a successful daily newspaper. Craig's distinctive editorials on politics and local events earned him the respect of area citizens and prominent state and national politicians. He served as Regent at Texas Women's University and was a member of the Texas Economic Commission, the Texas Centennial Commission and the Texas State Democratic Executive Committee. The Southern Journalism Congress named him "Country Editor of the South" in 1938. Craig sold the Athens Review in 1941 after twenty-five years as publisher. He died in Athens on February 15, 1968. A U.S. Senator attended his funeral.

Joseph Thomas LaRue
Nov. 18, 1864-Feb. 13, 1930

Alderman on Athens' first city council (1901). LaRue (town 13 mi. SE) was named for him. Educator, merchant, civic leader, banker, humanitarian, prohibitionist, democrat, historian. Married March 16, 1892, Stella Elvira Parsons. They had seven children.

Stella E. Parsons LaRue
Feb. 16, 1874-Dec. 7, 1949

Known as first white child born in Terrell; daughter of confederate army surgeon, Dr. Homer Lee Parsons (M.D. Yale University) and wife, Margaret C.R.R. Parsons. In role of wife and mother "Mammy LaRue" was beloved of family and community.

John Matthews McDonald
North Carolina-born John Matthews

McDonald (1827-1883) came to Texas in 1848 and lived first at Larissa, Cherokee Co. and then Mound Prairie, Anderson Co., where his brother Murdoch earlier settled. Two years later, he moved to the young town of Athens and became a teacher and a lawyer. He also served as the town's first mayor. He wed Mary Ann Elizabeth Pinson (1842-1931) in 1858, and the couple had ten children. During the Civil War, McDonald fought with the Confederate Army as part of Hood's Texas Brigade. Active in public service, he held the offices of Justice of the Peace, County Judge and State representative. His Pioneer leadership proved vital to the early development of his adopted home.

LOT AVAILABILITY AND PRICES

There are over 1,000 lots available in the old, historic section of the cemetery, and another 1,200 lots available in the new section where the Celtic Cross is located. In addition, the northwest part of the cemetery is available for expansion as the need arises and is currently available for large, multi-lot family sections on a square foot basis.

Old section lots - \$800

New section lots - \$900

Cremation lots - \$350

An installment plan (equal installments over 12 months) is available at no interest for pre-need purchases. Contact Kathy Killingsworth at: Cell- 903-288-1449; Office- 903-675-9203; or Home-903-675-4027 for more information.

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Contact one of the directors with any questions or suggestions you may have.

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