



ATHENS CEMETERY ASSOCIATION



2019 NEWSLETTER

ABOUT US

The Athens Cemetery Association, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to maintain and preserve our historic cemetery.

OUR MISSION

We are dedicated to being good stewards to guarantee that the cemetery remains a sanctuary for reflection, meditation, and a celebration of past and future generations.

OUR STRATEGY

The challenge is being met through lot sales, interments, special donations, and planned giving arrangements.



“On behalf of the board of directors of the Athens Cemetery Association, I'd like to personally thank you for your support of our beautiful cemetery and wish you a very Happy and Prosperous New Year! So many intriguing individuals are interred at the cemetery and, as a board, we strive to make certain that their lives are honored each and every day and their stories preserved for eternity.”

Steve Grant, President

REPORT FROM OUR WEBSITE www.athenstxcemetery.com

contributed by Stephen R. Sparkman

Ever since we designed and got our website up and going the interest has steadily increased. Not only from people just exploring the site, but relatives looking for love ones. With other internet-based research tools like Find-A-Grave and Ancestry.com, the need to access is tremendous. You can verify your data and communicate directly with us concerning all your needs.

Back in October of this year we received an e-mail through the website at: info@athenstxcemetery.com from Beth Day Pence of California. She was on a genealogical road trip to visit her relatives from the past. Her 2nd great grandfather, Rufus H. Day is buried in the cemetery. She notified us that he was not listed on the veteran's memorial and was in fact a Civil War veteran. We made arrangements and meet at the cemetery when she came through Athens on October 29th. Beth told me of what she had discovered about Rufus Day. And what a life he did live! The story featured on page 2 is his life - as best we know right now.

HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT - Rufus H. Day

February 8, 1839: Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas – 2nd oldest of 6 sons born to Ballard Day (1806 – 1853) and Susan Chamblee (1818 – 1880).

April 21, 1857: Marries Lucinda Fitzhugh in Hot Springs, Arkansas

1858: Daughter Martha was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas

April 1860: Martha dies of pneumonia in Hot Springs, Arkansas at 2 years old

1861: Daughter Cynthia is Born in Hot Springs, Arkansas

July 20, 1861: Rufus enlists in Co. E, 12th Regiment, Arkansas Infantry

April 8, 1862: He is captured by union forces at Island Number 10, Mississippi

The Battle of Island Number 10 was an engagement at the New Madrid or Kentucky Bend on the Mississippi River, lasting from February 28 to April 8, 1862. The position, an island at the base of a tight double turn in the course of the river, was held by the Confederates from the early days of the war. It was an excellent site to impede Union efforts to invade the South by the river, as ships had to approach the island, bows on and then slow to make the turns. For the defenders, however, it had an innate weakness in that it depended on a single road for supplies and reinforcements. If an enemy force managed to cut off that road, the garrison would be isolated and eventually be forced to surrender.

The 12th Arkansas served in the Western Department, and later at Beall's Brigade, Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana. After serving in the garrison at Columbus Kentucky, the regiment moved to New Madrid, Missouri. The 12th Arkansas, brigaded together with the 11th Arkansas Infantry, under the command of Colonel Gantt, originally acted as the garrison for Fort Thompson, one of two forts that guarded New Madrid.

The Union Army of the Mississippi under Brigadier General John Pope, made the first probes, coming overland through Missouri and occupying the town of Point Pleasant, Missouri, almost directly west of the island and south of New Madrid. Pope's army then moved north and soon brought siege guns to bear on New Madrid. The Confederate commander, Brig. Gen. John P. McCown, decided to evacuate the town after only one day of heavy bombardment, moving most of his troops to Island No. 10, abandoning his heavy artillery and most of his supplies. Gantt's Brigade now included the 11th and 12th Arkansas Infantry Regiments, the 4th Arkansas Infantry Battalion, many of whom were manning guns on Island No. 10. and the 55th Tennessee Infantry Regiment. Two days after the fall of New Madrid, Union gunboats and mortar rafts sailed downstream to attack Island Number 10. Over the next three weeks, the island's defenders and forces in the nearby supporting batteries were subjected to a steady bombardment by the flotilla, mostly carried out by the mortars. At the same time, the Union forces at New Madrid were digging a canal across the neck of land east of the town to bypass Island No. 10. Several transports were sent to the Army of the Mississippi when the canal was finished, which provided the army with a way to cross the river and attack the Confederate troops on the Tennessee side. Pope persuaded Flag Officer Andrew Hull Foote to send a gunboat past the batteries, to assist him in crossing the river by keeping off any Southern gunboats and suppressing Confederate artillery fire at the point of attack. The USS Carondelet, under Commander Henry Walke, slipped past the island on the night of April 4, 1862. This was followed by the USS Pittsburg, under Lieutenant Egbert Thompson two nights later. With the support of these two gunboats, Pope was able to move his army across the river and trap the Confederates opposite the island, who by now were trying to retreat. Outnumbered at least three to one, the Confederates realized their situation was hopeless and decided to surrender. The bulk of the 12th Arkansas was captured at Island Number 10 and sent to prisoner of war camps.

April 8, 1862: Confederate garrison at New Madrid and Island No. 10 surrenders to Brig. Gen. John Pope; 3,500 Confederates were taken prisoner.

September 6, 1862: Prisoners of the 12th Arkansas were delivered to Vicksburg, Mississippi November 10, 1862 the 12th Arkansas was officially "exchanged" Note: During the U.S. Civil War, both sides participated in the exchange of prisoners of war who had been captured by the other side. Although there was not a formal agreement in place, prisoner exchanges had taken place as a result of kindness between opposing leaders after a hard-fought battle.

1862 after the exchange, Rufus returned to Arkansas to be commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 12th and complete the war. At the end of the war, 1865, many of whom started out as the 12th Infantry were held up in Marshal, Texas.

1865: wife Lucinda Dies in Hot Springs, Arkansas

1865-1870: Rufus acquires land acreage in Anderson County, Texas

February 20, 1870: Rufus Marries Eliza A. Janes of Anderson County, Texas

1870 census shows: Rufus, Eliza, Cynthia (age 9 yrs.) and Rufus's mother Susan in Palestine, Texas. Occupation: "Farmer"

November 18, 1870: Son Ballard is born in Palestine, Texas

Unknown date Rufus becomes a Henderson County, Texas, Deputy Sherriff.

December 23, 1879: Rufus is killed in the line of duty in Van Zandt County, Texas

Deputy Sheriff Rufus H. Day, and an assistant, were transporting three prisoners they had arrested in Indian Territory (present

HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT - Rufus H. Day (continued)

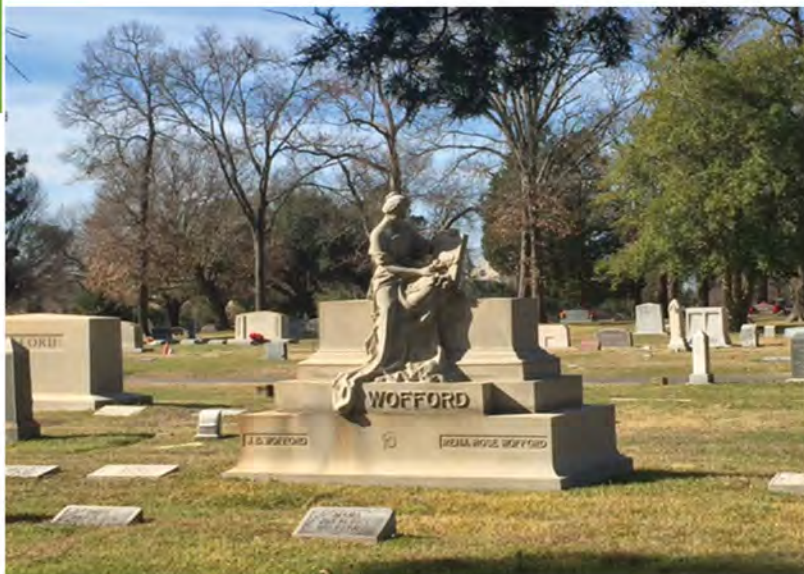
day Oklahoma). The three prisoners, Henry Smith, a Baptist preacher, and two brothers named Owen had been indicted in Henderson County for horse theft. They were on their way back to Henderson County, when the group stopped at a farmhouse in Van Zandt County, Texas, to spend the night. Smith somehow got possession of Deputy Day's pistol and shot and killed him. The three prisoners escaped but were soon captured.

October 1880, Elmer Owen was tried in Henderson County and sentenced to five years in prison for horse theft
May 1883, Henry Smith was tried in Van Zandt County and sentenced to life in prison for the murder of Deputy Sheriff Rufus H. Day.

Rufus H. Day was survived by his wife (Eliza) and children (Cynthia and Ballard). He was buried in the Athens Cemetery. His name is inscribed on the Fallen Peace Officers memorial on the N.E. corner of the Henderson County courthouse lawn and on the Veteran's Memorial Wall in the Athens Cemetery.

We'd love to hear YOUR stories . . .

Do you have an interesting story about a relative or friend buried within the Athens Cemetery? Please consider sharing it with us. We're always looking for history to share on our website or in the next issue of our annual newsletter! Just drop us a note at the address below, or email us at info@athenstxcemetery.com.



Beautiful holly plants now surround the Celtic Cross monument thanks to the time and generosity of a cemetery patron.

WITH OUR THANKS . . .

The serenity of the grounds of the Athens Cemetery has long been a source of refuge for many. Recently, Mrs. Janice Bray planted several miniature holly plants in the surround of the Celtic Cross monument in honor of her late husband, Dennis. We can't thank Janice enough for her support of the cemetery and are excited to see these beautiful plants mature for future generations to enjoy.



The Athens Cemetery is maintained by the Athens Cemetery Association, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to maintain and preserve our historic cemetery. Costs to maintain the cemetery are ongoing and continue to increase. In recent years, we have been able to meet this challenge thanks to the generous financial support of individuals and businesses. Without their support, it would be very difficult to maintain the cemetery in a manner fit to honor those interred there.

We would like to give our sincerest thanks to these individuals and businesses who have stepped up to help over the years. If you are interested in helping, won't you please consider making a donation?

Our sincerest thanks to ...

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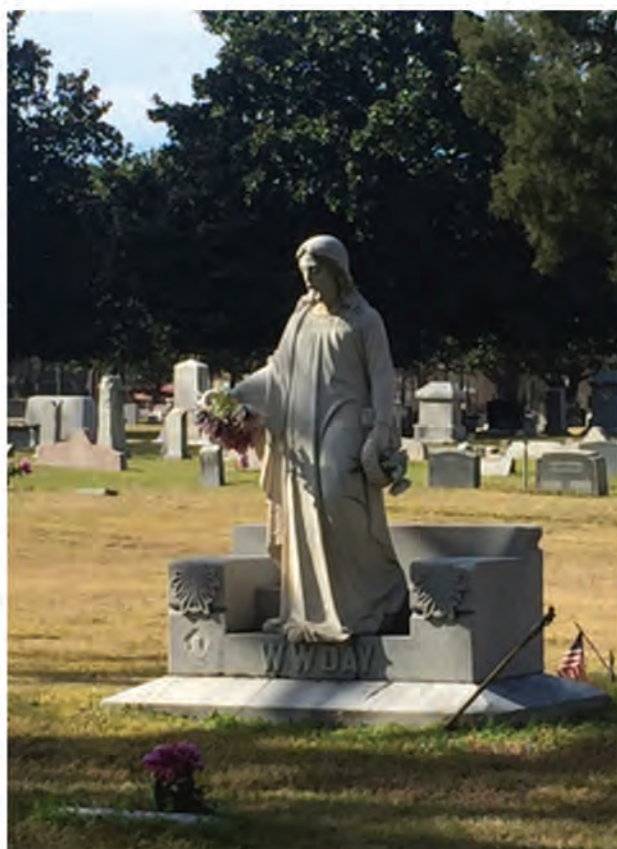
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Mr. Douglas Tanner
Mr. Donald Tyler
Mr. Rob Tyner
Ms. Carol Ann Wallace
Mr. Bill Ward
Ms. Mary Faye Ward
Ms. Lela S. Warren
Mr. & Mrs. Donald Weibel
Mr. & Mrs. Tim Wheeler
Mr. & Mrs. Sam Whitten
Ms. Mary Margaret Wright
Mr. Jesus Zanala

Have you met our board of directors?

Everyday operations of the Athens Cemetery are overseen by a volunteer board of directors and two part-time staff, each having their own passion for the cemetery. Current board members include:

Steve Grant, President
Stephen Sparkman, Vice President
Randy Daniel, Secretary
Larry Babb, Treasurer
John Cain, Member
C. A. Hawn, Member
Kay King, Member
R. F. Murchison, Jr., Member
Chip Perryman, Member
Lynne Stultz, Member
Nanette Stelter, Member
Bobby Glass, Cemetery Liaison
Darlene Forshage, Office Manager

If you have an issue or concern that you feel should be addressed by the board, we ask that you first check our website to see if the answer is there. If not, please contact us through the information in the footers of this newsletter. Should we not be able to assist, the item may be added to the agenda of a future meeting of the board for their consideration.



YOUR PARTICIPATION IS WELCOMED

The board of directors of the Athens Cemetery Association meets each month on the 3rd Tuesday of the month in the conference room of the Athens Professional Building at 108 N. Pinkerton Street in Athens. The public is invited to attend. Please confirm the meeting time/date prior to your attendance.

"As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter the words, but to live by them..." –John F. Kennedy

In 2013, the Athens Cemetery proudly dedicated a Veteran's Memorial Wall honoring veterans interred within the cemetery who served their country in the Cherokee Indian War, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, and all other conflicts during the time of war and peace. The impressive 50' long, 10' high structure consists of eight granite panels inlaid in brick. An American flag flies proudly over the memorial and the adjoining Veteran's Court, creating a sense of reverence. A complete roster of those honored may be found on our website.



May we never forget . . .

Please join us on May 25, 2020 as we acknowledge the sacrifice made by our fallen heroes in a special Memorial Day commemoration. To be held in front of the Veteran's Wall at the cemetery, this solemn event will begin at 11:30 a.m. and will conclude at noon with the raising of the American Flag. Stay tuned to www.athenstxcemetery.com for details as they develop.

CONTACT US ANYTIME.
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR
FROM YOU!

1

By phone to our offices:
903-675-9203

2

By phone to Bobby Glass,
our Cemetery Liaison
903-477-7281

3

By email to:
info@athenstxcemetery.com

4

On our website:
www.athenstxcemetery.com

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF THE CEMETERY. DONATE TODAY!

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We would like to thank each contributor for their continued support of the cemetery, and members of the Friends of the Cemetery for their contributions used toward special projects and permanent improvements to the cemetery.

Donations can be mailed to P. O. Box 1296, Athens, Texas 75751, or made online at www.athenstxcemetery.com.

Thank you for your generosity!!

Athens Cemetery Association
P. O. Box 1296
Athens, TX 75751

