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FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

A newsletter sponsored by the
Athens Cemetery Association

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ATHENS CEMETERY NEWS



ATHENS CEMETERY COMPLETES COLUMBARIUM

The highlight of 2010 was the creation of a new columbarium at the Athens Cemetery. The redbrick structure has a white concrete cap with a granite front. The site will be flanked by two permanent benches and tastefully decorated to create a special place of reverence and honor.

Over the years, the demand for a columbarium has been on the increase. "The Athens Cemetery Association has received many inquiries regarding a columbarium and the Association wanted to accommodate the demand," Board member, Bob McDonald indicated. Initial sales and inquiries have been brisk.

Financing for the project in part was received from private donors and interested parties.

Formal dedication of the columbarium will be after the first of January 2011.

Future Friends' Projects

2010 saw a continuation of beautification projects ranging from the trimming of trees to improving the permanent landscaping of the Cemetery.

Friends of the Cemetery continue to be a source for beautification efforts. Completed projects include wrought iron fencing along Lakeside Drive and the entrance of the Cemetery, funding for the creation of the information center and entry gate.

Future plans include extending the wrought iron fencing on the west of the Cemetery, planting of trees and other beautification endeavors. The Cemetery Association deeply appreciates the generous support for beautification projects given over the years from the "Friends". Beautification projects are funded almost entirely by donations from the Friends of the Cemetery.

Infant Burial Section - "Baby Land" has been established for infant burials. Although it has been utilized for many years for infant burials, the Board formally dedicated and erected a permanent boundary around this special area.



Main Entrance



Baby Land



*Snow photographs are courtesy of Mrs. Steve Sutton.

A Bit of History

Thomas Miller Matthews, Sr. M.D.
Contributed by Randy Daniel
Athens Cemetery Board Member

There are many, many prominent and early Americans buried in the Pioneer Section of the historic Athens Cemetery. We continue our look at some of those early Athenians.

Thomas Miller Matthews was born at Cumberland Courthouse, Virginia on March 6, 1830. His father, George H. Matthews, was a prominent attorney and served for fifty consecutive years as District Attorney. Thomas Matthews graduated from the University of Virginia in both its academic and medical departments and came to Texas in 1852. He first located in Shelby County, when Judge and later General O. M. Roberts was practicing law there. In 1855, he moved to Ft. Worth when it was but a small village.

He married Miss Emma Grazard in Mt. Enterprise, Shelby County, on April 9, 1857. She was born in Silasand, Norway and came to the United States with her parents to Nacogdoches, Texas. In the summer of 1864, Dr. Matthews enlisted in the Confederate Army at Ft. Worth as a private in Dr. Peak's Post and Dr. Matthews continued in the hospital service for a short time. Later, he was named Surgeon of Parson's Twelfth Texas Calvary. He was never wounded or taken prisoner in any action.

Dr. Matthews returned to Texas and resumed his medial practice. In the last 1870's, he was living near Ben Wheeler, Texas in Van Zandt County. He was active in the community and in the local Masonic Lodge, Pine Lodge No. 203. In December of 1881, he was elected Grand Master of Masons in Texas and served until December 19, 1882. Dr. Matthews later moved to Athens and remained very active in the Masonic Lodge here. He was elected and served as Secretary of Athens Lodge No. 165 for many years. He also remained active in Grand Lodge proceedings. He served the Grand Lodge as Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence for 27 years.

Dr. Matthews never sought or held any elected office during his lifetime, but served his community as a member of the medical profession until the time of his death. Dr. and Mrs. Matthews had thirteen children, eleven boys and two girls. Two boys and one girl died before adulthood. One of his sons became a lawyer, one a dentist and one a medical doctor. Two were agents for the Cotton Belt railroad, one a merchant and one a traveling agent for the Dallas News.

In April of 1907, Dr. and Mrs. Matthews celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in Athens, Texas. Dr. Matthews died in March of 1912 and is buried in the Pioneer section of the Cemetery. His grave lies a short distance behind the recently installed Columbarium. In 1969, the Grand Lodge of Texas marked his grave with a monument commemorating his service to the Masons of Texas and their Grand Master. Dr. Matthews is one of two Grand Masters of Masons buried in Athens Cemetery. The other is Albert B. Watkins.

The Athens Cemetery is maintained by the Athens Cemetery Association, a non-profit organization whose purpose is to maintain and preserve our historic cemetery. The Athens Cemetery depends on lot sales, internments, special gifts and planned giving to operate. Costs to maintain the cemetery have continued to increase, but the challenge has been met. The Board of the Athens Cemetery Association is dedicated to being good stewards of the funds provided to see that the cemetery remains a beautiful sanctuary for reflection, meditation and celebration of past and future generations.

4,000 lots are available including cremation lots. Call Bob McDonald at (903)681-1721 for further information.

Space Prices:

Principal, Historic Section - \$1,000.00

Celtic Cross Section - \$1,300.00

Multi-Lot Family Section - On a per square foot basis

Internment Fee - \$200.00 on non-holiday or \$250.00 on recognized holiday

Special thanks to outgoing Board Member, Neil Hunter, for his years of service and dedication to the Athens Cemetery Association.

“For all who visit our cemetery, may it remind them of all those who have gone before and of the nobility of life well lived. Remember that nothing is ended until it is forgotten. Whoever is kept in memory still endures.”

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