



ATHENS CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

2021 NEWSLETTER

**ATHENS CEMETERY IS A DESIGNATED STATE HISTORICAL CEMETERY
ESTABLISHED IN 1858**

ATHENS CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

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2021...A Year in Review

Vol. 20, December 2021

ABOUT US

The Athens Cemetery Association is 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.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2021, the Athens Cemetery Association celebrated its 100th anniversary of maintaining and supporting the historic Athens Cemetery. Part of the celebration included the annual Memorial Day Ceremony held on May 31, 2021, the dedication of a State Historical Marker in honor of Virginia L. "Ginger" Murchison held on November 6, 2021 and the participation in the annual Wreaths Across America for the third consecutive year.



MEMORIAL DAY—

On May 31, 2021, the Athens Cemetery celebrated Memorial Day. A Color Guard was present at the ceremony and Mr. Bill Seckel, President of the Sons of the American Revolution gave an in character description of what Memorial Day means, what it still means today and what it meant when our Country was formed. Chris Baker sang the National Anthem, Dorothy Grymonprez played the taps on the bugle and the invocation was given by Father Matthew Frick.

The Honorable Judge Scott McKee was our keynote speaker. Judge McKee is a decorated U. S. Army Ranger and he gave a moving talk and insight from someone who has served on the front lines.



**DEDICATION OF STATE HISTORICAL MARKER
HONORING VIRGINIA L. "GINGER" MURCHISON—**

On November 6, 2021, the Henderson County Historical Commission together with the Athens Cemetery Association hosted the dedication of a State Historical Marker honoring longtime Athens resident and true friend to Athens and Henderson County residents.

This event highlighted Ms. Murchison's legacy not only for her generous philanthropy, but also her enduring spirit, genuine caring attitude and friendship.

Ginger was dedicated to the Athens and Henderson County Community on many levels and her generosity continues to provide benefits for both the people and the organizations which serve our community to this date. Special thanks to the Henderson County Sheriff Department, Boy Scout Troop 343, Trinity Valley Community College and the Ginger Murchison Foundation.



WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA—

On another rainy and cold December day in 2021, approximately 75 volunteers came together for the third year to pay tribute to the approximately 650 veterans laid to rest in the Athens Cemetery. For the first time Oaklawn Cemetery and Athens North Cemetery took part in what has become an annual local tradition.

The beautiful handmade Christmas wreaths were donated by loved ones, local businesses and service organizations and help fulfill the mission of Wreaths Across America to "REMEMBER, HONOR AND TEACH."

The 11:00 ceremony coincides with the national effort which starts at the Arlington National Cemetery at noon EST. Volunteers at more than 3,000 locations across 50 states, at sea and around the globe, take part in the annual remembrance. Please plan to join us on December 17, 2022 for the 4th annual ceremony. More information is found at wreathsassamerica.org/tx0725. If

donating, please be sure to reference the local location TXATHC and group ID #0725. This insures the wreaths are credited to the local effort.

Here is a little of the story of how Wreaths Across America came to be. I think you will find it very interesting. Much of this information is taken from the National website.

“One man's annual tribute to our veterans inspired a legion of volunteers and gave rise to the Wreaths Across America of today”

“Morrill Worcester, owner of [Worcester Wreath Company](#) of Harrington, Maine, was a 12 year old paper boy for the Bangor Daily News when he won a trip to Washington D.C. His first trip to our nation's capital was one he would never forget, and Arlington National Cemetery made an especially indelible impression on him. This experience followed him throughout his life and successful career, reminding him that his good fortune was due, in large part, to the values of this nation and the veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

In 1992, Worcester Wreath Company found themselves with a surplus of wreaths nearing the end of the holiday season. Remembering his boyhood experience at Arlington, Worcester realized he had an opportunity to honor our country's veterans. With the aid of Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, arrangements were made for the wreaths to be placed at Arlington in one of the older sections of the cemetery that had been receiving fewer visitors with each passing year.

As plans were underway, a number of other individuals and organizations stepped up to help. James Prout, owner of local trucking company Blue Bird Ranch, Inc., generously provided transportation all the way to Virginia. Volunteers from the local American Legion and VFW Posts gathered with members of the community to decorate each wreath with traditional red, hand-tied bows. Members of the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C. helped to organize the wreath-laying, which included a special ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The annual tribute went on quietly for several years, until 2005, when a photo of the stones at Arlington, adorned with wreaths and covered in snow, circulated around the internet. Suddenly, the project received national attention. Thousands of requests poured in from all over the country from people wanting to help with Arlington, to emulate the Arlington project at their National and State cemeteries, or to simply share their stories and thank Morrill Worcester for honoring our nation's heroes.

In 2007, the Worcester family, along with veterans, and other groups and individuals who had helped with their annual veterans wreath ceremony in Arlington, formed Wreaths Across America, a non-profit 501-(c)(3) organization, to continue and expand this effort, and support other groups around the country who wanted to do the same.



HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT

Unfortunates Forgotten

By Stephen R. Sparkman, with courthouse research by Liz Bearden Smith

There is a part of the Athens Cemetery which few people know about, mainly because it is where the forgotten are buried. These are paupers, mostly wards of the county Poor Farm and others who passed away with no known relatives. The county usually would see to these burials.

In May of 1919, Matthias E. Richardson and wife Kate sold the Athens Cemetery Association 10 acres of land. The Richardsons, together with the Association, designated that two acres would be used as: "Burial grounds for persons who are unable to pay for their lots". This is what is referred to as the Pauper or County Section of the cemetery. In earlier times, there were two properties that the county owned and ran as boarding facilities also known as "Poor Farms", housing for the elderly whose family could no longer care for them or they for themselves. The first was purchased in 1890 and contained 362 acres. This facility was located on Mill Run Road, outside of the loop in Athens. It was closed in 1902. A second facility of 41 acres was purchased that same year, located west of town in the general area of Hwy. 175 and the East Texas Arboretum. It had a cemetery for those who passed away at the facility.

The second Poor Farm was managed by William Wesley Howard, a local citizen, who in May of 1927 posted the following advertisement in the Athens Weekly Review.

To The Review: Through the kindness of the editor, I am going to ask each and every one to help me buy a monument for the county burying ground. I have worked the graves and plowed a nice street.

The monument will cost \$100. Will appreciate any donation you feel like giving. The name for the cemetery will be changed to the "Last Resting Place of the Poor". If anyone can give a better name, will be glad to hear from them.

If you don't see me leave it with Dr. Kellams or at Robinson's Drug store. Thanking each and everyone. W. W. Howard, Mgr.

In September of that year the Athens Weekly Review printed this article:

Pauper Cemetery to be Marked with Monument - W. W. Howard, in charge of the county farm, invites the people of Athens to attend an unveiling of a monument in the pauper cemetery next Sunday afternoon at 2:30. Mr. Howard has invited all the ministers of the city to be present and said he would be glad to have all the people of Athens attend.

Some time ago, Mr. Howard became interested in securing a monument to serve as a mark of respect for those unfortunates who died penniless. By public subscription he secured enough to pay for the monument and on next Sunday it will be unveiled. Mr. Howard has not only been interested in those who are placed in his care while living, but desires that a single monument mark their resting place for all time.

The following Thursday the Athens Weekly Review reported the following about the Sunday ceremony:

Monument for County Cemetery is Unveiled – "Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer my God to thee". It was only a few feeble voices singing. They had gathered to attend the unveiling of a monument to those "Unknown Friends" buried in the potter's field. But thanks to the interest manifested in behalf of those unfortunates,

in the future there will stand a "living monument" to mark their place. Friendless and penniless, they have passed away until now there are 20 graves. No name marks the place where they lie, but on the new monument they are included in the inscription "To those who have passed away."

Some time ago W. W. Howard, manager of the county farm, who has had charge of these people for many years, became interested in marking their graves. Through public subscription Mr. Howard raised a sum sufficient to erect the beautiful monument which was unveiled yesterday.

Rev. O. W. Hooper conducted the unveiling service. He paid a tribute to Mr. Howard for his unselfish work with these unfortunates and pointed out that when the Master was on earth it was to this very class of people that he devoted the most attention. In olden times, he said, it was the custom to pass the poor and afflicted by, but the Good Samaritan brought a lesson to the world that had passed down through the ages and had been a blessing to humanity. The minister pointed out that those unfortunates were once filled with ambition the same as others and said that no man could tell how soon adversity would knock at his door. In the midst of prosperity we are often overtaken with adversity, he said. The world, he said, is too busy to pay attention to the needs of the unfortunate and we have an example of this in the small audience here at this service. Bro. Hooper praised Mr. Howard for his action in securing the funds to make the monument possible.

Mr. Howard delivered a short talk himself. He said that he loved these old people that he had been so long associated with and he felt that they were entitled to this mark of respect. Just above the monument, which stands in the center of the small plot has been placed in arch reading "County Cemetery". Shrubbery has been contributed and it is planned to beautify the plot immediately.

As of this writing, it appears that the burials at the Poor Farm #2 cemetery ceased in 1922 and the deceased were then interred in the Pauper/County Section of the Athens Cemetery. Mr. Howard had dutifully cared for the graves at the farm for the 25 years, till he erected the marker there. It is believed that there were 20 to 24 graves in the Poor Farm #2 Cemetery. In April of 1943, County Judge Frank J. Davis announced that the Poor Farm had been closed and the 7 remaining people will be given assistance in their own homes. In September of 1943, Commissioners Court authorized the selling of Poor Farm #2. All of the burials and Mr. Howard's beautiful monument were moved to the Athens Cemetery at that time and placed in the southwest corner of the cemetery.

The names and identities of the people buried at the Poor Farm #2 were never recorded. Just a few others in the pauper section were ever recorded, simply because a Good Samaritan installed a stone marker at that time. Very slowly through the years identification has come for some of the other burials, but no exact grave location. Even as recent as December 2021, a grandson contacted the cemetery through its website, looking for his grandfather. With only a partially completed death certificate to go on, we discovered the 1954 burial records at the funeral home—showing clearly that the county paid for the services. This elderly man was a traveling carnival worker who was living in a boarding house in Eustace for his last one year of life. The county supported the house owner for his care and others like him. He was buried in the pauper section without any marker. Upon hearing this the grandson was overjoyed that his long Ancestry.com search was over. He filled in the missing biography with these sentiments in an email: My grandfather has been the focal point of my ancestry search due to mystery around him and that my grandmother never would talk about him. My father (deceased) and I never met him and it appears that my grandmother left him soon after my father's birth. During much of his life he was a traveling photographer which led to 4 wives, 2 children and 2 grandchildren. Looks like in the end he was a carnival worker. Born: St. Giles, London, United Kingdom in 1883, entered U.S. : 7/1/1893, primary residence: St. Paul, Minnesota.

There is a lot more research to be done, but each day brings us closer to identifying these "Unfortunates Forgotten".

As the Athens Cemetery completes its 163rd year as this community's premier memorial grounds, the Cemetery Association completes 100 years of care for this landmark. In an effort to stay relevant and up to date with our changing world, the association has created a website, www.athenstxcemetery.com. This tool, along with our other public relations, are meant to keep everyone up to date with the life of the cemetery.

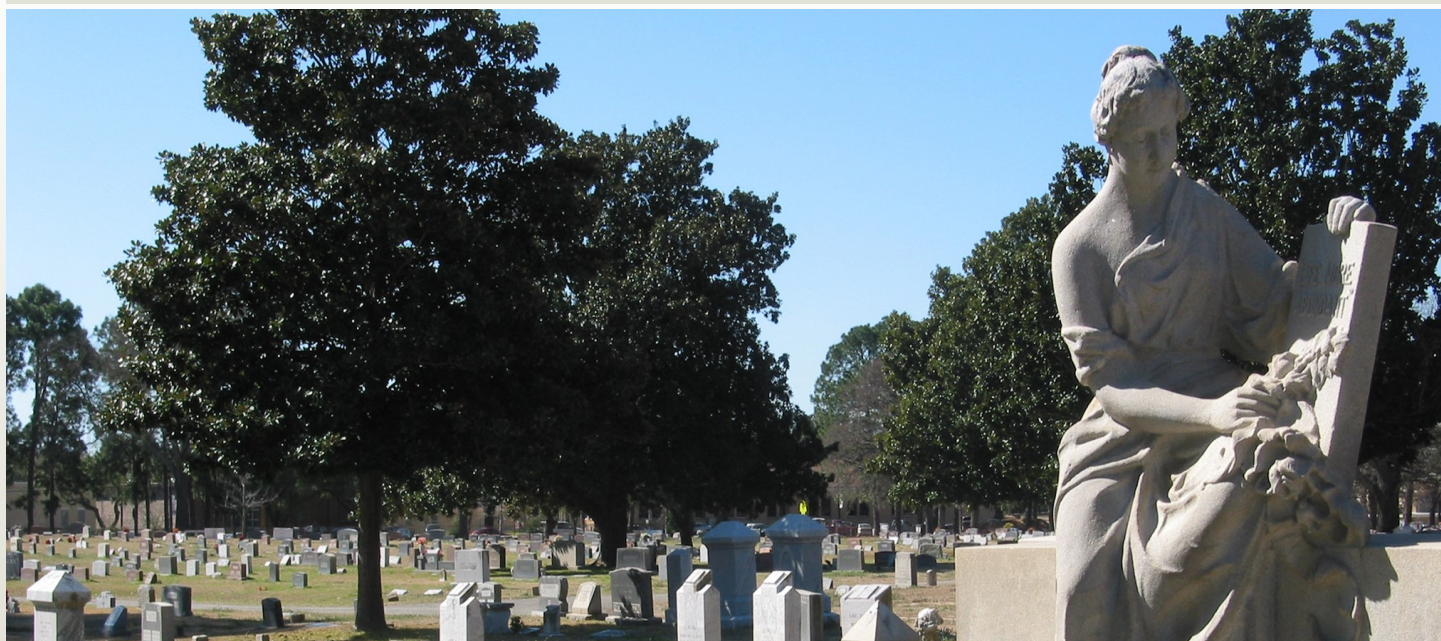
Operating as a nonprofit organization, the cemetery relies on the continued generosity of friends like you. Please help us continue our commitment of service and upkeep by considering a gift of your donation. Use the included slip and envelope to send in your check or use a credit card by going online to www.athenstxcemetery.com. Once there you will find a DONATE button at the bottom of every page.

We are also trying to update our contact list for all of our friends. Please send us your most current contact information. Include your mailing address, cell phone number and email address so that we can stay in touch with you. The enclosed slip may be used when you make your contribution by mail or you can email us this information to info@athenstxcemetery.com. If you know any one who would be interested in receiving these updates, please include them too.

The Athens Cemetery is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing the hallowed grounds of the Athens Cemetery and is committed to its preservation for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Board of the Athens Cemetery Association wants to express our deepest appreciation for your interest in the Athens Cemetery. Anyone who is interested in the preservation and improvement of the Athens Cemetery is encouraged to contact the Board. Everyone is welcome.

Monthly meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 108 South Pinkerton Street in Athens, Texas at 4:30 p.m.



SCENES FROM THE ATHENS CEMETERY



Perhaps you know that the Athens Cemetery has been designated a Historical Cemetery by the State of Texas. There is a marker designating this at the main entrance gate of the cemetery on South Prairieville Street.

There are nine state designated historical markers within its boundaries, one for the cemetery itself and others to honor eight notable individuals. These markers are on the graves of the following people who contributed to the growth and success of Athens and Henderson County: Mrs. Dulcinea Ann Holland Thompson Avriett, Clinton Williams "Clint" Murchison, Sr., Rupert Talmadge Craig, John Matthews McDonald and Joseph Thomas LaRue, Stella Parsons LaRue, Sid W. Richardson and Virginia L. "Ginger" Murchison.

The Board of the Athens Cemetery encourages you to visit these graves and markers on your next trip to the cemetery. You will indeed learn something you did not know about these pioneers and leaders of our city and county.



The hallowed grounds of the cemetery continue to be meticulously maintained and provide a special place of reverence, solitude and beauty.

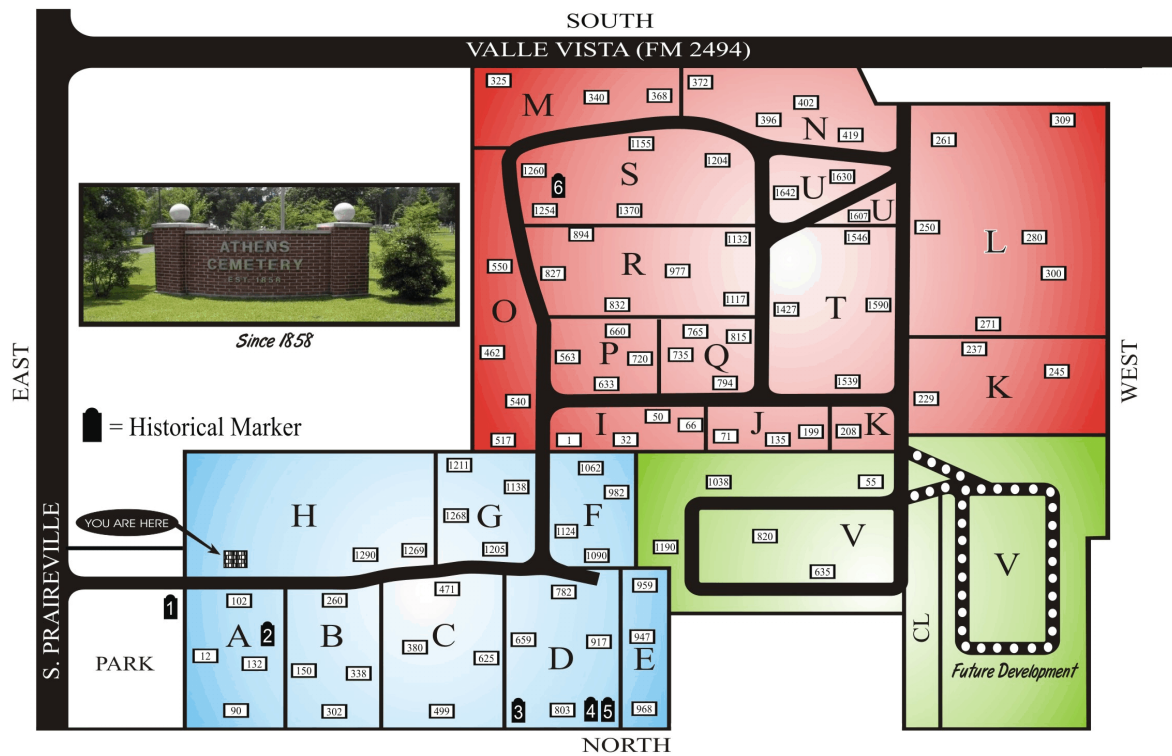
The general maintenance and upkeep of the grounds and monuments is conducted on an ongoing basis including additions of the veterans' names to the Veterans' Memorial and regular cleaning and removal of worn out flowers.

The Athens Cemetery would like to extend a special thanks to all our "Friends" who have supported the beautification of the cemetery.



4,000 spaces are available including cremation spaces columbarium niches. Call Cemetery Liaison, Bobby Glass, at (903)477-7281 or visit our website at www.athenstxcemetery.com for further information.

ATHENS CEMETERY



SPACE PRICES:

PRINCIPAL SECTION—

\$1,100.00

CELTIC CROSS SECTION—

\$1,450.00

MULTI-LOT FAMILY SECTION—

\$1,100 to \$1,450 per space (burial spaces sold in groups of 8 or more)

CREMATION BURIAL SECTION—

\$550.00

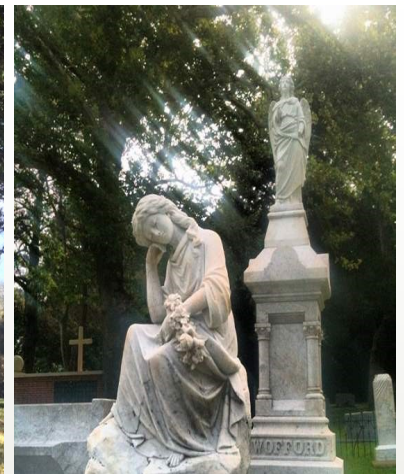
INTERMENT FEE—

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

COLUMBARIUM FEE—

\$1,600 (price is for 2 interments)

*Space Sales - If desired are available for a one (1) year payment plan with no interest.



HISTORICAL QUIOTE: Judge Faulk, a prominent historical figure in Henderson County, pinned the following quote in 1929 in the *History of Henderson County* in regards to the cemetery:

"Here can be seen the last resting place of practically all of the old pioneers who laid the foundation for this beautiful little city. It is too late to return thanks for them for the hardships and inconveniences they endured that we might enjoy the blessing and comfort which are ours now!"

Judge Faulk's words are as appropriate today as they were in 1929.

ANNUAL FINANCES

Annual budget needs for the maintenance and upkeep of the Athens Cemetery fall between \$60,000 and \$70,000 per year.

Funding of the cemetery is done through space and columbarium sales, interment fees and donations. Your gift does make a difference!

PLANNED GIVING

Originating in 1858, the Athens Cemetery has been generously supported through space sales, donations and other special gifts. Costs to operate the cemetery include tree trimming, weekly mowing and pick up, utilities, irrigation wells and system upkeep, insurance, automatic gate expenses and other updates.



Through tax and estate planning, many individuals have realized a tax advantage to their estate by donating a portion of their estate to charitable entities like the Athens Cemetery Association, Inc., a 501(c)(13) non-profit organization.

Donations made in this manner not only offer the potential to minimize federal estate taxes, but are of tremendous benefit to the maintenance and long term sustainability of the cemetery.

If interested, please consult your tax professional to see if this would be a benefit to you.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF THE ATHENS CEMETERY – DONATE TODAY!

BY PHONE TO OUR OFFICE—

Cemetery Office Voicemail

(903)386-3513

BY PHONE TO—

Bobby Glass

our Cemetery Liaison

(903)477-7281

BY EMAIL TO—

info@athenstxcemetery.com

ON OUR WEBSITE—

www.athenstxcemetery.com

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 upon lot sales, interments, donations and planned giving in order to operate. Costs to maintain the cemetery are ongoing and have continued to increase, but the challenge has been met 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.

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 remembrance for past and future generations.

Donations can be mailed to the Athens Cemetery Association at P. O. Box 1296, Athens, Texas 75751, or made online by credit card at www.athenstxcemetery.com. A donation button is located at the bottom of each page for your convenience. For additional information, please visit our website or email us at info@athenstxcemetery.com.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Our sincerest thanks to:

Mr. Carl Adams
Mr. John M. Adams
Mrs. William Ayers
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Babb
Mr. & Mrs. Jack Bailey
The Family of Melvin Bateman
Mrs. Ron Baugh
Ms. Gail Baum
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Mr. Martin Meredith
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Mr. Bill Ward
Ms. Mary Faye Ward
Ms. Lela S. Warren
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Mr. & Mrs. Sam Whitten
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Mr. & Mrs. Mike Wood
Ms. Mary Margaret Wright
Mr. Jesus Zanala

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