

A Legacy of Love:

# Friends of Hollywood Cemetery Celebrates 15th Anniversary this Fall

When David Gilliam started working at Hollywood Cemetery in 1985, the president of the company would send out an annual appeal letter to lot owners, to help build an endowment and cover the costs of projects. The letter generated about \$20,000 to \$40,000 each year.

"I knew that there were so many people with ties to the cemetery or just loved the place that there was the potential to realize more support for the cemetery if we expanded the effort, so I proposed Friends in 1988," said general manager David Gilliam.

The Hollywood Cemetery Company board voted down the idea. Some board members felt it unseemly for a cemetery to ask for money; others didn't want to compete with other local charities for support.

A master plan commissioned by the board in 2007 brought attention to the cemetery's dire needs. A total of \$7 million in repairs and restorative work was identified.

Mary Hoge Anderson served on the board at the time. "There was a lot of discussion then as to how we might restore and preserve the beautiful iron work fencing, sculptures, and monuments in the cemetery. With gravesites dating back to Hollywood's establishment in 1847, these items were not only historic, but many were in very sad condition," Anderson recalled.

"While the upkeep generally fell to families of the deceased, ties to the plots waned as families moved out of town, financial positions changed, and subsequent generations simply lost connection with the deceased," she said.

#### A renewed push for Friends

Following the master plan, several board members revived the effort to create Friends as a subsidiary of Hollywood Cemetery Company to solicit, receive, and administer donations for the benefit of the cemetery.

"The idea appealed to me because I had been concerned about the future of the cemetery," said Fielding Williams, who was then president of the board. "The cemetery had financial limitations as a business—it only had a set amount of land from which it could sell spaces to provide funds."

He learned from Peter Toms, a fellow director, that other great cemeteries had fundraising entities, and that struck him as something the board should investigate. Some board members were still resistant to the idea.

"It was at that point that the real heroes came in. It is my opinion that Friends of Hollywood Cemetery came into being because of the efforts of Peter Toms and Mary Hoge Anderson. They were able to persuade the Board to allow its creation," said Williams.

Toms says that Williams played a pivotal role. "He was very supportive. When the Friends opportunity reappeared in 2007, (continued on page 2)

Friends Anniversary

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Donors as of 10-31-23

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## **Anniversary** (continued)

he was one of the most vocal supporters."

This time, the board voted unanimously to support Friends. The organization began in 2007, with Anderson as the first chair and Toms and Williams the first directors.

#### The early years

The small group immediately got to work, creating the organization's mission statement as well as long- and short-term plans and budget. They opened a bank account, established a fundraising calendar and strategies, and created a list of potential donors. With legal support from former cemetery board president Matt Jenkins, the organization received its 501(c)(3) status in 2008, which allowed for tax-deductible donations.

In the fall of 2008, Friends officially opened. The board began to solicit its first gifts from individuals. Later, the organization hired a grant writer, Laurie Rogers, to solicit funds from foundations. One of the first major projects was the Presidents Circle renovation.



A restored Presidents Circle

"That was the thing that got the few foundations that we talked to in the beginning excited. A precious few cemeteries have U.S. presidents buried there, and we have two. We thought, 'Gosh this would be a good selling point'," Toms said. The reaction was immediate and positive.

"The early success of Friends is evidence of how important Hollywood Cemetery is to our community, not only as a sacred place but also as a place of history and beauty. The contributions to Friends flowed in to such an extent that it was too much for the cemetery staff to handle along with their Hollywood Cemetery company jobs," said Williams.

Kelly Wilbanks arrived as executive director in November 2010 and shortly thereafter, Nancy Rowe joined as development associate.

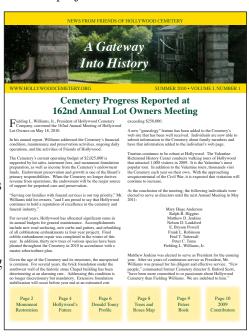
Wilbanks' hiring occurred in the same month that Friends received its first two gifts from foundations, each of \$100,000, to the Presidents Circle project.

"It was like a three-run homer: two exceptional grants and a gifted new development leader," said Toms, who took over as chair after Anderson resigned from the position in December 2013.

#### Growing community, spreading the word

Beyond an annual solicitation at Christmas, the cemetery did not have other communications to its lot owners and local community members. That changed with the creation of "A Gateway to History," the Friends of Hollywood Cemetery newsletter, which debuted in 2011. This year marks the 12th year of the biannual publication, which features cemetery news, articles of historic interest, and updates on Friends projects.

Toms designed and wrote the articles for the first newsletter, then Wilbanks ioined him. Several Hollywood Cemetery Board members and others began regularly contributing articles as well. Over the years, readers have learned about those buried at the cemetery including the mysterious Japanese businessman Tokukichiro Abe. artists Edward Virginius Valentine and Adele Williams,



The first issue of "Gateway to History" (Summer, 2010)

and Titanic survivor Robert Williams Daniel. They've discovered cradle graves, the Great Evacuation Fire of 1865, and the old Hollywood greenhouse, and met the first female members of the cemetery's board, rose expert Connie Hilker, and the Van Yahres family, who care for Hollywood's trees. Readers have followed the story of two missing cemetery ledgers from the early days of (continued on page 3)

## Anniversary (continued)

the cemetery, which reappeared within the same month.

"I thought if the only time people are hearing from the cemetery is solicitations for money, people are bound to be wondering, 'Well why? Why is this important for me to think about?" Toms said. "The newsletter has created a linkage that didn't exist before.

#### **Celebrating accomplishments**

By Winter 2012, contributions had increased threefold. Ted Farley, who joined the Friend's Board in 2011, was elected the second Chairman in 2018, and has served in that capacity ever since.

"Ted brought with him much needed fundraising experience, connections, and passion, and transformed Friend's focus and strategy for cultivating donors," said Anderson.

Two areas of growth under Farley's leadership are planned giving and individual donations through the creation of the 1847 Society. In 2008, its first year, Friends raised \$32,367 from individual donors; in 2022, that number had grown to \$314,898. To date, the non-profit organization has raised over \$5.28 million to support projects including the restoration of Presidents Circle, wrought iron fences and monuments in all 44 sections of the

cemetery, and the Tiffany windows in the Lewis Ginter mausoleum; digitizing the Minutes of Board meetings; establishing a genealogical repository and tree management software; and creating the fountain garden in the Glade and the three overlooks above the James River.

"We began promoting Hollywood as an open-air museum and as a significant green space in the city of Richmond for the use of the community. We sought and received accreditation as a level one arboretum, and we're now currently promoting the natural treasures of the James River and the many species of birds in Hollywood," said Farley.

Another important task is maintaining a strong board, said Farley. "Fortunately, we have an impressive group of younger members who will take the board forward and continue its positive momentum."

This year, Toms and Farley will be retiring from the board this December after many years of dedication.

"Together, Peter and Ted have contributed 28 years of service to Friends of Hollywood. They have spent countless hours attending monthly meetings, creating newsletters, signing letters, putting donor lists together, and working out plans to best build this organization," said Wilbanks.

"Friends was fortunate to have from its very beginning the dedication and support of leaders such as Mary Hoge, Fielding, Peter, and Ted, along with the time and talents of many others. We would not be where we are today without them."

## Friends of Hollywood Cemetery Board of Directors

Mary Hoge Anderson	2007-2013
Peter C. Toms	2007-2023
Fielding L. Williams, Jr.	2007-2013
Frank L. Robinson	2008-2010
Edward M. Farley IV	2011-2023
William R. Claiborne	2012-2024
Mary Lynn Bayliss	2012-2024
Joseph R. Herbert	2013-2025
Elizabeth R. Cronly	2014-2025
Elizabeth W. Talley	2014-2025
J. Mason New	2020-
J. P. McGuire Boyd, Jr.	2022-
Robley D. Bates, IV	2023-



The newly created Glade at the entrance to Hollywood

## **Digital Guide:**

## Hollywood Cemetery's Natural Treasures

Visitors encounter all kinds of flora and fauna throughout Hollywood Cemetery's 135 acres. Now, a series of online guides will help them identify the species of bird that just landed on a nearby branch or the name of the massive tree that just turned bright for fall.

Under the "Visit" tab, the cemetery's website now includes the "Natural Treasure Guides," developed in collaboration with the Riverine Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists, a community-based natural resources volunteer program that helps Virginia conserve and manage natural resources and public lands.

"We think this is a wonderful resource for our visitors and think it will draw even more birders and others who love nature to Hollywood Cemetery," said Kelly Wilbanks, executive director of Friends of Hollywood Cemetery. "We are grateful to all those who generously donated their time and talents to this project."

Master Naturalist Pixie Hamilton had the idea for the project three years ago. "Hollywood is one of my favorite places in Richmond. I'm one of those people who visits the cemetery all the time, whether it's to walk or just sit by the river. It's such a mecca for beautiful trees, birds and other wildlife," Hamilton said.

#### 100 Birds

More than 100 different species of birds can be seen over the course of a year at the cemetery, making it one of Richmond's "hot spots" supported by The Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In the new "Birder's Guide to Hollywood Cemetery," visitors can find photos of individual birds with a description and fun facts about each. There's also a link to Cornell's Merlin Easy Bird ID app, which provides real-time suggestions for identification by bird sounds or photographs.

On her visits, Hamilton enjoys seeing the variety of birds, including eagles, osprey, and a Great Horned Owl. One of her favorite experiences was watching the owl raise its young this year.

#### **A Special Siting**

Hamilton said the guide project had gotten delayed, due to Covid. But she made a push to get the guides going following a trip to the cemetery in February this year, when she saw a striking bird not normally seen that time of year. The bird had an orange breast, black hood, and glossy black wings.

"It was a Baltimore Oriole, and he just sat there in the maple tree right by President's Circle, and I just sat there with him, for probably 20-25 minutes," she said. "When this brilliant bird was just sitting there showing off for me this long, it said to me, 'You have to make more people know about this."



A recent siting of a Baltimore Oriole Photograph by Patricia G. Davis

#### Open invitation for wildlife photos:

Let us know about a special bird, butterfly, buck, or other wildlife you may see. Your input (including photos) can be sent to pahamilt@gmail.com. To ensure the cataloging of birds at the cemetery is as complete as possible, birders are also encouraged to add their sightings to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, found at ebird.org.

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## Treasure Guides (continued)

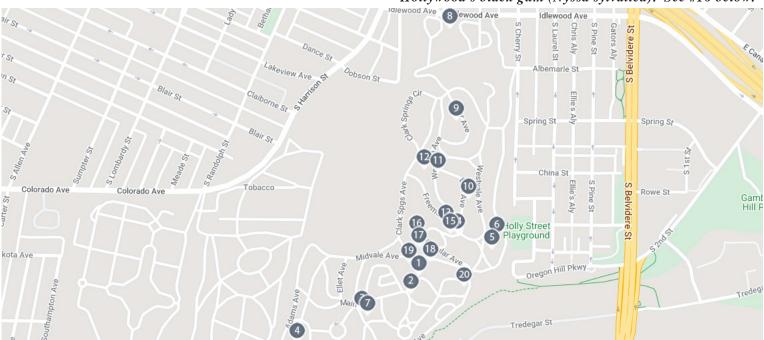
Longtime Hollywood photographer Bill Draper provided most of the photographs for the site. Photographs by Will Bagby, Patricia Davis, Cindy Haddon, and Parks Rountrey are also included.

#### **2500 Trees**

The cemetery is a registered arboretum and home to approximately 2,500 trees, including the old and majestic hollies for which it was named. "The Trees of Hollywood" guide introduces visitors to some of the specimens and provides a location tool to 20 notables. At the corner of Hillside and Waterview Avenues, for instance, is a tulip poplar that is the largest tree in the cemetery. Arguably, the black gum is the most beautiful. It is featured in "Remarkable Trees of Virginia" (2008).



Hollywood's black gum (Nyssa sylvatica). See #16 below.



The Treasure Guides contain a location finder for each of the 20 most notable trees in the cemetery.

#### **Natural Wonder**

The "James River Geology and Hydrology" guide introduces visitors to the geological history and interesting facts about the James River. According to the guide, the James River has been flowing through this area for about 2 million years. Hollywood Cemetery's dramatic bluffs mark Richmond's highest spot along the riverbed.

The James's watershed drains over 10,000 square miles, roughly 25% of Virginia's land surface.

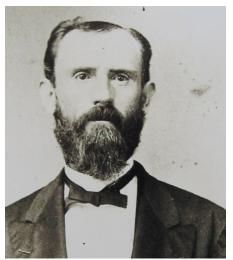
From it headwaters in Botetourt County, it flows uninterrupted 340 miles to the Chesapeake Bay. It is the longest of Virginia's rivers wholly contained within the state.

The river's meandering appearance as well as its rate of flow change dramatically as it nears Hollywood and downtown Richmond. We attempt to explain this remarkable transition with photographs and illustrations on page 9.

(continued on page 9)

## The Philosophy of Jennie & William Hatcher

Preacher, writer, educator - exclaimed: "Look out old folks! Old trees do not make a forest. They are not vital unless they keep green and drop their acorns for growing new trees. But there is nothing finer than a fresh, sound, fruitful old tree. Young trees look up to and honor an old tree like that!" William and Jennie Hatcher were "old trees" yet fresh and fruitful.



William E. Hatcher 1834-1912

William Hatcher was considered "the greatest platform speaker in America." Like Mark Twain, he was skilled in recognizing humor in almost any situation and using it to his advantage. Once in a church a man suddenly began to mournfully sing a hymn not on the program. Hatcher

tried to save the occasion by joining in on the next stanza; but the congregation sat, silent and mortified. Finally, someone informed Hatcher that the impromptu singer was drunk! Hatcher quickly retorted: "I didn't know that you employed drunkards to do your singing!" The crowd roared with laughter. Another time he was speaking before an interdenominational group in Washington; and out of the corner of his eye, he saw the timekeeper with his hand poised to ring the bell. With a flourish, Hatcher pointed his finger and said: "Ring that bell if you dare, but only at the risk of your life!" Again, "the roar of laughter shook the house."

#### **Pastor of four Churches**

Hatcher was in constant demand by churches, denominational organizations, colleges and civic groups. Across his ministerial career, he was pastor of four churches: Manchester (later called Bainbridge St. Church) in "Dog Town"; Franklin Square in Baltimore; First Baptist in Petersburg; and Grace Street Baptist in Richmond for 26 years. Grace was located at the northeast corner of Grace and Foushee. He led the congregation to build a large new building at the same site which was dedicated in 1894. Two years later, it was destroyed by fire. Again, he led them to rebuild at the same location. (Today, Grace is located in Windsor Farms.) For 25 years, Hatcher led the "Boys' Meeting;" and on Saturdays, throngs of boys from across the city would descend on Grace for lively and productive programs.

William Hatcher was born "beneath the shadow of the "Peaks of Otter" in Bedford County and never forgot his country roots. He declared that the Peaks looked so blue and so high that he thought he could climb to Heaven on them. "In time I saw the blue, burning mountains of Mexico, the weird mountains of Scotland, the Alps with their peaks, glaciers and cascades; but not one, nor all together, could ever supplant the great mountain of my boyhood wonder."

#### **Richmond College**

Jeremiah Bell Jeter, a cousin, encouraged William's father to enroll his sons, William and Harvey, into Richmond College. It opened a new world to the country fellows. William led revivals at the college; and Dr. Robert Ryland, president of the college as well as pastor of First African Baptist Church, often sent students to try themselves before his congregation. "The way in which I tried the people," Hatcher recalled, "effectively cut off any further practice on my part." Hatcher had a student pastorate across the James River at Manchester Baptist Church and there he remained from 1858-67. It was mainly a congregation of factory workers; and he soon learned of their poor working conditions. Under the pseudonym of "Miss Struggle", Hatcher wrote letters to the editor of a Richmond newspaper, telling the plight of the workers. Everyone tried to guess with no success the identity of "Miss Struggle". In time, there were some improvements in the factories.

(continued on page 7)

## Hatcher (continued)



Jennie Snead Hatcher 1843-1925

#### **A Christmas Wedding**

At Christmas 1864, William married Oranie Virginia "Jennie" Snead of Fork Union in Fluvanna County. Jennie studied at the Albemarle Female Institute in Charlottesville, which for women was the academic equivalent of the allmale University of Virginia. One of her

classmates was Lottie Moon who became a celebrated missionary to China and visited the Hatchers on a furlough. From 1887-92, Jennie served as president of the Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia. During their years at Grace St. Church, Jennie taught music which enabled the Hatchers to purchase a home at 608 W. Grace St., halfway between the church and the college. She was an accomplished writer and penned most of the biography of the Rev. A.B. Brown, a noted minister and professor, although the title page also carried her husband's name to help book sales. She also compiled a cookbook published by Grace St. Church. In 1894, she returned from a European tour with daughter Orie and immediately began writing a family history, *The Sneads of Fluvanna*.

#### **Fall of Richmond**

While at Manchester the Hatchers witnessed the fall of Richmond in April 1865 with the mass exodus, the burning of much of the commercial and factory areas, and the utter chaos which followed. William rowed across the James and secured the aid of Federal troops to restore law and order in Manchester. From their porch, William and Jennie watched as thousands of Union soldiers marched through Richmond following Appomattox.

William and Jennie became parents of nine children: Eldridge Burwell; Virginia Mabel; Orie Latham; Katherine Jeter (DeMott); David Steel; Elisabeth Herndon (Sadler); Edith Logwood (Harcum); and twins, Brantly and Elsie McDaniel. Orie went to Vassar, earned a doctorate in English literature from the University of Chicago, and helped form the Richmond School of Social Work and Public Health (a forerunner of VCU). Edith founded Harcum College at Bryn Mawr. Eldridge became a minister and school administrator. He also wrote a biography of his father. (All of the Hatcher children except Katherine are buried in Hollywood.)

#### **Prolific Writer**

William Hatcher was a prolific writer and authored several books including his autobiography entitled *Along the Trail of the Friendly Years*, and a biography of his cousin, the nationally-known preacher Jeremiah Bell Jeter. In 1908 Hatcher's biography of John Jasper introduced the African American preacher to the nation. While at Grace, Hatcher would walk with his deacons from their church through "Apostle Town", a corner of Jackson Ward, and together they would attend worship services in Jasper's church, Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church.

Hatcher made one European tour in which he made the friendship of the greatest preacher of the times, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who even invited the visiting American to share his pulpit. Hatcher also toured Spurgeon's orphanage which sparked an idea; and upon returning home, he helped in founding the Virginia Baptist Orphanage at Salem (now named HopeTree) and served as president of its trustees.

#### **Founded Academy**

Upon retiring from Grace, William and Jennie moved to

Fork Union where they had built a summer house which they called Careby Hall after the ancestral home of the Hatchers in England. Retirement



Hatcher Hall is the main administrative building on the campus of Fork Union Military Academy.

was busy for William who in 1898 founded a school which became known as Fork Union Military Academy.

(continued on page 8)

## Hatcher (continued)

Today it is one of the finest schools of its kind in the nation and Careby Hall is the home of the Academy's president.

Around 1900, a 14-year-old Chinese boy, Ah Fong Yeung, suddenly arrived in Fork Union. He had been sent to America by a Baptist missionary in China with the intention of enrolling him at Richmond College. Ah Fong was not ready for college so he was enrolled in Hatcher's Academy and lived with the Hatchers at Careby Hall. In time, he graduated from Richmond College and from Columbia University, returned to China and opened a school modeled after Fork Union Academy.

Hatcher remained loyal to his alma mater, serving as a trustee of Richmond College for 42 years and as president of the Board of Trustees from 1897-1908. He was influential in the election of the then 26-yearold Dr. Frederic W. Boatwright as president; and when Boatwright began promoting a relocation of the college from downtown to the far west end with a new separate college for women, Westhampton, it was Hatcher who persuaded his fellow trustees to adopt the president's plans.

At what was considered the advanced age of 78, Hatcher was still constantly traveling via trains to speak, preach, and raise funds for the Academy. He remained in constant demand as a speaker and literally wore himself out. He died of a stroke on August 24, 1912, at Careby Hall. While the family was preparing for burial at Fork Union, a delegation of deacons from Grace St. Church insisted that his remains should be interred in Hollywood in a lot provided by the church. "They declared," wrote his son, "that Dr. Hatcher belonged to Virginia and his grave ought to be in the Capital city of the state." He was laid

to rest in the section known as the Lawn, not far from the overlook to the James. In nearby lots are buried several fellow ministers who were contemporaries and friends of Hatcher. Jennie Snead Hatcher died in 1925 and was buried beside her husband.

In a sermon, William Hatcher once said: "Everyone must be their own monument builder." While Jennie and William left behind numerous "monuments," in time, an impressive stone monument was raised on the Hatcher lot in Hollywood; and two Virginia churches chose to carry his name: Hatcher Memorial Baptist Church in Richmond and Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church in Prince William County.



Section Lawn, Lot 55

Over the course of 40 years, Fred Anderson, the author of this story, portrayed Dr. Hatcher for churches and civic groups on 444 occasions. The Hatcher family lot is easy to find. From the front of the Jefferson Davis statue walk forward taking the path on the left and it is straight ahead. Interestingly, nearly everyone mentioned in this article is buried in Hollywood. Cousin Jeter is on Jeter Avenue and Drs. Ryland, Brown and Boatwright are in the Richmond College lot.

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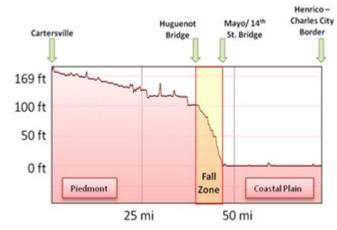
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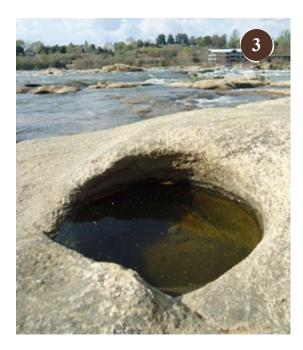
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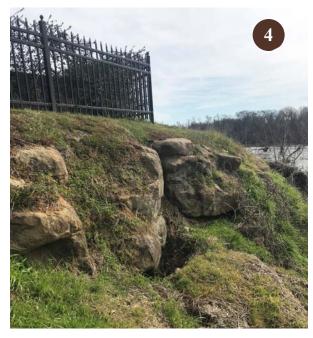
The "Fall Zone" is a band of igneous rock running from north to south along much of the eastern seaboard. It is estimated to be 300+ million years old, created by intense volcanic and seismic activity when the North American and African continents collided. The Fall Zone passes through/under Richmond, and is approximately 7 miles wide. It consists in part of "Petersburg" granite (a very stable rock formed from cooling magma). Granite from the Fall Zone at Richmond has been quarried (many quarries are visible today on riverside pathways) and used in numerous Hollywood monuments (e.g. the Pyramid and the Chapel) as well as city structures, including many cobblestone streets.



This graph illustrates the dramatic descent of the James River as it passes under the Huguenot Bridge in the west and courses toward Hollywood Cemetery and downtown Richmond. The final miles in which the descent is most dramatic are denoted as the Fall Zone in the graph (the same Fall Zone depicted in the illustration to the left). A significant portion of this zone (containing the challenging Hollywood Rapids) runs directly below the cemetery's bluffs and can be observed from numerous vantage points.



The granite riverbed of the James deserves a closer look. For two million years, flowing water containing abrasive particles (e.g. primarily sand) has been wearing the upper layers of granite away, leaving the river valley that we observe today. Notice the smoothed and rounded granite surfaces. Cracks, crannies, fissures, grooves, and potholes are evidence of the amazing effect of continually flowing water. And the process continues. See Hollywood on the bluff across the river in the background.



One of the largest granite deposits evident today in the cemetery is visible on the western side of the Palmer Mausoleum. This rough outcropping is evidence of the Fall Zone's existence. It is what remains of an ancient river bank and, today, is the northern edge of the James River valley below. Indeed, the Mausoleum's foundation is "solid as a rock."

## 2023 Contributors to **Friends of Hollywood Cemetery**

We are indeed grateful to the following donors for their generous support of Friends through October 31, 2023. You have enabled us to raise awareness of Hollywood and to continue vital monument and fence restoration. Thank you for helping us to preserve Hollywood Cemetery for generations to come.



Edward M. Farley, IV Chair, Friends of Hollywood Cemetery

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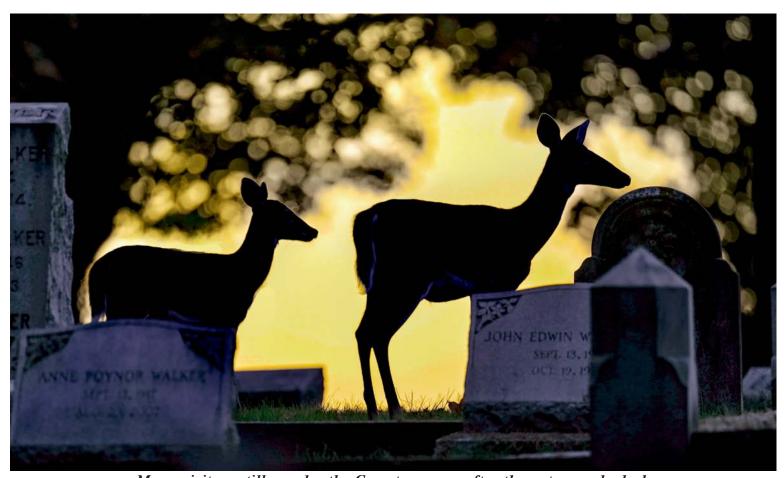
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