



WWW.HOLLYWOODCEMETERY.ORG

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*Most Frequently Visited***Soldiers Section Experiences Remarkable Comeback**

When David Gilliam started at Hollywood Cemetery in 1985 he found the Soldiers Section in disrepair with monuments strewn around and a large storm drainage area running through.

At the time, only one placard existed that explained how soldiers who died during the Battle of Gettysburg were relocated to Hollywood in the years following the war. Just under 3,000 remains were returned, all interred in an area known as Gettysburg Hill.

That's just part of the story for the 6.5-acre parcel, known as the Soldiers Section, the final resting place for more than 12,000 Civil War casualties known as the biggest drawing card for the cemetery sometimes referred to as the "Arlington of the South". According to Civil War historian Chris Ferguson, the Soldiers Section attracts more visitors than the graves of former Presidents John Tyler and James Monroe, President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis, and 25 Confederate generals. "The Soldiers Section tells the story of the Civil War with men from all states buried there," he said. "People come to better understand their Confederate legacy and where these men are buried."

**Ladies Association steps up**

The Hollywood Ladies Memorial Society initially purchased land adjacent to the cemetery grounds to

bury southern soldiers. Never intended to be a war cemetery, Hollywood was not in a position to bury men killed in action, but it helped with burials, charging \$1 for each, putting to rest as many as 100 per day at one point with bodies coming from battlefields and Richmond landmarks that served as hospitals, Gilliam said.

In 1866, hundreds of fallen soldiers were reinterred there from graves on the outskirts of town. Hollywood asked for farmers' help locating the sites of any former Confederates buried on their land during the war.



*A photograph by Matthew Brady (ca. 1865) of Richmond's Oakwood Cemetery, a scene similar to one that might have been observed in the Soldiers Section at the same time – hastily placed wooden markers.*

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Donors  
as of 10-31-24

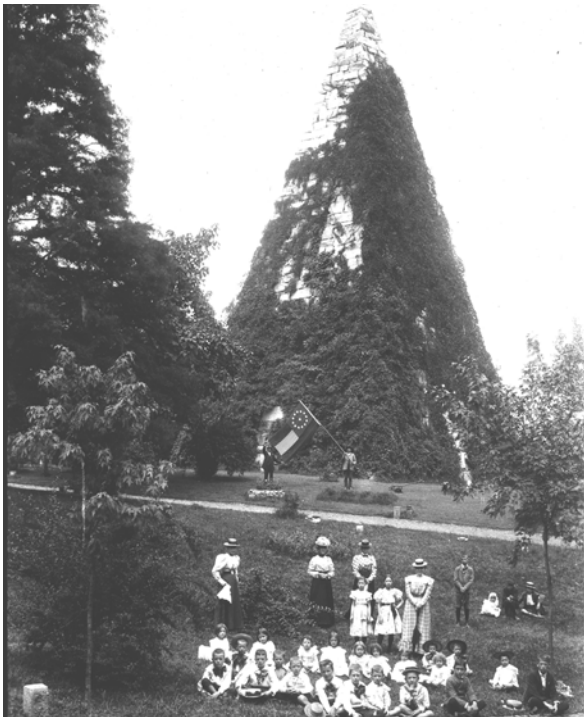
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## ***Soldiers Section (continued)***

“Most local farmers, wishing to plow and plant as much of their acreage as possible, were eager to cooperate,” according to Ladies of Richmond, Confederate Capital, a book by Katharine Jones.

### **Fundraising and the Pyramid**

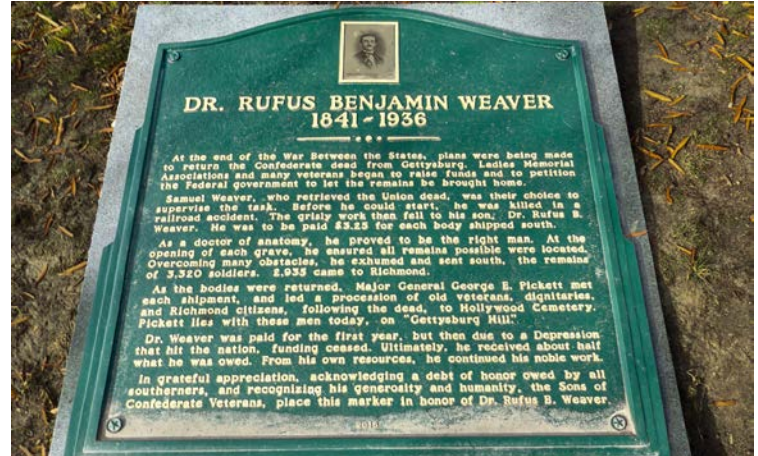
Soon thereafter the Hollywood Memorial Association held a series of fundraisers to construct a memorial for the site. Events included a lecture series featuring local notables as well as the New York and Philadelphia lawyers who served as counsel to Jefferson Davis during his trial for treason, six productions, and a 17-day bazaar selling war memorabilia and other goods. The association chose a design for the memorial submitted by Charles Dimmock, a lawyer who worked in Richmond after the war as an architect and engineer. His 90-foot pyramid, constructed of large blocks of James River granite and covered in evergreen vines, resides on the hill that overlooks the section. Latin inscriptions on two sides, when read together, translate to “in eternal memory of those who stood for God and country.”



***A late 1890's photograph of the Pyramid (covered with vines) taken during a Hollywood Memorial Day Celebration.***

When the Ladies Memorial Association made the decision to extend its wartime burial efforts in their Hollywood land and to reinter Virginians and other southern fallen from the Battle of Gettysburg,

an unsung hero emerged. The Association made contractual arrangements with Dr. Rufus Weaver, a physician from Philadelphia knowledgeable of the battlefield and location of most of the hastily dug, southern graves. Weaver undertook to exhumate and identify the remains where possible and to ship them in carefully labelled boxes to Richmond – the first arriving at Rocketts Landing in June, 1872. The final shipment occurred in October, 1873. Post war Association funds being in extremely short supply, Dr. Weaver was never fully paid for his services.



***A plaque in the Soldiers Section honoring the dedication and service of Dr. Rufus Weaver***

*Courtesy of Bill Draper Photography*

For years, the Soldiers Section played a significant role in celebrations, including Memorial Day ceremonies.

However, the more distant the war, the more waning was attention to maintenance and upkeep. Because Hollywood isn't a national cemetery, no government funding was available. “So for decades the Soldiers’ Section simply existed as an interesting addendum to the greater Hollywood story,” said Peter Toms, former Friends of Hollywood chair.

### **New enthusiasm**

When the last member of the Ladies Memorial Society passed away in the early 1990s, Hollywood Cemetery was deeded the land, and Gilliam made it a priority to improve its condition. “Cemetery management at the time considered the maintenance of the section something they would get to if and when time allowed,” he said. “My position on this section was quite different. I felt the section needed much more attention and began plans for improvement.”

*(continued on page 3)*



## ***Soldiers Section (continued)***

## **Identification continues**

Hollywood rectified the storm drainage issue and had numerous monuments reset in their proper places. The area was also brought into the cemetery's routine mowing and maintenance.

As the interest in the Civil War grew, fueled in part by a number of TV specials and documentaries, soldiers' descendants became interested in marking the graves of their relatives, a project funded by the federal government. "So over the years a huge number of government markers were ordered by families and the delivery and setting of the stones was performed by Hollywood Cemetery," Gilliam said.

Confederate markers are upright and pointed like arrows to keep people from sitting on them, especially those with Northern interests, while those for Union soldiers are rounded, Ferguson said. The stones document the soldier's name, rank, company, regiment and dates of birth and death. Burial ledgers discovered in recent years have helped identify soldiers.

Efforts are ongoing to mark the graves of Civil War veterans who lived in the Lee Camp Soldiers' Home near the intersection of what's now Arthur Ashe Boulevard and Grove Avenue. "It's not a change to the grounds but a new emphasis to understand their lives with more access to information about these men," said Ferguson who has written two books on the Confederate dead, the most recent *Southerners at Rest*.

Another addition to the Soldiers Section has been the reinterment of General George E. Pickett's third wife, LaSalle Corbell Pickett, from Arlington National Cemetery's Abbey Mausoleum, in 1998. When she died in 1931 the burial of women was not allowed in the Soldiers Section. When the mausoleum in Arlington was demolished due to its poor condition, Sallie Pickett's remains had to be relocated, and the cemetery's board approved the reinterment.

"Today, Hollywood continues to receive monuments to the Confederate dead and maintains that section to the same high standards as everywhere else on the cemetery grounds," Gilliam said.



***Granite monuments now cover the hills of the Soldiers Section***  
***Courtesy of Bill Draper Photography***

## *Angels of Hollywood Provide Protection and Peace*

Through the winding, bucolic roads and paths of Hollywood Cemetery, dogs, crosses and other statuary can be found at every turn. Perhaps none so aptly capture the history and emotion of the sacred grounds than the 30-some angels scattered throughout.

Fabric folds, flowing hair, lifelike limbs and feathered wings belie their cold hardness, most carved from marble. All seem vigilant, offering steadfast protection for souls that have gone before.

Some weep. Some are missing hands or feet, broken off after decades, and in some cases centuries, of weather and wear. Many grip anchors, wreaths, perennials, symbolizing connection to Christ, victory over death, eternal life, respectively. Two adorn the Ginter Mausoleum's Tiffany windows. (Section 24, Lot 30)

Some look serene while others cry or bow their heads. Many convey sadness, particularly expressed through their eyes, some downcast, others looking outward. One gray beauty adorns the cover of Mary Mitchell's book: "Hollywood Cemetery: The History of a Southern Shrine."

A regal Rueger family angel stands out as one cast in bronze, the largest heavenly being in Hollywood. Its seven-foot wingspan offers a sharp contrast to two small cherubs that hold back the veil of death for Theresa Rogers who died in 1855. (Secton B, Lot 96)

Gabriel (Section C, Lot 97), the only male angel in the cemetery, stands in the shadows of a Haxall Avenue magnolia.

An angel of grief adorns the grave of Jefferson Davis's spinster daughter Varina, recorded to have died from complications from malaria, rumored to have died of a broken heart when her mother and a letter writing campaign blocked her marriage to a Yankee. Varina's larger-than-life angel is adjacent to the larger-than-life statue of her father, both commissioned to the same sculptor, both with panoramic views of the James River.

The Brown family section, two plots down from Jeb

Stuart's grave, is home to one of Hollywood's most detailed angels. She drops roses, a sign of sudden death, and her style, like others from the second half of the nineteenth century, is ornate. Hollywood tour guide and Find-a-grave volunteer Bob Olsen notes that soon thereafter, statutory styles changed with machines doing carvings that were not as deep or detailed as those done by hand.

Olsen's favorite angel, often overlooked, is the centerpiece of a Tiffany-style stained glass window in the Cooper Mausoleum across from Jefferson Davis Circle. "All the other windows are just angels, while it has the angel overlooking the two children," he said. "It gives it more depth. It's more positive."

The grave of St. Catherine's School founder Virginia Randolph Ellett is adorned with an art deco trumpeted marble angel, identical to a gold one installed above the skating rink in New York City's Rockefeller Center, Olsen said. The core of the complex was completed in 1939, the same year of Ellett's death.

Meanwhile a modern Angel of Hope (Idlewood, Lot 188) stands in the Idlewood Section where a candlelight vigil is held every December 6th at 6:00 pm to honor children who died too young.

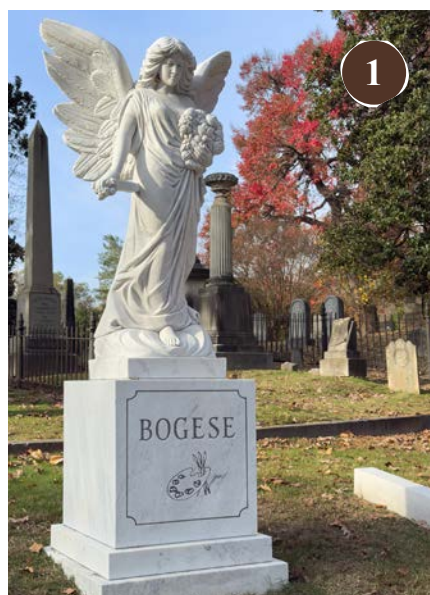
A.P. Grappone & Sons, Richmond's long-time monument maker, said several angels are currently on order from Italy.

The most recent one Grappone installed was for Jessica Bogese who died in 2021. Bogese's mother said her daughter, brain damaged at birth, blossomed through her 42 years as an artist and loving person remembered for her radiant smile. The angel stands 5'2", the same height as Bogese's daughter. "The angel reflects Jessie's pure and innocent spirit," she said. "I think it's protecting her and telling her how special she is and how loved she is." Bogese's angel holds flowers and is inscripted with an artist palette and quote from F. Scott Fitzgerald: "It was only a sunny smile, and little it cost in the giving, but like morning light it scattered the night and made the day worth living."

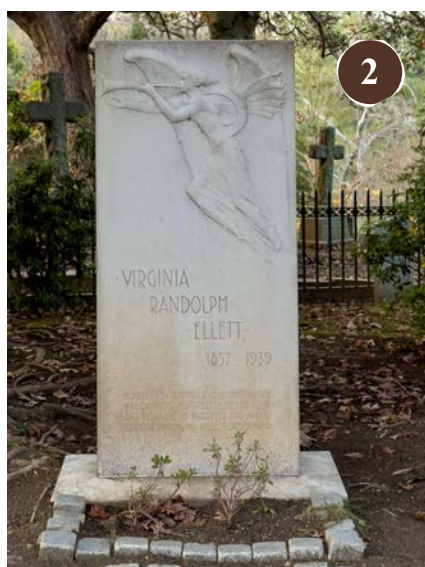
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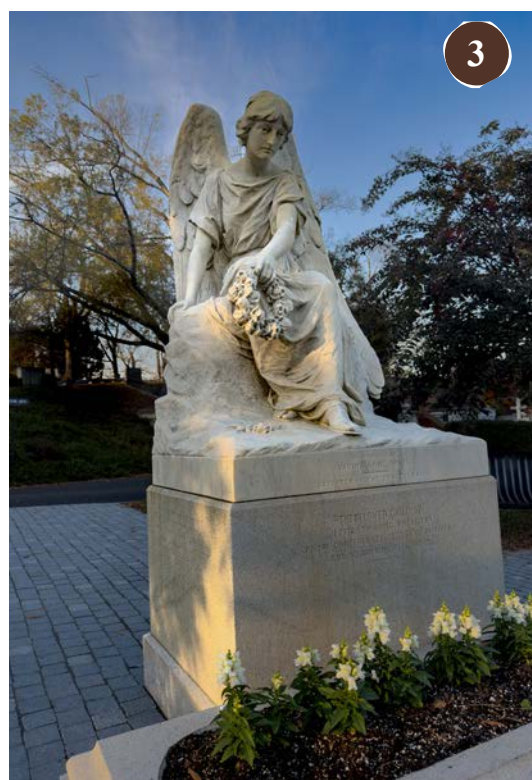
## Angels (continued)



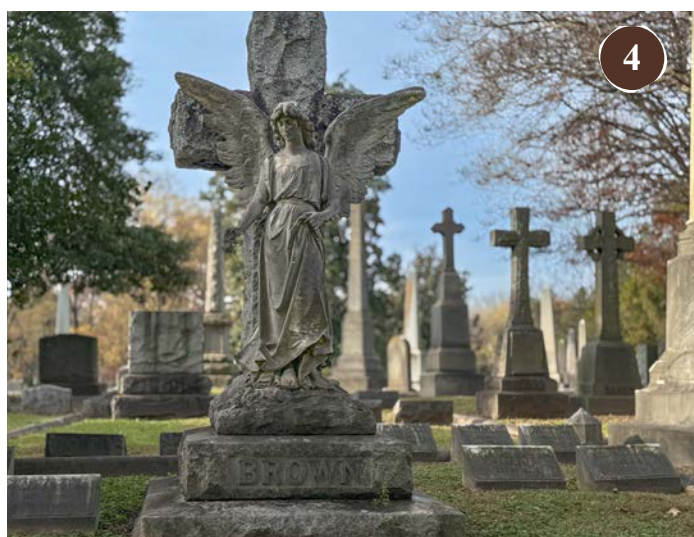
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4



5



6

1. the Bogese angel (section H – lot 11); 2. Virginia Ellett monument (section L – lot 38); 3. Varina Davis (Davis Circle); 4. the Brown family angel (section DE; lot 10); 5. the Rueger family angel (section 6; lots 22 and 24); and 6. the Cooper Mausoleum angel (section 23; lot 133)

Courtesy of Bill Draper Photography



## *Extraordinary Visionary of the University of Richmond*

At age 16, George Matthews Modlin of Elizabeth City, NC, told his parents that he had decided to be a plumber. But his parents guided him to enroll in Wake Forest College. Modlin made the basketball team; and in his senior year, they played at the University of Richmond. It was in January 1924

and the Wake Forest player spent the night in Jeter Hall, ate at the Refectory and played in Millhiser Gymnasium. One of the UR players deliberately tripped him; and as far as Modlin was concerned, he thought



*George Matthews Modlin*

that was the last time he would be on the Richmond campus.

After Wake Forest, he entered Princeton University where he pursued a doctorate and also taught economics. It was while at Princeton that one summer on vacation at Virginia Beach, he met Virginia Pendleton Brinkley of Norfolk. They married in 1928; and throughout their long marriage, Virginia Beach was their favorite vacation destination.

### **An historic meeting**

In 1938, someone mentioned Modlin as a possibility for the deanship of UR's School of Business. UR President Frederic W. Boatwright went to Princeton on the train to interview the young professor. As Dr. Modlin once recalled, "The Richmond car was always the last car and this tall, stately gentleman got off and I went down to meet him. That was the first time I had ever seen Dr. Boatwright and we had a very pleasant day together." That was the beginning of a relationship unique in the

annals of American academe.

As the new dean of the Evening School of the School of Business, George Modlin indeed made his second visit to the UR campus along with his wife. He discovered that the Spider basketball player who tripped him was now a professor but the two became friends. He met Dr. Samuel Chiles Mitchell, the legendary professor of history; and Mitchell pointed out one of the large trees, saying; "Modlin, see that pine tree. Tomorrow I want you to get a hatchet and put your initials on that tree because I want you to stay here."

As a dean, Modlin worked closely with Boatwright; but he had no inkling that there might be a future position for him at UR. In June 1946, the Modlins were on vacation in New York when a telephone call set the course for the rest of his life. Douglas Southall Freeman, rector of the University, telephoned to tell Modlin that Boatwright had just resigned after 52 years as president and that he should return immediately to Richmond. Modlin had no idea why his presence was so urgent.

### **A new President**

He took the night train back home; and the next day Charles Wheeler, treasurer of UR, telephoned to say, "Mr. President, come over to the Country Club of Virginia, the trustees are going to have a luncheon for you." Within two hours of Boatwright's resignation, the Board had chosen Modlin much to his surprise.

As Dr. Modlin remembered: "It was amusing that the first edition of the afternoon paper [the Richmond News Leader] came out with Dr. Boatwright's resignation and the final edition came out with the new president. That was rather rare and would be impossible these days."

Modlin was a worthy successor. He continued to consult Boatwright, then chancellor, and moved ahead with Boatwright's plans for several buildings including a large new library, fine arts, business school and law school facilities. Following the Second World War, there was an influx of new students and quickly an expanded faculty

*(continued on page 7)*

## Modlin (continued)



*Virginia Modlin*

had to be recruited.

Virginia Modlin became an ideal president's wife. She turned their campus home into a center of social engagements and assisted in creating the Faculty Wives Club. She also devoted time and work to the American Red Cross.

In 1946, the resources of UR were \$7 million, equally divided between facilities and endowment. At a trustees' meeting in 1968, Modlin assumed a professorial role and, using a chalkboard, taught an economics lesson to his trustees. He placed figures and plans on the board outlining various possibilities for the future of UR which included maintaining the status quo with limited options for enlargement, a possible merger with a state institution, or a course of action which would propel the University into one of the stronger small private schools in America. The latter would take a large infusion of financial resources.

### Phenomenal generosity

Among the trustees listening to the president was E. Claiborne Robins, an alumnus who had turned a family business into a great success. On June 9, 1969, at UR's commencement, Dr. Modlin announced a gift from Mr. Robins of \$50 million which the donor saw as "seed money" which would inspire other gifts. (In time, the donor's family gave more than \$175 million which would be greatly multiplied with today's valuation.) The Robins gift indeed set UR on a new thrust towards greatness.

George Modlin did put his initials deep into the life and character of the University of Richmond. For 25 years he served as president followed by service as chancellor and chancellor emeritus so that he served the University for 60 years. In 1988 he was named a Virginia Cultural

Laureate. In 1991, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* recognized him as one of six "shapers" of the 20th century in Virginia.

He was pleased that the University's new Center for the Arts, dedicated in 1996, carried his name. He also was surprised because he said that usually such an honor is given to someone associated with the arts while his field was economics; however, the Modlins were engaged in many cultural activities in the city. In the Modlin Center there is an exhibit case just under its namesake's portrait. Dr. Modlin was asked to personally select from his many awards the items which he wanted to be in the case. Among these he chose his Virginia Patriot award and a citation from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He also selected a vest which Virginia had embroidered with images associated with the life and work of her husband: a cardinal and dogwood for his adopted state, symbols of WFU, Princeton and UR. It is the centerpiece of the exhibit case.

### At rest in Hollywood

Virginia Modlin died on July 12, 1997; and Dr. Modlin had already followed her wishes for above ground burial



*Modlins at their campus residence*

in the UR lot in Hollywood Cemetery. He commissioned a simple yet classic double stone vault on which are carved the names of the Modlins along with the official seal of the University.

Modlin (continued)

Dr. George M. Modlin died on October 4, 1998, at age 95; and the Modlin mausoleum is located near the graves of Dr. Boatwright and Dr. Mitchell, the president who brought him to Richmond and the professor who insisted that he carve his initials to indicate that he might remain at the University.

Contributed by: Fred Anderson  
Executive Director Emeritus

Virginia Baptist Historical Society

Note: Fred Anderson established the UR Archives in 1981 and managed them for 36 years, including the papers of Dr. Modlin

Former Intern and Preservationist Joins Hollywood Staff

Since graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University 13 years ago, William Oakes worked at Hollywood Cemetery as an intern, then cemetery preservationist, and as of June 1, assistant general manager.



William Oakes

His focus now is selling lots for traditional burials and niches for cremations with ancillary office duties in accounting, payroll and day-to-day operations. He took on the new role after the retirement of Woody Harper who was with the company 34 years.

Oakes’ early experiences prepared him well for the new job. As a new college graduate, he worked for the monument restoration company that contracts with

Hollywood. “I was taught how to properly assess the status of monuments and what needed to be done to fix them and insure their place in history.

In 2018, Oakes segued to putting in foundations for new monument installations. The concrete pads are critical in preserving the long-term stability of the stones. It was a physically demanding job and a good fit for the former offensive lineman for Douglas S. Freeman High School.

General Manager David Gilliam said Oakes’ study of history and extensive knowledge of the cemetery grounds made him a perfect candidate for the assistant manager job. “William has a pleasant demeanor and is willing to learn and become an integral part of the management team at Hollywood,” he said.

In his new role, Oakes helps folks make decisions on their final resting places for casket burials or ashes. With increasing trends toward cremations, Hollywood offers options at the Lawn, the Idlewood Niche Wall, Presidents Circle and the scattering garden.

Outside of work, Oakes is busy with his growing family. He and his wife Angela have a 2-year-old daughter and are expecting a second child in January.

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# Felled Historic Oak adds to Hollywood's Rich History

A felled white oak now includes a memorable marker, a first for a Hollywood Cemetery tree, thanks to the creative efforts of Van Yahres Tree Company.

The company took out the old oak in June. Because a metal fence had grown through it, they had no choice but to leave a five-foot stump intact. Jake Van Yahres, an arborist, graphic artist and muralist, came up with the idea of marking it: "White Oak, 254 years, 1770-2024, born before the cemetery." Making it the latest addition to his company's Hollywood Cemetery tree tour. "I thought it was a fantastic way to save the story of the tree and add to the history of Hollywood Cemetery," said General Manager David Gilliam.

This wasn't just any white oak. To put its age in context, Van Yahres notes that the tree was born five years before the start of the Revolutionary War. While many mature trees hollow out with the passage of time, this one did not, allowing its 254 rings to be counted.

Van Yahres Tree, in business since 1919, has been handling Hollywood's tree work for the past 30 years. Their goal is preservation through pruning and soil remediation with nutrients specifically developed for the cemetery. The company maintains a computer file for each of Hollywood's 2,500-some trees, which details work performed as well as a ranking. "A small dogwood in the corner isn't as important as a sycamore on a walking path for example," Van Yahres said.

The demise of the old oak isn't entirely understood, but Van Yahres suspects it goes back to 2003 when Hurricane Isabel blew through, taking out all but two oaks from a grove. Another white oak just 80 feet away, almost identical in trunk size, looked perfectly healthy but fell unexpectedly in 2021.

It was then determined that the one remaining was also declining, a condition that a state arborist refers to as the spiral of death. Van Yahres did an X-ray of the trunk and found it solid as were the roots. "My best hypothesis is that all those trees were connected by roots, and the last one remaining didn't have its brothers and sisters to survive," he said.

Scientists have long been fascinated and baffled by the significance of trees' interconnection through complicated underground systems. Van Yahres says arborists joke that we know more about the moon than tree roots.

Van Yahres' mural in Charlottesville's downtown mall called "Together We Grow" explores the parallels with humans. Faces are depicted in tree branches with roots that look like hands extending underground. "The notion is that trees of all shapes and colors support themselves underground. Perhaps, we could be more like them," said the arborist/artist explaining the mural as his response to the anti-racist protests in 2017.



## 2024 Contributors to Friends of Hollywood Cemetery

*We are indeed grateful to the following donors for their generous support of Friends through October 31, 2024. 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.*



J. Mason New  
Chair, Friends of Hollywood Cemetery

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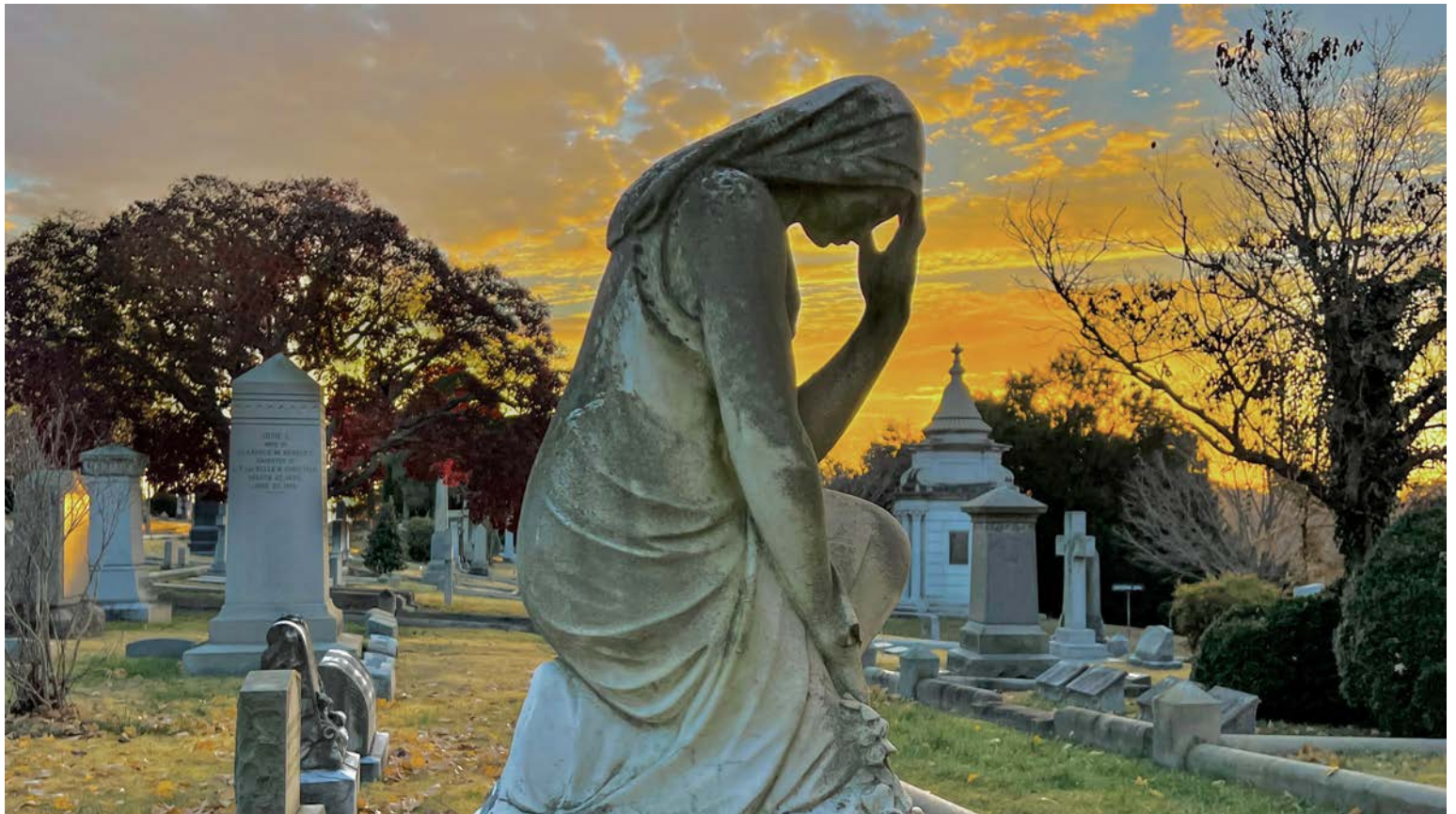
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