

A Gateway Into History

WWW.HOLLYWOODCEMETERY.ORG

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Caring for Hollywood's Sentinals:

Walkabouts Deepen Appreciation of the Cemetery's Arboretum

On two beautiful late winter mornings, February 27 and 28, Friends of Hollywood sponsored educational walkabouts conducted by Van Yahres Tree Company (Charlottesville, VA) and led by fourth generation co-owners –Shana Clarke and her brother, Jake Van Yahres. Their 100 year-old company has provided continuous annual care to Hollywood's population of 2,500 trees for the past thirty years. The two sessions were open to the public, well attended, and enthusiastically received. "There is so much that we learned," many exclaimed afterwards. "Just outstanding!"

Jake Van Yahres led the ninety minute interactive sessions using stations set up along a short walking route. Each station was used to illustrate a particular aspect of the life cycle of a tree, from youth to old age, including basic tree botany, supplemental nutrition, disease identification/prevention, tree wound pathology, climbing/pruning, etc.

Starting with a bit of relationship background, Van Yahres recounted a story originating from his grandfather, Mitch Van Yahres, the second Van Yahres to lead the company. He was commissioned by Hollywood's Board of Directors to perform a tree inventory in 1994 – the first of its kind in the Cemetery's long history. It included type, location and general condition of every Hollywood tree. The information was handwritten and delivered in a black spiral notebook (an archival treasure that is still in the Cemetery's possession). Young Van Yahres remembers, as reported by his father, that the Board's reaction to Mitch's notebook was "Well...what exactly are we supposed to do with this?" It marked the beginning of a very successful

relationship.

"The rest is history," Jake Van Yahres explained as he held out a trim, notebook computer (I-Pad). "Everything that was in the black notebook that you have just seen plus a great deal more is now housed digitally in this device. It's all in here. Every tree, its numerical ID, type, location, condition, peculiarities, care history, and so on. It has made our work here so much more efficient."



Jake Van Yahres explains the development of Hollywood tree care record keeping

While pausing at the **first station** and observing a newly planted tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera* L.), one of hundreds of young trees Van Yahres has planted throughout the cemetery during recent years, the group's
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Hollywood's
Arboretum

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Walkabout (continued)

attention was directed to a rather unusual black, synthetic collar circling the base of the tree as well as a layer of very different colored and textured wood chip mulch. The collar is a recent invention called a “tree diaper,” he explained. It is porous and is filled by rainfall. The bottom of the diaper permits the captured water inside to slowly seep into the ground. No more hand watering in Hollywood! The mulch, not available in garden centers, is a mixture of untreated organic hard wood chips that decomposes over time, leaching valuable nutrients (lacking in Hollywood’s urban landscape) into the soil. The chips come directly from trees in Hollywood creating a completely sustainable forest. And the soil and roots say “thank you!”



“Station One.” Young tree irrigation achieved through a water releasing “diaper”. Mulch consists of natural, untreated wood chips from Hollywood’s pruning efforts.

“How wide do you think tree roots spread?” Van Yahres questioned his audience. After a number of not so close guesses, Van Yahres provided the correct answer – “generally, up to five times the canopy of the tree (hundreds of feet in some instances). Often, tree roots grow under asphalt roads, structures, and into the root zones of other trees. And yes, it has also been established scientifically that neighboring roots (from different trees) have a way of communicating with one another. And further and contrary to popular belief, they mostly grow at a very shallow depth – +/- 18 inches.

While on the subject of roots, he added that 80% of all diseases and abnormalities that are detected and observed on a tree originate underground in and through the root system.

We then proceeded to ***station two*** where a Van Yahres associate demonstrated deep root feeding using a spade-like tool powered by extreme water pressure.

As the underground discharge provides nutrients, it also separates and loosens compacted soil. “Why is that important” an audience member asked? Although Hollywood Cemetery is still something of a forest, it no longer has a totally self-sustaining forest floor (decomposing leaves, twigs, insect activity, other natural debris, etc.) as it did years ago. Additional organic materials for root systems and ultimate tree health are therefore necessary in some situations. The particular



“Station Two.” High pressured deep root feeding is provided to each new tree planted in Hollywood

trees requiring this supplemental nutrition are highlighted in the digital tree app.

A bit further along, Van Yahres spoke about tree wounds and abnormalities. Many were surprised to learn that “tree wounds seal while human wounds, heal. Sealing is a process during which new tissue gradually grows over the surface of a wound, covering it completely with a layer of new wood and bark.

No visit to Hollywood would be complete without a visit to ***station three*** and the majestic white oak (*Quercus alba* L.) located at the intersection of Haxall and Westvale Avenues. Like many of Hollywood’s most notable, monarch trees, this tree contains lightning protection – a small cable attached from the top of the crown to the ground below. It would be impossible to estimate how many trees have actually been struck by lightning and saved by this protective measure.

Of greater interest was evidence of a large cavity wound in the trunk of the oak, just above the ground. Because of its depth, it had not sealed over as wounds most typically do. Van Yahres opined that, perhaps, the wound originated when the tree was mature. An abundance of scar tissue

(continued on page 3)

Walkabout (continued)

suggests that the wound may be decades old. It was puzzling to all how the tree managed to survive the severity of the wound – especially, after Van Yahres went on to explain that this particular tree had yet another serious flaw – a hollow trunk where rock hard heartwood (the strongest wood in a tree) normally exists!

“Trees can really surprise you at times,” he remarked. “This oak has been around for 75-100 years, with no sign of giving up the ghost. Overcoming its wound and hollow center, it has managed to grow and prosper from its strong root system and healthy exterior wood layers (cambium and sapwood).



“Station Three.” Jake Van Yahres explains tree health and the tree healing process

At the last station (*station four*), Van Yahres associates demonstrated the techniques employed to reach the required heights above ground (sometimes, 100 feet or more) to thin, prune, and administer care such as branch cabling. Jeremy Thompson (foreman of the Hollywood Van Yahres crew) and climbing veteran, Jonathan Gay explained the two climbing methods in practice today – the old-fashioned manual way (hand over hand raising yourself up using a rope with a “blakes hitch” knot)) and the more recent, motorized technique that effortlessly accomplishes the climb while the climber relaxes in his harness.

Quite interestingly, Jonathan, using the manual method, reached the treetop while mechanized Jeremy was only midway in his ascent. Of course, there are climbing bucket trucks in wide usage today, but nothing compares to the rope and sheer brawn technique, not even Jeremy’s motorized assist.



“Station Four.” Van Yahres’ Jeremy Thompson (r) and Jonathan Gay (l) prepare to demonstrate tree climbing techniques – manual and mechanized

There is much unseen by the general public that supports the preservation efforts of a natural spot like Hollywood Cemetery. “Its trees are without question one of its most notable features,” Van Yahres exclaimed with enthusiasm. “We are very proud to provide our services to Hollywood. It is a monument in itself.”

After two years of trial runs, Kelly Wilbanks, Friends Executive Director, hopes that Van Yahres tree walkabouts may become an annual Hollywood activity.



After a successful climb (by whichever method) and far above the ground, the real work begins

Note: Hollywood Cemetery is an Accredited Arboretum, also known as a museum of trees. It is one of eleven Level One arboreta in Virginia.

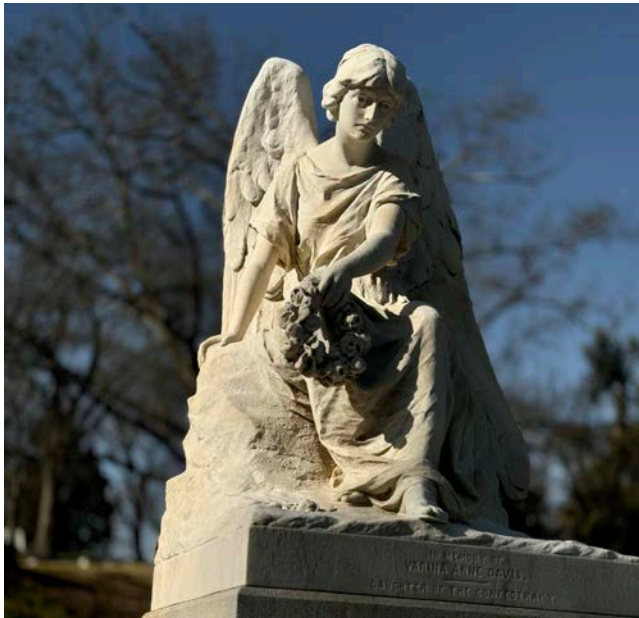
Monument Styles Reflect Changing Eras

Within the wrought-iron gates of Hollywood Cemetery, visitors find mysterious mausoleums, mournful angels, and soaring obelisks. The various monuments found throughout the cemetery offer a glimpse into the history of grave markers over the past 170+ years.

Victorian displays of affection

Hollywood Cemetery opened in 1847, during the Victorian era (1837-1901). The Victorians were known for their fascination and preoccupation with death. To honor the departed, families often spent lavishly on monuments—as much as they could afford.

Many Victorian grave markers and statues are classical in theme. Curved benches known as exedra, a style dating from ancient Greece, are found throughout Hollywood Cemetery, as are urns covered in draped cloth. While urns have been used since ancient times to hold cremains, the addition of the cloth can signify the veil between life and death, the mortal body versus the eternal soul.



*Varina Anne “Winnie” Davis
Davis Circle*

The *Angel of Grief* mournfully overlooks the grave of Varina Anne “Winnie” Davis (d. 1898), the daughter of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. The model for the statue was sent to Italy, where it was carved from Carrara marble.

Childhood deaths caused by now preventable diseases were common during this time. During the 19th century, an average of 38% of children died before the age of five. Cradle graves, designed to look like small beds, are prevalent in the cemetery.

A collection of identical monuments honors John and Cornelia Bacon’s five young children, who ranged in age from infant to six years old when they died in the same year, 1858. “They Were Lovely and Pleasant in Their Lives and in Their Deaths They Were Not Divided,” reads the epitaph.

Enigmatic abbreviations

The Victorians revered the natural world, leading to the rise of headstones that resembled tree stumps—often broken off, to signal a life cut short. Some of these tree stones are marked “Woodmen of the World” or simply “W.O.W.” The insurance company and fraternal organization, now WoodmenLife, purchased the tree stump markers for their members—many of



*The Lloyd Family
Section 20 - Lot 28*

whom worked as lumberjacks--upon their deaths. “The most common question regarding monuments is the significance of ‘IHS’ on so many stones. Research has shown this is the Greek symbol for Jesus [Ihsous in Greek]. Others indicate this to mean ‘in His service,’” said David Gilliam, General Manager of Hollywood Cemetery. “The symbol draws a lot of attention because the IHS letters are superimposed on one another and appears to be a dollar sign to some.”

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Monument Styles (continued)



The symbol “In His Service” sometimes is misinterpreted to be a dollar sign
Section L - Lot 46

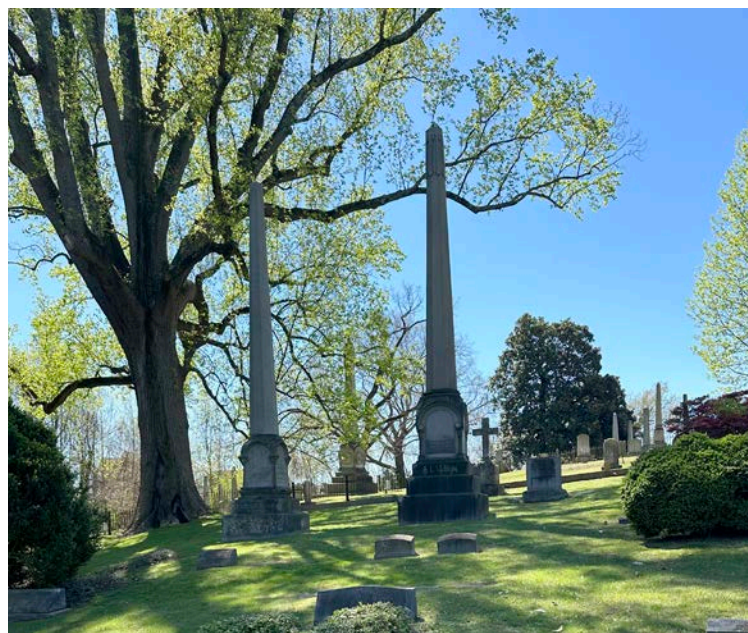
Egyptian influences

During his invasion of Egypt, Napoleon brought a team of 167 scholars with him to document the country’s treasures. The scholars created a 10-volume folio work, *Description de l’Egypte*, with over 3,000 illustrations—leading to widespread fascination and the growth of Egyptology. One result was the rise of Egyptian Revival architecture. In Richmond, this inspired a building on the MCV campus and the flat-roofed mausoleums on Westvale and other avenues in Hollywood Cemetery.

These influences also prevail in the cemetery’s stone pyramids, lotus columns, and obelisks, the Egyptian symbol of eternal life. A trio of towering obelisks (Alvey, Lipscomb, and Dove) stand guard at the corner of Hillside and Waterview.

Modern approaches

Art Deco, which arose in the 1920s, drew from classical, Egyptian, and other styles. The elegant design often featured long, sleek human and animal figures, flowers, and rays of the sun. Noted art deco sculptor Rene Chambellan carved the headstone for beloved educator Virginia Randolph Ellett, who died in 1939. The bas-relief sculpture features an angel blowing a slender trumpet.



The Trio of Obelisks
Section M - Lot 33

In modern times, an increasing number of families are choosing cremation, and engraving the names of their loved ones on memory walls or niches. Those who choose headstones often find ways to personalize them.

“One of the unique aspects of Hollywood Cemetery is that it has always allowed lot owners the flexibility in their selection and design of monuments for their lot,” said Gilliam, adding that non-standard designs must still go through a review process.

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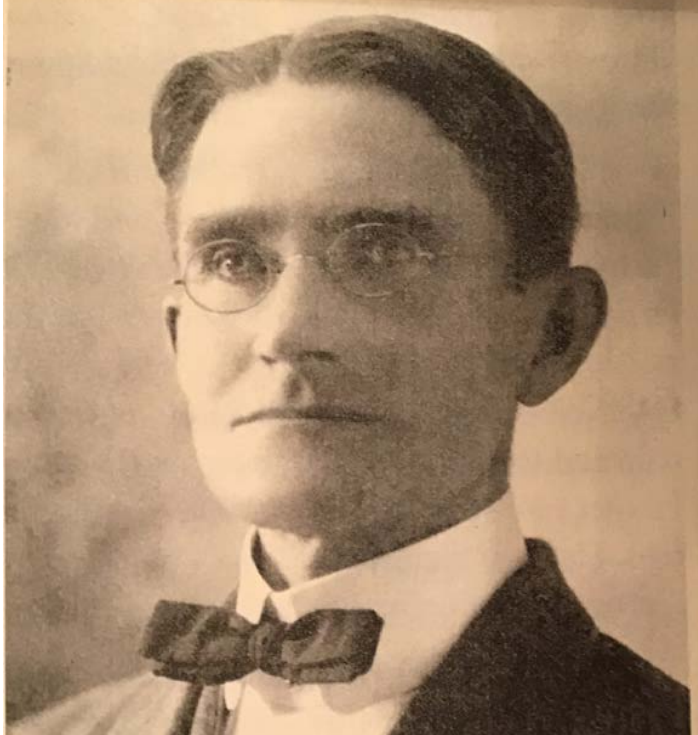


Virginia Randolph Ellett
Section L - Lot 38

George Braxton Taylor (1860-1942):

A Beloved Pastor of Sunbeams and Shadows

In the spring, many people continue the age-old tradition of “decorating the graves” with flowers. But what about the deceased who have no one left to remember them? One of these undecorated graves is that of George Braxton Taylor. His tombstone reads “Founder of the Sunbeams”; and in the distant past, he was remembered by thousands, who as little children, learned about Christian missions when they were in the Sunbeam Band at their Baptist church.



George B. Taylor, Pastor

In 1887, when Taylor was the young pastor of Fairmount Baptist Church, a small congregation in Nelson County, Virginia, he and a church member, Anna Louisa Elsom, started the first Sunbeam Band and it was an instant success. Children enjoyed imaginary trips around the world, learning about places and people where there were missionaries.

A lasting nickname is born

The Sunbeams movement soon spread across the South. In time, there were some 8,000 “Sunbeam Bands” which enrolled children in the USA and even in other countries. Children were taught to give whatever they could which often was pennies. Children in country churches gathered and sold eggs from their “Sunbeam hens” or donated their “missionary pigs” to the cause. From its beginning, the Sunbeams referred to Taylor as

“Cousin George”; and the nickname stuck for the rest of his life.

George Braxton Taylor was born in Staunton in 1860, the first child of George Boardman Taylor and Susan Spotswood Braxton. George’s middle name honored his mother’s family which included Carter Braxton, a Virginia patriot who signed the Declaration of Independence.

George’s father was pastor of the Staunton Baptist Church as well as chaplain of the University of Virginia. In 1873, the Taylors left Virginia for Rome, Italy, where George Boardman Taylor served as a pioneer Protestant missionary.

George Braxton Taylor was 13 when his parents uprooted the family and his siblings were much younger. He loved the experience of the ocean voyage, and the journey across Europe to Italy. He learned the language, culture and history of his adopted country. But it was a short transition because, at age 16, he returned to Virginia to enroll in Richmond College. While a student, he began keeping a diary which he maintained from 1876 to shortly before his death in 1942.

A pastor’s life begins

From 1883-85, he studied at the Baptist seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In March 1884, George received a visit from a professor who delivered the news that his mother, Susan Braxton Taylor, had suddenly died in Rome. She was buried in “the cemetery for strangers”, a place for Protestant burials outside the city walls of Rome. George’s father continued to serve in Rome where he died in 1907 and was buried beside his wife. Today their graves are maintained by the Italian Baptist Union.

While serving as a pastor in Nelson County, Taylor fell in love with a young woman, Jessie Cabell, a member of an old Virginia family. On “a golden mid-winter day” in December 1888, George and Jessie were married at the Episcopal church at Norwood in Nelson County. Their wedding night was spent at Ford’s Hotel in Richmond, “the best at that time in Richmond.” From there, they honeymooned at Old Point Comfort. For the groom the marriage was an answer to prayer. “How lovely a bride & wife God gave me,” he confided in his diary.

The young couple made their first home together in Chapel Hill, where he had answered a pastoral call. After serving as an associate pastor in Baltimore, they moved in 1891 to

(continued on page 7)

Taylor (continued)



*Jessie Cabell Taylor on her wedding day
December 19, 1888*

Macon, Georgia, where he was called to be pastor of the First Baptist Church. Jessie helped her husband by “listening to the sermons before the people heard them and making many wise decisions.”

It was in Macon on October 31, 1892, at their residence, that a son was born to the Taylors. They named him George Cabell Taylor. Before she gave birth, Jessie had become “sickly”; and likely the birth only hastened the deterioration of her health.

A widower at thirty-three

George took Jessie back to her family home in Nelson County; and she tragically died there on the last day of August 1893. George felt that “even death could not destroy the calm beauty and dignity of her face.” In her departure, Jessie left behind their ten-month-old son.

George entrusted their baby in the care of the Cabell family and returned to his church in Macon. His first sermon upon return was from Psalm 31:15: “Blessed the man who can say ‘my times are in thy hands.’” Lifted from his sermon are these lines: “God rules and controls in all the events of our lives - our times of joy, sadness, prosperity, adversity. It is good that it is so.”

George left Macon for several rural pastorates near Appomattox while his little son continued to be reared by the Cabells. In 1902, George answered the pastoral call to Enon Church, near Roanoke and just across the highway from Hollins College. He enrolled Cabell, at age 12, in “the Preparatory Department” of Hollins. In addition to the church, George served as chaplain and a professor of Bible at Hollins.

George wrote several books including a biography of his father, a history of Baptist missions in Italy, and four biographical volumes entitled *Virginia Baptist Ministers*, which continued a series started by his grandfather, James B. Taylor. He also served on the Board of Trustees of Richmond College at the time of the school’s move to Westhampton.

While at Enon Church, he acquired a horse named “Frank” and a buggy which he could use for pastoral visits. He never learned to drive an automobile; instead, he would begin walking from Hollins into Roanoke and invariably someone would offer a ride. He also had free passes on the train and bus.

In 1908, George enrolled his son in a military academy. “He is my only boy,” he wrote to the superintendent. “Do all you can for him. He goes to you pure & clean. Keep him so.” After the academy, Cabell agreed to enroll in Richmond College but his college days ended abruptly when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and entered a sanitarium near Roanoke.

Cabell recovered enough to pursue his dream of “going West” to New Mexico where he thought the climate would improve his condition. In 1919, George was proud that Cabell had published an article in a magazine and thereby joined the Taylor family’s long list of published writers.

A Hollywood homecoming

In October 1922, George received the sad news that Cabell had died; and he made the long train trip to the Southwest to bring his son’s body to Virginia. More than once, on the return trip, George went to the baggage car “to see if the precious box was safe.”

(continued on page 8)

Taylor (continued)

In his diary, George wrote: “So to Hollywood. Wonderfully beautiful day. Hollywood so peaceful & beautiful. Flowers from the student body, Enon and Troutville churches. Every one so kind.” In the afternoon, there was a return to Hollywood because Jessie’s body had been exhumed from her family’s cemetery in Nelson County and had just arrived in Richmond. The next day would have been Cabell’s 30th birthday. In his diary, George wrote: “Oh, how I have reviewed all these years! Jessie, Jessie!” On that same day of the double burials, George returned to Hollins and conducted the chapel services at the college.

George established a tradition called Flower Day in the churches he served. On a Sunday each spring, he distributed upwards of 400 rose plants to those who promised to plant them. For years after his passing, there were “thousands of roses blooming in yards and gardens, the gift of the good preacher.” And that’s why, on occasion, an old “Sunbeam” still places a lily at the grave of “Cousin George”.

The George B. Taylor plot is located on the right side of Midvale Avenue just past Ellet Avenue. Also buried there are George’s sister, Susy Taylor, and her husband, Dexter Whittinghill, who were missionaries to Italy.



Section 7 - Lot 7

*Contributed by: Fred Anderson
Executive Director Emeritus
Baptist Historical Society*

Monument Styles (continued)



*The Konrad Family
Section 2 - Lot 29*

While contemporary monuments often lack the extravagance of yesteryear, there are exceptions—such as the white marble obelisk that remembers the Konrad family. The bottom of the monument reveals a playful tableau of the characters from *The Little Brute Family*, a children’s book written by Russell Hoban and illustrated by his wife, Lillian. Scenes from the book are depicted in etchings around each side of the monument, showing the furry, snaggle-toothed family members eating breakfast, flying kites and other activities. Created in the 21st century, the marker presents a deeply personal and endearing tribute to the Konrad family.



Elizabeth Toms Joins Friends Board

A Richmond native, Liz has been very happy spending her adult life back in her hometown. While a career pursuit in advertising originally took her to New York, her fondness of Richmond's culture, history and a love for family and community brought her back.

Having spent the last 18 years as an employee of the Martin Agency, Liz is excited to use her background in advertising and marketing to expose more people to the cemetery. Her family is buried at Hollywood, and she has visited them there since she was a young child. With each visit, she has learned more and more about its monuments, trees, and endless resident stories.

Liz began her career in New York at Calvin Klein, working with the designer on a number of campaigns in the early 2000's. Passionate about the fashion industry and New York's proximity to major brands, Liz went on to do work for Vera Wang, Chanel, Kenneth Cole and The Limited.

At Martin, Liz has moved beyond her fashion expertise, working in both account leadership and business development across a variety of brands like GEICO, Microsoft, TIAA, Land of Lakes, Old Navy and Skrewball Whiskey. She likes the pace of the advertising business but most all, the talented teams with which she has worked – individuals, Liz says, “that I deeply respect, trust, and enjoy.”

Liz is a UVA graduate (a third generation HOO) where she majored in History and French, a Richmond Ballet board member, animal lover, avid gardener, and proud aunt.

A Farewell to Woody

After 36 years of faithful service, a Hollywood Cemetery stalwart and friend, Woodrow C. Harper, will retire at the end of May. Over his career at Hollywood, “Woody” has met and counseled countless families with final cemetery arrangements. He will be fondly remembered by many. Both the Cemetery's Board of Directors and the Board of Friends of Hollywood extend to him our gratitude as well as our very best wishes for future health and happiness.

Friends of Hollywood Cemetery

Received its fourth one-to-one

\$150,000

Challenge Grant

From

The Mary Morton Parsons Foundation

In November, 2023

Friends must raise \$150,000 in order to receive \$150,000 within a 12-month period.

Please help us meet this goal

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We are indeed grateful to the following donors for their generous support of Friends **through May 14, 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.



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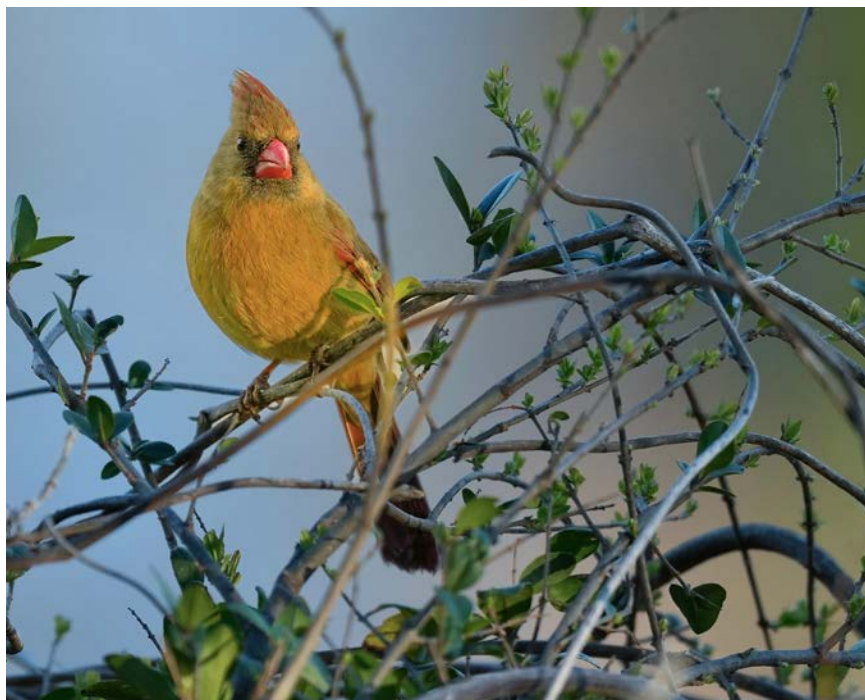
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A yellow northern cardinal recently photographed in Hollywood is a very rare visitor anywhere

Courtesy of Bill Draper Photography



*Your
Perpetual Legacy
for Hollywood*

With the future in mind

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**412 South Cherry Street
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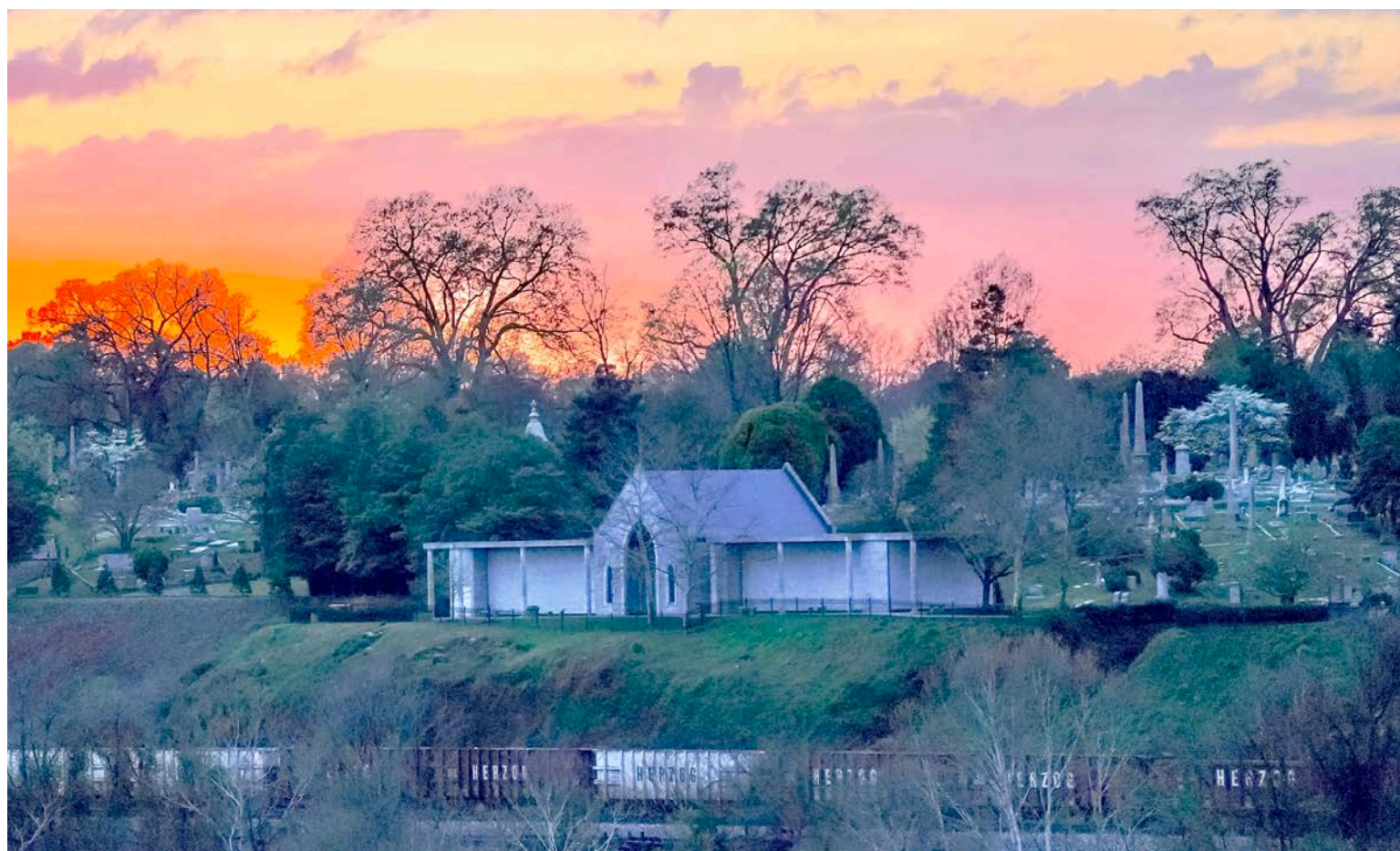
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A view of the Palmer Mausoleum at Hollywood

Courtesy of Bill Draper Photography