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Three Transforming Views

## Friends Completes Fundraising for River Overlooks

From its headwaters in the Alleghany Mountains, the James River flows three hundred and forty miles to the Chesapeake Bay and the sea. Bob Deans describes this majestic waterway in his book, *The River Where America Began*, as well as the Commonwealth and nation that emerged from its shores. There is no more scenic or historic portion of the James than its falls at Richmond. From Hollywood Cemetery, the dramatic change in the river's flow is a spectacular site.

Several years ago, Friends of Hollywood embarked upon funding for an overlook project to give visitors to the cemetery a spot from which the river might be seen and enjoyed in each different season and in all of its different moods. It was envisioned as a site for relaxation, meditation, and absorbing the natural world. What better setting than Hollywood Cemetery, a virtual outdoor museum built within view of a river that has witnessed so many chapters in our country's history?

centennial of the Club), the Dominion Foundation, the Richard S. Reynolds Foundation, and Bob and Anna Lou Schaberg Fund at the Virginia Nonprofit Housing Coalition.



*Overlook One as recently completed. Extensive landscaping is scheduled this fall.*

### Overlook One

This tastefully designed and lasting addition to Hollywood has just been completed east of the Palmer Mausoleum. Designed by Van Yahres Studio (Charlottesville) and constructed by Messer Contracting Company (Richmond), it is made of Georgia granite. "Domestic granite" has been heavily used in Hollywood since its opening in 1849. Landscaping will occur in the fall.

Overlook One was made possible by generous grants from the James River Garden Club (in celebration of the

### Overlook Two

Overlook One has generated such interest that Friends of Hollywood has solicited funding to build a second overlook, and a third! A \$150,000 grant from the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation (Atlanta) will make Overlook Two a reality in 2017. Like Overlook One, it will be constructed of Georgia granite. Built on the west side of the Mausoleum, it will be different in its design than Overlook One but rival its neighbor with an equally commanding view of the river below and far shore in the distance.

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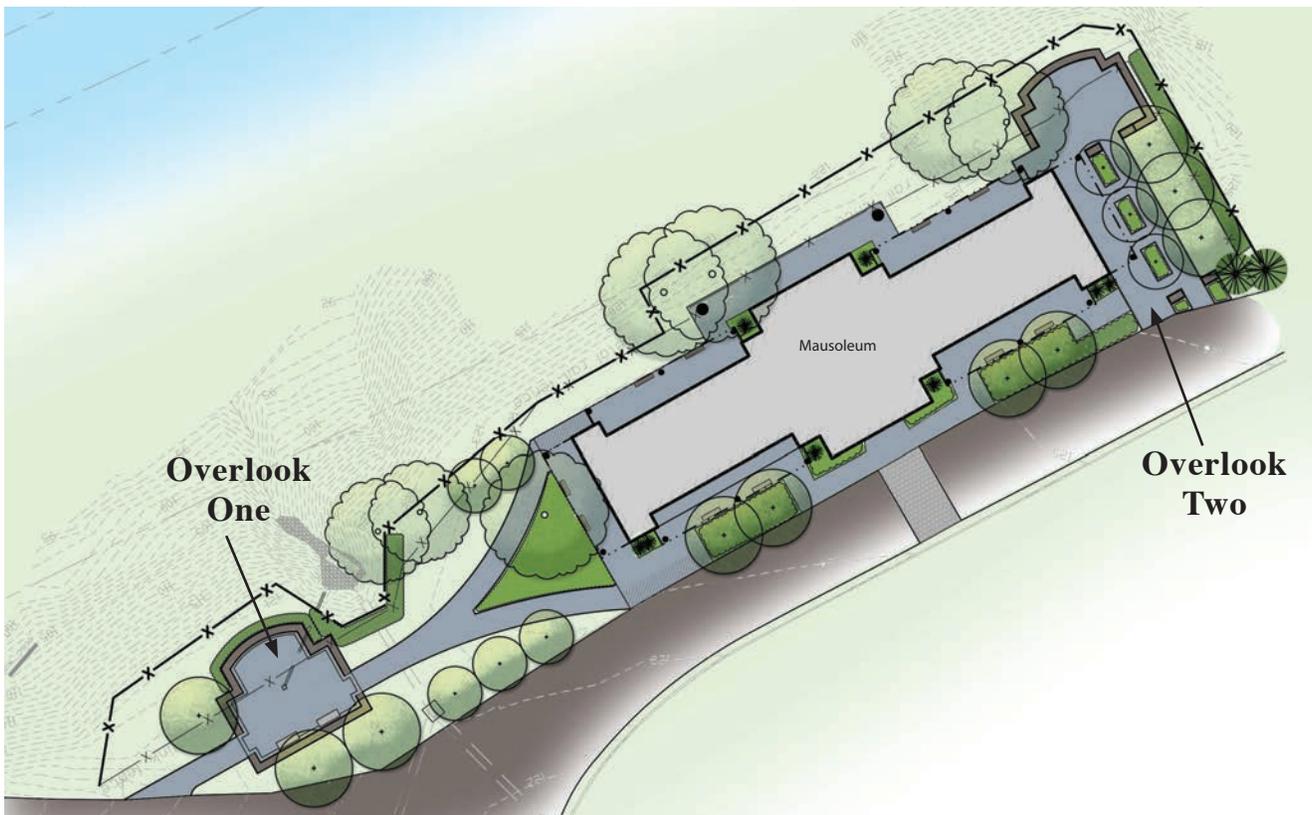
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*Overlook Two appears at the western end of Palmer Mausoleum (far right of diagram).*

### **The Philanthropy of Lettie Pate Evans and the Foundation That Bears her Name**

Lettie Pate Evans was born Leticia Pace in Thaxton, Virginia in 1872. In 1894, she married Joseph Brown Whitehead, an attorney from Mississippi. They settled in Chattanooga, Tennessee, where they had two sons. A few years later, for the bargain price of \$1, Whitehead and another attorney obtained the exclusive right to bottle a popular fountain drink – Coca-Cola.



The Whiteheads moved to Atlanta, where Joseph established his first bottling plant. Sadly, he died in 1906 at the age of 42, leaving his widow with two sons, then 11 and 8. Always noted for her business acumen, Mrs. Whitehead took over her husband’s bottling and real estate enterprises and brought them to great success. In 1934, the Coca-Cola Corporation appointed her to its board of directors, making her one of the first women in the United States to hold a seat on the board of a major corporation. She later married Colonel Arthur Kelly Evans, and they made their home in Hot Springs, Virginia. She was predeceased by both sons, who each set up foundations honoring their parents.

In 1945, Mrs. Evans created the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation, which makes grants to education, arts and cultural institutions in Georgia and Virginia. Upon her death in 1953, her entire estate was left to the foundation, which last year alone awarded \$16,442,000 in grants. She and Joseph and their two sons are buried in the Whitehead mausoleum in Hollywood Cemetery.

According to a statement by the Coca-Cola Corporation, “Endowed with material things, she had a conviction that she held them as a trustee for the poor, the meek and the unfortunate. During her life, she gave away millions to foster religion and education and to relieve and comfort the underprivileged and the afflicted ... by her life and example, Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans made the world a better place in which to live.”

*Historical information about Lettie Pate Evans obtained from her foundation’s website, LPEvans.org.*

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### *Overlook Three*

A grant of \$150,000 from the Ratcliffe Foundation in Tazewell County, Virginia will underwrite a third improvement adjacent to and in Davis Circle. Because the ground between the road and sloping bank is at its narrowest as it approaches the circle,

the proposed overlook will take the form of a cobblestone riverside walkway, complete with benches, bollards and chains. At the same time, cobblestones will be used to replace the concrete walkways within the circle itself.



*Overlook Three takes the form of a cobblestone walkway lined with granite posts and chain leading visitors to Davis Circle. It will provide inviting views of the River, Davis Circle and Richmond skyline in the distance.*

#### **Arthur M. “Smiley” Ratliff, Jr. – A Patriot, Friend and Philanthropist**

Arthur M. Ratliffe was simply “Smiley” to all who knew him. Originally from Buchanan County, Virginia, Ratliffe was a football standout at Grundy High School and later, at Emory and Henry College. Following, he taught history and became a winning football coach at Hurley High School.

Ratliffe was a decorated hero in World War II and the Korean War, having received nineteen medals for his service, including two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. After military service and teaching, he engaged in the coal business, cattle raising and banking. At one point, he was said to be the largest individual landowner east of the Mississippi.



A devotee of southern history, Ratliffe had a keen interest in the Civil War. Two of his lifetime heroes were President Jefferson Davis and Major General J. E. B. Stuart. When Friends discussed with Ratcliffe Foundation directors the need at Hollywood to restore the riverside property at Davis Circle, there was immediate agreement that this would have been a project in which “Smiley” Ratliffe would have had great interest.

According to Scott Cole, chair of the Foundation, Ratliffe was not only a visionary but also a genius. “He was also a genuine character. I never expect to meet anyone else like him in the remaining years of my life.”

Even those closest to him had no real idea of the extent of Ratliffe’s “quiet” lifetime philanthropy. In 1970, at the time of his death, his estate was left entirely to the Ratcliffe Foundation. He specified that “Ratliffe,” the ancestral spelling of his name, be used. Through its directors, the Foundation has given faithful attention to “Smiley” Ratliffe’s lifetime interests – history, education, and religion.

March 19, 2016

## Rose Lovers Gather for 4<sup>th</sup> Hollywood Pruning and Maintenance Day

Remembering the challenges of last year, Sharon Pajka arrived prepared for her second rose pruning. “I brought three different sizes of sheers with me today,” she said.

Pajka was among the 24 volunteers who arrived at Palmer Mausoleum the morning of March 19th to help care for the roses at Hollywood Cemetery, where some varieties are over 100 years old.

After giving some preliminary instructions to the group, leader Connie Hilker, owner of Hartwood Roses, divided the 24 volunteers into teams. Then, she spread out a map of the cemetery on a table and pointed out the locations where each team would be heading after receiving a red folder with individualized instructions about the roses in their area.

“Just take anything that’s dead—dead heads, dead wood and weeds,” Hilker told one team. To one of



*The 2016 Rose Day team poses with “red books” and tools in hand, ready for a morning’s work. Connie Hilker, leader and organizer, appears in center foreground in green jacket.*

the regular volunteers, she shared information about a special rose. “There’s a teeny weeny one on life support right now. It’s not on your list, but I can trust you to trim it back.”

Rose areas were marked with caution tape, so they could be easily identified. Grace LeRose gently worked on a Rose Safras, a tea rose from 1839. Her team included Pam and Juju Hawkins.

“Let’s try to get the grass from around the base of this. Then, let’s step back and assess,” suggested LeRose, a member of the Richmond Rose Society, to the others. She has attended annual pruning since it began. The first year, she said, “it was like going into a jungle.”

In another part of the cemetery, Jennifer King and Kathy Maitland worked together for their second year. “It’s like a treasure hunt trying to find the roses,” said Maitland, who enjoys discovering

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new things in the cemetery on the workdays. “You can see so much when you’re here. You can read stories on the headstones.” She also takes part in Civil War re-enactments, and has given historical lectures on mourning.

Meanwhile, Bob Olsen worked at clipping a tall rose bush that hovered over a grave. “You almost need a ladder to reach the top of it,” he said. “Some wisteria is trying to grow in there.” Olsen noted that he comes out to the cemetery once a week to volunteer for Findagrave.com, and has responded to 2,200 requests so far. “I liked it and I got hooked. I like a good mystery.”



## Hollywood Rose Day Volunteers March 19, 2016

Tracy Anderson	Alesa Hemenway	Sharon Pajka
Barbara Brancoli	Connie Hilker	Lynn Pappas
Joe Brancoli	Jennifer King	Judy Scovronski
Pat Cash	Wendy Kleinfeld	Joe Sites
Martha Davidson	Grace LeRose	Dean Siwiec
Laura Deck	Kathy Maitland	Caroline Tisdale
Pam Hawkins	Catharine Moser	Nanette Whitt
Ju-Ju Hawkins	Bob Olsen	Richard Whitt

After completing their hard work, the volunteers gathered for boxed lunches provided by Kelly Wilbanks, Executive Director of Friends of Hollywood Cemetery. “We are so grateful for the help of the volunteers. They have really made a difference,” she said.

“I thought it turned out great,” said Hilker, of the morning. “The roses are really responding to our care.”

Since 2012, Connie Hilker has created a detailed inventory of all Hollywood roses as well as a record of care for each rose.

## Every Rose Has a Story

Two years ago, while preparing for the annual rose work day, Connie Hilker stopped by the cemetery to check on a few final details. She encountered a businessman who was visiting the cemetery on his lunch hour.

“He asked me about the yellow caution tape on the roses,” she recalls. She told him that the yellow tape was there to make the roses more visible for the volunteers. The man then said, “I have roses on my family’s plot.” It turned out to be roses with which Hilker was very, very familiar.”

She has always called them “Katie Waldrop’s Roses” because of a name on a headstone near the roses. One of roses is ‘Safrano’, a tea rose that was introduced in 1839. The Waldrop ancestor believes that the roses were planted around the time that Katie was buried, in 1900. The other, smaller rose on the plot is still unidentified.

Another rose mystery was solved this year, in the Boyd plot near Presidents Circle. The small rose is always well maintained, and Hilker recently met the Boyd ancestor who is very diligent about care of his family’s rose. He shared his theory that the rose was probably planted in 1920, when his ancestor Mary F. Boyd was buried. His story makes sense, since Hilker believes that the rose is ‘Climbing American Beauty’, which was very popular in the early 20th century.

Hilker would love to document any other facts that families may have to share about roses that are currently, or were formerly, growing on their plot. “Someone planted these roses for their loved ones,” she says. “I would love to learn all I can about them, to add to what we may already know, and to preserve the information for folks in the future.”

If you have information or a story to tell about roses, or would like more information about a rose on your plot, contact Hilker via email ([connie@hartwoodroses.com](mailto:connie@hartwoodroses.com)) or call the Hollywood office.

## *Alexander W. Weddell, Diplomat (1876-1948)*

On the heels of Germany's shocking Blitzkrieg against the western democracies in spring 1940, neutral Spain became a hotbed of espionage and intrigue. "Madrid," wrote the American ambassador, Alexander W. Weddell (1876-1948), "continues to be a whispering gallery in which one heard rumors of diverse character, some of these seemingly fantastic."



*Alexander W. Weddell during his time as ambassador to Spain.*

Washington's man on the scene dutifully supported his own nation's official neutrality. But as America tilted increasingly toward the Allies, the pro-British Weddell strove to dissuade Spain, just emerging from the brutal trauma of civil war, from joining Hitler's Third Reich. Of all of today's permanent residents of Hollywood Cemetery, few had a better perspective on the unfolding European cataclysm than Weddell. It was a long way from his birth in the rectory of St. John's Church in Richmond and the genteel poverty that befell him after his father died when Alexander was seven.

Weddell liked to say his diplomatic career began by happenstance. One day in 1907, while working as a clerk in the patent office at the Library of Congress, he missed his

streetcar when he stooped to tie a loose shoelace. When he finally boarded another trolley, he fell into conversation with a man who told him the American minister to Denmark needed a private secretary. Weddell got the job, and higher consular postings followed in Zanzibar, Sicily, Athens, Beirut, Cairo, and Calcutta.

There, in the last of these, in the twilight of British India, his life changed abruptly. Forty-seven years old in 1923, he has assumed by then that he would remain a bachelor for life, but while visiting Virginia friends at a Calcutta hotel, he met a lively, and rich, widow from St. Louis. Sparks flew. Weddell quickly scheduled his leave so he could meet Virginia Chase Steedman and her party at their next stop in Rangoon. They married shortly thereafter. Following completion of his assignment in the Raj, she accompanied him to a posting in Mexico. Thanks to his wife's fortune, in 1928 Weddell retired from the consular service, only temporarily as it turned out. The couple made their home in Richmond and busied themselves with good works.

In 1933 the newly elected Franklin D. Roosevelt chose the tall, courtly Virginian as ambassador to Argentina. FDR knew he spoke Spanish and took a keen interest in Hispanic culture,

but Weddell's contributions to the Democratic Party cannot have hurt his chances for a senior diplomatic appointment either. It was from Buenos Aires five years later that Weddell moved to the fraught posting of ambassador to Spain, a scant month after the final fascist victory in a bitter civil war.

He arrived in Madrid in May 1939 and bent his efforts to establish sound relations with the newly ensconced regime of Francisco Franco. A conscientious worker, he acquitted himself well in negotiating a resolution to the long-simmering dispute for control of the American-owned telephone company in Spain. On the outbreak of war in Europe four months later, however, such commercial disputes faded in importance: the overriding American goal became keeping Spain neutral. With his dignified, erect bearing, pin-striped suit, bowtie, and white spats, Weddell presented the stereotypical image of a diplomat. He established



*Virginia House, the Weddells' home in Richmond.*

a correct relationship with the fascist government but gravitated toward those members of the conservative elite who had traditionally maintained ties with Britain and France.

The muck-raking Washington journalist Drew Pearson caused a stir back home by accusing the ambassador of totalitarian sympathies because Virginia Weddell had donated money to the welfare organization of Franco's Falange party. It was a spurious charge. The ambassador's wife had also given generously to the Spanish Red Cross and other agencies benefiting people irrespective of political leanings. Moreover, she had helped restore a hospital for children of those imprisoned or killed fighting for the Republican forces that had opposed Franco's fascists.

In his first two years on post, Weddell proved an effective observer and negotiator. Increasingly, however, he crossed swords with the colorful Ramon Serrano Sñner, interior minister and then foreign minister, the second most powerful figure after his brother-in-law, General Franco. Weddell's talents excelled in negotiating commercial relations, and he hoped to use economic leverage to keep Spain from allying with Hitler. Observing widespread privation, bordering on famine in some areas, Weddell was convinced of the humanitarian need and therefore of the value that foreign aid could have in furthering America's aims in Spain. He was a willing conduit for conveying Spanish desires for American support, especially food supplies. However, he was unable to convince Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who thought American public opinion remained adamant against giving any sort of aid to Franco. In the end, Weddell's efforts were in vain because Washington had other priorities and ultimately offered only a token shipment of food.

With German victory in the West, Weddell's chief goal was to thwart active Spanish belligerency on the

Axis side. The threat was highlighted by the celebrated meeting of Franco and Hitler in October 1940 at Hendaye, France, near the Spanish border. The Führer went away empty-handed (allegedly vowing he "would rather have three or four teeth pulled" than meet with Franco



*Virginia and Alexander Weddell at the ambassador's residence in Madrid.*

again). But if Spain did not enter the war on Germany's side, Franco did desire Nazi victory and later sent a volunteer division to fight alongside the Wehrmacht in Russia. Weddell knew well the danger posed if Spain abandoned neutrality. A month after Hendaye, he observed with disgust the red carpet rolled out in Madrid "in honor of this pervert," the repellent SS chief Heinrich Himmler.

Weddell's failure to convince the State Department to use economic aid to Spain as an incentive left him frustrated with his standing back home. He further allowed disagreements with Serrano Sñner to become personal, and this diluted

his effectiveness. Openly criticizing the Spanish foreign minister—and at one meeting completely losing his temper with Serrano Sñner—thwarted for some months Weddell's access to the government with which he was accredited.

Washington recalled Weddell for consultation in February 1942, and a medical problem prevented his expected return to Madrid. Back home, the Weddells took up residence at Virginia House, the mansion they had built during the ambassador's first retirement. Anglophiles in the fashion of upper-crust Virginians of the day, they indulged their tastes by purchasing Warwick Priory, a Tudor house built on the site of a dissolved monastery, and used its stones and woodwork to construct a brand-new sixteenth-century house in Richmond's Windsor Farms neighborhood. They filled Virginia House with Iberian antiques of dubious provenance, planted a sprawling garden designed by Charles Gillette that sloped down to the James River, and occupied their time with philanthropic pursuits.

On New Year's Day 1948, they set out by rail to winter in Arizona. On the way, in a snowstorm another train rammed their Pullman car and killed the couple and their English maid. Their tomb lies in Hollywood Cemetery. Each year the Virginia Historical Society, which inherited their house, holds its spring garden party on the Weddells' landscaped terraces and plantings that slope down to the James.

*Contributed by Nelson D. Lankford, PhD. Photographs courtesy of the Virginia Historical Society.*

# John Banister Tabb (1845-1909)

A pair of ivy covered yews mark the entrance to the gravesite of John Banister Tabb, Virginia's esteemed poet, beloved teacher, gifted musician, talented sketch artist, and Catholic priest. One of just two American writers admitted to the Oxford University Press Garland Series of Epigrams (1916), Father Tabb achieved national and international recognition as one of the South's finest poets for his treasury of brief lyrical gems.



At the age of 17, John Banister Tabb joined the Confederate Navy as a blockade runner bringing supplies from Bermuda and Nassau to the Carolinas. On his 21st mission, his ship developed engine trouble and was captured by Union troops June 4, 1864. During his confinement at the Bull Pen, a Federal prison camp at Pt.

Lookout, Maryland, he met fellow prisoner, Georgia poet-musician Sidney Lanier. Bound by their talents in music and poetry, Tabb and Lanier shared a life-long friendship.

After the war, Tabb journeyed to Baltimore to pursue his dream of becoming a concert pianist. After a year of study, his weak eyesight and the collapse of his patron's fortune forced Tabb to accept employment teaching English at St. Paul's in Baltimore in 1870 and at Racine College in Michigan in 1872. In 1878, he joined the faculty at St. Charles College, Ellicott City, Maryland, where he taught English and Greek. It was at St. Charles that he produced his greatest number of poems.

From 1877-1910, Tabb's poems were widely published in popular and prestigious magazines including: *Harpers*, *Atlantic*, and *Cosmopolitan* in the US, and *Spectator*, *Academy*, *Illustrated News*, and *Register* in England. Published books of his poetry include: *An Octave to Mary* (1893), *Poems* (1894), *Lyrics* (1897), *Child Verse*

(1899), *Later Lyrics* (1902), *The Rosary in Rhyme* (1904), *Quips and Quiddits* (1907), and *Later Poems* (1910). Francis A. Litz, Tabb's biographer, identified over 1000 poems in Tabb's production. After his death, the English poet Alice Meynell and Francis Litz both published collections of Tabb's works.

Many of Tabb's poems evoke the images he experienced at "The Forest," his family's plantation in Amelia County where he was born March 22, 1845, and during his woodland walks at St. Charles. His nature poems reveal a deep spirituality, a communion with and sensitivity toward the objects to which he gives breath:

### *Influence*

He cannot as he came depart--  
The Wind that woos the rose;  
Her fragrance whispers in his heart  
Wherever hence he goes.

### *The Dandelion*

With locks of gold today  
Tomorrow, silver gray,  
Then blossom-bald. Behold,  
O Man, they fortune told!

### *To A Songster*

Oh little bird, I'd be a Poet, like to thee,  
Singing my native song --  
Brief to the ear, but long  
To Love and Memory.

### *Snowdrop*

Behold from winter's sleeping side  
The sacramental power  
Of nature fashioneth a bride  
As fair as Eden's flower

### *Stars*

Behold upon the field of night,  
Far-scattered seeds of golden light  
Nor one to wither, but anon  
To bear the heaven-full harvest, dawn

### *God*

I see Thee in the distant blue;  
But in the violet's dell of dew,  
Behold, I breathe and touch Thee  
too.

"Tabb possessed an unerring sense of the exquisite beauty of the simplest works of nature" wrote one Richmond editor. Fellow poet Sister Mary Paulina Finn (aka M.S. Pine) writes: "Father Tabb moves and breathes in the heavenly atmosphere. He would have everything in nature, in art, in life bring us into closer relations with the Creator . . ." Enjoying a sunset one evening, Tabb remarked: "Now if men could take a picture of such marvelous beauty, how they would treasure it and take care to preserve it. God hangs it up in the sky for a few minutes, then wipes it all away. . . ."

Jessie Rittenhouse, editor of *The Little Book of American Poets*, writes "Tabb was, in poetry, a carver of cameos; his gemlike works almost wholly in very brief lyrics wrought with infinite pains." Dr. Charles A. Smith of the Naval Academy wrote: "Father Tabb had a concentric lyric genius without parallel in American literature."

(continued on page 9)

## Evolution

Out of the dusk a shadow, Then a spark;  
 Out of the cloud a silence, Then a lark;  
 Out of the heart a raputre, Then a pain;  
 Out of the dead cold ashes, Life again.

## Alter Ego

Though art to me as is the sea  
 Unto the shell:  
 A life whereof I breathe,  
 A love wherein I dwell.

Remembered for his “boyish love of a joke, his witty puns, and his brilliant epigrams,” Tabb often brought laughter and fun to his friends. Excerpts from *Quips and Quiddits* and *Child Verse* display a less serious nature:

### A Musician’s Trial

They brought him up before the judge  
 “What is this fellow’s crime?”  
 “Your honor, he has murdered scores,  
 And boasts of beating time!”

### Twins

Are you lost Jack Frost? Oh no;  
 For a time to and fro must I go,  
 But a longer stay I will make some day  
 When I come with my sister, the Snow.

Affectionately known as “Father Tabb” after his ordination into the priesthood, Tabb was a beloved companion and instructor to his students. *Bone Rules*(1897), his textbook on grammar, he dedicated to his pupils: “Active and Passive; Perfect and Imperfect; Past, Present, and Future.” Humor and rhyming memory verse he imbedded into his lessons. His students developed not only a love of literature but also an instinctive sense of grammatical correctness through unique teaching methods.

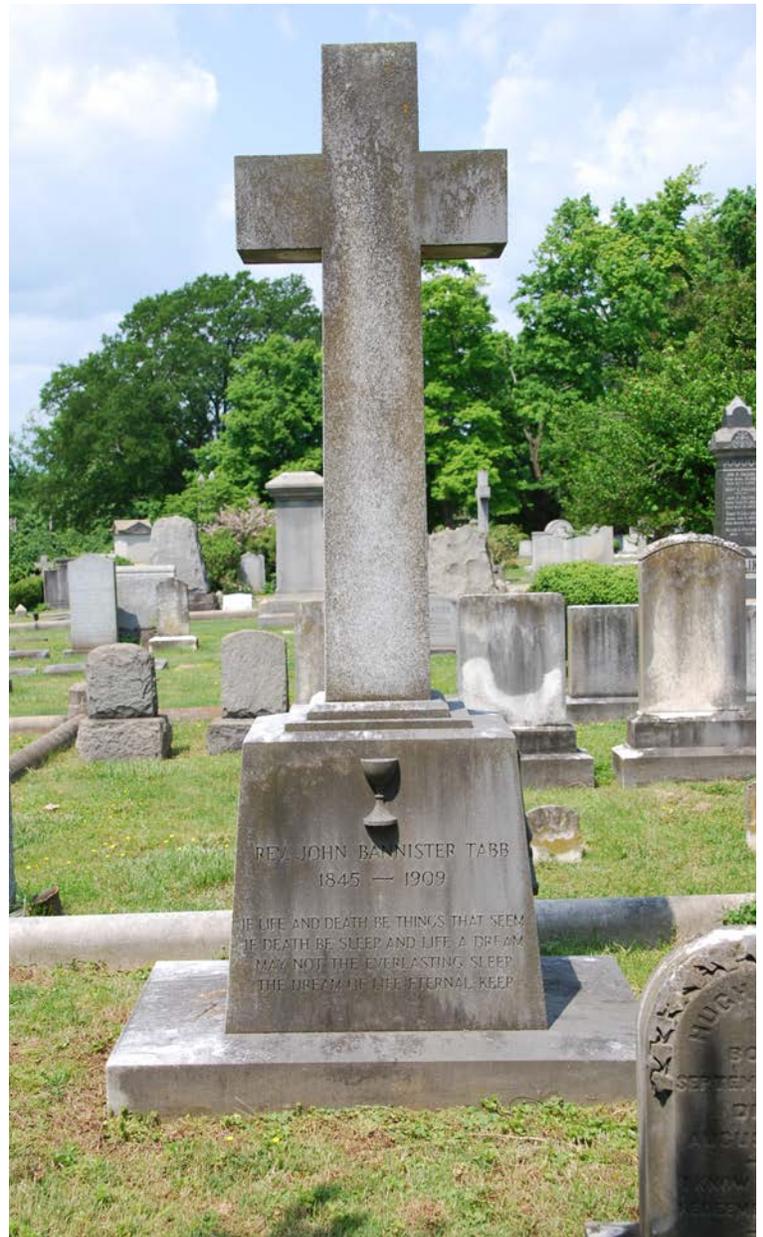
From an early age, Tabb also demonstrated talent in music and art. A gifted pianist, Tabb often used the vocabulary of music in his poetic analogies. As a sketch artist, he could draw a caricature of anyone in a minute. Under a cartoon of his own likeness he wrote:

“This is the Catholic Priest, Who in piety never increased  
 With the World and the Devil, He kept on the level  
 But from flesh he was wholly released!”

Totally blind the last two years of his life, Tabb died at St. Charles College, November 19, 1909. “He loved laughter and the pleasures of life while its pain stirred the depths of his being to affectionate and helpful response” read one Richmond editorial. The Rev. D. J. Conner, in his eulogy of Tabb said “all nature was to him a partial revelation of the beauty that is eternal”. Tabb was laid to rest in Hollywood Cemetery, Section 20, Lot 62. From *Later Poems*, his epitaph:

### In Aeternum

If life and death be things that seem  
 If death be sleep and life a dream  
 May not the everlasting sleep  
 The dream of life eternal keep.



**Tabb’s monument adjacent to Presidents Circle  
 (Section 20, Lot 62)**

In October 1936, Ephraim and Ida Anderson deeded one acre at “The Forest” to the state. There, the Forest Memorial Association of Notre Dame, Indiana, placed a marker honoring Tabb. Tabb’s poems are available on many online sites. Discover the creative genius and the poetic gems of Father John Banister Tabb.

*Contributed by  
 Kathryn L. Whittington  
 March, 2016*

# When A Great Tree Falls, Its Neighbors Sigh

Loss of a monarch tree in Hollywood is always a time of quiet reflection. Less than 100 such trees remain within the cemetery's 135 acres. A monarch tree has been defined as a tree generally over 35" DBH (diameter at breast height), a long lived species, in good condition, structurally superior, and in a prominent location. One hundred years of age would be considered young by some.

On March 4, 2016, a thundering sound interrupted the quiet morning routine. For those who have heard it before, it was not a welcome sound. On the hillside opposite the entrance bridge to the cemetery, the roots of a 200 year old white

oak had given way. As trunk and branches crashed to the ground, they took their toll upon surrounding monuments and markers in their path.

The demise of this particular sentinel tree has been attributed to interior rot (not visible to the naked eye) and to its hillside root system.

Recognizing that it requires generations to grow and nurture a monarch tree, Hollywood has for many years observed a program of annual tree replanting.



## Dates to Remember

**Rescheduled Annual Picnic**  
Sunday  
September 18, 2016

**Speaker Series**  
Dr. Edward L. Ayers  
Wednesday  
September 21, 2016

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*The Grave-Tender*

by Suzanne Munson

I always admired the cemetery  
with its ancient gray marbles  
and venerable old trees.  
But it was always a place for others,  
for others' hearts and memories.  
I was only visiting.

Now I am a grave-tender, a care-giver of graves.  
I soften his place with little green plants  
and water when days are dry.  
I clean the leaves from his parents' space  
and see where I will lie.

On his birthday, we bring flowers.  
I remove them when they die.  
I note the names on graves nearby,  
neighbors forever as seasons pass by,  
still and calm under an eternal sky.

**2016**

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Kelly Jones Wilbanks, Executive Director  
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**2016**

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***In the center of the photograph is the heart-shaped Palmer plot. The plot is enclosed by one of the most ornamental cast iron fences in Richmond. The restored “Palmer fence” was dedicated in November, 2015.***

*Photograph by Reid Attaway*