



FRIENDS OF OCONEE HILL CEMETERY

Fall 2019



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Cover Image: Don Smith took this photo of Oconee Hill Cemetery of the Harrison plot.

From the President

As you may read elsewhere in this newsletter, several projects recently initiated by the Friends have been stalled pending final agreement between the Trustees and local government officials regarding the city's resolute determination to extend the North Oconee Greenway through Oconee Hill Cemetery.

As long ago as 1992, when the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government (ACCUG) established the Oconee Rivers Greenway as a system of river-oriented public trails centered on the floodplain of the North Oconee River to connect Sandy Creek Park on the northeast side of town with College Station Road on the southeast, the 3,000 or so feet of river frontage within the boundaries of Oconee Hill Cemetery was critical to the Greenway's success.

Over time and, significantly, throughout the terms of mayors and county commissions that followed, the city continued to push for access through this privately held property while the Trustees discussed among themselves how best to accommodate what many considered an unwelcome intrusion at best or a permanent defacement of historic and hallowed ground at worst. For many years, a political and practical impasse existed between the two parties even as offers, counter-offers and wish-lists were passed back and forth.

By early 2019, enough segments of 12-foot-wide concrete pathway had been completed to provide nearly 5 miles of public trails for recreational walking, jogging and bicycle use by citizens of Clarke County. The big gap in the middle of the North Oconee Greenway Network Plan remained the Oconee Hill Cemetery sewer easement running down the east side of the river between Oak Street and River Road. By mid-year, ACCUG officials increased the pressure on the Trustees to agree formally to the extension of the Greenway or, in a worst-case scenario, face the imposition of condemnation or eminent domain, thus forcing the Trustees to accept the Greenway without further discussion or input.

The many parties fully invested in the welfare and future of this historic sanctuary may soon see a decision that's simply the result of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object. As Georgian Johnny Mercer's 1955 song suggests, "something's gotta give."

On September 12, 2019, the Trustees met in closed session and reluctantly voted 6-0 to accept ACC's most recent cash offer for easement rights and a promise to build the fenced Greenway path "under the bridge" adjacent to and within sight of the Wingfield Chapel. If they did not agree to the city's terms, the Trustees understood a condemnation order would be effected the next morning. A binding Memorandum of Understanding is now being drafted that will finalize details and a construction timetable.

We will continue to update the Friends membership on all issues dear to the heart of Oconee Hill Cemetery. Thank you so very much for your patience, your understanding and your continued support.

NANCY BUNKER BOWEN
President

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

The Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery is a nonprofit organization in Athens, Georgia, that is dedicated to building a partnership between the cemetery and the community by focusing attention on the cemetery's beauty, historic legacy, facilities and needs, particularly for the restoration and support of the cemetery through membership dues and other funding.





Robert Thompson was the speaker for Veterans Day. Tom Hodgson was in charge of the event at Oconee Hill Cemetery.



Robert Thompson, the speaker on Veterans Day, was the roommate of Al Kettner at the Naval Academy. Kettner was killed in Vietnam. His mother knitted this afghan and gave it to Thompson.



Callie Waller sang patriotic songs. Junior ROTC from Clarke Central High School displayed the American flag.



The Elijah Clarke Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution put the poppies out early morning.

VETERANS DAY OBSERVANCE

November 11, 2019, at 11 a.m.
Oconee Hill Cemetery

Robert Thompson, USNA and a retired lieutenant, US Navy, was the keynote speaker at this year's Veterans Day observance sponsored by the Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery. The annual observance was scheduled for 11 a.m., Monday, November 11, at the flagpole plaza at the entrance to Oconee Hill Cemetery and was free and open to the public.

This year's national Veterans Day falls on the 101st anniversary of the Armistice agreement signed on November 11, 2018, between Germany and the Allied Forces that brought to an end more than four years of horrific fighting and the loss of millions of lives during World War I.

Retired Lieut. Thompson is the brother-in-law of Tom Hodgson. A graduate of the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, he served on a warship in the Gulf of Tonkin and is a Vietnam veteran. Callie Waller sang patriotic hymns at the opening and closing of the Veterans Day ceremony. The Junior ROTC color guard was in attendance from Clarke Central High School. Graphic designer Eleanor Sams designed posters for the event. The Veterans Leadership Council provided water and cookies. Janssen set up the chairs on the plaza. The Elijah Clarke Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution provided poppies for the occasion. Moina Michael—born in Good Hope Georgia, in 1869 and died in Athens in 1944—is remembered as the “Poppy Lady” for her efforts to sell the flowers to benefit those who served in WWI. Marke Maxwell set up the audio system. Tom Hodgson was in charge of the Veterans Day event and is also a member of the Friends of Oconee Hill Board.

ANNUAL MEETING



In Nancy Bowen's absence, Jody Boling presided over the annual meeting on October 20, 2019. Tom Wilfong, Mark Costantino, Joe Tillman, Helen Mills, Lucy Allen and Cissy Hutchinson represented the Trustees of Oconee Hill Cemetery. Wilfong, who is chair of the Trustees, made some brief remarks, discussing the restoration of the Sexton's House from 2003 to 2005, the construction of the Wingfield Chapel in honor of Terry Wingfield and the restoration of the bridge and the plaza where the Veterans Day ceremony is held each year. The Trustees attended the Cemetery Association meeting in Savannah on October 16 – 18.

New Officers were elected for the Friends of Oconee Hill as follows: Charlotte Thomas Marshall, president; Sallyanne Barrow, vice president; Jody Boling, secretary; and Sue Boatright, treasurer. Jody Boling recognized Marcia Griffin Talmadge as a new member of the Friends of Oconee Hill. Boling also prepared the minutes of the October 21, 2018, annual meeting, and a committee of FOH



officers reviewed and approved them. Sue Boatright and the auditing firm of Turner and Patat reviewed the financial reports,

which were approved by a committee of board officers. The meeting was adjourned, and everyone was invited to enjoy refreshments in the dining room.

Above top: Helen Mills, Cissy Hutchinson and Jody Boling. Above: Winkie Winburn and Janet Bishop. Right: Gib Johnston, JoAn Salloum and Sue Boatright.



PRICE INCREASE

Effective January 2, 2020, the Trustees of Oconee Hill Cemetery will increase the price of a single 5 x 10-foot grave lot to \$4,000 from the current price of \$3,000. At the same time, the price of premium plots will increase to \$6,000 from the current price of \$5,000. Any lot purchased prior to January 2, 2020, will be sold at the current price. For sales information contact Don Smith at 706-543-6262 or dsmith@bellsouth.net.

Silver donated by Leslie Sinyard and her father Tom Smith.



Featured Stone:
MARY DOROTHY LYNDON
WEST HILL: LOT 184



Mary Lyndon was born in Newnan, Georgia, on August 13, 1877, and died in Washington, Georgia, on April 5, 1924. She was the first dean of women at the University of Georgia. She was the daughter of Lucy Lundy Lyndon and Andrew Jackson Lyndon. She never married. She received a bachelor's degree in dramatic arts at Wesleyan College and a master's degree in the same subject from the University of Georgia. She attended the State Normal School in Athens by taking the two-year diploma course. She completed that degree and graduated as one of 13 seniors in 1901.

She was still interested in drama, and she next attended Columbia University in New York, where she studied dramatic art and history. When she returned home, she taught English briefly at Athens High School from 1911 to 1917. She also taught history at the Lucy Cobb Institute, a private school for girls. In the summers she attended UGA and on June 17, 1914, she became the first woman to graduate from UGA by completing the master of arts degree for courses.

In 1918, the board of trustees opened the doors of UGA to women. Chancellor Barrow recommended "that a woman be elected Associate Professor of Education and also be made dean of Women," so Mary Lyndon became the first dean of women at UGA. At that time she was a mature woman, 43

years old, well educated and of wide and varied interests; she was possessed of an equable disposition, a keen intelligence, boundless energy and a love and sympathy for young people.

In 1921 the first sorority, Alpha Alpha chapter of Phi Mu, was established at UGA under Lyndon's guidance. She was an alumna of the Alpha chapter at Wesleyan College of Phi Mu. Lyndon managed to find time to serve as secretary of the local Daughters of the American Revolution chapter and was recording secretary of the Athens YWCA. She also wrote for the Athens Banner and was a teacher in the Sunday school of the First Methodist Church. As Dean Snelling said at her memorial service, "Her consuming desire was to serve the young people coming under her care and direction, and to make the institution of which she was a part worthy of respect and confidence."

A dormitory on the south campus of UGA is named in her memory, and a portrait of her by Atlanta artist Kate Edwards hangs in the entrance hall there. "Miss Mary," as her girls called her, believed in scholarship, in lofty ideals and in young people, and for them she lived a life of unselfish service. As a true pioneer, she blazed the trail for thousands of young women who since 1920 have come to the University of Georgia. (From the "Dictionary of Georgia Biography," edited by Kenneth Coleman and Charles Stephen Gurr.)

PIONEERS AND LEGENDS OF OCONEE HILL CEMETERY

On July 26, 2019, Professor Garrison Bickerstaff had his Freshman College class take place from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Sexton's House. The students, who had spent time researching at UGA's Special Collections Libraries, portrayed Thomas Dyer, Mildred Lewis Rutherford, Lucy May Stanton, Charles Mercer Snelling, Fred Davison and Dan Magill. The students divided the Pioneers and Legends into three parts so that each one had a role to play.



Tom Dyer was Vice President for Instruction at UGA and created Freshman College, which will be 20 years old in 2020.



Frederick Davison was president of the University of Georgia from 1967 to 1986.



A self-portrait of Lucy May Stanton from the collection of the Georgia Museum of Art.

*Donations from
November 1, 2018, to
October 15, 2019*
(not including membership contributions)

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Sexton's House photo courtesy of Dennis O'Kain, Wingfield Chapel photo courtesy of Mark Costantino.