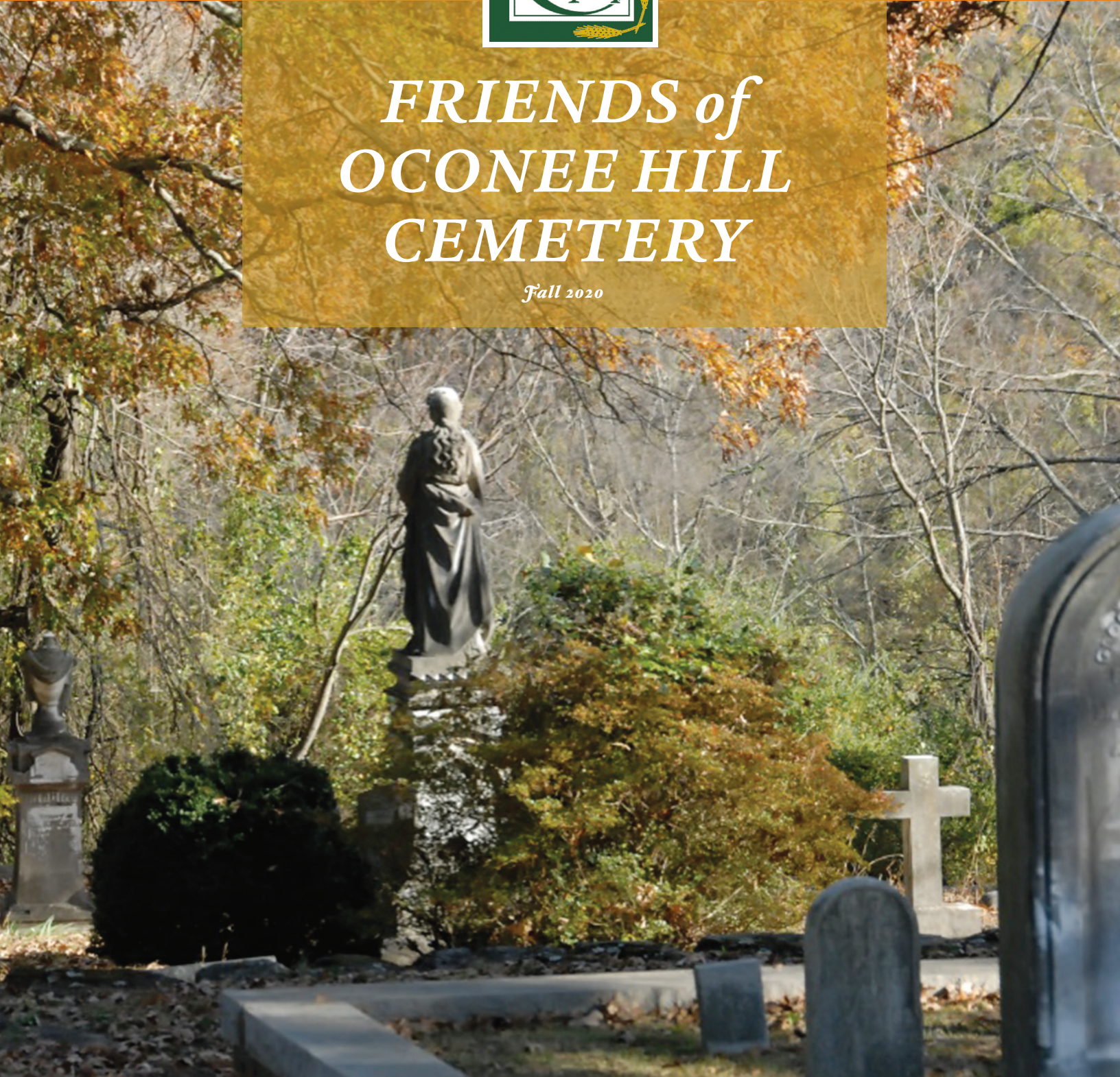




*FRIENDS of  
OCONEE HILL  
CEMETERY*

*Fall 2020*



## Board of the Friends

(Founded 1999)

### Officers, 2019–20

*President*, Charlotte Thomas Marshall

*Vice President*, Sallyanne Barrow

*Corresponding/Recording*

*Secretary*, Jody Wilson Boling

*Treasurer*, Sue Boatright

### Board of Directors

Sallyanne Barrow

Alice Ann Bowman

Helen M. Costantino

Anna Burns Dyer

Jodie Traylor Guy

Tom Hodgson

Gene Howard

Claire R. James

J. Gibson Johnston

Richard B. Lane

Nan R. Leathers

Ann Green Moseley

Milton Perry

JoAn Lewis Salloum

Marcia Griffin Talmadge

### Founding President

Mary Anne Bittner Kenner

(deceased)

### Historical Consultant

Charlotte Thomas Marshall

### Trustees

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Mark John Constantino, *vice chair*

Cissy Alexander Hutchinson,  
*finance chair*

Helen Hudson Mills, *secretary*

Lucy Erwin Allen, *immediate past chair*

Joseph E. Tillman

### Invited Guests

Charlotte Thomas Marshall, *president*,  
*FOH*

Donald H. Smith, *general manager*

Kelly Girtz, *mayor*, Athens-Clarke County,  
*ex-officio*

*Cover Image: Photo by Mark Costantino.*

*Restoration photos by Joe Tillman. Board photo  
by Charlotte Thomas Marshall. Back cover  
photo by Don Smith.*

## From the President

An unanticipated result of the coronavirus pandemic has been the resurgence of visitors, one of the original goals of the natural landscape cemetery that Oconee Hill Cemetery exemplifies. As the successor to the crowded, strictly pedestrian town cemeteries, it was to be a Victorian park with rolling, wooded hills, grassy valleys, curving drives, opening vistas and flowing water — a destination for a walk or carriage ride to enjoy beauty and serenity. Throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th, many people visited and often wrote newspaper articles about the features of this open-air museum.

This past spring a new audience discovered Oconee Hill Cemetery when area parks closed at the beginning of the pandemic. People needed to get out in a safe space — to walk alone, to stroll with their children, to bicycle, to read and study. Oconee Hill Cemetery has never been more inviting than in 2020! Visitors comment on the beauty of the grounds. Much credit for this is due to the Friends, whose projects over the past 20 years have brought in professional expertise and provided funding for countless improvements.

You have been — and are! — the catalyst making a profound difference. Ever since the Trustees employed Donald H. Smith, who is now general manager, great accomplishments have been realized in technological advances and new approaches to grounds management. Although the pandemic caused us to shelter and forego in-person board meetings for many months, we decided to try an open-air meeting in the Wingfield Chapel on a late July morning. It was so inviting that we will continue so long as the weather permits.

Farewells to valued board members began with Anna Burns Dyer's move to California to be near family. We appreciate the many splendid issues of this newsletter that Anna has given us. We are also bidding farewell to several long-time board members who have given selflessly of their time and abilities to the Friends. Ann Green Moseley and Jodie Traylor Guy have spent hours keeping our membership records in order (no small task) and reaching out to prospective members. Sisters Nan Richardson Leathers and Claire Richardson James have been our public face as they presided over the Sexton's House, preparing it for rentals, being present during the rentals to assist and to answer questions about the house and the cemetery, and returning to see that it was clean and ready to go again. Donations in appreciation of their assistance are frequent. The house was heavily used right up to the shutdown occasioned by the pandemic, and we look forward to being able to open it again.

It is with great disappointment that we accept the necessity of postponing the annual meeting until spring. Our Veterans Day observance will be reformatted from in-person to a self-guided tour of selected veterans' graves and an online event. Although Oconee Hill's first burial was not until February 1857, many graves have been relocated from other cemeteries, and veterans of all wars beginning with the American Revolution are buried within our gates. Each of you is important to the Friends and the cemetery, and we want to hold hands through any safe medium available until we can meet in person again.

Charlotte Thomas Marshall  
*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.



*The narrative of Oconee Hill Cemetery is, without doubt, one of history, an evolving story of Georgia families and the ancestors buried there.*

After 164 years, however, it is inevitable that many burial sites reveal the scars of time and a harsh Georgia climate. Our current Friends president, Charlotte Thomas Marshall, in her landmark book, “Oconee Hill Cemetery in Athens, Georgia,” tells us that over years marble in monuments changes color or bits of statues break off, not to mention the shifting red clay and harsh storms playing havoc with the environment.

The restoration of grave sites at Oconee Hill has been intertwined with the dedication and donations of families, foundations, grants, a capital campaign and volunteers from the Friends board and OHC Trustees. The synergy between these groups has made the difference between a project’s completion or it being placed on a waiting list, where it may take years before working its way to the top.

Families have stepped in when needed, as illustrated in the case of the Jacob Phinizy lot, when a storm caused a tree to fall and family members contributed funds for repair. The historic iron fence surrounding the Lumpkin-Cobb lots exemplifies another family effort. In 2017, the Friends and family members

collaborated to stabilize the deteriorating fence. OHC Trustee Lucy Allen, a descendant of Howell Cobb and his brother T.R.R. Cobb, led a letter-writing campaign to ask family members for assistance. Descendants of Joseph Henry Lumpkin and T.R.R. Cobb, along with a generous grant from the Watson-Brown Foundation and Joseph L. Hull Jr. Foundation, allowed the fence to be restored.



*Before and after photos of the George W. Center lot demonstrate recent restoration results, with unsafe steps and a crumbling wall repaired.*

*“The highly successful capital campaign has allowed funding for critical care needs...” –Joe Tillman*

In recent years several foundations have come to the rescue and allowed the completion of numerous projects. Friends board member Richard Lane has earned the appreciation of the OHC Trustees and Friends for his willingness to write successful grants.

The highly successful capital campaign has allowed funding for critical care needs and a reserve to take OHC into future decades. Trustee Joe Tillman says campaign funds are divided between the cemetery’s perpetual care fund; immediate and prioritized restorations; and a portion dedicated to the cemetery’s infrastructure.

Trustee Lucy Allen said the genesis for the capital campaign was completed over a two-year period. “The goal was to review the Chicora Foundation’s report, a survey commissioned by the Friends years earlier, which identified areas in the cemetery which needed improvement and it became a blueprint for action by Friends and Trustees,” said Allen. The Chicora Foundation specializes in historic preservation and cultural resources protection.

In order to make the recommended infrastructure improvements the Trustees enlisted Jeff Gowdy of Lighthouse Council and Friends board member Janie

*Both the Church-Robb lot (L) and the William and Martha Mitchell lot (R) had major repairs completed this summer. Virginia Historic Preservation restored the monuments on both lots.*



Bush to lead the capital campaign. “The generosity of the Athens community and others from across the state and nation with connections to OHC was impressive,” added Allen.

The results of this campaign are evident on these pages.

In 2017, Tillman and Marshall took a fact-finding walk through the cemetery to create a plan for future projects. That survey resulted in a list of 17 potential projects. Amazingly, 10 of these have already been completed, in only three years. The before and after photographs show unbelievable results.

In 2019, Marshall and Tillman were joined by OHC Trustees Allen and Tom Wilfong on yet another walk to assess upcoming repairs. “Based on our collective input, a list was created for repairs that included crumbling retaining walls and steps,” said Tillman. He added, “We are happy to report work has begun; however, it does not slow down. Work on retaining walls is endless. As most know, these walls are the ultimate responsibility of the family who owns the plot. We are making every reasonable step we can to ask families for their partnership.”

He also pointed out that many families have been very generous in partnering with the cemetery and will continue to partner in the future. “The infrastructure has not been neglected,” said Tillman. “Several of the projects listed have been completed and landscaping in the F-3 section to aid water drainage is done. Also completed are new retaining walls along the edge of the Factory Burial Ground along with another retaining wall on the side of West Hill and beside the road. In the near future, new paving will occur on some of the roads and plans are to service the bridge with a new surface across it.”

Although people complain that Athens is no longer a small town, these recent efforts signal that our town does preserve the community spirit that inspired the cemetery’s founders to create this beautiful space over 100 years ago.

*Retaining walls were at the top of this summer’s priority repair list. Walls along the Factory Burial Grounds next to the road were repaired by stone mason Johnny Smith. Clint Watson completed the stone work along the backside of West Hill Road. New vegetation was added this summer to prevent erosion.*





## *Farewell to Good Friends*

It is never easy to say good-bye, especially to good Friends as they leave the board of the Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery.

All of the current departing board members have been exemplary in their service and dedication to this group. The words of Helen Costantino, a fellow board member, express the sentiments of her colleagues when saluting Anna Burns Dyer, who is leaving the board after five years for a move to California to be near her daughter and family. “Becoming newsletter editor, Anna assumed responsibility for the most challenging position on the board. She not only rose to the task, but she made each issue unique and told stories of OHC that captured the essence of the mission of our group,” said Costantino.

“She created the ‘Featured Stone’ section, focusing on specific monuments and their fascinating history. Each issue was a work of art and a gift to our community. Anna gave much time and effort to tell the story of Oconee Hill. It was personal to her. She felt a connection to her late husband, noted historian Tom Dyer, who is buried at OHC, and wanted others to know of the peace and comfort this historic cemetery brought to her. Anna never accepted less than the best with any project she undertook. There was never a better friend of Oconee Hill Cemetery and she will be truly missed,” Costantino added.

The unsurpassable sister team of Nan Leathers and Claire James will also be missed as they rotate off the board after serving as chairs of the Sexton’s House. The duo has arranged their schedules to accommodate family members in grief who wish to schedule receptions following services. Their time and lives are often arranged around the wishes of families. The sisters have been a comfort to those in grief. Their willingness to serve has benefited not only our community but the board of the Friends in expanding rentals of the Sexton’s House to include meetings, bridal showers and luncheons. Leathers and James leave a vacancy that will be difficult to fill.

Ann Green Moseley and Jodie Traylor Guy are also leaving the board. No one knows how much patience and time it has taken these two to keep the records of membership in a meticulous manner. Their attention to detail has earned the respect and admiration of fellow board members. They leave their office in excellent condition for those who follow them.

Past president Nancy Bowen has requested to transfer to emeritus status this year. Long-time emeritus board member JoAn Salloum, also a past president, is leaving active board participation. Both Bowen and Salloum have been instrumental in many of the successes achieved by the board of the Friends.



## *Fall 2020 Announcements*

The Friends Annual Meeting will be held in spring 2021. The date will be announced later.

The annual observance of Veterans Day will not be in person this year. Materials for self-guided tours will be available at the cemetery and online.



The first Friends board meeting after months of sheltering was held on July 21 in the Wingfield Chapel. Everyone wore a mask, brought a chair and maintained social distancing. (left to right): Gibson Johnston, Nan Leathers, Milton Perry, Ann Moseley, Claire James, Helen Costantino, Sallyanne Barrow, Jody Boling, Sue Boatright and Charlotte Marshall (behind the camera).

**Memorials and Honoraria**  
received October 16, 2019, to September 1, 2020

**Memorials**

- In Memory of Virginia Sue "Jinx" Rosemond Baldwin*  
Dwayne Blasingame  
Marguerite and Charles Burch  
Betsy and Mark Ellison  
Bruce and Nedra Hecker  
Mrs. David Maybank Jr.  
Ann Moseley
- In Memory of Isaac Oakley Billue*  
Julie Boyd
- In Memory of Don and Jane Bloemer*  
John Daniel Bloemer
- In Memory of Harvey Cabaniss*  
Ann Moseley
- In Memory of Eve Marie Carson*  
Dennis Utley
- In Memory of Baxter Crane*  
Betsey and Ricky Chastain
- In Memory of Steve Erwin*  
Jim and Sallyanne Barrow
- In Memory of Lee Holloway Hatmaker*  
Suzanne Bennett
- In Memory of the Rev. Dr. John Kipp*  
The Rev. Dr. Ryan Baer

- In Memory of Marie Hodgson Koenig*  
Jack and Suzanne Bennett  
Lucy Tresp
- In Memory of Milton Mills*  
Jody Boling  
Mark and Helen Costantino
- In Memory of Dr. W. Robert "Bob" Nix*  
Jack and Suzanne Bennett
- In Memory of Sue Quillian*  
Fran and Richard Lane  
From her children  
Patricia "Candy" Quillian  
Carol Quillian Bethune  
Daniel D. Quillian IV  
Cathleen "Cay" Quillian
- In Memory of Hannah Smith*  
Jim Smith
- In Memory of Charlotte Reasor Waters*  
Suzanne Bennett
- In Memory of Kathleen Wilfong*  
Jody Boling  
Mark and Helen Costantino
- In Memory of Lovat and John Wilkins*  
Ellen Wilkins Wiley

- In Memory of Joy Wilkes Wingfield*  
Patricia Quillian Corbitt  
Shelley Q. McLeod

**Honoraria**

- In Honor of Lucy and Buddy Allen*  
Ellen Wilkins Wiley
- In Honor of Mr. and Mrs. R. Walter Eckles*  
Charlotte Crowe
- In Honor of Mary Talmadge Hardman*  
Mac Talmadge
- In Honor of Tom and Peter Hodgson*  
Joe and Penny Hodgson
- In Honor of Dorothy Crowe Hudson*  
Charlotte Crowe
- In Honor of Claire James and Nan Leathers*  
Max Gilstrap  
Jody Guy
- In Honor of Charlotte Marshall*  
Historic Athens



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## Oconee Hill Cemetery Social Distancing Since 1856

The founders of Oconee Hill Cemetery always intended that the town's new cemetery be used as a "park-like" setting. It is the perfect spot for a morning stroll or afternoon walk. Take time this fall to visit and enjoy not only the fall colors of Athens, but an outdoor history lesson.

*Open 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. daily.*