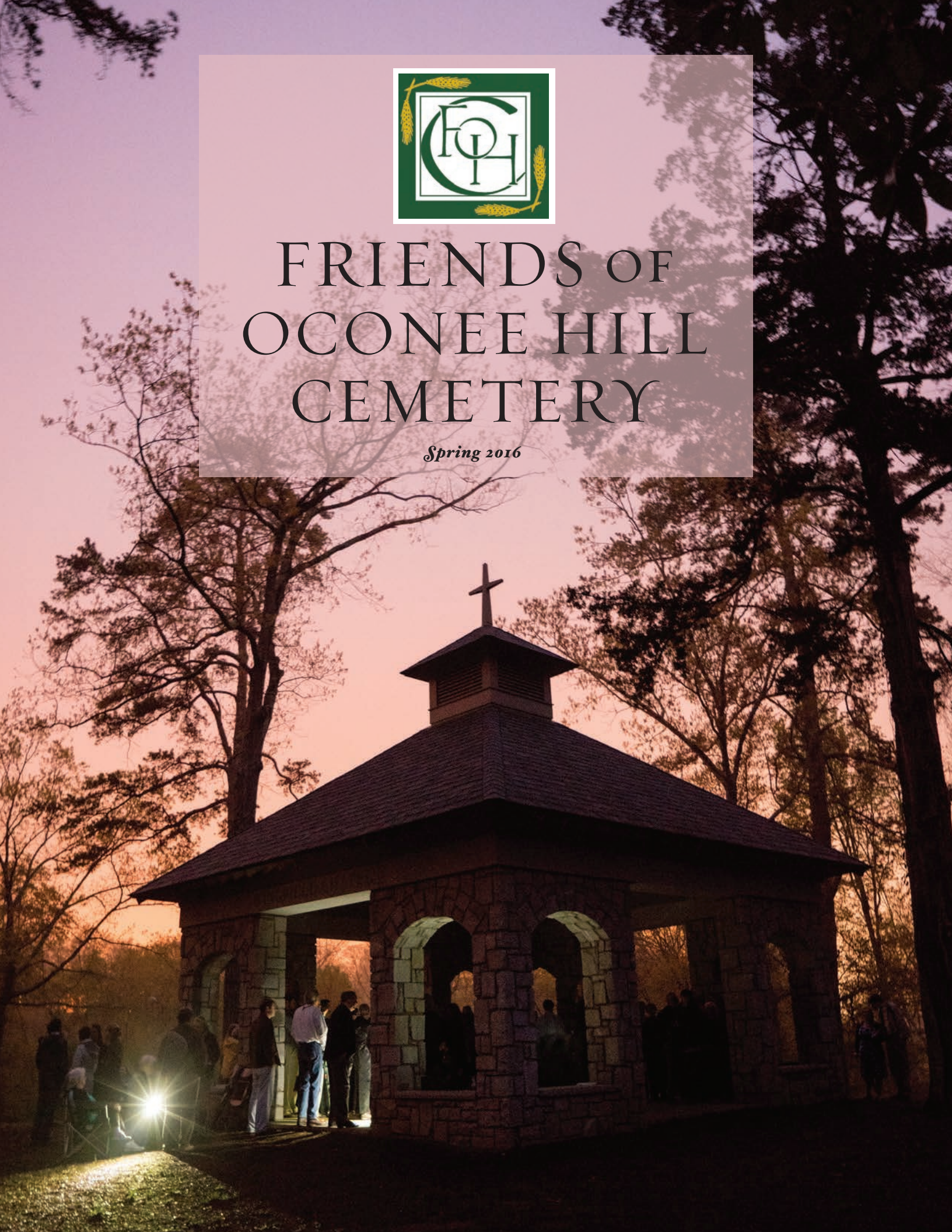




FRIENDS OF OCONEE HILL CEMETERY

Spring 2016



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Cover Image: The Easter sunrise service held at Oconee Hill Cemetery in the open-air Wingfield Chapel was conducted by the ministers of First Baptist Church, Athens.

Photo by Jason Thrasher.

From the President

The smartphone of the 21st century is an amazing invention. On this device we can make phone calls, text with friends or loved ones and Google any fact we are curious about at a moment's notice. Yet, this instant information has also led many people to be constantly attached to the latest information and what is coming next. Too often, people get sucked into this habit and lose sight of the present. As Oconee Hill moves through its 160th year, it might be easy to reflect on the past and wonder what will happen next. We on the Friends board are constantly looking to the future, but working and living in the present.

The board has done an admirable job focusing on priorities that need to be addressed, and in this issue you will learn more about initiatives it has supported: for example, the Trustee efforts at the Easter sunrise service and the Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours event, which the Trustees hosted. Of great interest is the growing relationship between UGA's Experiential Learning Program and the cemetery. Great articles on these projects and others are included in this issue of our newsletter.

Another item of note is that the Friends have been awarded a federal grant in the amount of \$10,710 from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources for tree work in the cemetery. This amount will be matched with \$7,500 by the Friends to manage living trees, remove dead trees and get rid of invasive plant species. The first priority will be "crown cleaning" of trees to remove any dead elements and correct any improper pruning from the past. A special thank you is extended to board member Richard Lane for getting this grant application off the ground and especially to Rob Trevena, director of Athens-Clarke County's Department of Housing and Community Development. Trevena was instrumental in the grant writing process and shepherding it through the necessary steps for approval.

We are also continuing to collaborate with high school students from Athens Academy who are doing research about interesting individuals buried in the cemetery. One day this information will be used for self-guided tours for visitors. Efforts by the board membership committee have been tremendous and have helped increase our ranks this year. Finally, the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation presented the Friends its 2016 Stewardship Award on May 22 at an awards ceremony in Marietta. Needless to say, the Friends are very much working in the present to help the cemetery have a healthy future.

JOE TILLMAN
President

DON SMITH JOINS OCONEE HILL TEAM



This spring the Trustees hired Don Smith as a marketing consultant to assist with a variety of tasks. Don will use his expertise from a career in sales and marketing to promote Oconee Hill Cemetery in the Athens community and beyond. Don will encourage more events and access to Oconee Hill and will assist the Trustees with fundraising efforts. Don has already created a master calendar to ensure that all events at Oconee Hill are coordinated. He will review cemetery software, the Oconee Hill website and the phone system to make recommendations to the Trustees. Don was born in Atlanta and has a degree in journalism and mass communications from UGA. He served in Vietnam, where he was a journalist for the 4th Infantry Division. He later became a photojournalist for the Stars and Stripes. Don is married to the former Margaret McPherson, a native Athenian. They have one daughter, Fleming, who recently completed her freshman year at the University of the South, Seawanee.

Easter Sunrise Service

Despite a forecast of thunderstorms and rain, a large crowd gathered at the open-air Wingfield Chapel at Oconee Hill Cemetery for an Easter sunrise service. The service was conducted by First Baptist Church of Athens with Rev. Paul Baxley, the senior minister, who was assisted by Frank Granger, the associate minister. As



is often the case, the forecasters were incorrect, and the morning was quite mild temperature-wise, with a mist rising from the trees rather than rain. Sexton Brian Adler and the grounds crew were extremely helpful, opening the gates to the cemetery early and standing by their trucks with headlights beaming to point the way to the chapel. Trumpet solos by Jim McKillip were a highlight of the moving ceremony. As

Bible verses were read and silent prayers were offered, attendees couldn't help but notice the chirping of many birds.

Photos by Jason Thrasher.



"BUSINESS AFTER HOURS" AT OCONEE HILL



Oconee Hill trustees and Friends board members hosted the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce for its Business After Hours on April 21 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The Chamber's monthly program gave its members a chance to enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres in the Sexton's House and on the porch and learn about Oconee Hill Cemetery. About 90 guests, many of whom had never visited Oconee Hill before, attended the event. Many visitors took advantage of a driving tour

through the cemetery on the Welcome Center bus with Tom Wilfong on board as the guide.

Left: Tiffany Burrows (ARMC; left) and Bridget Burke (The Graduate; right) register Colby Smith (Atlas Realty). Center: Tom Hodgson (Hodgson's Pig Farm) and Cissy Alexander Hutchinson (Oconee Hill Trustee). Right: Chamber members enjoy refreshments in the Sexton's House.

Experiential Learning Comes to Oconee Hill

Beginning this fall, the University of Georgia will require incoming freshmen to engage in hands-on learning prior to graduation. Although this requirement is new, students have been taking advantage of hands-on learning opportunities for years. Students will have a variety of ways to fulfill it, including internships, study abroad, research and service-learning. Oconee Hill Cemetery provides a 100-acre open classroom and laboratory within walking distance of campus. More than a year ago, several members of the Friends of Oconee Hill board and a trustee met with UGA President Jere Morehead and Provost Pamela Whitten to explore ways that UGA students could fulfill the new requirement at Oconee Hill. President Morehead and Provost Whitten were very positive about this possibility and suggested that they meet with Dr. Linda Bachman, the director of experiential learning. Dr. Bachman suggested that they meet to coordinate with the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts and its director, Nicholas Allen. Professor Allen and the Willson Center were quite enthusiastic about the proposed cooperative venture. This



(top) A UGA student explains her research about Susan Bevel Allen Harris and Young Lofton Gerdine Harris by their graves. (bottom) Students from Professor Berry's and Professor Nesbit's classes present their digital research about Oconee Hill while their professors listen.

Photos by Jason Thrasher.

cooperation led to the Willson Center and Friends of Oconee Hill hosting a barbeque lunch on April 21 at the cemetery to encourage professors and students to explore ways that they might satisfy the new experiential learning requirement at Oconee Hill. Prior to the new requirement taking effect Professor Stephen Berry (history) and Professor Scott Nesbit (historic preservation) have been teaching classes that require their students to conduct research about those buried at Oconee Hill in the original part on West Hill. At the barbeque lunch these students stood by the graves of those whose lives they had researched and told guests about the individual. Following the lunch other students showed the website that they are creating with their research. Eventually, a visitor will be able to access this information with either the last name of the deceased or the lot number. As Professor Berry said in conclusion this occasion represents a positive cooperation that employs hands-on learning to

benefit students, Oconee Hill Cemetery, the University of Georgia and the greater Athens community.



FRIENDS RECOGNIZED BY GEORGIA TRUST

At the April meeting of the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation the Friends of Oconee Hill received the Excellence in Stewardship Award. The award "recognizes those who have ensured the preservation of historic properties through long-term care and maintenance, stabilization, protection or continuous family ownership." Last fall the Trustees of Oconee Hill nominated the Friends for this award.

Receiving the Stewardship Award at the Georgia Trust Annual Preservation Awards ceremony in Marietta are Tom Wilfong (left) trustee and past president of the Friends board; Joe Tillman (center), current president of the Friends board; and Helen Costantino, past president and current member of the Friends board.

Featured Stone: Mary Jett Franklin, Section F-1, Lot 59

Mary Jett Franklin was the daughter of Corinna Myrtis Thomas and Leonidas Franklin. According to an article in "The Tangible Past in Athens, Georgia," Myrtis and Leonidas Franklin reared their two children—Mary Jett (b. 1842) and her brother,



Bernard (b. ca. 1845)—in a distinctive home at 850 Prince Avenue. Myrtis designed this handsome house and came by her architectural and building talents naturally; her father, Jett Thomas, built Franklin College (now known as Old College), the first permanent structure at the University of Georgia.

Mary Jett Franklin trained as an artist in the United States and in Paris, where she lived for several years. She exhibited her works at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in the 1870s and 1890s. "The Tangible Past" continues, "Mary Jett reportedly inherited her mother's independent mind. After returning from Europe after 1917, she preferred having an after-dinner cigar in the library with the gentlemen rather than retiring to the parlor with the ladies."

After returning to Athens, she taught with the Athens Art Association in Peabody Hall. When her family's land on the Lexington Road was being sold, she moved their graves to Oconee Hill Cemetery. Not long after, in 1928, she died; she is buried in the middle of several generations of her ancestors.

Franklin loved the University of Georgia and, as she had no heirs, she left her entire estate to the university.

(top) Mary Jett Franklin's grave. Photo by Jason Thrasher. (bottom) Mary Jett Franklin, *Nomade, n.d.*. Oil on canvas. Courtesy Georgia Museum of Art.



Her donation included several paintings that hung throughout campus, including in Soule Hall, a women's dormitory. During World War II, the dorm became a school for the navy, and the paintings were put into storage. In the 1970s, the paintings reappeared at the Georgia Museum of Art. Unfortunately, they were damaged with holes, cracks, stains and unstable frames.

Fortunately for all, Dr. Hildegard Timberlake, an Athens resident who had served as president and editor for the Art Association of Athens, had a love for art and recognized the importance of Franklin's paintings. Dr. Timberlake and her son Tom, who shares his mother's love of art, as well as Dr. Richard Timberlake generously provided the funds for the restoration of three of Franklin's paintings of Tunisian scenes. These three paintings were unveiled last year at the museum and are now available to scholars and researchers. Franklin found in North Africa the perfect locale for her particular strain of exoticism and the earth tones of her palette.

Note: The sources for this article include Charlotte Marshall's "Oconee Hill Cemetery," vol. 1, and her article "Vanished Prince Avenue" in "The Tangible Past in Athens, Georgia." William U. Eiland, director, and Christy Sinksen, associate registrar, both at the Georgia Museum of Art, also contributed valuable information.

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We wish to thank our 2015–16 members. Without them, the accomplishments mentioned in this newsletter would have been impossible. The following list is current as of March 31, 2016.

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