



# FRIENDS OF OCONEE HILL CEMETERY

*Spring 2018*

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*Cover Image: Professor Elizabeth  
Hatmaker takes her UGA art classes  
to OHC frequently. The cover draw-  
ing is by Jane Chang, a student in  
her Drawing I class.*

# From the President

Winter may be Nature's dormant period, but the season's cold and damp simply obscures what's going on just below the surface. It's the same with the winter and early spring activity here with the Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery. Spring arrives with boundless energy and, suddenly, new growth—the result of progress made over long winter days—bursts on the scene.

I'm sure many of us memorized the late American poet Joyce Kilmer's poem "Trees" while in grammar school. His memorable opening line "I think that I shall never see / A poem lovely as a tree" seems as alive now at Oconee Hill Cemetery as when the poem was first published, in 1913. In this issue, you will see how 20 oak trees of different varieties were installed in January, thanks to funds allocated from the Friends' treasury and generous donations from local garden clubs and private donors. These "reforestation" trees already provide spots of tender green in areas devastated by Tropical Storm Irma's dark and brutal assault last September. In late March, we also learned the Friends' application to the National Garden Club Disaster Relief Fund was approved! Those NGC grant funds will be applied to our reforestation effort as well—and it is particularly gratifying for local garden clubs to know their contributions to that national fund will be returning to Athens.

We've shown our dedication to building a partnership between the cemetery and the community in several ways. Here you will read about how the Friends worked with University of Georgia students and faculty to celebrate Women's History Month in March with a tour and luncheon at the Sexton's House. Through our Constant Contact email platform, we published a series of short sketches of this year's selection of notable local women who now rest in Oconee Hill Cemetery, another way we hope to focus attention on the cemetery's—and our town's—historic legacy.

Then, at dawn on April 1, as the first rays of sunlight broke through the trees Easter morning, the OHC Trustees and Friends hosted the third annual Sunrise Easter Service at the Wingfield Chapel, an event that has grown in popularity and attendance every year. On National Arbor Day (April 27), we hosted an "appreciation coffee" at the Sexton's House to thank the numerous local garden clubs and individuals who helped raise funds to make our reforestation project possible. The ladies were delighted to see the tangible—growing—result of their contributions. We were even more pleased to welcome them to our 100 park-like acres!

We are delighted to report this year is a record year for FOH membership! We know we could not begin to implement the goals of our stated mission without the help and financial support of the more than 400 individuals, families and organizations listed in our annual membership report. As we work to emphasize the community engagement aspect of our projects, we hope many more will join us as we strive to be good stewards of this community treasure for all seasons and generations to come. Happy Spring!

With my thanks,  
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.



## WOMEN'S HISTORY EVENT AT OHC

During Women's History Month, in March, the Institute for Women's Studies, the Willson Center for Humanities and Arts and the Friends of Oconee Hill joined together to sponsor an event highlighting notable women buried at Oconee Hill Cemetery. Annelle Brunson, one of the presenters, received a degree in accounting from UGA in December 2017 and will soon start graduate school at UGA's history department, working with Professor Stephen Berry. Her final two semesters she spent interning at OHC to assist with the preservation and



*Sydney Crudo and Annelle Brunson gave presentations about notable women buried at Oconee Hill Cemetery.*

scanning of historical records and interacting with visitors to the cemetery. Sydney Crudo, the other presenter, is a senior at UGA majoring in history, women's studies and political science. She is interested in studying women's history and uncovering the lives and contributions women have made and continue to make.

Brunson spoke about Alice Thurmond Comer (1850–1879), a young mother buried with her two nameless babies, symbolic of the expectations and risks of childbirth in the 19th century. She continued with Elizabeth Church Robb (1823–1868), a demonstrative woman who challenged the idea of gender roles throughout the 1850s in Washington society and during the Civil War through her work in northern prisons. Her father, Alonzo Church, was UGA's president from 1829 to 1859, so Miss Church was exposed to many elite young men who attended UGA. Brunson continued with Mary Dorothy Lyndon (1877–1924), the first woman to attend and earn a degree from UGA, in 1914. Lyndon founded the Pioneer Club for women who did not major in home economics. She also was the founder of the first sorority chapter at UGA—Phi Mu. She was the first Dean of Women for the entire university. Bessie Rutherford Mell (1855–1894) was a wife, mother and teacher of mathematics, calisthenics and parliamentary law at the

Lucy Cobb Institute for six years. She was dedicated to relieving the suffering of the poor and sick through her work as the president of the “Women's Mission and Aid Society” at First Baptist Church and founded the Athens Industrial Home.

Crudo presented on Mary Jett Franklin (1842–1928), who was the head of the Fine Arts Department at the Lucy Cobb Institute. She was a talented painter who trained in the US and Paris. She traveled throughout Europe, North Africa and Cuba. When she returned from Europe she preferred having an after-dinner cigar in the library with the gentlemen rather than retiring to the parlor with the ladies. Crudo continued with Laura “Aunt Lollipop” Paddock (1892–1979), who was a storyteller and puppeteer at Jack and Jill Nursery School. She was also on the radio and on television, enchanting all age groups with her humorous tales. Crudo ended with the African-American and Pauper Burying sections. Sadly, many of the graves in these sections were not marked because the families of their loved ones could not afford markers.

Brunson and Crudo presented their findings at the Sexton's House on Wednesday, March 28. The Willson Center provided a light lunch. After lunch, Brunson and Crudo gave a tour of the graves of these women.

Healthy, handsome trees being essential to the character of a natural landscape cemetery like Oconee Hill, the Friends recently planted 20 trees to replace the dead or

dying trees removed early in 2017 or lost during windstorms later in the year. After Irma ripped through

## Twenty Trees Planted at Cemetery

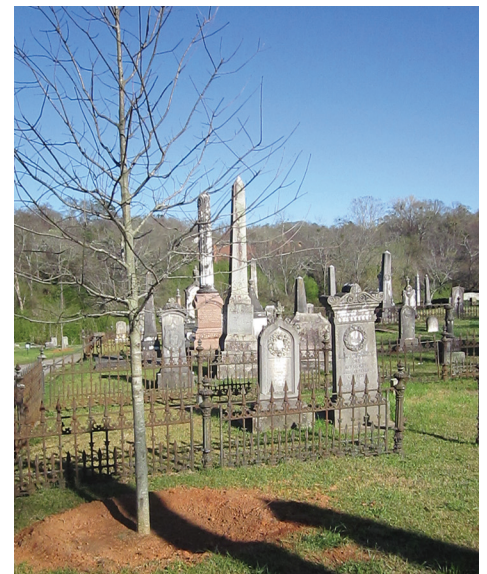
by Richard Lane

OHC, taking out several large trees, members of the Garden Club Council of Athens (GCC)—the group that created FOH almost 20 years ago—asked how they might assist the cemetery. Carol Reap, a GCC member who also happens to be recording secretary of the Friends, reported that Mike Glenn of Select Trees had once again offered to

sell some of his fine stock at a drastically reduced price. Sally Allen, president of GCC, then challenged each club, many of whose members have family buried in Oconee Hill, to purchase one or more of these trees, and all of the member clubs have stepped up to meet her challenge.

In late January 2018, the trees were delivered to the cemetery, and within a few days Bo Thurston and his crew from Athena Lawn Care had dug big holes for the sizable trees (3 to 4 inches in caliper) and installed four Highbeam® Overcup Oaks, three Sangria® Red Leaf Nuttall Oaks, three Fortitude® Willow Oaks, four Esplanade® Nuttall Oaks, two Abundance® Willow Oaks, two Ascendor® Willow Oaks and two Shiraz® Willow Oaks. Rains came the very next day and have continued regularly, giving these trees a great “watering in”! We thank the garden clubs, Mike Glenn, Bo Thurston and

all contributing members of FOH for helping us maintain the urban forest we know and love as Oconee Hill Cemetery.





## Oconee Hill Celebrates Rare Achievement

An informal picnic at OHC's well house was held on February 16, 2018, to show appreciation for the hard-working grounds crew. This crew cut the entire 117 acres, an achievement not accomplished in decades. Lucy Allen, chair of the Trustees, said, "I want to thank their leader, Carl Grimes, our landscape consultant who managed the team members Brett Shuman, Jason Bowen and Michael Jones to bring out the beauty of this 161-year-old Victorian cemetery." She also acknowledged Billy Willoughby as a "miracle man" for his pinpoint marking of the graves and guiding the funeral homes and monument companies to their exact locations. The picnic was attended by about 30 patrons and friends and ended by a surprise ringing of the well house bell that most did not know existed.

## ROBERT GIBSON REMEMBERED

Robert Gibson, a long-time trustee of Oconee Hill Cemetery and for many years president of the Trustees, died on November 10, 2017. He was 89 years old. He was a native Athenian, who attended Athens High School and graduated from the University of Georgia. Following his undergraduate degree, he attended UGA's law school and became a partner at Erwin, Epting, Gibson and McLeod.

He was quite active in civic affairs. He was instrumental in the revival of the Athens Historical Society in 1959. He was a faithful and devoted member of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, where he served on the Endowment Board and the Architecture, Gifts and Memorials committee. He married Sylvia Mathis Gibson in 1962 at Emmanuel Church in Athens.

He was preceded in death by his brother George Gibson, his sister Elizabeth Stephenson and George's son Andy. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Sylvia Gibson. Robert Gibson is buried at Oconee Hill Cemetery.

## NATURAL DISASTER USA FUND EXTENDS A HELPING HAND

by Carol Reap

We just received word that, in response to an application submitted by the Garden Club Council (GCC) of Athens to the National Garden Clubs (NGC), a grant of \$3,000 was awarded to the GCC to assist in the clean-up and reforestation of Oconee Hill Cemetery after the damage inflicted last fall by Tropical Storm Irma. This National Disaster USA Fund grant award, administered by the NGC, is a continuation of the outstanding Garden Clubs/Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery collaboration, which includes prior generous donations from local member clubs, and grants obtained in recent years from the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc., in support of renewal tree work done at OHC.

## JODY WILSON BOLING JOINS FRIENDS BOARD



As a native Athenian, some of Jody's earliest memories were of cleaning graves of her ancestors who are interred in the old section of Oconee Hill Cemetery. Her father, Troutman Wilson, was honored to be a trustee for many years and always considered it a privilege to help families find a resting place for their loved ones. Jody was educated on Baxter Street; she started school at Alps Road and worked her way up to the University of Georgia. She lived in Cumming for 30 years, her late husband's hometown. She volunteered for several local and national nonprofits and retired from the Forsyth County school system, where she taught middle-school social

studies and reading. Jody is thrilled to be back in Athens. Two of her three children live and work here. Her other son lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. She feels lucky to be able to spend time with her very active two-year-old grandson and looks forward to a granddaughter this summer. Being back in Athens has brought new volunteer opportunities at Meals on Wheels and First United Methodist Church and seeing lots of childhood friends. She loves taking classes through OLLI and attending cultural and sporting events through UGA and the Classic Center. She feels it is a real privilege and honor to be on the Friends of Oconee Hill Board. She looks forward to working for this beautiful and historic cemetery and taking part in many events here.

## Featured Stone:

### Rosa Huguenin Delony and William Gaston Delony, Valley, Lot 18

Rosa Huguenin was born in Savannah in 1832. Rosa's mother died when she was young and her father remarried soon after. Rosa's grandmother Huguenin raised her in Savannah. Rosa and her father never got along, and he excluded her from his will for a time. William Gaston Delony was born in 1826 on a cotton plantation near St. Marys. The Delony family was quite wealthy. Delony moved to Athens in 1844 to attend Franklin College (UGA). He visited his favorite aunt in Savannah and met Rosa on one of those visits. They married in 1854.

A few years after their wedding, the trustees of Franklin College hired William to teach "ancient language." During his time on the faculty he studied law and became an attorney in Athens. The Delonys built a house near the Arch, at the corner of Broad and Lumpkin streets, but it has been razed.

During the Civil War, William began recruiting for Georgia Troopers, a cavalry company under the command of Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb. Delony was a capable leader admired and respected by the men he commanded. His luck ran out at Jack's Shop in Virginia, where he was shot in the left thigh and taken prisoner by Union forces. On October 2, 1863, he died, in a Washington, D.C., hospital. Rosa had four children and was expecting a fifth child when she heard the news. William was buried in D.C., but after the Civil War ended his remains were shipped to Athens and

reinterred at Oconee Hill Cemetery. Rosa never remarried. She died on Hill Street at the age of 70, in 1897.

Vincent Dooley and Samuel Thomas Jr. wrote a book entitled "The Legion's Fighting Bulldog" published in 2017 about the Delonys, using their correspondence. Each chapter introduces background information and some context.



Athens BMW's General Manager Jeff Socha has provided Oconee Hill Cemetery with an X5 courtesy car. Don Smith uses it to tour clients around the cemetery.

## MEMBERSHIP

We wish to thank our 2017-18 members. Without them, the accomplishments mentioned in this newsletter would have been impossible. The following list is current as of March 31, 2018. Please note: This list does not include gifts to the capital campaign, which will be acknowledged separately.

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## THIRD ANNUAL SUNRISE SERVICE

On a chilly Easter morning (April 1, 2018) a large crowd gathered in the open-air Wingfield Chapel at Oconee Hill Cemetery. The service was conducted by First Baptist Church of Athens with Rev. Paul Baxley, the senior minister, assisted by Frank Granger, the associate minister. Jim McKillip played a prelude as the service began. Frank Granger gave an invocation and led everyone in the Lord's Prayer. Paul Baxley gave a meaningful meditation that talked about the urgency mentioned in Mark's gospel. Ms. Janet Cleland read the Gospel lesson from Mark 16:1-8. The service closed with McKillip playing the trumpet as everyone sang "Christ the Lord is risen today! Alleluia!"

## RETURN OF MYSTERIOUS SHELLS

It was a quiet day at Oconee Hill Cemetery when a visitor came to the porch of the Sexton's House and left a small package that contained two large weathered sea-shells with a note. The note, hand printed on a postcard, read, "Hi, I took these shells off of a grave many years ago. I hope you can replace them somewhere appropriate. Thanks." A board member rode through the cemetery and spotted some shells on a small grave. One could almost see where the returned shells had once lain. A UGA third-year law student Ralph Spain and his wife Betty had a son, Dwain Ralph Spain,

who died when he was only two months old. They buried their son in Section H of Oconee Hill. A small marker and beautiful shells, which often signify eternal life and hope for the resurrection were placed on the tiny grave. The shells will soon be placed where they lay years ago. Betty died in 2011 and Ralph in 2012; they are both buried next to their son. They never had another child. They are now reunited in death with the small son they so lovingly held for two months and held tenderly in their hearts for the remainder of their lives. Betty and Ralph Spain's graves remain

unmarked. Many times early actions are not seen as having a profound effect on the lives of others. With the passing of time, one often feels the need to right a wrong. We appreciate the return of these beautiful shells.

