



FRIENDS *of* OCONEE HILL CEMETERY

Spring 2023



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(founded 1999)

Officers, 2022–2023

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Helen H. Mills

Owen M. Roberts IV

Joseph E. Tillman

W. Thomas Wilfong

Ex officio

Kelly Girtz, *Mayor, Athens-Clarke County*

Invited Guests

Janet and Alex Patterson, *FOHC representative*

Donald H. Smith, *general manager*

Cover Image: Refurbished bridge with the Greenway passing underneath.

Photos by Joe Tillman and Charlotte Thomas Marshall.

Message from the Presidents

Janet and Alex Patterson are new co-presidents of the board of the Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery. They are also new members of the Friends' Board. In April 2019, their son Philip died at a young age from the disease of addiction. Anticipating the arrival of his ashes from California, they confronted the difficult topic of where he should be buried. Philip now resides in Oconee Hill Cemetery with a hillside view of the beautiful, historic cemetery landscape that his parents visit regularly. In time, he will be joined by his parents and perhaps other family members.

The Pattersons' history with Oconee Hill is recent, but Alex was born in Athens when his parents moved from Iowa to Georgia after his father received a faculty position at UGA's School of Forestry. He went to Barrow Elementary School, Athens High School, the University of Georgia and then Harvard Law School. He left Athens but returned in 2008 when he retired from Alston & Bird in Atlanta.

Janet's family moved to Athens in time for her to claim Athens High School and attend the University of Georgia. After graduation and marriage, they lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Washington, D.C., and Atlanta before returning to Athens. Philip is their oldest child. He has two sisters: Kathryn, who lives in Orlando, Florida, with husband Andrew, and Emily, who lives in Longmont, Colorado, with husband Jeffrey. The four of them are environmentalists. On a clear day, if there are few leaves on the trees, they say they have a view of UGA's Ecology School from our location at Oconee Hill.

After moving back to Athens, Janet and Alex supported FOHC by becoming members of the Friends. They did so not anticipating the need to buy a cemetery lot, but because of the cemetery's historic value. They have also supported Historic Athens, the Athens Historical Society and the Athens Land Trust. Janet is on the Board of Advisors of the Georgia Museum of Art and Alex is on the Board of Advisors of the State Botanical Garden of Georgia. Alex is a past chairman of the board of the Athens Area Community Foundation and is an emeritus trustee of the UGA Foundation.

We ask you to join us in maintaining your membership in the Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery. In 2020 when the pandemic kept us apart, the cemetery became a go-to respite, a parkland, an oasis adjacent to an equally beautiful college campus. We talked to Philip! We enjoyed the vistas. We met others just walking through. Perhaps we will meet you!

Janet and Alex Patterson
Co-presidents, Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery

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.



From the Chair of the OHC Trustees



Greetings! I am excited to be the new chair of the Oconee Hill Cemetery Trustees.

We are finishing a few years of great accomplishments with the completion of the Greenway and the repair of the bridge. The cemetery looks better than ever thanks to our excellent crew.

Now we want to build on our success and encourage visitors to our Garden Cemetery. We begin with the sunrise service on Easter morning at 6:45 in the Wingfield Chapel. Next we are planning to host tours of the grounds with a special viewing inside the Smith mausoleum. The fall brings a celebration with a dinner on the bridge hosted by Lee Epting. We encourage all of you to take advantage of opportunities to visit.

Corinne "Cissy" Alexander Hutchinson

Trustees of Oconee Hill Cemetery, October 2022
(left to right): Chair Corinne Alexander Hutchinson, Owen M. Roberts IV, outgoing chair Helen Hudson Mills, Greta Terrell Covington and W. Thomas Wilfong at Synovus Bank, flanking "Tempus Fugit," a 1948 view into Oconee Hill Cemetery painted by John C. Cleaveland, Farmington, Georgia. Absent from picture: Trustees Joseph E. Tillman and Kelly Girtz. Photograph by Donald H. Smith.



Garrison Bickerstaff, Service-Learning at Oconee Hill and new member of the Friends board

Service Learning at Oconee Hill

FOHC board member Garrison Bickerstaff completed a Ph.D. in linguistics at the University of Georgia in 2010 after completing a B.A. in English in 2000 and an M.A. in English in 2002 at Tennessee Tech. He teaches several courses for the Division of Academic Enhancement (DAE) at UGA, including Introducing English Composition and Developing Literacies in the Humanities. He also coordinates and teaches the Digital Literacies and Documentary Media course.

One of his favorite courses to teach is Learning for Success at the University for Thrive at Georgia students. Each July his class partners with the Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery for service-learning activities. In July 2022, his service-learning class pursued research at UGA's Special Collections Libraries. They focused on the following presidents or chancellors of UGA who are interred in Oconee Hill Cemetery: Alonzo Church, Patrick Hues Mell, Walter Barnard Hill, David Crenshaw Barrow and Frederick C. Davison. The students created a "Walk of Presidents" brochure that includes brief summaries of their research as well as instructions for finding each gravesite. The students shared their research in greater detail at the 2022 Pioneers and Legends event that was held at the Sexton's House in July.

Annual Meeting

THE ANNUAL MEETING WAS HELD OCTOBER 27, 2022.



Co-President Alex Patterson presiding



FOHC board members Gibson Johnston and Len Sapera



Co-President Janet Patterson presiding over the annual meeting



Helen Costantino talking with Dick and Susan Field and Ben Brackett



Secretary Milton Perry taking minutes



OHC Trustee Tom Wilfong



Treasurer Sue Boatright explaining



OHC general manager Don Smith with longtime coworkers Nan Leathers and Sue Boatright



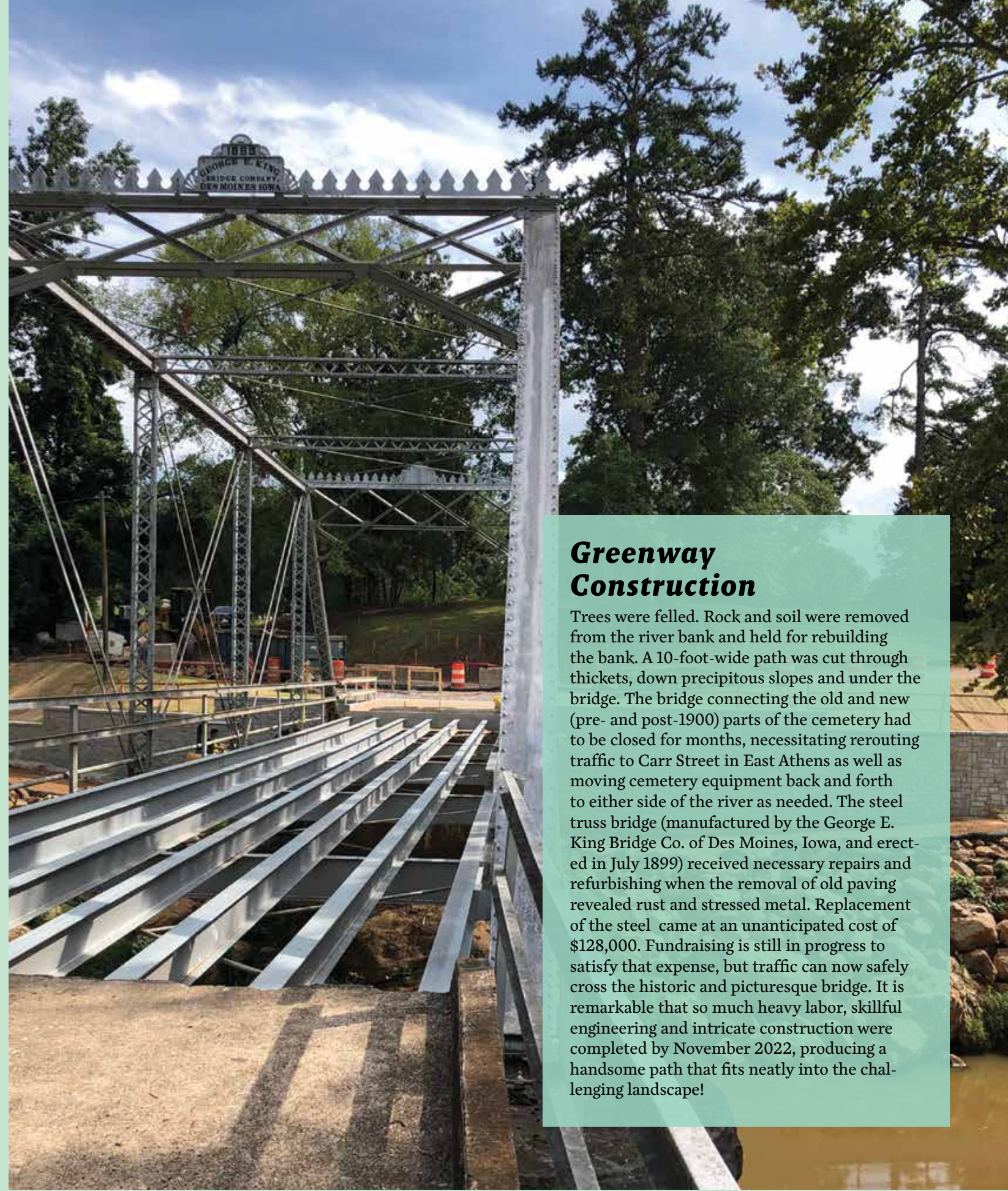
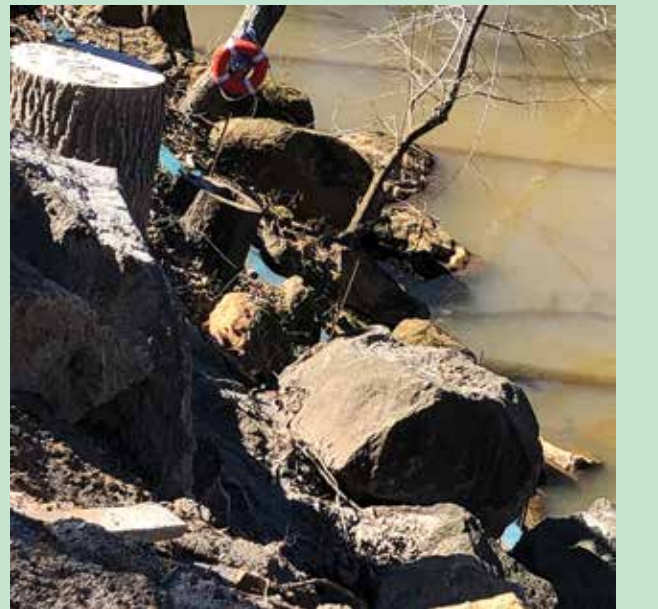
Vice President Sallyanne Barrow



Sexton's House co-chairs Marcia Griffin Talmadge and Jody Boling Warner



Helen Costantino



Greenway Construction

Trees were felled. Rock and soil were removed from the river bank and held for rebuilding the bank. A 10-foot-wide path was cut through thickets, down precipitous slopes and under the bridge. The bridge connecting the old and new (pre- and post-1900) parts of the cemetery had to be closed for months, necessitating rerouting traffic to Carr Street in East Athens as well as moving cemetery equipment back and forth to either side of the river as needed. The steel truss bridge (manufactured by the George E. King Bridge Co. of Des Moines, Iowa, and erected in July 1899) received necessary repairs and refurbishing when the removal of old paving revealed rust and stressed metal. Replacement of the steel came at an unanticipated cost of \$128,000. Fundraising is still in progress to satisfy that expense, but traffic can now safely cross the historic and picturesque bridge. It is remarkable that so much heavy labor, skillful engineering and intricate construction were completed by November 2022, producing a handsome path that fits neatly into the challenging landscape!



GREENWAY DEDICATION



On November 3, 2022, the section of the greenway trail that traverses Oconee Hill Cemetery was dedicated, with numerous attendees there to commemorate the occasion, including Athens-Clarke County Mayor Kelly Girtz.

Then Oconee Hill Trustees President Helen Hudson Mills gave remarks that reflected on the evolving nature of this cemetery and what it represents for every family who has a loved one buried here. The present change “harkens back to the original footprint, the added acreage, the historic bridge, the addition of the chapel—and the concept of this also being a place to observe, meditate and celebrate nature. The greenway will open the eyes of many in Athens to this historic, sacred place.”

In acknowledging and thanking the many groups and individuals involved, she emphasized that everyone mentioned was equally important in making the change. Beginning with the Oconee Hill Cemetery Trustees and the Friends of Oconee Hill Cemetery she saluted everyone under the Astra group—from pile drivers and dirt movers to engineers—and a thousand important tasks in between. “You



all went about your work with care and with reverence. There was never a time in my multiple visits at all times and different days that I didn’t observe that care.”

The Grounds Crew of Oconee Hill received “a thank you for continuing your care of the cemetery with a professional attitude and becoming part of the greater team that saw this work through many months. Yes, it was extra and, yes, it disturbed you that you couldn’t keep things totally pristine, but that didn’t stop you from trying.”

Mills thanked Don Smith and Carl Grimes “for rounding out the team that faithfully gave and shared communication and who both love this place beyond what a job description could indicate.” She also gave a special thank you to Derek Doster “for always keeping your

finger on the pulse of the project and the trustees!

You also truly cared that this project would reflect well on both the city and the cemetery. May it be so in the future.”

Those who planned the original footprint of the cemetery in the 1850s could not have imagined the changes made in recent months, but we believe they would be pleased. Mills concluded: “The trustees are charged with the cemetery’s perpetual care and future, and now to the mayor and city manager, we entrust you with the Greenway, its beauty, its safety and its contribution to Oconee Hill Cemetery as a sacred place to be treasured.”



CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS

Throughout 2021 and into 2023 the trustees continued to work on repairing failing retaining walls that posed safety hazards to visitors and our grounds crew. With funds from the capital campaign as well as from partnering with family plot owners, important projects were completed. Special attention was always made to reuse materials to maintain historical authenticity. If materials could not be reused because of deterioration, consideration was given to using identical materials to replace what was once there. Materials ranging from brick to granite, fieldstone, cinder block and marble slabs were used in these repairs. They illustrate the wide variety of grave markers that families used throughout the early days of the cemetery. Everyone is so pleased to see these improvements and the beauty they bring to the cemetery. We hope you take a visit soon to see these good works and the positive effect they have on the views. Special thanks is due to stonemason Johnny Smith for his excellent work on these walls and steps.

by Joe Tillman

Photos by Joe Tillman and Charlotte Thomas Marshall

CHILDERS

Before and after photos of the Childers lot on West Hill.



CARITHERS

Before and after photos of the Carithers Lot, West Hill lot 27



DYER

The wall and fence at the Otis Dyer lot have been repaired and replaced. There is still some final work to be done to the walls in filling in spaces and "pointing" with the mortar, but major work is now complete.



WEST HILL

The steps on West Hill, before and after repair.



WARE

Nicholas Ware lot, East Hill 86.



DAVID

Before and after photos of the David Lot, West Hill lot 48 1/2



BAILEY

Before and after photos of the Thomas Bailey lot, Valley lot 28b



ADAMS

The obelisk on the Newell Sayre Adams lot has been cleaned and repaired.



East Hill 86 is the burial site of the family members of the Honorable Nicholas Ware, who moved here in the 1820s from Augusta to educate his four sons. In Augusta, he had been mayor, elected to the Georgia legislature and U.S. Senate and built Ware's Folly. Ware died in New York City (where he is buried) while there to welcome General Lafayette on his return tour in 1824. Following his death Ware County was named in his memory. The Wares built their home on the choicest Athens lot and the house had an interesting history until razed 80 years later to build City Hall.

Buried here are the Wares' son Richard Henry, who died while a student at the University of Georgia, a daughter (Mary Ann Lavinia Ware, widow of Walter Veitch) and Ware's widow, Susan Carr Ware Savage, who remarried and survived her first husband by 45 years. She was the daughter of Thomas Carr of Columbia County and the sister of Colonel William A. Carr of Carr's Hill, Athens (buried Valley 74 & 75).

The last burial was in 1877, when the three daughters and three sons were no longer residents of Athens. Gifts funded the restoration of the lot, which was in jeopardy of eroding into oblivion.

Donations (other than membership contributions) received January 21, 2022 through April 1, 2023

MEMORIALS

In Memory of Jeane Lois Alderson Argo
Fran and Terry Wingfield Jr.

In Memory of "Skeets" and Jinx Baldwin
Dahl and Jo Cochran

In Memory of Suzanne Bennett
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In Memory of Isaac O. Billue
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Dennis Utley

In Memory of Jim Carter
The David and Jane Kidd Family Fund at the Athens Area Community Foundation

In Memory of W.H. Chapman Jr.
Betty Ann Chapman

In Memory of Bill Davis
Charles and Karen Pou

In Memory of Denny Galis
Diane Adams

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Pete and Cissy Hutchinson
Alex and Janet Patterson

In Memory of Blant Dove, James T. & Sarah Ann (Bailey) and Parker & daughters
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In Memory of Pauline O. Hartford
Georgina Hartford Garth

In Memory of John Bunn Hill, MD
Dr. and Mrs. E. Van Herrin

In Memory of Noah Michael Langdale
Alice and Noah N. Langdale Jr. Foundation, to continue development of technical improvements to OHC as well as marketing efforts to encourage community awareness.

In Memory of Leonidas Milton Leathers
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In Memory of George O. Marshall Jr.
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Membership Contributions received February 15, 2021, through April 1, 2023

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 Classic City Gardeners
 Glenwood Garden Club
 Heritage Garden Club
 Ladies Garden Club
 Rose & Dahlia Garden Club

CLEANING MONUMENTS

The following information has been made available by Claire Richardson James, who with her sister Nan Richardson Leathers, has used D/2 to clean family markers. We urge families to use this procedure and chemical rather than employing people who use abrasive methods, which hasten the deterioration of the stones. —*Editor*

D/2 Biological Solution is a biodegradable, easy-to-use liquid that removes stains from mold, algae, mildew, lichens and air pollutants. It is effective on marble and granite including monuments, sculpture and headstones.

A contact time of only 10 to 15 minutes followed by scrubbing with a soft nylon or natural bristle brush will loosen most biological and air pollutant staining.

Application Procedure

Always test a spot before proceeding with the project. Use in temperatures above 45 degrees. Use undiluted for best results. The pollutants will change colors (streaking, turning pink, etc.) as D/2 begins working.

Immediate Results Method

Apply D/2 with a brush, roller or garden-style pump sprayer.

Allow undiluted D/2 to remain on the surface 10 to 15 minutes.

Apply additional D/2 as necessary to maintain a wet surface.

Scrub with a soft nylon or natural bristle brush. Do not use metal. Can use wood or plastic for scraping.

Lightly mist water while scrubbing.

Rinse thoroughly with clean water and the sub-level of D/2 will begin working with the elements for several months.

No Scrub, No Rinse Method

Wet entire surface with undiluted D/2 using a brush, roller or garden-style pump sprayer.

Allow to air dry.

The sub-level D/2 works with the elements and results occur within one week to several months, depending on the severity of the stain.

Reapply if rain occurs within 12 hours.

D/2 can be purchased online or at Bicknell Supply Co., Elberton, (800) 241-7105.

Death of Elizabeth Charlotte “Betty” Bisson Chesnut (1924–2022)



A studio portrait of the Bert G. Bisson family in the 1940s.

Elizabeth was the last surviving member of the Bisson family to have lived in the Sexton's House. Her uncle, father and brother served as sextons of Oconee Hill from 1897 to 1983. No other family is known to have had such a lengthy record with a cemetery. Her father, Bert Guernsey Bisson, succeeded his brother James H. Bisson when Elizabeth was three. The Sexton's House was significantly enlarged to make room for the young family. Following her father's death in 1960, her brother Bert G. Bisson Jr. served as sexton until his retirement in 1983. Elizabeth made frequent trips from her home in South Carolina to help Bert with record keeping. She

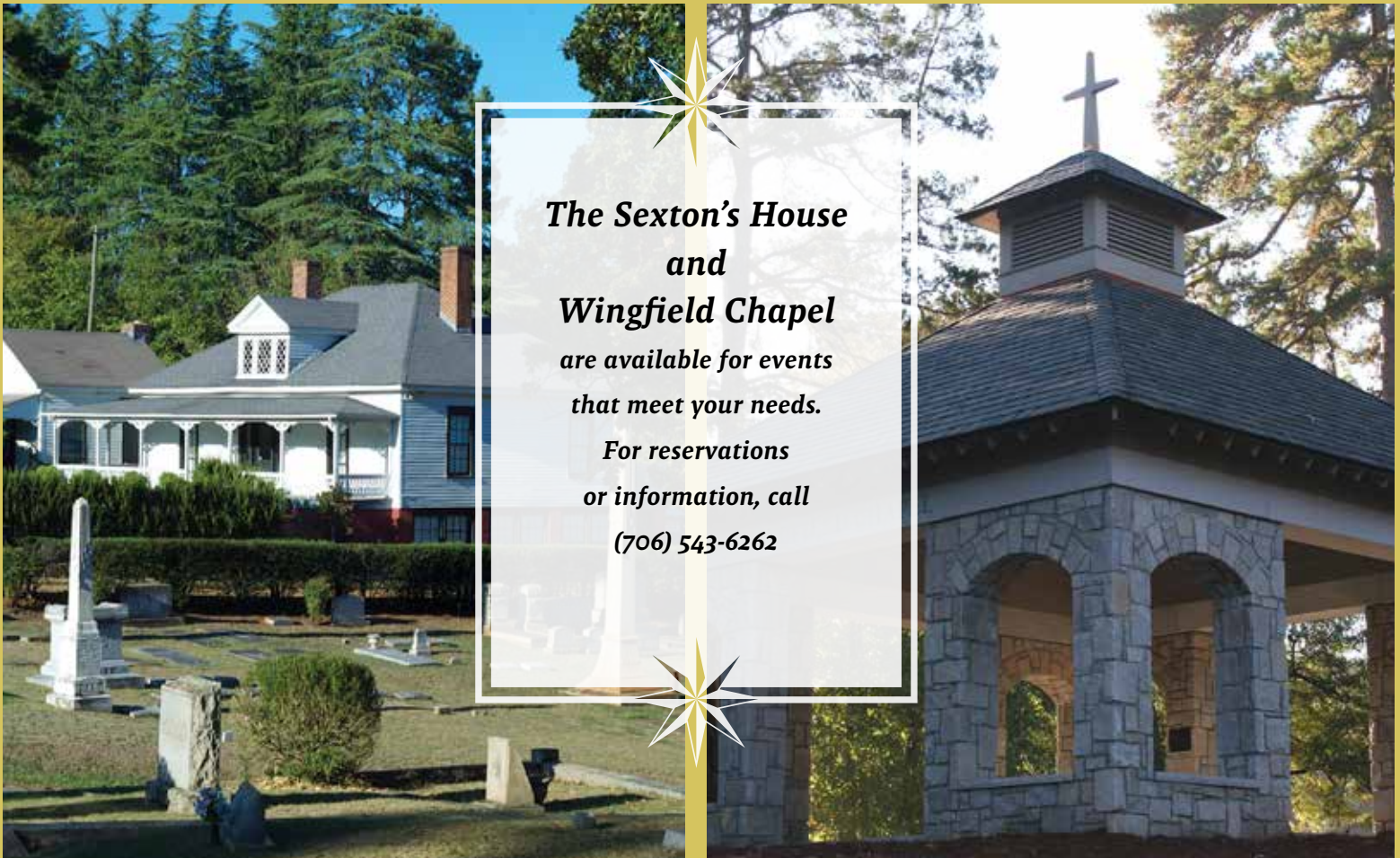
inherited the extensive collection of Bisson photographs and documents, many of which document the development of Oconee Hill Cemetery. Some of them can now be seen online at <https://www.oconeehillcemetery.com/online/elizabeth-bisson-chestnut-gallery/>



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