

Improvements in Porterdale

Last fall Porterdale Cemetery benefitted from the attention of a student intern seeking experience in preservation. Ashley Shares had completed undergraduate studies at St. Xavier University in Chicago, and she was in her second year pursuing a Masters degree in Heritage Preservation at Georgia State University. After touring the cemetery with Deborah Abraham, she agreed to drive from Atlanta on Sundays to work on damaged headstones.

Ashley's efforts were based in the lot of Samuel Cooper, near the brick building in Porterdale. She concentrated on five markers which were repaired and leveled; two more which had fallen were returned to their upright positions. She was assisted by Public Works Department employees Jabaz Davis and Derrick Jackson.

Our enthusiastic thanks go to these dedicated folks who have made significant improvements in Porterdale. All old cemeteries require these repairs, and we look forward to continuing to highlight such needs and seek solutions.



Looking Ahead to Spring ...

For Memorial Day, May 30th, small American flags will be placed at the grave sites of veterans to honor their service and sacrifice in all branches of the military. In addition to those in the American Legion section, veterans' markers are located in family plots throughout the cemeteries. If you know of a veteran whose marker does not show information about military service, please notify the Foundation so that a flag may be placed appropriately. Continuing thanks to Lisa Allen for a generous supply of flags!



Centennial Remembrance

Riverdale Cemetery put its best foot forward on October 24, 2015 in observing a Centennial Remembrance of the horrific crash of a carnival train on November 22, 1915. The Con. T. Kennedy Show, one of the most prominent traveling shows in America, was en route for a week's engagement to commemorate the opening of the new Dillingham Street bridge linking Columbus to Girard (now Phenix City), Alabama. The train carried numerous performers and workers, animals, games and a miniature model city display. Mr. Kennedy himself was on board. A Central of Georgia passenger train leaving Columbus met the carnival train in a curve of the track in a head-on collision just east of Columbus.

The recent event featured an illustrated presentation by noted historian Ken Thomas, detailing the tragedy for the crowd of approximately 300 attendees. Dr. James Elder, Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church, then spoke briefly at the circus tent shaped monument, where a wreath was laid in memory of those who lost their lives in the crash. Bagpipe player Beth Badger concluded this solemn moment playing "Amazing Grace"

Making the event even more realistic were three actors who impersonated survivors of the crash: John Gilbert as Mr. Frierson, baggage handler on the Central of Georgia passenger train; Bill Pacer as Mr. Kennedy; and LaDonna Allison as the adult Hazel Kempf, who was a two-year-old toddler saved from the blazing inferno as her parents perished. These characters circulated among the crowd giving carefully researched first-hand accounts of that fateful day. Bill and LaDonna, of Will Go Far LLC, are from the Atlanta area; John, a Columbus native now in Atlanta, has long had a keen interest in the carnival saga.

Inside the Riverdale Building an extensive display of Columbus pictures and artifacts from the 1915 era were exhibited, while the Bob Barr Community Band played outside. Stilt walkers from the Springer Academy and a sad but friendly clown delighted the children. Several guests enjoyed cemetery tours. Tasty hot dogs, hamburgers, cold drinks and cotton candy were served by Lisa Allen and her crew of volunteers.

During preparation for this event, we were particularly pleased to hear from descendants of various people involved in this tragedy. A South Carolina relative of the Kempf family who learned about our plans was able to be with us on that day, and she was invited to lay the wreath at the monument. An Alabama resident researching family genealogy learned that his grandfather, John Cunningham, had survived the crash; a recent newspaper article about plans for the event put him in touch with the Foundation, but he was not able to attend on that date. And Columbus is the home of one of the descendants of Edward Wise Allen, an employee and foreman of the Elledge and Norman Marble Company which produced the monument. He and a cousin from Louisiana were able to join the commemoration and share in the admiration of carving skill displayed. These unexpected connections have been especially meaningful in our efforts to mark this notable event in Columbus history.

The Foundation's special gratitude goes to local businesses and organizations which provided assistance: McMullen Funeral Home, Ann's Porch, Carmike Cinemas, Bob Barr Community Band, Springer Academy, Mr. Ronnie Culpepper, The Columbus Museum, Historic Columbus Foundation and CSU Archives. Additionally, we continually thank Columbus Consolidated Government and the Public Works Department for the valuable assistance of staff members who undergird all our efforts on behalf of the cemeteries.

Introducing ...

... **Darrell Meadows**, recently appointed Cemetery Division Chief of the Department of Public Works. A Columbus native, Darrell attended Spencer High School and Ashworth College in Norcross, GA; he has attained his BA in Criminal Justice (sporting a 3.76 GPA!). Employed by the city for 25 years, he has continually earned praise for his performance while moving upward through various positions.

Darrell's family includes his wife and four children. In his spare time he enjoys sports - especially football, physical fitness and automotive mechanics. He relates that early in his career he was known as "Robocop" because of his serious, unsmiling demeanor. We have experienced quite the opposite -- a smiling and enthusiastic partner in caring for these lovely old cemeteries.

Honorariums and Contributions

In honor of
Mrs. Minnie R. Bradley
by
Mrs. Virginia L. McPherson

In honor of
Mrs. Mary Alice Humes
by
Mrs. Charlie Frank Riley
Mr. and Mrs. John W. Walden

In honor of
Mrs. Margaret G. Zollo
by
Mrs. Jane D. Herndon

Mrs. Donald Broda
Mr. Stephen T. Butler
Mr. and Mrs. Kerry W. Hand
Mr. John Humes

Dr. Thornton F. Jordan
Mrs. Barbara B. Page
Col. (Ret.) Robert F. Poydasheff
Mr. and Mrs. Neal Wickham

The Riverdale-Porterdale Cemetery Foundation, Inc.
is now able to accept contributions of appreciated assets.

Dales Society

Representing Riverdale, Porterdale and East Porterdale Cemeteries, The Dales Society is our membership organization. Various levels of participation are available, and renewal notices are sent on the anniversary of joining. Income derived is used for improvements to the properties, special events and office expenses. Membership forms may be obtained in the Riverdale Building by calling the cemetery office (706-653-4579), or requests may be made to the Foundation's website www.riverdaleporterdale.org



P.O. Box 5128
Columbus, GA 31906



Riverdale - Porterdale Cemetery Foundation, LLC



Volunteer Opportunities Available

Do you have a little free time?
Do you like local history ... genealogy ... research ... ?

Have we got a job for you!

Prefer sharing your time inside ... or outside?

We're flexible!

The Foundation has a list of volunteer activities ranging from
record-keeping to landscaping,
from techno-genius to techno-novice! We're even open to
your suggestions of how you might improve what we do and
how we do it.

Contact the Foundation, www.riverdaleporterdale.org, to
check out the possibilities!