## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT



DC's Greatest Undertaking

PETER LEMOX, BRI IN WILLIAMSEURG V MARCH MDCGLXXI DIED IN WASHINGTON D. C DECEMBER MDCCCXXXII



## **Letter from the Executive Director**

#### Dear Congressional Cemetery Community,

When I walk through the historic grounds of Congressional Cemetery, a complex array of emotions washes over me. I feel the weight of over 200 years of history and legacy. I feel sadness as I pass a recent interment another family who has entrusted us with their loved one. I feel a jolt of joy when some of my favorite four-legged friends run toward me in excitement. I feel peace and serenity in the fresh spring air, punctuated by the bright pink blossoms of our cherry trees.

But most of all, I feel gratitude—for you.

Our community makes us strong. Our neighbors make us special. Our donors and members help keep the cemetery vibrant, safe, and cared for. And our impact on the local community and Washington, D.C., is both measurable and meaningful. Our Board Members, Staff, Volunteers, K9 Corps Members, and community partners united in service of our mission to make 2024 a year of growth and renewal at Historic Congressional Cemetery.

Our shared accomplishments last year included the introduction of formal K–12 field trip programs for the first time in our institution's history. We received a green infrastructure grant from the Anacostia Watershed Society. We launched exciting new events, including the Cherry Blossom 5K and our Día de los Muertos gathering. We brought back beloved signature programs like Soul Strolls and Cinematery. We welcomed a wave of new K9 Corps Members after finally retiring our long-standing waitlist. We repaired dozens of fallen gravestones. And we unveiled our first large-scale temporary public art installation, The Landscape Listens, by artist Tommy Bobo.

While I'm proud of these achievements, I'm most grateful that we remain in a position of trust—serving bereaved families and honoring their loved ones, as we have since 1807. That trust is our greatest responsibility and something all us at HCC hold dear.

Looking ahead to 2025, our outlook is positive and we are strong thanks to our community. In a landscape of uncertainty here in our nation's capital, we are an urban oasis. In seasons of doubt, we can be relied on. In times of chaos, we offer tranquility and peace.

We are DC's Greatest Undertaking and I'm looking forward to welcoming you all, whether it's the first time or the one thousandth time (or more), to Historic Congressional Cemetery.

Yours in service,

A.J. Orlikoff Interim Executive Director Historic Congressional Cemetery

A.J. Orlikoff





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Thanks to Our Contributors: Laura Lyster-Mensh, Death-Doula-in-Residence Kitty Linton, Photographer and Social Media Coordinator Ashley Molese, Curator-in-Residence

## **About Historic Congressional Cemetery**



ith its first burial in 1807, Historic Congressional Cemetery is among the oldest institutions in Washington, DC, and is the final resting place of over 70,000 individuals. Their stories are American history in microcosm, all in 35 acres of the nation's capital. As an active burial ground, it is the only place in Washington where individuals can be buried at a site directly on Pierre L'Enfant's 18th century city plan.

Historic Congressional Cemetery was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2011 and continues to build upon the legacy of over 200 years of American history. The cemetery is administered by the nonprofit Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery and owned by Christ Church + Washington Parish. The association is constantly striving to maintain the historic, cultural, and aesthetic qualities of this natural landscape along the Anacostia River.

- Hundreds of volunteers each year help to preserve the cemetery and further its nonprofit mission.
- Burial sites are still available to the general public.
- Notable burials include John Philip Sousa, the March King; Mathew Brady, the Father of Photojournalism; Elbridge Gerry, signer of the Declaration of Independence; Belva Lockwood, the first woman to legally run for president, and Alain Locke, the Dean of the Harlem Renaissance
- Veterans from across American history are buried in the cemetery.
- We promote innovative and sustainable practices, such as beekeeping, a dog-walking program, green infrastructure, and are the only cemetery in Washington, DC, that provides green burials.
- Congressional Cemetery is open to the public every day from dawn to dusk. We welcome visitors to walk around the grounds and explore the cemetery's rich history and environmental beauty.

The Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations are fully tax deductible.

Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery https://congressionalcemetery.org/ 1801 E Street SE | Washington, DC 20003 | 202-543-0539 | staff@congressionalcemetery.org

## **Our Mission**

Historic Congressional Cemetery preserves, promotes, and protects our historic and active burial ground. We respectfully celebrate the legacy of those interred here through education, historic preservation, community engagement, and environmental stewardship.

# 2024 at a Glance

**77** gardeners adopted **112** plots to beautify the grounds.

**850** K9 Corps families enjoyed frolicking and strolling among the stones. **1,253** historical enthusiasts attended guided tours of the grounds.

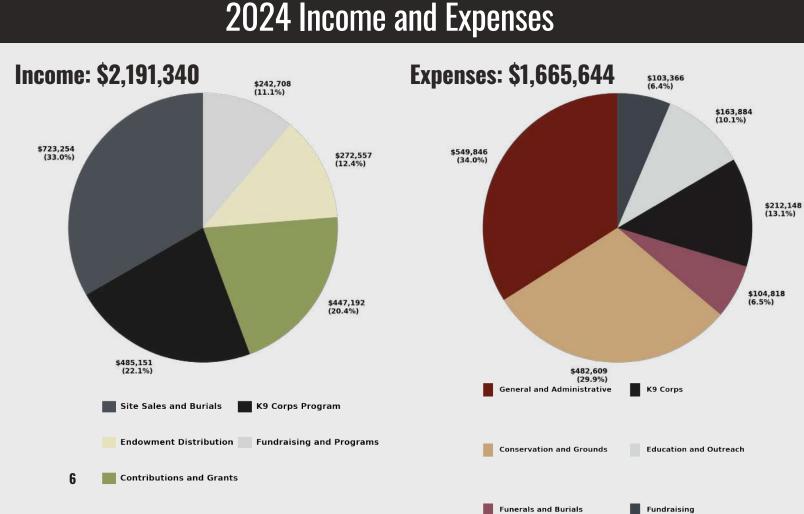
**96** headstones and memorials were restored and/or cleaned.

**11,625** people attended events generating **\$218,036** in income.

**439** volunteers contributed **4,217** hours.

(equivalent to more than \$141,227 in savings at the federal volunteer rate of \$33.49/hour).

\$736,565 in income was generated from site sales and burials with over **60%** of them being green burials.





## **Accomplishments and Highlights**

#### **Education**

The history of Congressional Cemetery is the story of us. The various headstones, memorials, and gravesites, and the stories associated with them form a one-of-a-kind portal into the American past. This past year, we succesfully shared the stories of our interred residents with the community, respectfully celebrating their legacies through our educational programs. This year:

• Our dedicated docents provided 90 public and private tours to an audience of 1,313 visitors.

•We partnered with local historical organizations, historians, and scholars for a vairety of programs, including the Cemetery Speaker Series.

• Working closely with our education team, we created self-guided tours including a Presdiential and Jewish American Tour. In addition, we revised our Introductory, African American, and LGBTQ+ tours.

• For the first time in the insitution's history, we created a formal K-12 education program, History Hunt: Discovering Shared History and Identity. We proudly hosted 16 field trip programs to hundreds of local school children.

•We also unveiled a family version of the History Hunt ideal for mixed age or family groups to explore hsitory together at HCC.

#### **Environmental Stewardship**

Congressional Cemetery continued to focus our efforts on the landscape that provides comfort and clean air to our visitors. We prioritized native plantings and mitigating safety issues on the grounds. This year:

• The Adopt-a-Plot program expanded, with a total of 112 plots adopted by 77 volunteer gardeners.

• As part of our commitment to be an urban oasis, 15 new trees were planted as we aspire to become a Level O Arboretum.

- Congressional Cemetery welcomed Sage Jackson, our Garden Programs Coordinator, who will bring her expertise in sustainability gardening practices to HCC.
- Our bee pollinator partnership with DC Beekeepers Alliance flourished, resulting in a successful honey harvest.
- The cemetery continued to be a supporter and proponent of green burials. As the only cemetery allowing green burials in DC, we honored the final disposition wishes of dozens of individuals and their families.



#### **Community Engagement**

2024 was a keynote year for cemetery events and programming. Thousands of visitors and community members gathered together at the cemetery, helping celebrate life, legacy, and community. 11,625 people attended events at HCC, generating a record high \$218,036 in revenue.

• Soul Strolls recorded its highest attendance and revenue ever. 1,816 visitors strolled with some of our more scandalous interred residents, generating \$88,432 in sales.

• Our Summer of Spirits Cinematery screenings hosted 1,008 visitors attend, generating \$12,104 in sales.

• Our death defying 5K races, including the new Cherry Blossom 5K and the retunring Dead Man's Run 5K passed for another lap, as over 1100 runners broke a sweat on our grounds, generating \$55,638

• The annual John Philip Sousa birthday was a well attended affair. The Marine Band performed some of Sousa's iconic music for a live crowd of approximately 170 people, with dozens more joining by live stream.

• Death Awareness Programs continued to educate a destigmatize, in the form of the retuning Death Cafes or new programs such as the Dia De Los Muertos event and Death Over Drafts.

•Partnerships returned and expanded, working with organizations such as DC Frontrunners, Fulcrum Residential, Special Olympics DC, Ford's Theatre, and Duffy's Irish Pub among others.

### **Historic Preservation**

Our commitment to protecting Historic Congressional Cemetery as a National Historic Landmark was made possible this year thanks to the efforts of a professional conservator, our Director of Conservation, and the sweat equity of our volunteers. The work of these individuals made possible:

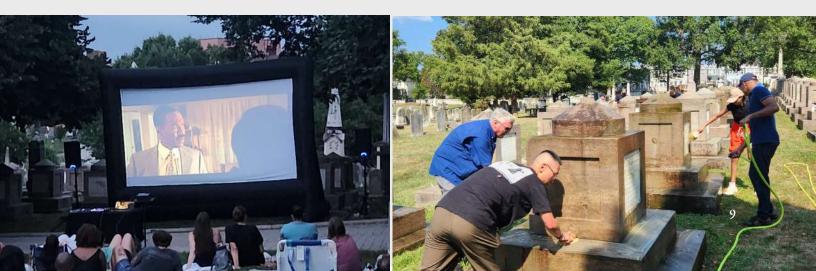
• The cleaning of 54 grave and memorial stones, including dozens of our iconic cenotaphs.

• An expanded partnership with professional conservator, Devlin McDonald, who repaired 42 of our most dangerous stones for \$80,800.

• A records audit to help consolidate the historic records of the cemetery with more modern site sales and burials continued, with active rectification continuing into 2025.

•We continued with repairs, maintenace, and facility upgrades to our historic chapel.

•We completed a list of the most dangerous gravestones and earmarked 106 of them for future conservation, creating the next list of safety repairs for the next 5 years.





## Donors

Historic Congressional Cemetery wishes to thank its many donors and supporters whose generosity makes it possible for us to continue to celebrate the legacy of those interred here and serve as stewards of more than 200 years of history in our nation's capital.

Abatte. Mike Accoo. Terrence Adams, Deborah Alarcon. Heather Allen, Kerry Allen, Willa And Hill Anonymous Arthurs. Sean Bailey, Emma Bailey, Mikol Barnett. Betty Bartels, Ellie Batzell. Anne Bauman, Dianne Beisecker, Randall Belman, Laura Benson, James H. Berry, Karen Beyard, Ernest Blair, Katherine Blair, Wendy **Blevins.** Andrew **Boatwright**, **David** Bowery, Charles and MarvAnn Brachman. Anne Brehl, Rebecca Breslin. Donna Brink, Peter And Susan Brophy, Devon Brown, Patricia Brvant. Kim Butz, Ben Cairns, Hilary Calabrese. Anthony Carlton, Bruce and Mary Citro, Constnace Clark, Cynthia Clark, RuthAnn Clarke, Dolores Coolidge. Kathleen Cornale, Samuel Cornale, Samuel

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#### **Gifts in Kind**

The following have provided donations and in-kind services in support of our programming and special events.

Benjamin Brown French No. 15, FAAM DC Beekeepers Alliance Fulcrum Residenital Hiram Takoma Lodge No. 10, FAAM Republic Restoratives

#### The Gift of Time

During the past year, Historic Congressional Cemetery's 439 volunteers contributed more than 4,217 hours in support of our education, historic preservation, community engagement, and environmental stewardship programs.

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In Honor of In Honor of my granddog Penny Kaufman Skinnion Donna Fleming

In Honor of A.J. Orlikoff Greenlawn Cemetery

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In Honor of City Dogs and City Kitties Rescue Patricia Lyall

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We wish to recognize the hundreds of K9 Corps members whose membership fees include a donation to our continued operations

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The Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery

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