

# HERITAGE GAZETTE

WINTER 2022

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF  
HISTORIC CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY

## HCC GIVES THANKS

**H**istoric Congressional Cemetery is thrilled to announce its selection as a Top 5 winner for the American Cemetery Excellence Award presented by *American Cemetery and Cremation*



**AWARD  
2022  
HCC Ranks  
among Top  
5 American  
Cemeteries**

*Cemetery and Cremation* magazine. This annual award is given to five cemeteries throughout the country that exhibit excellence in the field of deathcare. HCC was chosen for its innovative programming, focus on making the subject of deathcare and planning accessible, its notable residents, and its commitment to celebrating the diverse stories of the

American experience. Please help us celebrate this achievement by considering a year-end gift to support our continued efforts to preserve, protect, and promote this historic, yet active, burial ground.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR!

At the John Philip Sousa Birthday concert, we were honored to recognize the outstanding efforts of our volunteers to Congressional Cemetery. In a short ceremony, and in conjunction with our community partners,

we presented the following awards to three truly exceptional individuals who went above and beyond in 2022 to help make the Cemetery an amazing place. Congratulations and a huge THANK YOU to all our volunteers!

**The 2022 Connolly-Didden Docent of the Year Award:** Presented to Robert "Hoff" Hoffman

**The 2022 Benjamin B. French Lodge No. 15, F.A.A.M. Volunteer Award:** Presented to Caty Sinkam

**The 2022 John Philip Sousa Distinguished Service Award:** Presented by Hiram-Takoma Lodge No. 10, F.A.A.M. to Shawn Freeman



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**Director of Public Engagement A.J. Orlikoff presents the Connolly-Didden Docent of the Year Award to Robert "Hoff" Hoffman.**

## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

At this time of the year, I am always struck with how fast the year has gone by. I mean, 2023 is right around the corner! But we aren't there just yet. In the days and weeks leading up to the holidays, I enjoy the time to catch up with family and friends. Right before I sat down to write this, I was going through my recipes picking out some of the traditional dishes I make every year like biscuits, sweet potato pie, and mac 'n cheese, while also trying to find some new dishes to keep the family guessing. And in that moment, I realized how grateful I am. Gratitude for the roof over my head, the food that will be on my table, and the family and friends that will be around my table over the holidays.



Richard Greene, IV

And in that same spirit, I have a deep gratitude for the truly peerless community resource that is Historic Congressional Cemetery. The cemetery's park-like setting offers a peaceful respite, the green space provides important environmental protection for the Anacostia Watershed, and the wide avenues and curving paths invite both private contemplation of DC's rich and complex past as well as spaces for community fellowship. To describe everything the cemetery offers our community would turn this short note into a tome, so here are a few things I want to share with you:

I am grateful for all the great events we have hosted. This has really been our first full year coming out of the pandemic, and our events have remained strong attractions for the community. Soul Strolls, for instance, saw a record turnout. Anecdotally, several people attended Soul Strolls for the second or third time. If you have not had a chance to attend, make time for a fun-filled evening next year.

I am grateful for the 5K races at the cemetery. This year the Pride 5K and the Dead Man's Run continued to be popular and exemplify how the cemetery offers a safe and inclusive space for peace and vitality. I particularly love all the costumes at the Dead Man's Run, although I am not exactly sure how some people were able to run in such elaborate costumes!

I am grateful for new events and our traditions. This year we unveiled the Mathew Brady Memorial – an interactive installation that highlights the work of Civil War photographer Mathew Brady. A special “thank you” goes out to Larry West who spearheaded this project. We also continued with some of our well-known events like the annual John Philip Sousa Birthday Concert, docent tours, and the return of Yappy Hour.

I am grateful for our vibrant K9 Corps community, which is one of our largest, most popular programs and continues to grow. The K9 Corps has been the beating heart of the cemetery for many years, connecting our community to its past while providing resources and critical volunteer

*Continued on page 15*



THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION  
OF HISTORIC CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY

1801 E St. SE  
Washington, DC 20003  
202-543-0539

[www.congressionalcemetery.org](http://www.congressionalcemetery.org)  
[staff@congressionalcemetery.org](mailto:staff@congressionalcemetery.org)

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The Association for the Preservation of  
Historic Congressional Cemetery is a  
nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All  
donations are deductible to the extent  
permitted by federal tax laws. Funding for the  
preservation and maintenance of Historic  
Congressional Cemetery is provided in part  
by the Congressional Cemetery  
Endowment, which was created with  
matching funds provided by the U.S.  
Congress and administered by the  
National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## AT CONGRESSIONAL, WE CELEBRATE OUR NEIGHBORS.

I've been thinking a lot lately about what it means to be a good neighbor.

A little over a year ago, I packed up my husband, two small children, and the contents of our four-bedroom home and started the journey to the two-bedroom condo we rented sight-unseen that was chosen specifically for the great local school and because I could walk to work. We took a leap of faith and crossed our fingers that the supports we needed as new DC residents would find us. That we would be surrounded by good neighbors.

Coming from suburbia, I knew what a good neighbor could look like. It's helping the single mom shovel the snow off the driveway. It's making extra servings of dinner to take to the elderly widower down the block. It's letting the local kids take a dive in your pool to beat the summer heatwave. At its heart, being a good neighbor is about being generous--with your time, with your resources, with those around you.

Now, I may not see houses with big backyards filled with pool toys and long, winding drives needing shoveling after the first big storm, but living on the Hill and in this community surrounding the cemetery, I do see that same generous spirit. People craft community in their own ways, and that generosity shows itself in every "Little Free Library", "Walking School Bus", and ANC gathering. I am really starting to fall under the spell of living and working on the Hill.

This same community has shown up for the cemetery in so many ways this year. When we found ourselves suddenly without a groundskeeper in September, volunteers stepped up to help tend to basic maintenance on the grounds, even taking out the trash! Our dog walking community is always quick to let us know if something is amiss, and their keen

observations kept our grounds safe and clean this year and many years prior. We held going away parties for those staff members moving to their next adventure and welcoming meet-and-greets with the new faces gracing the gatehouse.

We worked tirelessly to help create the community of which we would want to take part.

It is the human element at Congressional Cemetery that makes us part of our community. We mourn loved ones, celebrate milestones, and tell the stories of our over 65,000 residents who were once cherished friends and neighbors. This winter, I invite you to tell those stories alongside us. Visit the cemetery to escape the hustle and bustle of the city. Find community in the most unlikely of places. Be pleasantly surprised by the lively offerings of our historic burial ground. Make a gift to help us keep this important historic and community resource in your own backyard. We treasure the opportunity to welcome you to our corner of Capitol Hill.

In the words of the late, great Fred Rogers: "Won't you be my neighbor?"

Yours in service,

Jaclyn Spainhour  
President





## AROUND THE GATEHOUSE

### MEET OUR NEW HORTICULTURE AND GROUNDS MANAGER



**Marvin Herbert, Horticulture and Grounds Manager**

This November, we welcomed Marvin Herbert to the team at Congressional Cemetery. Working as our Horticulture and Grounds Manager, Marvin has hit the ground running and is already hard at work maintaining and improving the beauty of our grounds. Please say hello to him and introduce yourself the next time you stop by the Cemetery!

To help everyone get to know him better, we asked Marvin the following questions:

**Q:** *What interested you in working for the cemetery? What is your favorite thing about Congressional Cemetery so far?*

**A:** I'm passionate about the work that I do. I love working outside and I was looking for employment and am thankful to be onboard. My favorite things so far are the people and seeing the dogs everyday throughout the cemetery.

**Q:** *Can you tell us a little about your background? How long have you been working in landscaping and where have you worked before?*

**A:** I have 20 years of experience in landscaping. I've worked at various places. My last position was at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. I also worked at Bowie State University and Catholic University. I've continued my education in landscaping through both my job experience and through attending conferences, trade shows, certifications, and the like. I'm a long time DC native. I grew up near East Capitol Street, and I'm now in Upper Marlboro, MD.

**Q:** *What is your favorite TV show or movie? Why?*

**A:** Wow, that's hard. I like Chicago PD, Martin, the Simpsons sometimes. I like something that is easy-going, comedic, has a little humor to it.

**Q:** *What is your favorite food and why?*

**A:** Wow, that's even harder. I like all types of food. Chicken, fish, some seafoods. If I had to say one food, it would be crab cakes. They are just tasty and perfect.

**Q:** *Do you like sports? If so, what are your favorite teams?*

**A:** I love sports. NFL is my favorite and I'm a die-hard Philadelphia Eagles fan. But I like all sports. Basketball, baseball, boxing, pretty much anything.

### NEW, IMPROVED GIFT SHOP OPENS SPRING 2023

We are excited to announce the opening of the new HCC Gift Shop, scheduled for spring of 2023. Housed in the Gatehouse, the new shop will feature unique gifts for cemetery enthusiasts, HCC branded items, a curated selection of books, and special seasonal items. The shop will reflect a diverse selection of subjects including history, nature, death, esoterica, and gardening. All sales support our nonprofit mission to preserve, protect, and promote our historic yet active burial ground. Be on the lookout for the grand opening and other pop-up shop events!

## **UPDATES ON OUR K9 CORPS PROGRAM**

Last April the board of the Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery (APHCC) formed a task force to review every aspect of the K9 Corps program at the cemetery. The task force's work included a survey of K9 Corps members and hours of discussion about the purpose of the program, its size, and its cost.

Through those survey responses last summer, the task force created recommendations that were approved by the board. Here are the highlights:

- Many respondents recommended increasing the number of K9 Corps memberships available, noting that would be a way to increase the income to the cemetery while helping to keep membership fees affordable. The board agreed and approved a membership increase of 25% for household memberships in 2023.
- Additionally, the membership fees were increased to ensure they both cover the cost of running the program and act as a fundraiser for the much-needed preservation work at the cemetery. HCC has recently identified over \$11 million in conservation work needed throughout the cemetery; K9 Corps membership fees will provide an important contribution toward that work.
- We're going to be installing a system to make it easier to report and track volunteer hours for those paying the volunteer rate.
- With the increase in the membership limit, we hope we can move those remaining on the wait list off in no more than three years.
- After the wait list is eliminated, we will hold an annual lottery to fill any available K9 Corps membership slots. Current K9 Corps members will be able to renew their membership without going through the lottery.
- Survey responses indicated strong support for the day pass program to allow those who don't have a K9 Corps membership to visit HCC occasionally with their canine pals. The board approved continuing the program at a price of \$15 for a day pass beginning in 2023. All day passers are required to provide their contact information, and they are given a copy of the K9 Corps rules and sign a waiver. We will establish daily limits on the number of day passes issued to ensure that the dog-walking experience is safe and pleasant for anyone in the cemetery.

We look forward to welcoming renewing and new members to the 2023 year. If you are a member or on the waitlist, please stay tuned for further information.

### **Information for your estate planning, bequest, stock gift, endowment match, or donation:**

*Legal Name:* The Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery

*Legal Address:* 1801 E St. SE

Washington, DC 20003

*Telephone:* 202-539-0543

*Tax ID Number:* 52-1071828

**Please contact us for wire instruction or banking information**

# EVENTS, PROGRAMS, AND NOTABLE HAPPENINGS: A YEAR IN REVIEW

BY: A.J. ORLIKOFF, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

**W**hen I onboarded in April 2022 as the head of Congressional Cemetery's events and programming, I was both excited and intimidated. On one hand, I felt grateful to be working at a place with so many amazing programs that engage the public and help bring our community together. On the other hand, I felt the pressure of living up to the legacy of these beloved events. As the year and the event season went forward, I began to feel more comfortable after we welcomed Sarah La Rocca to the events team and got to know some of our devoted volunteers. I am happy to share that, in large part due to the efforts of our volunteers and the hard work of staff, the 2022 events season at Congressional Cemetery was a stunning success! From an atmospheric journey into the world of criminal sin with Soul Strolls to our stimulating and vigorous Dead Man's Run to those carefree summer nights of Cinematery, Congressional Cemetery was truly filled with life, laughter, and good vibes in 2022.

## SOUL STROLLS: CRIMINAL SIN

Across four beautiful evenings in October, hundreds of visitors participated in Soul Strolls! Entering the world of criminal sin, our guests were enthralled with the stories of five of our interred residents who were touched by crime in Washington, DC, either as a victim or a willing participant. From murder, prostitution, to kidnapping and more, the stories of our interred residents were told yet again to throngs of enthralled guests. When not on their tour, visitors also enjoyed a drink at the Tavern of Lost Souls, chatted with one of our costumed improv actors, or, if a VIP, imbibed some select beverages in the Public Vault.

While visitors were certainly entertained, little did



**The Soul Strolls Main cast, left to right, Top row: Heather McPherson, Dawn Kopecki, John Wells, Katherine Smyth Haskins. Bottom row: Sally Cusenza, Zoe McDermott-Adler (Photo by Vincent Vassal)**

many of them know that they were getting a history lesson at the same time. Soul Strolls is a fun time, but it is also an important part of our mission to honor the people of the past by telling their stories and educating the public about the amazing historic resource that is Congressional Cemetery.

Over the four completely sold-out nights, over 1,600 people attended Soul Strolls, making it one of the most popular ever! This was a big event, and it would have been impossible to pull off without the tireless efforts of our dedicated volunteer corps. Over 120 volunteers participated in Soul Strolls, logging approximately six hundred hours combined! Whether they worked as a bartender, improv actor, costumed tour guide, bell ringer, at the registration table, or something else, we could not have pulled this off without all their efforts. We would also like to extend a special thanks to our main cast members who brought our interred residents to life.

## DEAD MAN'S RUN

What could be more fun and healthier than a 5K run? Well, a Halloween-themed costumed 5K run in Congressional Cemetery of course! Dead Man's Run was back for the first time in-person since 2019, and it was



## A YEAR IN REVIEW

back in a big way. Over eight hundred runners registered for DMR5K in 2022, making it the largest and most successful run in the event's history! Thanks again to the efforts of our devoted volunteers and the professionalism of Pacers Running, the event was a no-sweat success. Hundreds of runners dressed up in costume for both the adult and child runs, including the winners of our individual and group costume contests. All the winners took home a coveted prize, the No-Bones-About-It Award of Excellence. We hope that you can join us next year for another invigorating Halloween fun run.



**The “Zombees,” one of the contenders for best team costume at Dead Man’s Run**

### CINEMATERY

We are all about dead-serious fun at Congressional Cemetery, and we decided to fill our summer nights with another returning program, Cinematery. This time, it was the “Summer of Space” at Congressional as we screened classic sci-fi summer films, including *E.T. The Extraterrestrial*, *Galaxy Quest*, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, and *Spaceballs*. Our nighttime summer outdoor films delighted audiences with a mixture of laughs, thrills, and action. And while you would think a seating area in a cemetery would be full of a bunch of stiffs, the live reactions of the audience to the films were worth the price of admission alone. Cinematery will be back next year to haunt your summer evenings. We will save a seat for you!



**Visitors settle in among the tombstones for a screening of *Galaxy Quest***

### DOCENT TOURS

On the education side of things, our Docent Corps was out in full force in 2022. Known as the “Dozen Decent Docents” (yes, there are more than a dozen now), this dedicated group of individuals made it their mission to educate the public about the amazing historic resource that is Congressional Cemetery. Whether it was through delivering docent-led introductory tours, executing special tours for private groups, creating special walking tours, or helping us with historical inquiries and puzzles, our docents were there. Thousands of visitors attended docent-led tours of the grounds and we are so grateful for them, their passion, and their hard work. A huge thank you to our docents, and we are looking forward to 2023 with you for another touring season!



**Members of the Marine Band pose for a photo with John Philip Sousa reenactor Ron Anzalone. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Christian Thesken; Marine Corps Photo)**

## A YEAR IN REVIEW

### AND MORE!

It is an impossible task to write about all our programming, but we wanted to quickly mention a few more from 2022. We again celebrated the birthday of John Philip Sousa on November 6 by hosting the US Marine Corps Band for a concert, and rumor has it that Sousa himself was on-hand for the celebration. We were honored to host both the Pride 5K and the Law Enforcement Torch Run 5K in 2022, and we look forward to continuing to host these amazing runs for great causes in 2023. In September we unveiled and dedicated the new Mathew Brady Memorial, a stunning and educational addition to the historic landscape of Congressional Cemetery. A huge congratulations to HCC Board Member Larry West for his generous contributions and hard work to make the memorial a reality. Tombs and Tomes, our book club, continued with six appropriately macabre selections.

## THE YEAR AHEAD

### 2023 PROGRAMMING

We are so excited to share with you some of our plans for 2023! First, Soul Strolls, Dead Man's Run, Sousa's Birthday Concert, and Cinematerly will all be returning. Second, our docent-led tours of the cemetery grounds will continue from April-November. In addition, Death Cafés are returning as a bimonthly program hosted by a rotating slate of moderators. Furthermore, we are excited to announce the residency of Laura Lyster-Mensh for weekly death positive programs (see below for more details). Finally, we have a lineup of entirely new programs to unveil! Highlights include an Earth Day Festival, the Cemetery Speaker Series featuring select historians and thematic cemetery tours, and an interactive Prohibition Era mystery scavenger hunt. We cannot wait to share more with you—be on the lookout for more details on our website and social media channels.

### INTRODUCING OUR DEATH DOULA IN RESIDENCE

Congressional Cemetery is pleased to welcome Laura Lyster-Mensh as our Death Doula in residence for

To top it off, we brought back Death Cafés, the hugely popular death positive get-together where individuals meet to drink tea, eat cake, and talk about death.



**The Mathew Brady Memorial features statues of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.**



2023! We are no strangers to all things death related, and Laura was a natural fit to welcome aboard. She will be hosting visitors for Death Doula Days on Saturdays, 10:00 AM- 1:00 PM at our gatehouse for a weekly rotating slate of different death-positive programs, activities, and discussions.

Laura Lyster-Mensh is a woman of a certain age who has travelled the world learning stories. She has lived in Asia and Greece, written books, hosted podcasts, run businesses, studied languages, and taught English. During the pandemic she and her family moved to DC, and she used some of her isolation time to take training as an end-of-life doula and hospice volunteer. She now volunteers at the Capital Caring hospice unit at Sibley Hospital. Among Laura's goals for her residency are to promote death-positive conversations about life review, legacy, and planning for death. Check out our website and social media channels for more details.



BY MARGARET CANILANG

Over the course of the summer, we got a lot of questions about why we have so many headstones on the ground. In historic cemeteries it is inevitable that the ground, groundwater, burials, and foundations are going to shift over the course of 200 years. Factors associated with fallen memorials can be categorized based on groundwater, grave settling, human error, and weathering.

### WHY DO GRAVESTONES AND MEMORIALS FALTER?

#### Groundwater

- A high water table and springs can cause burials and foundations to shift.
- Salt from herbicides and ice melting products dissolve in groundwater and can enter stones through capillary action. When the water evaporates, the salt crystallizes within the stone, which results in cracking due to expansion.
- East End and Baby Land have a high water table, and this is evident with the number of headstones leaning or tipped over.

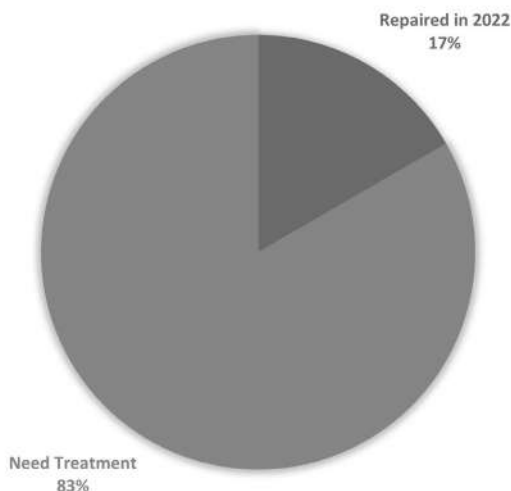
#### Grave Settling

- If stone is placed before the disturbed soil settles and compacts, the memorial will slowly lean in towards the location of the burial.
- Even after the disturbed soil compacts, wooden caskets without concrete vaults tend to cave in after 10-40 years, depending on the type of wood used. With a concrete liner, a memorial is much less likely to tilt due to grave settling.

#### Human Error/Action

- Vandals may damage gravestones.
- Hitting a stone with a lawn mower or vehicle can cause nicks or worse.

### CONSERVATION ASAP PRIORITY 1 HEADSTONES



23 out of 115 of our “Conservation ASAP” Priority One headstones were repaired over the summer! Devlin McDonald and Allie Stacy worked tirelessly in the heat to disassemble unstable memorials, pour new foundations, drill new pin holes, reassemble, and point the joints with fresh mortar.

- People sitting on delicate memorials can cause additional damage.
- Faulty installation and repairs from techniques and materials used in the past can prove to be insufficient.
  - Corrosion of iron pins in multipiece memorials leads to rust jacking.
  - Spalling occurs when the mortar used is stronger than the brick or stone.

#### Weathering

- The natural properties of stone also contribute to its longevity. The three most common materials used at Congressional Cemetery are sandstone, marble, and granite.
- Not all types of stone are created equally. And we are not just talking about sedimentary (sandstone) versus metamorphic (marble and slate) versus igneous (granite). For example: two 18th century sandstone quarries within an hour of Congressional Cemetery produced completely different products.

## STONE STORIES

Aquia Creek Sandstone, formed in the Early Cretaceous age (100-150 million years ago), is not as well-lithified as Seneca Creek Sandstone, which formed 100 million years earlier during the Triassic Period.

- Freeze and thaw occurs if water enters a crack or open joint and freezes. The continued expansion and contraction within the recess can inch stones

off their bases or crack entire memorials.

- Waterproof coatings that do not allow evaporation can result in trapped moisture and eventual decay from the inside out.
- Absence of a foundation or insufficient depth in proportion to the structure can lead to cracking.
- Neglecting to maintain the sacrificial parging or lime mortar can result in freeze/thaw damage.

### Sandstone



Sandstone is a sedimentary stone that was sourced locally and much easier to manufacture and transport than marble in the 1800s. Sandstone tends to delaminate based on its bedding planes, so instead of the inscription gradually wearing away over time, it is more likely to lose the entire inscription as a complete layer. Sandstone is also prone to groundwater entering through capillary action due to its porosity.

### Slate



Slate is the favorite stone of our Director of Conservation. While it is not a prominent material used at Congressional because it is not quarried locally, we do have several modern slate memorials. Slate is a resilient, dense stone with low porosity like granite, but due to its very fine-grains, complicated engravings can be carved onto the thin foliated sheets. Slate memorials are still hand-carved by skilled artisans.

### Marble



Marble had its heyday in the 1900s which was perfect for Victorians due to the ability to carve it into elaborate statues and intricate iconography. The downside of being soft is that marble is very porous and susceptible to erosion and disaggregation. Therefore, fine details and inscriptions are often lost over time.

### Granite



Granite is the most common memorial material used currently. It has a low porosity and dense structure which makes it less susceptible to groundwater and environmental erosion and weathering, but not as easy to carve fine three-dimensional details.

# MURDER AND MAYHEM AT CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY

BY: JEFF TRINCA

*Docent Jeff Trinca developed a “Murder and Mayhem Tour” for Congressional Cemetery’s 2022 Halloween Season. The content, research, and stories from the tour have been adapted for this article.*

## THE REED FAMILY—DEATH BY FIRE AND WATER

In the morning hours of August 8, 1873, Police Officer Joseph Reed, his wife, Sallie, and their three children—Sarah 7, Marian 5, and Joseph 2—boarded the steamboat, *Wawaset*, to enjoy a cruise down the Potomac River to visit family. Accompanying them were the officer’s brother John, aunt Julia Kelly and young niece Elizabeth Reed.

On that fateful morning, Reed made a decision that would stay with him for the rest of his life: he chose duty over family. Staying only for the short ride across the Potomac to Alexandria, he kissed his family goodbye and caught a stagecoach back to work the night shift.

Meanwhile, his family continued down the Potomac. As Sallie readied the children to debark around noon, passengers suddenly broke into a panic when a fire appeared amidship. A survivor recalled that “The air was filled with the piercing shrieks of women and children, while men stood aghast at the hopelessness of their situation.”

The captain decided that the best means of saving lives was to run the ship aground. Not knowing this and seeing the fire consuming the middle of the wooden ship, the passengers in the rear began jumping into the Potomac. Unfortunately, few people in those days could swim, especially women and children. Additionally, the cork life preservers were stored where few could find them. In less than twenty-five minutes, the ship was resting on the bottom of the Potomac.

Hearing the news of the fate of the *Wawaset*, Reed soon discovered that six members of his family—his aunt, niece, wife, two daughters, and young son—had lost their lives to fire and water. Only his brother, badly burned, survived. As the battered remains of his family were recovered, Reed brought them to Congressional Cemetery for burial. He lived to 90 and wondered how things might have differed had he remained with them that day.

The loss of any loved one is traumatic, and Reed was forced to endure the loss of his entire family in a single catastrophic event. Tragic stories like that of the Reed family are all too common among the approximately 65,000 interred residents of Congressional Cemetery. While most people hope to die in bed at a ripe old age, many of the headstones, memorials, and grave markers at Congressional Cemetery conceal a tragic story or untimely demise. Some of the most unfortunate had such violent or shocking deaths that their stories are like something out of our worst nightmares rather than historical reality. But these stories are all true.

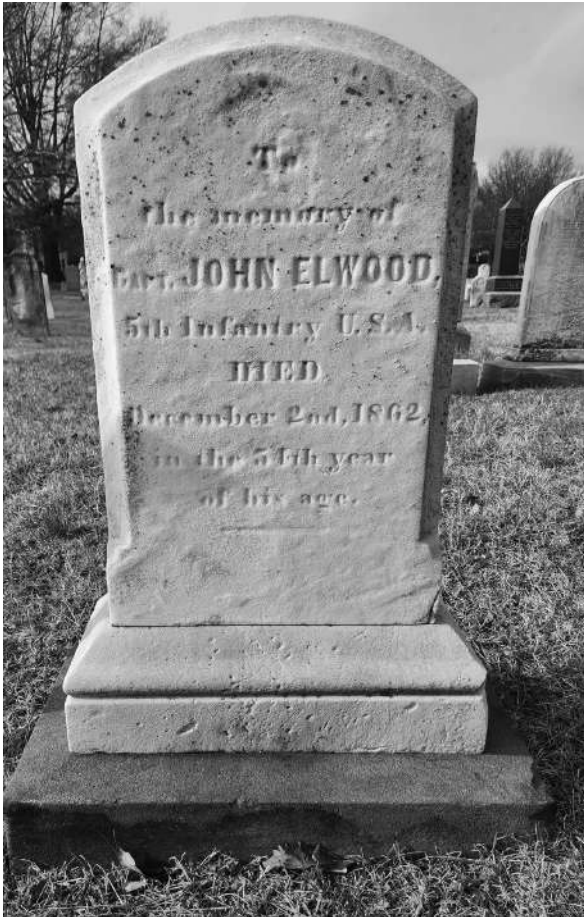


Jeff Trinca leads visitors on the “Murder and Mayhem Tour” at the graveside of Colonel Truman Cross, Range 39, Site 141.



## THE INTERESTING CASE OF CAPTAIN JOHN ELWOOD

After the disastrous Battle of First Manassas, there were many questions in Lincoln’s War Department as to how the Confederates seemed to have intelligence on the Army’s battle plans. The Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, decided it was time to crack down on Confederate spies and hired Allan Pinkerton to create an intelligence service. It wasn’t long before Pinkerton zeroed in on the attractive widow Rose Greenhow. Soon after staking out her house, Pinkerton and his men observed an Army captain knocking on her door and being admitted. Pinkerton climbed up on his agent’s shoulders and peered through the window, observing the captain showing Rose some maps and afterwards retiring to the back. Pinkerton recognized



The headstone of Captain John Elwood, Range 67, Site 49.

the man as Captain John Elwood, the local Provost Marshal.

When Elwood eventually exited, Pinkerton tailed the suspect as he made his way back to his post. Apparently, Pinkerton was still learning his spy-craft because Elwood rushed out of the post with soldiers in tow and soon had Pinkerton and his agents in a cell.

After a night in jail, Pinkerton was able to get a message to the War Department and was released. Within hours, the tables were turned, and Elwood found himself imprisoned in the Old Capitol Prison without charges or access to counsel. “Confederate Rose” was to follow, though she was treated more as a celebrity than a notorious spy and was soon traded in a prisoner exchange to the Confederacy.

For over a year, Elwood sat in solitary confinement in the prison just across the street from the US Capitol. No charges were ever brought against him, and one of his agents later wrote that Pinkerton kept the captain in solitary confinement with little or no evidence. One day, Elwood was found in a pool of his own blood with his throat slashed open. Without a formal inquest, the body was released to his family for burial, along with whispers that he had committed suicide. The official Union casualty list provides no information other than the date of his death.

## SAMUEL KEEP, A TOAST TO THE BRIDE AND GROOM

Samuel Keep was a young builder from Boston who won the contract to construct the Pensacola Naval Yard. A serious outbreak of yellow fever killed a sizeable number of his workers and soon brought the project to a halt. On the edge of bankruptcy Keep decided he’d take his case to Washington in early 1830 to negotiate with the government about increasing his funding.

He soon fell in love with a young lady. They married, and Samuel decided to take his bride Julia to meet his family in Boston. The day they were scheduled to leave by ship out of Baltimore, Mr. Keep stopped at the bar in Barnum Hotel at Washington Square where they were staying. Someone proposed a

## AMERICAN HERITAGE

toast to the happy couple. Keep grabbed what he thought was a bottle of hard cider and drank over half of it before realizing that he was consuming a toxic cleaner. He died shortly afterwards. The young Julia was heartbroken and never remarried. She lived into her 50s before she joined her husband. It is said that she can still be seen at night wandering through Washington Square.

### THE ASSASSINATION OF REPRESENTATIVE JAMES HINDS

James Hinds was an abolitionist from Minnesota who, after the Civil War, moved to Little Rock, Arkansas in 1865. He formed a law office and became a politically active Radical Republican. He advocated that the new Arkansas constitution end slavery, grant Black Americans full suffrage rights, and guarantee that all children have free public education. Subsequently, in June



Representative Hinds' remains were interred in Salem, New York but a cenotaph was erected at Congressional Cemetery in his honor.

1868, he was elected to represent Arkansas in the US Congress.

At the end of the session, Hinds returned to Arkansas to campaign for then presidential candidate Ulysses S. Grant. He attended political gatherings across the state, delivering speeches urging support for Reconstruction and the Republican platform. His life, along with thousands of other abolitionists and newly freed African Americans, was threatened by the newly formed Ku Klux Klan, including a coffin delivered to his front door with two daggers.

Hinds then traveled to Monroe County accompanied by a friend. Six miles from an event, the captain of their steamboat, as a witness stated, "put them off for being Republicans." Not sure where they were, the two men stopped to seek directions. They approached a man named George Clark, who gave them directions and then, it is rumored, followed them. Hinds had no disposition for conflict and had little regard for the risks of partisan violence in the post-war South. Someone, likely Clark, shot him with one barrel of a shotgun and then placed the other barrel against his body and shot him with the second. Before succumbing to his injuries, Hinds wrote on the inside of his hatband, "My name is James Hinds. I am shot in the body and shall live only a few minutes. Wife, take care of Jennie and Annie."

As someone later said, "It is rumored that he was either shot by the county chairman of the Democratic Party or the head of the Ku Klux Klan. My guess is both." No one was ever prosecuted for his death. Hinds became the first Member of Congress in history to be assassinated while in office.

### A MURDER THAT HELPED START A WAR — COLONEL TRUMAN CROSS

After Texas broke off from Mexico in 1836 and joined the Union as a state in 1845, James Polk was elected president with a campaign promise of resolving all border disputes. He ordered General Zachary Taylor to move troops between the Rio Grande and the Nueces Rivers. It was not at all clear that the Rio Grande was the southern boundary of Texas, although Texas

had forced the defeated Mexican general Santa Anna to say so when he was a prisoner. The traditional border between Texas and Mexico had been the Nueces River, about 150 miles to the north. Ordering troops to the Rio Grande, into territory inhabited by Mexicans, was clearly a provocation.

Colonel Truman Cross was a quartermaster general in the US Army from Washington, DC. On April 10, 1846, while posted at the headquarters of Gen. Taylor, Col. Cross went out alone on horseback to oversee his troops collecting provisions for the Army. He never returned and his body was found eleven days later, stripped naked and with his skull smashed. It was assumed he had been killed by Mexican guerrillas crossing the river. In a solemn military ceremony, visible to the Mexicans crowding onto the roofs of their houses across the Rio Grande, Cross was buried with a religious service and three volleys of rifle fire.

Hostilities continued to escalate until Mexican forces attacked a U.S. patrol, leading to Congress' declaration of war. As support for the war began to wane in the later months of 1846, Cross's body was disinterred and essentially put on a tour of the U.S. designed to help drum up support for the war, his body stopping at major ports on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. Cross's funeral and internment at Congressional Cemetery were attended by the President, his cabinet, and members of Congress.

### THE IMPETUOUS MR. CILLEY

Jonathan Cilley was elected to Congress in 1836 as a supporter of Andrew Jackson. During his time as president, Jackson, a staunch Democrat, had shut down the Bank of the United States, slipping the country into a recession. Representative Cilley considered the coverage by a certain newspaper editor, James Webb,



A lithograph of Cilley published after his death.

to be biased in favor of the bank. He vented on the House floor, suggesting that Webb's opposition to closing the bank came about because of loans from the bank totaling \$50,000.

Webb, insulted by Cilley's suggestion of corruption, asked Congressman William Graves to deliver to Cilley a challenge to a duel. Cilley declined the challenge in a manner which Graves decided was an insult to his honor, and therefore Graves challenged Cilley to a duel. Thus Cilley had managed to change his adversary from a nearsighted editor to a frontier fighter.

As the challenged party, Cilley had the choice of weapons. Because of Graves' reputation as an expert pistol shooter, Cilley selected muskets at 80 paces, a distance he hoped would negate Graves' shooting skill. After their first fire missed, Mr. Cilley refused to concede. So the participants shortened the distance and fired again, but again both shots missed. On the third exchange of shots—insisted on by the stubborn Cilley—Graves fatally wounded Cilley by shooting him through the femoral artery.

Losing a loved one is always hard but losing someone in a shocking manner—murder, sudden accident, or execution—is life changing. The stories told here are only scratching the surface of the many interesting but shocking ends of the residents here in Congressional Cemetery.





## CHAIR CONTINUED

### LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

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services for current needs such as restoration, maintenance, and beautification. A special thank you to all those who filled out the K9 survey so that we can continue to adapt to our community's needs.

I am grateful for all the volunteers that help keep the cemetery an open, welcoming, and beautiful place. And behind those volunteers working tirelessly to help organize it all is the cemetery staff. You are probably aware already that Congressional Cemetery is an active burial site, so balancing our core mission with everything else takes a significant amount of work. A special shout out goes to Jaclyn Spainhour, who just completed her first year as president, and her team for keeping the trains running on time.

These are but a few of the things for which I am grateful. Honestly, there is too much to mention it all here. To stay up to date on what we are doing at the cemetery, you can find us on Instagram under the han-

dle @congcem and on Facebook under Congressional Cemetery. While this year is not over, I look forward to the year to come. The cemetery staff and the board are constantly looking for ways to strengthen and grow the Congressional Cemetery in new and different ways. So please stay tuned for these new developments.

Of course, all of this is not possible without your support. The cemetery is a small organization with many needs. So, in the spirit of thanksgiving, I hope you will consider supporting the cemetery in your year-end giving. If you can and are able, then join me in making a donation at <https://congressionalcemetery.networkforgood.com/projects/136507-website-donate-button>.

I wish you and yours a happy holiday!

In gratitude,

Richard Greene  
Chair of the HCC Board

## A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF OUR RESIDENTS

We believe extraordinary people deserve equally interesting eternal resting places.

It takes a special person to want to spend eternity at our quirky cemetery, and we want to take the time to thank you for choosing to be part of our Congressional Cemetery family. We know how difficult it is to lose a loved one. Grief is compounded by the confusion and stress of the aftermath of that loss, from choosing how to say goodbye to finding the final resting place. We want you to know we think of you and your loved ones every day. We work to honor their legacy and are humbled by your trust in us as caretakers of this beautiful burial ground.

At Congressional, we collect stories. We preserve legacies. We celebrate and remember your loved ones alongside you this holiday season. Thank you for being here.

Our service does not stop after the burial. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you need anything related to the care of your loved ones and their sites. We are here for you.

Thinking of those missing at the table this holiday season,

Jackie Spainhour  
President  
Historic Congressional Cemetery

*Yes!*

I want to help preserve and restore Congressional Cemetery with a tax deductible donation.

\$25 \$50 \$75 \$100 \$250 Other \_\_\_\_\_

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My employer makes matching contributions. Please send me the matching gift form.

*Thank you!*

*Please mail with your donation to the return address on the mailing panel or use the envelope inside this newsletter.*



Association for the Preservation of  
Historic Congressional Cemetery

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Check the Event page on the website for details!

- January 7: Death Doula Days Begin
- January 10: Tombs and Tomes
- February 7: Death Café
- March 14: Tombs and Tomes
- March 19: The Circle of Life Dedication Ceremony
- April 1: Guided Docent Tours Begin
- April 11: Death Café
- April 15: Cemetery Speaker Series: The Lincoln Assassination
- April 22: Earth Day Festival
- May 9: Tombs and Tomes
- May 13: Cemetery Speaker Series: Capitol Police
- May 20: The Gentleman's Gambit: A Prohibition Era Mystery
- June 2: Cinematery Begins

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