

Prospect Hill Cemetery
Our Nation's Capital's German-American Cemetery
Established 1858
www.prospecthillcemetery.org

2201 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002-1103 (202) 667-0676

Summer-Fall

Newsletter

2008

**PROSPECT HILL'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS
WERE A SUCCESS AS THE RAIN HELD OFF UNTIL LATER**

It was a cloudy yet very pleasant Saturday morning (May 31) when our cemetery's Board of Trustees and guests gathered at the chapel circle for our annual lot owners meeting. About 40 people were in attendance for this first event celebrating our cemetery's 150th anniversary.

Board President Rudy Becker called the meeting to order at 10:45 a.m. Mary Anne Probus read the devotions and Carol Holler led us in the pledge of allegiance. The minutes of last year's meeting were read by Secretary Liz Becker. Short reports were given by Superintendent Joe Connell, President Becker, Treasurer Holler and the various committee chairpersons.

A discussion followed, under new business, concerning a proposed change to Section 1 of the Articles of Incorporation of Prospect Hill which stated ". . . board of trustees shall be elected annually by the proprietors of lots in said cemetery . . ." It was moved and seconded to change the word "annually" to "biennially." The motion was carried unanimously.

When the meeting was adjourned the group gathered at the old stone gatehouse for a delicious lunch featuring schnitzel and potato salad prepared by Liz Becker and desserts prepared by other board members.

During the luncheon the clouds darkened and rain seemed eminent. However, the luncheon was not disturbed, nor did the showers come during the time needed to drive to The United Church in downtown Washington where the second 150th anniversary event took place. It was a benefit concert put on by the Washington Saengerbund German choral group. The concert also honored The United Church's 175th anniversary. Just as the program began inside, the rains came down outside.

The concert began with Bach's "Canzona in D Minor, BWV 588" played by organist and Saengerbund director Stephen Ackert. Welcoming words were given by The Reverend Bodo Schwabe, pastor of The United Church, and Bernhard Wenzel, president of the Washington Saengerbund, after which the Saengerbund presented four selections.

Becker and Thomas Meindl of the Cultural Affairs Department, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, then spoke briefly to the 100-plus guests who attended.

Instrumental solos were then performed by pianist Johann Wiese and organist Ackert. Several more selections were sung by the Saengerbund including one by the group's Women's Choir. A very pleasant afternoon of Christian music finally came to a close after an hour and a half. A reception followed. Everyone seemed to thoroughly enjoy the concert and refreshments and termed the event a huge success.

Overheard that afternoon: A gentleman commented that this was the first birthday party for a cemetery he had ever attended. The comment drew many chuckles.

TOTENSONNTAG MEMORIAL SERVICE TO BE HELD NOV. 1 AT PROSPECT HILL

Mark Saturday, November 1, on your calendar now. That's when a third 150th anniversary celebration event will take place at the cemetery. It will be a memorial service in the tradition of the annual German religious festival called Totensonntag.

It is also known in Germany as "The Sunday of the Dead" when Protestant Christians honor their deceased loved ones, especially those who died during the past church year.

The famous Washington Saengerbund will again help us celebrate by singing several favorite German hymns. A member of the German-American Heritage Society and the pastor of The United Church are expected to give brief messages concerning Totensonntag, which in the United States is similar to our All Saints Sunday when a bell is sounded after the reading of each name of those deceased during the year.

This special service will again be held in the chapel circle area of Prospect Hill. Refreshments will be available at the old gatehouse after the service which is scheduled to start at 1:00 pm. In case of bad weather the service will be cancelled. Call the cemetery at 202-667-0676 for further notice.

BECKER, HOLLER SWITCH TRUSTEE POSITIONS

Our Board of Trustees met briefly after the lot owners meeting at Prospect Hill and announced that all seven trustees agreed to return to the board next year.

However, President Becker and Treasurer Holler exchanged duties. Becker is now treasurer, responsible for all financial transactions, and Holler regained her past position as president to preside over all meetings.

The other five returning trustees are Liz Becker, Jean Crabill, Henry Fankhauser, Mary Anne Probus and Al Reitz.

President's Message . . .

There is a saying . . .

"You can't go back again." We've all heard that familiar phrase. But it's not always true, for I have come back as president of the Board of Trustees.

Rudy Becker, an outstanding president, is by far the most financially knowledgeable person on the Board. Although I served as treasurer last year, I am not particularly talented in this area. So, with full Board approval, Rudy and I exchanged jobs for Prospect Hill's 150th year.

We are extremely grateful to the Washington Saengerbund for the beautiful concert they gave in support of Prospect Hill and The United Church on May 31. Despite the threatening weather, there was a substantial group of people who came to hear this wonderful music. In addition to the choral presentations, we were able to enjoy several Bach selections by organist Stephen Ackert (who was also the director of the Saengerbund) and a Beethoven sonata performed by pianist Johann Wiese.

I'm looking forward to an active year in which our trustees and lot owners accomplish much for our beloved cemetery. I hope you can join us at our upcoming Memorial Totensonntag on November 1.

Carol Holler, President
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THREE MORE TREES FALL BUT THERE'S A MYSTERY INVOLVING ONE

High winds and summer storms toppled three more large old trees in our cemetery. The biggest was completely uprooted. Another broke off at its base. And large branches snapped and ripped from the trunk of the third.

Luckily, no tombstones were damaged. Rudy Becker, of our Board of Trustees, drove up from his home in Locust Grove, VA, to check out the fallen trees and to give his idea, after an amazing and mysterious find, as to why no tombstones were toppled or damaged.

While closely examining the tree that had broken off at its base Becker noticed something protruding from its hollow interior near where the trunk had snapped off from the base. He reached in and pulled out an old rusty, disintegrating horseshoe.

How it got there or how old it is will always remain a mystery. Who knows, it may have been placed at the base of the tree during the Civil War and over the years the tree just grew around it.

Becker, with tongue in cheek, surmises that the luck of the imbedded old horseshoe may have mysteriously played a part in "saving" the tombstones.

Cemetery Superintendent Connell has already sawed up most of the fallen trees and disposed of them. But if you'd like to see the lucky horseshoe on your next visit to Prospect Hill he'd be glad to show it to you.

STUDENTS HELP SUPERINTENDENT CONNELL TIDY UP THE CEMETERY

Superintendent Joe Connell received some unexpected help early this spring raking leaves and picking up sticks and fallen branches in the cemetery.

Ten students from the Virginia Delta Omega chapter of the Delta Epsilon Phi German Honor Society at W. T. Woodson High School in Fairfax, VA, "invaded" the cemetery armed with rakes and garbage bags ready to do the "educational and helpful activity." Paulina Capar, a senior at Woodson, described the activity in an article she wrote for the cemetery's website.

The article ends with this paragraph:

"Rolling up our sleeves in the beautiful and comfortable weather, we tidied up the grounds, admiring the stonework on some of the gravesites, while learning of the history of the cemetery and its impact upon the surrounding community. The morning went quickly as the team worked solidly for three hours straight to the end. We hope that we made a positive impact on the site of the cemetery and lent a helping hand by being involved in its upkeep."

The activity was the idea of Myra Hillburg, a member of the Washington Saengerbund German choral group that has performed at several cemetery functions. She is also the German teacher at Woodson and sponsor of its German Honor Society. She plans to make the cemetery project an annual event for her students to receive extra credit for community service.

Superintendent Connell, the Prospect Hill Board of Trustees and all the lot owners thank Ms. Capar and her team for their time and effort in helping keep our historic cemetery beautiful.

We invite other school groups to offer their time and talents to help keep Prospect Hill a showplace cemetery and to receive school credit for community service. Call Superintendent Connell at 202-667-0676 if interested.

FOUR BURIALS SINCE LAST NEWSLETTER

Superintendent Connell reports four interments since the last issue of the Newsletter. Hugo, 93, and Herta Mueller, 97, were cremates. The two regular interments were for Mary Schaffert, 87, and Luise Opperman, 95.

YOU MAY BE SURPRISED AT WHAT YOU'LL FIND ON OUR WEBSITE

Would you like to know all about the history of Prospect Hill, or learn about some of the interesting people buried there, or read about our cemetery and the Civil War?

Answers to these questions can be found by switching on your computer to www.prospecthillcemetery.org .

If you missed a recent issue of our Newsletter, an archives of past issues can also be found on our website. Among other "chapters" are a list of surnames of persons buried at Prospect Hill; a list of Civil War soldiers buried there; and a list of German American organizations in the area.

Thanks to Prospect Hill historian Jean Crabill, trustee Rudy Becker and volunteer Al Wenzel for keeping our website interesting and updated. Wenzel is a member of the Washington Saengerbund and enjoys developing and working on websites; it's his hobby.

Like we said before, switch on our website - you might be surprised at what you'll find.

*The Newsletter is produced by the Board of Trustees of Prospect Hill Cemetery, 2201 North Capitol St., NE,
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