

Prospect Hill Cemetery

Our Nation's Capital's Historic German-American Cemetery

Established 1858

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

Holiday Season

Newsletter

2007

FALL FOLIAGE SPARKLED DURING SERENE MEMORIAL SERVICE

It was a bright, brisk and breezy autumn afternoon. The fall foliage was in its glory. The setting was symbolic the chapel circle in the upper center of our historic and beautiful Prospect Hill Cemetery. The day was October 20, 2007.

Dignitaries from the German-American Heritage Society and The United Church of Washington, DC, were present plus the Washington Saengerbund German choral group and our cemetery's Board of Trustees. All gathered around to participate in the final fall experimental annual lot owners meeting and Memorial Service to honor the German Totensonntag Festival of the Dead. Next year's festivities will revert back to our own Memorial Day Weekend in May.

Rudy Becker, president of our Board, welcomed those present, then explained the origin and celebration of Totensonntag. Pastor Bodo Schwabe of The United Church followed with the opening prayer and later delivered an inspiring message of the day.

Brief histories of the German-American Heritage Society and The United Church were presented by Gary Grassl and Christine Hambach, members of their respective organization. Between the speakers talks, the Washington Saengerbund delighted everyone by performing four favorite German hymns.

Pastor Schwabe concluded the service with the benediction blessing in both English and German. Refreshments and socializing at the old stone gatehouse residence of our superintendent ended another impressive and successful Day at the Cemetery.

LET'S CELEBRATE OUR CEMETERY'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY BY DONATING MORE GENEROUSLY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

In a few months Prospect Hill Cemetery will reach another historic milestone. And all of us, lot owners, heirs, relatives and friends, are invited to help celebrate this special occasion our cemetery's 150th anniversary by giving more generously to our annual Year-End Memorial Donations Fundraising Campaign during this coming Holiday Season.

Since 1858 this final resting place of our family members and other loved ones has survived and remained one of the beautiful and historic sites in our Nation's Capital.

Surely we want this wonderful legacy to continue for years to come. That's why this appeal, to give a little extra, goes out to you today. As you know, our cemetery is privately-owned and maintained mostly through donations from lot owners and heirs of those buried here.

And you must realize that the faithful circle of dedicated folks is dwindling day by day, mostly through death and relocation. But the daily upkeep and growing operating expenses, including the aged stone gate-house residence of our superintendent, are an ongoing financial burden. Contributions have fallen in recent years partly because that list of faithful contributors continues to shrink.

Prospect Hill Cemetery is getting into a very vulnerable financial position. We continue to operate under great financial pressure. Let's not let that continue! Please give generously! All Holiday memorial contributions go entirely toward the upkeep and expenses of our cemetery.

If you wish to honor the memory of your departed loved one(s) with a Holiday Season memorial donation, and we hope you do, please indicate it on the Order Form on the last page. A complete list of contributors, and the departed loved one(s) they are honoring, will be printed in the Spring 2008 issue. (The amount contributed will not be published.)

If you do not wish to contribute a memorial donation, please help us with an End of Year financial support donation, also indicated on the Order Form.

A NEW FLAG IS RAISED IN A DEDICATION CEREMONY

Notice the bright new American flag flying atop the flag pole as you enter the cemetery.

It was donated by former trustee Anita Carmack in memory of her uncle Albert Gersdorff who died in 1922 and is buried in Prospect Hill.

A brief dedication ceremony was held at the flag pole site after a recent meeting of your Board of Trustees. Mrs. Carmack gave a brief tribute to her Uncle Albert in a personal message which read in part:

I had an uncle who knew and loved me. But I never had a chance to know him because he died when I was just 10 months old. He had come home from World War I without a scratch.

When he died, my grandma was offered a choice of two lots in Arlington National Cemetery. But Grandma said, No! I want my boys buried near me in the Gersdorff family plot (at Prospect Hill) next to their father and mother.

And now I wish to dedicate this new flag to the uncle I never knew, Range-Finder Sgt. Albert Gersdorff, United States Marine Corps World War I.

Current trustee Albert Reitz, Mrs. Carmack's son, is named after Sgt. Gersdorff. Reitz, Board President Rudy Becker and Superintendent Connell then raised the new flag as other members of the board stood tall and repeated the Pledge of Allegiance with hands over hearts.

Trustee Reitz said he would burn the old, tattered flag ceremoniously on the grounds of the house where he and his mother live, just a few blocks from the cemetery

CEMETERY GATES WILL BE OPEN ALL CHRISTMAS WEEK

With Christmas falling on Tuesday this year, Superintendent Connell has agreed to keep the cemetery gates open during regular hours, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the entire Christmas week from Sunday, December 23, through Monday, December 31.

Their closing will then revert back to the regular weekly schedule of being closed on Tuesday (New Year's Day) and Wednesday. The gates will also be open on Thanksgiving Day.

President's Message . . .

HAPPY 150th BIRTHDAY TO OUR CEMETERY

Next year will mark another milestone year for our Prospect Hill Cemetery — the 150th anniversary of its founding in 1858. It is important and fitting that we celebrate this occasion because our cemetery has survived and prospered through some of the most tumultuous eras in Washington, DC, history.

The cemetery and the city have changed considerably since 1858. That's when five men, Christopher Friess, F. Heider, A. E. L. Keese, John G. Stock, and John Walter, from the German Evangelical Church Society of Concordia Church purchased 17-acre Moore's farm north of Boundary Street located outside the city limits. Since then, the city boundary has moved 3 1/2 miles to the north, North Capitol Street was extended through the Cemetery. Boundary Street became Florida Avenue. Cemetery land west of North Capitol Street was sold and developed, and Lincoln Road was rerouted. Yet, through all this turmoil, our cemetery has survived.

During the years when the physical environment around our cemetery changed, it witnessed the national upheaval of the Civil War. Even though our cemetery suffered financially during the conflict, it survived to become the final resting place of over one hundred casualties of that war.

In modern times, our cemetery continued to surmount ups and downs. After nearly 50 years of successful management by the King family, our cemetery suffered from the social upheaval which occurred in the city during the 1960s to the extent that the Kings were forced to leave their long-time home at Prospect Hill Cemetery. Eventually operations were turned over to the adjacent Glenwood Cemetery. But in the early 1990s lot owners became concerned about further deterioration of cemetery buildings and grounds, so they organized and regained control of the cemetery, made the superintendent's stone gatehouse livable again, revitalized financial assets, and established connections with prospective donors. Our cemetery was on the road to recovery.

Today, the city around our cemetery is also showing signs of revitalization. Young professionals are buying and refurbishing the historic homes, and under the leadership and hard work of our current superintendent, Joe Connell, our cemetery is keeping pace. Fallen headstones are slowly being uprighted, retaining walls within the cemetery are being rebuilt, roadways are being repaired, and the cemetery grounds have a professionally maintained appearance. Our cemetery has become what it was during its early years, a beautiful, historic place of solace and contemplation for families and friends of the deceased. Our Prospect Hill Cemetery and the community have survived and flourished! But financial assistance is an ongoing need.

We could all start honoring our cemetery's birthday by donating a bit more than usual to our Year-End Memorial Fundraising Campaign now going on. (See the Order Form on the last page.)

Planning is well underway on celebratory events commemorating our cemetery's 150th anniversary. If you have any suggestions on how you would like to celebrate, drop us a line at the cemetery address or email me at rbecker2004@yahoo.com.

Details on the event/events will be published in the Spring Newsletter.

Thank you again for your continued interest and support of our cemetery.

Rudy Becker
President, Board of Trustees

MEET AL WENZEL, KEEPER OF OUR WEB SITE

Meet Al Wenzel, the keeper of our website www.prospecthillcemetery.org. He's been working with computers more than 30 years and his hobby is developing and working on new websites.

Al is a good friend of Board president Rudy Becker. Both sing in and are former presidents of the Saeng-erbund German choral group. Rudy approached Al one day and told him about our website problems. The rest is history. Al not only volunteered to help set up our website but to keep it current.

Al retired six years ago after 40 years in The Washington Post advertising department, so he now has plenty of time of play with his computer. His son Anthony works in the computer business. Al and his wife, Renate, are from Germany, he from the town of Ascheffenburg near Frankfurt, she from Berlin. They now live in Fulton, Maryland.

Check out our website. You might be surprised at all you can see, thanks to Al Wenzel. (Our website is also available on the following domains: prospecthillcemeterydc.org or prospecthillcemetery.info).

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OFFICERS NAMED FOR 2008

Liz Becker, wife of Board of Trustees president Rudy Becker, was named to the Board at the annual lot owners meeting on October 20, 2007. She succeeds Sylvia Alspaugh, who recently resigned.

Mrs. Becker immediately accepted the position of Board secretary succeeding Maryanne Probus, who was named social events chairperson.

Rudy Becker was re-elected president; Carol Holler, treasurer; Jean Crabill, finance committee chairperson and assistant Newsletter editor; Al Reitz, building and grounds chairman; and Henry Fankhauser, Newsletter editor.

Superintendent Joe Connell, who admits he loves our cemetery very much, says he plans to stay on the job as long as I can.

HONOR YOUR LOVED ONES ON OUR LARGE CHRISTMAS WREATH

Want to help beautify your cemetery in a different way during this Holiday Season? Once again your Board of Trustees will place a large wreath on the porch of the gatehouse for you to decorate with special Christmas cards honoring your loved ones.

For an extra \$25 donation to the cemetery you may purchase one (or more) of these cards that will give the names of those you wish to honor and also the name of the donor. This card (or cards) will be attached to the wreath which will remain on the porch until after the first of the year.

Rain, sleet, snow all took their toll on individual wreaths offered in the past by your cemetery to buy and place on designated graves. Last season the wreath on-porch idea was tried and worked out well. Drop by the cemetery during Christmas week and see the Christmas wreath decorated with your cards.

Check the Order Form on the last page to record your donation.

LET US HAVE YOUR IDEAS FOR CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

How would you like to celebrate (or honor) your cemetery's 150th anniversary next year? Give us your opinion and/or suggestions on how we can promote this historic occasion. Your Board of Trustees will seriously consider all of your ideas.

And do you also have any ideas or suggestions (or complaints) concerning the upkeep, fund raising and/or beautification projects for our cemetery?

Our appeal in the last Newsletter for donations to purchase perennial plants (azaleas \$25 and rhododendrons \$40) to cover bare spots in the cemetery, as suggested by Superintendent Connell, is going quite well.

So far 22 azaleas and two rhododendrons have been paid for. There's still time to contribute to this worthwhile beautification project. See the Order Form on the last page.

Connell will purchase and plant the perennials in the Spring.

CHILDREN'S BURIAL LIST BOOK NOW AVAILABLE

Prospect Hill historian and Board member Jean Crabill has completed her fourth book on the history of our cemetery. Entitled Prospect Hill Cemetery Children's Burial List, this book has been put together at the request of a few of our lot owners.

The new book contains about 145 pages listing more than 4,350 names of children through age 13 buried at Prospect Hill. Also included, whenever possible, the child's cause of death, age, and the names of parent(s). The book is priced at \$20.

Order Form

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

1. I wish to give a year-end memorial donation in memory of:

Amount of donation \$ _____

2. I wish to make an end-of-year financial support donation of: \$ _____

3. I wish to order _____ Christmas card(s) for the Christmas wreath:

In memory of _____

Donor _____

4. I would like to order the following book(s):

___ copies, *The Immigrants and Their Cemetery: The Story of Prospect Hill* \$ _____
(\$30 plus \$5 postage each)

___ copies, *Families of Prospect Hill* (\$20 plus \$5 postage each) \$ _____

___ copies, *Prospect Hill Cemetery Adult Burial List* (\$35 plus \$5 postage each) \$ _____

___ copies, *Prospect Hill Cemetery Children's Burial List* (\$20 plus \$5 postage) \$ _____

5. I would like to donate the following plants: \$ _____

___ azaleas (\$25 each)

___ rhododendrons (\$40 each) \$ _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Please pay for your card(s), book(s) and plants with a separate check as these purchases are not tax deductible. Please make all checks payable to Prospect Hill Cemetery, and mail this full sheet to:

Prospect Hill Cemetery
c/o Carol Holler, Treasurer
8810 Side Saddle Road
Springfield, VA 2215