

Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, Inc.

520 North 15th Street  
Wilmington, NC 28401

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U.S. Postage  
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Wilmington, NC  
Permit No. 1

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Inscriptions

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FALL 2021

Epidemics/Pandemics in the Port City

by David Rice

The Old North State has seen many epidemics and a couple of pandemics since 1862. The difference between an epidemic and a pandemic has to do primarily with scale. An epidemic is temporarily high in prevalence and confined to one region. A pandemic is an outbreak occurring over a wide geographical area, also high in prevalence. A pandemic arises from an epidemic.

During the last 159 years, Wilmington experienced the yellow fever epidemic in 1862 and two pandemics (Influenza of 1918-19 and COVID-19). The yellow fever epidemic reported 1,505 cases and 654 deaths. The influenza pandemic of 1918 reported approximately 2,000 cases and 274 deaths. And the COVID-19 pandemic reported 21,205 cases and 181 deaths through August 2021. To give perspective to these events, Wilmington’s population was approximately 10,000 in 1862, 31,847 in 1918, and 120,194 in 2019.

North Carolina Highway Historical Marker D69, located on the corner of 15th and Market streets, states, “Oakdale Cemetery: Chartered, 1852. Graves of Confederate leaders, officers, & soldiers. Many yellow fever victims.” Yellow Fever Hill is located in Section G. A sign sponsored by Dr. William McMillan, Jr. says, “1862 Burial Site of Yellow Fever Victims: Communal burial site of



approximately 400 people who died of yellow fever during Wilmington’s epidemic between September and the frosts of November 1862.” The victims buried at Yellow Fever Hill are listed there on a sign developed by a boy scout for his Eagle Scout project. Many stories can be told by the medical providers, community leaders and victims of yellow fever buried at Oakdale Cemetery. Some of those affected by yellow fever are Dr. William George Thomas, John Dillard Bellamy, Dr. James H. Dickson, John Lamb Prichard, Charles Quigley, and James Sprunt. A good source of information for the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1862 is the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society November 1967 Bulletin.

You won’t find many historical markers for pandemics because they are so widespread geographically. In 1918, while World War One still raged in Europe, the United States found itself fighting a killer influenza for which there was no cure. According to John M. Barry, the 1918-19 pandemic may have started in Haskell County, Kansas, home for the Army Camp Funston, now Fort Riley. Because Spain was the only large country to report its cases, the pandemic was branded with the Spanish Flu label. In 1919, the North Carolina Medical Society stated, “The rapidity of the onset and development of the epidemic, together with the absence of a considerable percentage of the medical profession that were engaged in military service, created an administrative problem, local state and national, of great difficulty.”

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Holiday Wreaths Available

ORDERS MUST BE PLACED BY NOVEMBER 29, 2021.



The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery offers Christmas wreaths. This year the fresh live wreaths will be identical to last year’s - 25 inches across with a waterproof red bow. The wreaths will be placed on the grave site of your loved ones during the second week of December. **\*\* NOTE: Previous years we had offered trees as another option, but have found them too inconsistent in size from one year to the next and have opted to not continue.**



**Wreath, 25 inches \$35.00 each. (\$2.00 OFF EACH FOR MEMBERS)**

Provide the name of the person BURIED on the lot and check the appropriate selections.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ WREATH \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ WREATH \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ WREATH \_\_\_\_\_  
NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ WREATH \_\_\_\_\_

Record YOUR contact information should we need clarification on your order.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_  
STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

If you need assistance with your order, please call the cemetery office at 910-762-5682.

ORDERS MUST BE  
PLACED BY  
November 29, 2021.  
Make checks payable to:  
**Friends  
of Oakdale Cemetery**  
520 N 15th Street  
Wilmington, NC 28401

Calendar of Events

**Annual Meeting of the Friends of Oakdale Cemetery**  
The Annual Meeting of the Friends of Oakdale Cemetery will be held virtually this year due to current COVID-19 restrictions and precautions. Time and date TBD.  
  
**Friends of Oakdale Cemetery Board Meetings**  
Board meetings will be held virtually until further notice due to current COVID-19 restrictions and precautions. Time and date TBD.

**Christmas Wreath Sale**  
Deadline will be Monday, November 29, 2021 for ordering Christmas wreaths, which will be placed on the graves of loved ones during the second week of December. See back page for more details and ordering information.



ALL TOURS CURRENTLY SUSPENDED DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC PRECAUTIONS.  
WE LOOK FORWARD TO RESUMING THEM IN 2022 AND WILL PROVIDE UPDATES WHEN AVAILABLE.

A NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF OAKDALE CEMETERY, INC.  
520 NORTH 15TH STREET, WILMINGTON, NC 28401 ❖ 910-762-5682  
EMAIL: FRIENDS@OAKDALECEMETERY.ORG ❖ WWW.OAKDALECEMETERY.ORG

## A Letter from the President of Friends of Oakdale Cemetery

Greetings,

As we move into autumn, our thoughts are turning to cooler evenings, falling leaves and the approaching holidays. As beautiful as a spring stroll through Oakdale is, a slow walk on a crisp afternoon offers another view of nature's paintbrush. As Friedrich Nietzsche said, "Notice that autumn is more the season of the soul than of nature."

The Friends of Oakdale are continuing to provide funding for beautification and repair projects in the cemetery. We have completed projects that were slated for this year as well as continuing others. As we approach the final months of 2021, we are beginning to plan for 2022. Keep an eye out in future newsletters for more information. I want to thank all of you for your continued support of the Friends of Oakdale. We could not preserve the treasure we have without your generous donations.


Chris Nelson, President, Friends of Oakdale Cemetery

## Epidemics/Pandemics in the Port City

*Continued from front page*

The same can be said for yellow fever due to the Civil War. Some of Oakdale's stories from those affected by the influenza pandemic are Jane Daiziel Wood, Dr. Benjamin Joseph Willingham, Rudolph and Henrietta Gieschen, William Augustus Wright (First Influenza victim in NC) and Dr. Arnold R. Stovall. A good source of information for the Pandemic Influenza of 1918-19 is the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society October 1991 Bulletin.

In John Barry's view, "The most important lesson from 1918 is to tell the truth and managing a pandemic will depend on the character and leadership of the people in charge when a crisis erupts." The same can be said regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, information was withheld about the seriousness of COVID-19 for a few months until it became a crisis. Based on public health and science, washing your hands, waiting by social distancing, wearing masks, and getting vaccinated are vital to reducing the pandemic's effects. Not telling the truth has made vaccinations and mask wearing lighting rods.

The story for COVID-19 is still active. COVID-19 remains a concern for the young and the unvaccinated. The rest of the COVID-19 story remains to be written. 

## Remembering the Fallen Firefighters of Oakdale Cemetery

*by Chris Nelson*

October is known as Fire Prevention Month, and more specifically October 3-9 is Fire Prevention Week. In 1922 the National Fire Protection Association named the second week of October Fire Prevention Week in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. While the focus of this month is to raise fire safety awareness, we would be remiss if we didn't honor the memory of the brave firefighters that gave their lives in service to their fellow citizens.

The Wilmington Fire Department was established December 1, 1897. Prior to then, fire protection for the city was provided by various volunteer fire companies. These fire companies were overseen by a fire chief that was employed by the city. I know it was an exhilarating sight to see these firefighters rushing through the city to an alarm, bells clanging, and the sound of the hooves of their powerful horses pulling their engines through the streets. Danger has always been part of a firefighter's job and unfortunately, tragedy did strike more than once in our city. There have been twelve firefighters since 1868 that lost their lives in the line of duty. Six of them are interred in Oakdale, let's learn a little more about them.



### ***Joseph B. Willard, Wilmington Hook & Ladder Company #1, June 17, 1893***

In the early morning hours of June 17, 1893, an alarm of fire was sounded at the Calder Brothers warehouse on South Water Street near Ann. During the fire, the roof along Water Street fell in, causing the top part of the wall to bulge out and fall. Joe Willard, a member of the Wilmington Hook & Ladder Company could not get out of the way of the falling bricks and was struck by the wall. Other firefighters were injured, but none as severe as Joe. He died at the scene. He had spent the previous evening with his friends and family, enjoying himself. When the fire bell struck, he said "I don't want to go to the fire" but he went anyway, knowing it was his duty to go.

### ***William A. Ellerbrock, Howard Relief Fire Company, April 10, 1880***

In the late evening of April 10, 1880, a fire started at George Peck's store at the corner of Front & Dock Streets. Captain William Ellerbrock, a tugboat captain, hurried from his boat which was moored a block away and joined others in an effort to contain the fire. Wherever Captain Ellerbrock went, his faithful dog "Boss" was by his side. Before fighting the fire, Ellerbrock asked a bystander to hold the dog. As the fire intensified and the building collapsed, the firefighters pulled back a short distance. It was assumed everyone had left the building. The next morning, Ellerbrock failed to show for breakfast, and his uncle began to search for him. Ellerbrock was found badly burned, trapped by a heavy timber. Boss had reached him and had attempted to drag Ellerbrock to safety. The dog had pulled so desperately that a portion of the coat was torn away and was found gripped in his jaws. Boss had died at the side of his master for whom he had sacrificed his life. His body was placed in a box and buried in the casket with Ellerbrock. His is one of the most famous graves in Oakdale, where the back side of the headstone shows a dog lying as if asleep. The inscription reads "Faithful unto Death". The headstone was purchased by volunteer firefighters and other residents. Ellerbrock is thought to have been a volunteer fireman with the Howard Relief Fire Company.



### ***Assistant Chief William P. Monroe, January 27, 1932***

Chief Monroe was riding Engine 6 as it was responding to an alarm when they were struck by a car at Fourth & Chestnut Streets. After hitting the car the pumper plowed through a brick wall and then ran into a porch of a vacant house. Chief Monroe died the following day from complications. He was an original member of the paid department when it was established in 1897. He also was a volunteer member of the Wilmington Hook & Ladder Company No. 1 before the days of the paid department.



### ***Chief Charles Schnibben, June 16, 1933***

Chief Schnibben, along with his driver, was responding to an alarm when they swerved to avoid a truck at Fourth & Dawson. His vehicle overturned three times, severely injuring the Chief. He was taken to the hospital, where he died a few hours afterward. His body laid in state at City Hall, and was carried to Oakdale Cemetery on a fire engine. During his 37 years as chief, he had helped bring the department to a peak of efficiency, setting the standard for years to come. He was appointed chief of the paid department when it was established in 1897. He also was a volunteer member of the Howard Relief Fire Company before the days of the paid department. The Star News wrote "He lived to serve and died in action carrying out the important responsibility entrusted to him".

### ***Lieutenant Raymond D. Core, Engine 5, November 25, 1935***

Lieutenant Core was operating at a house fire at 1901 Chestnut Street performing salvage operations when he collapsed in a hallway. He was rushed to the hospital by Chief Zellers, where he was pronounced dead on arrival. It was determined he had suffered a heart attack. Lieutenant Core had been with the department since June 1, 1919.



### ***Firefighter Oscar D. Willis, August 10, 1956***

Firefighter Willis was fighting a fire in the 2200 Block of Carolina Beach Road at L.L. Mills Food Store when a wooden canopy and part of a brick wall collapsed on him. Other firefighters working with him barely escaped. He succumbed to his injuries later at the hospital. Firefighter Willis had been with the department for about two years.

The Wilmington Fire Department continues to honor these brave men on the anniversary of their deaths with a remembrance ceremony and placing flags at their graves. 

**www.oakdalecemetery.org**

For those interested in Oakdale Cemetery, the website provides spectacular photography by Kenneth Newland. Featuring a fresh updated look and offers a more user friendly experience, improved navigation, and more interactive resources including maps, burial database, the ability to purchase items online, history, news, calendar of events, comprehensive cemetery information, newsletter archive and much more.



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