

Inscriptions

VOLUME 14, NO. 2

FALL 2018

Buried at Oakdale F-35

Lois Toomer Red Cross Nurse in World War I

*By Dr. Jan Davidson,
Cape Fear Museum Historian*

There are many connections between Oakdale Cemetery and World War I. Twelve of the 37 men listed on New Hanover County's memorial are buried at in the cemetery. The most famous of those who died for the Allied cause is Arthur Bluethenthal, who was shot down over France in June of 1918. The men who died during the war years are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to Oakdale's Great War connections. There are many men who fought and survived the war buried in the cemetery. And there are also women who served their country.

Lois Arch Toomer (1887- March 22, 1958) was one of a number of Wilmington women who used their nursing skills to serve their county. Nurse Toomer, who graduated from James Walker Memorial Hospital's School of Nursing in 1908, was "one of the first graduate nurses to volunteer her services" for the war effort. A Red Cross Nurse, Toomer was stationed at Fort McArthur in Waco, Texas. Miss Toomer left Wilmington for Fort Arthur in October 1917. The local chapter of the Red Cross, "Believing that



FRIENDS
of
OAKDALE
CEMETERY

the woman who enlists should receive the attention that has been accorded the men, a pillow encased in a linen cover on which was sewed the Red Cross emblem was sent Miss Toomer with the assurance that she would be the particular ward of this chapter and that its good wishes and prayers go with her."

After she arrived in Texas, Toomer wrote to thank



Picture of Lois Toomer (left) in 1908 Graduating Class of James Walker Memorial Hospital. Courtesy, Cape Fear Museum.

the chapter for her pillow, and she described the conditions in her camp. "I really do not believe that I can

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Calendar of Events



Annual Meeting of the Friends of Oakdale Cemetery

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of Oakdale Cemetery will be held on Tuesday, December 11, 2018, at 11:00 a.m. at the Kenneth Sprunt Office Building.

Friends of Oakdale Cemetery Board Meetings

Second Tuesday of every month, 12:00 noon. Kenneth Sprunt Building, Oakdale Cemetery.

Walking Tour – Saturday, Oct. 20, 2018, 10 a.m. to 12 noon

Summer Walking Tour Series. Historical walking tours of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery will be given by local historian, Janet Davidson. Mrs. Davidson will take you on a journey through time and delight you with the history of World War I and some interesting tales of those who are interred at Oakdale Cemetery. \$10.00 for nonmembers and FREE to members.

Walking Tour – Saturday, Nov. 10, 2018, 10 a.m. to 12 noon

Historical walking tours of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery will be given by local historian, David Rice. Mr. Rice will be

accompanied by the Superintendent Eric Kozen as they take you back to the time of the (Spanish) Flu Epidemic in 1918. One of the most deadly worldwide epidemics that occurred right as World War I was ending.

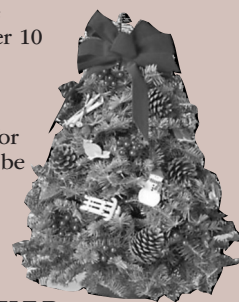


Veterans Day Remembrance

United States Flags will be placed on the graves of veterans of all wars who are buried throughout the cemetery on November 10 at 1:00 p.m.

Christmas Greenery Sale

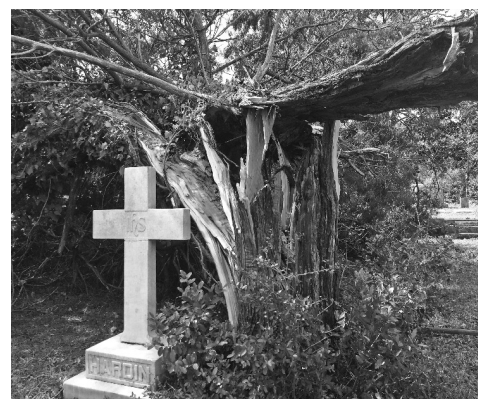
Deadline will be Tuesday, November 27, 2018 for ordering Christmas wreaths or trees, which will be placed on the graves of loved ones during the second week of December. See back page for more details and ordering information.



ALL TOURS ARE CANCELLED IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER.

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

Hurricane Florence Destruction



Over the past couple of years there has been an abundance of good news to report to The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery. Unfortunately, I have bad news to report. September's Hurricane Florence brought unprecedented destruction to our beautiful and historic property.

While the full scope of damage is still to be determined, the removal of downed and broken trees alone will amount to in excess of \$150,000 dollars. And that doesn't include damage to our infrastructure – roads, bridge, walls, steps, monuments and markers.

Still, we have a lot to be thankful for:

The damage occurred before the physical restoration work began.

We are blessed with hundreds of members and lot owners for whom Oakdale Cemetery holds a special place in their hearts.

What can you do?

- Continue to renew your membership in The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery.
- Consider increasing your membership level.
- Encourage your family members and friends to become members of The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery.
- Consider a special gift to The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery to help repair the destruction caused by Hurricane Florence.


In closing, I'd like to thank our Superintendent, Eric Kozen for his total commitment to Oakdale Cemetery and especially for his love of this very special place. Because of Eric, I'm certain we will repair this seriously damaged property AND restore it to it's former beauty.

Crae Dunn, President Friends of Oakdale Cemetery 



HISTORICAL BOOKLET "Oakdale"

Many thanks to Ann Hewlett Hutteman who recently updated our historical booklet about Oakdale Cemetery. Ann served as President for the Friends of Oakdale from 2013 – 2015 and has a vast knowledge of Oakdale and its history. Along with Ann, several folks as well as local historians provided their input and work on this project and we are most grateful for their efforts. We hope that this publication will continue to serve as an educational source for many visitors, school groups and families who come to

visit Oakdale and wish to learn more about the history of Oakdale. These booklets are for sale and available in the cemetery office. 

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.



**VOLUNTEERS
WELCOMED!**

If you would like to become more involved with the Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, Inc., we have lots of opportunities for you.

910-762-5682

www.oakdalecemetery.org.



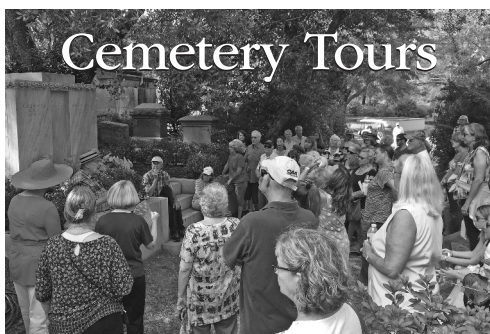
PLEASE FOLLOW US

Flag Day

Thanks again to the local Sons of the American Revolution and Daughters of the American Revolution chapters for performing a patriotic duty on Flag Day (June 14th) of retiring 157 US Flags that



were collected over the year. We must thank Boy Scout Troop #232 for assisting in collecting some of the flags, and properly preparing them for retirement. If at any time you have a US flag that is worn and torn, please feel free to drop them off at the office for the next retirement ceremony. You are also welcome to attend as it is open to the public and starts at 9:00 am. ❖



Our cemetery tours are becoming more and more popular. The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery continue to seek out new topics as we wind our way through the years. We have done many themed tours that surround themselves on anniversaries of specific events such as World War I, Flu Pandemic of 1918, Yellow Fever Epidemic 1862, Thalian Hall's 150th anniversary and the American Civil War to name a few. We have also focused on certain professions such as physicians of Wilmington, Maritime, Firemen and the Railroad. Our most popular to date are the summer flashlight tours, with nearly 150 attendees each tour. Three guides lead the tours into the darkness of Oakdale only to enlighten you with historical tales of Wilmington and beyond. ❖

Lois Arch Toomer

Continued from front page

tell you how much actual comfort I have gotten out of the little pillow and the thoughtfulness of our Red Cross chapter...if it was not for that pillow, I would be sleeping with my head next to the mattress.... Our quarters are very rough, just wooden shacks, very well ventilated – most too much so – but we do not mind any inconvenience as long as we can do our bit.” Miss Toomer also wrote she was at a hospital that could hold 1000 people, with 500 patients, and 40 nurses.

Although Nurse Toomer expected to serve overseas, In February 1918, she became seriously ill — so ill she was not expected to live. Toomer's aunt, Lena Beery, and sister Carrie Toomer traveled from Wilmington to Texas to be with her. In March, moves were made to transfer the still ailing--and still undiagnosed--Toomer to Fort McHenry, Maryland to see if “specialists may be able to diagnose the cause of her illness and remove it so that she may recover. Although newspaper accounts do not say what was wrong with her, Nurse Toomer began to recover after being sent to a hospital in Baltimore.

By May, 1918 Toomer had recovered enough to be able to come home where she continued to recuperate. Nurse Toomer planned to return to active duty in July 1918. While she did not make it overseas, by the end of the year, Toomer was in Maryland, caring for “...returned wounded at Fort McHenry.” In November 1919, a year after the armistice agreement was reached, Lois Toomer was discharged from service.

While Lois Arch Toomer's grave is not marked with a service plaque, she was one of thousands of women across the nation who served their country by nursing troops on U.S. soil and overseas during World War I. ❖

Sources:

Three Wilmington women Ready to Go as Nurses, Wilmington Morning Star, June 3, 1918, p. 6
The Wilmington Dispatch, May 8, 1918, p. 6
Red Cross Nurse Goes, The Wilmington Morning Star, October 17, 1917, p. 16
New from the Red Cross Nurse, Wilmington Morning Star, October 17, 1917.
Wilmington Morning Star, February 23, 1918, p. 6
Wilmington Morning Star, February 24, 1918, p. 6
Wilmington Morning Star, March 8, 1918, p. 6
Wilmington Morning Star, March 25, 1918, p. 6
The Wilmington Morning Star, December 29, 1918, p. 8

Our Beloved Dogwoods

Earlier this year there were nearly 100 dogwoods that were removed as the result of being dead, diseased or at least 80% beyond their prime. This may seem like a lot. For the past 10 years or so, there have been about 20-30 removed annually due to not making it through the winter.

Superintendent Eric Kozen sees a different phenomenon happening. In the 1950s, there were a lot of dogwoods that were planted shortly after the opening of the new Annex and Memorial Park sections. This area of the cemetery had a little over 100 dogwoods. There were also a number planted in the historic sections. It has been nearly 65 years since these plantings occurred and dogwoods have a life span of 50-80 years in our region. This puts the bulls-eye on these beautiful bloomers and they are dying off in droves. As part of the recent Capital Campaign, some monies were designated to replace these trees, but not at the rate it's happening now. This is why your memberships are so valuable to Oakdale in keeping this place a beauty spot of not only Wilmington, but also North Carolina. ❖



Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, Inc.

520 North 15th Street
Wilmington, NC 28401

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Holiday Wreaths and Christmas Trees Available

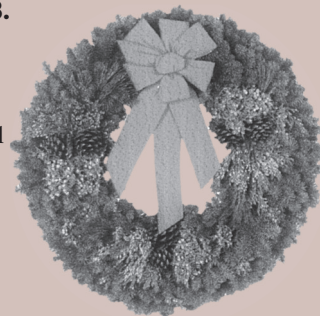
ORDERS MUST BE PLACED BY TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2018.



The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery offer Christmas wreaths and small trees. This year the fresh live wreaths will be identical to last year's —25" across with a waterproof red bow. Additionally, we are offering again this year, fresh small Christmas trees approximately 30" high, which will also have a red small bow tied at the top. The wreaths and trees will be placed on the gravesite of your loved ones during the second week of December.

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

Christmas Tree, 30 inches tall \$25.00 each. (\$2.00 OFF EACH FOR MEMBERS)



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

NAME: _____ WREATH____ TREE____

NAME: _____ WREATH____ TREE____

NAME: _____ WREATH____ TREE____

NAME: _____ WREATH____ TREE____

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 27, 2018.**

Make checks payable to:

**Friends
of Oakdale Cemetery**

520 N 15th Street
Wilmington, NC 28401