

## Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, Inc.

520 North 15th Street  
Wilmington, NC 28401

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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U.S. Postage  
P A I D  
Wilmington, NC  
Permit No. ###

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*Oakdale Cemetery Company*

## Holiday Wreaths Available

ORDERS MUST BE PLACED BY DECEMBER 1, 2025.

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.

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

Provide the name of the person BURIED on the lot.

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

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

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

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

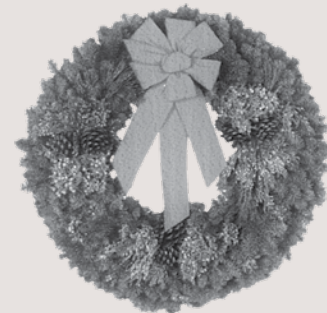
Record YOUR contact information should we need clarification on your order.

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  
December 1, 2025.

Make checks payable to:

**Friends  
of Oakdale Cemetery**

520 N 15th Street  
Wilmington, NC 28401

# Inscriptions

VOLUME 21, NO. 2

FALL 2025

## Buried at Oakdale

John H. Sweeney, Sr. and  
John (Jack) H. Sweeney, Jr.

by Jeff Hunnicutt

Wilmington's water supply and distribution system has a long and rich history going back to the late 1800's. We all use water in our day-to-day lives. We take it for granted that it will always be there; just turn on the tap and there it is!

Wilmington's water supply system has been around since the late 1800s, making sure we've got water whenever we need it. We all use it every day, and it's easy to take for granted - just turn on the tap, and there it is!

Two men who were pivotal to the success of that history were the father and son engineering team of John H. Sweeney, Sr. and John H. Sweeney, Jr. Both men worked a combined 90 years to establish the water system that is in place today. Their story is not widely known, but it has an impact that is still felt today.

Privately owned, and started in 1881, the Clarendon Waterworks was bought by the city of Wilmington in 1909, to establish the city's first public water and sewer department. A new treatment plant was built to address the need for a more reliable and safe water supply, because well water was not often clean.

When the elder Sweeney started, water was pumped through the city by a steam plant and the water meters were operated by a piston. In 1923, the plant was converted to electricity with a standby gas engine in the event of a power outage.

John H. Sweeney, Sr. came to Wilmington at the age of nine, with his parents and was educated at local parochial schools. Upon leaving school, he served his machinist apprenticeship. He then studied Marine Engineering and was later licensed as a Marine Engineer - 3000 tons. On November 24, 1881, he accepted the position of Chief Engineer of the new Clarendon Waterworks pumping station. He held this position until his death on November



3, 1931. His tenure of office, just 21 days short of 50 years, was best symbolized by his philosophy of life, "Trust in the lord, but keep two gages of water in the boiler on your account."



John H. Sweeney Sr.

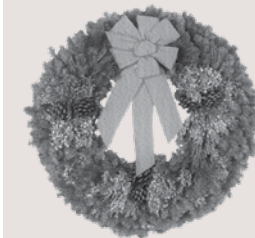
b. February 24, 1853 - d. Nov 3, 1931

Sweeney's adult life was spent either at his home, his church, or at the pumping station, and each was a complement to the others. He gave his all in in his career, that he might be able to support the other two. Loyalty was said to be his forte'.

His son, John (Jack) H. Sweeney Jr. was educated at St Mary's Parochial High School. After leaving school, at age 16, he began working under his father's tutelage at the new Hilton Pumping Station on June 15th, 1911. During World War I, in September 1916, he was assigned to the Mexican border with Company "A" - 105th U.S. Engineers. Later the 105th was transferred to the 30th Division and set sail for France in June of 1918. They returned a year later in March of 1919.

Continued on page 2

## Calendar of Events



### Christmas Wreath Sale

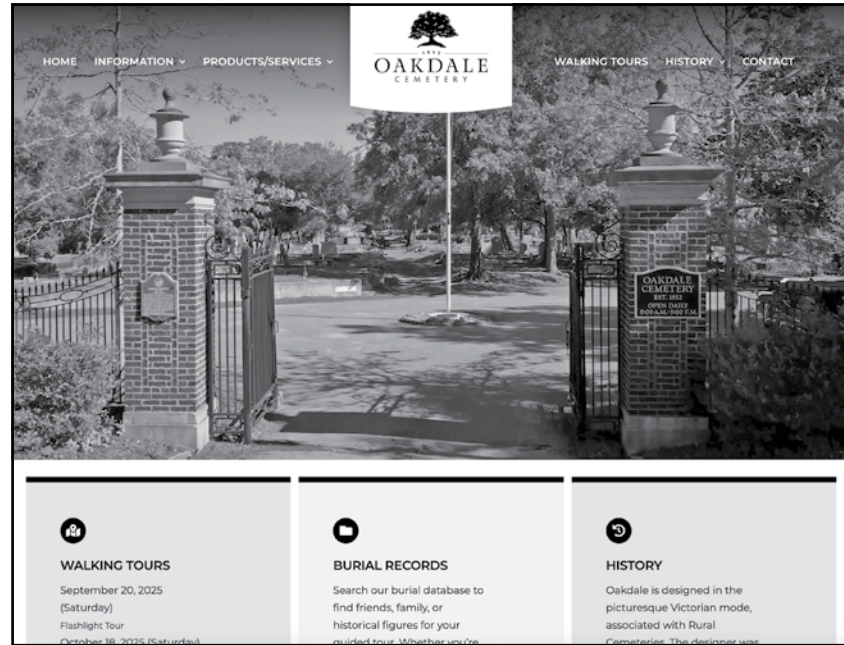
Deadline will be Monday, December 1, 2025 for ordering Christmas wreaths, which will be placed on the graves of loved ones during the second week of December. See back page for more details and ordering information.

**ALL TOURS ARE CANCELED 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

## Website Gets a New Look

Over the summer the Oakdale Cemetery website got a new look to update some of the pages and information. For instance, you can now renew your Friends membership online!! Go to the website and locate the information tab and scroll down to the Friends of Oakdale tab and that's it. Many more photos have also been added to represent the beauty of Oakdale during all the seasons. [www.oakdalecemetery.org](http://www.oakdalecemetery.org) ❖



## John H. Sweeney, Sr. and John (Jack) H. Sweeney, Jr.

*Continued from front page*



*John H. Sweeney Jr.  
b. July 18, 1895 - d. Nov 14, 1971*

After the Armistice, he resumed his duties at the Hilton Pumping Station. This pumping station provided water service to Wilmington before modern water treatment plants became operational. Upon the death of his father, John, he was appointed Chief Engineer, a position he held until March of 1952. In his 40 years of service, he saw a succession of changes in water sources and the equipment used to clean and deliver water safely to the citizens of Wilmington. It was said, "he follows his father's footprints."

Today, the Sweeney Water Treatment Plant at 1833 N. 5th Ave. Wilmington, NC is named in honor of John H. Sweeney Sr. It was built in 1943, and located near downtown. The 44-MGD Sweeney Water Treatment Plant is

Cape Fear Public Utility Authority's largest water system. This state-of-the-art facility treats water taken from the Cape Fear River and distributes safe, clean, drinking water to residents within the Wilmington city limits and portions of New Hanover County.

The Sweeney family is interred in a plot at Oakdale Cemetery in the historic section, Section M, Lot 60. ❖

**NEED A FEW GOOD PEOPLE!**  
Ever want to serve on the Friends of Oakdale Board???  
Let us know, we are looking for a few good people to include on our Board.  
Call the Superintendent, Eric Kozen 910-762-5682

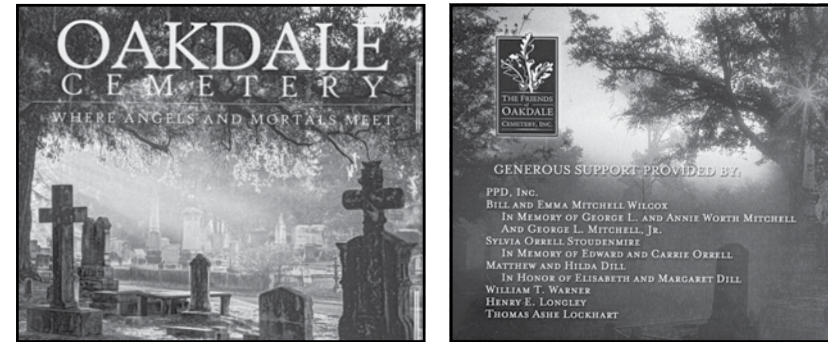
[www.oakdalecemetery.org](http://www.oakdalecemetery.org)



PLEASE FOLLOW US

## DVD Where Mortals Meet Angels Gets a New Look Too

After nearly 20 years, the DVD documentary about Oakdale was updated with new technology and formatting to better suit current TVs and computer screens. We also touched up some of the historical stories as new developments have come to light since the first edition. Many thanks to Don Koonce who reproduced the video and Dr. Chris Fonvielle for his historical research to get this done. ❖



## An Eagle helps Bluebirds

This past Spring we had an additional 10 blue bird houses installed in the Annex and Memorial Park sections of the cemetery. There is a large population of bluebirds in this area of the cemetery. Literally, within minutes of them being installed, bluebirds were coming in right afterwards checking out the new houses and making claims. Many thanks to Zack and BSA Troop 210 for their hard work in getting this done.. ❖



## Tree Tomb Stones

Cemetery tree stones, also known tree-stumped gravestones, are funerary monuments designed to look like cut trees or stumps, symbolizing life's interruption or the brevity of life. Popularized during the Victorian rustic movement (roughly the 1880s to the early 1930s), these stones often featured carved branches, logs, and other natural elements to tell the deceased's life story. Many were erected for members of the Woodmen of the World Society, but they also served as individual markers, popular for their natural symbolism and folk art appeal. ❖



**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**