

Time to Celebrate

The Friends of Oakdale is officially 20 years old !!!! Over these past two decades, The Friends of Oakdale has raised over one million dollars through memberships, contributions and proceeds from our popular walking tours. This is absolutely amazing!!! Not only that, but nearly all of the money raised has gone right back into the cemetery for numerous restoration projects which include tree and landscape conservation, cast iron fence and monument preservation, and supporting over 20 Eagle Scout projects, just to name a few. Educational materials have been created such as an updated version of the historical booklet on Oakdale, a DVD documentary that brings Oakdale to life through a visual experience, the creation and continued development of an informative website is something that is used daily by countless people researching the history and heritage of their families and so much more. ❖

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Inscriptions

VOLUME 22, NO. 1

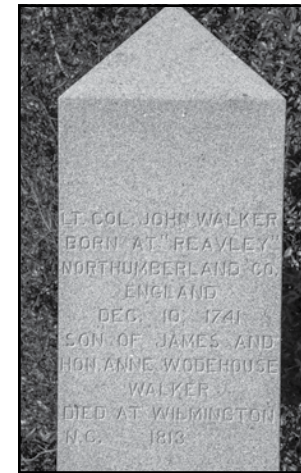
SPRING 2026



Revolutionary Tales

By: Hunter Ingram

As the country prepares to salute its 250th birthday, the stories of our nation's beginning can be found in the most unexpected of places, one of them being Oakdale Cemetery. Despite first opening its gates more than 70 years after the end of the American Revolution, Oakdale is home to at least four men who fought in it.

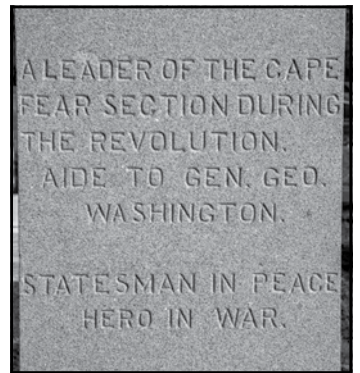


The most well known of them is Lt. Col. John Walker, whose grave marker in Section D, Lot 50 of Oakdale is inscribed with the kind of legacy most Patriots would dream of. One side of his granite marker reads, "A Leader of the Cape Fear Section During the Revolution. Aide to Gen.

George Washington." That last part is a big deal for the small but mighty town of Wilmington and its legacy after the revolution.

Walker was born in Reavley, Northumberland County, England in 1741. His family moved to the Cape Fear in 1761, where a barely 20-year-old Walker became a planter and ultimately the Deputy Collector of Taxes for New Hanover County. Quickly, he rose in the ranks of the region, eventually becoming involved with Royal Governor William Tryon.

Under Tryon's leadership, he was active in the militia against the Regulators in the backcountry, serving as hospital steward and eventually Captain of Artillery prior to the Battle of Alamance in May 1771. However, he was captured along with Lt. John Ashe and held prisoner until being found after the battle. *Continued on page 2.*



BE a Friend of Oakdale Cemetery!

Please mail your tax-deductible contribution to:

Friends of Oakdale Cemetery, Inc.
 520 North Fifteenth Street ❖ Wilmington, NC 28401

Questions? Call us at 910-762-5682



Please check one:

- Founder \$2,500 & up
 Benefactor \$1,000-\$2,499
 Sponsor \$500-\$999
 Patron \$250-\$499
 Donor \$100-\$249
 Family \$40-\$99
 Individual \$30
 Student \$15

 TITLE FIRST NAME(S) LAST NAME

 STREET ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

 PHONE EMAIL

Membership is for one year ❖ Many volunteer opportunities!

Please contact me about volunteering!

A REMINDER

To all the Friends of Oakdale, when receiving this periodic publication, this is not a reminder of your membership status. The Membership Committee sends out a specific letter. These letters are mailed to you annually when the time arrives according to the month you had renewed last or joined.

Calendar of Events



Deadline for ordering Easter Lillies First Come, First Served

Easter is April 5, 2026. The Friends of Oakdale Cemetery are offering for sale a limited number of full, fresh Easter lillies for the graves of loved ones. See details on insert sheet of this newsletter.

Summer Walking Tour Series

Saturday, May 16, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

Historical walking tours of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery will be given by local historian Hunter Ingram who created Burgwin-Wright Presents and Cape Fear Unearthed Podcasts Mr. Ingram will lead you on a journey through Oakdale and will delight you with many tales of those who are interred in the cemetery. Tour is from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Cost of the tour is \$10.00 per person.

Summer Walking Tour Series

Saturday, June 20 2026, 10:00 a.m.

Historical walking tours of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery will be given by local historian, Robin Triplett. Ms. Triplett will lead you on a journey through Oakdale and will delight you with many tales of those interred in the cemetery. Learn some local history

ALL TOURS ARE CANCELED IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER.

from a long time Wilmingtonian. Tour is from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Cost of the tour is \$10.00 per person.

Flashlight Tour

Saturday, September 19, 2026, 6:30 p.m.

Historical walking tours of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery will be given by local historians, Dr. Chris Fonvielle, Robin Triplett and Hunter Ingram. Each of these historians will lead you through the cemetery and speak about the history of Oakdale, Civil War veterans, Funerary Art as well as a taste of Oakdale's prominent citizens. Tour is from 6:30 pm till 8:30 pm. Cost is \$20.00 per person and you must supply your own flashlight.

Fall Walking Tour Series

Saturday, October 17, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

Given by Superintendent, Eric Kozen. Mr. Kozen will lead you on a journey through Oakdale and will delight you with many tales of those interred in the cemetery. Learn some local history and interesting facts from the Superintendent who knows every square inch of Oakdale. Tour is from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Cost of the tour is \$10.00 per person.

A Letter from the President

Greetings,

As you sit reading this, I'm certain that the memories of our recent snow and 25 degree mornings are fresh in your mind. While we are enduring the effects of winter, we can be certain that one step at a time, spring is heading our way. To quote the author Hal Borland, "No winter lasts forever, no spring skips its turn."

When was the last time you walked through the cemetery? Spring is a special season at Oakdale. It is a wonderful time to come out and enjoy all the things Oakdale has to offer. There is always something new to see, new to learn, and new to experience.

Be sure to take advantage of our fantastic walking tours that are scheduled for this year. If you've never experienced our summer Flashlight Tour, you are really missing out. A different kind of beauty reveals itself in Oakdale after dark.

Because of your generous support, we can ensure the preservation of the beauty and history of Oakdale. The projects we accomplish each year happen because of your generosity. On behalf of the Friends of Oakdale, I would like to personally say thank you.

Chris Nelson, President, Friends of Oakdale Cemetery ❖

Revolutionary Tales

Continued from front page

In time, however, he found himself preparing for war against the British crown by helping secure arms for the New Hanover County militia ahead of the revolution. After the Battle of Moores Creek Bridge on Feb. 27, 1776 in modern-day Pender County, he was appointed Captain of the First North Carolina Continental Regiment and eventually led his men to join Washington's ranks in June 1777. Under the Patriot commander's leadership, he was at Valley Forge and several northern battles in the coming months. By 1778, he served as aide-de-camp to Washington with the rank of lieutenant colonel, overseeing the southeastern region of North Carolina through the end of the war.

After the war, he fought for compensation for his seized property in Wilmington, ultimately being granted land in what is now Tennessee. He lived out the rest of his life with the pride of his role in the revolution, even becoming an early member of the Society of the Cincinnati. He died in Wilmington in September 1813, first buried in the St. James's Church graveyard, where he worshiped, before being relocated to Oakdale.



He is joined in Oakdale by three curious additions behind the Matt J. Heyer Mausoleum in Section O, Lot 161. Thomas Savage ("Wallace's Co.," 5th Va Regiment), Capt. Robert T. Bell ("Beall's Co.," 9th Va Regiment) and W.H. Bell ("Peyton's Co.," 9th Va Regiment) are all memorialized with small grave markers in the shadow behind the mausoleum. They are said to be ancestors of Mary Bell Heyer, wife of Matt. All three died in Northampton County, Virginia. However, when the men were interred there — if their bodies were even interred at all, given the spatial limitations of the plot given the mausoleum's substantial square footage — remains a mystery. It could be that only their grave markers were moved to the site as lone vestiges of their contributions to the birth of our nation. Regardless, they now stand among a rare class of residents at Oakdale — ones who predate their final resting place. ❖

www.oakdalecemetery.org

For those interested in Oakdale Cemetery, the website provides spectacular photography by Superintendent Eric Kozen and 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.



PLEASE FOLLOW US

Roses are Red



A rose on a tombstone typically symbolizes love, beauty, and hope, often acting as an emblem of affection for the deceased. The rose has become the queen of flowers in our gardens due to its sought-after fragrance, longevity and beauty. The state of the bloom often represents the age at death: a rose bud indicates a child, while a partial bloom suggests a young adult, and a full bloom indicates a mature person that has lived their life to the fullest. During the Victorian era, the rose became especially popular to adorn the graves of women and young girls, signifying their beauty and grace. ❖



Hebrew Cemetery Fence Painting

The Hebrew Cemetery fence needed some cleaning and painting. It has been nearly a decade or so since its last coat was done as well as some other minor repairs. This fence is a showcase as it sits on the main road of the cemetery leading from the main entrance to the bridge and annex. Most of the lettering on the gates has become illegible and faded over time. We are appreciative to work in tandem with the Temple of Israel who has assisted in providing some funding for this project. ❖

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

Tree-mendous Work

Many thanks to the Cape Fear Garden Club for coming out and planting some more native trees in the cemetery in 2025. The Cape Fear Garden Club turned 100 years old in 2025 and they had an initiative to plant 100 trees throughout the City and County. We received several white and nuttall oaks for their Arbor Day celebration and then this Fall we received several sweet bay magnolias. ❖

