

INVITATION TO JOIN FRIENDS OF THE BRYSON CITY CEMETERY

We encourage anyone who is interested in the history and heritage of Bryson City and Swain County to support the Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery (FBCC). FBCC is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) tax exempt corporation. Annual membership dues are \$20 per person or \$30/household. Contributions are most welcome. You need not have a relative buried here to be a member; in fact many of our members have neither ancestors nor immediate family in the BC Cemetery, but a great respect and affinity for those who take their final resting place on hallowed hill.

FBCC was begun in 2015 with two basic purposes, as defined in the organization bylaws:

- 1) Provide assistance in the restoration, maintenance, and preservation of the historical Bryson City Cemetery, and
- 2) Foster knowledge of its importance to Bryson City, Swain County, and surrounding areas.

FBCC has undertaken a long-term effort to develop biographical profiles of individuals and families buried here. A map of the grounds, with accompanying indexed list of those buried in the cemetery, has been completed. The biographical sketches, map, photos, and other materials related to those who take their final resting place in the BC Cemetery are all available at the FBCC website: friendsofthebccemetery.org

In addition to routine care of the grounds (mowing, trimming, leaf removal, etc.), we continue to work to improve the grounds by straightening and cleaning of stones, enhancing the appearance with shrubs, trees and annual and perennial flowers, and costly efforts such as dealing with walls which are in danger of falling.

We normally meet on a quarterly basis, with the standard venue being the United Community Bank Conference Room at 1 pm on the third Thursday of January, April, July and October (this varies occasionally and we send meeting notices to members and try to see that they are posted in the Smoky Mountain Times). We encourage member input in helping set the direction of the FBCC as well as active participation in our maintenance and knowledge-fostering efforts.

Mail checks made out to Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery to the address at the bottom of this page and please include your contact information below.

Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City, State, Zip code: _____
Phone (optional): _____
E-mail: _____

Our mailing address:
Friends of Bryson City Cemetery
P.O. Box 2223
Bryson City, NC 28713

Directors: Beth Sossamon Eckstein, Betty Sandlin, Ivan Gibby
Secretary-Treasurer: Susan Casada
President: Dan Welch

Previous Officers and Directors: Gwen Franks Breese, Don Casada, Toni Wright Davidson, Tony Monnat, Judy Gibson Revis, Bob Thomas, Ann Marie Sossamon Woffindin, Janella Verner.

Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery
P.O. Box 2223, Bryson City NC 28713
e-mail: hallowed.ground@friendsofthebccemetery.org

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE BRYSON CITY CEMETERY PROPERTY

At least as early as 1866, the area we now know as the Bryson City Cemetery was used as a burying ground. The earliest documented grave is that of Alfred Cline, a Civil War veteran. According to an article in the October 9, 1866 issue of the Charlotte Democrat, "A man by the name of Cline, residing in the lower part of Jackson County, was shot down in cold blood, a short time since, by a band of marauders from Tennessee, known as the Robert Burchfield robbers."

There are dozens of fieldstone-marked graves in the cemetery. While some of these almost certainly came later, it is also reasonable to assume that some predate the burial of Alfred Cline.

The central portion of the cemetery was sold by Cline's widow, Lucy Ann Raby Cline, her brother John B. Raby, and children of Alfred and Lucy Ann to trustees of the three main-line denominations in Bryson City – Baptist (D.K. Collins), Methodist (W.T. Conley), and Presbyterian (E.M. Scruggs) – in 1884 for \$62.50.

A marker placed near the grave of Lucy Ann at the time of the county centennial states that Lucy Ann donated the cemetery property as well as the area around the square in Bryson City. In reality, Lucy Ann Raby Cline donated neither the cemetery nor the town property – she sold both. Though she sold the town area at what might be considered a benevolent price, she reserved some of the prime territory for herself and subsequently sold the reserved property for considerably more than it would've warranted if sold for farmland, had the area not been designated the county seat.

Lucy Ann deserves to be honored, not as a purely altruistic soul but as a bright businesswoman who contributed to the public good while simultaneously providing for the welfare of her family.

After the purchase of the cemetery property, church trustees sold family plots in fee simple. Many family plots were sold – and occupied – but never recorded with the Register of Deeds. The first recorded sale of a plot was from the three trustees – W.T. Conley (Methodist), D.K. Collins (Baptist) and Kelly E. Bennett (Presbyterian) – to M. A. McCauley in November 1909.

The Andrew Jackson and Sallie Keener Franklin family owned property which adjoined the church-purchased cemetery on the east. They logically elected to use their property for a family burying ground, but also sold tracts to others, including the Coburn and Orr families in the late 1920s and early 1930s. These family plots are located at the southeastern section of the cemetery, near the cemetery sign.

In May of 1952, Berlin and Lillian Franklin Thomasson (Lillian was the daughter of A.J. and Sallie Franklin) and Coburn and Margaret DeHart deeded to the three church trustees of that time a right of way and road easement over their lands on the east (Thomassons) and west (DeHarts) sides of the original cemetery. Both couples subsequently had their lands lying inside of the road surveyed and subdivided into plots, most of which were subsequently sold.

The Bryson City Cemetery of today is thus a combination of the original Cline property which had been deeded to the church trustees and subsequently sold by the trustees, the Franklin/Thomasson addition, and the DeHart addition. The overall area is just under three acres. More than a thousand individuals take their rest on these hallowed grounds.