

Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery

Newsletter 2016-002

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We're making progress

After the monthly meeting held on May 12, North Carolina non-profit Articles of Incorporation for Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery (FBCC) were mailed to the North Carolina Secretary of State.

The Board of Directors approved the application and Corporation Bylaws on May 10. This is a step which has been in the making for a while. Based on feedback from others, the State normally turns these applications around in reasonably quick fashion, and so we're hopeful that by the time of the next quarterly newsletter we'll be able to report completion of this phase.

Some very welcome help

In March, Al Alemany, pastor of Hillside Baptist Church approached FBCC and indicated that he and the church would like to pay the crew which takes care of their grounds, including the decidedly steep hillside below the church, to clean the cemetery once. The outfit which does their work Penn Tree & Lawn Care (headquartered in Waynesville), did an absolutely superb job. They trimmed the entire cemetery, but also went well beyond and cleaned off the hillside in the northwest section of the cemetery. After they were finished, the grounds looked better than they have in years. But the thing which was particularly impressive is that this crew carefully avoided cutting spring flowers – including daffodils, iris, and thrift – which families have planted alongside graves.

Pastor Alemany also had some gravel dropped on the driveway from the circle road to the top of the hill. We intend to follow this with some additional, larger material and possibly some crusher run, to better fill in potholes.

New Officers and Directors

At the annual meeting, a new set of officers and directors were elected. The three directors are Gwen Franks Breese, Toni Wright Davidson, and Ann Marie Sossamon Woffindin. Officers (who are also Board

members) for this year are Christine Colcord, Treasurer, Janella Verner, Secretary, and Don Casada, President. Please feel free to contact any of them with questions, comments, or concerns. A note sent to the FBCC e-mail or post office address will be forwarded to the appropriate individual(s). Those addresses are:

Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery
P.O. Box 2223
Bryson City, NC 28713

e:mail: hallowed.ground@friendsofthebccemetery.org

Biographical sketch

Reverend Bryan Jackson prepared a fine piece on his great-grandparents, Will and Estelle Roberts Wiggins, who are buried in the plot near the southeast portion of the cemetery which is known as the Coburn plot. Will's sister, Bland Wiggins Coburn and her husband Jack are buried in the family plot along with their daughters, Mildred, Eleanor, and Aileen (Bryan's grandmother) as well as husbands of Eleanor and Aileen. Also buried on the northern portion of the family plot are Fiswoode Tarleton and Horace Kephart. The Coburns graciously provided space for these two fellows who were killed in a single car accident near the mouth of Coopers Creek in 1931.

The Wiggins are related to and/or had friendly relations with several others buried in the Bryson City Cemetery, including:

- 1) Frances Eliza Wiggins, an aunt of Will Wiggins and Bland Wiggins Coburn, married William F. Cooper. These are the Coopers who ran the Cooper House in downtown Bryson City for several decades in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Both are buried in the walled-in Cooper family plot about 120 feet northwest of the Coburn plot.

The Coopers bought what was previously known as the Mendenhall Hotel from the Mendenhall family, several of whom are also buried in the cemetery.

2) John Jason Wiggins, a great uncle of Will and Bland, is buried about 100 ft from the Coburn plot.

The Wiggins and the Coburns were active members of the Bryson City Methodist Church

Bryan’s article is available at the link below.

www.friendsofthebccemetery.org/files/biographical/Wiggins.pdf

Biographical sketches

The piece which Bryan did is the second of what we hope will be many stories about the lives of individuals and families buried in or with a connection to the BC Cemetery. Articles are in the works by over a dozen different writers on the following:

Fry family	Tribute to three ladies
Masons	Calhoun and Franks families
Bennett family	Lytle Hickerson
Bryson family	Jack and Bland Coburn
Alvah Dorsey	Lucy Ann Raby Cline
Cooper family	Myers family
Medlin family	Woody family
Sarah Welch Wilson	Martin family

While the articles on the Wiggins family as well as the piece on D.K. Collins which was issued earlier this year are both fairly lengthy and sourced, such is not expected to be the norm. One or two paragraph accounts of anecdotes or personal remembrances are encouraged. Please consider contributing to the effort. This is an extremely important element of meeting one of the two stated purposes in our bylaws – to foster knowledge of the importance of the cemetery to the town, county, and surrounding areas.

Photographs of individuals and families who are buried in the cemetery are also highly sought, whether accompanying an article or simply to add to our photo collection. You need not go to the expense of having the photo reproduced; we will gladly scan and return both the original and a digitized copy to you.

Please contact Don Casada regarding either articles you’d be willing to write or photographs to be scanned.

Phone: 828 488-2358

e-mail: Don.Casada@friendsofthebccemetery.org

Address: 177 Black Hill Road, Bryson City NC 28713

Memorial Day Weekend – request for help

Based on an excellent suggestion by Joyce Cooper, the FBCC will have a table at the Swain County Heritage Festival, held on Saturday, May 28, at Riverfront Park. Volunteers are needed, according to Christine Colcord and Judy Revis, who are coordinating the effort. If you’d be willing to spend an hour or so, please contact Christine at 828 736-7504 or at cvcoldcord55@gmail.com

Cemetery maintenance – request for help

Since the mowing paid for by the Hillside Baptist Church, most of the cemetery has been mown another couple of times. In preparation for Memorial Day weekend, it is highly desirable to give the entire grounds a good cleaning. Please contact Don (see phone/e-mail above) if you can help for even an hour or two on any day from Wednesday, May 25 to Saturday, May 28.

Paying for maintenance

In regards to cemetery maintenance, there has been a question about whether annual dues aren’t going toward grounds maintenance. Last year, all maintenance expense, including gas and other chemicals was borne by the individual who did the bulk of the work as well as the few families who hired others to have their own plots cared for. This year, the plan is for FBCC, with a nice boost from individual donations as well as annual dues, to cover the cost of fuel and chemical expenses borne by volunteers. It may also be necessary for FBCC to acquire its own maintenance equipment, since that owned by the chief lawn boy is showing its age, just like the lawn boy himself.

A fundamental long term goal is to do as much of the work as we can, and allow the bank account to grow. We’d like to be able to call on the funds in the event situations arise which require work that is beyond our personal capabilities. But in addition, over the very long term, we would like to see the account grow to a point where we can seriously consider putting the money to work to cover hired help. As of our monthly meeting on May 12, our bank account stood at \$2,442. A single hired professional mowing would cost approximately a third of that.

Membership drive

To this point in time, the members added to our group have come by word of mouth. While that certainly needs to continue, we plan to do a bit of advertising in local and regional papers once the Secretary of State has approved us as a non-profit corporation. The advertising will include an invitation to join coupled with a notice to contact us if anyone does not want the family plots maintained by us.

If you know of folks who you think would be interested in joining us on the journey, a bit about us and an application form can be retrieved here:

www.friendsofthebccemetery.org/Join_FBCC.pdf

Presentation to the Presbyterian Church

At the request of Pastor Terry Hanna, a presentation on the BC Cemetery history, with an emphasis on the connection of the Presbyterian Church’s connection to the cemetery was given on May 18 at the Church’s monthly potluck supper. The

presentation was well received, and the Presbyterians made a nice donation to FBCC.

Please pass the word that we’d be delighted to present to any church, civic, or historical group about the cemetery and what we’re doing to preserve both the history and the cemetery grounds.

Your input encouraged

Our standard monthly meeting time and location is 1 pm on the second Thursday of each month in the United Community Bank conference room.

Many of our members either live outside of the area or have work or other scheduled matters which preclude them from coming to the regular monthly meetings. But we strongly encourage you to offer suggestions and advice if you see that we’re missing out on an opportunity or feel that we’re going astray in any way whatsoever. See the mailing and e-mailing addresses under the “New Officers and Directors” section above.

Grave markers of Eliza Jane Burns Seay and her husband James Metillas Seay, before and after cleaning.



Eliza Jane’s epitaph reads:
“Asleep in Jesus O for me,
May such a blissful refuge be,
Securely shall my ashes lie,
Waiting the summon from on high.”

James Metillas’ epitaph reads:
“God will take care of me”