

Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery

Newsletter 2016-004

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Legal status progress update

This newsletter starts off with the same heading as that of last quarter, in which it was noted that we had submitted the application for approval as federal tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization. We did receive a follow-up request for additional information from the IRS concerning the nature of the organization, how much time and resources were devoted to doing what, etc. A prompt response was submitted, and much to our great delight, Friends of the Bryson City Cemetery (FBCC) was approved on September 23, with an effective date being that of the FBCC incorporation, June 17, 2016.

Based on experiences shared by others, the turnaround time was remarkably short, something certainly worthy of thanks this Thanksgiving season.

Grounds

The dry summer we had has persisted and in fact worsened into the fall. The grass has not been mown on the cemetery grounds since early September.

That doesn't mean the grounds haven't seen some labor. We have six large white oaks, one large red oak, two maples, three dogwoods, a poplar and a pair of Bradford pear trees on the grounds. Leaves from the maples and poplars have been removed. There are several huge piles of oak leaves awaiting shredding or other disposition, and perhaps a quarter of the leaves are still on the trees.

The Swain High JROTC group, led by Major Anthony Monnat, spent the morning of Saturday, Nov. 19 working on the grounds. They picked up sticks, moved leaves, spread dirt on sunken grave spots, removed debris and old yucca plants, and planted grape hyacinth and crocus bulbs at over two dozen graves. This is a truly impressive group of young folks. The word "sir" fell on the writer's ears more often on Saturday morning than has been the case in the past two years combined. In addition to the cadets, Major Monatt brought along his lovely family, all of whom pitched in

and worked just as hard as the cadets. Photos from the day are posted at the end of this newsletter.

In addition to the grape hyacinth and crocus bulbs, daffodils were planted at selected locations which require minimal mowing, and more will be planted later, as will some iris – all in areas where they will have minimal impact on grass cutting efforts.

Monuments

In the last newsletter, it was noted that the tombstone for Epp Everett had been shoved off its base. That, unfortunately, was a harbinger of things to come. Five other gravestones were pushed over, including one weighing an estimated 1500 pounds. One thin marble¹ stone which was likely kicked over fractured into three pieces.

Fortunately, FBCC member Lee English volunteered the help of his track hoe, his own labor and that of Cabe Wright, who works with Lee, to reset the monuments. They did a fantastic job. For any locals who know Lee or Cabe, please express your personal thanks to them. The service they provided saved FBCC and family members hundreds if not thousands of dollars.



**Cabe Wright and Lee English – gravestone replacers
par excellence**

¹ The stone which was broken may be limestone; marble is the metamorphic rendition of limestone, and it isn't always easy to tell the difference, particularly with aged stones.

The Dessie Coffey Fund

Dessie Cunningham was born to Mary Jane DeHart and Rufus Cunningham in 1889. She was raised in the Almond area, and was teaching at the Almond school when she married John Hill Coffey on May 23, 1917. The wedding was conducted by Rev. Joseph H Wilson, who is buried in the Bryson City Cemetery and is the subject of a recent [biographical sketch](#) by FBCC member Pat Queen.

The Coffeys lived in the Almond area for a time before moving to Bryson City where Hill Coffey operated a store in the location which later became Belks Department Store (now Pasquolino's). The Coffeys were faithful members of First Baptist Church, and Dessie set aside a fund to be used for cemetery care prior to her death and left it in the trust of First Baptist. The church recently voted to turn the fund over to FBCC. That was formalized on Saturday, Nov. 19 when First Baptist Pastor John Tagliarini delivered a check to FBCC treasurer Christine Colcord at the Coffey gravesite. The Coffeys are buried in the far northeastern section of the cemetery, alongside former neighbors, friends, and fellow Baptists, Elbert and Edith Welch.

We are grateful to First Baptist for not just the financial contribution, but the implicit vote of trust which accompanies it.



Hill and Dessie Coffey on Good Friday, 1941; the photo was taken by I.K. Stearns (courtesy Carl Gueninger, Jr)

New FBCC web page

FBCC has acquired our own web page: Friendsofthebccemetery.org

We have been busy developing its basic structure and populating it with material, but still have much to do. Rather than provide a detailed list of what is available, it is suggested that you just give it a test run. All of the biographical sketches which have been completed to date are available on the site, as are the newsletters. Organizational documents, including bylaws, articles of incorporation, and an image of the letter from the IRS approving our tax exempt status are available.

One feature which users may find particularly useful is a [Search by Name](#) tool. If you do a search, for example, with the name "Wood", you will find any name with "wood" as part of the name, including Underwood, Fiswoode, Wood, Woody, and Leatherwood. A search with no name specified will list every name in the cemetery, including those we don't know (e.g., Field stone).

Over the long haul, we want to accumulate photographs of as many folks as we can. If you have photographs of family members or others who are buried in the cemetery, please let us know (see e-mail address in the footer) and we'll work with you to get them digitized and uploaded.

Much work remains to be done on our web site; it will be an ongoing construction effort for years to come. Suggestions and help are most welcome.

New biographical sketches

Biographical sketches on an individual, a family, and a group of individuals and families have been completed and are now available for your perusal.

Jean Sandlin Douthit prepared a history of the family of her maternal grandparents, [Frank Emmett and Martha Emerelda Pender Fry](#).

Jim Casada prepared a sketch of his catfishing mentor and friend, [Alvah Dorsey](#).

Don Casada prepared a piece on [Place Names](#) in the county with connections to the Bryson City Cemetery.



Major Anthony Monnat, his family and JROTC students



FBCC Treasurer Christine Colcord accepting a check underwritten by the Dessie Coffey fund from First Baptist Pastor, John Tagliarini

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

hallowed.ground@friendsofthebccemetery.org