

# Rockville Cemetery Association

DECEMBER 2014



## President's Message

Rockville Cemetery continues to prosper as 2014 comes to a close. Gravesite sales were steady; nearly twenty burials occurred this year. Both upper and lower columbaria had inurnments. Gravestone conservation remains a key priority; our contractor Robert Mosko performed dozens of repairs in 2014. Solar Gardens continued their steady quality work maintaining the grounds in tidy and attractive condition. Several large trees in the upper cemetery are in poor condition, requiring trimming or removal. A series of repairs to the 1889 house have kept it in good shape for our tenant.

The board went through a significant transition in 2014. After thirteen years, President Dr. Stephen C. Cromwell stepped down. He was honored for his outstanding service at our April community meeting. Burt Hall was elected as the new president, Frank Teti as vice-president and Eileen

McGuckian as secretary; Tim Mertz continues as our treasurer. As our only professional cemeterian, Tom Claxton continues to lend his expertise to the board's decisions. We welcomed a new board member, Ellen Buckingham. Ellen is already contributing with leadership on the website upgrade project, an important priority going forward. Check [www.rockvillecemeterymd.org](http://www.rockvillecemeterymd.org) to follow our progress.

Another board priority, converting RCA's voluminous records to digital format continues under the guidance of volunteer Michael Grant. Mike's expertise and diligent work on this project have been essential. RCA's efforts are much enhanced by an ongoing partnership with Monocacy Cemetery Association, specifically Glenn Wallace and Anne Allnutt.

Board member Fred Bird continues his research and recognition of U.S. veterans interred at Rockville Cem-

etery. Fred installs commemorative flags on all known veteran graves for Memorial and Veterans Day. Let us know if there is a veteran who is not on our list, which will be added to the website this winter.

A big thanks to the Rockville Rotary Club Foundation for another generous grant of \$5,000, slated for additional interior road repairs in the upper section. The biggest project on our list, the opening of a new section for graves on the north side of the upper cemetery, remains on hold pending availability of funds.

As always, donations from friends of the Rockville Cemetery are sorely needed and will be put to good use.

Please contact me with questions, suggestions, or to volunteer to help. I can be reached at (301) 294-6396.

**Burt Hall, President,**  
*Rockville Cemetery Association*

## VOLUNTEERS WELCOMED!

*If you would like to become more involved with Rockville Cemetery, here are some opportunities for you.*

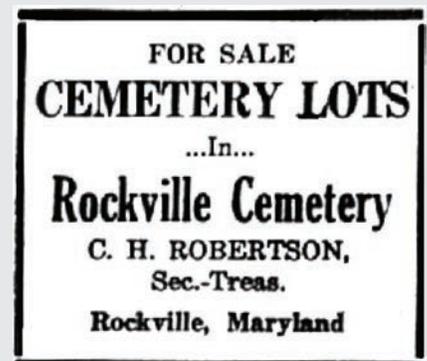
- Research interred individuals and cemetery topics
- Write articles for RCA newsletter and website
- Help convert paper records to digital format
- Fund raising
- Landscaping and gardening
- Serve on the Board of Directors

For more information, call 301-468-7331 or email [RCA@RockvilleCemeteryMD.org](mailto:RCA@RockvilleCemeteryMD.org).

## Some Things Never Change

*This ad from a 1939 issue of The Montgomery County Sentinel is still correct today.*

*Burial sites and columbarium niches in historic Rockville Cemetery are available for sale. Call 301-294-6396.*



A NEWSLETTER OF ROCKVILLE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 4318, ROCKVILLE, MD 20849 • [WWW.ROCKVILLECEMETERYMD.ORG](http://WWW.ROCKVILLECEMETERYMD.ORG) • [RCA@ROCKVILLECEMETERYMD.ORG](mailto:RCA@ROCKVILLECEMETERYMD.ORG) • 301-309-0191

## New Era for Rockville Cemetery Association, Inc.

Rockville Cemetery, oldest burial ground in the city, moved into another era of its history in April 2014, when the reins passed to a new generation. At its annual community meeting, the Board of Directors honored the old and elected the new governing body. The newly elected board is composed of mostly current members, with many of the board positions changing hands.

From May 2001, when a newly-incorporated nonprofit organization took title to Rockville Cemetery, to April 2014, Dr. Stephen C. Cromwell led the all-volunteer board to reverse past neglect, move operations into the 21st century, and increase accessibility and usability. Under his leadership, Rockville Cemetery Association organized numerous



*Dr. Stephen C. Cromwell (President Emeritus) is surrounded by members of the Rockville Cemetery Association Board of Directors. Standing from left to right are Tim Mertz, new president Burt Hall, Eileen McGuckian, Fred Bird, Tom Claxton, and Frank Teti. Other directors (not pictured) are Phyllis Cromwell and Ellen Buckingham.*



*Rockville Cemetery hosts hooved as well as human visitors.*

community clean-up sessions, renovated the caretaker's cottage, made major road repairs in the upper and lower cemeteries, conserved and repaired hundreds of damaged gravestones, obtained nonprofit status from the Internal Revenue Service, marked veteran graves with appropriate flags, installed columbaria to provide a new interment option, nominated the cemetery as a Rockville Historic District, took steps to protect and conserve trees in the cemetery, and invited the public to join tours, document the history of the cemetery and the people buried here, and assist with projects to improve the property. During

this time, more than 100 burials and inurnments took place in historic Rockville Cemetery.

The Board of Directors meets on the second Tuesday of (almost) every month. You are welcome to join us at Rockville City Hall, 111 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, MD, from 7 to 9 p.m.

RCA always appreciates volunteers.... If you are interested in assisting, please let us know! Call 301-468-7331 or email [RCA@RockvilleCemeteryMD.org](mailto:RCA@RockvilleCemeteryMD.org).



*Mary Margaret Garrett Abert cleans around her family plots every autumn in Section I, upper cemetery.*

## Walter Perry “Big Train” Johnson

1887—1946 • Upper Cemetery, Section M, Lot 18

Walter Perry Johnson was one of the greatest baseball pitchers of all time. He signed with the Washington Senators just out of high school in 1907, on condition that the team would pay train fare back to Southern California if he did not make it in the big leagues. Within a year, he was nicknamed “Big Train” and pitching for a team that rarely was in the running for the American League pennant.

Johnson was the star pitcher for the Senators from 1907 to 1927, compiling a record of 417 wins and 279 losses. He was at his peak in 1913, when he pitched 12 shutouts and was 36 and 7 to win his first MVP award. His second MVP came in the 1924 World Series, when the Senators beat the New York Giants in seven games. He chalked up 110 shutouts in his career, and in 1936 was one of the first five players voted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. Ty Cobb wrote about Johnson: “His fastball looked about the size of a watermelon seed and it hissed at you as it passed.”

With earnings from the World Series, Walter and Hazel Lee Johnson bought a large Colonial-style house on 8½ acres at the corner of Old Georgetown Road and Oakmont Avenue near Bethesda. They maintained a fruit orchard, coops for 2,000 chickens and, of course, a baseball field. The house still stands at 9100 Old Georgetown Road.

Johnson was manager for the Senators in 1930 when Hazel died suddenly and was buried in Rockville Cemetery. His mother came to live in Maryland and to raise the five children. After managing the Cleveland Indians for a few years, Johnson sold the house and purchased a 552-acre farm in Germantown (now site of Seneca Valley High School). There the family raised chickens, which he generously made available for local fundraisers, and the popu-

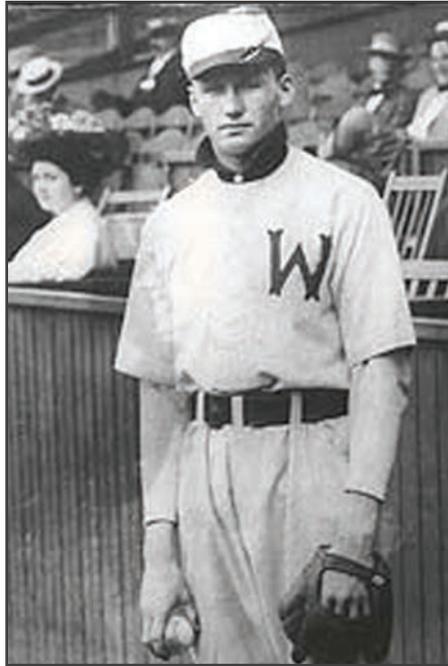


Photo courtesy of Henry W. Thomas.

lar pitcher became the county’s most sought-after bachelor.

Johnson served two terms as a Montgomery County commissioner, 1938-46. His time was one of major change in county government. From 1918 well into the 1930s, the county had been shaped by E. Brooke Lee, a war hero with a strong vision of the future. By 1938, the population had shifted to suburban Bethesda and Wheaton. Although Democrats still swept county offices that year, one high-profile Republican was elected County Commissioner -- Walter Johnson. A study of Montgomery by the Brookings Institution, made public in 1941, recommended fundamental changes in most aspects of county

government, on which a referendum was held the following year. The Charter Movement allied Republicans and anti-organization Democrats from suburban precincts. The 1942 election upset Lee’s machine and marked the end of an era. Walter Johnson stayed for a second term, part of the group that worked to develop a new model for Montgomery County government.

Walter Johnson died of a brain tumor on December 10, 1946, and was buried next to Hazel at Rockville

Cemetery. Ten years later, a local high school bearing his name opened on Rock Spring Drive in Bethesda. About eight years ago, a huge tree limb fell and knocked the Johnson stone off its base. Now the big tree stump helps us to easily find the Johnson plot.

To visit: Go down the hill, around the curve, and start up the hill on the north end. Stop at the cable gate where the new carriage road meets Northern Avenue. Walk down the hill toward the woods and look for the ‘big stump.’ The Johnsons are to the left and behind the stump. Look for baseballs, old hats, and baseball gloves. 🧢



Henry W. “Hank” Thomas, author of *Walter Johnson: Baseball’s Big Train* (1995) at his grandfather’s grave, November 2011.



Rockville Cemetery Association  
P.O. Box 4318, Rockville, Maryland 20849

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

ROCKVILLE CEMETERY ASSOCIATION

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

- Burt Hall, *President*
- Frank Teti, CPA, *Vice President*
- Tim Mertz, *Treasurer*
- Eileen McGuckian, *Secretary*
- Frederick R. Bird, *Historian*
- Ellen Buckingham
- F. Tom Claxton, C.C.E.
- Phyllis E. Cromwell
- Stephen C. Cromwell

Join us for  
the 2015  
RCA Annual  
Meeting &  
Election  
Tuesday, April 14  
7:00 p.m.  
Rockville City  
Hall

**MISSION STATEMENT:** Rockville Cemetery Association is dedicated to the spirit, beauty, usability, economic viability, long-term preservation, and enjoyment of historic Rockville Cemetery. RCA maintains Rockville's oldest cemetery as an active burial place, including gravestone conservation and improvement of the landscape, roads, and structures. Public outreach, education, involvement, and responsibility to lot owners strengthen the organization's relationship to the community.

Please include  
Rockville  
Cemetery  
Association  
when making  
your end-of-year  
gifts. *Thanks!*



**Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution:**

- \$25 To be used for:
- \$50  Road Repair
- \$100  Gravestone
- \$500 Conservation
- Other  However funds  
\$\_\_\_\_\_ are needed

- I'd like to help out.  
Please contact me.

IN MEMORY OF: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to  
**Rockville Cemetery Association.** Thank you!