

DECATUR CEMETERY

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LIVES

..... *that*

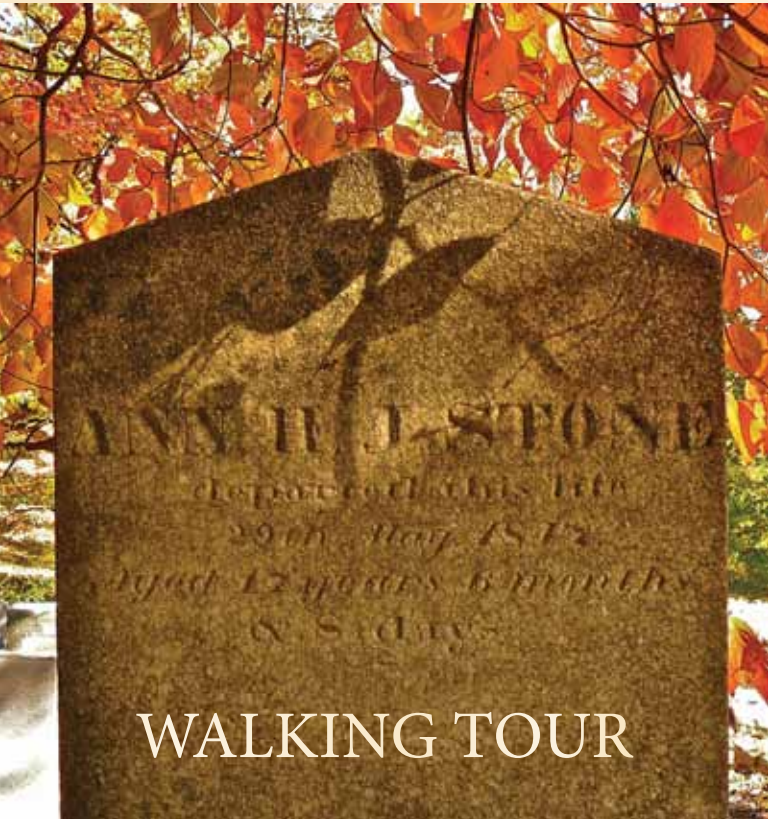
MADE

..... *our*

CITY

.....

Decatur, Georgia • USA



WALKING TOUR

You will recognize here many names from Decatur, DeKalb and Georgia history: politicians, educators, authors, religious leaders, merchants, doctors and musicians. Soldiers from every war from the American Revolution to 21st century conflicts rest here. Whether famous or not, here lie people who made this community. Their lives are worth remembering.

The cemetery is Decatur's largest greenspace – a quiet park that covers approximately 58 acres. The landscaping and monuments in the 7.5-acre Old Section (near Commerce Drive) are historically significant and encompass the simpler styles of the early 19th century and some later Victorian styles. The oldest headstones here date to 1827 and 1828, predating by nearly a decade the construction of the railroad and the development of the town six miles to the west that would come to be known as Atlanta. The Georgia legislature appointed the first Decatur Cemetery Commission in 1832, when the population of DeKalb County, which included what is now Fulton County, numbered about 3,600.

In the 1920s the cemetery was expanded northward across the spring-fed pond. The rolling hills of the “new section” reflect the changing burial tastes of the 20th and 21st centuries, with a great variety in monument styles and expansive, gardenlike landscaping. In 1997, Decatur Cemetery was included on the National Register of Historic Places.

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Use care as you move about the grounds; please be respectful of the monuments and the lives they represent. Some of these monuments are fragile, loose or crumbling, and the older walking paths can be tricky. Enjoy your visit and we hope you will return often.

*Cover photo: Jonah Clayton, 2011 Decatur Cemetery Photo Contest
Photo at right: Roy Turner, 2011 Decatur Cemetery Photo Contest*

CEMETERY MANNERS

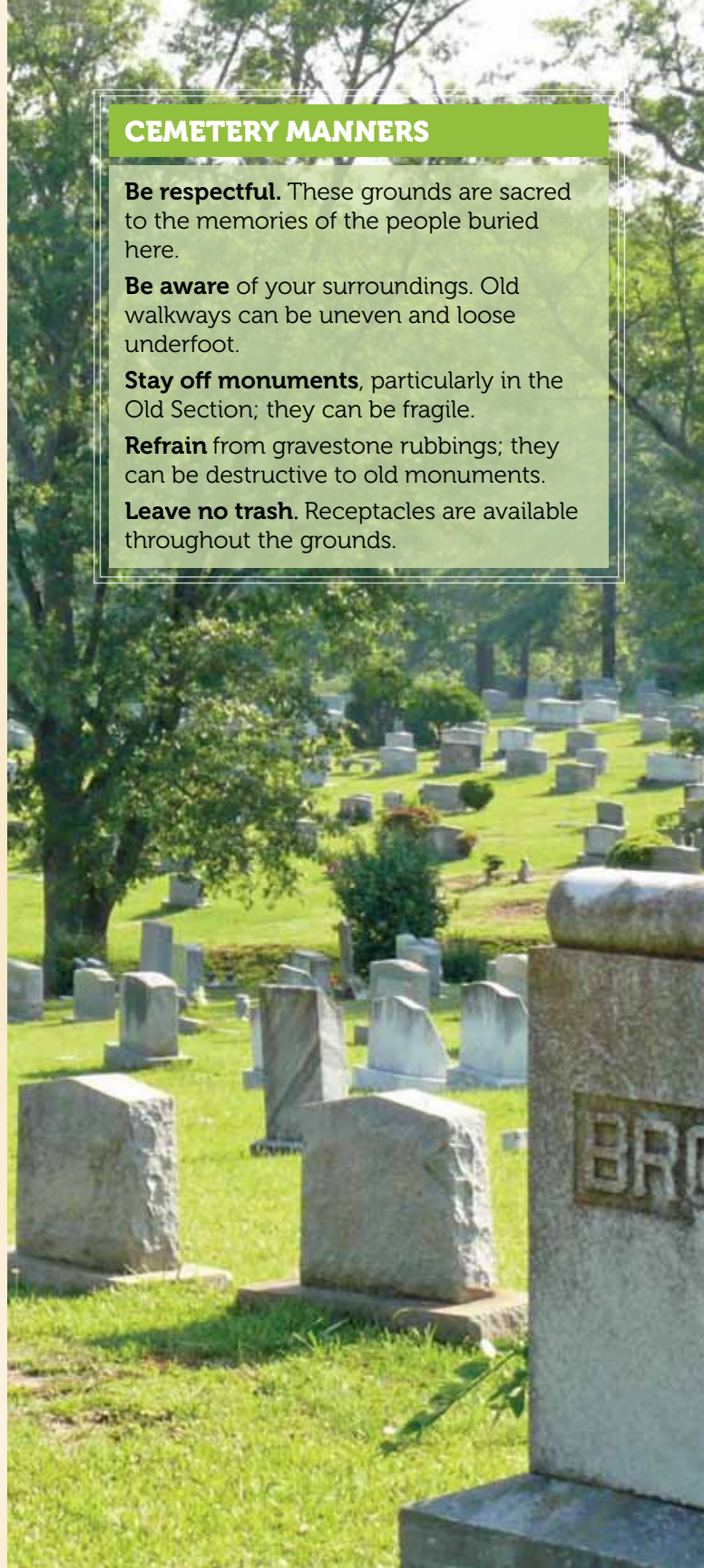
Be respectful. These grounds are sacred to the memories of the people buried here.

Be aware of your surroundings. Old walkways can be uneven and loose underfoot.

Stay off monuments, particularly in the Old Section; they can be fragile.

Refrain from gravestone rubbings; they can be destructive to old monuments.

Leave no trash. Receptacles are available throughout the grounds.



Start Your Tour



Begin at the  Cemetery Office.

1 Veterans Memorial

First dedicated in 1945 to “those who died in service to their country who rest in foreign soil or in the bosom of the sea,” this monument was rededicated in 2009. Each Veterans Day, volunteers place flags at the graves of more than 1,000 known veterans throughout the cemetery.

Photo by Nancie Sill



2 Reclining Man – David Hicks

On a bench designed by his architect father from an original drawing by his son, mourners are invited to contemplate the life of this Eagle Scout who died tragically at age 17.

3 Col. James G. Bogle, US Army, ret. Civil War and railroad historian

He had extensive knowledge of the railroad’s role in the development of Atlanta. He was an expert on the Great Locomotive Chase (Andrews’ Raid) of 1862, and a good friend of Atlanta Historian Franklin Garrett.

4 The Rev. Hovie Lister – Gospel singer

He was the founder of the “Statesmen Quartet,” which was the first gospel quartet to be nationally televised. He was inducted into the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2001.





5 "Si monumentum requiris, circumspice"

The Latin inscription on this striking black marble translates: "If you are searching for a monument, look around you." Indeed, a perfect observation in the middle of Decatur Cemetery. The inscription is borrowed from the 18th century grave of architect Sir Christopher Wren, interred within St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

6 Dr. Chester W. and Eugenia Slack Morse

Chet and Gene Morse donated their 7-acre estate on Scott Boulevard to the City of Decatur for Woodlands Garden. Both were active in many local charities.



7 Milton Candler Scott

Scott was president of Scottdale Mills, founded by his grandfather George Washington Scott in 1901. He was the great-grandson of Agnes Scott, for whom the college is named. He fought in WWI and received commendation from the French government. He died in 2001 at the age of 106.



8 Rutland Family

Four generations of this family have been instrumental in Decatur, DeKalb and Georgia development. Considered to be fine examples of Christian stewardship, their endeavors have helped to change the face of Decatur and DeKalb County through numerous civic and commercial projects.



9 George Scott Candler, Sr. – "Mr. DeKalb"

A "devoted servant of the people of his county," he was elected as sole County Commissioner from 1939-1955. During his tenure, DeKalb County tripled in population and grew from a rural area known for its dairy farms to a vibrant urban city.



10 Davis Chambers

Chambers, a Decatur High School student, died in a tragic 1915 football accident at the school. Methodist Bishop Warren Candler subsequently led successful efforts to suspend football at DHS. The sport returned in 1921, and has been played continuously every fall since.





11 Beverly Claire Bottoms – The Reading Girl

Killed accidentally when her bicycle was struck by a car at the end of her driveway, Beverly Claire was an avid reader. At night after the lights were out, she would secretly pull out books and read. Her father designed the memorial from a surprise snapshot of her late night pursuits.

12 Dr. Carl Renfroe – Educator

Dr. Renfroe gave more than 44 years to public education in Decatur and Georgia. He served on the staffs of Governors Carl Sanders and Jimmy Carter. Renfroe Middle School in Decatur bears his name.

13 Cinerarium and Emory Memorial

As cremation becomes more accepted in the South, Decatur Cemetery has included a cinerarium for the interment of ashes. The adjacent garden is dedicated to those who have given their remains to Emory and other medical schools.

14 Pond and Terrace

Thanks to the 2006 Cemetery Master Plan that called for many improvements, the pond (fed by a natural spring) and a former unclaimed area covered by kudzu and weeds have been transformed into a welcoming park-like area. Area residents are invited to respectfully use the cemetery as a place of peace, contemplation and recreation.

15 Margaret Pepperdene

Beloved English professor at Agnes Scott College, her classes on Chaucer were much in demand. She could speak Old English fluently with just the right lilt. After retirement, she continued teaching at the Paideia School in Atlanta.



The spring-fed pond and the newly constructed terrace join the new cemetery and the old.



16 Old Cemetery

This 7.5-acre section dates to the beginnings of Decatur and DeKalb County. A stroll around this area reveals many familiar names seen on local streets or buildings. The historic African-American section reminds us of a different era.

17 The Orphans' Home – UMC Children's Home

This plot contains 25 small graves and a large marker purchased by the Marble Hill Sunday School. It was used over a period of years and reflects the uncertainty of life in Victorian times when the mortality rate for children under age 10 was more than 50 percent. It was used over a period of years in the early 1900s.

18 The Rev. Donald Fraser

Rev. Fraser was pastor at Decatur Presbyterian Church from 1872 to 1877. A gifted teacher, it was said that he could even make Latin and Greek interesting to his students. In 1892, the first boys' high school in the city was named in his memory.

19 Charles and Eleanor Latimer

The Latimers owned a Covington Highway plantation, and were the parents of Rebecca Latimer Felton, the first woman U.S. Senator and an early women's rights advocate.

20 African American Section

The north and east parts of the old section have rolling terrain, old trees, but few granite markers. Many of those buried here are African-American and died before the end of legal segregation in the 1960s. The earliest extant marker is dated 1887.



21 Bukumba

Rescued from a difficult life in the Belgian Congo, missionaries brought this young woman to Decatur, where she succumbed to the post-WWI Spanish flu epidemic. The sentiment on her stone, while seemingly insensitive in the 21st century, indicates that she had embraced the Christian religion and her soul was “white as snow.” (Psalm 51)

22 Williams Family

To make death more knowable, graveyards in the 19th century became “cemeteries” or “sleeping places.” Many gravesites were fashioned to resemble beds and inscriptions reflected the hope that loved ones were merely sleeping and all would be reunited on Resurrection Day.

23 Ann Reynolds (1827) & David Young (1828)

These are the two oldest marked graves in the cemetery (directly behind the Williams Family, No. 22 above).

24 Col. John S. Prather, CSA

Col. Prather led one of the few successful Confederate engagements during the Battle of Atlanta in July 1864. (See marker placed by UDC at Commerce Drive gate. Gravesite is downhill and to the right of No. 23 above.)



25 26 37 Revolutionary War Patriots – John Maffett, John Hays and James McNeil

All three settled in Georgia after the war. Note Maffett’s hand-carved monument.

Colonel McNeil who is buried across from the wellhouse, had a home and saddle shop on Clairemont Avenue (then Shallowford Road/Webster Street) and was a member of the Georgia General Assembly.



27 The Swanton Family

Benjamin Swanton was an early Decatur entrepreneur who operated a gristmill, tannery, brickyard and cotton gin. The Swanton House, owned by the DeKalb History Center, was moved from its original location on Peavine Creek and has been restored. It can be visited at 720 W. Trinity Place.



28 Mary Ann Harris Gay

Her *Life in Dixie During the War* is a record of Decatur life during the Civil War and some of her stories inspired portions of *Gone with the Wind*. Her house was relocated to 716 W. Trinity Place in the 1970s and restored by the Junior League of DeKalb County. She was honored as a “Georgia Woman of Achievement” in 1997.



29 Levi Willard Family

The Willard family is one of Decatur’s oldest. Levi Willard, who is not buried here, was known as “Decatur’s first historian.” After DeKalb’s second courthouse burned in 1842, his letters and memories became some of the only surviving records of early Decatur.

30 Hiram Johnston Williams

Williams served as postmaster of Decatur during the Civil War when he was only 15. After the war he served in both city and county offices and was an outstanding civic leader. His home, the High House, still stands at 309 Sycamore St.

31 Dr. Ormond Morgan

Dr. Morgan was Decatur’s second physician, and his is considered to be the cemetery’s oldest known burial. His actual resting place is unmarked, but it lies within this southeast corner near the Commerce Drive gate.



32 Emily E. Pittman

This young woman died in 1852 at the age of 21. She was the stepdaughter of Dr. Peter F. Hoyle, a prominent Decatur physician and civic leader whose farm was where Agnes Scott College stands today. The elaborate gravesite is a testament to her family’s great love for her.

33 Thomas Holley Chivers, MD

A native of Washington, Ga., Chivers abandoned his medical training for poetry. He is best known for his stormy association with Edgar Allan Poe, who once described him as “one of the best and one of the worst poets in America.” He lived in Decatur late in life, and was buried, at his own request, at the foot of his front doorstep before reinterment here.



34 Leila Ross Wilburn

A pioneering woman architect, her early studies at Agnes Scott were followed by training with an Atlanta firm. In a half-century of work, she left a legacy of homes, apartments and commercial buildings throughout the southeast. Her residential “Pattern Books” enabled clients to choose a design and construction plans. Many homes along Decatur’s Adams Street are of her design. She was honored as a Georgia Woman of Achievement in 2003.



35 Wellhouse/Gazebo

Since its completion in 1881 for \$125, the wellhouse has endured as a landmark in Decatur. Today, the well is covered and the structure serves as a gazebo—a perfect spot to enjoy the peace and beauty of the cemetery.

36 Col. George Washington Scott

The founder of Scottdale Mills, Col. Scott served the community in many positions, including chair of the 1881 cemetery committee which planned the improvements and included the wellhouse and landscaping. In 1889, under his patronage, Decatur Female Seminary was renamed to honor his mother, Agnes Scott.



37 Col. James McNeil (see #25 above)

38 The Murphey Family

Charles Murphey was a member of the Secession Convention in 1860, but died before it actually met. The marble obelisk was, by family tradition, brought through the Union blockade during the war. It is a fine example of Victorian symbolism. Note the down-turned torches indicating a “life snuffed out” and the five rosebuds with broken stems in memory of his five children who died in infancy. Murphey’s only surviving daughter, Eliza, and her husband Milton Candler (of the distinguished Candler family), who served Georgia in the U.S. Congress, are also buried here.

39 Edward Cox/Robert Alston

It is ironic that these two bitter enemies in life lie a mere dozen paces from each other in death—Col. Alston rests immediately behind Capt. Cox’s grave. These men engaged in an altercation over Georgia’s convict labor/lease laws (essentially a system where private employers could “rent” convicts). Alston was fatally shot in the encounter and Cox was wounded. Cox was convicted of murder but later pardoned.

40 Confederate Memorial Cross

Unlike many southern cemeteries, Decatur Cemetery has no area dedicated to burials of men who fought for the Confederacy. The United Daughters of the Confederacy (Agnes Lee Chapter) erected this cross to remember more than 100 Confederate veterans who rest throughout the cemetery. Each soldier, buried in privately owned plots, is marked with a CSA (Confederate States Army) footstone.



Thank you for visiting Decatur Cemetery. We invite you to conclude your tour with a moment of relaxation and quiet contemplation by the pond. We hope you return often.

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DECATUR'S
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LARGEST
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GREENSPACE
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Fifty-Eight Acres
of Lives that Made
Our Community
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