DECATUR CEMETERY

Walking Tour

LIVES that MADE our CITY

Decatur, Georgia • USA
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 downtown 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 both the simpler styles of the early 19th century and the more ornate ones of the later Victorian era. The oldest headstones here date to 1827 and 1828, predating by more than 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 variety of monument styles and expansive, garden-like landscaping. In 1997, Decatur Cemetery was included in the National Register of Historic Places.

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: “A Swing With a View,” Alice Hawks, 2013 Decatur Cemetery Photo Contest winner

Photo at right: Roy Turner, 2011 Decatur Cemetery Photo Contest
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.

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 Archibald Johnson – early settler
Born in Scotland, Johnson journeyed to Georgia in 1774. He was buried in a family cemetery near Emory University, but re-interred here in 1969 when the family farm was sold for residential development (Johnson Estates).

6 George Scott Candler, Sr. – “Mr. DeKalb”
A “devoted servant of the people of his county,” he served 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.

7 Ben Forkner Sr.
This DeKalb County civic leader developed Avondale Estates in its early years. His son, Tom, co-founded Waffle House. Nearby Forkner Drive is named for the family.

8 “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.

9 Nancie Sill – adventurer, photographer
An accomplished photographer, Nancie designed the image for this marker, which depicts Cade’s Cove in the Great Smoky Mountains. She served as chair for the Friends of Decatur Cemetery 2010-2013.

10 Milton Candler Scott
Scott was president of Scottsdale 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 the First World War and received a commendation from the French government in 1999. He died in 2001 at the age of 106.

11 Dr. Chester W. and Eugenia Slack Morse
Chet and Gene Morse donated their beloved seven-acre estate on Scott Boulevard to the City of Decatur for Woodlands Garden. Both were active in many local charities.
**12 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.

**13 Cully Cobb**

A philanthropist, educator, printer, and publisher, Cobb’s combined his lifelong love of learning and his entrepreneurial spirit in endeavors throughout his lifetime (1884-1975). He made enormous contributions to the fields of archaeology and agriculture, and at one time was publisher of all phonebooks in the Southeast. The Archaeology Institute at Mississippi State bears his name.

**14 William Henry Duckworth**

Duckworth served as chief justice on the Georgia Supreme Court 1948-1969. As an associate justice, he authored the “three governors” decision following the 1946 gubernatorial election. The court intervened when Eugene Talmadge won the race, but died before he could be sworn in.

**15 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.

**16 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.

**17 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.

**18 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.
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.
Decatur Cemetery

Grounds are open every day from sunrise to sunset.

Office Hours
Monday-Friday
7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

Saturday
7:30 a.m-3 p.m.

Office Phone
404-378-4411

The Friends of Decatur Cemetery (FODC) is a volunteer group working to preserve, maintain and improve Decatur’s largest greenspace as a historic and cultural resource.

Guided Second Sunday Strolls begin at 2:30 p.m. on the second Sunday of each month May through October. To arrange a group tour, email friendsofdecaturcemetery@gmail.com.
21 Oscar White
His simple stone reads “Worked for Bucher Scott Family for over 30 years.” He resided in DeKalb County for more than 60 years, and owned property in the Beacon Community.

22 The Orphans’ Home – UMC Children’s Home
This site reflects the uncertainty of life in earlier times, when the mortality rate for children under age 10 was more than 50 percent. More than 25 children were buried here in the early 20th century. The large marker was purchased by the Marble Hill Sunday School.

23 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 (she served for one day in 1922) and an early advocate for women’s rights.

24 African American Section
The north and east parts of the old section have few granite markers. Many of those buried here are African-Americans who died before the end of legal segregation in the 1960s. The earliest extant marker is dated 1886.

25 Sallie Thomas Durham
Born into slavery, after emancipation she worked for the Junius Hillyer family. Upon moving to Decatur, she married Sylvester Durham and owned her own successful catering business. Four generations of her descendants became prominent philanthropists and community leaders in the Atlanta area.

26 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).

27 Henry Oliver (unmarked)
Born into slavery in the 1830s and trained as a blacksmith, he became a prominent landowner in what is now downtown Decatur after emancipation. The Oliver House apartments on Commerce Drive are named for him.
28 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.

29 Ann Reynolds (1827) & David Young (1828)
Prior to the placement of the memorial at No. 37 in 2015, these were the two oldest marked graves in the cemetery (directly behind the Williams Family, No. 28 above).

30 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 the United Daughters of the Confederacy at the Commerce Drive gate. The gravesite is downhill and to the right of No. 29 above.)

31 32 43 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.

33 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.
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.

Dr. Ormond Morgan
Dr. Morgan was Decatur’s second physician and is considered to be the cemetery’s oldest known adult burial. The previously unknown burial spot was determined using photos, historical resources and ground-penetrating radar. The memorial was placed by FODC in 2015.

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.

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.

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, restored by FODC in 2012, is a testament to her family’s love for her.
39 **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.

40 **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. Many homes along Decatur’s Adams Street are of her design. She was honored as a Georgia Woman of Achievement in 2003.

41 **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.

42 **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.

43 **Col. James McNeil (see listing #31)**

44 **The Murphey family**
Charles Murphey was a member of the Secession Convention in 1860, but died before it met. The marble obelisk was 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.

45 **Edward Cox/Robert Alston**
It is ironic that these two men — close friends for most of their lives but bitter enemies at the end — 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.
46 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.

47 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.

48 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.

49 Henry Maier/Karen Lamb

He served as Milwaukee’s mayor for nearly 28 years, and helped to bring state and federal money to aid city centers in the 1960s. She grew up in Decatur and married Maier in 1976. She was a consistent supporter of LGBT causes (long before there was an acronym) and an early activist in the fight against AIDS.

50 Kenneth “Thumbs” Carllile

Carllile played with many musical luminaries in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, and earned his nickname because of his unique style of playing. Guitar legend Les Paul said Carllile was among the best players he’d ever heard.

... and back to swing by the pond

As you complete your walking tour of Decatur’s largest downtown greenspace, catch your breath in the “Swing with a View.” A photo of the swing by Alice Hawks was the first prize winner in the 2013 Cemetery photo contest, and is reproduced on the front cover of this brochure.

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.
DECATUR’S LARGEST DOWNTOWN GREENSPACE

Fifty-Eight Acres of Lives that Made Our Community