



**FRIENDS OF THE
PAGE-WALKER HOTEL**

MYSTERIES & SECRETS

Exploring Hillcrest Cemetery

Compiled by Marla Dorrel and Pat Fish
Originally presented on October 27, 2009

This program has its roots in the Friends of the Page-Walker's annual inventory of historic treasures, *What Have We Got to Lose?* Originally, *What Have We Got to Lose* covered only structures. Then, we began adding cemeteries. In 2009, we realized our program was becoming too long, and we decided that our area's cemeteries deserved a program of their own.

We started by making a list of the cemeteries we knew of, then we began looking for more. Our list kept growing. We've identified 46, just in Cary and its surrounding areas and we're still counting.

- Hillcrest
- Cary First UCC
- Nathaniel Jones
- Lewter-Yates
- Reedy Creek Church
- Stone-Maynard
- White Oak
- Green Level Baptist Church
- George Atkins
- Upchurch
- Turner-Evans
- Olive
- Good Hope Baptist Church
- Womble
- Edwards-Yates

Now let's define "mysteries and secrets" – these are the things that haunt you, first when you visit a cemetery, but also when you leave. You're not haunted in the traditional Halloween sense, but you are definitely haunted by the memories. And the questions. You're haunted by the stories that you know are there, but you're only seeing a glimpse of.

Why Focus on Cemeteries?

This one is no mystery: cemeteries are worth preserving – they are a source of history that cannot be replaced. And the history they reflect is about more than the individuals who are buried there. Collectively, they describe our community and give us identity. They display art – in the use of stone and the shapes and symbols the gravestones display. They provide places for quiet contemplation. They are cornerstones in our community. Yet, many have been lost. But, thanks to the work of cemetery surveyors, many have also been found.

In the 1930s, federal workers as part of the WPA program were sent out to find all of the cemeteries in the state and record the information found on grave stones. Since vital statistics, such as birth and death certificates, were not issued before 1913, the emphasis on this cemetery search was concentrated on graves dated before 1913. Results of this survey are captured in a huge card catalog that resides in the North Carolina State Library.

In 1978, the General Assembly revived the cemetery survey project. By 1980, volunteers had documented 32,000 cemeteries in North Carolina – 10,000 of them abandoned. In 1989, the estimated number of cemeteries in North Carolina was revised to 75,000.

As part of the 1978 state survey, the Wake County Survey of Cemeteries was started in 1981.

One of the key members of the group was Cary resident Irene Kittinger, who conducted many of the surveys in the Cary area and served as Coordinator of the Wake County Survey committee.

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In 2006, North Carolina revived its search for cemeteries, taking steps to create the Cemetery Survey and Stewardship Program.

Out of a growing public concern for the plight of North Carolina's forgotten and abandoned cemeteries, the Department of Cultural Resources' Office of Archives and History created the Cemetery Survey and Stewardship Program, a joint effort between the Archives and Records Section and the Office of State Archaeology. State funding for the Cemetery Survey and Stewardship Program resulted from recommendations of a legislative House Study Committee on Abandoned Cemeteries that submitted its final report to the North Carolina House in December 2006.

The committee also recommended changes to several General Statutes to provide greater protections to gravesites. Those bills were ratified in June 2007.

In 1981, about the same time the Wake County Survey began, the North Carolina survey group studied the problem of lost graveyards.

MYSTERY: Where did the missing cemeteries go? And how did we let that happen?

The committee found that "thousands of cemeteries of all ages, sizes and shapes have been abandoned and are being vandalized or lost." Thousands of family cemeteries in the state were often the most threatened because of their small size and scattered location, in addition to the fact that these sites usually consisted of a handful of plain, unadorned headstones.

In one of a series of articles published in the Wake County Genealogical Societies' journal, Mrs. Kittinger posed the thoughtful question: "Do we forget that North Carolina was an original colony?"

She continued, saying that these graveyards are and were the only tangible evidence of many first families, sons and grandsons of whom went on to build the West.

In 1988, it was estimated that 35,000 tiny cemeteries had been abandoned, overlooked or lost across the state of North Carolina. Many of those will forever be a mystery.

How do you find a hidden cemetery?



There is one clue that can lead you to find the possible site of a small, family cemetery. Here's the secret – just look for a grove of Cedar trees.

According to Donna Flowers, coordinator of the North Carolina Cemetery Survey in 1988, "Any time you ride down the road and see a grove of cedar trees, you can bet there is or was a cemetery located there." It was said that cedar trees were a very popular way to mark the location of a cemetery.

In Peggy Van Scoyoc's oral history book, "Just A Horse Stopping Place," Esther Ivey reinforces this fact with her description, "On Sundays we would go to the cemetery. The Jones lot was surrounded by Cedar trees. That was [where] Adolphus and Rufus Jones and their children were buried, and you would notice. There's one of those graves that had [what] looked like an open Bible on it. We always thought a great deal of that, when it was

surrounded by cedar trees. You had to go in between the trees to get in that place. "

To start our studies, we collected records, both online and from friends.

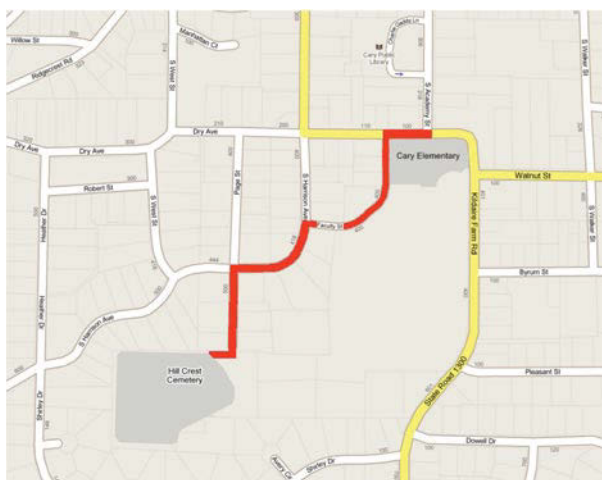
As the Friends of the Page-Walker set out to study local cemeteries, we were lucky – we didn't have to look for groves of cedar trees. We simply had to look at our growing list, compiled from online sources, such as CemeteryCensus.com and Interment.net. We were also very fortunate in that Irene Kittinger shared with us her original survey records from the 1980s – some typed, and some written by hand. It is in these records that you see the true labor of love that went into the surveys, and the value they have for us today.

We started with an ambitious plan to take our growing list of local cemeteries and visit them, one by one, with what we dubbed “The Cemetery Crawl.” In September, we held our first crawl – an evening visit to Hillcrest Cemetery, near downtown Cary. It only took an hour or so to realize that this cemetery held enough riches to entice us back for several visits, offering a wealth of stories – easily an evening’s worth. We quickly decided, then, to narrow our scope for this year’s program and make a single cemetery our focus for tonight. And I can promise you, we’ve only scratched the surface.

So, we invite you to join us now, with a spirit willing to be haunted – by the stories and the images, the mysteries and the secrets, we’ve found in Hillcrest.

If you were to close your eyes and imagine the perfect, idyllic small-town cemetery, you might very well conjure up Hillcrest. True to its name, Hillcrest Cemetery is at the top of a hill. It’s surrounded by homes and appears to serve the adjacent neighborhoods as a passive park. It’s not unusual to see people walking their dogs through the cemetery (notwithstanding a town ordinance against this) or children riding their bikes along the peaceful, paved paths. Hillcrest is located just a few blocks from Cary’s downtown historic district, easily within walking distance. Nevertheless, it remains one of Cary’s hidden secrets.

Let’s start, then, by sharing a secret. Finding Hillcrest.



Finding Hillcrest is easy, if you start from one of Cary’s most notable landmarks: Old Cary Elementary (now the Cary Arts Center).

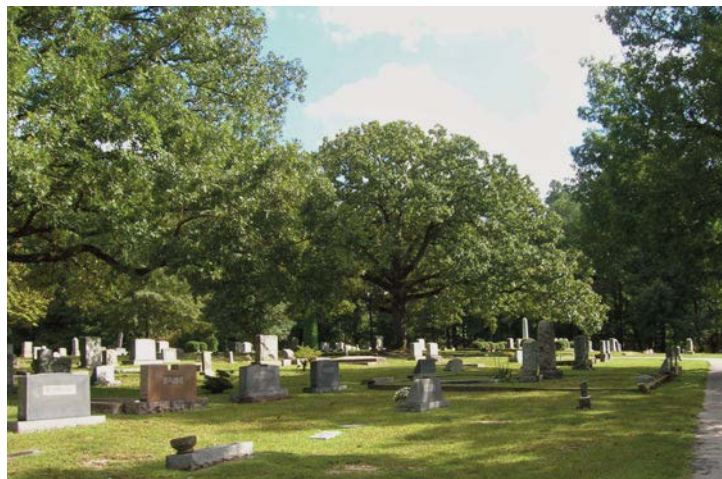
Go west on Dry Avenue, crossing South Harrison, to Page Street. Turn left and the rest is really simple– Page Street ends at the cemetery gate. The cemetery opens daily at 8:00 am and closes during the winter months at 6:00 pm; during the summer, it’s open until 8:00 pm.

Hillcrest is owned by the Town of Cary, but that was not always the case. According to the Town’s records, the Hillcrest Cemetery property was first owned by R. O. Heater, who conveyed the first tracts, commonly known as the “old section,” to the Hillcrest Cemetery Association on June 11, 1945. Ten years later, George

Turner conveyed additional tracts to the Association. These tracts were conveyed to the Town of Cary in 1970; in 1977, more tracts were deeded over to the Town.

At the time that the cemetery ownership was shifted from the Association to the Town, the Town was given two documents regarding the gravesites. The first is a small yellow notebook in which the names of some of the persons who are buried in the cemetery are listed – the information is handwritten and by different people. A note in front of the notebook states “Information compiled from available records-3/27/64”. The second document is a much larger scrapbook type book made of heavy paper that contains maps of the gravesites and typewritten pages entitled “Hillcrest Cemetery-Key To Graves.” This book was compiled from information available in 1962.

These documents indicate the old-fashioned bookkeeping that was used to maintain cemetery records. There were no written procedures or ordinances in place and no contact information for the individual owners of the cemetery plots. Some burials had occurred without being recorded; and often in the past the purchases of some cemetery plots were transacted with a handshake rather than the issuance of a deed.

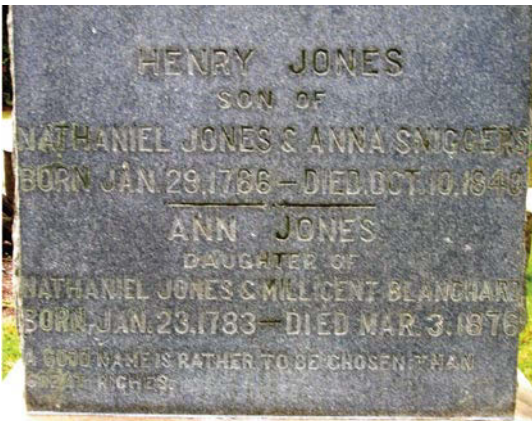


The Town has worked diligently to bring the records up-to-date and identify those gravesites that were unknown when the Town acquired the property.

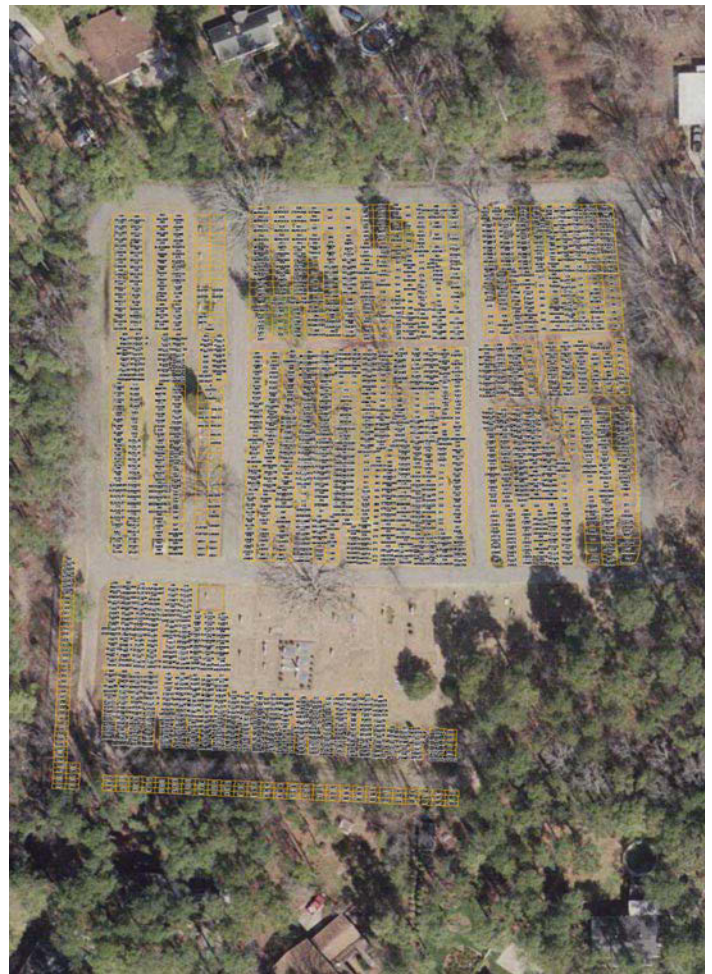
The map on the right from the Town of Cary shows an aerial view of Hillcrest, with many of the gravesites identified. Wake County land records show the cemetery property to cover 4.9 acres. The Town's official count of burial sites in Hillcrest is 1,938.

We wondered which graves were the earliest and, based on the cemetery census, here's what we found.

The earliest recorded date of birth is that of Henry Jones, born on January 29, 1766.



He was the son of Nathaniel Jones of Crabtree and the husband of Nancy Jones. The inscription near the bottom states, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."



The earliest recorded date of death is also among the Joneses – Nathaniel Jones, who died on August 31, 1840 – just 40 days before the death of Henry Jones.

This Nathaniel Jones, however, is not Nathaniel Jones of Crabtree. We'll invite you to next year's program to learn more about his place of burial.

There remain today several mysteries surrounding unmarked graves or illegible markers, such as this one, which brings us to our next mystery -

MYSTERY: Who is buried in the ten graves whose headstones are unreadable?



The cemetery census conducted by Shirley Olson in 2005, and updated by Karen Freeman in 2008, identified ten unreadable or unmarked headstones in Hillcrest. We may never know what secrets lie buried in these places.

Markers & Headstones

Hillcrest presents an interesting assortment of grave markers, both old and new.

Here are just a few of the interesting shapes we found.



While most of the graves have the traditional monument headstone, there are a number of examples of more distinctive markers.



Obelisk



Box Tomb



Headstone & Footstone with Ledger Marker

The box tomb; the headstone and footstone - in this case with a ledger marker (the moss-covered, concrete pad) and the obelisk.

Hillcrest also displays a wide array of artistic designs, some of which give us clues about those who are buried there.

The book, "Stories In Stone, A Field Guide to Cemetery

Symbolism and Iconography," opens its chapter on Flora by reminding us, "Flowers have served as symbols of remembrance ever since we began memorializing the dead."



Engravings of flowers adorn many of the gravestones (left).

There is some unusual artwork to be found among gravestones in Hillcrest, in both the older and the more contemporary markers:

And quite interesting are these two footstones:



For the father, with a mortar and trowel, and the mother, with a rake and hoe.

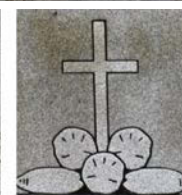
MYSTERY: What is this symbol? What does it mean? The bent arm on the monument is taken from the emblem of the Order of Railway Conductors, Scottish Rite as pictured below. The lantern (which looks more like a grenade on the monument) is easily identifiable on the emblem; the tool remains unidentified.



C M Baucom was a Seaboard freight conductor. He also served in the Spanish American War and WWI. The prominent flag on his monument memorializes his service to his country.

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Religious Symbols are also widely used in Hillcrest.

Here you see, in the upper left corner, the praying hands; beneath them, the crown, symbolizing victory, leadership and distinction, but more often in funerary, the crown represents the sovereignty of the Lord. On the right, the Latin cross shown here with a heart, likely symbolizing the love of Christ; and below it, the Star of David. In the center is the Celtic cross. The initials, IHS, in the center, are derived from the first three letters of Jesus' name using the Greek alphabet: Iota, Eta, and Sigma.

Walking through Hillcrest, you are reminded of those who served their country in the military.



From reviewing cemetery surveys, we've identified some 62 gravestones that speak of the role these brave men and women played in defending our country and standing for their ideals. The records reflect service in five wars, all branches of the military, and rankings at all different levels. Here are two of the more elaborate gravestones that speak of the service record of those they memorialize.

Before we leave symbology, we must mention the secret societies, clubs and fraternal organizations symbolized on the grave markers at Hillcrest.



The most prevalent symbol in Hillcrest is that of the Masons. More than a dozen markers carry the Masons' symbol, the square and compass. It is said that the square and compass represents the interaction between mind and matter and refer to the progression from the material to the intellectual and spiritual. The letter G in the center – some say this stands for "God" while others say it stands for "geometry."

According to the book, "Around and About Cary," Cary Lodge No. 198 of the Ancient Free and Accepted Masons was chartered on November 17, 1857 - 14 years before the town was incorporated.

A great deal of secrecy surrounds the organization – and those are secrets that we couldn't tell you, even if we knew them.

Other clubs, societies and organizations are also represented in Hillcrest. Here are more of the emblems we found.

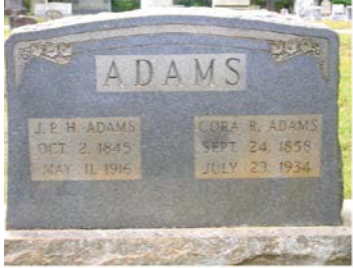


The emblem of the Eastern Star (far left) is frequently seen on the marker for the wife of a Mason – rightly so, since the Order of the Eastern Star is the female counterpart to Freemasonry. In the center is the emblem of the American Legion, primarily an association for military veterans. The emblem of Woodmen of the World (right) is one of the

best-represented in cemeteries, because until the 1920s, each member was provided with a tombstone.

Other organizations represented at Hillcrest, but not pictured here, include Sons of the American Revolution, Daughters of the American Revolution, Rotary International, Shriners and Boy Scouts of America.

To tour Hillcrest is to take a stroll through Cary's history.



Hillcrest is the final resting place of 15 of Cary's mayors, the earliest of these being JPH Adams, Cary's second mayor, serving in 1871; J.P.H. Adams, Mayor in 1884; and Robert J. Harrison, Cary's mayor in 1903.

But mayors aren't the only notable citizens we found at Hillcrest. You'll recognize many of them, because they have also been memorialized in other ways throughout our community. Here is just a sampling:

Captain Harrison P. Guess, 1827 – 1919

Captain Guess was among the first "railroad men" to arrive in Cary. His position was recorded as



"road master." His name is familiar to many of us, because it graces the historic pink Guess-Ogle Home in downtown Cary. "Around and About Cary" tells us that the home takes its name from Captain Guess due to the fact that in 1880, he and his wife, Aurelia, purchased 16 acres of land from Frank Page, including the site of the Guess-Ogle Home.

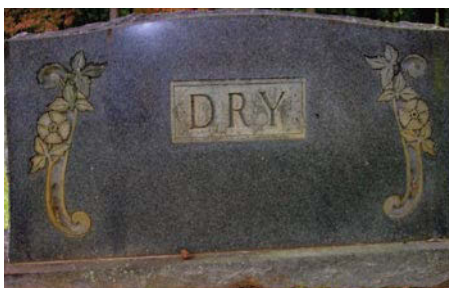
Dr. J. M. Templeton 1855 – 1932



One of Cary's earliest doctors, Dr. Templeton is described in "Around and About Cary" as a man who searched for the truth, lived by principles and practiced charity. He crusaded for Prohibition, public education, good roads and economic justice for farmers. In addition to being a doctor and surgeon, he ran a lumber business and also farmed. His gravestone carries the following inscription: A country doctor who served his nation in the time of war, his community in the time of peace, the rich and poor alike.

There is a small secret here – Dr. Templeton volunteered for the Army when the United States entered World War I. But it seems he quit after six months, supposedly because the Army insisted that he stop wearing civilian clothes. Nevertheless, the statement is true – he DID serve his nation in the time of war.

You can see Dr. Templeton's uniform in the Cary History Museum.



Marcus Baxter Dry, 1871 – 1946

Marcus Baxter Dry was Principal of Cary High School for 34 years, from 1908 through 1942. He also served as Superintendent of the Cary School District. Under his leadership, North Carolina's first state-supported high school, Cary High, became a model for all that followed. It is said

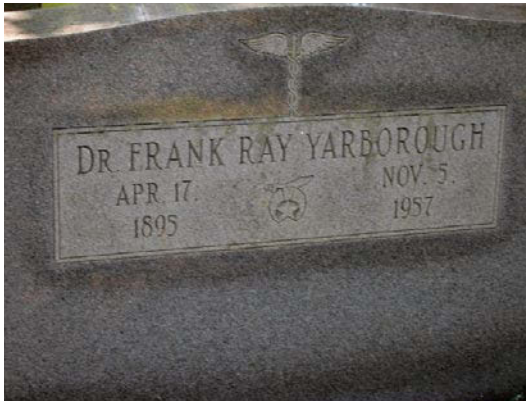
that his success as an educator stemmed from his genuine interest in each student and his ability to embrace new ideas over the course of his career.

Dry was instrumental in the construction and modernization of Cary High School's buildings during his tenure. In 1913, under Dry's leadership, a brick building was built on the school's site. The current building, which we know as "Old Cary Elementary," was constructed just a few years before Dry's retirement.



Dry's residence was just east of the school and, today, is a contributing structure in the Cary Historic District. It is fitting, then, that both his house and the school are located on what is now called Dry Avenue.

Dr. Frank Yarborough, 1895 – 1957



Another of Cary's earliest doctors, Dr. Yarborough first practiced with Dr. Templeton. He also practiced at Rex Hospital when it was located on St. Mary's Street in Raleigh. His home, where he established his own practice, stands today in the Cary Historic District, and still retains the two side entrances for his patients. One entrance was for those who were white, the other for those who were black.

In Cary's oral history book, "Just a Horse Stopping Place," there is the following account, recalled by Dr. Yarborough's son: "He (referring to his father, Dr. Yarborough) built the office at the present location on Park Street that was connected to our home. He practiced there for the

entire time that I can remember him practicing medicine. The cars would line Park Street on both sides of the street from morning until night. And when I say night, I mean eleven, twelve o'clock. When I'd come home from school in the day, it was just a line of cars like a big procession going on. His office hours at night were Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The rest of the nights, and even when he got out of the office, he would make house calls."

Hillcrest Cemetery also holds many stories of tragedy and great sadness. Among these is the story of Dr. Yarborough's daughter, Mary.

Mary Ray Yarborough was said to be "the apple of her father's eye" and family members recall that she called him "Daddy Blue Eyes." When she was eleven years old, she contracted meningitis, and, unfortunately, the medical treatment she received was unable to save her. It was said that the anguish of her death tore the Yarborough's marriage apart. Their love for her is there at Hillcrest for all of us to see, in the bust of Mary that marks her grave in the family plot.



R. S. "Dad" Dunham, 1905 – 1987

This well-known teacher at Cary High School owned a 30-acre tract of land on Kildaire Farm Road, which was described as "the closest thing Cary had to a botanical garden." Mr. Dunham's agriculture students at Cary High received much of their forestry training on these grounds, which later became the site of the Glenaire, among the earliest of Cary's continuing care retirement communities. It was the Dunhams' desire to see their land used for this purpose.

If "Dad" Dunham's name looks familiar to you, it may be that you've visited the popular neighborhood park on Walnut Street that was named after him.



Tammy Lynn Pierce, 1957 – 1971



Described on her gravestone as, “Cary’s Angel Unaware,” Tammy Lynn Pierce sustained a brain injury at birth and lived all of her twelve years in the family’s home on Kildaire Farm Road. At that time there were no custodial homes in North Carolina for children with developmental disabilities, and her family refused to place her in a state institution. Prior to her death, Tammy Lynn’s parents joined two Raleigh couples in similar circumstances to create a foundation that would lead to the establishment of the Tammy Lynn Center for Development Disabilities. Today, the Tammy Lynn Center offers education, residential and family support services to children and adults with special needs. The Center’s goal is to provide the individuals it serves the opportunity to maximize their abilities in a loving, nurturing environment.

Fascinating Inscriptions

We couldn’t leave Hillcrest without sharing with you some of the fascinating inscriptions found on the grave markers. And, yes, there are a few mysteries and secrets waiting for us here.

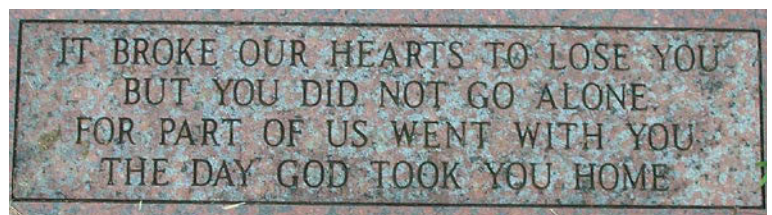
Inscriptions provide the opportunity for those who are deceased to continue to speak to us. Or, in some cases, the message is from loved ones, telling us about the one who has passed away. Some inscriptions give us advice and others recite Bible scriptures that tell us of the person’s religious devotion.

The book, “Sticks and Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Gravemarkers, ” tells us that an influx of British stonecutters arrived here in the 1830s to work on the new state capitol in Raleigh and other major masonry projects. In 1837, North Carolina’s first resident funerary monument firm was established in Raleigh. Once rail lines were complete, more commercial stonecutters set up marble yards along the rails. While the railroad caused the proliferation of small marble yards, it also led to their demise. In the early 1900s, small marble yards were absorbed by larger ones and the ease of shipping monuments by rail led to the rise of the mail-order monument business. New stonecutting technology allowed for the use of granite, instead of marble, and within a few years, the artistic role of the stonecutter changed from sculptor of the overall monument to mere engraver of the inscription. Today, stonecutters still work in North Carolina, but most of their business is sandblasting inscriptions onto blanks. With only a few exceptions, gravestone carving is a lost art.

We identified interesting and intriguing inscriptions at Hillcrest. Some are serious, while others add a touch of humor.

Here is a sampling of those we found and liked:

- Love makes memory eternal
- She hath done what she could
- Redeeming love has been my theme . . .
- To live in the hearts we leave behind is not to die
- Always Giving Never Asking
- Your legacy of love and laughter lives on through your family
- Mom to All Who Knew Her
- She was too good, too gentle and fair to dwell in this cold world
- Under The Dew, The Sun And The Stars, I Wait For You



We were also touched by the simplicity of this hand-engraved marker.



Next, we have a mystery – what might this inscription mean?

"I'm Your Mother"

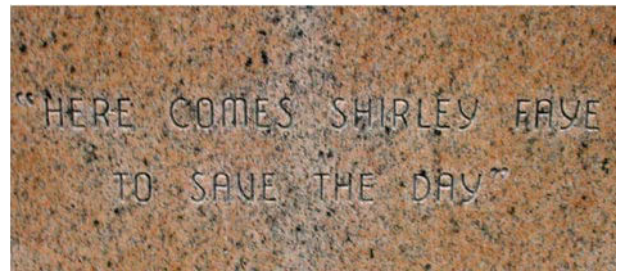
And who decided to place it on the marker – the deceased, or her family?

It took a second look at the inscription below to realize that there was a secret here, but apparently, the stonecutter did not take that second look. Can you find it?

"We loved the well, but Jesus Loved you Best"

I suspect it was not "the well" that they loved, but that they loved "thee well." Today, even spell check wouldn't have caught this mistake. And either way, the second line cannot be disputed.

One of the most loved inscriptions – and the one that made us really smile – was found on the back of the gravestone of Shirley Faye Tharpe.



It is time to leave Hillcrest, with our invitation to you to visit this beautiful, peaceful and intriguing Cary treasure on your own.

We think you'll fall in love with it, as we have.

As we depart Hillcrest, we'll also leave you with this sage advice from one who is buried there.

Remember friends as you pass by
As you are now so once was I
As I am now, so you must be
Prepare therefore to follow me.

Ed. Note: In 2014, Hillcrest cemetery was designated a Cary historic landmark.

The Town Clerk's office maintains an electronic map of the cemetery with information about each individual grave.

Acknowledgements & Sources

Mary Hollis Barnes, c.a., NC Cemetery Survey & Stewardship Program

Friends of the Page-Walker

Kris Carmichael, Supervisor - Page Walker Arts & History Center

Karen Gray, Deputy Cary Town Clerk

Irene Olive Kittinger, Cemetery Surveyor & Historian

Pam Simons, Parks Planning Technician - Cary PRCR

Philip Thomason, Thomason & Associates

Phyllis Tuttle, Preservationist

"Around & About Cary" by Thomas M. Byrd & Jerry Miller

Cary Historic District Registration Nomination

CemeteryCensus.com – Surveyors Shirley Olson & Karen M. Freeman

Frank L. Hoffman – Cedar Trees Photo

Interment.net

"Just a Horse-Stopping Place: An Oral History of Cary, NC" by Peggy Van Scoyoc

"Sticks & Stones" by M. Ruth Little

"Stories In Stone" by Douglas Keister

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