Hillcrest Cemetery
Memorial Association INC.

Self-Guided Tour Notes

Welcome to Hillcrest Cemetery. This guide was designed for the May 14, 2022 event during which the locations will be marked with numbered flags. It may be used later, using the map below, but some specific locations may require a little seaching.

- Please watch your step! There are many tripping hazards including some not readily visible.
- Look but don't touch. Some of our stones are delicate and uneven, and they are the familys' property. Be especially careful not to step on any flat stones (some are hollow underneath and could break) or coping walls around graves (some are uneven and can fall over).
- It is impossible to not step on a grave on a walk such as this, so relax and enjoy your stroll. Dancing or stomping would be disrespectful, but the graves are the ground we use to get around in a cemetery such as this—just as the mowers and volunteers do. It truly is the *thought* that counts.

General History of Hillcrest Cemetery

Hillcrest Cemetery was incorporated in 1910, but had existed as an informal burial ground for a few years prior. The earliest known grave is dated from 1886, but it is believed to have been moved here along with other members of the family from a family lot elsewhere. Section 1 was the original cemetery site. Section 3 and the Circle Section were added about 1927. (We don't know why there is no Section 2, though we believe it was planned to go behind Section 1 but was not used.) Sections 4–6 were added around 1942. The Bronze Section (across the street) and Sections 7–9 opened in the 1950s.

Hillcrest Sign at original location, c. 1935

There were expansion plans, with land owned to the north extending beyond present day Langford Parkway, which was stopped by the contstruction. A roadway was built in back of Section 8 that still exists under a dirt pile and into the woods.

The cemetery was always privately owned and maintained by the owners themselves over the years. In 1997, one of the owners passed away and his wife was unable to continue maintenance. It became badly overgrown. Families and members of the community got together in 2001 to try to find a solution, and our organization was formed. For 21 years, we have maintained the 15-acre property using only volunteers and donations.

Summer volunteer schedule

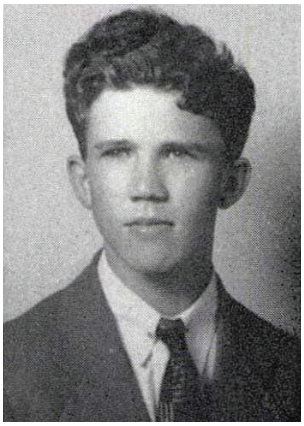
We have wound down the heavy duty weekly cleanups of the winter and spring, but we have lots of small projects that we hope to take on in the coming months, from tending to trees and shrubs to maintaining litter pickup and transcribing headstones.

From June through October, we plan to host volunteer days on the second Saturday of each month through October. **We will be there from 9am–1pm for each date.** Feel free to come and go when you prefer. We can also work with you on other dates and times—just let us know. **Please confirm dates and times on Facebook or by contacting** us before traveling, in case something comes up.

June 11 • July 9 • August 13 • September 10 • October 8

A. Overgrown graves by back fence: This is an area we hope to restore this fall. We focused this past winter and spring on clearing brush from as many graves as we could, but this area is so bad we held off in favor of clearing a larger area.

B. Memorial marker for Billy Towns, 18, who died on during the D-Day invation at Omaha Beach, France as part of the First Infantry Division. (Photo)



Billy Towns

C. Memorial marker for Perry Whatley, one of many Korean War veterans at Hillcrest.

D. Memorial marker for Pvt. Tilmer H. Vickery, 21, who died at Camp Blanding, FL, coincidentally the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

E. Interesting trees: A pair of tall short leaf pine trees, and behind them, a water oak tree with a diameter of 63 inches and circumference close to 200 inches.

F. Goodman family lot. Note the wide memorial to two brothers lost at sea two years apart—Winfred and Tom Goodman, inscribed with the lyrics to the Navy Hymn. (Please avoid stepping on the walls and stones here.)

G. Memorial marker for Staff Sargent Lawrence H. Brown, Jr., 26, a parachute infantryman with the 82nd Airborn Division, who died during invation at Normandy Beach, France as part of the First Infantry Division. (Photo)

Lawrence H. Brown

H. Memorial marker for Robert Norman Berry, Assistant Postmaster of East Point. He was the organizer and one time president of the East Point Chamber of Commerce and a well known East Point civic leader. (Namesake for East Point's Norman Berry Drive) (Photo)

I. Overview of the northeast hillside. Note the metal Hillcrest sign. It dates back at least to 1935 when it spelled out the name "HILL CREST CEMETERY" (Photo on front) at the entrance to what is now Stanton road, but at the time was only the driveway into the cemetery. We plan to clear this area next year, including restoring the hillside staircases up from Stanton.

R. Norman Berry

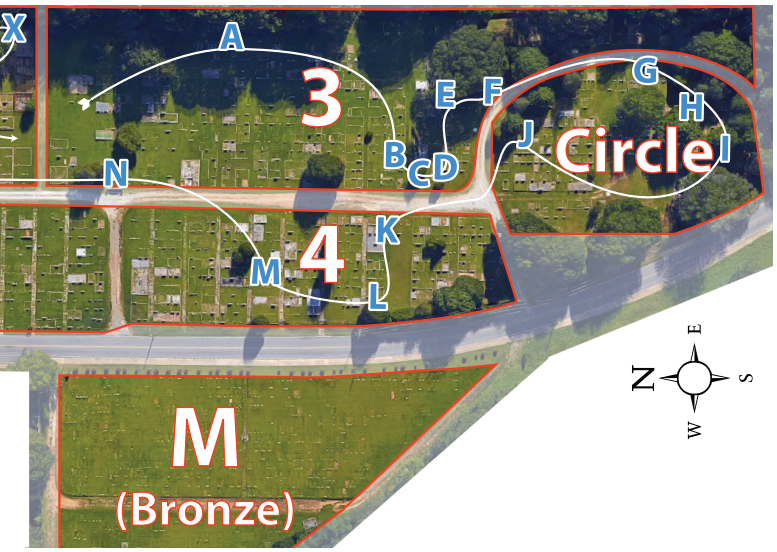
Section numbers are in white.
Tour stops are in blue.

J. On May 16, 1938 the most disastrous fire in Atlanta's history (at time based on the loss of life) broke out in the kitchen of the Terminal Hotel. Five of the hotel guests, Emma Bacon (66), her daughter Josephine Overstreet (35), and her children Jaqueline (11) and twins James and Jeane (7) were among the victims. Rather than returning their remains home to Knoxville, they were buried on this spot. Their graves are not marked. (Photo)

Terminal Hotel fire service, 1938

K. Memorial marker for Joseph "Joe" H. Barnett (photo), a founding member of the Hillcrest Cemetery Memorial Assoiciation and primary funder for the Hillcrest Veterans Memorial. His list of accomplishments is interesting, but too long to include here, but his biography includes references to Russell High School, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), World War II, Army Ordinance at Aberdeen Proving Ground Maryland, Masonic Lodge #288, Boy Scouts of America, and East Point United Methodist Church.

Joe Barnett



L. Memorial marker for Jack Boatright, 25, the first East Point resident to die in World War II. The USS Juneau was on duty in the South Pacific. Shortly after midnight on the morning of November 13, 1942 the USS Juneau and other ships engaged the Japanese in the Battle of Guadalcanal. After hours of fierce fighting the USS Juneau took a direct torpedo hit near its magazine and exploded, sinking almost immediately. Of the 699 Officers and Crew, 685 were lost. Jack's nephew, Steven Bramlett, was one of the most instumental people in starting the Hillcrest Cemetery Memorial Association.

Jack Boatright

Look across Stanton Road from here. That is Section M, also known as the Bronze Section. It's was an "economy" section where only flat bronze markers were allowed when the cemetery was being operated. We recently graded the back edges of this section to remove kudzu and other growth to establish a new maintenance baseline.

M. This stone block was a trickle fountain in the early days of Hillcrest. Just north of the block you can make out a ring of rocks that bordered a small pond that the water ran to before being pumped back up into the fountain.

N. The Hillcrest Veterans Memorial was built by our Association in 2009. It was funded through the sale of memorial and honor bricks, which can be seen at the base. The largest contributor was Joe Barnett ("L" on this tour). It was designed by Hillcrest volunteer, Kevin Hudson. We would like to add a flagpole to the site but the need for lighting (we have no electric power) to do so properly is in question at this time. If anyone would like to pursue such a project with us, please let us know.

O. Memorial marker for William Johnson, known as "Ole Stump" by some (the marker, not the person!). This is a prime example of the Woodmen of the World markers. (This is a fraternal benefit/insurance company, which had an option for including their markers as part of your plans.)

You can see two other WoW stones nearby, on the Newby graves, which look like stacks of logs, which were slightly damaged when a tree fell in 2016.

The young eastern red cedar tree to the left of William Johnson's marker was planted March 19, 2022 in memory of longtime friend of the association and volunteer, Deb Aziz. It is planted on the site of the hickory tree that fell in 2016.

P. Fannie May Schell Lipes was one of the first school teachers in East Point and did so for many years. To the right of her lot, you will see the Schell lot—the family she was descended from. They were one of the "first families" of East Point. They are also related to the Callahans and other famililies with similar large lots near these. This one extended family take up nearly an entire block of Section 1. (Photo)

Fannie May Schell Lipes (left)

Q. Memorial marker for Henry Decatur Reagan, Sr. (1880–1957). As far as we can determine from the records, so far, this was the first African-American burial in Hillcrest.

R. Memorial marker for Reuben & Eliza Phillips. Reuben was an early mayor of East Point and also served as its postmaster. This lot was fully surrounded by this old wrought iron fence, with two working gates, as recently as 2002. the gates and about half of the fencing was stolen, likely for resale as architectural antiques, by 2008.

Side trip, if you want—Keep heading along the main deriveway to the north for a view of Sections 7, 8 and 9. The far end of 8 and 9 was badly grown over by kudzu and we just recently had the edge graded so that it can be maintained going forward.

S. Memorial marker for Rev. Benjamin H. Phillips, a well known minister in East Point, and his wife Perlina Phillips. This is the most massive memorial at Hillcrest, but not the tallest...keep going.

T. Memorial marker for Mrs. Roxana "Roxie" Stringer. Simply included here because of the unusual marker style. The rectangular cube on top is not attached, but simply rests in a cradle carved into the base stone. Please do not touch as this memorial is top-heavy and it has recently started leaning slightly. There are several other interesting markers in this area. Take your time and look around.

U. Memorial Marker for Isaac William Carter "Ike" Gaston, whose death was one of the most infamous in the City's history. At the time, the Ku Klux Klan was not only terrorizing the black community, but had set themselves up as the "moral police" for the white community as well. The media, police, courts and city leadership paid them little attention.

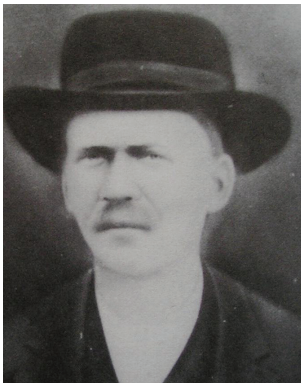
In March of 1940, Ike's wife went to the Klan headquarters in East Point and lodged a complaint that she and her children had no food or coal and that Ike, a white barber, had been drinking rather than providing for his family. (Other reports say her father told them Ike was beating

her.) The Klan convened and judged him in need of a moral correction and assigned a “Wrecking Crew” to carry it out. On the night of March 7, 1940, the Klan came and removed him from his downtown barber shop, where he was sleeping.

Gaston was taken to a field off Redwine Rd. and flogged repeatedly. He was told of his violations and to correct his behavior, and left to walk back to town, beaten and still under the effects of alcohol. He instead laid down and passed out in the field. He died of hypothermia that night.

His funeral drew over 1500 people to his burial here. The city was cast into a spotlight of embarrassment and controversy. Many town officials and organizations, as well as the Atlanta newspspers, finally called for the end of the Klan in East Point. Numerous people were indicted, but few served much time as Governor Eugene Talmadge later commuted the few sentences that were given.

V. Memorial marker for Young Reuben Allen. His was one of the first families in East Point. He was the Grandson of Reuben Mundy, the proprietor of historic Mundy’s Mill in Jonesboro. He worked at the White Hickory Wagon Manufacturing Co. downtown. He was one of the first City Councilmen of East Point and he and his wife were instrumental in organizing the First Baptist Church here.



Young Reuben Allen

W. Memorial markers for John and Rachel Corley. John entered the Confederate army at age 18 and lived to age 99, dying in 1938, believed to be the last living confederate veteran in East Point. (Home photo, John in center)

Corley home on Cleveland Avenue

X. Memorial marker for Jesse Smith Lemon and Annie Davis Holcombe. This is the only obelisk-shaped marker located in Hillcrest, and is our tallest. This is one of two markers in Hillcrest designed to mark four burials with one stone—one person on each side of the marker, in the shape of a cross. He served on the City Council.

Y. Memorial marker for David E. Floyd, one of three known veterans of the Spanish-American War, which was fought in 1898.

This completes our tour. Of course, there are thousands more stories to tell, but these are a sample of the ones we have heard. We welcome additional information or corrections, as well as questions and suggestions.

One thing worth noting—most of our records are from the records obtained from the cemetery office, not the markers you have been seeing. This summer we plan to begin the process of transcribing all the information from the markers that we can, to add to our knowledge base. This will be some of our easiest work ever, but will still involve cleaning off some markers that have settled or are covered with grass—good projects for families or teams. If interested, you can sign up to be notified when we are ready to start at the event tent.

Special thanks to the East Point Historical Society, Atlanta Historical Society and findagrave.com for photos.

Finally, this tour would not be as good as it is without the assistance of the East Point Historical Society. We have worked with them since our founding and consider them a sister organization. They are having an open house/ May Mixer event today (May 14, 2022) from 2–4pm and we encourage you to visit them.

From Hillcrest, turn left from any driveway in the main section and go to the second traffic light (Norman Berry Drive) and turn left. The entrance to EPHS is just ahead on your left.

Contact us

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