

# Heritage Gazette

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY • FALL 2015



## In Their Own Words

Faithful supporters of Congressional Cemetery are likely familiar with our fall fundraiser, Ghosts and Goblets. For a number of reasons, we decided to retire the event in 2015, or rather, to transform the idea into something new.

This year, we bring to you Soul Strolls: Twilight Tours at Congressional Cemetery. This event gets down to the bare bones of what our tours are all about, which is celebrating DC and American history as represented by those interred here. And in the true spirit of our cemetery events, we take the celebration part rather seriously.

Soul Strolls will explore the stories of a few of the 65,000 residents through guided tours and costumed interpreters. It's the one time you can hear from our residents in their own words, as best as we can manage. Can you imagine what Adelaide Johnson or J. Edgar Hoover might say to you if they could still speak? We can guess, and we will, with our twilight tours on the nights of October 16th, 17th, 23rd and 24th from 6 to 9 pm. Hour-long tours will leave every twenty minutes from the Chapel, and each night we'll have a cash bar with beer, wine and hot cider. You can even have a heart-to-heart with a few of our residents while you wait for a docent to guide you on a tour among the headstones and through the history of Congressional Cemetery.

You may be wondering which residents will be attending this year, but you'll have to come to Soul Strolls to find out for yourself. We hope you'll visit us on one of these moonlit evenings in October.

*Sculptress Adelaide Johnson*

Interested in purchasing tickets to Soul Strolls? Tickets can be purchased through [congressionalcemetery.ticketleap.com](http://congressionalcemetery.ticketleap.com) or by calling 202-543-0539 during our office hours, Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. Adult tickets are \$20; children under 12 are \$10. This event is rain or shine. Unfortunately, we are unable to offer refunds or transfer ticket times, so please keep this in mind when purchasing.

## Letter from the Chair

What does Historic Congressional Cemetery mean to you? This is a question that Board is asking of ourselves, the staff, the K9 community, site owners, and many other stakeholders associated with the cemetery. As we continue our strategic planning process, we are taking a fresh look at our mission statement and considering if it needs revamping to reflect the growth, changes and future vision of the cemetery.



By definition a mission statement should reflect an organization's goals, ethics, and culture — in other words its core purpose for being. Obviously HCC is and will remain an historic and active burial ground, which is the first element of our current mission statement. From there our current statement outlines our commitment to preservation and restoration, celebrating the stories and history of those interred, sustaining the grounds and landscape, protecting the Anacostia River watershed and, finally, being a broader community resource. That is a very diverse set of priorities! But, I think the staff does a great job of addressing each of these elements, which is reflected in the range and multiplicity of HCC's events, volunteer opportunities, tours, restoration projects, and in our K9 Corps.

However, as we progress through the strategic planning process, we may find that what once was a top priority is now less urgent or that funding sources have dwindled in one area or another. Similarly, every organization must continue to evolve over time and we may find that the needs of our various stakeholders have shifted or that new opportunities could open up additional funding streams.

So, with an open mind and thoughtful consideration we will continue this process throughout the Fall. And, we'd love to hear from our readers: What does HCC mean to you?

—Kelly Crowe



THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION  
OF HISTORIC CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY

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The Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are deductible to the extent permitted by federal tax laws. Funding for the preservation and maintenance of Historic Congressional Cemetery is provided in part by the Congressional Cemetery Endowment, which was created with matching funds provided by the U.S. Congress and administered by the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

## From the President

With much fanfare and to the delight of local and foreign media outlets, the goats were back at Congressional Cemetery after a two year hiatus. A herd of 32 goats were unloaded for a press event on August 6th, penned into our wooded area just south of the cemetery where invasive species, vines, and thick underbrush had taken over approximately two acres of land. They hailed from Prosperity Acres in Sunderland, Maryland, and it was the first time any entity in Washington, DC had goats onsite since our very popular herd made worldwide headlines in 2013.

The goats are owned by Mary Bowen who operates [BrowsingGreenGoats.com](http://BrowsingGreenGoats.com), where we found our livestock. And yes, they all have names, such as Nadia the Wonder Goat, Whiskey, Rose, and Peanut. They came in all shapes, sizes, colors, and personalities. Their cost of \$4,500 was sponsored by an anonymous benefactor of the cemetery. They ate everything – and I mean everything – from seven feet down to the bare ground. And working 24 hours a day for two weeks, they are really only paid about 25 cents per hour, per goat.

The media exposure was again

a bit overwhelming at times, as their presence was picked up by the wire and stories began appearing in newspapers as far away as Malaysia and Tokyo. Their television credits included



*Podium for the goats press event.*

CNN, CBS, NatGeo, Discovery, and others so numerous we lost count. And of course we had lots of goat 'swag' for sale in the gift shop for the duration.

On a more practical note, the cemetery is experiencing a strong financial year, with many

thanks due to your continued contributions, gifts, and donations. We were able to finally replace the roof atop our east end garage and workroom, with which we now have dry and

secure storage for our many activities and events. Planting and fencing was also completed around the new tall columbarium obelisk, which is more than half sold out already, with additional units planned for 2016.

Don't forget to adopt a brick to memorialize a loved one or pet — the money raised from the bricks will go toward the never-ending restoration of our more than 25,000 headstones throughout the cemetery, which have been cataloged and prioritized for conservation.

As I surpassed my three year anniversary with Congressional in July, it is with eager anticipation that I look forward to our myriad fall events, some old and some new. It's a great time to visit the cemetery to watch a movie, run a race, or take a night time tour!

—Paul K. Williams, President



# Around the Gatehouse



## NATIONAL DAY OF SERVICE AND REMEMBRANCE

Every year, on the National Day of Service and Remembrance, we welcome hundreds of volunteers from many different branches of the uniformed services. And even though we have benefitted from this partnership more than a dozen times, each year we are left amazed at the work ethic and overall determination to improve the cemetery that these men and women demonstrate. This year we were joined by Rear Admiral Yancy Lindsey, who led by example, spending the day trimming branches hanging over our fences. Though a rainy day prevented us from painting the front fence, we were able to complete many more projects across the grounds; including maintaining the swales, trimming trees, pulling vines, digging out stumps, and a number of other tasks. Our sincerest thanks go out to each of the volunteers who worked that day; without your help over the past fourteen years, the cemetery would not be what it is today.

## ADIEU, FAIR GOATS!

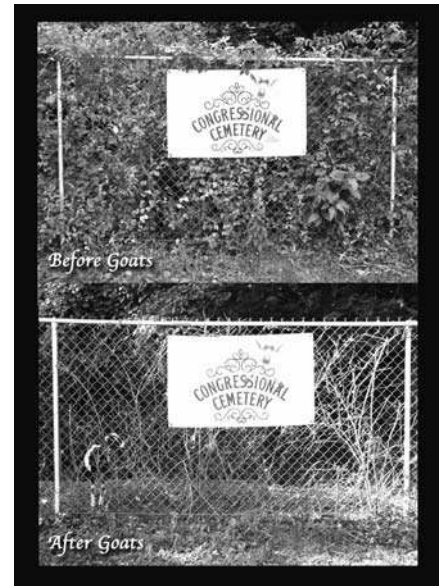
The Browsing Green Goats were only here for a few short weeks, but the impact they made on the unwanted vegetation in the cemetery is indisputable. Many thanks to our anonymous sponsor who made this goat visit possible. We hope to bring them back again soon!



*Nadia the Wonder Goat takes a brief jaunt.*



*Ward 6 Councilmember Charles Allen meets a goat.*



## OUTDOOR YOGA MORTIS

Join us for our last outdoor Yoga Mortis class! Although weekly classes will still be held in the Chapel until the weather is too chilly, this is the last scheduled class for the great outdoors. Save the date for Saturday, October 10th at 11:30 am, and check our website and social media outlets for up-to-date information about the class.



*Jenna Makharita strikes a pose.  
Photo Credit: Kelly Carnes.*

## A SOMBER NOTE



We regretfully acknowledge the passing of Paul C. Reber, the Executive Director of Stratford Hall. Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Reber served on the APHCC Board in the early 2000s. Our thoughts are with Mr. Reber's family, and we would like to recognize his extensive service in the historical community as well as his time on the Board here, which was dedicated to ensuring the preservation of the legacy of Congressional Cemetery.

## HONEY HARVEST



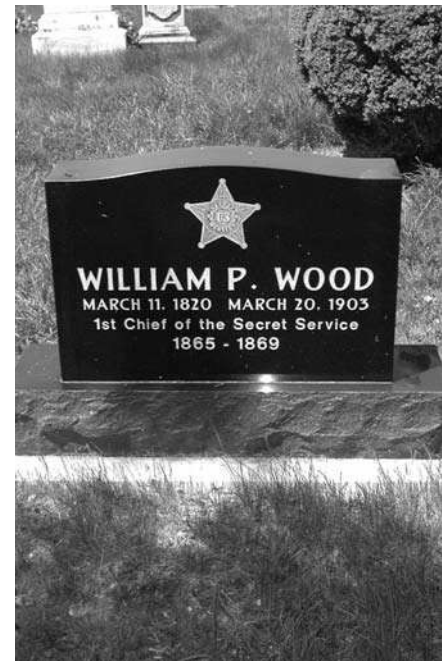
In early September over 20 volunteers gathered in the Gatehouse to assist beekeeper Toni Burnham with harvesting Congressional Cemetery's "Rest in Bees" honey. This year's honey harvest was particularly bountiful, and over 300 jars were collected. At the time the newsletter is going to press, we still have jars available in the gift shop! Large jars are \$20, and the small jars are \$10.



## 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE

On Thursday, September 10th, the Association of Former Agents, United States Secret Service (AFAUSS) hosted a ceremony at the gravesite of William Wood, the first Chief of the Secret Service. James Legette, the organizer of the ceremony for the AFUSS, describes the origins and background of the organization. HCC was proud to host this distinguished organization.

"Founded/chartered in 1973 (IRS 501(c)(3) Public Charity)



by 25 supervisors of the Secret Service, lead by Chief James J. Rowley (1961 -1973).

Original mandates: Volunteer membership, only Special Agents; minimal dues; developed a "crisis fund" to assist Service personnel in need of support; extend scholarship support to college students interested in entering Law Enforcement as a profession — restricted to "outside the Service" students — nationwide applications accepted; form of communication to members was (still is) the "Pipeline" established by Deputy Chief Harry E. Neal (1926 - 1957) as editor and writer and developed an annual conference — held in various cities.

AFAUSSS has continued to grow and explore many various avenues of support for members and other law enforcement causes. Membership today is 2,000. Surviving spouses become members as do special supporters within the Service family."



## James A. Lafontaine

BY DANIEL HOLCOMBE

ere at the Congressional Cemetery we strive to make the stories of the people interred here, and their roles in our history, more approachable. We currently have 16 walking tours available online that cover a range of subjects, from the brewers of D.C. to Civil Rights heroes, and we are adding more steadily. These tours include the stories of more than two hundred people, and yet, this is still only a small fraction of the total number of people buried here.

Not everyone wants to sit down and read through a combination of obituaries, old newspaper articles, and other sources to try and gain a better understanding of an unknown person. Yet somehow we have managed to assemble a staff along with a number of supporters that greatly enjoys doing that very thing. Without fail, from time to time, each of us gets lost reading the story of a person interred here.

As the Grounds and Conservation Manager, I have a somewhat different approach to learning about new people. I usually don't "find" someone initially in an obituary or old article, but by their grave marker. I was working on the grounds last fall when I noticed the headstone of James A. LaFontaine. Tucked neatly

back into the shade of a magnolia tree, it is a fairly simple monument that is nothing out of the ordinary.

James was however far from an ordinary man. Known as Jimmy to almost all that knew him, he amassed a small fortune by owning and operating the Maryland Athletic Club. Today the Club is nearly forgotten, demolished in the early fifties, but even in its day nobody knew it by its formal name. Everyone referred to it as Jimmy's Place, or just Jimmy's. Located off of Bladensburg Avenue exactly on the line between Prince George's County and the District, Jimmy's Place was known as being the best casino in the District.

Just as Jimmy wasn't an ordinary man, however, Jimmy's Place was not an ordinary casino. Jimmy's Place did not permit any guns, women, or alcohol. It was nothing like casinos today; any sort of disturbance, whether out of joy or misery, would see you escorted out of the front door immediately. The entire casino was quiet, with only the low voices of the dealers and the quiet shuffling of cards able to be heard.

*Legends grew around old Jimmy and the joint he ran. One night a man lost \$3,000 at the dice table and left quietly. As was*



*The Lafontaine Family stone.*

*the custom, Jimmy sent him home in a chauffeured hack. Several hours later there was a furious racket at the guarded front door of the place and a woman was pulled into the vestibule by guards who didn't want to see the police awakened. Women ordinarily were not permitted in Jimmy's place. But this one bawled at the top of her lungs that her life's savings of \$3,000 had just been squandered by her ne'er-do-well husband, and she was going to every newspaper in Washington and Baltimore and tell all... unless. Jimmy gallantly paid her the money and told her never to let that bum of hers go gambling again.*

*No Wife*

*Couple of nights later the fellow*

came back and was nearly slugged. But he finally got them to understand that (1) he had no wife; (2) he had a lot of money and would like to play; and (3) he had picked up a streetwalker at 15th and H Streets, N.E., on the way in that night, had told her he lost \$3,000, and was surprised when she jumped out of the car and took off in the opposite direction.

**THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN, P. 25, FEB. 8, 1955**

After reading many articles from across the country detailing Jimmy's casino and later legal troubles, the common theme is that nobody actually disliked him. A 1949 Kingsport News article even mentions that the judge that found him guilty of tax evasion would go on to say, "Apart from his admittedly illegal business activities, his character is probably otherwise exemplary." Jimmy went from being listed with the likes of Al Capone as a racketeer, to being mentioned as one of the finest of people. His name appears in a number of papers as having sponsored advertisements aiding in the WWI war effort, as well as donating a Great Horned Owl to the Smithsonian Zoo.

Charles Price, a writer for Sports Illustrated whose father managed the casino, tells a story in this article about Jimmy that wouldn't be believable if it were about any other man.

*At the height of Prohibition, Mr. Jim had been kidnapped by some out-of-town racketeers for*

*\$40,000 ransom. Three men spirited him, blindfolded, to a backwoods cottage in Virginia. There they waited for three days, but nobody offered to pay Mr. Jim's ransom. That bothered Mr. Jim not at all. He whiled away the time napping, telling stories and puffing on his Havanas. To kill time, he suggested that they play some hearts. Mr. Jim beat them out of several thousand dollars for which he took a marker.*

*On the fifth day the kidnapers began getting nervous. Mr. Jim, on the other hand, was enjoying himself immensely. He was playing cards against three of the biggest patsies he had ever seen. Finally, one of the men blew his stack. "Why doesn't somebody pay your ransom?" he demanded. "That's easy," said Mr. Jim. "I'm the only guy I know who's got \$40,000, and nobody knows where I keep my money. But I'll tell you what. You take me home, and I'll get your money for you."*

*The kidnapers looked at him in disbelief. Then they turned to each other and shrugged their shoulders, as if to ask what they had to lose. They drove Mr. Jim to his row house, the sight of which must have convinced them that he had pulled a fast one on them. But, true to his word, Mr. Jim strolled into the house, kissed Miss Annie on the cheek as though he had been away on a business trip, then walked back to the car with 40 thousand-dollar bills. He counted out 36 of them and tucked the other four back in his pocket. "These are what you owe me for the hearts game," he said and walked away.*

"Spud the Kaiser" The Washington Herald, 1918  
James A.

LaFontaine listed in the last column



**SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, OCTOBER 11, 1976**

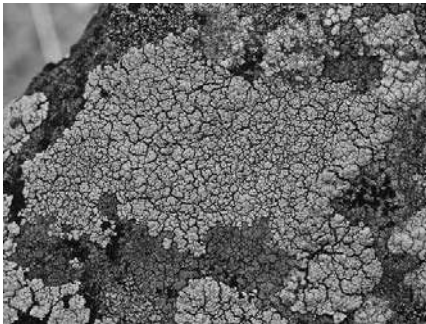
Jimmy's business survived for more than twenty years even though it was not entirely legal. The benefit of being on the border of D.C. and Maryland is that anytime the Maryland police came to raid the casino, its patrons would simply cross the line into the District, and vice versa. Multiple sources state that all of the gaming tables were on wheels, and when police would raid from one side of the line, the tables would be moved to the other, out of the police's jurisdiction. He would continue to run his casino until it finally closed in 1947; his health was failing and nobody else could run Jimmy's but the man himself. When he passed away on November 21, 1949, his estate included more than two million dollars in cash that he kept in small safes in his various properties around the city.

James was laid to rest here in a site purchased by his daughter, Rose, on the 24th of November following the mass at St. Dominic's Church. His wife, Annie B. LaFontaine, would join him here a little more than a year later. 🍷

## Lichen: To clean or not to clean?

BY MARGARET PUGLISI

Lichen. Some people love it. Others hate it. The effect of lichen on historic stone is a debated subject in the realm of grave-stone enthusiasts.



*Crustose*

Lichen is a common occurrence in historic cemeteries. These colonies thrive on stone in damp, shady areas, often obstructing the view of names, dates, and iconography. Three different types, in varying colors

and forms, can be found throughout Congressional Cemetery.

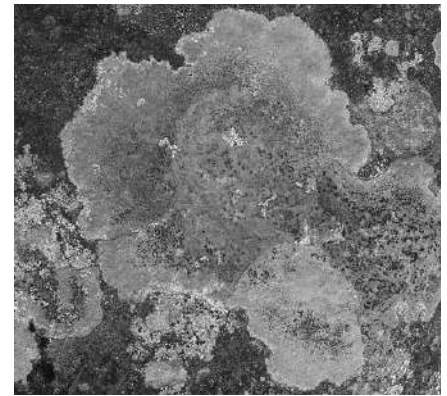
Leprose – thin, powdery appearance in a variety of greens and oranges

Crustose – thick, crusty appearance in a variety of greens, yellows, and oranges

Foliose – grey or green, leafy appearance



*Foliose*



*Leprose*

Opinions fall on both sides of the lichen-covered fence. For some, it's viewed as a layer of aesthetically-pleasing patina. For others, it's a nuisance for recording genealogical information. Some species of lichen are actually guarded by law in other countries, banning their removal.

The two sides in the debate make the following points:

### PRO-LICHEN

- Lichen protects stones by creating a protective coating that actually prevents air pollution from reaching the stone.
- Cleaning is more damaging than allowing lichen to remain on the stone.
- Lichen will continue to return to the stone; therefore, caretakers will be performing multiple abrasive cleanings.
- Lichen contributes to the integrity of a historic cemetery.
- Lichen should only be removed to improve legibility for documentation purposes and to prepare for restoration treatment.

### ANTI-LICHEN

- Lichen deteriorates stone by etching into the surface with acidic secretions.
- Lichen traps moisture on the stone's surface.
- Lichen obstructs important information.
- Lichen creates an impression of neglect.
- Lichen should be removed to brighten memorials so that the cemetery does not look neglected, in addition to legibility and restoration preparation.

Carved Stones Adviser Project. "Guidance Notes: Lichens, Algae and Mosses." Scottish Graveyards. Accessed September 21, 2015. <http://www.scottishgraveyards.org.uk/downloads/5lichen.pdf>.



Despite the need to have trained volunteers, cemeteries (Congressional included) often find it easiest to arm large volunteer groups with bristle brushes and spray bottles, gung-ho about removing EVERY stain. Volunteers are our greatest line of support, but cleaning requires special care and awareness of the fragility of historic headstones — stability, previous repairs, flaking, disaggregation, etc. Regardless of the thrill of witnessing the transformation of a lichen-laden memorial into a glimmery-white majesty, this seemingly harmless activity can actually be more detrimental in the long term.



While Congressional Cemetery does not have a position on whether lichen protects or deteriorates our

memorials, we aim to regulate cleaning with the institution of new preservation guidelines. Until more research is completed, we err on the side of caution, knowing that excessive cleaning is detrimental, a concept supported by organizations such as the Association for Gravestone Studies, Chicora Foundation, and the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training. Our perspective is to follow the motto, “the gentlest means possible,” which includes limiting our cleaning unless a headstone’s legibility for documentation has been compromised or during preparation for restoration work involving color-matching and adhesion of restoration treatment products. 🍷

## Field Trip

On September 16, the staff of Congressional Cemetery was treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of the Smithsonian’s Natural History Museum (NMNH) by renowned forensic anthropologist Doug Owsley, and with Deborah Hull-Walski and Efrain Tejada. There, they toured the new NMNH interactive science learning center Q?rius, and especially enjoyed viewing the thousands of Education and Outreach specimens which included taxidermy animals, whale bones, giant oyster shells, and miles upon miles of cabinets holding Americas treasures.

The crew also was led to a private lab behind the butterfly exhibit where they inspected



*HCC staff in Q?rius.*



*A lofty view of the National Museum of Natural History.*

hanging butterfly cocoons, held giant spiders, and watched technicians mounting butterflies for exhibition.

The highlight of the trip however, was to pay a visit to Catherine White and other White relatives remains that were temporarily removed from the White vault at the cemetery when restoration commenced. They are being sorted and studied by Owsley as a baseline, and will soon be back in their respectful place in the White vault. The cemetery is fortunate to have such expertise just a few short blocks from the grounds.

## Introducing the K9 Committee

The K9 Committee is an advisory group that assists with the management of the K9 Corps, the dog walking program at Congressional Cemetery. Put simply, this group of volunteers donates their time to adjudicate disputes, recommend rules and actions, and serve as the voice of the K9 Corps to the HCC Board and staff. As the K9 Corps program has grown, so have the responsibilities of the K9 Committee. The K9 Corps has come a long way since its humble beginnings in the early 1990s with only a handful of dog walkers, and thus the role of the committee has evolved over the past few decades.

But who is the K9 Committee, exactly? Currently, it's a group of seven members who meet once a month to discuss current K9 Corps issues. Over the next few months and moving forward, they'd like to hear the K9 Corps' thoughts and concerns about the program. Please see the K9 Corps event schedule for information about upcoming opportunities to meet the K9 Committee. They look forward to seeing you then! ~

### **K9 COMMITTEE:**

Steve Brennwald, Chairman

Eric de Waardt	Brynn Barnett
Heather Alarcon	Sue Hagedorn
Gayle Girod	France Sundt



*K9 Corps December Event: Photos with Santa.*

### **UPCOMING K9 CORPS EVENTS**

**Oct. 3, 8:30-10:30AM:** K9 Committee Meet & Greet. Ever wonder who the K9 Committee is and what we do? Stop by the Gatehouse the morning of Saturday, Oct. 3rd for coffee, donuts and conversation with K9 Committee members. Dogs welcome!

**Oct. 24, 8:30-9:30AM:** Annual K9 Corps Community Meeting. Join the K9 Committee, members of the HCC Board of Directors, and HCC Staff for this first annual event. You'll have an opportunity to offer your perspectives on issues facing the dogwalking program, share news, or discuss any concerns you may have.

**Dec. 5:** Santa Photos. Holiday cheer returns to the HCC with this special annual visit from Santa Claus, who will again be available for photos with your (human and/or furball) family. Mark your calendar for the first weekend of December and be on the lookout for more information about booking your photo op.

## Let's Play a Game, Shall We?

We have a friendly challenge here at Congressional Cemetery: give us an American historical event and we'll find you a connection to a cemetery resident. No promises on how relevant or direct the connection will be, but we're able to find an abundance of tidbits and trivia that can connect many events in American history (particularly in the 19th century) to the cemetery or one of our 65,000 residents. You can call it our version of Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon.

For instance, if we flip the game and connect an individual to an event, let's consider the Hon. Warren Ransom Davis. At first glance, his obituary seems rather standard for a 19th-century Congressional Representative.



*Cenotaph for Hon. Warren Ransom Davis*

Studied law, practiced in South Carolina, elected to Congress and served until his death. Buried at Congressional Cemetery.

However, closer inspection reveals he has a connection with one of the more dramatic stories from American history, the very first assassination attempt on a President of the United States. Davis wasn't actually around to witness the attempt, but that's neither here nor there, as President Andrew Jackson was attending Davis' funeral at the Capitol when the incident occurred:


### FROM THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCER, SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 1835

"As the President of the United States (Jackson), who was present at the solemn ceremony of the funeral, came into the portico of the Capitol from the Rotondo, a person stepped forward from the crowd into the space in front of the President, and snapped a pistol at him, the percussion-cap of



*Jackson assassination attempt; Library of Congress*

which exploded without igniting the charge! This person was struck down by a blow from Lieutenant Gedney, of the Navy, who happened to be near; he also received a blow promptly aimed at him by Mr. Secretary Woodbury; but, before receiving either blow, snapped a second pistol at the President. The cap of that lock also exploded without igniting the charge!"

Other versions of the event claim that Jackson, who was at that time well into his 60s, went after the perpetrator with his cane after the first shot. Either way, dear old departed Mr. Davis, a future Congressional Cemetery resident, was part of this bizarre and dramatic moment in American history. 





Association for the Preservation of  
Historic Congressional Cemetery

1801 E Street, Southeast  
Washington, DC 20003  
www.congressionalcemetery.org

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*Yes!*

I want to help preserve and restore Congressional Cemetery  
with a tax deductible donation.

\$25  \$50  \$75  \$100  \$250  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Special donation for the Sousa Gate Project:

Anonymous  Yes  No

2015 Membership:  \$125 Individual  \$250 Family

Check enclosed, made payable to Congressional Cemetery

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My employer makes matching contributions. Please send me the  
matching gift form.

*Thank you!*

*Please mail with your donation to the return address on the mailing panel  
or use the envelope inside this newsletter.*

## Calendar of Events

- October 10** Outdoor Yoga Mortis
- October 11** Notes from the Crypt
- October 13** Lecture: "The Boy in the Iron Coffin"
- October 16-17; 23-24** Soul Stroll: Twilight Tours
- November 6** Sousa's Birthday
- November 12** Lecture: "The Silas Omohundro Family"



18<sup>th</sup> and E Streets, SE.

**IT'S BEST TO KEEP AT LEAST SIX  
PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE WHO WILL  
ALWAYS HELP YOU MOVE.**



**You don't have to be rich and famous to be buried in  
Congressional Cemetery. You just have to be dead.**

Green Burial Options

Visit [CongressionalCemetery.org](http://CongressionalCemetery.org) for details  
(202) 543-0539