

St. John's Cemetery Foundation

Fall Newsletter

Issue No. 1 - Fall 2010

The Baton is Passed

Longtime Friends officers and co-founders, Jack Fleming M.D. and Ted Nickinson, have retired. They continue to serve in an adjunct capacity, assisting the new officers as needed.
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New Officers

Three new officers were elected at the June 2010 board meeting. Later the position of secretary/treasurer was split. Now four officers lead the organization.
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The Baton is Passed

After nearly a decade of service, longtime officers and co-founders, Jack Fleming, M.D. and Ted Nickinson, have retired.

Jack Fleming and Ted Nickinson did not think very much of St. John's Cemetery while growing up in Pensacola. Sure, they had many relatives buried there, but maintaining a cemetery was not their responsibility.

It was going to the 'dogs'!

In November 2000, Jack proposed to Ted that the two ought to do something to revitalize St. John's. "It was going to the 'dogs'!" stated Ted. "A group had formed to save St. Michael's Cemetery, which was the long-neglected Catholic cemetery downtown. We thought we could do similar work at St. John's."

Initially, the two men organized as a committee under St. John's Cemetery Inc., which is the organization that owns and operates the cemetery. Due to their persistent efforts, the organization grew. "We attracted more contributions than we had anticipated," recalled Jack. In 2002, their success supported establishing a separate non-profit entity, Friends of St. John's Cemetery Foundation,

Inc., which remains the name of the organization today.

Under their leadership, a number of projects were completed. The biggest was the documentation and



As a boy, Jack Fleming would enjoy watching the goldfish that used to swim in the front fountain near G Street.

publication of the thousands of people who are buried in the cemetery. Others include planting trees and ornamentals, removing the old fish pond fountain, installing a new roof over the chapel building, organizing clean-up days, hosting commemoration days, and sponsoring a website.

Jack is most proud of the friends he made while researching the backgrounds of various families and the overall enhancements that brought beauty back to the grounds. "It's an uplifting place now. Every tombstone has a wonderful story; it is important to remember the people who are buried there."

Ted is most pleased with the installation of a new irrigation system and well. The former system was full of leaks. The coffins were getting more water than the grass. With a leak-free system, spigots now are regularly available.

Not only did their efforts improve the visibility of the cemetery, but the company that owns the cemetery has been able to sell more lots. "People were receptive to what we were doing," Ted claims. "Jack was the engine; all I did was steer!"

The work is not over.

As much as the men accomplished, they realize that the work is not over. "I'd still like to see the chapel get remodeled and a nice fountain be installed just inside the entrance," says Jack.

When they announced their retirement at the June board meeting, Wesley Odom commented, "They laid the foundation upon which we must build. We owe them a great, big thanks!" The two will continue to assist the new officers as needed.

Board Meeting

All members of the board are encouraged to meet at the Earl Bowden Building, downstairs on September 29, 2010 from 5:00 - 6:00 p.m.

New Officers Elected

At the June 2010 meeting of the Board of Directors, Jack Fleming and Ted Nickinson announced their retirement and nominations for their replacement. The following officers were unanimously elected:

- President: Rick Fountain
- Vice President: Wesley Odom
- Secretary/Treasurer: Lynn Fulghum Lewis

All are native Pensacolians.

Rick recently retired and moved back to town after a notable career as an attorney in Jackson, MS. He published a book about football at Pensacola High School and spoke about some of the players who are buried at St. John's in a commemoration ceremony. He has served on many non-profit boards and works as a part-time professor at UWF.

Wesley owns an investment advisory firm, Armada Advisors, and has long championed local historic causes. Specific examples include North Hill, brick streets, the Pensacola Historical Society, First Methodist historian, and Saenger Theater. He wrote a book last year titled, *The Longest Siege of the American Revolution: Pensacola*.

Lynn is a fourth generation local with many relatives buried at St. John's. She is a retired business owner of the original Linen Corner. She is married to C.F. "Buddy" Lewis, DDS, who is also retired. They enjoy cruising, but in their frequent travels, they are always reminded how special Pensacola is.

After the elections, the officers decided to split the jobs of Secretary/Treasurer. Lynn kept the Secretary position, and Wayne Stephenson was asked and agreed to act as Treasurer.

Wayne also is a native. After founding and managing the Certified Public Accounting firm of Stephenson and Company for over 30 years, he now serves as Chief Financial Officer for CTS American, a computer software development firm that specializes in law enforcement software. Like Rick and Lynn, Wayne is a graduate of Pensacola High School.

He is expected to be confirmed as Treasurer at the next Board meeting.

Meeting with St. John's Cemetery, Inc.

Soon after being elected, President Rick Fountain and Vice president Wesley Odom met with the directors of St. John's Cemetery, Inc. (SJC) The purpose of the meeting was to discuss formalizing the duties and responsibilities of each organization in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

SJC has long supported the activities of Friends of St. John's Cemetery Foundation (the Foundation), but the officers felt with the change in officers it would be wise to establish an earnest dialogue.

Both parties agreed on many items--notably that the Foundation's officers will present a MOU in writing to SJC. Once this is approved by SJC, the Foundation's officers will submit the MOU to the Board for ratification.

Annual Dues

Annual membership dues for the Foundation are only \$25/year, which supports the publication and mailing of this newsletter, website, and on-going cemetery database. There is much more that could be done with more contributions. Your officers have many ideas like renovating the chapel at the cemetery and other exciting projects.

There are many memorial and honoring opportunities to fund stained glass windows, fountains, art, and a HVAC system.

St. John's is landmark cemetery in Pensacola. You can ensure that the momentum begun by Jack and Ted continues. Please prayerfully consider making more than just a regular membership contribution.

Picnic

For this year's commemoration event, the Foundation has scheduled a pot-luck picnic at the cemetery on Sunday, November 7th after church at 12:00 noon.

Tents will be erected near the chapel. Besides utensils, napkins, and cups, the Foundation will provide the meat--fried chicken and ham--and drinks. All attendees are asked to bring a casserole, vegetable, salad, or dessert to complete the pot-luck affair.

The event will be a great way to meet the new officers, make new friends, and celebrate the community we have for St. John's.

Please kindly RSVP to Lynn Lewis at 438-0220 or lynnandbuddy@cox.net by November 3 if you plan to attend this event so a head count can be obtained for ordering the main dishes.

Recent Burials

Herman Bray of SJC records recent burials, as follows:

Michael Douglas Vickery

James K. Vancil

Willie C. Nellums

Henry Jordan, Jr.

Steve Stevens

Mary Pace Townsley

Rebecca Blondell Rood

Sarah E. Mabbire

Lewis Wiese

Mary Leonard Pace

Elmer Adrian Summerlin

Helen Testman Suarez

Betty Maria Biebijhauser Mize

Dorothy Copts

Ellen Engstrom Threadgill

Ina Margaret Lynn



President's Message

President, Rick Fountain, addresses his first letter to the membership.

St. Johns' Cemetery is more than a final resting place. It is an important part of Pensacola's rich history. Already local historians have added to our collective knowledge by exploring the lives of the famous and not so famous who are interred there. But their efforts are just the beginning. Literally hundreds of untold stories are waiting to be explored. That is just one of the reasons Ted Nickinson and Jack Fleming started the Friends of St. Johns' Cemetery several years ago.

Ted and Jack have been true champions for St. Johns. Whatever the need the two have worked tirelessly to preserve, restore and improve the Cemetery. No job has been too menial nor has any dream seemed unattainable. Sadly, Ted and Jack decided recently that even though their commitment to St. Johns was unwavering, they wished to relinquish their leadership roles. They are irreplaceable and following in their shoes is daunting at best. However, at their request, and upon election by the Board of Directors a new group of officers have assumed leadership. The new officers have pledged to honor the goals and objectives they espoused. In addition, they hope new plans will make St. Johns a destination for historians and a venue for those who want to enjoy Pensacola and its past and present.

I have the honor of serving as President. Even though I have no illusions of replacing either Ted or Jack, my fellow officers are talented and capable folks who desire to move the Cemetery forward. Serving as Vice President is

Wesley Odom. A talented writer and historian, Wesley brings a wealth of skills and a keen sense of what is possible at St. Johns. Lynn Fulghum Lewis, whose grandfather helped build this town, is our Secretary-Treasurer. Ever diligent, she lends excellent skills to our organization. Finally, Wayne Stephenson, CPA, has graciously agreed to assist with our financial record keeping and is a savior in all matters requiring accounting expertise. We are excited about the opportunity to work with each of you for the benefit of St. Johns.

Finally, I know everyone joins with Wes, Lynn, Wayne and me in saying Thank You to Ted and Jack for their tireless efforts on behalf of St. Johns. We pledge to carry on in their honor.

Rick Fountain

Current Board Members

Board members are elected annually. For more information about the terms, please contact one of the officers.

Vic Bokas

Herman Bray

Richard Brosnamah

Randall Broxton

JoAnn Doman

Rodger Doyle

Charles Green

Rick Johnson

Gordon MacKenzie

Thomas Pace

Bobby Riggs

Dwight Watson

Guy Yaste, III

Website

While there have been many upgrades to the website (www.stjohnshistoriccemetery.org), there are plans to continue this project.

Many thanks to Duncan McDavid who recently retired as webmaster. The current officers are discussing ways to improve the site. If you have any comments, please contact Wesley Odom at wodom@armadaadvisors.com or 497-6167 wk.

Tour of St. John's

If you have not enjoyed a tour with Professor Randall Broxton, you should. He is one of the area's true historians.

Professor Randall Broxton is offering his annual tour of St. John's Cemetery on Saturday, November 6, from 10 am -12 pm. He does this under the auspices of the Jerod Sparks Historical Society of Pensacola State College (formerly PJC).

His tours are always most informative and entertaining.

There is no charge for this tour. Simply arrive at the cemetery at the gatehouse. Bathroom facilities will be available at the site, if needed.

Friends of St. John's Historic
Cemetery Foundation
P.O. Box 30245
Pensacola, FL 32503-0245

Non Profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Pensacola, FL
Permit 449

Celebrate with the Saints!

SUNDAY

November 7, 2010

12:00 - 2:00 pm

Pot-luck lunch at St. John's

*Bring your favorite side dish; the Friends will supply the
fried chicken and ham.*

RSVP to Lynn at 438-0220 or
lynnandbuddy@cox.net