

Ivy Hill Cemetery more than it is today, so that its future is assured for the long tomorrow.

A Brief History, by Clark Edwards:

Ivy Hill Cemetery is located on King Street about a mile west of the center of Alexandria. The cemetery was chartered in 1856 after a bequest of three acres in the settlement of the Hugh Smith estate. Dedication services were held on June 19, 1856 and attracted a large attendance. The nonprofit, nondenominational, nonsectarian corporation now has 24 acres of beautifully sloping land covered with shady trees and divided by a murmuring brook.

Inside the entrance to the cemetery is a circle containing a tall stone obelisk and a fountain with a fire hose nozzle. This, memorial was originally dedicated to seven firemen killed in a tragic fire in Alexandria. Near midnight on Friday, November 16, 1855, the fire alarm was raised for a fire at J. T. Dowell's china store in a three story building on the north side of King Street. Contemporary accounts attribute the fire to arson. After battling the fire for almost four hours, and saving the adjacent buildings, the citizen firefighters were inside Dowell's store in a desperate attempt to save the building. The west brick wall collapsed crushing seven of the firefighters: James Keene of the Friendship Fire Company; George Plain, Robert J. Taylor, John A. Roach, Jr., Carson Green and G. David Appich of the Star Fire Company, and William L. Evans who was not a member of any fire company. The fountain was refurbished and was rededicated October 12, 2002, to memorialize the lives of 343 fire and emergency personnel lost in the collapse of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Ivy Hill has long served the interests of, and has been helped by, Alexandria

families. Interments date as early as 1811, including burials on the original estate. At the time of the chartering of Ivy Hill, many of Alexandria's cemeteries had fallen into a state of neglect. This and the recognition that various family and church plots were in the path of subsequent city growth, led to re-interments from other burial sites.

From the early days it was common for families to gather under the trees on a Sunday afternoon, while the adults caught up on news and gossip and the children played among the stones. Ivy Hill continues to be a pleasant place to walk among the azaleas, dogwood, and cherry blossoms, mark the various species of birds while listening to their song, and contemplate earlier days in Alexandria while reading inscriptions on the stones.

During the depression in the 1930s, the cemetery fell into a precarious financial position. Two families came to the rescue, those of Arthur Herbert and of Arthur H. Bryant. The two men allowed no record to be kept of what they and their families did to save Ivy Hill, but subsequent generations benefit from their dedication.

Early records for the cemetery are scant; in the beginning only the purchaser of each lot was recorded. Lot owners were responsible for their own burials and for tombstones. In 1978 and 1979 two friends of Ivy Hill spearheaded a listing of information on the various stones. Virginia Irene Sullivan Bruch and Josephine Elizabeth Sullivan recorded and rechecked the data during the showers of spring, the heat of summer, the cool of fall, and the chill of winter. The results of their labors were published in a book "Beneath the Oaks of Ivy Hill" in 1982. Since the mid 1990s careful and accurate records have been kept of interments. However, there remains a need for additional volunteers to fill the gaps and verify older records.

Annual Memorial Service

Friday, October 12th, 2007, 11:00am

Ivy Hill Cemetery Company of Alexandria this year proudly hosts its 151st anniversary and the Alexandria Fire Department's Annual Memorial Service. This year marks the 151st anniversary of Ivy Hill Cemetery Company of Alexandria. We have chosen to observe this anniversary in conjunction with the Alexandria Fire Department's Annual Memorial Service.

When the cemetery was opened and dedicated in 1856, so too, was the obelisk monument dedicated to seven firemen who lost their lives in an 1855 fire. It is very fitting to observe the relationship that began 151 years ago between the Fire Department and Ivy Hill Cemetery at what amounts to a double 151st anniversary. We gather together during fire prevention week to recognize our fire fighters, EMS and department personnel that keep us safe and to honor those that have been lost in doing so.

Tom Bowling
President - Ivy Hill Cemetery

A Very Special Thanks To:

Twig Murray
Twig Murray Creative
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Alexandria, VA 22314

for helping with the graphics of this newsletter.

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If you would be interested in knowing about upcoming events, please contact us at:

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