

HISTORIC HENDERSONVILLE

A Newsletter Published by the
HENDERSONVILLE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
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NEW MAIN STREET LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Hendersonville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is pleased with the creation of the City's first commercial local historic district, the Main Street Historic District. Local designation is a means by which the City, for the purpose of preserving historic districts and landmarks, can regulate the changes a property owner makes to the exterior facades of buildings and site landscapes. The City now has three locally designated historic overlay districts – Druid Hills and Hyman Heights – both residential and Main Street.

The process to designate Main Street as a local overlay district dates back to 2001. Initiated by the HPC, the road leading to this district included investigation of the district through a consultant's research, review by the State Department of Cultural Resources, public information meetings, Planning Board's recommendation and, ultimately, City Council's approval. After reviewing the report, the State Historic Preservation Office expressed support of the proposed district citing it as "... one of the most intact early twentieth century main streets in western North Carolina."

Main Street has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1988. This designation, however, does not provide protection. Listing of a property on the National Register is more of an honor than anything else. The main benefit of having one's property listed on the National Register is that the property owner is eligible to receive tax incentive credits (income producing property, 20% federal and 20% state; non-income producing, 30% state) for qualified rehabilitation projects.

The local designation of a historic district includes a new zoning overlay district. For properties included, any new construction or alterations to the exterior of existing buildings would require a certificate of appropriateness (COA) from the HPC. The HPC classifies projects into three categories: normal maintenance which is allowed without a COA, minor works which can be approved by the HPC staff, and major works approved by the full HPC.

To go along with the new district, design guidelines haven been put in place as a basis to make decisions on applications for certificates of appropriateness. Over the past year, a committee has been meeting to formulate these guidelines. The committee included HPC members, a Downtown Hendersonville Incorporated representative, Main Street property owners, and design professionals. The design guidelines address site features such as signage and awnings, parking, lighting, changes to the building exterior such as storefronts, side and rear facades, windows and doors, and use of materials. For additions and new construction the design guidelines address setbacks, scale, materials, decks, and terraces. Demolition and relocation are also addressed.

By establishing this district, the City is responding to concerns that downtown Hendersonville may lose its charm and architectural history. Measures such as local designation, of this and other districts, allows the property owner and City to work together to protect new work necessary for viable businesses to operate downtown. In one respect, it's a historic step to protect our historic town.



The shaded area on the map above shows the Main Street Historic District.

OAKDALE CEMETERY

As we zip up and down Sixth Avenue West, the residential and commercial structures suddenly give way to the pastoral hills that are Oakdale Cemetery. Few take the time to look at, much less pull in and stroll the quiet paths and read the tombstones that introduce you to some of Hendersonville's earliest residents and founding families.

Oakdale Cemetery began in November 1883 when Hendersonville's commissioners appointed a committee to "select a suitable place" for a municipal cemetery. Prior to that, most churches in town had their own graveyards. By December 1885 the City had purchased 5½ acres for the cemetery from T.K. Davis for \$250 and enacted a law prohibiting private burials within town limits. At the time the property was described as a "lot on a hill on Shaws Creek Street, one mile from the court house" and outside of the town's limits. Shaw's Creek Street/Road was later renamed Sixth Avenue West. It is generally accepted that Laura Vance Nelson was the first person to be buried in Oakdale in 1886 in the northern corner near Valley Street.

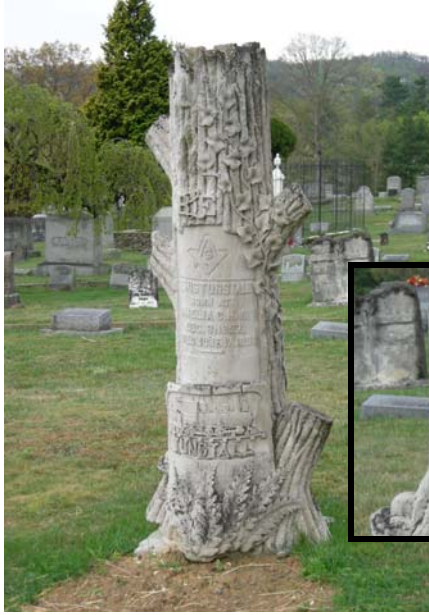
As was the custom at the time the cemetery was divided, with the north side of Sixth Avenue West designated as the burial ground for black citizens and the portion south of Sixth Avenue West the burial ground for white citizens. In 1938 the cemetery deeded approximately two-thirds of an acre, at its southeastern corner, to members of Agudas Israel Synagogue which established a cemetery there for the local Jewish community.



The only non-grave or maintenance structure in the cemetery is the pavilion that appears to date from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Its wide openings suggest that it may have served a function similar to that of a lych gate or a graveshelter - a decorative house-form structure that provided temporary shelter from the rain to the coffin and mourners and protection during subsequent cemetery visits.

The most famous marker in Oakdale is the large marble angel that stands over the grave of Margaret E. Johnson (1832-1905). According to the writings of local historian Sadie Smathers Patton, the angel was placed there by William O. Wolfe of Asheville, the father of novelist Thomas Wolfe. Patton speculates that the Oakdale angel was the one that lent its name to the novelist's opus *Look Homeward, Angel*. However, other regional cemeteries also claim this honor with their angel markers. In 1975 a fan of Wolfe accidentally knocked Oakdale's angel from its pedestal, leading the cemetery to enclose it and two other Johnson family markers within a six-foot-tall iron picket fence.





Another interesting marker in Oakdale is the headstone carved from native granite in the shape of a tree trunk. Lewis Tunstall was a railroad engineer on a train bringing another train down the Saluda Grade. The brakes on the second train failed and, with no safety switches on the Grade at that time, caused Tunstall's engine to jump the tracks and crash into a chestnut oak tree, where he was killed instantly. Carved on the unusual grave marker are an engine, the engine number, 391, and a railroad cross-tie. Following this wreck, safety switches were installed on the Saluda Grade.



The most famous story of persons buried in Oakdale Cemetery is the one of Confederate Captain Walter Bryson and the slave that served him in war, George Mills. Bryson grew up in Hendersonville on the family homeplace in the vicinity of Immaculata Catholic School. Born just a few months apart, Walter and George grew up together so when Walter was promoted to Captain in the Confederate Army, George was sent to attend the young captain. When Walter was killed at the Battle of Sharpsburg, George Mills kept his promise to the family to bring the son back to his family. George spent nearly a year bringing the wrought iron casket of Walter Bryson, first by train to Greenville, Tennessee then over the mountains by horse and wagon, home to Hendersonville. In 1863, George Mills stood by to watch the Captain buried in the graveyard of First Methodist Church. To add further interest to the story, Mills watched when the casket was exhumed, still in good condition, and moved to Oakdale Cemetery because of church expansion in 1923. George Mills continued to fight for the Confederacy after the captain's death and attended many Civil War Veterans' reunions on the local and national level. He lived to be 83.



GRAVEYARD SYMBOLS

The earliest graves in Oakdale date to the Victorian era, a time in which death and mourning were taken very seriously. Many graves of that period not only told you whom was buried there but what the person may have been like in life. Here are just a few of the symbols you may find.

Anchor - Grave of a seafarer or a symbol of hope
 Angel - Afterlife and heaven
 Broken column - Mourning
 Butterfly - Resurrection
 Clasped hands - Farewell and friendship
 Crosses - Symbols of Christianity
 Celtic Cross - Immortality
 Crown - Reward in heaven or a noble person
 Dove - Holy Spirit or peace
 Flowers - Love, beauty, brevity of life
 Heart - Love
 Hourglass - Inevitability of death



Ivy - Remembrance or friendship
 Lamb - Purity, innocence; used for a child
 Lily - Purity
 Peony - Honor, love, or affection
 Pansy - Eternal sleep
 Praying hands - Piety
 Scythe - Life cut short
 Sheaves of wheat - Abundant life or final harvest
 Tree trunk with broken branches - Life cut short
 Urn - Death and mourning
 Violets - Humility

WANTED: STORIES ABOUT HENDERSONVILLE

We hope you have had a chance to check out the HPC website at www.hendersonvillehpc.org. One feature of the site is the National Register write up on each home and building within all historic districts. Since this data is very limited, we hope to continue adding information on these homes/buildings. So, if you have any pictures, information or stories you would like to add to the website, please send it to HPC, PO Box 1670, Hendersonville, NC 28793, call 697-3088 or e-mail it to us at info@hendersonvillehpc.org.

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Hendersonville Historic Preservation Commission

The historical heritage of the city of Hendersonville is a treasured asset enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. The Mayor and Council recognize the role that historic properties play in that heritage, and believe that the conservation of historic properties stabilizes and increases property values and strengthens the overall economy of the City.

Hendersonville Historic Preservation Commission consists of nine members appointed by City Council to serve the public as a steward for historic properties and as a facilitator to people fortunate enough to own such properties.

For these reasons, they have adopted an Historic Preservation Ordinance with the following purposes:

- To safeguard the City's heritage by preserving any property therein that embodies important elements of its culture, history, architectural history or prehistory.

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 "The City of Four Seasons"
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