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## OCCC Calendar

**Saturday, Feb. 7 ~ 10 am - 4pm**

**Museum Day**

**Saturday, March 7 ~ 10 am**

**History Tour**

*Tour Guide: TBA*

**Saturday, March 21 ~ 10 am**

**Early Roses in Bloom**

*Tour Guide: Jennifer Holden*

**Saturday, April 4 ~ 10 am**

**History Tour**

*Tour Guide: TBA*

**Sat., April 18 ~ 9:30 am - 3 pm**

**Open Garden Day**

**Garden Tours & Rose Sales**

**Saturday, May 2 ~ 10 am**

**History Tour**

*Tour Guide: TBA*

**Monday, May 4 ~ 6:30 pm**

**Deadheading at Dusk**

*Tour Guide: Anita Clevenger*

**Saturday, May 16 ~ 10 am**

**What's Blooming**

**in the Cemetery**

*Tour Guide: TBA*

**Monday, May 25 ~ 10 am**

**Memorial Day Program**

**Monday, June 1 ~ 6:30 pm**

**Deadheading at Dusk**

*Tour Guide: Anita Clevenger*

**Saturday, June 6 ~ 10 am**

**History Tour**

*Tour Guide: TBA*

Information: 916-448-0811

## St. Nicholas Hotel Fire Albert Fehr, Sr. - 1844-1913 (B119-28)

*By John Bettencourt*

*This story about the life of a Sacramento Historic City Cemetery resident was written and presented on tours by the late John Bettencourt. Mr. Bettencourt was a founding member of the Old City Cemetery Committee.*

Young Albert Fehr, Jr., a fireman of Engine Co. No. 1, was standing amidst the ruins of the once gracious and beautiful St. Nicholas Hotel, spraying water on the still smoldering debris, all that was left of the four story wood structure.

"I'm glad this fire occurred in the daytime," he was overheard remarking to one of the other firemen. "For my father lived here, and had it been at night he might have been asleep and been burned."

Unbeknownst to the young fireman, he was standing upon the blackened debris under which the charred remains of his father would later be discovered.

The fire was attributed to an open furnace room door. A sudden gust of wind had apparently blew the oil flame that ignited the oil tank. The subsequent explosion quickly enveloped the old wooden structure in flames.

It was 4 a.m., the morning of February 5, 1913. Albert Fehr, Sr. and his youngest son, Walter, were awakened by the crackling sound of the fire as it engulfed the floor below them. They could hear the screams of those trapped by the flames. Smoke was everywhere. Rushing out of their room, they found that the stairway was already afire, a wall of flame sealing off their escape route. The two made their way back to the room. Young Walter Fehr threw open the window and urged his father to jump. The old man hesitated. Turning to his youngest son, he ordered him to go first — that he would be right behind him. The boy eased himself out of the window and, with flames from the floor virtually licking at his feet, he let go and fell to the ground three stories blow.

His father, Albert Fehr, Sr. did not jump. Frozen with fear, the old man stood looking out of the window as the fire consumed him.

The antiquated wooden structure burned rapidly. Before the responding fire companies could get a handle on the fire, it was gone. Long before five

# President's Message

By Lynda Walls

Change is inevitable...

The Old City Cemetery Committee Board of Directors experienced many changes this year. The saddest of all was the passing of Mory Holmes. Mory was a founding member of the Old City Cemetery Committee. He was the first Treasurer for the OCCC and served on the Board of Directors since the beginning. Mory's vast knowledge of the cemetery and engaging personality are sorely missed.

Three Directors have retired from the Board - Lonnie Ratzlaff, who also served as our Treasurer, Jane Howell and Suzanne Sanchez. Lonnie, Jane and Suzanne have been valued members of the Board and we thank them for their years of service. I am happy to report that all three continue to volunteer at the cemetery in various capacities.

We're fortunate to have OCCC Director Steve Bartel as our new Treasurer. Steve is the Senior Vice President of East Lawn Memorial Park and also a CPA. Thank you, Steve, for accepting the office of Treasurer, contributing your abilities and sharing with us your sense of humor.

We also welcome four new Directors to the Board - Anita Clevenger, Jewel Riley, Rick Roberts and Jeanne Baldwin.

Anita is the manager of the Historic Rose Garden. You will remember Anita from her profile in the last Epitaph. Jewel is an avid Rose Garden volunteer and contributes fresh ideas and insight. Many of you know Rick Roberts. He is returning to the Board after a long illness and brings a vast amount of knowledge and experience. Jeanne is an Archives volunteer with excellent research skills and has served on many nonprofit boards of directors. I'm very excited to welcome all four of our new Directors and look forward to serving this great cause with all of you!

With all these changes, my thoughts turn from what has been to what will be...

I recently found myself in a conversation about the City Cemetery and the role the Old City Cemetery Committee plays. At first I gave the often repeated answer that paraphrases our mission statement: 'to preserve, protect and beautify...' Fortunately, my

partner in this conversation wanted to know more and coaxed a more descriptive answer from me. Somewhere in the questions and answers, a visual image began to formulate and I was finally able to articulate a concept that had previously eluded a cohesive statement. I'd like to share with you the thoughts that remain with me:

The OCCC is much more than a charitable organization which supports the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery. The OCCC members and volunteers are the *stewards* of an important, beautiful and unique historic site. We have all taken on a role that requires us to keep one foot in the past and one foot in the future. What a fascinating posture! The OCCC strives to protect and preserve the final resting place and the memory of thousands of early Californians - not just for the sake of preserving this historic place, but in the hope that future generations may learn from who and what has come before us.

My inspiration and motivation are renewed by the visual image of our many volunteers not only reaching backward to the generations of the past, but also reaching forward to the generations yet to come. I can imagine that historic time line we all had to memorize as school children and I see the OCCC volunteers defying the linear constraints. We are among the few who have transcended ordinary thought processes, set aside the notion that history is about the past and have embraced the concept that history is for the future.

So as you contribute your time and energy to this wonderful place called the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery, take pride in the fact that you are contributing to the future. Know that what you do today will influence tomorrow. *We are the stewards of the Sacramento City Cemetery and what we do matters!*

Lynda Walls



# Volunteer News

By Sharon Patrician, Volunteer Coordinator

## Volunteer Hours

Please call or e-mail me at 916 455 8166 or patrician@midtown.net with your *monthly* volunteer hours.

## Weekly City Meetings

You are all welcome to come to the City staff and adopt volunteer meetings, held the first and third Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. at the 10th Street gate office. Call Sharon at 916-455-8166 if you have any questions or concerns.

## In-Service Training

I am thinking of reinstating in-service training for Adopt A Plot volunteers and would like your input and/or ideas. In the past, we have invited speakers during the spring and summer to discuss what's new in the gardening realm. Meetings are generally 2 or 3 hours on a Saturday morning near Hamilton Square. Please let me know if this sounds like something which you would attend and what you would like to learn. Call me at the number above or e-mail me at patrician@midtown.net. Thanks.

## Plant Donations

Our plant donations have been hit and miss this spring and summer; perhaps fall will be better. Keep looking for plants near the brick building especially on Fridays when Victor can pick up from the nursery.

## Scouts Repair Benches

Eagle Scout, Leeseng Thao, of Troop 268 located in South Sacramento, contacted Sharon Patrician about a possible scout project recently. Since scouts used to clean headstones for Eagle badges, he hoped he could do such a task. However, the cemetery is now under preservation guidelines which recommend old stones not be touched other than to stabilize.

So, Sharon suggested he and his friends might want to replace the wooden slats in the two benches in the plaza area. Lee organized the donation of wood from Home Depot, got spray paint for the iron standards and arranged to be there on a Saturday afternoon with friends and family. After they completed the project, Lee's mother had prepared Hmong goodies and invited Sharon to participate.

Lee is a senior this year at John F. Kennedy and plans to go to UC Merced majoring in pre-med. He wants to give back to his "...family, community and the world...and being a doctor I will have the chance to give others a second chance in life".

The cemetery and the Old City Cemetery Committee thanks Lee, his sponsor (the South Sacramento Hmong LDS) and his family and friends for improving the benches at the Historic City Cemetery.

## Meet the Volunteers

We are continuing our series on volunteers in the Cemetery. Meet Sabrina and Sharon. These women manage the two of the three major gardens in the cemetery: The Native Plant Demonstration Garden and the Hamilton Square Perennial Garden.



### Sabrina Okamura-Johnson

Sabrina is currently working as an Associate Environmental Analyst for the Sacramento County Department of Environmental Review and Assessment. Her experience lends her an appreciation of the cemetery environment and the need to practice organic gardening to the greatest extent possible.

When Sabrina, her husband and their old English Sheep dog, Alfie, lived in Land Park, they walked through the cemetery in the early 90's and wondered at its rundown condition. After she joined the Sacramento Valley Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) due to her interest in native plant botany, she learned about the Native Plant Demonstration Garden at the cemetery.

Continued on page 5

# Meet the Volunteers - continued from page 4

This garden, conceived and planted in 1996 by Eva Butler, chapter President of the CNPS at the time, needed volunteer help to thrive. Sabrina became involved in '96 and has continued to provide educational tours of the area, create brochures, label plants and help with maintenance.

Sabrina is a member in good standing of the Old City Cemetery Committee (OCCC), the CNPS and serves on the Board of Directors for the OCCC.

Sabrina feels the most gratifying aspect of her volunteer efforts at the cemetery is "seeing all the various native plants in bloom throughout the year". She is also thrilled at the commitment and quality of the volunteers at the cemetery. She says: "Sacramento's real 'gold' is its citizen volunteers. They are awesome in so many different ways; you just have to get out and get involved to really understand...".

When asked what she would like to see in the future of the cemetery, she felt the City should have a trained horticulturist to help the volunteers acquire more gardening skills, enforce no-pesticide regulations and help decide on appropriate plants for our climate and soil.

For more information about the CNPS Demonstration garden, see [www.cnps@cnps.org](http://www.cnps@cnps.org).



## Sharon Patrician

When Sharon came to the cemetery in 1994 and adopted four plots, little did she know how involved she would become in cemetery management and politics. Her original goal was to plant "just a few perennials and observe their progress." From those original four plots, Sharon now manages

over an acre of garden known as Hamilton Square.

Sharon also joined the Board of Directors about 1996 and became the OCCC Volunteer Coordinator in 1998. She is the Recording Secretary for the OCCC Board, writes for the newsletter *The Epitaph*, has chaired fund-raising events, helps with the Lantern Tours and is currently working on an information

plaque program for the cemetery. She also provided input to the Master Plan with an inventory of all trees and large shrubs in the cemetery.

In 1997, John Bettencourt asked Sharon if she would plant what is known as Hamilton Square, the last resting place of Stephen Hamilton, youngest son of Alexander Hamilton. Although still working full-time as an information systems analyst, Sharon eagerly took on the project and added hundreds of plants to the existing roses obtained by Barbara Oliva.

After retirement in 2002, Sharon increased her efforts on behalf of the Hamilton Square Garden. She designed and wrote a brochure about the garden, provides updates to the Perennial Plant Club who has "adopted" Hamilton Square as its public project, and seeks donations of plants to enhance the overall beauty of the garden. She also gives public and private tours of Hamilton and its large collection of perennials.

In 2006, Dr. Gordon Frankie, a professor of entomology at the University of California, Berkeley, sought out Hamilton Square as a sample site to identify the native bee population in Sacramento. To his amazement, the garden fairly leaps with over 85 species of native bee. Since the cemetery is an urban site, Dr. Frankie is hopeful such gardens help the native bee population survive the deprecations of land development. His project is just a part of the overall contribution of the cemetery's beautification and its usefulness to the City of Sacramento.

Sharon especially likes the administrative part of her volunteer work. She describes herself as someone who works behind the scene to ensure visitors and guests have a pleasant experience while in the cemetery.

She believes the future for the cemetery lies in its designation as a federal historic site and continued efforts to educate and entertain the public on the history of the cemetery's residents. She also wants the gardens to thrive without overtaking the historic headstones and monuments.

For more information about the Hamilton Square Garden, see [www.SacramentoPerennialPlantClub.org](http://www.SacramentoPerennialPlantClub.org)

# **Albert Fehr, Sr. St. Nicholas Hotel Fire**

continued from page 1

o'clock, the desperate cries that had been coming from the burning mass ceased. Those who heard the doomed cry out would never forget. The piercing echoes of their death screams would remain forever embedded in their memory.

The body of Albert Fehr, Sr. was recovered first. It was found deep beneath a pile of charred debris shortly before noon that day. It was perhaps a miracle that only four residents of the St. Nicholas Hotel perished in the flames that fateful morning.

Young Walter Fehr sustained serious back injuries from his leap for life, but survived. He was unable to attend his father's funeral. Albert Fehr was laid to rest by his namesake – his eldest son.... bringing to its conclusion another story from tear stained pages of Sacramento history.

# **Rose Garden Receives Award**

*By Anita Clevenger,  
Historic Rose Garden Manager*

Mayor Heather Fargo selected the Historic Rose Garden to receive the Historic Preservation Award of Merit. A total of six projects were honored at the May 20, 2008 City Council meeting. Each Council member could recognize one preservation project in his or her district, while the mayor was free to nominate a project from anywhere in the city. This award was given by The Capital City Preservation Trust "for saving historic rose bushes," and includes a check for \$500. Barbara Oliva and Anita Clevenger accepted the award on the Historic Rose Garden's behalf.



## **Old City Cemetery Board of Directors**

President

**Lynda Walls**

Vice President

**Connie Bettencourt**

Treasure

**Steve Bartel**

Secretary

**Sharon Patrician**

Directors

**Jeanne Baldwin**

**Anita Clevenger**

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**Dr. Bob Perriere**

**Barbara Oliva**

**Caludia Richardson**

**Jewel Riley**

**Rick Roberts**

**Debbie Rogenmoser**

# Lantern Tours 2008



Check out all the Lantern Tour photos on our web site at [www.OldCityCemetery.com](http://www.OldCityCemetery.com)!





**Old City Cemetery Committee, Inc.**  
 1000 Broadway, Sacramento, CA 95818  
 916-448-0811 ♦ www.OldCityCemetery.com

If you're receiving this newsletter, you're important to the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery!  
*Are you a member of the Old City Cemetery Committee?*

The Old City Cemetery Committee, Inc. is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit association, whose purpose is to maintain and preserve the beauty and integrity of the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery. Membership is only \$20 per individual, \$30 for families and \$50 for businesses. Join today!

**Membership Application**

Annual Dues (Membership runs January 1 through December 31):

- Individual: \$20.00
- Family: \$30.00 (One household, One voting member)
- Business: \$50.00 (One voting member per business)
- Donation: Amount & Designation: \_\_\_\_\_
- Patron: \$200 - \$299
- Sponsor: \$300 - \$599
- Silver Sponsor: \$600 - \$999
- Gold Sponsor: \$1000+

Name (include all names if Family Membership) \_\_\_\_\_

Voting Member's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (evening): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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