



WALKING TOURS OF

HISTORIC NORCROSS

CEMETERY



www.NorcrossGa.net

HISTORY OF THE NORCROSS CITY CEMETERY

Local landowner Milton C. Lively donated the land in the central part of today's cemetery for a burial ground around the time the city was established in 1870, and the road connecting it to the town became known as Cemetery Street.

At one time there were two streets leading from town to the cemetery, known as North Cemetery Street and South Cemetery Street. However this changed over time. When the Buford Highway was built in the 1930s and expanded in the following years, the streets running to the cemetery were modified so that South Cemetery Street stopped at the Buford Highway. It was renamed Carlyle Street, after the eponymous family, many of whom lived in the town and then later were buried here. The portion of North Cemetery Street west of Buford Highway was renamed Holcomb Bridge Road circa 2012.

In 1916 the city purchased an additional nine acres of the land surrounding the cemetery from M. C. Lively's descendants, and used part of that land to expand the cemetery to its current size.

The pavilion at the entrance to the cemetery was erected by the townspeople in 1922. The fence and gates were added in 2015 as part of a major renovation project undertaken by the Norcross Public Works Department.



TOM RAINEY STORY

In a newspaper interview after his retirement Tom Rainey told of a close call early in his career:

Before I was a conductor I was a brakeman on the Atlanta and Chattanooga line. In one place there was a narrow trestle high above a gorge. This trestle led directly into Pumpkin Vine Hill. We got across the gorge, all right, but in those days the cars weren't fastened together as well as they are now. Halfway up the hill the train broke in two. The engine kept going. The last half of the train started rolling back down the hill but didn't get far. We pulled the brakes on, and I ran back down the trestle to flag the next train.

I was out in the middle of the trestle when I glanced up at Pumpkin Vine Hill. The brakes on the cars had slipped, and the whole back end of the train was rolling down the hill toward me, lickety-split.

It wouldn't have been so bad if there had been any place for me to run. I took a look down and saw the gorge. Then I took a look up and saw the cars tearing down the hill. The train was fast, but I was faster. I climbed out on one of the ties and let myself down till I was hanging in the middle of the trestle, by my hands. The cars rushed past me, and I climbed up again mopping my forehead. I felt like I'd just lost 20 pounds in less than a minute.

A. A. JOHNSON STORY

John Adams, writing in the book Norcross by Adams and Crapo, told a story that he recalled from his youth regarding a late-night incident at Johnson's Store. We quote Adams' account here:

Anyone living in Norcross during this time can recall some unusual incidents relating to Johnson's Store. The one incident I remember is the great break in and robbery of the store in the mid-30's. A group of robbers backed a truck up to the front of the store at night and apparently waited for a train to come through town. While the train was passing with the attendant noise, the burglars knocked the plate glass window out of the front of the store, located and stole all the clothing and dry goods from the store, along with other items they selected. The burglars were never apprehended. This was during a time when there was only one man on the police force, Chief Homer Green. He had retired to his home at this late hour. With no police to detect the robbers they were able to load the truck and escape without being caught. After the robbery was discovered on the following morning several people remembered driving through town and seeing the truck, but they had no suspicion because they thought someone was making a late delivery to the store.

ROY CARLYLE

Roy was the son of a local tannery worker, he played baseball for the New York Yankees and still holds the record for the longest measured home run in professional baseball history, 618 feet. He ran the Norcross hardware store after his playing days were over, and it became a gathering place for retired baseball players.

EDWARD BUCHANAN

He became an expert telegraph operator while growing up in Norcross, and parlayed these skills into millionaire status as a stockbroker in New York City in 1907. The following year his wealth collapsed due to a stock trading scheme, and he died in poverty soon afterwards. He donated funds to build the original library building in Norcross when he was at the height of his wealth; three years later his headstone was donated by his Norcross Methodist Sunday School class.

T. T. TWITTY

Orphaned after the Civil War, he educated himself and became a well-known Baptist preacher, serving a number of churches in Northeast Georgia. Rev. Twitty collapsed and died at the end of a sermon during a “protracted meeting” that he led near Gainesville when he was 60 years old.

FLOY AND FRANK ROBERTSON

Mrs. Robertson, a long-time Southern Bell employee, ran the local manually-operated telephone switchboard, which was located in her family’s home, for over 30 years. Her husband Frank was a well-regarded baseball pitcher during his youth, later serving in the US Army during World War I and as town mayor.

RUTH DAVENPORT

She moved to Norcross to become a teacher after attending college in Milledgeville. She married local boy “Cree” Davenport and taught sixth grade in the local schools for many years. She was a member of the Norcross Woman’s Club for 59 years.

W. A. THRASHER

William Augustus Thrasher, nephew of town founder John Thrasher, was a railroad employee who died in the 1880s.

WYATT “MIKE” DAVENPORT

Mike was injured in 1921 when he collided with another player while trying to catch a pop-up fly ball during a Georgia Military College baseball game. He died a few days later due to his injuries.

ABRAHAM A. AND MARY LOUDOVIA JOHNSON

The Johnsons moved to Norcross in 1885 where he established a family-run retail store that operated downtown for over 100 years. He was also a successful farmer, and together they raised eleven children.

WILLIAM DALY BURTCHAEI

Burtchael was an Irish emigrant who came to America in the 1850s. He fought for the South during the Civil War and was held as a prisoner of war by the Union forces on an island in Lake Erie for a lengthy period. After walking back to the south when the war ended he became a successful railroad construction engineer, and lived near Norcross for many years.

ESTELLE “STELLA” REYNOLDS

Long-time community leader who led the effort to build the pavilion at the entrance to this cemetery.



ARCH LIETCH

Dr. Lietch was the town pharmacist for 40 years, operating a shop that featured marble-topped tables, hand-stirred milkshakes and a soda fountain.

FRANK MARSHALL

Marshall was the conductor of the Crescent Limited passenger train on its run from Washington DC to New Orleans from its start in 1925. He worked for the Southern Railway and its predecessors for 58 years, and survived two head-on collisions during his time on the railroad.

TOM ED AND LALA SUMMEROUR

Tom Ed, raised in the area, spent much of his youth farming in Texas. He married Lala Simpson after he returned to Georgia, and became known for civic improvement and beautification projects that he supported in Norcross. Lala Summerour donated land for the building of schools in the area; the middle school that can be seen from the cemetery is named for their family.

FRANK AND OLLIE SIMPSON

Both were sons of Dr. O. O. Simpson, local politician and businessman. Frank served as mayor of Norcross and as Solicitor (D. A.) of the state court in this part of Georgia. Ollie worked for the state government and was a leading supporter in Norcross of the Talmadge faction of the state Democratic Party, a powerful political machine in the state in the mid-20th century.

J. R. GARNER

The Garner family moved to Norcross from nearby Luxomini in 1907, and ran local retail stores over three generations. Son Carl Garner served in the US Marines during World War I; his brother "At" Garner was in the first group of men drafted for service from Gwinnett County during that conflict.

NATHAN ARENDALL

Pioneer settler Nathan Arendall served on the Norcross City Council for several terms in the late 19th century.

WALTER SPARKS

Ran a camera shop in Norcross as a young man, and worked as a photo-journalist for The Atlanta Journal and other publications for many years. He was a close friend of Margaret Mitchell, author of Gone with the Wind.

TOM RAY

He was an executive with the Southern Oak Leather Company, a tannery and harness manufacturer in Norcross, for many years, and ran one of the first dairy operations in the area.

HOMER GREEN

Served as town marshal in the 1920s and 1930s, and became well-known for his creative ways of disposing of moonshine captured from bootleggers caught passing through the area during Prohibition days.

CARL WOOTTEN

He spent time following many pursuits, including stints as a soldier, musician, actor, jeweler and watch and gun repairman. He and other local musicians formed the Norcross Concert Band and he performed as a violinist on the Atlanta radio stations during the 1920s.

JACK CAIN

Dr. Cain grew up in Norcross, graduated from Emory Medical School, and was beloved for his service to the community over many years.

ROGER "DODGER" DELEON

Known as Dodger to all in the community, he lived in Norcross his entire life, served on the city council, built local businesses, organized the springtime car show in town for many years.

WESLEY RAY

Local resident who kept a diary that gives the reader a first-hand account of North Georgia farm life at the beginning of the 20th century

Graves on the right side as you enter the cemetery

WINN BORN

University of Georgia law school graduate, successful trial lawyer who served as mayor of Norcross and in the state legislature, died at a young age due to tuberculosis.

HENRY M. "DOC" LIVELY

Cotton broker and merchant who served as town mayor in 1905. He was shot to death in front of the local hardware store on Christmas Day 1915, the culmination of an argument that started earlier in the day with local butcher Bija Nuckolls (who is buried in the Wright Cemetery, across the street)

LOLA KEY

Served as town librarian for 17 years, and was instrumental in helping organize community support for construction of the town's first library building, which stands across from Thrasher Park. She taught Sunday School at the Methodist Church for 60 years.

CLARK JONES

A Civil War casualty in 1864 at the age of 10 when he was shot in his family's front yard in crossfire between Yankee and Confederate cavalry units, one mile from this location. His remains were buried near the home at that time, then moved here after the cemetery opened around 1870.

CLIFFORD JONES

Nephew of Clark Jones. Grew up in Norcross, and made such an impression on the local congressman of that time that he was appointed to West Point. He served in the US Army for 43 years, achieving rank of Colonel. After retirement he was President of the Bank of Norcross.

CAROLINE ADAMS

Family tradition is that she was married three times, with the first and third husbands dying of natural causes, and the second due to a shotgun in her hands. Her son John, buried here also, was the local blacksmith for many years.

PAUL SETTLE

Spent his youth in Norcross, attended University of Georgia and served as a lieutenant in the US Army during World War 1. He was wounded a few days before the armistice that ended the war on November 11, 1918, and died a few weeks later. His remains were returned to Norcross for burial in 1921.

R. O. MEDLOCK

A major landowner in the Norcross area in the early 20th century, he built the two story brick building that stands at the corner of Jones and Wingo Streets. He died when he accidentally fell four floors down an elevator shaft while on his way to his office in Atlanta.



OLIVER FORD

Ford worked as a fireman on a railroad locomotive crew on the “Piedmont AirLine Railroad”, which passes through Norcross. This monument, showing an ax blade, was erected in his memory by his parents after he died in train wreck near Lula, GA in 1889.

IVEY WINGO

Was a major league baseball catcher for the Cincinnati Reds and St. Louis Cardinals for 15 years. He was a member of the 1919 world champion Reds, victorious in the “Black Sox” World Series, so called due to accusations that players for the opposing Chicago White Sox, including “Shoeless Joe” Jackson, colluded with gamblers to throw games.

LOUETTE ROCHESTER

Built the prominent house that stands today at the corner of Park and North Peachtree Streets, and played the organ in the local Baptist church, which was across the street from her home at that time.



IDA AND W. J. WOOTTEN

Ida Wootten was a teacher of music and elocution in Norcross – she staged operettas in the town auditorium and was fondly remembered by generations of Norcross kids. Her headstone, erected in her memory by the community, was paid for through donations. Her father W. J. Wootten, buried here also, was a Baptist minister who fought for the Confederacy in the Civil War, and afterwards worked with the Freedmen’s Bureau to educate formerly-enslaved blacks.

FRANKLIN DODGEN

He was the Norcross town marshal for several years at the start of the 20th century, described as “a man without fear” in his obituary.

L. P. MURRAY

A South Carolina native who was a member of the Confederate forces that forced the surrender of Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor in April 1861, the event that started the four-year-long Civil War. Moving to Norcross after the war, he ran a mill and was a grocer.

SALLY MCELROY

During the 1920s she served as head of the Georgia Federation of Woman’s Clubs, and the Grand Matron of the Georgia Grand Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star. These were two of the most prominent social organizations for women in that era. The home she and her husband Eb built on South Peachtree is known today as the Carlyle House.

MARY ELIZABETH LANKFORD

She grew up on a farm a few miles from Norcross. During the fighting around Atlanta in the Civil War she drove family livestock into a nearby swamp to hide it from the invading army.

“CAPTAIN TOM” RAINY

He worked for the Southern Railway and its predecessors for over 50 years. As a conductor he courteously served famous riders such as Franklin Roosevelt and thousands of others over the years.



C. P. LIVELY

He was the son of Milton C. Lively, who donated the land for the central section of this cemetery. Known as “Pink”, he served in the Confederate cavalry during the Civil War and afterwards was a merchant and farmer for many years. (Note the misspelling of “cavalry” on the tombstone.)

N. F. COOLEGGE

Born in Vermont, he came to Norcross shortly after the town was founded and ran a high school for 20 years. He is said to have drawn the first map of the town.

NERONIA RODGERS

She and Flonnie Clement, buried nearby, ran a popular millenary shop in Norcross for many years, known for its fine selection of hats.

FREDERICK HUMPHRIES

Fred was under the minimum required age but managed anyway to join the US Navy during World War I, serving on the USS Preston (DD-19), a destroyer in the Atlantic Fleet. He died of tuberculosis not long after the war ended.

GUS MCDANIEL

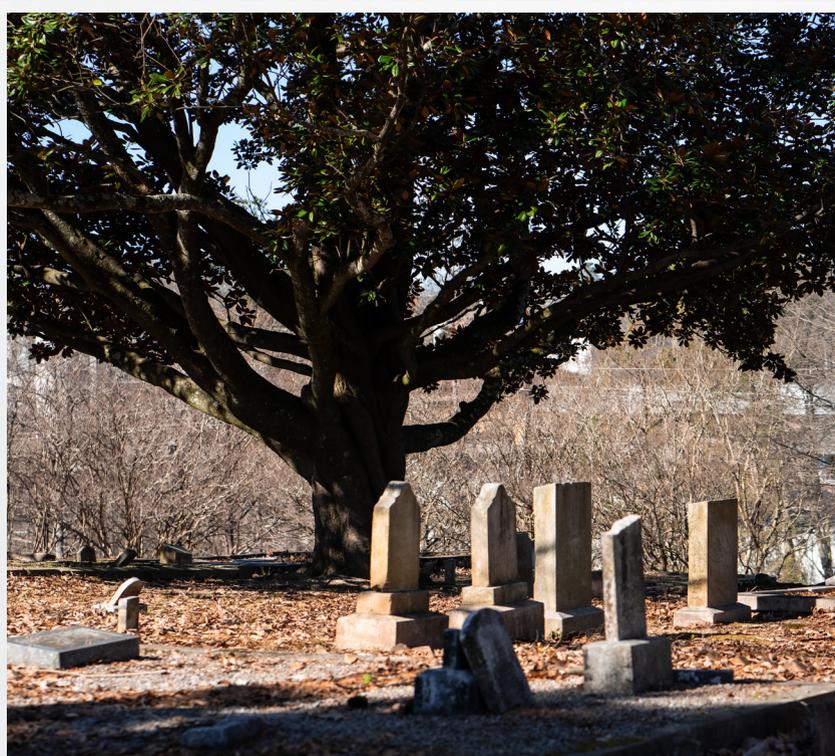
Charles Augustus “Gus” McDaniel filled many roles in the community, including serving at various times as chairman of the county board of education, mayor, cashier of the Bank of Norcross and Worshipful Master of the local Masonic Lodge

S. T. MCELROY

In the 1870s he operated a sawmill which made crossties for use in constructing the railroad being built through the area. Later he ran a mill and a furniture manufacturing company, and shipped peaches by the carload to the markets on the east coast in the early 1900s.

HOYLE SKINNER WILSON

President of her senior class in college, Hoyle Skinner became a state extension agent, teaching farm families how to can foods and run their operations more efficiently. She and her husband raised four children.



FIND MORE HISTORIC TOUR INFORMATION AT:
www.APLACETOIMAGINE.com



www.NorcrossGa.net

Tour and History Development
Gene Ramsay

Photography
Jennifer Mottola

Design
Jay Ledbetter

Norcross Welcome Center & Museum
189 Lawrenceville Street
Norcross, GA 30071
678.421.2049