

# THE VIEW

FALL 2015

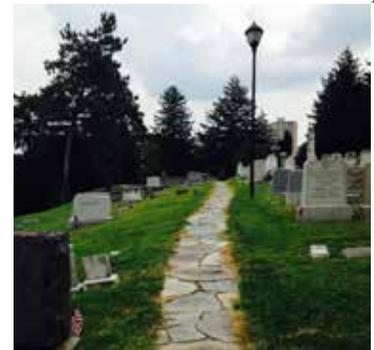
*It is always great to share good news and there is much to report about improvements to Prospect Hill since the last newsletter, thanks to the hard work of members of the Board and friends, as well as several significant financial gifts.*

**UPDATES FROM THE HILL: HILLEN PLOT** Capping well over a year of planning, the Board completed a major enhancement to the Hillen family graves in time for the bicentennial commemoration of the Battle of Baltimore during the War of 1812. Two defenders of Baltimore, Solomon Hillen III and John Hillen are buried along with other family members in an area that was threatened by water runoff. Thanks to generous support from several Board members, the Master Plan Committee (chaired by Board member Bruce Campbell III and assisted by volunteer architects Helen Hiser and Jose Galvez) oversaw the installation of new plantings, bollards and grave surrounds to protect the fragile marble tombstones. The project was designed by Hoehn Landscape Architecture. We thank the following generous donors for their support of this capital project:

- ▶ \$5,000 contribution from the Rotary Club of Towson
- ▶ \$5,000 donation by Jose and Board member Ginger Galvez
- ▶ \$800 grant from the Preservation Alliance (formerly the Baltimore County Historic Trust) for the Hillen project. The letter states “The work you have done in the Cemetery is extraordinary and demonstrates an appreciation and respect for the many individuals and families resting there who were instrumental in the development of Towson and surrounding areas.”
- ▶ \$1500 from former County Councilman Eugene Kibbe for proposed signage



**WALKWAYS** Over the decades, the original stone walkways in the upper section have sunk and covered over with grass. Thanks to a generous gift from donor James Price IV, and working with Pinehurst Landscape Company, we were able to reestablish a secure walking path along the top of the hill. This long-desired enhancement is in addition to one other shorter walking path which was unearthed by Boy Scout Colin Howard and members of his troop



as his Eagle Scout project. Another generous anonymous gift from a Board member helped to complete this project with professional help. It is great to have safe pathways for families to use when visiting the cemetery.

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**BABYLAND** The most poignant area within Prospect Hill is Babyland, a section located on the hill in the lower section and the final resting place for over 100 infants and young children.

Babyland was established decades ago and had become somewhat neglected. Over the past several years, we have reestablished the tree-lined east and west borders and refurbished the stone pathway and a low stone wall at the base of the hill. Now, thanks to additional generous gifts from emeritus Board



member Catherine R. Soares, this area has new plantings and metal signage on the wall as well.

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**THE DOG WALKING ISSUE** As the density of apartments and condos has increased around Towson's core, it has become apparent that there is inadequate green space for exercising pets. As a result, there has become significant dog walking traffic within the cemetery. The Board feels strongly that walking one's dog within a burial ground is inappropriate. Accordingly, we have posted signs at each end of the driveway to

discourage this activity.

We hope that the signs and reinforcement of the fact that the cemetery is private property will discourage most dog owners from using the cemetery to exercise and relieve their pets. Board member Ed Crawford has met with County Councilman David Marks, the Baltimore County Planning Commission and developers of a proposed

apartment building across York Road about our concerns. We have received sympathetic support from the community.



#### **PHC BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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**VISIT OUR WEBSITE** For photos, information about affordable lot sales and history about Prospect Hill, go to [www.prospecthilltowson.org](http://www.prospecthilltowson.org)

#### **VOLUNTEERS ARE ALWAYS**

**WELCOME!** As a small, all-volunteer Board managing the business of running a non-profit cemetery and answering inquiries from families, we seek volunteers who are willing to donate a few hours each month to helping with the following tasks:

- ▶ Handling phone calls and website queries
- ▶ Historical research
- ▶ Writing for the newsletter
- ▶ Event planning
- ▶ Serving as docent for cemetery tours (we get regular requests)

Please call **410-252-8462** to volunteer and help us preserve this treasured green place of rest and tranquility within the heart of Towson.

**A STEADY STREAM OF VISITORS** A regular stream of visitors, both local and from far abroad, comes through Prospect Hill and often a member of the volunteer Board of Directors is on hand to greet them and give a little history of the cemetery. Some of the more formal visits include:



*Board member Bruce Campbell at the Hillen plot. Visitors included members of Towson Rotary.*



*The public was invited to tour the Hillen enhancements over the weekend of September 2014, during the bicentennial observance of the Battle of Baltimore.*



*Again this year, local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, working in conjunction with Towson American Legion Post 22, volunteered the weekend before Memorial Day to place flags on the graves of veterans buried at Prospect Hill.*

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## FAMILIES ASK US

**Q:** My grandparents purchased several lots at Prospect Hill that have never been used; can another member of the family be buried in one of these lots?

**A:** We get this question often, and according to Maryland law, this can be a somewhat complicated situation. PHC Board member and Towson attorney Henry Peck, Esq., responds: *Ownership rights in cemetery lots is a topic which is not widely understood, and it may be helpful to provide a brief summary of Maryland law. Lots may be purchased and owned by one person, or they may be held in some form of co-ownership. Joint ownership between two or more people provides that the survivor or survivors of the co-owners will inherit any unused lots upon the death of one co-owner. Typically, spouses own lots in joint and survivor ownership. Two or more people can also own lots as tenants in common, providing that upon the death of one, his share passes to his heirs, as outlined later, rather than passing to the other co-owners. Unless cemetery lots are specifically mentioned in a Will, ownership does not pass along with other assets to those who are listed to inherit the balance of a person's estate. Instead, ownership of unused lots passes to the owner's heirs, defined as being those persons who would inherit the property under the State laws of intestacy if the owner had died without a Will. A surviving spouse will always be an heir, as will a surviving child. Depending on which other family members do or do not survive, grandchildren, parents, siblings, nieces and nephews and cousins may end up being identified as heirs. A separate determination needs to be made in each case. If a lot owner dies and leaves several heirs, they will collectively own the lots as tenants in common. Within a fairly short span of time, ownership of unused cemetery property can be spread among a large number of people. A co-owner, whether he/she is one of several original or subsequent purchasers, or one of several heirs of a deceased purchaser, can relinquish his/her rights in the lot in writing, and thereafter no longer needs to be consulted about the use of the space. All co-owners who have not relinquished their rights must agree before a burial can occur in an unused plot. Therefore, in the typical case, an authorization for burial signed by each heir of an original lot owner must identify the individual whose remains are to be interred.*

*If you have questions about whether a lot can be used by another family member, please consult your attorney for guidance. You can contact the cemetery at 410-252-8462; it may be possible in some cases to provide information about a lot's original ownership.*

## WHO IS BURIED AT PROSPECT HILL

Historic Prospect Hill Cemetery contains a virtual “Who’s Who” of fascinating local residents. This issue features the recollections of Jim Price, 91, about members of his family buried here.

### *“Big John” Lebruger Robbins*

“The first member of the Price family to be buried at Prospect Hill is Ignacia, my grandmother. She was from Argentina, and lies with a number of members of the family, including my wife Midge, on the crest of the hill. That grandmother’s husband leads to a colorful story about an interaction with Geronimo, the famous Bedonkohe Apache fighter. Prior to ever meeting Ignacia, her eventual husband, “Big John” Lebruger Robbins, originally from Cumberland, MD, worked in the late 19th century in the Arizona Territory. “Big John” was in charge of a water station and, to keep the peace with the local Indians, let them water their horses and take water to drink. However, the steam engines of the railroad needed that water and word came down from the Santa Fe railroad that “Big John” was to stop giving water to the Indians—immediately. When informed that they could no longer water their horses at the station, the Indians went away disgruntled, only to return the next day with the much-feared Geronimo. It was all looking pretty threatening. Big John spoke to Indians in admittedly rough Spanish. The Indians didn’t understand him and thought he was telling them they could have all the water they wanted – or at least that’s what John told the railroad office.

Geronimo was so pleased with Big John’s efforts, that he gave him a pair of leather chaps that the Price family, with justifiable pride, still has. [Editor’s note: what an “Antiques Roadshow” item that would be!]

After that episode, it became unpleasant to remain in Arizona, so Big John wisely decided to immigrate to Argentina, where he worked to establish a railroad. After that, he went to London and subsequently got a job with the Rosario Railroad in Buenos Aires. There, he met Ignacia, married her and raised a family (including Jim’s mother, Frances Robbins). Eventually, he returned to Maryland and with money he had saved while working in South America opened a Buick dealership on North Avenue in Baltimore. He died in the early 1930s, when I was a young boy and I remember him well.”



Frances Robbins married William James Price III and William James Price IV was born in 1924. Jim worked virtually his entire career at Alex Brown & Sons, retiring as Managing Director. A veteran of World War II, he fought in Germany and was wounded by a land mine while on patrol behind German lines. He was the recipient of a Bronze Star and two Purple Heart awards. He is the proud father of four and grandfather of eight. His family owns Vann Spices in Baltimore. Jim is the major donor to the re-establishment of safe pathways along the crest of the hill in the upper section of Prospect Hill Cemetery. The PHC Board is grateful for the Price family’s support.

