

2016 Laurel Hill Cemetery Tour Guides



CAROL BALDRIDGE

Carol has been an archivist at both the American Philosophical Society and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. After leaving the archives and book world to raise her sons, Jake and Sam, she morphed into a 3rd grade teacher at Chestnut Hill Academy. Her interest in cemeteries started with trips to family graves with her mother and grandmother where stories were told for each person visited. With an abiding interest in Philadelphia history, Carol is adding Laurel Hill to her volunteer schedule.



BILL BARKER

Attracted to the stage at an early age, Bill Barker became a professional actor, director and producer. Born and raised in Philadelphia, his interest in Thomas Jefferson reaches back to his youth. Bill has portrayed Thomas Jefferson in a variety of venues since 1984 and at Colonial Williamsburg since 1993.



KRISTIE BERGIE

Kristie opened KB Experience in 2004, after a successful career in retail and facilities management. She is a Temple University graduate who has been giving back to the community since her earliest days in business.



MICHAEL BROOKS, Ph.D.

A retired professor of literature, Michael Brooks is the author of a book on Victorian architecture and another on the New York City subway. He moved to Philadelphia in the 1970's, got lost looking for the falls of the Schuylkill, and found himself in a bizarre wonderland of Victorian monuments. He couldn't think of any better way to learn local history and has been researching and tour guiding at Laurel Hill ever since.



KERRY BRYAN

Having discovered a passion for 19th-century American history, Kerry Bryan has been avidly reading, attending lectures, consulting primary sources and attending tours at Laurel Hill Cemetery to learn as much as she can on the topic. Kerry is a Civil War aficionada and received her training in research techniques as candidate for a Masters of Liberal Arts degree at the University of Pennsylvania. Kerry now portrays Mrs. Elizabeth E. Hutter (1821-1895; Section W, Lot 160), a battlefield nurse, and one of the many amazing women of that era.



STEVE CHAWAGA

Steve is a native of the Philadelphia area and an attorney with a firm in Center City. He enjoys reading and studying history and learning about the fascinating people that have lived in Philadelphia and are buried at Laurel Hill. In his free time Steve takes photographs, bicycles and travels with his wife, Laurie.



RUSS DODGE

Military historian, biographer and photographer, Russ Dodge, is a longtime tour guide at Laurel Hill and administrator of www.findagrave.com. His love of grave hunting and photography grew out of his passion for American History. History to Russ is more than abstract names and dates in a colorless text book. It's the thoughts, ideas, efforts and experiences of real people. Russ commemorates those who have passed on by researching and sharing their stories.



BILL DORAN

If you've paid a visit to Laurel Hill Cemetery in the past 15 years, chances are you've run into Superintendent, Bill Doran. A native Irishman and natural storyteller, Bill possesses a wealth of knowledge on Laurel Hill's past and present—and is always willing to share his stories and experiences with those who visit. In addition to being a skilled general contractor, Bill has worked in the cemetery and monument business for nearly 30 years.



MARTY FOLEY

Marty teaches American History to 7th and 8th graders in nearby Germantown. His cemetery experience dates back to a college summer job as a groundskeeper at the Trinity Church graveyard on Wall Street and he takes advantage of school breaks to visit historic sites across the country, with a special interest in 19th century industrialization and the Civil War. Marty looks to inspire his students with primary sources and historical music, and appreciates the power of narrative in understanding history.



TERRI GREENBERG

Terri Greenberg, local artist and writer, has been a tour guide at Laurel Hill since 2009, having been drawn in by its beauty and stories of Philadelphians both famous and humble. Every aspect of a region's history is represented in cemeteries like Laurel Hill, and Terri loves sharing tales of its residents and their lives and times with all who visit.



SARAH HAMILL

Sarah Hamill started visiting old cemeteries years ago and has never stopped. She first came to Laurel Hill on a picnic and has been learning more about the history of the people buried there ever since. She rounds out her professional career in marketing with personal interests in archaeology and travel. A native of Nebraska, Sarah now lives in Lansdale with her husband and two children.



DAVE HORWITZ, Ph.D.

Dave Horwitz's love for Laurel Hill began when he was looking for high ground to photograph the Schuylkill River after Hurricane Agnes in 1972. Though the cemetery was being reclaimed by vines and ailanthus trees at that time, Dave recognized its historical and cultural relevance. He began bringing his history students to the cemetery and befriended John Francis Marion, one of the founders of the Friends of Laurel Hill. Forty years later, Dave is still leading tours and bringing his history students to Laurel Hill.



PETE HOSKINS

Alexander “Pete” Hoskins has had a long career of civic service in Philadelphia, especially focusing on parks and public open space. He currently works as President and CEO of West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Laurel Hill Cemetery and Bringhurst Funeral Home. He is a member of the Philadelphia Commission on Parks and Recreation, and former Chair of the Philadelphia Parks Alliance. Previously, he was President and Chief Executive Officer of the Philadelphia Zoo; Commissioner of the Philadelphia Streets Department; and Executive Director of the Fairmount Park Commission.



ALEXIS JEFFCOAT

Alexis Jeffcoat has worked in the Philadelphia arts and culture scene for the last eight years including four years at Laurel Hill Cemetery. She received her undergraduate degree in Psychology and European History from Temple University and her Masters in Arts & Humanities from Arcadia University. She is a huge history nerd, loves playing Dungeon and Dragons, and enjoys being blinded by science in her position managing public programming for the Chemical Heritage Foundation. An active part of the geek community, Alexis can be found collaborating on projects like Science on Tap and the Philadelphia Science Festival.



GWEN KAMINSKI

Amidst the musty weightiness of Laurel Hill’s archival records lies a paper slip indicating the burial of a lone human heart, bereft of the body in which it once beat. Upon discovery, Gwen recognized the makings of a great story, and knew it had to be told. Thenceforth, she stumbled into the glamorous world of cemetery tour guiding. Gwen had the fortune of working with and among some of the finest folks in Philly – dead and alive – as the cemetery’s Director of Development + Programs for the better part of a decade. She thus had no choice but to leave a piece of her own heart behind at dear Laurel Hill.



TOM KEELS

Tom Keels is a lecturer, writer, and commentator specializing in Philadelphia history and architecture. He is the author and co-author of six published books on Philadelphia history and recently published an essay on the city’s premier Victorian necropolis, Laurel Hill Cemetery, for the Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia. A confirmed taphophile, Tom has been a tour guide at Laurel Hill for over a decade. He has conducted classes on Philadelphia cemetery history for the Bucks County Community College Historic Preservation Program, Cheltenham Township Adult School, and Mount Airy Learning Tree.



SONIA KRUTZKE

Sonia Krutzke has a background in art, education, language and literature. As a Laurel Hill tour guide, Sonia enjoys the pleasures of learning and teaching (without the burdens of testing and grading). Born and raised in Camden, NJ and a lifelong South Jersey resident, Sonia first visited Laurel Hill on an American Cemetery Art field trip in 1983.



MIKE LEWANDOWSKI

Mike is a professional engineer who specializes in water and wastewater treatment. He also loves walking around old cemeteries. Mike's other interests include: home brewing beer, home roasting coffee, Japanese swordsmanship and volunteering with the Cub Scouts. Each year, he participates in the cemetery's RIP 5K Run, in hopes of becoming Laurel Hill's fastest tour guide. Mike first visited Laurel Hill to satisfy his young son's curiosity about cemeteries; both of them have been coming back for years.



LORA LEWIS

Lora Lewis is a local radio broadcaster who enjoys Philadelphia history and cemeteries. At her favorite, Laurel Hill Cemetery, she's especially interested in Millionaire's Row, the artists, writers and publishers, our military heroes and the amazing women of art, science and business from the 19th century. Okay, everybody at Laurel Hill is interesting!



BILL LINHART

Bill Linhart took an interest in genealogy as a hobby more than 30 years ago. Bill's interest persisted and he completed Boston University's Genealogical Research Certificate Program. Research of families and kinship connections led him to many places for research including cemeteries. One December, Bill saw an advertisement inviting the public to come celebrate New Year's Eve with a champagne toast on General Meade's birthday at Laurel Hill Cemetery. The celebration was a patriotic event filled with civil war history. It included brief speeches and re-enactors firing muskets and playing music. Bill joined the General Meade Society and The Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery. He now enjoys the opportunity to introduce others to the rich history of Laurel Hill as a tour guide.



STEVEN MAURER

Steve Maurer is a certified guide with the Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides and is co-chair of their Events and Programs committee. He has served as National Director with the Garden Writers Association and Chair of the Brandywine Museum and Garden Alliance. He retired in 2016 as Public and Media Relations Manager for Nemours Alfred I. duPont Hospital for Children, in Wilmington, Delaware, which included Nemours Mansion & Gardens, the largest formal French garden in North America. In addition to Laurel Hill, he has led tours at The Philadelphia Flower Show, in Old City, and the Brandywine Valley.



JERRY McCORMICK

Jerry McCormick took an interest in the life and career of General George G. Meade after he first visited Laurel Hill in the late 90's. Since then, he has joined the General Meade Society, where he now serves as Treasurer and coordinates many of the society's events. In addition to his involvement in the Meade Society, Jerry is a Living-Historian and often portrays Civil War Union general officers at Laurel Hill events and throughout the region. A native Philadelphian, Jerry has lived in East Falls for the last thirty years with his wife, Betty. Both Jerry and Betty enjoy spending their free time visiting and volunteering at Laurel Hill.

**FRANK RAUSCH**

Cemetery Foreman and resident photographer, Frank Rausch, has worked and lived on Laurel Hill's grounds for 14 years. Frank's 78 acre backyard has provided him with photographic inspiration and his pictures of the cemetery have been featured in solo and group exhibitions throughout the region.

**SAM RICKS**

Challenged by a newspaper reporter to find "a local angle" for an article about Confederate graves, tour guide Sam Ricks uncovered the untold story of Philadelphia's Confederate veterans. A descendent of several Confederate soldiers, Sam was appointed Graves Registrar for the Pennsylvania Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) in 2006. Additionally, Sam has twice received the SCV's Graves Award for locating and documenting the missing and often unmarked graves of Confederate veterans buried in Pennsylvania.

**COLLEEN RUMPF**

Colleen is a professional violin teacher, amateur historian, and enthusiast of all things Philadelphia. She first began volunteering at Laurel Hill when it occurred to her that serving drinks and snacks at the RIP 5K might be less strenuous than running in it. She finds the cemetery a seemingly inexhaustible well of fascinating stories about the people buried here, and has been sharing these stories with anyone who would listen for the past several years. She is delighted to finally be a legitimate tour guide, and to help the Friends of Laurel Hill continue to engage visitors in the lively times of this National Historic Landmark.

**BETH SAVASTANA**

Beth Savastana joins the Laurel Hill Cemetery staff as special events volunteer coordinator and gift shop manager; but is delighted to be able to get back to her tour guide roots! Having previously been a tour guide at Christ Church, The Mutter Museum, and Eastern State Penitentiary, she is excited to learn and share the history of another unique Philadelphia historic site. She holds a B.A. in Archaeology of the Ancient Near East and an M.A. in Museum Studies. Her biggest interests in graduate school were museums that transcend the limitations of four walls and morbid curiosity; therefore, Laurel Hill Cemetery is the perfect institution to begin cultivating her career!

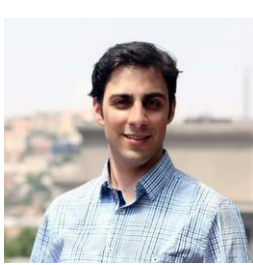
**CLARISSA SHANAHAN**

Originally from New York, Clarissa is a fine artist and educator. She holds a BFA from University of Pennsylvania, in conjunction with Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where she teaches, as well as studies at New York Academy of Art and The Art Students League of New York. Additionally, Clarissa spent almost twenty years in the film industry as a scenic artist, producing sets for over 40 film and television productions. In addition, she produced both original and reproduction paintings for numerous productions, including the Lee Krasner paintings for the film Pollock. She is a longtime taphophile, visiting cemeteries anywhere she travels, with a specific interest in Victorian era symbolism and ruined architecture.



ALEXANDRA SMALLBERGER

Alex Smallberger's interest in cemeteries began at a young age. While her family enjoyed picnics and the Carillon at St. Thomas' Church in Whitemarsh, Alex and her sister would explore the cemetery. Her interest in art, history, catacombs, and cemeteries continued through college and while traveling in Europe and the US. Alex loves history and enjoys visiting historical sites while away on family vacations. Alex and her husband, Joe, have twin boys, who have already started to show their appreciation for old cemeteries and history.



PAUL SOOKIASIAN

Paul Vartan Sookiasian returns to Laurel Hill after a few years absence living and working abroad in Armenia. He has been a long-time participant and volunteer with cemetery events since taking his first Halloween tour over a decade ago. Beyond Laurel Hill, he is a local historian with special focus on the Philadelphia Armenian Community. He served as lead researcher and collaborating editor on a newly published book about the Armenian Genocide, and led a project which placed a traditional Armenian marker on the previously unmarked grave of one of the only Armenians to serve in the U.S. Civil War. Additionally, Paul's family has owned a chain of pet stores for 35 years and while he has never owned a dog or cat, he thinks his pet rabbit is pretty adorable.



EMMA STERN

Emma Stern serves as the Director of Programs at Laurel Hill Cemetery, and takes pleasure in the unique challenge of pairing creative programming with historic preservation. A native New Yorker, Emma relocated to Philadelphia to pursue her undergraduate degree in photography at Drexel University. Upon graduating, her love for art and history led her to a career in the non-profit sector. When she's not working for the dead, she can be found amongst the living at Gravy Studio & Gallery, an artist collective that she co-founded to promote the work of local photographers.



PATRICIA (PATTY) STRINGER

In a long and varied career, Patty Stringer has twisted pretzels, sold swimwear, written newspaper columns, designed textbooks, provided voiceovers and worked with the CIA. After all of that, what could be more natural than serving as a Laurel Hill Cemetery guide? Patty lives in Burholme with her husband Tom, collects antique clothing, and loves history and classic films.



TOM STRINGER

One morning in 2013, Tom Stringer heard a radio ad inviting people to become guides at Laurel Hill Cemetery. He thought his wife Patty would make a great guide and urged her to apply. Patty started her training, and Tom tagged along, attending lectures and going on tours. They both fell in love with Laurel Hill. The very next year, Tom became a guide himself. Tom is a medical editor and has spent his career in publishing and advertising. He loves history and is an avid reader of biographies. Tom is pleased to "know" the various interesting folks buried at Laurel Hill; each has his or her own great story. Tom and Patty live in the Burholme section of Philadelphia. Besides their Laurel Hill activities, they love Broadway and are active in the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire.



ANDY WASKIE, Ph.D.

Professor Waskie is a Civil War historian, author, and preservationist. He specializes in the life of General George G. Meade. Waskie serves as president of the General Meade Society; on the Board of the Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery; as Vice President of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Civil War Museum & Library; on the Executive Board of the Civil War History Consortium of Philadelphia; and other history related organizations and institutions.



RICH WILHELM

Rich Wilhelm is a writer who lives in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Donna, and sons, Jimmy and Chris. Rich's interest in cemeteries began with a family trip to George Washington's Mount Vernon in 1975; he has since visited the gravesites of 14 additional U.S. presidents and many other well-known Americans.



NANCY W. WRIGHT

Nancy's interests in American history and memorializing the dead led her to be a 2012 Halloween Guide, but she knew she was destined to keep returning to Laurel Hill when she realized she and Clio of the Lea Memorial sported the same hairstyle. Trained in visual arts, dance and arts administration, Nancy now enjoys an encore career sharing her many talents with a vibrant community of elders living with dementia. Besides being on the tour guide roster for Laurel Hill she can also be found weekly at Bartram's Garden as a house guide. For over 23 years she has been part of a work study archaeology team at James Madison's Montpelier, and for more fun she sometimes dances in 18th century operas.



CAROL YASTER

Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery Board President, Carol Yaster, first came to Laurel Hill as a volunteer in 2006 and has since become an integral part of the organization. Carol has spent countless hours rehousing the cemetery's archival records, conducting genealogical research, and developing and leading her own guided walking tours. Carol attended the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and spent 25 years as a private flute teacher, music theory tutor and freelance musician.