2019 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
Bill has enjoyed portraying Thomas Jefferson at Colonial Williamsburg since 1993. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Bill’s interest in Thomas Jefferson reaches back to his youth. He enjoys researching the American world Jefferson knew with an interest in the role the man played and continues to play in our American identity. Bill is a student of history and an actor. He is passionate about both and brings them together in a way that allows people to be transported back in time to feel, hear and taste what it would be like to mingle with Mr. Jefferson.

KRISTIE BERGEY
As a resident of Philadelphia’s Fairmount neighborhood since 2004, Kristie is thrilled with the many exciting changes that are occurring throughout the City. Her extensive knowledge of Philadelphia’s diverse neighborhoods, appreciation for its history, and the wide range of lifestyle options available are just some of the reasons Kristie calls Philadelphia her home. A world traveler, Kristie embraces the many cultural differences expressed in the City’s arts, culture, and cuisine.

RICH BOARDMAN
A transplant from the south side of Chicago, Rich spent 43 years with the Free Library of Philadelphia, retiring as Head of the Map Collection. After taking an early spring tour of Laurel Hill and becoming a tour guide and volunteer he was soon immersed in the records, biographies and resting places of the thousands of Laurel Hill residents. They all have their own story, each just waiting to be told.

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.
its residents and their lives and times with all who visit. Of a region's history is represented in cemeteries like Laurel Hill, and Terri loves sharing tales of those who have lived in Philadelphia and are buried at Laurel Hill. In his free time Steve takes photographs, bicycles and travels with his wife, Laurie.

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.

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.

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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.

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.
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 MAUER
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.

NICK MCAULISTER
Nick McAulister has served as Laurel Hill’s Director of Development and Membership since June 2016. He has almost a decade of experience as a development professional for arts and culture organizations having worked previously at the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Philadelphia Museum of Art. After graduating from Providence College with a BA in the Humanities in 2006, McAulister moved to Philadelphia’s East Falls neighborhood where he soon discovered Laurel Hill Cemetery was his favorite place in the city. He brings a passion for art, history, preservation, and the City of Philadelphia to his role as a staff member and now tour guide for the cemetery. Nick now lives in Queen Village with his wife Ria and son Lex.

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.

MARYELLEN MORAN
A lifelong Philadelphia area resident, MaryEllen has always loved history and cemeteries. Her grade school playground included the cemetery at Plymouth Meeting Friends School, and her favorite subject in school was American History. Learning Philadelphia history through the lens of Laurel Hill has been a rewarding and challenging experience. The construction and maintenance of the cemetery’s monuments appeal to her engineering background. In addition to being a cemetery guide, MaryEllen enjoys hiking and traveling.

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 HUDSON
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 the Program and Volunteer Coordinator; 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!

DAVID SCHWARZKOPF
Originally from Brooklyn, New York, David has been a resident of Philadelphia for 35 years and a Physical Therapist for 40 years. He holds a passion for 19th and 20th Century history, particularly the American Civil War.
Burholme with her husband Tom, collects antique clothing, and loves history and classic films.

In a long and varied career, Pattye Stringer has twisted pretzels, sold swimwear, written news paper 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? Pattye lives in 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. 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 & Gal lery, an artist collective that she co-founded to promote the work of local photographers. 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 repro duction 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.

She lives with her family in Queen Village.

Paul Sookiasian returns to Laurel Hill after a few years absence living and working abroad in Asia. 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.

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 U.S. Alex loves history and enjoys visiting historical sites while away on family vacations. And, of course, she and her husband, Joe, have twin boys, who have already started to show their appreciation for old cemeteries and history.

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.

Linda Blowney has always been searching for ways to communicate the stories of the people in our past. From 35 years of historic re-enactment, to studying textile anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania (how the clothing and textiles of ancient cultures reveal the lives of people), to searching for the stories of those buried in historic cemeteries in Saratoga Springs, NY and portraying those characters in public events throughout upstate NY. Cemeteries have been crucial to her own story since her Grampy would tell her tales of his family while pointing to the names on stone monuments. She shares her love of personal stories throughout history through her Facebook cemetery blog, “Linda’s Coimetramania”, and through leading tours in her beloved Laurel Hill Cemetery. She can’t wait to meet you in the cemetery to add your story to her repertoire!

Jessica Heichel

Having attended a catholic school in Drexel Hill for 8 years, Jessica jokes that her recesses took place not on a playground, but in a cemetery parking lot. By first grade, she already had a huge curiosity about the stories behind the monuments always surrounding her, and that desire to know more has stayed with her ever since. Currently working as a freelance writer and researcher, Jessica has a background as a middle school English teacher. Her interests include medical history, true crime, horror movies, Victorian fashion, and tabletop games. She has two children with her husband, and she’s delighted to say that her kids are also enchanted by “weird” things like dragons, monsters, and occasionally even cemeteries.

Patricia Silverman

Patricia has a background in Education, Museum & Historical Programming as well as Special Education Advocacy. Her first love was 18th century history and architecture. However, she has developed a strong affection and appreciation for the Victorians and their way of viewing and handling death after discovering lovely Laurel Hill Cemetery. She is a certified tour guide with the Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides and a Board Member Member of Effretts Alley Association. She has an unwholesome obsession with coffee, Georgian Fanlights and is now in the process of developing an equally unhealthy obsession with Victorian funerary monuments. She lives with her family in upstate NY. Cemeteries have been crucial to her own story since her Grampy would tell stories of people in our past. From 35 years of historic re-enactment, to studying textile anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania (how the clothing and textiles of ancient cultures reveal the lives of people), to searching for the stories of those buried in historic cemeteries in Saratoga Springs, NY and portraying those characters in public events throughout upstate NY. Cemeteries have been crucial to her own story since her Grampy would tell her tales of his family while pointing to the names on stone monuments. She shares her love of personal stories throughout history through her Facebook cemetery blog, “Linda’s Coimetramania”, and through leading tours in her beloved Laurel Hill Cemetery. She can’t wait to meet you in the cemetery to add your story to her repertoire!

Other guides: Ellen Silverberg-Brennan and Susan Miller
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 Pattye would make a great guide and urged her to apply. Pattye started her training, and Tom tagged along, attending lectures and going on tours. 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 Pattye 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 and frequent cemetery visitor who lives with his family in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. 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 in 2012 to begin her LHC tour guide journey. Trained in visual arts, dance and arts administration, Nancy enjoys an encore career as an activities professional working with persons living with dementia. She has spent her past 25 years of vacations with a work study archaeology team at James Madison’s Montpelier and resides in 19th century’s Moyamensing Township where she grows vegetables on the site of Machpelah Cemetery – yummy!

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. She has spent countless hours rehousing the cemetery’s archival records, conducting genealogical research, and creating guided walking tours for the cemetery. Carol attended the Peabody Conservatory of Music, and spent 25 years as a private flute teacher, music theory tutor and freelance musician.