

# CITY OF HIGH POINT

## AGENDA ITEM



<b>TITLE:</b> Historic Marker Request (Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery)	
<b>FROM:</b> Sushil Nepal, AICP Planning & Development Director	<b>MEETING DATE:</b> June 3, 2024
<b>PUBLIC HEARING:</b> n/a	<b>ADVERTISED DATE/BY:</b> n/a
<b>ATTACHMENTS:</b> Historic Preservation Commission Recommendation Staff Report	

**PURPOSE:** A request by the High Point Preservation Society for approval of a historic marker to recognize Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery on the south side of Qubein Avenue near the cemetery entrance.

**BACKGROUND:** The Historic Preservation Commission is designated by the Historic Marker Policy to review and evaluate all proposed roadside historic markers prior to consideration by City Council.

This roadside historic marker request is the thirteenth request under the City's roadside Historic Marker Policy. On April 10, 2024, the Historic Preservation Commission recommended approval of this request by a vote of 4-0.

**BUDGET IMPACT:** The High Point Historic Preservation Society is purchasing this marker.

**RECOMMENDATION/ACTION REQUESTED:** Staff recommends approval of this request as outlined in the attached staff report.





**Recommendation of the City of High Point**  
**Historic Preservation Commission**  
**Historic Marker Request**

The Historic Preservation Commission recommends the Historic Marker request proposed by the High Point Preservation Society to commemorate Oakwood Memorial Cemetery Park on the south side of Qubein Avenue be forwarded to the City Council for approval due to the request meeting the criteria set forth in the City's Historic Marker Policy. The proposed language that the Historic Preservation Commission recommends to the City Council is as follows:

**Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery**  
**Since 1925**

**This Romantic style memorial park was established by Stephen Clark, the developer of High Point's historic Emerywood neighborhood. The original entrance gates, designed by noted architect, Fred Klein, have welcomed many High Point families to their final resting place. The Gatekeeper's Cottage was added in 1927.**

**Erected by the High Point Preservation Society, in partnership with the David R. Hayworth Foundation and Charles E. Hayworth, Jr. Foundation.  
Dedicated on All Saints Day, November 1, 2024**

Approved by the Historic Preservation Commission this 10 day of April, 2024.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Fennema", written over a horizontal line.

Jeremy Fennema, Chair

Filed with the Historic Preservation Commission Clerk this 10<sup>th</sup> day of  
April, 2024.

Genine Solis

Genine Solis, Historic Preservation Commission Clerk

**To:** Historic Preservation Commission Members

**From:** David Fencl, Senior Planner

**Meeting Date:** March 13, 2024

**Subject:** Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery Historic Marker Request by the High Point Preservation Society

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**PURPOSE:**

The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is designated by the Historic Marker Policy to review all requests for historic markers to be located in public street rights-of-way. The HPC shall first determine whether the request meets the minimum evaluation criteria outlined in the policy, and if the request meets the minimum evaluation criteria, the HPC shall then evaluate the request based on relevant criteria as determined by the HPC.

The following criteria must be present and factually correct in order for the HPC to review any request for placement of a marker:

1. Any site or event requested to be recognized must be at least 50 years old and for any individual to be recognized with a marker, the individual's contribution that is the subject of the request must have occurred as least 50 years before the request.
2. There may not be any current markers, public or private, currently recognizing the site or event within the City of High Point.
3. The location requested to be recognized must be within the corporate limits of the City of High Point and within public view.

Requests for markers shall be evaluated based on relevant criteria as determined by the HPC, including the following:

1. Is each historical claim by the applicant presenting the request supported by documentation or other evidence of the claim's validity? Documentation should consist of primary sources that were created at the time of the event and may include tax records, deeds, newspaper articles, meeting minutes, photographs, etc. Secondary sources may be submitted to help provide context and justify the significance of the event, person, or location.
2. In an attempt to avoid repetition and promote diversity in the recognitions, is the requested site, event or individual closely related to a site, event or individual accomplishment that has already been recognized with a Marker?
3. Has the site, event, or individual contribution maintained its significance over time?

4. Is the site, event or individual recognized outside of High Point at state wide, national, or international levels?
5. Marker proposals will be rejected if the Commission cannot authenticate or verify the historical information to its satisfaction. The Commission shall make the deciding rule if there is conflicting evidence.

#### **STAFF ANALYSIS:**

According to the information supplied with this historic marker request, the Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery, Gatekeeper's House and Entrance Gates were designed and built between 1925 and 1927 by Stephen Clark, the developer of Emerywood. According to the historic marker application Oakwood Memorial Cemetery was privately operated until June 2015 when the City of High Point took ownership and incorporated it into Oakwood Municipal Cemetery, the city's oldest Cemetery begun in 1859.

The historic marker application references the description of Oakwood Memorial Cemetery in Benjamin Briggs' book: *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina, A History and Guide to the City's Homes, Churches and Public Buildings*; which states that the "cemetery continued established traditions of markers in a variety of shapes and sizes, mausoleums and classically inspired sculpture within a park-like setting of mature hardwoods and winding roads". The historic marker application also states that the cemetery's Gatekeeper's House has special features and many of its original appointments intact including the Flemish bond brick pattern, slate roof, hardwood floors, mantel and fireplace, original windows, floorplan, garage and tool shed. The cemetery's burial book, blueprints of the Gatekeeper's House, and illustration of the original gates also survive.

The historic marker application notes that Roy Shipman self-published a history of the cemetery titled: *The Sacred Ground that Built Our Town: Oakwood Cemetery* that includes primary documents and a partial listing of the illustrious citizens buried in the cemetery. No excerpts or information has been supplied from this publication with the historic marker application.

Staff believes that the Oakwood Memorial Cemetery, the Gatekeeper's House, or the Entrance Gates collectively or individually are worthy of a historic marker if enough information is supplied to authenticate or verify information about them. Other than a picture of the illustration of the entrance gates and picture of the blueprints for the Gatekeeper's House, no other information has been supplied to support the historic marker request or verify the information in the proposed inscription. Staff cannot support the proposed marker inscription without more information about Stephen Clark.

- Did Stephen Clark really design the Gatekeeper's House and Entrance Gates or was he just the cemetery's developer?
- Is the Historic Marker for the Oakwood Memorial Cemetery, or the Gatekeeper's House and Entrance Gates?

More than fifty percent of the proposed marker inscription describes the restoration and funding of the Gatekeeper's House and Entrance Gates which begun in 2023 and continues to this day.

This is not an event that meets the Marker Policy's 50-year minimum evaluation criteria. A more appropriate way to honor the significant contributions to the restoration of the Gatekeeper's House and Entrance Gates might be a cast plaque attached to the Gatekeeper's House and/or the Entrance Gates.

**RECOMMENDATION / ACTION REQUESTED:**

Staff cannot recommend the Historic Preservation Commission recommend approval of the historic marker request recognizing the Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery at this time. Staff does not believe this historic marker request meets the minimum evaluation criteria based on one-half of the proposed marker inscription recognizing an event that is less than 50 years old. With the limited documentation submitted staff also does not believe the proposed marker application meets the relevant evaluation criteria of the Historic Marker Policy.

**Attachments:**      Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery Historic Marker Request



# HISTORIC MARKER REQUEST MARCH 2024

Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery, Original  
Gatekeeper's House, Gates, and Entrance

## ABSTRACT

The Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery, Gatekeeper's House and Entrance Gates were designed and built between 1925-1927 by Stephen Clark, the developer of Old Emerywood in High Point, one of the finest early 20th-century suburbs of North Carolina, equally important to the state's architectural history as Myers Park in Charlotte, Irving Park in Greensboro, Country Club Estates in Winston-Salem, and the Biltmore Estates in Asheville.

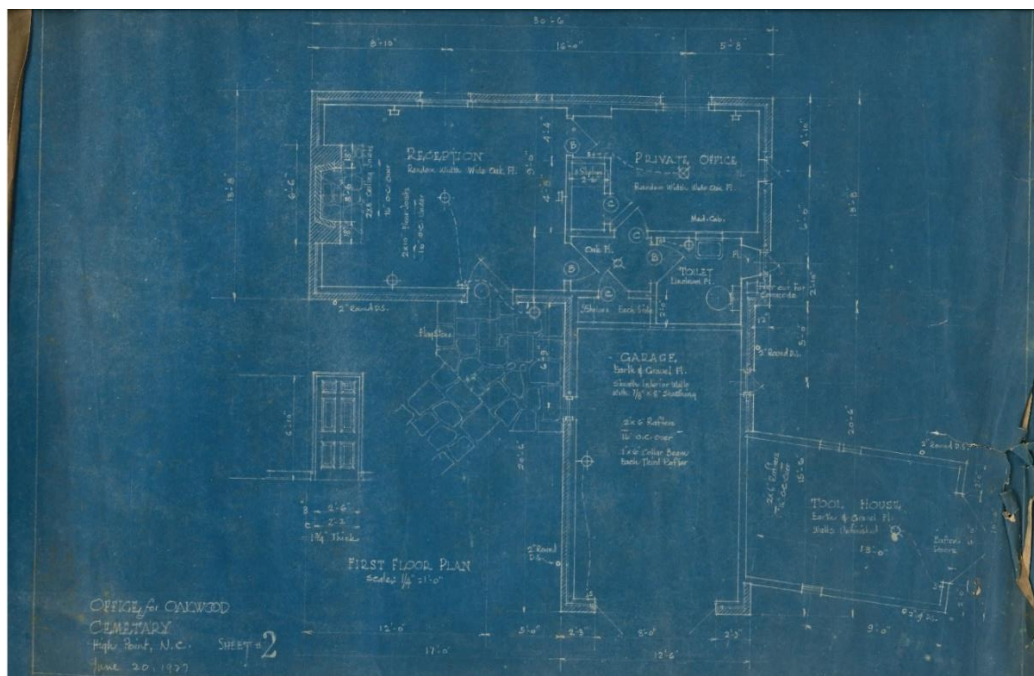
**REQUEST:** The High Point Preservation Society (HPPS) requests to fund a new historic marker at 312 Qubein Avenue commemorating the Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery, and featuring its historic 1925 entrance with the Gatekeeper's House and Gates. This cemetery park operated under private ownership until June 2015 when the City of High Point incorporated it into Oakwood Municipal Cemetery, the City's oldest cemetery begun in 1859. Today, both cemeteries are collectively known as Oakwood Cemetery, despite their two distinct histories, dates, origins and entrances.

**HPPS MISSION:** Preserving the historic buildings and architecture of the City of High Point and its vicinity.





***Original Image of the Entrance Gates now Being Restored by the High Point Preservation Society  
A Stone Marker Dating the Cemetery and Gates 1925 is Embedded in Brick on the Left-Hand Column***



***The Original Blueprints of the Gatekeeper's House Survive and are being used in the restoration now underway by Contractors B.E. Vaughan and Sons, Inc.(since 1955).***



The Gatekeeper's House has special features and many original appointments intact:

- Flemish Bond Brick
- Slate Roof
- Hardwood Floors
- Mantel and Fireplace
- Original Windows
- Welcome Room, Office, and Rest Room
- Garage and Tool Shed
- Burial Book
- Original Blueprints of Gatekeeper's House
- Drawing of Original Gates

Similar in landscape design to the 1920s and 1930s Emerywood Neighborhood by developer Stephen Clark, Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery features "a park-like setting of mature hardwoods and winding roads," still evident today. (1)

Additional features grace the grounds inside this cemetery's gates: high quality funereal art exhibited in "markers in a variety of shapes and sizes, mausoleums and classically inspired sculpture..." (2) Please see the 8-minute YouTube video of Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery by the HPPS with over 50,000 views. [Oakwood Memorial Park \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) Ancestry tourism is a growing trend in the United States popularized by TV shows like "Finding Your Roots" and websites like Ancestry.com.)

The HPPS raised \$399,500.00 in 2023 to restore the original Gatekeeper's House and Gates, and to landscape this historic entrance, once tree-lined, but now barren. Without funding, the City of High Point planned to demolish Oakwood Park Cemetery's historic Gatekeeper's House and Entrance Gates which would degrade the cemetery and its importance in the history of High Point and the State of North Carolina. The city agreed to spare the building and entrance gates until July 1, 2023 if the High Point Preservation Society could raise funds for the restoration of the cemetery's historic entrance, which we did. Restoration is now underway.

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(1) Benjamin Briggs, *The Architecture of High Point, North Carolina, A History and Guide to the City's Homes, Churches and Public Buildings* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2008) page 72.

(2) *Ibid.*



### *Original Wrought Iron Entrance Gates (Details)*

In addition to fine funereal art, Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery contains the burial sites of some of High Point's most famous and reknown citizens from the late 19<sup>th</sup> into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This cemetery's history, including primary documents and a partial listing of the illustrious citizens buried here, was recently published by Roy Shipman in his book The Scared Ground that Built Our Town: Oakwood Cemetery (1923). Exemplary of High Point's first families buried in Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery is the Hayworth Family with graves dating from 1928 (Charles E. Hayworth, Sr.) to 2023 (David R. Hayworth). This family started the first veneer company in the State of North Carolin in 1908, which expanded to Hayworth Industries, the largest manufacturer of wooden office furniture in the United States and the largest employer in High Point in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The David R. Hayworth Foundation and Charles E. Hayworth, Jr., Foundation are funding the restoration of the 1925 entrance.

This proposed historic marker meets the criteria of primary documents verifying significant history over 50 years old relating to the city and state. The marker will be placed on public property on the east side of the Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery entrance at 312 Qubein Avenue.

HPPS will commission SEWAH STUDIOS to create this historic marker. Sewah is the same foundry that produces North Carolina's Roadside Historic Markers, and will meet the City of High Point Historic Marker Guidelines (Georgia-style marker; black background with silver lettering). HPPS would like to follow North Carolina's guidelines of keeping the number of descriptive words on the marker to a minimum and recognize HPPS contributions and those of our partners in smaller font at the bottom of the marker. SEWAH delivery time now is approximately six months from the date ordered.

Proposed inscription:

Oakwood Memorial Park Cemetery

Since 1925

This Cemetery Park and Entrance, designed by Stephen Clark, welcomed High Point's families to their final resting place. The Gatekeeper's House, Entrance, and Gates were restored by the High Point Preservation Society in 2024 with funding from the David R. Hayworth Foundation and Charles E. Hayworth, Jr. Foundation.

Erected by the High Point Preservation Society, in partnership with the Hayworth Foundations, High Point Historic Preservation Commission, and the City of High Point.

Dedicated on Labor Day, September 2, 2024

## CONTACTS

Dorothy Darr, PhD, HPPS Vice President and Charter Member; Co-Chair, Oakwood Cemetery Committee, [dorothy1@northstate.net](mailto:dorothy1@northstate.net) , Phone: 336-887-5130

Gloria Halstead, Retired Attorney, HPPS Board President and Co-Chair, Oakwood Cemetery Committee, [howlerdemondeacon@gmail.com](mailto:howlerdemondeacon@gmail.com) , 1-202-213-5672

Randy Vaughan, B.E. Vaughan & Sons, Inc. (since 1955), General Contractor, [jrv@northstate.net](mailto:jrv@northstate.net) , Phone: 336-240-3388



Guilford County, NC



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Map Scale  
1 inch = 63 feet  
1/15/2024