

Wildwood Cemetery

at Terrell State Hospital

Restoring Dignity ... from Numbers to Names



Terrell State Hospital opened in 1885 as the second facility designed to serve Texas' mentally ill population. Initial funding for the hospital was in a \$200,000 appropriation by the 18th Texas Legislature. Governor John Ireland commissioned the purchase of 672.65 acres of land for the institution designated as the *North Texas Lunatic Asylum* for the "chronic incurable insane" of the state's northern counties.

During the first year, the hospital served 330 patients from 46 counties. The patient population reached its peak in the 1960s at 3,500. Since its beginning, the facility has undergone three name changes. From a *Lunatic Asylum* to a *Hospital for the Insane* to *Terrell State Hospital*, the hospital's names reflected the public's attitude toward mental illness and developments in treatment.

Today, the hospital is a modern psychiatric facility serving the mentally ill population of 22 northeast Texas counties.



The Wildwood Cemetery began almost immediately after the facility opened. The first burial was October 22, 1885, just three months after the first patient was admitted. Not all of the patients buried in the first years came to the hospital because of mental illness. For some time, the institution also functioned as a sanitarium for patients with tuberculosis and other highly infectious diseases.

In 1904, Superintendent Jonathon S. Turner requested and received a legislative appropriation to improve the condition of the cemetery. Throughout the years, more than 3,600 people were buried in the cemetery with only numbers on concrete blocks to identify their graves. Although a few families have placed headstones upon a loved one's grave, the vast majority buried in Wildwood continue to be identified merely by a number.



Wildwood Cemetery Association

In the mid-1990s, TSH Chief Executive Officer Beatrice Butler appointed a committee to study the protocol for handling the death of a patient. Their work brought a heightened awareness about the condition of the cemetery. Consequently, Ms. Butler established the *Wildwood Cemetery Association*, composed of staff and community volunteers. Through the Association's ongoing efforts, the cemetery and the memories of thousands of persons are being reclaimed and given the respect and dignity they deserve.

Markers

A numbered concrete block originally marked each grave and many of these are now damaged or missing. The *Numbers to Names* campaign intends to place a dignified and permanent headstone inscribed with the name and dates of birth and death on each grave. You can participate by donating \$70 that will provide a marker for one grave.

Research

Since 1997, volunteers and *Wildwood Cemetery Association* members have donated hundreds of hours in exacting research. Now, for the first time, the Association has personal information linked to each of the approximately 3,600 graves in the cemetery. Volunteers continue to maintain this database so the life of each person buried in the cemetery can be remembered with respect.

Memorial

The *Association* plans to build a memorial to the patients buried in *Wildwood Cemetery*. This memorial will introduce visitors to the complex history of the cemetery.

Surroundings

The hospital's Grounds Department and the *Wildwood Association* work together to make the cemetery an attractive and peaceful setting for families and visitors. To date, a new entrance, fences, and initial landscaping are now in place. Future projects include additional landscaping, trees, pathways, and sitting areas.

Restoring Dignity ... *From Numbers to Names*

Yes! *I support the WILDWOOD CEMETERY ASSOCIATION'S work to remember those once forgotten!*

\$100.00 *(will provide one inscribed marker & a memorial donation)*

PLEASE PRINT

\$ 70.00 *(will provide one grave with a personal, permanently inscribed marker)*

\$ 50.00

\$ 25.00

_____ *Full Name*

_____ *Street Address or PO Box*

Other

**Please contact me
about other ways
in which I can support the
Wildwood Cemetery Association**

_____ *Telephone Number(s)*

_____ *City, State ZIP*

For additional information, please call Community Relations, Terrell State Hospital, 972.551.8639

Please make checks payable to: VOLUNTEER SERVICES COUNCIL, WC FUND, Terrell State Hospital, PO Box 70, Terrell, TX 75160.0070

Contributions made to the Volunteer Services Council are deductible by the donor as provided in §170, Internal Revenue Code