

FRIENDS OF FOREST HILL PARK

The Forest Hill Park Post



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President	Patricia Wood
Vice President	Terry Fitzgerald
Treasurer	Lee Shewmake
Secretary	Carolyn Paulette

www.friendsofforesthillpark.org

A Noon Mark in the Park

Patricia Wood

Some people live in Forest Hill and surrounding neighborhoods for decades and do not know there is a Stone Pyramid in the park. It stands in the 3800 block of Forest Hill Avenue about 125 feet north of the asphalt service road. It's constructed of granite stones and is about 10 feet tall. Hard to miss, maybe, but for a long number of years it resembled a green blob covered with English ivy. Gradually, through the efforts of volunteers, the pyramid was uncovered and rediscovered. But who constructed it and why?

Local legend is that the stone pyramid serves as a memorial over the grave of the Forest Hill Park bear. The bear was an attraction in the amusement park that operated near 41st and Forest Hill Avenue more than 100 years ago. Several years after the death and burial of the bear, Works Progress Administration workers building stone walls and pathways in the park during the 1930s used some granite stones to erect a pyramid over the grave of the beloved bear. That's the myth. If true, it's probably a coincidence that the four corners of the pyramid indicate north, east, south and west.

Going back farther than the days of the amusement park, Forest Hill Park land was a working plantation during the mid 1800s, growing fields of wheat, Indian corn, oats, Irish potatoes and hay. The owner, Holden Rhodes, also had a substantial dairy that produced milk and butter. The land remained under cultivation with little space for large trees such as those growing in the park today, so Rhodes would have had a fair view of the stone pyramid from the east-facing windows of his plantation house.

During the 1800s and earlier, people relied on sundials or other time indicators to learn the time of day. The simplest time indicators registered noon by casting a shadow directly on a north-south horizontal line. The north-south lines were stable to ensure accuracy and were made of stones, wood – any available material that could be used. Those devices or structures that cast the shadows were called “noon marks.”

Melvin Fulks thinks that the stone pyramid was Holden Rhodes' noon mark. Each day, when the shadow of the capstone of the pyramid fell upon a north-south line on the ground, an eye-witness would know that it was noon. This person would somehow signal the plantation house and Mr. Rhodes' mechanical house clock would be set to the correct time.

“Noon marks were common during those days, nothing to wonder about,” Mr. Fulks said. Certainly, Holden Rhodes would have had enough money to own a mechanical clock as well as build the pyramid “noon



The granite stones of the lower half of the pyramid appear to have supported a larger top than what we see today.



Mortar made with larger rocks was used to construct the lower portion of the pyramid. Both types of mortar can be seen in this photo.

mark”.

Locating the north-south line north of the pyramid would add credence to the noon mark theory. However, a recent visit to the pyramid presented a dilemma. The pyramid base, up to a height of about three feet, is broader than the top and a different type of mortar was used to secure the stones. The mortar on the top portion is made with finer gravel than the bottom section which suggests that the top portion is newer. The broader base suggests that the pyramid was initially taller. If the pyramid isn't as originally built, the noon mark it casts today would not fall on a north-south line used during Holden Rhodes' time.

That leaves us, for the time being, with the pyramid's existence continuing to be a mystery. Is the stone pyramid the grave marker for a much-loved bear or was it a time indicator for a wealthy local plantation owner?



Richmond City Council Recognizes Friends of Forest Hill Park



During the February 12th City Council meeting, 4th District Councilwoman Kristen Larsen and 5th District Councilman Parker Agelasto sponsored a community service award for Friends of Forest Hill Park. Seven FFHP members managed to navigate the chamber crowded with people interested in Mayor Stoney's meals tax proposal. L to R: Pat Wood, Suzette Lyon, Christie Owens, Ann Mays, Carolyn Paulette, Mary Godsey, and Andrew Stevens accepted the certificate on behalf of all of the volunteers who have made Forest Hill Park a healthier, more sustainable environment for native flora and fauna.

Park Champions

The ground behind these weed warriors was covered with English ivy before they went to work January 27th, pulled it and placed it in a very large pile for disposal. Young native trees such as beech, oak and sassafras, have a better chance of surviving and thriving in Forest Hill Park without ivy and other invasive vines growing at their base taking nutrients and water away from them.



Friends of Forest Hill Park & Coqui Cyclery
present

FOREST HILL SPRING CLASSIC

APRIL 8th - FOREST HILL PARK
1pm - 5pm

Race Categories: 18 and under | 14 and under | 6 and under
\$25.00 Registration Fee ● \$28.00 after April 5, 2018

Training Sessions Prior to Race
PRIZES FOR EACH RACE



Register Online:
www.friendsofforesthillpark.org

Registration Forms @ Coqui Cyclery
3416 Semmes Avenue



AURA LEE'S



Kristen Larson
4th District Council Representative

WESTOVER
HILLS
neighborhood
association

JOYNER
FINE PROPERTIES

Christina Barrett Shaw
Christina Barrett Shaw
REAL ESTATE



Forest Hill



HOUSE OF HAYES
GRAPHIC DESIGN

POOLHOUSE



RHOTEN TREE SERVICE
804-598-7571

