

**Walter J. Hoxie and Mary Russell Day Gravesites
Sunnyside Cemetery (5300 19th Street North)
HPC #99-01 - Designated June 2000**



The Hoxie/Day Gravesites at Sunnyside Cemetery (the third oldest cemetery in St. Petersburg) recognize the efforts of Walter John Hoxie and his daughter, Mary Russell (Cappy) Day, who were instrumental in establishing girl scouting in America and locally in St. Petersburg. Walter John Hoxie authored the first Girl Scouts Handbook; he is also recognized as an important naturalist and ornithologist whose portrait is on display at the Smithsonian Institute and the Library of Congress. Originally from Rochester, New York, Walter Hoxie developed a love of nature and birds in his youth. After serving for the Union in the Civil War, he served as an "Educator of the Freed Man" to assist in the social transition for newly freed slaves, and later as a surveyor for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in Jacksonville. As an educator and a surveyor, Hoxie developed his skills as a naturalist in the South. After various teaching positions relocated him to the northeast, Walter Hoxie returned to the South permanently in 1879, taking various positions in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Finally, Hoxie settled in Savannah in 1901. He became a natural history instructor at Bethesda, the oldest orphanage in America. In his free time, he wrote over 500 articles for the *Savannah Morning News* about nature, birds, and other items related to the outdoors.

In concert with these activities, Walter John Hoxie also held a girls' nature study group of about sixteen girls every Saturday. These girls would go on to become one of the first two patrols in the Girl Guides of America. The Girl Guides of America was formally established by Juliette Gordon Low (with help from Hoxie) in Savannah in 1912. The name Girl Guides was shortly changed to Girl Scouts of America. In 1913, Walter John Hoxie wrote what is known as the first Girl Scouts Handbook, "*How Girls Can Help Their Country*." In 1927, Hoxie moved to St. Petersburg to live with his daughter, Mary Russell Day. He continued to write articles about nature for the *Evening Independent*. In his later years, he was nearly blinded by cataracts. He died on July 30, 1934 at the age of 86.

His daughter, "Cappy Day," brought girl scouting to Pinellas County by establishing the first local troop. She was also actively involved in other important local organizations such as the Animal Welfare League and Children's Home Society. She moved to Savannah with her father where she attended school and graduated. Thereafter, she pursued the teaching profession, teaching for eighteen years in Savannah. In 1923, Mary Russell Day moved to St. Petersburg with her husband, Irving. She took a position teaching at the Central Primary Grammar School, which is now the site of the County Building on Mirror Lake. In 1924, as a direct result of her father's interest in girl scouting, she started the first girl scout troop in Pinellas County. As the leaders were called captains when scouting first began, Mary Day became known as "Cappy Day" in Pinellas County.

Mary Russell Day is important for other noteworthy activities. She helped to create the original parcel wrapping station near the Open Air Post Office (to fund the girls' camping trips), organize the Animal Welfare League (a predecessor of the S.P.C.A.), and establish the local chapter of the Children's Home Society. In 1957, Cappy Day was present at the memorial dedication of her father's gravesite at Sunnyside Cemetery. She passed away on January 22, 1964 in Dade City, Florida. Her body was transported to a spot next to her father where she rests today. A grave marker reads "Mary Russell Day, Daughter of Walter J. Hoxie, Founder of Girl Scouting in Pinellas County, 'Cappy Day' to all her scouts."