

# Homes & Gardens

## Stone Dogs and Memorials Grace our Hill Gardens

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY RINDY O'BRIEN

**H**ave you ever noticed how many dog statues there are on Capitol Hill? We all know Hill residents love their pets. You can see it from morning to night as Lincoln Park, Stanton Park and Turtle Park are filled with pet owners throwing balls or Frisbees, chasing their dogs, or walking block after block as their dogs stop to smell the roses in every tree box available.

Judging from the number of stone dogs gracing the Hill's front doors and gardens, dogs also hold a special sway with Hill gardeners and homeowners. Throughout history, dogs have played a big part in people's everyday lives and have influenced art as well. Archeologists have found artifacts depicting dogs in all different kinds of civilization. The Hill gardens' stone dogs are representative of civilizations from the

Han Dynasty to Egyptian pharaohs and, of course, the Victorian era. Some of the dog sculptures are more functional serving as a flower container or doorstep.

In addition to the stone art sculptures, there are also rocks and headstones that mark the place where families have buried their beloved pets. Some of the stones have names of the buried pets while others just mark the spot. For many new homeowners, the stones are a genuine surprise found months after buying a house.

Officially, it is illegal to dispose of an animal on your property according to Sec. 11-3-7 Dead animals; Disposition in the 1978 District Code. However, many Hill residents will privately confess that they have buried their beloved dogs or cats in the corner of their yards. If you have questions about dis-

posal of your pet, you can contact the DC Department of Environment or your veterinarian.

### Guarding our Possessions

The Washington Humane Society reports that DC residents often tell them one of the important reasons they are looking to adopt a dog is for protection. The choice of placing a dog sculpture near your front door may reflect the same impulse. The dog sculptures known as Feng shui Fu dogs or Imperial Guardians Lions are considered strong protection symbols. Traditionally, the dogs were placed in the front of Imperial palaces, temples and government offices. The Fu Dogs were also a sign of family wealth and social status. So we shouldn't be surprised to see these good luck mythical guard

LEFT: The King Charles spaniel is just waiting for a bouquet of flowers on A Street NE. RIGHT: A Fu Dog guards a Hill home at the corner of Seventh and C streets NE following in the Chinese tradition of the Imperial Lions.





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The James Anthony Colias memorial bench at the Historic Congressional Cemetery memorializes his life with wife and dogs – Poopsie and Baby Pie.

dogs protecting our Hill homes.

Dogs were also held in high esteem during the Victorian era, thanks to the passion of Queen Victoria for her many dogs. The King Charles spaniel was one of her favorites, and she often commissioned statues and paintings of her cherished pets. In addition to the spaniels, she had greyhounds, mastiffs and collies. Given the Victorian style of many Hill homes, it seems a natural choice to add statues depicting the Charles spaniel and other Victorian style statues.

### A Lifetime Together

Queen Victoria was also known for the poetic and very sentimental tributes she wrote to memorialize her pets, like the one: "Here lies Dash ... His attachment was without selfishness, his playfulness without malice, his fidelity without deceit."

At the Hill's Congressional Cemetery, there are two memorials that celebrate the close relation-

ship of people to their dogs. A picnic table with two benches in marble is situated close to the entry gates just yards from the gatehouse. The tributes etched into the table remember the family and also a long list of family dogs – Bucky, Pudgy, Major, Jeep I and II, Rosie I, II and III, Frannie I and II, Mimi I and II, and Madame Nu. It is definitely one of the favorite stops on the Congressional Cemetery tour.

At the other end of the cemetery is a more recent bench that has etchings on each side. The front side expressed the deceased couples unending devotion – "A life time together wasn't enough." And on the backside of the bench are two names – Poopsie and Baby Pie. Cindy Hayes, a volunteer docent at the cemetery, verifies that the memorial bench does indeed celebrate the couple's two dogs.

Hayes also notes that pets are not allowed to be buried at the Congressional Cemetery, although she sus-

A marble picnic table and benches at the Congressional Cemetery remembers 16 family dogs including Bucky, Pudgy and Madame Nu.



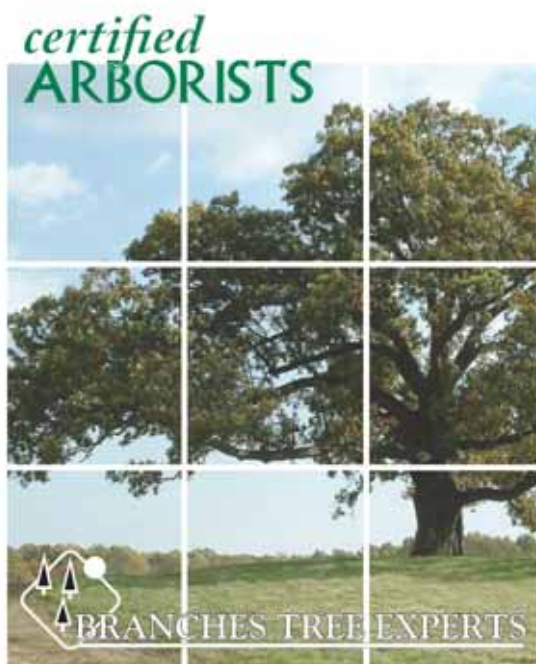
pects that some ashes may have been co-mingled over the years. The 2010 winter newsletter of the Association for the Preservation of the Historic Congressional Cemetery, the organization that now manages the cemetery, has a wonderful article about a Foreign Service widow who petitioned to have her husband's ashes returned from his foreign post to the Congressional Cemetery along with their beloved dog. She was denied her request to include her dog's ashes and spent years in protest to no avail. The entire story can be accessed through [www.congressional-cemetery.org](http://www.congressional-cemetery.org).



The soft light of afternoon shines on the Victorian style statue of woman and adoring dog at the corner of Second and F streets NE.

The stone dogs adorning our gardens continue to keep ancient traditions alive while giving our gardens and homes good prosperity and protection. The statues also provide a wonderful way to memorialize the joy and life that our pets have given to us.

*Rindy O'Brien lives on the Hill and loves all the dogs on the Hill, real or stone. If you have thoughts or want to share your memorial, e-mail [rindyob@mac.com](mailto:rindyob@mac.com). ★*



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