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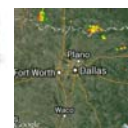
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## Little Rock cemetery is the 'Westminster Abbey of Arkansas'

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Who says the dead tell no tales? At Mount Holly Cemetery, high school students give voice to the deceased one night a year.

Established in 1843, the cemetery is on the National Register of Historic Places. It's nicknamed the "Westminster Abbey of Arkansas" for the notables buried there. Walk among its Victorian statuary and you'll find the graves of 11 governors, 22 Little Rock mayors, movie star Eleanor Counts and a Pulitzer Prize winner (John Gould Fletcher, for poetry). Veterans from the Revolutionary War through Desert Storm are buried here, including four Confederate generals.

On the second Tuesday of October, high school drama students choose among these and lesser-known residents of Mount Holly for 16 graveside skits.

The students study their subjects' lives, write scripts, don costumes and act out skits that draw as many as 2,000 people. Tales of the Crypt is no spooky pre-Halloween attraction, however, but a historical performance.

At other times of the year, themed tours cherry-pick stories of the dead: the famous and not-so famous, including former slaves, ministers, suffragettes, an 8-year-old Confederate drummer boy and the wife of a Cherokee chief who died on the Trail of Tears.

Then there's Lou Odom, described in her newspaper obituary as "the keeper of a house of ill fame" in the former red-light district where Little Rock's bustling River Market district now stands.

Dr. Matthew Cunningham is buried next to his wife, Eliza, the first white woman to live in what was Quapaw Indian territory. The doctor, a veteran of the War of 1812, bought 100 acres from a land speculator in what became the center of Little Rock. He was the first mayor.

The Southern Cross of Honor adorns the grave of Anna Sophia Crease, a Confederate spy who smuggled notes and goods under her saddle blanket. A Union general was sweet on her and refused to allow his men to question her.

Perhaps the most famous person buried at Mount Holly is boy martyr (and Texas native) David O. Dodd, convicted and executed as a Confederate spy at age 17. Each January visitors gather at his grave to mark the anniversary of his death.

*Katherine Rodeghier is a freelance writer in Illinois.*

### When you go

Mount Holly Cemetery, 1200 S. Broadway, Little Rock. Open daily; free. Check the website for information about scheduling specialty tours. [mounthollycemetery.com](http://mounthollycemetery.com).

This year's Tales of the Crypt is from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Oct. 8; free, but donations requested.

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