

## Birney Memorial Rose Garden

Deeply-rooted on the grounds of Marietta Middle School, rose bushes and marble adorn an historic garden memorializing Marietta's own education hero, Alice McClellan Birney, the founder of what is currently known as the National PTA (Parent Teacher Association.)

Mrs. Birney was born in Marietta in the year 1858, and as a young adult, taught at the Haynes Street School. "Alice dreamed of a national organization for families and children, while teaching underprivileged children in Marietta," explained Marietta Mayor Steve 'Thunder' Tumlin, also a former Marietta High School PTA President. She felt passionately about the success of all children and worked to bring mothers and teachers together for their benefit.

In 1897, Mrs. Birney's dream became a reality as she spearheaded the organization of the first Parent Teacher Association, originally known as the National Congress of Mothers, serving as the organization's president until 1902. Birney died of cancer in 1907, at the young age of 49. In 1933, fundraising efforts began to memorialize and honor the efforts of Alice McLellan Birney. Marietta's Virginia Crosby began the process and with the support of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), PTAs throughout the country, the National PTA and the Roberts family, funds were raised for the completion of a memorial and the dedication of the Sun Court took place on September 27, 1942.



The Sun Court, referred to today as the Birney Memorial Rose Garden, was dedicated on the grounds of then Marietta High School - occupied today by Marietta Middle School. The sundial, made of Georgia marble, is centered in a square of engraved stone slabs, contributed by PTAs of each of our United States. Hedges surround the courtyard and forty-two rose bushes, including Peace, Veterans Honor and Cherry Parfait border the memorial garden. There are community benches for students and visitors to sit and reflect. The marble archway was added in 1954 by the Marietta Board of Education.



"The Birney Memorial Rose Garden is such a blessing and legacy to our community," states Merrilyn Eastham (nee: Welch), a 1949 Marietta High School graduate. "The garden has always been a wonderful landmark in Marietta as a place to reflect."

The Marietta Mens' Garden Club, now called the Marietta Gardeners, were the initial caretakers of the garden and in 2017, the charge was transferred to one of Marietta's newest garden clubs, the Marietta Daisies Garden Club. The "Daisy Darlings" (19 volunteers) have contributed more than 150 hours to restore and support this historic garden. With monies from fundraising (including a grant from the Friends of Brumby Hall), the Marietta Daisies have been able to make many improvements to the memorial.

Annually, the Marietta Daisies volunteers participate in rose care training, including deadheading, shaping and fertilizing. Other improvements include the addition of a viable water source and the addition of an irrigation system within the rose beds. The Daisy Darlings have also partnered with three master rosarians to identify several rose plants in the garden. Several projects are on the immediate improvement list, including restoration/repair/replacement of many state tiles. Donations can be made to the Marietta City Schools Foundation on behalf of the historic Birney Memorial Rose Garden.