

“Grave Matters”

Historic Oakwood Cemetery

Preservation Association

Syracuse, New York

Fall, 2017 Volume 25, Number 2

President’s Message ...

.... Connie Palumb



As we approach the Holiday Season, it’s time to reflect on our accomplishments and activities of the past year.

The Oakwood Ghost Trail is a collaborative effort between ESF, LeMoyne, and SU students and staff. Our own Paul Harvey compiled the stories and legends of supernatural happenings recorded as having occurred in Oakwood to form the basis for the two-mile Ghost Trail. There is a pamphlet available including a map, created by Syracuse Community Geography, along with twelve sites and the stories associated with each location.

Work continues on the project involving S.U. Professor Koziara and his students who are creating designs for several new mausolea facades located in Dedication Valley. These creations should greatly improve the looks of those mausolea which have been sealed shut for years.

We are busy planning an interesting (and hopefully exciting) group of tours for next year. This year’s tours were very well attended and engaging, as always.

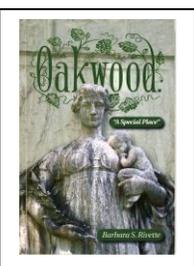
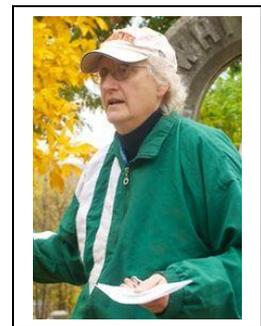
Don’t forget, if you don’t already own a copy of our book authored by local historian Barbara S. Rivette, we have a new supply for holiday giving. It’s titled: *Oakwood, A Special Place* and is priced at \$20.00. Checks may be made out to HOCPA and mailed to me at: 102 Bradford Lane, Syracuse, NY 13224.

We are most grateful for your generosity to as well as ongoing interest in Oakwood Cemetery. I urge you to contact me anytime at: cspalumb@hotmail.com with any concerns or suggestions.

Editor’s Notes ...

... Sue Greenhagen

As our tour season ended, I took a look at our attendance statistics. It seems that this past summer was our *lowest* attendance for the past six years. We had a total of 112 folks on our five 2017 walking tours. Sounds good? Well, there were 201 people last year! For those six years we’ve averaged about 150 people per year, or about 30 people per tour. They say you can prove anything with statistics, but that 112 stands out. Are the tours getting stale? Is the tour guide (yours truly) getting stale? Are we in a giant rut? If anyone has any suggestions, please let me know. (greenhsh@morrisville.edu) We do these tours for *you*. Let us know how *you* feel.



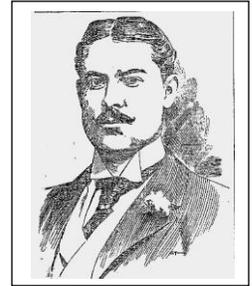
Oakwood: a Special Place by Barbara Rivette

Our president, Connie Palumb, already mentioned the Oakwood book we have available, but it bears repeating. It’s through these sales that we raise money needed to undertake our projects. Right now we’re looking at the restoration of Silsbee Chapel, and we know that it won’t be cheap. In addition, consider a membership to HOCPA. It all counts and it all adds up. Help us protect a true treasure - Oakwood Cemetery.

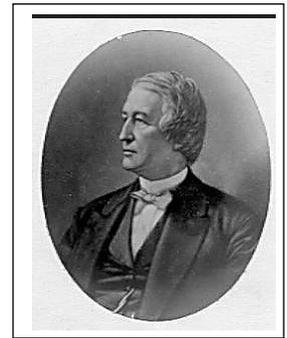
What's It Worth Today?

As we look around Oakwood Cemetery, delve into the lives of some of its “residents,” we often come across some interesting financial facts. However, we might not appreciate the magnitude of some of the amounts cited unless we can adjust them for inflation. Fortunately, there's a website that will adjust a currency value into 2016 terms, going all the way back to 1800. Go to <https://westegg.com/inflation/>. Let's take a look at seven stories of Oakwood, with the money amounts involved converted into modern levels:

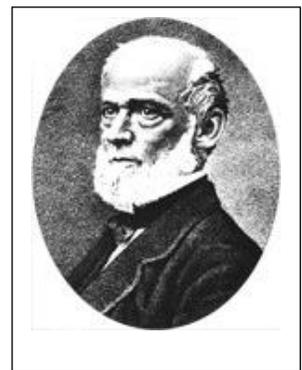
Alonzo Chester Yates, Jr. (1872-1899) - Lonnie Yates' father made a fortune in the men's ready-made clothing business back in the 1850s and 60s. When his father died in 1880, Lonnie, who was only eight years old, *inherited 4 million dollars*. As he grew into adulthood, he found all sorts of ways to squander his fortune, including drinking, carousing, and generally living up to his reputation as the “Syracuse Playboy.” Imagine Lonnie in a horse and buggy, speeding down South Salina Street as fast as possible. He did take the precaution of having a coachman with him blowing a bugle to warn of his approach. Lonnie died at the age of twenty-seven. What would his inheritance be worth today? Answer: *One hundred million dollars*.



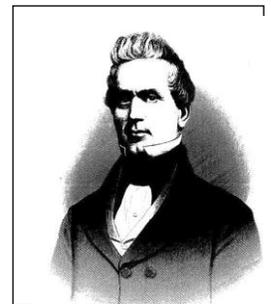
Elias W. Leavenworth (1803-1887) - The resume' of Elias Leavenworth is truly remarkable. Besides being known as the “Father of Oakwood Cemetery,” he was twice mayor of Syracuse, a New York State Assemblyman, a New York Secretary of State, a United States Congressman, and also was the son-in-law of Joshua Forman. Oakwood was always close to his heart, so when he died in 1887, he made sure to leave the cemetery \$1000 for the perpetual care of his monument in Section 13. What would his bequest be worth today? Answer: *\$27,000*. Taking it one step further, he died 130 years ago. Over that span of time his bequest, seemingly more than adequate in 1887, comes to a mere \$7.70 per year or \$200 per year in today's currency.



Amos Westcott (1815-1873) - An interesting fact about Amos Westcott actually has nothing to do with his reputation as one of the foremost dentists in New York State or with his election as mayor of Syracuse in 1860. In 1835, he graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, earning a degree in civil engineering, the first class at RPI to do so. With his credentials, it is surprising that he got mixed up with one of the great hoaxes of all time - the Cardiff Giant. The plan was hatched by some locals. A 10-foot stone figure was buried on some farmland south of Syracuse, and was “discovered” in 1869. Westcott invested \$3000 in the promotion of the petrified figure. A year later, 1870, the hoax was exposed. As they say, “The jig was up.” The giant today reclines at the Farmers' Museum in Cooperstown. What is today's value of Amos Westcott's investment? Answer: *approximately \$55,000*.

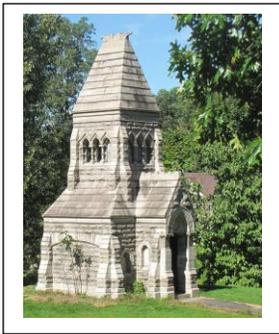
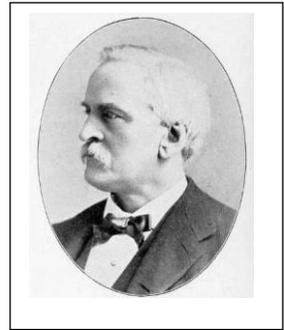


Charles A. Baker (1798-1881) - Twenty acres of the old section of Oakwood Cemetery was bought from Charles Baker in 1858 for the sum of \$9,500. That comes out to \$450 per acre. He was one of the largest landowners in the south side, and his land included a fine stand of oak trees. What is this transaction's value in today's money? Answer: *\$9,500 equals \$267,391* and the per acre cost today is \$13,370. Seventy-two acres had already been bought from Henry Raynor the year before. He was paid \$15,000 (\$392,220) for the acreage, or \$208 (\$5,440) per acre. (continued on page 3)



(continued from page 2)

George Barnes (1827-1892) - Barnes came to America from England in 1844, and began the study of law in the firm of Wilkinson & Bagg. Through John Wilkinson he became associated with the Syracuse & Utica Railroad, and later the New York Central Railroad. Barnes also became friends with Charles Sedgwick, and in 1851 he joined Sedgwick's law firm. Being involved with the law and the railroads provided the financial means for him to build, in 1853, a fine mansion at 930 James Street. In 1892, sailing back from a European trip, Barnes caught cold, and he died. At his death his estate was worth *\$825,000*. What would be its value today? Answer: The value would be *over \$22 million*.



Crouse Mausoleum (Section 16, 1884) - Two years prior to his death, former mayor John J. Crouse hired H.Q. French from New York City to design the Crouse family mausoleum. It was designed in the Romanesque Revival style and was constructed by the Smith Granite Company of Westerly, RI. The interior used polished granite and Italian marble. It has stained glass windows and bronze doors with a lion's head motif. Leading up to the front door is a 35-ton stone pathway, 35 feet long, 5 feet wide and 10 inches thick. The immense stone had to be brought in on an 8-wheeled wagon, with wheels 18 inches wide, and pulled by 10 spans of horses. In the mid-1880s, this mausoleum cost *\$50,000* to build. What would it cost today? Answer: *Over \$1.3 million*.

Knowing today's value of old-time money gives us a better appreciation of what these movers and shakers of old-time Syracuse were *really* worth.

Cemetery Symbols

On our tour of Section 24 this summer, we saw the headstone pictured at right. On top is a sheaf of wheat, which usually denotes a harvest, or person who lived a long life. Some further research revealed that Silas Smith and Eunice Bagg, from Lanesboro, MA, were the parents of Cora C. Smith, wife of Gen. Daniel P. Wood. Silas and Eunice were both born in the 1700s, but Eunice lived to the age of 74, dying in 1856. The remains of Silas and Eunice were removed to Oakwood Cemetery in 1867.



Forever Young...

Among the most poignant headstones in Oakwood are those of children. Case in point is the grave of "Florence" in Section 13. Her full name is Florence M. Howlett, and she was the daughter of Minerva and Alfred A. Howlett. The Howletts were an early family in Onondaga Valley, and their homestead is located on Howlett Hill. Alfred Howlett was a prominent citizen having made a fortune in banking, railroad, business and industry in Syracuse. All his wealth, however, was to no avail in the life of his daughter. Florence was born on 2 February 1857 and died six months later, on 1 August 1857. On her headstone is just her name, Florence, and a dove, a symbol of peace and purity.



You Never Know...

Have you ever been researching a topic in an old newspaper when a totally unrelated headline catches your attention? If you're ever looking at page six of the 27 November 1902 issue of the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, this may happen to you. The headline read, "LOADED CIGARS STIR PANIC IN CITY HALL." There's an article worth reading. It seems one of our Oakwood "residents" was quite a practical joker. Charles J. Batcharie, an assistant health inspector in Mayor Jay Kline's administration, brought to work at City Hall a box of innocent looking Havana cigars which were actually exploding cigars. Going down the list of his colleagues/victims as their cigars exploded, here are the results of his prank:



- Edwin C. Tallcott, Mayor Kline's executive clerk, thought anarchists were blowing up the building;
- Andy Zinsmeister, Deputy City clerk, was seen running down the hallway;
- Health Inspector James P. Maloney saved his cigar, and lit up on his way home on a crowded street car. Of course, panic ensued;
- Reporter Michael Kingsley took two cigars, one to share with a friend.

They both lit up out on East Genesee Street, and "spouted flames in unison;"

- Baron Neville, "the much-married crank," was out in front of City Hall when offered a cigar. "The Baron applied a match, puffed and played Mount Pelee while a score of passers-by applauded." [note: Mount Pelee, located in Martinique, had experienced a deadly volcanic eruption earlier that year.]

Batcharie was a native Syracusan born in 1868. He was a noted salesman having worked for Bartel's Brewing Company, Barnes 'Cycle Company, Chase Motor Truck Company, among others. He was for two years a member of Mayor Jay Kline's administration. He was actively involved in fraternal organizations, and in 1903 he was elected president of the Syracuse Indoor Baseball League. He died in 1929 and, along with his wife, Kathryn, is buried in Section 59. He was remembered fondly by his friends and associates. Today we remember Charles J. Batcharie, as the *Post-Standard* back in 1902 called him, "the purveyor of pyro-technics disguised as fragrant Havannas."



Tours...

In addition to our regularly scheduled summer walking tours, we again had high school and college students visit Oakwood. Eighty-five students from West Genesee High School took our "Live Oaks & Dead Folks" tour in preparation for their Oakwood elegies assignment. Melissa Chessher's magazine writing students from the Newhouse School (pictured at right) toured in preparation for their writing assignment. It is very gratifying to be able to introduce so many students to the people, both famous and infamous, residing in historic Oakwood.



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We are most grateful to all our donors for their continued interest and support.

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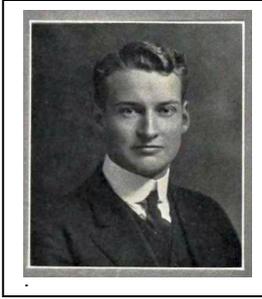
Please make checks payable to **HOCPA**, and mail to:

HOCPA, PO BOX 15065, Syracuse NY 13215

Oakwood All-Star

... Louis Addison Waters

This year marks the 100th anniversary of America's entry into World War I. As 2017 winds down, it seems fitting to honor a veteran of "the war to end all wars." Louis Waters will represent the more than 12,000 men from Onondaga County who answered their country's call in 1917 and 1918.



Louis Waters was born in 1895, and was the son of Syracuse lawyer, Louis L. Waters, and his wife, Cora. He attended North High School, but transferred to Philips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts where he graduated in 1916. He entered Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but in November of 1917, he enlisted. *The Syracuse Journal* of 28 November reported that there was a rush of couples applying for marriage licenses at the city clerk's office. Included in that rush was Louis and his bride-to-be, Mildred Bausch. Having been commissioned a second lieutenant, Waters headed for Madison Barracks, and then to Fort Niagara for training. He was sent to Europe as a member of the 26th Infantry, First Division, in late January, 1918. A June 17 letter home described his surroundings. He was in a "dugout" with 30 feet of soil above. He slept in a "chicken wire bunk," that is netting thrown over poles. They slept by day and lived by night. He talked of ruined homes, shattered forests, torn and wasted fields, and the pitiful refugees. The Battle of Soissons took place from July 18 through to July 22. Waters' regiment was in the second wave of Allied troops under Field Marshall Foch to meet the Germans who were pushing toward Paris. This battle resulted in an Allied victory, and was Waters' last engagement.

Lt. Waters returned to Syracuse on leave in September of 1918. He shared his war stories with friends and even gave a talk at the University Club on the Second Battle of the Marne (Soissons). He always stressed the valor of his comrades. In 1919 Waters got official notification of his death in the war. It seems that on July 17, just prior to Soissons, he gave his sweater to another officer from the 16th Regiment. That officer was probably killed, and the only identification was the sweater with Waters' name in it.

Louis A. Waters survived the war, took up photography, and then became a criminologist, serving the Syracuse Police Department from 1948 to 1968. He established and directed the police laboratory, and was the author of articles of police forensics. He died on 13 November 1973 and is buried in Section C. Thank you, Lt. Waters, and all your comrades, for your service. Rest in Peace.



address correction requested

**H.O.C.P.A.
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