



# *Grave Matters*

Historic Oakwood Cemetery

Preservation Association

Syracuse, New York

Fall, 2020 Volume 28, Number 2

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## President's Message - Submitted by Paul Harvey

Our beloved president, Connie Palumb, has stepped down after many years of excellent service. So we begin a search for a new president, one with the same vision and commitment as Connie, a person who will inspire us to even greater efforts on behalf of Oakwood Cemetery.

Because Connie always wrote impressive messages encouraging membership and showing great leadership, we would like to follow her example. Largely due to her leadership we have a vibrant new board and two prospective new members. We have added younger professionals with diverse backgrounds who have themselves been developing new programs and activities, and bringing in new members and volunteers.

Even during these challenging days, we have expanded our offerings and, while placing the original tours on hold, are offering a number of self-guided tours. We are also taking small groups out, safely, by request. We have several new trails including a marvelous new tree trail. We are working with Syracuse University to turn this trail into a "smartphone" tour.

We have a new website, a new book titled *Guide to Trees of Oakwood Cemetery*, and a formal relationship with SUNY-ESF. They have formed a friend's group and now have a seat on the board. We are experimenting with new ideas in honey production and in harvesting downed trees. We have a group focused on restoring and protecting the mausoleums and others who are doing detailed research. We also have groups of students and adults who are clearing long neglected graves of brush, helping in restorative projects, and helping develop the trails.

We have also partnered with SUNY-ESF in an effort to bring back the beloved American Chestnut trees of the past. All of this and so much more was begun under Connie's watch and we are all excited and dedicated to continuing the efforts.

Best of all, Connie will still be on the board to help guide us in the future.



## Editor's Notes - Sue Greenhagen



One thing that makes me really mad is the vandalism that has taken place in Oakwood Cemetery. Actually any vandalism in any cemetery makes me mad. The most audacious act I have seen in a long time is the spray painting of the Shipman mausoleum (see page 3). That mausoleum, the smallest in the cemetery and located in Section 4, had its entire interior spray painted in bright colors in a checkerboard pattern. Is nothing sacred? Azariah Shipman was a doctor, a Civil War veteran, and he and his wife, Mary, deserve better. I know, I'm preaching to the choir. We've had similar "tagging" at the Green mausoleum (one of the largest in the cemetery), and even at the chapel. Our Board has had to resort to a video surveillance system. The "old section" of the cemetery is very secluded. Occasionally a police cruiser will swing through, but not often enough. Maybe ~~we~~ need to step up. By "we" I mean anyone who cares about Oakwood Cemetery, and there are a lot of us out there. Our volunteers have stepped up big time in repairing damage done by paint. There are plans to reset some of the headstones that have been tipped over, although I have to admit that Mother Nature can be almost as troublesome as vandals. Even those of us who just walk in Oakwood can be alert. Report any damage that you see. Send us an email at [OakwoodHocpa@gmail.com](mailto:OakwoodHocpa@gmail.com). Let's tackle this problem together.

## The NEW Tree Trail

The old Tree Trail was in trouble. Two of the trees were gone, victims of old age. The original route had never been ideal as it was not a complete loop and left folks a mile away from where they began with no obvious direction to go in, except to retrace their steps.

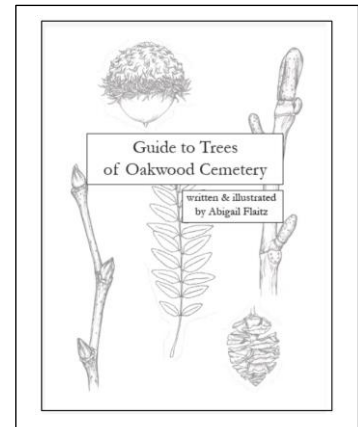
So board member Hilary Donahue, a lover of trees as well as all things natural, stepped up to fill the gap. She has done much more! The new Trail is a wonder, connecting some of the most interesting and lovely trees in the Cemetery and providing an energetic mile and a half walk, perfect for someone wanting a quick, healthy exercise routine.

There is a map and photos of the trees on our website ([hocpa.org/cemetery-map/](http://hocpa.org/cemetery-map/)) but be warned, it is a scavenger hunt for the moment as there are no signs except for a three-inch label on each tree (see picture at right). If you don't have time for that, there are two answers: contact board member Paul Harvey ([luludoodah@aol.com](mailto:luludoodah@aol.com)) for a guided walk, using the safety measures needed during these times or wait a few months. By springtime we plan to have a smart phone trail, developed by Syracuse University Professor of Geography, Jonnell D. Allen, which will allow folks to use their phones or pads to walk the route.



### *Guide to Trees of Oakwood Cemetery*

Embark on a self-guided tour of the magnificent trees in Oakwood Cemetery, a 160-acre historic land that neighbors SUNY ESF. Meant for novice and experienced tree enthusiasts alike, *Guide to Trees of Oakwood Cemetery* covers the 38 most common species, hybrids, and genera of trees that can be found in Oakwood. Each are described, illustrated, and marked on a high quality, colored map. Instead of most field guides where identification is often without certainty, you can be confident you are looking at the right species. \$10.00, free shipping through PayPal or by check to HOCPA, 102 Bradford Lane, Syracuse NY 13224. This book was written and illustrated by the uber talented, Abigail Flaitz.



More information at [hocpa.org/reintroduction-of-rare-trees](http://hocpa.org/reintroduction-of-rare-trees)



### The SUNY/ESF “Crypt Keepers” are Back!

Now known as the “ESF Friends of Oakwood,” they are SUNY/ESF students meeting the challenge of the covid-19 pandemic by removing brush, working on drainage patterns and erosion damage, uncovering long lost architecture, protecting our new trees and fighting the graffiti pests. They work in smaller groups now, wear masks and avoid getting too close but they are doing amazing work. Most work every Saturday, while others work on dedicated projects during the week. They have nearly a hundred members and continue to grow.



Shown at right are before and after photos of work done in 2 hours by ESF senior Ryan Palace (also an Eagle Scout).



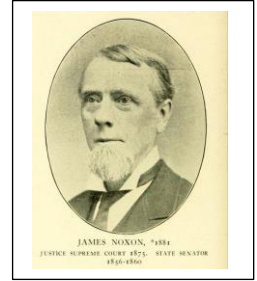
Quote from volunteer coordinator, Paul Harvey: “There are now over 90 members of the group, though they don't (thankfully) all show up at once.”

## Obituary for a House: submitted by Davis Haas

The Syracuse community recently witnessed the demolition of an historic home on the north side of the city, 406 Danforth Street. The house was known as the Catherine Murray Home.

The house was built around 1850 for James Noxon, a local lawyer (at right). In 1864, the house was purchased by Catherine and Michael Murray. Michael was a wealthy salt manufacturer who died just two years after moving in. Catherine took over their estate and successfully managed the couple's salt holdings for over forty years. When Catherine passed away in 1908, she was considered one of Syracuse's wealthiest women.

For several years, the Greater Syracuse Land Bank has attempted to find a buyer for this house. The house was most recently listed for sale at an asking price of \$1,000 with estimated renovations nearing \$500,000.



Many people showed interest and the Land Bank conducted dozens of showings over 2.5 years, but no one felt confident enough to save it. The building has suffered from many years of prior neglect, having been vacant since at least 2001, resulting in severe deterioration. Two of the walls of the structure were collapsing deeming the house unsafe and threatening the safety of nearby residents. Any future restoration project would ultimately require a buyer to construct almost an entirely new home. The house was deemed structurally compromised and unfit for renovation or reoccupation. It was demolished in early September, 2020.

I visited the site during demolition and was given one of the bricks from the home by the demolition crew. I took the brick to the tombstone of James Noxon, the original owner, inside Oakwood Cemetery - Section 24. You can see the brick near the bottom left corner of his tombstone in the picture at left. Hopefully, this gesture has made James Noxon and his family smile from above, even as their former home was lost forever.



### A Serious Issue: Graffiti

Graffiti has been a growing problem in Oakwood Cemetery. One of the most egregious examples was the Shipman mausoleum (shown at left), an open-air monument that has long been an attraction for visitors. Over the past year an ambitious painter created a multi-colored checkerboard pattern (shown below) across the entire inside wall over which later "artists" left jumbles of scrawls and obscenities.

After two attempts at removing the graffiti it was decided to temporarily cover the mess with a paint similar in color to the stone. Three SUNY/ESF members of the "ESF Friends of Oakwood," Nicholas



Timoshenko, Anna Marino and Danara Dormaeva labored and within three hours accomplished the work.

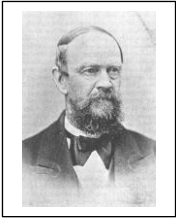
Two days later it had been retagged by the graffiti culprits! One of the HOCPA Board members, Paul Harvey, got so fed up he immediately covered the new scrawling with spray paint that obliterated the messages and left a note asking the villains to rethink what they were doing. The following Saturday the ESF student heroes repainted the entire surface, reposted the note and, to date, the walls have remained clean. Can it be that an appeal to the spray painters revealed they had a heart (and could read)?



We are not taking any chances. Board member Rick Naylor is arranging for a sturdy metal gate to be permanently installed that will prevent spray painting but also deny access to the mausoleum.

## Another of History's Mysteries: The Gravesite of Moses Summers submitted by Hugh Yeman

On Friday, September 9th, 1845, the following marriage notice appeared in Horace Greeley's *New-York Daily Tribune*, "At Syracuse, 4th, Moses Summers to Harriet L. Hunt."



Why would a nationally influential New York City newspaper print a notice about the marriage of the foreman at the *Onondaga Standard*? To answer that question, one must understand Syracuse's prominence within the political and cultural landscape of New York State during the antebellum period. Newspapers were nakedly partisan, and far more polarized than today. The *Syracuse Daily Courier and Union* was nationally regarded as one of the most pro-slavery, pro-South, anti-Emancipation newspapers in the country, and the *Syracuse Daily Standard* was its antithesis.

In 1848, Moses Summers bought Asahel Smith's share of the *Standard*, and the firm became "Agan & Summers." Abolitionists were unpopular at the time. Most Northerners considered them fringe extremists out to destroy the country. The *Standard* was one of the only mainstream social media platforms for anti-slavery firebrands such as Gerrit Smith, and Moses Summers was the driving force behind the *Standard*. His work was a cornerstone of Northern resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.

On October 1st, 1851, a group of abolitionists meeting for a convention in Syracuse disobeyed the Fugitive Slave Law when they prevented marshals from apprehending a local cooper known as Jerry. During the following days, as various supporters spirited Jerry away to Canada, news of the "Syracuse riot" rippled outward. Hundreds of newspaper articles across the country cheered for Jerry, and hundreds more shrieked for his recapture and the arrest of his "treasonous" abettors. The "Jerry Rescue" was a tectonic event on a national scale, and Summers was in the thick of the fight, risking injury and incarceration. Years later, anti-abolitionists were still howling for his arrest.

In 1862, Summers once again put his money where his mouth was when he signed up for the 149th New York Volunteer Infantry. During the entire course of his service from 1862 to 1865, he composed an astonishing output of letters which he sent back to Syracuse for publication in the *Standard* under the heading "SWORD AND PEN." His firsthand account, from a unit that saw horrifically bloody action, was one of the main ways in which people in Syracuse heard about the war.

Summers worked in ways modern students of history may not immediately recognize as important. But the way he lived his life, and put his life on the line, was of inestimable importance to the anti-slavery cause. He deserves recognition as a nationally influential figure, and I am honored to take some small part in reviving his memory.

As remarkable as Summers' life was, Oakwood enthusiasts may find his posthumous movements even more interesting. In the summer of 1882, the bodies of Moses and his wife Harriet were laid to rest in Oakwood. Almost twenty-six years later, in May of 1908, Moses's surviving relatives had their remains exhumed and moved out of the family plot to individual graves in another section of the cemetery. Five years later, in October of 1913, their remains were moved back to their original locations in the family plot.

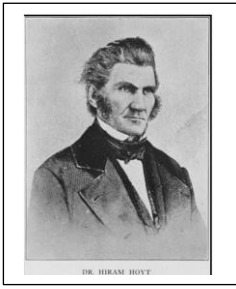
After many hours of research, including a great deal of correspondence with Judy English and Diane Medvitz, I came to no definite conclusion. However, given that there was no shortage of space in the Summers family plot in 1908, it seems likely that Moses's sister-in-law Annie Summers had the remains of Moses and Harriet moved out of sheer spite. The particulars of that spite will remain a mystery. However, we can make an educated guess.

Up until early 1865, Annie's mother, Elizabeth Donovan, lived in Richmond, Virginia. Just before the fall of that city in April, she got permission to evacuate North to live with Annie in Syracuse, where she died the following year. Now I believe Annie hated Moses because, during his time with the 149th, he participated in Sherman's March to the Sea, and wrote about his wartime experiences in his "Sword and Pen" letters that were published in the *Standard*. One of those letters was a description of Richmond, written when the 149th passed through the city about a month after it fell.

Special thanks to Oakwood staff who, in response to my inquiries, unearthed Moses's sunken grave. Moses deserves a memorial, and I'm thrilled that his stone now stands in the light of day again.

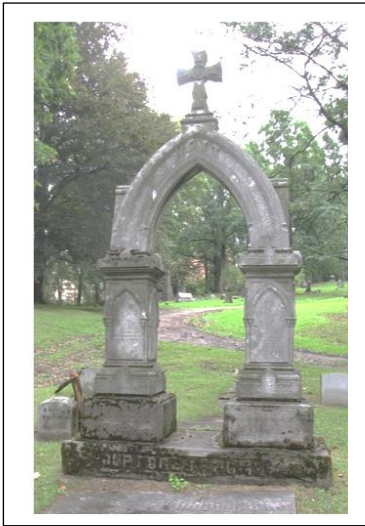


## Hiram Hoyt's Circle



When Dr. Hiram Hoyt died in 1886, he was buried in Section 19, Lot 1. He and his family members are the only residents of the lot, the only lot in the section. Dr. Hoyt was born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont in 1800. He studied medicine and came to Syracuse, where in 1851 he was listed as an instructor at the Syracuse Medical School. Although he was a well-respected doctor and an accomplished surgeon, he is perhaps more well known as having an office on South Warren Street where the Jerry Rescue plot was hatched.

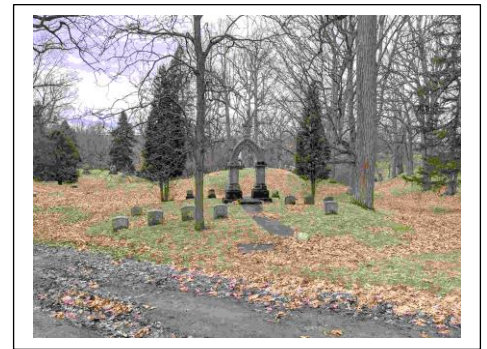
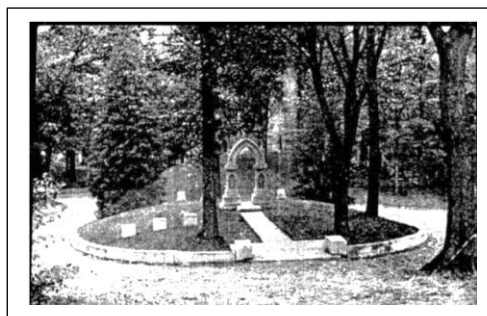
Beauchamp's *Past and Present of Syracuse and Onondaga County* (1908) contains an interesting description of the good doctor. Hoyt is said to be of a nervous and active temperament. He was a natural mechanic who was quick to see and do in a workman-like manner. His surgical dressings were always neat and tidy. He was something of an actor, that is, with the rough, he could be rough. This earned him the nickname "butcher," an appellation that seemed to please him. With the elite and cultivated he could be a courtly gentleman. He was brilliant and an acute reasoner, ready to split hairs in morals and theology with priest or bishop. He suffered a bout of insanity in his later years and spent some time at the Utica Asylum. He recovered and continued to practice up until his death in 1866.



In the *Syracuse Daily Journal* of 11 July 1879, there is a detailed description of the monument that stands at the center of Hoyt's circular lot. The arch, which is a single stone, is Grecian Gothic in design with "Our Forest Home" cut in rustic letters. The article goes on to say the monument is singularly adapted to the location. It sits on a bold elevation, among tall trees. It is a graceful and fitting memorial structure and displays quiet tastefulness.

The stonemason of this monument was Aloys Schafer. In the 1870 Federal census he is listed as 44 years old, born in Prussia. His personal estate was valued at \$3500 (that's over \$70,000 in today's money). The census lists his wife, Rosa, and four children. It also reveals that he could neither read nor write.

An early photo of the lot (below, center) shows one important thing that does not appear in the modern photo (below right) - a stonework circle around the entire lot. Our volunteers took on the challenge of revealing the circle, and have made significant progress. The several inches of the entire south side of the circle is now exposed (see below). Work will continue until the entire circle is visible and the front platform is brought back to life. By the way, archaeological screening found five old beer bottles and a 1950 penny. We are very grateful to our volunteers, two of whom are shown (below left) with the results of their labor - the Hoyt lot stone circle.



HOCPA would remind folks who want to "spruce up" their ancestor's headstones, never to use detergent, soap, or bleach. Any chemical can damage the patina of the stone. When in doubt, use good old water and a soft brush. Any questions, ask HOCA at [HocpaOakwood@gmail.com](mailto:HocpaOakwood@gmail.com).



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PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION**

The five levels of sponsorship are:



**\$10 Lillian Oakwood Gardner Level.** Lillian was the infant daughter of George Gardner, the first superintendent of Oakwood. She was born in 1863 in the Superintendent's cottage, but lived only 10 months. She is buried in Section 4, Lot 107 with her parents and two siblings.



**\$25 Elias W. Leavenworth Level.** Elias Leavenworth, known as the "Father of Oakwood Cemetery," was one of its founders, and its first President. He was also twice Mayor of Syracuse, and served two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives.



**\$50 Herbert H. Franklin Level.** H. H. Franklin was the founder of the Franklin Automobile Company, producing the first automobile air cooled engine in 1902.



**\$75 James J. Belden Level.** James J. Belden, a former congressman and mayor, was for 36 years a trustee of Oakwood. He donated the funds to build the entrance arch and the cemetery's greenhouses.



**\$100 Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage.** Mrs. Sage was the widow of Wall Street tycoon, Russell Sage. When he died, she became one of the wealthiest women in America. She then devoted her life to philanthropy.

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Historic Oakwood Cemetery Preservation Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

Donations are deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

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

**HOCPA, PO BOX 15065, Syracuse NY 13215**

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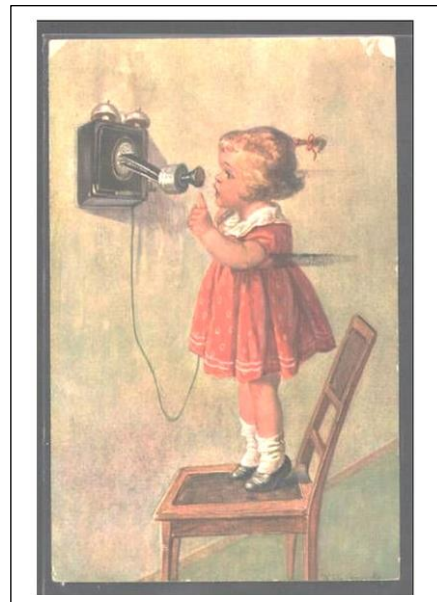
### Technically Speaking

For those of us who remember rotary telephones and party lines, today's technology is quite a shock to our systems. Modern communication is instantaneous and unlimited. Well, don't let it be said that Oakwood Cemetery is living in the Dark Ages. We may have kicked and screamed a little, but here we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We have embraced the digital world. We now have a website at [hocpa.org](http://hocpa.org). We have all sorts of information there, and it's still growing.

If you need to contact us, we have email at [HocpaOakwood@gmail.com](mailto:HocpaOakwood@gmail.com). We also have a page on Facebook where many interesting things can be found. As we test the waters for virtual tours, you can see what we're doing in that regard on Facebook. Then there's YouTube. Search "sue greenhagen," and you'll be able to watch one of her "Live Oaks & Dead Folks" Powerpoint programs. Hopefully, as we develop virtual tours, we will put them on YouTube also.

For those of you who use Amazon, there's a way for you to have .05% of your eligible purchases count toward a donation to HOCPA. Go to [smile.amazon.com/about](http://smile.amazon.com/about) for more information. Any donations to HOCPA can now be made through PayPal.

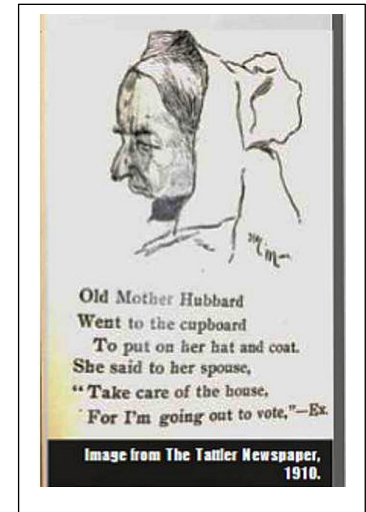
By the way, you can still reach us the old-fashioned way - by telephone: 315.415.2954.



## Oakwood All-Stars

The celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was supposed to be the theme of our August tour, “Remember the Ladies.” Thanks to Covid-19 the tour was cancelled. Oakwood has many women who worked really hard to earn the right to vote in a presidential election. As they traveled, spreading the word, one newspaper reported that they were “ridiculed and driven by howling mobs from place to place.” Pictured below are just a few of those pioneers. Blanche Baxter, a former Broadway stage actress, used her stage skills to organize, lead, speak, and march for the cause of suffrage. Ina Merrell, the granddaughter of Ann Maria and Lewis Redfield, was four-time president of the Women’s Equality Club, and also founder of the first Mothers’ Club in Syracuse. Katherine White, of THE White family, marched in Syracuse suffrage parades. Dora Hazard was active in many civic organizations, including helping to establish the National Women’s Party in central New York. Anna Whittic was an 1895 graduate of Syracuse University. She was a prolific writer of letters to the editors of various Syracuse newspapers on the subject of votes for women. She was active in the National Women’s Party, serving as State Chairperson during the lead-up to the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In the 1930s she was advocating for an Equal Rights Amendment as national chair of the party. Lucy Goodrich, it was reported in a local paper, was “one of the first women to be harangued and rotten egged.”

These and dozens of other ladies in Oakwood paved the way for that momentous event on 26 August 1920 of Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby signing into law the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution. Indeed, we should “remember the ladies.”



*Address correction requested.*

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