

Grave Matters

Historic Oakwood Cemetery

Preservation Association

Syracuse, New York

Spring, 2021 Volume 29, Number 1

President's Plot ... Rick Naylor



As the new President of the Historic Oakwood Cemetery Preservation Association, this is my first message to our friends and followers and I would like to share a little about myself. I'm almost a lifelong Syracuse resident. I lived in Oneida for 2 years, but worked in Syracuse. I grew up in the Valley/Southside area where the Valley Cemetery and St. Agnes were our bicycle riding and hiking havens.

I've been a *taphophile* (someone who is interested in cemeteries, gravestones and the art and history that goes with them) almost my entire life. Thank you, Grandma and the Great Aunties! When I was 6 or 7 years old I overheard my Grandmother talking about going to visit the "relatives." My cousin and I said, "we want to go, too!!" Imagine our surprise when we ended up in a cemetery.

That was a time when a family went to visit the "relatives" to plant and water flowers, trim the shrubs, clean and edge the stone, maybe lay a wreath, etc. My cousin and I started playing games looking at tombstones for the earliest birth or death, funny sounding names, unusual designs on the stones and bones! We rarely missed a trip with Gramma and the Aunties to visit the "relatives."

As I got a little older our family took vacations to New England and Cape Cod. I would get dropped off at a cemetery with an arm load of paper vellum, a large black or brown crayon (remember those crayons that were as big as a horse's leg that we got in 1st grade?), some snacks, a jug of Kool-Aid, a don't talk to strangers lecture and strict instructions of when and where they would pick me up. I never meet a stranger but I made lots of friends, or pen pals, as we called them back then. Those were the days, my friend.

Not sure I would do that today with my kids!! That's another topic for another day.

Here we are 50 some years later. I'm still in cemeteries, walking, gawking, working, seeing things I've never seen before and making friends on a texting and social media. I guess we call them "friend me" now.

I've wondered if drinking cemetery spigot water for all these years has raised my level of taphophilia....

In the last few years HOCPA has grown in so many ways with new tours or ways to do them, different activities, a renewed focus on preserving our "little jewel" and our local history. Social media has helped a lot. Please visit and "like" our Instagram and Facebook pages. Visit our website, too. We're trying harder to keep it up to date.

We're working on more virtual and self-guided tours. Maybe we might be able to host a live tour or two this year if COVID gets under control. We're working closely with Oakwood Cemeteries Inc, the owners, on more ideas and projects to continue to protect and preserve this amazing place we call Oakwood.

The Board is always seeking volunteers to help with various projects to continue our growth and success. We need able bodies that enjoy the outdoors and fresh air, folks that understand and use social media and website management, people that enjoy research (we have lots of fun stuff to look up) to help build and lead tours and develop stories and of course we will always accept a donation to plant a tree, clean, right or restore a tombstone or help restore the chapel.

Please feel free to email me at hocpaokwood@gmail.com or call me at 315-263-7159 if you have ideas to share, questions or concerns on anything involving Oakwood Cemetery. Our Board members and I thank you for being good friends and sponsors of Oakwood Cemetery in the past and into the future.

Editor's Notes ... Sue Greenhagen

There is so much going on with HOCPA, it's making my head spin (even more than usual). It's all due to the many people who truly care about Oakwood. Folks volunteer their time, energy, and, yes, money to the upkeep of this iconic cemetery. Others lend us moral support. It means a lot to hear someone say, "Thank you for what you do for Oakwood." But we don't do it for praise. Oakwood is 161 years young. It's showing its age, in some places more than others. Every day we find something else that needs our attention. So out come the volunteers, determined to fix what is wrong, make right every aspect of the grounds. Just take a look at Paul Harvey's update below. The Crypt Keepers are constantly cleaning, clearing, and caring about the tasks before them. Our HOCPA Board is a multi-talented group of people, each with an area of expertise. Then there are folks like John Marsellus (see page 8) who see something amiss, and then see that it is rectified. How about all the people who have become sponsors of Oakwood. With the work needed on the 1879 Silsbee Chapel, our sponsors and donors are a critical component of Oakwood's upkeep. In whatever way anyone contributes, HOCPA is truly grateful. By the way, my head feels much better...



Crypt Keepers Update ... Paul Harvey

The Crypt Keepers are entering their fourth, or fifth year now (but who's counting?). Two years ago I thought we'd reached a high point only to see this past year turn out even better despite being during the Covid pandemic!

So, who are "The Crypt Keepers" and how do they amaze? Well, the easiest answer to that is they are YOU (if you want to be). More clearly, they are Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, family groups, interested individuals and many special interest groups like Veterans, The Witches and Heathens of CNY, folks with a real interest in local history, artists, photographers, and many folks from SUNY-ESF and Syracuse University. They volunteer on any number of projects or start their own (with approval, of course). Once they have put in three action visits, each one gets a beautiful forest green t-shirt with the Oakwood symbol and the words "Crypt Keepers," of course.

How do they amaze? Oh, where do I begin? Among other things, they have cleared scores of graves and monuments, some that haven't seen the light of day in nearly a hundred years. They have worked with the Haggerty family to relandscape and solve drainage problems around the famed and deeply loved "Haggerty Lion."



They have done archaeological work, exposing the original Hoyt Circle (Section 19) around that old abolitionist's grave site. This past fall they were able to cover over the graffiti in the Shipman Mausoleum (Section 4) and prepare it for others to seal it off with a new gate and windows. Two of our Shipman workers, Nicholas Timoshenko and Anna Marino, are shown at left. Crypt Keepers also cleared and helped raise the old Moon

Tomb stone (Sec. 54,) a massive monument to a past President at SUNY/ESF which had fallen several years ago.

Recently a Syracuse University Newhouse professor started cataloging all the mausoleums in the cemetery, their condition and needs. While doing this she and HOCPA President Rick Naylor discovered the original Internment books in our offices and arranged with the State Library system to have them all digitized, starting with the very first burials in 1859. We have also been assisting Cornell Cooperative and SUNY/ESF in their efforts to revive the long extinct American Chestnut trees. New folks bring new ideas all the time.

This coming year will see a lot of brush removal, and a team is working on the restoration and protection of the old monuments. A group of photographers are considering a show of their work on the cemetery. The paranormalists are developing a video tour of the more haunted sites. Other folks are working on cataloging the plants and herbs usable by knowledgeable cooks and brewers. The list goes on and on but the one certain thing is that the cemetery has over the past few years been improving by leaps and bounds. The Crypt Keepers are a big part of the reason that I hear, at least a hundred time a year, "This is the best kept secret in CNY."

Come join us: Call or text me, Paul Harvey, at 1-315-247-4420 or Email at luludoodah@aol.com.

Another of History's Mysteries – the Yates Family Monument

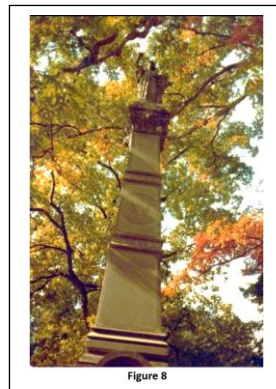
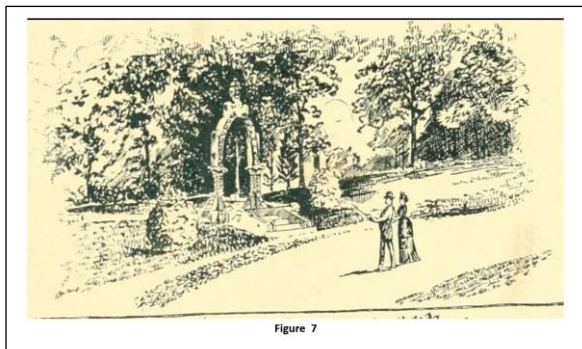
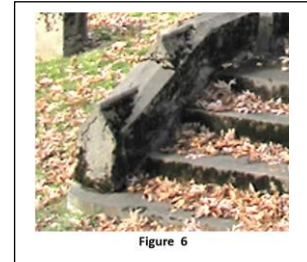
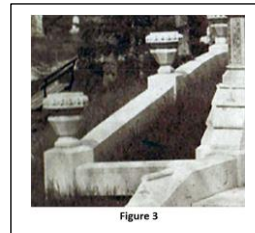
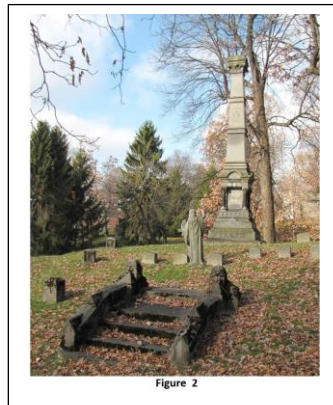
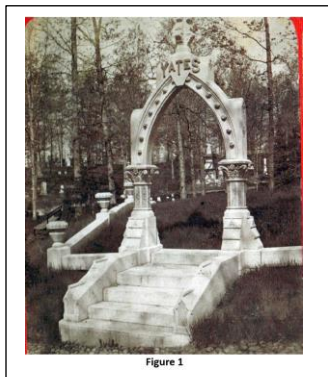
One of our recent discoveries in the Oakwood office (940 Comstock Ave.) was a stereograph showing an arched monument that said “YATES” at the top. Shown is half of the stereograph (Figure 1). At first the image was dismissed as not “our” Yates. There’s no arch there today. A closer examination however, showed some interesting features that changed our minds.

As background, this early photo was taken by George F. Gates (1845-1904), a well-known photographer who lived in Syracuse from the mid-1870s to around 1882. That would date the photo to that time frame.

So, if we compare the early photo to a modern view (Figure 2) we can see the similarities between them. The square posts in the modern picture were once part of a fence structure (Figures 3 and 4). A closer look at the steps shows similarity of style (Figures 5 and 6).

An 1888 edition of *Syracuse & Its Surroundings, Illustrated* shows a pen drawing of the Yates lot with the arch (Figure 7). We don’t know when that arch was removed. Did it get broken by a falling limb? Was it vandalism? Did the family decide to change the monument? Sometime between 1888 and prior to the Labor Day Storm of 1998, the Yates monument was a tall column with an angelic figure at the top (see Figure 8). A branch from a nearby tree came down in the storm taking the statue with it. When she fell her upraised arm hit the ground first breaking off her hand (which was recovered) and her index finger. That finger is still missing. The cost of putting the figure back on the top of the monument was prohibitive so she was placed near the top of the stairs, facing the monument (Figure 9).

The Yates family, of whom it was said “insanity was the rule rather than the exception,” has once again captured our attention. The saga of Alonzo Yates Sr. divorcing his wife to marry the family’s Irish housekeeper, or that of Alonzo Yates Jr., the “Playboy of Syracuse,” Yates Castle, Yates Hotel, it all makes for good storytelling. Now we have our next chapter – the Yates Monument and its mysterious arch.



Is It Written in Stone?

Genealogy and cemeteries seem to go hand in hand. Those searching out their family histories seek the gravesites of those most elusive relatives. When they find them, they are no doubt led to a new line of research. Some folks believe “genealogia” is actually a Greek word meaning “can of worms.”

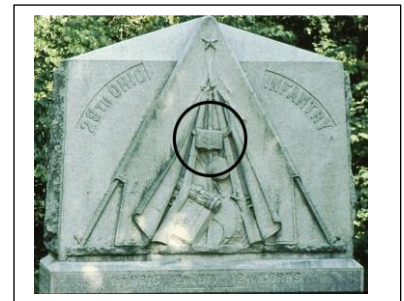
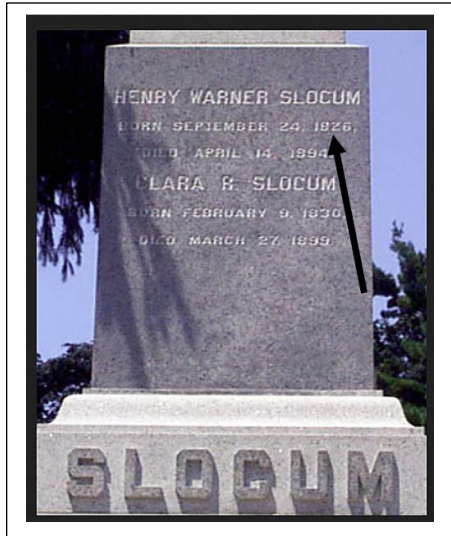
A word to the wise for all you budding genealogists, heed the three rules of research: “verify, verify, verify.” No where is that more true than in a cemetery. Stone cutters practiced their craft in order to have perfect letters and beautiful artistic designs. Even our own Sidney Stanton (Section 10, Lot 65) practiced his alphabet at the lower end of a headstone (see picture below left) found over in Madison County. The arrow shows where he signed the stone, “S. Stanton, Syracuse.” But stone cutters are human, too. They make mistakes. Take the gravestone of Civil War General Henry Warner Slocum. True, he’s not buried in Oakwood but two of his brothers, two of his

HOW MANY RELATIVES DO YOU HAVE?

Only	1 YOU
2	parents
4	grandparents
8	great grandparents
16	gg grandparents
32	ggg grandparents
64	gggg grandparents
128	ggggg grandparents
256	gggggg grandparents
512	ggggggg grandparents
1,024	gggggggg grandparents
2,048	ggggggggg grandparents
4,096	gggggggggg grandparents
8,192	ggggggggggg grandparents
16,384	gggggggggggg grandparents
32,768	ggggggggggggg grandparents
65,536	gggggggggggggg grandparents
131,072	ggggggggggggggg grandparents
262,144	gggggggggggggggg grandparents
524,288	ggggggggggggggggg grandparents
1,048,576	ggggggggggggggggg grandparents
2,097,152	ggggggggggggggggg grandparents

sisters, and distant cousin, Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage, are. The Delph Falls native is actually in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn. A close look at the information on the Slocum obelisk shows a birth date of 1826 (see picture below center). His actual birth date is 1827. Another one of my favorite “oops” moments is not on a headstone but on a regimental monument at Gettysburg Battlefield Park. The 29th Ohio Infantry has a beautiful monument (shown below, top right) on Culp’s Hill. It’s ten feet wide, four feet deep and over nine feet tall. Imagine the work that went into carving a piece of granite that size. Notice the circled cartridge box. I wonder if the carver realized what he had done as he was finishing up and carving “U.S.” on the cartridge box (shown below, bottom right).

So, the moral of the story for ALL cemetery researchers is, even though it’s written in stone, it may not be right. *Verify, Verify, Verify!*



Shipman Mausoleum – an Update

The mausoleum of Azariah B. Shipman, M.D., has been a source of concern for many years. Shipman, a well-respected surgeon in central New York, died in 1868. This mausoleum in Section 4, the smallest in Oakwood, is his final resting place, as well as that of his wife, Emily.

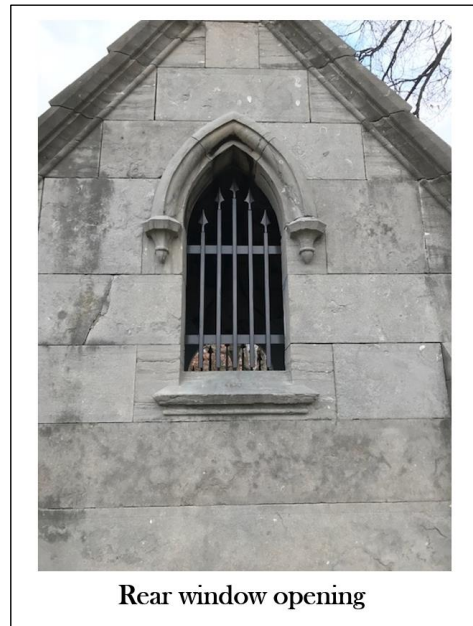
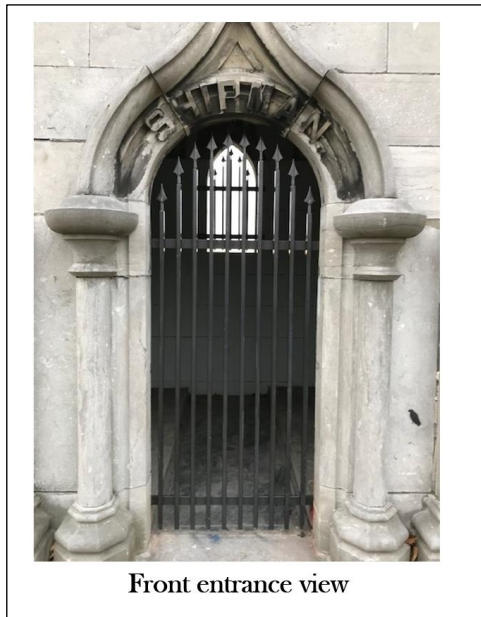
Last year there was an increase in vandalism to the structure's interior that required immediate action. Spray painting and tagging were happening with regularity. Some of our volunteers approached the cemetery administration about cleaning up the graffiti and securing it. The graffiti would be painted over only to have it reappear shortly after. There was the idea of sealing it up with concrete and cinder blocks. The unsightliness of that remedy precluded it as an option. Placing an iron gate was discussed. The cost of an iron gate from commercial shops was \$1000s. Plus with COVID they didn't even know if they could or would want to do it.

HOCPA President Rick Naylor has a friend that does welding as a side business. Rick brought him up to visit the Shipmans. In an instant he was all in and the ideas started flowing for a gate. As you can see from the picture below, an historically appropriate gate is now in place.

HOCPA would like to personally thank the following people that made this happen:

- Oakwood Cemetery, Inc. for giving us permission to do what was right.
- Gary Mullen, owner of Eliminator Trailers in Pennellville, NY, for designing and fabricating the gate and back window grill. He did the job for the cost of the materials and donated his labor. He's offered to do more gates. He found his new niche!
- Cosmo Fanizzi of City Woods Mill and Factory Park Ltd. for all his help installing the gate and back window grill and countless hours of work as a volunteer.
- ESF Friends of Oakwood Student volunteers, aka the "Crypt Keepers." They did all the prep work and painting inside the mausoleum to cover the graffiti. They have also been a great help with brush removal, trail marking and clean up around many areas.
- Paul Harvey, Board member and the Crypt Keepers coordinator.

Without these energetic, generous and visionary people this would not have happened. HOCPA hopes the Shipmans are pleased and continue to rest in peace, undisturbed.



HOCPA Sponsors as of Spring, 2021

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

Patrick Alexander, David Andrews, Mary Anklin, Sandra Ashley, John & Katherine Auwaerter, Kenneth Baker, J. Thomas Bassett, David & Elisabeth Beebe, Jennifer Nolle Berg, Carol Biesemeyer, William & Katherine Billingham, Susan Boland, June Bomberger, Robert & Kathleen Brown, Nicholas & Caroline Brust, Donald & Barbara Burns, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Caldwell III, Central New York Humanist Association, Lawrie Chase, Stephen Chase, James Clark, John Collins, Jeffrey Comanici, Dennis & Amy Connors, Nicole Cook, Sharon Coulter, George Curry, Paul & Melanie DeLima, Jalica DeSalvia, Eloise Diamond, Rita Ann Downing, Rebecca Eiholzer, John & Anne Endries, Patricia Fergerson, Matthew Ferro, Patricia Fitzgibbons, Mark Franklin, Kathryn Case Gemmill, Audrey Gibbs, Margaretrose Gioia, William Goodwin, Sue Greenhagen, Samuel Gruber, David Haas, Ruth Pass Hancock, Elise Handcrafted, Elizabeth Handler, Dorothy Hanes, Denise Hanlon, Ellen & Dave Hardy, Melissa Hayes, Anne Marie Higgins, Erica Holcomb, Ruth Hotaling, Brian Ide, Bruce Irvine, Carol Johnson, Allyn & Sue Jones, Paul Kalska, Lawrence Keefe, Anne Kemper, Jean Kimber, Russell King, Anne & Jay King, Joan Kitromilis, Ashley Kosciolk, Pamela Lane, Carolyn Lawless, Gelene Lewis, Alan & Joyce Lock, Christine Lozner, Coy Ludwig, Gerald Mager, Cynthia Mahoney, Emily Maltese, Hilary Mansur, Susan Mansur, Benjamin Marsden, John & Candace Marsellus, Wallace & Gayonne McDonald, McHarrie Life Foundation, Erin McLaughlin, Terrence & Laura White McSweeney, Diane Medvitz, Penny & John Mercer, Eileen Miller, Susan Miller, Thayer Miller, Shirley Mills, Francis & Alice Morigi, Edward Murray, Elisabeth Murray, Jean Murray, Patricia Musengo, Rick Naylor, Jon & Joan Nelson, Linda Nolle, William Odea, Onondaga Historical Association, Karl Orlick, Andrea O'Shea, Craig Otto, Linda Palmer, Connie Palumb, David Palumb, Frederick & Virginia Parker, Dorothy Pease, Michael & Marny Peterson, Eric Pettit, Susan Pope-Millet, Lisle Rath, David & Linda Rezak, Karen Richards, Dave Richardson, Barbara Rivette, David & Eligia Robinson, George Rodormer, Robert & Nanette Rodormer, Robert & Tonia Salisbury, Jeffrey Salmon, Barbara Scheibel, Judy Schmid, Noah Shepaerd, Brenda Silverman, Daniel & Nancy Smothergill, Ryan Spaulding, Megan Spilman, James Stathes, Jamieson Steele, Nancy Stewart, Olin Stratton, Peter & Martha Thompson, Neil & Suzanne Thornton, Doreen Todorov, Cynthia Tracy, Gregg Tripoli, Jodi Upton, Paul Votra, Karen Waelder, Marita Walper, William Wiecek, Sheldon Williams, James & Marsha Wooster, Katelyn Wright, Cynthia Zacharek, Marilyn Zaleon.



Signs of the Time ... Connie Palumb



While strolling through Oakwood one day, John Marsellus noticed a need for new section signs. These signs act as road maps for visitors as they search for burial plots throughout the cemetery. John approached HOCPA with the offer of providing new signage. Karl Orlick, a veteran HOCPA board member, volunteered his considerable talents to creating and installing the signs. Many thanks to Karl for donating so freely of his time and expertise over many years!

Now there are fifty plus new signs greeting visitors thanks to a very generous gift from Candace and John Marsellus through the CNY Community Foundation. Further, these funds were donated in my honor as outgoing HOCPA Board president. John's hope is that others will be similarly inspired to help with projects at Oakwood. There are indeed many such opportunities including planting trees, perhaps to honor a loved one, to name just one.

As long-time president of HOCPA's Board, I'm especially grateful for the ongoing support of the Marsellus family. The Marsellus Company was long known world-wide for the manufacturer of caskets. They are quiet benefactors of Oakwood and, of course, to the community at large. We are thankful for their thoughtful generosity.



**YOU ARE INVITED
TO BECOME A SPONSOR OF
THE HISTORIC OAKWOOD CEMETERY
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION**

The five levels of sponsorship are:



\$10 Lillian Oakwood Gardner Level. Lillian was the infant daughter of George Gardner, first superintendent of Oakwood. She was born in 1863 in the Superintendent's cottage, 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 years a trustee of Oakwood. He donated the funds to build the entrance arch and the cemeteries' greenhouses.



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

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- _____ \$10 LILLIAN O. GARDNER LEVEL
- _____ \$25 ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH LEVEL.
- _____ \$50 H. H. FRANKLIN LEVEL.
- _____ \$75 JAMES J. BELDEN LEVEL.
- _____ \$100 MARGARET OLIVIA SLOCUM SAGE LEVEL.

Name _____

Address _____

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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**

Oakwood All-Star, George Gardner

George Gardner, the first Superintendent of Oakwood Cemetery, was born in England in 1825, the youngest of ten children. He settled in Syracuse in 1848 and took a job with the Syracuse & Utica Railroad, where he worked for nine years. In 1859 he worked with landscape gardeners Howard Daniels and Frederick Knight in laying out Oakwood Cemetery. When the cemetery officially opened, Gardner was appointed superintendent. In October of 1862, Gardner and his wife Elizabeth moved from their home on E. Fayette Street to the Superintendent's residence at Oakwood. In April of 1863 a daughter was born and they named her Lillian *Oakwood* Gardner. The little girl died ten months later. Two other children, Charles, age 7, and Elizabeth, age 5, had died five days apart in November of 1856.



For 28 years, George lovingly cared for the grounds at Oakwood, and oversaw the sale of plots and subsequent burials. On 28 March 1887 James J. Belden read a report that claimed mismanagement of the cemetery, and the mishandling of books and accounts. Most of his criticism was aimed at Cemetery President, 84-year-old Elias Leavenworth, and Secretary Treasurer Henry C. Leavenworth. However, George Gardner did not escape the wrath of Belden. "Oakwood has outgrown Mr. Gardner," Belden declared. George, at age 62, was not the spry young man he had once been. His assistant, who was fired in the reorganization, was replaced by Burritt Chaffee. Chaffee would become the second Superintendent of Oakwood Cemetery when Gardner retired later that year. As for the Leavenworths, Henry resigned, dying just eight days after his uncle Elias, on 3 December 1887. George died in 1903, and he, Elizabeth and their three children rest in Section 4, Lot 107.

SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS ... David Haas

The Historic Oakwood Cemetery Preservation Association continues to grow our social media presence!



You can now find us on Instagram by searching for *@HistoricOakwoodCemetery* or typing <https://www.instagram.com/historicoakwoodcemetery/> into your browser. Instagram is a photo sharing application that can be accessed through mobile devices or desktop computers. If you use Instagram and upload photos of the cemetery, please tag us in the pictures as we will be sure to share them!

We also continue to utilize our Facebook account, *H.O.C.P.A.*, and we can also be found on the web at HOCPA.org. Since the pandemic, we have been slowly trying to upload some of our tours into video form via YouTube! Currently, we have four tours uploaded with more in the planning stage! You can find us by searching for *Historic Oakwood* on YouTube!

Address correction requested.



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