

“Grave Matters”

Historic Oakwood Cemetery
Preservation Association
Syracuse, New York

Fall, 2023 Volume 31, Number 2

President’s Plot – Rick Naylor



This year has flown by for me again. I guess it’s true as we get older it goes by faster. Mother Nature really cooperated with us this year for the most part. The Spring blooms and flowers and the Fall foliage were at its best. I hope everyone had a chance to catch some of the wonderful show. We had great weather for all of our tours and record numbers in attendance. There were a lot of new faces at our events which is very nice to see. If anyone has pictures taken during our tours or pictures taken in the cemetery we’d love to see and share them. Please email them to hocpaoakwood@gmail.com

I can’t thank our supporters, our volunteers and my Board Members enough for all the planning and support that’s put into our events to make them so successful.

Please think of Oakwood Cemetery during the upcoming season of giving by donating money, give your time as a volunteer or do an act of kindness while visiting the cemetery. Picking up a stray bottle, can and some litter helps the cemetery and their staff with upkeep. Please reach out to me if you have questions about more ways to help out Oakwood Cemetery.

As the season shifts into Winter, Oakwood takes on a new look. With the leaves off the trees, you can see further into the hills and valleys. We’ve had our first snow and the blanket of white creates a beautiful contrast with the darker colored monuments and trees. Winter is a wonderful time for a peaceful walk or snowshoe through the cemetery to take in the stillness of the snow-covered vistas.

Wishing everyone and your families a healthy, joyous and prosperous 2024.



Editor’s Notes – Sue Greenhagen

I got to thinking the other day (I do that sometimes) about how we, HOCPA, could improve our outreach to the public. Continuing to think, it dawned on me that communication is the key. Of course, we communicate. We have our annual summer tours. As the Prez said above, the tours are attracting lots of folks, many of whom are seeing Oakwood for the first time. We have a program we take on the road called “Live Oaks & Dead Folks.” We also have a website at hocpa.org. We post items to Facebook and Instagram. And then it dawned on me - “communication,” from the Latin word *communis*, means to share. What if we navigate down this two-way street of sharing? That means we want to hear from those of you who care about Oakwood Cemetery. We know you’re out there. We want to hear opinions, ideas, comments, questions, suggestions, experiences, stories, whatever you would like to contribute concerning Oakwood. We’ll even listen to complaints. Your input will most certainly make HOCPA a better organization. The best part is that you can communicate with us on email at HOCPAOakwood@gmail.com. The Prez, and all of us at HOCPA, are looking forward to hearing from YOU.



Civil War Inventory Project – an Update



A few years ago, a small group of volunteers started a project in Oakwood Cemetery to locate all the veterans of the Civil War buried there. In Section 56, the G.A.R. plot is easily identifiable by its clean white government-issue headstones, 231, to be exact. Our volunteers, folks from the Onondaga County Civil War Round Table, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, and HOCPA, looked at each other and smiled. “This would be a piece of cake. There are what, maybe a couple hundred more veterans to find, and they have VA headstones.” How wrong we were. As I sit here and write this article, there are 860 verified Civil War veterans in Oakwood Cemetery, and more keep popping up (not literally). So, what have we learned from this project? Plenty.

Let me give you some context. New York State sent over half a million men into the war which lasted from 1861 to 1865. Being the most populous, this was the most of any state in the Union. The state’s total casualties numbered just over 50,000. That included battle-related deaths, deaths from disease, and deaths related to being prisoners of war. When the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter, the Federal military numbered about 16,000, most of them being stationed in the western territories. The military was further depleted when the Southerners resigned (especially the officers) to fight for the Confederacy. The administration sent out a call for troops. Men enlisted, but for only three months, so sure was Washington that the war would be over quickly. The First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, changed that thinking. The Union forces, including the 12th NYSV, the “First Onondaga” regiment, were overwhelmed, and the spectators who had driven out to watch were forced to run for their lives. The 12th, like other Union regiments, was made up of 10 companies, labeled A - K, of 100 men each. Sixty-one members of the 12th are buried in Oakwood. Lincoln put out a call for more volunteers, and Onondaga County responded. The 101st NYSV, the “Second Onondaga Regiment,” left the state in early March of 1862. From late May until September 1, they took part in the Seven Days Battle and Second Manassas, losing 18 killed, 103 wounded, 44 taken prisoner and 4 missing. Twenty members of that regiment are buried in Oakwood.

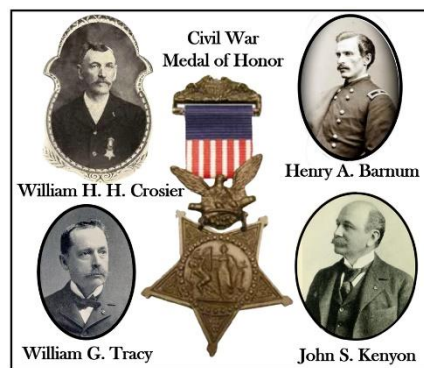
The “Third Onondaga Regiment,” the 122d NYSV, left the state on August 31, 1862. They were present for the Battles of Antietam, Fredricksburg, and Chancellorsville, but were not actively engaged. Their first major battle was Gettysburg in July of 1863. Although the regiment suffered 8 killed and 33 wounded, it did not compare to their losses at the Battle of the Wilderness on May 6, 1864. There they lost 14 killed, 76 wounded, 35 taken prisoner, and 6 missing. Fifty-two members of the 101st are buried in Oakwood. The “Fourth Onondaga,” the 149th NYSV, left the state on the September 23, 1862. Their introduction to war came, not at Gettysburg where they made their stand on Culp’s Hill saving the Union’s right flank, but at Chancellorsville on May 3, 1863. There they lost 22 killed, 60 wounded, and 94 captured or missing. By the time they got to Gettysburg, their regimental strength was down to 319, mostly due to illness in the ranks. They went on to join Sherman’s March to the Sea and returned to Syracuse to a hero’s welcome in June of 1865. Seventy-seven “Salt Point Rangers” are buried in Oakwood. The last Onondaga regiment to muster in was the 185th NYSV. They left New York on September 27, 1864. Their main engagement came near the end of the war, from February 6, 1865 to April 1, 1865 (just a week before Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House). Their losses during that time were 36 killed, 194 wounded, 5 taken prisoner, and 1 missing. Sixty-three of those veterans are buried in Oakwood.

Service in nineteen states is represented in Oakwood, the most veterans being from Pennsylvania (13) and Illinois (12). Nineteen men served in the Navy, and 12 were regular Army. There are 25 Black veterans, 20 of whom served in the U.S. Colored Troops. Among our Black veterans, two, James Jameson and Charles Creamer, served in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry, the unit highlighted in the movie *Glory*. We have three Civil War nurses - Lucy Blanchard, Harriett Dada Emens, and Melinda Bennett. Of the 38 men in Oakwood who died during the war, 16 died of disease or accident, and 22 deaths were battle-related. Lt. Colonel Augustus Root, for whom the Grand Army of the Republic Post No. 151 is named, was killed one day before the Confederate surrender on April 9, 1865.

The oldest veteran in Oakwood is Dr. Nathan Tefft, born in 1808. He was a surgeon with the 122d NYSV, enlisting at age 54. The youngest veteran was George W. Hughes, born in 1850, and who joined the navy at age 12. The last surviving veteran was Dwight Landon, 105th Illinois Infantry, who died on May 2, 1939. Richard H. Davis, 2d N.Y. Mounted Rifles, was a native American born in Canada. Three veterans attained the rank of general – Edwin Vose Sumner, Henry A. Barnum, and John J. Peck.

Not all our veterans fought for the Union. We have four veterans who served with the Confederacy – James W. Eager (Sec. 27), Hiram F. Eastman (Sec. 36), Chaplain Foster Ely (Sec. 15) and Col. Eugene McLean (Sec. 8). Col. McLean is buried a short distance from the Sumner tomb. In 1848, McLean married Margaret Forster Sumner, daughter of Major General Edwin Vose Sumner. During the war McLean served as military secretary to Jefferson Davis. After the war he was a civil engineer, and eventually moved to New York City where, in 1881, he became a city engineer. In 1886, Congress removed his “political disabilities.” Asked why he waited so long, he acknowledged that the war had been over for twenty years “... and I thought that I should like to vote again.”

During the Civil War the Medal of Honor was award to 1,522 soldiers and one woman, Assistant Surgeon Dr. Mary Walker. Here in Oakwood we have four of those recipients – William H.H. Crosier, William G. Tracy, John Kenyon and Henry A. Barnum. Color Sgt. William Crosier, at the Battle of Peachtree Creek in 1864, saved the 149th Regiment’s flag from capture by Confederates by ripping it off its staff and stuffing it in his shirt. 2d Lt. William Tracy, 122d NYSV, had to escape being captured by Confederates while delivering information to and from the front lines. Sgt. Kenyon, 3d NY Cavalry, under fire at Trenton, NC, returned to retrieve a wounded comrade and bring him to safety. At the 3d Battle of Chattanooga, TN, in November of 1863, Col. Henry Barnum, 149th NYSV, although severely wounded continued to lead his men in the fight until forced to retire when he was again wounded.



There are as many stories as there are veterans buried in Oakwood, and we’re still learning about them. One of my favorites is that of Charles Rogers, Company F, 12th N.Y. Volunteer Infantry. Rogers was 42-years-old when he enlisted and he served just four months. He was at the First Battle of Bull Run on July 21, 1861, and was discharged for disability on September 15, 1861. He was known locally as “Gypsy Jack,” a nickname bestowed on him by his comrades. In a lengthy obituary published by the *Syracuse Standard* in 1888, he was quoted as saying he was the son of a British nobleman, and as a youth was kidnapped by gypsies. The ransom wasn’t paid so he grew up with his gypsy captors. The article said he could “jabber the gypsy lingo as well as English.” He took umbrage at being characterized as a tramp. Yes, he wandered, he said, but he would never “go farther than to get bread to eat and a roof to cover his head.” He believed that “the gypsy was the chosen child of nature, acknowledging no place for a home but having one wherever the sun shone or the rain fell.” Our “Gypsy Jack” died in the Onondaga County Poorhouse, but his comrades saw to it that he was buried here in Oakwood, in the G.A.R. plot, in a soldier’s grave.

The entire inventory of Civil War soldiers is available on our HOCPA website: <https://hocpa.org/initiatives/>. We invite you to peruse this list, and we welcome any additions, corrections, questions or testimonials. If you go to our inventory you may notice a column labeled “Headstones.” One of the saddest parts of the inventory is that over 75 Civil War veterans lie in unmarked graves. The process of requesting a headstone, free of charge, from the Veterans Administration is cumbersome at best. It is our goal, down the line, to make sure each veteran has a proper marker. The first marker that we requested and placed was that for James Jameson who served in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry. And so the work goes on.

Many thanks go to our volunteers that have spent so many hours traipsing around Oakwood, examining headstones, taking notes, and to those who do the research to verify each veteran’s service. I think Gypsy Jack, if he could, would thank you all.

Crypt Keepers from ESF – Alissa Altweis, President

This semester has been a busy one for our Friends of Oakwood community. We started off the semester by planning a big Japanese Knotweed removal using Glyphosate, a common herbicide. For those who don't know, Japanese Knotweed is an invasive species that grows extremely quickly and makes it so no other plants can grow there. The only way to remove it permanently is by using herbicides, which led to our Glyphosate method. We used a method called "cut and paint" in which we cut the stalks of the knotweed, then immediately painted them with glyphosate using a sponge. We picked this method because it was a localized use of herbicides and it wouldn't affect any of the other native species growing or any of the water sources that are nearby. We hope in the spring that we will be able to come through and remove the rest of the knotweed, opening up that space for the potential planting of new native species.

We've also been working on removing European Buckthorn along the edge of the cemetery that borders ESF campus. Since we've started on that project, we've removed large amounts of buckthorn and successfully removed some of the root systems as well which we hope will prevent it from growing back in the spring.

We also recently participated in the Onondaga Earth Corps Southside Tree planting event. Several of our members went and helped give back to the community by planting trees. We all had a lot of fun and we hope to participate again next semester!



Cut and Paint Method of Japanese Knotweed Removal wearing hazmat suits:
From Left to Right:
Rowan, Chan, Mak, Josephine



Knotweed



Pile Picture after Buckthorn Removal:
From Left to Right: Maria, Phillip, Connor J, Abby, Nick, Kevin, Jackson, Lucas, Josephine, Annie, Brian, John, Victoria



Buckthorn



Knotweed removal pile picture wearing hazmat suits:
From Left to Right: Chan, Rowan, Abby, Josephine, Annie, Mak, Becky, Gray, Emily



Something to Think About

Here's a question for you: If you could spend 10 minutes talking to any "resident" of Oakwood Cemetery, who would it be? And why? Now there's 60,000 burials so don't tell me you can't think of anyone. We will include some of your answers in the Spring issue of *Grave Matters*. Send your (succinct) answers to HOCPAOakwood@gmail.com.



“A landscape painter has, in a way, the happiest lot of all men.”



Henry Ward Ranger, the man who summed up his career in these few words, was born March 1858, in Geneseo, New York, to Ward V. and Martha Ranger. The elder Ranger was a photographer who moved his family to Syracuse by 1870. Henry worked in his father’s business (Ranger & Frazee in the Wieting block) developing film and tinting photographs. He spent much of his spare time drawing, painting with watercolors, and playing the piano. Fortunately, when Ward Ranger became a professor of photography at Syracuse University, he recognized his son’s talent and allowed him to study Fine Arts there between 1873-1875. Moderately successful at selling his watercolors in Syracuse, Henry left for New York City after 1880 to research modern American painters and pursue a full-time career as an artist.

Although Henry was able to sell some of his early works, he found it necessary to augment his earnings as a music and theater critic. In 1884, he married actress Helen Jennings. In 1887, the two embarked on an extensive tour of Europe. In Paris, Henry learned the methods of applying varnish and oil glazes to create a sense of illumination. In Holland, he acquired the convention of sketching outdoors in nature, a habit he retained his whole career. In London, he studied the techniques of the “old masters” by copying paintings in museums; he often bemoaned that these examples were lacking in America at the time.

By the 1890s, Henry had settled on landscape painting in oils as his milieu, often focusing on forest interiors as subjects (what he described as “cloud, tree, pool, and stone”), using a heavily applied limited palette of colors and glazes creating the illusion of depth and luminosity, almost as if being perceived through stained glass. The style became known as “Tonalism,” and Henry Ranger was considered its originator. In 1899, he stayed at a boarding house in Old Lyme, Connecticut, owned by Florence Griswold. His time in the beautiful scenery was so productive, he continued to return there for the next five years with a merry band of like-minded artists from New York City. That establishment, which became the Lyme Art Colony, continues today as the Florence Griswold Museum.

Henry Ranger was an imposing figure – corpulent, entertaining, opinionated, and often enveloped in a cloud of smoke from a cigar or cigarette. He and his wife enjoyed a vibrant social life including evening dinners and theater with their circle of friends wherever they traveled. Unlike many artists, Henry sold and exhibited numerous paintings during his lifetime, and was elected an Academician of the National Academy of Design in 1906. He was also a savvy real estate investor, contributing to the couple’s financial success.

Helen Ranger died in Milan, Italy, on June 5, 1915. Her body, embalmed and in a lead coffin, was interred in a local cemetery. As there is no accessible record of her ever having been returned to America, it is probable her remains are still there. Henry himself died November 7, 1916 of heart disease. He left all of his large estate to the American Academy of Design to be invested and the income used for the purchase of paintings

by American artists for distribution to museums in the United States, the Smithsonian American Art Museum having first pick. In May of 1918, Henry’s sister, Edith Ranger, was arrested along with two co-conspirators for filing a false will, with herself as beneficiary. All three were eventually acquitted and the original will honored. Edith died impoverished in 1924. The Ranger Fund has since purchased hundreds of paintings by national artists over the years.



The works of Henry Ward Ranger can be seen in museums throughout the world, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum, the Metropolitan, and the Everson. He is buried, along with his parents and sisters, in section 20A, lot 67, of Oakwood Cemetery. Researched and submitted by Holly Koenig.

**Henry Ward Ranger, *Bradbury's Mill Pond*, 1903.
In the Smithsonian American Art Museum.**

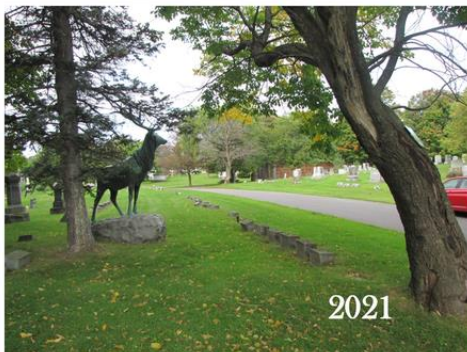
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Elk's Rest - Then & Now



Back in 1885, Elks Lodge #31 was established in Syracuse. The official title of the organization is the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, B.P.O.E., commonly known as the Elks. In 1921, the Elks took title to a 52-grave plot in Oakwood on the north edge of Section 52 along Midland Avenue. Notice the large trees along the roadside. The plot had been donated by Miles C. Hencle, Secretary of the Lodge, as a tribute to his mother Eliza Hencle. Interestingly enough, both Miles and his mother are buried in Baldwinsville, their hometown. According to the *Syracuse Journal* of 19 April 1921, George E. Campbell who passed away on 3 February 1921, would be the first Elk buried in the plot, as had been his dying wish. It was not until June 14, 1925, that the statue of the elk was dedicated in that plot. The plot was named "Elks Rest," a commonly used name for that special cemetery section reserved for members of the Elks. The statue itself was created by a sculptor named Eli Harvey. Harvey was born in 1860 in Clinton, Ohio. As a young man he studied art, and later traveled to Europe to study there. By 1900, he decided to specialize in animal sculptures, and in 1904 he was commissioned to create the "Elk at Rest" statue to be used

expressly by the Elks organization in cemeteries and at their lodges. The first sculpture of the elk was cast in bronze in 1905 by one of the leading art foundries in the United States, the Gorham Manufacturing Company of Providence, Rhode Island. All subsequent elks were also cast by Gorham, including ours in Oakwood Cemetery.



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\$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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Oakwood All-Star - Henry Washington

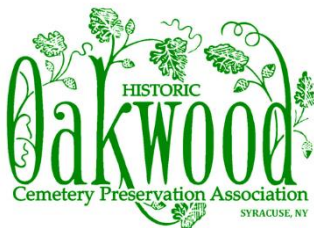
Henry Alvin Washington, M.D., is credited with being the first Black doctor to practice in the city of Syracuse. He was born in 1906 in Nashville, TN where his father was a teacher in a public school. After graduating high school, Henry attended Howard University in Washington, D.C., and in 1929 graduated from their School of Medicine. He moved to Cleveland, OH, to set up his first practice. There he met Miss Evelyn Green whom he married in August of 1929. After moving to Syracuse in 1939, his house at 818 E. Fayette Street served as a home and an office. Dr. Washington would serve the Black community for the next 51 years, retiring in 1980. Known as “Doc Washington,” he was loved by his patients. He was a doctor who would make house calls, and if money was tight, not charge his patients. He was a veteran of World War II, attaining the rank of Captain in the Medical Corps. In 1950 the Washingtons hosted a reception at their home for Marian Anderson. After his retirement, Dr. Washington received numerous awards, including the NAACP Freedom Award in 1989, the Mayor’s Community Service Award in 1990, and the Urban League’s Harriet Tubman Award in 1991. Mrs. Washington passed away in 1981, and Dr. Washington died in 2001. He is buried in Sec. 102, Lot 30. He does not have a headstone.



CEMETERY HUMOR

Once there was a man named Odd. All his life, he was teased and mocked because of his strange name. It got so bad that on his deathbed, he insisted that his headstone be blank, lest he live with that name for all eternity. He got his wish. The day of his funeral, the gravedigger arrived looking for the correct plot. When he spotted the blank headstone, he scratched his head and thought, *That’s odd.*

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