

Grave Matters

Historic Oakwood Cemetery
Preservation Association
Syracuse, N.Y.
Spring 2023 Vol. 31, No. 1

President's Plot - Rick Naylor

As I write this, the calendar says April, but there were a few days that had me believing we skipped into July! With the warm days and April showers Oakwood Cemetery is in bloom a couple weeks early. It is a wonderful sight to see the redbud trees and magnolias in bloom. As you look around daffodils are popping up around lots of family plots.

Keep an eye on our website at hocpa.org, Facebook and Instagram pages for upcoming tours and posts about the many interesting people buried in Oakwood. We have a new stock of tee shirts with an updated design on them available in all sizes. We will have them for sale very soon on our Etsy Store site at www.etsy.com/shop/HOCPA?ref=shop_sugg_market. You can also find our two books, *Oakwood Cemetery: A Special Place* and *Guide to Trees of Oakwood Cemetery* for sale on Etsy too. These items would make wonderful Graduation, Mother's Day and Father's Day gifts!



We are always looking for volunteers to help with the organization. If you have an interest in helping with events, tours, genealogy/history research, social media or fund raising, reach out to us at HocpaOakwood@gmail.com.

Thank you for all your support of our organization, Historic Oakwood Cemetery Preservation Association, and beautiful Oakwood Cemetery.

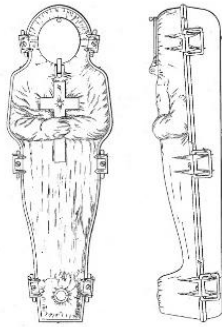


Editor's Notes - Sue Greenhagen



Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "The earth laughs in flowers." And so Oakwood Cemetery joyfully welcomes Spring. Stroll around Oakwood, take in the Spring sights (and sounds), and you can't help but smile. A new year is about to begin. That means we're getting our tours lined up, something we've been doing since 1990. Dennis Connors, from O.H.A., gave the first guided walking tour in October of that year. Since then we've done over 150 monthly scheduled tours. I've led 32 of them myself. No wonder my feet hurt. These tours are an important part of HOCPA's educational component. We'll take you to all parts of the cemetery, show you things that may surprise you, tell you stories of the many "residents," both famous and infamous. We'll teach you history and it won't hurt a bit. We'll give you a real appreciation for the historic treasure that we call Oakwood. All our tours are free but we gladly accept donations. Believe it or not, preservation costs money. The flora may change with the seasons, but it is always spectacular. Come along with us. Contact us at HocpaOakwood@gmail.com or (315) 263-7159 if you have any questions. In fact, if you have any ideas for tour topics, let us know. We're listening...

Uncovering a Crouse Casket - Diane Medvitz



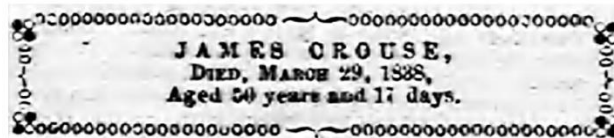
In the second half of the 19th century metal caskets became very popular. Almond D. Fisk of New York patented a model in 1848 featuring a round glass window for viewing the face, and custom formed to the body, representing an Egyptian sarcophagus. This was exhibited at the N.Y State Fair in Syracuse in 1849. However, a fire destroyed his factory in Queens so he borrowed money from Horace White of Syracuse to rebuild. His caskets cost between \$50 and \$100 when a plain wooden casket cost \$2.00. But affluent families preferred the metal caskets for their potential to deter grave robbers. It was also possible to preserve the remains of individuals who died far from home until they could be shipped back to their families and to quarantine victims of contagious diseases.

In 1855 Martin H. Crane designed a new casket, modifying Fisk's original design, allowing them to be mass produced, and later perfected the first one made of sheet metal instead of cast iron. This lowered the cost and opened new markets as well as hastened the decline of the cast iron caskets. Abraham Lincoln was buried in a Crane casket but Oakwood has a closer tie to this design. In 1858 James Crouse died, after requesting to be buried in Oakwood upon its completion the following year. His monument is the oldest in the cemetery.



On April 2, the *Syracuse Daily Courier* published a detailed description of the funeral:

“The body was encased in one of Crane's Patent Metallic Burial Caskets, (from the undertaking establishment of Chas. Rust & Son, 41 South Salina Street,) elaborately ornamented outside in imitation of caring, eight silver handles on the sides, and top of the casket being entirely of heavy French plated glass, presenting when the casket is closed up and sealed a full view of the body. The deceased was dressed in a full suit of black cloth. On the top of the casket was placed an orbal silver plate, surrounded with a border or vine, cut on the plate bearing the following inscription:



After the conclusion of the services, the glass plates were enclosed with metallic plates (ornamented like the casket) the casket when closed up being perfectly air tight and durable. The hearse, a beautiful one, cared with glass panels, was surmounted by eight large black Ostrich plumes, the horses being covered with heavy black nets. The bearers were: --M.D. Bennett, [E. W. Leavenworth](#), [Israel S. Spencer](#), [Horace White](#), [William J. Hough](#), John D. Norton, Major Dana, Herrick Allen. The body was taken to Rose Hill Cemetery for interment. There were twenty carriages, first carriage with clergymen, followed by two carriages containing the pall bearers; next came the hearse after which the carriages with the mourners and friends. Great credit is due to the skill and taste of the Messrs. Rust & Son, for the handsome manner in which they performed the duties of undertakers in this instance. We doubt if ever we beheld a more beautiful or elaborate burial casket as this one from their establishment both in its trimmings and unique workmanship.”

Without this play-by-play newspaper description we would have never known that a metallic casket came to Oakwood in 1858.



Sunday Summer Tours

Enter from Comstock Avenue. Follow the signs.

We go, rain or shine.

We do not go out if there's thunder and lightning.

Be sure to wear comfortable shoes.

Any questions, call (315) 263-7159.

May 21 - Section B - Join Diane Medvitz to hear some of the stories the residents of Section B have to tell. Along with Diane will be Holly Koenig who will describe some of this section's most interesting monuments.

June 25 - Section 35 - Mrs. Kate Candee Knickerbocker (1850-1925), a resident of Lot 127, has graciously agreed to introduce tour-goers to some of her neighbors. Mrs. K. (aka Sue Greenhagen) knows their stories, and then some.

July 16 - Section 17 - Back on the circuit is Diane Medvitz, touring one of her favorite sections. Hear about folks you might know well, and some maybe not so well.

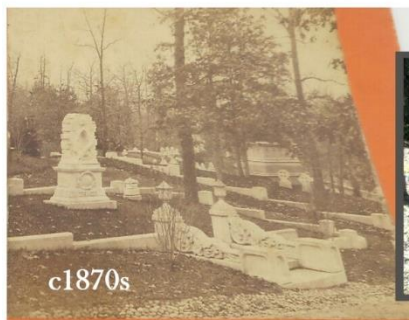
August 20 - Section 48 - Guide Sue Greenhagen will lead our tour of Section 48. Or will one of the "residents" be our guide? Anyway, the tales to be told are bound to be memorable.

September - TBA. Watch our Facebook and Instagram pages for updates.



THEN & NOW IN OAKWOOD

Milton Price (1824-1889), the flamboyant "Merchant Prince of Syracuse," never did anything halfway. Now we know this also applied to his final resting place in Oakwood Cemetery. A recently discovered stereoscopic photo shows the decorative setting of the Price plot in Section 12. It's highly probable that the old stereoscopic dates from the 1870s. In looking at the old photo, there is no headstone to the left of the large monument. Milton Price's wife, Rhoda, has occupied that spot since 1888, so the photo is earlier. Son Willie's small monument is to the right in the old picture, and since he died in 1861, that narrows it down to after 1861, but before 1888. The next thing to do is to look at the back of the photo. There it says, "Taken by J.L. & H.A. Jordan, Photographers." When were James L. and/or Henry A. Jordan in Syracuse? According to city directories, the brothers, who were born and raised in Connecticut, came to central New York in the mid-1860s. In 1868, they published "Stereoscopic Views of Syracuse and Vicinity." Of the 29 pictures they published, none were of Oakwood. Henry left for Dubuque, Iowa, around 1880. Although it's impossible to pinpoint, we can assume that this view in Section 12 of Oakwood was taken in the 1870s. That would make it one of our earliest views of Oakwood.



Section 12, Lot 105
Milton S. Price



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

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Earth Day at the Cemetery – April 22

Paul Harvey

We gathered on Saturday morning, hosted by the ESF Crypt Keepers. Several HOCPA Board members joined in, as well as some community members. In partnership with the students and a couple of staff members they did the traditional removal of limbs, leaves, and loose litter from the luxurious lawn (how's that for alliteration?). The work progressed quickly after a lively lecture from HOCPA member, plot owner and local good guy, Hamilton White, the fifth in line from the original treasurer of Oakwood. His information was incredible and included the facts that in 1848 Syracuse was the 12th largest city in the US, that a ¼ keg of salt was actually worth more than the same size keg of gold, and that there are well over 200 descendants of the White line buried in Oakwood.



Earth Day, 2023, was a huge success at Oakwood. Not only did our ESF Crypt Keepers come out to work, sporting their snazzy green shirts, but also community members just doing their part to help the cemetery look its best.

Thanks to everyone involved and particularly to our partners from SUNY -ESF.



Headstone Humor

This item appeared in the February, 1907, issue of *The Monumental News*. The *News* was a trade magazine first published in 1896. Over the years it has changed names and is now *Stone in America*, which is still published today. A "kick" is obviously another term for "complaint." Enjoy...

DIARY OF A HEADSTONE

- August 1: Sold a headstone for \$50.
August 2: Ordered it from manufacturer.
September 1: Shipped from the quarries.
September 3: Received bill of lading and Mfrs. bill.
September 15: Visited freight depot; nothing doing.
September 16: Visited freight depot and kicked; kick filed.
September 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30: Visited freight depot and kicked; kicks filed.
October 1: Kicks sent to head freight office.
October 17: Letter from head freight office saying that the third assistant office boy had mislaid kicks; please send formal complaint.
October 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31: Called up local freight agent; nothing doing.
November 1: Wrote to head freight office.
November 15: Reply, saying the matter had been referred to the deputy assistant to the vice-auditor of the Wayback Claim Department.
November 30: Letter from the V. A. of the W. C. D. asking for description of goods, marks, date of shipment, etc.
December 1: Sent data, with some other remarks.
December 15: Wrote a kick to the V. A. of the W. C. D.
December 30: Kick acknowledged, saying the matter would be taken up with the freight department of the D. V. & Z. R. R., over which the goods had come.
December 30: Wrote another kick.
January 10: Reply, saying that tracer had been sent out.
January 22: Letter from manufacturer wanting his money; also from customer wanting his stone, which is two months over due.
January 23: Sent another kick to R. R.
February 3: Reply saying another tracer had been sent out.
Feb. 27: Letter from R. R. saying shipment had been located in Crossroads, Ala., 1,836 miles from destination, and had been forwarded via P. D. & Q. R. R.
March 19: Inquired of freight agent; nothing doing.
March 20: Sent a kick to the general freight agent.
March 21: Letter from manufacturer saying stone had been returned to him, and asking why; job was exactly as specified; would reship it; if bill not settled soon would sue.
April 23: Stone arrived without any boxing, and two corners missing; freight charges \$38.
April 29: Set it in cemetery.
May 5: Customer saw it and demanded reduction of one-third for damage.
May 8: Letter from manufacturer demanding extra payment for delay.
May 30: Dealer sells out to local undertaker and goes fishing.



**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, 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.

SPONSORSHIP FORM

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

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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

SOS! – Save Outdoor Sculpture – Diane Medvitz



Driving around the city you may notice statues such as General Gustavus Sniper at the intersection of North Salina and North State, or “Waiting for the Night Train” at the New York Central Train Station along Route 690. They are listed in the Save Outdoor Sculpture! (SOS!) database as part of a nationwide survey to document and preserve outdoor sculpture. Begun in 1989 by the Smithsonian American Art Museum and Heritage Preservation, Inc., in conjunction with regional partners and volunteers, their website highlights over 32,000 sculptures in the US with 54 percent of these considered to be in critical or urgent need of conservation to survive. Syracuse is

represented by 75 outdoor sculptures including 12 at the Everson and 14 at Syracuse University. These can be searched at the website <https://americanart.si.edu/research/inventories/outdoor-sculpture>.

Under the guidance of HOCPA member Christine Lozner eight sculptures located in Oakwood Cemetery were added to the list. If you were asked you could probably name those readily apparent including the bronze Elk by Eli Harvey dedicated in 1925 in section 52, the Grand Army of the Republic Monument by David Richards dedicated in 1885 in section 56, or the bronze Haggerty Lion by Thomas Haggerty dedicated in 1982 across from the chapel. But five other beautiful examples are also on the list.

Across from the Civil War area in section 48 is the stone Olive Belden Wigglesworth monument by John Massey Rhind showing a woman holding a child in her arms. In the older sections of the cemetery are three monuments sculpted by John C. Esser, who is also buried in Oakwood, section 6, lot 57. The Lewis Hamilton Redfield monument in section 3, lot 144 was commissioned in 1866 but dedicated in 1883, made of Onondaga Limestone. The John Robert Whitlock monument is in section 4, lot 94 made of Onondaga limestone, dedicated about 1878. The James Robbins Lawrence monument in section 7, lot 10 is also Onondaga limestone, dedicated about 1866.



Perhaps my favorite is the Onondaga County Orphan Asylum monument, made of stone by Ralph Cook and dedicated in 1894. Christina Colvin (section 20, lot 1) was one of the founders of the Orphan Asylum and in her will donated \$4000 (today equal to \$128,508) to erect a statue in section 44. Ralph Cook chiseled this monument from a 5-ton block of blue Westerly granite, erected two years after her death.

SOS is a proud sponsor of a program for The Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. in which girls earn a patch by researching local sculptures and artists, particularly those by and about women. The goal is “to generate appreciation, enthusiasm, and a sense of ownership for American outdoor sculpture; to promote the use of sculpture as an interdisciplinary teaching tool and a focus for community involvement; and to raise awareness about the need for ongoing preservation of outdoor sculpture.”¹

You can view all eight of these sculptures at <https://www.findagrave.com/virtual-cemetery/382667>. These art works deserve a look in person. Take a drive around Oakwood to enjoy them.

¹ Gspacket.pdf. SOS! Girl Scouts Patch Program. Inside Outdoor Sculpture, page 4.



Cemetery Iconography

A monument that is a tree stump or tree trunk lacking branches symbolizes a life cut short, the brevity of life.



However, sometimes a tree stump is just a tree stump.



Hiram Putnam - Oakwood All-Star



Hiram Putnam (1786-1874) is not the most recognized name in local history, but maybe it should be near the top of the list. He was the first President of the Syracuse Board of Education, serving from 1848 to 1852. He established the rule that prohibited employment of any faculty that indulged in alcoholic drinks or tobacco. He set the pay scale for teachers at \$15 to \$20 a month. In today's money, that would be about \$631 a month. Putnam was born in Danvers, MA, in 1786. BTW, Danvers used to be part of Salem Village of witch trial fame. He was educated at the local common school and at age 16, he went to sea where he rose through the ranks becoming a ship's captain in 1812. In 1816 he married Elizabeth Osgood of Andover, MA. In 1819 he became captain of the ship *China* and sailed the Pacific ports carrying all sorts of trade goods. After 27 years at sea, Hiram Putnam retired and moved his family to Syracuse. Early on he served as Syracuse village trustee and assessor. He was one of the founders of the Unitarian Church, later May Memorial Church. He was President of the Board of Counsellors of the Home Association. In 1833 he went into the wholesale and retail drug business with Thomas B. Fitch. In 1851 he was a member of the Vigilance Committee, resisting the Fugitive Slave Law. At the time of his death, he was a Trustee of the Syracuse Savings Bank. His wife, Elizabeth, deserves a mention as she and Ann Maria Redfield established the first public library in the Village of Syracuse. They had a wooden case with thirty books that could be borrowed by anyone. Elizabeth died in 1848. Even the Putnam monument in Oakwood (Section 24, Lot 21) gets a mention. It is a large capstan with the words, "Ship China," on it. Truly unique, it was designed by Francis & Duffy Co. of Syracuse, and placed in Oakwood in 1876, two years after Putnam's death. Hiram and Elizabeth, two remarkable people, rest in its shadow.



Address correction requested.



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