

The EMCA's Early Days

Today, a visitor to the Masonic Cemetery might easily remark "Wow! I had no idea this whole cemetery existed and is so beautiful, peaceful and well kept." The current condition is indeed so outstanding that visitors can be excused for not believing the stories that they're told about the "old Masonic Cemetery."

The Eugene Masonic Cemetery, established by Masonic Lodge #11 in 1859, enjoyed many decades of prominence as a pioneer cemetery, but over time it fell into disrepair. By 1990, neighbors, families of those buried in the cemetery and community leaders were clamoring for change.

In 1995, the city of Eugene facilitated the transfer of ownership of the cemetery to a new board of directors. With such a troubled past, expectations were generally low for what this change in ownership could achieve. Local *Register-Guard* columnist Don Bischoff called me one day to ask "What makes you think that you can do anything with the Masonic Cemetery when so many before you have failed?"

When the Masonic Lodge deeded the cemetery to the new non-profit agency, the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association, they also gave the EMCA the cemetery's total cash assets of \$15,000. As president of the new organization, I saw that my first goals were to raise money and deal with vandalism and issues of security.

We knocked on many doors and received positive responses from many sources. Here are just a few examples of the many yesses we

received, both in time and money, that helped rescue the cemetery.



In the early years, three private individuals contributed about \$32,000, which was a tremendous help in starting our work.

The Lane County Historical Society granted us \$2500 to pay for private security at the cemetery for the first two years of our operation. At the same time, they granted us a one-time use of their membership list for fundraising purposes.

An important non-monetary gift we received came from a man in Springfield who was retiring as a genealogist. He had once produced a list of all of the obituaries published in the southern Willamette Valley between 1859 and 1909. Would we like to have this document? Yes! Yes! This compendium of obituaries provided important research for our book *Full of Life* and also for research we later needed for legal purposes.

The Eugene Garden Club planted hundreds of allium bulbs along the road leading to Hope Abbey. These now provide a delicate ground-level display of white among spring greens growing there.

A 1995 grant provided support for a qualified historical preservationist and a retired photographer to record the contents and photograph the condition of each of the 500 20 x 20-foot burial plots in the entire cemetery. That project, which involved 250 to 300 hours of labor by both people, was the largest such study in the Northwest.

At the same time, another grant-supported study, the Masonic

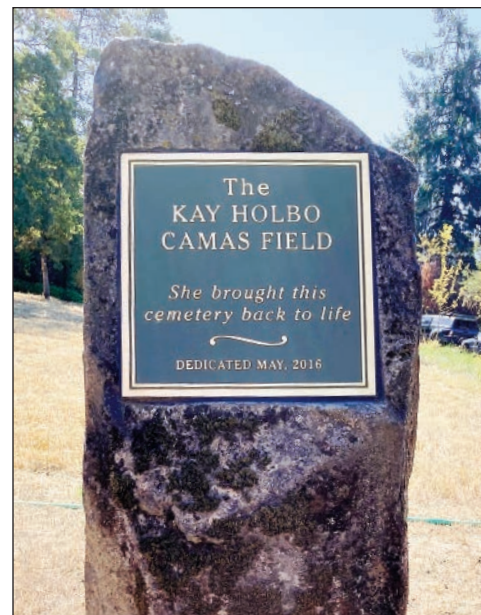
Cemetery and Hope Abbey Mausoleum Restoration Plan, was produced by a similar combination of a professional preservationist and an assistant.

Finally, a man who described himself as a professional handyman said he would like to work entirely alone on one large project for the cemetery. We asked him to prepare and paint the outside of Hope Abbey. He selected a color for our approval and, working without any supervision or collaboration, did just what he said he would. And then, without much fanfare, he disappeared and has not been heard from since. What a volunteer!



Since these early beginnings, there have been many more donations of time and money, some more visible than others, to restore the cemetery and Hope Abbey to their former prominence.

*Kay Holbo,
former Board President*



EMCA fountain

“At the top of the cemetery, opposite the Public Square, there is a drinking fountain made from one massive stone column. It was installed just before the turn of the last century, during the final week of December, 1999. Installation wasn’t easy; it was cold, hard, sometimes painful work.

The fountain is a memorial to Hubert Prichard, my father, who died more than fifty years ago at the early age of 49. My family wanted to do something special in his memory—something useful and beautiful.

We chose a single stone of native basalt. To install the plumbing, Keith Schneider, a local stone mason, drilled two holes completely through the stone’s long axis for the water supply and drain. This required precision equipment, skill, and many hours of effort.

Keith then spent many more hours

shaping and grinding a basin in the stone. No other changes were made to the stone’s natural features. It took several days on site to install it. No telling how much the stone weighed, but it took a serious truck-mounted crane to inch it into place.

Supplying the water required over 300 feet of trenching and a new water line brought all the way from 26th Avenue. This improvement also allowed for the installation of a nearby faucet for irrigation.

The drinking fountain blends into the natural landscape and looks like it has always been there. It has a small plaque with my father’s name and the simple phrase, “Gone too soon.” The fountain has become a regular stop for cemetery visitors, and it should still be providing cool refreshment at the turn of the next century. And the next.

Hugh Prichard, former Board Member



Hubert Prichard memorial fountain

History of the Land

Tribal Histories of the Willamette Valley by David G. Lewis, a Kalapuyan of Grande Ronde, will be available November 14. Information in this book will help shape future histories of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery. The EMCA Board has previously considered writing a land acknowledgement, and this book will aid further discussions.

The purpose of a land acknowledgement statement is to recognize that a piece of land is part of the traditional homelands of an indigenous people, and to understand the history that brought an organization to reside on the land.

In **1830**, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act that stipulated Native Americans would be “removed” to land in the West in exchange for land in a U.S. state. Title to the land would pass from a sovereign indigenous nation to the U.S. government by treaty, after which the U.S. government could sell the land to individual settlers.

In **1850**, the U.S. Congress passed the Donation Land Claims Act, which conferred legal ownership to white male settlers over age 18 who had squatted on and farmed land for the previous four years. It further offered 160 acres to

white men arriving during 1850–1853—later extended to 1855—and allowed a husband to double his claim in his wife’s name. This same year, Fielding McMurray claimed 320 acres, including the future Masonic Cemetery property. The first recorded burial on McMurray’s land was in 1854.

In **1855**, the United States government and the Confederated Bands of the Kalapuya signed the Willamette Valley Treaty. This ceded title to claims by Kalapuyans and their descendants to land in the Willamette Valley in exchange for a permanent reservation, annuities, supplies, educational, vocational, and health services, and protection from violence by American settlers.

The following year, the Kalapuya people were forcibly removed to the Grande Ronde encampment. In 1857, the Masons purchased land from McMurray for the cemetery, which was established in **1859**.

*Beatrice McKenzie,
Board Member*

Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association (541) 684-0949 www.eugenemasoniccemetery.org

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The IRS Form 990 is available for inspection upon request.

We acknowledge that the cemetery stands on land formerly inhabited by the Kalapuya tribe. We honor the care they provided for the land.

From the President

Go West (and Head West), Young Man

The author and newspaper editor Horace Greeley is often credited with the phrase, “Go West, young man.” The phrase relates to America’s expansion westward and the concept of Manifest Destiny. Greeley wrote, “Washington [D.C.] is not a place to live in. The rents are high, the food is bad, the dust is disgusting and the morals are deplorable. Go West, young man, go West and grow up with the country.” The phrase became popular in the 19th and 20th centuries and is the title of multiple films and even a Bing Crosby album.

You may be asking, “What does this phrase have to do with the Eugene Masonic Cemetery?” There are two reasons why it comes to mind as I walk through the cemetery: pioneers and burial customs.

Pioneers

The pioneering history in the cemetery becomes readily apparent as one walks through the cemetery, examines the grave markers, and reads the signage. The cemetery is full of 19th century pioneers who saw the fertile farmland of the West, and particularly the Willamette



Marker of pioneer Luckey family

Valley, as an ideal place to establish roots. They worked hard for the opportunity to succeed. These pioneers embraced the concept of Manifest Destiny as they sought to tame the wild West and tap into the potential that the land had to offer.

I am in awe of what these pioneers were able to accomplish, and I am struck with the trials that they endured. Pioneers interred in the Eugene Masonic Cemetery include William Nelson Luckey and Elizabeth Leasure Luckey, who came to the Willamette Valley via the Oregon Trail in 1850. Other notable pioneers include Mahlon H. Harlow and Frances Tandy Harlow, who purchased their 320 acres for five dollars and an old pistol. There they cultivated a successful farm, raised eight children, built a school, and offered their home as the first church in Eugene.

I sometimes feel a bit of a connection with these pioneers, since many of my ancestors were among those who trekked across the plains seeking a better life. I am a descendant of Mormon pioneers who endured trials as they sought refuge and settled in the Mountain West.

Although we highlight the pioneers’ history and even celebrate their accomplishments, it is important to note and acknowledge that the motivations and actions of some of the pioneers who embraced Manifest Destiny were not always pure. Actions of early pioneers included mistreatment of Native Americans and dispossession of the lands over which groups such as the Kalapuya were stewards. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that racist ideologies were not uncommon during the period in which settlers established themselves in the Willamette Valley. Oregon’s territorial constitution, adopted in November 1857—less than two

years before Oregon became a state—barred people of color from coming within its borders. As we tell the stories of the pioneers in the cemetery, we strive to present the full story, albeit sometimes checkered and sordid.

Burial Customs

The phrase “Go West, young man” also reminds me of burial customs present in the Masonic Cemetery.

Prior to moving to Oregon, I worked in the family business—a funeral home. As a licensed funeral director, I had the opportunity to serve those who had lost loved ones. One of the most enjoyable parts of my job was being able to work alongside my dad. We often drove together in the funeral coach (aka, the hearse), as we led the funeral procession to the cemetery. Upon our arrival at the cemetery, loved ones would gather around the open grave, and the pallbearers would congregate at the back of the funeral coach. My dad would arrange the pallbearers and provide instructions for carrying the casket to the gravesite. He would point out which end of the casket was the head and would instruct the pallbearers saying, “Head West, young man” (indicating that the head of the casket should be to the west). Sometimes a pallbearer (typically an older gentleman) would get the reference to the old phrase and give a smirk.

It is the custom in many cultures that people are buried with their heads to the west so that they are facing the east. Although it is not required, this is the custom in the Eugene Masonic Cemetery. In the United States and other Western cultures, the practice of burying the dead so that they face the east generally comes from the Christian belief that at the second coming of

continued on page 5

Running in the Cemetery

Recently, the Eugene Masonic Cemetery was featured in an article in *Runner's World*, a globally circulated monthly magazine for runners. The article is entitled "Wait ... Is It Okay to Run in a Cemetery?" The article features a sign located in our cemetery and discusses whether running in a cemetery is appropriate, or whether doing so is disrespectful.

The featured sign reads: "Runners, this is a cemetery NOT a training area." The article describes the sign as being "strongly worded" and indicates that the sign started a lively discussion among runners, with varying reactions. The article's author reached out to me for comments and to discuss our policy with regard to running in the cemetery.

I am quoted as saying: "I think it can be helpful for visitors to keep in mind that the cemetery is first and foremost a cemetery. Visitors come to the cemetery to grieve, to remember those who have passed on, and to seek solace. Other 'non-cemetery' related activities are fine and encouraged as long as the activities do not disrupt the cemetery's primary role."

The sign featured in the article may come off as strongly worded and a bit harsh. However, it is important to understand the context and the backstory. For a while, we were having ongoing issues with groups of runners who were training in the cemetery. One particular group would regularly engage in group trainings that included sprints and chain



This sign replaces the ones directed at runners.

runs. The coach would shout commands, use a whistle, and draw chalk lines on the cemetery paths. They continued this type of training despite our multiple requests that they find a more suitable location. The placement of the signage was in response to those who were disrespectful of the space and dismissive of our requests. The article did include this context and backstory, albeit briefly; however, I appreciate its inclusion. Fortunately, the issues we were having seem to have subsided.

Later in the article, I am again quoted as saying: "We love having visitors in the cemetery, and part of our mission is to maintain and operate the cemetery as a resource for the community. I believe it can be perfectly appropriate for runners to run in the cemetery as long as their activities are respectful to other visitors and to the space."

The Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association prides itself in providing a beautiful space for all to enjoy. Please, come to the cemetery. Feel free to run, walk, picnic, and enjoy our music events. We only ask that visitors be mindful of the setting and engage in these activities appropriately.

Shawn Walker, EMCA President

Cemetery Trees of Interest

The Masonic Cemetery in 1859 was a grassy knoll with a few oak trees and dozens of wildflowers. Over time, Douglas-fir trees have come to dominate much of the area. Several of these firs have interesting histories.

One Douglas-fir east of the Public Square has a long scar that spirals down its trunk from high in the canopy. This tree was struck by lightning in September, 2001. The lightning coursed down the outside of the tree, stripping bark and casting it in all directions, some as far as 60 feet from the base of the tree. The next morning, a woodpecker and an owl that had been roosting in the tree when the lightning struck, were found dead on the ground. For months, visitors came to pay their respects.

In February, 2002, two firs lost their tops during a severe windstorm. One tree was home to a wild honey bee

continued on page 5



One of the snags providing habitat

Hope Abbey Mystery Solved

A recurring question among members of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association has been the disparity between the death dates of some of the inhabitants of Hope Abbey and the date of dedication of the mausoleum.

Hope Abbey was dedicated on Decoration Day (the precursor of Memorial Day) in 1914. However, some of the niches are marked with dates of demise going back to 1910, four years prior to the mausoleum's dedication. How could this be?

The history of Hope Abbey's construction provides the answer. The earliest mention of the Abbey occurs in the *Eugene Daily Guard* of October 5, 1912. At that point, the mausoleum had been planned and a site selected.

As construction continued, mausoleum space was heavily marketed in the *Guard*, and remarks on the "sanitary" and "dignified" interment in mausoleums instead of in the ground were many and from various sources, including a quotation from Abraham Lincoln. One remark suggests that ground interment should cease and that all people should be encrypted above ground!

A May 10, 1913, article stated that an interim mausoleum was being constructed "for the temporary care of bodies until such time as the community mausoleum is constructed this summer." A list of those interred in the interim mau-

soleum included Eli Bangs, Duncan Scott, August [his crypt says Augustus] Vitus, George Hall, Sr. and Miss Frances Orton.

This situation is confirmed by several death certificates, which read "Hold for Mausoleum" in the disposition field. A few bodies were also kept at the Gordon & Veach funeral home on 10th Avenue and Olive Street until the temporary structure was available.

A December 20, 1913, article in the *Guard* described Hope Abbey as a "Work of Science," in what can only be described as a propaganda piece. Deterioration was "impossible," and the crypts guaranteed to be dry. The article continues, "Humanity is the slave of suggestion, and the grim thud of clods upon the lowered casket has more nearly scoffed down the Divine promise of eternal life than all the writings and utterances of the unbelievers."

The earliest death date of those interred in Hope Abbey is that of John Leroy Carpenter, who died in 1910. He had been interred in the IOOF cemetery located at 18th Avenue and University Streets. Eli Bangs and others who passed in 1912 were stored at local funeral homes prior to the completion of the temporary structure. George Hall, Sr. and others who died in 1913 and early 1914 were housed in the temporary structure until the week prior to the dedication.

The June 4, 1914, article describes the placement of the time capsule urn in a columbarium niche, to be opened in 2914. A subsequent article about the dedication details the contents: "A copy of the *Eugene Guard*... a picture of the building, statistics regarding Eugene and Lane County... and a publication on the development of the mausoleum." None of the founders could have foreseen the day when these documents would be available with a simple internet search.

Hope Abbey continued to be heavily advertised, and such advertising was evidently successful. Today the Abbey crypts are almost entirely full.

Ariana White,
EMCA Historian



The Western Screech-owl's streaked plumage resembles tree bark.

Trees, from page 4

colony in a cavity nearly 25 feet from the ground. When the tree snapped, the honey comb scattered. The sweet bounty was retrieved and enjoyed by neighbors. Both of these "snags" have been retained to provide habitat for birds, insects and other creatures that rely on dead trees for feeding, roosting or nesting.

Next time you are walking in the cemetery, see if you can spot these trees. You may also find other trees with interesting shapes or stories.

From the EMCA brochure
Trees of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery

From the President, from page 3

Christ, Jesus will come from the east (Matthew 24:27). However, the practice of burying the dead so that they face the east has roots that trace even further back—to the Egyptians and Greeks who believed it was important that the dead face the rising sun and/or the sun god.

As you walk through the Eugene Masonic Cemetery, maybe you will

think of the phrase, "Go West, young man" as you learn of and contemplate the pioneer heritage present there. Maybe you will even think of my dad's variation, "Head West, young man" as you observe the burial customs present throughout the cemetery.

Shawn Walker,
Board President

A Window Dedication and a Party



A new plaque below a beautiful stained-glass window in Hope Abbey honors Karen Seidel “for her years of service and contributions

to EMCA.” That plaque’s wording struck the EMCA Board as a good reason to have a party, and on August 26, a number of current and former Board members got together with Karen to celebrate and to have fun reminiscing about some of those early years.

Many of the stories told are familiar, and also appear in the EMCA’s oral history project, but new details came out at the party. For example, when Karen was talking about her delight in researching early burials, she commented on the change over time in the way newspapers wrote obituaries. “At the beginning [in 1863], the obits began with a discussion of the people’s religious life, not their family or life’s work. There would be a dis-

cussion of whether the deceased had forgiven people who did them wrong before they died. Gradually the information changed. It was less religious and more about family and work.”

It would be impossible in a few words to summarize the substantial contributions to the cemetery of all of the participants at the party—check out their oral history comments under *About Us* on our website for some of them—but Karen’s have certainly been remarkable. For many years, as our board secretary, as the editor-in-chief of the *Monumental News*, and as a wise guide, she has played an outsized role in making the EMCA the effective organization it has become.

Charley Wright, Board Member

A Rewarding Encounter

Earlier this summer, I took a break from gardening to go for a walk in the cemetery, where I met a youngish couple with a small girl in a bright dress. All three were clearly enjoying themselves.

The child didn’t seem put off by the geezer in old clothes and started asking me questions. “When people die, where do they put their hands?”

I was surprised, and I didn’t know how to answer, but Mom took it in stride. “Well,” she said, “When Grandma died, her hands were at her sides, but when they buried her, her arms were across her chest.”

That question and others led to the mention of a marker they’d seen—it must have been one with a lamb on top. “How did that girl die?”

I told Beatrix, who by now had let me know that she was four, that a number of children were buried in the cemetery and that I thought many of them must have died of the flu. “But,” I said, “these days children don’t die of the flu, because we have flu shots to keep them well.” Mom beamed. That was exactly the right answer, it seems.

We crossed paths again a few minutes later, and in response to Dad’s praise for the grounds, I mentioned that the cemetery has recently become an arboretum. I learned that the family was visiting from Madison, Wisconsin, where they also enjoy going to the arboretum to appreciate nature.

After we parted, I felt such a warm glow. Beatrix and her par-

ents were having the kind of experience we hope visitors to our cemetery will be able to share for years and years to come. What a delightful, positive vision!

Charley Wright, Board Member



Marker of young girl, Georgia

To Our Readers: If you would like to receive EMCA’s monthly eNewsletter, go to the EMCA’s website. On the pull down menu, click About Us and then EMCA publications. At the bottom of the page is a link to sign up.

Recent Contributions

The following individuals and organizations contributed gifts between April 1, 2023 and October 1, 2023. We thank you all.

Monumental Giver (\$2,500+)

William and Christina Bradshaw Hallis

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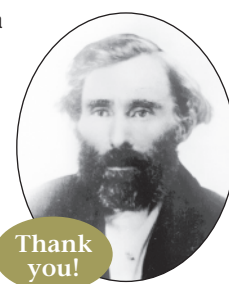
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Thank you!

Eugene Skinner

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Eshkie Zachai
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Gifts in Honor and in Memory

Between April 1, 2023 and October 1, 2023, the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association received gifts from the following. We wish to thank all who contributed and regret any errors or omissions.

Monumental Giver (\$2,500+)

Hallis for the general endowment

Monument Rebuilder (\$500-\$2,499)

Kathleen Wiley and Bob Carolan in memory of Dr. David L. White and Don and Shirley Wiley
Brigid Flannery in memory of Dan Slovic
Chan Beals and Kate Nicholls for the endowment in memory of Barbara and Roger Nicholls
Carol Williams for the general endowment

Preserver (\$250-\$499)

Sandra and Steve Burrowes for the endowment in memory of Carolyn Spector and Fran Ross
Sula Fiszman in memory of Joseph and Rachele Fiszman
Martha and William Hall in memory of the Benner family
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Deb Trist in memory of Scott Jarvis
Barbara West in memory of Barger

Recent In-kind Contributions

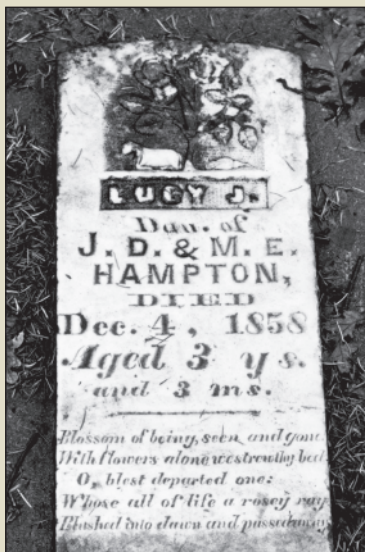
We happily acknowledge the in-kind services and discounts afforded to us by the following.

Dan Delsman
Dale Forrest
Lane Forest Products
QSL Printing
Sanipac

Photos Wanted

Sally Dietrich, EMCA Administrator, has become aware of the lack of photos of the cemetery. She, and those working on marker restoration, are particularly interested in turn of the century photos, although any old photos are welcome.

If you have any, you may contact Sally at emca1859@gmail.com



If you wish to donate, please use the enclosed remittance envelope or PayPal.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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*Newsletter by Betsy Halpern
and Beneda Design*

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Burial Space in the Cemetery

Owing to historical considerations, the terrain, and the landscape, much of the cemetery is no longer available for casket burials. Only a limited number of lots remain for such burials, and rights for many of those have already been purchased.

Although casket burial lots are almost gone, there are still lots for cremated remains located throughout the cemetery, many in the northwest portion where the terrain is steeper and there are more trees. Three urns can be buried on a full-sized lot, and a half-size lot will hold two urns. Each option allows for a grave marker on the site.

Other options for cremated remains are our Memorial Overlook and Memorial Garden. In

these areas, only the ashes are buried, with no container. Memorialization can be with bronze plaques placed on steles in the area.

Moving towards the exclusive burial of cremated remains will reduce the impact of burials on the cemetery's environment. These burial sites are prepared by hand, and there is no need to bring in heavy equipment for excavation. The disturbance to the ground is substantially reduced, and it is possible to work around animal and bird habitats.

Burial of cremated remains supports the continuity of the cemetery as an urban forest and a valuable piece of Eugene's history.

*Sally Dietrich, Cemetery
Administrator*

