



February, 2025

## Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association eNewsletter



### "Last Sunday" Open House

We'll be hosting our monthly "Last Sunday" Open House this coming Sunday, February 23, in Hope Abbey Mausoleum. The doors will be open for visitors from 1 to 4 PM, and there will be

two knowledgeable board members present to answer questions about the mausoleum and the cemetery grounds.

Mother Nature and our ace landscape crew have the cemetery grounds in great shape. If you do visit the open house, consider spending some time exploring the monuments and the blossoming flora. Our Site Manager tells you what's coming up now.

Please park on city streets because there is no general parking on the cemetery grounds. Hope Abbey is the large concrete structure at the end of E 26th.

## Cemetery Arboretum/Landscape Update

By Diego Llewellyn-Jones, Site Manager



Plants that are blooming now: snowdrops, hellebores, violets, and crocuses. The daffodils are budding and will be blooming soon. Other things coming up, but not budding yet, are larkspur, meadowrue and cardamine. And the fawn lilies are just beginning to emerge from underground. Come visit. The grounds are beautiful this time of year.

I recently met with Whitey Lueck for a walk through the cemetery. Whitey is a professor in the Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning department at University of Oregon, and a friend and neighbor of the cemetery. He was very impressed with the new plant labels, and was interested in them for a project he's been working on for years. During our conversation he pointed out some errors, including the label for the yew tree. I had identified it as an English Yew (*Taxus baccata*), but it's actually an Irish Yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Fastigiata'), planted in memory of Thomas Condon, who was himself Irish. It's a mistake I'll correct in the next batch of labels.

Irish yews, as seen in the photo above, typically have a more upright, columnar growth habit. You might recall it having that shape in past years. Unfortunately, the ice storms of 2016 and 2019 took their toll, eventually damaging the main leader and causing it to break. If you'd like to take a look at the one yew tree in the cemetery, begin the walk up the road from the mausoleum. Straight ahead at the first bend in the road is the tombstone of Thomas Condon. The well-marked yew is just a few feet from Condon's marker.

You can find more information on yew trees [here](#).

## What Are Snags?



Occasionally Diego will mention the word "snag" in his column. But what is a snag?

The saying, "Home is where the heart is," has never been more true than in nature. For many animals, home can be the heartwood of dead or decaying trees. These dead trees are often left standing in a woodland and are called snags, which effectively captures the image of a standing, often broken or incomplete, dead tree. They can provide home and refuge for many animals including birds, reptiles, and mammals.

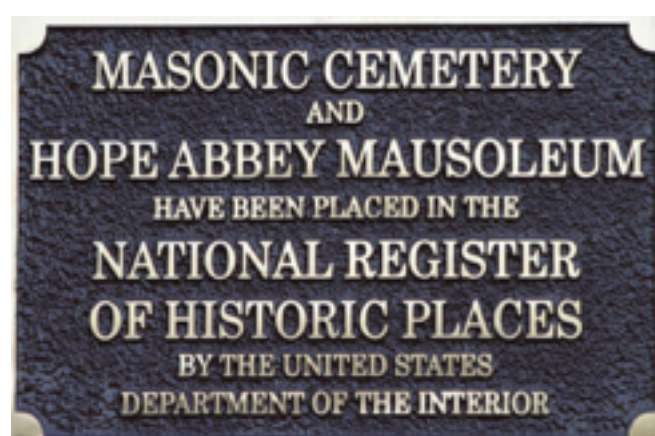
Birds and other animals who live in these snags are an important part of the cemetery's ecosystem because many of them are insectivorous and keep forest pests in check. Once a snag has rotted enough to fall to the ground, its role of providing a home does not end. Once on the ground an entirely new ecosystem can begin, and this rotten wood now becomes home for fungi, earthworms, toads, and even salamanders, all the while recycling nutrients back into the forest floor. So as you look around the cemetery, know that the dead wood you see can sustain as much life as a living tree. The photo below was taken in the cemetery. The owl looks very much at home.



In the past, snags were often removed from forest ecosystems, but as we learn more and more about their importance, retaining snags has become an important part of maintaining a healthy ecosystem. That's why we have about 25 snags in the cemetery, so as you look around, know that the dead wood you see can sustain as much life as a living tree.

## –Full of Life–

The History and Character of Eugene's Masonic Cemetery  
Something worth reading one month at a time.



Last year we began a serial presentation of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery's publication *Full of Life*, a short book on the history and background of the cemetery. A link to this month's chapter appears below.

As was pointed out in last month's chapter, life in the frontier days of the west could be dangerous, and often resulted in an early death through an accident or other unplanned event. Unlike today, when a death occurs and the body is moved to a funeral home, services were much more rustic. But the lack of a funeral industry as we know it doesn't mean that death rituals were lacking in early Eugene.

This chapter, *Ceremonies of Death*, explains how most deaths were handled.

Because of the size of the print in the original book, it's suggested that you read these chapters on a laptop or large computer screen.

Click on the title below to access this month's chapter.

Chapter Six: [Ceremonies of Death](#)

John Bredesen, eNewsletter Editor  
Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association

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### Mission Statement

To restore, rehabilitate, maintain, interpret and operate the historic Eugene Masonic Cemetery and Hope Abbey Mausoleum as a cultural and natural resource for the community.

The cemetery is operated for the public benefit,  
but it is private property.  
(A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization)



Eugene Masonic Cemetery  
ASSOCIATION

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