



January, 2025

## Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association eNewsletter



### "Last Sunday" Open House

We'll be hosting our monthly "Last Sunday" Open House this coming Sunday, January 26th, 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.

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 Ave.

### Cemetery Tour Scheduled



Grab your gloves and scarf and join Caroline Forell on one of her walking tours of the cemetery. The tour will also include a visit inside the beautifully restored Hope Abbey Mausoleum. The entire guided tour will last about an hour and a half.

You can expect the tour to include some beautiful tombstones by local artist Lisa Ponder, the burial site of Eugene's founder Eugene Skinner and his wife, and the fascinating story of the banged-up, "no longer missing" mystery monument, and much more.

The tour is next month on Saturday, February 15th, at 1 PM. Meet at Hope Abbey near the gate at the E 26th Ave. entrance. Please park on the city streets such as Potter.

### Looking back at 2024

By: Shawn Walker, EMCA Board President

As we turn the page to a new year, I would like to take a moment and look back at the projects, developments, and accomplishments at the Eugene Masonic Cemetery in 2024. We very much appreciate the countless individuals that have contributed to the cemetery. I hope this article may serve as a sort-of accounting to illustrate how your contributions are being used and how your support is ensuring this community treasure is available for generations to come.

As reflected in the EMCA Mission Statement, I see the cemetery as serving at least four roles: a solemn place, a place of culture, a place of history, and a place of nature. With those roles in mind, allow me to provide some highlights from 2024:

- **A Solemn Place** - It is important to remember that the cemetery is first and foremost a solemn resting place for those who have passed on. Although the cemetery may be well-known as a historic cemetery where Eugene's earliest citizens are interred (including Eugene Skinner himself), the Eugene Masonic Cemetery is also an active operating cemetery. In 2024, there were many graveside services, memorial services, and interments in the cemetery. Also, there were a number of inurnments and entombments in the Hope Abbey Mausoleum. Additionally, many individuals purchased burial spaces and made arrangements to ensure they have a place in the cemetery upon their passing.
- **A Place of Culture** - The cemetery is also a cultural resource for the community in which we may respectfully gather and enjoy music events. The cemetery offers two series of musical events. Our music series *Music to Die For* utilizes the remarkable acoustics of the Hope Abbey Mausoleum. In 2024, we hosted five concerts for *Music to Die For*. The other music series, *Music on the Square*, takes advantage of the open space near the top of the grounds. In 2024, we hosted an additional five concerts for *Music on the Square*. Between these music series, hundreds of community members were able to gather together and listen to skilled musicians who generously share their talents. In 2025, we encourage you to join us at these music events. Stay tuned for dates and a lineup of performers.
- **A Place of History** - The cemetery also serves as a historical resource for our community. As noted above, the cemetery is the final resting place for many of Eugene's influential figures. The EMCA is active in historical research and compiling burial records. In 2024, we made a big step in archiving and digitizing records into a digital platform. Some of these records date back to the 1800s. Leading these efforts in preserving history is the EMCA Board Vice President, Beatrice McKenzie. Through Beatrice's research, we are working on new and updated signage throughout the cemetery.
- **A Place of Nature** - Many visitors come to the cemetery for its peaceful natural beauty. 2024 started off with a bang as we experienced a crippling ice storm. Many of our trees suffered damage and the cleanup was daunting. Fortunately, there was no significant damage to headstones or other infrastructure. A few years ago, the cemetery became officially accredited as an arboretum. In 2024, cemetery staff was busy in these arboretum-related efforts - hosting tours, creating signage, cataloging, etc. Stay tuned in 2025 as more arboretum-related signage and publications will be available to visitors of the cemetery.

One major project in 2024 was an update and remodel of the "Garden Cottage." The Garden Cottage is where cemetery staff meets with individuals making arrangements for burial spaces and headstones. Additionally, the Garden Cottage serves as the base camp for our landscaping staff and storage for the many tools and supplies necessary to keeping the cemetery grounds beautiful and safe. The remodel created a better workspace, storage, breakroom for staff, and a more comfortable place where cemetery staff can sit down with individuals to make arrangements.

For me, the biggest highlight of 2024 is our staff. We are so fortunate to have a staff that is passionate about the cemetery and dedicated to restoring, rehabilitating, maintaining, and interpreting the cemetery. In 2024, Diego Llewellyn-Jones, the cemetery Site Manager, became the first full-time employee of the cemetery. Diego has a deep love for the cemetery. He leads the landscaping efforts along with two skilled landscapers, Ben and Avion. In 2024, we also welcomed Sara Besch as the Cemetery Manager. Sara has made a positive impact on the cemetery. Sara assists those who have recently lost a loved one and she leads efforts in sales, volunteer coordination, and many other aspects.

2024 was a busy year for the cemetery. As we turn the calendar to 2025, we look forward to new projects and serving the community. As the Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association, our hope is that we can provide a setting in which individuals can remember those who have passed on. We strive to provide an important cultural and natural resource to our community. We encourage you to donate to the EMCA or otherwise get involved to assist us in ensuring this community treasure is available for generations to come.

### Cemetery Arboretum/Landscape Update

By: Diego Llewellyn-Jones, Site Manager

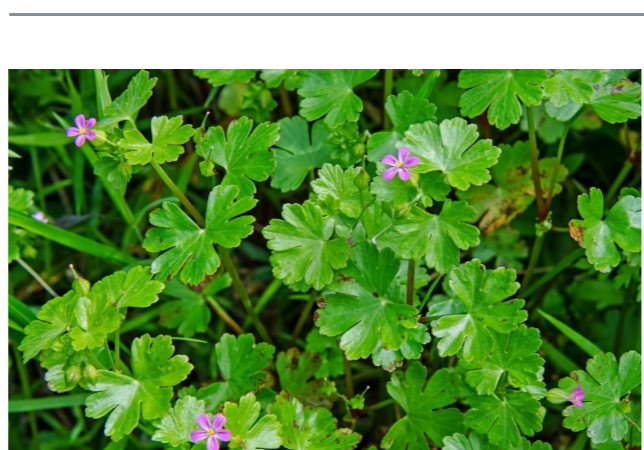


The snowdrops are already blooming, as are some violets, and the hellebores are starting to bud out. They will probably start blooming soon.

Lately, we have been focusing heavily on weeding, pulling blackberries along the northeastern slope, and flame-weeding patches of shiny geranium (*Geranium lucidum*), which is why entire plots look as though they've been scorched. As you probably know, we don't use chemical weed killers in the cemetery.

Tree pruning is in progress, along with removal of hangers, branches that have broken close to the trunk and are in danger of falling unexpectedly.

There were some minor incidents of vandalism which were addressed promptly. The crew is busy!

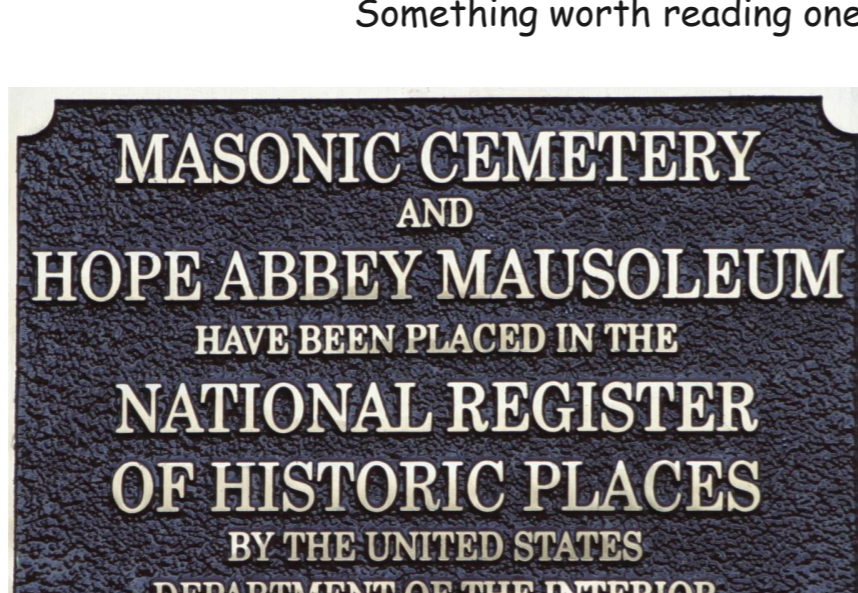


As Diego mentions in his article above, the shiny geranium is generally regarded as an invasive plant, and is not wanted in the cemetery. Not only can the seed be transported by clinging to shoes and animals, it can be forcefully ejected up to 20 feet from the host plant, even in still air. Here's a [link](#) about the plant.

### —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 *Full of Life*, a short book on the history and background of the cemetery. A link to this month's chapter appears below.

*Full of Life* is the product of research of many historic documents by several authors.

Life in the frontier days of the west could be dangerous, and it was no different in the Pacific Northwest.

The May 16, 1891, issue of Eugene's *Oregon State Journal* reported a young man killed by being struck in the breast by a horse's hoof while judging a horse race at Seaside, an Albany woman's painful injury by sticking her scissors into her side when she fell off a fence while cutting flowers, and two Eugene men in a horse-drawn wagon almost killed by trying to beat the Roseburg express train across the railroad tracks near the University of Oregon.

There is an interesting photograph in this chapter that needs some explaining. You'll find a picture of a flume, which is a man-made channel conveying water from one place to another. The one in this photograph was used to quickly move logs off the hills down to the sawmill. Boredom and testosterone makes this photo interesting. If you look carefully, you'll see a man riding a log down the flume. There is no word of how he got off at the bottom.

This chapter of *Full of Life* explains some of these tragic and near tragic events in the territory.

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 Five: [Life and Death in the Early Days](#)

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 non-private property.  
(A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization)



Eugene Masonic Cemetery  
ASSOCIATION

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