



January, 2021

## Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association eNewsletter



### Last Sunday Open House **CANCELLED**

The normal Last Sunday open house is cancelled for January because of the COVID-19 restrictions currently imposed by the Governor's office.

We normally have a Last Sunday open house every month except December, but it's simply not safe to do so yet. To gain access to visit a loved one in Hope Abbey Mausoleum, please contact Charley Wright to make arrangement for a private visit. He can be reached by phone at (541) 485-4399, or by email by clicking [here](#).



### The Importance of Tombstones

Sheri Pyron, an EMCA Board Member, wrote this true story. The Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association is keenly aware of the point of the story, but it never hurts to be reminded.

*"In 1989, I went with my husband, John, on a trip to Scotland with his uncle Don and aunt Hester. They took us to the ruined crofter's (farmer's) cottage on the shores of Loch Tay, from which John's great-great-grandmother left in the 1850s during the potato famine, to emigrate to Canada. They also took us to the east end of Loch Tay, to the town of Kenmore where the church graveyard had gravestones dating back centuries. We knew this was a place with deep family history.*

*"Thirty years later, John returned with our daughter for a hiking trip in Scotland. They searched for the crofter's hut, but only a few stones were visible in a pasture, and only a few years remain before it returns completely to the earth. They went to the church cemetery so our daughter could see the place her ancestors were buried. To their dismay, many headstones were no longer legible. Some had a thick layer of moss. Others were weathered and covered in lichen. Stones had fallen over. The new part of the cemetery with shiny granite markers was in fine shape, and the cemetery was clearly still operating, but the old stones, the family name, and our family connection to this place were lost forever."*

This story prompted the writer, Sheri, to send the following memo to the rest of the board to remind us of the primary reason the cemetery exists, and of our responsibility as the current caretakers.

"As Caroline (Forell), President of our Board likes to say, 'We all love the Cemetery!' We've joined the board for a variety of reasons. Some love the majestic trees and park-like setting. Others are particularly interested in restoring the built structures and preserving Eugene's oldest cemetery. Many appreciate the events and continuing cultural impact on the community. For others it is nearly their back yard. We can all agree it is important to take care of a place where so many people—even some of our own family members—are buried.

"As I started to do research on the best way to clean and preserve headstones, I realized that when they're gone, the meaning of the place is lost. Lynette Strangstad, author of 'A Graveyard Preservation Primer,' describes it well: 'Each tombstone is an irreplaceable historical document containing some of America's earliest written history. The accessibility of these museums (cemeteries) allows us all, not just historians, to view, appreciate, and study these documents, and to enjoy their artwork. They are valuable tools through which we can teach our history to a new generation.'

"It's clear to me that we, as a board, are conservators of history, and that our gravestones are the backbone of this history. It's also important to understand this is personal history to someone's family, not just our collective community history. The fact that families trust us with the remains of their loved ones is a responsibility not to be taken lightly, and we should do everything we can to preserve their legacies."

The EMCA remains committed to the cemetery's restoration and maintenance that we began in 1995, a mere quarter century ago. As our unsold inventory of full casket burial spaces dwindles, so will our main source of income for continuing these critical undertakings. Twelve years ago, we established an endowment program with the Oregon Community Foundation to carry our mission into the future. We've made very significant progress in growing these funds, but much remains to be done. You'll be hearing more about this in the near future.

### Eugene's Historic Streetcar System

Streetcar service began in Eugene in 1891 when Henry Holden constructed a mule-powered system. One of the drivers, Wiley Griffon, Oregon's first African-American streetcar operator, is buried in the Masonic Cemetery.

In 1907, the streetcars were electrified, with four lines in service. The Fairmount Line tracks crossed the very northeast part of the cemetery and brought people to the Public Square for picnics and other events. The only visible remains of the track can be seen on Columbia Street.

With the advent of fossil-fueled cars and buses making transportation easier, the last streetcar ran in October, 1927. Here's a link to a short video about Eugene's historic rail system: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTkdwY1peo4> The section on Eugene begins one minute into the six minute video.

### REMEMBER THAT THE MASONIC CEMETERY

- Is privately owned, but opens its grounds to the public, subject to COVID-19 safeguards.
- Is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and is not subsidized by the city of Eugene.
- Is eligible for the Oregon Cultural Trust match.
- Has a website, [eugenemasoniccemetery.org](http://eugenemasoniccemetery.org) with lots of information about the cemetery.
- Has free informational brochures available at the Garden Cottage, including a walking tour.
- Has burial and cremains space for sale. Contact Sally Dietrich at (541) 684-0949 or by email clicking [here](#).
- Uses PayPal for on-line donations. Please [click](#) here to donate.

John Bredesen, eNewsletter Editor  
Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association

[Please Donate](#)

### 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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