

January, 2024

Eugene Masonic Cemetery Association eNewsletter



"Last Sunday" Open House

We'll be hosting our monthly "Last Sunday" Open House this coming Sunday, January 28, 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 cemetery and the historic Hope Abbey Mausoleum.

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

Ice Storm Damage

By Diego Llewellyn-Jones, Site Manager

On Thursday morning at the end of the historic ice storm, I arrived at the cemetery to find the ground still covered in snowy ice, Douglas fir boughs everywhere peppering the white and grey landscape, and what appeared to be only a few major limbs down. As Jackson (groundskeeper) and I walked around surveying the site, light rain fell, melting the snow and ice that crunched beneath our feet, and clouds of mist and vapor filled the air under the canopy. Significant losses amounted to three trees.



The most striking was an Oregon White Oak which had stood prominently along one of the main paths that leads to the Memorial Garden. It had huge long branches that hung across the path and reached out well over 30 feet. The ice weighed them down so much the limbs just gave out, leaving us with another snag, which is essentially a tree

without branches. I can only imagine what a tumultuous event it must have been, the cracking wood, the whooshing branches, a moss-covered tangle plummeting down around the large red granite monument that stood below, surrounding it with so much mass and yet managing not to even graze it.



The public square at the top of the hill was the site of the second major loss, a California Black Oak. The tree had two main trunks leaning in opposite directions. The trunk that fell was fully uprooted and landed just inches away from a memorial bench that had recently been installed. Jackson remarked, "I felt

relief in seeing remarkably little debris had fallen on any markers. It was like a protective charm had been placed on our grounds. It was a welcome sight to see that all the fallen tree branches and trunks had managed to land almost perfectly between plots." The work ahead is hearty, but our history seems to be preserved.

The third tree came from just outside the northeast edge of the cemetery. A large cherry tree collapsed over the chain-link fence that divides the cemetery and a neighbor's yard, landing entirely on our side.

Given the circumstances, we were very fortunate. Once we had assessed the level of damage, we got right to work cleaning things up, starting with large limbs that were in paths and walkways, covering markers, or hanging in shrubbery. Then we moved onto chopping up the larger branches and trunks. There are still little piles of fir boughs, and massive amounts of oak, fir and maple branches that will need to be hauled away, but after just a few days of work, we have managed to get the cemetery looking like very little happened.

Karen Seidel 1936—2024

By Charley Wright, Board Member



After several months of unremitting pain, Karen Seidel, one of the Eugene Masonic Cemetery's longest serving board members, died on January 19.

Karen brought to the cemetery a keen interest in what she called "qualitative" research, to distinguish it from the "quantitative" work she had done for thirty years on the staff of the UO Bureau of Governmental Research and Service. When EMCA founder Kay Holbo asked Karen if she would be interested in looking up the histories of those buried in the cemetery prior to 1900, Karen jumped at the chance.

Pulling together resources from the early days, she collected information about a wide range of prominent local citizens. Those stories were then placed on signs at their graves to form a historical walking tour of the cemetery. Just recently, Karen contributed to a thorough review of that historical signage, a review that added material, including engaging photos, to many of the signs.

She went on from that initial project to join the board in 1997. Additional research led her to write two chapters of *Full of Life*, a book about the history of the cemetery. Karen learned about the lives of veterans—from the Civil War to the Korean War—who are buried in the cemetery and helped to place guide flags on their graves on Memorial Day weekends. She also wrote the "Self-Guided Walking Tour," "Welcome to Hope Abbey," and "Civil War Veterans" brochures.

Karen was active in a number of organizations. Besides using her research skills for the Fairmount Neighbors history project and writing a number of articles about the cemetery for the "Lane County Historian," she put her energies into Fortnightly, the Eugene City Club, the Unitarian Church (where she lent her musical talent to the services), and the Obsidians. She went on over a hundred hikes with the Obsidians and served as a guide for their first hike through the cemetery.

During her many years as the EMCA's Secretary, Karen's board meeting minutes displayed her amazing ability to capture complicated discussions while taking part in them herself and, as she said, having fun. She also served for over a dozen years as editor of the semiannual "Monumental News" and she continued to help as a copy editor and third set of eyes after she turned over the editorship.

Karen's many contributions were recognized in 2018 by her designation as a Register-Guard and United Way Volunteer of the Year, an award that led to a newspaper article about her. In 2022, the Lane County Historical Society also honored her with a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Those who have had opportunities to know Karen will remember her as wise, gracious, talented, committed, firm, and irreplaceable.

Unchanged and Continuously Changing
—The President's Corner—

By: Shawn Walker, EMCA Board President

Oftentimes as I stroll through the cemetery, I am struck with the permanency of the cemetery and how, in many ways, the cemetery has obviously remained unchanged since its inception in 1859. Additionally, I am also often struck with how much has changed in and around the cemetery over those 165 years. I believe in many ways the unchanged, yet continuously changing nature of the cemetery is a part of what makes it so endearing.

In many ways, the cemetery remains as it was in its early days. For the most part, the layout of the paths remains the same. The headstones of the early pioneers also remain in their original places and look very similar to how they looked upon installation, albeit now with some added characteristics such as lichen and moss. Also unchanged is the purpose of the cemetery—to remember and honor those who have passed on and to provide a natural place of reflection and enjoyment.

These unchanging aspects of the cemetery are also surrounded by constant change. There have been hundreds of burials and interments over the years and corresponding monuments have been erected. The surrounding area is completely different than what it looked like when the cemetery was established. In 1859, the cemetery was beyond the city limits, with very few homes nearby. Over the years, the City of Eugene has grown up around the cemetery. The cemetery changed drastically in many ways through the years as the grounds and the Hope Abbey Mausoleum were established, fell into disrepair, and now have been rehabilitated and restored. Even the group of people managing the cemetery has changed, and continues to change. The Eugene Masonic Lodge consisting entirely of men, many of whom were prominent figures of the community, originally established the cemetery. Now, a nonprofit organization not affiliated with the Masons, manages the cemetery. This nonprofit is led by a board of directors, the majority of whom are women.

We have seen change just in the recent weeks. A beloved board member and dear friend of the cemetery, Karen Seidel, passed away this month. Karen's impact on the cemetery and on the organization has been immense; we will miss her dearly. We also saw change in the cemetery as our area felt the brunt of the recent fierce ice storm. These events are a reminder that change is constant even in a permanent cemetery.

It is important to me that many of the unchanged aspects of the cemetery remain unchanged. I hope the cemetery will forever remain a stalwart of our community on which many community members rely to find peace and to honor those who have passed on. At the same time, I hope many aspects of the cemetery continue to evolve and improve as we strive to fulfill our mission—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.

Music To Die For



We are pleased to announce that the free *Music To Die For* concert series will continue in 2024, featuring a lineup of talented musicians. The concerts will begin in June and run through October, held in the picturesque setting of the Hope Abbey Mausoleum at the Eugene Masonic Cemetery. These one-hour programs are open to all and offer a unique opportunity to enjoy live music in an intimate and historic venue. We invite you to join us for this special series and experience the magic of *Music To Die For*.

Music on the Square

Music On The Square will also return for 2024.



Information on both of these free concert series will be listed here and on our Facebook page.

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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