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Association for Gravestone Studies e-newsletter

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2008 AGS Conference and Annual Meeting

Our 2008 conference and annual meeting will be held at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts, June 17-22, 2008 (a week earlier than usual). For a virtual tour of the Hampshire College Campus, click on: www.hampshire.edu. Stay tuned for more details.



2008 Conference Logo-
Detail from headstone of
Jonathan Ingram,
Amherst, Massachusetts

Do you have photos from the 2007 Conference?

We've started working on the Fall issue of the *Quarterly*, in which we plan to feature a review of the 2007 conference. We need photos, especially of conferees doing the things we do--at workshops, on bus tours, etc.

If you have images you'd like to share, please email Andrea at info@gravestonestudies.org. We can use jpeg or tif files, on a CD or emailed.

\$1,000 Gift Given to AGS

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We're happy to report that Jessie Farber, a founder of AGS, generously contributed \$1,000 to AGS in June. The Board of Trustees is very grateful for her continued support.

### **AGS Member Ruth Shapleigh Brown Receives Preservation Award**

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On May 10, 2007, the Hartford (Connecticut) Preservation Alliance presented Ruth Shapleigh Brown with it's 2007 Award for: Community Education--Cemetery Preservation and Revitalization. Ruth is Executive Director of the nonprofit Connecticut Gravestone Network, founded in 1995 "to educate the public on the historical importance of old graveyards and cemeteries and to promote and preserve the artistic contributions of gravestone carvers."

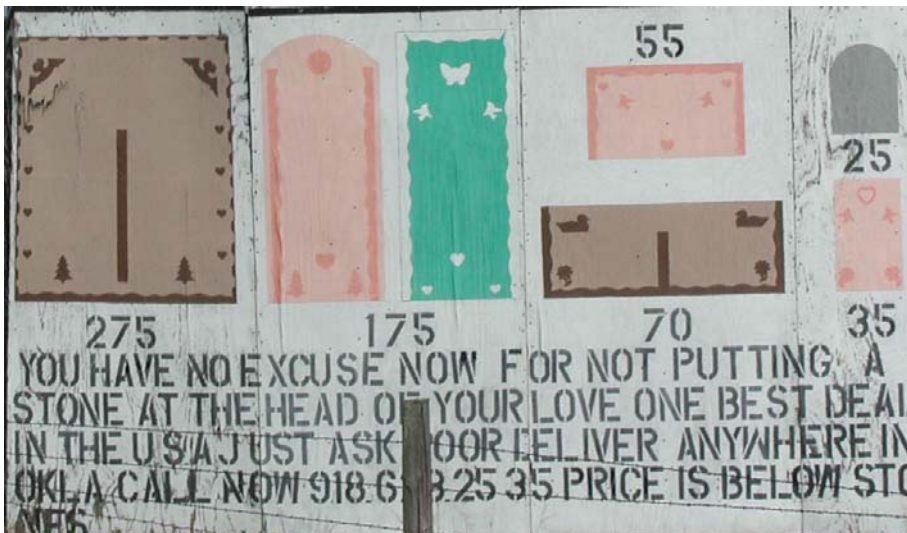
Congratulations Ruthie!

<http://www.hartfordpreservation.org/>

Query: Gerald "Poor Penny" Carson, Tombstone Maker

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This query comes from AGS Member Mark Esping. He writes: "I am looking for cemeteries in which there are bright, pastel-colored cement gravestones in a variety of forms (see illustration), with indented decorations (heart, scalloped edge, pine tree, etc.), made by Gerald 'Poor Penny' Carson. Based in Clearview, Oklahoma, Carson sold his markers for several years in the early 1950's. 'Poor Penny' advertised that he would ship his markers to 'anywhere in Oklahoma,' and it is possible that some may have

made their way elsewhere. Any leads that you can provide about cemeteries with Carson's gravestones, or about how to contact him, will be gratefully accepted. Please call me collect if you have information. My number is (816) 753-1871 (usually best after 7:00 PM central time) or email me at [kcmo@kcnet.com](mailto:kcmo@kcnet.com). Many thanks, Mark Esping."



**Query: Origin of an Epitaph**

AGS Member Jeremy Pye sent in this query. He writes:

"Greetings AGS Members,

I am writing this query in the hopes that someone might be able to contribute some information about a certain stone inscription...

'As a wife devoted, As a mother Affectionate, As a friend ever kind and true.'

I first found this inscription on a stone from 1881 in Manhattan, Kansas. First, I thought that it was just an interesting memorial, until I found the same inscription again, on a stone from 1923 in a small cemetery near Comanche, Oklahoma. I am interested in the origin of this text. Where was it first used? What is the temporal and geographical range of its use? If anyone can give me some information on this matter, I would greatly appreciate the help.

Thank you,  
Jeremy Pye  
University of Florida  
[jpye@ufl.edu](mailto:jpye@ufl.edu)"

### Information about Placing Stones on Jewish Gravemarkers

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AGS Member Zena Beth McGlashan posted information on the Grave-L online group about the practice of placing stones on Jewish gravemarkers. She wrote:

"Leaving stones in remembrance is one explanation. The Association for Gravestone Studies Quarterly Winter 2002 had a great article 'F.A.Q.--A Question Wrapped in a Conundrum: Why Do Jews Put Pebbles on Gravestones?' by Roberta Halporn. She said the explanation 'I was offered as a child is that you put a pebble to console any relative who would visit the grave later, customarily during the week between our High Holy Days--Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur--in the fall. Another frequently repeated rationale is that early Jews were desert nomads who buried their dead in the sand. They placed large stones to keep animals from digging up the bodies.'

The animals theory was supported by Dear Abby (Abigail Van Buren), herself a Jew, in her June 25, 2001 column. She said stones were to mark the grave in addition to preventing the animals from digging. 'It was considered a mitzvah or good deed for others to place a stone when the grave was encountered.'

Abby ran another letter with this explanation: 'In the Book of Joshua, Chapter 4, God instructed the people to gather stones and place them in a pile after crossing the Jordan River. The stones were to remind future generations that the waters were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and so the stones were to be a permanent reminder and a memorial to the people of Israel.'

That's the explanation Walter Luke sent to Grave-L members in June of 2004. And wisely (I thought) he added this: 'the intent behind leaving stones on graves might be to draw a parallel between the crossing of the ark and the crossing of the soul into the afterlife. In a sense, the deceased is passing into the promised land.'

Another source I have is from a Conservative rabbi who said the practice is to show respect for the dead. He cites the Code of Jewish Law at length. And, he very practically adds that in some cemeteries, it's hard to find a pebble 'so people often bring them with them when visiting the cemetery.'  
[www.jewish.com/askarabbi](http://www.jewish.com/askarabbi).

Why I have all this stuff is that I'm writing a book about our local cemeteries. Just as a final note: I asked the two elderly gentlemen who comprise the board of the Jewish cemetery about leaving pebbles. One looked at the other, who

said, "Beats me. I don't know why. We just always have."

To learn more about or join the Grave-L online group, please visit:  
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Grave-L/>.

### **News from Allegheny County, Pennsylvania**

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 AGS Member Elissa Scalise Powell sent in the following information.

"There is a free cemetery index at www.NorthHillsGenealogists.org for several northern municipalities in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania: Franklin Park Borough, Marshall Township, Pine Township, Richland Township and Hampton Township.

With the addition of the latest *Pioneer Cemetery* book in the series (now in pre-publication sale), the North Hills Genealogists [of Pittsburgh] have completed a total reading of the oldest cemeteries in the above municipalities. Reading every stone in any cemetery founded before 1900, they have preserved the cemetery information in the northern Allegheny County area. The books are hardcover, library-quality and include unpublished church records and full tombstone descriptions with color, condition, symbols, and stone carvers' names for all stones, cross-referenced to the church burial records. The books are indexed and cross-referenced with maiden names, military units, place names, fraternal symbols and funeral home directors. They include maps, directions, histories of each cemetery, and illustrations. Photos enhance the volumes. The full comprehensive indexes to all the books are available for free online."

Oregon Cemetery Grant Applications Are Available

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 Help has arrived for historic cemeteries in Oregon!

The Oregon Commission on Historic Cemeteries is pleased to announce the 2007-2008 Historic Cemeteries Grants. OCHC grants are intended to provide financial assistance in the following general categories: Protection and Security, Restoration and Preservation, Education and Training, Research and Interpretation. Eligible projects may include, but aren't limited to: security needs, training, conservation of historic elements such as curbs, markers, etc., documentation and mapping, signage, landscape restoration and planning.

For information, application and lists of past grant projects please visit the [Heritage Grants](#) page. APPLICATION DEADLINE: **SEPTEMBER 15, 2007**.

### **CD For Sale: Cemetery Regulations**

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 For the month of August, The International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) is offering a discount on "To Regulate or Not to Regulate? That is the Question," a 50-minute audio CD of a presentation from the ICCFA 2006 Convention & Exposition, by consultant Tom Daly, CCE. Among the topics covered are:

- cemetery governing rights
- characteristics of effective cemetery rules and regulations
- how to communicate your rules and regulations
- how existing documents and laws affect your rules and regulations

Regularly \$18 for members and \$28 for non-members, the CD can be purchased until

August 31 for just \$12 plus shipping. Call 1.800.645.7700 to order. For more information about Tom Daly, visit www.cemeteryhelpfulsolutions.com.

To order, please visit the ICCFA website: www.iccfa.com.

Seminar: Introduction to Chicago-area Cemeteries

AGS member and 2004 Forbes Award Recipient Helen Sclair will be leading a seminar at the Newberry Library in Chicago. The seminar is entitled: "Introduction to Chicago-area Cemeteries." This seminar will explore how the lands of the dead affect the lands and lifestyles of the living. It is a 4 week seminar, being held Saturdays, 10:00 am - Noon, September 29 - October 20.

For more information and to register please visit the Newberry Library's website: <http://www.newberry.org/>.

September Events: Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

PEOPLE, POLITICS and POWER: LAUREL HILL and THE UNION LEAGUE, a walking tour of Laurel Hill Cemetery, Sunday, September 9th at 2:00 PM.

A Twilight Performance of *Spoon River Anthology*, Saturday, September 15th, at 6:00 PM. The Late Laureates of Laurel Hill, Philadelphia's only known collective of dearly departed artists, from beyond the grave will speak their own epitaphs...tales of seduction, sorrow, and sin for which not even death can bring a merciful end.

Classy Broads and Daring Dames, a walking tour of Laurel Hill Cemetery, will take place on Sunday, September 30th at 2:00 PM.

For event rates and more information, visit: www.theundergroundmuseum.org/.

Article: Mount Moriah Cemetery Hit by Wind Storm

Micro-burst Hits Montana Cemetery

By Zena Beth McGlashan

One of Mount Moriah's clean up crew said it best: "Mother Nature can be really wicked." He was part of about a dozen men working to clean-up the 17 trees, most of them tall, hundred-year-old firs, felled in the Butte, Montana cemetery on Aug. 7, 2007 by a sudden, fierce wind storm lasting only about 20 minutes.

The micro-burst tore some trees from their root bases and sent them crashing to the ground. Other trees cracked a short way up the trunk. Some were still strong and healthy; others showed the death process had already begun. Old trees die from the inside out.

Some monuments and copings were dislodged and broken, but the cushion of the huge branches saved others. The ground was covered with thousands of pinecones.

Ed Zimpel is superintendent of Butte's oldest cemeteries--Mount Moriah, founded in 1878, and B'nai Israel, which is now included within the boundaries of Mount Moriah. He is accustomed to maneuvering his backhoe in tight places to dig graves. He used the same skill to turn the machine into a piece of logging equipment.

As his crew sawed off branches and chain sawed the trunks into sections, Ed loaded

trucks with debris. Some trunk pieces were so heavy that his backhoe almost lifted its front wheels into the air.

Ed said some damaged stones would be covered by people's home insurance. As for others, old and no longer visited by relatives, he said, "We'll fix 'em all."

The older of Butte's two Catholic cemeteries, St. Patrick's, adjacent to Mount Moriah, also had trees down. St. Patrick's, which has some of the finest funerary art in the city, has become a dead cemetery. The broken trees seem appropriate to the un-watered, weed infested grounds.

As a safety measure, city firemen cleared the trees that toppled from St. Patrick's onto Montana Street, a main thoroughfare.



Wrenched From its Roots

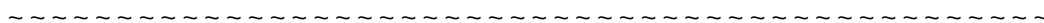


A Delicate Task



The Author at Mount Moriah

Rescuing a Historic Cemetery Brochure Available Online



The new brochure, *Rescuing a Historic Cemetery*, is now available online from the Texas Historical Commission. It provides tips on how to start researching cemetery records and conduct cemetery surveys. The brochure also gives information about the RIP Guardian program for neglected historic cemeteries, and tells how to get additional assistance for your project.

To download the publication, visit www.thc.state.tx.us, select "Cemeteries," then "RIP Guardian" and scroll down to the bottom for the link to the PDF.

For more information about the RIP Guardian program, contact Anne Shelton at anne.shelton@thc.state.tx.us or 512/475-4506.

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