
Association for Gravestone Studies e-Newsletter

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AGS Membership Drive

More and more historians, preservationists, folklorists and genealogists are becoming involved in the study of gravestones. AGS wants to make every effort to assist these enthusiastic researchers and to provide opportunities for them to share their discoveries through our publications and annual conference. Our newly established Membership Committee is coordinating our efforts to invite interested individuals to join our organization. If you know of any researchers or cemetery enthusiasts that might welcome an invitation to become an AGS member, or if you're interested in helping the committee please contact Susan Olsen at Friends@thewoodlawncemetery.org.

2006 AGS Conference & Annual Meeting, Doylestown, Pennsylvania

The 29th Annual Association for Gravestone Studies Conference and Annual Meeting will be held from June 22-25, 2005 at Delaware Valley College, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

Call for Papers: Proposals are solicited for scholarly papers, 20 minutes in length, to be presented during the lecture sessions. Proposals will be due March 31, 2006. We encourage papers on gravestone subjects from around the world as well as specific to the Mid-Atlantic region. Please send your proposal for a lecture or participation session and 250-word abstract to: Andrea Carlin, Administrator, AGS Office, 278 Main Street,

Call for Participation Sessions: As part of the Conference, we host fifty minute "Participation Sessions," programs conducted in a workshop format where cemetery scholars, preservationists and educators can exchange ideas. These programs are ideal for panels and we recommend including others in your presentation. All Participation Sessions proposals should allow time for questions and audience discussion. We are encouraging topics that focus on four themes:

- Cemeteries in the Digital Age
- New Resources for Cemetery Research
- Development and Promotion of Cemetery Tours
- Current Issues in Preserving Cemeteries

Proposals should include the Session Title, a 250 description of the Topic, focusing on the value to the audience, brief biographies of the presenter and panel members and information about the cemeteries included in the presentation. Please send your proposal for a participation session to: Att: Susan Olsen, AGS Office, 278 Main Street, Suite 207, Greenfield, MA 01301, info@gravestonestudies.org. If you would like to discuss your proposal prior to submitting it, contact Susan Olsen at The Woodlawn Cemetery (718) 920-1469 or Friends@thewoodlawncemetery.org. Proposals are due MARCH 31, 2006. We encourage topics that feature cemeteries around the world as well as specific to Pennsylvania and the Mid-Atlantic States.

Applications for 2006 conference scholarships are ready. These scholarships are available to students who are currently pursuing gravestone-related studies, and can be used to help cover the costs of attending AGS conferences. The deadline for applications is April 1, 2006. Please e-mail the AGS office at info@gravestonestudies.org for an application.

[AGS Conference Website Page](#)

VA Adds Nearly 2 Million Records to Online Gravesite Locator

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The burial locations of more than 5 million veterans for whom the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has provided grave markers are now available on the Internet, as well as the information inscribed on each marker.

Online since April 2004, the nationwide gravesite locator (<http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov>) helps veterans' families, former comrades-in-arms and others find the graves of veterans. VA recently added 1.9 million records, primarily for veterans buried in private cemeteries, to its database. The gravesite locator previously carried records on 3 million veterans buried in VA national cemeteries since the Civil War, and in state veterans cemeteries and Arlington National Cemetery since 1999.

"The expansion of this innovative program continues VA's commitment to using Internet technology to fulfill the important mission of memorializing our nation's veterans," said the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "By adding records to our online database, VA also helps families research their genealogy and ensures that future generations of Americans will be able to honor these veterans for their service."

The new records date from January 1997, the earliest time for which electronic records exist. The information comes from applications made for these veterans' headstones or markers. Beyond the 5 million records now available, VA continues to add approximately 1,000 new records to the database each day.

Last year, VA furnished nearly 369,000 inscribed headstones and markers for veterans' graves worldwide. Internet users only need to provide the last name of the deceased veteran or dependent. Typically, the information available includes name, birth and death dates, rank, branch of service and the address and phone number of the cemetery. Veterans whose discharges are other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children may be buried in a national cemetery, regardless of where they live. No advance reservations are made. VA provides perpetual care, as well as a headstone or marker, a burial flag and a memorial certificate to survivors. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained from national cemetery offices, from a VA Web site at [www.cem.va.gov](http://www.cem.va.gov) or by calling VA regional offices toll-free at (800) 827-1000.

[Dept. of VA Affairs Gravesite Locator](#)

### **Two News Items from the Chicora Foundation**

#### **African American Plaintiffs Win Case for Preservation of Scanlonville Cemetery.**

The Court of Common Pleas for the Ninth Judicial Circuit handed down its decision on August 31 in the case of the East Cooper River Civic Club et al. v. Remley Point Development, LLC, Thomas D. Rogers, III, and Victoria Rogers. The decision was a victory for the African American community seeking to preserve their ancestral burial grounds. Drawing on long-held legal principals, the Court found that the cemetery had been dedicated for burial purposes and had, in fact, "been used as a public burial ground for at least 130 years without interference or limitation from any putative landowners or any other person or entity." Of equal importance, the Court held that the cemetery has not been abandoned, as had been alleged by the defendants. The Circuit Court relied on a 1924 South Carolina Supreme Court case that found that as long as graves are present in the cemetery, it is not abandoned. The Circuit Court also rejected the argument offered in the dissent, noting that the cemetery was well known, clearly visible, and recognized even by the defendants. This is also excellent news for others seeking to preserve cemeteries since it provides additional legal precedents. The complete court decision is available on the Chicora website (<http://www.chicora.org/East%20Cooper%20Civic%20Club.pdf>). Chicora had previously conducted extensive research at the cemetery (published as our Research Contribution 341) and nominated the cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of only three rural African American cemeteries nominated for the National Register. The Foundation's Director, Dr. Michael Trinkley, also served as an expert witness in the case and his testimony is referenced several times in the Court's opinion.

**Publication on SC Undertakers.** Chicora Foundation has published a short monograph that lists undertakers and funeral directors in South Carolina from the late nineteenth century through mid-twentieth century. Where possible, notes have been included indicating approximate periods of activity. The goal of this publication is to compile, in one location, information to assist researchers begin to track down funeral home information. The publication is available from Chicora for \$35.30 (p/h included).

[The Chicora Foundation](#)

#### **General Meeting and Workshop of Association of Significant Cemeteries**

The 2006 Annual General Meeting of ASCE, Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe, will be held in Verona, kindly hosted by AGECE Servizi Cimiteriali, on September 28th-30th, 2006, with the following provisional program:

- Thursday, September 28th, 11 a.m.: ASCE 2006 Annual General Meeting
- Thursday, September 28th, at 3 p.m.: Seminar on "The splendour of sculpture in the European cemeteries"

- Thursday, September 28th, at 9 p.m: Welcome dinner
- Friday, September 29th: Seminar on "The splendour of sculpture in the European cemeteries"
- Saturday, September 30th: morning: guided tour in Cemetery of Verona.

The aim of the seminar is to show how European cemeteries are important in the history of European sculpture of the 19th and 20th centuries. More information about the program is available at [www.significantcemeteries.net](http://www.significantcemeteries.net)

[ASCE Website](#)

**Event: Connecticut Gravestone Network Symposium**

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 CGN Symposium, March 25th, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. South Senior Center, 70 Canterbury Rd. East Hartford, CT. Details and scheduled speakers will be forthcoming.

Display tables will be available at the symposium. Tables are \$12.00 for a display table, \$6.00 for a shared table and \$15.00 if you are selling items.

Displays do not have to be fancy! It's more important to just have a group or cemetery represented, photos, lists, etc. Any information is welcome as long as it's cemetery related. Email, write or call Ruthie Brown (860-643-5652, shapbrown@cox.net) to reserve a table or ask about more details.

Please let Ruthie know where you saw this announcement. We are taking note of where we are promoting and how it is reaching people.

[Connecticut Gravestone Network Website](#)

Seminar: Pet Funerals, Cremation and Memorialization

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 As part of its Annual Convention & Exposition, March 13-16 at The Venetian Resort, Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, the International Cemetery and Funeral Association (ICFA) will present a groundbreaking three-hour symposium on Pet Funerals, Cremation and Memorialization.

Four experts will address the growing demand for pet funeral and bereavement products and services, and the opportunities this presents for funeral homes and related businesses to meet a need within their communities. Attendees will learn concrete examples of how companies are successfully meeting this growing need, the latest consumer research, and marketing and merchandizing strategies they can use to help fill this niche. The presentations will be followed by a question-and-answer session.

Additional information on the symposium and the entire ICFA Convention & Exposition program is available at [www.icfa.org](http://www.icfa.org) or by calling the ICFA Meetings Department at (800) 645-7700.

[ICFA Website](#)

**2006 National Preservation Institute Cemetery Workshops**

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 The National Preservation Institute is hosting a series of cemetery seminars in 2006. **Cemetery Preservation** will be led by Michael Trinkley and Debi Hacker. This seminar is offered in conjunction with **Cemetery Landscapes: A Practical Guide to Care and Maintenance**.

Locations and dates:

- May 2-4, 2006: Brooklyn, New York
- September 18-20, 2006: Washington, DC
- October 17-19, 2006: Phoenix, Arizona

These seminars are sponsored with the support of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) through a grant that makes scholarships available for tuition. For program descriptions, cost, and registration information, please visit NPI's website at www.npi.org

[The National Preservation Institute](#)

Event: New England States Historical & Genealogical Conference, Nashua, New Hampshire

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Saturday, March 4, 2006, 8 a.m to 5 p.m. (snow date March 18 , 2006) at the Horse Pond Fish & Game Club of Nashua, New Hampshire. A one day conference, the first in a series of State conferences designed for the budgeted historian and genealogist. Enjoy an informal bag lunch while visiting with your friends and others. Buy 3 chances for \$1 in our vendor-donated raffle. Take part in our casual and informal lecture/discussion groups where you can get the speakers attention to your own special needs or just listen to the wealth of information that will be shared by many lectures throughout the day.

AGS will have a table at the conference, as well as Donna Walcovy of the Falmouth (Mass.) Genealogical Society Cemetery Transcription Project. AGS members will be giving informal talks during the day.

The attendee fee has been reduced from \$30 to \$15 --a great savings! For more information and registration forms, email Paul Bunnell at [Bunnellloyalist@aol.com](mailto:Bunnellloyalist@aol.com).

**Workshop: Biloxi, Mississippi**

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AGS member Mike Mitchell will be conducting a workshop on February 24-25, 2006. He writes: "The Biloxi/Beauvoir two day mini-workshop will be held, literally, in the 'eye of the storm' where Hurricane Katrina made land fall in Mississippi. Much of the major devastation to the local cemeteries has been solved such as several bodies being washed out of mausoleums from the storm surge and debris from trees and garbage from major winds have been cleaned up so current burials can now be preformed. It's now time to pay attention to the often forgotten damaged stone 'over in the far corner.' It will be sponsored by the Mississippi Heritage Trust (MHT) and the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) MI. Division.

AGS members are encouraged to attend this free workshop. If you have special talents as a possible speaker or a Project Team Leader please contact Mike at scvgraves@aol.com."

Call For Symposium Papers: "Death & Loss in America": Colonial Era to the Present

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The Museum of Funeral Customs and the Illinois Funeral Directors Association will host "Death & Loss in America": Colonial Era to the Present October 19 - 21, 2006, at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Springfield, Illinois.

Academic and amateur historians, funeral service professionals, museum curators, archivists, collectors, folklorists, cemeterians, thanatologists, psychologists, grief

counselors, hospice care-givers, sociologists, archaeologists, anthropologists, physicians, as well as undergraduate and graduate students from these disciplines are invited to submit presentation proposals. Papers may be of any length; however, presentation will be limited to twenty minutes. Recognizing that the subject lends itself to many forms of presentation beyond the traditional oral delivery, audio visual works are also invited.

Submissions should include a one-page summary of the paper or program (an identification of the sources should be included), curriculum vitae, and a current e-mail address. Proposal materials should be mailed to: Museum of Funeral Customs, 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield, IL 62702, postmarked before February 15, 2006. Notification of acceptance will be made by April 1. Questions may be directed to Jon Austin, Director, at 217-544-3480 or by e-mail at funeralmuseum@ifda.org.

[Museum of Funeral Customs](#)

**Query: Celtic Design Images**

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AGS Member Burton Fletcher of AAA-Memorials.com & ValdostaMemorials.com writes: "We desire to collect pictures of Celtic designs that we can add to our website. We have found a lot of interest in those designs." Do any other AGS members have images they'd be willing to share? Burton's email address is: burton@valdostamemorials.com.

**Query: Rescuing a Cemetery**

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AGS Member Linda Lewis of Overland Park, Kansas wrote in with the following question: "I am currently trying to rescue a cemetery in dangerous condition due to neglect for the past several years. The cemetery is on private property that is listed for sale, and there's a rider for care of the cemetery on the deed. Does anyone have any guidance that could help me with this situation? All wisdom appreciated!" Linda's email address is webmaster@cottonhills.com.

**Query: Cemetery Fundraising**

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The following query is from AGS member Martha Wiley of Middlesboro, Kentucky. She writes: "I have been asked by a member of our local cemetery board to help come up with ideas to financially help the cemetery. It is the city cemetery, founded at the end of the 19th century, and is attractive but has no stones of artistic distinction. The only people of distinction are local notables, with the exception of the city's founder, Alexander A. Arthur, a British businessman who founded Middlesboro (Kentucky) in 1890. The only idea I can come up with is sponsoring Boy Scouts to decorate veterans' graves. Tours are already given by request, and are sponsored by the local historical society. Does anyone have any ideas on fund-raising? Annual income is approximately \$12,370, primarily from maintenance fees, interment fees, and trust fund income; annual expense is approximately \$12,350, the vast majority of that being for maintenance and mowing. Please contact me, Martha Wiley, at dirk\_wiley@earthlink.net."

**Article and Slide Show: Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park Pet Cemetery, Elkridge, Maryland**

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This website, linked below, is dedicated to Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park, founded in 1935 as one of the world's first pet cemeteries. The site was sent in by AGS Trustee Melvin Mason. He writes "This is an interesting website that deals with the Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park issues. It provides background information and pointers to state governmental offices to contact. This is from an animal groups perspective."

To see a slideshow of photos that Melvin took at the Cemetery, [please click this link.](#)

[Rosa Bonheur Memorial Park](#)

**Event: Constructions of Death, Mourning, and Memory Conference**

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Constructions of Death, Mourning, and Memory Conference, October 27-29, 2006, Woodcliff Lake Hilton, Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey. Sponsored by the WAPACC Organization (Women Art Patrons and Collectors Conference). Program details and registration are posted on the Aurora: The Journal of the History of Art website linked below.

[Constructions of Death, Mourning, and Memory Conference](#)

Query: Photos Needed from Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts

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This request comes from AGS member Scott Withrow:

"I'm writing a magazine article regarding my great, great uncle and aunt, Francis V. Bulfinch and Mary Withrow Bulfinch. The couple met during the gold rush in the Appalachians of Georgia around 1834. Mary died at Charlestown, Massachusetts 21 February 1854 and Francis at 84, 26 Sept. 1887. I'm looking for photos of the gravesite/gravestone, which I believe to be Mt. Auburn Cemetery in the Boston area. I would pay a modest fee for old or existing photos or someone willing to take photos. (His burial site is likely Mt. Auburn; I'm not as sure of Mary's. The aforementioned Francis Vaughan Bulfinch is not to be confused with his nephew, Francis Vaughan Bulfinch, b.1879.) Scott Withrow, 2513 Motherwell Drive, Greer, SC 29651, [swithrow@earthlink.net](mailto:swithrow@earthlink.net)."

**Websites to Check Out**

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We have three websites featured in the Quick Links section below.

1. Taphophilia.com is devoted to "Thanatology and Taphophile Issues, Cemetery, Funeral Industry and Death Related News." This is an extensive site that includes an article repository, forums, photo galleries, journals, links, and a chat room. There is also a section of photos showing damage to Louisiana cemeteries as a result of the hurricanes.
2. Al McFadden's website is developed to provide information about Pinegrove Cemetery in East Stewiacke, Colchester County, Nova Scotia, Canada.
3. "Cemetery Collection" has photos from cemeteries in Russia, the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, and other locations in Europe and the U.S.

Quick Links

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- [Taphophilia.com](#)
 - [Pinegrove Cemetery, Nova Scotia](#)
 - [Cemetery Collection](#)