

Evening Programs

Coordinator Ian W. Brown

AGS 33rd Annual Meeting and Conference

June 22-27, 2010

Denison University

Granville, Ohio

Lecture 1: Wednesday, June 23, 8:00–8:20 P.M.

From Transi Tombs to Winged Death's Heads: The Medieval Origins of New England Memento Mori Culture

Joy Giguere

Prior to the 14th century, Death as an active figure in the transition from life to the afterlife was conspicuously absent from virtually all media, both sacred and profane. Imagery from the *Ars Moriendi* focused primarily on the juxtaposing forces of Angels and Demons at the critical moment of death. The effigy tombs of the elite depicted the deceased in prayerful repose, with his or her features as they had been in life, thus avoiding any visual associations with death altogether. However, the Black Death (1347-51) fundamentally altered European attitudes toward the process of death itself and had further ramifications for the aesthetics of death until well into the modern era. Beginning with the introduction of transi tombs to Northern European church burials in the early 15th century, the increased devotion in sacred art to the corporeality of the body and its natural decay went hand-in-hand with the evolution in both funereal and secular art of Death as an active, and decidedly skeletal, figure. Such a development culminated in Northern Europe during the 16th century with Hans Holbein's *Dance of Death* woodcuts, but would persist with the movement of English Puritans to the New World in the 17th century. The figure of skeletal Death as both the taker of lives and a reminder of the corporeality of the body remained popular within the sacred space of the churchyard and public graveyard in New England until its final disappearance in the late 18th century and the secularizing influences of the American Revolution and Enlightenment philosophy. This paper, therefore, will trace the late medieval origins and development of Death as a corporeal and active figure in sacred funerary art, with its perpetuation until well into the 18th century on the farthest periphery of English society in colonial New England.

Joy Giguere, PhD, is currently a full-time History Instructor at Ivy Tech Community College in Fort Wayne, Indiana where she teaches courses in U.S. History and the

History of American Technology. This will be Joy's fifth time presenting at the annual AGS conference.

Lecture 2: Wednesday, June 23, 8:25–8:45 P.M.

A Search for the Source

Laurel K. Gabel

Although no pattern books or design folios remain as examples (and there is doubt that any ever existed in New England), we know that early gravestone carvers drew from a vocabulary of common death-related motifs, which they adopted, adapted, and arranged to form their own familiar designs. Drawing from decorative elements found in 17th and 18th-century material culture, it is easy to find examples of these shared designs. However, there are a few unique gravestone compositions that clearly were copied from some more specific printed source. This paper chronicles a search for the printed sources of several distinctive gravestone designs.

Laurel Gabel is Trustee-Emerita for the AGS and serves on the Editorial board for *Markers*. She is a past recipient of the Harriette Merrifield Forbes award.

Lecture 3: Thursday, June 24, 7:00–7:20 P.M.

Carved and Cast: Sculptural Cemetery Angels, a Theological, Thematic and Stylistic Study

Frederick Meli

This paper will present a diverse selection of carved and cast examples of sculptural cemetery angels that can be found in most large and small cemeteries throughout the United States and Western Europe. The study will follow stylistic as well as thematic analysis. Detail will be devoted to the medium and methodology of the creation of these guardians of the dead. The objective of this investigation is to delineate the power these three-dimensional images embody in a religious, devotional sense. Subsequently, how do sculptural angels come to signify bereavement, commemoration and worship? The sculptural images of angels depicted as guarding, protecting and standing watch, are more than simple religious imaginings. The sculptured cemetery angel is a coherent and comprehensive reflection of a deep-seated practice based on a long-standing theological and artistic tradition. The overall mission of this study is more than just an iconographic interpretation of particular sculptural angels from a religious and/or an aesthetic point of view. Behind the issue of these angelic images lies an even bigger question, one concerning the very nature of how people perceive the presence of often larger than life anthropomorphic sculptures. This presentation seeks to enhance the

interest in these often overlooked examples in stone and bronze and to reveal them as innovative, reflective and integral parts of the western eschatological tradition.

Frederick F. Meli is a retired professor of art history and cultural studies. He is also a practicing artist and sculpture, who has a love and passion for gravestones, grave-sculpture and cemeteries. Fred has spent the last 25 years doing research and study of gravestones and cemeteries all over the world.

Lecture 4: Thursday, June 24, 7:25–7:45 P.M.

Lonite: The Unknown Canadian Alternative to Granite, Marble, and Bronze

Dustin Bulloch (Student Scholarship Competition Award Recipient)

Lonite was a brand name used by the now defunct Lo's Stone Works of Winnipeg, Manitoba to describe their patented process for producing cast-stone monuments. In mixing Portland cement, marble chips, and powdered blue dye with water Lo's engineered a material that closely resembled granite in its shape, colour, and expected durability. The process of making a Lonite memorial was not simple; it required a precise blending of the above mentioned ingredients as well as a time sensitive forming and curing procedure that could only be achieved by experienced tradesmen. Unlike the earlier White Bronze, a patented American product that was manufactured in Canada under license, Lonite was a Canadian invention produced only by Lo's Stone Works in Winnipeg and by their branch plant in Belleville, Ontario. To market and sell their product they targeted rural consumers by advertising in nationally subscribed publications and made their product available by mail-order; it was shipped directly from the plant to the customer's home. It is not known if this product ever made its way into American markets, but future research should produce some answers. As a monument maker and dealer Lo's Stone Works was in business for the best part of sixty years from 1908 to 1965. Evidence suggests that they over-extended themselves in the sixties and could no longer remain profitable as a business. Brief mention will be made of other cast stone products to give Lonite some additional context. In concluding the presentation, examples will be shown of other little-known manufactured materials found during research for this topic. As an alternative to granite, marble, and bronze Lonite has been an unknown material in the academic world. By uncovering its existence it is hoped that scholars will be encouraged to explore other monument alternatives.

Dustin Bulloch recently completed his B.A. Honours in History and Political Science at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. His presentation is the result of a fourth year project done for Bruce Elliott's history seminar "Gravestones and Cemeteries."

Lecture 5: Thursday, June 24, 7:50–8:10 P.M.

Jonischkies Cemetery and the Earliest Lithuanian Immigrants to America

Patricia Hand and Milda Richardson

The Jonischkies Cemetery in DeWitt County, Texas, has been at the focus of research concerning the migration of Lutheran Lithuanians from Lithuania Minor to South Texas during 1848-1864, in the years preceding the Civil War. Prior to this research project, it generally was accepted that the earliest Lithuanian immigrants to the United States had arrived well after the Civil War and settled primarily in Pennsylvania to work in the coalmines. Study of the Jonischkies Cemetery and several others, such as the cemetery at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Yorktown and older burial grounds of Woodlawn and Meyersville, reveals that the earliest Lithuanian immigrants to America came to Texas several decades before the Civil War from the Lithuania Minor region along the eastern coast of Lithuania (historically known as East Prussia). Among the approximately forty Texas interments already restored, the earliest tombstone dates to 1869. Restoration continues by volunteers, with support from local businesses, and a grave "witcher" has visited in an attempt to locate graves that have no markers. Markings on the tombstones are written in German, reflecting the Lithuanian-Prussian origin of the immigrants. However, the evidence in 19th-century correspondence and religious books indicates that the people spoke, read and wrote in the Lithuanian language (and always spelled San Antonio correctly!). A historical marker was erected en route to the Jonischkies Cemetery in 1994. A portion of the text reads, "Leaving their homeland for a variety of religious and political reasons, the Lithuanians arrived in Texas primarily through the ports of Galveston and Indianola. Establishing farms in the area, the Lithuanians became American citizens and contributed to the history and culture of this area. Men from the community fought on both sides of the American Civil War. A small graveyard south of Yorktown known as Jonischkies Cemetery contains the interments of many of these early settlers." This presentation is based on over twenty years of archival and ethnographic research (including oral histories of descendants), and will be illustrated with photographs (both historical and contemporary) and an excerpt from a documentary film being prepared by award-winning filmmaker Romas Šležas.

Independent Researcher Patsy Hand lives in Victoria, Texas. She is a member of the Victoria County Historical Commission, initiated the Indianola Database project and has spent the last 30 years compiling the archive of primary sources for the first significant wave of immigration from Lithuania to the United States.

Milda Richardson received her Ph.D. in architectural history from Boston University and teaches in the Art & Design Department and School of Architecture at Northeastern University and the Fine Arts Department at Emmanuel College.

Lecture 6: Thursday, June 24, 8:15–8:35 P.M.

Grave Images: San Luis Valley

Kathy T. Hettinga

Beginning in 1994, I began a fourteen-year project to photograph and document an unknown body of funerary folk art found in the cemeteries of the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado. I have recently finished the book *Grave Images*, which begins with my story of death and loss as a young widow living in the San Luis Valley. Years later, the beauty of the valley was relentless in calling me back to document the places and the ways people honor those that have died. *Grave Images* recounts my spiritual and artistic journey to find meaning in the cemeteries of rural and largely Hispanic communities of the San Luis Valley. The photographs of unique grave markers made of wood, concrete, metal, sandstone, glass and other materials by individuals or families to commemorate the passing of loved ones capture the ethereal beauty of the cemeteries and serve as a touchstone for our common understanding of loss, grief, and the need to memorialize and pay tribute. My narrative articulates the meaning of this visual record from the perspective of an artist and provides religious and historical perspectives on the San Luis Valley as final resting place.

Kathy T Hettinga is Professor of Art at Messiah College in Grantham, Pennsylvania. She is an award winning photographer, designer, and recent author of *Grave Images: San Luis Valley*.

Lecture 7: Friday, June 25, 7:00–7:20 P.M.

John Zuricher, Stonecutter of Old New York

Richard Veit

This paper examines the life and career of John Zuricher, New York City's most prolific 18th-century gravestone carver. Zuricher, who was affiliated with Dutch and German congregations in New York City, was a talented artisan who carved markers in English, Dutch, and on at least one occasion Latin. He is perhaps best known as the carver of many of New York City and environs Dutch-language grave markers. This paper provides a preliminary gazetteer of his work, particularly in New Jersey, Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and New York City. Active from the 1750s through 1783, Zuricher's carving career was interrupted by the Revolutionary War, which caused him to relocate to Rockland County, New York. There he continued carving his distinctive markers. Also discussed is the variability in his carving styles over time and across space, his limited use of mortality images, clues to the cost of his markers, and his relationship to other carvers in the greater New York City region.

Special attention is paid to distinguishing characteristics, which allow his products to be identified. A preliminary gazetteer of his work is presented.

Richard Veit, Ph.D., RPA, is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Monmouth University and director of the University's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Lecture 8: Friday, June 25, 7:25–7:45 P.M.

"In order to provide a fit and proper burial place": Burial Reform at the Jersey City Harsimus Cemetery

Mark Nonestied

The Jersey City Harsimus Cemetery is one of the earliest cemetery companies in New Jersey. Incorporated in 1831, the burial ground reflects a transition between colonial church graveyards and the cemeteries of the Rural Cemetery Movement. The cemetery encompassed design and management ideology from both types of burial grounds but never fully embraced one or the other. Such transitional burial grounds sprung up during a period of burial reform as society looked for better ways to manage the dead. For many years the grounds and records of the Jersey City Harsimus Cemetery have been off limits to researchers. A recent change in the governing board has permitted access to the earliest records. In addition, portions of the burial ground that had been overgrown are now accessible. Monuments, vaults and landscape features have been examined adding further information. What has developed is an opportunity to better examine this early cemetery company and place it within a larger context of burial reform.

Mark Nonestied has been a staff member of the Middlesex County Cultural and Heritage Commission since 1991. He currently serves as the Director of Exhibits and Programs at a historic site in Piscataway.

Lecture 9: Friday, June 25, 7:50–8:10 P.M.

Boulder Monuments: From Clutter to Simplicity

Natalie Wampler

During the early 20th century Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts sought to partner with families to alter the landscape by removing "clutter." Groups of old marble monuments were sometimes replaced with one single boulder with a bronze plaque. In 2007 the Cemetery surveyed bronze elements and a noticeable pattern emerged. Boulder monuments with bronze plaques were found that commemorated people who had died in the 19th century,

some as early as the Cemetery's founding in 1831. This seemed particularly puzzling since boulders did not become a prevalent monument type until later in the 19th century. Through the archives, the story of a scheme between Mount Auburn and willing families surfaced. In this partnership, monuments were removed and the sizes of lots were decreased so that the cemetery could have more salable land, and reduce the maintenance of monuments. This alteration of the landscape highlights the challenges of managing a rich and layered site that is a permanent place, yet affected by the passage of time and changing taste.

Natalie Wampler is the Preservation & Facilities Planner at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Lecture 10: Friday, June 25, 8:15–8:35 P.M.

Sears and Montgomery Ward: The Forgotten Producers of American Memorial Art

Michael Trinkley

While some may view 18th or 19th century gravestones as more interesting than those from the 20th century, this elitism ignores the historical impact of companies such as Sears and Montgomery Ward who developed very active – and apparently successful – monument divisions that provided the latest in memorial art to their catalog clients. Not only do period catalogs provide an exceptional record of the monuments offered, but also provide important details on shipping methods and even how the monuments would be set. The catalogs also helped to drive “appropriate” sentiments by offering “quotations and verses suitable for inscriptions.” The catalogs trace the gradual ascendancy of granite over marble, as well as helping us recognize other changes in the cemetery, such as the rise of lawn markers. This paper offers some preliminary observations concerning these two companies and the monuments they offered, comparing both product and prices to other sources. These Sears and Montgomery Ward monuments are now over fifty years old and are worthy of recognition and preservation. They help trace the continuing evolution of the American cemetery and its memorial art.

Michael Trinkley is a stone conservator and director of the non-profit Chicora Foundation. He received his Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina and has worked in cemeteries from Montana to Massachusetts to Alabama.

Lecture 11: Saturday, June 26, 8:00–8:25 P.M.

American Parnassus: Here lies a POET

Walter Skold

Why are the graves of American poets unique – or are they? This paper presents the preliminary results of a study of 200 graves of American poets, from all time periods in American history. The poets considered wrote in all genres and include the most famous to the least well known. Looking at the gravestones through the lens of historical and literary analyses the paper looks at three main questions: how exactly are the graves of poets stylistically different than others, especially those of their contemporaries; what kinds of epitaphs and poetry appear on poets' graves; and what percentage have the word "POET" inscribed on them. The paper presents the possibilities of what these graves tell us about the changing role of the poet in American society as well as how the tombstone designs of poets may reflect evolving religious beliefs in American culture. Special emphasis is placed on the Greek myths of Mt. Parnassus and the historical symbol of the lyre of Orpheus, and the fascinating ways this ancient symbol for poetry is used to adorn the graves of poets. The paper also briefly addresses the "afterlife" of poets: who decided what their epitaphs would be and what their tombstones would look like, and the historical reasons why a poet's remains were sometimes moved.

Walter Skold is the founder of the Dead Poets Society of America and has a Masters in Library and Information Science from the University of Rhode Island and a B.A. in History from Fordham University.

Lecture 12: Saturday, June 27, 8:30–8:50 P.M.

In a Sudden and Awful Manner: Lightning Stones of Early New England

Judith Trainor

Lightning kills people each year in the United States. This occurs despite our knowledge of lightning behavior, building codes established to prevent lightning damage, and widespread teaching of lightning safety. Many more people are struck but survive the incident. National Weather Service statistics on the frequency, location, and circumstances of the deaths caused by lightning are not totally as expected. The AGS annual conference, with its wealth of outdoor activities, is held during a time of the year when lightning strikes are most likely to occur. In fact, it typically coincides with Lightning Safety Awareness Week. Lightning struck frequently and often resulted in death in early New England. The gravestones of the period document lightning as a cause of death. Inscriptions contain vital statistics and sometimes provide information as to the circumstances of the death. Where did lightning deaths occur? What were the individuals doing when they were killed? Did lightning favor men or women? What age was more apt to be struck? How does the frequency and manner of these deaths compare to lightning deaths occurring today? The similarities and differences between then and now can be surprising. To answer these questions information recorded on gravestones was compared to accounts of death caused by lightning printed in local newspapers. The newspapers of the day were eager to relay the most sensational events and sometimes included detailed

descriptions of lightning strikes provided by survivors. The inscriptions and imagery on these gravestones also offer insight as to how early New Englanders perceived lightning. It was an awesome event that was feared and little understood. Lightning was seen not as an act of nature but as an act of God. It chose its victims from the many. Sermons and poems memorialized lightning strikes, and in some cases can be linked to the gravestones of lightning victims. The scientific experiments conducted in the mid 18th century, most notably those of Benjamin Franklin, established the natural causes of lightning and proved lightning to be a form of electricity. Information on lightning became widely disseminated, yet the general population held on to its beliefs in divine providence and remained reluctant to adopt measures to protect life and property.

Judith Trainor is the Director of Budget and Planning at Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Worcester. She is a longtime member of the AGS Board of Trustees and is its current Treasurer. Judi is known for her foil impressions of gravestones and has taught the technique at AGS conferences for several years.