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## **Association for Gravestone Studies e-Newsletter**

**Issue #80**

**December 2009**

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### **AGS Membership**

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We invite everyone with an interest in gravestones and cemeteries to join the AGS.

Membership benefits include:

- The *AGS Quarterly*: Bulletin of the Association for Gravestone Studies
- The next published issue of *Markers*
- The AGS monthly *e-Newsletter*
- Discounts on AGS publications
- Access to the AGS Research Clearing House and Lending Library
- Discounts on AGS conferences

To join, renew, or for more information, visit [www.gravestonestudies.org/join.htm](http://www.gravestonestudies.org/join.htm).

### **Earn a Free Membership!**

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Any member of the AGS who brings in five new members at the Senior level or above within a 12-month period will receive a free membership renewal at the Individual level for one year (free year begins with your next renewal date). New members that you recruit must record your name in brackets, after theirs, on the membership application form.

### **2010 AGS Conference and Annual Meeting**

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2010 AGS Conference and Annual Meeting

June 22-27, 2010 in Granville, Ohio

Updates will be posted on the AGS website,  
in the *e-Newsletter* and the *Quarterly* as they develop.

We hope to see you there!



**Our 2010 Conference Logo**

*from the gravestone of Mr. Byron Hayes who died March 6, 1836.  
It is located in Granville's Old Colony Burying Ground, established in 1805.*

**Call for Papers and Participation Sessions**

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Call for Papers and Participation Sessions  
2010 AGS Conference and Annual Meeting  
June 22-27, Granville, Ohio

Proposals are solicited for scholarly papers, 20 minutes in length, to be presented during the evening lecture sessions. Please send your proposal and 250-word abstract by February 1, 2010 to: Program Chair: Dr. Ian Brown, [ibrown@bama.ua.edu](mailto:ibrown@bama.ua.edu).

Proposals are solicited for Participation Sessions, 50 minutes in length, to be presented Thursday June 24 and Friday June 25. Please send your proposal and a 250-word abstract by February 1, 2010 to: Participation Sessions Co-Chairs, Robert Keeler and Judy Juntunen, [robertk@clackamas.edu](mailto:robertk@clackamas.edu), or Robert Keeler, 3005 S.W. Westwood Dr., Portland, OR, 97225.

**Student Scholarship Announcement**

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A scholarship is being offered for a student to attend and participate in the 33rd Conference and Annual Meeting of the Association for Gravestone Studies to be held at Denison University in Granville, Ohio, June 22-27, 2010. The scholarship will cover registration, room and board for the full conference. There will also be a cash prize of \$200, which will be presented at the conference. The recipient of this scholarship is expected to present a scholarly paper, twenty minutes in length, during the Friday evening lecture session.

Requirements: The applicant must be a graduate or undergraduate student at an accredited college or university, as well as a member of the AGS.

Application: The application will consist of the title, abstract and text for a twenty-minute paper presentation. The presentation should be in the exact form that will be delivered at the conference, including visuals. Powerpoint is the preferred medium.

Deadline: By April 1, 2010, submissions should be sent as a PDF attachment to an email, a CD, or a hard copy to [ibrown@bama.ua.edu](mailto:ibrown@bama.ua.edu) or Ian W. Brown, Box 870210, Department of Anthropology, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487-0210.

### **The AGS President's Bully Pulpit**

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I was saddened to learn of the recent death of Helen Sclair (1930-2009), longtime member of the AGS. I first met Helen at the Savannah meeting in 2002. Although I had been a member of the AGS for many years, this was the first time I actually attended a conference. Newcomers are always a little hesitant at conferences, and I was no exception, but Helen would have none of that. She not only made me feel very welcome at my first conference, but ever after she always had a big hug for me whenever she saw me. Helen's great big smile was always so inviting, but one soon learned that behind the grin was a person to be reckoned with. In Chicago Helen was considered "The Cemetery Lady, An Advocate for the Dead." She not only fought for the dead but, as a result of her occupying an old caretaker's house at the Bohemian National Cemetery, she even lived with the dead! I will always remember her at Poultney, Vermont when she took on the entire granite industry. Memorials forever? Hell no! Helen showed all of us just why nothing lasts forever, even those magnificent granite mausoleums. And Lord protect those who messed with facts. One speaker (not me!) at that same conference happened to substitute "casket" for "coffin" in his talk and certainly paid the price, but once she set him straight she proceeded to hug him with her smile. I will miss that great big jolly woman who helped teach me what the AGS is all about.

--Ian W. Brown

### **AGS Featured in *American Cemetery Magazine***

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The November 2009 issue of *American Cemetery* magazine features an article entitled "Grave Addictions: Association for Gravestone Studies" by Barbara Claire Kasselman. It contains in-depth interviews with AGS President Ian Brown and AGS Administrator Patricia Welch, as well as comments by past President Bob Drinkwater and Librarian Marie Ferré.

For more information: <http://www.kates-boylston.com/index.aspx?page=ac>

### **Query: Italian Sculpted Gravemarkers**

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This query comes from Elisabeth Roark. She writes: "I am collecting examples of

sculpture and gravemarkers by Italian sculptors that appear in large American garden or 'rural' cemeteries before 1900. If you work with or frequent cemeteries of this type, and are aware of works by Italians identified by signatures, documents, or research you have done, I would be very grateful if you would share this information (and possibly a picture) with me. I promise to send you a copy of the paper I write based on this information."

Thank you,  
Elisabeth Roark  
Associate Professor of Art History, Chatham University, Pittsburgh, PA  
[Roark@Chatham.edu](mailto:Roark@Chatham.edu).

### **Query: Funding Sources, Scotland**

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The "[Graveyards and Gravestones](#)" page of the Historic Scotland website has a lot of information for anyone interested in gravestones and cemeteries in Scotland.

We learned of this site from Alasdair Charleson, who sent in this query. He writes: "Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Pitlochry, Perthshire, Scotland is beginning the project to make safe a number of headstones surrounding the property. An initial estimate proved to be beyond our means without significant outside assistance. Would any one have any additional leads?"

Thank you,  
Alasdair Charleson  
(Member of HTEC vestry).

They have consulted [Sources of financial Assistance for the Conservation of Scotland's Historic Graveyards](#). Alasdair's email: [alasdaircharleson@btinternet.com](mailto:alasdaircharleson@btinternet.com).

### **News from the National Trust for Historic Preservation**

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After a multi-year effort, officials at Arlington National Cemetery and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers committed to do what we at the National Trust for Historic Preservation had long argued for: repairing, rather than replacing, the authentic Tomb of the Unknowns, eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

For more information: [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#).

### **New Website: Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Rochester New York**

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Rochester, New York's Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, founded in 1871, has announced the launch of their new web site at [www.holysepulchre.org](http://www.holysepulchre.org).

The site features a new look and feel and includes a "Lifebook." The Lifebook is a custom, online application that pulls data from the Holy Sepulchre database to help web site visitors find burial locations of loved ones and post stories, memories, prayers, or messages to friends and family.

**New e-newsletter, Vine Lake Preservation Trust, Medfield, Massachusetts**

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The Vine Lake Preservation Trust (VLPT) has a new e-newsletter. You can sign up to receive it at their website: [www.vinelakepreservationtrust.org](http://www.vinelakepreservationtrust.org).

The VLPT was organized in May 2009 as a funding organization for preservation, education, beautification, and research projects at Vine Lake Cemetery in Medfield, Massachusetts.

**Website: Cemeteries of the Czech Republic**

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Kimsey Fowler, Jr. of [www.stonepics.com](http://www.stonepics.com), sent this information.

"Our project is to document the cemeteries of the Czech Republic. We recently got the web site up and running, and the transcript work has finally taken off at a nice pace. Our goal is to add about 7,000 names per month to a database that has surpassed 30,000 so far.

The web site is still in it's infancy, but there is some interesting stuff there already."

<http://czech.stonepics.com>

**Letter to the Editor from AGS Member Ruth Miller**

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In the November edition of the *e-Newsletter* we included a link to an article about the Dead Poets Society founder Walter Skold's visits to the graves of 150 poets in 23 states.

AGS Member Ruth Miller copied the AGS office on her letter to the *Post & Courier*, Charleston, S.C. in response to a mistake in the article.

"Dear Editor,

On November first *the Post & Courier*, Charleston, S.C. featured Dead Poets Society founder Walter Skold's visit here. Below a four column photograph I was dismayed by the headline 'Final resting place of S.C.'s Henry Timrod in Magnolia Cemetery.' The story spoke of S.C. Poet Laureate Marjory Wentworth joining Skold for the reading of a Timrod poem.

Occupied with countless activities which include exploring burial grounds in my spare time, I did not submit a letter to the local editor.

That was yesterday, this is today. I read that Skold has garnered international recognition by appearing in the *AGS e-newsletter* for November 2009. Now I know that there are graveyard folks into ghosts, haunts, haints (the Southern version of haunts), and all matter of immaterial beings of matter, but this is the first time I have run into a poet with two lives. Henry Timrod, poet, buried in Magnolia Cemetery in Charleston? The poet laureate of our state visiting his grave there with Skold? Where? How?

Last time I looked Henry Timrod, poet, was buried in another cemetery -Trinity Episcopal Cathedral Cemetery - in another city - Columbia - albeit in the same state - South Carolina. The stone clearly reads Henry Timrod, poet, who died in 1867. Since Timrod is known as 'Poet Laureate of the Confederacy' it appears the South rose again, as did Timrod. The South apparently fell again, as did Timrod, only this time they buried him in Charleston when no one was looking--no one, apparently, except an itinerate Yankee named Skold, too much in a rush to document this second incarnation of Timrod and the second secession.

Despite my search, I have not found the Second Confederacy or the second poet Timrod anywhere in my history books.

Dear Mr. Skold, I can't wait for elucidation, ephemeral as it may be. Then again maybe Skold and Wentworth just read Timrod at Magnolia and the reporter got it wrong!

Respectfully submitted by longtime AGS member and a Connecticut Yankee who has lived south of the Mason-Dixon line for decades,

Ruth Miller  
Charleston, S.C."

**Blog: Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York**

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Jeff Richman sent in this information about his new blog. He writes: "I am the historian at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York, and a longtime AGS member. I have just launched my Green-Wood Cemetery blog at <http://greenwooddiscovery.org/>.

Below is the introduction to the blog:

Welcome to this blog. My name is Jeff Richman and I am the historian at Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn, New York. Green-Wood is truly a remarkable place: 478 acres of trees, sculpture, ponds, gardens, and grass-covered hills in the heart of urban Brooklyn. It is my privilege to be the historian at Green-Wood Cemetery, which was founded in 1838 and is one of only a handful of cemeteries in America that have been honored with the designation as National Historic Landmarks.

For as long as I can remember, I have been interested in history--New York City and Civil War, in particular. I practiced law for 33 years, but while I did so I pursued my passions, collecting historical material, particularly stereoviews of New York City.

Almost 30 years ago, on a slow buying day at an antique photography show, I purchased my first photograph of a place called Green-Wood Cemetery. At the time I had not heard of the place--and even after I heard the name, I didn't even know if it still existed. I just liked the photograph. I purchased a few more photos of Green-Wood, then saw an ad for a tour of Green-Wood Cemetery, to be led by a professional photographer, a rare opportunity to photograph the historic landscape. I do love taking photographs, so that sounded great, but I had something else in mind: I really wanted to spot the places I knew from those photographs of circa 1870, to see if I could recognize them.

Well, that tour was a big hit with me--it changed my life. After just a few steps into the cemetery, I was hooked. What an amazing place! So I went back the next day and got a pass to the cemetery, with permission to take photographs. In 1990, having left trial work for appeals, I decided I wanted to still talk to groups (but no more juries), and that I wanted to lead tours of Green-Wood. And I've been doing tours there ever since. All of this led to research for a book about Green-Wood, published by the cemetery in 1998 as *Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery: New York's Buried Treasure*. And, in 2000, I became Green-Wood's historian, working evenings and weekends. Green-Wood Cemetery Historian became my full-time job in May, 2007.

We have just over 561,000 people interred at Green-Wood. The discoveries are endless. The rewards of working with volunteers, historians, and descendants, are great. Organizing volunteers to staff our Historic Fund cart, to share information, maps, self-guided walking tours, books, and much more--to help our visitors enjoy the place--has been great. And leading our Civil War Project, which started 7 years ago, and has resulted in volunteers identifying more than 4,000 Civil War veterans, writing biographies for each, collecting photographs of them, and marking 2,000 unmarked graves, has been a thrill. I still can't believe, that 7 years later, volunteers keep coming back for more!

So, this blog is an opportunity to share some of Green-Wood's most exciting discoveries and developments with you. I have long believed that history is fascinating because you cannot make this stuff up. This blog is an opportunity for me to share that sense with you. And, how many people can say that the place where they work has become better every year that they have worked there? That is true of Green-Wood Cemetery. So, whether it's a story of a new discovery, a new planting, or a recent restoration of a monument, you will find news of it here.

And, I hope you will get involved. It is amazing the things that I have learned from people across the world, sharing their knowledge about Green-Wood and its permanent residents. I look forward to hearing from you."

**Article: *Gravestones Stitch a Historical Tapestry***

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In the October 2009 edition of the *e-Newsletter*, we featured an article by Oliver Peterson about the Old Burying Ground in Sag Harbor, Long Island. Oliver forwarded us another one of his articles, published in the October 25, 2007 edition of *the Southampton Press*. This article is about gravestones in the East End of Long Island.

[Gravestones Stitch a Historical Tapestry](#)

**Two Articles about Cemetery Fee Increases, British Columbia**

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One article, published in the *Nanaimo Daily News*, is about cemetery plot fee increases in the city of Nanaimo, British Columbia. There is also information about Pioneer Cemetery Park, Nanaimo's first cemetery which contains the remains of many of the early settlers.

[Nanaimo Daily News](#)

And, according to an article in the *Cowichan Citizen*, plot charges and fees in North Cowichan's municipal cemetery are set to rise there by 15% per year over the next five years.

[Cowichan Citizen](#)

**Article: *Suspect charged in grave robbing, British Columbia***

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This article, from the *Chilliwack Times* is about the recent arrest of a suspect in connection with stealing brass plates from cemetery headstones around Chilliwack.

[Chilliwack Times](#)

**Article: *Ross Bay cemetery vandalism vexes officials***

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This article, from the British Columbia *Times Colonist* is about recent vandalism at Victoria's historic Ross Bay Cemetery. This is the second time this year the cemetery has been vandalized.

[Times Colonist](#)

**Article: *Tombstone Tourism***

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Folks who are "graveyard tourists" are interviewed in this article linked to [cnn.com](http://cnn.com).

**Article: *Skull finds way back to Milford (CT) for burial***

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This article, linked below, is about a skull presumed to be that of a Revolutionary War

soldier that was returned to Milford Cemetery.

[New Haven Register](#)

**Article: Gravestone From 1799 Is Found in Washington Square Park**

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This article, linked below, is about a three-foot-tall, 210-year-old sandstone grave marker that was unearthed during construction work in Washington Square Park in Greenwich Village.

[New York Times](#)

**Article: Gravestones Talking Through Time**

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This article, linked below, is about a global citizen science program called EarthTrek, and a call for volunteers to measure marble gravestones of different ages around the world. This data will be used to help map the story of changes in Earth's atmospheric chemistry and rainfall.

[sciencedaily.com](#)

**Article: Grave of former Jacksonville mayor finally gets recognized**

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This article, linked to [Jacksonville.com](#), is about the formerly unmarked grave of former Jacksonville mayor William H. Sebring and the dedication of his new headstone.

**Obituary: Helen Sclair**

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**Helen Sclair, 1930-2009: Authority on cemeteries, burial places**

By Trevor Jensen Tribune, *Chicago Tribune*

Helen Sclair's address during the last years of her life will remain unchanged into eternity.

A recognized authority on cemeteries and burial practices, Mrs. Sclair lived in a house on the grounds of Bohemian National Cemetery on Chicago's Northwest Side since about 2001. Her cremated remains will rest not far away under a granite stone bearing

the inscription, "The Cemetery Lady, An Advocate for the Dead."

Mrs. Sclair, 78, died of cardiac arrest on Wednesday, Dec. 16, in the Harmony Healthcare and Rehab Center in Chicago, where she had been recovering from surgery, said her daughter, Lu Helen Sclair.

Mrs. Sclair lectured around the country to groups like the Association for Gravestone Studies, taught on burial and genealogical related topics at the Newberry Library, and possessed encyclopedic knowledge of Chicago-area cemeteries.

"It made her feel connected to the family and the person who died," Sclair said. "It was important for her to see where the person was laid to rest."

In 1991, she made significant discoveries on Chicago's early years while scouring records made available through the Illinois Regional Archives Depository System at Northeastern Illinois University.

She found that some families were trying to get their ancestors' remains out of Lincoln Park as recently as 1900, leading her to believe that old bones still linger beneath the lakefront park. Her work also sharpened knowledge of the Immigration patterns that shaped Chicago.

The documents she dug up were, said one historian at the time, a million-to-one shot, comparable to finding a painting by an old master in an attic trunk.

Her fascination with cemeteries dated to her childhood in bucolic Lake County. Born Helen Young, her mother died shortly after her birth, and she was raised by a close friend of her mother's on a duck farm.

In Studs Terkel's book "Will the Circle Be Unbroken?: Reflections on Death, Rebirth and Hunger for a Faith," Mrs. Sclair recalled that "the first thing my foster family did was take me to visit my mother's grave down in southern Illinois."

Later, she spent weekends tending grave markers at a local cemetery, trimming the grass and watering flowers. She felt an earlier generation had a better handle on death, and studied the old rituals that marked human passing, her daughter said.

Her father, Irvin Young, was an entrepreneur and former missionary in Africa who helped his friend Marlin Perkins bring gorillas to Lincoln Park Zoo.

She attended a boarding school in Kenosha and graduated from Carleton College in Minnesota, then went to work for a small manufacturing company her father had started on Sheffield Avenue. It was there she met her first husband, James Henry Holcomb, a machinist who lost his job, left town to find work and never returned.

She later married Marvin Sclair, who died in 1975.

For 30 years she taught school, mostly at Gladstone Elementary on the Near West Side. She lived most of her adult life in Lincoln Park until health problems made it difficult to trek up the stairs to her fourth-floor apartment on Lill Street.

Through a friend, she learned of an old caretaker's house at Bohemian National Cemetery that was available for rent.

"Someone asked if she thought it was too weird to live there," her daughter said. "She didn't, and it was really a wonderful match."

Among other benefits of living in a cemetery, she later said, was that unlike Lincoln Park, there was never any problem finding a parking space.

Mrs. Sclair is also survived by a grandchild.

A service is being planned for the spring.

**Contact Information**

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phone: 413-772-0836  
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