

The Grove Street Bulletin

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A Publication of the Grove Street Cemetery

Spring 2006

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Curtis Patton Lectures on African Americans Interred in Grove Street Cemetery

On April 18, Dr. Curtis L. Patton, Director of International Medical Studies and Professor of Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases at the Yale University School of Medicine, provided members and guests of the Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery with his last pre-retirement lecture. Dr. Patton focused attention not only on pre-Civil War slavery and the abolitionist movement in New Haven, but also on the lives and social structure of African Americans living here. He made special note of the Creed family, whose family monument stands close to the Cemetery's 'gate house.'

Courtland Creed, a descendant of John Creed and a high school graduate, expressed his desire to become a doctor and through his employment contacts at Yale became the first African American graduate of its Medical School, in 1870. It is noteworthy that an undergraduate college degree was not a requirement then for medical school admission.

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left to right, Dr. & Mrs. Curtis Patton, Mrs. & Dr. James Niederman



Lecture audience assembles at the New Haven Lawn Club on April 18, 2006

Denison Olmsted and His Contributions to the Grove Street Cemetery

"One of the earliest efforts to preserve and improve the Grove Street Cemetery was influenced by Connecticut native and Yale professor Denison Olmsted. The Cemetery, more properly called the New Haven Burying Ground, was assessed by a committee of concerned citizens in the late 1830s. A short report attributed to Olmsted addresses the condition and history of the Cemetery, and makes recommendations for its improvement and protection. Olmsted's background and interest in the Cemetery made him a natural choice to serve on the committee. Denison Olmsted was born June 18, 1791, in East Hartford. In 1809, he entered Yale and in autumn 1813, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree with high honors. Two years later, he was appointed a tutor at Yale, during which time he also studied theology. In completing his Master of Arts degree in 1816, he gave an oration 'on the state of education in Connecticut.

"Olmsted was hired in 1817 as the chair of chemistry and mineralogy, a newly created professorship, at the University of North Carolina. He accepted the professorship with the proviso that he would remain at Yale one additional year to work under Benjamin Silliman, a leading promoter of science in the 19th century, to gain additional expertise in the theory and practice of chemistry in preparation for his new professorship at Chapel Hill.... In 1825, Olmsted was tapped to become Professor of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy (later, of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy) at his alma mater, [where] he devoted and dedicated himself for the remaining thirty-four years of his life to teaching and research.

"In mid-career, Olmsted became involved with the welfare of the Grove Street Cemetery by actively serving on the committee that reviewed the condition of the grounds and proposed plans for their improvement. In the committee report, members mentioned that the grounds lacked a proper enclosure, resulting in people traversing through the land and breaching the solemnity of the graveyard. They therefore unanimously recommended that the grounds should be enclosed by a durable and ornamental fence and that a gateway

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Denison Olmsted and His Contributions *(continued from page 1)*

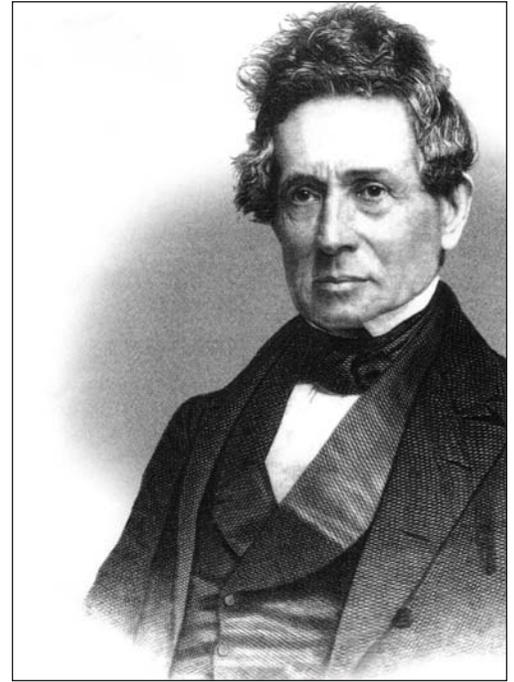
should be constructed as a focal point to its entrance. [The Henry Austin Gate was dedicated in July, 1845.] Landscaping also commanded the committee's attention, [suggesting] the planting of trees and shrubs not only for the beautification but also for enhancing the peacefulness and sacredness of the setting. ...Denison Olmsted died on May 13, 1859. [His] final resting place is in the Cemetery that he dedicated to preserve and improve."

—William R. Burk, John N Couch Biology Library, University of North Carolina, 2006



Burial Site of Denison Olmsted

We are most grateful to Bill Burk for his contribution of this article about Denison Olmsted, one of the early pioneers for the preservation and improvement of Grove Street Cemetery. It is interesting to note that the committee's 28-page report to which Mr. Burk refers in the article is titled: "Report of the Committee, Appointed to Inquire into the Condition of the New Haven Burying Ground and to Propose a Plan for its Improvement," was printed in New Haven in 1839. Denison Olmsted's gravesite, located on Cedar Avenue, is #16 on our list of "Eminent People in Grove Street Cemetery." Olmsted was one of the first two scientists to observe Halley's Comet in 1835.



Denison Olmsted

Beautification Program Continues

The Master Plan for beautification of the Cemetery, prepared by Balmori Associates and presented in 2001, has been the guide for the work of the Horticulture Committee of the Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc. during the last four and a half years. While some aspects of the Plan, including a few not directly related to horticulture, remain on our 'to be done' list, a major portion of the recommended plantings of trees and shrubs has been completed. Through the efforts of the Horticulture Committee and the funds contributed by members of the Friends organization, over 65 new trees have been planted and number of new shrubs have been added. And, gradually, through the natural course of events, a few of the less-than-healthy elderly trees are being replaced.

Cemetery Tours — an Increasing Success

This year's schedule of one-hour guided tours of the Cemetery has already begun and will continue through mid-November. Regularly scheduled tours are given every Saturday morning at 11:00 a.m. and on the first and third Sundays of the month at noon. We estimate that there will be well over 1,000 people escorted through the Cemetery in 2006. Most will be part of our regularly scheduled tours, but some will be members of pre-scheduled, specially arranged 'private' tours for schools, families, historical organizations, club groups, etc. For information on special group tours, for which there is a modest fee, please contact Patti Illingworth at (203) 389-5403 or by email at p.b.illingworth@worldnet.att.net.

Many visitors to the Cemetery prefer a self-guided tour. Maps and other materials are available at the 'gate house' just inside the entrance on Grove Street. Please note: the Cemetery is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily.

Ceremony on July 4 to Honor Signers of Declaration of Independence

The annual Independence Day commemoration in Grove Street Cemetery, sponsored by the General David Humphreys Branch Number One, Connecticut Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, will start at 9:00 a.m., rain or shine. With participation by a local Boy Scout troop, ceremonies will be held at the gravesites of Roger Sherman and David Humphreys. The public is invited to attend and to participate in this patriotic event, which starts just inside the Gate on Grove Street.

Yale Alumni Magazine has Feature Article on Grove Street Cemetery

The May-June, 2006, issue of the Yale Alumni Magazine has a several-page pictorial article about Grove Street Cemetery. Entitled *Stories in the Stones*, the article's headline reads, "At the heart of Yale, the Grove Street Cemetery holds 200 years of town and gown history."

Curtis Patton Lecture

(continued from page 1)

Dr. Patton spoke glowingly about Grove Street Cemetery. He considers it to be the “People’s Cemetery” and a “National Treasure.” He indicated that he is a very frequent visitor to the Cemetery and finds it a peaceful place to contemplate everything from the most worldly considerations to the more mundane. He admitted spending more time studying our Website than in preparing the notes for his lecture.



Creed family monument



Glenn Miller Memorial



Trowbridge Angel

Newsbytes from the Website

Our **website** at: www.grovestreetcemetery.org continues to show growth in its viewer usage. In the six week period April 23 to June 4 this year, visits to the site were made from 5 of the 6 inhabited continents of the world! During that time only South America was missing from the ‘inhabited’ list. In the same time period, there were over 8,000 ‘hits’ and over 1200 ‘visits’ lasting more than a few minutes. In the month of May, there were over 800 searches made into the Registry of Burials and almost 300 searches of the Cemetery location maps, nearby restaurants, etc. In the one week ending June 4, there were nearly 800 ‘visits’ of all types to the site.

The most frequently viewed picture is that of the Glenn Miller memorial stone. Among the most frequent of the unusual requests on the site is for information about “pirate lore of the Thimble Islands!” A request from one of our visitors, which has been fulfilled, was for pictures of the “Trowbridge Angel” tombstone. Our Website viewer wanted to send the photos to a stone carver in Poland who had asked for examples of our ‘local’ funeral art and stone-sculpting skills and styles.

Burial Plots Available

It often surprises those who visit the Cemetery that there are, in fact, over 1000 gravesites still available. If you are interested in purchasing a burial plot, a conversation with Mr. or Mrs. Cameron, the Superintendents, is the best way to begin. To contact them, please call the Cemetery at: (203) 787-1443.



How to Join Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc.

Individuals, organizations and corporations interested in Grove Street Cemetery and supporting the objectives of the Friends are encouraged, to become members. Annual membership dues are shown below. The membership year is October 1 to September 30. Membership Dues and Other Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Contributions in excess of membership dues are welcome and, unless otherwise specified, will be allocated to the Landmark Fund, which was created to complete the renovations and restorations of the Cemetery’s physical plant and park-like setting. Checks should be made payable to Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc. and mailed with this completed form to: P. O. Box 9238; New Haven, CT 06533-0238.

Name _____

Address _____ Tel.: _____

Dues: Individual \$25 _____ Couple \$40 _____ Not-for-profit \$50 _____ Corporation \$100 _____

Interested in Becoming a Docent?

The Cemetery needs more docents to maintain its scheduled program of tours from early May through mid-November in 2006. Several of our present docents would be happy to provide you with the training necessary to become a tour guide and would lend you an on-site helping hand before you embark on a 'solo flight.' If you are interested in becoming a docent or want to learn more about what is involved, please contact Patti Illingworth by phone at: (203) 389-5403 or by e-mail at: p.b.illingworth@worldnet.att.net.

Photo credits: William Burk, William Conway, Sue Williams

How to Reach Us

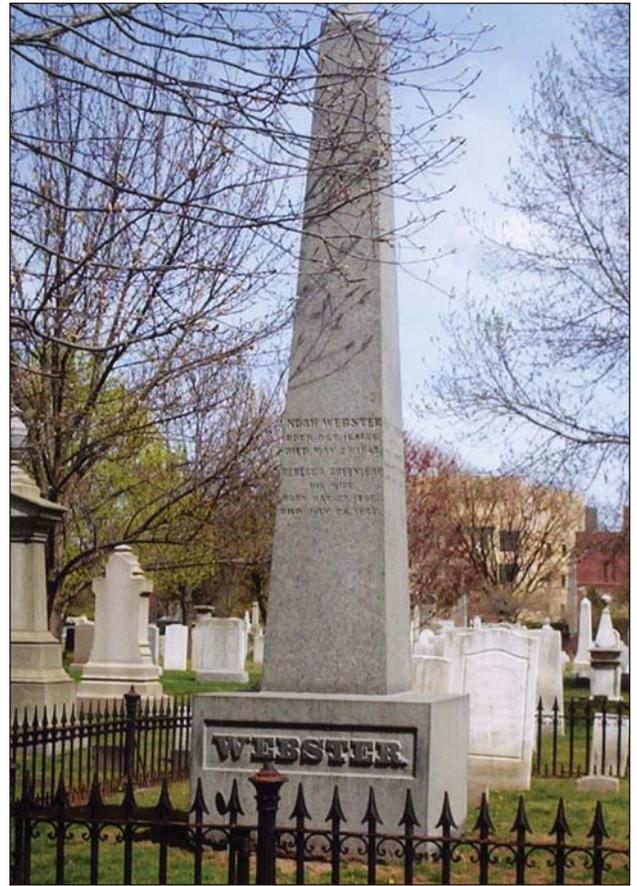
Grove Street Cemetery

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Friends of Grove Street Cemetery

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Fax: (203) 281-6886
e-mail: office@grovestreetcemetery.org
website: www.grovestreetcemetery.org



Noah Webster monument 250th birthday celebration in 2008

Address Service Requested

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P.O. Box 9238

Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc.



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