

EPITAPHS

THE GROVE STREET CEMETERY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2, No. 1 Spring 2023



Happy Quasquibicentennial, Grove Street Cemetery!

Join us in celebrating the 225th anniversary of the founding of the cemetery, originally named the “new Burying Ground in New-Haven,” where the first burial was that of Martha Townsend on November 9, 1797. Today, what we know familiarly as the Grove Street Cemetery is a National Historic Landmark: a well-maintained landscape of memorial monuments and a certified arboretum of notable trees, final resting place of at least 14,500 individuals. It continues to accept new burials and is frequently visited for countless reasons: remembering lost family and friends, engaging with New Haven’s history, seeking the respite of nature, and bird watching, among others. Even as some of the country’s earliest designed cemeteries were visited for passive reflection and relaxation when there were few public parks, so too today this cemetery serves as a natural, culturally rich refuge for urban neighbors and distant visitors.

As we emerge from the challenges of Covid, it is interesting to note that Grove Street traces its origins to earlier pandemics of yellow fever in the late eighteenth century, when the ancient burial ground on the Green was overcrowded and a group of New Haven citizens led by James Hillhouse planned the new cemetery. Not long after opening it was already shown with pride to foreign visitors. Timothy Dwight, the president of Yale College, commented in 1811:

I have accompanied to it many foreigners and many Americans who have traveled extensively on the Eastern Continent, none of whom had ever seen or heard of anything of a similar nature. An exquisite taste for propriety is discovered in everything belonging to it... No plot of ground within my knowledge is equally solemn and impressive.

The first non-sectarian cemetery laid out in family plots, it has been through twenty-two decades of care and improvements, and is known for the many notable individuals now resting here. See the accompanying timeline for significant dates and visit the website for much more detail on the history.

(continued on next page)

GROVE STREET CEMETERY

227 Grove Street
New Haven, CT 06511

(203) 787-1443
grovestreetcemoffice@gmail.com
grovestreetcemetery.org
facebook.com/grovestreetcemetery

Grounds are open daily from
8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Office hours are
Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m.
Burial plots are available.
Contact the office for information.

Seeley Jennings, *Superintendent*
Jacob S. Jennings, *Assistant Superintendent*
Rosa Rodriguez, *Office Manager*

Standing Committee of the Proprietors of Grove Street Cemetery

Charles H. Long, *President*
Gerald E. Gaab, *Vice President*
J. Lloyd Suttle, *Treasurer*
Eleanor C. Babbitt, *Co-Clerk*
Regina L. Starolis, *Co-Clerk*
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Charles D. Ellis
Judith D. Hackman
Lorraine D. Siggins
C. Michael Tucker

Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery

P. O. Box 9238
New Haven, CT 06533-0238
friends@grovestreetcemetery.org

Board of the Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc.

Michael Morand, *Chair*
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Sandra Markham
Jill M. Snyder
Charles Warner, Jr.

Epitaphs Newsletter

Channing Harris, *Editor*



Happy Quasibicentennial (continued from first page)

This is also the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Friends of Grove Street Cemetery, whose first mission is to “preserve and protect the Cemetery as a historically important land area, as a place of cultural significance, and as a park-like community resource. Secondly, to disseminate historical knowledge and other information through programs, publications, tours, etc.” The Friends also raises funds for projects such as the recent replanting of the 700-foot-long front border garden, restoration of over two dozen cradle graves, and the publication of an arboretum guide. Additional tree planting continues. The Friends also created and manage the website, www.grovestreetcemetery.org, and a Facebook page. (Please join us!) ☺



Grove Street Cemetery Timeline

1797

Incorporation and opening of the “New Burying Ground”; first burial Martha Townsend, Nov 9

1812

Last burial on New Haven Green. Remaining stones moved to Grove Street by 1821

1839

Report ... to Inquire Into the Condition of the New Haven Burying Ground, and to Propose a Plan for Its Improvement, Denison Olmsted, committee chair

1845

Construction of Egyptian-style gate, walls, and iron fence begun, and new plantings added

1861–1865

Civil War veterans’ graves influence monument styles; introduction of granite

1872

Chapel completed; eventually becomes Superintendent’s Office

1876

Headstones from the Green are aligned against outside walls (previously stored on lots)

1914

First guide and map issued from *Memorials of Eminent Yale Men*, by Anson P. Stokes; updated in 1947 for 150th Anniversary; later guides expanded to include women and men not related to Yale

1997

Founding of Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery; National Register Nomination

2000

National Historic Landmark certification

2002–2006

Balmori Associates planting plan implemented; sixty new trees planted including ginkgos on Myrtle Path

2003

Website established with online Registry of Burials

2004

Grove Street Bulletin newsletter begun

Find a Grave digital documentation expands information on burials and family history

2007

Grove Street Cemetery: City of the Dead, City of the Living, documentary film by Karyl Evans, released

2015

Facebook page begun including links to videos

2020

Arboretum guide produced and status certified; front border replanting

EDITOR’S NOTE: The Friends would like to thank outgoing Board Chair, Ed Bottomley, for his many years of great service and upbeat leadership. We also welcome Michael Morand as our new Chair with his significant knowledge of the Cemetery.

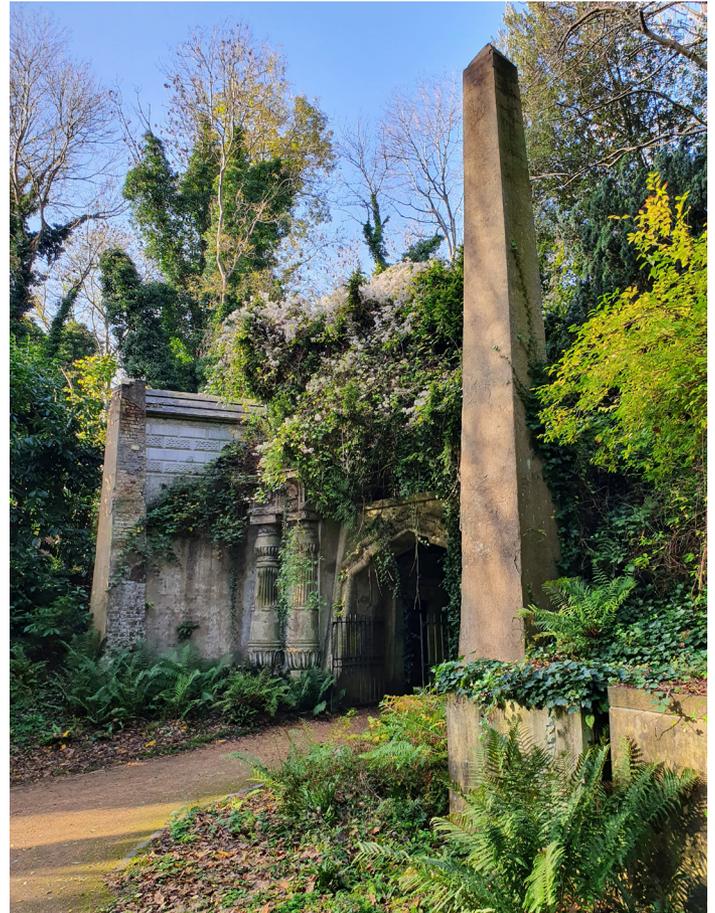
We hope you like this new format for the newsletter, newly named *Epitaphs* in recognition of the cemetery’s monument inscriptions. I’d also like to give acknowledgement to Karin Krochmal for the new design and her voluntary efforts once again to layout and help publish this, and to Sandra Markham for contributing to several articles and recent projects.

A Comparison with London's Highgate Cemetery on the Occasion of Grove Street Cemetery's 225th Anniversary

More Than Seven Things We All Didn't Know About English Cemeteries

In celebration of the cemetery's quasibicentennial, the Friends launched its first-ever international online program on Sunday afternoon, November 6, 2022. Our speaker was Dr. Ian Dungavell, the Chief Executive of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery in London, England (where it was, for him, 9 pm). Ian's thought-provoking presentation, titled "Seven Things You Probably Didn't Know About English Cemeteries," centered on Highgate, which was founded in 1839 and is one of the world's greatest Victorian cemeteries. He touched as well on others in the "Magnificent Seven" burial grounds that ring London, while finding some interesting parallels with our older, much smaller (and much tidier) Grove Street Cemetery. In his illustrated talk, Ian considered the modernity of his and other cemeteries that had followed Grove Street's lead in creating purposeful, planned landscapes for permanent burials. He also shared the remarkable inspiration provided by the Cimetière du Père-Lachaise in Paris (opened in 1804, seven years after Grove Street), the cemetery mania of the 1830s in England and the United States, and the then-controversial "strange association of commercial and sepulchral ideas" brought about by burial grounds charging for gravesites and associated services. He ended with his thoughts on Highgate in the twenty-first century, encompassing the important issues of sustainability and biodiversity that all burial grounds are facing today.

With the nearly two hundred local, national, and international viewers on November 6th—and nearly two hundred more taphophiles who have since watched the recording on our Facebook page—the success of this endeavor recommends similar future programs. In the meantime, we remain grateful to Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for both promoting and cosponsoring Ian Dungavell's talk as a Zoom webinar. It can still be accessed



for first-time or repeat viewing here, regardless of having a Facebook account: [facebook.com/grovestreetcemetery/videos/530267925229148](https://www.facebook.com/grovestreetcemetery/videos/530267925229148).





Two Journeys, 200 Years Apart

Two hundred years ago, in November 1822, a group of courageous travelers arrived in New Haven to board—as passengers—a working whaleship set to sail on a treacherous trip around Cape Horn to the North Pacific Ocean. The five clergymen, three teachers, a physician, and their spouses comprised the Second Company of missionaries bound for the Sandwich Islands (now Hawai'i) on behalf of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, where they would begin work in collaboration with the Pioneer Company of missionaries and a'i (rulers) to translate the Bible and open schools on the islands. An exhibition recently on view at the New Haven Museum, "Point of Departure: New Haven 1822," commemorated that adventure by considering what New Haven looked like then, how the intrepid voyagers prepared for a trip to the other side of their world, and how their departure was remembered by the city's residents over more than a century afterward.

In October 2022, a group of Hawaiians arrived in New Haven for a week-long bicentennial commemoration of their spiritual ancestors that included two days of events in the city before embarking on a journey to related sites in Mystic, Farmington, and Cornwall, Connecticut, and to Cooperstown, New York, and Princeton, New Jersey. After visiting the exhibition, the Hawaiians toured the two Congregational churches on the Green where services had been held for

the missionaries and their New Haven supporters. Friends member Sandra Markham also walked them through Grove Street Cemetery on a picture-perfect—and to them, thrilling—fall day in New England to pay respects to nearly two dozen men and women who figured in the story of the Sandwich Island missionaries' days in New Haven. Among the stops were the gravesites of significant religious figures Nathaniel Taylor, Noah Porter, Lyman Beecher, and Samuel Merwin, and their Cedar Avenue neighbors Eli and Henrietta Whitney and Daniel Read, co-owners of the whaleship *Thames* on which the missionaries had traveled. Other stops on Cedar were made at the graves of Nathan Whiting,

uncle of one of the missionaries and the editor/publisher of the influential journal *Religious Intelligencer*, and John Warner Barber, whose engaging wood engravings help to illustrate what his city looked like in 1822. Also visited were Jeremiah Evarts on Spruce Avenue, an administrator for the ABCFM, who read the missionaries their instructions for conduct once on the islands, and the shopkeepers Timothy Dwight and Timothy Williams who securely packed for shipboard travel several casks of goods donated to the mission by local citizens. On Maple Avenue the Hawaiians "met" other ship co-owners William Leffingwell, Aeneas Monson, Seth Staples, and Jehiel Forbes, and the Reverend Jeremiah Day who was in 1822 president of Yale College and whose oration at North Church on the eve of the missionaries' departure reminded everyone present that the Sandwich Islands combined were the same size as Connecticut but held a population many times that of the state.

Respects were paid as well to two missionaries, Hiram and Sibyl Bingham, who were already working in Honolulu at the time and now buried on Sylvan Avenue, and to the sea captain Caleb Brintnall, who had stopped at the Sandwich Islands some years in advance of the waves of New England missionaries. In 1822 New Haven was by far the largest city in Connecticut, but the New Haven Museum exhibition and a corollary tour of Grove Street Cemetery demonstrated to the visiting Hawaiians that it was also, in many ways, an equally small town. 🌀



Judith Ann Schiff, 1937–2022

COURTESY OF YALE UNIVERSITY



Friends of the Cemetery mourn the passing of long-time Friends' board member, and member of the Standing Committee of Proprietors, Judith Ann Schiff. She was remembered with a graveside service at Grove Street Cemetery on July 15, 2022, that was attended by over a hundred colleagues and friends. Judy was Yale University Library's Chief Research Archivist, with over sixty years of service to the university; her monthly columns in

the *Yale Alumni Magazine* often enlivened historical figures with rich details based on her research. In addition, Judy was New Haven's City Historian for the past decade.

Judy was a founding board member of the Friends of Grove Street Cemetery in 1997 and was regularly at work on countless

projects, publications, and events including a number of programs recognizing notable woman and others in the cemetery who have historically been overlooked. Her knowledge of local history, individuals, and events was unequalled, and in fact, at the time of her passing, she probably knew more about the cemetery's permanent residents than anyone. Judy joined that cohort when she was buried next to her mother at 7 Laurel Avenue, West.

Tours

Join docent Darlene Casella on a tour of the cemetery from April through November. Her tours provide history of the cemetery, information on many notables buried here, as well as interesting stories and lively discussions about the cemetery's residents. The schedule is easily accessed on our website grovestreetcemetery.org and Friends of Grove Street Cemetery Facebook page: facebook.com/grovestreetcemetery/. In addition, private small group tours can be scheduled by contacting her directly at 203-777-3887. If you are interested in becoming a docent, please contact her at the same number. Training can be provided.

Last year's tours were well-attended, covering the history of the cemetery and notable burials, as well as the horticultural collection and special interests such as African Americans connected with the early Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church. Private group tours were provided for local



civic and professional groups, members of health treatment programs; Yale School of Management, Office of Financial Planning and Analysis, Provost's Office, and University Women's Organization, as well as a reunion group with international members.

See the website for several self-guided tours on separate topics, and stop by the Superintendent's Office for informational brochures.

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

Individuals, organizations and corporations interested in Grove Street Cemetery and the objectives of the Friends are encouraged to become members. Annual membership dues are shown below. The membership year is January 1 to December 31. Membership Dues and other contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Contributions in excess of Membership Dues are welcome and will be allocated to its General Fund. Funds support the on-going horticultural programs of the organization and the ever present need for support of the Cemetery's renovation and restoration efforts.

NAME

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CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE

TELEPHONE

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Dues:

- Individual \$35 Not-for-profit \$50
 Couple \$50 Corporation \$100
 Additional Contribution \$ _____

Please check areas of participation that interest you:

- Preservation Program
 Publication Horticulture
 Docent Fund Raising

Order your DVD of the documentary film, "Grove Street Cemetery — City of the Dead, City of the Living"

Produced, directed, and written by six-time Emmy Award winner Karyl K. Evans

Copies of the 30 minute Grove Street Cemetery DVD, nominated for two Emmy awards, are available for purchase at \$15 (postage pre-paid) per copy.

No. of copies ___ @ \$15 = \$ _____

Become a member or purchase DVD

on grovestreetcemetery.org or send check payable to Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc., with completed form, to:
P.O. Box 9238, New Haven, CT 06533-0238

Cradle Graves

The Friends have published a small guide to the locations of these unique monuments and names of the interred. Their flower beds are maintained by The Grove Street Gardeners who select plants appropriate to the Victorian period. Thanks especially to organizers Cordalie Benoit and Millie Legenhausen and their gardening colleagues, as well as to the cemetery's groundskeepers who keep the blossoms watered. The group welcomes new members and has other potential planting projects in mind. Contact: friends@grovestreetcemetery.org.



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