



# The Grove Street Bulletin

Vol. 1, No. 18

A Publication of the Grove Street Cemetery

Spring 2021

## A National Historic Landmark

## Remember the Women

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## How to Reach Us

### Grove Street Cemetery

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.

227 Grove Street  
New Haven, CT 06511

(203) 787-1443  
[grovestreetcemoffice@gmail.com](mailto:grovestreetcemoffice@gmail.com)

### Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery

P. O. Box 9238  
New Haven, CT 06533-0238

[friends@grovestreetcemetery.org](mailto:friends@grovestreetcemetery.org)  
[www.grovestreetcemetery.org](http://www.grovestreetcemetery.org)

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On October 24, 2019, the Friends sponsored an evening of short talks titled “Remembering New Haven Women: Four Centuries of Women’s History Inscribed in Grove Street Cemetery.” The event was held at the New Haven Museum and presented seven speakers who showcased more than a dozen women who made their marks both locally and internationally before entering eternal rest in Grove Street. Karyl Evans opened the program with remarks following a viewing of her 2017 film on the cemetery, which highlighted notable women including Mary Clap Wooster (1729–1807), Mary Lucas Hillhouse (1786–1871), Sybil Moseley Bingham (1792–1848), Delia Bacon (1811–1859), and Ada Comstock Notestein (1876–1973).

Vera Wells, a Yale alumna, spoke about her friend and mentor Sylvia Ardyn Boone (died 1993), a scholar of African art and the first African American woman to receive tenure at Yale. Channing Harris talked about Harriet Trumbull Silliman (1783–1850) and her circle of friends and family living on Hillhouse Avenue. Darlene Casella focused on Mary Goodman (1804–1872), an African American laundress who believed that education was the key to progress for black Americans, and left her estate to Yale for a scholarship to prepare young men

“for the Gospel ministry, preference being always given to young men of color”; it still supports scholars today.



Sandra Markham

The New Haven philanthropist Lucy Hall Boardman (1819–1906) was one of two women discussed by Christine Janis. Boardman gave substantial support to several local churches and to institutions including the New Haven Orphan Asylum, The Home for the Friendless, and the Boardman Manual Training School. Janis also talked about Mary French Weir (1846–1927), who was an active participant in the founding years of the Yale School of Fine Arts with her husband John Ferguson Weir, the school’s first director and dean. Sandra Markham profiled two authors, Catharine Potter Stith (1795–1839) and Elizabeth Barber Barrett (1827–1863), the former a Philadelphia teacher and composer who lived in Gibraltar before settling in New Haven, and the latter a New Haven poet who married a sea captain and died on board a ship off the coast of China.

Judith Schiff closed the evening by speaking about a pair of twentieth-century notables: Laurel Fox Vlock (1926–2000) and Elga Wasserman (1924–2014). Vlock was a television journalist whose videotaped interviews with local Holocaust survivors became the founding collections of Yale’s Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. Schiff circled back to the topic of women’s education through the career of Wasserman, who became special assistant to Yale’s President Kingman Brewster on the education of women and chair of the university’s Committee on Coeducation, thereby ushering in the school’s first class of female undergraduates, among whom was Vera Wells.

Afterward, the audience enjoyed a reception where animated discussion of the evening’s topics continued over refreshments provided by Millie Legenhausen.



Sandra Markham

# Arboretum Designation and Tour

Grove Street Cemetery has a new audience: The cemetery has recently been certified as a Level I arboretum by the internationally recognized ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program.

[arbn.net.org/morton-register/grove-street-cemetery-arboretum](http://arbn.net.org/morton-register/grove-street-cemetery-arboretum)

Master Gardeners Karyl Evans and Marilyn Elsworth facilitated the certification when they undertook a University of Connecticut Extension Community Outreach Project to establish a self-guided



Karyl K. Evans

tour of forty significant trees on the grounds. Because there were so many great trees to consider, selecting just forty was an arduous decision based on several criteria: the overall quality of the plants, the presence of specimens common to the region and some more rare species, the diversity of the collection, and the proximity of the trees along a viable tour route. Their project successfully represented the wide diversity of plant materials on the property and distinguished Grove Street Cemetery as an official arboretum.

Once the one-mile path was devised, permanent identification labels were created for the chosen trees to display their common and scientific names, family, and place of origin. The self-guided tour brochure, produced by the Friends of Grove Street Cemetery, contains a detailed map with botanical data and illustrations for each tree; it is available for free at the cemetery gate house during office hours, as well as on the cemetery's website.

[grovestreetcemetery.org/explore/visiting/tours](http://grovestreetcemetery.org/explore/visiting/tours)

On the tour, visitors can observe native trees including oak, maple, linden, dogwood, paper birch—and an ancient horse chestnut—as well as rare plant specimens such as Princeton elm, dawn redwood, golden rain tree, and weeping katsura tree. Some of the trees lining the avenues even correspond to the street names in the cemetery: Magnolia Avenue features saucer (*Magnolia x soulangiana*), star (*Magnolia stellata*), southern (*Magnolia grandiflora*), and evergreen magnolias.

Grove Street Cemetery has been graced with the beauty of trees since 1798 when James Hillhouse began planting rows of Lombardy poplar trees along the avenues of family burial plots. By the 1840s, inspired by a rural cemetery movement that promoted the aesthetics of nature, a greater variety of trees and shrubs were planted. Sporadic beautification projects by both cemetery staff and individual families over many decades have introduced a wide variety of trees and shrubs throughout the eighteen acres, including an *allée* of ginkgo trees that was established along Myrtle Path in

(continued on page 3)

# Renovating the Front Border Landscape

When the cemetery was first laid out in 1796, a wide border was reserved for plantings along Grove Street, one of the first times such a landscape feature was implemented in this country. The use of evergreen trees particularly was later copied by many cemeteries. The plantings have since evolved, but in the past few years many of the shrubs, particularly the privet hedge, were suffering from the shade of the adjacent mature street trees and needed removal. A new landscape design was developed to reorganize this 700-foot long border, providing larger groupings of the same species, while preserving better specimens of the existing flowering trees and shrubs.

Shrubs and trees were selected for shade-tolerance, diversity of bloom times and fall foliage. The design was a community-service by Towers|Golde landscape architects, led by Channing Harris, ASLA. Planting was done by volunteers from Towers|Golde, cemetery staff led by Superintendent Seeley Jennings and the second phase was installed by G T Landscaping of Hamden. Sandweiss Tree Service assisted with plant purchases, discounted by Planter's Choice Nursery. Friends of Grove Street Cemetery provided all funds for plant purchases and other supplies. More opportunity remains to infill the beds with additional plants.



Several new Roseum Elegans Rhododendrons join one older one in the border, blooming close to Memorial Day with their lavender-pink display.



A group of Minuet Lilacs, *Syringa x prestoniae* 'Minuet' have fragrant flower masses in late May. It is very cold hardy and densely branched.



Volunteers from Towers|Golde LLC joined cemetery staff digging and installing shrubs and trees along the east portion of the front border.



## Aloha from 5000 Miles and 200 Years

Certainly among the more noteworthy visitors to Grove Street Cemetery in 2019 were eight Hawaiians who traveled thousands of miles to New Haven as one stop in their tour marking the two-hundredth anniversary of the first company of the Sandwich Island Mission, under American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), setting sail from Boston on October 23, 1819. The first company (of twelve that left from Boston, New Haven, New London, and New Bedford between 1819 and 1847) included Rev. Hiram Bingham (1789–1869) and his wife Sybil Moseley Bingham (1792–1848). A week in advance of the Boston celebrations, descendants of the Bingham, and of company member Rev. Asa Thurston (1787–1868; buried in Honolulu), arrived in New Haven with two objectives: to view the Bingham family papers at Yale University Library’s Manuscripts and Archives department, and to see the graves of Hiram and Sibyl Bingham in Grove Street Cemetery.

The group was hosted at Sterling Memorial Library by Chief Research Archivist Judy Schiff and Sandra Markham (both Friends board members) where they pored over nineteenth-century letters, daguerreotypes, and papers. They were most in awe of Sybil Bingham’s manuscript journal, dating from 1811 to 1847, in which she wrote of her marriage to Bingham, their preparations and sea journey to the Sandwich Islands—where they disembarked at Kawaihae, on the west side of the island of Hawaii, on April 19, 1820—and their two decades working in Hawaii before returning to New England in 1840. Following a morning in the library, the Hawaiians walked to Grove Street and spent time at 1 Sycamore Avenue, West, paying their respects to Sibyl and Hiram Bingham, and photographing their gravestones. Buried alongside the couple is Hiram Bingham’s second wife Naomi (1802–1873), who in 1839 had established a school for girls on nearby York Square, a site now occupied by Yale’s Morse College.

*(Arboretum Designation and Tour continued from page 2)*

2003. The Friends of Grove Street Cemetery have undertaken a replanting of flowering trees and shrubs in the border along Hawthorne Path fronting on Grove Street.

Although Friends and frequent visitors might not be a new audience for Grove Street Cemetery, the Arboretum Tour—celebrating its living residents—will enable everyone to enjoy this historic graveyard with new eyes.

## 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, unless otherwise specified, will be allocated to its General Fund. We also maintain two additional funds which may be of interest to donors. The Landscape and Landmark Funds were created to 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

### Dues:

Individual \$35       Couple \$50       Not-for-profit \$50

Corporation \$100       Additional Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Please check areas of participation that interest you:

Preservation       Program       Publication       Horticulture

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**Join on [grovestreetcemetery.org](http://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.**

## 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 \$15.00 (postage pre-paid) per copy. Please complete the form below to receive your copy. You should also consider purchasing copies for family members and for friends. Buy it, watch it, and then give it to your local library or school!

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## Historic Chapel Transformation

The 1872 Chapel is being restored and renovated to become a welcoming Visitor Center. Planning began under an Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Grant from Preservation Connecticut with an analysis of existing conditions and prioritized improvements including a new roof, a barrier-free entrance ramp, and an accessible bathroom. Knight Architecture and Leland Torrence Enterprises worked with the Standing Committee to prepare a Master Plan and cost estimates. A matching grant was secured from the 1772 Foundation for phase one, to restore the roof along with the fascia, crown molding, and woodwork. The team, including Standing Committee member and architect Michael Tucker, also reviewed historic photos so any improvements would be historically accurate to the building's original design.

The existing roof was removed and selected decorative details salvaged, while new architectural elements were fabricated where needed. Replacements included the “dog houses” and the fascia, raised areas along the gables, and the wooden supports for the gutters. Brackets were removed from the eaves, repaired, primed, and painted. Mortar repointing of masonry and brick replacement in areas at the roof perimeter were also completed. Copper work on the vault and gables was carefully fabricated to match the original, and copper flashing of masonry joints and gutter lining was completed. Leland Torrence Enterprises carried out the work, including replacing old slate with new custom-cut, diamond-shaped slates. The scope of renovation is ongoing, including current restoration work on the building's front door and windows.



Channing Harris



[www.grovestreetcemetery.org](http://www.grovestreetcemetery.org)

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