

# Heritage Gazette

ASSOCIATION FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC CONGRESSIONAL CEMETERY • WINTER 2009

## Arsenal Monument Wraps up NPS Activity

BY MOSS RUDLEY, EXHIBIT SPECIALIST, NPS,  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION TRAINING CENTER

The team from the National Park Service's Historic Preservation Training Center arrived on the grounds October 1, 2006. Our mission was to conserve, preserve or replace components of the 166 cenotaphs that honor members of Congress who died in office between the years 1807 and

1870. Designed by architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who was working on the new south wing of the Capitol, these identical Aquia Creek sandstone cenotaphs reflect the classical inspiration that was shaping the city plan and its new Capitol building.

*Continued on page 6*

## Slight Mishap Will Reshape Entrance to Historic Congressional Cemetery

Although the dump truck coming in the front gates to pick up dirt excavated by Imperial Paving was only going 3 miles an hour, its big side mirror caught between rungs of the wrought iron gate. The gate and the brick column, to which it had been

attached for 85 years, moved forward with the truck.

The National Park Service stonemasons who were working on the Arsenal Monument judged the injuries to the column fatal. Ed Wood of Woody's

*Continued on page 9*

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW!

Construction work is often the impetus that makes archeological work happen. Sometimes you attend to what you know is there and should be saved; other times you discover what you didn't know. Our road construction has brought us one of each. Stories on page 10 and 11.

*Arsenal Monument photo by  
Moss Rudley*

## Letter from the Chair

### EXPERIENCE BUILDS CHARACTER

Historic preservation often focuses on a place where a famous person spent some quality time — George Washington slept here! Or where important things happened: a battle waged, a treaty signed, a village established. It's generally not about the land itself but about the things that happened on the land.

Certainly, an historic cemetery celebrates the people who are spending quality time on, or rather in, the land. But an historic cemetery also celebrates what has happened to the land itself. The texture of the land, the gentle undulations of the sod above its old graves speak to us of the journey the land itself has taken.

If you visit an old burial ground in the early evening, you will experience the land in a way most historic sites cannot ever hope to share. As the sun sets beyond the horizon, shadows gently rise up to claim the shallow depressions, leaving no doubt as to what the place is all about. Even if you took away all the headstones, you wouldn't need an interpretive sign to tell you it's a graveyard.

At each of several thousand three-by-eight foot plots the earth has been disturbed, opened up to accept someone to his or her final resting place. And as those mortal remains

return to the earth, dust to dust, the ground settles back down to close the final chapter of that life. It is a profound thing that has happened and the texture of the ground is what tells us it has happened. The experience of the land itself speaks to us as forcefully as the old tablet upon which the name and dates have been inscribed.

One of the important missions of an historic site is to call upon us to examine our own lives, to apply the lessons of what happened here to ourselves. Are we rising to the challenges of our life, are we making our communities better places? The character of an historic graveyard raises these questions in a profound yet subliminal manner. When a shallow depression is all that's left, we can't help but pause to consider what mark we will leave after we have passed this way.

Preservation of an historic burial ground isn't just about the old buildings and tomb stones; it's also about the character of the place. And character is acquired through experience. For an historic cemetery, preserving the character of the land is as important as preserving the things on the land.

~ PATRICK CROWLEY



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*Community • Leadership • Discovery*

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HERITAGE GAZETTE: WINTER 2009

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## *From the Executive Director*

This has been a busy fall. The new roads are coming along well.

When I stand at the chapel and look down Ingle Street it is like seeing Dorothy's Yellow Brick Road — not really yellow, but very majestic in appearance. Our Board Chairman, Patrick Crowley, was convinced there were old cobblestone swales under the years of built-up dirt on several of our shorter streets. Since they are part of our history, he took a shovel and dug up a corner to prove it. The swales on Whittingham (21st) Street, have now been excavated and an "historic" road that will look like it did in 1850's will replace the broken asphalt.

We have really moved ahead in our archiving work under the supervision of Historian Sandy Schmidt. Dayle Dooley, one of the Dozen Decent Docents, is heading up the preservation and filing of hundreds of thousands of pieces of paper that concern a site in the cemetery. She and the other volunteers are protecting the old records in plastic sleeves and making files for each site. The only problem with this job is that some of the letters are so interesting that it takes a long time to get them filed. Some day we hope to scan the documents, and add a link to our website

allowing a visitor to view a copy of old documents executed by their relatives many years ago. Thank you very much to those who have sent contributions for the archival materials we are using.

We have contributed to an endowment set up for us by Congress and held by the National Trust for Historic Preservation since 1999. Our annual disbursements currently pay for contract maintenance. Fortunately there was enough money this year to work on our trees. Over the past five years, 100 dead or dying trees were removed while 300 trees were planted. This year we lost one tree to a storm, removed several others, and pruned the old trees. We have developed a wonderful relationship with certified arborist Bill Shelton and his crew from Capitol Tree Care. His men are professional and respectful of our grounds.

And a sad note is the departure of Moss Rudley and his wonderful team from the National Park Service Historic Preservation Training Center. They have been with us for two years, and have become friends to us, and certainly to our stones.

~ CINDY HAYS

## **MEET OUR NEW CEMETERY MANAGER**

After a three month search, Congressional Cemetery has a new Cemetery Manager. Son of a career Army officer, Alan Davis grew up all over the world including a three year residency in Japan and another in Germany. When time for college, he came to Washington to attend Howard University and has been here since. In 1990, Alan joined MCI which was then a start-up communications company. In his 14 years with the company until its bankruptcy, he advanced from a computer operator to International Marketing manager.

He joined Stewart Enterprises, the second largest American cemetery management company, and was assigned to National Harmony Memorial Park. Harmony was founded in 1825 in NE Washington. Although it moved to Landover, MD in 1960, there are generations of family members just like in Congressional. At Harmony, Alan recruited and managed the sales force, monitored the physical condition and appearance of the property, and developed a genealogy program.

Alan was an early resident of the Car Barn and knows Capitol Hill. His experience in developing and implementing strategic business marketing plans and industry research with MCI will benefit the development of a new cemetery business plan to expand the number and variety of sites available for sale. He is already developing a property survey to confirm what sites are still available, and his respect for family and community history is a real benefit for the Congressional Cemetery community. ~

**PLEASE NOTE** ~ Our image of Joseph Gales in the Summer 2008 Heritage Gazette should have included an attribution to the artist George Peter Alexander Healy and the U.S. Senate art collection, where the original painting resides.

# *Around the Gatehouse*

## **CHAPEL WINDOWS REPAIRED**

In the midst of all the dust, dump trucks, and cement mixers, Tech Painting arrived October 2nd to begin the repair and painting of the chapel windows. To protect the 105 year old stained glass, Washington Art Glass designed a low-profile aluminum framing system that raises like a storm window. The plastic material is Lexan, a clear, high impact, flame retardant product made by General Electric and guaranteed for clarity for 20 years. The funding for the project was spearheaded by Toni Burnham and Patti Martin who collected many donations among the dogwalkers.



*Chapel Bay Window Courtesy  
Patrick Crowley, APHCC*

## **FLUSH AWAY, FLUSH AWAY, FLUSH AWAY ALL**

The outside public restroom received a total renovation this fall. General contractor Tom Young removed the old and

installed new flooring, stripped the brick and painted bright yellow walls, installed water conserving fixtures, added a battery operated hand dryer, and made the door self-closing.

## **A SPIFFY NEW COAT**

After the Gatehouse roof was repaired by Corley Roofing, Tech Painting closed the gable eaves using the same bead board that would have been there when the new Gatehouse was built in 1923, and gave the porch a fresh coat of paint. In preparation for the new Cemetery Manager's arrival, Tech also repaired the extensive plaster damage and painted the back office.

To protect our valuable and historic cemetery records, the office vault was scraped, sealed with a special water/mold resistant product and painted. The humidity is being tested and if it is safe, the records will be returned to it.

## **THE DIAGNOSIS IS TERMINAL**

After three professional opinions, the unfortunate verdict for the exterior of the chapel doors is that the years of wood rot cannot be repaired. It is possible that the frame of the doors may be original, but the bead board and the ornate hinges were added later. The base of the doors have suffered from many years of standing in water during heavy rains. We are building a new drainage system around the chapel to



eliminate this is the future, but the doors must be replaced to prevent further damage to the interior floor of the chapel.

## **SWAYING IN THE BREEZE**

After last year's near miss when the big Buckeye crashed near the Park Service crew and the crash of the oak tree south of the chapel this summer, the Association decided to take preventive action rather than risk a potential disaster. Thanks to our Congressional/National Trust endowment payment this year, we have been able to hire a Capital Tree Care company. Owner and certified arborist, Bill Shelton, inspected a number of our older trees and recommended serious pruning and a few removals before winter snow and ice. Board Member, Ted Bechtol, and the chief arborist of the US Capitol concurred with his diagnosis, and Capital Tree Care started their work.

We've been fortunate that the big trees have caused relatively minor stone damage and so far no injuries to visitors or work crews, and with the help of the Capital Tree Care team, we hope to retain that clean record.



## DOZEN DECENT DOCENTS

The DDD, headed by Board Member **Joyce Palmer**, have been busy this fall. After welcoming over two hundred people to the Cemetery for Cultural Tourism DC "Walking Town" in September, they provided the regular Saturday public tours and a number of private tours to family members, organizations and the public. The Committee has established a new fund to finance a Docent's Garden and other projects. Board Member and Fine Gardening Chairman, **Emily Crandall**, has reached out to the Botanic Gardens, the Arboretum and others who have already contributed.



In recognition of his outstanding research, monthly Civil War tours and other work, **Steve Hammond** was awarded the Connolly-Didden Docent of the Year Award, named in honor of **Gerry and Marian Connolly** and **George (Sunny) Didden**, the original signers and pioneers of "the Committee for the Preservation of Congressional Cemetery.

After losing **Eric Summers** to a posting in Sicily, **Tommy Arrasmith** has been welcomed to the training portion of the Docents program. Its hard work learning about all the personalities.

**Lynne Boyle** has developed a new history of the sculptress Adelaide Johnson who created the "Suffragettes Monument"

statue in the Capitol and is developing a new cell phone tour about her.

The DDD's new shirts carry on the tongue-in-cheek tradition with this year's motto "We will talk about you after you're gone."



## ARCHIVISTS

Over the past 201 years, hundreds of thousands documents have been produced for site purchases, interments, disinterments, perpetual endowments, transfers, and other business of the cemetery. They have been stored in envelopes, card files, boxes, and other unique methods of storage. Now we are bringing them all together and putting them into individual file folders — one per burial site. This is a huge project and is being carried out under the leadership of Sandy Schmidt and Dayle Dooley, and volunteers from our dogwalking committee. Professional archivist **Leslie Swift** has developed a best practice procedure for our work and volunteers working are **Ruth Arzonetti**, **Barbara Allhouser-Hacker**, **Ada Bosque**, **Patsy Sims**, and **Anne Oman**. To finish our tasks — in less than 15 years — we need more volunteers to work at the Gatehouse, the National Archives or from your own computer.



*Dan Pensyl, Imperial Paving Company Supervisor places the first paver. Photo courtesy Bruce Watson*



*Equipment mobilization before excavation*

## ROAD PROGRESS PHOTOS

The eyesore that was Congressional Cemetery's roadways is quickly being replaced by new, safe, and long-lasting concrete pavers that mimic the historic asphalt block of Congress and Ingle Streets on the west side of the cemetery. Crews from Imperial Paving and Chevy Chase Concrete excavated the first old asphalt on July 15. Over half of the roads were completed before they stopped for the cold weather, but they will return to complete their job in the spring.

## AND THANKS TO YOU.

We are moving ahead quickly, and we appreciate all the patience from our visitors and the contributions from so many friends who have made these improvements possible.

## ARSENAL MONUMENT WORK

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After 150 years the cenotaphs were showing damage and wear. Those beyond repair were replaced or components were replaced. When sections of the stone were broken or missing, “Dutchman” patches of new Aquia Creek sandstone are carefully shaped fit the void created by removing the

deteriorated portion of the masonry. The “Dutchman” repairs take time, patience and skills of craftsman. Cracks, small voids and other isolated areas of deterioration were prepared and then filled with a JAHN composite mortar.

After com-

plete restoration of the below grade vault and monument of General Alexander Macomb this summer, the team began their final task, the Arsenal Monument. Stone conservation is a science as well as an art, and a brand new technique was employed. Once the marble was consolidated (sealed) with HCT, a cleaning system was set up. This system is constructed with a “misting” sprinkler set 6 inches apart and 4-6 inches from the surface of the marble. When it was set in place, the 26 feet tall Monument looked like Christmas tree.

The cleaning process is 24 hour cycle of 20 seconds misting and 5 minutes off. The first 24 hours of cleaning with water, the second 24 hour cycle is with a D-2 Antimicrobial solution which cleans and removes any biological growth present on the surface of the marble. The purpose of the misting system is to gently agitate the soiling to remove it.

The entire project has been a large undertaking, stretching over two years and involving countless man hours of hard, intricate work but over the process the National Park Service been proud to be a part of catalyst that has begun to save on of America’s historic treasures.

The VA’s National Cemetery Administration contracted with NPS to perform the work under a \$1,750,000 contract. ❧



*Statue of “Grief” photo by Moss Rudley*

## The Arsenal Monument

AMANDA RAZIANO

Congressional Cemetery's tallest monument towers over the west side of the grounds in silent tribute to a mostly forgotten tragedy that took the lives of 21 young women who died in an explosion at the Washington Arsenal while serving the Nation during the height of the Civil War on June 17, 1864.

The Arsenal was located near the present day Fort McNair. On the day of the explosion, the women were working to provide munitions for the Union army. Just before noon, a large quantity of fireworks drying outside the arsenal building caught fire from the hot sun. A spark flew into the gunpowder inside the building causing a major explosion.

In all, 21 women were killed, many burned so badly that they could not be identified by family or friends. The papers reported that many other young ladies were saved by the "heroism of some persons present" that threw burning victims into the nearby river and tore off burning clothing, injuring themselves.

The funeral consumed the entire city. The funeral began at the Arsenal, and "several thousand" pushed onto the grounds to attend. President Lincoln and the Secretary of War led the cortege to the cemetery followed

by a band, ninety pall bearers and two thousand mourners. The outpouring from the community was so large that newspapers reported that every cab (hack) in the city was in use. Fifteen of the women are buried here below the memorial, two others are buried in family plots elsewhere in Congressional Cemetery, and four are buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Northeast DC. The funeral expenses were paid by the Department of War.

On the Monday after the funeral, arsenal employees voted to have a monument erected and sought contributions from the

public to pay for its creation. Local sculptor, Lot Flannery, created the memorial that includes a relief illustration of the explosion, a grape vine symbolizing sacrifice and winged hourglasses symbolizing that their time has flown.

Newspaper accounts of the incident, including additional details of the tragedy, as well as many others related to the history of this Cemetery, are available on Congressional Cemetery's website at [www.congressionalcemetery.org](http://www.congressionalcemetery.org) under the section called "HCC Archives." ~



*The Washington Arsenal, circa 1863*







## SLIGHT MISHAP

Continued from page 1

Welding came immediately, and with the help of Grounds Manager Barry Hayman, detached the 16- x 7-foot cast iron Congressional Cemetery arch before the column fell. Capitol Tree Care's staff had been pruning our big oaks with a bucket truck,



which was impressed into service to remove the arch aerially.

To help us in the redesign of the main entrance to the property, hopefully more in the style of the 1832 gate, we are con-

tracting with an historic architect. These new main gates were not in the plan or the budget, but they will give us a fresh "old" look for the next 100 years. ~

## Association Activities

Last fall saw the departure of Board member Reverend Dr. Judith Davis. After serving as Rector of Christ Church + Washington Parish for 12 years, Judith answered the call and accepted a new assignment as Rector of Christ Church in Harwich Port, MA. Several members of her former church, including Board Member Alice Norris, traveled to Cape Cod in September to attend Judith's first Sunday service.

The Association was represented at the annual Washington Studies Conference sponsored by the Historical Society of Washington. Alice Norris took the lead by providing informational materials about the Cemetery and its important part in Washington DC history to all attendees.

### SOUSA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

For the 54th year, on November 6th, the U.S. Marine Corps Band traveled the 18 blocks from the Marine Barracks to the graveside of John Philip Sousa, the 17th Director of the Band. Under the direction of Drum Major William L. Brown, and Assistant Director Michelle A. Rakkers, the band played a musical tribute to Sousa on the occasion of his 154th birthday, and laid a wreath at his grave to the delight of over 100 neighbors, Association members and school children.



The Association also marks the celebration of Sousa's birth by recognizing those people who have given extraordinary service to the preservation of the Cemetery and its history. The award recipients were:

The *John Philip Sousa Distinguished Public Service Award* to Delegate Eleanor Norton Holmes for her strong support of the Cemetery and her efforts to secure Congressional funding to repair the drainage system and historic pathways.

The *Benjamin B. French Masonic Lodge Volunteer Award* to volunteer Sandra Schmidt for her 10 years of research into the lives and writings of over 22,000 of the famous, infamous, and ordinary "residents" of Historical Congressional Cemetery which are available to all researchers on [congressionalcemetery.org](http://congressionalcemetery.org).

## Cobblestone Swales

PATRICK CROWLEY

Congressional Cemetery's east side crosses over Pinkney and Wittingham Streets (20th and 21st Streets), both of which were laid out over 150 years ago. Following typical road construction practices of the day, cobblestone swales were constructed along the side of the street to lead rain water toward the river. Similar water management techniques can be found at Mount Vernon, Oak Hill Cemetery, and Lincoln Cottage. (See photo at right.)

The swales are made of elongated river rocks (cobblestones) inserted length-wise into the ditch dug along the road. (See lower left photo.) Over the decades, silt from our grounds has filtered toward the swales and gradually filled them with six inches of great topsoil, which has hidden them from view for many, many years. We suspected the cobblestone swales existed but had not investigated until reconstruction of the roads began in July. Sure enough they are there and are in surprisingly good condition.


The build-up of the land (think 150 years of grass clippings) has left the swales well below current grade level, which presents some engineering challenges if we are to preserve the swales as swales. The Lincoln Cottage faced a similar issue and chose to preserve their swales by reburying them and building



new cobblestone swales above them. It's an expensive alternative.

As a first step we took advantage of some great volunteers to uncover the swales to find out whether they are sufficiently intact to recover or repair. Manassas Scout Troop 670 excavated the swales on Willingham



St. as part of a project that earned Nathan Beuttler his Eagle Badge. 

# Granite Pavers Suggest Old Wharf Road

PATRICK CROWLEY

Old maps of Capitol Hill's east end include the land known as Reservation 13, a place that was used by the government for every undesirable public need: the prison, small pox hospital, crematorium, and a paupers grave yard, just to name a few. If you were taken to Reservation 13 for any reason in the early 1800, your chances of leaving Reservation 13 were not good. Among the structures found on these old maps is a reference to a powder magazine at the intersection of G Street and 23rd Street. That little piece of history provided a clue to what we found during our road construction last month. (Remember our motto? Community, Leadership, Discovery!)

Congressional Cemetery's east end was created largely by a land fill project undertaken in the 1820s. Ingle Street, labeled G Street on city maps, once led all the way to the Anacostia River's edge. As a low-lying stretch of land consisting to a large extent of putty-like clay, the ground would have made a poor surface for any road way used for heavy carts and wagons. In fact those same conditions have caused delays in our current road re-paving work. The 1800s solution appears to have been an inlay of thousands of granite pavers to firm up the cart path. The existence of this material was unknown until we began excavation to build our new roads.

Not sure at first what to make



*Old Pavers, courtesy of Patrick Crowley, APHCC*

of the 15 to 20 pound blocks but sure that we wanted to hold on to them, we put out a call to our dogwalking community to help us pull them from the road bed before they were to be removed by the construction crew. Being the great volunteers they are, over 50 individuals made the trek to the east end to join in the exhausting hand by hand salvage effort over one weekend. Several thousand blocks were saved, each with a value of about \$9 — a forty to fifty thousand dollar salvage effort. Bravo!

Why did they end up where they did? We'll probably never know for sure but we suspect the granite blocks were used as ballast by the ocean going sailing

ships that used to ply the Anacostia River up to the port of Bladensburg. When the ships arrived in DC, the blocks were jettisoned to make room for cargo, and then used to build the wharf road to the powder magazine. The pavers ended just about where that intersection would have been.

Although squarish in shape, the blocks are not quite plumb enough for most construction uses. While we explore ways to use them we want to thank all the volunteers who went home with sore backs and aching arms. Your stewardship helps make both Congressional Cemetery and Capitol Hill a great community. ~



## Yes!

I want to help preserve and restore Congressional Cemetery with a tax-deductible donation.

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## *Wrapping up 2008*



*Senator Mark Begich stops at his father's cenotaph before swearing in ceremony.*



*Roberts Walk brick walkway re-laid*



*Marine Corps Drum Major*



*Freshly painted Chapel windows with Lexan protective sheets*