

Nineteenth Century



The Magazine of the Victorian Society in America | Volume 38 Number 2

Editorial

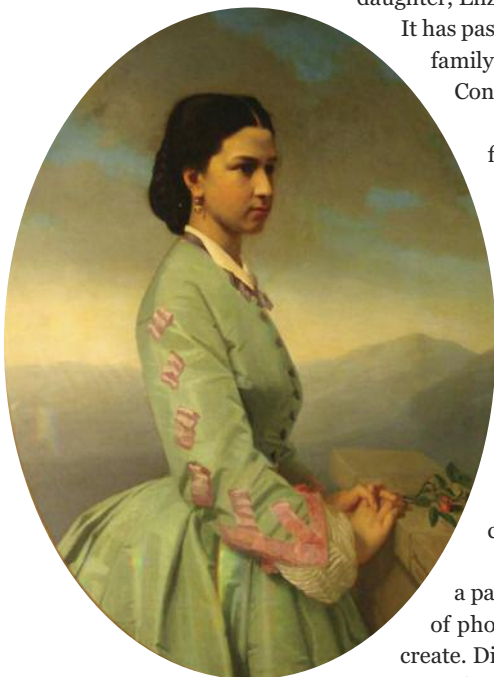
When I was one of Richard Guy Wilson's students at The Victorian Society's Newport Summer School about ten years ago I fell in love with a woman. Her name was Marie. I met her at one of the grand houses that crowd Richard's itinerary. It is called Clouds Hill, located north of Newport in Warwick, Rhode Island.

Since my wife, Susan, is my first reader and editor let me say right away that Marie died in 1863.

Clouds Hill is a big, broad house on top of a steep rocky incline. It is built of local granite and features dramatic wood eaves and extravagant barge boards. Its deep, three-sided porch overlooks an inlet off Narragansett Bay. It is a grey and brooding house, one that epitomizes what we think of as Victorian. Crossing the threshold, I felt an odd frisson, wondering who had called this looming dwelling "home"—a question soon answered by Anne Holst, its current owner and resident. She gave us an intimate tour of the house that had been in her family since construction was completed in 1872. It was built by textile magnate William Smith Slater, of Slatersville, Rhode Island, for his daughter, Elizabeth Ives Slater, upon the occasion of her marriage to one Alfred Augustus Reed, Jr.

It has passed down the matrilineal line to Ms. Holst and contains 150 years' accumulation of the family's furnishings and fixtures. She runs the beautifully maintained house as a museum. Concerts, tours and events are regularly scheduled there.

Well do I remember the moment of my coup-de-foudre. We were touring the ground floor. We had just seen the Egyptian Revival Reception Room dominated by two sensuously carved mahogany caryatids in the Egyptian style who supported a massive mantelpiece. Our group entered the parlor and I found myself face to face with a painting of a lively young woman in a bustled green silk dress leaning against a garden wall. I was completely smitten and asked Anne Holst who it was. "Oh, that is Marie, the sister of the original owner of the house." Ms. Holst went on to explain that the broken stem of the red rose Marie held in her hand was the key to the portrait. In Victorian shorthand, a broken stem signified that the person portrayed had died. She noted that anyone in the nineteenth century, viewing this striking tableau, would immediately understand that this was a posthumous portrait. And yet the young woman in the painting looked quite alive and quite ready to step away from her garden wall and take a turn around the grounds with me (chaperoned, of course).



Aside from being in love, I was astonished. I had never encountered even the idea of a painted posthumous portrait. Anne Holst said they were not unusual at the time. I knew of photographs of the dead, and of death masks, but a painting? A painting takes time to create. Did you have to go engage the painter even before you called on the mortician? Did the portraitist have to prop the body up to prepare a good likeness? Did he lay my beloved on the stone floor and gaze down at her, painting swiftly before she started to—well, you know...

This was clarified when I called Anne for details. She told me the full name of the subject was Marie Ambrosine Reed and that she was 19 years of age when she died. Based on a clear signature and date, Anne knows the last name of the painter was Schwartze, and the work was done in 1864, a year after Marie died. All that is known about how she died comes from Miss Reed's diary, which is in Anne's possession. The diary describes a journey by steamboat to Europe with her family for an extended vacation. While in Lausanne, Switzerland, the last entries in the diary describe two weeks of not feeling well. She died a week after the final entry, of unknown causes, and is buried in Lausanne. As access to the body was impossible, the commission of the portrait was not rushed. For a likeness, the painter was able to hew closely to an existing portrait of Miss Reed fortuitously painted shortly before her demise.

At that moment, in the dim, filtered light of the Clouds Hill parlor, I remember feeling tragic love and loss for this stranger. I can describe it no other way. And though today I have a little trouble calling to mind the face of my high school girlfriend, Marie Ambrosine Reed's image—and her broken-stemmed rose—remain vivid in my mind's eye. Such is the power of the posthumous portrait.

And so, we at *Nineteenth Century* bring you our issue on the theme of death wherein many of these mysteries are explored and explained. We hope you enjoy your sojourn among the shades.

Warren Ashworth

Nineteenth Century

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Cover: Edwin Romanzo Elmer, *Mourning Picture*, (detail) 1890. Courtesy Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts.



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DR. SNOW AND THE
BLUE DEATH

Anne-Taylor Cahill

About the Guest Editor

Sara Durkacs is the membership secretary for the Alumni Association of the VSA and corporate secretary for The Green-Wood Cemetery. Hung on every inch of Durkacs' office walls are Victorian paintings—a smattering of The Green-Wood Historic Fund's collection of works of art by the more than 400 artists interred at the Cemetery. Durkacs collects vintage linen postcards and takes long walks among the dead at Green-Wood to avoid the living.



Advertisement for W. M. Raymond & Co., featuring the funeral procession of President Abraham Lincoln after leaving New York's City Hall, c. 1866. Published by Hatch & Co., New York.

Decorating the Dead

COFFIN HARDWARE AND THE FAREWELL CEMETERY

Melissa Cole and Laura Suchan

Victorian attitudes towards death involved elaborate burial customs and rituals that were clearly defined and strictly adhered to as much as finances and circumstances allowed. Magazines of the day, such as the *Ladies Home Journal*, often carried advice on the customs of mourning and what was considered to be both acceptable choices in clothing and behavior during the mourning period. Think of the reaction when the recently widowed Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* accepted Rhett Butler's offer to dance and you get some indication of how rigid and deeply entrenched the mourning culture was in the nineteenth century. This culture also extended to the graveyard where a visit to any nineteenth century example will reveal a variety of gravestone carvings ranging from willow trees to urns and cherubs. This visible display of commemoration was a deeply personal choice and was influenced to some extent by economic status and the period in which the stone was carved. What is not as visible now are the ways in which the Victorians ornamented and personalized the coffins of the deceased.

In the early days of settlement, the local cabinet and furniture makers were tasked with the production and selling of coffins. Already supplied with the necessary materials, furniture makers most likely found the coffin trade to be a good way to supplement their business in times when the furniture business was slow. Luke & Brother of Oshawa, Ontario was one such company offering simple wooden coffins in addition to the more mainstream furniture side of their business. This furniture and undertaking business was started by members of the Luke family in 1853. The Luke brothers had a booming business in the furniture trade as more and more new homes were built in Oshawa. The undertaking department at Luke & Brother advertised professional qualified staff, caskets and all requisites were carried.¹ Coffins were for the most part unadorned until the middle of the nineteenth century. After that it became the norm to decorate coffins to create a totally unique look. As coffin decoration became more elaborate, it became less desirable to replicate

the exact look of another coffin. Soon furniture makers were being asked to undertake many of the funeral arrangements, including managing the funeral cortege and furnishing a hearse equipped with horses to carry the deceased. Luke & Brother advertisements in local newspapers offer the services of "undertaking" and funerals complete with hearse and horses—alongside their furniture, engravings and frames. As time went by many furniture makers began to dedicate part of their own business to laying out the deceased and providing a setting for the family to receive friends. For some, the funeral business began to increasingly dominate the furniture trade.



Luke Brothers storefront, Oshawa, Ontario, c. 1900.

LUKE & BROTHER,

OSHAWA,

Call attention to the following departments of their business:



FURNITURE!

Their new Factory being now in full operation with new machinery, and complete in all departments and with large Show Rooms attached, they are prepared to supply every want of the public. Parties desirous of procuring either single articles or complete sets, would find it to their advantage to

BUY FROM THE MANUFACTORY.

A liberal reduction made to those purchasing in quantities. Lumber taken in exchange for Furniture.

FRAMES, PICTURES, &C.

They keep a supply of Engravings framed and unframed. Frames made in any style to order. Window Cornices and Rollers of various patterns in stock.

REPAIRING.

This has been formed into a separate department under a first-class workman, and all work will be promptly and neatly done.

A NOVELTY.

They have purchased the sole right for this country to manufacture and sell the

PATENT HAMMOCK CHAIR.

It is an easy chair and camp bed combined, is very portable, strong and simple. All parties are hereby cautioned not to violate the conditions of this Patent.

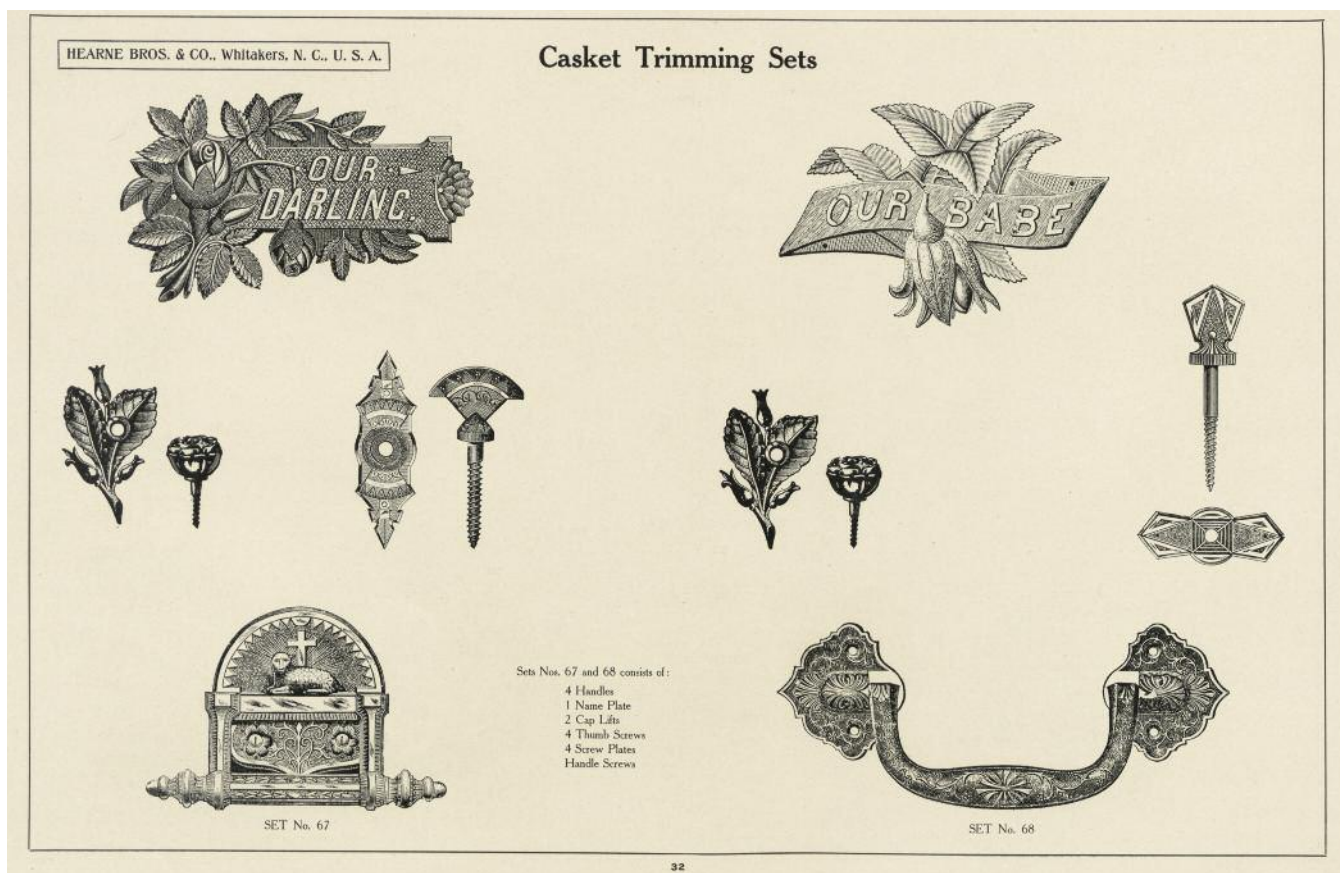
UNDERTAKING.

Coffins made in a superior manner, and funerals arranged at the shortest notice, and at reasonable rates, with or without hearse. A hearse supplied with one or two horses.

Oshawa, April 20th, 1870.

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Advertisement for Luke & Brother, Oshawa, April 1870.



Casket trimming sets, as seen in a catalog published by Hearne Bros., & Co., Whitakers, North Carolina, c. 1890. Courtesy East Carolina University.

Coffin hardware was made from metal castings specifically manufactured for coffin use. Funeral merchandise catalogues were produced illustrating coffin and casket hardware and funeral sundries. An example of one such catalogue comes from the Hearne Brothers and Company, of Whitakers, North Carolina which showcased an array of coffin hardware designs.² Companies, like Luke & Brother, would order pieces from similar catalogues for purchase through mail order or perhaps during a visit from a traveling salesperson to ensure they had stock available as need arose. Name plates, coffin ornaments, handles, cap lifts, escutcheons and coffin studs could be ordered from the catalogue in various finishes, styles and colors to provide individuality to coffins. These finishing touches could be ordered in a variety of designs and in many cases were ordered in complete “casket trimming sets” containing four handles, one name plate, two cap lifts, four thumb screws, four screw plates and handle screws. Floral designs and depictions of animals (particularly sheep) predominate, however geometric flourishes were also popular. Most pieces of ornamentation were available in one’s choice of silver, gold, ebony, oxidize, brass and copper depending on preference and budget.³

Coffin nameplates were decorative adornments attached to coffins and often placed in the center. These plates may have the name, birth and death date of the deceased inscribed on them and came in many different shapes and sizes. Nameplates could also be ordered with common inscriptions such as “At Rest”, “Father”, “Mother”, “Rest in Peace” and

“Our Babe.” Nameplates were made of different metals with lead, brass or tin being most popular. Their choice would reflect the status and wealth of the deceased. President Abraham Lincoln’s nameplate from 1865 was an elaborate



Coffin nameplate belonging to President Abraham Lincoln, 1865.

sterling silver shield adorned with a wreath at the top and engraved with his name, birth and death dates as well as the words “16th President of the United States.” As nameplates began to increase in popularity, they were often removed by

loved ones to be kept as mementos of the deceased. This practice peaked in the late nineteenth century.

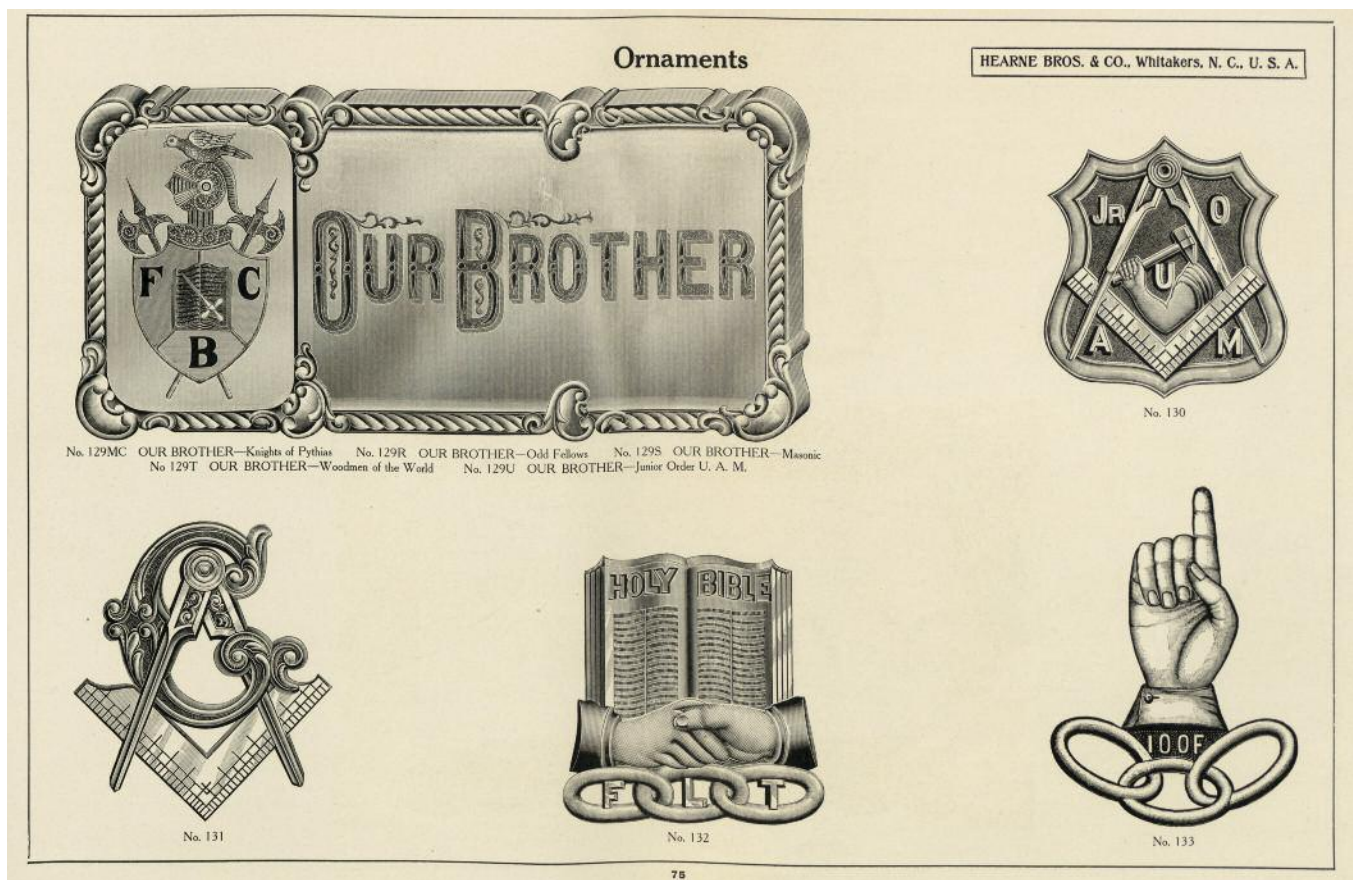
Ornamentation could also be purchased to reflect memberships in organizations and religious ideals. Membership in fraternal or secret organizations was popular in the nineteenth century. It is estimated that two thousand such organizations were in existence at one time or another in North America.⁴ It is no surprise then the Hearne Brothers catalogue featured coffin emblems representing several of the most popular organizations including Masons, Knights of Pythias, Oddfellows, Woodmen of the World and the Junior United American Mechanics. The embellishments of these organizations were quite ornate and cast in great detail to represent the logos of the organizations. On occasion, portions of these ornaments were cast separately to render the effect of bold relief, adding to the striking nature of the pieces.

For those not belonging to such organizations there was still plenty of ornamentation to choose from. In the nineteenth century, floral motifs were particularly popular. Many

and examples of foliage and fruit are suggestive of the lushness of heaven. The grapevine, a popular choice, represents Christ in the vine and followers in the branches. Ivy leaves refer to Christian constancy, laurel leaves to victory over evil and palm leaves to peace, victory and excellence. The daisy symbolized purity and peace, and rosemary remembrance. In addition religious images such as crosses and Bibles were also popular.⁵

Archaeological excavations of historic cemeteries have revealed just how prevalent the use of coffin hardware was during the nineteenth century. In Oshawa, Ontario an excavation in 1993 at one of the earliest cemeteries uncovered several examples of coffin hardware which indicated their styles and use changed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

The Harmony Road (Farewell) Pioneer Cemetery in Oshawa, Ontario has been in use since the early 1800s. Initially the land for the cemetery was given by Acheus Moody Farewell Sr., an early settler in the area for use as a family



Coffin ornaments for Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Masonic, Woodmen of the World and Junior Order U. A. M., as seen in a catalog published by Hearne Bros., & Co., Whitakers, North Carolina, c. 1890. Courtesy East Carolina University.

examples are to be found throughout the Hearne Brothers catalogue. For the Victorians, each type of flower had a particular symbolism and careful thought was put into making just the right choice. Today much of the meaning associated with various types of flowers is forgotten but for the Victorians flowers represented another way to communicate. In Christian iconography, the lily and the rose represent purity

cemetery. Farewell gave two of his sons, Acheus and William, a portion of the cemetery for their use as well as members of the Brown and Hinkson families. The cemetery was in use until 1937 and eventually came under the ownership of the municipality and was officially closed to burials in 1968. The old cemetery remained virtually unnoticed until 1993 when a plan to widen the north-south road adjacent to the cemetery



Clockwise, l to r: Grape leaf ornament, “At Rest” nameplate, thumbscrew and matching escutcheon, swing bail handle. The coffin hardware was found during an excavation of the Farewell Cemetery in 1993. Courtesy Oshawa Museum.

uncovered 38 grave shafts located in the road allowance. Subsequent investigations revealed the cemetery had encroached 8.5 meters into the original road allowance sometime during the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. An archaeological firm was hired to investigate and as a result the remains of 38 individuals were removed and re-interred within the cemetery bounds.⁶

Much of the coffin hardware uncovered at the Farewell Cemetery was similar in style and variety to what was advertised in the Hearne Brothers catalogue and included coffin plates handles, different types of screws and escutcheons. Handles, used to carry the coffin, are of the swing bail or short bar types. These would be fastened to the coffin sides by lugs, which were usually decorative or by the use of backing plates and two or four screws. Thumbscrews had large white metal heads attached to an iron screw and were used to fasten the lid to the coffin. Thumbscrews were usually paired with escutcheons which were flat, decorative metal plates that were screwed to the coffin lid and used as a guide for the thumbscrews. After the lid was placed on the coffin, the thumbscrews were inserted through the escutcheons. White metal coffin screws were used for coffin decoration and were basic iron screws with ornamental white metal heads. Coffin studs, made from tin, were four-sided, star-shaped or round and were used to cover the screws or nails giving them a neat,

decorative finish. Before the practice of embalming became more established, coffin windows, formed by making a hole in the coffin lid and covering it with a pane of glass were common. These windows were fixed in place and were used to view the body without having the coffin open.

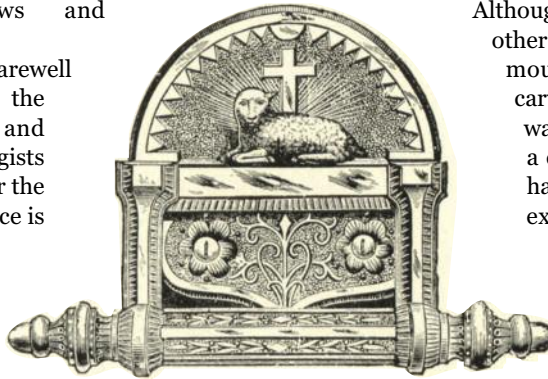
The coffin hardware found by the archaeologists was compared to that uncovered at similar sites. The assembled chronology used by the archaeologists illustrates not only when certain coffin styles appeared but and also when various decorations were popular. Previous cemetery research in Ontario indicated rectangular coffins gradually replaced hexagonal coffins sometime after 1850. Also, about the same time, coffins began to include increasing numbers of hardware items, beginning with two forms of plaques or nameplates, followed by swing bail handles (c. 1860), white metal coffin screws (c. 1860 onward), tin studs (c. 1870 onward), viewing windows and short bar handles (1878 onward), and finally escutcheons and thumbscrews (c. 1881 onward). This chronology of the coffin hardware was used by the archaeologists at Farewell to help date the burials.⁷

Much like the Hearne Brothers catalogue, the coffin hardware from the Farewell Cemetery represented a great cross section of styles and finishes. The range of variation in the artifacts recovered from the graves at the Farewell site is remarkable for the number of burials uncovered. Of the 38

graves excavated, 28 of the burials included nineteenth century coffin hardware in the form of engraved coffin plaques, swing bail and short bar coffin handles, decorative white metal screws, stamped tin studs in various shapes, viewing windows, thumbscrews and escutcheons.

Perhaps most interestingly, the Farewell site revealed one item not seen in the Hearne Brothers catalogue and previously unknown to the archaeologists and a unique decorative treatment for the exterior of a coffin. The hardware piece is a decorative metal strip with three studs in place. The other find is an unusual form of coffin designation that consisted of the letters “G” and “W” separated by a stylized heart. The “G” “W” and heart were created from fabric that was placed on the coffin lid and formed by brass studs nailed into the fabric. The letters represent the name of the deceased individual: George Weekes, Jr.⁸

The coffin hardware recovered at Farewell Cemetery is similar to examples found at other contemporary sites and the coffin hardware collection discovered at the hardware store of A. L. Calhoun in Clio, South Carolina.^{9, 10} These similarities suggest that most coffin hardware would have come from a few manufacturers and distributors. Cost would most likely have been an important factor in deciding what items were to be fixed to a coffin. Unfortunately the available catalogues do not list prices, for it was most likely the distributors that set the cost for customers. Many of the decorations such as studs, were manufactured of inexpensive stamped tin. Handles were made of various materials such as white metal, plated white metal and sometimes solid brass. The more elaborate coffins with an abundance of hardware do not necessarily indicate an expensive burial since most of the hardware represented at Farewell Cemetery was made of elaborately decorated white metal or stamped tin and could be compared to inexpensive costume jewellery.



“No. 2, White,” decorative metal handle, as seen in a catalog published by Hearne Bros., & Co., Whitakers, North Carolina, c. 1890. Courtesy East Carolina University.



The Victorians were known for their complex behaviors associated with death and mourning. Coffin decoration was just one part of the elaborate rituals associated with death practiced during the nineteenth century.

Although not as visible or as well-known as other aspects of death rituals like clothing, mourning behaviors and gravestone carving and sculpture, coffin decoration was one way mourners could personalize a coffin for a loved one. Today the coffin hardware from the Farewell Cemetery excavation resides at the Oshawa Museum where it continues to assist researchers in understanding how the Victorians decorated coffins and commemorated their dead.

Melissa Cole was born and raised in Oshawa and has worked at the Oshawa Museum for 18 years. She has a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Anthropology from Trent University and a Museum Management and Curatorship certificate from Sir Sandford Fleming College. Melissa cares for the extensive collection at the Oshawa Museum and is also responsible for the design, construction, fabrication, installation and maintenance of exhibits. She is passionate about her hometown heritage and challenging the traditional story and history of Oshawa.

Laura Suchan is the Executive Director of the Oshawa Museum, a museum dedicated to the preservation of Oshawa’s history. Laura’s passion for public history has led to presentations at provincial, national and international conferences including the Ontario Museum Association, History of Education Society, and the Association for Gravestone Studies. In 2005, Laura developed a classification system for nineteenth century Ontario gravestones which allowed for a more systematic transcription and preservation of gravestones. She currently contributes her time to the Unregistered Cemeteries Committee (Ontario Historical Society), the Trent University Alumni Association and the Women’s Herstory Connection of Durham Region.

Notes

1. The funeral home business founded by the Luke brothers is still in operation today under the name McIntosh Anderson Kellam (MAK). *The Manchester of Canada: Oshawa Illustrated*, The Ontario Reformer: Oshawa, Ontario, 1911, 32.
2. Catalogue H-6. Illustrating *Coffin and Casket Hardware and Funeral Sundries*, Hearne Bros. & Co., Whitakers, N.C., U.S.A. Digital Collections, East Carolina University, digital.lib.ecu.edu/22655.
3. Catalogue H-6. Illustrating *Coffin and Casket Hardware and Funeral Sundries*, Hearne Bros. & Co., Whitakers, N.C., U.S.A. Digital Collections, East Carolina University, digital.lib.ecu.edu/22655. Accessed July 23, 2018.
4. *Grave Preservation by the Old Cemeteries Society of Victoria*, Grave Preservation, Monuments, Obelisks, Columns, Pedestals. www.oldcem.bc.ca/gp_art_sy4.htm. Accessed July 23, 2018.
5. Laura Suchan, *Memento Mori: Classifying Nineteenth Century Ontario Gravestones*, Oshawa, ON: Laura Suchan, 2012, 31.
6. “Archaeological Mitigation of the Farewell (Harmony Road) Pioneer Cemetery,” City of Oshawa Regional Municipality of Durham, Toronto, Ontario: Archaeological Services, 1993.
7. “Archaeological Mitigation of the Farewell (Harmony Road) Pioneer Cemetery,” City of Oshawa Regional Municipality of Durham, Toronto, Ontario: Archaeological Services, 1993.
8. “Archaeological Mitigation of the Farewell (Harmony Road) Pioneer Cemetery,” City of Oshawa Regional Municipality of Durham, Toronto, Ontario: Archaeological Services, 1993.
9. Philip J. Woodley, *The Stirrup Court Cemetery Coffin Hardware*. Ontario Archaeology 53: 45-64. 1992.
10. Debi Hacker-Norton and Michael Trinkley, “Remember Man Thou Art Dust: Coffin Hardware of the Early...” Chicora Foundation Research Series Publications, accessed July 26, 2018. Chicora.org/pdfs/RS2-RememberMan.pdf&p=DevEx.LB.1,5068.1. An in-depth analysis of a large cache of hardware found at the A. L. Calhoun merchandise store in Calhoun, N. C. and the Sumter Casket Company, Sumter, S. C., was presented in this 1984 study.



Elbridge H. Thompson (1839-1931).

Funny Epitaphs

A CENTURY-OLD LOOK AT SOME POIGNANT AND AMUSING CARVINGS

Elbridge H. Thompson (1839-1931) Lebanon, New Hampshire

Editor's note:

When my grandmother, Beatrice Davis Ashworth, died in 1978, she left in my care a long, typewritten manuscript for a lecture her old Uncle Elbridge gave in his home town of Lebanon, New Hampshire (and perhaps elsewhere). Until contemplating this issue of Nineteenth Century on the subject of death, I never quite knew what to do with his remarkable piece of field research. I have resurrected it here, with some judicious editing for readability. Wherever possible, I have corroborated his observations through the remarkable website www.findagrave.com. But, even when the graves noted herein have been found there, more than a century after Uncle Elbridge's observations they are often unreadable due to the weathering.

Since I was able to find enough evidence that these epitaphs are not invented, I have confidence that Uncle Elbridge was an accurate researcher. The date of this research and of the delivery of his lecture is not known. Based on some reasonable conjecture noted later, I expect this was gathered and written between 1900 and 1910.

It is fair to ask why a peer-reviewed scholarly publication such as Nineteenth Century would publish an article written more than a century ago. The current condition of the epitaph for Mary Pemberton, in Vergennes, Vermont provides an answer to the question. In Elbridge Thompson's day, the grave and its poignant message was legible. Today it is nearly indecipherable. Thus, the first publication anywhere of this research affords us a record of graves that may be illegible or completely lost today.

As a last note, we at Nineteenth Century should be quite glad of any corroboration readers might wish to furnish. These graves are all in New England (or New York). If an opportunity arises to visit one or more of these graveyards, please let us know if you locate the grave that is written about here.

Warren Ashworth

I propose to wander with you among the cemeteries of our land and trace the idiosyncrasies of the world as they crop out [sic] on tombstones. Someone has said the deaths of the world are only provision for the births of the world and there would be no room for to-day if yesterday did not get out of the way. This is true and if death must come, there must be graveyards. Even the advocates of cremation demand a finely laid out cemetery with its slabs and monuments on which to record the names, age and, sometimes, the peculiarities of those who have gone before.

The cemetery is an educator of the living where one may get wisdom and rare instruction from the monuments and graves which so outnumber the abodes of the living. Some of what is inscribed there is the subject of this essay and I testify to the authenticity of what you are about to read. Fictitious inscriptions lack the charm of authenticity which in the case of epitaphs are more remarkable than any imagination could conjure. Almost any witty writer can produce very funny epitaphs, hence the

papers and magazines always intent on novelty often publish most quaint and grotesque epitaphs but many of them are of such absurd character that I came to the conclusion they must be fiction. I was induced to give the matter careful study to ascertain if any portion of them were real. To that end, I have visited many out-of-the-way graveyards. The result was indeed startling; that people of any intelligence could allow the sculptor to work for hours, days or even weeks with the stone and chisel to inscribe such odd, gossipy or downright inappropriate words to commemorate the death of a friend or relative is astounding, as with this example from the Hollis Cemetery here in New Hampshire:

*Here lies old Caleb Ham, By trade a Bum;
When he died, the Devil cried, "Come Caleb, Come"*

Starting close to home, I commenced my odyssey in the old Pine Hill Cemetery on the ridge near the residence of Miss Fanny



*Praises on a tombstone are trifles vainly spent,
A good man's name is his best monument.
From a tombstone in Knaresborough, England.¹*



Alden in Lebanon. Finding nothing particularly queer, I did come away with this poignant inscription:

*In memory of Mr. John Baldwin who died
December 7th, 1817, in his 75th year.*

And then is added:

Mr. Baldwin had 13 of his family die in 6 years

A tragic bit of family history that still resounds so many years later.

More intriguing are two tombstones I found in Hollis, New Hampshire, three if you include the above ode to Caleb Ham. Here is the epitaph of a man who evidently was not a general favorite in the town, yet two stood by him to the last:

*Here the old man lies
No one laughs and no one cries;
Where he's gone or how he fares
No one knows and no one cares
But his brother James And his wife Emaline
They were his friends all the time.*

And I encountered this:

*Here lies Cynthia, Steven's wife,
She lived six years in calm and strife;
Death came at last and set her free;
I was glad and so was she.*

In Guilford, New Hampshire, may be seen two graves; one that of Josiah Haines and the other of his wife; and although given to good works, they evidently were not fond of ministers. Mr. Haines' stone is thus inscribed:

*He was a blessing to the Saints
To Sinners rich and poor;
He was a kind and worthy man
He's gone to be no more.
He kept the faith unto the end,
And left the world in Peace,
He did not for a doctor send
Nor for a hireling priest.*

On Mrs. Haines' stone we find the following:

*Here beneath these marble stones
Sleeps the dust and rests the bones
Of one who led a Christian Life
'Twas Haineses, Josiah's Wife.
She was a woman full of Truth
And feared her God from early youth;
And priests and elders did her fight
Because she brought their deed to light.*

Quite a bit of family history in two grave stones. And in bitterness towards the clergy the Haines' were not alone. In Milford, New Hampshire, one Doctor Cutter became very much disgusted with his church because of an unpleasantness which

occurred between the church and his wife. He apparently hoped to get even with them by placing the following long, scathing and very expensive epitaph on her grave stone:

*Caroline H., Wife of Calvin Cutter, M.D.
Murdered by the Baptist Ministry and Baptist
Churches As follows: Sep't. 28, 1838; aged 33
She was accused of lying in church meeting by the
Rev. D. D. Pratt and Deacon Albert Adams
Was condemned by the church unheard.
She was reduced to poverty
by Deacon William Wallace
When an exparte council was asked of the Milford
Baptist Church, by the advice of their committee,
George Raymond, Calvin Averill,
and Andrew Hutchinson
They voted not to receive any communication on
the subject. The Rev. Mark Carpenter said he
thought as the good old Deacon said,
"We've got Cutter down and it's best to
keep him down." The intentional and malicious
destruction of her character And happiness as
above described destroyed her life. Her last words
upon the subject were "Tell the Truth and The
Iniquity will come out"*

On a lighter note, in Hebron, New Hampshire, we find this careless pronunciation set for eternity on a good man's stone:

He was a pillow in the church

In Seabrook, New Hampshire, Cemetery you may seek out this poor rhyme and worse grammar, written in the crude, colloquial style of the early times:

*Is she dead, am she gone, Is I left here all alone?
Cruel Fate, how unkind
To take she and leave me behind.*

And another from that same graveyard:

He was almost a success.

So much for my explorations in New Hampshire. Staid old Vermont is not far behind in eccentricities. How is this for subtle sarcasm from Burlington's Old Cemetery?

*My wife lies here;
All my tears cannot bring her back
Therefore, I weep.*

And another commentary on marriage from the same cemetery:

*She lived with her husband for fifty years
And died in the confident hope of a better life.*



O Lord, she was thin.



From a tombstone in the Old Plymouth Churchyard, Boston

While this last may have been of honest intention, it leaves one wondering. In Chelsea, Vermont, at the West Hills Cemetery, I found this which I would not have countenanced had I not seen it with mine own eyes:

*Here lies the body of Hannah Thurber
Once she talked and none could curb her;
Three husbands had she, all are dead:
They died of earache so 'tis said.*

A counterpoint is found in the same graveyard:

*In memory of Susan Glover.
My wife most kind and true:
Though I should marry ten times over
Her like I shall not find.*

Many are the graves of children, of course. Always sad, a particular few in Vermont bear notation. Up in Burlington you may see inscribed in imperishable marble this silly doggerel:

*Beneath this stone our baby lays,
He neither cries nor hollers.
He lived just one and twenty days,
And cost us forty dollars.*

I found this:

*Our little Jacob has been taken away
To Bloom in a superior flower pot above.*

And on another little grave is inscribed:

*This little buttercup was bound to join
the Heavenly choir.*

In Stratford:

*Ezra T. Jackson, died Sep't. 14, 1763, aged 25 days.
What did the little hasty sojourner find so
forbidding And disgusting in our upper world to
occasion his Precipitous exit?*

In Plainfield, Vermont an older child is remembered:

*This blooming youth with health most fair
To his uncle's mill pond did repair.
Undressed himself and then plunged in
But never did come out again.*

Enough I think of those who died too young. Let us to [sic] Vergennes, Vermont to read an epitaph sent to me by a friend:

*Elizabeth Pemberton died January 31st, 1836,
aged 46*

And then follows this legend:

*An aged woman sleeps beneath this sod
Who once the path of affluence trod;
But fate decreed to make her poor
When scarce a friend did open her door;*

*Her heart it broke, her senses fled.
And now she is numbered with the Dead.*

From the same churchyard, terse and to the point:

A rum cough carried him off.

And here is one which, if not a lapsus linguae, we might call a lapse of the graver's chisel. It reads:

Sacred to the memory of three twins.

But for brevity, honesty and economy of words, one in Grafton, Vermont, carries off the palm:

Gone Home Below.

My peregrinations next took me to Massachusetts where I think you will conclude that tombstone trash is not all confined to New Hampshire and Vermont. Indeed, in the old Grainery Burying Ground in Boston, on Tremont Street, by the side of Historic Park Street Church, you may read on a stone:

*Here I lie bereft of breath'
Because a cough carried me off;
Then a coffin they carried me off in.*

In Copp's Hill Cemetery near the Old North Church in Boston you may seek out the stone that reads:

*The sister of Sarah Lucas Lieth here
Whom I did Love most dear;
But now her Soul has took its flight
And bade her spiteful folks good night.*

In the Old Plymouth Churchyard there is a stone on which the sculptor was most likely instructed to place the following: "O Lord, she was thine". By miscalculation he did not have room for the last letter and placed the 'e' on another line, leaving it to read:

O Lord, she was thin

A little further on is the stone to Tabitha Plasket, 1807, this epitaph most likely written by herself, breathes such a spirit of defiance that it attracts much attention:

*Adieu, vain world, I've seen enough of thee,
And I am careless what thou sayest of me;
Thy smiles I wish not, nor thy frowns I fear,
I'm now at rest, my head lies quiet here.*

Mrs. Plasket in her widowhood (so Plymouth history tells us) taught a private school for small children at the same time she did her spinning. Her mode of punishment was to pass skeins of yarn under the arms of the little culprits and hang them upon pegs on the walls. Apparently, a suspended row of miscreants was a ludicrous sight.



He was almost a success.



From a tombstone in Seabrook, New Hampshire

In South Dennis on Cape Cod the awful power of the sea inspired this rhyme:

*Of seven sons the Lord his Father gave
He was the fourth who found a watery grave;
Fifteen days had passed since the
circumstance occurred
When his body was found and decently interred.*

And just offshore, in Vinyard Haven on Martha's Vineyard, as follows:

*John and Lydia, the blooming pair,
A whale killed him, and her body lies here.*

In Chatham I encountered this, written almost in cipher:

*There were three brothers went to sea
Who were never known to wrangle; Holm's Hole,
cedar pole, Crinkle, Crinkle, Crangle.*

The explanation of this mystic epitaph in local lore is: three brothers started for Holm's Hole in a boat to get to cedar poles and on the passage they were killed by lightning, the sound of their demise uniquely represented by the crinkle, crinkle, crangle.

And here is a pointer for politicians: In Wayland I found:

*Here lies the body of Dr. Hayward
A man who never voted
Of such is the kingdom of heaven*

In East Wareham the historical society records the story behind the next grave stone. An old bachelor, an Irishman, died owing many small debts. It was his creditors who erected a stone over his grave on which they had placed the following:

*Hibernia's son himself exiled,
Without an inmate, wife, or child, He lived alone.
And when he died, his purse though small,
Contained enough to pay us all, And buy this stone.*

In that same graveyard, I found a stone that seems to have been more recently inscribed than the date of death would indicate. Grave markers from the seventeenth century are very rare in my perambulations, at least ones that are as legible as this. Based on its style and its message it would appear to be a replacement stone with a very important message. Only about two hundred years ago there was a tremendous blot on the civilization of this country when the witch craft craze got such a strong hold on the people of New England. Any development of mental trouble was looked upon as a sure sign of sorcery. And if the poor person who became deranged was a woman, she was often doomed to be hanged, drowned or worse. The pages of our early history are forever blotted with the records of many executions which grew out of the ignorance of our early citizens.

*Accused of witch craft she declared I am innocent and
God will declare my innocency Once acquitted. Yet
falsely condemned She suffered death July 19th, 1692.
Christian martyr who for truth could die, When all
about thee owned the hideous lie,
The world redeemed from superstitious sway
Is breathing freer for thy sake to-day.*

And this is true, for with modern intelligence and modern religious ideas such a crime as hanging a poor maniac for a witch can, we trust, never again take place.

Editor's note: We do not have a specific date when Mr. Thompson composed this lecture. The line above "Only about two hundred years ago..." is the closest we come to being able to attribute a date to it. Two hundred years from execution of this woman would be 1892. It was in 1692 that the tragic mass hysteria swept so much of Massachusetts. It peaked in 1693 with the last of the Salem witch trials. If the date of this writing was well after 1910 one might imagine that an author of such a piece, reading aloud, would most likely say "Only about two hundred and twenty years ago..." or "Only about two hundred and thirty years ago..." Thus between 1900 and 1910 might be a likely date. From another point of view, we know that Elbridge H. Thompson lived from 1839 to 1931. From the town register we know he ran a millinery shop in Lebanon, New Hampshire starting in at least 1900. The records also show that he continued to work in that shop until his death. From the amount of footwork required to document this lecture, we might naturally assume that, successful with the shop in his later years, he could perhaps afford the time to pursue this research. And though he died at age 91, we would assume he also needed the energy of a man in his sixties or seventies to go into the field with such zeal. But, this is conjecture. Of proof, we have only one specific, which is the epigram at the beginning is from a book published in England in 1900. Thus, this manuscript had to have been written after that and before 1931.

The state of Maine is particularly rich in grave stone oddities, but no inscription of them all can show more business enterprise than this one which displays to advantage the bitterness of local warfare over the medicinal qualities of two noted mineral springs:

*Here lies John Jones and his two daughters
Who died of drinking Cheltenham waters.
If they had drunk the waters of Howe,
They might have all been living now.*

I do not imagine that the state of marriage in Maine is any different than elsewhere but the state certainly abounds with cemetery commentary on the subject. In Augusta, I found this:



*She lived with her husband for fifty years
And died in the confident hope of a better life.*



From a tombstone in Burlington, Vermont

*I laid my wife beneath this stone;
For her repose and mine own.*

In Winslow this:

*Here lies the body of Obadiah Wilkinson and
Ruth, his wife.
Their warfare is accomplished.
In the same bone yard can be found:
Here lies my poor wife much lamented
She is Happy and I'm contented.*

And, also in Winslow, this more peaceful paean:

*She was married 44 years
And in all that time
She never banged a door.*

The Old First Parish Cemetery of Alfred is fruitful in antique curiosities of epitaphy of which this legend is a fair example:

*John Hall, 1762-1813
May he rest in peace till we meet again.
-His loving wife*

In York Cemetery is a marital admonition:

*Emma, Daughter of Abraham and Matilda Cox,
and Wife of Theodore Shallen,
Died July 9, 1847, aged 26 years
Leaving five children; married too young against
Her father's will.
Single women, take warning.*

And an appeal found in Kittery Point Cemetery:

*Here lies Martin Elginbrod
Have mercy on my soul, Lord God
As I would do were I Lord God
And you were Martin Elginbrod.*

And so ends my tour. Going forward, let us guard with jealous care the graves of our loved ones, and see that no trifling or senseless epitaph shall mar the resting place of any friend of ours. It does seem that many modern cemeteries in our larger cities now have a censorship committee to whom must be submitted all inscriptions, and the directors reserve the right to reject any which seems undesirable.

Let us congratulate ourselves that there is a grand movement at the present time in the direction of improving our cemeteries. Look at the various national burying grounds: Arlington, Gettysburg, and others where all that can be done to beautify and adorn the last resting place of thousands of America's noble youth who fell in the service of their country has been done by a grateful nation. This gracious [part of a] poem by Theodore O'Hara on Arlington's McClellan Gate sets the tone for more art and less wit in poetry for the deceased:

*The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo;
No more on Life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.
On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents to spread,
And Glory guards, with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead.*

Look at Woodlawn, Forest Hills, Greenwood and Mount Auburn where nature, supplemented by art, has adorned the resting place of so many of earth's loved ones with a lavish hand.

And may we not believe that the time is coming when "God's acre" will be the fairest spot on earth? When mould [sic] and melancholy will give way to the comforting and uplifting symbols of memory and triumphant faith, when we can look away from the darkness of the open grave to the glory of the open heavens. And when the voiceless marble of our cemeteries shall respond to the voices of the beloved dead, calling us to meet them in the "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."³



Elbridge H. Thompson was born in 1839 and died in 1931. He lived his life in Lebanon, New Hampshire, where he was a milliner and owned a millinery shop.

Notes

1. *A Picturesque History of Yorkshire*, J. S. Fletcher. London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1900. p. 225
2. This is one of the grave stones that may be found on www.findagrave.com. It is of interest that Elbridge Thompson's friend made a transcription error in the first line, corrected here. The manuscript notation was "An aged woman sleeps beneath this slab." The last word of this line in the transcription on www.findagrave.com is 'sod,' true to the rhyming couplet, as 'slab' is not.
3. Hebrews 11:10 AV



The making of a death mask, c. 1900. George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress.

Death Masks

INTIMATE MEMORIAL TRIBUTES

Eve M. Kahn

When nineteenth century celebrities lay dying, sculptors started preparing liquid plaster to slather onto the features of the deceased. While the molds for making death masks were sculpted directly from the corpses' faces, reporters updated readers on the progress of the work and critiqued the realism of the results. The plaster countenances came in varied shades of whiteness, reminiscent of flesh already drained of blood. They soon went on public view as memorial tributes. They were considered three-dimensional records of "the moment after the soul has taken flight," as one newspaper reported in 1884.¹

A surprising number of Victorians kept death masks on display, sometimes acquiring examples by the dozens. Quantities have remained on exhibit at institutions, where they are undergoing further research, shedding light on the lives of the deceased and the objects' sometimes obsessed past-owners.

There is an enduring public fascination with these intimate images-in-the-round of accomplished or notorious personages, at peace right after exhaling their last breaths. The sight still routinely stops viewers in their tracks, and it can bring on moments of respectful quiet, with thoughts of one's own mortality. Knowing that the sculptors worked from actual human contours, without heroically idealizing or editing out any asymmetries and warts, is a key aspect of the objects' attraction.

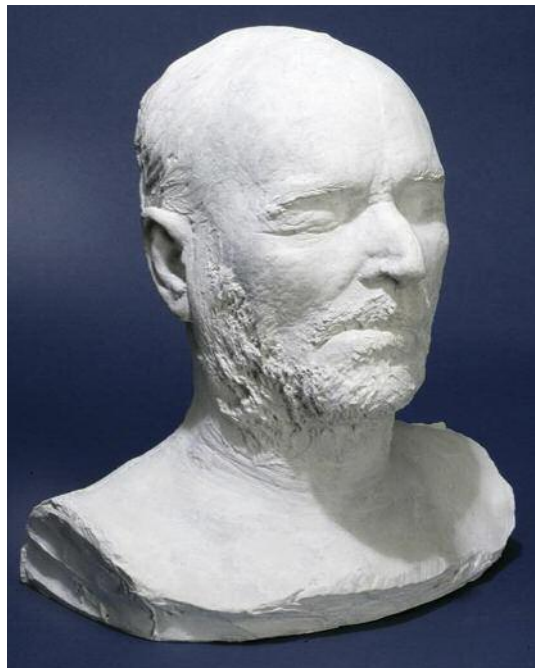
"There are hairs still stuck in the plaster," I was told by Margi Hofer, the museum director at the New-York Historical Society, while we pondered William Tecumseh Sherman's death mask at the fourth-floor gallery there this past summer. In 1891, the sculptor Daniel Chester French was brought to Sherman's deathbed, to create plaster molds of the war hero's head. On the plaster bust now at the historical society, the face is bisected by a faintly visible straight line. That is likely a ghostly trace of where French's team had used a string or tool to slice apart the two halves of the mold, while removing them from the corpse. The bust's matted texture on Sherman's beard may have resulted partly from the oily coating used on the corpse's skin,

so that stripping off the hardening plaster would cause no disfiguring damage. The historical society has installed a touchscreen nearby, which allows visitors to spin the Sherman portrait virtually, revealing mussed thinning hair and a partial comb-over on the back of the skull.

A few other death masks have gone on view in the same case, including a portrait of the Seminole rebel Osceola (1804-1838), who died of quinsy, a throat infection, while imprisoned at Fort Moultrie in Charleston, South Carolina. His posthumous depiction looks calm and youthful, the forehead unfurrowed. The cast was made around the time that an army doctor decapitated the corpse and embalmed the head (its current whereabouts are unknown). The historical society has also shown two versions of a cast made from the head of Aaron Burr (1756-1836). It depicts him with his eyes sunken, his nose bent to his right, and his mouth crumpled—his false teeth apparently taken out during his last days.

While Burr was suffering the aftermaths of a paralyzing stroke and shuffling off this mortal coil at a Staten Island hotel, a "mysterious stranger" had kept haunting the property. As soon as Burr died (according to a 1920s account from the historian, art collector and physician John E. Stillwell), the lurking stranger appeared at the door bearing a kit full of supplies to cast the corpse's head and features "before the symptoms of decay made themselves visible."²

Journalists and historians routinely recorded when sculptors arrived at particular deathbeds, and even which bodies already in coffins had been hoisted into seated positions to undergo the casting process. The observers then passed judgment on the death masks that had scarcely hardened. In 1882, Augustus Saint-Gaudens worked on a cast of President James A. Garfield's face, and the *Buffalo Morning Express* praised his rendition for representing the recent assassin victim's features "exactly as they were after death, showing traces of suffering."³ In 1891, the *New York Sun* announced that Sherman's cast was deemed "satisfactory and perfectly successful in every respect," preserving his features "as last seen by his family and friends."⁴

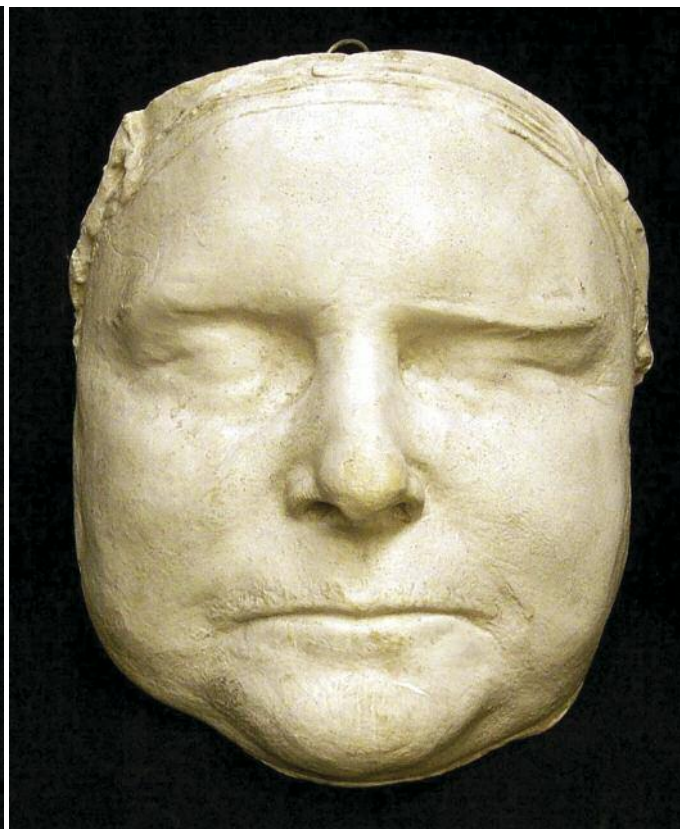
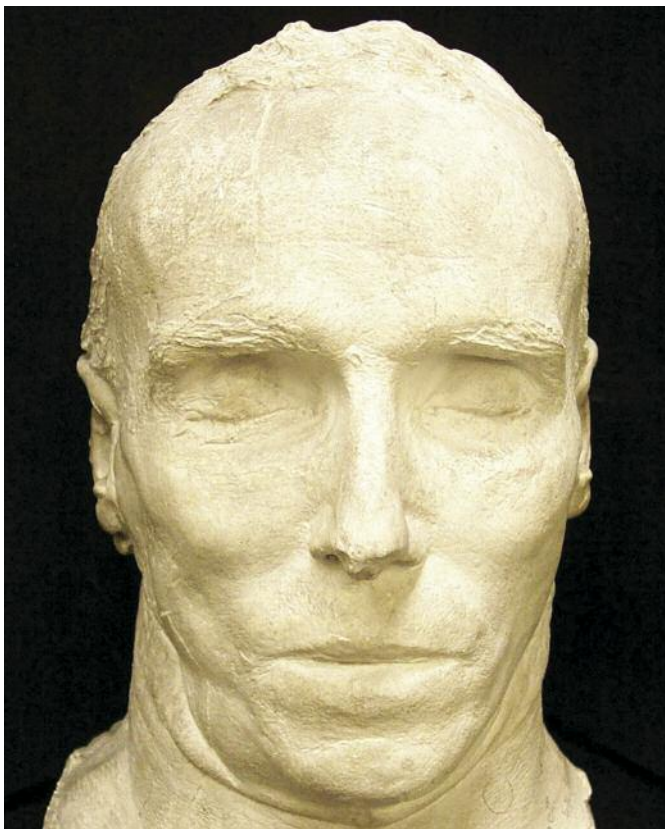


Daniel Chester French, *General William Tecumseh Sherman* (1820-1891), 1891. New-York Historical Society. Gift of Mr. Philemon Tecumseh Sherman.

Cast makers were sometimes sent to deathbeds on assignment from phrenologists, including the New York-based brothers Orson Squire Fowler (1809-1887) and Lorenzo Niles Fowler (1811-1896). The practitioners of this pseudoscientific field had widely popularized the theory that the shapes of facial features and skulls revealed a person's character strengths and weaknesses. Cranial bumps and slopes were said to indicate now-obscure tendencies like "amateness" (amorousness), "approbateness" (eagerness to please) and "inhabitiveness" (attachment to home). The Fowlers eventually set up a phrenological publishing house, schools and museums. They worked in partnership with their sister Charlotte (1814-1901), her husband Samuel Roberts Wells (1820-1875) and Lorenzo's wife Lydia (1823-1879). Part of their substantial collection of death masks has ended up at the New-York Historical Society. Burr's cast-plaster portrait led the Fowlers and their followers to detect "excessive amateness, destructiveness, combativeness, firmness and large self-esteem," Dr. Stillwell

(details about the plaster heads' identities and current whereabouts and exhibitions are posted at www.phrenology.mvm.ed.ac.uk).⁷ University College London has preserved three dozen casts that the British phrenologist Robert Noel started acquiring in the 1830s. He brought together death masks for important intellectuals, like the Irish physician Robert James Graves (1796-1853), the discoverer of the thyroid malfunction known as Graves' disease, as well as castings of men and women who had been executed for murdering children. Eyebrow hairs occasionally remain stuck in Noel's plaster portraits of the killers; the casts were apparently made in haste at morgues.

The most prominent collection in America belonged to Laurence Hutton (1843-1904), a drama critic and literary editor, and it remains intact as his gift to Princeton University's library.⁸ His book, *Portraits in Plaster from the Collection of Laurence Hutton*, delves into the sculptures' historical precedents. He explains that Egyptians made gold



L to R: Death mask of actor Laurence Barrett, 1891. Produced at the direction of artist Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Death mask of writer and artistic salon hostess Celia Thaxter, 1894. Laurence Hutton Death Mask Collection, Princeton University Library.

wrote. Sherman's phrenological reports deemed him "kind, humane, domestic, and devotional" with tendencies to become "somewhat cranky and willful when opposed."⁵ In examining Osceola's cast, phrenologists found signs of benevolence, amateness, philoprogenitiveness (fertility) and, perhaps understandably since white settlers had stolen his territories, inhabitiveness.⁶

A few other Victorian collections of death masks have remained whole. The University of Edinburgh owns the substantial former holdings of that city's phrenological society

face impressions to place on entombed mummies, and ancient Romans cast tinted wax masks from corpses' faces and wore them in funeral processions. Hutton's text waxes poetic at times, pointing out that a mask

cannot flatter; it cannot caricature...And in the case of the death-mask particularly, it shows the subject often as he permitted no one but himself to see himself. ...In his mask he is seen, as it were, with his mask off!

Part of Hutton's collection had originally belonged to the British phrenologist George Combe (1788-1858), but Hutton disliked phrenology's emphasis on clinical analysis and the dark side of humanity. "Usually, the Phrenological Museums contain casts of idiots, criminals, and monstrosities," he complained. He focused instead on politicians (George Washington, Aaron Burr, Benjamin Disraeli), cultural luminaries (Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Liszt) and megalomaniacs (Cromwell, Robespierre, Napoleon). He acquired death masks of artists who had made death masks, including Canova and Benjamin Robert Haydon. Hutton owned new masks that had been cast at the deathbeds of some of his friends, including the actor Lawrence Barrett (that cast was produced at the direction of Augustus Saint-Gaudens) and the entomologist Henry Edwards. Gazing upon those plaster visages, he wrote, made him "grieve afresh for what I have lost." A handful of women had accomplished enough to appear as faces on his shelves: Queen Louise of Prussia, the actress Sarah Siddons, the writer and artistic salon hostess Celia Thaxter and the opera singer Maria Malibran (1808-1836). The latter had died months after a devastating riding accident, and the mask reveals "her face ruined by that terrible fall from her horse," he wrote. He allowed a nameless head into the collection, too, depicting an African-American boy from Florida. The architect Thomas Hastings had made the cast from a living person. Hutton, reflecting the prevalent bigotry of his time, brutally described the youth as representing "one of the lowest examples of his race." But he also showed a trace of compassion, wondering whether the boy's "present inferiority" may have been at least partly due "to bad treatment and to unfavorable circumstances."

Hutton donated casts for display elsewhere, including the Players Club in Manhattan, which he helped found in 1888 with Edwin Booth. Plaster faces of about a dozen luminaries are scattered around the building. Women are on hand—Malibran and the actress Ellen Terry—although the club's membership was all male until the late 1980s. In one parlor, two drawers have been filled with masks. The curator Raymond Wemmlinger told me that it is not clear why particular portraits were laid side by side in the displays over the years. Goethe, Keats, the actor Edmund Kean and the playwright Richard Brinsley Sheridan are together in a drawer, incongruously surrounding the bearded visage of Cromwell, who had tried to shut down all the theaters.

In summer 2018, while I was researching this article, death masks seemed to follow me everywhere. When I stopped by for a meeting at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, a survey of their collection treasures was on view. A case was devoted to the wizened plaster face of the activist and writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935); she had committed suicide while suffering from terminal breast cancer. The mark of the string or tool that had vertically bisected her posthumous cast remains visible.

At the Neue Galerie in New York, in a retrospective for Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele (1890-1918), a cast of Schiele's emaciated face was shown around the corner from a photo of his corpse at his deathbed in Vienna. He had succumbed to the Spanish flu pandemic, days after it had killed his wife Edith and their unborn child. The Neue Galerie installed his death mask in a case over a gallery fireplace. His eyelashes,

eyebrows, forehead furrows and cheek sags are clearly molded. The peaceful white sculpture contrasted with his signature colorful paintings on the walls all around, depicting malnourished lovers clutching each other. The mask drew small crowds; perhaps other viewers shared my eerie feeling that I was witnessing the artist's evanescence, in the midst of his family tragedy unfolding in wartime Vienna. In the gallery I ran into Jason Busch, the newly-appointed director of the American Folk Art Museum in New York. He peered into the case with somber wonder and asked, "How more real does it get?"

On a repeat visit to the New-York Historical Society, I stood before the fourth-floor case full of assorted plaster faces for half an hour or so. I wanted to ask museum goers pausing there about their thoughts on a rather ghoulish subject that had nonetheless captivated me. A middle-aged British tourist pithily summed up their modern-day broad appeal: "They're pretty creepy," he said, "but they're really cool at the same time."



Eve M. Kahn, independent scholar, wrote the weekly Antiques column for *The New York Times* from 2008 to 2016. She has contributed widely to publications and websites including *The Magazine Antiques*, *Apollo* magazine, and *atlasobscura.com*. In recent years she has specialized in documenting the lives and works of under-appreciated women pioneers, including the photographer Lillian Baynes Griffin (1871-1916), the painter Annie Traquair Lang (1885-1918), and the artist and designer Edith Varian Cockcroft (1881-1962). Kahn's first book, *Forever Seeing New Beauties: The Forgotten Impressionist Mary Rogers Williams, 1857-1907*, is due soon from Wesleyan University Press.

Notes

1. "The Clown's Death," *The Tennessean*, June 15, 1884, 10.
2. John E. Stillwell, *The history of the Burr portraits, their origin, their dispersal and their reassemblage* (New York, N.Y.: privately published, 1928), 36.
3. "New-York City," *The Buffalo Morning Express*, February 28, 1882, 1.
4. "Sherman Lying in State," *New York Sun*, February 19, 1891, 2.
5. "Our Leading Generals," *American Phrenological Journal and Life Illustrated*, August 1865, 34.
6. Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 277.
7. Details about the University of Edinburgh plaster heads' identities and current whereabouts and exhibitions are posted at www.phrenology.mvm.ed.ac.uk.
8. Princeton's online database for the Hutton Holdings is library.princeton.edu/libraries/firestone/rbsc/aids/C0770/



Charles Willson Peale (1741-1827), *Mrs. Peale Lamenting the Death of Her Child, Rachel Weeping*, 1772. Philadelphia Museum of Art

Remembering the Life in Death

THE ROLE OF PORTRAITURE AND PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AS A MOURNING RITUAL

Marie Carter

Recently, there has been a surge of interest in nineteenth-century mourning rituals that might be considered macabre today. For example, two years ago the American Folk Art Museum in New York City held an exhibition titled *Securing the Shadow: Posthumous Portraiture in America*. There are also several recent books covering this subject. Museums like The Morbid Anatomy Museum in Brooklyn and The Mütter Museum of the College of Physicians of Philadelphia, and cemeteries such as The Green-Wood Cemetery, are also covering these lost rituals. For example, this year, The Mütter Museum hosted an exhibition on hair art, most of which covered that particular Victorian mourning ritual.

In the Victorian era, it was popular to paint portraits of, or have photographs taken, with the dead. Today, these portraits might be deemed as creepy or bizarre, but during its time of popularity, posthumous portraiture or capturing the dead on camera, was accepted as a method of honoring and immortalizing the dead and coping with bereavement.

Posthumous Portraiture

Before the era of photography the desire to have a lasting memento of one's loved one often led to the creation of a posthumous portrait. However, this had a set of unique challenges.

Generally death was followed by a two to three day waiting period to ensure the loved one was truly dead. Victorians are often noted for their terror of premature burial. Such incidences were more common than one might think. For example, *The Victorian Book of the Dead* cites multiple instances of corpses sitting up during a wake and quotes evidence of premature burials from the newspapers of the day. Science had not advanced enough to differentiate between a coma and death.

The waiting period would give the grieving family an opportunity to locate an artist, and give that artist a window of time to create the perfect portrait of the beloved for the family. Since death has a habit of striking at inopportune times, the family would need to secure an artist quickly. The corpse might be disfigured or marked by disease, in a state of decomposition or lying supine in a coffin. Some artists agonized over posthumous portraits. With the time factor involved there was no room for mistakes; given that the portrait had to be created for a grieving family who would have wanted a perfect depiction of their loved one. There was no arranging the subject to the artist's liking, a subject that might be discolored, withered, swollen, deflated, bloated, or mangled. The aim of the posthumous portrait was to represent someone who was dead, as alive. Due to these challenges, the



William Sidney Mount (1807-1868), *Portrait of Jedidiah Williamson*, c. 1837. Courtesy the Long Island Museum. This posthumous portrait was commissioned by the Williamson family after the young boy was struck by a wagon.

artist would often charge twice the amount of what they would typically charge.¹

Popular American artists of the posthumous portrait in the nineteenth century included William Matthew Prior (1806-1873), Joseph Whiting Stock (1815-1855), Joseph Goodhue Chandler (1813-1884), and Isaac Wetherby (1819-1904).

Some of these portraits could feature the loved one mourning over the body of the recently deceased, for example, a portrait titled *Mrs. Peale Lamenting the Death of Her Child, Rachel Weeping* by Charles Willson Peale from 1772 depicts a woman in dark mourning clothes weeping into a large white handkerchief over the body of an infant, dressed in white.

Posthumous portraits are also embedded with subtle and curious imagery: from cats and dogs who were considered guardians for the "other world," children's toys, hammer and nails (suggested as possible symbols of Christ²), birds, and flowers. In some of the portraits, children are only wearing



Top to bottom: William Matthew Prior (1806-1873), *Baby in Blue*, c. 1845. National Gallery of Art; Artist unknown, *Memorial Portrait of Catherine Schultz* (1789-1832). The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

one shoe, a possible nod to the Christ child, as Jesus is depicted without a shoe in some medieval portraits. Children, or even adults, who died of cholera were often depicted as they were at the time of death with a blue-gray hue to their skin, for example the *Memorial Portrait of Catherine Schultz* in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, circa 1836, artist unidentified, depicts the skin of the deceased with a leaden tone. This skin tone was often due to the effects of cholera, which could significantly change the appearance of a person within a matter of hours. Posthumous portraits were frequently of children due to the high infant mortality rate in the nineteenth century. Often, the subjects are wearing their Sunday best, with hair immaculately styled, coiffed, and curled. This tradition of depicting the dead looking their best would continue with the rise of postmortem photography.

Postmortem Photography

The earliest known surviving photograph made in a camera, was taken by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce around 1826 in France. In the United States, further developments in photography were made by Samuel F. B. Morse and Winslow Homer. Samuel Morse, who was a well-known portrait painter of his day, was an early adopter of Louis Daguerre's photographic method.³ Morse was interested in this immortalizing technique because he was devastated by the death of his beloved wife Lucreita in 1825. He loved the idea of having a memento that could quickly capture a deceased loved one. Because photographs could be created more rapidly than a painted portrait, photography soon became the more popular way of depicting the deceased.

Moreover, in the early stages of photography, even the slightest hint of movement from the subject having their photograph taken, could result in a blurred photograph, hence all the portraits of frozen, grim faces from that era. By taking a photograph of the unmoving dead, it would ensure a perfect portrait by which to remember the loved one.

In 1839 the daguerreotype process was introduced into the United States. Within a year, that process was being used to capture recently deceased loved ones. In 1853 John F. Mascher invented a stereoscopic device that created a three-dimensional image out of side-by-side daguerreotypes.

Advances in photography, and the rise in "Spirit photography" in particular, coincide with the rising deaths during the Civil War. According to the American Battlefield Trust, approximately 620,000 soldiers died during the Civil War.⁴ As a result, a high percentage of the U. S. population was in mourning and seeking ways to commemorate the dead.⁵

Certainly one of the most striking aspects of postmortem photography is the number of photographs of dead infants. One of the most famous is that of Samuel Charles Stowe, the son of Harriet Beecher Stowe. He was her sixth child, and he died in a cholera epidemic in Cincinnati at eighteen months. The photograph, taken in 1849 (artist unidentified) is part of the collection at Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University. In this portrait, the infant lies on a bed, head resting on a pillow, simple white flowers (perhaps snowdrops) in his left hand. His eyes are closed, as though peacefully sleeping, and he is wearing a white gown. Harriet

Remember Me

*Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.*

-Christina Rossetti, 1849



L to R: Post-mortem photograph of Samuel Charles Stowe, 1849. Post-mortem tintype of an unidentified child, c. 1860. Photograph of unidentified woman and deceased infant, c. 1855.

Beecher Stowe, of course, is the author of the wildly popular, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Published three years later, the novel had profound effects on attitudes towards slavery in the United States, and was the second best-selling book of the nineteenth century after the Bible.⁶ In the context of the photography of her son, one scene from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is particularly striking. Uncle Tom (a black slave) rescues a young girl (perhaps five or six years old) from drowning. Her name is Eva, and she persuades her father to buy Uncle Tom. Eventually Eva falls terminally ill, and before she passes away, she gives a lock of her hair to each of the slaves, telling them they must become Christians so they can all be reunited in

Heaven. Perhaps Stowe was considering the death of her infant son when she wrote about the deathbed of Little Eva.

In addition to the portrait of Harriet Beecher Stowe's son, the recent exhibition at the American Folk Art Museum featured other photographs and daguerreotypes by unidentified artists from the collection of the Burns Family (Stanley B. Burns and Elizabeth A. Burns). A hand-tinted daguerreotype titled *A Posthumous Mourning Portrait: Little Drummer Girl, Sarah A. Lawrence of 119 Hudson Avenue*, reveals an infant, perhaps eighteen months old, lying on a bed with blue sheets. Her eyes are open. She is wearing a faded-red patterned dress, and a drum is slung over her shoulders.



Post-mortem daguerreotype of a deceased infant, c. 1840.

Infants were often depicted with toys. In another daguerreotype from 1848, titled *Father and Daughter with Toy Rattle*, (artist unidentified) a bearded adult man standing in a black suit, props up his infant in a blue, perhaps, solid-colored dress. The infant, whose eyes are open, is holding a rattle.

From the same collection is another daguerreotype, *Sisters Holding Photograph of Deceased Loved One*, circa 1846, two gloomy looking sisters stand side-by-side, one staring into the distance, one staring directly at the camera, holding a portrait of their loved one taken while alive. The portrait is so tiny it's hard to discern who the figure might be. In another tinted daguerreotype from 1860 titled *Mother in a Country Dress Cradling Her Infant*, a mother in a collared housedress, hair pinned back in a bun, holds her infant in her arms. The infant's eyes are closed, and the infant is wearing an all-white dress.

Curiously, in the photograph *Mother and Daughter with Eyes Painted Open* circa 1875, an infant, who is cradled in her mother's arms, has her eyes

painted open. The mother wears a black mourning dress. The infant wears a white dress, embroidered with flowers, and her hair is curled.

Often, the subjects are depicted holding flowers or a single rose as with the daguerreotype, *Young Woman with Rose*, circa 1844. Here, a young lady all in black lies with her eyes closed, holding a simple white rose in her left hand.

With either painted or photographed posthumous portraits, it was important to get it right. While the loved one was assumed to have moved on to higher realms, the ones left behind only had this memento as a permanent reminder of the life that had once been. Photographer Mathew Brady stated in 1856, "you cannot tell how soon it might be too late."⁷ In this context, he had placed an advertisement in *The New York Daily Tribune* urging readers to sit for their portrait while they still could.

Spirit Photography

With the unprecedented loss of life during the Civil War the overwhelming grief that swept the country caused many to seek a connection with the dead. This coincided with the rise of Spiritualism, a movement based on the



Spirit photograph of Abraham Lincoln with Mary Todd Lincoln, William H. Mumler, c. 1869. Mumler's photos were later exposed as fraudulent.

belief that the spirits of the dead exist. Spiritualists believed that the dead had the ability and motivation to communicate with the living. Its popularity commenced, in this country, around 1848, when Kate and Margaret Fox, two young teenagers in Hydesville, New York, claimed they were in communication with a peddler who had been murdered and buried in their basement. The sisters asserted that this person communicated with them through a series of “rappings.” The sisters went on to become celebrities and performed séances throughout the United States.

William H. Mumler was a pioneer in what came to be known as Spirit photography in the 1860s, and he was directly influenced by the Spiritualists of the day. He had an office at 630 Broadway in New York City. An engraver by trade, he learned the art of photography on weekends, and was merely dabbling in photography when he took his first “Spirit photograph” in 1862. He subsequently became interested in the work of Mrs. Hannah Green Stuart, proprietress of a photographic studio and art gallery. As Mumler dabbled in photography, Stuart dabbled in mediumship. She claimed to be in communication with the dead, and also claimed she could diagnose illnesses. Mumler said he had seen men faint under her charismatic powers.

Mumler discovered his spirit photography technique by accident after he saw a second figure in a photograph he took of himself. He recognized the other woman who appeared in the portrait as his cousin who had passed away twelve years prior. The explanation for this was that the image was a double exposure from an old emulsion plate. On discussion with Stuart, he decided to pursue this new discovery. He told his story to Dr. Gardner who then reported the matter to a newspaper called the *Herald of Progress*,⁸ leaving out the logical explanation. A week later the newspaper published an account of the image’s appearance. This caused quite a sensation in the Spiritualist community.

Seeing there was a market for it, Mumler started working as a medium, taking people’s pictures and doctoring the negatives to add lost loved ones into them (mostly using other photographs as basis). Some of his famous photographs include the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison with a shackled spirit; the medium Fannie Conant with a Spirit image of her brother; a curious Spirit image of a child beside a photograph of a (presumed) family member; and most famous of all, Mary Todd Lincoln posing in a seated position with the

Spirit image of her husband standing behind her, ghostly white hands placed firmly on her shoulders. Some of the images are rather comforting, for example, one depicts Mrs. H. B. Sawyer being embraced by a spirit she claimed to be her late husband who himself was holding a spirit that she thought was the infant child she lost.

Mumler’s fraud was discovered after he put identifiable living Boston residents in the photos as spirits. He was put on trial in New York City in 1869, and even P. T. Barnum testified against him (Barnum had been photographed by Mumler with the spirit of Abraham Lincoln beside him). Though Mumler was acquitted at the trial, his reputation was ruined and he died in poverty in 1884. It has been decided by photography experts that all of Mumler’s photographs are fraudulent. No one is quite sure of which technique he used, but there are a number of theories among experienced photographers.

Other photographers also went into the Spirit photography racket. One was Fred A. Hudson, who took many Spirit photographs for Spiritualists in 1872. Through the 1880s into the early twentieth century Spirit photography remained popular and Spiritualism had many notable proponents such as the celebrated writer Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and the scientist Sir William Crookes. However, as more frauds were exposed, the practice of Spirit photography started to fall out of fashion. It is interesting to consider that despite all our twenty-first century skepticism, there has been such a resurgence of interest and curiosity about these rituals of mourning from the past. What has not changed is our need to process death and mourn for those we have loved. Many look to the past for new ways of understanding. Perhaps as nineteenth-century artist Eugène Delacroix wrote, “The new is very old; you might even say it is the oldest thing of all.”⁹



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Bruce Price, William Lee Price Memorial, Hollenback Cemetery, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 1876. Photo by Ralph Lieberman.

Bruce Price and the “Purely Greek” Tombstone

Michael J. Lewis

Bruce Price, the brilliant architect of Tuxedo Park and the Chateau Frontenac, cultivated no distinctive personal style, as did H. H. Richardson and Frank Furness; he made no radical innovations, as did Louis Sullivan; he did not even have interesting vices like those that made Stanford White famous. His reputation rests entirely on the quality of his work, which was consistently tasteful, gracious, and imaginative. Least known of that work, but perhaps most imaginative, is the group of poignant funeral monuments that he designed for his family, his friends, and himself.

One thinks of Price as the quintessential New Yorker but he did move there until he was in his early thirties.¹ In fact, he was a southerner, and one who found his loyalty sorely tested by the Civil War. He was born in Cumberland, Maryland, in 1845, the son of a prominent lawyer. He attended Princeton University, briefly, and after the war broke out he withdrew, perhaps to join the Confederate army. At any rate he was apprehended by the police on his way south with a carpet bag, a few months before Gettysburg.² Opting for architecture instead of war, he spent the years from 1864 to 1868 in the office of Baltimore architect Rudolph Niernsee. He then withdrew along with fellow draftsman E. F. Baldwin to establish their own lucrative partnership.³ But the partner who really mattered was Price's wife.

In 1870 Price married Josephine Lee, the daughter of a wealthy and well-connected coal merchant from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The Lees were part of the anthracite aristocracy, one of the most financially secure and socially stable social elites in American history. Sitting atop limitless wealth, they needed only to live respectable lives, promote art and culture, and marry one another's daughters. They lived pleasantly in hospitable houses with generous verandas fronting the Susquehanna River. Having married into this fashionable society, Price did not need to hustle for work; once he moved to Wilkes-Barre in 1873, an endless pageant of these riverfront mansions flowed from his office.⁴

These buildings gave him the theme of his career—the architecture of gracious leisure. The Chateau Frontenac in Quebec City is the most celebrated of resort hotels, but he designed many others, from Montreal and Banff Springs to Bar Harbor and Long Island. His lifelong study of civilized leisure culminated at Tuxedo Park, the fashionable summer resort he built for Pierre Lorillard outside New York City. All were distinguished by a superb sense of good manners, how a building should comport itself and behave. And so we are obscurely pleased when we learn that Price's daughter was Emily Post, the author of the influential *Guide to Etiquette*, who made good manners her life's cause.

Although Price left for New York in 1877, he maintained ties to Wilkes-Barre till the end of his life and when he died in 1903,

he was buried there under a memorial of his own design. This is in Hollenback Cemetery, the romantic rural cemetery that served the elite of the city. Within a few hundred paces are other tombstones from across Price's career, which trace the maturation of his thought as he tackled the same artistic problem across three decades. Nowhere else is the arc of his career laid out so clearly and in such concentrated form.

The earliest of these is the saddest object an architect can ever design, a tombstone for his young child. William Lee Price was barely two when he died in December 1875 and over his grave Price raised a poignant Gothic marker.⁵ In a sharp gabled aedicule, he set a cherub, its form so detailed and specific that it must be a portrait. Tombstone of this type are usually treated as a symbolic house, with a gable carried on two piers that frame a recessed panel. But here the central panel seems to detach itself from its frame and at the top it breaks free in an emphatic upward gesture. The angled ears at the side of the gable flare sharply outward, and the crocket at the apex splits apart like a sprouting bud to burst into the flower that is the cross. Perhaps these were too many formal ideas to cram into such a tiny shrine but the central motif is unmistakable and poignant: Price's son rising heavenward as an angelic being.

Price designed his son's tomb when he was still in his High Victorian Gothic phase. The medieval character, the sharp angularity of the moldings, the intersecting and interpenetrating forms—all these were hallmarks of Price's early work. Only the customary polychromy is missing. He was still in this phase when he emerged on the national scene in 1876, when the newly formed *American Architect and Building News* began regularly to publish his Wilkes-Barre work. But in that same year came the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, when the country began to recoil from the pyrotechnics and structural drama of the High Victorian. When Price later spoke about his exuberant early work, it was with chagrin:

In the last period...everything must be quaint and odd, rooms shooting off at unexpected angles, or unexpectedly appearing where they were least wanted; rooms at various levels, with steps up or down to them; rambling strange affairs, a mixture of all sorts of odds and ends. And yet, as abominable as the whole system is, I acquired a very considerable reputation in doing these very things of which I now absolutely disapprove.⁶

(Here one gets a foretaste of the distinctive voice of Emily Post, the charm and wit, but also a quick eye for the social abominations.)

By the time Price placed another family memorial at the cemetery, scarcely a decade later, the High Victorian intensity was giving way to refinement and restraint. The grave marker of Washington Lee (1821-1883), his father-in-law, was once

again was an abstraction of a building, but in this case a domed classical temple. Price set it on a square base, and to use the transition from square to circle to give it interest and tension. The base is beveled at the corners, each bevel turning into a projecting bracket at the next level, then into a support for a fluted pilaster in the superstructure. These pilasters flare outwards to carry the circular dome above, giving the memorial a swollen silhouette that is anything but classical, despite the classical pedigree of its parts. At the apex is the symbolic flame that the ancients used to represent eternity.

Price may have been drawing on the elements of classical architecture but he used them with uncommon freedom and imagination, without any show of archaeological pedantry. He was still a picturesque designer, and he had a weakness for

mausoleum; instead he made an open-air shrine, approached from the north. The visitor climbs uphill, passes the grave of young William, and faces a flight of stone steps, flanked by a pair of upright stone slabs. These are modeled after Greek funerary stelae, one for Price and one for his wife. Beyond these comes the stone platform, surrounded on three sides by Doric columns bearing a simple marble lintel. The columns are unfluted, except for a narrow band at the collar. And there is no roof, only a lattice of wooden beams, open to the sky.

The model for this was Greek, and it comes from remotest antiquity. In the *Iliad*, which draws on sources nearly a millennium older than Classical Greece, there are no temple buildings; the gods are worshipped at altars, under the open sky. Price's gentle hillside sanctuary was an abstraction of one



Bruce Price, Washington Lee Memorial, Hollenback Cemetery, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, c. 1883. Bruce Price, Bruce and Josephine Price Memorial, Hollenback Cemetery, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, c. 1903. Photos by Ralph Lieberman.

those three cardinal qualities of the picturesque: variety, contrast, and surprise. A more scholarly designer would have smoothed the transition from square to circle, but at every stage Price makes it bold and abrupt. And yet there are passages of real delicacy, as in the gorgeously carved roses in the panels between the pilasters. If this was a picturesque architecture, it was one that aspired to Beauty rather than Truth, the watchword of the Gothic Revival. In that sense, the Washington Lee monument was the funerary counterpart to Price's exquisite Shingle Style houses of the decade.

Price, like most of his generation, embraced academic classicism in the 1890s. In such impeccably studied works as his American Surety Building in New York or his lovely Richard Morris Hunt monument on Fifth Avenue at Seventieth Street, along Central Park, he eliminated the lively flashes of personality that sparkle in his earlier work. And so it is fitting that his ultimate memorial would be an imaginative but scholarly performance, the hillside pergola that marks his own grave and that of his wife.⁷

Price had no interest in a conventional temple-form

of these open-air altars, where the mystery of death might be contemplated under the heavens. It is significant that there is nothing archaeologically literal about the design, other than the stelae with their exquisitely carved palmettes.

It is curious that the imagery of the memorial is pagan, with no Christian references. One can only speculate what that meant, for Price himself said nothing about it; we have only the visual evidence.⁸ Although Price was a gifted writer, who wrote a remarkably thoughtful essay on the design of suburban houses, otherwise he wrote very little.⁹ Fortunately, tucked away in a local newspaper, is his program for one of his Wilkes-Barre monuments.¹⁰ Never again, as far as we know, would he speak so clearly and eloquently about the ideas and theory that underpin his work.

George Woodward (1809-1875) was a lawyer and distinguished politician, and one of the most influential figures of the Democratic Party in Pennsylvania. At various times a United States Congressman, chief justice to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, and candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, he just missed serving on the U. S. Supreme Court (nominated

by President Polk, he was not confirmed by the senate). His views were in many respects noxious. Woodward was an apologist for slavery, who notoriously claimed that “Human bondage and property in man is divinely sanctioned, if not ordained.”¹¹ And yet he was also one of Wilkes-Barre’s most distinguished citizens, and so when it came to designing his funeral monument it was natural that his family should turn to Price.¹²

Rather than designing a generic monument, Price aimed for something that would express the specific qualities of Woodward’s personality and his career. It was to speak “of the man and his profession, of his force of character, of his vigor of intellect and purity of life, of his dignity and worth, and of the majesty of the great calling to which his life was devoted.” This was a tall order, for Woodward was not a particularly warm or appealing personality. Rather, he was imperious and forbidding, and spoke with a bluntness that disconcerted even his friends. Frank Gowen, the president of the Reading Railroad and a close friend, confessed that Woodward “did not know tact. He did not know the meaning of the word”—an odd sentiment to find in a funeral tribute.¹³ Woodward’s physical appearance was as arresting as his character; he was uncommonly tall and slender, and spoke with a “peculiar melody of voice.”¹⁴ All this made him a challenging subject to render, unless literally in a statue.

But instead of a statue, or any other conventional monument, Price conceived an entirely new form, a poetic metaphor that he took from the ancient funeral pyre:

the traditional pile upon which the ancient Athenian burned his illustrious dead...A great pile battering up from its base to its summit was built of wood and other inflammable materials; upon this heap was laid the body of the hero, and...consigned to the flames.¹⁵

A funeral pyre is the most temporary of all architectural objects, but Price was captivated by its formal qualities, its compact silhouette and its mighty tapered shape. Of course, such a pyre is pagan and Woodward was a lifelong Episcopalian. To remove its exclusively pagan character, Price placed atop his pyre “with arms out-stretched to heaven, the Christian’s sacrifice—the cross.” And just as the Greeks adorned the heads of their heroes with laurel leaves, Price marked the head and arms and head of the cross with bronze wreaths, now lost but visible in his drawing.¹⁶

Price’s greatest challenge was to evoke the character of his subject, and entirely through abstract means. Woodward’s “firmness and endurance” was conveyed by its boldly battered shape while “the idea of the masculine” was expressed in the bold rustication. And indeed, the sense is of a mighty implacable personality, willful and determined, but also quivering with nervous energy. As for Woodward’s legacy, the monument’s discs or *paterae* were “emblems of the immortality of the soul” and its frieze of stars at its inscribed tablet represented “Christianity and (among the ancients) fame.”

Price proclaimed that the Woodward monument was “purely Greek,” a curious boast for something with none of the devices of

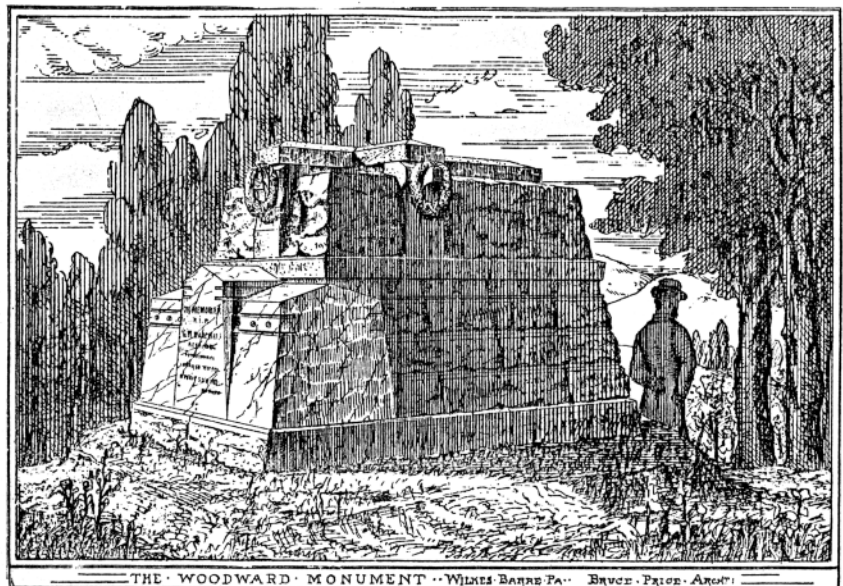
classical architecture—column, cornice, or pediment—but with the cross of Christianity. Yet there is more than one way of emulating the ancient Greeks; one can copy their forms or copy their principles. This was the insight of the *Néo-Grec*, the French intellectual movement of the 1820s that revitalized thinking about classical architecture. The young radical architects who created the doctrine knew that the ancients did not design with their nose in books, measuring details with calipers; they designed with imaginative freedom. Followers of this movement could only look with contempt on the literal Greek Revival, with its craze for spurious but archaeologically correct Parthenons.

For Price, who had grown up in an orthodox Greek Revival house, an 1842 performance by John Notman, the *Néo-Grec* was a revelation. He would have learned of it from the architect Henry van Brunt, whose essay “Greek Lines” gave American readers its first cogent account of the new movement.¹⁷ The article appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* in the summer of 1861, just as Price was preparing himself for Princeton, and we can be certain that Price read every word. His essay on the Woodward monument, printed in the appendix below, is unimaginable without it. In particular, Price noted what “Greek Lines” had to say about funereal monuments:

Structures of this character, demanding earnestly in their composition the expression of human sentiment, have hitherto been in most cases unsatisfactory, having been built out of a narrow range of Renaissance, Egyptian and Gothic *motives*, originally invented for far different purposes, and, since then, *classified*, as it were, for use, and reduced to that inflexible system out of which have come the formal restrictions of modern architecture. Hence these *motives* have never come near enough to human life, in its individual characteristics, to be plastic for the expression of those emotions to which we desire to give the immortality of stone in memory of departed friends.¹⁸

In other words, conventionalized forms were impersonal and could never provide “an architectural version of the life

AMERICAN ARCHITECT AND BUILDING NEWS. AUG. 5. 1876.



THE WOODWARD MONUMENT. WILKES BARRE PA. BRUCE PRICE ARCHT.



Bruce Price, Woodward Monument, Hollenback Cemetery, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, 1876. Photo by Ralph Lieberman.

and public services of the distinguished deceased.” For this, only abstract forms and lines suited.

The taut elasticity of the Woodward monument, and the razor-sharp incision of its details and moldings, suggest first-hand inspection of actual *Néo-Grec* monuments. Did Price make a pilgrimage to see the funeral monuments in Paris that Van Brunt praised? It seems likely.¹⁹ The startling tomb of Admiral Dumont d’Urville in Montparnasse Cemetery, designed by Simon-Claude Constant-Dufeux, would likely have been at the top of his list. At any rate, the Woodward monument reveals that Price in 1876 was far more than a provincial American architect, diligently keeping up with the latest productions of the English Gothic Revival, and that he was intensely interested in the intellectual argument for a purely abstract design, not beholden to the specific ornament of the various period style.

The “purely Greek” Woodward Monument is unique in Price’s career, but it is essential to understanding his later work, particularly those brilliant Shingle Style cottages at Tuxedo Park that he created in a single heroic bout in 1885–1886. Each is remarkable for its poetry of silhouette and mass, none more so than the cottage of Henry I. Barbey, whose shingled surfaces slope and tilt inward as it were trying desperately to be a pyramid. The effect is akin to *entasis*, the Greek word for the expressive swelling of a column under pressure. (The original word referred to the bulging of a form when exerted, as when an arm muscle swells when pulling the string of a bow.) The resemblance would seem entirely coincidental except for the Woodward monument, which is the missing link between the radical *Néo-Grec* of early nineteenth-century France and the abstract Shingle Style compositions of late nineteenth-century America.²⁰ If no one spoke of the *Néo-*

Grec by that point, this is not because its insights were passé but because they had passed into the mainstream of architectural thought.

Emily Post once wrote that “letters of condolence are like love letters, in that they are too sacred to follow a set form.” Her father seems to have felt the same thing about the tombstone, which is the architectural manifestation of condolence. None of his follow a set form, as we learn from a small cemetery in northeastern Pennsylvania, where the whole of his career is reprised in miniature by the poignant objects he created for the most silent and obliging of all his clients.



Acknowledgements:

I am deeply indebted to that trio of Baltimore scholars, Carlos P. Avery, Randolph Chalfant, and Jim Dilts, who unstintingly shared their knowledge of Bruce Price. I am also especially grateful to David B. Brownlee who patiently supervised the first version of this essay, an M.A. paper written more years ago than I would care to count.

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“The Woodward Monument—Erected in Hollenback Cemetery, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.”

Bruce Price (1824-1903)

The motif of this structure is the Greek Funeral Pyre, the traditional pile upon which the ancient Athenian burned his illustrious dead.

A great pile battering up from its base to its summit was built of wood and other inflammable materials; upon this heap was laid the body of the hero, and with him whatever, (whether things of life or inanimate) was most intimately linked with his fame. The whole, with funeral rites, was consigned to the flames; the embers at last were extinguished with oil and wine, the ashes of the dead collected, and with the bones—which were cleansed with oil and wine—were placed with sacred care in an urn. Whatever of ritual, as well as authority, there was for these rites at the Pyre—as well as at the tomb—came from their great law-giver, Solon, who revised the Greek funeral ceremonies and gave laws for governing them. We can borrow the thought that poetical justice would make the type of the Greek Pyre an appropriate ideal for a memorial to a great Jurist.

The burning of the body and its accompanying sacrificial rites was an Eastern custom as old as history. In their classical superstition the soul of the cremated ascended to heaven, or to a region of eternal bliss, upon the fumes of the burning altar. The dead lay upon its back with open arms and face to the sky. Amidst chant or dirge, the flames leap up and all is consumed; the ashes are gathered in the urn, and these few cinders, housed in their pot of baked clay, become the memorial of even their greatest. The Greeks rarely raised monuments to persons. It is but a step from these classic ceremonies to their embodiment into an ideal that shall have form and shall last.

Built of most enduring stone, we rear our Pyre at the feet of him whose memory we perpetuate; upon its summit we lay with arms outstretched to heaven, the Christian's sacrifice—the cross. As if hewn from the living rock it lays in its rigid purity, its arms resting upon consoles wreathed with circlets or immortelles. In the cornice are paterae, or discs, emblems of the immortality of the soul, and of the imperishable. Upon the tablets are bands with the stars symbolizing Christianity and (among the ancients) fame. Of the schools of plastic art, the Greek lends itself most happily to such a work. Its perfect simplicity and refinement make its selection the most appropriate. Our monument is therefore purely Greek, and every detail that can lend dignity to the work has been borrowed. The battering or sloping up of the line of the structure gives it firmness and endurance. Its boldly rusticated construction gives it dignity and embodies the idea of the masculine, and of firmness and power both in the law and in the man. A simple corniced band unites the whole and gives unity and harmony. At the foot of the cross and forming part of the structure, stand in purity of line and surface—like the Pylons at the tombs of the kings—the great dies, and speak upon their memorial tablets the purpose of the pile. As for the style of the work its prototype proclaims its fitness—for its success as a monument must depend upon its embodiment of the character of him to whom it is reared. So, in its composition the studious effort has been to make it speak of itself, of the man and his profession, of his force of character, of his vigor of intellect and purity of life, of his dignity and worth, and of the majesty of the great calling to which his life was devoted. Such has been the problem, the work as it stands is the effort to embody it.

Notes

1. Although there is no modern biography, there is a dissertation: see Samuel H. Graybill, Jr., “Bruce Price, American Architect (1824-1903),” diss., Yale University, 1957.
2. “Local Matters, Charged with Attempting to Go South,” *Baltimore Sun* (March 27, 1863), p. 1.
3. Randolph Chalfant and Charles Belfoure, *Niernsee and Nielson, Architects of Baltimore* (Baltimore: Baltimore Architecture Foundation, 2006); Carlos P. Avery, *E. Francis Baldwin: The B&O, Baltimore and Beyond* (Baltimore: Baltimore Architecture Foundation, 2003).
4. Price faced one competitor in Wilkes-Barre, Willis G. Hale (1848-1907), who did not enjoy the same social connections and had to make do designing schools and cast-iron storefronts. Hale would later win fame as Philadelphia's great architectural eccentric.
5. Obituary, *Daily Record of the Times* (December 7, 1875), p. 3.
6. Bruce Price, quoted in Barr Ferree, “A Talk with Bruce Price,” in *Great American Architects Series* (New York: Da Capo, 1979), p. 44, reprinted from *Architectural Record*, June 1899.
7. Price died in 1903 in Paris, having gone there to recuperate from an undisclosed stomach ailment that proved to be cancer. Josephine Price died six years later, a very early automobile fatality. See “Mrs. Bruce Price Meets Tragic End in Auto Accident in York State,” *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* (Oct. 18, 1909) p. 1.
8. Price's monument bears are similar to his George A. Fuller memorial, Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago. See the *Inland Architect*, XXXVII, no. 6 (July 1901).
9. Bruce Price, “The Suburban House,” *Scribner's Magazine* VIII (July 1890), pp. 3-19.
10. Bruce Price, “The Woodward Monument—Erected in Hollenbeck Cemetery, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.,” *Wilkes-Barre Record* (February 22, 1878), p. 4.
11. See the rebuke in Frances Anne Kemble, *The Views of Judge Woodward and Bishop Hopkins on Negro Slavery at the South* (Philadelphia: Union League, 1863), p. 3.
12. *Daily Record of the Times* (Sept. 12, 1876), p. 2.
13. “George Washington Woodward,” *Luzerne Legal Register*, vol. 4, no. 29 (July 16, 1875) p. 194, p. 204.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
15. “The Woodward Monument,” *American Architect and Building News* (August 5, 1876).
16. *Ibid.*
17. Henry van Brunt, “Greek Lines,” *Atlantic Monthly* 7, no. 44 (June 1861), pp. 654-668; 8, no. 45 (July 1861), pp. 76-88.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
19. But when did this happen? In one account, Price “spent nearly a year abroad” before commencing his partnership with Baldwin in 1868: “Bruce Price Dies in Paris,” *Baltimore Sun* (May 30, 1903), p. 2. Or is it true that in 1872 Washington Lee “offered to send him and his wife to Europe, for a year of combined study and pleasure providing he would take his mother-in-law along”? “Museum Receives Ebony Gem Chest from Emily Post,” *Montgomery Advertiser* (April 11, 1954), p. 12 C.
20. For Price and the Shingle Style, see Vincent J. Scully, Jr., *The Shingle Style and The Stick Style* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971). For the Barbey House, and other work by Bruce at Tuxedo Park, see George William Sheldon, *Artistic Country-Seats: Types of Recent American Villa and Cottage Architecture with Instances of Country Club-Houses* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1886/87), reprinted as *American Country Houses of the Gilded Age* (Dover, 1982).

Reprises

A Tale of Two Graves: Barilla Adeline Taylor and Louisa Maria Wells “Mill Girls” of Lowell, Massachusetts

Bridget M. Marshall

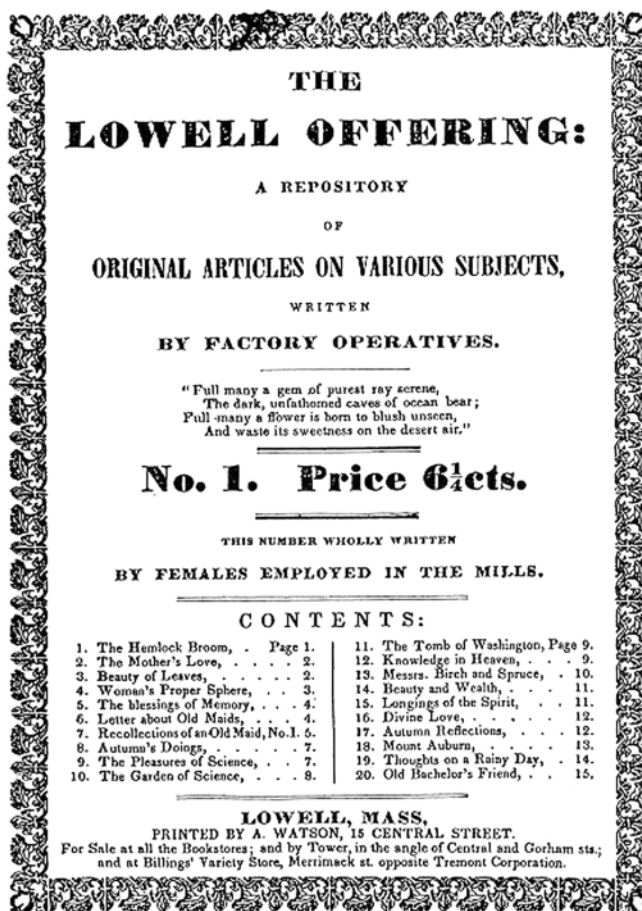
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Lowell, Massachusetts is perhaps best known for being the birthplace of Beat writer Jack Kerouac (1922-1969), and Kerouac's grave (located in the city's Edson Cemetery) is likely the most popular gravestone in Lowell. For those interested in further graveyard tourism, there is no better spot to visit than the Lowell Cemetery. Dedicated on June 20, 1841, it was modeled on Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge (founded in 1831), which is known as the first “Garden Cemetery” (more frequently referred to as a “Rural Cemetery” then) in the United States.¹ A February 1842 account appearing in the *Magazine of Horticulture* described the Lowell Cemetery as “eminently picturesque and beautiful,”² and in 1998, Lowell Cemetery was put on the National Register of Historic Places. We know that many of the girls who worked in the Lowell mills in the mid-nineteenth century enjoyed taking walks through the cemetery during their limited leisure hours because they wrote about such cemetery rambles in their magazine, *The Lowell Offering* (1840-1845).³ The cemetery contains at least three graves of former mill girls. Of particular interest are two monuments that are less than a hundred yards apart—one for Barilla Taylor (1828-1845) and one for Louisa Maria Wells (1818-1886). The stark difference between them is immediately noticeable in comparing the size of the monuments. Taylor's simple stone is flat on the ground, measuring fifty inches by twenty-two inches, with the edges of its outline covered by grass; Well's monument can be seen from Taylor's, standing at thirteen feet tall and more than six feet wide, a sculpture portraying larger-than-life human figures.

The two women—whose deaths were just forty years apart—both worked in the mills of Lowell as “operatives,” so termed at the time because they were operating looms and other machinery. Their monuments (and the stories of how they got there) reveal complicated stories of families dealing with the deaths of single working women in the nineteenth century.

Barilla Adeline Taylor (1828-1845)

Born in Roxbury, Maine on June 29, 1828, fifteen-year-old Barilla Taylor headed to Lowell to seek employment in



The Lowell Offering, a magazine written by the “mill girls” of Lowell, Massachusetts, c. 1840.

October of 1843, where she found work at the Hamilton Mills. She was one of nearly 30,000 women who by that time had left their homes across New England to come to Lowell to work. Whether she was sickly before she arrived, or whether her illness was brought on by her working and living conditions is unclear, but she died on August 22, 1845, at the age of just seventeen. Records indicate that she died in Andover; the cause was “typhoid fever.”⁴ What we know of her almost two-year stint in Lowell comes from letters written and received by Taylor and her family that provide intriguing details, but leave much unexplained. On July 14, 1844, Barilla

wrote to her parents and told them of her good health, but she remarks that at her first boarding house, she was given little to eat, and says “I was sick there, and I don’t wonder;”⁵ she also mentions that she still has a doctor bill to pay. Letters indicate that the family was apprised of her illness, but due to limited finances, they were not able to get to her or bring her home before she died. Pliny Tidd (a friend of Byron Taylor, Barilla’s older brother) wrote a letter to Barilla’s father on March 5, 1846—almost seven months after her death—indicating that he had had Barilla’s body moved to the Lowell Cemetery in November of 1845. The specifics of why and how are not explained; however, the letter does explain, in considerable detail, the costs of the stone. Tidd writes:

I have had Barilla moved to the cemetery at Lowell on the 14 of Nov. 1845. Also the stones put up, the whole of them is \$12.75. I had a name put on, the cost of which was 1.12 the putting them up, 50 cts. These I claim to pay for, which will leave the cost to you at only \$11.12. They are all good strate stones and engraved in good taste.⁶



Gravestone of Barilla A. Taylor (1828-1846). Photo by Bridget Marshall. Reprinted with permission from The Association of Gravestone Studies.

The whole cost of \$12.75 is about \$412.00 in today’s terms.⁷ Another way to consider this cost is to look at what \$12.75 was at the time: consider that Barilla’s average wage for an entire month’s work at Hamilton Mills was about \$12.00.⁸

Tidd claims that Barilla’s stone is “in good taste,” and it is indeed a modest, simple marker; it lies flat in the ground and is easily overlooked. At the top is the urn and willow motif that is quite common to stones of that period. The engraving reads:

Barilla A./ daughter of Stephen B. /
& Melinda Taylor, / Died Aug. 22, 1845 /
Æt 17 yrs.

Four lines of a poem appear beneath:

Is there a thought, sad sorrow healing
which can a while your grief suspend?
Yes! there is a sweet, a holy feeling,
‘Tis the remembrance of a friend!

The untitled poem is a popular one from the time. It appears in at least one book dating as far back as 1834—*Parting Gift to a Christian Friend*—and is reprinted in many gift books featuring popular sentimental poetry of the time. At the very bottom of the stone it indicates “Of Roxbury, ME.” Barilla’s stone does not particularly attract attention; but about a hundred yards away, another mill girl’s monument is definitely a major attraction for this cemetery.



Louisa M. Wells (1818-1886) monument. Photo by Bridget Marshall. Reprinted with permission from The Association of Gravestone Studies.

Louisa Marie Wells (1818-1886)

Born in 1818 in Proctorsville, Vermont, Louisa Wells eventually (it’s not clear when) moved to Lawrence, Massachusetts, where, when she was thirty-two years old, she worked at the Atlantic Mills. By 1860, she moved to Lowell, where records indicate she lived with her widowed mother, and she continued employment as a mill hand. By 1874, at age

fifty-seven, she was “residing in her own home” at 261 Varnum Avenue in Lowell. She died in 1886, at the age of sixty-eight in Lowell, with cause of death listed as “Disease of heart.”⁹ She had already purchased two plots in the Lowell Cemetery, one for herself and the other for her mother, who was already buried there. This is where the story gets interesting.

Wells’ will specifically stated that all her remaining money was to be used to erect “a suitable and proper monument” on her already-purchased grave in the Lowell Cemetery. It turned out that at her death, there was something around \$8,000.00 in her estate, a substantial sum for the time, and indeed, a remarkable sum for a grave marker. To put that sum in context, according to the 1888 *Annual Report of the Trustees of Lowell Cemetery*, cemetery lots there cost \$250.00 at that time;¹⁰ a lot in the Lowell Cemetery in 2015 costs \$1,200.00.¹¹ While accurate comparative calculations for the value are hard to determine, the most conservative calculations suggest that Wells’ \$8,000.00 in 1886 would equate to roughly \$200,000.00 in 2015 dollars.¹²

Wells had never married and had no children, but she did have other relatives, and at least one of them was not happy about the plan to spend this grand sum on a grave marker. Josephine Leland Chase, who was a first cousin to Louisa (Louisa’s mother’s brother was Josephine’s father) contested the will, initiating a lawsuit that dragged on for almost twenty years. According to the suit *Davis v. Chase*,¹³ the plaintiffs indicated that \$8,000.00 was not a “suitable and proper” amount of money to spend on such a memorial. Chase’s lawyer pointed to the fact that “the will was dated twelve years before her death,” suggesting that at the time she wrote the will, she did not have as much money, and presumably would not have left such a large sum for that purpose. According to the legal brief, the distant heirs contended that “only a portion of the property” should be used for

fitting up the burial lot [], and that the rest of the fund should be distributed among the heirs at law and next of kin.¹⁴

The most significant next-of-kin was of course Josephine Chase (who was married with six children at the time). Josephine Chase—who had lived in Lowell since at least 1880—stood to gain considerably if she could overturn the will. In 1902, Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes pronounced,

if a single woman not otherwise distinguished should be minded to prolong the remembrance of her family name by a beautiful monument over her grave, we could not pronounce it unsuitable or improper as a matter of law.¹⁵

Thus, in this ruling—made in 1902, almost sixteen years after her death—the court decided that Louisa was to have her monument, to be paid from her assets worth at least \$8,000.00 plus interest.

In the intervening years, Wells’ original executor (John Davis) had died, and the cause of Wells’ monument fell to George F. Richardson, who, according to a 1904 article in the *Lowell Daily Courier*, desired to make sure that the monument “would reflect credit upon the deceased lady, and at the same time benefit the city of Lowell.”¹⁶ His interest not merely that the monument honor Louisa, but also somehow

benefit the city seems to suggest that, like the disgruntled heirs, he too believed that such a huge sum of money should not be spent merely to memorialize just one woman.

With more than \$8,000.00 to spend, Richardson reached out to a sculptor with ties to the area and to his own family: Daniel Chester French. French is well known now as the creator of the 1920 Lincoln Memorial in Washington D. C., but at that time he was already well-known for the *Minute Man* statue in Concord (1875) and *John Harvard* in the Harvard Yard (1884). French accepted the commission for the Wells monument in 1904; his account book indicates that he had a contract with George Richardson to complete the sculpture by June of 1906, for the amount of \$5,000.00. (I’ve not yet been able to figure out where the remaining \$3,000.00 went, though the purchase of a base, transportation and installation of the monument, and legal fees all seem to be likely, if still unconfirmed answers.) The already well-known French had many commissions at the time, and handed this one off to an assistant named Evelyn Beatrice Longman. French’s records indicate from the start that “All [money for the Wells contract] goes to Miss Longman,” and his accounts indicate that he made regular advances to her for the work until he received the payment from Richardson. While some contemporary articles continued to refer to French as the sculptor, records make it clear that Longman was the artist. An article appearing in the *New York Times* in December of 1906 praised Longman’s work on the monument,¹⁷ and Longman deserves to be more well-known today. One particular piece of her work that art historian Ellen Wiley Todd has suggested has a connection to the Wells monument is her *Triangle Fire Memorial to the Unknowns* in the Evergreens Cemetery, Brooklyn, a 1912 monument erected on the gravesite of the 146 workers, almost all of them women, who were killed in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.¹⁸

The Wells monument is beautiful and impressive, standing thirteen feet high. It features a seated female mill worker, apparently at rest, with a bobbin in her hand. An enormous winged female angel figure appears behind the mill girl, reaching out to touch her shoulder. The inscription on the base of the monument reads:

Out of the fibre of her daily tasks
she wove the fabric of a useful life
Louisa Maria Wells
Died February 20 1886

The monument immediately became a celebrated and much-visited site in the city. In 1928, an article in the *Lowell Sun* declared that “scores of visiting tourists inquire of the ‘Mill Girl Monument,’”¹⁹ and in 1936, F. W. Coburn wrote in a Lowell paper admiringly about what he called “our city’s noblest work of sculptured art.”²⁰

Numerous newspapers over the years have re-told the story of the Wells monument, typically portraying Wells as a poor worker who saved carefully and who ultimately won a battle (from beyond the grave) against greedy heirs. They frequently refer to her as “little,” although we have no records indicating her height. Given the lack of detailed personal information about Wells, it’s clear that later generations have filled in some details to make the story more poignant. A 1921 *Boston Post*

article, titled “Little Weaver’s Dream Realized” is typical in its tone; it refers to Wells as “this humble little weaver,” and to her “simple, hard-working life.”²¹ A similar article in the *Burlington (Iowa) Gazette* titled “Dream Fulfilled,” notes with satisfaction that “Louisa’s life dream is to be fulfilled. The poor little weaver girl rests among the mighty.”²² It’s not at all clear that it was Louisa’s “life dream” to be buried in Lowell Cemetery or to have such a grand monument. The repeated narrative trope of the “poor little mill girl” that appears in these and other stories is particularly problematic, especially if we compare Wells’ situation to that of Barilla Taylor, or to most other women who worked in the mills of Lowell. It is very doubtful that Wells could have saved up that huge sum of money only through her mill wages. The fact that she owned her own home suggests that there was perhaps family money that augmented her resources. We do know that she worked in the mills, but it seems likely that her fortune resulted at least in part from something other than mere thriftiness. The *Post* article claims that “the mill girl’s dream is to stand forever as a spiritual inspiration to coming generations”; in such articles, Louisa is held up as a model of how even a “poor mill girl” can (theoretically) save a tidy fortune, thus she is a model for a good poor—or working-class—woman. Indeed, compared to many of her fellow mill girls, Louisa’s story is inspirational. She clearly made a good life for herself in Lowell, and lived to the age of sixty-eight; her life expectancy at her birth in 1818 would have been about forty, and life expectancy in 1850 for a white woman of her age in Massachusetts was around sixty-five.²³ By contrast, Barilla Taylor, born ten years after Louisa Wells, lived to only seventeen. Barilla’s story, in which her

family and friends had to scrape together the funds to erect even her modest stone in the cemetery, is far more common for the girls who came to Lowell. The markers for Barilla Taylor and Louisa Wells remind us of yet another story that grave markers can tell us: the economic realities in which they lived and died. While the inscriptions on cemetery markers don’t include a price tag, the size and form of the monuments can tell us quite a lot about the economic situation of the deceased. Wells’ grand monument and Taylor’s simple stone tell very different versions of what life was like for Lowell’s nineteenth century mill operatives, pointing to the diversity of personal and economic situations that motivated women to move away from home to factory cities during the American Industrial Revolution.



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Notes

1. Stanley French, “The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the ‘Rural Cemetery’ Movement,” *American Quarterly*, 26.1 (1974): 37-59. JSTOR. Web. 27 June 2013. 38.
2. W. Art. II. “An Account of the Lowell Cemetery, its Situation, Historical Associations and Particular Description.” *Magazine of Horticulture, Botany, and All Useful Discoveries and Improvements in Rural Affairs*. Ed. Charles Mason Hovey, 1842-49. Googlebooks.com
3. A writer going by the name “Elizabeth” describes walking through the cemetery for pleasure in her description of “My First Independence Day in Lowell” in the November 1845 issue of the Lowell Offering (249). The author of “A Letter to Cousin Lucy,” appearing in the May 1845 Lowell Offering, explains, “The Cemetery is a hallowed retreat if we want to take a walk for meditation.” (111).
4. “Barilla Taylor, 21 Aug 1845.” *Massachusetts Deaths, 1841-1915*. Volume 20, Page 74. State Archives, Boston. FHL microfilm 959,808. Familysearch.org
5. Barilla Taylor. Letter to Stephen and Melinda Taylor. Lowell. July 14, 1844. Virginia Taylor Collection.
6. Pliny Tidd. Letter to Mr. Taylor. Lowell. March 5, 1846. Virginia Taylor Collection.
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8. “Payroll Volume 308.” *Hamilton Manufacturing Company Records*. Baker Library, Harvard Business School. Reproduced in *The World of Barilla Taylor: Lowell Industrial Learning Experience*, 1993.
9. Massachusetts Vital Records. Ancestry.com
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14. *Davis v. Chase*. 40.
15. *Davis v. Chase*. 41.
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17. “Current Matters of the Arts,” *New York Times*. December 30, 1906. 30. Newspaperarchive.com.
18. Ellen Wiley Todd, “Remembering the Unknowns,” *American Art* 23.3 (Fall 2009): 60-81. 61.
19. “Neat Monument Will Mark the Grave of Lowell Mill Girl,” *Lowell Sun*, August 11, 1904. Page 11.
20. F. W. Coburn, “Wells Memorial in the Lowell Cemetery Noblest Work of Sculptured Art.” *Courier-Citizen, Lowell Centennial Edition*. June 30, 1936: 33. Center for Lowell History.
21. “Little Weaver’s Dream Realized,” *Boston Post*, November 21, 1921. Page 6.
22. “Dream Fulfilled,” *Burlington Gazette (Iowa)*. November 28, 1921. Page 7.
23. David Hacker, “Figure 6: Life Expectancy at Birth.” Decennial Life Tables for the White Population of the United States, 1790-1900. *Historical Methods*. 2010 Apr; 43(2): 45-79. From author manuscript online. Doi: 10.1080/01615441003720449.

Beating the Bodysnatchers

Allison C. Meier

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In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries an expansion in the study of anatomy at medical schools fueled a brisk trade in grave robbing. As a result, families sought to protect their loved ones' remains. One method of keeping the bodysnatchers at bay was the use of mortsafes.

In the Scottish hamlet of Towie, a rusted metal crown rises from the churchyard. It's a rare relic from an era of rampant fear of grave robbing, when contraptions called mortsafes protected the newly dead. Made of iron and sometimes incorporating a heavy stone lid, a mortsafe enclosed a coffin to defend it from interference. The Towie example is one of several photographed and described by James Ritchie in "An Account of the Watch-houses, Mortsafes, and Public Vaults in Aberdeenshire Churchyards, formerly used for the Protection of the Dead from the Resurrectionists," published in the 1911–12 *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*.¹

"It is difficult for those of the present generation to realize the feelings of horror with which bodysnatching was regarded about a century ago," Ritchie begins.² A teacher at Port Elphinstone School in Scotland, he was also an amateur photographer who contributed illustrated articles to the Society of Antiquaries, such as studies of prehistoric stone circles in Central Aberdeenshire.³ (His passion likely inspired his son, naturalist James Ritchie.)

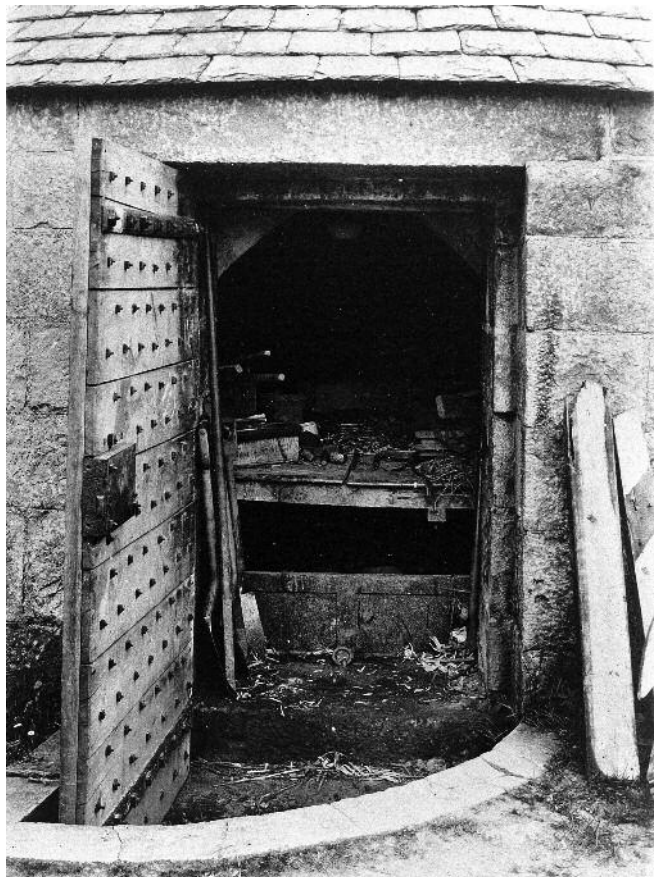
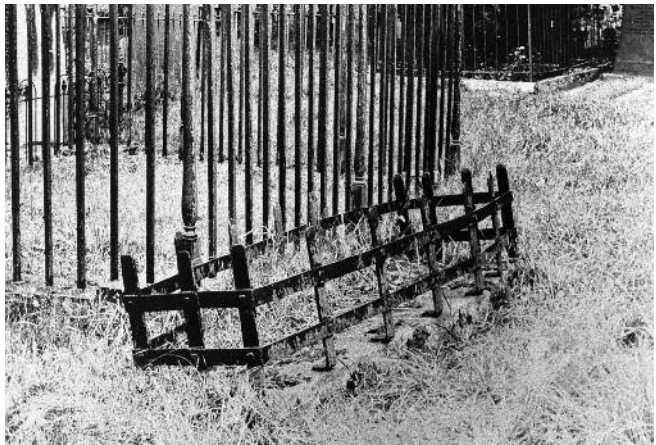
A Dread of Dissection

The terror of grave robbers, or resurrection men came about when a rise in anatomical and surgical study met a limited cadaver supply. In Great Britain and the United States, dissection was a punishment for executed criminals, and legal avenues for acquiring corpses were restricted beyond the gallows. So, if you had the stomach for it, money could be made by hauling carcasses out of their graves and selling them to anatomists.

The British Anatomy Act of 1832 allowed anatomical schools the use of unclaimed bodies, but anxiety lingered. In Scotland, the well-publicized 1828 trial of William Burke and William Hare (who bypassed grave robbing altogether and killed people to sell their corpses) further fueled this dread. Not even doctors wanted to be dissected: London anatomist Sir Astley Cooper—who had boasted "there is no person, let his situation in life be what it may, whom, if I were disposed to dissect, I could not obtain"⁴—was in 1841 interred in multiple coffins within a stone sarcophagus.⁵ Meanwhile in the United States, a series of similar acts were passed, including the 1854 Bone Bill in New York that allowed the unclaimed to be dissected, and the Pennsylvania Anatomy Act of 1883 which similarly permitted medical schools to utilize unclaimed bodies, although there were still only so many of those to go around.

Non-white and poor cemeteries were often targeted by

grave robbing, particularly in the United States their burial grounds were usually located on the desolate edges of cities. A simple safeguard might be placing flowers or a heavy rock on



Top to bottom: Mortsafe in Towie churchyard, Aberdeenshire. Vault with mortsafe in graveyard at Udney, Aberdeenshire. Courtesy Wellcome Collection.

the fresh earth, although a diligent grave robber could just replace them. A late 1820s edition of *Freedom's Journal*, an African-American newspaper, advised readers to layer straw and earth so it would take more time to disturb a burial.⁶ Recent excavation at the New Churchyard, in London, as part of the Crossrail project revealed an eighteenth-century coffin filled with sand and covered with rocks.

Stones, Safes, and Societies

Before the appearance of the iron mortsafes around 1816,⁸ large stones were sometimes employed. Ritchie documented a coffin-shaped granite block at Inverurie Churchyard, adding that Inverurie's proximity to the university at Aberdeen, Scotland, and the location of its graveyard outside of town, "afforded a tempting means of procuring the specimens required by the students."⁹ Nevertheless, a stone was little deterrent. Ritchie explained how a grave robber could dig down on one end of it to the coffin, where they

then fastened a rope round the neck of the corpse and dragged it out, afterwards filling up the hole and removing, as far as possible, all traces of their work.¹⁰

Mortsafes, iron coffin lids, and coffin collars around necks better secured the body for the weeks it needed to grow putrid, and therefore useless for anatomy. In *Bodysnatchers: Digging Up the Untold Stories of Britain's Resurrection Men*, author Suzie Lennox states that parishes "would often purchase one or two mortsafes and subsequently hire them out as required."¹¹ An 1888 issue of *North-Country Lore and Legend* described a Mortsafe Society "which undertook the guarding of coffins on payment of a small sum per annum" [sic].¹²

Rare Relics and Recycled Remains

Despite being designed to be temporary, some mortsafes were permanent, and could be above or below ground. In 2013, a nineteenth-century coffin was excavated in West Bromwich, England, with the remains of a young woman who apparently

suffered from a disfiguring bone and skin disease. Her body had been protected inside the coffin by a metal cage. Her disease likely made her body desirable for theft.¹³ Greyfriars Churchyard in Edinburgh, a stone's throw from the Old Medical School, still has a couple of iron cages, while in Catawissa, Pennsylvania's Mt. Zion Cemetery, two birdcage-like iron structures, now nicknamed the Hooded Graves, hint at the unease radiating around the Philadelphia medical schools.

When Ritchie set out to document mortsafes in Aberdeenshire, few were extant. In fact, he found some reused as watering troughs, one at an Upper Mills farm cleverly installed under a wall dividing two fields, so cattle on both sides could drink from the coffin shape. In the 1920–21 *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, he shared his supplementary notes, including the new discovery of a surviving mortsafe tackle at Inverurie, used to lift the hefty metal enclosures.¹⁴

Over the years, most mortsafes were discarded or their metal recycled. But Ritchie thought they were worth noticing to remember those decades of medical advancement and fear of fates worse than death. He wrote,

They are interesting as memorials of a time now rapidly passing into oblivion, when the feelings of the people were deeply stirred, and they were willing to suffer much inconvenience and to make many sacrifices to preserve the bodies of their dead friends from shameful desecration.¹⁵



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Notes

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——— WINNER OF THE 201 VSA PRESERVATION AWARD ———

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Preservation Diary

Making a Museum: Eustis House

Karla Rosenstein



View of Gus Eustis reading in the parlor, photographed by William Ellery Channing Eustis, c. 1890. Courtesy of Historic New England,

“I’ve been wondering what this place looked like inside for my entire life!” is a common refrain from visitors to the Eustis Estate Museum and Study Center in Milton, Massachusetts. Perched atop a hill, the striking stone mansion has captured the imaginations of locals for generations. This mystery endured because the house was privately owned by the original family until it was purchased by Historic New England. Our organization undertook an extensive restoration

project to transform this grand family home into a museum, which opened to the public in May 2017.

It lives up to the imagination. The house is a gem of Aesthetic Movement taste, which was the height of fashion when it was built in 1878. The remarkably intact interiors include richly carved woodwork, dramatic stained glass windows, and a great hall soaring three stories to a decorative trussed ceiling. The restored wall treatments, highlighted by



The Eustis Estate, Milton, Massachusetts, shortly after completion, c. 1880. Courtesy of Historic New England.

metallic paints, glitter and glow when illuminated by ornate brass chandeliers.

The project took years of intensive planning, construction, and restoration to create a public museum with modern amenities and a visitor experience designed to be innovative and inclusive. Traditional guided tours of the house and exhibition spaces are complemented by self-guided tours that, with the use of technology, allow visitors to design their own experience.

Historic and Architectural Significance

The Eustis Estate, comprising eighty acres of land and six major buildings and structures, is an archetype of the pastoral, park-like residential estates that developed around Boston during the late nineteenth century. The thirty-four-room brick and stone Queen Anne mansion was the year-round residence of William Ellery Channing Eustis and Edith Hemenway Eustis. The property remained in the family for three generations.

The Eustis Estate is a monumental work of architect William Ralph Emerson that exhibits an emphasis on craftsmanship that defined Victorian-era architectural styles. This is an early work of Emerson's, designed at the beginning of the most productive period of his career, and is one of the few residences he designed in stone. The firms he employed for the interiors reflect the pinnacle of Boston craftsmanship and design: W. J. McPherson stained glass; Lewis and Lane

terra cotta; L. Haberstroh and Son decorative painting; and Low art tiles.

Ernest W. Bowditch's 1879 design of the grounds emphasized the mansion's prominence as well as views of the Blue Hills south of the mansion and the bucolic farm setting to the east. The landscape also features a series of structures including an electrical power house, a gatehouse, and a boiler house for the former greenhouses.

Restoration and Adaptive Reuse

The Eustis family moved out of the home in 2014 and Historic New England purchased the property directly from them. Anonymous donors generously funded the acquisition and start-up costs, as well as an endowment to cover operating expenses. The local community was very supportive of the acquisition because it ensured that eighty acres of land would never be developed and no public funds were involved.

The project started by documenting the condition of the buildings and cataloging the objects that remained. This provided a clear picture of what needed to be accomplished to go from private residence to public museum. As with many restoration projects, the majority of the work goes unseen. The first phase involved the essential—though hidden—upgrades for septic, electrical, and data, plus a new HVAC system to protect the collections. Life safety equipment, a chair lift, and accessible bathrooms were installed to comply with safety codes and the Americans with Disabilities Act—no easy feat in

a historic building. The project also included converting a 1970 garage into a visitor center with a parking lot and transforming a gatehouse into staff offices.

The more visible phase of interior restoration began in 2016 and involved talented twenty-first century craftspeople to complement the work done by the nineteenth century ones. When Historic New England acquired the property, most of the rooms had been painted with modern, light-colored latex paint. The Aesthetic Movement's extensive use of motifs inspired by nature are apparent throughout the house, in the woodwork, decorative tiles, and stained glass. To restore the

original paint treatments were true to the aesthetic of the day. The deep earth-tone colors—highlighted with metallic paints—were chosen to complement the rich woodwork, accentuating Emerson's architectural design. Designed to shimmer and glow in the gas light, the metallic paints and the deep wall colors of red, green, and amber were executed by skilled hands.

The Aesthetic paint finishes were meticulously restored using authentic materials and methods: hand-ground pigments built up in layers as they would be on a painted canvas. Despite the demands of the work and how time-



Clockwise from top: IFACS team members restoring the dining room paint and applying gold leaf to arch in the living hall; Historic New England staff member cleaning sixteenth-century Spanish tile in the parlor; Diane Rousseau conserving a stained glass window designed by W. J. McPherson. Courtesy of Historic New England.

overall effect, it was essential to return the colors in the principal rooms to their Victorian splendor.

To learn more about the original interiors, experts from International Fine Arts Conservation Studios (IFACS) worked to understand what was beneath the modern paint. Using microscopic paint analysis, conservators discovered that the

consuming this was, Mary Aldrich, IFACS chief conservator recognized the importance of using traditional paints, especially on a project like the Eustis Estate. "Hand-ground paints have a quality of color and finish that can't be replicated with modern commercial paints," she said. "When applied with a brush, hand-ground paint has a soft quality that

accentuates the beauty of old plaster walls.” These dramatic paint colors enhance stained glass work in the entry and dining room and the intricately carved and etched designs used throughout the house on the grand staircase, wooden mantels, built-in cabinets, and fireplace surround tiles.

Though the house had been lovingly cared for, some of that stained glass was showing signs of strain. McPherson created large panels of leaded glass in the double doors leading into the main living hall. These doors were opened and closed thousands of times since 1878 and the many small pieces of glass were starting to weaken and bow outward. It was clear

so, a detailed cleaning and application of wax was needed to highlight the details of the carving and bring out the luster of the materials. That is easier said than done when there is elaborate paneling in nearly every room and fourteen carved mantels. It was also necessary to refinish 7,000 square feet of flooring to protect it from the increased traffic it would receive in its new life as a museum.

Making a Museum

Two rooms of original furnishings were included with the sale of the property. Since the rest of the house needed to be



IFACS team members testing historical paint colors after analysis. Courtesy of Historic New England.

that long-term preservation required the attention of a specialized conservator. Diane Rousseau (from Massachusetts, just like the original designer) was commissioned to handle the task and she developed a conservation plan that is unique to these panels, taking into consideration Historic New England’s approach to preservation. “Minimum intervention, with enough restoration and restructuring to accommodate the panels’ intended use” is the strategy she employed.

There are at least nine different woods used in the intricate woodwork throughout the house. It was in excellent condition considering three generations of children grew up here. Even

furnished, it was a unique opportunity to create an innovative visitor experience. Period-appropriate furnishings were acquired with the intent that visitors use them for seating and relaxation, experiencing rooms as the family did. The house is designed to be available to visitors independent of guided tours, with interactive touch screens in each room. The web-based technology presents an opportunity to share stories, archival photographs, videos about the restoration, and details about the history of the house and the many artisans who worked on it.

Additionally, several bedrooms on the second floor have been turned into gallery spaces for rotating exhibitions to



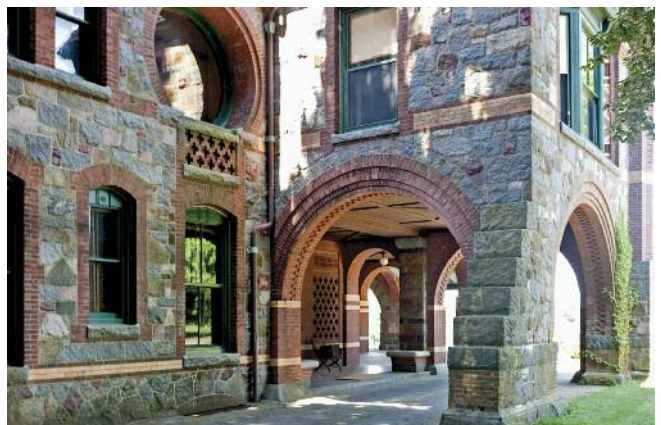
Dining room after restoration was completed. Photo by Eric Roth. Courtesy of Historic New England.

highlight Historic New England's extensive collection of objects. This is a wonderful opportunity to tell new stories from the region's long history. The current exhibition (until February 24, 2019)—*Head to Toe: Hat and Shoe Fashions from Historic New England*—explores the creation of these fashion accessories and their effect on New England's economy, workforce, and environment.

During the first year of operation, we have worked to become a vital part of the community. The public programs not only focus on the house but highlight our beautiful property with everything from vintage baseball games to summer concerts. In decorating for our Victorian Christmas celebrations, we worked with the local garden clubs to create incredible live arrangements throughout the house. The success of the opening year has been gratifying and the recognition from the Victorian Society in America with its preservation award for the restoration project is a tremendous honor. We hope you come to see this marvel for yourself.

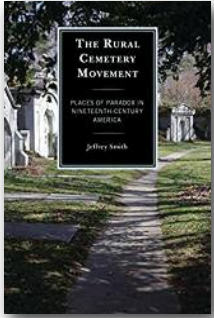


Karla Rosenstein is site manager of the Eustis Estate, where she manages the museum, public programming, local marketing, and serves as the liaison to the community. Previously, she worked at the Preservation Society of Newport County and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She holds a BA in art history from University of California, San Diego, and MA in history of art and archaeology from New York University's Institute of Fine Arts.



Exterior views of the Eustis Estate and the front entrance under the porte-cochere. Photo by Eric Roth. Courtesy of Historic New England.

The Bibliophilist



The Rural Cemetery Movement: Places of Paradox in Nineteenth-Century America

Jeffrey Smith. Lanham, M. D.: Lexington Books, 2017.

When I discovered the Fall 2018 issue of this magazine would be featuring death as its primary subject, I was pleased but wary. Although I was eager to read this book, I feared that the topic of rural cemeteries could prove dour. I am happy to admit that I was wrong. Smith's work had me reading late into the night, completely enthralled by the author's convincing argument that cemeteries were places of paradox. Smith's book creates a vivid story of the rural cemetery movement that should be read, even inhaled, by generalist scholars of nineteenth-century America and specialists in historic cemeteries.

Smith's primary argument is best laid out in his introduction:

rural cemeteries came to represent...a great paradox—they were 'rural' yet urban, sacred yet secular, burial places for the dead but used regularly by the living, natural yet manicured.

Because of a variety of concerns over the unsanitary conditions and disrepair associated with burial grounds adjacent to urban churches, rural cemeteries, located between two and five miles outside of the city center, developed. Following the opening of Mount Auburn outside of Boston in the 1830s, these cemeteries flourished, especially in the mid-nineteenth century. Through his extensive use of primary source material, Smith is quite successful in describing the shift towards rural cemeteries.

Furthermore, Smith provides insight into a side of the cemetery movement many of his fellow scholars do not: cemeteries as business ventures. Often, writing on rural cemeteries focuses on the architectural marvels, the beautiful landscapes, and the famous individuals interred in those cemeteries. We would rather read about the symbols of everlasting life on headstones or the reflections of romanticism in the landscape design. The cost of a plot or the rules and regulations governing upkeep are not usually popular topics, but Smith makes these subjects far from boring. I was particularly engaged by his discussion of the rise of cemeteries as tourist attractions and the marketing methods used to entice desirable people to purchase family plots. He sheds light on how the industrial revolution affected the popularity of cemeteries as destinations; a trip to the cemetery was an outing to the country. This trend

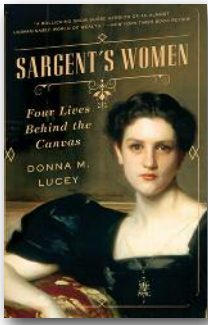
prompted governing councils to issue new rulebooks highlighting codes of behavior for a new middle and lower-class patron (who they often believed to be less than civilized). I also immensely enjoyed discussions of how the fascination with flora and fauna played roles in the developing of the names of cemeteries and their "streets" – yet another selling point. The entire book is filled with interesting facts like these. I was impressed with both the amount and quality of material he used, particularly when discussing the marketing techniques used by cemeteries for attracting both tourists and potential purchasers in the late nineteenth century.

This book was published in 2017 and I recommend reading it alongside another, related recent publication: James Cothran and Erica Danylchak's *Grave Landscapes: The Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemetery Movement*. This book includes numerous images depicting items such as postcards, maps, and stereographs. Smith's book has very limited images, all in black and white. This is likely a reflection of the publisher's concern with costs, and should not be held against the author. Personally, I did not feel Smith's book needed pictures, but the lack of images is remedied by Cothran and Danylchak.

I highly recommend this work to even the most specialist scholar of cemeteries. Smith's writing is easy to follow and succinct. His source material is informative and intriguing. Smith effortlessly reconciles the cemetery movement as a business trend with the rise of social and cultural change in nineteenth century America. It is a gem.

Reviewed by Jaclyn Spainhour

Jaclyn Spainhour is an author, historian, and the Director of the Hunter House Victorian Museum in Norfolk, Virginia. She serves on the Board of Directors of the VSA, the Chair of its Book Awards committee, and the Copy Editor of this publication.



Sargent's Women: Four Lives Behind the Canvas

Donna M. Lucey, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2017.

Sumptuous gowns, entrancing settings and an overall ethereal quality are depicted in the portraits of the four women addressed in this book. It is the usual Sargent Style: beautiful ladies in beautiful clothes just being beautiful. This book is a compendium of four biographies that tell the real stories behind Sargent's magic canvases. Who would think that behind all the Sargentian loveliness was many a tale of deep sadness? This is sadness that comes from lives lived with a determined passion and assertiveness unusual in the nineteenth-century woman.

The first and youngest is Elsie Palmer, of the big eyes and doleful mien. She sat for her portrait at age seventeen. Looking lost, forlorn and miserable, her white dress almost resembles a shroud. Sargent's portrait not only depicts her present life but foretells her future one. Elsie was raised to be a handmaiden to a sickly mother with social and artistic aspirations. Her father had made his money in the Wild West of Colorado and Mrs. Palmer wanted out of that scene. Using her heart condition as an excuse, she took herself and Elsie to London. Here they enjoyed the company of "the cultured." Elsie continued her subservience until her mother died. She was then summoned back to Colorado to wait on her now paralyzed and demanding father. Finally, Elsie escaped by marrying Leo Myers, a younger man. They had been secretly engaged for some time. For her wedding Elsie wore a long brown robe "covered in huge buckles and bronze figures of animals." It was most peculiar. Leo eventually committed suicide and Elsie ended up back in England, taking long walks in the country...alone.

Perhaps the most curious section is that on Sally Fairchild, a redhead beauty whose Boston family was friends with Sargent's family for many years. Swathed in a heavy veil, Sally is presented in profile and really could be anybody. One gets the impression that there is more to be told here. Apparently, that was not case as she lived a rather ordinary Boston matron's life. Until, at the age of 80, she seduced a 30-year-old married man! Using Sally as a jumping off point, the author switches to Sally's sister Lucia. Although not as striking as Sally, Lucia was the interesting one. Despite parental wishes, she became an artist and married one, Henry Brown Fuller. She worked in large scale; she painted a mural for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. And she worked in small scale; she founded the American Society of Miniature Painters. Moreover, she won a bronze medal at the Paris Exposition of 1900, and medals in other world's fairs. Because her lazy tom-cat husband felt it was beneath him to work and only painted when so moved, Lucia supported him and their children. Tragically, Lucia became blind and paralyzed with multiple sclerosis, and died before she was 50. In letters and diaries, Lucia makes much of the fact that

her children were her redemption. They were extremely loving and devoted.

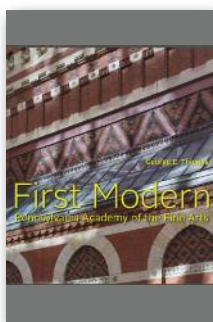
Elizabeth Astor Winthrop Chanler's tale culminates with her love affair with her best friend's husband, lawyer and writer Jack Chapman. But Lucey calls the chapter on Elizabeth *The Madonna* and for good reason; her early years were saintly. After her mother died when she was nine, Elizabeth was responsible for her seven younger siblings. During her teens, Elizabeth suffered a severe hip problem, and the remedy was being strapped to a board for two excruciatingly painful years. No one expected her to marry. Beautiful and suffering she soldiered on. Then along came Jack Chapman. Romance and scandal bloomed. Eventually, after much intrigue, they married.

The apogee of the book is the chapter on Isabella Stewart Gardner. Famous for flouting Boston's stern social norms, Isabella flirted outrageously with any man who crossed her path and more shockingly danced often with men who were not her husband. She even invited scantily clad prizefighters to tea! At one evening party she descended the staircase wearing two enormous diamonds attached to gold spiral wires atop her head that, knowing that the diamonds would bob and sparkle as she talked. Despite all the flirting and frivolity Isabella went on to found the very serious and still important Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston.

What about these four women inspired the author? In an interview with *Elle* magazine, Lucey says she chose these particular women "because they were not afraid to say...*I am going to be who I am....*" Indeed these four were fiercely themselves and their fascinating exploits make most entertaining reading.

Reviewed by Anne-Taylor Cahill

Anne-Taylor Cahill is a professor of philosophy at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, and serves on the national board of the Victorian Society in America. She is also founding member and former president of the Eloise Hunter Chapter of the VSA. She often writes the Milestones column for this magazine.

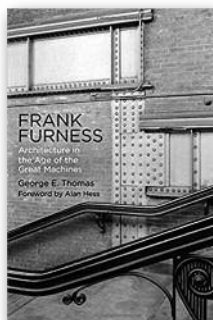


First Modern: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

George E. Thomas. Foreword by David R. Brigham and Chronology by Isaac Kornblatt-Stier. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; distributed by the University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Frank Furness: Architecture in the Age of the Great Machines

George E. Thomas. Foreword by Alan Hess. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2018.



In the grand narrative of American architecture, Philadelphia usually plays a supporting role, with Boston, New York, Washington, D. C., Chicago, and Los Angeles assuming the lead at various times. Two new books by noted architectural historian George E. Thomas aim to subvert this narrative. *First Modern: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* and *Frank Furness: Architecture in the Age of the Great Machines* both argue for the primacy of Philadelphia and its manufacturing titans, along with their preferred architect, Frank Furness (1839-1912), in nurturing modern architecture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thomas knows his subjects thoroughly, having authored and/or co-authored several books on Philadelphia architecture and on Furness, including *Frank Furness: The Complete Works* (1991, revised 1996). While Thomas considerably enlarges the context for understanding Furness's wide-ranging practice, his most salient contribution is in rooting the architect's myriad creative impulses within the industrial metropolis itself.

Furness has, alternately, been reviled and praised for his design excesses, only being recognized as a creative prodigy around 1973, when, with modernist orthodoxy on the wane, the Philadelphia Museum of Art awarded him a long-overdue retrospective exhibition. This led indirectly to the restoration of his first major commission, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, in time for its centennial and the nation's bicentennial. *First Modern* is a paean to the Academy building. Lavishly illustrated and printed on quality paper stock in an oversized format, the book is nevertheless a carefully researched monograph that delves deeply into the building's functional planning and idiosyncratic design.

Thomas leads the reader through the maze of preliminary decisions reached by the Academy's board of directors, including the selection of Furness and his partner George Wattson Hewitt after a close competition and their building's subsequent design and construction, which was kept on a flexible schedule in anticipation of "comparatively unsolved difficulties." The shift in the board's membership from the older, mercantile elite to the younger, industrial elite certainly influenced Furness, who quickly assumed leadership over the design. Board member and artist John Sartain was largely responsible for the Academy's innovative layout: studios on the lower level lit by a continuous north-facing skylight and galleries above lit by individual skylights. The incorporation of iron framing in fellow

board member Joseph Harrison, Jr.'s Rittenhouse Square townhouse, a design by the older architect Samuel Sloan, may have steered Furness toward the use of this modern material. Moreover, it was board member and building committee chairman Fairman Rogers, a bridge engineer with connections to the University of Pennsylvania and the Franklin Institute, who may have helped Furness arrive at the Academy's most pioneering structural advance: a massive iron truss in four sections that carries the considerable weight and spans the nearly 200' length of the upper galleries' brick clerestory wall. Precedents for the Academy's Broad Street façade, a colorful and provocative fusion of the Victorian Gothic and the Second Empire, abound. By the early 1870s, both styles had been chosen by leading American art institutions for their new buildings: the former for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the National Academy of Design and the latter for the Corcoran Gallery of Art. To these, Furness infused his own interpretation of the Neo-Grec, an experimental variant of classicism popularized in Napoleon III's Paris and transmitted stateside via his French-educated mentor Richard Morris Hunt. The façade is, in Thomas's words, "a visual compendium of historical and global styles drawn from chronologically distant worlds." Gothic tracery, classical metopes, patterned brickwork and stonework, and machine-like colonettes and brackets all vie for the attention of passersby. The new building opened in April 1876—just ahead of the Centennial Exhibition in nearby Fairmount Park—to a somewhat indifferent reception. One contemporary critic deemed its exterior a "patchwork" and, while admiring its functional interior planning, he largely overlooked its structural innovations.

Frank Furness builds solidly upon the research Thomas initially gathered for *First Modern*. It is neither a biography—that territory having been comprehensively explored by Michael J. Lewis in *Frank Furness: Architecture and the Violent Mind*—nor an architectural survey in the manner of the *Complete Works*. Rather, it is an insightful and compact study—divided into four chapters and bookended by a prologue and an epilogue—of what Thomas calls Philadelphia's "ecological frame" vis-à-vis Furness's own development as an architect. By this reasoning, Furness's habitat was industrial Philadelphia, which had been known popularly from the colonial period as the "Quaker City," but which would recast itself ambitiously in the nineteenth century as the "workshop of the world."

Furthermore, the looming presence of transcendentalist philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, a close family friend, predisposed the young architect toward a creative expression bound in both nature and the material demands of the modern age.

New institutions and changes at existing institutions drove this transformation. Founded in 1824, the Franklin Institute was a relative newcomer among the city's many associations, but, owing to an egalitarian membership policy, it soon became the center of professional scientific inquiry. Significantly, its board drove the organizing and planning for the Centennial Exhibition, the largest celebration of industry and technology attempted up until that time, ultimately attracting millions of national and international visitors to the city. Likewise, the University of Pennsylvania, which had been established more than a century earlier, shifted its educational mission around the time of the Civil War from the study of the classics to the study of applied science and engineering. Furness's patrons were largely drawn from among this new class of scientists and engineers. They were individuals who worked hard and built considerable fortunes, and their work ethic permeated even the era's new leisure activities on which Furness, obligingly, bestowed muscular forms. As Thomas observes of the Undine Barge Club:

In a building dedicated to the pleasures of physical effort, the effort of spanning, load bearing, and carrying were given the lead architectural roles.

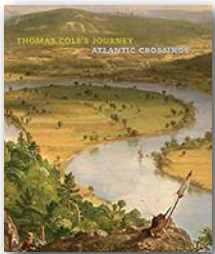
In 1873, Louis Sullivan famously spent a few months as a young draftsman in Furness's employ, vividly recounting in his autobiography that the senior architect "made buildings out of his head." Departing somewhat from the standard historical narrative, Thomas ascribes to Furness a pivotal part when discussing Sullivan's subsequent career in the Midwest, a part greater than

even, the robust, Romanesque-revival style of H. H. Richardson. In Sullivan's late bank projects, furthermore, Thomas finds surprising echoes of Furness's early banking halls. At times, Thomas even verges on reimagining the traditional triumvirate of early modern American architecture—Richardson, Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright—with Furness replacing Richardson as their forebear and Philadelphia replacing Chicago as their ancestral home.

Narratives are not so easily rewritten, however, and genealogies not so clearly delineated. Thomas posits that the three men may have actually met in 1892 in Sullivan's Chicago office, where Wright was, in remarkably parallel fashion, working as a young draftsman. At the time Furness was on official assignment to inspect the construction of the World's Columbian Exposition, whose tasteful, academic classicism was in many ways a repudiation of his own life's work and Philadelphia's industrial aesthetic. Whether they recognized in each other at that moment a kindred sensibility is not known. What is known is that, according to an eyewitness account more than sixty years later, Wright proclaimed Furness's library at the University of Pennsylvania to be "the work of an artist." Wright apparently recognized in Furness the same Emersonian impulse to unite natural and modern forms that lay behind his own work. Perhaps it is the philosopher, rather than the architect, who should be proclaimed the true "first modern." In any case, Thomas' books give us rich new insights into Furness, Philadelphia and the course of modern architecture.

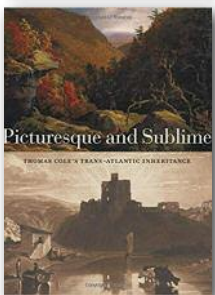
Reviewed by Robert Wojtowicz

Robert Wojtowicz is professor of art history and dean of the Graduate School at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. He is an expert on the life and work of architectural and urban critic Lewis Mumford (1895-1990).



Thomas Cole's Journey: Atlantic Crossings

Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser and Tim Barringer, with Dorothy Mahon, Christopher Riopelle and Shannon Vittoria. New York City: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018.



Picturesque and Sublime: Thomas Cole's Trans-Atlantic Inheritance

Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester, Sophie Lynford, Jennifer Raab and Nicholas Robbins. Catskill, N. Y. and New Haven, C. T. and London: Thomas Cole National Historic Site and Yale University Press, 2018.

These two exhibition catalogs delve deep into the nature and consequences of Thomas Cole's inheritance and interactions with art, artists and the landscape across the Atlantic. This is a new avenue of inquiry. Cole is known as a self-taught artist, the "father" of Hudson River School, the first and still the most distinctively American art movement. In fact, Cole was born in northern England, where industry boomed, cities

became overcrowded and dirty, and labor unrest ran rampant. His father failed as a textile manufacturer, and 1818 the family came to the United States seeking new business opportunities. In his thirty years as an American artist, Cole made two extended trips to England and Italy (along with brief passes through France) to study the art of old and contemporary masters and the European landscape, especially its

hallowed cultural landmarks. Both catalogs put Cole's artworks alongside these foreign forbearers and experiences. Cole's self-proclaimed quest to paint a "higher style" of landscape is thus revealed to be profoundly affected by his trans-Atlantic influences and context.

In each book the catalog entries, as a group, substantiate the exhibition's premises. Both publications organize the entries into well-articulated themes, with each artwork illustrated and discussed thoroughly. The catalog from the Metropolitan Museum of Art uses a thematic arrangement based on the phases of Cole's life and travels, with Cole's work surrounded by works that directly influenced him or contextualize him. The catalog from the Thomas Cole National Historic Site is a more focused look at how prints—from fine engravings to illustrations in instructional manuals—transmitted the aesthetic categories of the picturesque and the sublime. Not surprisingly, the Met's catalog is lavish, with color images on nearly every page and all the apparatus of an academic volume, including a fine bibliography. The catalog from the much smaller Thomas Cole National Historic Site is equally ambitious, in its narrower scope. Its very fine reproductions of mezzotints, aquatints, and other kinds of prints convey all the nuances of these works, communicating the aesthetic strategies that influenced Cole.

The essays in the Met's catalog examine the finer points of Cole's career. In a largely biographical essay, Barringer shows how Cole's experiences on both sides of the Atlantic shaped his perceptions of the American landscape and its potential to carry meaning. Barringer ends the essay with an extended look at Cole's masterwork, "The Oxbow," with its two painted queries: the giant question mark formed by the path of the Connecticut River and Cole's self-portrait looking out at us quizzically. Barringer states Cole's implicit questions:

...is it possible to balance the pursuit of wealth with the preservation of the God-given wilderness, to temper the material with the spiritual, industry with art?

While painting his series *The Course of Empire*, Cole paused, took the central panel, *The Consummation of Empire*, and painted over it, creating *The Oxbow*. Kornhauser shows how these two images are not only physically but programmatically melded. Both are painted versions of Cole's publication "Essay on American Scenery," a call to reject Jacksonian expansionism. As a compliment to Kornhauser's art historical analysis, painting conservator Mahon looks deep into *The Oxbow* and *The Consummation of Empire*, using infrared imaging and microscopic examination of paint layers to give us technical data on the linked processes by which Cole created the two paintings. Riopelle examines Cole and plein air oil sketching, a practice informed by his European travels. Cole learned from John Constable, Joseph Mallord William Turner and expatriates in Rome, including Scandinavian painters and the Frenchman Camille Corot. In turn, Cole introduced the landscape oil sketch to his pupil Frederic Edwin Church, who really ran with it. A detailed chronology of Cole's life by Vittoria tracks his movements around the globe, a good underpinning for the entire catalog from the Met.

The principle essay of the Cole House catalog, "An Inheritance in Print: Thomas Cole and the Aesthetics of Landscape," is an overview of the entire book. This long essay, by Barringer and Raab, rambles through Cole's biography, the development of the picturesque aesthetic by Claude Lorrain and

Salvator Rosa, the development of the sublime by literary theoreticians as well as artists, and Cole's absorption of it all, primarily through the medium of prints. The essay culminates with an analysis of Cole's oil *Catskill Mountain House: The Four Elements*, which shows the hotel suspended above a crag, bathed in an eerie light while being assaulted by a torrential rainstorm and a forest fire. The painting is Cole's sermon on "the aesthetics of the sublime, classical cosmology and environmental catastrophe" falling on the deaf ears of the frivolous tourists in the hotel. In this catalog focused on the print, Robbins essay is an appropriate examination of Cole's engagement with varied forms of printed paper. Robbins discovers that in his journal, Cole copied out passages from a poem on the proportions of the human body, a bit of writing quoted by two premier artist/theoreticians: the seventeenth-century Frenchman Roger de Piles and the eighteenth-century Englishman Joshua Reynolds. By this action, Cole aligns himself with generations of European artistic pedagogy. The essay by Lynford compares Cole to his friend and colleague William Guy Wall, and their different depictions of Hudson River scenery. Ultimately Wall shows the land as an arcadia that can be improved through thoughtful development by mills, steamboats, tourism and other commerce. Cole sees this same arcadia under threat by the same forces of commerce.

There are many delights and surprises scattered in the pages of these two publications. Two entries in the Met's catalog document colorful objects: a cartoon of the mythical Ned Ludd and a book of calico samples. These are material evidence of Cole's childhood and his father's trade in the tumultuous textile industry in Lancashire. The Cole House catalog gives us a look at rare and important prints, especially ones with direct ties to masters Cole admired. Claude Lorrain made drawings to record his oeuvre, and these were bound in a book that came to be known as the *Liber Veritas*. One of Richard Earlom's engravings, a fine etching and mezzotint after plate 23 of the *Liber Veritas*, is included. In emulation of Claude, Turner created his own set of drawings for engraving, calling it the *Liber Studiorum*; two of these are included. *The Hudson River Portfolio*, a volume with text by John Agg and aquatints by John Hill after William Guy Wall's watercolors influenced Cole and the course of American landscape painting, but it is rarely given the analysis it deserves and receives in Lynford's essay and the entries in the Cole House catalog. Finally, both catalogs examine Cole's anthropomorphic drawings of tree trunks, which became a motif to portray his own feelings about nature.

To be sure, the books have flaws. There is much repetition, not only between the books but within each one. Both publications are so big and so lavishly illustrated, and the material brought to bear is so diverse that I found it easy to lose track of the arguments or judge their effectiveness. For example, I was stopped short by an illustration of Jacques Louis David's *Napoleon Crossing Alps* in a catalog entry on Turner's *Snow Storm: Hannibal and his Army Crossing the Alps*. The Turner painting is included because Cole emulated his cloud effects. And Turner's painting may well allude to Napoleon's ill-fated trek, but this tangent into a discussion of how Turner and David depicted empire builders is a distraction from the main story: Cole. In the Met's catalog, especially, huge paintings by Claude and Turner are scaled down to fit the pages of the book, while tiny oil sketches by Constable are scaled up, distorting our understanding of these artworks and how they must have been experienced by Cole. Given both catalog's preoccupation with

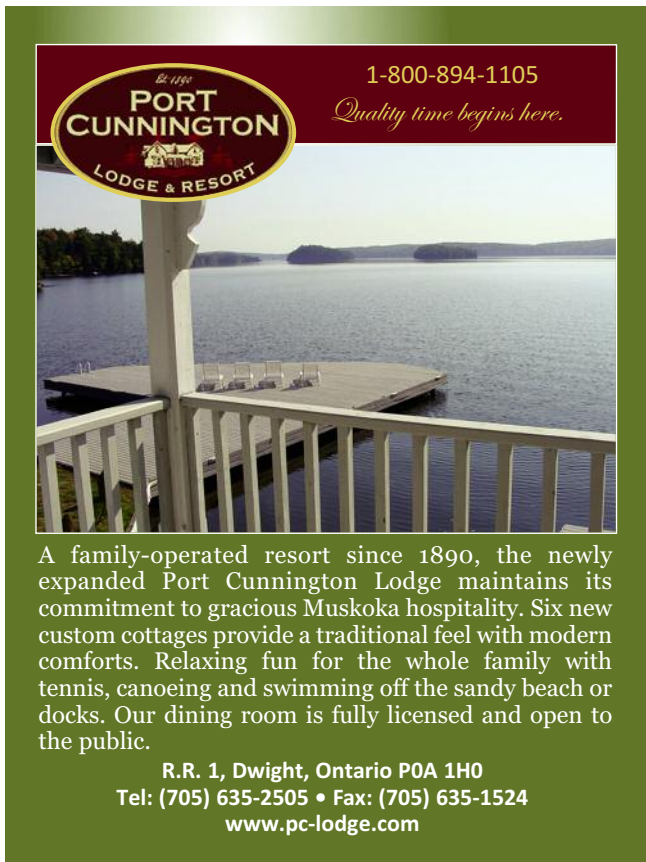
aesthetic categories of the picturesque and sublime, I am puzzled by the reluctance of either to discuss the related category of the beautiful—a label often applied to very artworks cataloged here. (More peculiar is Barringer's and Raab's tendency to class Rosa's works as picturesque rather than sublime.) Furthermore, both catalogs cite specific works as influences upon Cole, but do not always provide corroborating evidence. For example, no explicit connection is cited between Cole and Paul Sandby in the Cole House catalog, even it includes five engravings after his watercolors. And one may disagree with the readings of paintings. In particular, *The Oxbow*, seen by Barringer and Kornhauser as a warning of impending overdevelopment, could as easily be read as a celebration of American agriculture bringing order out of the chaos of the wilderness. Indeed, generations of nationalist art historians have seen the painting this way.

But, all told, these deep dives into Cole's relationship with his trans-Atlantic heritage and experiences expand our understanding of his work. The main arguments are convincing. Cole's celebration of the American wilderness was based on the devastating effects of industrialization he witnessed in England, and his renditions of doomed empires derive from the ruined

aqueducts of Italy and the castles of Wales. The aesthetics of the picturesque and the sublime were conventions used to depict long-populated landscapes and elevate the genre of landscape painting. Cole's genius was to adapt these conventions to the American landscape, in order to convey higher truths about the course of American civilization. These publications demonstrate that Cole is both deeply cosmopolitan and profoundly American.

Reviewed by Karen Zukowski

Karen Zukowski is an independent historian of American visual culture, and the book review editor of this publication. She is co-editor, with Julia Rosenbaum, of *Frederic Church's Olana on the Hudson* (Rizzoli, 2018).



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Milestones

Dr. Snow and the Blue Death

Anne-Taylor Cahill

Known as the “Blue Death,” the “Asian Disease” and the “Price of Empire,” cholera decimated thousands of nineteenth century Londoners. The effects of cholera were nearly instantaneous; vomiting, diarrhea and death by dehydration. Because the severe dehydration caused the body to take on a desiccated blue-gray tone it was called the “Blue Death.” Mortality would usually occur within twenty-four hours of the disease’s violent onset. Cholera was originally referred to as the “Asian Disease” in 1817 as it spread from the Ganges Delta in India to the rest of the world. When the British Empire expanded, cholera spread along its trade routes. Major waterways and railways enhanced the spread. The press asked “Is this the price of Empire?”

In Great Britain the Industrial Revolution drove more and more people into London, which was splitting at the seams. Families were crowded into homes (sometimes twenty in one room). Sanitation was virtually nonexistent. Over 200,000 cesspools existed in London. These were holes for human waste in the back yard or under houses. There was no such thing as trash collection. Public animal markets and open slaughterhouses exacerbated the problem. Often animal waste (from horses primarily) was simply left to rot in the streets. This was a recipe for disaster.

The medical community was baffled. Two schools of thought debated the issue: Contagionists believed cholera was spread from person to person by direct contact; Miasmatists believed cholera “hung in the ether in unsavory places.” The Board of Health issued a statement to the effect that the poor and “those addicted to spirituous liquors” were responsible for the spread of the disease. The populace was advised to wear a bag filled with myrrh and camphor so as to be “surrounded by an aromatic atmosphere.”

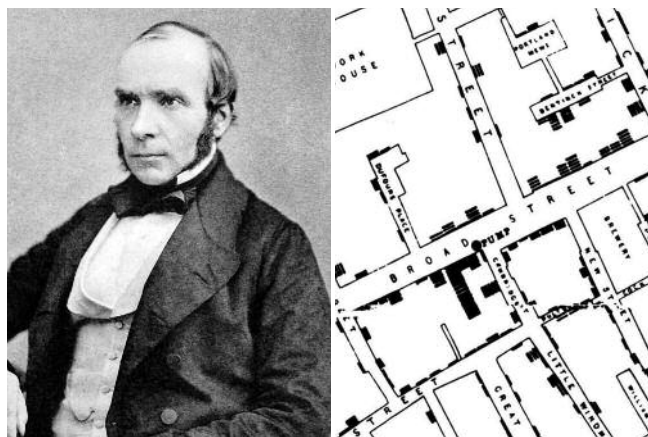
London’s Sanitation Commissioner, Sir Edwin Chadwick believed cholera to be the result of “atmospheric impurities” resulting from waste rotting in the streets. He decreed the city’s cesspools should be closed. Unfortunately, the few sewers that existed were overwhelmed. Thus, what had been contained in 200,000 cesspools was directed into the Thames River; the same river that was London’s main water supply.

In direct opposition to Chadwick, Dr. John Snow (1813-1858) discounted both the Contagionists and the Miasmatists. His observations and interviews with people in the neighborhoods most affected by cholera led to a completely different conclusion. Dr. Snow identified the Broad Street water pump as the primary source of London’s cholera. Using a dot matrix system he was able to identify a cluster of victims around the pump. He was convinced of a connection between the water source and cholera.

Dr. Snow’s studies were enough to convince the local council to remove the handle of the Broad Street pump. The cholera began to diminish. According to his reports:

I found nearly all the (cholera) deaths had taken place within a short distance from the pump...there were instances in which the deceased persons used to drink water from the pump...In consequence of what I said the handle of the pump was removed the following day.

Later it was discovered that the pump had been dug only three feet from an old cesspool that leaked fecal bacteria. The cloth



L to R: Dr. John Snow and his map showing the cholera cases near the Broad Street water pump, 1854.

diaper of an infant who had died from cholera had been washed into this cesspool. This particular cesspool had been dug under a house that had burned down and when the city widened Broad Street the location of the cesspool was forgotten. Because the cholera epidemic died down, the city replaced the handle of the Broad Street pump. To accept Dr. Snow’s theory meant the city was accepting responsibility for disease transmission. However, in 1866 when another cholera epidemic occurred, one of Dr. Snow’s chief opponents, Dr. William Farr, realized that Snow had been correct. He persuaded the city to issue orders that only boiled water should be consumed.

Dr. John Snow was a man ahead of his time. Now considered the Father of Epidemiology, he was an early proponent of anesthesia in childbirth and served as Queen Victoria’s anesthetist. In London a plaque honors Dr. Snow on Broad Street, and is decorated with the image of a pump with its handle removed. In York, a memorial pump sans handle was erected in 2017. The John Snow Society meets each September in London at the John Snow Pub, where a member delivers the annual Pump Handle lecture. A recent lecture title was “What Pump Handles Need to Be Removed to Save the Most Lives in This Century?”

For further reading:

Spence Galbraith, *Dr. John Snow, His Early Years*, (London: The Royal Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, 2002).

Robert D. Morris, *The Blue Death*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2007).

Katherine Tansley, *The Doctor of Broad Street* (United Kingdom: Matador, 2016).

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