The Gatehouse
News from the Monroe Street Cemetery Foundation
Fall 2012

In This Issue...

Saga of the Gatehouse.........................1
More Restoration Work Coming Up in 2013.................................3
Foundation News ................................4
Other Happenings..................................4
Events Calendar.....................................4

Foundation Committee
Linda Litto, Founder and President
Lesa Hess, Secretary and Director
Alan Fodor, Treasurer and Director
Adam Saurwein, Director

Planning Committee
Tom Buford
Russell Cendrowski
Jeremy Feador
Cristine Hoffmann
Julie Kurtock
Fran Palucki
Melanie Simon
Carol Smith
Pat Zolten

Monroe Street Cemetery Foundation
Email: MSCF3207@att.net
Website: www.MSCF1841.org

Saga of the Gatehouse

The Monroe Street Cemetery gatehouse and archway are going to be restored. Those structures, along with the gatehouse and archway at the Erie Street Cemetery, are now City of Cleveland-funded capital projects. It has been a long time coming, but thanks to numerous people with vision within the city government, interested parties in the community, and representatives of the Monroe Street Cemetery Foundation (MSCF), restoration is becoming a reality.

After the collapse of the west wall of the Cemetery gatehouse in March 2010, the probability of restoration was fairly dim. The economics of trying to run a city just didn't include the rebuilding of an unused, deteriorating structure. After the collapse of the west wall, demolition seemed like the likely result. "Save the gatehouse" became the mantra of MSCF.
The gatehouse was designed by Walter Blythe, a prolific nineteenth-century Cleveland architect, and completed in 1876. Yet there are very few buildings left that Blythe designed. Working inside City Hall and relying on relationships developed over many years, MSCF President and Founder, Linda Litto, kept the gatehouse restoration alive.

At early meetings with city officials, MSCF director Alan Fodor proposed repurposing the building as a columbarium—a place to keep the remains of loved ones who had been cremated. Cremation is becoming a primary choice, nationally, for after-death disposition, and the gatehouse gave opportunities for 250-300 niches. Income from niche sales would have offset some of the restoration costs.

It seemed like a miracle was necessary if anything positive was going to happen. A meeting was arranged by councilman, Joe Cimperman. Attending were Commissioner Silva and Director Cox from the Department of Parks, Recreation & Properties, the Mayor’s Chief of Staff, Ken Silliman, Litto and Fodor from MSCF. Chief Silliman explained that early in the 20th century, the city started an endowment fund for maintenance of city-owned cemeteries. A portion of each grave sale was put into the endowment. By 2011, the endowment fund exceeded $6,000,000. Chief Silliman was exploring the possibility of utilizing a portion of the endowment funds for repairs at the three historic cemeteries—Monroe Street, Erie Street, and Woodland.

In mid-2011, a request for proposal was issued for an engineering study of the gatehouses and archways at Monroe and Erie to establish possible approaches and costs for dealing with these structures. The study was completed by Osborn Engineering in late 2011. The study proposed three alternate approaches: 1.) demolish the structures, 2.) deconstruct and store the pieces for future reconstruction, 3.) restore the structures.

During the spring of 2012, the City took action to set aside approximately one-third of the endowment funds and made the decision to restore the structures. They authorized Osborn to proceed with drawings and specifications for the work. The approach recommended by the engineers was to completely deconstruct the Monroe and Erie gatehouses, numbering, cataloging, and storing the stone pieces, demolishing the brick walls, and then constructing a new concrete block box onto which the stone pieces would be reinstalled. The reconstructed building would not be useable, but merely a monument to what the gatehouse once was. The idea of using it as a columbarium was not to be.

Litto, Fodor, and Tom Starinsky from the Historic Gateway Neighborhood CDC (Erie Street Cemetery is located in the Gateway neighborhood), as well as Jim Hayes from Mid State Restoration, a local experienced masonry contractor, objected to the proposed work. It was felt that the proposed work was not an acceptable way to restore the buildings since the historic fabric was, in essence, being thrown away, yet the buildings seemed to have significant portions of their walls without signs of structural damage. It was also felt that tearing down and rebuilding walls that did not need to be rebuilt was wasting the endowment funds when there are so many other ways to utilize the money at both cemeteries.

It took several meetings and much discussion, but in the end it was agreed that, where it was possible to reduce construction costs by reusing existing structural elements, the cost savings could be applied to other projects at the cemeteries such as replacement of damaged iron fencing at Erie Street Cemetery; replacement of the gatehouse belltower, removal of biological growth and sealing of stone roof joints on the Sims mausoleum; restoration of the Lord and Faulkner mausoleums, and construction of a new rood on the Scott mausoleum—all at Monroe. There are so many possible projects.

Lastly preparations for the future installation of utilities into the Monroe Street Gatehouse will be included in the drawings and specifications in the event the building is to be repurposed.

As things move forward we will keep you updated. We are planning a major celebration when the work is complete next year, so keep tuned.
Monroe Street Cemetery is 171 years old this year. The property that was the original cemetery was sold to Brooklyn Township in 1836 by Richard Lord and Josiah Barber, the real estate moguls who owned, developed and sold the township property starting in 1818 when they moved here from Connecticut. Both Lord and Barber were buried in the cemetery, though later in the 19th century Barber and nine other family members were transferred to Riverside Cemetery. Richard Lord and his wife Anna are still at rest at Monroe. The cemetery became the cemetery of Ohio City in 1841 through the preparation of a deed of ownership, and we generally use this date as the beginning date of the cemetery, though burials were made there as early as 1818.

It's a very old cemetery that has seen the ravages of time, climate, poor maintenance, and vandalism. In 1989 vandals did $100,000 worth of damage to the cemetery. Many headstones were toppled over as several youths ran wild for no apparent reason. The City of Cleveland made an attempt to fix some of the problems, but for the most part the damaged stones still remain.

At least until 2009. That year the Foundation invested in the cemetery by having 24 headstones repaired. Several beautiful obelisks were put back on their bases. Some stones that had been broken into pieces were reassembled and set back in place. It was a wonderful feeling to see what was done, but as you looked around you realized that there was still a long way to go.

We took the next step this year by having 15 more headstones/monuments repaired at a cost of $3,000. The source of funds was Foundation programs presented during 2011, a donation from Ohio City, Inc. for our participation in the 2011 Ohio City Christmas Walk, and from contributions from folks like you who share our interest in this historic burying ground. The work was done by Eternity Monuments, Inc. from LaGrange, Ohio and headed up by Tim Stallman. Tim is a former employee of another Cleveland-based monument company and now the owner of his own company.

Tim and his crew completed the work in less than one month to the satisfaction of the Foundation. We are hoping that in 2013 we will be able to continue our repair program and perhaps do another 15 of them or more. Your donations earmarked “for headstone repairs” will be used only for that purpose and, of course, that donation is 100% tax deductible. To support this initiative, please make your check out to Monroe Street Cemetery Foundation and mail it to 3302 Hancock Street, Cleveland, Ohio 44113.

**A Great App for Your Smartphone**

Cleveland State University professor Mark Tebeau and his crew have created a wonderful app for your cell phone. It is called Cleveland Historical. It is a terrific resource if you are interested in Cleveland history. You can download the free app at www.clevelandhistorical.org. You can enjoy the hundreds of stories at home or better still take it with you as you go out and about in Cleveland and call up history facts where you happen to be at the time. Check out the stories for Monroe Street Cemetery, Erie Street Cemetery and Woodland Cemetery. MSCF Director Alan Fodor prepared the story about Monroe.
Foundation News

We are sad to report that Connie Hardy, an original founder of The Friends of Monroe Cemetery and a director of the Monroe Street Cemetery Foundation passed away this year. Connie lived just around the corner from the cemetery and spent many hours there.

Her father, Lou Hardy, was an unofficial caretaker of the cemetery and shared his love of the place with his daughter. When Lou passed away he was buried at Monroe and Connie’s remains will join him there.

Members of the planning committee of MSCF met on August 18 at the cemetery and planted 200 day lily bulbs plus 25 hostas on the raised mound by the Whitman obelisk just inside the main gate. The bulbs were donated by a friend of Russ Cendrowski and Russ contributed the hostas. Planting day was a lot of hard work but even now, the plants have taken root and we are looking forward to next summer when they are blooming.

Back at our June meeting one of our planning committee members, Jeremy Feador, taught us how to clean a headstone. We all had an opportunity to learn first-hand how it is done. Jeremy, a historian at Baldwin Wallace University, had been involved with the restoration work that was done a few years ago at Adams Street Cemetery in Berea.

Two new directors of the Foundation have been elected. They are Adam Saurwein and Lesa Hess. Lesa has also taken on the role of the Foundation Secretary. With the addition of Adam and Lesa there are now four Foundation Directors including Linda Litto and Alan Fodor.

Other Happenings

Many of the stately trees at the cemetery were beginning to be problematic. Storms blew down many branches and did significant damage all over the cemetery. The City Forestry Department came in and designated about a dozen trees to be removed. Those trees are gone now and we all feel much safer when enjoying a walk at Monroe. Two new trees have been planted and we are expecting more to follow.

Several new trash cans have been installed. They look great and are much more substantial than the old ones, most of which have been destroyed over time.

All of the chain link fencing along the east and south edges of the cemetery has been replaced with new chain link fencing. Not being notified that the fencing was to be replaced, we were shocked one day when most of the fence along the east edge disappeared. Shortly thereafter the new one was being installed, and we were breathing easier!

We understand that the City is in the process of making section markers for the cemetery. This will be a great help to visitors trying to find a gravesite. Marker installation has not yet started but we hope it will be soon.

Calendar of Events

Early Summer 2013, Date and Time TBD

When the Gatehouse restoration is complete, join us for a celebration of preservation and cemetery history. Details to follow!