

# The Grove Street Bulletin

Vol. 1, No. 17

*A Publication of the Grove Street Cemetery*

Fall 2016

## A National Historic Landmark

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## End of an Era Marked by the Passing of Husband–Wife Team of Cemetery Superintendents

**WILLIAM M. CAMERON, JR., 1930–2016; JOAN CAMERON, 1937–2016**

The Standing Committee, Proprietors, Friends of Grove Street Cemetery, cemetery staff and all who knew Bill and Joan Cameron were saddened by their recent passing, after a remarkable 40 years of service. Theirs was an outstanding commitment in caring for the cemetery: it wasn't just a job to Bill and Joan, it was a labor of love. They worked seven days a week, never taking a vacation or a day off except in the rare instance of illness. They embodied the old school work ethic which Bill learned from his parents. This is evident when you enter the gates, in the way the cemetery has been managed and maintained over the past 40 years.



Bill began his career at the cemetery as a grounds man in 1976 and became Superintendent in 1983. He and his family were very active in the day-to-day operations of the cemetery, his children doing odd jobs, grounds work and eventually his wife Joan joined the team as Assistant Superintendent/Bookkeeper and later as Superintendent following his death.

Bill was a “behind-the-scenes” type of guy. He knew every inch of the cemetery, who was buried where, and could tell you exactly how to locate any gravesite from memory, which is not surprising since he had dug many of the graves himself, laid the foundations and provided stone restoration. Overseeing the landscape and grounds staff, managing burials and grave-side service arrangements, sharing information with visitors were all Bill's concerns and their own reward. Many articles have been written about the cemetery, as well as documentaries produced, but he declined first billing, rather providing information as needed and never wanting the spotlight.

Joan's accounting background was a perfect fit for managing the books, including the sale of graves, recording each burial and keeping an accounting of the remaining available burial sites. Joan who was recently recuperating from surgery was looking forward to returning to work to tidy up loose ends before she retired when she could at last spend time at home to tackle her list of projects.

Bill was always respectful of others and never outwardly judged people by their station or status in life. He encountered all types of individuals in his position as Superintendent, however he treated everyone as his equal. If one spent any time in Bill's company this quality came across loud and clear. It was refreshing to hear him discuss any topic intelligently and equally with Yale professors or a passerby asking questions about the cemetery. He was also privileged to hear many personal stories about the deceased from families and friends, yet kept these matters to himself, never betraying the confidences entrusted to him.

The cemetery was not always a pristine and neat place. When Bill began work, it was a shadow of what you see today, but it was his vision which transformed it into the Historic, park-like cemetery we have today.

*(continued on page 3)*

# Common Early Types of Grave Stones and Monuments in Grove Street Cemetery

*Characteristic forms of headstones and memorials represent various periods in our cemetery, influenced by beliefs, cultural styles, materials and technology, among many factors. This describes some of the earlier types you may encounter on a visit.*

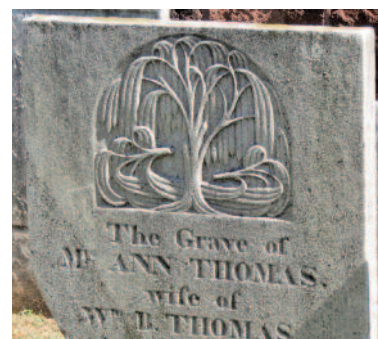


## Death's Head, Cherub or Soul Effigy

Late 17th to early 19th century. A common type used in New Haven with a stylized winged head on a rounded-top 'tablet stone', frequently of brownstone, with no separate base. These usually have side panels featuring decorative vegetation with smaller rounded tops. There are many of these placed against the back wall of the cemetery, having been moved from the burial ground on the Green in 1821 (only the stones were moved). The earliest colonial-period head images were skulls or "death's heads", which evolved into full-fleshed cherubs around 1800.

## Urn and Willow

A common early 19th century allegorical design associated with the Greek Revival movement. The weeping willow is associated with the Greek god Hades and the underworld, but also mourning, as in the Bible's 137th psalm. When combined with the urn it takes on neoclassical associations, as the Greeks also put the ashes of the dead in decorative urns. These images are more often on square-topped tablets, of the simple, symmetrical Federal style. Grove Street has some from as early as 1835 with only weeping willows, but with broken branches, signifying a life cut short. This period also saw the rapid growth of marble used for monuments, which unfortunately erodes in the current climate of more acidic rain.



## Revival Styles

Mid 19th–early 20th centuries. Based partly on evolving popular architectural styles, monuments were created in Egyptian, Gothic, Romanesque, Rustic and Palladian styles, among others. The massive gateway on Grove Street, designed by architect Henry Austin in 1845, is the most grand example of the Egyptian style, cut and carved from Connecticut brownstone. The single most popular Egyptian type monument, however, is the **obelisk**, of which there are over a hundred in the cemetery. These four-sided, tapering shafts are topped by a pyramid shape, such as the Washington Monument, and their popularity outlasted other Egyptian style architecture. Often placed on wider bases, they can be found in marble, brownstone and many types of granite, sometimes multiples in a single family lot.

## Sarcophagus

The sarcophagus form of monument is another revival style, recalling Classical Antiquity. Often decorative, these feature a rectangular casket-shape on a wider base (those in American cemeteries were usually empty above-ground). Two of the first in Grove Street Cemetery were those for Eli Whitney, the inventor, 1825, that for Yehudi Ashmun, 1828, agent for the African Colonization Society (see right; note row of obelisks beyond). The form was further popularized by Napoleon's Tomb in Paris in 1840 and there are some fine late 19th century Beaux-Arts style variations in Grove Street.



## New Superintendent Announced

The Standing Committee is pleased to announce the new superintendent for the Grove Street Cemetery. His name is A. Seeley Jennings, and he comes to the position with an incredibly strong background and extensive experience.

After a decade as owner of a monument company, he served 34 years as Superintendent of the Lakeview Cemetery and Crematory in Bridgeport, CT and has served as President of the Connecticut Monument Builders Guild and member of the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Cemetery Association.

If you visit the cemetery you will find an orderly office with new electronic equipment and a grounds staff proudly sporting new uniform shirts as they continue their excellent care of the landscape and preparing gravesites for burial. The office remains open from (at least) 9 till noon Monday through Friday, and the gates will remain open from 8 to 4 every day of the year. Seeley already has a number of ideas for innovation and improvement that he intends to recommend to the Steering Committee over the next few meetings. He says that that he already loves working at the Grove Street Cemetery, which he sees as both a sacred burial ground and an historical museum.

We always knew that the long-serving Camerons were unique and irreplaceable, but in Seeley we have a worthy successor who has already demonstrated the requisite skills to do an excellent job, a genuine affection for the Grove Street Cemetery, and the dedication to continue the long tradition of stewardship of that wonderful place shared among the Standing Committee, the Friends Board, and the Superintendent.

*(continued from page 1)*

Together with his son Bill, he was instrumental in repairing broken monuments, sandblasting the front gate and chapel/office exterior to return it to its natural stone coloring, repairing walls which over time needed repointing and supports, planting trees appropriate to the street names (Magnolia, Cedar, Hawthorne, etc.), as well as his involvement in obtaining National Landmark Status.

In addition Bill and Joan especially looked forward to and enjoyed the celebrations held at the cemetery, such as Memorial Day, July 4th and the Glenn Miller celebration, to name a few. Feeding the birds was a pleasant task for both of them which brought some life to the cemetery.

Bill was a West Haven native spending his youth at Bill's (now known as Grove Park), a restaurant owned and operated by his parents where the whole family worked and where he learned the importance of a solid work ethic. It was a natural fit that this "team" would work together again at Grove Street Cemetery. Bill was proud of his status as a Marine veteran, having served on the Battleship New Jersey fighting in the Korean War.

Bill and Joan met at Savin Rock in West Haven some 63 years ago, when one day she spotted him on a motorcycle and asked him for a ride. The rest, as they say, is history and although physically gone they are now riding together in memory and spirit. When you visit the cemetery, stop by their monument on Central Avenue and pay homage to them for their many years of service in making Grove Street Cemetery one of New Haven's Treasures.

**Darlene M. Casella, *Docent***

## How to Join

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

Individuals, organizations and corporations interested in Grove Street Cemetery and the objectives of the Friends are encouraged to become members. Annual membership dues are shown below. The membership year is October 1 to September 30. Membership Dues and other contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Contributions in excess of Membership Dues are welcome and, unless otherwise specified, will be allocated to its General Fund. We also maintain two additional funds which may be of interest to donors. The Landscape and Landmark Funds were created to support the on-going horticultural programs of the organization and the ever present need for support of the Cemetery's renovation and restoration efforts.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

#### Dues:

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

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

Preservation       Program       Publication       Horticulture  
 Docent       Fund Raising

**Send check payable to Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc., with completed form, to: P.O. Box 9238, New Haven, CT 06533-0238.**

## Order your DVD of the documentary film, "Grove Street Cemetery — City of the Dead, City of the Living", produced, directed, and written by five-time Emmy Award winner Karyl K. Evans

Copies of the 30 minute Grove Street Cemetery DVD, nominated for two Emmy awards, are available for purchase at \$15.00 (postage pre-paid) per copy. Please complete the form below to receive your copy. You should also consider purchasing copies for family members and for friends. Buy it, watch it, and then give it to your local library or school!

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**Send check payable to Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery, Inc., with completed form, to: P.O. Box 9238, New Haven, CT 06533-0238.**

*Ceremonial musket volley by members of the 6th Connecticut Regiment, Continental Line (reconstituted), in honor of the patriots of the 6th CR killed in action in the Revolutionary War, performed after the conclusion of the Sixty-Fifth Annual Ceremonies to Honor the Signers of the Declaration of Independence conducted by General David Humphreys Branch Number One Connecticut Society, Sons of the American Revolution, July 4th, 2016.*



Michael Morand

## How to Reach Us

### Grove Street Cemetery

Open daily from  
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

227 Grove Street  
New Haven, CT 06511

(203) 787-1443  
[office@grovestreetcemetery.org](mailto:office@grovestreetcemetery.org)

### Friends of the Grove Street Cemetery

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

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

### Burial Plots are available in Grove Street Cemetery

Contact the Superintendent's Office for further information: (203) 787-1443



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

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