

# *The Voice of Vale Cemetery* *Established 1857*

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Spring 2024

Schenectady, N.Y.

## **A Tribute To Dr. Bernard McEvoy**

On December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Vale Cemetery and the greater community at large lost a beloved friend, Dr. Bernard “Bernie” McEvoy. Dr. McEvoy and his wife Barbara worked tirelessly for Vale Cemetery for over 20 years. Their efforts saved the caretaker’s house from demolition and worked to achieve financial stability for the cemetery. He obtained grant funding from various institutions including the Wright, Carlilian, Broughton and Schenectady Foundations as well as the New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, Preservation League of New York and the Schenectady County Initiative. These grants helped to fund projects such as the paving of roads, the installation of brick pillars and wrought iron fencing, video surveillance, the placement of kiosks throughout the cemetery, a historic landscape study and the expansion of the crematory. Another critical element involved outreach; getting prominent individuals and organizations engaged with our urban park and historic treasure nestled in the City of Schenectady. During his tenure with Vale Bernie worked with organizations such as the Hamilton Hill Arts Center, Community Fathers, and Roots & Wisdom just to name a few. Dr McEvoy looked to re-establish connections put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He kept going strong until the very end, embodying his tenacious and caring spirit.

Below are kind remembrances of Dr. McEvoy testifying to the great impact he had on everyone he met.

“Bernie, or Dr. McEvoy, was truly committed to transforming the Vale’s reputation from perilous to secure, from financial instability to stability...Our paths crossed when I initiated a class on gravestone cleaning and sought a venue.

I reached out to Bernie, and he graciously offered the Vale as a host for these classes...our relationship blossomed into a meaningful friendship.”-----

**Melody Howarth**

“The Dr., as he was called, was instrumental in supporting us and ‘The Male Achievers Program’ we developed for young leaders within our community. Dr. McEvoy was a partner in our changing the area known as The Old Colored Plot to what is now known as the African American Burial Ground...The Schenectady Juneteenth Celebration begins with the ceremony at Vale Cemetery. Dr. McEvoy was an integral part of various ways in which the Burial Ground and the ceremony has evolved. His absence this year will leave a gap.”-----**Community Fathers, Inc**

“I fondly remember when I first met Dr. McEvoy: it was at a career fair at Union College in the spring of 2011...he was looking for a student intern to help conduct historical research at Vale. One year later, I found myself arriving on the front steps of the former caretaker's house each week, and touring the grounds...That summer, our collaborative historical research paid off through the national recognition of Moses Viney's journey to emancipation and his final resting place at Vale...He especially inspired me through his passion for and commitment to the local history, environment, and community...I am certain that Dr. McEvoy's impact will continue to be felt at Vale and in Schenectady at large for many years still to come.”-----**Erica Fugger**



*Photo from the family provided to the Daily Gazette- Jan. 5th, 2024.*

“Dr. McEvoy and Dr. Wells would be in the back of their office mixing up some kind of concoction to ease my painful topical eczema...When they went their separate ways, I stayed with Dr. McEvoy. I attended graduate school in Omaha, Nebraska, he put me in contact with a dermatologist...A kind, caring person and a great conversationalist. ‘He fought the good fight, he finished the race and he kept the faith...’ 2 Timothy 4:7-8”

-----**Julia Holcomb**

“It is hard to give the Doc his due respect and love...During the many years I volunteered at the cemetery, I have never known a person more considerate and compassionate of others...He was always striving to maintain and enhance the cemetery. I loved his many stories but his love for the cemetery and its history will always be most precious to me.”-----**Marion Clas**

“Dr. McEvoy was both a friend of historic preservation and a wonderful person. A long time board member of Schenectady Heritage Foundation, he and his wife Barbara, were largely responsible for the revitalization of Vale Cemetery...While Bernie was honored with a ‘Patroon’ award from Schenectady for his civic volunteerism, other charitable work was done ‘under the radar,’ expecting no recognition. And he did it all with his unique sense of humor.”----- **Gloria Kishton-Chair, Schenectady Heritage Foundation**

### **Juneteenth Celebration:**

On Friday, June 21<sup>st</sup> at 6pm, Vale Cemetery will host a Juneteenth celebration at the African American Ancestral Burial Ground. Juneteenth commemorates the last slaves freed under the Emancipation proclamation, June 19th, 1865.

### **Vale Cemetery Association Board of Trustees:**

The turn of the year brought several changes to the Board of Trustees. Gordon Zuckerman stepped down as President, with Vice President Tom Ciancetta moving up into the position. Mr. Zuckerman's many years of service dedicated to putting Vale Cemetery Association on a firm financial footing reached its goal in 2023. The Vale Cemetery Association board thanks Gordon for his service and his outstanding accomplishments during his time on the Board. The Board also thanks Chris Leonard and Julia Holcomb for their contributions and wishes them well in future endeavors, while welcoming Dr. Mac Sudduth and Jill Bogdanowicz-Wilson to the board.

### **Upcoming 2024 Tours at Vale Cemetery:**

Sunday tours begin at 2pm at the Caretaker's House. A donation of \$10.00 per attendee will help in supporting these historically interesting tours. Vale Lot owners and children under 12 are free.

- Sunday, May 5<sup>th</sup>-Schenectady's Dutch Settlers-Scott Haefner
- Sunday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>-Victorian Lady in Mourning -Sue McLane
- Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup>-Birding at Vale- George Steele (7:30 AM and is free of charge)
- Sunday, July 7<sup>th</sup>-Schenectady, WWI and the Spanish Influenza Pandemic-  
-Dr. James Strosberg
- Sunday, August 4<sup>th</sup>-Giants of Industry  
-Chris Hunter
- Sunday, September 1<sup>st</sup>-Schenectady and the Civil War - Chris Leonard
- Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>-Notable Women  
-Sue McLane

### **Memorial Day Commemoration**

The Vale Cemetery will observe Memorial Day at 10:30 AM, May 27 with a formal ceremony. “Taps,” a flag raising, and the National Anthem will be on the program. Veterans’ groups representing all military branches will participate. Local dignitaries will speak briefly at the Veterans’ Plot. Participants will assemble at Vale’s Veteran Section near the main entrance at 907 State St.

### **Welcome William McLean Sudduth and Jill Bogdanowicz-Wilson:**

William McLean Sudduth (a.k.a. Mac) and Jill Bogdanowicz-Wilson. Mr. Sudduth holds a PhD from the University of Oklahoma in History of Science. He has extensive background with grant writing, fundraising and educational development with numerous organizations spanning several states. He recently served as Director of MiSci until retiring in 2018. Dr. Sudduth is also very active in the community serving in the Schenectady Rotary Club and on the Vale Park Advisory Committee. For the last couple of years, Ms. Bogdanowicz-Wilson has assisted Susan Jackson with Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) in the creation of a database of Vale’s burials records. She has also cleaned up the cemetery grounds. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Historic Preservation and Interior Design. Ms. Bogdanowicz-Wilson received a Community Recognition Award for her work in the Goose Hill Neighborhood.

### **Vale Preservation Committee is Formed:**

The death and retirement, respectively, of Bernie and Barbara McEvoy necessitates a rebirth of Vale Cemetery Preservation, Inc. Vale Cemetery Association has established a Preservation Committee to assist in that effort and, during the transition, continue the programs set up by Bernie and Barbara during their tenure. Since this is a new and evolving committee, we ask that everyone please be patient when either emailing or calling with requests. We promise to get back to you as soon as possible.

One of the first tasks of this Committee is to restore the Caretaker's House, specifically, the portico area which has suffered some damage over the years. Another project is cleaning up and better identifying the headstones on graves in the First Reformed Plot. There are numerous Revolutionary War veterans buried in this plot and it would entail tracking down the inscriptions and then matching them with the stones. We are hoping to have this done for the American Revolution 250 in 2026.

### **Vale Cemetery Honors Its Veterans:**

As a nation, we celebrate Memorial Day this year on May 27th. While it is now common to honor all veterans, this solemn day was set aside for those who died in our nation's wars. Over time, this celebration has come to include all deceased veterans.

Historic Vale Cemetery is the final resting place of hundreds of men and women who served in all American wars from the birth of our nation to the conflicts of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These veterans include holders of the Silver and Bronze Stars, while three of our Civil War veterans earned the nation's highest accolade, the Congressional Medal of Honor.

If you visit, (and we hope you do!), please be aware that you are walking on sacred ground that deserves your respect. Many headstones have become fragile over the passing of time. Please do not take rubbings, clean, or attempt to move/straighten the stones, as these efforts can cause unintentional damage. If you are interested, we are always looking for volunteers to help us maintain our heritage. Please contact us for further information on preserving Vale's legacy.



### **Vale Cemetery Receives- Urban Community Forestry Grant:**

Vale Cemetery Association has received a \$24,000 grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation for an inventory of the trees in the upper section of the cemetery grounds. The project's goals are to document species diversity and maintenance needs, leading to a safer, healthier, and more sustainable tree canopy. The cemetery is currently accredited as a Level 1 Arboretum by ArbNet and is listed in The Morton Register of Arboreta. Information gathered under the Urban Forestry Grant will help the cemetery in its efforts to achieve Level II accreditation. Vale would like to thank Steve Feeney of the Schenectady County Economic Development and Planning Department for assistance with the grant.



**Portico in 1899**



**Portico in 2022**



## VALE CEMETERY

Vale Cemetery

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### **Vale Cemetery Association Board of Trustees:**

*President-* Thomas Ciancetta

*Vice-President-* John Gearing, Esq.

*Secretary-* Daniel Bradt

*Treasurer-* Marion "Jet" Jackson

*Superintendent-* Clark Adams

*Crematory Operator-* James Carpenter

Elena Alvarez

Jill Bogdanowicz-Wilson

Angela Committo

Carla Hernas, DVM

John Polster, Esq.

William McLean "Mac" Sudduth

### **Please contact Vale Cemetery by phone or email for the following:**

- To receive your newsletter via e-mail (Vale continues its efforts to go green)
- Had a change of address or e-mail?
- Know someone who would like to receive the newsletter?
- Unsubscribe to the newsletter
- Volunteer opportunities

