

The Voice of Vale Cemetery *Established 1857*

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Fall/Winter 2020

Schenectady, N.Y.

VALE NAMED CEMETERY OF EXCELLENCE BY NATIONAL MAGAZINE



Vale Cemetery is proud to announce its selection as the 2020 Cemetery of Excellence by the *American Cemetery & Cremation* magazine (ACCM). The ACCM chose Vale for this prestigious award for its perseverance as an inner city historic cemetery and for its numerous and diverse programs. It acknowledges Vale as a vital social, historical and environmental resource and for its fiscal stability in trying times.

The magazine editors spoke with Vale Board Secretary, Dr. Bernard McEvoy and City Historian/Vale Board member Chris Leonard. They were impressed with the development of the Dell, a natural Green Burial area and the revitalization of the African American Ancestral Burial Ground, which is on the National Park Service Underground Network to Freedom and is the site of a Juneteenth Ceremony. The Dell is a wildflower meadow and a pollinator garden. The African American Burial ground is the grave site of Moses Viney, a runaway slave, who became a prominent businessman.

Vale's community involvement includes 9 yearly public tours, school, and group tours, guided nature walks and bird walks, 2 road races, a Memorial Day program. Unused cemetery land is the site of an Urban Farm community garden with chickens and rabbits and a beekeeper.

A place of tranquility as a certified arboretum, it provided meaningful service during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A photograph of Vale will be featured on the cover of the ACCM December edition. Runners up for the award were Cave Hill Cemetery, Louisville, KY, Garden of Remembrance (Gran Zikaran), Clarksburg, MD., and Greenlawn Cemetery, Bakersfield, CA.

Superintendent Clark Adams and his staff are to be commended in receiving the award as their excellent service to funeral directors is the essential factor for Vale's reputation.

VALE, COVID-19, AND NEW YORK CITY

Shortly after the Pandemic began in March, Vale Superintendent Clark Adams received a phone call from an area funeral director. He told Clark that the funeral home where he interred had a crisis situation where the crematory in New York City that they usually used was backed up causing a 7-day delay for cremations. Because of the delay the funeral home was storing bodies in a refrigerated trailer on their premises. He wanted to know if Vale could help rectify the situation. Clark told them he could accommodate 8 bodies if they could be at Vale by 8 A.M. A few days later a Long Island funeral asked if Vale could help with their cremation backlog.

Thus, began weeks of long hours for Vale's crematory staff. Many days the staff worked from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. Some nights an employee would have to come in after midnight to start or complete a cremation. Added to this was the risk of infection with the virus when working with Covid-19 victims.

Strict precautions were scrupulously followed to protect staff and minimize the possibility of spread. Superintendent Clark Adams and his staff are to be commended for the superb effort they put forth in the crisis.

Cemetery Staff Efforts are Appreciated

The cemetery staff makes extra effort to fulfill funeral directors' special needs. Our crematory is open seven days a week so funeral directors can easily collect remains and return them quickly to their families.

Vale welcomes families to witness their loved one's cremation and to hold religious ceremonies within or newly redesigned crematory. Vale's superb, specialized services have resulted in 45 funeral homes in 9 counties choosing Vale as their preferred crematory.



Vale President's Message

Vale could not more appreciative of our selection as the 2020 Cemetery of Excellence by American Cemetery and Cremation Magazine. We know how hard our entire staff has worked in what has been an unquestionably difficult year. But, in the end, that is what we do every year. Yet, to be recognized for this effort by a prestigious magazine in our field lets us know we continue to head in the right direction. As always, we look forward to working with the community to help serve all your needs.

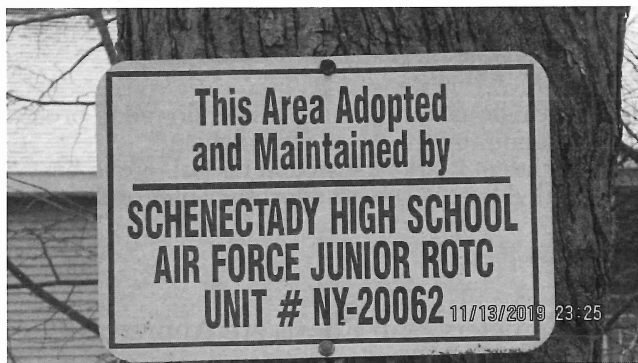
- Gordon Zuckerman

R.O.T.C. Continues to Help Vale

Every year, the Air Force Junior R.O.T.C. of Schenectady High School has been of great help to Vale Cemetery. They perform numerous workdays and attend the Vale Memorial Day Celebration. Their Color Guard adds greatly to the event.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic they spent their September workday planting flowers and sprucing up a road covered with weeds. They did so wearing masks and gloves, while remaining socially distanced.

The cadets have adopted Section L4 of the cemetery and help keep it in prime condition. The R.O.T.C. is guided by Retired Chief Master Sargent Jayne Thompson.



The Birds at Vale Need Help

Bird watching at Vale is a popular past-time. We have acquired a number of bird houses that we'd love to have placed in the Dell Green Burial area but lack the expertise as to the best places to put them (location and height). If anyone, who is a bird watcher or avian expert, could help us with this, the birds would appreciate it.



Tree Labeling at Vale Arboretum

In February 2018, Arbnet, the interactive community of Arboreta, accredited Vale as a Level 1 arboretum. When Vale was established in 1857, hundreds of native and exotic species were planted within its borders.

Two years ago Angie Tompkins, director of the Schenectady branch of the Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Master Gardeners identified 30 species of trees within Vale. They developed plastic labels and affixed them to about one third of the identified tree species. This summer the rest of the labels were applied. Vale can now have tours specifically for tree identification. This also expands the scope of the Nature Walks led by Amy Veino each year.

Hemlock Tree Still Endangered

The large stately hemlock tree near Civil War Hero William "Billy" Horsfall's grave is still infected with woolly adelgid in spite of being treated last year with imidaclopid. Davey Tree Service has advised retreating it again in the Spring. This will hopefully end the problem. It would be a shame to lose this stately old tree and incur a very large expense for taking it down. The cost for treating the tree is approximately \$500, the cost of removing the large tree down is estimated at over \$3,000. We gladly welcome any support you can provide in this venture.



Wind Damages Vale Trees

The recent windstorms have damaged several of Vale's trees, one of them so badly it had to be taken down at a cost of \$3,200. Some of the damaged trees remain alive but lost many limbs. Vale's gas-powered chipper can handle limbs less than 3" in diameter, but larger branches require the service of a commercial chipper at \$75 per hour.

An additional problem is that the maple trees planted near Brandywine have grown tall enough to block some of our video surveillance in the area. They can be professionally pruned to allow the cameras to function, which is preferable to losing the trees.

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of address or e-mail?

Notify Vale by phone
(518-346-0423)
or e-mail vale@valecemetery.org

Know someone who would
like to receive the newsletter?

You Have Questions, We Have Answers

Will the Cemetery Repair my Gravestone?

Gravestones are not cemetery property. They belong to the lot owner or whoever purchased the plot. It is the lot owner's responsibility to repair them.

How do gravestones get tipped over or broken?

Some monuments fall as a result of the ground becoming uneven due to frost and thawing, or simply due to gravity and time.

Some tipped stones are the result of vandalism. This occurs in every cemetery and has been a problem for centuries. Children (young adults) are frequently the perpetrators. Locking the cemetery entrance gates is not the solution. The police warn that closing the gates bars police patrols and might result in more vandalism.

What can be done with a tipped over or broken monument?

New York State collects \$5 from each burial to repair vandalized stones. It is only paid out if the owner of the monument can be found with running newspaper legal notices 3 times.

Competitive bids for repair costs must be sought. A New York State Division of Cemeteries inspector then examines the damage to approve repair. Photos and records must be submitted with the application for repair. The process usually takes a few months.

Who can I get to clean or repair my family's monument?

The cemetery office has a list of professional monument repair companies, and can be reached at (518) 346-0423.

Vale Contributes to Cancer Research

Since 2016 Vale has collected metal components (rods, screws, plates, hip joints) left behind after cremation and sent them to a metal's refiner. The reimbursements received by Vale are donated to the American Cancer Society, specifically for cancer research. For this purpose, Vale created the Brenda Adams Memorial Fund named for Cemetery Superintendent Clark Adams' sister who died from cancer in 2016. Thus far, over \$28,000 has been sent to this fund.

Funeral directors explain to families considering cremation that this is a way for their loved ones to make a final contribution at life's end, which many families find consoling.

WHAT IS VALE CEMETERY PRESERVATION, INC.?

IT IS AN ORGANIZATION THE GOAL OF WHICH IS TO PROMOTE VALE CEMETERY, TO PRESERVE ITS GRANDEUR AND PRESERVE ITS HISTORY.

WHO ARE OUR MEMBERS?

ANYONE CONTRIBUTING \$10 (OR MORE) YEARLY
STUDENT MEMBERSHIP \$5
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP \$15
LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP \$25

BENEFITS OF A MEMBERSHIP?

- FREE ADMISSION TO PUBLIC TOURS
- INVITATION TO JUNETEENTH CEREMONIES
- INVITATION TO MEMORIAL DAY OBSERVANCE
- RECEIVE COPIES OF 2 YEARLY NEWSLETTERS
- GENEALOGY ASSISTANCE USING CEMETERY ARCHIVE

WHAT DO THEY SPEND MONEY ON?

- LAST YEAR APPROXIMATELY \$9,000 WAS SPENT FOR ADVERTISING FOR TOURS AND EVENTS AT VALE.
- PURCHASE AND REPAIR OF LANDSCAPING EQUIPMENT
- HALF OF THE \$8,000 COST OF REBUILDING THE CHIMNEY OF THE 1899 CIRCA CARETAKER'S HOUSE WHICH IS NOW THE CEMETERY OFFICE AND GENEALOGY CENTER

ATTENTION!
GE Employees,
retirees and spouses



Gifts of \$25 or more to Vale Cemetery Preservation can be matched by the GE Foundation's Matching Gift Program. You can register gifts to the center by calling the GE Matching Gift Center at (800) 305-0669 or online at www.ge.com/foundation/matching_gifts.html.

Checks should be made out to Vale Cemetery Preservation, which is a 501c3 tax exempt organization. Call (518) 346-0423 for more information.

Vale Arboretum

Vale Cemetery/Park is a recognized Level 1 arboretum and is the crown jewel of the city's Green Necklace. The tree groups include Central Park, Jackson Garden, Erie Boulevard and the boulevards on Parkwood and Glenwood.

Cemeteries have been the repository of trees including exotic varieties as cities have become more and more paved over with wider roads and more parking lots.

Trees in addition to their beauty are a key to water uptake and with the shade they provide are modifiers of temperature and carbon monoxide.

Dr. Robert M. Fuller: Father of Tablet Triturates and Witness to the Lincoln Assassination

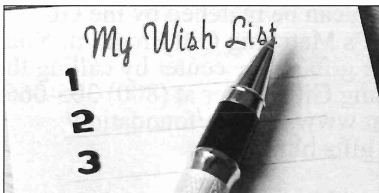


Dr. Robert M. Fuller was born in Schenectady in 1845. He attended Union College, graduating with the class of 1863 before attending Albany Medical School. He is famous for inventing a process to create medicine tablets. Tableted medicine standardized dosages received by patients allowing for better regulated care and improved recovery rates. For this reason, Dr. Fuller is known as the “Father of Tablet Triturates”

While a student at Albany Medical College, Fuller was selected by a Dr. Armsby to travel to Virginia to retrieve a gravely wounded Union soldier and bring him to the Ira M. Harris hospital in Albany. Fuller arrived in Washington DC the night before he was due to collect the soldier. He decided to take in a show to pass the evening, a performance of *Our American Cousin* at Ford’s Theater. That evening he witnessed the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln at the hands of John Wilkes Booth.

Not to be deterred, he continued his way to Virginia, where he found the injured soldier too ill to be moved. He returned to Albany alone, but with an incredible story to tell.

Dr. Robert M. Fuller is interred in Vale Cemetery with his parents in the Fuller Family Plot in Section M, Plot 128.



Every so often an unanticipated expense just comes up. These are usually things not budgeted for, but they **MUST BE DONE!**

1) Used Car or Truck

The 2016 Honda used to deliver cremains to funeral homes has over 100,000 miles and is beginning to need repairs. The 1990 pickup truck used only within the cemetery is “on its last legs” and will have to be scrapped. A replacement only needs to be drivable as it won’t be used outside the cemetery.

2) Used Riding Mower

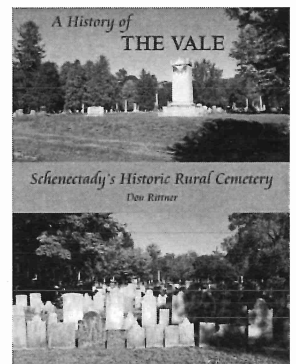
Volunteers often are willing to cut grass, but aren’t qualified to use a \$6,000 riding mower and go into sections of the cemetery with standing monuments. A small home model mower that a volunteer can use on the large fields with no burials would allow him to help and free our paid workers to do other areas.

If you’d like to contribute to a fund, please mark your contribution for tree trimming, wood chipper rental, or treatment of the Horsfall hemlock tree.

Book About Vale Available

The lavishly illustrated book, “A History of the Vale – Schenectady’s Historic Cemetery” by Don Rittner is still available. For many years, Don was the Schenectady City and County historian.

In the book, he discusses the Rural Cemetery Movement of the mid 1800’s and the development of special areas in Vale Cemetery (Potter’s Field, African American Ancestral Burial Ground, Dutch Reformed Church Cemetery, Millionaires’ Row, the Urban Farm and the Ahmadiya Muslim Cemetery). Each is described and their history explained.



There are 100 pages of biographies of notables interred in Vale including war heroes, inventors, industrialists, notable women and African Americans.

A description of the Union College Faculty Cemetery and a list of those interred there is included. Vale Cemetery sells the book at cost (\$21) plus postage.