

The Voice of Vale Cemetery Established 1857

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FALL / WINTER 2021

Schenectady, N.Y.

Vale Cemetery in FALL/ WINTER 2021



The Schenectady Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution dedicated a plaque on June 19, 2021, to honor Emma Van Vranken Gibbs, a past chapter regent, NY State Regent, and Vice President General at the National level. Emma's gravestone had previously been inscribed with her name and dates as part of this project. Two of Emma Van Vranken Gibbs' Revolutionary War patriots, Stephen Gates and Cornelius Peek, are buried in Vale Cemetery. Following the plaque dedication, these graves were marked by the chapter with a short ceremony held at each grave site. Our honored guests included New York State Regent, Patrice Powley Birner, Senator James Tedisco, and Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara. Since 1890, the Daughters of the American Revolution have promoted patriotism, historic preservation and education across the nation.



Vale President's Message

COVID has not gone away at Vale. So far this year we're on target to do almost as many cremations as we did last year when we accepted bodies out of the New York City area. This year we cremated between 40 to 50 COVID bodies. Our burials are up as well. We are doing it with a staff of three full time and one seasonal staff member led by our Superintendent. A shout out to our hard working staff!

- Gordon Zuckerman

JUNETEENTH 2021 Success!

This year saw the largest turnout for Juneteenth in the 15 years of being held at Vale. Walter Simpkins organized and directed a program of oratory (Frederick Douglass' address) and song, and reenacted the role of Moses Viney. Viney was a former slave who escaped a Maryland plantation, and with the help of the Underground Railroad made his way to Schenectady. Befriended by Union College President, Eliphalet Nott, he ultimately became a livery owner.

2 New Board Members

At the next meeting of the Vale Cemetery Board of Directors, there will be 2 new Board members attending.

Dr. Carla Hernas, a prominent Schenectady Veterinarian, will be attending for the 1st time. She has family members at eternal rest in Vale. She has an interest in keeping Vale's grandeur maintained, and keeping it financially sound.

John Gearing, a Schenectady attorney, will be attending his 1st Vale Board of Directors meeting also. Gearing is the author of the book, *Schenectady Genesis, Part 2*. This is a definitive history of the city in the years 1661 to 1800. It is entitled, "How a Dutch Colonial Village became an American City."

Gearing each year leads one of Vale's Public Tours. Large crowds attend to learn about Schenectady's part in the Revolutionary War.

Green Burial Grave Sites in Demand

Hardly a day goes by without an inquiry about purchasing a Green Burial plot. Most weeks there is at least one visit to see the Green Burial plot by an interested party. There are 169 graves in the DELL. So far, 60 lots have been sold and there have been 9 burials.

This was a wonderful year for wildflowers appearing in this section. Two families, who have relatives interred in the DELL, have planted extensive beautiful flower gardens in their plots. The tall colorful cosmos and brown-eyed Susans are in abundance. Schenectady County Soil & Water District each year gives Vale their leftover annual plants-snapdragons, zinnias, and petunias. Vale can always use volunteer gardening help. If you'd like to be a volunteer out at the DELL planting flowers for the pollinators (butterflies and bees), we have the tools for you to use and water sprinklers for you to move around.

Just call: 518-346-0423,
and tell us when you would like to come in.

Farewell to a Volunteer

It is with sadness that we announce that a faithful Vale Cemetery volunteer has passed away.

Ronald Ratchford, a retired NYS employee, has served Vale in any capacities for years.

A gifted amateur historian, Ron corrected mis-statements in *A History of the Vale*, Schenectady's Historic History book. He could lead any of Vale's narrated tours. He was a spellbinding storyteller with the histories of political regime intrigue.

He was the source of the postage stamps from the 1950s through the 1970s that graced our newsletters. A renowned stamp collector and editor of a philatelist's newsletter, he disposed of hundreds of old stamps that only had their postage value left due to the decline of a number of stamp collectors. It made the Vale Newsletter envelope an object of awe.

Thank you, Ron for all of your efforts for Vale.

Vale Board of Directors

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www.valecemetery.org

Receive your Vale Newsletter via e-mail!

Have you had a change
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?

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 ARCHIVES

Employer Matching Donations to Vale

Does your employer match your donations to Vale? Many employers do so. Call the Vale office 518-346-0423 to get the Particulars.

Checks should be made out to Vale Cemetery Preservation, which is a 501c3 tax exempt organization.

SPOOKY TOURS – NOT at VALE

Vale receives numerous phone calls at this time of year asking: “Are we having a nighttime Haunted Cemetery Tour?” We have never done this type of tour in the past, and are not considering offering such an event presently.

To prevent illicit activity, such as drug sales, prostitution, and vandalism in the cemetery, we actually discourage people from entering the cemetery after dark when it is closed. The Board is exploring closing the cemetery entrance gates. We don’t want to discourage police patrols however. In fact, we encourage frequent police surveillance. This would be prevented if the entrance gates were closed.

The Board’s feeling regarding night “haunted tours” is that this is disrespectful to those buried there. A person at “eternal rest at a cemetery should not be subjected to frivolities. We don’t want to make Vale an amusement park. We won’t “Disneyfy” this historic site, arboretum, bird and wildlife sanctuary, and place of beauty”.

Vale Cemetery Hosts Albany Death Cafe

On Sunday, September 12th, Vale was the scene of the Albany Death Cafe.

The Death Cafe is a meeting place for people who have questions concerning burial, Cremation, natural burial, and what services funeral directors perform. The costs of these services are often a question in the minds of many.

Two experts on such matters, Kate Murray and Carla Sofka from Albany can answer almost any question on the subject, and are experienced facilitators for a group. The cafe is so named because tea and sweets are provided. The attendance at the get together was about 15 people, mostly first timers, for a discussion of end of life issues.

Services at Vale Cemetery

How much does cremation cost?

Vale charges \$355 for cremation, which does not include funeral director's fees for bringing the body to Vale and for filing the necessary papers, and other services. Vale offers family gathering space at the crematory for personal or religious services free of charge

What is the price for a gravesite at Vale?

Vale Cemetery offers affordable burial plots. Prices range from \$175-\$500 depending on the location and the type of monument desired to mark the site. Gravesites in the Urn Garden for cremated remains are just \$175, where flush, small memorials are permitted. Gravesites in the Dell Natural Burial Area are \$600, where small, flush monuments are allowed.

It should be noted that these charges are for the right to bury, not for the piece of land which is still owned by Vale Cemetery

Get a Tax Deduction for What's Rusting in Your Garage

That rusting riding mower, snow blower, leaf blower, hedge trimmer, truck, car, lawn sprinkler, chain saw, trailer, garden tools, etc., will give you a tax deduction if donated to Vale Cemetery.

Vale Cemetery Preservation is a 501c3 organization and is tax exempt. Donations are tax deductible provided you do not receive anything of value in return for your donation.

FREE Firewood!

The fall and winter windstorms took down several of Vale's trees. If you can use some firewood there is lots of it available for free, much of it near the crematory. We do not have a splitter, nor a way to transport it to you, but it is free for the taking. The wood is cut into lengths for ease of transport. Bring your truck or trailer and grab as much as you want. Just call our office (518 346-0423) to let us know that you are taking wood.

Tours a Success

After a year of no public tours due to COVID, public tours at Vale resumed in April. There was a large turnout for each of this year's narrated public tours, probably related to a desire to get to any event after a year of being homebound. We owe a debt of thanks to Union College for supplying a bus and drive (free of charge) for each tour. Sue McLane's Victorian Lady in Mourning was enthusiastically received, as was John Gearing's Revolutionary Tour, Chris Hunter's Giants of Industry Tour, and Dr. Strosberg's tour of Schenectady's part in WWI and the 1918 Flu Pandemic of that time.

VALE ROOFS & ROADS are DONE

Over the summer, a new roof was put on the caretaker's house. Shingles were coming off each time there was a windstorm. Leaks had developed in the roof in 10 places. The cost of the project was \$15,899.

The rubber roof of the crematory building had developed a severe leak.

Rather than patching the leak, a new roof was applied. The cost for this was \$15,500.

The crematory garage roof was over 10 years old and had begun leaking. The roof was replaced at a cost of \$4,663.

The main road to Brandywine Avenue had many bone jarring potholes in it. It was resurfaced by Callanan Contractors for \$41,000 with a bequest Vale received.

Vale was recently notified that it was left a significant bequest in the will of an anonymous donor. This was welcome news as there are always unanticipated (unbudgeted) expenses. There is an ongoing campaign to restore the faded grandeur of Vale. Time has taken a toll on the arboretum of Vale as well.

If you would like to remember Vale in your will or if you are interested in tax advantages of contributing appreciated stock, or from stock or charitable annuity, Vale will help with making the necessary arrangements.