

The Voice of Vale Cemetery Established 1857

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Fall/Winter 2019

Schenectady, N.Y.

VALE OPENS THIRD CREMATORY RETORT



Across the country, burials are decreasing while cremations becoming more popular. Vale only performs about 50 burials a year, most of which are for the county's Social Services Department.

Vale could not function if its income were solely derived from burials. Fortunately, Vale was ahead of the curve, opening its crematory in 1994. Last year, ninety-five percent of Vale's income came from its crematory operation, which performed 1,960 cremations for 45 funeral homes in 9 counties, including Vermont and Massachusetts. To do so, Vale's two crematory retorts were stressed well beyond their performance capacities.

To solve the problem, Vale borrowed \$225,000 at 5.5% to build a third state-of-the-art retort, and the building to house it. This new retort, which was completed in October, is more efficient than our other retorts and can accommodate larger (750 lb or more) bodies.

While grant funds are being sought to help defray the cost, we are appealing to Friends of the Cemetery to help us repay the loans ASAP. Such donations are tax deductible and donor's names will be memorialized *in perpetuity* on a plaque in the family gathering room at the crematory building.

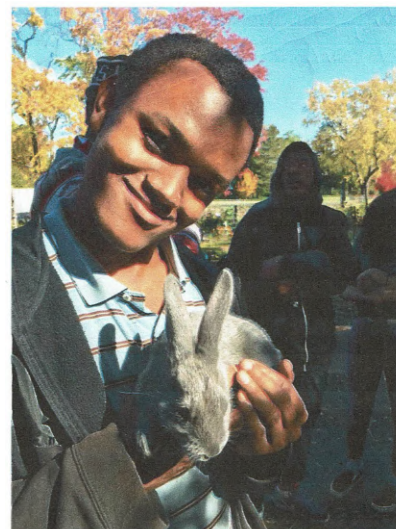
The walls of the improved crematory building are constructed of concrete blocks painted tastefully with two-tone gray paint. A drive-thru for unloading hearses provides convenience to funeral directors during inclement weather and privacy while making deliveries.

UPDATE ON THE VALE URBAN FARM

The Vale Urban Farm, growing over a thousand pounds of food to feed people and pollinators, served 62 member-families fresh produce, flowers and eggs over the 2019 season. The farm season continues even now as we harvest leeks, carrots, beets and greens. In addition to our members, volunteers from Union College, Mildred Elly, College of St. Rose, ECOS, B'Yachad Religious School, and the local community, volunteered at the farm planting, weeding, harvesting and taking care of animals.

The farm provided garden plots for Ellis Mental Health and SCAP and partnered with Schenectady High School and ARC to run training programs for youth. A grant from the City of Schenectady allowed the Farm to offer a Saturday summer lunch program in July and August. Lunch was served to over 60 children and their families living in the surrounding area. A partnership with ECOS allowed the Farm to construct the children's play area. The Community orchard was planted with help from area horticulturists and arborists.

The Vale cemetery crew trenched around the outer fence of the farm to keep out the woodchucks that ate an entire crop of cabbage twice. Perennial flowers and shrubs were planted around the outside of the fence to further beautify the farm space and bring pollinators.



Vale President's Message

It is with great honor and humility that I accepted the position of the president of the Board of Vale Cemetery. I look to continue the stellar work performed by our previous president, Robert Coan.

This is a critical period in Vale Cemetery's history as we put a third crematory retort into service to help meet the challenge of providing the greater regional community with rapid and efficient crematory service. Stay with us and watch us continue to grow, knowing we can and will handle all of your burial and crematory needs for years to come.

- Gordon Zuckerman

ROTC Volunteer Work Day

The cemetery is fortunate to have the Air Force Junior ROTC from Schenectady High School perform volunteer workdays.

In October the students filled the potholes in the dirt road leading to the Green Burial area (The Dell) and planted 6 arborvitae trees along the Moyston Street fence. These trees replaced ones that had been cut down by vandals. The ROTC did a second workday in November helping to rake up tons of fallen leaves and transport them to the Vale Urban Farm for composting.



The Sheep and Goats are Back!

About 25 sheep and goats from the livestock division of Cobleskill College spent a day in the Dell, the Natural Burial section of Vale on Friday, October 25th. They enjoyed eating the flowers and weeds there. It must have looked like a salad bowl to them.

Having the ruminants pastured there eliminates the use of gas or diesel mowers there. The object of natural burial is to cause as little disturbance of the environment as possible. The Albany Times Union featured on its front-page photos of the farm animals visiting the city. Reporter Asa Stakel Channel 6 (CBS) did a segment on the noon and evening news of the event

Tombstone Cleaning Workshop

Melody Howarth, a faculty member at Schenectady County Community College, offers a one-day Tombstone Restoration course at Vale Cemetery. The course is on a Saturday and is offered twice a year through the college. The next course is scheduled for May. Registration is through the college. The enrollment fills up rapidly when it appears in SCCC newsletters.

To date, 100 monuments in Potters Field have been restored as a result of student efforts in her course. Melody is available to clean and/or restore monuments for anyone who would like this service. She can be reached at 518-766-9324 or by e-mail: melzbelles@aol.com.



D.A.R. Work on Cemetery Database

Schenectada Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution continue work on their project to update the cemetery database. One of the objectives of the DAR is historic preservation, and Vale Cemetery records contain a wealth of information that should be preserved.

Late last fall, a stone was located that did not appear in the cemetery records. Further investigation of the area led to the discovery of 16 additional tombstones that also were not in the records. With permission, these stones were carefully uncovered, many buried deep under the sod. Vale Cemetery opened in 1857 and these stones would have been moved here from nearby cemeteries that needed to be relocated. The Schermerhorn family, an old Schenectady family, now has more evidence of family members from these stones. The oldest stone dated back to 1797, and the stones of children were found.

The Schenectady Chapter will also be dedicating a plaque in the spring for a past Chapter Regent, State Regent and National officer of the DAR, Emma VanVranken Gibbes. Previously, the chapter updated her family stone with her name and dates.



Vale Board of Directors

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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?

New Board Officers

At the Yearly Lot Owners Meeting in June a new slate of board officers were elected. Robert Coan, Board President, resigned and he became an Emeritus board member.

Gordon Zuckerman was elected **President of the Vale Board**. Mr. Zuckerman is a partner in Murray & Zuckerman Insurance and has served on numerous boards including the Arthritis Foundation, and the Autism Foundation. He has served on the Board of the Niskayuna Volunteer Fire District and the Board of Temple Gates of Heaven, and is a Viet Nam War Veteran.

Thomas Ciancetta, who has been on the Vale Board for two years, was elected **Vice-President**. He is the retired Director of the Boys and Girls Club of Schenectady. On his retirement after many years of service, he became a consultant to the Boys and Girls Club of the Northeastern U.S. Mr. Ciancetta also serves on the Board of the Vale Urban Farm.

Mary Beth Kabalian was elected **Treasurer**. She is a CPA, and Vice-President and Comptroller at Union College.

Bernard McEvoy, M.D., was elected **Secretary**. He is retired physician, volunteer at Vale the past 15 years. He has served as president and vice-president of the Vale Board.

The Vale Board meets regularly at 1- or 2-month intervals throughout the year.

Schenectady City Historian Joins Vale Board

Chris Leonard, Schenectady City Historian, has joined the Vale Board. Chris has already served as a guide for Vale's Civil War Tour and brings with him a wealth of local historical knowledge.

Donate Stuff You Don't Need and Get a Tax Deduction

Vale Cemetery Preservation is a 501c3 organization and under the tax code your donations to it are tax deductible. Virtually anything you don't need any more - a power mower, hedge trimmer, chain saw, garden tools, motorcycle, boat, trailer, car, truck or bus - would help us greatly.



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

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.

Vale Tours a Success!

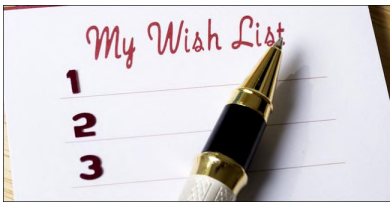
Vale Cemetery held 6 public tours this year, which were quite successful, as well as school and group tours. Private groups including the DAR, Senior Citizens, Garden Clubs and Church groups all enjoyed tours of Vale Cemetery. The cost of tour advertising is often greater than donations received, but the tours improve the public's impression of Vale Cemetery and have led to an increase in grave sales. The list of this tours held this year on the first Sunday of each month from May through October include:

Sunday May 5th	Nature Walk in Unique 100 Acre Urban Green space. Observe the birds, wildlife, flora and fauna.	Naturalist Amy Veino
Sunday June 2nd	The Victorian Lady in Mourning	Sue McLane, Expert on the Victorian Era
Sunday July 7th	Schenectady and the Revolutionary War	Scott Haeffner, Manager Historic Old Fort Johnson
Sunday August 4th	Notable Women of Schenectady	Sue McLane, Authority on Women's Suffrage
Sunday September 1st	Schenectady and the Civil War	Chris Leonard, Schenectady City Historian
Sunday October 6th	Giants of Industry	Chris Hunter, MiSci Archivist

In addition to the tours, **2** Bird Walks are held at Vale each year guided by Neal Reilly, Ornithologist. 40 species of birds were identified on the last tour.

The narrated tours are on an air conditioned bus provided by Union College and are held rain or shine.

Donations \$7.00 Adults
Children FREE



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

1. An upgrade to the cemetery's video surveillance system. Two additional cameras are needed to cover the approach to the crematory and the Urban Farm, which has been vandalized. Trenching for an underground power line which would power the cameras is required. Additionally, technology to alert the police must be upgraded.

2. The walkway connecting the Locust Avenue Entrance to the Bike Path lacks some 800 feet of trail. While the design and layout of the project is complete, the estimated cost is \$120,000, with but \$12,000 grant funds available.

3. A gas- or diesel-powered backup electrical generator to support our crematory in the event of an electrical outage. A snowstorm took out Vale's electricity for 3 days, a few years back, with severe results in as the crematory does not have a cold storage unit for bodies. The cost of a generator is estimated at \$15,000.

4. Last year, we discovered a wooly adelgid infestation the large, beautiful hemlock tree at Colonel Horsfall's gravesite (cemetery section U) While the treatment helped the tree, it did not eradicate the infection. The tree requires a second treatment, which will cost \$500.

If you'd like to contribute to a fund, please mark your contribution for video surveillance, walkway to bike path, emergency generator, or treatment of 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.

