

Lower Mystic Cemetery ASSOCIATION

MYSTIC, CONNECTICUT 06355

OFFICERS

BARRY V. CONNELL, President
ROBERT P. BANKEL, Treasurer
CAROL W. KIMBALL, Secretary

SPRING NEWSLETTER 1994

Once again we greet you in the name of the historic 1849 Lower Mystic Cemetery to bring you up to date on the condition of our treasured burial ground and the outlook for its future.

In the spring of 1986, after the cemetery had remained unmowed for the previous year, a new board of directors was formed to care for the burial ground, specifically to keep it mowed and to make needed repairs.

It's been a struggle, but with contributions from interested individuals, re-investment of perpetual care funds, and added help from The Mystic Garden Club and the Charles B. Allyn Foundation, we have preserved, and we anticipate that on Memorial Day 1994, the cemetery will look its best.

MEMBERS OF OUR CURRENT BOARD

Barry V. Connell, President	Roger Lewis, Cemetery Liason
Robert Banke, Treasurer	Barbara N. Jensen
Carol W. Kimball, Secretary	Atty. Peter B. Viering

Honorary Directors

Virginia Fleming	Emily Stoddard Perkins
Kay Smith Hill	Alan Brush
Marilyn J. Comrie	Mary Jane Spring

HOW WE ALL GOT INVOLVED IN LOWER MYSTIC CEMETERY

Barry Connell's grandfather, Thomas Melvin, and other members of his family are buried in Lower Mystic Cemetery.

Roger Lewis's parents and grandparents are buried there. We are indebted to Roger for his supervision of grounds-keeping at the cemetery.

Treasurer Robert Bankel inherited his position along with the original cemetery records from his grandmother Mrs. D. Palmer Brown.

Barbara Jensen's grandparents are buried there as well as are Emily Stoddard Perkins, both remember decorating the graves for Decoration Day.

Peter B. Viering replaces the late Warren B. Fish who spear-headed the re-juvenation of Lower Mystrc Cememtery. Both of whom are descended from Captain Silas Beebe who is buried there.

Realtor Kay Smith Hill is the daughter of Marion Gremley whose parents are buried there.

Alan Brush and wife Mary Jane Spring live in the home built by Hannah Fish who lies in Lower Mystic Cemetery.

Marilyn J. Comrie represents the Mystic River Historical Society.

Virginia Fleming represents the Mystic Garden Club.

Carol W. Kimball, Groton Municipal Historian, is interested in preserving the cemetery and also has a great-aunt buried there.

THREE CHEERS FOR THE RED, WHITE, AND BLUE AND THE BOY SCOUTS

We want our cemetery to look great on Memorial Day, the special time to remember our dead and those who have served our country in the past. Nothing gladdens the eye like the sight of our freshly mowed cemetery with the flags waving on veteran's graves !

We are indebted to Rocco Celtruda and his Mystic Boy Scouts for placing the flags on veterans' graves this past two years, and we want to express our appreciation in this newsletter.

Thank you Rocco, and thank you Scouts

A VISIT TO THE CEMETERY

On April 5th, a beautiful sunny morning, your secretary stopped at the cemetery to see how it had fared during the brutal winter. Some good omens - - sky-blue myrtle twinkled at the base of the stonewall, daffodils poked up green shoots near the pump and the Bradford pear tree, gift of the Mystic Garden Club, seemed full of buds.

Vandalism is one of our continuing concens, after the horrendous destruction of 1990 which was repaired through the generosity of the late Edward Comrie, jr. Fortunately we seemed to have escaped thus far, although I noted that two of the older stones have toppled, probably from the effects of weather and time.

I noticed two places where unwanted bramble bushes are growing close to stones, obscuring the inscriptions. Hopefully, we can have these removed during spring clean-up.

With help from many sources, we have managed to have the cemetery mowed regularly and also to keep poison ivy, unwanted brush and briars at bay by regular spraying. We also wage an

un-remitting war against yucca. These invasive plants are trimmed back early each year which prevents their spreading and self-sowing. We are proud of our cemetery, and are pleased that often genealogists stop to search for family data from the stones.

All this adds up to money, money, money. Our perpetual care funds have been re-invested for a better yield and the Mystic Garden Club and the Charles B. Allyn Foundation have been generous. We are most grateful for several individual contributions received last year to help with maintenance. Every bit helps.

Take time this spring if you are in Mystic to visit the cemetery, to note our accomplishments and our future needs.

MYSTIC'S FAMOUS GATES BROTHERS

Lying on the east side of Lower Mystic Cemetery is a spot which could well be called "Gatesville". Four Gates brothers and their families and descendants occupy eight lots, one of the largest holdings in the burial ground.

Remarkable even for maritime Mystic where seamen were no novelty, all four sons of farmer Zebadiah Gates became prominent sea captains. The eldest, Gurdon, went to sea at age 15. He commanded many vessels during his long life ranging from coastal packets to Mystic-built clipperships ELECTRIC and TWILIGHT and ending with steamer VICTOR wrecked in 1872 on the Florida Coast. Gurdon's home still stands on Gravel Street in Mystic.

Captain Gurdon trained his younger brothers at sea and helped them rise to command vessels. Captain Isaac, master of barks ASA FISH and ASA SAWYER and clippership CREMORNE, was very successful until his tragic death at age 45 in 1868 when a harried doctor prescribed aconite instead of arnica for his illness. Isaac died in agony of aconite poisoning. His home on Cliff Street also stands today.

A third brother, Captain George Washington Gates, had many vessels in his command including ships NATIONAL GUARD and WILLIAM WHARTON and the clipper TWILIGHT. His home still stands on High Street.

The youngest brother, captain Charles H. Gates with his 19-year-old son, John, were lost when the clipper CREMORNE sailed from San Francisco June 1, 1870 and was never heard from again. A beautiful stone topped by a large carved anchor stands on the lot in their memory. Charles's home is just east of the cemetery, up the hill on New London Road.

And all around are graves of the Gates' brothers' wives, children and grandchildren, really a family affair, memorials to a prominent Mystic family.

In general the Gates lots are looking well, although a large evergreen tree and a raggedy line of bushes are advancing from the east. We're asking for an estimate for the cost of

removing this tree before it gets out of hand, Hopefully we'll be able, with our limited funds to keep the encroachment at bay. Perhaps some Gates descendants would like to help with the project.

FINANCIAL HELP NEEDED !!!!!

It is a challenge to keep the Lower Mystic Cemetery mowed regularly. Last year it cost \$195 per mowing; it was mowed seven times. This year it will cost \$225 per mowing.

We also need to trim the brush, keep the yuccas at bay and do all we can to make the cemetery look its best, and this means extra expense.

This is an historic cemetery, but we have had two burials there in the past two years, and we need to preserve the appearance of this burial ground in its prominent position at the entrance to Mystic.

Contributions to the cause are appreciated at any time and in any amount. Send them to the secretary, Carol W. Kimball, 28 Allyn Street, Mystic Ct. 06355. They will be gratefully received by the Board of Directors and put to use for the good of Lower Mystic Cemetery. Make checks payable to Lower Mystic Cemetery. Contributions are a tax-deductable charitable contribution.