



Friends of RHINEBECK CEMETERY, INC.

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Fall 2020
Newsletter

October 15, 2020

Dear Friends,

So much of what we do at the *Friends* is about ecology, beauty, history and reverence for the dead. And yet, at its core, Rhinebeck Cemetery is a place for the living.

While the distance we must keep from one another hasn't transformed our mission, it's certainly shifted our focus. Unable to safely gather in any sizeable group, we've had to cancel our annual *Tales from the Underground* tour and our biannual tree planting, while our Board holds its meetings on ZOOM.

So, we've turned our attention to wrapping up some of our programs – like the Memorial Bench program – at the same time that we embark on others that do not require physical community involvement – the first of which is the beautification of the entrance to the Natural Burial Ground.

We're also taking some time to think about the 1918 influenza pandemic and how the virus may have shaped our cemetery. Looking back in the context of COVID 19 and across the historic sections of the cemetery offers both lessons and balm.

A special thank you to all of you who continue to support our projects and vision, especially during this difficult time. We're doing our best to keep the energy moving here until we can meet again in person.

Sincerely,

Michel P. Haggerty
President

**We are a New York Not-for-Profit and Federal
501(c) 3 Organization.
All of Your Donations are fully Tax Deductible.**

**Does Your Employer have a Matching Grant
Program? Please let us know.**

2020 ANNUAL MEETING

Our annual meeting has always been held in September, but COVID 19 has thrown us off course. After much deliberation, we've decided to hold it in November on ZOOM. While not everyone may have access to a computer, we do hope that some of you will link into the meeting at **5:00 PM on November 9th**. The meeting link will be listed on the website under UPCOMING EVENTS one week prior. Hope to see you.

NATURAL BURIAL GROUND ENTRANCE BEAUTIFICATION PROJECT

When the Natural Burial Ground opened in 2014, it was understood that stewardship of the young hardwood forest would be an ongoing process. The *Friends* is committed to that.

In recent years, the entrance to the burial ground has been enhanced by the addition of a beautiful handcrafted gate, bench and sign. But surrounding those features, Japanese Stiltgrass, a now common invasive species, covered the area.

We're thrilled to be enhancing the entrance by mitigating the Japanese Stiltgrass and adding new plants that will bring color, ecological health and a new verve to this area. We're grateful to our tree consultant, Meg Crawford, for providing the landscape design and direction.

This fall, the Japanese Stiltgrass was cut down to the soil, smothered in mulch and several varieties of perennials and 2000 bulbs were planted. A large bottlebrush buckeye, a native shrub with plumes of feathery white flowers that bloom in early summer, was planted next to the gate. In the spring, the addition of ferns will complete the project. We look forward to seeing how these plants grow and change over the seasons.



NATURAL BURIAL GROUND CLEANUP

Unlike our community tree planting, the clean up can be done at a safe distance from others. Our next Natural Burial Ground cleanup is scheduled for **October 25th at 10AM. MASKS REQUIRED.**

Enjoy the woods while gathering downed branches and making brush piles. It's always a fun morning. Meet up at the entrance to the Natural Burial Ground (55 Mill Road).

NEW MAP

We’re excited to be designing a new walking map for all three areas of the cemetery (Historic, Grasmere and Natural Burial Ground) with interactive features. What would you like to see featured on it? Let us know by emailing us at friends@friendsofrhinebeckcemetery.org

MEMORIAL BENCH PROGRAM

We’re pleased to announce that all of the memorial benches in the Historic and Grasmere sections of the cemetery have been sponsored. The last of them will be scheduled to arrive in November.

The memorial benches are the same iconic benches of the New York City Parks Department, originally developed for use at the 1939 World's Fair (held in New York). Stop by, have a look, and sit a spell.

PLANT-A-TREE: GROW AN ARBORETUM

Every year since our inception, we’ve held two tree community tree plantings, which has amounted to over 200 trees. But because planting trees requires very close contact with other people, our community tree-planting days are on hold.

While we will plant a few trees this year without volunteers, we cautiously anticipate the next collective tree planting to happen in the fall of 2021. Please let us know if you are interested in donating to the program or sponsoring a memorial tree. For more information please contact Suzanne at friends@friendsofrhinebeckcemetery.org.

RHINEBECK CEMETERY & THE 1918 PANDEMIC

It’s estimated that between fifty and a hundred million people died from the H1N1 flu virus between 1918 and 1920. According to Rhinebeck Town Historian, Mike Frazier, that was one in thirty-six people. With those statistics, it comes as no surprise that Rhinebeck was not spared the effects of the pandemic.



Rhinebeck Cemetery does not have data on how many people who died from the virus were buried at the cemetery. But we do know of a few. Here we pay homage to one WWI soldier: Alfred W. Lane. The following is excerpted from a longer, insightful piece written by Rhinebeck Town Historian, Mike Frazier, for the Rhinebeck Historical Society’s Fall 2020 Newsletter:

One of the earliest Rhinebeck volunteers to be affected was Marine Private Alfred W. Lane. In a letter from St. Sulpice, France, to the deceased soldier’s father, the military chaplain explains that, “he was sick only a few days. He was attended here in the Camp hospital and had good attention, the hospital having a good corps of doctors and nurses, but pneumonia was fatal and he died on March 5 [1918] at 7 A.M.” In another letter to the family, acknowledging Lane’s service, an officer writes that Lane had arrived in France “at the beginning of the influenza and pneumonia epidemic, which was brought by the troops from the US.”

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