

Island Annex

Monuments

St. Mary's

Common Burying Ground

ENTER

Island Cemetery Newport Rhode Island

Remarkable Monuments

Selecting monuments as “remarkable” is purely subjective. Those included in this section have features that make them unique to the Island Cemetery based on design, material, or designer. Architects of the day are known to have designed grave stones and monuments for wealthier clients. Island Cemetery is fortunate to have such markers created by Richard Morris Hunt and George Champlin Mason, Jr. As you stroll through the grounds you will likely find stones that you find remarkable that could have been included in this section but hopefully, you’ll agree the monuments included here are worthy of recognition.

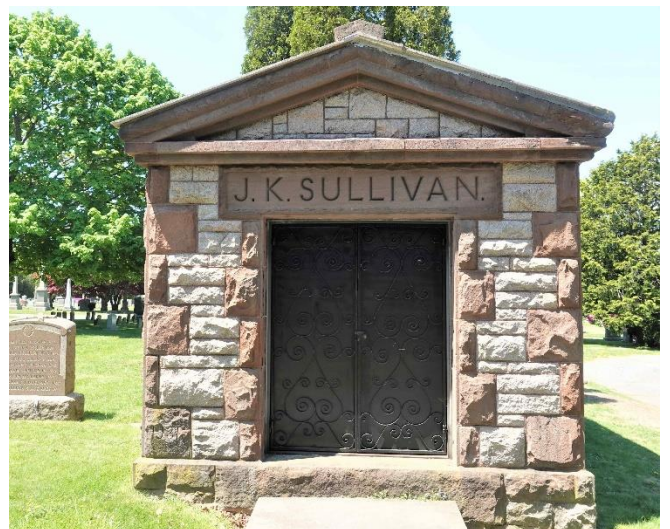
MAUSOLEUMS

Island Cemetery boasts at least three noteworthy mausoleums. The first, chronologically, is that of **Henry Gurdon Marquand (map HM)**, designed and built by the firm of Hunt and Hunt in 1902-1903. According to the records at Island Cemetery, the granite mausoleum is designed in the form of a classical temple, and appears to be in the Greek style.

Marquand was a stockbroker, philanthropist and an art collector. He was one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and served as its president from 1889 until his death in 1902.

Another interesting mausoleum is that of **J.K. Sullivan (map JKS)**. Island Cemetery has no specific information about who designed or built this mausoleum, but it is made of two rough types of stone—one light in color and the other brown. It is the same type of stone used in the Sullivan Building on Bellevue Avenue, for which J.K. Sullivan was the contractor, so he may have been responsible for the design and building of his own family mausoleum. The exact date this mausoleum was installed is not known, but it was definitely prior to Sullivan’s death in 1939.

One of the grandest structures in Island Cemetery is the granite mausoleum constructed for **E. Hayward Ferry and his wife, Amelia Parsons Ferry (map AF)**. The designer is unknown, but the style is definitely Art Deco. Ebenezer Ferry was a prominent New York businessman, who was the vice-president of Hanover



Bank in New York for nearly two decades. While in Newport the Ferrys lived at Edgehill, an estate close to that of Mrs. Ferry's sister, Mrs. Arthur Curtiss James.



August Belmont (1816-1890) map B

This impressive monument was designed by architect Richard Morris Hunt in 1890 and completed in May of 1892 (according to cemetery records). The sculpture work was done by Karl Bitter. The monument includes a Greek exedra bench surrounding a Roman triumphal arch which encloses a pink marble sarcophagus covered with palm leaves and olive branches. The arch is supported by Ionic columns and features life-size caryatids. Oliver Hazard Perry Belmont, son of August and Caroline Belmont, commissioned the monument from Hunt.

Additional Richard Morris Hunt monuments include

Henry Ledyard (1812-1880) map HL

Richard Morris Hunt was responsible for the design and building of the marker for the Ledyard plot in 1881-82 and for the redesign in 1893. The dark grey granite false sarcophagus was done in the Roman style and elevated on a classical style catafalque. Henry Ledyard was a founder and first president of Newport Hospital.ⁱ



CHARLES HANDY RUSSELL (1796-1884) map CR

According to the records of Island Cemetery, Russell's false sarcophagus was designed and built by Richard Morris Hunt in 1863-64. The Roman style monument has scrolled volutes or capitals, dentils and friezes. The frieze has triglyphs and metopes which enclose rosettes.

Russell was a merchant in both Providence, Rhode Island and New York City as well as a director of two major banks in



Providence and three major East Coast railroads. His summer home in Newport was called Oaklawn, and once stood at the corner of Bellevue and Narragansett Avenues.ⁱⁱ

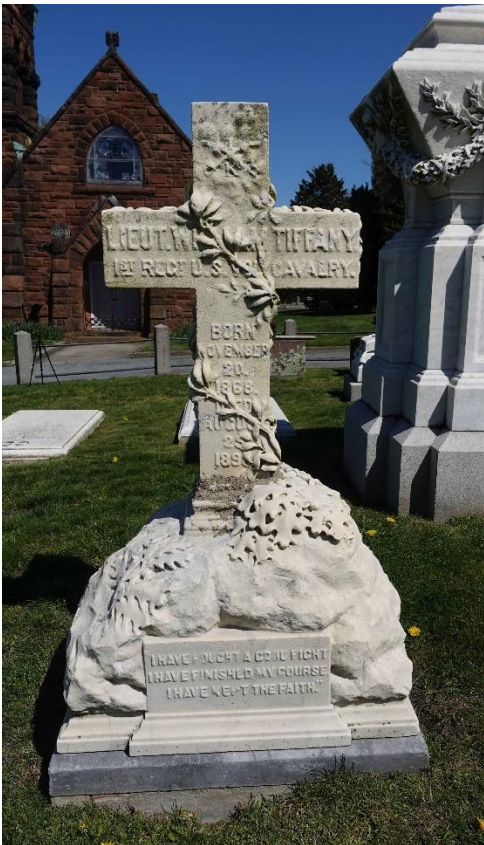
Wetmore monument (map W)

The family monument for the Wetmore plot was designed and built by Richard Morris Hunt in 1873, not long after he completed the redesign of Chateau-Sur-Mer for George Peabody Wetmore.

Island Cemetery records describe this as a classical pediment with Roman fasces, a symbol of a magistrate's power in ancient Rome. Since G.P. Wetmore was a senator and later governor of Rhode Island, the symbols are appropriate. Also included are ribbons indicating victory and a swag of oak leaves for strength.



LIEUTENANT WILLIAM TIFFANY (1868-1898) map B



William Tiffany, a summer resident of Newport and nephew to August and Caroline Slidell Perry Belmont, was one of Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders who died of fever and exposure after battles in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. His body, accompanied by Theodore Roosevelt and twelve Rough Riders, was returned to Newport for burial with his family in August of 1898.

His marble grave marker was designed by George Champlin Mason Jr. An article in the *New York Times* explained the symbolism carved into the marker:

"The cross for Lieut. Tiffany's grave suggests the life of promise unfinished, as is shown by the molded or cut work begun, but cut short. The emblematic meanings of the laurel [hero] and oak [strength] add much to the artistic finish. On the top part of the cross the inscription is found, and the military marks "I. K." and crossed swords, copied just twice the size of those Lieut. Tiffany wore on his hat in the service, and which was loaned the sculptor, Mr. Kelley, by Mrs. Tiffany, the dead officer's mother. They are surrounded and supported by clouds, and are the gem of the work...On the bottom of the column there is the inscription:

I have fought the good fight,
I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith."

BESSIE MORGAN BELMONT (1862-1898) map B

Bessie Morgan Belmont was the first wife of August Belmont Jr. She passed away in Paris, where she had gone to regain her health. Her grave marker is also made of Rutland marble and is decorated with a wreath “bride roses [beauty and virtue] and double violets” [death too soon] that were sent to the sculptor from the nursery of her husband. On her cross is one word “Devotion,” as she was a very devoted wife and mother.ⁱⁱⁱ This monument was designed by George Champlin Mason, Jr.



Additional stones designed by GC Mason, Jr.

George Champlin Mason, Jr. (1849-1924) began working as an architect with his father in 1867. In 1871 the firm was renamed George Champlin Mason and Son. Mason Jr. designed 5 additional gravestones to the Tiffany and Belmont plot discussed earlier. They include stones for Jane Pauline Belmont, three men named John B. Newton (1823, 1833, 1884), Abbie (1894) and Charles (1881) Spooner and Carrie M. Stewart (1887). While the design of each marble stone varies, the overall visual impact of each stone is similar to the other Mason stones.

Charles Spooner (1883-1881) map CS2

Carrie Stewart (map CS3)

John Newton (1833) map JN

John Newton (1884) map JN



Martha Maria Anderson (1803-1880) map MA

Martha Maria Anderson, her husband Elbert and other family members are buried in this triangular marble monument. Martha Anderson was a descendant of Abraham Redwood, Ezra Stiles and William Ellery. After she died in 1880, her husband hired George Champlin Mason to design and build this unusual grave marker. Notes from the Island Cemetery records indicate that this was High Victorian Gothic style inspired by the 1872 Albert monument in London and influenced by 13th century Eleanor crosses.



Anna Theresa Downing (1855) map AD

The sleeping child was a common image used for children’s graves in the mid to late 1800s. This marble stone is a good example of Victorian sentiment.



Herbert Barnett (1871-1902) map HB3

This granite monument has a rustic or natural design and features a broken oak branch. The oak symbolizes many things including strength and endurance and the broken branch represents a life ended.^{iv} The information on the scroll includes



the Masonic square and compass symbol.

William Birckhead (1840-1895) map WB2

At first glance this monument looks like a house or small church. Due to the design of the top (roof of the building) it is referred to as a hip tomb.^v There are a few similarly shaped monuments in the Island Cemetery but this one is nicely detailed, in good condition, and executed in granite. Dr. Birckhead lived in a Dudley Newton designed home at 20 Catherine Street. His wife, Sarah, was a daughter of Dr. David King.



Adeline Caswell (1838-1913) map AC2

This monument is fashioned from an alternative material to stone. Referred to as White Bronze, the material is actually zinc. The Monumental Bronze Company, established in Bridgeport, Connecticut which operated between 1875 and 1912, was a major manufacturer of these monuments. They were produced in a variety of styles and sizes. There are a few installed in Island Cemetery with details as crisp today as the day they were created. Albert Caswell



was a pharmacist and worked with his brother in New York City. His brother was a cofounder of the Caswell-Massey company in 1872 which was started by Dr. Hunter in Newport in 1752.

Chase (map C)

This sizable, natural looking stone is comprised of rose quartz that was possibly harvested from somewhere in New England. Rose quartz is known as the crystal of unconditional love and joy.^{vi}

Members of the family buried here (according to cemetery records) include Sarah A (died 1961), Emily (died 1909), George (died 1943) and Milton (died 1958). Milton

graduated from Rogers High School, became an engineer and was known for the installation of water and electricity on Prudence Island.



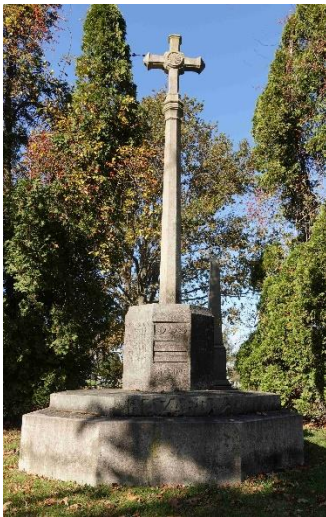
William B DeBlois (1850-1896), Mary E DeBlois (1851-1919) map WD

This rose-colored granite monument features a marble sphere atop a pedestal. There are a few other monuments in the cemetery with similar design but are missing their spheres. The symbol above William's name was originally used by the Knights Templar during the Crusades and later adopted by the Freemasons. The phrase "in loc signo vinces" is Latin for "you will conquer".

William DeBlois served in the Civil War and was injured at Bull Run in 1861.^{vii} His obituary stated that he was a contractor specializing in masonry and a prominent member of St. John's Lodge of the Freemasons.^{viii}

John Eldred (1818-1886) map JE

The most striking feature of this gravestone is the double-headed eagle with a crown above the heads. Your first thought might be the symbol of Russian in origin but that is not the case. This double-headed eagle symbol is for the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry. The number 32 inside the triangle represents the 32nd degree of the Scottish Rite. The Latin motto, "Spes mea in Deo est," means "My hope is in God" and is often included with the use of this image.

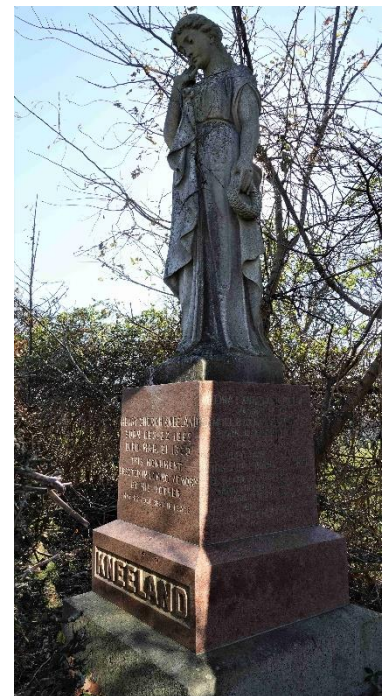


Hazard (map FH)

This unusual granite monument features an octagonal base with the information about members of the Hazard family for whom it was erected. The Latin word "sinceritas" is engraved on one panel and means honesty and integrity. The tall slender column rising from the center of the base terminates in a cross. The Hazard family was one of the founding families of Newport in 1639.

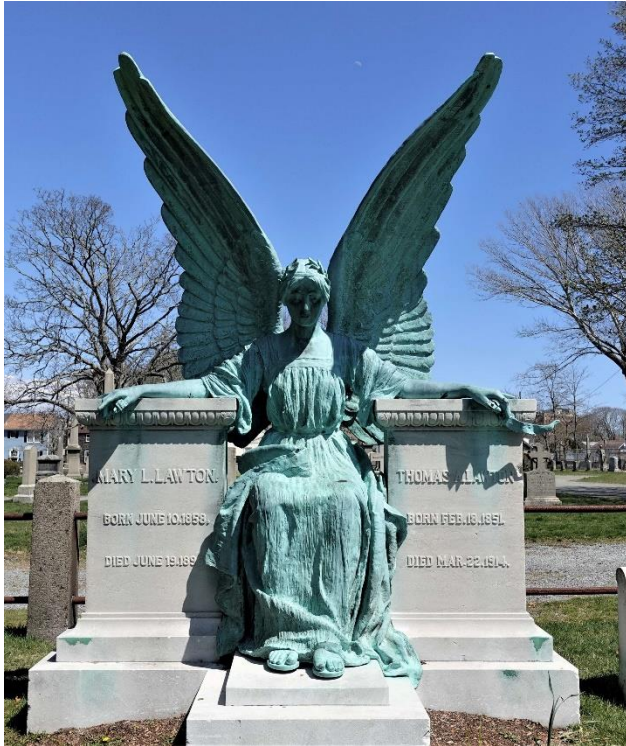
Henry Kneeland (1865-1900) map HK

This granite monument features a contemplative woman holding a wreath. While this design can be found in other cemeteries, it is one of the few full figures in Island Cemetery. Since the monument was erected by a mother for her son, it may represent a mother's grief.



Mary Lawton (1896) and Ann Smith (1884) map AS

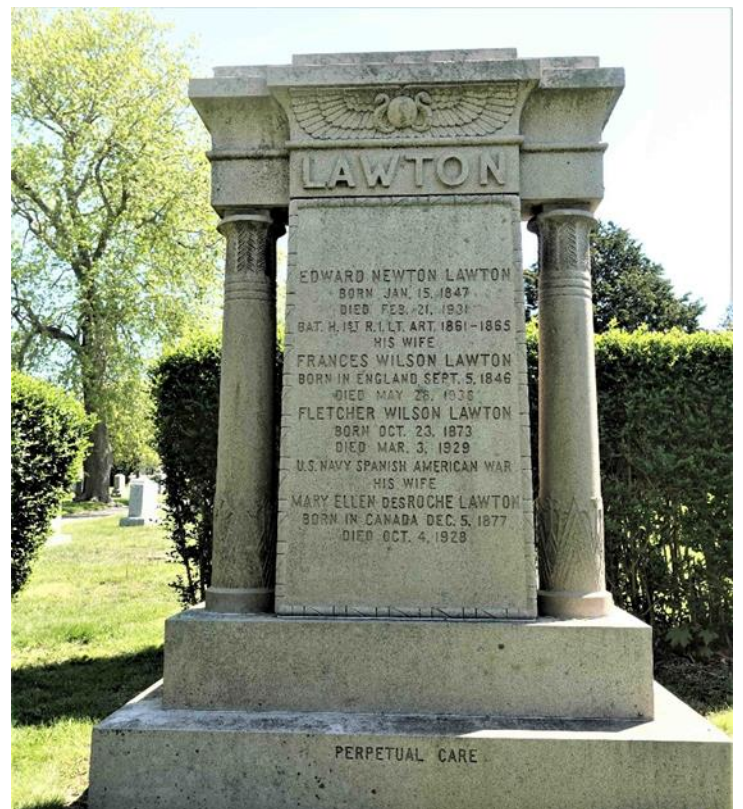
This life-size bronze, seated winged woman monument, "Angel of Victory" is one of the most noted in Island Cemetery. It was created in 1897 by Oscar Lenz (1873-1912) who studied under Augustus Saint-Gaudens. Lenz was a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Lawton was the daughter of real estate mogul Alfred Smith and his wife, Ann. According to cemetery records, the Ann Smith monument was designed by Stanford White and carved by Augustus and Louis Saint-Gaudens. The subject is "Amor Caritas" or Angel of Charity and was based on an 1880 figure for the tomb of Edwin Morgan.



LAWTON MONUMENT (map EL)

America as a new nation was searching for its identity and turned to ancient democracies for inspiration, such as the Egyptian civilization. Ancient Egyptians were obsessed with providing special care for their deceased and took elaborate steps to send them into the afterlife. That was one of the many reasons Americans chose Egyptian themes for their cemetery monuments.^{ix} The Egyptian Revival movement in architecture and the decorative arts began in the 1880's and continued well into the 1930's.

This monument for four members of the Lawton family includes the winged orb at the top symbolizing the sun god Ra flying across the sky. The symbol was easily adapted into more modern Christian and Jewish beliefs, and the winged orb became a symbol of resurrection. The stylized



decoration on the columns includes palm leaves indicating victory over death, inverted chevrons and perhaps lotus flowers used to show rebirth or immortality. x

Edward King (1815-1875) and family map EK

Many King family members are memorialized on this marker that was designed and built 1876-1878. John LaFarge designed the monument and August Saint-Gaudens executed the design in stone. The subject, "Steps to the Cross" was designated by Mrs. King to recall medieval pilgrimage shrines of Brittany, France. The oak leaves invoke Edward King's favorite tree.



Clara Lewis Moffitt (1859-1884) map CM2

At first glance this monument may seem as though it marks the grave of a child. Instead, it is a prime example of a

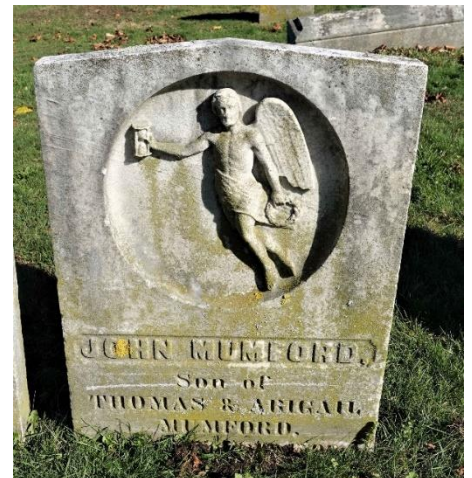
Victorian Era grave marker. The dove descending from heaven with a piece of olive branch signifies that the soul has reached divine peace in heaven. The roses signify love and purity, and the hanging flower buds may symbolize sorrow or a premature death. That fits the deceased, Clara Moffitt, who died at the age of 25.

The back of the stone contains the full name of the deceased and her birth and death dates. The somewhat poetic lines show that the family was a religious one who believed that although they had lost a loved one, they knew that their souls would one day be reunited in heaven.



John Mumford (1796-1821) map JM2

This gravestone displays many symbols used on stones in the late 1800s. The winged figure represents the soul heading to heaven, and the hourglass indicates that time for life has run out. Laurel, often in wreath form as on this stone represents eternity as laurel leaves do not wilt or fade.





Alexander Nesbitt (1901-1995) map 20th century gravestones were, for the most part, mass produced granite markers that were similar in basic design, shape, and size. This naturalistic granite marker for Alexander Nesbitt, who died in 1995, is unique in its design and setting. Nesbitt was born in 1901 and worked for many years as a graphic designer and teacher. He and his wife, Ilse moved to Newport in 1965 and founded the Third and Elm Press. They were some of the early craft people who purchased property in the Point

section of Newport, and their efforts lead to the resurgence of the neighborhood. This stone is a fitting tribute to Nesbitt.

George Norman (1797-1867) map GN

The centerpiece of the Norman family burial lot may well be the tallest monument in Island Cemetery. George Norman made a fortune installing utilities in many places including the water system in Newport. This large family lot is centered on the 30+ foot fluted column that terminates with a winged toga-clad angel standing on a capital. Additional classic design elements include garlands of flowers. Table tombs and head and footstones indicate the burial location of the members of the family.

Oliver Hazard (1785-1819) map OP

Oliver Hazard Perry died while serving the country on a diplomatic mission to Venezuela in 1819. His remains were conveyed to Rhode Island in 1826 and originally interred in the Common Burying Ground. Plans started in 1828 to honor his service to the country with a fitting memorial, and the obelisk that stands today was completed in 1843. Perry's remains were moved to a grave 4 feet south of the monument and marked by two small stones. The obelisk is 21 ft. 8 inches tall and sits on a mound that is 8 feet high. The stone was deemed unable to receive an inscription so the 5 ft. tall marble pedestal was installed at the base to accommodate the wording noted here:

Oliver Hazard Perry

At the age of twenty-seven,

He achieved



The victory of Lake Erie.

One the north face

Born in South Kingston, R.I.

August 23, 1785

Died at Port Spain, Trinidad.

August 23, 1819

Aged 34 years

On the west face

His remains

Were conveyed to his native land

In a Ship of War,

According to a resolution

Of Congress,

And here interred

December 4, 1826



South side

Erected by the State of Rhode Island

FRANK READ (1868-1869) map FR

This monument for the Read family looks quite rustic, but the rocks show a belief in the power of faith. In the Christian religion, rocks are a symbol of God, and the Old Testament is full of references to rocks.

In Psalms, “The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my strength...”

In Matthew, Christ refers to St. Peter as the rock that is the cornerstone of his Church.

In most cultures rocks are a symbol of strength, permanence, and stability.^{xi}



Charles M. Thurston (1819-1878) map CT

According to cemetery records, there are six people buried in this site that resembles a mound of earth that could be called a tumulus. There is no documentation as to why this style of burial was selected, but it is likely the popularity of the side-hill tomb at Mt. Auburn Cemetery^{xii} inspired Thurston to use this style of tomb. Since the topography of Island Cemetery was flat, a mound was created rather than using the side of a hill. Charles Myrick Thurston (-1844) was a Newport native, successful New York City merchant, active in the New Rochelle Historical Society, and an avid genealogist. His daughter married into the Barrington family (of Philadelphia) and is buried here.



Vitello-Winkler (map VW)

When the Island Cemetery was established, stone benches were commonly installed as a place for visitors to sit and possible as a form of monument. This 21st century bench monument has its roots in that tradition but is executed in a contemporary design.



ⁱ Island Cemetery Records; Onorato, *AIA Guide to Newport* (Providence, Rhode Island: Architectural Forum, 2007), 66.

ⁱⁱ "Obituary of Charles Handy Russell," *New York Times* (22 January 1884), 5.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Monuments at Newport," *New York Times* (2 May 1899), 2.

^{iv}Douglas Keister, *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* (Salt Lake City, Nevada: Gibbs Smith, 2004), 62,66.

^v Keister, 33.

^{vi} healing -<https://www.healthline.com/health/healing-with-rose-quartz#:~:text=Rose%20quartz%20is%20known%20as,and%20is%20used%20for%20protection.>

^{vii} US Civil War Soldier Records and Profiles 1861-1865. www.ancestry.com.

^{viii} *Fall River Daily Evening News* (9 March 1896), 5.

^{ix} Joy M. Giguere, *Characteristically American: Memorial Architecture, National Identity, and the Egyptian Revival*. Knoxville, Tennessee: The University of Tennessee Press), 3-4.

^x Giguere, 68; Keister, 49,63.

^{xi} Keister, 123.

^{xii} Joy M. Giguere, "Palaces for the Dead: The Mausoleum Craze in Gilded Age America," *Markers XXXVII* (Greenfield, Massachusetts: The Association for Gravestone Studies, 2021), 124.