



The South Wall of the Cemetery has been completely repointed this year from below ground level to about four feet above ground.

Please join us on **Sunday, May 4th** during our annual reception to enjoy Spring in our "Secret Garden" and inspect the excellent, recent restoration work stabilizing and repairing the walls of the Cemetery.



*New York City
Landmark*

*National Register
of Historic Places*

The first privately owned, nonsectarian cemetery in New York City, established in 1831.

The half-acre Cemetery lies hidden in the interior of an East Village block; its underground vaults are concealed beneath an open lawn and enclosed within a 12-foot marble wall and wrought-iron gates.

The Cemetery's 156 vaults have accommodated over 2000 burials in an arrangement designed, during an era of frequent epidemics, to safeguard public health from the little-understood ravages of infectious disease.

The vaults form a grid of 26 rows of six vaults each beneath the lawn, and the wall bears numbered tablets naming the original family vault owners.

Today, each vault belongs to the heirs of its 19th Century owner and all current owners have the right to burial here.

Postmaster: Address service requested

NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY, INC.
P. O. Box 315 New York, NY 10159



**ANNUAL RECEPTION
SUNDAY, MAY 4, 2008
2-4 PM**

Featuring Historical Displays,
Refreshments & Distant Cousins

Owners' Meeting at 2 PM

Look for handsome iron gates at 41½ Second Avenue
adjacent to Provenzano Lanza
Two blocks North of Houston Street in the East Village
RSVP: Caroline S. DuBois (212) 206-1106

NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY

*New York City
Landmark*

www.marblecemetery.org

SECOND AVENUE
ABOVE EAST SECOND STREET

*National Register
of Historic Places*

ESTABLISHED 1831

APRIL 2008

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WALL STORY: CONSTRUCTION, DETERIORATION & RESTORATION

The following was written to accompany a 2008 application to The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission as trustees plan major work on the West Wall to re-establish the secure enclosure of this historic space.

The New York Marble Cemetery was built in the fall of 1830 in the interior of the block bounded by 2nd Street, 3rd Street, Second Avenue, and the Bowery. Its entryway has always been at 41½ Second Avenue. In order to construct underground burial vaults, the ½-acre interior was excavated 10 feet deep throughout.

The perimeter was enclosed with 670 feet of 12-foot-high rough marble walls, 2-feet thick. Inside them 156 barrel vaults were built, and the block was filled in again. Spaces between each pair of vaults allow for 78 covered access shafts into which the vault doors can open. The original specifications appear to have been followed precisely. A Dead House was later added in the southwest corner; it was demolished in 1956.

There are no headstones or individual monuments in the Cemetery; the above-ground walls are the Cemetery. From the outset, the long North and South Walls have held marble tablets engraved with the name of each owner who had purchased a vault for his family. The position of each tablet in the wall is the geographic key to that family's vault location.

With the vaults underground and no markers other than the family tablets embedded in the wall, it is the wall itself that defines the character of the Cemetery and gives expression to its presence.



Masons repointing the East Wall and repairing problem spots, with their shelter from sun and weather at the left.

Over the years, as weak spots appeared in the walls, the superintendent made repairs. These repairs are in a variety of red brick, yellow brick, and cement. It is obvious that the superintendents were not hired for their masonry skills, but it is fortunate that they took all the stop-gap measures that they did.

The North, South, and East Walls backed up to private gardens and back yards. Then in 1913 the YMCA replaced the frame houses on 3rd Street with the large building which is now a men's shelter.

Continued next page.

"SISTER" CEMETERIES:

NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY (US) &
NEW YORK CITY MARBLE CEMETERY (THEM)

The first and second nonsectarian cemeteries in New York City are frequently confused with each other.

SIMILARITIES: Both were developed by Perkins Nichols with underground family-owned vaults. Current descendants have right of burial. There was intermarriage among families within and between cemeteries; there is a good chance that if you are linked to one, you may have "cousins" in the other or have rights to both cemeteries.

DIFFERENCES: We are an open space without monuments, with family tablets on the walls; They have monuments and tablets on the ground. We are hidden down an alley; They are visible from the street. We have a complete paper trail to 1830, on loan to the New-York Historical Society; An 1844 fire destroyed their early records.

COMPARISON	US www.marblecemetery.org	THEM www.nycmc.org
Number of Vaults	156	258
Size of Cemetery	½ acre	¼ acre
Number of Burials	2,100	5,400 (est)
Most Recent Burial	1937	2007
Year founded	First burial 1830 Incorporated 1831	First burial 1831 Incorporated 1832 Additional vaults 1835
Location (Half block apart)	2 nd Avenue, between 2 nd & 3 rd Streets	2 nd Street, between 1 st and 2 nd Avenues

NOTABLE BURIALS for Us: Rep. Jas. Tallmadge, Mayor Aaron Clark, Luman Reed, Anson G. Phelps (removed), Dr. Gurdon Buck, Benj. Wright; for Them: President James Monroe (after 2 nights with us; removed), James Lenox, Mayor Stephen Allen, Rep. David S. Jackson, John Lloyd Stephens.



Removal of mulberry tree whose weight and roots threatened integrity of vault roofs.

move away or to use newer cemeteries, the vaults were used less and the assessment system became impractical. The neighborhood changed to one that catered to the growing immigrant population, prompting Jacob Riis to attempt to have the Cemetery taken over in the 1880s for a playground. Faced with a movement by some descendants to empty all the vaults and sell the property, a complete reorganization of management and family solicitation took place in 1906.



View west, after tree removal, grass reseeding, and overgrowth trimming in ongoing clean-up.

The areaway excavated along the YMCA's back wall to the base of the Cemetery's North Wall eventually caused a major collapse. The ends of the gap are now braced. Since 1970, disintegration of the mortar has led to falling stones and collapses.

In 1997, Peter Luquer, the sole surviving trustee (three generations of the Luquer family had carefully shepherded the old endowment), commissioned a full survey. At that time, all that was left at the west end was about 18 feet of wall in the northern corner and a long, low stub along its southern end.

It remained that way, with additional deterioration, through the 2003 demolition of an old filling station and parking garage at the corner of Bowery and 3rd Street. In 2004, construction began on a planned NYU dormitory. The dorm, with its zoning variance allowing extra floors, was transformed into the upscale Bowery Hotel. When the Hotel added a rear terrace in 2005 and 2006, the last 13 feet of full-height West Wall came down completely.

EARLY FINANCING

Initial construction was paid for by the sale of the 156 vaults at \$250 each. In the 1830s, '40s, and '50s, maintenance was covered by assessing the owners of each vault. As families began to

Save the date for OPEN HOUSE NEW YORK October 4 & 5, 2008 Saturday and Sunday

This city-wide free event is our biggest annual crowd pleaser.



Visitors looking at displays during Open House New York.

OPEN 4th SUNDAYS
March to October, NYMC is open on the 4th Sunday of the month, 11 AM - 3 PM, in good weather.



The trustees considered fundraising drives in 1927 and again in 1937, but abandoned them because of the difficulty in tracing descendants. Fortunately, the 1906 endowment provided basic maintenance for the next 90 years. It was not sufficient, however, for the reconstruction that was desperately needed by the mid-1990s. In 1999, the Cemetery engaged a restoration mason to do about \$150K worth of work, which unfortunately turned into \$450K as more failing parts were uncovered.

RECENT FUNDRAISING

At almost the same time, a campaign was begun to identify descendants, solicit restoration funds, and return the Cemetery to public knowledge and access. With the great generosity of one family trust and substantial contributions from several other families, as well as a grant in 2004 from the New York State Division of Cemeteries, the 1999 stabilization was eventually paid for.

With continuing support from its owner-descendants, in the last few years the Cemetery has been able to repair a number of weak spots and repoint the base of the wall. However, the Cemetery does not have the funds to recreate in marble either the missing section of North Wall or the West Wall. The complete restoration which this unique site deserves remains financially out of reach.

— ANNE W. BROWN

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P. O. Box 315 ♦ New York, NY ♦ 10159

www.marblecemetery.org

Local contact: Caroline S. DuBois (212) 206-1106

TRUSTEES

Anne W. Brown, office: (410) 586-1321
Peter C. Luquer; Caroline S. DuBois
Rodman P. Neumann

ADVISORY BOARD

Includes more than 20 owners, neighbors, historians, genealogists, and preservationists



The existing eastern portion of the North Wall of the Cemetery with repointing work in progress.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY RESTORATION FUND

WE NEED YOUR HELP to maintain the site and to continue the long-term goal of rebuilding the wall, restoring the tablets, and enhancing the landscaping. To raise funds for restoration successfully, we must: regularly open the site to visitors; practice the best historic restoration techniques and management policies; receive significant financial and operational support from owners and friends like you.

- ◆ To recreate missing Cemetery wall in marble costs approximately \$4,000 per linear foot.
- ◆ To fill in missing wall with cement block and stucco finish costs about \$1,000 per linear foot.
- ◆ Maintaining the lawn and shrubbery costs about \$5,000 per year.

Please send your generous contribution to help restore and protect this fragile historic open space.

— Thank you

GIVING — THANKS TO OUR DONORS

The Trustees are extremely grateful to these organizations and these generous individuals for their support:

(Names withheld in this version for Internet privacy.)



Greg Pasternack, our master mason (on left), with Gresham Lang, our expert landscaper.



The certificate of ownership for Vault 36, signed and sealed for Edward Priest Banker (1797 to 1866), courtesy Craig Blakely, his great-great-grandson.

Craig said, "this scrap of parchment in the bottom of a steamer trunk eventually led me to [visit the Cemetery], and to a door that opened to the past, and into the future."



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Enclosed is my contribution:
\$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Your relationship to the Cemetery (descendant, neighbor, etc.) _____

For more information on gifts of appreciated stock or for a financial statement, call the office (410) 586-1321 or write treasurer@marblecemetery.org

Your contribution is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY, INC. is a Sec. 501(c)(13) registered charity.