

“Greenwood Cemetery”

(located in Brooklyn, New York)

By William Howe Downes

The Monumental News, Vol. 8, No. 1, January 1896

Excerpts from the above article:

“The most astonishing fact about the Greenwood Cemetery, in Brooklyn, N.Y., is that between 1840 and 1892 the total number of interments was 268,786. If the ordinary or average number has not varied in the three years since 1892, the number of interments there up to the present time can not be far from 300,000....”

“The situation of Greenwood is most beautiful, and its contiguity to the two great cities of Brooklyn and New York affords the obvious geographical explanation of its exceptional growth. It is also to be remarked that it has been for half a century the most fashionable burial place for wealthy families, and, the mysterious potency of fashion has as much to do with cemeteries as with anything else.....”

This article, which begins on the next page,
is presented on the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site.

<http://quarriesandbeyond.org/>

Peggy B. Perazzo
Email: pbperazzo@comcast.net
August 2014

THE GREENWOOD CEMETERY.

BY WILLIAM HOWE DOWNES.

The most astonishing fact about the Greenwood Cemetery, in Brooklyn, N. Y., is that between 1840 and 1892 the total number of interments was 268,786. If the ordinary or average number has not varied in the three years since 1892, the number of interments there up to the present time can not be far from 300,000. These statistics are surprising. The cemetery contains 474 acres of land. It has 22 miles of carriage roads and 18 miles of foot-paths. There are in the grounds no less than eight lakes, all of which have fountains; 2 reservoirs, 10 miles of water pipes, hydrants and 19 miles of sewers. The estimated average of about 5,200 interments per annum would give us 100 funerals each week, or a little more than fourteen for each day in the week. These figures may serve to convey some idea of the enormous size and densely compacted population of this immense city of the dead.

The situation of Greenwood is most beautiful, and its contiguity to the two great cities of Brooklyn and New York affords the obvious geographical explanation of its exceptional growth. It is also to be remarked that it has been for half a century the most fashionable burial place for wealthy families, and, the mysterious potency of fashion has as much to do with cemeteries as with anything else. Like all the best cemeteries in this country, Greenwood is well kept, carefully managed in the interests of the lot owners and abounds in costly monuments.

It is especially notable for the number of eminent individuals whose mortal remains are buried there. Although but a few of these have a national reputation, the list of names of the dead would comprise a considerable number of widely known New York business men, inventors, professional luminaries, literary people, philanthropists, statesmen and

merchant princes of the metropolis. Some of the monuments erected comparatively early in the history of the grounds and costing vast sums would hardly be deemed works of art, even in the estimation of the uncritical; for here, as elsewhere, mere size, weight and bulk, with expensiveness of material and occasionally fineness of workmanship and finish, have been blindly accepted as fulfilling the requirements of a memorial, without the most rudimentary effort to secure harmony of proportions, balance and symmetry of outlines and the first essentials of good design. On the other hand, the visitor who searches patiently will find certain tombs which produce an effect of reposeful dignity, of architectural impressiveness and even of sculptur-esque grace and originality.

The principal gate, a monumental structure of dark brown sandstone in Gothic style at the Fifth Avenue and Twenty-fifth street entrance to the grounds, is exceedingly handsome. It is decorated in the recessed panels above the arched gateways with high-relief stone carvings representing the Entombment, the Resurrection, the raising of the Widow's Son and the Raising of Lazarus. Near the gate is the receiving tomb, with a capacity of 1,500 in its extensive vaults excavated from a steep hillside; and just in front of it is the pretty sheet of water with the picturesque name of Arbor Water.

In the same vicinity is the rather ordinary monument erected by the city of New York in memory of the soldiers who died in the defense of the Union, 1861-65, a tall granite pillar of no particular style, with four bronze figures around the base typifying the various branches of the land and sea service, these statues being cast from the material of captured cannons. The summit of the hill on the slope of which this monument stands commands the finest view of New York harbor, Staten Island, and the Lower Bay, to be obtained anywhere. The vast

city of Brooklyn stretches to the north until its roofs and spires are lost to view in the dim distance. The high buildings in the lower part of New York seem to rise almost beneath the spectator's feet. The stirring panorama of the swarming harbor and the crowded shipping of the East River, with the filmy outlines of the huge Brooklyn Bridge, form a superb spectacle of life and animation, and the western horizon is beautifully closed by the vague blue silhouette of the Orange mountains in New Jersey. All in all, this is the grandest prospect to be had in the neighborhood of New York, and it makes an impression of vitality and in-



ENTRANCE TO GREENWOOD CEMETERY, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

(photo caption) "Entrance to Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, N.Y."



GREENWOOD CEMETERY—ONE OF THE LAKES.

tense activity which is only heightened by the contrast with the silent and peaceful alleys of the army of the dead.

Greenwood is singularly favored by nature, the ground being just sufficiently rolling and diversified by hills and vales to furnish forth a constant succession of gentle and sylvan scenes pleasantly shaded by large and healthy white oaks, which in some instances have reached an exceptional size. The lakes and mountains supply the needed element of water in the landscape, and in the summer the display of flowers is extensive and rich.

A melancholy interest is attached to the monument built by the city of Brooklyn to commemorate the 105 unidentified victims of the terrible Brooklyn Theatre fire of 1876—a calamity, the horrors of which are still remembered with a shudder.

An interesting and pathetic memorial is the Pilot's Monument, erected by the pilots of New York in memory of one of their fraternity who died heroically in the discharge of his duty in a shipwreck on the New Jersey coast in 1846. This monument is surrounded by emblematic carvings suitable to the nautical character of the pilot's career, and it is crowned by a statue of Hope. The situation of this memorial is on a hill-top, overlooking the harbor, and it can be seen by every pilot who enters the bay.

Another interesting work associated with maritime life is the Old Sea Captain's Monument, as it is commonly called. This is the tomb of Capt. John Correja, a hardy ancient mariner, who built his own monument about fifteen years before he died. He had his own portrait statue carved in marble, and chose to be portrayed in the characteristic act of taking an observation of latitude and longitude. In the hands of the stone figure is the actual sextant used by the old man for many years.

He stands firmly on his short legs, intent upon his important and delicate task, in the everyday costume of a merchant ship master; there is to my mind a world of marine romance in the curious image of the quaint Sea Captain, long since embarked on his last voyage across uncharted seas of night.

But there is a peculiar sadness about the untimely death of the beautiful young girl, Charlotte Canda, that lovely maiden cut off in the flower of her innocent youth (she died on her 17th birthday, the victim of an accident), and whose heart has not been touched by the old story of her father's broken heart, and his expenditure of his whole fortune in the splendid monument of intricately carved Carrara marble, one of the renowned works of this famous cemetery? Its lace-like filigrees of finest meshes, its wonders of patient detail, its wealth of emblematic handiwork, are beautiful expressions of an undying paternal love. No one goes to Greenwood without visiting this shrine. No doubt the taste of the structure might be criticised, but to my apprehension all its convoluted and tangled webs of sculptured marble are sanctified by a sacred sentiment which renders it inviolable and exempt.

I own that the cheapest display of affection, if it be the real thing, disarms me completely, as a critic. Cheapest, did I say? Let me retract that word. Affection is the one thing on earth which can not be that. I have found the meanest and lowliest of burial grounds to abound in that sweetest and divinest evidence of humanity's worthiness of immortality—the loyalty of the living? So eager should we be to foster the manifestations of this nobility, so tolerant should we be to see with complacency its clumsy and groping rituals and tokens, that I can almost venture to prophesy the coming of a time when our cemeteries will be the most beautiful places in the world and the most inspiring.



CHARLOTTE CANDA.



THE OLD SEA CAPTAIN.



JAMES GORDON BENNETT.

MONUMENTS IN GREENWOOD CEMETERY, BROOKLYN.

WASHINGTON NOTES.

Col. J. M. Wilson, after consultation with the Secretary of War, has rejected all the proposals opened Oct. 26th for the erection, in the Gettysburg Military Park, of a bronze tablet bearing a medallion of President Lincoln, together with a portion of his Gettysburg address. The appropriation for the work was \$4,750. While several of the designs showed artistic merit, the majority were crude and unsatisfactory. The selection of an appropriate design will be deferred until after a suitable site in the Park has been chosen, when new bids will be invited. There is no time to spare in the matter, as the structure is required to be in place by June 30, 1896.

The competition for the Sherman statue, which has been occupying the attention of sculptors throughout the United States, will be decided in January and the models placed on exhibition in the city. The statue will be of bronze and colossal in dimensions. Four prizes of \$1,000 each are to be given for the best designs. The committee of selection and award is composed of the Secretary of War, Gen. Schofield and Gen. G. M. Dodge.

The Third General Exposition of Fine Arts and Industrial Art will be held at Barcelona, Spain, between April 23 and June 26, 1896, and the Mayor of Barcelona has invited the artists, sculptors and architects of the United States, as well as those of other nations of the world, to send such of their works as they may desire to exhibit. These must reach the Exposition Building between March 20 and April 1. The exhibition will embrace seven divisions: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Metallurgy, Ceramics and Pottery, Wood-carving and Tapestry, Lace and Embroidery. Not more than four entries may be made in any one of the above sections. The "Prix d'honneur" will be \$1,675, and medals of three classes will also be awarded.

The Secretary of War has awarded to J. F. Manning & Co., Washington, D. C., the contract for the erection of a granite pedestal for the statue of Dr. Samuel D. Gross, to be erected in Washington, in amount \$1,400, using Red Beach granite.

Imports of marble for October amounted to \$85,701, an increase of \$31,648 over that of October, 1894.

"Monuments in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn: Charlotte Canda, The Old Sea Captain, James Gordon Bennett."