

Preservation Plan

ASPEN GROVE CEMETERY

Aspen, Colorado



completed by

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with assistance from

BHA Design Inc.

Anthony & Associates

Norman's Memorials Inc.



23 November 2010

SHF Project #08-01-044

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23 November 2010

Sara Adams, Senior Planner
City of Aspen
Community Development Department
130 S. Galena St.
Aspen, CO 81611

Subject: Preservation Plan, Aspen Grove Cemetery
SHF Grant #2008-01-044

Dear Sara,

In compliance with our contract with the City of Aspen, Tatanka Historical Associates Inc., together with our allied consultants BHA Design, Anthony & Associates, and Norman's Memorials, has worked over the past two years to document Aspen Grove Cemetery and prepare a preservation plan for the site.

The following preservation plan presents the results of our site analysis. It has been a pleasure working with you on the project, and I want to thank you for all of your thoughtful guidance and assistance. Please contact me if you have any questions about the material presented herein.

Sincerely,

Ron Sladek
President

This project has been funded by a grant from the Colorado Historical Society's State Historical Fund (#08-01-044), together with matching funds provided by the City of Aspen.

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Aspen Grove Cemetery Preservation Plan

**Nature requires and humanity suggests
That such a home be prepared
Not only for ourselves but for our brethren,
Our friends, the rich and the poor,
Even the wayfarer and the stranger within our gates;
And we are proud to note the fact
That some of the citizens of aspen,
Perceiving the necessity, long since conceived the plan
Of preparing a cemetery which will be at once
a resting place for the departed
and a “thing of beauty”
and an object of interest to the living.**

*“The Aspen Grove Cemetery”
Aspen Daily Chronicle
28 September 1889*

Project Background

Aspen Grove Cemetery is located on the east edge of the city and is one of Aspen's most important and intact historic sites. Its period of significance stretches from the mining camp days of the late 1880s, through the “quiet years” that lasted until the end of World War II, and then into the postwar decades as the city emerged as a resort community. In recent decades, the cemetery has continued to be used on a periodic basis, with a small number of burials taking place there each year. After 120 years of use, the site holds the graves of hundreds of Aspen's citizens, among them miners, ranchers, housewives, children, business owners, and prominent leaders of the city's 20th century renaissance.

Since 1889, when the cemetery was founded, the site has been developed, managed and maintained by the non-profit Aspen Grove Cemetery Association. Between the late 1800s and 1930s, citizens of Aspen and the surrounding region held annual Decoration Day (now Memorial Day) ceremonies at the site. In conjunction with traditional remembrance activities, visitors decorated and cleaned the graves. Other maintenance activities took place throughout the warmer months. In recent decades, board members Jim and Ramona Markalunas have managed the cemetery with an admirable degree of dedication. Jim has invested a tremendous

amount of his own time and labor to the site's physical maintenance and visits the cemetery almost daily during the months when it is free of snow.

Today the site sees occasional visitors that include family and friends of those buried there, hikers enjoying the natural setting, and others with an interest in history and funerary art. Flowers and other mementos are occasionally left at the gravesites, and a few burials still take place there each year. Because the cemetery is situated on the edge of town and its location is not obvious, those who come there purposefully seek to visit the site. During the winter months, the cemetery is buried in a deep blanket of snow and is accessible only to those willing to walk or ski in, and brave the cold conditions.

In 2006, the City of Aspen's Community Development Department launched discussions with the Cemetery Association regarding the need for a professionally prepared preservation plan that would provide analysis of current conditions, guidelines for future management, and documentation of cultural resources. The Aspen Grove Cemetery Association agreed that the effort would be a necessary and important step, providing information and guidance that would be helpful to its management and preservation efforts. The Association's board of directors is comprised of a small number of dedicated local volunteers. While they continue to manage the site, and have recently attracted several new board members, the effort may eventually require participation from the City of Aspen or another local organization.

The City of Aspen secured funding for a cemetery preservation plan in August 2007. While the City provided half of the funds, the remaining cost was covered by a grant from the Colorado Historical Society's State Historical Fund. Tatanka Historical Associates Inc. (THAI) of Fort Collins was engaged to prepare the preservation plan. To assist with this effort, THAI recruited landscape architect BHA Design Inc. (BHA), also of Fort Collins, to provide assistance with analysis of the cemetery landscape. Norman's Memorials Inc. (NMI) of Greeley was engaged to look at the condition of stonework, and Anthony & Associates (A&A) of Fort Collins took on the challenge of assessing the condition and preservation of woodwork on the site.

While funding had been secured for the project, the contract was not executed for several months, by which time the cemetery was buried in snow. Consequently, fieldwork could not begin until the spring of 2008. With a relatively limited scope of fieldwork, the sub-consultants were able to finish their analysis that summer. However the much more extensive field

documentation of each of the hundreds of gravesites took from the spring of 2008 through the fall of 2009 to finish. This work was done by THAI personnel and resulted in the completion of a data sheet on each marked gravesite, complete with photographs and detailed written descriptions and analysis. These data sheets are a separate submittal designed to accompany this preservation plan report.



Fieldwork Being Completed at the Site, 2009

The preservation plan is designed to serve as a practical guidebook for a broad range of future efforts at the site and should be consulted periodically for guidance. Copies should be distributed to the directors of the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association, and to City staff who might be involved with the site in the future. In addition, contractors engaged to work on the property should be briefed in advance, and as appropriate to their tasks, on the proper care of the cemetery and its resources.

Site History

The story of Aspen Grove Cemetery begins during the summer of 1888, when the *Aspen Daily Chronicle* published an editorial complaining that the condition of the city's existing cemetery was a disgrace. That early cemetery, known as Evergreen (later changed to Ute), was founded in 1880 on the southeast edge of town. It was an unplanned, unregulated burial ground that was clearly also not maintained. The site had no planned roads, paths or landscaping, and

burials were haphazardly scattered throughout the grounds. The writer expounded upon their disappointment: "It reflects small credit upon the community that the city of our dead should be so sadly neglected. It has become the pasture ground of every species of animal, the burro, cow and stray horse finding the grass in that neighborhood especially to their taste. All the nobler sensibilities of men and women are shocked at such light treatment and gross neglect of the last resting place of many respected and loved citizens. The authorities should take some early action in the premises." (2 August 1888, p. 2)

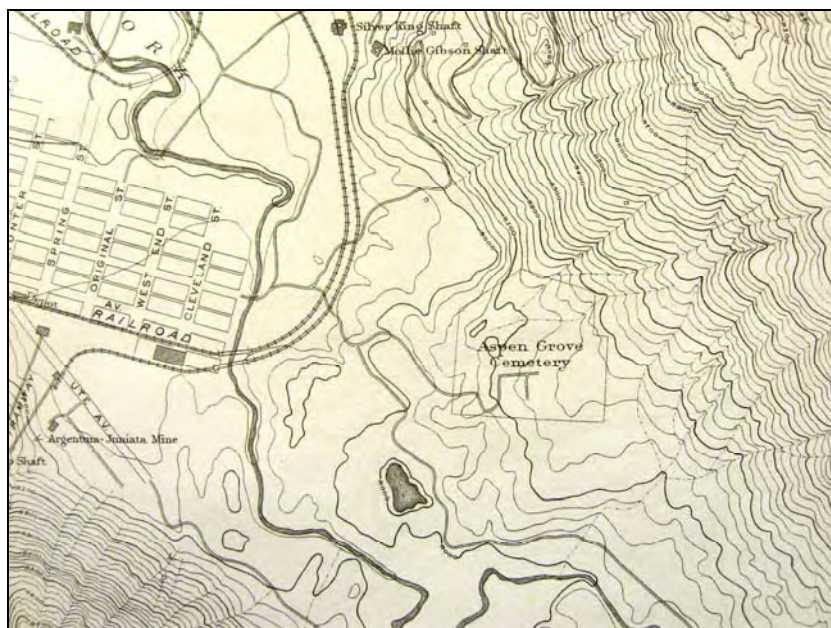
The following month, a reporter from the newspaper visited the site and prepared an article titled "Desolation and Decay." According to the reporter, "No effort in fact has been made to keep up the fence...and the consecrated ground is stampeded by every animal that turns its nose toward the bunches of grass that have here and there shot their heads above the rocks. The fences by which the private lots were girdled have also been wrecked and unless reformation is begun at once a suburb that should be the most beautiful in its solemnity will be a howling carnival ground." (7 September 1888) Naturally, the community was upset about the poor condition of its only cemetery. Taking note of the editorial, article and other complaints, the Aspen Chamber of Commerce decided that decisive action had to be taken to address what had emerged as a civic concern and embarrassment.

In April 1889, the Chamber held its annual meeting, at which President I. W. Shilling stated that the newly elected board should move to correct the deteriorated condition of the city cemetery. Responding to a comment that this was the city's problem, one board member pointed out that the site was located outside the city limits and the municipal government had no jurisdiction there. Discussion also revolved around the cemetery's questionable legal status on unpatented land. Located as it was on the edge of town, Aspen's business leaders thought it preferable to have a burial ground situated a greater distance from the downtown district.

The Chamber board concluded that a cemetery association should be formed to handle the issue. Following discussion, a resolution was passed calling for the creation of a non-profit organization to oversee and regulate burials, and to maintain a more fitting cemetery for the proud and successful mining town. However, rather than working to improve the existing cemetery, which continued to be used but failed to garner support for its maintenance, the Chamber appointed a special committee tasked to pursue the acquisition of land for a new site.

The members of this committee included D. W. Strickland, B. Clark Wheeler, Henry T. Tissington, W. B. Root, and W. E. Turley.

Within days, the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association emerged and the organization was incorporated on 3 July 1889. Its original board of directors consisted of George Vickery, president; Leonard Sivyer, vice president; W. E. Turley, secretary; and J. R. Williams, treasurer. The Cemetery Association announced that it was working to acquire fifteen acres one-half mile east of town, where a new cemetery would be established. Purchased for \$700 in mid-July, the grounds were previously part of the Williams Ranch, adjacent to land owned by George Vickery. Association president Vickery prepared plans for the site and oversaw its development. Secretary Turley, Aspen's coroner and undertaker, was appointed superintendent of the new cemetery. The Cemetery Association filed its first annual report in March 1890, showing \$100,000 in capital stock, with \$94,300 paid in and \$300 in indebtedness. An office for the organization was maintained at 417 E. Hyman Ave.



Aspen Grove Cemetery, 1894

From its height along the flanks of Smuggler Mountain, Aspen Grove Cemetery provided visitors (at least those still alive) with a spectacular panoramic view of the booming mining town, along with the Roaring Fork valley and mountains to the west. Prior to 1889, the river to the east constrained the developed core area of Aspen. Although a bridge over the Roaring Fork River

existed at the east end of Cooper Avenue, access to the new cemetery required improvements to the bridge and long unpaved entry road, along with the creation of a safe crossing over the Midland and Rio Grande railroad tracks. The cemetery's main entrance gate was located in the vicinity of the current entry. Near this, the Cemetery Association constructed a sexton's cottage, along with a circular peaked mound designed to serve as a receiving tomb for the temporary storage of bodies awaiting either burial there or shipment to other locations in the country. The first sexton was John Paxham, who was replaced by the mid-1890s by Charles Brisco.

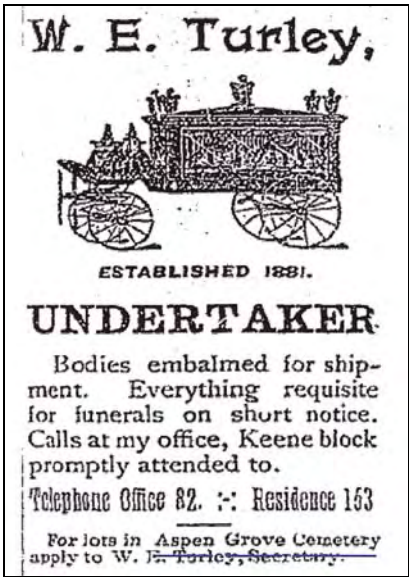
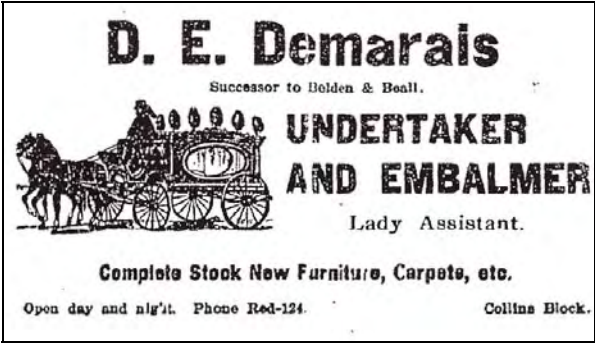
During the fall of 1889 and again in the spring of 1890, a crew of men under the supervision of George Vickery cleared brush and debris, and constructed improvements at the site. Seven acres of the property were originally staked into a formal grid of blocks and lots that were divided by graded roads and walking paths. A fence of unknown design was also installed around the perimeter. From the entrance, the internal roadway system was designed so that visitors could either loop through the site or turn into the central carriage turnaround. The various roads and paths within the site were designated with floral names such as Acacia, Clematis, Daphne, Elder, Forget-Me-Not, Hazel and Hawthorne. A summerhouse, or gazebo, with seating for visitors was planned for the center of the carriage circle, although whether this was constructed is no longer known. Hitching posts and spigots for irrigation were to be placed at convenient locations throughout the site.

The original plans called for the site to be planted with grass. While there is no physical evidence of planted grass on the site today, early references to the property suggest that it may have held irrigated lawns. The Cemetery Association secured water rights for irrigation when the site was developed. Water was piped to the site and used to irrigate not only the lawns, but also flowers and burial plots. During the summer months in the mid-1890s, the Cemetery Association placed notices in the local newspapers advising those interested that fees for the watering of burial plots in the cemetery were due.

In the southern area of the cemetery, just south of the turnaround and southern loop road, the Cemetery Association installed a small pond known as Lake Dell. The Cemetery Association intended to place a fountain there, along with shrubs and flowering plants that would ornament the shores. At some point, most likely when the pond was installed, piles of granite rubble were placed around its perimeter. The property already held several small evergreens and numerous

Aspen trees, hence the name Aspen Grove. Most of these pre-existing trees were retained to provide greenery and shade. In addition to laying out the standard blocks and lots, along with roads and paths, a potter's field area was prepared for the poor and indigent burials that would be handled by the county.

Aspen's fraternal organizations acquired blocks that would be reserved for their members. In March 1890, the International Order of Odd Fellows acquired all of Block 21, located just south of the carriage circle, for a fee of \$100. The Patriotic Order of Sons of America established its own burial area, which they marked in June 1890 with a 70'-tall flagpole (now gone) that could be seen from town. According to the *Aspen Daily Chronicle* (18 August 1890, p. 3), "those who sleep there will always rest beneath the shadow of the Stars and Stripes." The Masons and Knights of Pythias also reserved their own blocks. Each year during the month of June, the fraternal orders held memorial ceremonies for their dead. Hundreds joined processions that wound their way to both city cemeteries, where solemn ceremonies were conducted and flowers placed on the graves.

<div data-bbox="246 1012 654 1587" data-label="Complex-Block"> <p>W. E. Turley,</p>  <p>ESTABLISHED 1881.</p> <p>UNDERTAKER</p> <p>Bodies embalmed for shipment. Everything requisite for funerals on short notice. Calls at my office, Keene block promptly attended to.</p> <p>Telephone Office 82. ∴ Residence 153</p> <p>For lots in Aspen Grove Cemetery apply to <u>W. E. Turley, Secretary.</u></p> </div> <p>Aspen Daily Leader 1 December 1892</p>	<div data-bbox="779 1148 1369 1491" data-label="Complex-Block"> <p>D. E. Demarais</p> <p>Successor to Holden & Beall.</p>  <p>UNDERTAKER AND EMBALMER</p> <p>Lady Assistant.</p> <p>Complete Stock New Furniture, Carpets, etc.</p> <p>Open day and night. Phone Red-124. Collins Block.</p> </div> <p>Aspen Democrat 11 April 1905</p>
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Early Undertakers Involved with Aspen Grove Cemetery

Numerous individuals and families purchased burial plots that were available in sizes of 4' x 9', 10' x 16', and 20' x 20' at prices ranging from eight to sixty dollars. Funerals at the new cemetery began before the site's development was completed. The first burial to take place there was that of Elizabeth Frey, who died on 16 June 1889 (buried in Block 17, her grave is now unmarked). Henry Henthorn, who drowned in Crystal Lake in July, was the next person to follow Frey to the grave. Undertaker Turley handled Henthorn's funeral, and the Good Templars accompanied the body to the cemetery. A number of additional burials occurred between July and September, all of them handled by Turley. On 7 September 1895, the *Aspen Weekly Times* reported that hundreds of individuals had already been interred at Aspen Grove Cemetery. Eighteen of these were moved from the old Evergreen (Ute) Cemetery across the river. (After Red Butte Cemetery on the west side of Aspen was established in 1900, a number of bodies from Aspen Grove were disinterred and moved there.)

Fatalities in the mines were frequent, as men died as a result of cave-ins, falls, and explosions. In September 1889, for example, Russian immigrant miner Laverick Anibl was killed by a stope collapse in the Compromise Mine. With no family in the area, the mining company paid for his funeral at Aspen Grove Cemetery. Three men died in the Cameron Mine on 18 April 1891, the result of a premature explosion while they were setting charges. Two of the men, John Mahoney and Thomas Kennedy, were buried next to one another in Block 54 during a funeral attended by their wives, children and hundreds of mourners. Noting the frequency of miners' deaths, the *Aspen Weekly Times* wrote that "the hardy miner who goes down into the depths of our mountains to toil for the riches therein, holds his life in his hands; that his occupation, though surrounded by every precaution that prudence can suggest, is still a hazardous and perilous one; that he who goes down bravely with buoyancy and hope may be brought back to the light of day a mangled, bleeding bit of inanimate clay." (7 September 1895, p. 4)

Common to many pioneer towns of the era, deaths in the Aspen community were also related to the periodic arrival of epidemics, along with a variety of illnesses, non-mining accidents, violent acts, and the perils of childbirth. Infant mortality was particularly high as children succumbed to a diversity of diseases that were later conquered through the development of vaccines and other treatments in the 20th century. The deceased were usually transported to the cemetery by horse-drawn hearses provided by the undertaker. Typically, the hearse employed a team of black horses if the deceased was an adult and white horses for children. In early May 1891, a

body was found floating in the Roaring Fork River ten miles below Aspen. Although the coroner investigated this mysterious death, the dead man's identity could not be determined. The body was taken to Aspen Grove Cemetery, where it was buried at county expense. In December 1891, twenty-two persons were interred at the site.

Evidently, some among Aspen's citizens viewed both the old and new cemeteries as places where they could continue the previous practice of burying the dead without obtaining prior permission. Evergreen Cemetery was unregulated, burial permits were not required by a governing body, and no records were kept. As a result, the community had become used to conducting funerals with no regard for permitting. In October 1889, the *Aspen Daily Chronicle* printed a short editorial calling on the community to obtain official burial permits before conducting funerals in either cemetery. As the newspaper stated, "The unceremonious hurrying of the dead into the ground should be stopped." (10 October 1889, p. 2)



**Aspen Grove Cemetery in Foreground
Circa 1895
(Aspen Historical Society)**

Aspen Grove Cemetery remained active throughout the 1890s and into the middle decades of the 20th century. Most of those interred there during these years were average citizens who populated the town as well as the surrounding countryside. They came from a diversity of

backgrounds and included miners, saloonkeepers, housewives, children, clerks, shopkeepers, postal deliverymen, teamsters, and mechanics. Ranchers and farmers from miles around were also buried there. One of the most prominent burials to take place in the 1890s was that of Henry P. Cowenhoven, who died in 1896. Among the earliest pioneers to arrive in the nascent mining camp, Cowenhoven became one of the town's most prominent merchants and community leaders. He was buried in a family plot in Block 25 that soon came to include his wife Margaret and daughter Katherine.

By 1893, Aspen's population had grown considerably and reached its peak at around 12,000 people. In addition to hundreds of businesses and residences, the town held mines, mills, and dozens of saloons, gambling houses, and brothels. Although the Silver Crash of 1893 dramatically undermined the market for ore and damaged Aspen's industrial base, the much quieter community hung on for a time as some of the mines reopened with reduced wages and lower rates of production. The town's population decreased over the following years: by 1900 it had dropped to just over 3,300; by 1920 it was at 1,265; and between 1930 and 1950 the town reached a low point that wavered between 700 and 900 residents. During the early years of the 20th century, the mining industry in Aspen went under for good. The small city, with its closed mines and mills, and unoccupied buildings, remained the administrative and market center for Pitkin County and its mostly agricultural community. Both townsfolk and rural dwellers from the area continued to use Aspen Grove Cemetery for the next century.

During the early years of the new century, the most notable burial at Aspen Grove Cemetery was that of former Colorado Governor Davis H. Waite, who served in office from 1893 to 1895. Long a resident of Aspen, Waite was known as a Populist reformer and editor of the *Aspen Union Era*, in whose pages he argued on behalf of labor and the working class. Waite died at his Aspen home in November 1901. His funeral was one of the largest ever held in the city, starting at the Methodist Church and then moving to Aspen Grove Cemetery. In 1907, Waite's body was disinterred and moved to Red Butte Cemetery.

In 1906, citizens complained about the fact that some residents surrounding the site were pasturing their cows in the burial ground. An investigation of the perimeter fence revealed that the wood posts had in fact rotted out and the fence had collapsed, allowing bovines from the adjacent fields to enter the site and feed on its rich grasses. The Cemetery Association had

become inactive by that time and the site was being managed by local undertaker D. E. DeMarais. A fundraising effort led by Matt Callahan was conducted in 1908 to raise money to replace the perimeter fence. In May of that year, the city council appropriated funds to be used for this purpose. The new fence was completed later that month and the gates were securely locked. From that point on, the DeMarais undertaking firm held the key to the site, and anyone seeking entry had to gain prior permission.

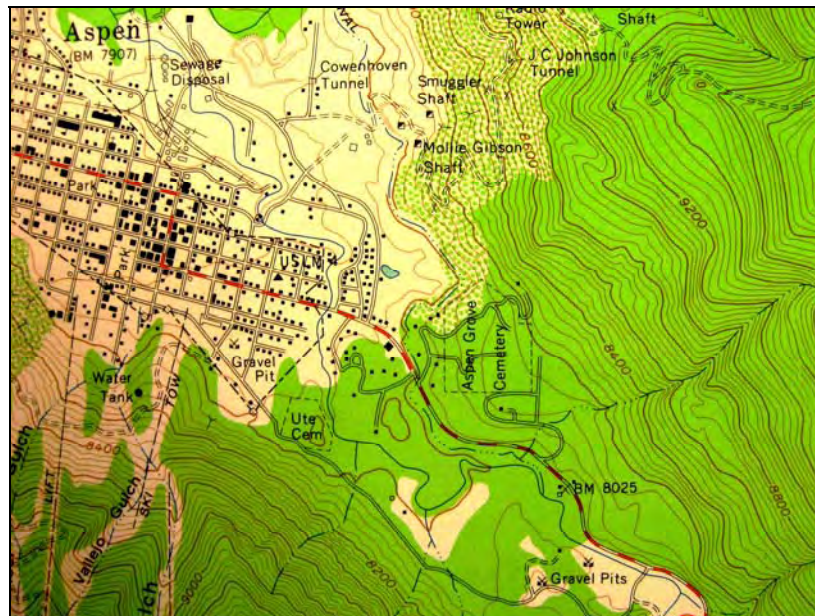
Another notable burial took place at Aspen Grove Cemetery in October 1921. During World War I a few years earlier, Aspen resident Peter F. Galligan was serving in the US Army when he was killed in action in Metz, France. Galligan's body was originally buried in a US military cemetery on French soil. However, in April 1920 some of his friends and former soldiers in Aspen established the Peter Galligan Post No. 117 of the American Legion there in his memory. Eighteen months later they had his body shipped to Colorado, where his remains were re-interred in Block 52 in Aspen Grove Cemetery.

During the sixty-five years that followed the end of World War II, Aspen Grove Cemetery continued to be used by the community. A number of prominent residents who were involved in Aspen's post-war renaissance as a ski resort and center of arts and culture are interred there. Among the most notable graves are those of:

- Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke – prominent Chicago industrialist; philanthropists; founders of the Aspen Company, Aspen Music Festival & School, Aspen Institute, and Aspen Skiing Company
- Freidl Pfeifer - Austrian immigrant; national ski champion; 10th Mountain Division veteran; operator of the Aspen Ski School; partner with Paepcke in developing the Aspen Mountain and Buttermilk ski areas
- Herbert Bayer - Austrian immigrant; Bauhaus-trained graphic designer and artist; brought to Aspen by Paepcke to work with the Aspen Skiing Company and Aspen Institute
- Mina Loy – noted early feminist poet and modernist artist; daughter Joella became the wife of Herbert Bayer and daughter Fabienne married Fritz Benedict

- Fredric “Fritz” Benedict - architect and landscape architect; 10th Mountain Division veteran; master planner of Vail, Snowmass and Breckenridge; founder of the 10th Mountain Hut & Trail System; chair of Aspen’s first Planning & Zoning Commission
- Ferenc Berko – Hungarian immigrant; prominent official photographer for the Aspen Institute and Aspen Music Festival; founder of the Aspen Photography Conference

By the 1960s, Aspen Grove Cemetery had endured decades of poor maintenance and what was clearly a long-defunct Cemetery Association. While the burial ground remained in use, and area families and funeral homes continued to hold burials there, the site was in need of more consistent oversight and maintenance. In addition, by the 1970s its surroundings were beginning to be developed with residences. The cemetery’s northern area, which apparently contained no burials, was either sold or abandoned and replaced with the Aspen Grove Subdivision. During the 1960s and 1970s, a group of local volunteers under the guidance of Florence Glidden, Ramona Markalunas and Elizabeth Paepcke began to rehabilitate the cemetery from decades of neglect. The Aspen Grove Cemetery Association was re-incorporated in 1980 to take over ownership, management and care of the site. Among the persons who have been most actively involved with the Cemetery Association over the past thirty years are Ramona and Jim Markalunas, with Jim acting as the cemetery’s sexton.



Aspen Grove Cemetery, 1960

Site Description

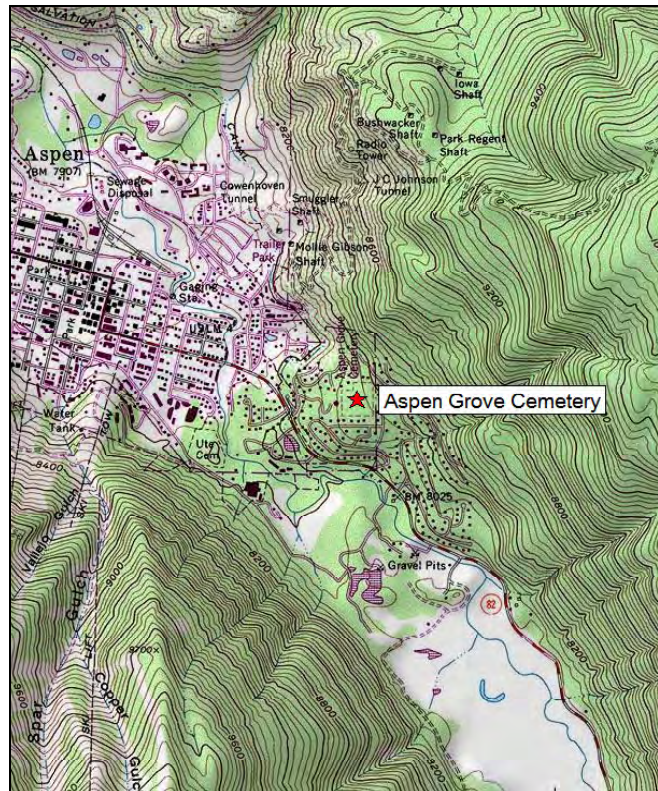
Location & Access: From the intersection of Original Street and Cooper Avenue, Aspen Grove Cemetery is located one-half mile east of downtown. Traveling east along Cooper Avenue, the route to the site crosses over the Roaring Fork River and then continues east a short distance along Highway 82. A left turn is made onto McSkimming Rd., followed quickly by a right turn onto Aspen Grove Rd. After turning onto this short unpaved drive, the visitor quickly reaches the entry gates for Aspen Grove Cemetery. No signage is found along Highway 82 or at any other location along the route to indicate that the cemetery is nearby.

Based upon historic maps of Aspen, it is clear that the main entry to the cemetery has always been located where it currently remains. However, any historic features that might have been located at or near the main entry are gone. The entrance to the site today consists of two gateways. The first of these consists of a pair of metal swinging gates, installed within the past several decades, which are supported by metal pipe posts. These gates are kept locked, and anyone requiring vehicular access needs the combination. A painted wood sign attached to the gates greets visitors to Aspen Grove Cemetery. South of and adjacent to the vehicular gates is a smaller modern metal pedestrian gate that is always accessible. Attached to this small gate is another painted wood sign, this one reminding visitors to close the gate behind them.

About fifty feet inside the first gateway is a second, more ornamental gate and archway that was installed in 2000. The modern metal gates at this location are kept open. Tall squared marble pillars support both the gates and an ornamental metal overhead arch that is decorated with curvilinear patterns. The face of the northern pillar contains metal letter spelling out the words "Aspen Grove Cemetery." Next to this pillar is a smaller metal pedestrian gate, just inside of which is a small modern mailbox where brochures and donation envelopes are stored. The stretch of roadway between the two entry gateways is lined by ornate but modern metal fencing.

Additional signage is found in the entry area. On the south side of the entry road between the gates is a printed metal street sign mounted on a metal post. This sign simply states "Aspen Grove Cemetery." Below that is a sign reminding visitors to clean up after their dogs. Just inside the second pedestrian gate next to the north marble pillar is a small printed interpretive

sign that is mounted to a metal post. Installed in 2000, this sign provides a bit of site history, a list of the Aspen Cemetery Association's board of directors, mention of Jim Markalunas as sexton, and that master blacksmith Will Perry created the archway. The sign is partly covered with paint that was applied with a brush in the years since it was installed.

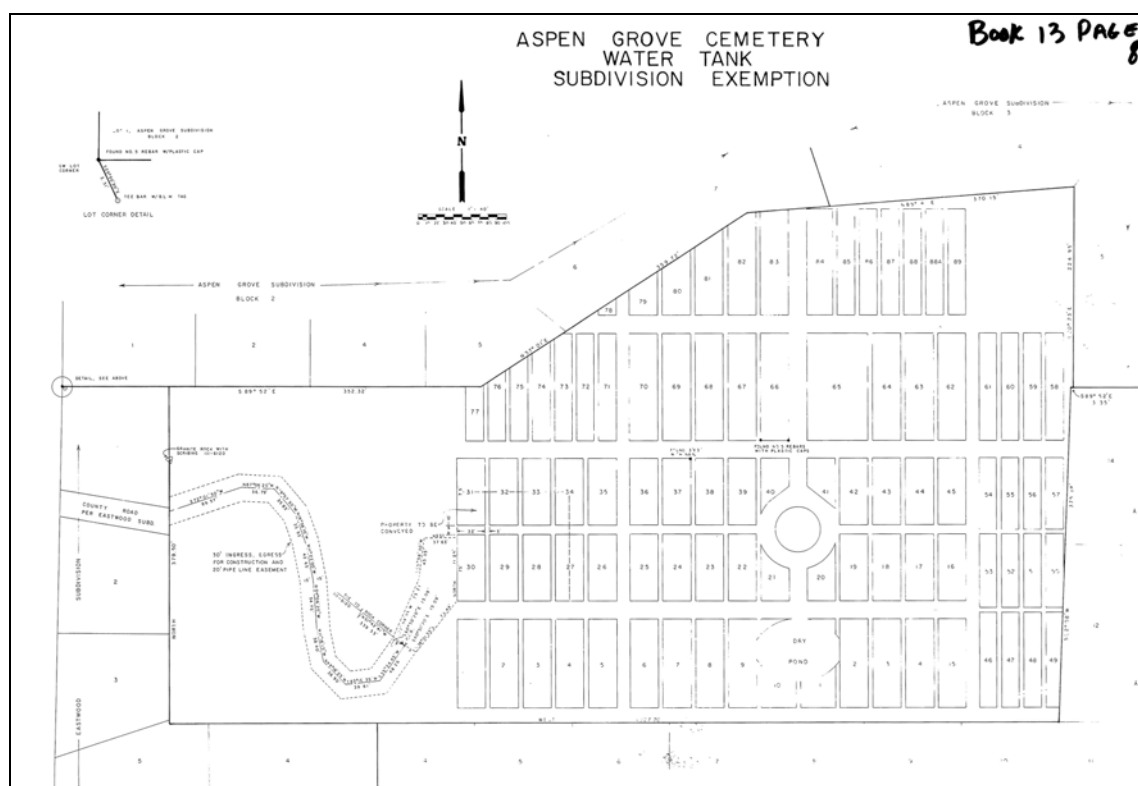


Site Location Map, 1987

From the entry, the unpaved access road into the site curves generally eastward for several hundred yards before it enters the actual burial ground. This roadway is lined with a dense growth of Aspen trees and brush. As the road snakes into the cemetery, it also rises in elevation. Adjacent to the upper portion of the roadway is a massive aboveground circular concrete water reservoir that is owned by the city. Installed during the early 1980s, this is built into a slope and is largely hidden from view by thick forest. The top of the reservoir is capped with concrete and lined by a modern metal fence with a historic profile. Visitors can access the roof of the tank from the east along a narrow, unmarked trail through the brush. The western edge of the roof provides a panoramic view of Aspen and the landscape beyond. Due to the

elevation rise and vegetative growth along the entry road, it is not possible to see the burial area until it is actually entered. No parking space is located outside the cemetery grounds.

The Burial Area: Aspen Grove Cemetery is a roughly rectangular, wooded site that today is approximately 11.5 acres in size. Originally occupying about 15 acres of land, the northern extent of the cemetery was truncated around 1980 to make room for the Aspen Grove Subdivision. This area of the site is not believed to have contained burials. The cemetery occupies ground that slopes upward from west to east, with the main burial area sitting on a relatively flat bench at the base of Smuggler Mountain. Installed around 1982, a wood post and triple rail fence with woven wire demarcates the property's entire perimeter. While much of the fence is in good condition, a number of the rails have deteriorated and collapsed.



Site Plan, circa 1980

Within the site, driving and parking are limited to the basic system of internal unpaved roadways. These form a rectangular grid pattern, and the main east-west road that enters the cemetery connects with additional east-west and north-south roads, all of which are relatively short. Near the center of the burial area is the former carriage circle. While the carriage circle

was historically accessible to vehicles, today it is enclosed with metal fencing that was installed several decades ago. Although modern, this fencing replicates the essential profiles and design elements of the historic fencing within the site. Rather than continuing to act as a vehicle turnaround, the carriage circle is now used as a distinct burial section. Today some of the internal roads are narrower than they were originally, but their intended widths can be determined through careful study of the site.

The burial area is divided into a series of eighty-nine rectangular blocks, each of them oriented lengthwise on a north-south axis. Of these blocks, around twenty-five show no evidence of any burials having taken place there. These empty blocks are mostly located in the western area of the site, and are partly occupied by the city water reservoir. A small number of blocks along the eastern edge of the cemetery also appear to be empty. The northeast corner of the site, which is highest in elevation, is not divided into blocks and exhibits no evidence of gravesites.



General View of the Cemetery, 2009

Roads and walking paths separate the blocks from one another. Some of the primary pathways, particularly in the central area of the site, have been finished with crusher fines in recent years. Many of the original paths, especially in the south, east and northeast areas of the cemetery, are unmarked and difficult to locate. In addition, some of the pathways (or at least segments of them) are moved from their original platted orientations. While some appear to have been moved to avoid trees, others are misaligned or cut off because of historic burials

that took place within segments of unmarked pathways. The blocks were re-surveyed in recent years and their corners along the main roads are now marked with stakes, making it somewhat easier to see where the pathways were also located.

One other historic feature on the site is the small oval-shaped pond located south of the carriage circle and south road. The pond was installed when the site was developed, and it was filled with water during the cemetery's early years. Today it is dry and filled with mature trees and shrubs, indicating that the pond was abandoned long ago, probably for over a century. The center of the pond holds a very large pine tree that contains an old dilapidated treehouse. Dark granite rubble lines the pond's shores.



Granite Rubble Lining the Edge of the Pond

The ground throughout the site, except along the roads and graveled pathways, is covered with a carpet of natural grass. During the summer months this grass grows so tall and thick that it obscures some of the gravestones and most of the low-lying cultural features. In addition, the site rests within an extensive Aspen forest. Many of the Aspen trees are mature, and some have reached the point where they are in danger of falling. A number are growing within fenced family enclosures. Trees have occasionally fallen on the site, some of them causing damage to stonework and metal fencing. A recent arborist's survey resulted in the marking (with ribbons)

of Aspen trees that need to be removed in the near future. Several large pine trees are also scattered around the property.

The cemetery holds a variety of shrubs. In some places, these are growing in thickets so dense that they are practically impassable. This is particularly the case in the northeast, northwest and southern areas of the property. Non-native perennial flowers mark the locations of both identified and unidentified graves. Over the past year, the Cemetery Association planted hundreds of flower bulbs on the site, specifically along the roads and paths. From spring through fall, the site is ornamented with a rich, verdant coat of vegetation. During the colder months, from approximately November through April, the cemetery is buried in a deep bed of snow that covers most of the gravestones and makes the site inaccessible other than on foot.



Mothers & Children Monument

The southwest corner of Block 65 contains a monumental marble sculpture that faces to the southwest. It is over eight feet tall and features a mother with three children. Installed in 2006, the sculpture is dedicated to all of the pioneer mothers and children who succumbed to the ravages of disease, the difficulties of childbirth, and the randomness of accidental death. The artwork was commissioned by the Aspen Cemetery Association and created from a block of Yule marble by sculptor Gregory Tonozzi.

A small modern maintenance shed is located in the southwest area of the cemetery at the intersection of the western and southern roads. This wood-frame building has a footprint of 8' x

8' and faces toward the north. Other than water spigots and a few modern park benches, no public amenities or conveniences are located at the site or in the vicinity.

The Graves: The burial area at Aspen Grove Cemetery holds many hundreds of graves. According to Cemetery Association records that date back to 1889, the total number of recorded burials is just over one thousand. Of these, approximately 912 took place prior to 1949 and another 96 internments date to the period between 1950 and 2005. However, field documentation and archival research completed in 2008-2009 uncovered scores of additional burials that do not appear in the Cemetery Association's records. Some of these include marked graves with names on headstones. Others have involved infant burials and the unpermitted burial of ashes in unmarked graves. Two dogs are also buried on the site, both of them with markers placed at the graves. Additional statistics regarding burials in the cemetery may become apparent as the individual graves are documented and analyzed in the coming months.



The Modern Columbarium/Mausoleum at the Site Entry

Just inside the main entry gates, along the north side of the road, is a small modern granite mausoleum/columbarium designed to hold two coffins and a number of ashes. The structure measures approximately 5' wide by 8' long by 6' high, rests upon a concrete pad, and has a gabled granite roof. Its south elevation contains two stacked coffin drawers and the west elevation holds twenty-four slots for ashes, all of which are closed with square granite panels.

The structure was placed near the main entry in recent years so that it could be used during the winter months when the cemetery is inaccessible. The two coffin storage drawers are currently empty. These are available for temporary storage in cases of winter deaths, in which case burial will be delayed until spring when the snow melts and in-ground interment can take place. The mausoleum/columbarium currently holds just one set of ashes, those of Ermanno Masini who died in 2005.

The burial blocks are divided into numerous lots that were sold either individually or in groups. While most of the lots hold just one burial, some include mothers and newborn infants who were interred together. A number of the lots are grouped together and fenced into family plots that contain multiple burials. Some of these hold a large stone with the family name, surrounded by individual gravemarkers. Some have a single monument to all buried there. Others hold just one or two graves, with room left for other family members.



The Bayer / Benedict Family Enclosure

Among the marked graves, a number of the headstones contain the names of more than one person. In these cases, each time a family member died a blank face on the marker was inscribed with the details. This typically required temporary removal of the headstone for carving. When they were replaced, the headstones were often oriented without care regarding their original placement. In other words, many of the headstones from multi-part monuments were not aligned as they were originally intended in relation to the other carved pieces below

and to the adjacent walking paths. Some of the misalignment of monuments also resulted from markers falling over and not being put back together correctly. Most of these inexact reassemblies appear to have taken place years ago.

Another example of haphazard resetting of monuments is evident in Block 20, where two adjacent headstones were reinstalled onto the opposite bases. This left them marking the wrong graves. Evidence of the problem was found during the recent survey, as the headstones and bases were found to be the wrong sizes for one another, and the footstones are mismatched. A similar problem has involved the movement of stonework and wood markers away from their original gravesites. While the majority of gravemarkers and footstones are clearly in their original, intended locations, a small number (probably no more than twenty) have been moved around. In one case, a dislodged and readable wood marker was found a distance from of its original block. Because most have rotted out of the ground, the wood markers are most likely to have been moved. Research into these individual cases using Cemetery Association records may restore at least some of the moved markers to their original locations.



Views of the burial area, showing individual graves and family enclosures.

Unmarked graves numbering in the hundreds can be seen around the site. Most of these are identified by depressions of varying depths, caused by the collapse of coffins and settling of loose soils. Planted flowers, especially irises, mark the locations of some of these burials. It is very likely that many of these unmarked graves were originally identified with wood markers (often crosses) that deteriorated and disappeared over the past century. Field measurements combined with research in the Cemetery Association records may reveal who occupies each of

these graves. The recent planting of many hundreds of flower bulbs throughout the site by the Cemetery Association may present a problem in the future as some could falsely suggest that burials exist where none are present.

Typical of most western cemeteries, the site's numerous gravestones are predominantly fabricated from granite and marble. Many of the older granite markers are grey in color, and are likely to have been quarried from the area around Salida, Colorado. A number of the pure white marble markers appear to have originated from the Yule marble quarry in the nearby West Elk Mountains. Some are simply rough pieces of marble that were inexpensively acquired from among the quarry's scrap materials. Most of the granite and marble markers in Aspen Grove Cemetery were probably purchased through monument companies or mail order catalogues before being inscribed and then shipped to Aspen by rail. The Sears catalogue, for example, offered a selection of affordable monuments in a variety of styles. In addition to these, the cemetery holds a much smaller number of sandstone, concrete, wood and metal markers. The metal markers would also have been ordered from a catalogue (more about this below). Most of the others appear to have been fabricated locally, sometimes by surviving family members themselves. Materials such as sandstone, concrete and wood were cheaply available to anyone, and were sometimes the only option for poor families.

Architectural monument styles at Aspen Grove Cemetery include a variety of traditional tablets, pedestals, obelisks, ledgers, slant markers, and squared dies. Also found there are flat stone and bronze plaques, circular metal and stone markers, classical columns, truncated marble and granite trees, a few crosses, stacked geometrical shapes, rough slabs of marble, two aboveground granite vaults, and several sculptural pieces. Sixteen government-issued marble military markers are scattered throughout the cemetery, most of them identifying the graves of Civil War veterans. Almost all of the gravemarkers are professionally carved and face toward the adjacent walkways. Footstones are also found throughout the site, typically inscribed with the deceased's initials. Many of these are obscured by vegetation or have sunk into the ground and are barely visible above the surface.

Sandstone blocks that are ornamentally carved with scoring, stippling and diamond patterns support most of the stone gravemarkers. Dozens of the taller gravemarkers consist of stacked parts that include combinations of foundations, bases, blocks, pedestals (or dies), and caps. While most of these stone parts are present, many of the smaller caps are missing. These often

interestingly shaped pieces are presumed stolen since they are no longer found on the site. Relatively lightweight, they would have been easier to remove than larger stonework. Almost all of the stone gravemarkers on the site are in relatively good condition. However, a number show evidence of damage in the form of corner chips, scratches, sugaring, soiling and weathering of inscriptions. A small number exhibit more substantial problems, including spalling, significant cracks, and the wholesale loss of readable information.

Granite is a very heavy and durable stone, weighing about 172 pounds per square foot, and typically resists many forms of possible damage. These stones, even small ones, can weigh hundreds of pounds and prove to be difficult to move, although repeated frost-thaw cycles can cause them to slide off their bases. Even if toppled, they rarely break although they can suffer from chips and scratches. Most of the scores of granite gravemarkers at Aspen Grove Cemetery are in very good condition. These range in size and complexity from small flat plaques and simple slant markers, to monumental, ornate, multi-part pedestals. All of the granite markers are likely to last for hundreds of years with little wear, and their inscriptions will remain readable for generations to come. Even so, some of these stones are more soiled, scratched or chipped than others. None were noted to be significantly damaged and in need of substantial repair.



Granite Gravemarkers at Aspen Grove Cemetery

At 160 pounds per square foot, marble is softer and slightly lighter than granite. Many of these stones at Aspen Grove Cemetery exhibit simple, small, inexpensive designs that were affordable for the average family. However, because it is more malleable to the carver's chisel, marble stones can also be shaped to include fine inscriptions, an abundance of ornamental features, and even sculptural designs. Consequently, the site holds a number of more decorative marble pieces, ranging in color from pure white to dark gray. Because of marble's chemical characteristics, these gravemarkers are more susceptible than granite to physical damage from toppling or vandalism, and to environmental damage caused by several factors. Evidence of such damage is found throughout the site.

One ornate marble monument in the cemetery has suffered from a significant form of damage. This is the gravemarker in Block 53 for Minnie Livingston (*see photo on page 3*), which is missing the head from its finely carved statue of a seated woman. The head was present a number of years ago, and whether it came off through vandalism or as a result of a crack in the marble is not known. In any case, it is nowhere to be found and was probably removed from the site by someone who took it as a souvenir.



Marble Gravemarkers at Aspen Grove Cemetery

In addition to corner and base chips, many of the numerous marble monuments at Aspen Grove are stained and suffer from sugaring, particularly along the upward facing surfaces. Sugaring occurs when the outermost microscopic surface of the stone deteriorates and essentially

dissolves, exposing the underlying crystalline structure. This dissolution is often the result of sulphur dioxide / acid rain in the atmosphere, and is very difficult if not impossible to control. Once exposed, the crystalline structure continues to deteriorate at varied rates of speed depending upon environmental factors. In addition, marble gravestones located in a forest environment typically darken due to sap and insect droppings raining onto the upper surfaces of the gravemarkers from the trees above, with wind-blown dirt then sticking to the sap over a period of decades. Some of this staining has turned the marble gravestones almost black.

The several sandstone and concrete gravemarkers at Aspen Grove have suffered more extensively due to the nature of these softer materials when exposed to the elements. They are prone to cracking and spalling, with the resulting loss of inscriptions. While chips and scratches are typically the result of toppling, cracks and spalling are often caused by structural failures of the stone and are unavoidable. The sandstone corner blocks marking the Knights of Pythias burial area (Blocks 39 & 40) are all in exceptionally good condition. This may be because they are a different type of sandstone or are thicker than the gravemarkers.



Sandstone & Concrete Gravemarkers at Aspen Grove Cemetery

A relatively small number of metal gravemarkers are found on the site. These are found in one of the following basic forms: zinc, bronze, steel, or other. The nine cast zinc markers found in Aspen Grove Cemetery are the oldest of these, all of them dating from the period between 1892 and 1901. They were custom ordered and cast in sand molds. In the United States, the

primary fabricating plant for zinc markers was the Monumental Bronze Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut, which operated from 1874 to 1914. Zinc gravemarkers were marketed by the firm under the term “white bronze” and promoted as an attractive option because they were durable, did not rust, and were less expensive than marble or granite.

Never widely accepted by the buying public, today zinc markers are present in cemeteries in limited numbers and are seen as something of an oddity. True to their marketing claims, however, the zinc does not rust or stain, and after more than a century of exposure to the elements the monuments in Aspen Grove Cemetery are in remarkably good condition. The only problem noted is that a few of them have slightly split seams. This is unlikely to result in further deterioration that needs to be addressed.



Zinc Gravemarkers at Aspen Grove Cemetery

The thirteen bronze, steel and other metal gravemarkers in Aspen Grove Cemetery are all newer markers that were installed since the 1960s. All of the bronze ones are flat plaques that were ordered from catalogues or monument companies, with the names and dates cast by the manufacturers. The two steel markers were custom fabricated and are flat circular plates that appear to have had the inscriptions cut with a laser. Those referred to as “other” are actually small metal plaques placed at the graves by funeral homes to act as either temporary or permanent markers. Some of the temporary markers were never replaced with a more

permanent monument. Others were left in place even though gravemarkers were installed. A few mark the burials of ashes and seem to have been intentionally left there for the long term. Historic woodwork at the site originally consisted of numerous crosses, tablet-shaped gravemarkers, and fenced grave enclosures. Wood was readily available from area forests, and could be inexpensively carved by family members or local craftsmen. Consequently, wood crosses, gravemarkers and fencing were frequently employed, especially by the poor, during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most of these resources deteriorated over the past century and have been lost forever. Remnants of woodwork, primarily fencing, are scattered throughout the site. These are almost entirely in severe states of decay and now simply mark where some of the unidentified graves are located.



Wood Gravemarkers at Aspen Grove Cemetery

Today the cemetery holds thirty-one wood gravemarkers, all but three of which date to the period before 1900. While a number of these are intact and readable, others are more severely decayed with the inscriptions erased. All but a few are dislodged from the ground, having rotted and fallen over. Every one of the historic wood gravemarkers is in some state of deterioration, the result of moisture, biological activity, and decades of exposure to the elements. Because they are damaged and have become so fragile, these are the most threatened historic resources in the cemetery. Every attempt was made to capture the inscriptions from the wood gravemarkers at the site before they are lost forever. Much of the information was successfully

recorded, and the results of this effort are found in the individual graves documentation forms that accompany this preservation plan report.

During the summer of 2008, Anthony & Associates completed a study of the woodwork in Aspen Grove Cemetery. Their analysis and conclusions are summarized and incorporated into this preservation plan. Fieldwork at the site determined that the wood gravemarkers and fence enclosures are all suffering from various degrees of deterioration caused by weathering and decay. While some of these problems can be addressed, others are unavoidable in an outdoor, high altitude setting.

Decay is the result of fungi that damage the cellular structure of wood. This typically occurs in areas of high moisture, such as joints or connection points, exposed end grains, and where the woodwork comes into contact with the ground. The wood fibers eventually break down, causing a loss of strength and eventual failure. Evidence of this can be seen throughout the site in the form of collapsed fencing and dislodged gravemarkers. Once woodwork has failed and collapsed, it often comes into greater contact with the ground and results in additional deterioration. Lichens are also present on the woodwork, but are not a significant concern.

Weathering of woodwork is caused by repeated patterns of wetting and drying, ultraviolet light, and erosion caused by windblown soil. This process can occur over decades, if not centuries, but ultimately results in erosion, the formation of a surface patina, splintering, and the removal of surface features. All of these not only cause woodwork to deteriorate, but in the case of gravemarkers results in the loss of inscriptions. As stated, all of the historic wood crosses and most of the wood fencing at Aspen Grove Cemetery are gone, with only scattered and severely deteriorated remnants found at the site. The sole concern regarding woodwork at the cemetery revolves around preservation of the surviving gravemarkers.

Among the gravemarkers, it is clear that repeated exposure to moisture has caused the greatest damage. Some of this is natural and unavoidable, resulting from precipitation in the form of rain and snow. However, natural precipitation events alternate with drying episodes. In recent years, a sprinkler irrigation system was installed at Aspen Grove Cemetery, with almost daily spraying of the site during the warmer months. This constant wetting of the site, and its wooden gravemarkers, with sprinklers has caused significant deterioration. Between 2006 and 2008 alone, it was observed that some of the inscriptions had already deteriorated to the point that

they were no longer readable. Repeated soaking of these markers with sprinklers speeds up the deterioration process and will result in the eventual loss of these artifacts.

A number of individual and family plots are surrounded by metal fencing or stone coping (sometimes a combination of both). These run along the perimeters of the gravesites, clearly marking their boundaries. The photograph on the cover of this report shows a good example of a combination of these materials applied to the Cowenhoven family plot in Block 25. In the several cases where sandstone coping was employed, masons provided shaped blocks that were often ornamented with scoring and stippling. Some graves, including unidentified ones with no headstones, are lined with rough pieces of granite or even bricks (a few are entirely covered with mounds of granite). Most of the coping stones throughout the cemetery were laid one course high, with just one instance (Cowenhoven) of a low wall being formed by three courses. Due to sinking and the abundant growth of vegetation on the site, many of the coping stones are disappearing from sight.



Metal Fencing at Aspen Grove Cemetery

The metal fence enclosures in the cemetery exhibit a variety of styles, and are predominantly fabricated of cast iron or wrought iron. Several of the modern enclosures are unique and appear to have been fabricated by local metalworkers. One is stamped “Made in Mexico.” However, many of the historic fences appear to have been ordered from catalogs and delivered to Aspen by rail. The most common source of fencing was the Stewart Iron Works of Cincinnati,

Ohio, and many examples of their work are found in the cemetery. This company remains in business today, and historic profile fences remain in their current catalog of available products. The metalwork at Aspen Grove Cemetery is predominantly in very good condition, with little rust or damage noted. A few gates are missing, and a small number of fences have bent sections. Most of the bent metalwork appears to have been caused by falling trees. One enclosure, located in the southeast area of the site just east of the intersection of the south and east roads, may have been hit by a vehicle. This appears to be one of the few fences that could use some preservation attention.

The family names in Aspen Grove Cemetery are predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Irish and Germanic. This indicates that many of Aspen's residents were either immigrants from these areas of Europe, or derived from ancestors that came from these same regions. Other than the graves of several persons of Jewish ancestry, all of those interred there are likely to have been Christians. No names of Asian, African, Hispanic or any other ethnic derivation are found in the cemetery.

All of the inscriptions but one are in English, with the single exception being a phrase in German. Circumstances of death are absent from almost all of the gravemarkers. The single exception is the monument for the Ellis family in Block 43. In this case, the husband, wife and their infant child all died in a horrific railroad disaster at Aspen Junction on 11 July 1891.



Ellis Family Marker with Reference to the Railroad Disaster.

Children's gravemarkers, many of them capped with carved lambs, are found throughout the cemetery. They stand as somber evidence of the dangers of childbirth, limitations of medical care, and frailty of childhood during the pioneer era. Most of these markers include statements and poetry expressing the grief of mourning parents. While many of the lambs are singular, a few gravemarkers include as many as three lambs to indicate the number of children from one family buried there. Rare designs include a deceased carved dove (below left, a symbol of purity) and a reclining child framed by a scallop shell (below middle, a symbol of rebirth). A number of the children's gravemarkers also feature tree stumps, symbolic of lives cut short. Some of the children buried in the cemetery died in childbirth or during infancy and are buried in shared caskets and graves with their mothers. Close analysis of the children's monuments and burial dates is likely to reveal periodic epidemics that passed through the community and took the lives of susceptible young people.



Children's Gravemarkers at Aspen Grove Cemetery

Many gravemarkers at the site include carved emblems of fraternal organizations. While some of these are concentrated within the blocks that were reserved by these organizations, numerous others are scattered throughout the site. These include organizations such as the Woodmen of the World, Women of Woodcraft, Masons, Knights of Pythias, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and the Ancient Order of United Workmen. While family members and friends

erected some of these monuments, others were likely to have been paid for and installed by fraternal orders that provided funeral insurance funds.



Fraternal Order Markers at Aspen Grove Cemetery

Exposed to the elements, the gravestones and other cultural resources at Aspen Grove Cemetery are subject to a number of environmental and human-caused impacts. Stone, wood, metal and concrete placed in a cemetery will weather and deteriorate just as they would in any other outdoor location. Each type of material has its own strengths and weaknesses, weathers in certain ways, and is prone to specific types of damage. Natural environmental impacts at this location include factors such as the site's exposure to sunlight, rates of precipitation and humidity, altitude and atmospheric temperatures, the freeze-thaw cycle, vegetative growth, and the presence of insects and mammals. All of these factors constitute the specific microclimate and microenvironment of the cemetery, and contribute to types and rates of deterioration of various historic materials and artifacts.

Evidence of environmental impact to cultural resources is found in varied characteristics of the site. For example, woodwork has deteriorated due to exposure to sunlight and moisture. Falling trees have damaged historic fences around some of the graves. Many of the granite and marble stones are darkened by sap and windblown soil. Some gravemarkers are likely to have been toppled by bears using them as scratching posts. Many of the stone and wood

gravemarkers have moss and lichens growing on their surfaces. These living organisms are a natural part of the alpine environment and do not in themselves cause significant damage to their host materials. However, they do retain moisture, and moss especially can damage stonework and woodwork where it is in contact with these materials primarily through repeated freeze-thaw cycles. No significantly negative impacts are noted at Aspen Grove Cemetery in relation to the abundance of insects, voles, birds, deer and bear that make the site their home. Their presence is obvious throughout the site, and they have turned the forest property into a nature preserve. This natural environment, rather than a groomed one, is now central to the historic cemetery's special character.



Bear Claw Marks on an Aspen Tree in the Cemetery

Human-caused impacts at historic cemeteries are typically the result of abandonment, vandalism, poorly conceived or executed repairs, pollution, and a variety of management practices. For example, the cultural resources at Aspen Grove Cemetery have undoubtedly been impacted by the site's location within a managed Aspen forest, along with the fact that aboveground sprinkler irrigation has been introduced and increased there in recent years. Although mountain air may appear to be pristine, it can also hold and transport sulphur dioxide

from the burning of fossil fuels and salts from road de-icing activities. These compounds cause chemical degradation of soft gravestones such as marble, resulting in the sugaring described above.

The Cemetery Association worked diligently over the past several decades to maintain the site, reversing decades of neglect. Repairs completed there do not appear to have been mishandled or caused further damage. Although some of the damage to gravemarkers may have been caused by earlier vandalism, there is no evidence of malicious acts taking place there in the past few decades. In fact, even the damage done to gravestones (mostly minor chips and scratches) may not relate directly to vandalism. Gravestones are prone to being dislodged due to other factors such as ground settling, freeze-thaw action, and even bears. The Cemetery Association has already reset toppled stones throughout the site and addressed all but a few of the significant cases of damage. Except for a few items that still need to be addressed, and that will be discussed below, the Cemetery Association has done a laudable job of managing and maintaining Aspen Grove Cemetery.

The Preservation Plan

Guiding Concepts: Documentation of the cemetery's history and current condition have been presented in detail in the previous sections of this report. However, what about the future? A useful cemetery preservation plan must also address recommendations for how the site might best be managed and maintained in the coming decades. The goal of the remainder of the report is to explore methods to protect Aspen Grove Cemetery's historic character, and to preserve the integrity of the numerous historic resources found there. To achieve this, the plan presents practical concepts for addressing a number of issues at the site. The overall guiding concept of these recommendations is to sensitively address the cemetery's needs, while providing enhanced opportunities for public access, interpretation, education and appreciation.

In addition to being a sacred burial ground, the historic importance of Aspen Grove Cemetery rests with the stories it tells of the pioneer mining community's active years, decline into the "quiet years," and post-WWII emergence as one of the nation's premiere resort communities. In addition, the site remains an active and beloved cemetery where a small number of interments take place each year. With this understanding, it is emphasized that few improvements are

recommended within the burial area, which should be left largely untouched by anything other than a few carefully planned and executed maintenance, preservation and interpretation efforts.

Future work at the site should comply as applicable with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Also of great utility are cemetery preservation publications such as Lynette Strangstad's *Preservation of Historic Burial Grounds* (National Trust for Historic Preservation, Revised 2003) and *A Graveyard Preservation Primer* (Association for Gravestone Studies, 1995). A wealth of additional information related to various issues impacting cemeteries may be found online. While the information presented in these documents can be very helpful to decision-making regarding the preservation, restoration and rehabilitation of historic cemeteries, it is important to note that these resources usually focus upon cemeteries in the eastern United States. Little guidance specifically addresses issues, materials and environmental conditions that are uniquely characteristic of the western United States and the high altitude Rocky Mountain region in particular.

Although Aspen Grove Cemetery's period of intensive use runs from approximately 1889 to 1940, the site and its surroundings have continued to evolve since that time. Most of the graves date to the period prior to World War II, but the cemetery includes a number of additional burials from the more than sixty years that have passed since that time. Among the prominent post-WWII Aspenites buried there are the Paepckes, Bayers, Pfeiffers and Benedicts, all of whom were integrally involved in turning Aspen into the world class resort that it remains today. Although many of these burials are not yet fifty years old, they still contribute to the cemetery's overall history, integrity and significance, and are just as important to preserve as those from the pioneer mining era.

The site's setting has changed since the 1970s as it has become completely surrounded by single-family homes. However, the thick growth of forest within and surrounding the cemetery obscures these homes from view, causing the site to retain its historic feeling of isolation from the city. The interior landscape has been transformed through the healthy growth of an Aspen forest on what was previously the barren flank of Smuggler Mountain. While many Aspen trees were planted when the cemetery was established, the forest (including trees, shrubs and grasses) has expanded and grown to the point where today the cemetery is no longer visible from its surroundings. Although it no longer looks like it did in 1889, all cemeteries experience

an organic form of growth, expansion and change over time. This site exhibits an excellent degree of integrity and significance, and is clearly eligible for individual designation to the National Register of Historic Places.

Because of the cemetery's historic significance and probable National Register eligibility, it must be treated with careful thought and preservation techniques into the future. The Cemetery Association has already shown its interest and abilities in this regard, as it has taken great care of the site for many decades. According to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, future work at the cemetery should focus upon "preserving those features of the property which are significant to its historic and cultural values." The *Standards* are to be applied in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility. Patience and good planning are the highest virtues in this regard. The following list, drawn from the *Secretary's Standards*, succinctly defines the principles of rehabilitation that should be taken into account on this site:

- A property shall be used for its historic purpose, requiring minimal changes to the defining characteristics of the site and environment.
- The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features, shall not be undertaken.
- Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
- Distinctive features, finishes, and examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.
- Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
- Chemical or physical treatments that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. Surface cleaning shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
- Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

- New construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- New construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Site Approach & Entry: Aspen Grove Cemetery is accessed from Highway 82 and McSkimming Rd. No signage of any kind identifies the exit off the highway or notifies passers-by that the burial ground is in the vicinity. Those who seek to visit the cemetery will have some difficulty locating it by chance without getting directions. Even if they do find out where the site is located, there is no signage until the cemetery entrance is reached. If the intent is to keep the cemetery relatively secret, the lack of signage is an effective means to do so. Determined travelers with Internet skills and no fear of asking for directions will do their research and find a way to visit the site. Others who might be interested will fly by on Highway 82 and skip the site altogether. It is recommended that a sign pointing visitors to the cemetery be placed at Highway 82 and McSkimming Road. This could be similar to the nearby sign, a short distance to the west, which notifies travelers of the turnoff to the Smuggler Mine.



The Gateway and Entry Road

The short, narrow, unpaved Aspen Grove Road that approaches the main entrance to the site runs between adjacent modern residential properties. When crossing through the main entry gates, the road turns into the private drive that curves through the lower, western area of the cemetery and provides access to the burial area. The entire entry road appears to be adequate for the low volume of traffic that it handles and no recommendations are made for

improvements. Driving into the site along this road, visitors are transported away from the city and into the forest, where the burial area and its historic monuments soon greet them. The road is inaccessible to vehicles during the winter months and should be left that way.

The main entry gate is kept locked and is inaccessible to vehicles without the code. However, the adjacent pedestrian gate is always open to those willing to walk into the site. The locked vehicular gate prevents unauthorized entry, and is an excellent measure for reducing vandalism, inappropriate use of the site, and theft of historic resources. Although the gate should continue to be kept locked, there is nothing at the entry that informs visitors who to contact for the code. While much of the time this is not a problem, there are probably occasional elderly or handicapped visitors who are turned away from visiting the site. Because of this possibility, it is recommended that a phone number be provided on one of the entry signs so that visitors will know whom to contact for information. Also, the gates that currently mark the main entrance are not historic but function well there. Because no photos of the original gateway are available, no effort to replace the current gates is necessary.

Parking & Circulation: Parking at the cemetery currently takes place along the interior roadways within the burial area. There is no room for parking at the main entry gate or along the entry road. Although the interior roads are unpaved and narrow, the very small number of vehicles that enter the site on any given day can easily be accommodated. Vehicles parked on the central loop road will block circulation through the site. However, they can pull out of the way as needed onto the secondary roads in the northern area of the cemetery. As long as visitation to the site is not greatly increased, this system serves the cemetery adequately and no recommendations are made for additional parking spaces or related improvements.

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Interior Roads in the Burial Area

Vehicular circulation through the site takes place primarily along the main internal loop road that travels through the southern half of the cemetery. The roads in the northern area of the property are mostly accessible as well. However, the platted east and north roads do not connect in the northeast area of the site, so the northern loop is incomplete. It is not recommended that this vehicular connection be made in the future due to likely damage it would cause to nearby gravesites.

Pedestrian circulation through the site takes place both along the internal roadways as well as along the system of paths that run between the burial blocks. The paths in the south-central area of the site have been improved in recent years with crusher fines. Throughout the rest of the cemetery, the pathways are covered with grasses. Some are difficult to discern in areas where the shrubs have grown in thickets. As described above, some of the paths have also become misaligned over the years. It is recommended that, where possible, the pathways be opened and realigned to match their original locations. This is particularly important in areas where burials are known to be present. However, no realignment should be completed where it will impact graves or other historic cultural resources on the site.



Pedestrian Pathways Between the Burial Blocks

Perimeter Fencing: The cemetery's perimeter is marked by a modern wood post and rail fence that is suffering from some deterioration. While perimeter fencing won't completely stop vandalism or theft, it is an important element in defining boundaries and protecting the spatial integrity of the site from encroachment. This is particularly critical with the cemetery surrounded by residences that could otherwise quietly add ground to their yards. In addition, the simple presence of an intact perimeter fence with limited entry enhances the appearance that the property is being watched over and maintained. The perimeter fence is important for these reasons alone, and its maintenance in the coming years is its only concern. Some effort needs to be made to fix the fence in the near future, as some of its horizontal rails have deteriorated and failed. Although the cemetery is known to have been fenced when it was established, the style of that fence is no longer known. Consequently, the fence that is currently located there is adequate for its purpose, and no attempt to replicate a historic fence is necessary.

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Perimeter Fencing at the Site

Shelter & Amenities: Aspen Grove Cemetery currently has no shelter or restroom facilities, and amenities in general are almost non-existent. Visitors are exposed to the elements, with no shelter other than the tree canopy. The trees have grown dense enough, however, that they provide adequate shade during the warmer months. Several park benches have been placed on the site in recent years, providing a handful of locations to sit. While a shelter is unlikely to be necessary, the site could use a temporary restroom in the form of a portable toilet. Although the cemetery is a short drive from town, visitors would benefit from the availability of an on-site toilet facility since nothing else is nearby. This should be placed in an unobtrusive location, probably near the maintenance shed in the southwest corner of the burial ground. The portable toilet could be installed each spring and then removed for the winter months.

Handicapped Access: The Americans with Disabilities Act contains standard accessibility guidelines for newly constructed trails in outdoor areas. These state that all pedestrian trails shall be accessible and comply with the guidelines set forth in section 16 of the ADA. However, there are exceptions to this rule, as stated in section 16.1.1 (1): *“Where compliance would cause substantial harm to cultural, historic, religious, or significant natural features or characteristics.”* In the case of Aspen Grove Cemetery, it is not recommended that any new trails be constructed within the site. The cemetery is already accessible to vehicles and pedestrians, and has an excellent system of roads and walking paths. In addition, the relatively flat interior roads and the more clearly defined walking paths within the burial ground appear to

be handicapped accessible. Because much of the site is already accessible, it is not necessary to greatly improve the remaining overgrown historic walking paths. Any such effort should be carefully considered due to the potential damage it may cause to the site's historical and environmental integrity.

Cemetery Regulations: The primary concept that applies to the maintenance and security of cemeteries, as is the case with many types of historic sites, is that a neglected property often encourages vandalism and theft by appearing to be unimportant and forgotten. Conversely, when a site is maintained it creates the image of being cared about and watched over. A key element of security at Aspen Grove Cemetery will therefore revolve around a general appearance of its continued upkeep, maintenance, and limited access. Over the past few decades, the site has been visited almost daily by Jim Markalunas, a small number of family members visiting graves, and occasional hikers. Together they have kept an eye on the cemetery and made sure that problems are quickly addressed. In the future, it will help to have the site visited on a frequent basis to make it evident that it is cared for and watched over.

Site access and security concerns two basic but seemingly opposite interests: discouraging people with malicious intent from entering and damaging the cemetery, while encouraging those with good intent to visit and experience the historic site. While these might sound impossible to reconcile, thoughtful planning can in fact bring these two goals together. Although there is no way to completely prevent vandalism and theft from occurring, the posting of cemetery regulations and other efforts sets a tone for how the visitor is expected to behave while at the site and specifies what activities are approved or not permissible there.

Describing, through signage, the activities that may or may not take place at Aspen Grove Cemetery sets a standard for an environment of respect. Posted regulations should be included with other relevant information at the entrance to the burial ground. Using the term "Cemetery Etiquette" as a heading provides the reader with a positive impression of expected behavior that may result in a greater degree of respect and acceptance than the imposition of "rules" or "regulations." The following are suggested "Cemetery Etiquette" standards that may be amended or added to in relation to the needs of this site:

- This cemetery is a historic burial ground and should be treated with appropriate respect for the dead and for the living whose ancestors and loved ones lie buried here.

- Wheeled vehicles are permitted on the site, but must remain on the roadways and maintain a safe speed. Care should be taken to avoid hitting gravestones and grave plot fencing, particularly when turning corners.
- Although made of stone, grave markers can be damaged or defaced. Gravestone rubbing is prohibited. Photos are recommended as the best way to document inscriptions and avoid negative impact to the stonework and other site features.
- The stonework, metalwork, landscaping and other features on this site are maintained by the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association, which handles necessary repairs and cleaning. Please do not attempt to clean the stones or move any cemetery features from one place to another.
- Gravestones are extremely heavy and dangerous, and can sometimes be tipped over with very little effort. Adults and children are advised to avoid climbing on or pushing on any of the stones.
- Pets should be leashed and their wastes disposed of properly out of respect for the site and other visitors.
- Burials must be pre-approved by the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association.
- The cemetery is open for visitation each day from dawn to dusk.
- If you have questions or concerns about this site, please contact the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association (phone number).

Documentation & Interpretation

Records & Documentation: The scope of work for this project includes documentation and an assessment of each marked grave at the site. This effort involves photography, field notes, and a discussion of condition. The results of this intensive effort are presented in a gravesite analysis form that is being prepared for each marked burial. Together, this preservation plan and the gravesites forms provide substantial documentation of the site and its needs.

Once this current planning effort is completed, there are a few priority documentation and records tasks that should be undertaken in the coming years. Jim and Ramona Markalunas are the current caretakers of the Cemetery Association's records. These are filed in their basement home office in Aspen, and are mostly in paper form. In recent years, Jim has been working to digitize basic information from the burial records, along with mapping of the site so the exact locations of the graves can be clarified. While this effort has been successful, much remains to be done. As with any archival collection, the volume of records is sizable and keeping them organized and accessible is a challenge.

At some time, the Markalunases may wish to have the records transferred to another member of the Cemetery Association for safekeeping. However, if the cemetery's ownership is eventually transferred to the city or some other entity, the records should be transferred as well. These records are not only critical to management of the site, but are also an important historical collection. Care needs to be taken to ensure that they are not lost or damaged, that they are well organized, and that they continue to be available to historians and genealogists. It is highly recommended that a professional historian or archivist take a closer look at the collection to determine what might help in terms of its organization and preservation.

Another priority task is to correlate the gravesites analysis information that has just been collected with the Cemetery Association's records, particularly its database of burials. During the course of fieldwork and research for the gravesites analysis, it has been noted that the cemetery's database contains a number of errors and omissions. Whether these are due to mistakes and missing data in the original records or took place as the information was transcribed is not known. These errors and omissions are found in several forms:

- The burial records do not include all of the interments found at the site. Some of the gravemarkers contain names that do not appear in the official records of the cemetery.
- Some errors are present in the records regarding burial locations. In a modest number of instances, the wrong blocks are found in the cemetery records. A number of the records show no blocks or lots at all.
- Some names are spelled incorrectly. While carving errors may occasionally be found on the gravemarkers, these need to be correlated and checked against other records.
- The cemetery records contain some errors in personal details, such as the ages of the deceased.

Most of these issues can be corrected through a single phase of research during which the gravesites analysis forms would be double-checked against the cemetery records, and corrections made to the database. While many problems can be addressed, it may not be possible to complete some of the missing information or correct some errors due to a lack of adequate information. The numerous unmarked burials on the site will provide no new information beyond what is already held by the Cemetery Association. However, the cemetery records would benefit from corrections and additions provided by the gravesites analysis.

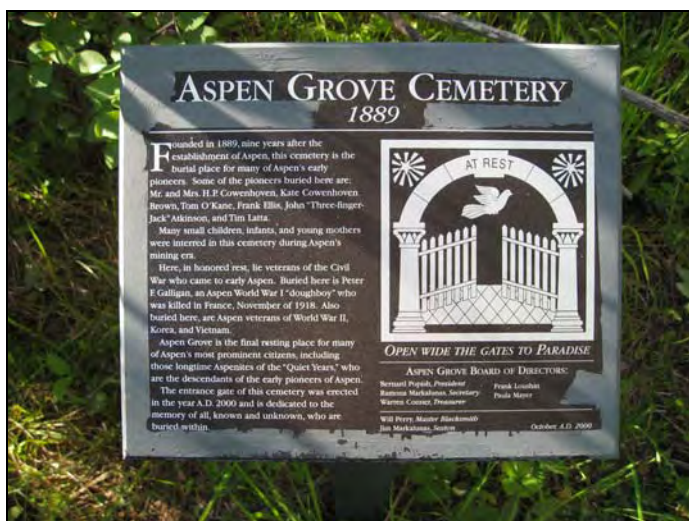
Additional biographical research can also be completed to assemble a more comprehensive database of information about the persons buried in the cemetery in both marked and unmarked graves. Resources such as newspaper articles, obituaries, and census records are readily available online and in the Aspen Historical Society's archives. Not only would this information provide greater depth of understanding of Aspen's pioneer community and 20th century residents, but it can also be used for future genealogy efforts, demographics analysis, and mortality studies. This type of project can take place in one phase using professional research services, or over many years with the help of volunteers. The results of biographical research should be added to the Cemetery Association's records, and should be placed in the Aspen Historical Society's archives so they will be accessible to future researchers.

Site Interpretation: In terms of interpretive materials, the Cemetery Association has produced a brochure and a single sign, both of which are found at the site. As described above, the sign is located just inside the second main entry gateway, is very small, and provides minimal information about the site. Due to its location behind one of the marble pillars, it is hidden from view and probably missed by many site visitors. Other than a small amount of commemorative signage within the burial area, there is no other interpretive signage on the site.

Given the excellent interpretive opportunities that are available at Aspen Grove Cemetery, it is recommended that several informative and carefully placed interpretive signs be considered for the site. The main entry gate area is not necessarily the best location for such signage, where it is likely to be missed and is not near the graves themselves. Instead, it is preferable to install such signs within the burial area, where the information presented is likely to be more meaningful and can point out specific features. A number of excellent locations exist along the main roads and pathways. The question of signage should be addressed through careful study of the site, addressing issues such as locations, materials, and interpretive goals.

Interpretive signage should be designed to complement the character of the site. In particular, it should be unobtrusive and reflect the historic setting and natural look of the cemetery. In no way should it be allowed to detract from the site's integrity and overall appearance, so signage should be restricted to a few select locations. Manufactured signs that are printed can last for many years, and modern materials and printing techniques have improved dramatically. They do eventually wear out due to constant exposure to the elements, particularly in high altitude

settings. In addition, they may require periodic repairs or reconstruction if vandalized. Although vandalism is possible, the cemetery has not been subject to any significant acts of vandalism in recent years so signs may last longer here than at other sites.



Small Sign at Main Entry



Cemetery Brochure

Existing Interpretive Materials

Another option would be to have a shaped stone marker of regional origin fabricated and inscribed with text. A carved stone monument would be appropriate for this location because it would use the type of stonework found within the cemetery as a precedent. In addition, it would be durable and require little maintenance. However, the primary concern with this option is that an inscription in stone will typically be limited to less text than could be printed on a sign or brochure, and once it is done it cannot be easily changed. Because of these limitations, signage may be preferable to creating stone markers.

The Cemetery Association's glossy tri-fold brochure was created in 2003 and is an attractively designed promotional piece for the cemetery. It offers a map of the site along with minimal text about its history and who is buried there. Although the brochure has served the Cemetery Association well, it could be nicely revised in light of the information and recommendations

included within this preservation plan. For example, there is an opportunity to provide more substantial information about the site, its history, and its occupants. The site history section of this preservation plan provides a good starting point for language that could be edited and utilized. In addition, the brochure's map contains several errors along with highlighted points of interest that need to be revised.

It is recommended that a new brochure be created for visitors that improves upon the existing one and incorporates new information provided in this plan. Brochures are an excellent interpretive option because they can include a substantial amount of information, can be edited and modified as new information becomes available, and can be printed as needed and placed in a distribution box at the site. Finally, it is recommended that this preservation plan and the accompanying gravesites analysis forms be made available online, probably as a link to the city's historic preservation office, for ease of public access.

Site Maintenance & Preservation

Plantings on the Site: Aspen Grove Cemetery was originally conceived as a planned, manicured, irrigated cemetery. However, while many of its planned improvements appear to have been completed when the site was established, the cemetery went into decline as Aspen became depopulated during the late 1890s and first several decades of the 1900s. Today the historic cemetery is located within an Aspen forest and includes both natural and intentional plantings, impacted by more than a century of growth. It is now perhaps more of a nature preserve than the cemetery's founders probably anticipated it would become.

The abundance of vegetative growth on the site adds to its charm and is a historic change in itself that should not be reversed. Returning the site to its original appearance is not only unnecessary, but would require removal of many of the plants that are currently there. This would only devastate the historic growth and natural environment of the cemetery. While ongoing maintenance and management of the site's historic natural environment is important, it must be completed with care. For example, new plantings are not recommended in the burial area because it is already heavily vegetated with trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowering plants. Some of the existing shrubs and flowers were planted many decades ago and identify the

locations of unmarked graves. The introduction of new flowering plants, such as the numerous bulbs placed around the site during the past year, will result in false readings regarding the locations of unmarked burials. They will look nice each spring and summer, but from the standpoint of interpretation will become problematic as they are scattered throughout the site.

Irrigation is also problematic and unnecessary to reintroduce into the cemetery (although it has been) since the original manicured plan and appearance were abandoned over a century ago. Modern managers of pioneer western cemeteries sometimes feel a need to “green up” or “beautify” the cemetery landscape. Pressure can come from family members and descendents who are accustomed to the look of a groomed site like Aspen’s Red Butte Cemetery, with its trimmed lawns, distinct drives, and rows of trees. However, this does not appear to apply to Aspen Grove, where the Cemetery Association board, visitors, and family members have expressed an interest in seeing the cemetery maintained as a natural forest environment. Most are likely to want the roads and paths to remain usable, basic oversight and maintenance to be continued, and the graves to remain accessible to visitors.

Some may like the cemetery to continue to deteriorate at a natural pace and for the forest to be allowed to fully take over. This might be described as a “from dust to dust” approach, in which nothing is done to improve or even maintain the site. This approach is certainly an option at any pioneer cemetery, and many are experiencing this by default because they are abandoned. However, a balanced approach to Aspen Grove Cemetery’s natural environment would focus upon careful, unobtrusive, and minimalist efforts toward maintaining the site, with no inappropriate beautification work completed.

While irrigation makes Aspen Grove Cemetery more verdant, it also causes two types of problems, one relatively minor and the other more severe. First and most significant is the damage that irrigation, especially with raised sprinklers, directly causes to the gravemarkers (this is discussed further below). Secondly, it causes excessive growth of both native and non-native plant species. The cemetery is located in an alpine environment that receives an adequate amount of precipitation to support a diversity of vegetation that is native to this region. Among these native plants are Aspen trees, serviceberry bushes, gambel oak, mountain mahogany, Wood’s Rose, conifers, and many understory wildflower and native grass species.

This list includes most of the plants that are located in the cemetery, all of which appear to be thriving and would do so even if they were not watered with human intervention.

When sprinkler irrigation is introduced to the natural environment, the native plants increase their growth and so do non-native species. Most of the non-native species there are herbaceous annual and perennial flowering plants such as tulips, iris, peonies, non-native lupine, bleeding heart, and pansies. By and large, these were brought to the site to ornament gravesites. Most are well established and some have spread, although they are not causing problems of any kind. In addition, it was noted that irrigation has resulted in the growth of more densely formed grass varieties along with weeds, primarily dandelions. These non-native species have not taken over the ecosystem, but with continued irrigation can become more prominent. The benefit of irrigation to natural vegetation at the site is currently unclear and is likely to be negligible. This appears to be an unnecessary expense that could be curtailed or even eliminated. In addition, it is recommended that no non-native species be introduced to the site since they are unlikely to thrive without being watered.

In terms of maintenance, the cemetery will continue to benefit from selective pruning and removal of problem plants. For example, tree branches should be pruned to avoid scraping or hitting gravemarkers, and trees in danger of falling should be removed as soon as possible. Many of these have already been identified and marked for removal. A good rule of thumb is to remove trees and shrubs that are located within two feet of gravemarkers and fence enclosures, because as they grow larger they are prone to disrupt and damage these historic features. As a rule, plantings can always be replaced, but gravemarkers and other cultural features cannot. The thick growth of trees and understory plants around the perimeter of the site should be left in place as they provide a visual buffer between the burial area and surrounding residences.

Burial Area Maintenance: In recent decades, the Cemetery Association has completed numerous maintenance efforts at the site that have included resetting and repairing individual gravemarkers, grading and resurfacing of select roads and paths, pruning of shrubs, and removal of trees that have fallen or are threatening to topple. The work and funds invested in these efforts have paid off and the cemetery today is in very good condition. There are, however, a few additional maintenance issues that could use guidance for the future.

In relation to the burial area and its graves, the most significant problem appears to involve the irrigation system. This system, which employs a series of aboveground hoses, valves, and sprinklers on risers, is utilized during the warmer months for almost daily watering of the entire burial area. The problem with this practice is that it appears to be speeding up deterioration of the softer gravemarkers in the cemetery. Of particular concern are the marble, sandstone, concrete, and wood markers, all of which are susceptible to damage from frequent wetting and the freeze-thaw cycle.

Some of the inscriptions are starting to fade, and sugaring is found on most of the marble stones' upward-facing surfaces. While this is not entirely attributed to the irrigation system, recent stonework preservation studies have shown that frequent watering of any kind, whether from natural or human sources, contributes to the deterioration of softer stones. Most troubling is the noted increase in rotting, weathering, and loss of inscriptions that is taking place among the rare wood gravemarkers at this site in recent years. The increased rate of deterioration is believed to be a direct result of the frequent sprinkler irrigation that is taking place at the cemetery. In addition, irrigation may be contributing to sinking of the graves themselves and related tipping of gravemarkers as the ground shifts. Due to these concerns, it is recommended that sprinkler irrigation be discontinued in Aspen Grove Cemetery, that native plants be allowed to thrive with existing precipitation, and that the visually obtrusive system be removed.

Some of the gravemarkers, as well as footstones, coping and other features, are quite low to the ground and special attention will be required to keep them from disappearing. They are not only sinking but are becoming obscured by the abundance of grasses that grow and die off each year. These resources should be raised and leveled as needed, preferably by a monument contractor or by volunteers under the guidance of an experienced preservation consultant or conservator. Natural grasses growing around the marked graves should be trimmed once a year to maintain the visibility of the gravemarkers as well as lower profile features such as footstones. The grass does not need to be highly manicured or cut low to the ground, as would an irrigated lawn. Operators of trimming equipment should be instructed in proper techniques to minimize impact to the stonework and other historic features.

Paramount in importance is that all maintenance personnel, including temporary contractors and volunteers, be instructed to avoid any work that would negatively impact the gravemarkers.

Even weed-cutters using spinning nylon cord should be used in such a way that they hit the softer markers as little as possible. Granite is much less prone to damage, although it can be chipped and scratched with greater impact. The softer markers are particularly susceptible to damage from harsh techniques and repeated impact over time. Falling stones of any kind are prone to chip or even break and care must be taken to avoid knocking stones over during maintenance activities.

Care should also be taken to ensure that areas containing unmarked graves remain intact unless archaeological investigation is scheduled. Archaeological oversight of projects that break the surface of the ground, except for routine resetting of gravemarkers in the same location, will be important due to the probability of discovering artifacts.

Additional maintenance guidelines specific to the historic features of the site are outlined below:

- No herbicides should be used in any part of the cemetery, as some of their chemicals may damage stonework. In addition, they can also sterilize the soil and increase erosion or cause non-native species to spread.
- Fertilizers should not be spread widely to maintain or enhance plant health. If fertilizers are needed for those plants intentionally placed in the cemetery, they should be applied only to the plants themselves since some ingredients in fertilizers may damage stonework. In addition, widespread application of fertilizers simply promotes the growth of non-native species and causes site maintenance to become more challenging.
- Gravemarkers, footstones, fencing, coping stones and other features should not be relocated to accommodate tree or shrub growth, vehicular or pedestrian access, or to make maintenance activities easier.
- Other than for specified restoration work, the stonework, metalwork, and any other historic (or possibly historic) items should not be moved or removed from the site. Items that appear random may actually mark a grave and moving them erases evidence of the grave's location.
- Only experienced restoration experts should handle repairs and cleaning of stonework, metalwork and other features on the site. While they mean well, unapproved and unsupervised volunteer restoration projects such as those completed by Boy Scouts are not acceptable and in some cases result in irreversible damage.
- Other than the placement of flowers at graves and tending to family burial areas, no work of any kind should be done on the site without prior approval from the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association.

Materials Restoration: A substantial amount of information on the subjects of stonework, woodwork, and ironwork restoration is available online. This information can be accessed through simple keyword searches. While online analysis and guides to restoration are very

useful, it should be remembered that Aspen Grove Cemetery is located in a harsh, high altitude, exposed environment. Consequently, it is subjected to environmental conditions that are more akin to other Rocky Mountain cemeteries than to those located along the Eastern seaboard, Midwest, or West Coast.

Many cemetery studies that have been completed and posted online have involved sites that are east of the Mississippi. This is simply a factor of where most restoration projects have been taking place. While these sites hold monuments of granite and marble, they often contain numerous slate markers and fewer sandstone ones. Ironwork rusts more quickly in a humid environment than a dry one such as Aspen. The strength of the sun's rays in the high altitude Rocky Mountain West adds to the rapid deterioration of woodwork. In sum, regional characteristics such as weather patterns, humidity, air pollution, vegetative growth, and altitude often play a part in how these cemeteries' resources have aged and in some cases how the materials need to be treated.

While much of the information online is applicable to resources found at Aspen Grove Cemetery, it is recommended that the site's managers also look for studies of analogous sites to serve as examples of restoration concerns and techniques. The National Park Service's National Center for Preservation Technology & Training offers excellent information and training in the field of cemetery conservation. Its website at www.ncptt.nps.gov is a good source of articles and video tutorials about various aspects of restoring cemetery monuments, fencing and woodwork, along with related topics of interest.

Because the field of cemetery restoration, and particularly of monument conservation, is evolving, it is important to seek out current standards, recent studies, and applicable guides for the treatment of stonework, ironwork, and woodwork. Dated information on cleansers, for example, can result in failed cleaning efforts or even damage to stonework that could have been avoided by obtaining information on state-of-the-art materials and techniques. The challenge of conserving historic cemetery woodwork in a western environment is a subject that has recently come under study, and analysis is just starting to be published, primarily online.



**Recent repair to one of the cemetery's gravemarkers.
(The obelisk's shaft was broken about 1/3 of the way down from the top.)**

Information on the subject of cemetery materials restoration is available online for almost every facet of cemetery restoration that can be conceived. However, it is important to remember that cemetery monuments can be damaged and restoration work is often best left to professional conservators. While admirable in their intent, ambitious Boy Scout projects and other efforts undertaken by unsupervised volunteers often result in increased damage or poorly executed repairs that are irreversible. No repairs of any kind should be undertaken at Aspen Grove Cemetery without the prior knowledge and approval of the Cemetery Association. In addition, even though regional monument companies are skilled at fabricating new gravemarkers and ironworkers are good at fabricating and repairing metalwork, they must be interviewed to determine whether they have the sensitivity and training necessary to undertake restoration projects before such work begins.

Few practical options are available in terms of wood preservation at Aspen Grove Cemetery. Although treatment of the woodwork with preservatives is possible, this will only slow down the ultimate loss of these resources if they are left outdoors. The only way to truly preserve the

historic wood gravemarkers from loss is to move them indoors into a protected, climate-controlled environment. While it may not be the best option, identical replacement markers could be fabricated from the same types of wood and placed in their former locations. This option may look attractive, and could be the best approach for the wood gravemarkers that still hold readable inscriptions, but should not be pursued without considerable discussion beforehand among all appropriate stakeholders. It is advisable that those wood gravemarkers that have already lost their inscriptions be left in place on the site.

Another possibility may be called the “Return to Nature” option. This would involve the least amount of effort and cost, and simply involves allowing the woodwork to continue to deteriorate without any form of intervention. The only preservation “treatment” would be to document the gravemarkers and other wood features on the site in detail and as they are currently found. Although this approach will ultimately lead to the loss of all remaining woodwork in the cemetery, information about these artifacts would be captured for future knowledge and research. In fact, documentation of much of the woodwork on the site has already been completed during the course of this preservation plan project.

A final option is known as “Stabilization and Selective Repair/Replacement.” This would involve repairs where possible and replacement of missing and severely deteriorated components of wood enclosures. Deteriorated gravemarker bases could also be addressed so they can be stood upright again. Below ground features could utilize more durable materials, while those visible above ground should involve the use of identical wood species and profiles. Each artifact and situation would need to be studied and addressed in light of its unique problems and characteristics. Dislodged gravemarkers with unknown original locations should not be reinstalled based upon speculation as to where they belong. In cases where the woodwork is severely deteriorated and inscriptions are no longer readable, it is advisable that no interventions be made.

Future Burials

Aspen Grove Cemetery is both a historic site and an active burial ground. Family members of individuals already interred in the cemetery own many burial plots. Some family plots are empty but have been set aside for future burials. Additional space is available, especially in the northwest quadrant of the burial area. Since the cemetery is not full, it is entirely appropriate for

family members and others holding title to gravesites to be buried in these locations. They should continue to be welcome at the site. The Cemetery Association will regulate future burials, and individuals and families using the site should be informed that it is being managed as a historic cemetery. This will include the restriction that monuments and plantings that do not comply with the preservation plan will be discouraged and possibly prohibited. No burials should take place on the site without prior approval from the Cemetery Association. This restriction needs to be posted at the main entry and in relevant cemetery publications.

Site Security

Most visitors to Aspen Grove Cemetery have good intentions and are of no concern in relation to site security. Because the site is entirely surrounded by residences, only two access points are close to nearby roads. The first of these is the main entry gate, which is hidden from view until it is reached and is a distance from the burial area. The other is McSkimming Rd., which curves past the north-central edge of the site just beyond a residential driveway. From this location along the road, the thick vegetative growth on the site prevents it from being seen. The cemetery's perimeter is bordered by residential yards overlooked by houses. While some of these residents access the cemetery directly from their own properties, most visitors are forced to enter the site through the main entry gates. The cemetery's setting therefore restricts access to one location and acts as a buffer for the remainder of the site. In addition, the surrounding residents provide an extra layer of eyes and ears to look after the site.

Acts of theft in the past few decades have been exceptionally rare, and the site's security seems to be quite good. However, in terms of future planning it should be remembered that malicious acts involving cemeteries are more likely to occur when a vehicle can be pulled into the site unseen. Those acting with bad intent will prefer to get in with a vehicle, quickly load resources, and then quietly exit. Most attractive to thieves are items such as sculptural stonework, iron fencing, ornamental gates, and other metalwork that has market value. In recent years, the rising value of metals has resulted in a corresponding increase in thefts from cemeteries. Many of these items are heavy, and their weight alone may discourage theft if they have to be hand-carried a distance. To prevent thefts from happening, it is recommended that the entry gate be kept locked as is the current practice. Signage should be placed there informing visitors that

vehicular access into the cemetery must be prearranged. It is not possible, nor is it desirable, to restrict pedestrians from visiting the cemetery. The pedestrian gate should be left accessible, and visitors welcomed into the site on foot. Posted regulations should also include notice that the site is open from dawn to dusk.

Because of its location and the visitors it tends to draw, there seems to be a low risk of vandalism at this site. In most cemeteries, incidents of vandalism are typically the result of misguided juvenile pranks, often committed during nighttime hours as impulsive crimes of opportunity. They just happened to be walking by, or used the site for indulgences in alcohol and drugs, and took advantage of a darkened cemetery that could be disturbed for fun. These types of incidents are best prevented by clearly showing all visitors that the community values the cemetery. An abandoned-looking site is going to draw more negative attention than one that looks like it is being watched, managed, and maintained.

While damage to a cemetery is sometimes premeditated and perhaps more often impulsive, such acts are not always intentional. Cemeteries also sustain periodic damage from vehicles that run off roadways, “acts of God” such as floods and falling trees, and from animals such as bears, horses, deer and elk that use monuments as scratching posts. Without a constant security presence, there is truly no way of preventing all forms of theft, vandalism and damage from occurring. All that can reasonably be done is to create an atmosphere that discourages such events from taking place.

The following guidelines can help to minimize vandalism and theft at the site:

- Maintain the site so the public can see that it is being watched over and cared for.
- Members of the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association, and perhaps city staff, should visit the site periodically to observe its condition and note any problems. During the warmer months, Jim Markalunas has been visiting the site almost daily, but he cannot be expected to do this indefinitely.
- Visitors and the surrounding residents should be asked to help keep an eye on the site. For visitors, this request would be included in signage at the main entry gate. It is also recommended that the surrounding homeowners be contacted directly and recruited. While there have not been any specific problems with the cemetery, it might help in the future if these residents were made more aware of the role they play in its security.

- The public should be made more aware of the site, its history, and its preservation progress through newspaper articles and an Internet presence. Many Aspen residents and visitors do not even know that this cemetery exists. They are more aware of Red Butte Cemetery, which is located in west Aspen along the more visible Cemetery Lane. Publicity is unlikely to draw problems to the site, but instead will bring more people with good intentions to visit the cemetery.
- The press should be notified if vandalism or theft occurs at the cemetery. This will remind the public that the site is cared for and will recruit additional eyes to keep watch over the cemetery. In addition, the public may be able to help retrieve a missing artifact if it is found somewhere.
- Law enforcement authorities should be notified of any suspicious activity, vandalism or theft at the site so they can be aware of and assist with security. If items are stolen, notify regional antique dealers, junkyards and metal recyclers so they will be aware of the theft in case an attempt is made to sell the artifacts.

Future Cemetery Management

During the course of this project, questions were raised about the future of the Aspen Grove Cemetery Association. The organization has done a commendable job of bringing the site back from a state of virtual abandonment, and of managing its operation and maintenance over the past several decades. However, they are beginning to experience some concerns as the board is aging and the task is becoming more challenging. Efforts to address these concerns will become increasingly necessary in the near future.

The Cemetery Association has two primary options for future management and ownership. The first would be to retain ownership and recruit younger members. Those who are currently active are doing a great job and their participation should continue to be valued. A realistic approach will require that either new people get involved or that the site be transferred to a different entity. The most reasonable approach in relation to possible transfer would be to have the City of Aspen assume ownership, management, and maintenance of the site. A city cemetery board would then be established to oversee both Aspen Grove and the nearby Ute Cemetery.

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