



NORFOLK SOCIETY FOR CEMETERY CONSERVATION

Art and Architecture in Elmwood Cemetery

By Cindy Meier

The National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Elmwood Cemetery contains a section called Art and Architecture which talks about the style and design of monuments to include headstones, sculptures, above ground mausoleums, and beehive tombs. Listed in the application are 26 stonemasons and sculptors locally from Norfolk, Portsmouth and Northern Virginia in addition to Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and London. Probably one of the most well-known locally is Couper Marble Works in Norfolk owned by John D. Couper. The Couper Marble Works existed for over 130 years; from 1848 to 1942 as the Couper Marble Works, and from 1942 to 1981 as Couper Memorials. Isaac Ferebee, a stone cutter for Couper Marble Works, is buried in West Point and his headstone tells his experience with Couper Marble Works.

Unbeknownst to many, stone masons, stone carvers, and sculptors often left their name on the headstones usually on the lower portion of the headstone or base. After first seeing the Couper name on about 18 headstones in Historic St. Luke's Cemetery in Smithfield, VA, I started paying attention to headstones for a maker's name on headstones while working in Elmwood Cemetery. Recently, I discovered a maker's name which I did recognize from the list. Because the 2nd line said Balto, I sent a photo to the Maryland Historical Society and discovered it was the work of Andrew Hemphill Lyeth of Baltimore. Mr. Lyeth ran a stone yard on West Baltimore Street from 1861-1901.

These photos represent the maker's names for Couper, Ennis (Joseph B Ennis, Norfolk), O'Rourke (James O'Rourke, Norfolk), and Lyeth (Andrew H Lyeth, Baltimore). Not all headstones have a maker's name so take the time and look for one. I am working on a list the names of stone carvers by lot number, name on headstone, and name of stone carver. So far, I have located the following sculptors/stone masons from Norfolk: M P Butcher, Consolvo and Overmyer Jos B Ennis, Couper/J D Couper, E V Ennis, J P Hall, Lawson Newton, and James O'Rourke. Also, John Baird from Philadelphia and Andrew Hemphill Lyeth from Baltimore.

Consolvo and Overmyer, Inc., a Virginia corporation, was operating a stone cutting and contracting business in the City of Norfolk, Virginia, and on January 6, 1938, the plant and equipment, books, records, etc., were destroyed by fire. The only assets remaining after the fire were a small quantity of stone, damaged by fire and water, together with a few receivables. Andrew B Consolvo and Arthur Dale Overmyer are both buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery. In 1942 the business was known as Overmyer & Ennis at 950 21st St., Norfolk.

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