

Annual Reception & Banquet

Presenting

The Harriette Merrifield Forbes Award

The Fred & Rosalee Oakley
Certificates of Merit

Student Scholarships

June 18, 2022
ENDICOTT COLLEGE



Harriette Merrifield Forbes.

To foster appreciation of the cultural significance of gravestones and burial grounds through their study and preservation.

THE HARRIETTE MERRIFIELD *FORBES* AWARD

The Forbes Award is intended to recognize members of AGS who have devoted a significant part of their life to the study and/or preservation of gravestones and its related issues.

The Forbes Award is the highest honor bestowed by the Association for Gravestone Studies and presented by the AGS Board of Trustees to honor an individual, institution, or organization for exceptional service and outstanding work in the field of gravestone studies. The award is named for Harriette Merrifield Forbes of Worcester, Massachusetts, who photographed gravestones and studied their carvers in the early 1900s. In 1927 she published a book titled *Gravestones of Early New England and the Men Who Made Them,* it was the first serious study of gravestones in the twentieth century.



Harriette Merrifield Forbes book published in 1927.

THE FRED & ROSALEE *OAKLEY* CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

The Fred & Rosalee Oakley Certificate of Merit is presented periodically by the AGS Board of Trustees to individuals and groups that have helped to advance the mission of the Association.

Named for long-time members Fred and Rosalee Oakley, the Certificate of Merit is designed to honor those whose work in the field of gravestone studies may have gone unnoticed and are worthy of recognition.



Fred and Rosalee Oakley.
Photo by Beth Santore.

THE HARRIETTE MERRIFIELD

FORBES AWARD

2022

For outstanding contribution to the field of gravestone studies

Presented to

Mary L. Dexter,

Cortland, New York

Over 50 years ago when Mary Dexter was doing genealogy research in a cemetery, she noted the deteriorating condition of the gravestones. Little did she know then that it was the beginning of a lifelong scholarly adventure, culminating in the publication of *On the Trail of Coffin Man: Researching the 19th Century Gravestone Carvers of Central New York.*

Those early visits to cemeteries led her to inventory nearly 150 cemeteries in Cortland County. Her broad first-hand knowledge of Cortland County, New York cemeteries and her supporting scholarship has made her a leader in bringing awareness to these historic landscapes and the deteriorating gravestones.

While on this pursuit Mary completed an honors thesis on the carvers of South-Central, New York.



During one of her early excursions, Mary noticed gravestones with little vertical coffins engraved at the bottom. She named this carver the "Coffin Man". This carver became one of the many carvers she discovered during her surveys of Cortland County cemeteries, but the "Coffin Man" continued to be a mystery.

She continued to look for the elusive Coffin Man. After 23 years of visiting and recording untold cemeteries and gravestones and reviewing probate records, she finally found that Coffin Man was Jonas Stewart. But that didn't stop her, she continued to look for his work in Vermont, New Hampshire, and northern Pennsylvania, and found more markers. She found not only Stewart's work (400+ stones), but also work by his father and brother.

Her recently published book not only tells about her search for Coffin Man, it also documents some of the other carvers she found in her search. Now this research is available to anyone, and Mary hopes it will spur others to do more research.

In addition to Mary's scholarship, her photographs of stones have become an archive of the existing and lost stones of the region.

What began as genealogy research turned into a lifelong passion for Mary. Not only has she compiled a great body of work, but she has also helped and encouraged other cemetery researchers. And, through her presentations and tours, she continues to make people aware of the historical significance of the cemeteries and the work of the people who carved the gravestones.

Mary's dedication, passions, and contributions are immeasurable and clearly exemplify the mission of the Association for Gravestone Studies.

Nominated by Dale and Tina Utter

THE FRED & ROSALEE
OAKLEY
CERTIFICATE OF MERIT
2022

Presented for distinguished achievement in promoting the mission of the Association

Linda Jean Limes Ellis
Lyndhurst, Ohio

Linda Ellis through her blog, *Exploring Almost Forgotten Gravesites,* and her Facebook group, *Preserving Ohio Cemeteries,* encourages individuals and groups to record and preserve gravestones. Since Ohio has very little legal protection for cemeteries her work is especially important and impactful.

Her Facebook page and blog are a "one stop shop" for cemetery related news and information in Ohio. Beginning in 2013, Linda contacted every county government in Ohio (88 total) to attempt to locate and provide detailed information regarding the location of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Cemetery Plot Maps, a product of Ohio's WPA Veteran Grave Registry. She continues to provide updated contact information for researchers looking to access these maps as well as creating information blog posts. She is also currently compiling many of these maps electronically in databases available to everyone.

Linda uses her blog and Facebook page to inform the interested public on upcoming cemetery preservation training opportunities and preservation projects ongoing across Ohio. She creates posts on how to use and manage memorial pages, like Find A Grave, to help both novice and advanced users. She stays up-to-date on laws and bills not only in Ohio but across the country that could help the cemetery preservation community. She provides good, accurate links and easy to read descriptions to help the public understand these laws and what they can do to support them.

Linda is the driving force for cemetery preservation in Ohio. She connects professionals to amateurs and provides reliable, detailed information to help everyone. Without her, cemetery researchers and preservationist would struggle to find the resources they need. She provides invaluable knowledge to everyone in Ohio.

Nominated by Krista Horrocks

Bill King Jr., Hank McIntyre, & Dawn Thistle
Gardiner, Maine

In 1771, Dr. Silvester Gardiner established St. Ann's Church, which included the region's only meeting house and churchyard. The churchyard includes the graves of Revolutionary War veterans and families tied to the area's pioneering businesses, including the 1791 gravestone of Dorcas Gardiner and Dr. Gardiner's son, William, who died in 1787.

In 1817 the church had become so crowded that St. Ann's was raised, and a Christ Episcopal Church new church was completed and consecrated next to it in 1820. By 1823, the St. Ann's churchyard was so full that burials were restricted. A more fashionable cemetery was opened where families buried their loved ones.

As the cemetery no longer had active burials, care of the churchyard diminished and it fell into disrepair. A few fundraising efforts over the years fell short and little was done to maintain it. Town records indicate in 1911 sixty-five gravestones stood, but by 2014 only eleven markers remained.

In 1987 "Bill" King, Jr., a Gardiner descendant, visited the graveyard to locate the graves of his Gardiner family ancestors. Fifteen years later when he visited again, Bill found the remaining stones upended, broken and flat. Bill shared the concerns with Christ Church parishioner and historian, Jody Clark, who recruited fellow-parishioners and groundskeeper, Hank McIntyre, and Gardiner Public Library's Special Collections Librarian, Dawn Thistle, to restore the churchyard. Together, this determined team worked for seven years conducting needed research and completing physical restoration work. Along with completion of the project, the team also celebrated another occasion, reconsecration of the churchyard on October 16, 2021.

The team credits the project's success to friends, family, and parishioners of Christ Church, which owns the churchyard. They volunteered and enthusiastically supported the project. The restoration of the physical grave markers was guided in part by Cheryl Patten of the Maine Old Cemetery Association (MOCA).

Bill King explained the importance of preserving historic cemeteries, "they are a very important repository of our history, holding the last remains and documentation of our founders and builders of our Maine culture and communities."

Nominated by Andrea Carlin & Cheryl Patten

AGS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AWARD OF RECOGNITION

2022

In recognition of generous contribution toward the mission of the Association

James A. Freeman

1935–2021

Hadley, Massachusetts



Jim was an indefatigable explorer of the world providing an international lens for the Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS). Jim used his physical and intellectual travels to bring a greater understanding of our shared material culture to AGS members in the pages of the *Quarterly* where he greatly expanded the focus of what the organization.

In the *AGS Quarterly*, Jim approached gravestone studies with a humor and adventurous spirit. Thematic challenges were brought to the writers of these pages to create articles that explored themes such as premature burials and exhumations in history to martyrs, military memorials, metaphysics, and death by horse. He considered the realm of the supernatural with compassion and respect. His literary training brought Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and James Agee to the pages. Many European cemeteries are explored, but so are the graves of Papua New Guinea.

Jim's research and editorial direction also showed his unwavering commitment to addressing racism and xenophobia — domestic and international — and its impact on gravestone studies. Jim — ever the teacher — helps us to understand that gravestones, monuments, memorial artifacts, and landscapes can never be disentangled from the cultures and subcultures that created them.

The scope and breadth of Jim's source material was vast. Jenny Swadosh described her experience. "As a professional librarian and archivist, in addition to my role as chair of the AGS Archives Committee, I periodically received Jim's requests for research assistance, which we often then discussed in freewheeling conversations that demonstrated his intense curiosity and thirst for understanding (conversation is also a form of research). Jim's gravestone studies scholarship notably assigned equal weight to textual and visual sources, something of a rarity in my experiences with classicists and historians, who often view visual materials as "icing on the cake" of a journal article or book chapter. Even more astonishing was his ability to incorporate such disparate sources as Latin texts (accompanied by what I believe were his own translations) and panels from Scrooge McDuck comics, all dutifully cited, into articles about gravestone studies."

Jim took extra steps to share his bibliographic information through the donation of his papers to the AGS Archives at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. They are carefully organized into topical binders and labeled.

Jenny added, "Jim, through his deft editorial hand, made me a better writer. All writers — whether they are conscious of it or not — write for a specific reader in their first draft. In my contributions to *AGS Quarterly,* Jim was that reader. As I write this nomination, I feel his absence acutely, and I wish I could request his guidance."

Nominated by Andrea Carlin (with help from Rosalee Oakley and Jenny Swadosh)

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS 2022

Thanks to generous donations from Ron and Jane Stockton, Bryan Lorber and others, this year AGS has been able to award two conference scholarships, giving the awardees a free in-person place at the hybrid conference along with a cash prize.

The winner of the
JAMES A. SLATER SCHOLARSHIP
(honoring one of the greatest gravestone scholars of the twentieth century, and funded by a number of our generous donors)

Shakera Forbes
Roger Williams University,
Bristol, RI

The winner of the
STOCKTON STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP
(endowed by Ronald and Jane Stockton)

Charlie Huxley
Portland State University,
Portland, OR

Student Scholarship Committee
Jonathan Kewley, Chair

Edited by Anne Tait & Judy Juntunen
Design by Lynne Baggett

The Fred & Rosalee Oakley Awardees

2022	Linda Jean Limes Ellis, Bill King Jr., Hank McIntyre & Dawn Thistle.
2021	Deborah P. Franklin, The Sabine County Historical Commission (Weldon McDaniel and Felix Holmes Jr.), Laurel Wilson.
2019	Tina & Dale Utter, Little Compton Historical Society with Frederick & Helen Bridge.
2018	Andrew Hendricks, Hendrickson Family Association, Knoxville Central High School HOSA & Dante Church of God, Alfred & Betsy McKee, Spirits Alive.
2017	James Barnett, Vine Lake Preservation Trust, Jennifer Stucker & Members of Seaside Grange, Euphus Ruth.
2016	Betty & Carlo Mencucci, Katherine Babrick Ambroziak, Friends of Eastern Cemetery.
2015	E. Michael DiPaolo, The Historic Jersey & Harmisus Cemetery, Jason Church.
2014	Randy Frazier (posthumously), Mona Vance, Jennifer Rose.
2013	Friends of Lone Fir Cemetery, Andrew Hall, Carla Hines & Tamela Tenpenny Lewis. Luper Cemetery, Prof. Kimball Erdman & Dr. Johanna Miller Lewis, Dirk Siedlecki.
2012	Marilyn Burgess, Jessica Crawford, Roland G. Jordan.
2011	Colonel Edward D. Baker, Camp #6 Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Dr. Jennifer (Perky) Beisel & Dr. George Avery, Phippsburg Old Cemetery Restoration, Mark & Donald Cheetham.
2010	Dr. Indira Gesink, Eagle Scout Michael Martinez, Old Colony Burying Ground Volunteers.
2009	Mo Barry, Molly DePue, Georgia Municipal Cemetery Association.
2008	Minxie & Jim Fannin, Jeffry Kuschka.
2007	Gaynell Stone, PhD., Linda K. Lewis.
2006	Historic Richmond Foundation, Fred Burdick, Kimberly Kenney, Brandon Kenyon, Jennifer Cerasuolo, Bob Posson, Olde Historical Burial Ground Joint Committee of the First Presbyterian Church.
2005	None given.
2004	Emma Dragon, Adopt-A-Plot (Hampden MA), Robert Carson, Craig Dolder, Norman Saul.
2003	Melissa Fleming, Rebecca Gorman, Betty Myers.
2002	Juliana Fuchs, Penny Lambreth, Bonaventure Historical Society.
2001	Nate Crepeault, Alicia Paresi.
2000	John O'Brien, Mary Reilly McNellan, James A Smith, Henry "Red" Sutowski, Arthur & Frances Hyde, Charles Marchant.
1999	Harriet Ryan & Phyllis Lohrum, Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery.
1998	Fred Fredette, Friends of Center Cemetery.
1997	Fred & Rosalee Oakley.

The Harriette Merrifield Forbes Awardees

2022	Mary L. Dexter
2021	Gerron S. Hite, R.A.
2019	Dr. Daniel W. Patterson
2018	Dennis R. Montagna
2017	June Hadden Hobbs
2016	Robert W. Drinkwater
2015	J. Joseph Edgette
	Richard Sauers
2014	Margaret "Peggy" Jenks
2013	Traci Parent
2012	Ruth Shapleigh Brown
2011	William Fred Oakley, Jr.
2010	Tom Malloy
	Brenda Malloy
2009	David H. Watters
2008	Roberta Halporn
	Gary Collison
2007	Gray Williams
2006	The National Center for Preservation Technology and Training
2005	Terry Jordan
2004	Helen Sclair
2003	James Blachowicz
2002	John Sterling
2001	Mary-Ellen Jones
	M. Ruth Little
2000	James Deetz
	Warren Roberts
	Edwin Dethlefsen
1998	Rosalee Oakley
	Richard E. Meyer
1997	Vincent F. Luti
1996	Historic Burial Ground Initiative, Boston, MA
1995	Dillon R. Dorrell, Sr.
1994	Barbara Rotundo
1993	Deborah Trask
1992	Ralph Tucker
1991	Lynette Strangstad
1990	Theodore Chase
1989	Betty Willsher
1988	Laurel Gabel
1987	Pamela Burgess
	Frederick Burgess
1986	Louise Tallman
1985	Jessie Lie Farber
1984	Ann Parker
	Avon Neal
1983	Hilda Fife
1982	Jim Slater
1981	Allan Ludwig
1979	Peter Benes
1978	Ernest Caufield
1977	Daniel Farber



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