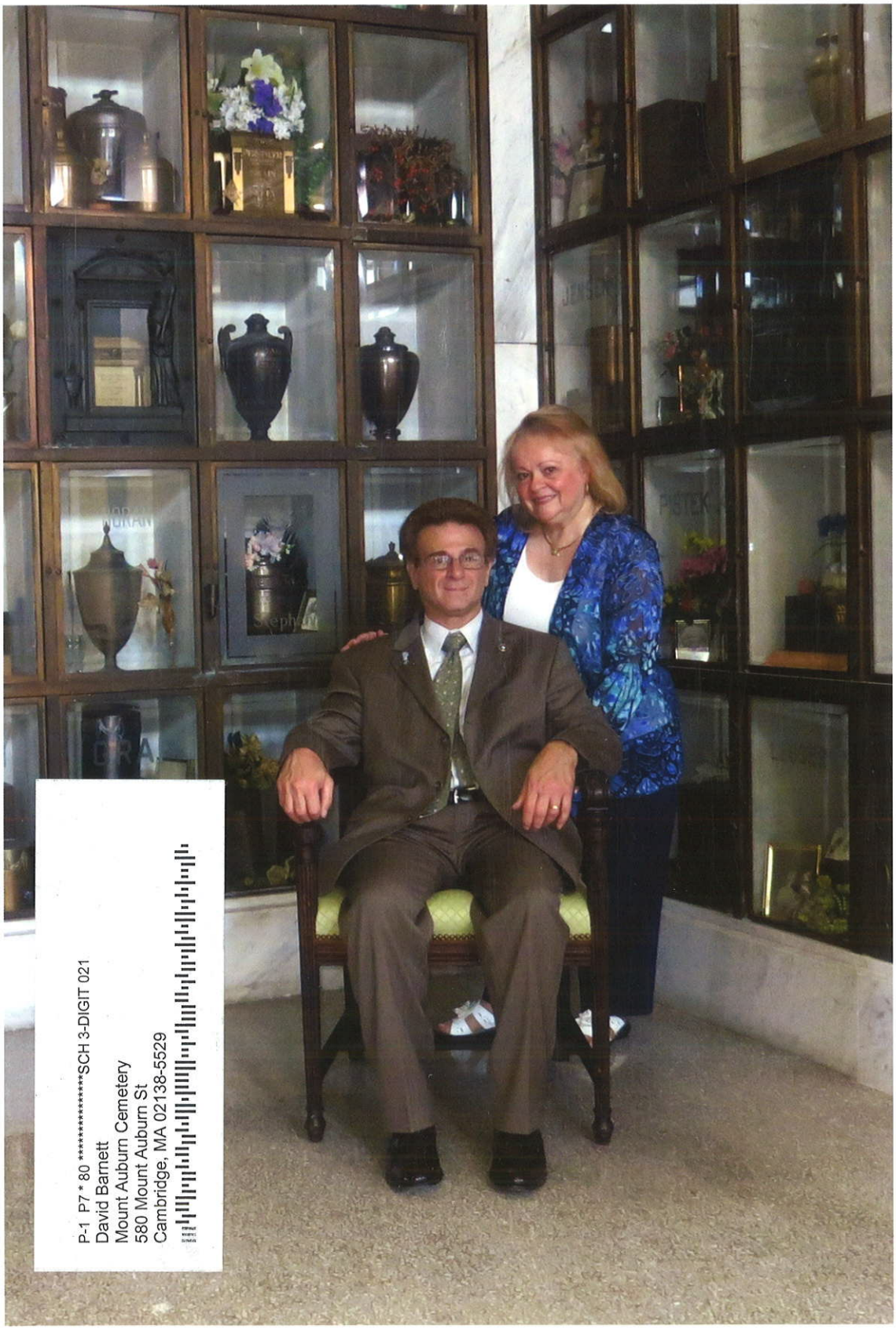
ICCFA® MAGAZINE

October 2015

CEMETERY CREMATION FUNERAL



P-1 P7 * 80 **********SCH 3-DIGIT 021
David Barnett
Mount Auburn Cemetery
580 Mount Auburn St
Cambridge, MA 02138-5529

Cremation: Di Troia works to inspire memorialization

Cremation:

- Lemasters on cremation & the Funeral Rule, how to avoid common mistakes
- Stuart on what *every* funeral director should know about cremation
- Cremation projects in Michigan, Wisconsin, British Columbia, Toronto and New York

Celebrants:

- Stansbury on serving the growing numbers of 'nones'
- Funeral director, celebrant show how they work together

Gould on hamburgers, funeral service & the new competition

Cemeteries:

- Mount Auburn's memorial conservation
- Why visit a cemetery?
- Evoking reverence
- Restoring the grave of the man who played God

Van Beck on why you should keep your cool

ICCFAU yearbook

SALES TIP OF THE WEEK
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JANUARY 13-15 • MONTE CARLO • $64 ROOM
PROGRAM, PAGE 107
REGISTRATION FORM, PAGE 111

by Meg L. Winslow and Melissa Banta

ICCFA Magazine author spotlight

➤**Winslow** is curator of historical collections at Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Massachusetts, overseeing the cemetery's permanent collections, including the archives, library, photographs, fine and decorative arts, stained glass and the significant monument collection. Prior to joining the Mount Auburn staff in 1995, she was an art gallery director in New York. *mwinslow@mountauburn.org*

➤**Banta** is consulting curator in the historical collections department at Mount Auburn Cemetery. Her writings, including publications on Mount Auburn's African-American heritage trail and significant monument collection, explore the history of the cemetery through the historical collection's holdings of correspondence, institutional records, photographs, prints, maps and fine art. She also holds a curatorial position at Harvard University.

www.mountauburn.org

Reimagining the cemetery as museum

Lessons from IMLS collections stewardship grants

Join us at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Thursday, November 12, for a one-day **program on new strategies for managing and interpreting outdoor collections in cemeteries** and historic landscapes. Sessions include planning, prioritizing, fundraising and connecting with the public. The program will also include a conservation case study and a walking tour of Mount Auburn's significant monuments in the landscape.

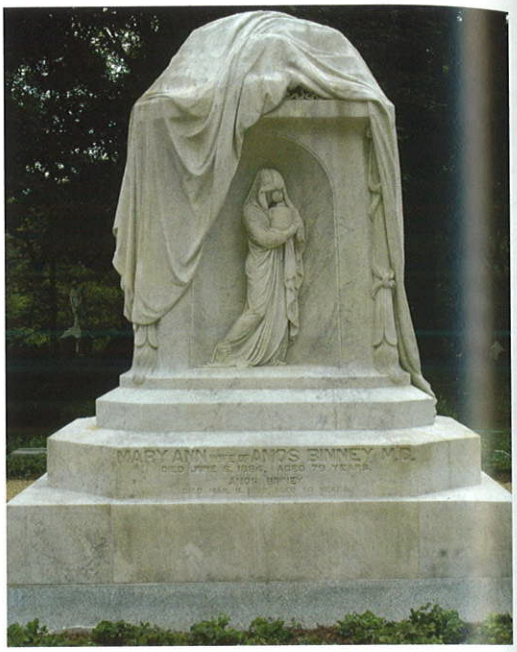
Register at *www.mountauburn.org*

Free admission; space is limited

This project is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services
Grant number: MA-30-13-0533-13

CEMETERY PRESERVATION

The elements can be hard on monuments, especially historic marble ones. Mount Auburn Cemetery shows how a monument can be conserved to reveal its original beauty, step by step.



The Binney monument at Mount Auburn, before and after conservation.

Mount Auburn's efforts restore treasured memorial

Mount Auburn Cemetery has completed the conservation of the Binney monument, a 19th-century marble memorial carved by Thomas Crawford in 1847. It is the only monument at Mount Auburn that has been designated an "American Treasure" by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the White House Millennium Committee.

"It is without question, one of the finest and most important funerary monuments in the United States," said Lauretta Dimmick, former assistant curator of American decorative arts and sculpture at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

"Because it is Crawford's only realized funerary monument, and because none of the other first-generation American sculptors even attempted such commissions, this sculpture is of extraordinary value historically."

The Binney monument at Mount Auburn, before and after conservation.

The need for conservation

Before this conservation project, lichen, moss, organic growth and soil accretions covered the surface of the stone, and severe weathering had eroded the monument over time, creating a fragile, "sugary" surface.

Comparisons made with historic photographs show that damage had accelerated at an alarming rate in the last decades. Curators of American sculpture from around the country supported Mount Auburn's efforts to save the neoclassical sculpture before the artistic

The monument's stone foundation, which had to be repaired and stabilized.

Flowable grout is poured into open joints to replace mortar that had washed out of the foundation.

Above, lifting and resetting the curbing. Below, filling the joints between curbing stones with lead.

integrity of the nationally significant work of funerary art was lost.

Repairing and stabilizing the foundation

Beginning in June 2014, Mount Auburn's Chief of Conservation David Gallagher and his preservation team began work on the project. The first step required repair and stabilization of the stone foundation underneath the monument.

Located just below the marble base of the sculpture, the granite apron stones on each side of the monument not only contribute to the overall design, but also serve to channel water away from the foundation, provide a buffer between the marble monument and the damp earth and conceal the foundation.

Mount Auburn's preservation team removed the apron stones on the monument's south and west sides. The stone on the west side had broken into two pieces and was repaired with stainless steel rods set in epoxy.

The team carefully maneuvered the two apron stones back into place and secured them to prevent further movement.

"This is a major repair and it's barely visible," said Gallagher. "Our team did an outstanding job." A flowable grout was poured into open joints on all four sides to replace mortar that had washed out of the foundation, and thus stabilize the stones and minimize water penetration.

Resetting the lot curbing

The next step involved resetting the granite curbing surrounding the lot. The granite stones had settled, and dirt and grass had completely covered a length of the curbing along the west side of the lot. Roots from a large tree had also pushed several of the curbing stones out of place.

The preservation team carefully lifted a long, heavy section of the curbing out of the ground, realigned it and reset it above grade. The joints between the curbing stones were then filled in with lead.

Pointing and consolidating the monument

With the cleaning completed, the monument was restored to the creamy white color of the Italian Carrara marble.

A thrilling moment came when the conservators and Mount Auburn staff were able to locate the sculptor's signature,

Above, washing the monument. Below, laser cleaning the monument.

Above and left, pointing work on the open joints and cracks in the marble.

which had been previously concealed by biological growth and dirt.

After cleaning, the conservators applied a chemical consolidant to the entire sculpture in order to strengthen the sugaring surface of the stone and reduce further damage from acid rain and snow.

The cleaning process also revealed further networks of fine cracks and imperfections in the stone not previously visible. Using soft lime mortar, the conservators patiently filled in these numerous cracks and pointed the open joints between the marble stones.

Finer cracks were injected with a reversible acrylic resin, tinted to match the color of the stone.

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Landscaping

The final step involved landscaping. Mount Auburn's horticultural staff planted the lot surrounding the Binney monument with a low groundcover in order to further protect the monument and enhance the beauty of the lot. Two dogwood trees now frame the boundaries of the site.

Conservation of the Binney monument is part of a larger project supported by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (MA-30-13-0533-13) focused on the cemetery's most significant monuments deemed critical to the long-term stewardship of Mount Auburn's cultural landscape.

For many years, it had been a dream to conserve this beautiful work of art, and the cemetery administration is immensely grateful for a generous contribution that made this landmark preservation project possible

This critical conservation work, so urgently needed, has preserved and stabilized a national treasure, whose narrative, meaning and symbolism future generations will continue to appreciate. ❐

The conserved Binney monument in its newly landscaped lot, surrounded by a low groundcover.

DID YOU KNOW?

The ICCFA pays a retainer so that all members in good standing can benefit from telephone consultations on:
- employment law,
- labor relations and
- human resources management.

IF YOU'VE GOT QUESTIONS, CONTACT

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