

THE

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BEECHWOOD

WAY

MAGAZINE

WHITE BRONZE

A UNICORN IN THE CEMETERY

by Nicolas McCarthy

IN THE GARDENS

A VEGETABLE HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

by Trevor Davidson

MONUMENT UPDATE:

NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN

AN ARTIST OF SOME RENOWN

SET IN STONE: JAMES MATHER

by Thomas Ritchie

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

AS WE MOVE CLOSER AND CLOSER to our 150th anniversary (2023), Beechwood has been researching our past and our history. We dove deep into our own archives, early Bytown and Ottawa Newspapers, City debates and decisions, and discovered a common element in all of this. Beechwood Cemetery was always meant to hold a special and unique place in our community, our city and ultimately our country.

Over the course of the next few years, we will share short historical pieces about the cemetery. We are discovering incredible stories from the earliest citizens of Ottawa and interesting fact about how they interacted with Beechwood.

Some of the earliest letters from the editor spoke about the natural beauty of Beechwood and how one could get lost in the gardens, the blooms of the flowers and how Beechwood would showcase some of our own flowers in stores across the city.

By June 15, 1874, the Ottawa Daily Citizen published short articles about the local cemeteries and said this: “*Beechwood Cemetery is becoming a favorite resort on Sunday, and we would advise those of our readers who have not seen the ground to pay it a visit some pleasant afternoon during the present month while the foliage is at its greenest.*”¹ I suppose the more things change, the more things tend to stay the same.

As part of the research, we have started to establish a library of self-guided tours, with various themes, people and communities highlighted. These tours can be found on the website, on our blog and shared on social media. We hope you take these tours and enjoy exploring different aspects of the cemetery.

I have a request to all our readership: Do you have a Beechwood story that you would like us to share? Is there something or someone you know who has an incredible story or tale?

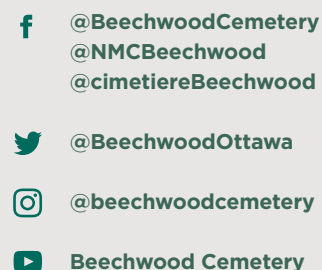
The Beechwood Way has been receiving regular updates on the stories we share and, in this issue, there is an update on the Nicholas Flood Davin monument and its connection to a National Military Memorial in France. We cannot be more appreciative of our readers sending this information to us.

Remember to follow us on social media or the Beechwood Blog found on the homepage of our site for quick stories, interesting information, and updates on all the activities of the Beechwood Cemetery Foundation.

Thank you and as always, we hope you enjoy this issue and come for a tour.

Nicolas McCarthy

Director of Marketing, Communications and Community Outreach



1. The Cemeteries, Ottawa Daily Citizen, Monday, June 15 1874.

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Visit us online to learn more about Beechwood, the National Cemetery of Canada and read back issues of *The Beechwood Way* at: www.beechwoodottawa.ca

We want your feedback on how we are doing! Contact: Erika Wagner at foundation@beechwoodottawa.ca

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WHITE BRONZE

A unicorn in the cemetery

by Nicolas McCarthy

Director of Marketing, Communications and Community Outreach

Article first appeared in The Funeral Chronicle, June 2021 issue

ACROSS CEMETERIES, the standard building materials have been consistent – stone. From the earliest boulders to mark graves, to the great pyramids, to the stately mausoleums of well-known figures, stone from marble to granite has been the material of choice.

A unicorn can be found scattered throughout older cemeteries across Eastern Canada and the Eastern United States. These distinct bluish-grey monuments have been around for over hundred years, and we may never truly appreciate what they are. These White Bronze metal monuments were meant to dramatically change the bereavement industry and forge a path away from natural stone.

White Bronze was the name given to the zinc based metal monuments to help differentiate them from other cheaper and low quality metal monuments available at the time. Many of the upper members of society in the late Victorian Period viewed metal monuments as a cheap imitation to solid granite. Many cemeteries would ban them, in favour of their local granite and marble monument supply companies. Needless to say, these White Bronze monuments are unique in every way.

The Monument Bronze Company, based in Bridgeport, Connecticut, manufactured the zinc monument from 1870's until start of the Great War (1914). The technique for construction of the monument was developed in 1873 in New York and was eventually commercialized by the Monument Bronze Company. The original casting of the monuments were made in Bridgeport, shipped in pieces to foundries and assembly plants from Chicago to New Orleans, and at the St. Thomas White Bronze Monument Company in Ontario. Each plant could stamp their name on the bases. Looking around Canada, the majority were assembled at the St-Thomas plant and shipped across the Eastern part of the country.

To create the White Bronze monument, the process isn't as dissimilar as granite or marble carving. An artist would create traditional designs commonly found and requested in cemeteries. The artist would make a wax carving, then create a negative plaster cast of the carving. They would then pour in more plaster and create the positive impression of the carving. These positive impressions would be placed in sand moulds and molten zinc would be poured in to create the impression. These pieces would be cleaned and shipped to the assembly plants.

At the assembly plants, the pieces would be fused together, again with molten zinc, and sandblasted to create the stone-like texture and finish. A final secret lacquer would be applied to chemically oxidize the monument creating the bluish-grey finish, allowing it to be named White Bronze. The name was chosen to appeal to the upper classes of society.





The White Bronze monuments, after 100 years, are still as crisp and clean as they were when they were first installed.



White bronze monuments ranged in size and shape and were fully customizable with over 500 monument designs taken from popular styles of the times and traditional images and symbols. Being made to order, the family would start by choosing the base; select the style and finally the custom panels that would include images of flowers, angels, crosses or other popular Victorian imagery. Finally, inscription plaques could be chosen with names, dates, roles and personal or religious epitaphs.

Another unique aspect to White Bronze monuments was the purchasing process. Unlike marble or granite, you couldn't physically see the monuments or visit a local shop. Travelling sales people would visit cemeteries not only to convince them to purchase White Bronze monuments, but to leave catalogues. White Bronze could only be sold through the catalogue and its forms. Families would need to pick and choose based on the images of the catalogue and build their own monument. This would have been quite a different buying process and most didn't like the "coldness" of a catalogue. However, families who had less resources or were willing to take the risk, would end up with a custom monument that could range from several inches to 25 feet in height and from \$2 to \$5,000 in price.

White bronze monuments were sold as a better solution than granite and marble. They were built to last, which in fact they do. The White Bronze monuments, after 100 years, are still as crisp and clean as they were when they were first installed. The monuments remain readable and visually stunning to this day.

There was one major design problem, they were built hollow. When the weight of the top part of the monument bears down on the base, the base can over time, begin to bow or bulge at the seams. This may take years, but it is visible on the example from Beechwood Cemetery. The Bronze Monument Company didn't last long enough to design a solution. However, a steel internal structure inside the base would prevent this.

Corrosion was a problem for metal monuments of the period. Most metal monuments would use less expensive metals or copper, which would darken, corrode or rust. White Bronze monuments did not have this problem, as the metal was relatively pure at 99% zinc. These monuments left unpainted and untreated aged well and did not need a lot of maintenance.

Another issue became the decorative panels and the screws that locked them in place. These screws could disintegrate and the panels would fall inwards or to the ground and be taken for the value of the bronze.



White bronze monuments were made for only four decades and never gained the popularity that the Monument Bronze Company desired. With lacklustre sales, the final nail on the coffin came under the dark clouds of the Great War. Zinc quickly became a vital product for the war effort and the Monument Bronze Company was pressed into service by the government (USA) to manufacture gun mounts and munitions. The company did survive the war, however, never produced another monument past 1914. They tried to survive by developing custom White Bronze panels that could be applied to other monuments. The Monument Bronze Company closed in 1939 and with that ended the era of the White Bronze metal monument.

At the height of its “popularity”, White Bronze remained a novelty, never fully accepted by the funeral and cemetery industry and never adopted as a viable option by the clients. Based on the research, there doesn't seem to be a full account of the number of White Bronze monuments across Canada and the USA. However, I would suspect that it's under several thousand. Union Cemetery in Oshawa may be considered Canada's metal cemetery with 13 white bronze monuments out of 25,000 burials, while here at Beechwood, we only have only one out of 85, 000 plus burials.

White Bronze monuments are the unicorn in the cemetery. Only when you see them, will you believe it. Better yet, only when you knock, will you hear the hollow echo of a White Bronze Monument.

IN THE GARDENS

A vegetable hidden in plain sight

by Trevor Davidson

Beechwood's Chief Horticulturalist



Located next
around the pond
in the Botanical
Gardens.



BEECHWOOD IS RECOGNIZED as one of the most beautiful and historic cemeteries in Canada. Our breathtaking park-like setting boasts 160 acres of colourful gardens, century-old trees, ponds, enchanting fountains and over 35,000 spring tulips.

Beechwood is renowned for our unique landscaping and our diverse planting. At times some plants are not what they seem, and although they have beautiful blooms, they are part of the vegetable family.

HERE ARE TWO OF THESE INCREDIBLE BLOOMING VEGETABLES.

An ornamental onion

Onions, shallots and garlic are members of the allium family that belong in the vegetable garden. But there are many ornamental alliums that deserve a hearty welcome in your perennial gardens.

Alliums are plants of exquisite beauty in both flower and leaf, with tough constitutions. These easy-to-grow bulbs come in a broad palette of colors, heights, bloom times and flower forms.

They make excellent cut flowers for fresh or dried bouquets. Even crowded gardens can accommodate a few alliums because they don't take up much space.

This hearty perennial flowers in shades of purple, white and occasionally blue and yellow. Alliums are almost trouble free. The only maintenance required for Alliums is that the taller variety need staking to prevent the flower stem from being damaged, unless planted in a sheltered spot away from wind.

Alliums are loved by bees and insects, and on a warm day the large flower heads will be buzzing. They will also attract butterflies and are a great source of nectar. Given the biodiversity in Ottawa, we often get voles, chipmunks and rabbits eating our plants. Alliums are relatively resistant to those threats.

A family member of the asparagus

The *Yucca filamentosa* comes in many different names including Adam's needle, common yucca, Spanish bayonet, bear-grass, needle-palm, silk-grass, and spoon-leaf yucca. This species of flowering plant is part of the Asparagus family

which is native to the southeastern United States. Originally, native to beaches, sand dunes and fields from South Carolina south to Florida and Mississippi, it has escaped cultivation and extended its original range north into Southern Ontario and the New England ranges.

The *Yucca filamentosa* is a virtually stemless shrub that looks more like a perennial plant. The blade-like leaves form a basal rosette ending in spines. The foliage clumps are usually 2 to 3 feet tall, with curled threads lining the edges of the leaves, giving it its species name *filamentosa* for its threads or “filaments.”

Mature plants about 4 or 5 years old will send up flower stalks from the center of the foliage in late spring, which can double the height of this yucca plant, sometimes growing to over 8 feet tall. The blooms look like nodding, white bells.

The *Yucca filamentosa* is best used in borders, in a dry garden area. It adds great architectural height to a garden with out the need for must fuss. It is also great for areas that receive road salt runoff as its quite a resilient plant. *Yucca filamentosa* can be planted almost any time, though it is most commonly available at nurseries in the spring. However, transplanting, or taking basal offsets of *Yucca filamentosa* is best done in the fall.

Yucca filamentosa has virtually no severe disease or pest issues. Adam’s needle attracts butterflies but also draws earwigs; these pests are unlikely to do any serious damage to the plants.

Across our gardens, you can find these hidden horticultural gems, planted in plain sight for everyone to enjoy. If you are interested in more “In the Gardens” articles, please keep eye our for our regular blog post found at the bottom of the homepage of the Beechwood website. We regularly highlight interesting flora.



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Located near the stream in front of the Sacred Space.



MONUMENT UPDATE: NICHOLAS FLOOD DAVIN

An Artist of some renown

AS YOU STROLL THROUGH BEECHWOOD CEMETERY, one of the highlights is the Nicholas Flood Davin Monument. Members of the Conservative Party erected the monument in 1903 for their fellow MP after his death. It is a rather unique monument in both history and overall design.

The monument has one of very few busts found in the cemetery. The bust of Flood Davin has an interesting patina and almost appears to be tear stained. It's a beautiful example of sculpture in the cemetery. What makes this bust even more interesting is the artist behind it. It was designed and carved in 1902 by artist Walter S. Allward.

Allward was a Canadian monumental sculptor best known for the Canadian National Vimy Memorial. He has been widely praised for his original sense of spatial composition, his mastery of the classical form and his brilliant craftsmanship.

Allward's first commission was for the figure of Peace on the Memorial of the Battles in the North-West (1895) in Queen's Park, Toronto. Other early works included a life-sized figure of Dr. Oronhyatekha commissioned by the Independent Order of Foresters for the opening of the Temple Building in Toronto (1899), and the Old Soldier, commemorating the War of 1812 in Toronto's Portland Square (now Victoria Memorial Square) (1903).

Also in 1903, he was elected an associate of the Royal Canadian Academy and in 1918, became a full academician. Once well established he received commissions to do busts of Lord Tennyson, Sir Charles Tupper, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and others. On the grounds of Queen's Park are statues of General John Graves Simcoe and Sir Oliver Mowat, completed in 1903 and 1905 respectively.

Allward's true talent lays in his heroic monuments. These included the design work for the Boer War Memorial Fountain in Windsor, Ontario (1906), the South African War Memorial in Toronto (1910), The Baldwin-Lafontaine Monument on Parliament Hill in Ottawa (1914) and the Bell Memorial commemorating Alexander Graham Bell's invention of telephone in Brantford, Ontario (1917). Allward had also completed design work on a memorial to King Edward VII but the onset of the World War I prevented its completion. It brought the sculptor to fame and led to Allward later creating the Canadian National Vimy Memorial in France, his most renowned work. Some of the sculptor's works have also been acquired by the National Gallery in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Allward has been described as probably Canada's most important monumental sculptor of the 20th century.



Designed and carved in 1902 by artist Walter S. Allward.

SET IN STONE

James Mather, Architect and Beechwood President

by Thomas Ritchie
Friends of Beechwood — 2010

JAMES MATHER WAS BORN IN 1833 in the Scottish fishing village of Usan, located about 60 miles (100 km) along the North Sea coast from Edinburgh. His father, a contractor and inventor, gave James practical knowledge about building and construction, while the Bowan Academy, in nearby Montrose, introduced him to architecture and the design of buildings. When Mather arrived in Ottawa in 1872, he was almost forty years of age. His previous experience as an architect is not known, nor the reason for his choice of Ottawa, but soon after his name appeared in the city directory's list of architects in 1873, he was designing buildings.

In 1874, he prepared the plans for two new market buildings for the city, one in the ByWard market, the other in Upper Bytown, both large, two-storey brick structures, decorated with towers and iron crestings. He also designed two primary schools and he became associated with the new Beechwood Cemetery, preparing plans for residences, at the cemetery, for members of the staff, which are still in use. He later became president of the Beechwood company.

Many leading citizens had Mather design their houses. For businessman B. Batson's "Gothic villa", a three-storey stone residence built in 1875, Mather provided, among its many rooms, a large drawing room, a spacious hall and a conservatory measuring 16 by 45 ft. (5 by 14m). Mather also designed a residence, on Laurier Ave., for jeweller John Leslie, completed in 1878. It was later occupied by two prime ministers, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and William Lyon Mackenzie King. The later bequeathed it to Canada and it became a museum.

Mather's involvement in the construction and later development of Lisgar Collegiate and the Teachers' College (Normal School), started when the college was built in 1875. Its Toronto architect, W. R. Strickland, appointed Mather to be the supervising architect and Mather was involved in its additions, a model school for teacher training and an assembly hall. Lisgar Collegiate was constructed in 1875 to plans drawn by Montreal architect William T. Thomas, but when the building was enlarged in 1892 Mather was the architect, also for a 1903 addition, and for a five-storey dormitory for another institution, the Ottawa College, the dormitory called the finest such building in America.





Mather's design for the First Baptist Church at Elgin St. and Laurier Ave. W. was in the Gothic revival style of architecture, with a tall slender tower. The corner stone was laid in 1877 by Prime Minister, and church member, Alexander Mackenzie, and another Prime Minister, John Diefenbaker, also attended the church. Mather designed many buildings important to Ottawa's social, business and political activities, such as the Rideau Club building. When formed in 1865, the club rented space from a hotel until Mather designed its first building which it occupied from 1875 until 1911. A larger structure replaced it but was destroyed by fire in 1979. In 1882 the Russel House, one of Bytown's early hotels, was completely rebuilt and enlarged to Mather's design. It was Ottawa's finest hotel and considered to be "the political headquarters of the Dominion" until its destruction, by fire, in 1928. The nearby Roxborough Apartments, also built to Mather's plans, were favoured by politicians such as Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent who reluctantly gave up his suite there when an official residence, for prime ministers, was established on Sussex Drive in 1950. The Roxborough Apartments were demolished in 1965 for the construction of a museum proposed for the site but not built.

Two monuments in Beechwood Cemetery are memorials to James Mather; the first, in Section 41, marks his grave. Another monument, in Section 39, marking the grave of Andrew Main who died in 1884, provides another memorial to Mather, since his name is inscribed on its base, identifying him as its architect.