GREY TOWERS
LEGACY
Conservation • Community • Culture

FALL • WINTER 2020

Improved Visitor Access at Laurel Hill Cemetery

The Grey Towers Heritage Association has been assisting the US Forest Service and others on the continued maintenance and restoration of the Laurel Hill Cemetery, located on the grounds of Grey Towers National Historic Site.

This summer, volunteers helped restore the Cross family plot, including stabilization of the large monument to repair erosion. Volunteers also repaired a headstone that was damaged when a tree fell into the plot and re-set four footstones.

Visitors will have an easier time walking through the cemetery after volunteers mulched the extended perimeter trail and the areas around the stone benches. The GTHA uses its funds to pay Yarosz Landscaping to mow and control vegetation around family plots and headstones and the main access roads within the cemetery.

To assist the Cemetery team or to help fund the projects, contact the GTHA at info@greytowers.org.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

The COVID crisis of 2020 has been a challenge for everyone, and the Board has shown resilience and innovation. To respond to changes, we are recruiting new Board Directors for leadership positions as a few of the long-term Directors prepare to mentor the "next generation."

By necessity, the US Forest Service curtailed many of their operations and public access this season was focused on outdoors, as allowed. The grounds are beautiful and open to the public—including the Bait Box with a special Cornelia Pinchot display that is timely for the 100th Year Celebration of Women's Suffrage. Our programs will be back next year, better!

Your giving spirit is integral to our recovery and continued success! Kindly stay active in your support of Grey Towers Heritage Association, and feel free to reach out to any Director.

Stay safe. Be well.

Marian Keegan

MESSAGE FROM BILL DAUER, GREY TOWERS DIRECTOR

Who would have ever imagined a year named 2020, a number associated with perfect vision, would have turned out the way it has.

The uncertainty and rapidly changing conditions, constant concerns about the health and safety of all and my commitment to serving the American public created a tenuous balancing act, to say the least.

And even though we were not able to offer our full slate of conferences, traditional events, and visitor services this season, I am so very proud of how the entire staff has maintained the buildings and grounds and adapted our programming to outdoor opportunities for visitors.

After completing exhaustive risk assessments, adhering to the various levels of guidance, seeking input, and following what we felt was the socially responsible thing to do, we have had to postpone until 2021 our large public events, including the Festival of Wood, National Public Lands Day, the popular ice cream social and more.

It is with a heavy heart that, in keeping with continuing concerns, I must make the difficult decision to also postpone our popular holiday programming, including the Christmas Carol dramatic readings, decorated mansion tours and holiday art show.

As I frequently walk the grounds and chat with guests, I appreciate the patience and understanding our many visitors have shown and look forward to welcoming everyone back to once again tour the mansion and celebrate everything Grey Towers!!! Take care, be safe, and have a wonderful holiday season.

Bill

Bill Dauer

FIRE TOWER UPDATE

Restoring one of the Pinchot Towers—Big Pocono Fire Tower

The Big Pocono Fire Tower built in 1921 is undergoing restoration at Grey Towers National Historic Site (Grey Towers). The Big Pocono Fire Tower was one that Gifford Pinchot, as the Pennsylvania Commissioner of Forestry, approved for construction. The original mountaintop location offered long-range views even though the tower was only 21 feet off the ground!

Volunteers and the US Forest Service, with funding support from the Grey Towers Heritage Association and other donors, have restored and rebuilt the Aermotor LS-40 steel cab. Access was through a trap door in the floor. The site where the tower will stand was cleared and prepared this summer.

The next steps, temporarily slowed due to COVID-19 restrictions, include reattaching the cab to the tower structure, pouring a foundation and installation in place (along the Forest Discovery Trail). This is the most complex and critical step in the project.

Volunteers who can offer technical or financial support are asked to contact the GTHA at 570-296-9630 or info@greytowers.org.

The Fire Tower is intended to be used as an educational resource, not for fire management, and exhibits that describe the the history of the US Forest Service fire program, Gifford Pinchot's role, and fire suppression and management today are being developed.

LAUREL HILL CEMETERY

Tragedy Strikes Entire Milford Area Family by Grey Towers Volunteer, Nancy Duvinski

Five children from the same family died within a week of each other and were buried in Laurel Hill Cemetery. The following is a first-person description of the tragedy, as if told through one of the children:

My name is Julia Kircheis and I am nine years old. My parents were grief stricken at my death, but even more so when four of my siblings, including my twin brother Haupold, also died. All in the same week. It was May of 1862.

First my 15-year-old sister died on May 9. Her name was Erana. I died two days later. The next day my twin Haupold and my sister Rosa died. Rosa was 11. On May 15 our baby brother Ichan died; he was only four years old.

Even though we were laid to rest in this spot more than 150 years ago, nobody could find our headstones and footstones because they were covered by overgrowth and hidden from view. This cemetery had fallen into disrepair and was neglected after the more formal Milford Cemetery was established along Route 209 in the 1870s.

Recently a Forest Service intern was doing research in this cemetery and she discovered our headstones and footstones. The information on our stones shows that a shocking tragedy befell our family, but no other information about us exists.

You can see that someone, perhaps our parents, though grief-stricken, took great care to add symbolic art to our headstones. On mine and Haupold's, you see a lamb in repose. Lambs are used at the graves of infants or children, as they represent innocence and purity.

Headstones recently discovered for 5 children from one family who died within one week in May 1862.

Learn more about this tragedy at: www.greytowers.org

A broken rose engraved on the headstones of my oldest siblings, Rosa and Erana, represents love, beauty, hope and unfailing love. The fact that it is broken means their lives were cut short. I don't know what the willow tree on Ichan's headstone represents.

Deaths of entire families was all too common during this time, as diseases and accidents often claimed the lives of children. We wish we could share our stories. Discoveries like these often leave the future generations with more questions than answers. What happened to us? What about our parents? Though our lives were brief, what can you learn about us and from us?

Visit the Kircheis plot in the Laurel Hill Cemetery.
We thank the mysterious donor who leaves seasonal trinkets at the children's graves. It's nice to know they are remembered.

Reminiscence: "You've Been with the President Again"

A historical tale of a wet walk in Washington

Gifford Pinchot was a key member of President Theodore Roosevelt's "Tennis Cabinet," a team of trusted advisers. They were notorious for valuing physical prowess, often engaging in strenuous and competitive activities.

One wet and rainy day, the President invited Pinchot and the new Assistant Secretary of State Robert Bacon to join him for a walk. The men were advised to put on old clothes and come to the White House.

Bacon, unaware of the President's habits, ignored the hint and appeared in a "natty business suit and patent leather shoes." Pinchot, well aware of what a walk with the President meant, wore his oldest suit.

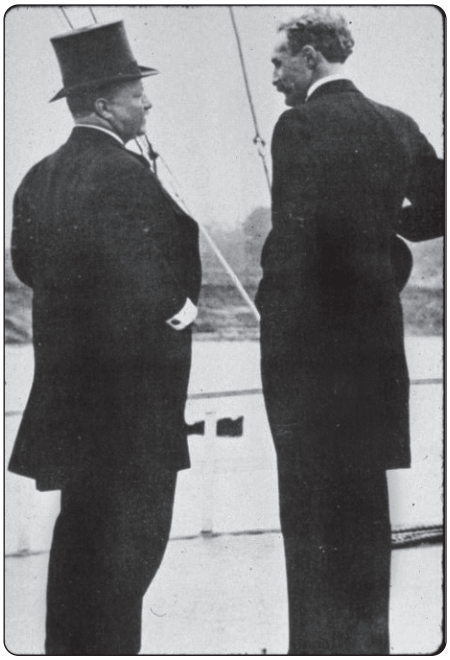
They started out through Georgetown and up the towpath of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal at a lively pace.

At one point, they noticed that the other side of the canal was particularly inviting for a cross country walk, but there was no place to cross for at least a mile.

In deference to Bacon's dress, the President suggested that he walk to the bridge carrying their watches and pocketbooks, while the other two would wade through the canal and meet up at a designated spot. Bacon, unwilling to be outdone by the other two, insisted on going into the waist deep water. The men tucked their valuables under their hats and proceeded forward.

When they emerged from the water, Bacon's trousers were no longer nicely creased and his shoes not bright. After a 12-mile hike, the three men returned to the White House in good spirits. The newspapers of the day considered this Bacon's initiation into the "Tennis Cabinet."

As for Pinchot, he returned home still soaking wet to be greeted by Mrs. McCadden, the housekeeper, who reportedly said, "Well, you are a sight. I know where you have been. You have been with the President again."



Gifford Pinchot, right, was Roosevelt's key advisor on conservation issues.

This account is summarized from newspaper articles and diary entries by Grey Towers volunteer and GTHA board member Dianna Levine.

Consider a Grey Towers Heritage Association Gift Membership

Help preserve the Grey Towers estate and Pinchot legacy and support public programs and projects by giving a Grey Towers Heritage Association gift membership.

There are five different levels of membership to choose from, all are tax deductable.

Membership Levels:

Individual Associate:
$30 (seniors $25 and students $10)

Associate Household:
$50 helps support tree plantings in a National Forest

Patron:
$250 annual tour pass included

Sponsor:
$500 annual tour pass included

Sustainer:
$1,000 annual tour pass included

You may purchase a gift membership through our website at greytowers.org or by sending a check to: GTHA, PO Box 188, Milford, PA, 18337.

Membership fees help with preservation and rehabilitation projects, public programs and volunteer support.

Check out past and ongoing projects on our website greytowers.org.

Grey Towers Heritage Association
P.O. Box 188
Milford, PA 18337

greytowers.org

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OUR MISSION

To assist the US Forest Service in education, improvements, promotion, conservation and wise use of Grey Towers National Historic Site, Milford, PA.

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CHECK OUT OUR SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

Fun Fact Fridays

Each week more than 2,000 viewers enjoy and learn from a new fun fact about Grey Towers and the Pinchot family. We try to make the posts timely and relevant, using significant dates and events when possible. Be sure to follow, like and share these posts. And we love feedback and comments!

Two of this year's most popular Fun Facts:

FACT #15: viewed by 3,961 people, 92 reactions, 24 shares, 5 comments

"This week, 134 years ago, the Pinchot family moved into their newly completed summer home, Grey Towers. James Pinchot purchased two parcels of land on both sides of the Sawkill from George Buchanan for $6,500. Local speculation rumored that the massive stone chateau would be a hotel. Today it is a National Historic Site, with public programs that perpetuate the legacy of the family's many accomplishments and contributions to society."

FACT #16: viewed by 2,258 people, 19 shares, 18 photo views

"My feminism tells me that women can bear children, charm lovers, boss a business, swim the Channel, and stand at Armageddon and battle for the Lord… all in a day's work."

Powerful words by Cornelia Pinchot of Grey Towers, whose efforts to help pass the 19th amendment 100 years ago paved the way for women's right to vote.