





Stonington Cemetery Association

Volume 7 • Fall 2022

TOMBSTONE CHRONICLES



Angelo Buzzi

STONINGTON
CEMETERY contains
the work of many
monument makers.
Of the notable names,
the most recent is
Angelo Buzzi. His story
is an immigrant tale.
He was born in 1900 to
Italian parents living in
Arzo, Switzerland —

a small town on the Swiss-Italian border where once thriving and important marble quarries are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Angelo's family were *scalpellini* (stone carvers) who recognized his talent and promise and enrolled him, as a teenager, in school in Zurich, Switzerland.

By 1923, opportunities in Angelo's home region were dwindling and there was promise of more work abroad. He, like other craftsmen of the period, made the decision to emigrate. Upon arrival in the US, Angelo was quickly integrated into the network of immigrant *scalpellini*. These craftsmen didn't design the artwork. They translated a sculptor's models into stone.

By 1928, Angelo was in Providence as part of a team carving the Providence War Memorial. Smith Granite of Westerly supplied that stone. Five years later, by then married and a father, he moved permanently to Westerly, RI, to set up shop on Route 1 in Stonington. Buzzi Memorials was Angelo's main source of income until he died in 1963. During his years as a local businessman, he continued to work on important monumental projects around the country in Washington, DC, New York, El Paso, South Carolina and West Virginia and elsewhere. These were collaborative works too grand for a single carver to execute. Angelo was one of the best. A dwindling number of skilled carvers in the second half of the 20th century meant that he was much in demand for work that was challenging and satisfying.

His son, Harold, also a skilled designer and carver, learned the trade from his father and from Oscar Nurmi of Bottinelli Monument Company of Westerly. As a teenager, Harold helped to run the family business.



Buzzi Memorials

Later, he commuted to Bryant College to earn a business degree and later served in the Marines during the

Korean War. Upon Angelo's death in 1963, Harold took over the business. Many local monuments bear his clear and distinctive engraving — a testimony to his own skill. Harold's long and respected career ended in 2016 when, at the age of 86, he sold the business. He died in 2019.

Luckily for the community, Richard Brooks fell in love with stone carving while working for Richard Comolli of the Comolli Granite Company in Westerly — another local monument company. Taking over Buzzi Memorials in 2016 was for Rich, "like stepping back in time." He inherited tools and stones from Angelo and Harold. That some of these tools are in use today, is a testimony to the timelessness of the trade. Brooks follows the tradition as the only person in CT to have received this certification as a certified memorialist.

Buzzi Memorials continues to provide headstones for local cemeteries — some are pre-carved but needing



Gatepost Ball

inscriptions and some are custom stones. During the past year, we benefited from Rich's donated work. He shared with us the expense to replace the granite ball on the front gatepost.

WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK everyone who gave to the Stonington Cemetery Association during the past fiscal year — 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022. Contributions received after June 30, 2022 will be acknowledged in our Fall 2023 newsletter. If we have inadvertently missed you, please forgive us and send a correction. Gifts of \$250 and over are noted with an *. Gifts of \$500 and over are noted with an **. Gifts of \$1,000 and over are noted with ***. We are grateful to donors who are regular annual givers in any amount. All gifts are important!

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During the summer, Tim Keena's firm improved many of the eastwest avenues along with areas on the main perimeter roads where runoff had degraded the surface. The total cost of this project to the Cemetery Association was \$7,540. A donation of thirteen tons of re-used surfacing material worth

\$12,000 from the Town of Stonington was made possible with Tim's assistance.



Keith Robinson

Elliott Shaw of Green Wheel LLC has been fine tuning the lawns and shrubs for Stonington Cemetery for two years.
Elliott adds another dimension to the care of our grounds — the pruning of shrubs, clearing of small areas, repair of sunken graves, and lawn seeding. Elliott's master gardener designation has helped us make decisions about what to keep and what to

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eliminate. Over this summer his team improved overgrown areas. Recently he seeded a large area near the pond that we received permission to clear.



Stonington Cemetery

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Dear friends,

When Ann Freeman and I set out to publish a newsletter in 2016, we were not sure that volume 1 of Tombstone Chronicles would be followed by a volume 2. Now we have reached Volume 7. Happily, each edition has marked progress for the Cemetery Association and there has been ever more history and news to share with our community.

At our annual meeting in October, we welcomed four new members (marked with asterisks) to our Board. Their enthusiasm will help us cement progress made during the past five years.

This past year saw the highest level of giving ever - over \$46,000. We are very grateful to our donors, to the Charles B. Allyn Foundation, and to the Town of Stonington for continuing support.

In addition to road and wall repairs highlighted below, we have continued to make many improvements to the grounds including tree and stump removal, completion of the shed restorations, and the identification and numbering of new burial areas. Behind the scenes, we have been working on uploading and organizing information in our new cemetery software system. It will make possible the consolidation of years of burial and sales records and add to our inventory of unsold plots. With almost 4,700 burials in the grounds and more plots sold but not occupied, this is a challenging, but essential, undertaking.

A more detailed record of our past year can be found in the 2022 Annual Report and Financial Report. These are available on our website or can be emailed upon request. We hope you will share your ideas and bring any concerns to our attention. You are making this work possible. Thank you.

Warm regards,

Lynn Callahan, President

hyperCallator



In April, we signed a contract with Czaja Brothers to provide our cemetery services. Craig Czaja (pronounced chaiya) was born into the cemetery business and worked with his father before starting his own business. He is currently responsible for seven cemeteries spread over the eastern part of CT and RI. He and his brother employ a staff of four.

Craig's experience and expertise have allowed us to accurately mark burial areas and determine the best sites for new burials. He is responsible for all burials and the installation of monument foundations — the footings that hold cemetery markers in place.



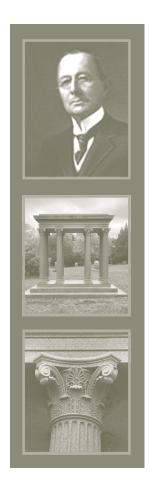
Beginning last December and finishing up in July, Thaler Hefel of Hefel Masonry rebuilt the stone wall that borders the Route 1 side of our West Grounds property using stones from the site. Thaler learned his trade from his father Harald Hefel, a respected local mason who has also performed work for us. Thaler's

work includes larger projects in CT and RI including the stone chapel at Enders Island, Pequot Lighthouse, Waylands Wharf seawall, Coogan Farm, and other important restoration, structural, and cosmetic restoration projects.



Stonington Cemetery

P O Box 345 Stonington CT 06378



THE ATWOOD COLONNADE is located near the rear of the cemetery off Williams Avenue. The Greek revival temple style structure is composed of eight Corinthian columns arranged in two rows of four columns each standing on a base three steps high and supporting a pedimented roof. The front of the monument bears a simple inscription: ATWOOD.

The column caps are a composite Roman style — a combination of Ionic scroll designs and Corinthian acanthus leaf decoration symbolizing the garden of Heaven. Matching marker stones are arranged around the Colonnade. The monument was commissioned in 1927 by Annie Atwood for her husband, Eugene, who had died a year earlier. Smith Granite of Westerly designed and constructed the monument using local Smith blue granite. The cost was \$14,000.

Eugene Atwood was born in Mansfield, CT in 1846 to a family of silk manufacturers. His father, uncle, and grandfather all owned and operated silk mills around Gurleyville, CT during the first part of the 19th century. It was inevitable that Eugene would join the family business. By the mid-1850's, the Atwoods' focus had shifted from silk weaving to the manufacture and repair of machinery for weaving. Then, in 1865, at the age of 25, Eugene invented an improved mechanism — a spindle or sleeve whorl — for twisting silk thread. This revolutionized the production of silk cloth. The business moved several times finally locating, in 1876, to Stonington where it occupied the stone building that is now Stonington Commons. It later expanded with new buildings.

Eugene continued to improve spinning equipment and, in 1882, was awarded a patent for a self-centering spindle. The success of this device resulted in the Atwoods having a near monopoly on the manufacture of global silk thread making machinery. The income from the business enabled Eugene to establish The Eugene Atwood Fund to provide interest free loans to college bound students in the New London County area and, more recently, to students in technical and trade programs. Although the business ceased to operate in 1940, the fund and the Atwood Colonnade are a lasting memorial to Eugene Atwood.