



After we die—and the people who remember us die—often all that’s left of us for future generations to ponder is our gravestones: what they look like, where they are located, what’s written on them. These final markings tell the world who we were and what people thought of us while we were on this earth. This can be said about graves anywhere, but examples abound in Washington State.

There are graves of the famous—Bruce and Brandon Lee, or Jimi Hendrix, for example—that receive thousands of visitors every year. But there are other graves in the Evergreen State with stories to tell. Some of the tales, like the deceased themselves, have been buried by time: the grave of prisoner 21520 in Walla Walla state pen, for example. You’ll need some Weird help to find out who he was or why he was there. Other graves we may never find, like that of convicted killer Henry Timmerman, who cursed the town of Goldendale for his execution, a curse that came true (at least in part)!

But many other interesting graves are right out there, easy for the curious to investigate. Just be careful not to disturb the spirits who lie below. They have been known to be very unfriendly those who don’t show proper respect.

Cemetery Safari



Visiting the Lees in Lakeview

In *Seattle's Lakeview Cemetery*, two of the most famous residents are Bruce Lee and his son, Brandon, both of whom died early deaths. Every year thousands of people from all over the world come to visit their final resting place. Visitors are so common that when we recently went into the cemetery office to ask about another matter, the receptionist did not even look up from what she was doing. She pointed to a little box beside the entryway and, in a tone that suggested she repeated the same thing several times a day, said, "There are maps to the Lee graves in the box beside you."

After Chairman Mao, Bruce Lee is probably the most recognized Asian in the world. He was one of the greatest martial artists in history, creating the discipline of Jeet Kune Do, or The Way of the Intercepting Fist. He was also a star of film and television. As a child, Lee starred in several movies made in Asia. In the 1960s, he was the crime fighter Kato on television's *Green Hornet*. Bruce Lee taught Kung Fu to actors like Steve McQueen and James Coburn. Because of his talent and hard work, he managed to break Hollywood's racial barrier and became internationally famous as a leading man.

Like many well-known people, Bruce Lee had his enemies and critics. When he died in 1973 at the age of thirty-two, there were rumors that he was killed for revealing Asian fighting secrets to Westerners. An autopsy surgeon told a skeptical public that Lee probably died of an allergic reaction to a prescription drug.

Brandon Lee died in 1993 at the age of twenty-eight, while filming the movie *The Crow*. He was killed by an improperly loaded stunt gun. In the case of both father and son, their final movies were released posthumously to rave reviews.

Many believe the Lees were like stars that shined too brightly and burned out before their time. They are buried

side by side; local fans and some of Bruce Lee's former students take care of the grave sites. It is not difficult to find them, even without a map. There is usually a car or two parked nearby and a small crowd gathered around the father and son. The Lee family had a bench erected at the foot of the graves, on which fans may sit. Many people leave symbolic offerings, like flowers, coins, letters, toy weapons, and food.

When we visited the Lees, there was a couple from Washington DC there who had brought a friend from Poland. He talked about how he idolized Bruce Lee and how seeing his movies as a child (not an easy feat in a country that was Communist at the time and considered Lee's movies to be Western decadence) influenced his study of the martial arts. He eventually earned a fourth degree black belt in his discipline and considered his visit the smallest respect he could pay to Bruce Lee.

Some people believe that the spirits of the departed may come to the grave site when friends and family gather there. Many people say they have somehow touched the spirits of Bruce and Brandon at their graves, and at least one person may have evidence of that in a photograph. In 2004, T. C. O'Reilly sent us an e-mail along with a curious photograph:

I recently visited Bruce Lee's grave in Seattle and took some pictures and found something very interesting in one of them. My girlfriend and I were the only people there that day and she was standing in front of the tombstone when it was taken, yet there's still a reflection of what looks like a small Asian man [in it]. Take a look and tell me what you think, especially look in the reflection on the tombstone.

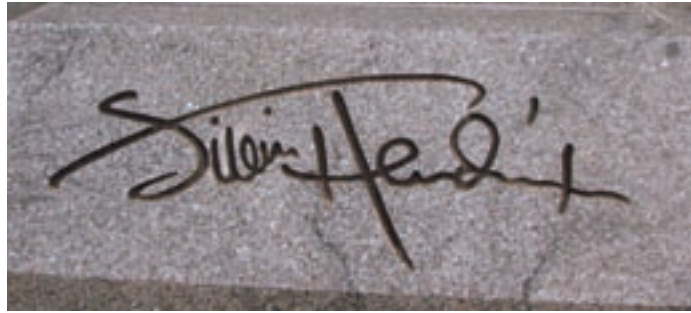


Electric Graveland

'Scuse me while I kiss the sky.

So goes one of Jimi Hendrix's most famous lyrics, and kiss the sky he did, much too early by any standard. The Seattle-born rock musician, known for his overdriven guitar riffs and flamboyant attire, was only twenty-six when he died in a London hotel from asphyxiation caused by vomiting. September 18, 1970, marked the tragic end of a major talent who, in all likelihood, had not yet reached his full potential.

Jimi reportedly told friends he wished to be buried in England. However, his father, James "Al" Hendrix, had him returned to the



Seattle area and interred in a family plot at Greenwood Memorial Park in Renton. His grave was marked by a simple headstone with an etching of a Fender Stratocaster guitar, his instrument of choice (though the guitar pictured is right-handed, and Jimi adapted his to play left-handed). At the time, this basic grave was all Al Hendrix could afford.



After his death, Jimi's popularity grew. In the 1990s, a generation of young Seattle grunge musicians was inspired by his musical technique. Jimi's legacy instilled local pride, and fans regularly made pilgrimages to his grave site. The cemetery's management began worrying about damage to nearby graves from all the foot traffic.

To ease concerns and to vastly expand the family's burial space (since the extended Hendrix family had significantly grown beyond the original plot's five graves), Al Hendrix announced plans for a new memorial to his son, bigger and more fitting to his iconic status. Al envisioned such a memorial for a long time, but didn't gain the financial means to build it until the mid-1990s after acquiring the rights to Jimi's music.

Designed by architect Mark Barthelemy, the memorial was constructed over the next few years by Cold Spring Granite of Minnesota. It was dedicated, still unfinished, in June 2002. Sadly, Al Hendrix had died two months earlier.

The memorial consists of a circular plot of land with a granite dome supported by three columns. The slightly raised structure is accessible by steps and a ramp. The outer base is circled with headstones for Hendrix family members; there's space for fifty-four graves, with Al Hendrix and a few other relatives currently occupying some.



Jimi is interred in the ground beneath the gazebo, with his original gravestone embedded on a pedestal that is intended to support a much-delayed brass statue. Fans presently use it as an altar for paying their respects: They tape guitar

picks to it and drop offerings to Jimi's memory into a hole where a peg on the statue's base will one day be inserted.

Disputes over the remainder of Jimi's multimillion-dollar estate have divided surviving members of the extended Hendrix family. It's speculated that this is why the statue, supposedly being sculpted in Italy at the time of the 2002 dedication, has not been mounted in the memorial. Instead, fans can admire the statue of Jimi in Seattle's Capitol Hill, on Broadway just north of East Pine Street.

Hendrix biographers have noted an odd situation involving the family and Greenwood Memorial Park. Jimi's mother, Lucille, who died in 1958 when he was just fifteen, lies elsewhere in an unmarked pauper's grave. Why was she buried this way? Why didn't Jimi buy her

a gravestone after achieving rock stardom, especially given his well-known devotion to her? Why hasn't she been moved to one of the plots at the memorial? The answers may point to more family discord.

Greenwood Memorial Park is located at 350 Monroe Avenue NE in Renton. The Jimi Hendrix memorial is easily visible on the west side of the cemetery.

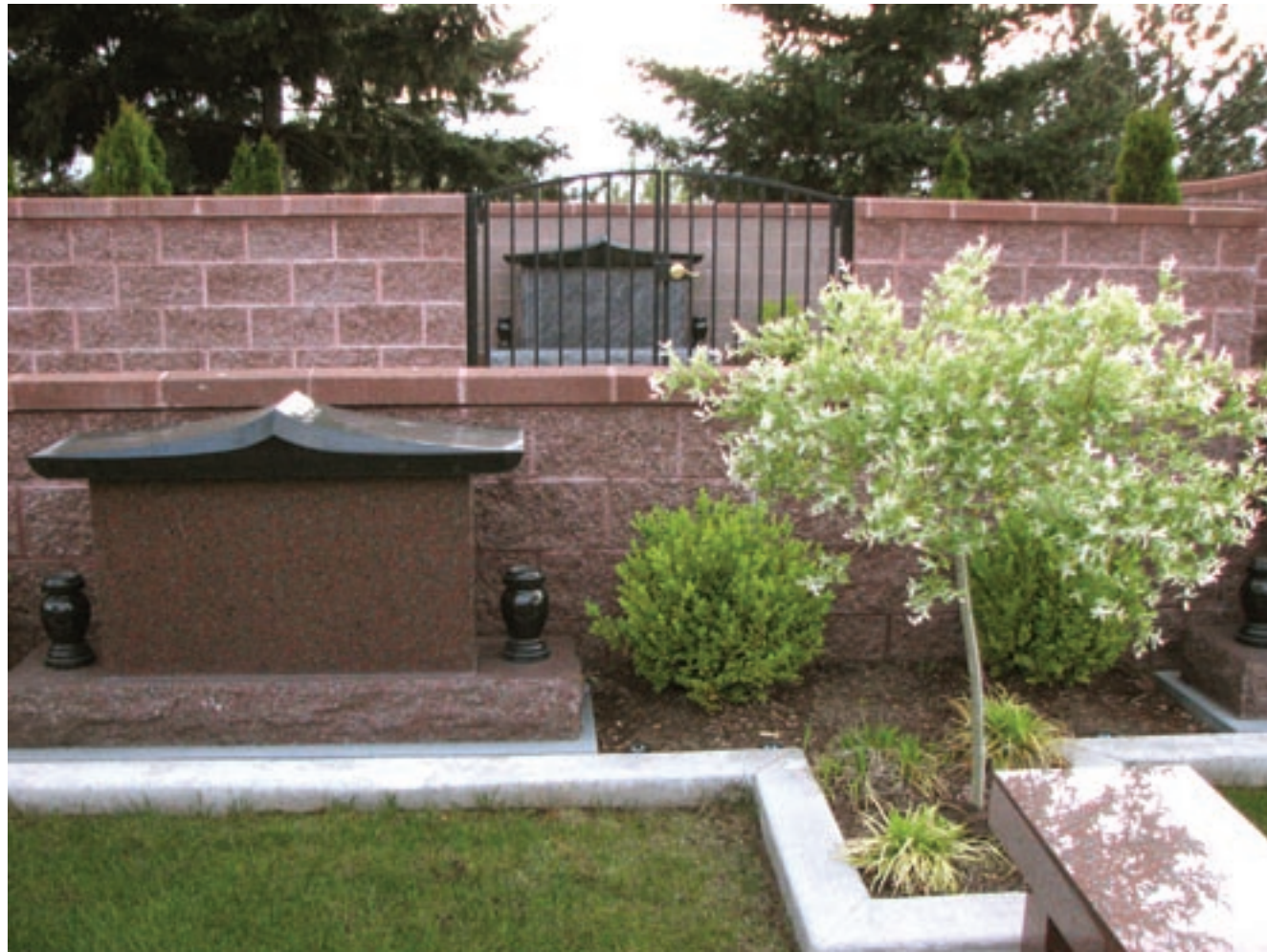




arden of Eternal Peace

Adjacent to the Jimi Hendrix memorial is a rather elegant section of Greenwood cemetery called the Garden of Eternal Peace. Based on traditional Asian design, the garden features a central shelter surrounded by a shallow manmade moat. Its water is pumped around boulders and over small waterfalls, providing a calming ambient sound to break the cemetery's mournful silence. On either side of the shelter are rows of gravestones with the tops shaped to resemble curved Asian roofs. The back of the garden is partitioned into gated brick enclosures for private family plots.

The garden was dedicated in April 2006 for the memorial park's first commemoration of the Ching Ming Festival (the traditional Asian holiday dedicated to grave tending and honoring one's ancestors); the vast majority of graves are still unused, the gravestones blank. The Garden of Eternal Peace is a culturally significant accommodation for the large Asian community in the area; but more than that, as the blank gravestones are gradually carved with occupants' names, it can serve as a profound reminder of the passage of time toward our shared fate.



Henry Timmerman's Curse

Reality and fiction are both full of tales of innocent men and women sentenced to death for crimes they did not commit. Before they are put to death, many of the condemned make final statements proclaiming their innocence. Some even put curses on the heads of their oppressors, and these curses usually come true . . . in fiction. But in the real-life case of Henry Timmerman, the first half of his curse did come true, leading many to take drastic action to prevent the second half from doing the same.

In 1888, Henry Timmerman stood trial for the murder of a former friend. No one saw him kill the man or even placed Timmerman at the scene, but he was the only candidate for the crime. He was caught after a monthlong

manhunt, and the location of his trial had to be changed three times due to threats by vigilantes. Despite his pleas of innocence, he was found guilty and sentenced to hang. His case was appealed at the Territorial Supreme Court, and the German government became involved because Timmerman was a German citizen. Despite these efforts, all appeals were denied, and Timmerman was scheduled to hang in Goldendale on April 6, 1888.

The people of Goldendale built a special gallows on a hill overlooking town. (A gallows with a view!) Timmerman rode up to the site in the back of a wagon, sitting on top of his coffin. As his final request, he asked for a cigar and a bottle of whiskey, and all the way up the road, he puffed his cigar, drank the whiskey, and jeered at the hostile crowd.



No one knows who actually did it: the lying witnesses, the real murderers, or even the sheriff, but somebody snuck into the graveyard and dug up Timmerman's grave, thus fulfilling part of the curse themselves. After making sure he was still dead, they threw his body into a nearby stream.

Timmerman did have some supporters, and when they heard about the desecration, they found his body and reburied it in a hidden grave. Perhaps this broke the curse,

When the wagon arrived at the gallows, the crowd paused, waiting to see Timmerman dragged from the wagon to his death.

Instead of cowering in fear, Timmerman jumped down from the wagon and walked up the thirteen steps of the scaffold. With clear contempt for his audience, Timmerman threw his cigar into the waiting crowd and watched them tear it apart, fighting for scraps. He proclaimed his innocence one last time and then cursed the group, saying that if they hanged him, within three months the town of Goldendale would burn to the ground. Not only that, the men involved in his conviction would die. He also said that he would rise from the grave.

Timmerman waited quietly while they fitted a noose around his neck, and a few minutes later, he was dead. The crowd dispersed, probably disappointed in the show and trying to forget Timmerman's curse. But a month later their memories were no doubt refreshed when the town caught fire. The blaze started in the business district; then it swept through the streets, burning the city hall and jail. Remembering the rest of Timmerman's curse, many of the townspeople were frightened. Would it also come true?

because none of the people involved in Timmerman's trial died mysteriously – or maybe Timmerman's spirit was satisfied after making the people of Goldendale sweat it a little bit.

In our research, we often find that legends like this are too good to be true. But the Klickitat County Historical Society in Goldendale verifies this tale, at least the parts about the trial, the hanging, and the great fire. The town has even celebrated Henry Timmerman Day on special occasions over the years. Records of Timmerman's burial, though, are less clear. The historical society directed us to Mountain View Cemetery, north of Goldendale. There we looked at a detailed map with the locations of all the graves in the cemetery, but found no mention of Timmerman. A caretaker we spoke to confirmed the legend, but said that there was no gravestone or marker.

Just in case, we wandered the cemetery, hoping to find Timmerman's grave. We didn't, but this isn't proof the grave was never there. Several headstones were so worn that their inscriptions were illegible. Regardless, neither vandals nor time have erased the memory of Henry Timmerman. This might be fitting justice in an imperfect world.

Separated Together: Roslyn Historical Cemeteries

It's not really Cicely, Alaska; it just played it on TV. The town of Roslyn, in Kittitas County, is perhaps best known as its quirky alter ego in the 1990s television program *Northern Exposure*. In real life, it's a quiet small town in the Cascade Mountains. Downtown buildings still evoke the nineteenth century, while some area homes are pure Norman Rockwell, complete with white picket fences. The population has remained steadfastly in the nine hundreds for years.

In fact, here the dead outnumber the living 5 to 1.

This is because the town, founded in 1886, has kept generations of its deceased close to home. Specifically, they're in the forested hills along Pennsylvania Avenue, on a fifteen-acre expanse comprising twenty-six separate but contiguous cemeteries. Collectively, they're referred to as the Roslyn Historical Cemeteries.

By walking the grounds, there are two things you quickly realize about Roslyn's past. First, its coal mining industry attracted a multinational, multiethnic mix of workers. Poles, Italians, Slovaks, and other nationalities were well represented, as were African Americans—all sharing the town in relative peace. Secondly, folks here loved organizing themselves into fraternal organizations: Along with the Masons, Odd Fellows, Moose, and Eagles, lesser known societies like the Red Men and Sokol had lodges in Roslyn.

These groups and nationalities all have dedicated cemetery space. Veterans have a place of honor right in front, in what resembles a mini-Arlington. Then there are general-purpose burial grounds like the Old and New City Cemeteries. The Old City Cemetery is the most antique, with its family plots fenced-in to keep out foraging animals.

Roslyn suffered its greatest disaster on May 10, 1892, when a mine explosion killed forty-five workers.

The memory of this tragedy is literally etched in stone throughout the cemeteries on the grave markers of some of those killed.

Though the grounds are mostly well kept, many of the graves, particularly those corresponding to defunct lodges, are showing their age. This contributes to the “long ago and far away” aura permeating Roslyn in general and the cemeteries in particular.



Prisoner 21520: The Grave You Can't Visit

The cemetery at the Walla Walla penitentiary is a place of true anonymity. It's off-limits to the general public, and when a prisoner passes away, a simple brick marks his grave with his inmate number, like that of prisoner 21520: Jake Bird.

"Jake who?" you might ask. Therein lies the point of this tale.

Even though serial killers do their business anonymously, many crave fame and notoriety. They write letters and give clues to the press and police that can eventually lead to their capture. Once caught, serial killers tend to take on a celebrity status that follows them even after they die. Perhaps the single greatest fear of this kind of monster is to be forgotten, which is exactly what happened to Jake Bird.

As an African American, Jake Bird doesn't fit in with the usual group of disgruntled Caucasian guys who make up the profile of most serial killers. And he wasn't tripped up by writing letters or leaving cryptic clues behind; rather, he was caught as a result of a robbery gone wrong.

On October 30, 1947, he broke into a Tacoma home, carrying an axe. He'd later tell police he just intended to rob the house, but its owner, fifty-three-year-old Bertha Kludt, surprised him. So he killed her with the axe. In the middle of this, Bertha's daughter Beverly June arrived and tried to stop Bird, so

he killed her too. The police heard the screams of the two women, and they captured Bird as he fled the area.

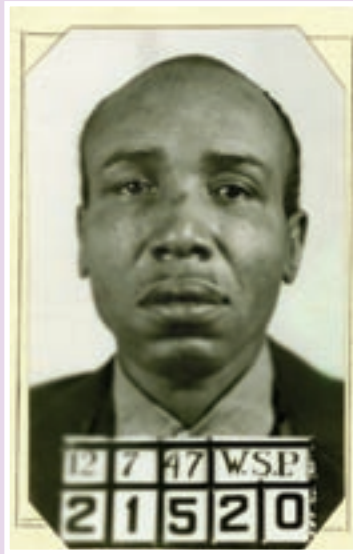
Bird pled innocent and said he wanted to represent himself in court, but a lawyer was appointed for him. The trial lasted two days, and the jury deliberated for only a half hour before declaring Jake Bird guilty of the premeditated murder of Beverly Kludt. Before sentencing, Bird's attorney told the judge that Bird deserved the death penalty.

When Bird was asked for comment, he spoke for twenty minutes. Noting that his defense team was against him and his request for self-representation was denied, he declared that all the men involved in his case and conviction would die before he did. The judge, unimpressed,

sentenced him to be executed at the state penitentiary in Walla Walla on December 7, 1947.

Jake Bird changed strategies at the penitentiary. He filed a series of motions to set aside his murder conviction on technicalities, and argued his own case at the Washington State Supreme Court. Strangely, even though he continued to plead innocent to the Kludts' murders, Jake Bird admitted to killing another forty-four people across the United States.

Like many other serial killers, Bird knew that information could buy him time. He told authorities he had traveled the United States for



nearly thirty years, working mostly on the railroads. He claimed to have killed people—mostly women—in twelve states, including South Dakota, Florida, and Oklahoma. He received several stays of execution as he met with law-enforcement officials from across the country. Many thought it was a stunt to delay the inevitable, but Bird gave enough details to make officials think that he committed at least eleven murders.

Reporters visiting Bird in prison noted that he seemed to be in charge, sitting back in a chair and smoking cigars while the guards acted more like his assistants. He especially got a thrill when one of his "oppressors" died, which they did with regularity. Between the day of Bird's conviction and his execution early on July 15, 1949, five men involved in his case died: the trial judge, three policemen, and Bird's defense

attorney. With each death, Jake Bird misquoted the Bible, suggesting his curse was divine justice.

It's likely that the serial killer in Bird hoped there would be a parade of visitors to his grave site in the years to come. It would not have mattered to him if they were fans or enemies, so long as they remembered him as one of America's most prolific serial killers. In reality, his ending was justifiably pathetic. Since the general public can't get access to the cemetery, parades of gawkers never materialized at his grave. Even a request by Weird Washington failed to gain entry into the penitentiary or cemetery. Perhaps the greatest blow to Jake Bird's ego would be that penitentiary officials were too busy to take pictures of his grave site for this book. But it's probably for the best, so Bird can sink back into the obscurity he justly deserves.

Cemetery Beneath Seattle's Suburbia?

*In the movie **Poltergeist***, a real estate developer built houses on top of an old cemetery. While the tombstones had been removed, the bodies remained buried, causing suddenly restless spirits to throw a temper tantrum of Hollywood proportions.

Some believe a similar scenario is taking place in real life on Seattle's Beacon Hill.

Comet Lodge Cemetery is located on South Graham Street between Twenty-Second and Twenty-Third Avenues South. The vibrant grass of the 2.5-acre memorial park is a surreal contrast to the weathered old grave markers dispersed throughout the grounds. It's a marked improvement from the bramble jungle it had been for decades, but given its history, any perceived serenity in this final resting place is fleeting at best.

Bereavement, Bureaucracy, and Breakdown

First known as the Old Burial Grounds, this is where the Duwamish Indians laid their loved ones to rest. The Mapel family, among Seattle's first settlers, bought the original five acres of property as part of their estate. They began interring their own here in 1880. In 1895, they officially established the land as Comet Lodge Cemetery for an Independent Order of Odd Fellows lodge of which a Mapel family member was president. The cemetery was used until 1936.

Two years later Seattle and King County foreclosed on the property, citing failure to pay back taxes. Some considered this a blatant land grab, since cemeteries are legally exempt from foreclosure. Regardless, it set the stage for decades of controversy. The cemetery was caught in a bureaucratic limbo as confusion reigned over its rightful ownership. The only certainty was that the more time passed, the more the cemetery succumbed to neglect and vandalism. In a 1948 letter to the Seattle City Council, city treasurer Herbert Collier described the cemetery as

being "in a deplorable condition. Graves were sunken, tombstones were scattered here and there, and the brush has overgrown everything with the exception of a few foot paths. It would be almost impossible to estimate the number of graves, but a rough guess would be . . . considerably more than one hundred."

One way or another, Collier was drastically underestimating. King County records indicate 494 burials at Comet Lodge Cemetery. Others report as many as 1,000. Why such a great disparity? The extra 500 could represent estimated burials by the Duwamish Nation. Or, as some believe, it accounts for burials in the northern 2.5 acres, where eleven homes were eventually built atop possibly unexhumed graves. Some of these are said to be part of the cemetery's Babyland, a section for common burial of children prior to the purchase of a family plot.

John Dickinson, a local activist who has ancestors buried in the grounds, has gathered about one thousand pages of evidence that he contends demonstrate several unethical and potentially illegal indignities committed against Comet Lodge Cemetery by city and county government. His research shows that in addition to houses, both a portion of Twenty-second Avenue South and the western half of Twenty-third Avenue South are also built on grave sites.

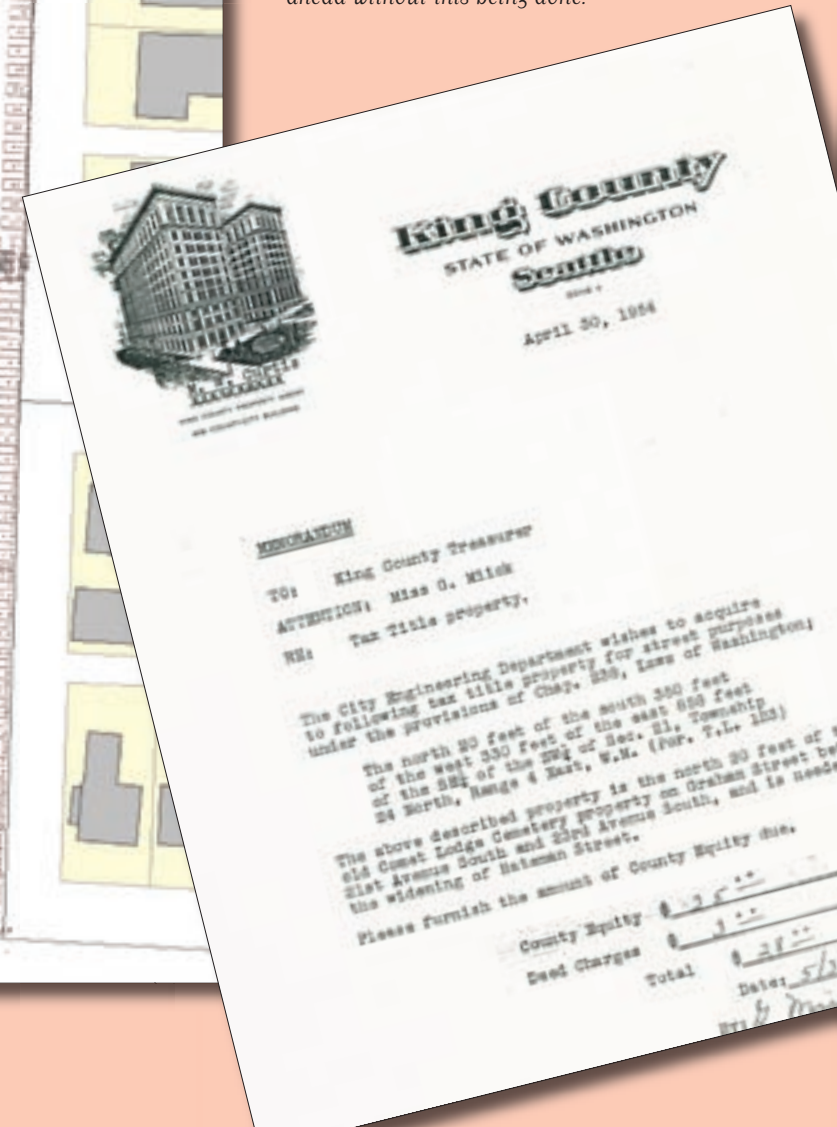
As suburban homes expanded onto Beacon Hill, residents launched occasional cleanup efforts at the graveyard which for various reasons never reached fruition. Meanwhile, vagrants camped in it, trash was dumped in the wild brush, and gravestones were damaged or stolen.

In 1987, local resident Don Kipper obtained permission to clean up the site. By the time officials realized he was an unabashed eccentric who wanted to build a dream home on the cemetery, he'd already bulldozed about two hundred grave markers. Eyewitnesses still mention the startling sight



Left: Comet Lodge Cemetery's original plan, showing the layout of graves, overlaid on an official Seattle neighborhood zoning map. The orange area represents retail space, which the southern half of the cemetery was zoned as until the 1990s.

Below: Seattle and King County correspond in 1954 regarding the acquisition of part of the cemetery for road widening. Seattle is advised that it must exhume affected graves prior to commencing with the project. Critics charge that the widening went ahead without this being done.





of broken gravestones in a pile, and visitors who helped themselves to these “mementos.” Although Seattle city leaders were supposedly incensed by Kipper’s actions, more graves were later bulldozed (ironically on All Souls’ Day) to install a new sewer line.

In the 1990s, John Dickinson organized a volunteer group and obtained a permit to attempt his own restoration, but efforts were impeded, he said, by claims that the work was destroying trees “where falcons were nesting.” He pointed out it was in the middle of winter and that no nests were in the trees.

Eventually, King County executive Ron Sims proposed clearing out the remaining gravestones and turning the property into an off-leash dog park. Activists balked; they would accept no less than a dignified restoration of the cemetery. So the county finally took up the effort, grooming it into its current well-kept state. However, controversy remains.

Of the 494 graves on official record, only thirty-one grave markers have been salvaged or retrieved. Eighteen of these remained on (or were matched to) their corresponding graves. The remaining thirteen were dispersed “aesthetically” around the grounds, but their intended grave sites are unknown. A pile of broken grave markers still lies beneath a tree on the property. A promised fence was never installed, and dogs run leash-free there.

The Dead Weigh In

How might the dead in Comet Lodge Cemetery feel about all the decades of neglect and disturbance? Film fantasies like *Poltergeist* are hardly required to answer this question. According to local legend, deceased residents make themselves known from time to time.



There are recurring accounts of the spirit of a little boy walking around the grounds and of the distant sound of children laughing. It’s said that stepping over certain unmarked graves might yield a sudden, mild feeling of distress. Or you might hear sticks breaking underfoot, even if you’re alone and didn’t step on any. Floating orbs of light are occasionally spotted at night.

Beverly Washington, who lived in one of the houses on the northern half of the cemetery,



gained some fame by sharing her supernatural experiences with the local media. She claimed to have peacefully shared her home with some ghostly Comet Lodge inhabitants. A spectral woman and a little boy (perhaps the same one who walks around the grounds) would sit at the foot of her granddaughter’s bed. She described flickering lights and a cloudlike transparent figure swooping from room to room. When some of her yard was dug up in 1987 for the sewer line, her phantom housemates panicked. Suddenly more aggressive, they engaged in threatening and destructive behavior until the construction ended. Similar activity was reported in other nearby homes.

If these incidents are meant to express dissatisfaction with the cemetery’s current state of affairs, the ghosts certainly have living allies. John Dickinson, for one, continues to promote the cause whenever possible. As he puts it: “There is no statute of limitations excusing ongoing desecration of a federally protected, Native American, designated Historic Cemetery.”



Afterglow Vista

Most people think family cemeteries, particularly ones in the western United States, consist of a couple of tumbledown marble or wooden headstones surrounded by a rotting picket fence. Sad to say, this is mostly true, but there are exceptions. Take, for example, the family plot of the McMillins in Roche Harbor.

John McMillin owned the local lime works and was active in local and state politics. He believed he owed much of his success to his religion, personal philosophy, and family, and he wanted to express this through the construction of a family tomb that was full of symbols that would be rich to him and to others. The meaning of many of the tomb's symbols has faded, but visitors can find several places in Roche Harbor that have maps to the tomb and pamphlets explaining the design and purpose of the magnificent structure.

The mausoleum is located near Friday Harbor and can be found by following a trail in the local cemetery leading through a green, overgrown wood; a sign reading afterglow vista marks the entrance.

After going through the gates, visitors must walk up three flights of stairs. The steps symbolize many things, especially to Freemasons. The first flight has three steps, which represent the three ages of man. The second has five steps, which represent both the five orders of classic architecture and the five senses. The last flight of seven steps represents the seven liberal arts and sciences and

also symbolizes the seven days of the week.

Once up the stairs, visitors reach a raised platform on which several pillars support a domed roof. In ancient times, pillars lined the western entrance to any house of worship. At Afterglow, one of the western pillars was installed broken to symbolize the way death breaks the column of any man's life.



Perhaps the most striking feature of Afterglow is the large limestone table on the platform, which symbolizes the entire McMillin family meeting in unity over dinner. Around the table are chairs for each family member, with the corresponding names written on the chair

backs. A hollow niche inside each seat serves as the place in which the family member's cremated ashes rest.

Besides the family, one other person is buried here: Ada Beane. She was McMillin's personal secretary and more like family than an employee. After she died, she was cremated, and the family kept her ashes, which were later interred in the family crypt.

Unfortunately, vandals turn up even in remote places like Roche Harbor. A few years ago they attacked the McMillin crypt, damaging one chair back and removing another completely. Even so, the place still has a peaceful aura. As the sun goes down on summer evenings, the light shines through the trees on the tomb. Some people believe that when it does, the shadows somehow change, and the McMillin family meets again to have a ghostly dinner together in the afterglow.

Even Wild Men Have Graves

The Tornow family plot is located in Grove Cemetery, about seven miles south of Matlock, in Mason County. It's not easy to find, which probably suits one of the Tornows buried there—John—quite well. John liked his privacy, but his attempts to be alone would be hampered by changes in social attitudes, nosy neighbors, and plain bad luck. Even today, his story inspires some and angers others.

John Tornow was born in the Olympic Peninsula in 1880. His older brothers may have picked on him, or he may have just naturally sought the solitude of the woods. For whatever reason, by the age of ten, Tornow disappeared into the woods with his rifle and stayed for weeks at a time. His family tolerated his behavior for a while, but in 1909, his brothers committed him to a mental institution in Oregon.

John was either released or escaped the next year. He made his way back to his old hunting grounds along the Satsop River, west of Olympia. He refused to talk to his brothers, but visited his sister and became attached to her twin sons, Will and John Bauer. He settled into a routine of hunting, fishing, and occasionally coming into town for necessities.

People in town were a little afraid of Tornow, who was well over six feet tall and weighed over two hundred pounds. He usually dressed in a mix of cotton or wool clothing patched with animal

skins. Sometimes he wore shoes he made of tree bark.

Tragedy struck in September 1911. According to some, Tornow's brothers decided to have him committed again, and his nephews went to warn him. Others suggest that the young men went to bring him in by force. Either way, Tornow was skinning an animal in a clearing when a shot rang out, followed by a bullet whizzing over his head. An expert shot, he returned fire. When he went into the brush, he found he had killed both of his nineteen-year-old nephews.

Without waiting for the local sheriff or deputies, Tornow fled into the wooded Wynoochee Valley. In newspaper articles, the press called him the Wild Man of Wynoochee. A posse of up to fifty men scoured the

countryside, searching for him until snows closed the trails. The hunt might have ended that winter, except that money entered the picture in February 1912. Someone broke into Jackson's Country Grocery Store and stole supplies. The culprit also took a strongbox with \$15,000 in it. The sheriff blamed Tornow and offered a reward.

In spring, trappers, loggers, and law-enforcement officials again scoured the woods for Tornow and the money. Reports came in from all over western Washington, with people claiming to see



the fugitive as far north as Lake Quinalt and as far south as Raymond. Some were afraid to go out into the woods unless they were armed. Logging operations virtually ceased in some areas. With all these paranoid people in the woods, there were numerous accidental shootings or attacks.

In March 1912, Sheriff McKenzie and Albert Elmer probably found Tornow, because on March 16, hunters found THEIR bodies. They had both been shot, then buried in shallow graves. If anybody else found Tornow, they did not live to tell about it.

In April 1913, Deputy Giles Quimby and two other men came across Tornow's camp. He was waiting for them and killed two of the men. Quimby took shelter behind a tree, where he yelled to Tornow that he would let him go if Tornow told him where the missing money was hidden. Tornow told him the money was buried near Oxbow, by a boulder that was shaped like a giant fish fin. Quimby fired into the woods where he thought Tornow was hiding and then fled to Montesano, where he gathered a posse. They returned to Tornow's camp, where they found the Wild Man of Wynoochee dead, leaning against a tree.

The posse returned Tornow's body to Montesano, where over two hundred and fifty people crowded into the funeral home to see the Wild Man's body. They stole bits of his clothing and locks of his hair as souvenirs.

Someone took a picture of his body and sold it as a postcard.

Tornow's brothers took his body and buried him in the family plot at Grove Cemetery, near Matlock. His grave lies a few feet away from his nephews'.

John Tornow's story certainly didn't die with him. People have searched for the stolen money but never found the fin-shaped rock. Several authors wrote books about Tornow, seeing him as either a maniac or a victim of hysteria and paranoia. Many people visit the Wild Man's grave, where they leave behind offerings to his memory including flowers, bullets, money, and the occasional beer.

As previously mentioned, Grove Cemetery is not easy to locate. There are no signs along West Brady Matlock Road, which runs several miles through timberland, clear-cuts, and small house holdings. We went up and down the road twice before giving in and stopping to ask for directions at the small market where West Brady Matlock Road meets West Shelton Matlock Road.

While enjoying some very good fried chicken gizzards, we talked with the woman at the deli counter. Like most of the people in Matlock, she knew where John Tornow was buried. She was nice enough to call someone with the Mason County Historical Society, who came with a book or two on the subject. He gave us directions to the cemetery and said that the current tombstone was a recent replacement of the original, which had deteriorated.

Finding our way back to the cemetery was easy with directions. It was about five miles south of the store, just after (or was it before?) a steel car bridge. It was on the west side of the road, marked with a carved log that said simply grove. The cemetery is small—about five acres—and well taken care of. So far, no vandalism was evident, probably because the people who live across the street have guns! Or it could be that the Wild Man of Wynoochee still somehow guards his privacy.



Maltby's Mystique

SA *hilltop* on the outskirts of Woodinville is where the Doolittle family and their descendants have interred their dearly departed since the early 1900s. This family plot, known as Maltby Cemetery, currently contains about forty graves along an elevated forest trail that extends into the backyard of a suburban home.

Given its somewhat isolated location and unusual configuration, it's no surprise that the small graveyard became big in supernatural folklore. Generations of thrill seekers have contemplated it with curiosity and imagination. In fact, it seems as if most locals have ignored the prominent NO TRESPASSING signs at least once to see for themselves what all the fuss is about.

Among the cemetery's rumored elements and tales:

The Gates (or Pillars) of Hell

Really neither gates nor pillars, these two four- or five-foot-tall concrete obelisks reportedly once supported a gate from the yard into the cemetery. These days they represent an ominous point of no return: a landmark suggesting, "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here!"

Ghosts and Apparitions

The apparition of a woman is sometimes seen wandering the grounds alone, searching for her child through eternity. Alternately, another—or perhaps the same—ghost is seen with a child, both wearing old, ragged clothing. These are just two of many ghostly tales ascribed to the cemetery. Others include an eerie whispering in the air as the wind blows through surrounding trees, ghosts shoving or hitting trespassers, and, of course, floating orbs of light.

The Changing Gravestone

One legend concerns a particular gravestone that changes its appearance from a fairly small, generic marker to a

larger, ornate monument. To observe this phenomenon, one has to walk past all the graves, then turn around, walk back, and look at the spot where the original marker stood. According to one account, "It's not something you actually see happen; it's more like you notice it afterwards."

The Pentagram Gravestone

Many people mention a gravestone with a satanic pentagram design. Far be it from *Weird Washington* to burst any bubbles, but we have it on good authority that the "pentagram" is actually a square-and-compasses symbol, identifying the grave of a Mason.

The Den

Details are vague on what or where exactly the Den is supposed to be. Some say it's the ground between the Gates of Hell and the graves beyond it. Others specify a clearing nearby in the woods. Either way, legend has it that its entrance is protected by some kind of spiritual force and that anyone who manages to breach it will go irreversibly insane.

The Thirteen Steps to Hell

This is the most often cited Maltby Cemetery legend, though accounts of the steps' location are inconsistent. Some believe they're hidden somewhere on the forest trail; others say they lie beneath a fallen slab in the cemetery itself. In any case, watch that last step. It's a doozy! Rumor has it that many a young person has emerged catatonic from the Thirteen Steps after catching a horrifying glimpse of the infernal netherworld. Or maybe it was the tequila they snuck from Dad's liquor cabinet.

Mystery Guards

Like the stories of men in black who frequent areas with UFO activity, tales of mysterious uniformed guards at



Maltby Cemetery briefly cropped up a few years ago. Though they were doubtlessly flesh-and-blood, a few accounts classified them as supernatural.

If these guards really existed, there's a logical reason for their presence: vandalism. The owners and caretakers of Maltby Cemetery have had to deal with the destructiveness of a few inconsiderate jerks for the past few years. Take our word for it that their patience has worn very thin and the cemetery is strictly off-limits. In addition, the neighbors keep an eye out for trespassers at all hours. Be warned: You risk very real arrest by going there without permission. We strongly suggest you bask in the Maltby Cemetery mystique solely from the pages of this book.

Pickled Willie's Grave

The oldest grave in a private little hilltop cemetery that lies between Raymond and Menlo belongs to nineteen-year-old Willie Keil. Willie actually died over a thousand miles from Washington State, but his untimely death may have given his family safe passage as they traveled across North America to the West Coast.

Willie was the son of William Keil, who was a member of a Christian religious order known as the Bethelites. Seeking religious freedom, William Keil and several followers emigrated from Prussia to the United States in the 1830s. They settled in several places, including New York and Pittsburgh, before reaching Missouri in 1844. They remained there for several years, and the community grew.

In 1855, Keil decided that God wanted him to set up a colony in the Pacific Northwest, so they prepared to head out. His son Willie asked permission to ride in the lead wagon, but a few days before they planned to leave, Willie died.

The elder Keil kept his promise. He lined Willie's coffin with lead and filled it with whiskey. He draped a wagon with black cloth and bells, and put the coffin in the front. This wagon took the lead as they set out along the Oregon Trail.

Along the trail, the Keil party heard tales of wagon trains being wiped out by hostile Native Americans. Many tribes approached them, including the Sioux, Cayuse, and Yakima. Most Native American tribes had a long tradition of respecting burial grounds and parties escorting the dead to them. Each time the Indians arrived, William Keil took the lid off the coffin and showed them his son's body floating in the whiskey. The rest of the party, dressed in black, gathered around and sang dirges and other mourning songs in German. Doing this enabled the Keils to pass safely all the way to western Washington.

They settled near the Washington coast, along the Willapa River, and buried Willie on a hilltop. In the next year, however, the entire colony relocated to Oregon's Willamette Valley, where they founded Aurora. Perhaps they left Washington because of the weather or because William Keil received new guidance from the Lord. The only thing they left in Washington was Willie's grave.

The grave is locally famous and marked by a Washington State historic landmark sign. To find it, from Highway 101, turn south on SR 6 and head south. You will see the marker and vehicle turnout just west of Menlo. It is recommended that visitors do not try to visit the grave itself. The hilltop cemetery is still in use by local families and is located on private property behind a gate that is usually locked to keep in cattle.



The 1000 Steps

The state of Washington seems rather devoid of good urban legends and ghost stories, but one of the best I've heard so far is the "1000 Steps." The 1000 Steps are a set of stairs at a Spokane Cemetery on Government Way. There really couldn't be more than 80 steps, probably fewer. The reason for the exaggerated name is that it is said to feel like 1000 steps when you go up them.

The story continues that on top of the steps (where there is just an old crypt) satanic and pagan rituals are performed, including the sacrifice of animals and children. No one can reach the top of these steps because they experience an overwhelming sense of fear when they get there that prevents them from going further. I've heard many stories from friends who said they've been up there and saw horrible things (demons and such). Others say that it's nothing at all. It doesn't matter really, though. The story is too good to throw out.—*Karli*