



NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY

SECOND AVENUE ABOVE EAST SECOND STREET

www.marblecemetery.org

November 2023

©New York Marble Cemetery, Inc.

HOW MANY CEMETERIES CAN ONE PRESIDENT USE?

The death of President James Monroe is a rare instance of the New York Marble Cemetery and the New York City Marble Cemetery sharing a burial. The fifth president died on July 4, 1831, five years to the day after Thomas Jefferson and John Adams. His son-in-law, Samuel Gouverneur, had purchased Vault 147 in the New York City Marble Cemetery, but the second cemetery was still under construction in the summer of 1831. Monroe's burial was the first to take place there,¹ but it took place sometime after the July 7th formalities. It seems the president was initially interred in a New York Marble Cemetery vault.

Following tradition, Monroe's body was kept in the Gouverneur house on Prince Street until the funeral. At 3 o'clock, as muffled bells tolled, the procession of dignitaries and cavalry left the house for City Hall. The grand ceremonies began with a brief address by Judge William A. Duer, president of Columbia College. It touched on the coincidence of the three presidents' Fourth of July deaths as well as Monroe's signature policy to warn Europe from interfering in the New World – a declaration now known as the Monroe Doctrine.²



*National Museum of Funeral History, Houston
Monroe's hearse would have had less glass.*

The lead-lined mahogany casket with silver nameplate was next moved from City Hall to St. Paul's Chapel, where the service was led by Bishop Onderdonk and Dr. Wainwright. The final trip was in "a hearse covered with black cloth, fringed with gold. From the centre panels the national flag hung reversed and eight black feathers waved above the whole; the hearse was drawn by four black horses. On either side of the hearse, in open barouches, rode the pallbearers."³ City businesses were closed for the day, and the two-mile route up Broadway to Bleecker and then 2nd Street could not hold all the participants. With the spectators, they totaled 50,000⁴ to 100,000,⁵ which was more than half the population of the city.

It was 7 o'clock in the evening when the burial rites, complete with a salute of three minute-gun volleys, took place in one cemetery or the other. Ah, mystery! A newspaper description of the vault as "specially appropriated for the purpose"⁶ and being the "Norris" vault owned by the Cemetery's founder⁷ implies that the site was the older, finished cemetery – the New York Marble Cemetery – not the unfinished New York City Marble Cemetery to which Monroe would be moved. Norris was a name mistaken for Nichols. The developer of both cemeteries was Perkins Nichols, who had received Vault 51 in the New York Marble Cemetery as payment for his services.

A fire destroyed the New York City Marble Cemetery's first burial register. The New York Marble Cemetery, however, is fortunate to have a paper trove going back to the day that its property was purchased. On line 31 of the first page of burials is written:

July 7 James Monroe Widower Prince [street] Virginia [birth] Consumption

After all this, in 1858 President Monroe was removed to Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond.

1 New York Herald. "Quaint old cemetery," 13 May 1888.

2 New York Evening Post, 8 May 1831. The oration is included here, probably in its entirety.

3 Morgan, George: *Life of James Monroe*. Boston: Small, Maynard. 1921.

4 Pintard, John. Letter to his daughter, Eliza Davidson, 1831.

5 Boston Patriot & Mercantile Advertiser, 11 July 1831, citing the *Journal of Commerce*.

6 Boston Courier, 11 July 1831.

7 New York Herald, 2 May 1858. "Tomb of Monroe."

PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE

New York Marble Cemetery (NYMC) is a 501(c)(13) public cemetery, whose vaults have always been offered for sale to the community at large.

It is an enclosed half-acre; with a private alley entrance; two locked gates; private family-owned vaults, managed by a small board of Trustee-Owners.; and is rarely open.

Despite our appearances of exclusivity, that does not make ours a “private” cemetery. Such a graveyard might be set aside for the descendants of a single family.

Since 2016, two empty reclaimed vaults are being offered for sale to the general public for \$350,000 each. The vaults themselves are “private,” designated for family only – not to be shared by friends or affinity groups.

After NYMC was incorporated in 1831 as the first non-sectarian cemetery open to the public, the subscription for vaults was filled up almost overnight by prosperous merchants and professionals, while other vaults were given to local businessmen as payments by the founding trustees to discharge the personal debts of Perkins Nichols, the developer.

MARBLE CEMETERY.
FOR SALE, the only Vault remaining unsold in the Ce-
metery in Second-street, near Bond street. Apply to
16m 6t EDWARD MARTIN, 18 Wall-street.

Several of the vaults changed hands among family members and business partners. A few were advertised, such as Edward Martin’s classified ad for Vault 16, which ran in the New-York American in May 1832.

Thus, we are offering **private** vaults in a **public** cemetery with unusually **private surroundings**.



NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY, INC.

*A New York City Landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places
A 501(c)(13) registered charity*

CONTACT

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stonehillproductions.com

TABLET INVENTORY PROJECT

During the summer, the Trustees began a Conditions Report of the family name tablets, with a view towards the possible replacement or restoration of some of them.

A map of the Owners of Record and tablet condition is available on our website at [www.marblecemetery.org/visit the cemetery/vault map](http://www.marblecemetery.org/visit-the-cemetery/vault-map).

An exception to the “no replacement yet” policy will be when our two reclaimed vaults are eventually sold. At that time, we will provide the new Owners with their own new tablet.

Meanwhile, there is the very real possibility that the NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission will block any replacement efforts, due to concerns about destroying the fabric of the walls. They may eventually recommend alternative solutions for memorializing the owners-of-record, like installing brass markers at the base of the walls.

Over the intervening 192 years, some tablets have been re-engraved (which is not recommended because marble is fragile); replaced with non-matching stone; eroded by the weather to the point of being illegible; cracked badly and missing pieces, while some tablets have vanished entirely.

In the past, when Owners asked to pay for the replacement of their individual family tablets, but not to generally support the restoration of the cemetery, the policy had been to delay, until the walls are fully restored.



Family Name Tablets

Plus, a donation to restore any individual tablet is not tax deductible in the way gifts are when made to the cemetery as a whole.

Another concern can be the strong desire by a single current owner wanting to replace his stone, when there may be dozens of other cousins with differing opinions and who want to leave the tablet untouched, preferring the old weathered style.

Since the Trustees control all aspects of any installation, the final decision to replace the tablets may be years down the road.

To learn more about our history, go to our past newsletters: [www.marblecemetery.org/more about us/newsletter](http://www.marblecemetery.org/more-about-us/newsletter)



If you'd prefer to receive this newsletter by email, notify us at info@marblecemetery.org with your name and the preferred email address.

MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION A 501(c)(13) registered charity

Online via  at www.marblecemetery.org

Or send a check to:
New York Marble Cemetery, Inc.
Attn: Treasurer
P.O. Box 315
New York, NY 10159

ENCLOSED \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

EMAIL _____

For information on gifts of appreciated stock or for a financial statement, please email treasurer@marblecemetery.org

NEWS OF THE DAY



OWNERS MEETING

SUNDAY
MAY 5, 2024
1:30 PM

NORTH WALL BEFORE REPAIR



MAILING NOTE:

To cut mailing costs and conserve paper, we are reducing our snail-mail deliveries. Please send your current email address to info@marblecemetery.org, if you are able to receive our newsletter and postcards online.

We will continue to update our email contact list and master database which lists donations, visits, and Owners connections to the cemetery.

WE APPRECIATE

The **New-York Historical Society** for helping us work with our fragile papers, which they have held for safekeeping in their library since 1977.

Candid (formerly GuideStar) for upgrading our status from Silver to Gold. Candid allows donors to research the transparency of a non-profit's statements.

The **NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission** which oversees our restoration, and issues building permits for the reconstruction of our walls and vaults.



The garden has been very thirsty this year.

We very gratefully receive our hose water courtesy of a hook-up in the Johnston family's townhouse backyard, adjacent to our alley. A metered faucet/header with a nighttime distribution system allows us to measure our usage. Unfortunately, because this has been an unusually hot summer and we have reclaimed more new lawn from old rubble, our water bill is expected to top \$3,500.



NEW YORK MARBLE CEMETERY INTERMENTS 1830-1937

By Anne W. Brown
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inquiries to
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