

THE MOUNT AMWELL NEWS

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Readington Township Steps Up at Woodschurch Cemetery

By David Reading

In August several large and dangerous trees were removed from the Woodschurch Cemetery thanks to a cooperative effort of various bodies within the Readington Township municipal government. The Historic Preservation Commission, the Environmental Commission, and the Department of Public Works all joined in the effort to remove the trees on August 10 and 11.th Public works contractor Ken's Tree Service of Whitehouse, carried out the removal.

The trees became an acute problem two years ago when a large part of a triple trunk tree fell towards the road but missed any headstones. The remaining two trunks were leaning precipitously, one hanging on two other large trees. Removal of these two trees was beyond the ability of MTAP volunteers, and a professional tree service was required. We received several quotes for the work, but the costs were prohibitive.

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Dave Reading attended the monthly Readington Township Historical Preservation Commission meeting on March 10th and described the fallen tree and leaning trees as dangerous prohibiting work on the property. Chairperson Pat Fisher-Olsen agreed to ask the Township Administrator to take action to remove the trees. Neil Hendrickson, Chair of the Readington Township Environmental Commission, and a NJ licensed tree expert, inspected and marked several trees in addition to the leaning ones for removal early in June. Dave Reading thought that there could be more trees removed and met with Neil Hendrickson and Director of Public Works Scott Jesseman, at the cemetery at the end of June to select a few more. Scott said the work would proceed but probably not until August. In the meantime, we needed to remove several headstones located under one of the leaning trees to avoid breakage. Site



1: Woodschurch cemetery, 28 Woodschurch Rd., Readington Twp. After tree removal and cleanup.



2: Large triple trunk tree before removal.



3.: And after

steward Dennis Graney and his volunteers removed the stones in early August. Ken's Tree Service of Whitehouse removed nine trees on August 10 and 11.

Once the trees were removed, we proceeded to reset the headstones that had been disturbed and repair one of the stones broken during the tree work. This was done in September by Dennis Graney and his volunteers, Dave Voorhees, Peter Nace, and Dave Reading. With the site now more visible, it was clear that depressions throughout the cemetery caused by grave collapses were significant enough to require filling with topsoil. We contracted with Tim Alley, owner of Windtryst Nursery in Stockton, for 10 cubic yards of unfiltered topsoil which he delivered on October 10th. In the spring we plan to straighten some headstones, order a second filling of clean top soil, and seed.



5: Buried headstone of Rachel Yorks wife of John Yorks discovered with probe. Rachel died 17 Feb 1868 at age 82.



4: I. Tim Alley delivers top soil. R. Peter Nace fills in grave depressions.

The Death of Harry Reading

This is a letter written (unedited) to his mother after Sgt. Harry Reading died of typhoid on October 31, 1918, in France during World War I. It is from the nurse who treated Harry before he died. Harry Ambrose Reading was born May 29, 1887 in Trenton, Mercer County, New Jersey. He was a twin brother to Alfred A Reading, who was a Captain in war. This letter was sent to me from a Reading cousin, Patricia Wolfe Labrecque who is John J. Reading's Great Granddaughter.

--- Gerald Varner

Bordeaux France Base Hosp 208.

March 10, 1918

My dear Mrs. Reading,

Your letter of Feb 7. Is at hand and I am glad to tell you that your son was an especial friend of mine, as Miss parsons wrote you he always said I reminded him of you. I was in charge of ward 55, where he came into this hospital sick with flue. His charming manners at once singled him out for special interest and attention. He did not develop pneumonia as so many of the flue cases did but, continued to improve rapidly until he said to me "Now I am able to do it let me relieve you of any care of the little ward kitchen." So he took charge of that and was so interested of all the other patients and did so much for those who could not help themselves at all. I cannot remember just how long he did this, it was during our greatest rush of work and I was very, very busy but one day I noticed he was limping badly. When I ask him about it he laughed it off and said a little touch of rheumatism he guessed. But it continued to get worse until he used a crutch. It seemed to centre in one hip joint. Still he insisted he felt better to get around as much as he could. One morning he did not get up and when I went to his bed to speak to him, he ask me if I could get him a prayer book and rosary saying he lost his up at the front. I did this at once and the next day he asked me to send for the priest and told me he was not going to get well. I said why Sergent, Reading I do not consider your case any cause for alarm! He replied that he was sure he was right. Well I sent for the priest and he seemed cheered up. He did not ask anyone to write for him and I did not think of doing so because the Dr. said he would soon be about again. He had a slight fever which the Dr. said was rheumatic. I cannot tell you how many days this kept about so, but not so many.

When the morning the night nurse told that he was delirious during the night and kept asking for his mother I went at once to him and he reached out and took both my hands with such a happy smile and said "when did you come." He had recognized and accepted the mother heart, and from there until the end he never questioned it again. We did all we could do for him. The day he died the Priest came and administered the sacrament and we buried him with full military honors, his casket draped in our loved stars and stripes and his grave marked with a plain White Cross in the Catholic Section of our Hospital Cemetery. It is a beautiful spot and the little French school children are admitted once a week and decorate the place with flowers. There are always flowers here in Southern France. I have a son (the only child I ever had) with our Armies in Siberia and the last I heard from him was last October. It is so difficult getting mail from there! I expect to return to America sometime in June. No doubt I will have to remain in N.Y. a number of days. Could you not come to see me there? If you will write me the quickest way to communicate with you when I reach there I will so at once upon arrival. Hoping this letter will bring you some comfort in your deep sorrow. I am lovingly yours.

Anna W. Allen

Base Hosp. 208.
Bordeaux France
A.P.O. 708

Message from the president

I will be stepping down as Executive Director at the end of the year and turning over the operation of the Mount Amwell Project to the very capable hands of Beverly Kirby-McDonough (see her short bio below). I am extremely thankful for the support I have received from all of you over the past 15 years. Together we have accomplished much and you should be proud of what we have done. I deeply regret that we could not hold our annual luncheon this year due to the risk of the COVID virus but, hopefully we can recover next year. We continue to maintain six cemeteries and will probably take on an additional one in 2021. Your donations make this possible and if you have given already this year, I thank you deeply. If you haven't and want to donate, I've included a donation envelope with the

newsletter. I hope you stay safe and have an enjoyable holiday season. David R. Reading

Announcements

Beverly Kirby-McDonough Named Executive Director



We are very pleased to announce that Beverly Kirby-McDonough will become our **Executive Director** in January 2021. David Reading, executive director since our founding 15 years ago, will remain as President and chairman. Beverly has been working with us for the past two years, organizing the Howell graveyard clean-up last year and doing substantial work updating our on-line cemetery database. She has experience with historic preservation as the treasurer and founder of the Milford New Jersey Historical Society and recording secretary for the Holland Township Historic Preservation Commission. Beverly is a graduate of Montclair State University with Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration. She retired from AT&T in 2019 after serving as Product Manager for several product lines and staff supervisor for a financial support organization where she developed multibillion-dollar budgets. Beverly is well experienced in cemetery field work and documentation. She will contribute greatly to the future success of the Mount Amwell Project.

John Varoli has agreed to volunteer as Communications Coordinator for the Mount Amwell Project. His first project was to work with John G. Reading to post a blog article to our website www.mtamwell.org. Mr. Varoli has 25 years' experience in international media and communications. Nearly 15 years were spent in journalism, writing for major global media such as Bloomberg and the New York Times, as well as Reuters TV. Since 2011, he has a small PR and Communications company, and his wide range of clients include the Belgian Foreign Ministry, Art Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, the Faberge Museum, UNICEF and other UN agencies, Lord Cholmondeley and his estate in Great Britain, Swiss investment funds and pharmaceutical companies, A La Vieille Russie jewelry shop on Fifth Avenue, as well as tech startups from around the world. He holds a dual degree in the

history of U.S. Foreign Policy, and Russian Studies, from Cornell University. He lives in Bergen County and has a great interest in the people and history of Hunterdon County, as well as Revolutionary War America.

David Voorhees will assume the role of **Chief Steward** in January. Dave will coordinate the work of the other stewards, Pat Barber, Trevor Oldenburg, Dennis Graney, and Jeff Barnes in keeping track on all the cemeteries currently under our management. In addition to the extensive work he has done for us, Dave is the caretaker for the Lebanon Reformed Church cemetery on Brunswick Ave. and he was instrumental in acquiring funding for major cleanup at the old Lebanon Reformed Church cemetery on Cherry Street. Dave is a retired carpenter and a descendant of the Voorhees family present in Hunterdon County since the 18th century.



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