

Those Amazing Pet Graveyards!

By Jessica Lykken



A 1916 photo taken in Dr. Buckingham's Dog Graveyard. Washington, D.C. - MOAPH collection

When considering the phrase: “Pets are family,” what images first come to mind? Perhaps it’s a dog welcoming a newborn home alongside first-time parents, or a cat snuggling up to comfort its sick owner. Regardless of the association, people have considered their pets as best friends and family members for centuries, sometimes placing their companionship above even their human relatives.

No other place uniquely illuminates this undying love for animals than that of pet-graveyards.

This article highlights the history of dedicated pet cemeteries. By exploring the oldest animal cemeteries in the UK and U.S., it showcases the evolving relationship between

people and their animal companions and highlights the stories that revolutionized the way animals are memorialized. It also briefly explores the phenomenon at similar sites in Scotland, France, California's West Coast. Ultimately, these amazing pet graveyards capture the impact of pets on the lives and memories of those who cared for them.

The archeological trail of human-animal cohabitation dates to approximately 20,000 years ago for dogs, and 10,000 years for cats, making the history and necessity of animal burials extensive. However, it wasn't until the 18th and 19th centuries that pet-keeping and pet memorialization as people think of today truly developed.

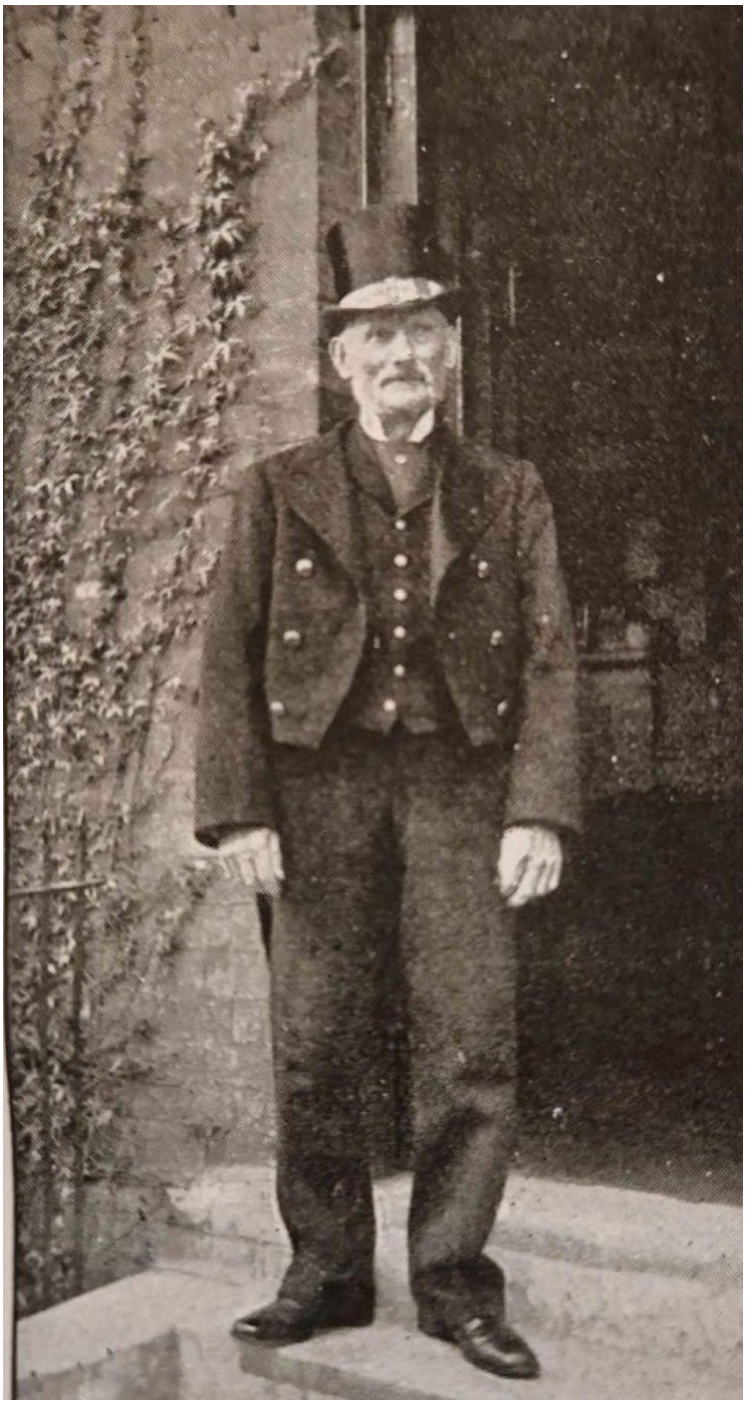
Archaeologist, Dr. Eric Tourigny, discusses how public expressions of grief when animals died emerged within elite Victorian households. He explains how these owners "staged small funerals for their pets, and erected memorials to them in their gardens." This highlights how domesticated animals, once deemed as tools for work, evolved to be seen as companions, especially in families that had disposable income.

The first formal pet cemetery was not founded until 1881. The concept was introduced when the owners of a deceased Maltese Terrier named Cherry sought a peaceful place to lay him to rest. Noticing the beauty of Victoria Lodge, a short distance from Cambridge Square where they lived, the couple decided to ask the gatekeeper permission to bury their dog in his private garden on the grounds.

The gatekeeper, Mr. Winbridge, sympathetically obliged. Word spread of his kindness, and "over the next two decades, almost 500 little gravestones sprang up in the increasingly crowded garden, forming Britain's first dedicated pet cemetery."



A postcard depicting pet headstones in Hyde Park, London. The back of the card has a handwritten message exclaiming that the individual had found "the most interesting cemetery," and asking if the recipient had been there. - MOAPH collection



Mr. Winbridge, gatekeeper at the Victorian Lodge and founder of Hyde Park Pet Cemetery. Credit: The Royal Parks - "A Cemetery for Dogs," *The Strand Magazine,* 1893

The appeal of laying pets to rest in beautiful gardens is not unique to the UK, however. A similar story unfolded in the United States. In 1896, New York City veterinarian, Samuel Johnson, allowed one of his clients to bury their dog in his apple orchard. Known as Hartsdale Pet Cemetery, the property “has over 80,000 dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, reptiles, monkeys, horses, a lion and even some people buried on its five acres.”

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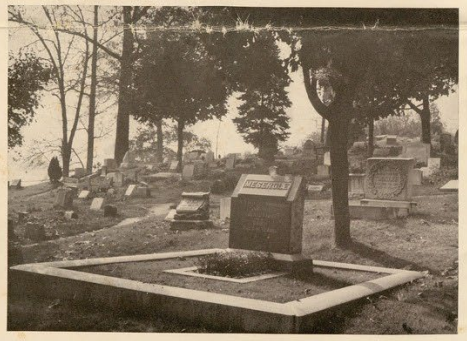
To Maintain the Reputation of the Cemetery Everlasting

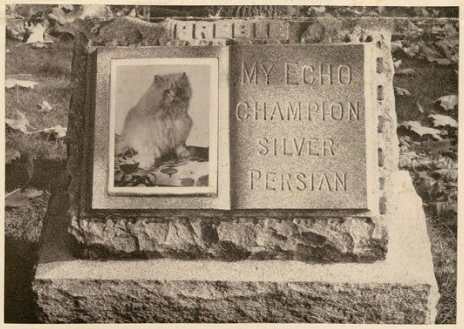
There is a required general upkeep charge of $1.00 for each single lot per year. Annual flower care is optional at $7.00 per year. This consists of Pansies in the spring, followed by Begonias in the summer and fall and a winter cover of evergreen boughs. Endowment for perpetual general care or flower care may be arranged at the office in Hartsdale.

The Chase National Bank of New York is the custodian and trustee of the Tax Endowment Fund and the Perpetual Care Fund. These Funds assure the perpetuity and safety of the cemetery.

The cemetery is a place of beauty and known all over the world by animal lovers. Office and gates are open daily including Sunday from 8 A.M. to 4.30 P.M. Burials are made weekdays only. Arrangements may be made at a nominal charge to call for your pet.

Call WHite Plains 9-2583



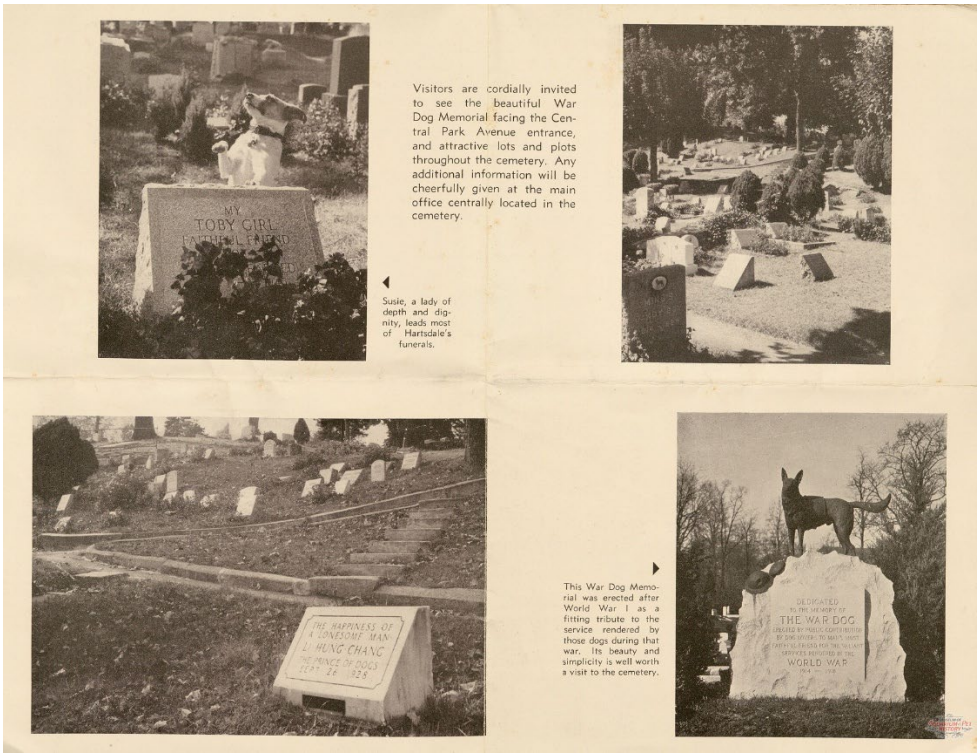


A Permanent Resting Place for a Faithful Friend

This pamphlet advertises Hartsdale as, "a place of beauty and quiet," offering a dignified burial site for people's beloved pets. Interestingly, it became more common for pet cemeteries to emphasize the need to honor a companion animal's life via burial, something historically only seen between humans until that point.



This page of the pamphlet highlights Hartsdale as "America's oldest and most beautiful burial ground for pets," and gives readers directions to the cemetery's location.



The last page of the pamphlet encourages visitors by emphasizing friendly staff, beautiful views, and historic memorial sites, like that of the WWI canine hero statue.

The Museum of Aquarium & Pet History

Although the Hyde Park and Hartsdale pet cemeteries were far from the first animal burial sites, what made them groundbreaking (quite literally), was that conventional pet “disposal” in places like the UK and U.S. had historically involved discarding bodies in the trash or nearby bodies of water. If a pet was buried, it was usually in an undisclosed, unmarked location.

Thus, when Mr. Winbridge and Johnson allowed people to not only bury their beloved animals on their properties but place small headstones that more closely resembled the grave sites of people, they radically, even if unintentionally, broke from tradition.

A Scottish postcard depicts the similarities between human and pet cemeteries. Regimental Pets Graveyard at Edinburgh Castle is situated on a hill that overlooks the city, and headstones distinctly mark the presence of each animal. These sites reflect more than affection for animals—they mirror evolving ideas about which lives deserve ritual, remembrance, and public grief.



Front of postcard: "Regional Pets Graveyard, Edinburgh Castle." *Back of postcard reads:* "An interesting sight is the small, well-kept cemetery, with its row of miniature gravestones marking the burying-ground of the regimental pets." - MOAPH collection

A 1933 article in *Spiller’s Dog Journal* titled “Where Animal Heroes Lie Buried” by Frank Bardon further illuminates this sentiment by discussing an animal cemetery on île des Ravageurs (Wrecker’s Island) in France that houses 25,000 pet graves. Notably, he highlights the stories of animal heroes that have been memorialized at the location.



The monument erected in memory of the mascot of the Chasseurs à Pied.

WHERE ANIMAL HEROES LIE BURIED

A Unique Cemetery with 25,000 Graves on an Island

by FRANK BARDON

I HAVE just visited a unique cemetery in the heart of Paris, whose existence is known to few people in Britain. Even the majority of Parisians know nothing of the animal cemetery on Wrecker's Island in the Seine, where 25,000 pets lie under tombstones and memorials of varying sizes.

Under the direction of an official I passed through the great stone gateway to be confronted with a huge memorial to a huge dog, with a great heart. He was known as "Barry," a St. Bernard attached to the famous Mount St. Bernard monastery in the Alps, and the memorial commemorates his greatest feat. Patrolling in the snow one night, he nosed out a child, who was rapidly dying of cold and exposure. The distance to the monastery was too great for Barry to carry the child in his mouth, but with amazing sagacity, he crouched down beside the little girl, who almost unconsciously nestled into the warm fur and gripped his back. In a moment, Barry was up, and bounding towards the monastery with his precious load on his back. The girl was saved.

Barry saved forty people from certain death in four years, nosing them out in the snow and tugging them to safety, if they were conscious, pulling them if they were insensible. His end was tragic and heroic, for he died doing the duty which had been taught him as a puppy.

During a blizzard, Barry found a man staggering in the snow and tried to bring him to safety. But the man, suffering from delusions as a result of his hardships, mistook the dog, probably for a bear, and struck out at him with his ice-pick. Barry turned back towards the monastery, bleeding profusely, and died before first aid could be applied. But even in death he saved life, for the monks followed the trail of blood and found the demented man.

It was to commemorate the heroic achievements of Barry that the cemetery was begun. Now it contains the graves of pets of every kind from dogs to pigeons. Many of them have made themselves famous for their deeds. The visitor is most surprised, perhaps, to find the graves of two lions. The tablets tell that they were favourites of the famous animal trainer Pezon, and that they lie next to the dog who was their foster mother!

The epitaphs all tell of lives spent in the service of man, of pets whose departure would be harder to bear than that of a relative. The memorial to a canary bears the line: "You other little birds that fly round this tomb, sing softly and low to my little one." Two quotations are repeated many times, chosen by men who, in the bitterness of their grief, compared the faithfulness of dogs with the faithlessness of men. "A dog is virtue which, having been unable to become man, is a beast instead" and "The more I see of men, the more I love my dog," the authors being, of course, Victor Hugo and Pascal.

In order that no one of deep religious feeling shall be offended, it is a strict rule that the tombstones must bear no resemblance to those commonly used in human cemeteries and it is also forbidden to use religious symbols. In many cases the memorial takes the form of a model or cast of the animal, covered by a bell glass to protect it from the weather.

Amongst the many interesting graves is that of a poodle which won many prizes in the show ring. The coronet of its titled owner forms part of the memorial. Another grave marks the last resting place of a Grand Prix winner who later fell dead on the race-course. Part of the island, which is about six acres in extent, is devoted to a crematorium, the ashes being buried.

All kinds of men and women have brought their pets to be buried, from the mongrel of the humblest labourer to the lap dog of the wealthy lady. As a rule there is no "ceremony." The animal is laid in the grave and covered over, with perhaps only the owner and a friend present. But on one memorable occasion a Peke was buried with elaborate ritual. The dog was a great favourite of the Chinese legation, and the officials' wives came in their native costumes to perform the traditional last rites. The bottom of the grave was first covered with flowers and silk and the sides were lined with cushions. On to these the Peke was lowered and more flowers and silk used to cover it before the earth was thrown in. It is a tradition that no coffin must be used for an animal, and that at the same time the earth must not be allowed to touch the body.

The island is a lovely place, in spite of its sad associations. There is not much room left for new graves. As I went back from the quiet and solitude of the island to the bustle of the boulevards, I thought that there must be many men and women who visit the graves and remember their favourites in the words of Lamartine, used on the graves: "Ah, come, this last of my friends who rejoices in hearing my steps. Dry my tearful eyes, lay thy heart close to mine and, alone in the world, let us love each other."



A monument in the Paris Animal Cemetery.

"Where Animal Heroes Lie Buried," an article by Frank Bardon. - MOAPH collection

On example is Barry, a St. Bernard dog from the St. Bernard Monastery in the Alps who risked his life retrieving individuals from treacherous snow conditions. Following his untimely death after a rescue accident, Barry was the first animal memorialized on the French island, a way to commemorate his over 40 successful life-saving operations.



A memorial statue that preserves the heroic legacy of Barry, the St. Bernard. Credit: PraktikantinNMBE CC BY-SA 4.0


6 ALL-PETS MAGAZINE February, 1936

VALHALLA FOR PETS

Mausoleum and crematory of the Los Angeles Pet Cemetery of Hollywood, Calif. Many famous pets are resting in this beautiful structure. It is the most famous of its kind in this country. Pets of all kinds and sizes—from a canary to a horse—are received for burial. —Cut by courtesy Los Angeles Times.

Books by Daustin

The Los Angeles Pet Crematory. – MOAPH collection

Similarly, a 1936 article in *All-Pets Magazine* titled “Valhalla for Pets” by Georgia P. Kendall notes the famous pets buried at the Los Angeles Pet Cemetery. She states that “The Valhalla for pets of Southern California is in its own way becoming famous, since in its quite acres are many pets of stage and screen—all stars in their own way.” Notable mentions include “Puzzums” who starred in “Handy Mandy,” cartoonist Jimmy Murphy’s Boston Terrier, Jiggs, and Dolores Del Rio’s Irish Terrier, Rusty.



VALHALLA FOR PETS

By GEORGIA P. KENDALL

WHEN father buried Johnny's beloved Rover in the family corn field, way back in the 90's, he little dreamed that along with airplanes and other scientific advancements of the human family would come a thoroughly modern equipped crematory, or a restful cemetery, where granddaughter's beloved Fou Fou of Ashcraft could be laid away with all the tender care and dignity which one of such royal lineage deserves from their owner.

The Los Angeles Pet Cemetery is the only one in the West with a modern equipped Mausoleum and Crematory for those who believe in the more sanitary form of burial for their departed canine pals; or perhaps it may be Polly, the family parrot, whose chatter has been stilled in death, and the grieving family feel the need of a place where their pet may be laid away. Since city laws positively forbid burial on city lots—this modern institution fills a great need felt by kindly folks who shudder in horror at giving their departed pet over to the city pound for cremation. It is a great stride along sanitary and humanitarian lines from the days of yesteryear, when Rover or Fido could be buried any old place about the family yard.

This tiny hearse is used by the Los Angeles Pet Cemetery to carry pets to the last round-up.

The original pet cemetery is one that has through the years become famous—it is situated just outside of London, and has been in operation over 80 years. Pets from all the aristocracy of old England repose in this cemetery. We understand it is not equipped with a crematory or mausoleum.

Other pet cemeteries are to be found in Paris, New York, Boston, Chicago and Washington, D. C. Not all of these have the modern equipment which is to be found at the Los Angeles Pet Cemetery.

The valhalla for pets of Southern California is in its own way becoming famous, since in its quiet acres are many pets of stage and screen—all stars in their own way. Among the most famous of these was a cat called "Puzzums." This highly intelligent cat was beloved by many a star of the silver screen. Mack Sennett put this cat under contract—having the cat sign with its own little paw. Puzzums' last appearance was with our beloved Will Rogers, in "Handy Andy."

During the "Be Kind to Animal Week," Puzzums always paraded on Broadway. For this, the Humane Society had purchased and engraved a gold medal to be presented to this wonderful cat. Alas, for the plans of man! An infected tooth caused Puzzums' untimely death and so the Humane Society presented the medal to him on his casket at burial.

Rudolph Valentino's beloved Doberman Pinscher, Kabar, grieving unto death after the loss of his master lies on a sunny slope of this "valley of quiet."

Jiggs, the pet Boston Terrier of Jimmy Murphy, cartoonist; Boogey, Monkey pet of Mae West; Da Da, Irish terrier of Dolores Del Rio; Rusty, belonging to Gloria Swanson; Bozo the Black Raider, of Corinne Griffith; Hansi, the Maltese poodle of Oscar Strauss, the composer; all

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"Valhalla for Pets," an article by Georgia P. Kendall. - MOAPH collection

The article also informs readers that the cemetery offers embalming and cremation services. Kendall explains that the modern facility is “equipped (with a) Mausoleum and Crematory— for animals ranging in size from a horse to and canary bird, and has expertly prepared bodies in a manner that makes them ‘appear natural and lifelike.’”



Another example of such sites in California is Sea Breeze Pet Cemetery. Established in 1961 in Orange County, this location maintains over 40,000 pet graves. Sea Breeze is also the final resting place for "Old Sarge," a decorated WWII Devil Dog and purple heart recipient.

The emphasis on technological advancements and arrangements further suggests that animals became increasingly seen as family members by exemplifying the importance of dignified care, even in death. Businesses like Hoegh Pet Casket Company in Chicago also reflect the demand, as seen by their advertisement below. (See on next page).



A Hoegh Pet Casket Co. advertisement. - MOAPH collection

Yet, regardless of if an animal was cherished by thousands on TV or loved by a single individual—whether they lived for twenty years or only two—such sites are reminders that their time on earth mattered. Although they may no longer be here, their presence continues to shape the households and people that they left behind.



A dog memorial tree in Lake Tahoe. - Photos taken by author

Above is a tree in Lake Tahoe, California. Located along a serene walking path and decorated with signs, images, and painted stones, it stands as a local reminder of the adventure dogs of the past. Whether carved into marble, printed in magazines, or gently nailed into pine bark beside a mountain trail, these memorials reveal the same enduring truth: people have long searched for ways to keep beloved animals present after they are gone.

To all the departed good boys and girls out there, rest easy.

The Museum of Aquarium & Pet History

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