



A VERY SPECIAL PARK

Heritage

The Newsletter of Green Lawn Cemetery
Fall 2019

Summer Restoration Success!

Three major bronze works were restored at Green Lawn this summer, all of which are among the twelve monuments at Green Lawn designated by the Smithsonian as significant.

First to be completed was the Frederick W. Schumacher sarcophagus. This classic bronze monument was starting to oxidize and pit and was on our wish list to be restored by 2024. Support from the family and a wonderful grant of \$29,000 from the Frederick W. Schumacher Foundation allowed this restoration to be completed 3-4 years ahead of schedule, which will allow us to apply our funds to monuments that no longer have family support. The monument posed some unique challenges: whereas some of the other bronze pieces could be taken into a studio for treatment, a sarcophagus containing actual remains could not. After some initial cleaning and stabilization, a tent was erected over it so that a multilayer coating process could be completed. The new finish should protect the monument for many decades to come. A special thanks to Lesley Blanchard who championed this project with the Foundation. I can't express how positive the reaction has been on our tours that almost always include the Schumacher story!

Next up was a smaller project, the Riordan monument, which features a bronze relief by Fidardo Landi, a prominent artist. Although a simpler project, the oxidation was perhaps the most advanced on this monument and restoration therefore critically needed. Funds for this project came from a variety of smaller donations and our Historic and Grounds Preservation Committee.

The third project was a complete restoration of Emil Ambos, popularly known as "The Fisherman". Not only was oxidation at the point of causing damage, but over the years Emil had been shot and the original three trout stolen along with other damage. The board approved \$30,000 in special funding not only to restore the bronze but also to replace the fish (and in a more secure manner).

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Frederick W. Schumacher Detail

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President's Message

Greetings From a Very Active Cemetery!



Standing in front of a heritage tree hydrangea in section J.

It has been a summer of restoration – with much work done in sections E and 48, a couple of big art pieces restored, and dozens of other projects both small and large either completed or in the works. It has also been a summer of restoring sound operations to Green Lawn, and our new operator continues to make strides in that department.

An area that has been a concern for a long time is cleaning up and enforcing the decoration policies, and the staff is currently planning a big effort for the late November quarterly clean up. This painful but necessary restoration of good stewardship will be wonderful in the long run.

Please check out our events for the fall – if summer is a time for restoration, fall seems to be the season of events! As always, thank you all for your support of Green Lawn, and I look forward to seeing you in the cemetery!

Randy Rogers, President and Executive Director
Green Lawn Cemetery Association

Wildlife Story



We have always suspected we had a good number of flying squirrels at Green Lawn. They are common in Ohio, but not as common in city parks - but we're larger than most parks and have more old trees! A hollow branch fell from a tree and guess what we found inside!

Summer Tour!

Great turnout at the Summer Tour led by Randy Rogers and Doreen Uhas Sauer. Around 100 visitors came to learn about the suffragette movement in Columbus.



The Rise and Fall of Melvin Edward Clark: Ohio's Black Numbers King

By Chad Huggins Dunbar, Northern Kentucky University
Melvin Edward Clark (section 97, lot 39)

Melvin Edward Clark (October 14, 1914 - July 18, 1955) was a prolific African-American mobster that dominated Ohio's numbers racket (illegal lotteries) during the 1940s and 1950s, controlled an empire of nightclubs and casino bars, and even owned several Black newspapers. In the military, he became an explosives expert and went on to use his talents rigging car bombs for the Cleveland Syndicate. Before the rise of Las Vegas, the small city of Newport, Kentucky held the title of Sin City, and Melvin Clark controlled the gambling industry in its Black community with enough success that he was frequently covered in *Jet* magazine before his untimely death in a mobster ambush.



Clark was born in Columbus, at 216 N. Grant Street, to William D. Clark, a second-generation porter-turned-landlord, and Mattie Ceola Watson, a cateress. His family later moved to 968 E. Long Street.

Clark's criminal career began at the age of 13, when he and 8 other teenage boys were busted as part of a theft ring. Clark was sentenced to the Boy's Industrial School, a juvenile reform school in Fairfield County. Three years later, Clark appeared in a *Columbus Dispatch* article titled "Youth Caught After Fleeing Court Room" in which he was charged with petit larceny for stealing a watch belonging to a lodger that rented a room from his father. When sentenced to another stint at the Boy's Industrial School, Clark fled the courtroom but was chased down and caught in a nearby hay loft. In 1930, he was jailed for 9 months in Columbus for auto theft. Two years later, Clark was once more sentenced to juvenile detention for petit larceny.

1935 was an unlucky year for Clark. He was arrested in Cincinnati for making moonshine whiskey and his illegal still was seized by the Internal Revenue Bureau. That same year he was arrested in Columbus for disorderly conduct. Worse, his father died unexpectedly, leaving him a \$60 payment through the Dispatch 75-cent Travel Accident Policy, an insurance program operated by the *Columbus Dispatch*.

In 1936, Clark transitioned to more daring plots and larger stakes. He allegedly robbed Morrey Davidson, an influential player in the entertainment industry. The felony case lingered in court but was dismissed the following year. In 1938, Clark – now working for the Cleveland Syndicate – was arrested in Columbus for promoting a scheme of chance, but no record of the municipal court's decision survives. A year later, he was arrested and fined for operating a numbers ring in Hamilton Township.

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For information about making an Annual Campaign donation, a gift to the Endowment Fund, or a Planned Gift for Green Lawn Cemetery, please contact Randel Rogers, Executive Director, at 614-271-8600 or by email at: greenlawncemeteryassoc@gmail.com.

Green Lawn Cemetery's 170th Grand Opening!

On July 6, 2019, Green Lawn Cemetery celebrated its 170th Grand Opening. This year's event was especially festive because we also welcomed Mr. Kyle Nikola and Memorial Properties of Ohio as our new operator. The celebration included a cook-out and walking tours of section G where Green Lawn originally opened in July 1849 and where some of Green Lawn's oldest monuments are located.



***Offering \$1,495 Savings on
Above Ground Cremation Options***

Please cut out this coupon and call (614) 444-1123 to schedule a meeting. We will be happy to validate the coupon and answer any questions.

Offer expires October 31, 2019.

Hayden Mausoleum Update

Working with Columbus Landmarks Foundation, we have assembled a team of preservationists, architects, and other interested parties as a working group for restoration of the Hayden. The mausoleum was accepted on the Ohio list of endangered buildings (it had already made the Columbus list), and we are starting to build momentum towards what will be a long and strenuous project. We expect by fall to have a study and possibly some stabilization work underway, but this will just be the tip of a very large iceberg.



Summer Restoration Success! *(Continued from page 1)*

Preserving these special monuments and the history they represent is the main function of the Green Lawn Cemetery Association, and being able to complete these projects in a single summer is incredibly rewarding. Special thanks to Mike Major, the artist that completed the work, and again to the Frederick W. Schumacher Foundation for their generous grant.



Upcoming 2019 Green Lawn Cemetery Programs

Most Events are Free, and All are Family-Friendly

- *September 7th, 2019: “Introduction to Genealogy Research”:** Interested in researching your ancestors? Curious what resources are available? Russ Politt of the Columbus Metropolitan Library will lead this introductory presentation. Information will also be available about research resources offered by Green Lawn Cemetery and its volunteers.
- **September 21st: 7:00am-6:00pm: “Migration Mania”:** Grange Insurance Audubon Center and Midwest Photo are sponsoring a weekend of bird walks, nature, and photography. As part of the celebration, Randy Rogers will conduct a field trip through Green Lawn Cemetery beginning at 8:30am. For more information, go to <https://www.facebook.com/events/2546101835409681/>
- **September 30, 2019: 8:30am-11:00am: “VFW Founders Day Celebration”:** The VFW Post 1598 will celebrate the 120th anniversary of the founding of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the US in Columbus, Ohio.
- *October 5th, 2019: “The Art of Dying Well: The Victorian Cult(ure) of Death”:** Dr. Susan Ritchie, fully affiliated faculty member at Methodist Theological School in Ohio and minister at North Unitarian Universalist Congregation, will bring to life the 19th century culture of death by exploring post-mortem portraits, mourning jewelry, religious practices, embalming practices, beliefs about hauntings, the role of women, and funerary art such as one sees in Greenlawn. Special attention will be paid to the similarities and differences of what it meant then and now to die (and mourn) well.
- **October 19th, 2019: 10:00am-7:00pm: “Day of the Dead/El Dia de los Muertos”:** Festivity to celebrate life and remember family and friends who have passed from this life. This free family event will feature art exhibitions, a poetry reading, storytelling, kids’ activities, music, crafts, and food trucks serving authentic Mexican food. This year’s theme is “Honoring Oceans Blue.”
- **October 25th, 2019: 6:30pm-9:30pm: “Walking with the Dead 5K and Monster Mash Bash”.** Green Lawn Cemetery partners with the Rotary Club on 5K Run and Walk, which will be followed by a Monster Mash Bash featuring food, music, and entertainment. Proceeds will go for the care and maintenance of Green Lawn Cemetery. To register, go to the Race Roster web site at <https://raceroster.com/events/2019/25498/walking-with-the-dead-5k-and-1-mile-runwalk>.
- **October 27th, 2019: 2:00pm-4:00 pm: “Fall Walk at Green Lawn Cemetery”:** A guided walking tour will be led by Randy Rogers, executive director of Green Lawn, and Doreen Uhas Sauer, Education and Outreach Coordinator of Columbus Landmarks Foundation. Tour begins at the Huntington Chapel. Tickets required, available at the event, or contact Columbus Landmarks Foundation at www.columbuslandmarks.org/event or call 614-221-04227.
- *November 2nd, 2019: “Columbus History: A Conversation with Ed Lentz”:** Ed Lentz, local historian and prolific author of central Ohio history, will lead an informal discussion on early Columbus.
- *First Saturday event; free and runs from 11:00am until noon inside the Huntington Chapel unless noted otherwise.**
- **Partnering For Our Community event; free unless noted otherwise.**

*The Rise and Fall of Melvin Edward Clark....
(Continued from page 3)*

According to census data, by April 1940 Clark had married Jessie Carl Clark. Melvin was still living with his mother in Columbus and listed as having dropped out of high school after his freshman year, while Jessie was described as having completed her first year of college. That same year, Clark was arrested for armed robbery but managed to get his charges reduced, receiving only 5 years of probation. Whether it was marriage or the threat of serious prison time, Clark surprisingly completed his probation without any run-ins with the law.

Meanwhile, the Cleveland Syndicate sent Clark to Cincinnati under the leadership of Percy L. Williams, an older Black mobster from Cleveland. While Percy dominated Greater Cincinnati’s Black numbers racket, Clark expanded into Newport’s Black casino bars in partnership with Steven “Big Steve” Payne, a Black mobster who controlled a gang-turned-organized-outfit called The Sportsmen. Clark and Payne became co-owners of several profitable casino bars in Newport during the 1940s. After robbing his one-time mentor Williams, Clark set up an adjacent competing numbers house, eventually becoming the new “Numbers King” of Greater Cincinnati’s Black community.

The Rise and Fall of Melvin Edward Clark...

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In early 1949, “Big Steve” was found executed by the side of the road in Covington, Kentucky after being picked up in Cincinnati by rival mobsters and dumped across the river. On Easter Sunday, a stick of dynamite exploded on the porch of Xenia racketeer Earl Artis, blowing a hole in the front wall and shattering windows up and down the block. While there were no witnesses, authorities tried to tie the bombing to Clark and Arthur “Little Brother” Drake, a Black mobster from Cleveland. Clark was known for his skills in explosives, while Drake was a convicted extortionist. Once indicted, however, Clark held a press conference in which he revealed that Artis, the prosecution’s main witness, was himself a numbers kingpin. Charges were dismissed.

In 1951, Clark faced a series of escalating criminal charges, including a manslaughter charge after killing another driver in an accident in Cincinnati (acquitted). Clark and his wife were fighting an Internal Revenue Service tax lien of \$184,712 for non-payment of income tax on gambling profits. The following year, Clark was arrested for the murder of Oliver “Bull” Payne (younger brother and successor of Steven Payne), who he shot during a gunfight in Club Alibi, a casino club that once belonged to Clark. He was found not guilty but later convicted for carrying a concealed weapon, for which he received one year of probation that required him to leave Newport. Clark stayed in Columbus for most of that year, focusing on his other numbers rackets and purchasing the African-American newspaper *The Cincinnati Leader* in 1954.

Upon returning to Newport, Clark opened a new Black casino bar called the Coconut Grove Night Club to compete with casino bars controlled by Frank “Screw” Andrews, an Italian mobster known for muscling his way into nightclubs, numbers, prostitution, and horse betting in Newport’s Black community. Clark particularly angered “Screw” Andrews by opening an off-track horse race betting operation in the basement of his new club. Clark’s closest ally turned on him, leading to a brief gunfight outside one of his clubs. Neither was wounded, but Clark was charged with malicious shooting with intent to kill and released on \$3,000 bail.

Within days of his release, Clark was ambushed by Andrews outside Club Alibi on July 18, 1955. By now, he was separated from his wife Jessie and dating 19-year-old University of Cincinnati student and *Jet* magazine “Beauty of the Week” Evelyn Farmer, who also served as his bookkeeper. An eyewitness to his murder, Evelyn escaped on foot and disappeared for a time before finally returning to testify against Andrews, who was found not guilty in a controversial ruling. News of Clark’s death appeared on the front pages of newspapers and in magazines across America, from the *Chicago Defender* to *Jet* magazine, *Long Beach Independent*, *The Courier-Journal*, and *Columbus Dispatch*.

After an autopsy, Clark’s body was transported to Whittaker & Sons Funeral Home, a historic African-American family-owned mortuary in Columbus founded by Mrs. Dollie A. Whittaker in 1905 and later purchased by Diehl-Whittaker Funeral Home. The funeral service was performed by Rev. James Parrish of Shiloh Baptist Church. He was buried at Green Lawn on July 23, 1955. Clark had purchased the lot for \$225 and included adjoining spaces for his mother Mattie C. Clark and his older sister Garnett A. Ingram. On August 4, 1955, Melvin’s body was exhumed and forensic tests were conducted at University Hospital to determine if he had died in the manner described by Frank Andrews.

Melvin Edward Clark was an African-American mobster that came from humble beginnings and eventually controlled a significant segment of Ohio’s numbers rackets. He built his empire without selling drugs and is an example of Black organized crime existing before the 1960s in Midwestern cities outside of the usual places like Chicago or Detroit. However, current scholarship’s general neglect of African Americans’ involvement in organized crime during the mobster era has led to his story being largely forgotten.

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