

Weinberg Foundation Supports Chapel Renovation Grant is Major Gift to Second Century Campaign

For several years the directors and executive of the Hebrew Free Burial Association have planned and raised funds for the renovation of the historic chapel at Mt. Richmond Cemetery. A generous gift from the Nathan and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, one of the largest Jewish-oriented foundations in the United States, has brought the goal of the Second Century Campaign closer to reality.

The Weinberg Foundation was created by Nathan Weinberg, a Baltimore millionaire with strong ties to Jewish communities and Jewish life in the United States and Israel. Following the death of its creator in 1989, the Weinberg Foundation has become a leading force in Jewish philanthropy.

Recognition of project's importance.

"We are pleased and gratified that the Second Century Campaign has received these funds for

several reasons," said Gerald Feldhamer, HFBA president. "The monies will allow us to begin the long process of renovation and restoration necessary to bring the chapel to usable condition.

"Additionally, we hope the Weinberg Foundation's recognition of the importance of the project and of the Hebrew Free Burial Association will make it easier to persuade other major foundations to work with us towards our goals."

Treasurer Jack M. Gross stated, "The significant gift of the Weinberg Foundation allows the Second Century Campaign to move into a new phase. Together with our efforts to place markers on every grave in Mt. Richmond Cemetery, the Foundation's contribution will provide funds that help assure that the cemetery for the poor is maintained with the facilities and appearance we would want for the resting places of our own families.

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CHESED is a publication of the Hebrew Free Burial Association
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Please call us at 212 686-2433.

Second Major Unveiling Set For Spring Fifty Markers To Be Placed In Mt. Richmond Cemetery

Final arrangements are being completed for the erection of 50 markers in one of the adult sections of Mt. Richmond Cemetery this spring.

The purchase and erection of the stones is one of the projects of the Second Century Campaign, the HFBA's long-range plan to renovate the notable cemeteries for the indigent at Mt. Richmond and Silver

Lake Cemeteries in Staten Island.

Since the first unveiling of 75 markers in the children's section last year, the headstones program has received donations from individuals and congregations throughout the tri-state area. "This project has obviously hit a responsive chord with New York-area residents," remarked Gerald Feldhamer. "While it may be difficult to visualize the

hundreds of poor Jews who are buried every year at Mt. Richmond Cemetery, people can easily imagine one person whose family could not afford a marker. The publicity surrounding last year's unveiling, particularly the stories of people who found the gravesites of siblings when they saw the photographs in the newspapers, propelled many people to take on this communal obligation."

From The President's Desk

Weinberg Fdn. Supports Chapel Renovation.

(Cont. from page 1)

The unveiling of a monument is an emotional time for family and friends. As the marker is seen for the first time, those gathered in the cemetery must come to grips with the finality of death when they see the name of someone they love encribed in stone.

But what happens to those whose family or friends can't afford even the simplest of headstones. We at HFBA were always saddened by the thought of their anonymity to visitors. Although they were marked on our maps, there was no marker to tell the world of their existence, short or lengthy, on this earth.

Several years ago, we decided to change that situation and instituted the Second Century's Marker Campaign to place simple monuments on the site of every grave in Mt. Richmond Cemetery. Last year we were able to unveil the first 75 of these markers in the children's section.

The event was widely covered in the Jewish and general media. One of those profiled found his little sister, Fannie Kaplan. In a very moving letter, Bernard Kaplan wrote us that his parents were poor immigrants. Fannie, one of eight children, died at the age of 2. The other children knew that Fannie had been buried somewhere on Staten Island by a volunteer group, but could never get more information from their parents. When he found Fannie, Bernard, now a retiree, made the trip to her grave with his remaining siblings for an emotional reunion.

This year we will unveil markers for 50 more people whose parents, siblings or children could never afford to buy them themselves. As each name is chiseled in stone, as each foundation is dug into the earth, I am reminded of the dozens of people who braved strong spring rains to attend last year's ceremony and of reading Bernard Kaplan's letter for the first time.

For over 100 years, HFBA has existed to bury the Fannie Kaplans of our community, those whose families are too poor to afford even the simplest Jewish funeral and burial. But we also exist for the Bernard Kaplans, those who want to visit the grave of a sister, brother, mother, father, grandparent or friend. They deserve to know the spot where their loved one's remains lie and to have that plot marked for all of us to see. They deserve to know their relative or friend is buried in consecrated Jewish ground.

I invite you to join us when we unveil the next 50 markers and I urge you to contribute to this noble effort.

Gerald E. Feldhamer

Collaboration of Efforts Needed

The blueprint for renovation was sketched in 1991, when architect Charles Rabinovich visited Mt. Richmond Cemetery. Mr. Rabinovich, a volunteer from UJA/Federation's Management Assistance Program, outlined ways in which the chapel could be restored economically while retaining its historic character.

HFBA has already begun to take many of the steps needed to ensure structural integrity of the chapel building, which also houses the cemetery's office, a storage area, rest rooms and a caretaker's apartment. Over the winter, new gas heating facilities and thermal windows were installed and other improvements made.

Now the task of revitalizing the chapel remains. The Rabinovich plan calls for a collaboration of volunteer and professional efforts to strip and refinish pews, clean fixtures, repair the floors and windows and make other improvements.

For more information about how you or your organization can get involved in the renovation and restoration of the Mt. Richmond Cemetery chapel, call the HFBA office at

212 686-2433

OUR CEMETERIES NEED YOU!

The combination of a recession and sweeping budget cuts have stretched our resources to the limit.

Do you have ties to charitable foundations that might be able to help us? If you do, please contact Gerald Feldhamer, president, HFBA, Suite 912, 1170 Broadway, New York, NY 10001 or call the office at (212) 686-2433.

Mt. Richmond Drainage System Nears Collapse Erosion To Monument Foundations, Land Visible

As anyone who has seen the damage a flood can wreak on property will attest, rainwater is not always as benign as it seems. At Mt. Richmond Cemetery, the combination of rainwater and an already severely compromised drainage system has produced the heartbreaking picture of devastation and fallen monuments that now greets visitors.

According to Rabbi Shmuel Plafker, associate administrator, the appalling

Appearance of cemetery suffers

The effect of the poor drainage is immediately noticeable to visitors. Many have remarked about the melancholy look of the grounds; others have assumed the cemetery is a frequent target of vandals despite HFBA's comprehensive security measures.

"It was very depressing to visit my grandfather's grave," one visitor told Rabbi Plafker. "The headstone for

which my family had saved is beginning to lean. It made me feel that the cemetery is being neglected, even though I know that you are working very hard to maintain it."

Donors Sought To Defray Costs

Although the drainage system has been operating marginally for several years, the last winter seemed to take an extraordinary toll on the plumbing. Work is needed to clean the existing catchbasins, clear blocked concrete

scene of fallen tombstones is not always a result of vandalism. "The inability of our drainage system to function properly has led to underground flooding and raising of the water table. The water undermines the foundations upon which the monuments are set, causing them to lean precariously and even to topple over," he lamented.

"Additionally, the land itself has begun to erode, as has our internal road.



Damage caused by faulty water drainage has undermined the foundations and caused monuments to learn or fall over. The result is a cemetery that looks abandoned or neglected instead of carefully maintained by the community.

gutters, repair and/or replace inlets and basins, repair manholes and manhole basins, level the pavement and create new inlets and piping where needed.

"The total cost of the project will be \$30,000. This sum is not provided for in our annual maintenance budget, so it is imperative that we seek contributions from among our friends and supporters," explained treasurer Jack Gross. "For that reason, we've set up a special Drainage Repair Fund to receive donations to this effort."

From The Mailbag...

We received a copy of this letter, which we proudly relate to you, earlier this year.

"This is to express my gratitude for your help in pointing me in the right direction after the sudden death of my second cousin...(The burial arrangements) had to be made

expeditiously and with great care, considering that the brother of the deceased is a professor of Hebrew Linguistics in Israel and is very Orthodox.

"The Hebrew Free Burial Association was able to complete all the arrangements in 30 hours at a reasonable cost. Everything was done to the complete satisfaction of everybody. Mrs. Leist was very

helpful, understanding and efficient. Rabbi Shmuel Plafker did a fantastic job at the cemetery.

"It is wonderful to have such an organization that can help people of lesser means or (who are) inexperienced in such matters. I would like to encourage my friends and fellow congregants to donate what they can to this very noble organization..."

When Tragedy Strikes, a Young Family Turns to HFBA

When a mother dies at a young age, it is always a tragedy. But when a family in its grief must wonder how the unfortunate woman will be buried, it can be a disaster. Thanks to a community rabbi's intervention, Mr. R. was spared the indignity of having to beg for funds to bury his wife and the mother of his four young children.

The R. family are immigrants from Romania, via Israel. The father had practiced medicine in his native country and in Israel, but was still trying to get

established in the United States. They lived on savings that his father gave him. The family was not un public assistance.

When Mrs. R. passed away, her husband felt lost. Who would help him in this new, strange country?

He contacted his rabbi, who immediately referred him to the Hebrew Free Burial Association. With one phone call, Mrs. R's remains were cared for and burial arranged for the next day. To the great comfort of the family, Mrs. R. received a

funeral in accordance with Jewish tradition and was interred in Mt. Richmond cemetery.

Ineligible For Assistance; Buried by HFBA Nevertheless

The saga of the R. Family is just one of the three hundred stories we will hear and become involved in this year. Not unlike many of these, the R. family was ineligible for any state burial benefits. The monies that paid for the preparation, funeral and burial were contributed by supporters like you.

Remember HFBA In Your Will

You can enhance your support for the work of the HFBA by remembering us in your will. It's easy to do and you'll have the lifelong satisfaction of helping poor Jews in their hours of need.

For information on planned giving, write to S. Wiesel at the HFBA office.

Chevrá Agudas Achim Chesed Shel Emes
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