

## **TAKING A TURN AROUND WOBURN'S WOODBROOK CEMETERY**

**by Marie Coady**

**Although the land for Woodbrook Cemetery was set aside as early as 1845, it was known merely as the Woburn or Salem Street Cemetery until 1906. The newspaper of the day, the Woburn Journal, commented tongue in cheek on its naming by saying, "It is a curious union of two very good words Wood---Brook, but it is remembered that no brook runs within several gunshots of the place."**

**It's true. There is no babbling brook skittering over rocks and whirling autumn leaves in circles downstream, but that takes nothing away from the feeling of peace and serenity that people seem to have when spring bursts forth and birds perch on the bust of John P. Crane, Civil War veteran. Everyone understands the nightingale means no disrespect. His sweet song is an affirmation of life.**

**Taking a turn around Woodbrook you will most likely find Andreas Paicopoulos. He arrives every spring with his flats of geraniums, zinnias and dusty miller and plants them in living memory of his mother. This spring he arrived with his grandson and namesake, four year-old Andreas. Little Andreas looked on as his grandfather cleared away the winter waste from a small patch of soil and planted his garden of life to the great-grandmother he never met. No doubt little Andreas will inherit this chore and perform it as lovingly as his grandfather.**

**Not far off to little Andreas' right is Eleana Kiklis Scantilides. She is the designated caretaker for five Kiklis graves. One of them is brother Harry, the owner of a shoe repair shop on Main Street until his death from heart disease in 1976. His daughter Marina succumbed to the same illness in 1988 at age forty-five and rests only a few feet from her father and mother, Tina, who united with Harry in 1990.**

**Eleana is often joined by other family members for an impromptu reunion as they arrive to take their turn at weeding and watering. She says, "It's beautiful when a relative from far away surprises me here. It's like a family reunion. It's sad to say, but sometimes it's the only time we see one another." But all the Kiklises will be getting together for a formal family reunion in January of 1997.**

**Far off to Eleana's left, on the plot where flat bronze markers lay almost hidden to the casual eye, a surprise reunion is taking place. Silvio Maffeo, his wife Jean and an aunt, Eleanor Copetta, are delighted to find Silvio's sister, Lee Streeter, and her husband when they arrive to visit their father, Emiliano Maffeo's gravesite. What follows is laughter and memories, floating on a delicate breeze and echoing in the heavens.**

**Emiliano Maffeo owned the Ideal Barber Shop on Main Street where the**

Liberty Bell Restaurant is now. He died in 1956, but his children still come for the annual ritual of planting and tending the flowers around his grave marker.

Lee tells the story of how upset her mother, Leonilda, was to find her husbands' grave so well covered with snow one winter that she couldn't locate it until spring. Lee says, "My mother was so upset that his marker looked like a paupers grave, but that's the way it was in the years around 1956. If you bought a two plot in this section, you could only have a marker that laid flat."

Silvio reminisced about his midnight shortcuts through the cemetery, especially the time he spotted the head of the old Civil War soldier, John Crane, as it glowed in the moonlight. It seemed to stare at him menacingly. He got home in record time that night, his feet never hitting the ground.

Rosalind Hensiek is never lonely. Her husband Elmer is a weekly visitor, no matter the weather. Elmer still considers himself a Chicagonite in spite of the fact he has been here forty-seven years, serving eight years on the Woburn Housing Authority and instrumental in launching the Boy's Club where he coached a swim team.

Not bad for a carpetbagger. Gladys McDonald Lindmark is faithful to her sister who died in 1967 and also to her mother, father and brother, but since her brain operation last October she needs husband Harry's hands to plant her living garden. Gladys leans alternately on her cane and her sister's stone, but she is getting stronger since her water therapy at Woburn Rehab.

Then at the edge of the road a blond toddler, named Wyatt, raced gleefully around the grave of the grandfather, Firefighter Walter Foley, he never met. Wyatt never met his uncle Walter Jr. either. Both were firefighters and both died young.

The most poignant story was told by a young woman who wished to remain anonymous. She was busily planting petunias on a solitary grave. When I asked if Christopher was a loved one she said, "No. He was a friend. But his family disowned him because he was gay. He was killed by a speeding car one night on Route 128. The hospital called me to say he had given them my name and number to call, but by the time I got there he was gone. The nurse said the last thing he called out was my name. I take care of him now." Christopher died June 12, 1988 at the age of twenty-six.

The general consensus from Woodbrook regulars is that it is a place of serenity, individuality, safety and most of all...tender loving care.

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