

Preservation Buffalo Niagara Honorees

Category: Neighborhood Conservation

Concordia Cemetery, Buffalo

The Volunteers of Concordia Cemetery

At 152 years one of the oldest cemeteries in Western New York and only one of two in the city, 15-acre Concordia Cemetery on Walden Avenue began as burial place for the faithful of three German Lutheran churches. Its designation on the State and National Registers of Historic Places is owed to its strong representation of Buffalo's early German population and its collection of grave monuments of the Victorian era.

Abandoned and without a caretaker for years, Concordia has faced many challenges in preserving the integrity of a century and a half of Buffalo history, including theft of \$154,000 by a former treasurer, who was sentenced to prison in 2004, and recent vandalism of numerous grave-stones.

Only through the extraordinary efforts of dedicated volunteers whose mission since 2001 has been to restore,

preserve, and protect the cemetery grounds, its history, and its records has this often forgotten gem been cared for.

This committed group was coordinated from 2003 through 2009 by Wayne Rettke, volunteer extraordinaire and former cemetery board member, who created a database of cemetery records, mapped all plot locations and identified those buried in each—a three-year project—regularly helped visitors find the burial sites of ancestors, sought grants for tombstone restoration, and oversaw the landscaping efforts of volunteers on the cemetery's annual United Way Day of Caring.

The group also includes such members as Diane Savaterri of Lancaster, who has served as president of the Concordia Cemetery Association board; Nur Munir, who has regularly mowed cemetery grounds; Elizabeth



Triggs, cemetery board member; Doris Nelson, whose brother was buried at Concordia in 2000 and whose need for a cane never deterred her from week-end cleanups; and countless unnamed others among the one hundred or so Cemetery Association members who will not rest in peace until Concordia becomes beautiful again.

For their preservation spirit, Preservation Buffalo Niagara is proud to present our award for Neighborhood Conservation to the Volunteers of Concordia Cemetery.