

FEBRUARY

“Resilient”

Weather-wise, February is an unpredictable month. It may be slightly warm and sunny one day, and frigid cold with icy rain or howling winds and blowing snow the next. With snow in January and perhaps a light dusting in December, February is a month of piles of snow. While the school children were delighted to see and play in the snow in January, by February the thrill has worn off and only school delays and cancellations are something to look forward to. The adults, for the most part, are tired of shoveling snow. The dog walkers, who are a sturdy and dedicated breed, are still walking their dogs. If the snow does get deep, the dog walkers are restricted to walking the main road, with only a few daring the side grassy paths. There are fewer school children crossing the property now. Perhaps they have found rides to and from school. The ones that do walk the property are in a hurry with their heads bent low against the wind.

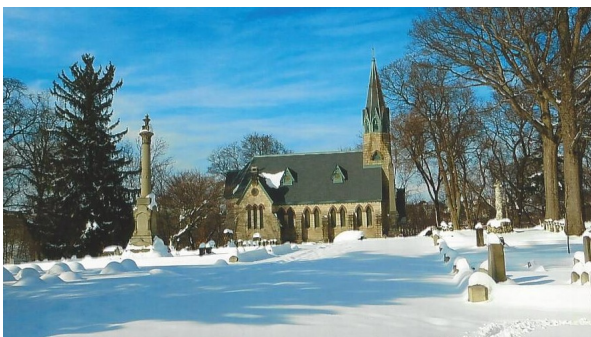


However, as much of a nuisance as the weather appears to be on the outside of the cemetery's walls, here inside the gates, the property remains serene and oblivious to what is happening on the outside. There may be snow everywhere or even icicles hanging from the roof overhang or maybe on a few of the unusually shaped memorial markers, or on the mausoleums, but the snow caps give the chapel roof, the mausoleums, the trees, and the memorial markers a soft, enticing, and almost comical look. Even as the gusting wind may be blowing the snow in swirls up and over the memorial markers and creating a white out, the property takes on a mystery of haunting beauty.

The tall dark evergreens look stately as they stand their winter vigil over the grounds. The needles on some of the trees, like the cryptomeria, have lost their green coloring and have taken on a brownish tint. The trees are most fragile now, and if too much ice and snow coat the limbs, there is a lot of broken debris to clean up in the spring, not to mention potential damage to the tree itself. It is at this time of year that Frank Snyder, DCNR, holds a tree pruning session with high school students and the public invited for a hands on learning experience. The barrenness of the leaf bearing trees provides an unusual glimpse of their trunks and branches that are never seen during the other seasons. Some trunks are deeply grooved, others are lightly grooved in square blocks or “v” shapes, or in long vertical blocks. Others trunks are very smooth, And still others are spotted.



The laborers are called back to work for snow removal, particularly shoveling the long Market Street walk. The city codes require the pavements to be cleaned within a few days after a heavy deep snow. If we get too much too quickly, then we have to hire an outside company to plow the pavements with a bobcat. The roads are plowed by an outside contractor. Burials in the month of February are hard to handle. Sometimes, the actual burial cannot occur on schedule because the plot can not be found under the snow nor can the grave be dug. Here at Baber Cemetery, we try to accommodate everyone. In these months, the easiest interment is in the columbarium outside the front of the chapel.



Even though the weather is extremely cold and harsh, by Valentine's Day, teeny nubby buds are forming on many of the trees. Through this weather, the mighty oaks and tall green pines, the stately Gothic chapel, the immense Egyptian Revival gatehouse entrance, and the long conglomerate stone wall, stands resilient against the elements as a beacon of solidness, fortitude, and endurance.