

The Heritage Fund 2023 Annual Drive

★ WAR DOG MEMORIAL CENTENNIAL ISSUE ★



**AMERICA'S FIRST PET BURIAL GROUNDS
LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HISTORIC PLACES
A NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION HABITAT**



Dear Friends,

“To be killed in war is not the worst thing that can happen. To be lost is not the worst that can happen. To be forgotten is the worst.”

Those words by the World War I veteran Pierre Claeysens are the inspiration behind Wreaths Across America, which this past December made a pilgrimage to Hartsdale Pet Cemetery to pay tribute to service canines under the watchful gaze of our War Dog Memorial. It was cold but sunny the day they arrived bearing evergreen wreaths with representatives from the Westchester County Police K9 Unit and Westchester County Animal Response Team, the Air Force, Coast Guard, Marines, Army and Navy. One by one, as they attested to the courage of dogs in war as well the importance of canine companionship for veterans back home, the garlands were carefully set at the foot of the memorial until finally a bugler played taps. “Remember, honor, teach,” is WAA’s mission. “When we place a wreath, we are reminding all to remember those who give so much for our freedom.”



Westchester County Police Officer Jesse Gold and his canine Purdy laying a wreath in December

A similar event occurred here one hundred years ago in 1923 when plot-holders gathered at Hartsdale’s summit for the official unveiling of the first publicly-funded tribute to wartime service animals in the country. Americans were already aware of the life-saving duties assigned to dogs in the “Great War” and they threw their enthusiastic support behind Dr. Johnson’s proposal for a memorial in the heart of the cemetery that, in his words, would “live for the ages and be a reminder to our posterity of recognition for the dogs’ valuable service.” In the years to follow, veterans from both World Wars would come to pay their respects as would subsequent generations of soldiers mindful of the critical role dogs played—and continue play--on the field of battle. Even now our memorial stands as an extraordinary example of inspired design, engineering and artistry that evokes deep emotion in anyone seeing it for the first time. In this year’s newsletter we celebrate the centennial of Hartsdale’s beloved War Dog and reflect on how it brings together people from all walks of life in a shared appreciation for everything that animals give to us unconditionally.

Your kind and generous support of the Heritage Fund enabled us to continue the work to keep the cemetery in peak condition this past year. We are replacing more of the aging fences and reinforcing additional retaining walls that date from Hartsdale’s early years. Dr. Johnson’s former summer cottage underwent some much-needed upgrades, the walking paths got repaved, the heritage trees got the care they needed and after a century of exposure to the elements the pedestrian gate’s pillars on Central Park Avenue are undergoing restoration. I hope we can depend on your continued support to keep Hartsdale the most beautiful resting place for animals the world has ever known.

Hartsdale Pet Cemetery is grateful to the following for their participation in the December wreath-laying ceremony at our War Dog Memorial:

Lisa Wernick, for all her hard work organizing and officiating at the ceremony,
Sam Waltzer,
Dr. Steven Immerblum, DVM,
Police Officer Jesse Gold and his dog **Purdy**,
Dave Campisano,
Heather Blasko,
and **Will Kalish** of Buglers Across America



Wreaths Across America is a 501 (c) 3 tax exempt nonprofit organization.
For more information visit www.wreathscrossamerica.org

Thank you for being a part of the Peaceable Kingdom community.

Here’s wishing you and your animals the very best in 2023.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary".

Mary Thurston, Historian

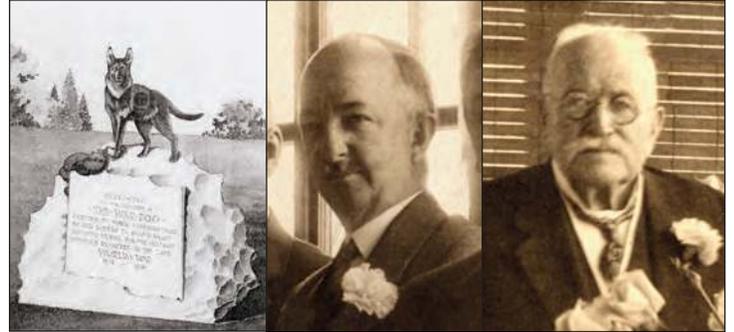
100 Years with the Hartsdale War Dog Memorial



Dr. Johnson had already set aside a central section of Hartsdale’s summit when he formed a committee of plot-holders to canvas for contributions totaling \$2500, or nearly \$45,000 in today’s money. In 1919 they issued a call for designs and among those submitted was this one for a tall square obelisk, a popular Victorian style for war memorials, flanked by four dogs at the base.

Ultimately the committee opted for a more modern and impactful concept by the designer Walter Buttendorf, who worked for the monumental architect Robert Caterson. He drew inspiration from something beautifully straightforward--a German shepherd walking with its master every-day past his office window.

Construction of the memorial took place in stages, beginning with the grand promenade of stairs leading up from Central Park Avenue, followed by installation of the memorial’s ten-ton granite base, which involved the use of ropes and dollies to move it through occupied burial sections before winching it into its final position on the hilltop. Finally came the setting of the Red Cross dog, soldier’s canteen and helmet.



Robert Caterson (right), Walter Buttendorf (center) and his design sketch, which was shared with plot-holders in 1921.



Malvina Hoffman working in clay on St. Francis in 1939. Our War Dog from a comparable perspective.

Although the bronzes are unsigned, the most likely candidate for their creator is the artist Malvina Hoffman. She spent her summers in Hartsdale not far from the cemetery and during the war she was an active volunteer for the Red Cross in Europe. Upon returning to America, Hoffman devoted herself to the creation of several World War I tributes, all of which she opted not to sign because they were works for charity.

As a student of the French sculptor Auguste Rodin, who emphasized natural physicality and emotion in his works, Hoffman learned to create expressive figures in clay as a prelude to the bronze casting process. When examined alongside her other works the War Dog exhibits the same stylistic treatments, the most compelling example being her masterwork St. Francis and the Wolf, which includes a canine figure of comparable size with similarly cupped ears, high fetlocks on the legs, narrow chest, angular face and neck rolls textured to resemble fur.

History records at least one World War I veteran visiting Hartsdale to speak about the dogs he remembered from the battlefield. Later on, there was a World War II soldier known only as “Arthur” who came every year for more than a decade, each time leaving a wreath. Since the 1980s, under the proprietorship of the Martin family, the cemetery has hosted public gatherings to remember the animals who protect life, with keynote speakers from civilian police departments as well as combat veterans of the Vietnam, Persian Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan wars.



In the 21st century the War Dog Memorial’s fame has spread far beyond Westchester County to become a source of inspiration for other similarly themed monumental tributes, in the process furthering respect and appreciation throughout the nation for the selfless animals who aid and protect us to this day.



Combat veteran and K9 handler Matthew Plumeri with his retired detection dog Gulliver.



Please Help Us Preserve and Improve Our Irreplaceable Treasure



**Now available --
Commemorative War Dog Postcards!**

The U.S. Department of the Interior added Hartsdale Pet Cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places, making it the first and only animal burial ground to receive such distinction as a place of profound cultural significance. With this recognition comes a new level of responsibility to care for the cemetery's many historic features and assets. Hartsdale's general maintenance fund is not sufficient to cover these costs and unlike human cemeteries we are not tax exempt from federal and state taxes, nor do we receive any federal or state funding. We therefore depend entirely on supporters like you to help us protect this legacy of animal history. As a valued member of our family, we ask you to please help us protect this precious national asset.

YES, I want to help the Hartsdale Pet Cemetery Heritage Fund!

No matter what size, every gift counts. Thank you!

\$100* \$500 \$1,000 Other _____ *Eligible for limited edition commemorative coin

Name _____

To give online, visit www.petcem.com

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E-mail _____

Card # _____

Address _____

Exp. Date _____

City _____

Enclosed is my check payable to:
Hartsdale Pet Cemetery

State _____ Zip _____

Please note: Hartsdale Pet Cemetery is not a 501(c)(3) corporation. Your contribution is not tax-deductible.