



Moses Greeley Parker Mausoleum

History

Moses Greeley Parker was born and raised in Dracut, Massachusetts. He joined the Union Army in 1864 as a surgeon immediately following his graduation from Harvard Medical School. When Parker arrived in Virginia in April 1864, he was assigned to the 2nd US Colored Cavalry Regiment as Assistant Surgeon.

Unlike earlier battles of the Civil War that involved linear tactics and relatively brief, though extremely deadly, confrontations, the siege of Petersburg resembled trench warfare on the Western Front in World War One. It was a long, miserable and very deadly stalemate. Throughout the campaign, Parker was frequently in the trenches and under fire as he cared for the men of his unit.

In July, 1864, Parker was detached from his unit and was ordered to construct a hospital to care for the troops during the coming winter. He chose a place called Point of Rocks on a high bluff overlooking the Appomattox River, 6 miles from Petersburg. Using local timber, Parker and his men constructed 20 "wards," each 250 feet long by 30 feet wide, with a total capacity of 3,500 beds. Once the hospital opened, it had many prominent visitors including President and Mrs. Lincoln as well as Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Benjamin Franklin Butler.

Parker was discharged from the Union Army on May 24, 1865 and returned to the family home in Dracut. There, he spent months reading, relaxing, and restoring his health. However, when his father died on December 23, 1865, he was motivated to open a medical practice to help support his mother and sister. In May 1866, he bought a house at 11 First Street in Lowell and spent the rest of his life there. The VFW Highway/Route 110 heading towards Methuen now sits in place of First Street; Parker's home was just three down from the Bridge Street bridge, with the rear of Parker's lot overlooking the Merrimack River, across from Massachusetts Mills.

In 1876, Parker attended a demonstration of the newly-invented telephone by Alexander Graham Bell, held at Lowell's Huntington Hall (corner of Merrimack and Dutton Streets). As a doctor who was frequently called out at night to visit patients, he saw the benefits of the telephone and invested significantly in the product. Eventually, he gave up his medical practice and became the largest shareholder of AT&T and New England Telephone, taking an active role in the management of the company.

As part of his involvement, Parker is credited with inventing the telephone number. During a measles epidemic in 1879, the city's four telephone operators were at risk of being quarantined and thereby shutting down the phone network. Parker suggested that if the individual phone lines were numbered, it would be easier to train new personnel on the use of the system. That suggestion laid the groundwork for the system we take for granted today.

Parker never married and had no children. He left his estate to his nephew, Theodore Edson Parker Jr., who created the "Theodore Edson Parker Foundation," which today awards grants to Lowell non-profit organizations.

Art and Architecture

Four granite steps lead up to the entrance, suggesting this is a transition from one space to an important location. The mausoleum exterior references Roman, Greek, and Egyptian styles. The overall design suggests a Roman triumphal arch with its solid bronze doors making a passageway. The exterior is granite from Barre, Vermont. The one-piece roof stone weighs 13 tons.

The most significant element of this understated structure is the relief panels on either side of the door. Both female figures have billowing veils. To the left of the entrance is a female representation of Knowledge. She sits on two books and is placed beside a Djed (pronounced dee-jade) symbol, a pillar-like shape in Egyptian hieroglyphics representing stability. The Djed is associated with Osiris, the Egyptian god of the afterlife, the underworld, and the dead. On the opposite (right side) is a figure representing Medicine. Her chin rests on one hand as if deep in thought, a pose often symbolizing philosophy. Beside her is the Rod of Asclepius, a serpent-entwined baton wielded by the Greek god Asclepius, a deity associated with healing and medicine.

The Tiffany window inside contrasts with the structure's pure white Tennessee marble. The brilliant color and Art Nouveau style are quintessential Tiffany. A leader in this stylistic movement, Louis Comfort Tiffany was an American artist best known for stained-glass designs. The mausoleum's window scene depicts mountains, lake, flowers, and cypress trees against a vibrant twilight sky. In contrast to the transparent glass used in older stained-glass windows, Tiffany used translucent stained glass, streaked and mottled in color, milky and opaque, and layered to achieve this peaceful image. A very different style is seen at the Theodore Edson Parker mausoleum.

Interred in the mausoleum are:

- Moses G. Parker - age 74 - buried October, 1917
- Hannah Greely Parker – (sister) age 84 - buried October, 1918 - removal
 - Lydia Carter Parker – (niece) age 30 - buried October, 1918 - removal
 - Theodore Parker – (brother) age 66 - buried October, 1918 - removal
 - Leonard H. Morrison – (brother-in-law) age 82 - buried November, 1907, removal from Lot 2351
 - Mary G. Morrison – (sister) age 86 - buried October, 1922

Family obituaries:

The following is the obituary of Mary Morrison, Moses G. Parker's sister that appeared in the paper on October 18, 1922:

MORRISON - Died in this city Oct 17, at her home, 136 Chestnut Street, Mrs. Mary J. Morrison, aged 86 years, 9 months and 12 days, widow of the late Leonard H. Morrison and sister of the late Dr. Moses Greeley Parker. She is survived by a nephew, Theodore E. Parker. . . . Funeral and burial strictly private. Please do not send flowers. The funeral is in the charge of Undertaker George W Healey.