Oakwood Student Activity Booklet
For Educators Historic Overview:

Oakwood Cemetery is one of the most exceptional cemeteries in the United States. Organized in 1848 at the height of the rural cemetery movement, Oakwood Cemetery was created as a park-like setting north and east of the City of Troy and the Village of Lansingburgh. The beautiful trails, ponds and views of the Hudson River Valley are the spectacular backdrop to the history of its “residents.” Eleven Civil War generals, a leader in women’s education and the progenitor of our nation’s symbol all call Oakwood their final resting place.

The Rural Cemetery Movement
The rural cemetery movement can best be described as a response to the Puritan ethic of pre-determined destiny so prevalent in the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries in New England and Upstate New York. Village and church burial grounds contained hundreds of marble or slate stones placed in straight rows, and engraved with stern epitaphs promoting the notion that a person’s place in heaven and hell was pre-determined.

Proponents of the rural cemetery movement believed that a person should be laid to rest in a beautiful park-like setting, where ornamental plantings, beautiful fences and sculptural gravestones reflected the deceased’s personality, while representing their accomplishments on earth and their expectation of glory in heaven. This landscape also eased the pain of the bereaved relatives, who could be comforted by the thoughts of their loved ones being forever interred in such a peaceful and scenic environment.

The rural cemetery movement followed closely on the heels of the optimistic religious revival movements of the 1830’s and the writings of American authors such as Thoreau, Hawthorne and Emerson. Artists could be commissioned to create tombstones as sculptures, and they embraced cemeteries as settings for public display of their work. In fact, the rural cemetery movement laid the groundwork for grand public parks such as Central Park in New York City and the development of American landscape architecture.

The Industrial Revolution and the Growth of Troy
The City of Troy developed from a commercially-based town along the banks of the Hudson River to an increasingly industrial city by the mid 1840’s. Troy’s population rapidly increased due to the demand for labor in the iron and bell factories of South Troy and the burgeoning collar and cuff industry north of the downtown area of the city.

Troy’s first burial ground was established in 1796. Located on the corner of Third and State Streets, portions of that burial ground were also given to the First Baptist Church and the Quaker Meeting House for use by those respective congregations. Two other burial grounds, the Troy Cemetery located on the
southeast slope of Mount Ida (now Prospect Park) and the Mount Ida Cemetery on Pawling Avenue, rounded out the principal non-sectarian city burial grounds. The Rev. Peter Havermans, founder of the earliest Catholic parishes, established Catholic burial grounds by the 1860’s. Two Jewish burial grounds were established on the eastern outskirts of the city in the last quarter of the 19th century.

Oakwood’s Beginnings
By the time the Troy Cemetery Association purchased the land for Oakwood Cemetery in September of 1848, Troy and Lansingburgh had an established upper class with sophisticated tastes and a burgeoning middle class ready to spend money on purchasing family “plots.”

The site chosen by the cemetery trustees was 150 acres of land just north of Troy and east of the Village of Lansingburgh on an escarpment with views of the foothills of the Adirondacks to the north, the Cohoes Falls to the west and the Helderberg Mountains and Hudson River Valley to the south. Philadelphia landscape engineer, J. C. Sydney, was commissioned to lay out the curvilinear roads, plots and plantings. An abundance of natural water sources helped to create the many ponds and waterfalls that enhanced the landscape of Oakwood.

In 1871, the Troy Cemetery Association purchased an additional 150 acres, and hired landscape architect John Boetcher, who introduced a wide variety of rare shrubs and plants, many of which survive today, to the Oakwood landscape.

Many of Troy’s wealthier families purchased plots in strategic locations that commanded some of the finest views in the cemetery, hiring architects and artists to design and build their family mausoleums and sculptures to enhance the final resting place of their family members. Hundreds of burials were also re-interred from old Troy Cemetery on Mount Ida and the old burial ground on Third Street, which by 1875 became the site of Troy’s first City Hall.
For Educators Teachers Instructions:

Using the historic overview of Oakwood Cemetery as your guide, below are four student activities for the classroom. Activities #2 and #4 can also be used on a field trip to Oakwood Cemetery or to your own community’s local cemetery. The information for the activities was obtained from the cemetery records of Oakwood Cemetery (Troy Cemetery Association) and the Rensselaer County Historical Society, (RCHS) archives. RCHS can be reached via the web at: www.rchsonline.org or e-mail info@rchsonline.org or by phone 518-244-6846 or 518-272-7232.

When visiting a cemetery please apply these guidelines to your visit:

Students should be respectful of the cemetery. These are after all hallowed grounds. Be cognizant that a burial may be going on nearby and to keep voices to an appropriate level. Despite the fact that rural cemeteries are park-like settings, they are not playgrounds.

Students or chaperones should never climb or sit on the gravestones. Along with being disrespectful to the person buried in the grave beneath, gravestones are extremely heavy and can tip over on a person potentially causing a serious injury.

Please do not allow gravestone rubbings. The stones are fragile, both from age and from the consequences of acid rain. Bring a digital camera to record information and to photograph interesting cemetery stone shapes, icons or epitaphs.

Recommend that students wear sturdy shoes or sneakers. Wet grass, uneven ground and chuckholes are not conducive to students wearing flip flops. Rural cemeteries tend to be near woods, and many deer and wildlife roam through cemeteries. Remind students to check for ticks when they return home.

Supplies needed:
Clipboards, pencils, survey sheets, digital camera(s) if possible.
For Educators Student Activities:

Activity 1
Oakwood's Famous Residents

Many of Troy's most famous residents are buried in Oakwood Cemetery. Using the map and the clues below, locate the graves of some of Oakwood's most famous residents. The graves are all located in the area south of the ponds.

A. He was known as the "Rock of Chickamauga." His wife is Frances Lucretia Kellogg. An eagle is perched atop his gravestone. He is one of 11 Civil War generals buried at Oakwood. Who is he?

B. His stone is the tallest one in Oakwood Cemetery. There is a military hat carved into the stone. His wife is Sarah Moulton. Who is he?

C. She was one of the leaders in women's education. She believed that young ladies should learn math and science the same way that young men did. There is a large statue of her in downtown Troy across from the courthouse. Her maiden name is Hart and her husband's first name is John. Who is she?

D. His gravesite is a building with many columns on it but there is no name on the building. There is also a bench near the building that contains a carved head of woman with snakes as hair. He was known as a "robber baron." A college located in downtown Troy is named after him. Who is he?

E. He was known for supplying beef and pork to the troops stationed in East Greenbush during the War of 1812. The barrels were stamped: "U.S. E.A." He is most known today as "Uncle Sam". His wife's maiden name was Betsey Mann. Who is he?

F. She has a tall bronze statue over her gravesite. She is holding a laurel wreath in her hand. The artist and sculpture's name is engraved on the back of the sculpture. Her husband's name is John. Who is she?

G. There is a small lamb on top of this stone. The person buried here has a last name that is a word you hear when you talk about books, but this person never got to see a book. Who is he?
For Educators Student Activities:

Answer Sheet PG 1-Activity 1
Oakwood's Famous Residents- Continued...

A. General George Henry Thomas, 1816-1870. General Thomas is best known for having never lost a battle during the Civil War. His most famous battle was the Battle of Chickamauga in 1863, where he held the union line against the confederate forces. General Thomas was trained at West Point and was a career officer. When the Confederacy split from the Union, General Thomas did not join the Confederate forces even though he was from Virginia. His family never forgave him and disowned him. His wife, the former Frances Kellog was a native of Lansingburgh. General Thomas's military funeral was the largest in the Capital District. Over 10,000 mourners including President Ulysses S. Grant attended the service at Oakwood.

Location on map: # I. ____________Road

B. Major General John Ellis Wool, 1784-1869. General Wool had an illustrious career that began with the War of 1812 and ended with his leadership of the Union forces in the New York City Draft Riots of 1863. Born in Newburgh New York but raised in Schaghticoke, Rensselaer County, Wool started his military career as a Captain in the 14th United States Infantry, leading his regiment with distinction during the Battle of Plattsburgh. For his service he was promoted to Major. During the Mexican War he distinguished himself in leading his troops at the Battle of Buena Vista. He earned a Congressional sword and was promoted to major general. He then took over command of the Eastern Department and the Dept. of the Pacific after the war. Although he was quite elderly when the Civil War broke out he never the less again played a key role in protecting the entrance to Chesapeake Bay. He witnessed the major naval battle of the iron clad ships: the "Monitor" vs "Merrimac". His last battle was not on the battlefields of the south but rather on the streets of NYC during the Draft Riots of 1863. General Wool died in 1869. His monument is a 75' granite monolith one of the tallest single pieces of granite in the United States. Mined in Vinyl Haven, Maine, the monument was shipped down the east coast, up the Hudson River to Haunsick Street, where a special railroad track was built to move the monument to Oakwood. An enormous scaffold was erected to set the monument in place. It is one of the most visited grave-sites in Oakwood.

Location: At the end of Millionaires Row, Section __________
C. Emma Willard, 1787-1870. A pioneer in women's education. Born in Connecticut, Emma Willard opened her first female seminary in Middlebury, Vermont. She came to Troy in 1821 and opened her school with 90 girls enrolled. Mrs. Willard became friends with Amos Eaton, founder of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and the other professors who began teaching math and science to her pupils. This was radical since up to that time women were not taught the same subjects as men. Mrs. Willard herself went on to publish a history of the United States as well as several geography books. She was a strong opponent of the Civil War and was one of the first women to appear before Congress. While not a suffragette herself, one of her students, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, became a leader in the suffrage movement. At the turn of the century the campus moved from downtown Troy to the east side of the city. Another of her students, Margaret Olivia Slocum, who married the railroad baron Russell Sage, took some of his vast fortunes and founded Russell Sage College after his death.

Location of Mrs. Emma Willard: Section__, lower half of Millionaires’ Row.

D. Russell Sage. 1816-1906. Russell Sage was born in Verona, New York. In 1833, he came to Troy to apprentice at his brother Henry Sage’s grocery store. Sage lived on the corner of Washington and 2nd Street in ____ ward. In 1837, Sage became a partner in his brother’s business. He entered politics by becoming a ward alderman in 1841. He also served as a treasurer for Rensselaer County. Sage’s political career continued when he was elected to Congress as a Whig and served from December 1853 until 1857. Sage was the first congressman to support the idea that the government should purchase Mount Vernon, George Washington’s home in Virginia, and turn it into a national shrine. By 1874 Russell Sage was investing in the railroads and became a business partner with another gilded age robber baron, Jay Gould. His most famous railroad that he was director of was the Union Pacific. Russell Sage died in 1906 and left his entire fortune of around $70 million dollars to his second wife Margaret Olivia Slocum Sage. (1828-1918). She began a foundation to support educational and charitable causes that continues today.

E. Samuel Wilson, aka “Uncle Sam”. 1766-1854. Born in Menotomy, (Arlington) Massachusetts in on September 13, 1766, Samuel Wilson was one of thirteen children. Samuel and his brother Ebenezer came to Troy in 1789 and began
a brick manufacturing plant, using clay from the west slopes of Mount Ida. Their bricks were used to build the first Rensselaer County Courthouse and Jail as well as many other houses and commercial buildings in Troy. They also planted a fruit orchard and purchased land from what is now 8th Street to the north slopes of Mount Ida and used it to graze beef. The brothers established a meatpacking plant close to the river and built a dock at the foot of Ferry Street to ship their meat. Samuel attended the First Baptist Church on Third Street and became one of their trustees. When the War of 1812 broke out, Samuel and his brother replied to an ad placed in the Troy Post by Elbert Anderson of NYC, for barrels of beef and pork to be supplied to the 5,000 troops stationed in Greenbush, approximately 8 miles south of Troy. The Wilson brother's beef was packed in a good brine and well-made oak barrels, stamped "U S E A," meaning, United States and Elbert Anderson. The soldiers joked the U.S. really meant Uncle Sam, (as he was called often). The story spread and eventually anything that was supplies for the government was referred to as coming from Uncle Sam. Samuel was a tall thin man, so when soldiers told their stories to political cartoonists they began using the term and created the image we now recognize as Uncle Sam. In 1961, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy signed into law that Samuel Wilson was the progenitor of our nation's symbol, "Uncle Sam" and that Troy, NY was the "official" home of "Uncle Sam". Samuel Wilson died in 1854 and is buried here in Oakwood Cemetery.

F. Julia Tayloe Paine. 1838-1872. The daughter of Julia Dickenson and Benjamin Ogle Tayloe, Julia was born in Washington, DC, near the White House, but often traveled to Troy to visit her grandmother and grandfather John and Ann Eliza Dickinson. She was a friend of Emma Willard and was involved in many charitable causes in Troy and in Washington. Julia married John W. Paine and moved permanently to Troy, where they lived on 2nd Street. Her house is now known as "The Castle" and is owned by a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute fraternity. Her statue was designed by the artist William Rhinehart and completed in 1874. It was the last work he completed before he died. Notice the Paine Mausoleum to the left of Julia's statue. It's shape will remind you of a beehive.
G. Read. Born... died... It is always sad to see a child's gravestone. Before antibiotics and vaccines were invented, many children died from diseases such as typhoid, smallpox, diphtheria, yellow and scarlet fever. To mark the grave, lambs or a small cross were used to readily identify the grave as belonging to a child. This child's father was a mayor of Troy and owned a brewery. His name was Arba Read.
For Educators Student Activities:

**Activity 2**

Read the Stones

Students will learn or reinforce basic statistics and graphing by “reading a stone” for clues as to the age of a person, cause of death, indication of relatives nearby (i.e. single stone or family plot). Within that area the students will determine who are the oldest and youngest persons, and whether each person is man, woman or child. Students will look at death dates and also try to determine the cause of death including: cholera, typhoid, yellow fever epidemics or war casualties.

**Oakwood or Local Cemetery Data Survey Worksheet**

This activity will enhance students’ math and statistical skills, as well as further class discussion of key historical topics, such as wars, and inventions in science, particularly in medicine. Using the map of Oakwood or your local cemetery, choose a small designated area. Have the students choose partners to share the recording of data for approximately 12 stones.

**Supplies needed:**

Clipboards, pencils, and copies of student survey worksheets for the pair of students to record 7 - 10 gravestones. Digital camera to record image of stone (if time warrants).

Once the students have recorded the information from the stones, the sheets can be brought back to the classroom to create a graph showing the statistical information they gleaned from the stones. The entire class can participate by including information from their worksheets.

**Discussion questions once graph is completed:**

1. Were there more men or women buried? (Most often it is men why is that?)

2. How many soldiers were there? What years did they die? By seeing the year they died can you determine which war they may have fought in? (Ex: Revolutionary, War of 1812, Mexican, Civil War, Spanish American, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Gulf War, Iraq/Afghanistan.

3. What symbols did you see on the stones? What symbol was the most prevalent? (Masonic symbols are very predominant in the 19th century, discussion of fraternal organizations what their purpose is)
Activity 2 PG 2
Read the Stones Continued...

4. Does the shape or engravings, epitaphs, etc. give an indication of a person's occupation?

(Firemen, for instance, often had fire hats or hoses carved onto their stones; a bookmaker or publisher would often have his or her stone carved with an open or closed book.)

Cemetery Student Data Survey Worksheet

Cemetery gravestones contain a great deal of information about a person’s life. Look at the stones in your designated area. With your partner, locate 7-10 gravestones and answer the questions listed below. Not every stone will have all the information you see listed below. Others will contain a great deal of information as to who is buried beneath the stone. Be sure to check the stones to the right or left of the stone you are recording, sometimes they may be a parent, grandparent, or sibling of the deceased. You may find an entire family. Check the reverse side of the stones as well for information. Use the back of your paper to draw the shape of the stone or any special stone symbols, like flowers, or military insignia.

Student’s name: ________________________________________________________

Date of visit to Oakwood___________________________________________

Location/section of Oakwood_________________________________________

Name on gravestone:________________________________________

Male________________________________________________________

Female_______________________________________________________
For Educators Student Activities:

Activity 2 PG 3
Read the Stones Continued...

Date of birth______________________

Where was person born?__________________

Date of death ______________

Age at death___________________________________

Where did this person die?
______________________________________________________

Cause of
death______________________________________________

Was this a military person? __________________________

What branch of the
military?_______________________________________________

What was this person's occupation?
____________________________________________

What religion
______________________________________________________

Is grave a single grave or part of a family plot?
____________________________________________

Are there any symbols on the grave? What are they?
____________________________________________

Copy the information listed on the stone:
____________________________________________

Use the back of this sheet to draw the shape of the stone.
For Educators Student Activities:

Activity 3
Mapping Skills

In this activity, students will learn or reinforce their map skills, using 19th and 20th century maps from the Troy Cemetery Association and the Rensselaer County Historical Society. Students will locate Oakwood Cemetery on Troy City maps. They will also identify key changes in the urban landscape that surrounds Oakwood Cemetery by comparing an 1858 map of the City of Troy to a current map of the City of Troy. Students will examine an Oakwood Cemetery map to identify locations of mausoleums, water sources and major buildings, as well as identifying and locating cemetery sections of Oakwood.

Oakwood Cemetery Mapping Worksheet

This 1818 Map of Troy drawn by John Klein helps to tell the story of the growing community in Troy. The map shows Troy's location on the Hudson River, important structures such as the courthouse and jail, plus Troy's businesses, schools and cemeteries. All maps have a key or legend that helps to describe what you are looking at. There is also a compass point that shows you the map's orientation. Compass points always are drawn facing north.

Using the 1818 Map of the City of Troy please answer the following questions:

1. Locate the Hudson River. Using the compass as a reference point is Troy located on the east bank of the Hudson River or the West Bank?

2. Looking at the map's legend (which on this map is called "EXPLANATION") what is the symbol used to represent churches and cemeteries?

3. Locate the cemeteries and burial grounds on the map. Please note the cross streets. Are the cemeteries located in the city or outside of the city?

4. How many churches can you identify on the map? Are there any church burial grounds next to or near the churches?