



Dying Well in Montpelier: The Story of the Hubbard Memorial

This is the story of John Hubbard's fall from public grace and of his memorial's place in the continuing battle over how a man's actions should be remembered and judged.

By CYNTHIA MILLS

The seated bronze sculpture of a man, his head thrown back and his body wrapped in a billowing shroud, stirs a sense of wonder in many of the visitors who come upon it in Montpelier's Green Mount Cemetery. In its fine workmanship and aura of mystery, the figure stands out from all others in the rugged, spectacularly beautiful cemetery.

The name "Hubbard" on the monument's base is a familiar one in Montpelier today, for residents borrow books from the Kellogg-Hubbard Library and enjoy the high reaches of Hubbard Park. What most passers-by do not know, however, is that this bronze cemetery figure represents a final assertion in the struggle for public redemption by John Erastus Hubbard (1847–1899), a businessman who was vilified by his foes in Montpelier in the last years of his life.

In the eyes of a number of his nineteenth-century contemporaries, Hubbard lost his good name forever when he wrested from the town a large bequest that had been left by his aunt in 1890 for public projects. Hubbard became the target of stinging public insults. But when he died less than ten years later at age fifty-one, Montpelier residents learned that he had tried to prove his basic goodness by leaving the town the bulk of his own fortune. In a further attempt to ensure that he would be remembered well, Hubbard left a handsome sum for a cemetery monument. The administrators of his estate commissioned the celebrated sculptor Karl Bitter to design the memorial, which invokes the highest



Detail of Hubbard Memorial by Karl Bitter, Green Mount Cemetery, Montpelier, 1902. Photograph by Sean McCormally.

literary and artistic sources to convey the message that this was a man profoundly human and profoundly misunderstood.

This is the story of Hubbard's fall from public grace and of the memorial's place in the continuing battle over how a man's actions should be remembered and judged. In the arena of contested memory, deeds, words, and images collide.¹



John E. Hubbard

THE CONTESTED WILL

The saga began unfolding on January 29, 1890, when Hubbard's 70-year-old aunt, Fanny Hubbard Kellogg, passed away in New York City. She and her husband, Martin M. Kellogg, who had died less than three months before, were childless and had mutually agreed to leave their entire estate, amounting to more than \$300,000, to their hometown of Montpelier. Thus Fanny Kellogg's last will and testament, drawn up shortly after her husband's death, allotted \$55,000 for the erection of a chapel and gates at Green Mount Cemetery. It generously directed that the rest of her estate be used to build and maintain a public library in Montpelier bearing the Kellogg name.²

Hubbard, a bachelor who lived with his parents at their Montpelier homestead on Main Street, had expected to benefit personally from the Kelloggs' estate and was sorely disappointed about the will's terms. He persuaded his nearly blind father, Erastus Hubbard, and an aged uncle, Gustavus Hubbard, who were Fanny Kellogg's nearest living relatives, to assign to him their stakes in the estate.³ Then he challenged the will and opened a rocky era in Montpelier history that left residents deeply divided about his integrity.

Historian John W. Burgess (1844–1931), a professor at Columbia

University, who was a summer resident of Montpelier and had been Martin Kellogg's friend, suggested that Hubbard did "other things" as well to obtain the family money. Burgess was so troubled by what happened that he devoted a chapter of his memoirs to an indictment of Hubbard. By leaving his bitterly worded account of things, Burgess sought to make sure that the public memory of Hubbard's actions did not soften over the years.⁴

When Fanny Kellogg's will was offered for probate, Burgess reported, the two witnesses who had signed it only a few months earlier—Mrs. Kellogg's doctor and a clerk—testified that they had not understood that the document was a will. This response astonished Fanny Kellogg's lawyer, who insisted in court that he and Mrs. Kellogg had explained the situation to them. But the surrogate judge in New York, where the Kelloggs lived, ruled the will invalid.⁵

Montpelier officials then filed suit in the Supreme Court of Vermont, seeking to force John Hubbard to carry out the agreement between Martin and Fanny Kellogg to give their money to the town. Shortly before the court was expected to rule in early 1894, however, the town's selectmen agreed to a compromise with Hubbard, in which he promised to erect a library building costing about \$30,000. Under that settlement, Hubbard could retain all the remaining money in the estate, which Burgess calculated, a bit overgenerously, at "some \$275,000."⁶

"I was simply aghast" at the news of the deal, Burgess wrote. "But, of course, I knew what had happened, something which I never supposed possible in that Puritan community." Burgess hinted darkly that favors had been promised or money had changed hands, but he did not use the word bribery itself. He said town officials, with whom he had regularly been discussing the court action, avoided him when he arrived in the state capital during that summer of 1894, declaring: "I could easily discern the demoralizing effects of some baleful influence stealing over the community. Men no longer looked each other squarely in the face nor greeted each other with the hearty tones of innocence. I was distressed and confused in mind beyond measure."⁷

Amos P. Cutting, an architect from Worcester, Massachusetts, was hired to design an elegant two-story granite library. It was to be called the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, a name that suggested Hubbard was a philanthropist equal to the Kelloggs. As it became clearer and clearer that his reputation rested on the library he was building, Hubbard spent an estimated \$30,000 more on the structure and its maintenance.⁸

Burgess became obsessed with the case, declaring that Hubbard must not be allowed to cheat the public and at the same time gain the image



Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Montpelier

of town benefactor. He tried to punish Hubbard and town officials who had backed the settlement by helping in 1895 to install a small “rival” library (organized ten years earlier by a private association of stockholders) in the offices of Montpelier’s Young Men’s Christian Association. Burgess proposed that the library in the YMCA offices “stand up as a permanent protest against the settlement by the lawyers and officials of the town in the Kellogg will case and against any condoning of the offense by the community.”⁹

To give this library high status and public appeal, artist Thomas Waterman Wood, a native of Montpelier who also summered in the town, offered to deed to it forty-two of his oil paintings valued at some \$30,000, on the condition that the library’s books be kept at the YMCA and not at the Kellogg-Hubbard building. Wood, a painter of genre scenes, was president of the prestigious National Academy of Design in New York from 1891 to 1899 and a nationally prominent artist. Burgess’s wife had been Wood’s student and assistant, and the two men were good friends. Wood, who was in his early seventies, was giving some thought to his own legacy and he well understood the implication of his actions, allying art with civic and Christian morality. His donated gallery of paintings was opened August 8, 1895, with U.S. Supreme

Court Justice John Harlan, U.S. Senator Justin S. Morrill, the president of the University of Vermont, and Roman Catholic Bishop Louis de Goesbriand in attendance, adding their weight to the battle for virtue.¹⁰

The Kellogg-Hubbard library opened to the public January 2, 1896, with about 6,000 books on its shelves. While Hubbard had agreed to construct a library building, he did not promise to stock it with books. The “rival” library, run by the Montpelier Public Library Association (MPLA), had thousands more books, and Wood and his allies obtained a court order preventing their transfer.¹¹

In 1896 and 1897 heated town meetings were held discussing proposed appropriations to run the Kellogg-Hubbard Library and to buy more books for it. Anti-Hubbard forces issued bitter broadsides and used the meetings as opportunities to publicly assail all those associated with Hubbard as betrayers of the town. Trustee Hiram A. Huse angrily told one such gathering that he “did not take it kindly that in some undefined way it was thought that everybody connected with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library is a scoundrel.”¹²

The dueling libraries remained in existence until Hubbard died on July 17, 1899. His passing early that morning was blamed on cancer of the liver, but supporters and detractors alike speculated that the strain of the battle had contributed to his early demise. Burgess’s memoirs tell of a tremendous storm that passed through Montpelier in the hours before Hubbard’s death—suggesting a kind of supernatural vengeance had been enacted for Hubbard’s deeds. The air was “heavy and sultry” on the evening before Hubbard’s death, Burgess wrote:

At midnight the hurricane burst upon us; great trees swayed and houses trembled; torrential rain fell; the lightning was so incessant that it seemed no longer night but brilliant day; and the incessant roar of thunder was like the discharge of a thousand cannon. At daybreak it ceased. . . . Word ran through the town that, in the midst of the tornado, the spirit of Hubbard had departed. Two days later a little funeral cortege, a hearse and two or three carriages, passed down the main avenue of the town to the beautiful Green Mount Cemetery, and the tragedy of that life was ended.¹³

A lengthy obituary appearing that day in the *Evening Argus* newspaper was more sympathetic about the death of “the largest individual tax payer in Montpelier.” It depicted Hubbard as a charitable man, sadly misunderstood by his community, who “has done a great deal that will never be known or written about.” And for the unnamed author of the *Evening Argus* obituary, Hubbard’s “wonderful calm nerve” in meeting death and refusal to indulge in revenge were final evidence of his virtue.

When a man passes away it is said that many good things are found to write about him, yet even those who have been opposed to his policy acknowledge that they would undoubtedly have done the same thing had they been in his place. All during a dispute that has stirred the city to the lowest depth, his bitterest opponents must agree that he carried himself with wonderful propriety and no murmur of illwill toward any man was heard from his lips, no matter what his mind had thought.¹⁴

The newspaper also ran a separate story that evening, with the tantalizing headline: “MADE PUBLIC BEQUESTS/Some Surprises Expected in the Will of/John E. Hubbard.” The article reported: “A gentleman who has been a close friend of Mr. Hubbard . . . informs an EVENING ARGUS reporter that those who have said unpleasant things will have occasion to be most agreeably surprised at the manner in which Mr. Hubbard remembered the city. With the death of Mr. Hubbard the long drawn out library fight will undoubtedly be settled.”¹⁵

The predictions about Hubbard’s intentions proved correct, and the *Evening Argus* could crow on July 20 when the contents of his will were made public: “MUNIFICENT BEQUESTS To Montpelier By John E. Hubbard.”¹⁶

Hubbard left an estate valued at nearly \$300,000, mostly in real estate and stocks and bonds. In a will dated August 4, 1897, he bequeathed the bulk of this to the town, including \$125,000 for the library, \$25,000 for a gate and chapel at Green Mount Cemetery, and some 100 acres of land known as Hubbard Hill for a public park, with \$50,000 to fix up the land and maintain it. He also left \$10,000 for erection of his cemetery monument, and the remainder of his money to three surviving relatives. In effect, his will closely paralleled the Kellogg will he had challenged nearly a decade earlier.¹⁷

“The name of Mr. Hubbard is on every lip today,” declared the *Argus*. “No other man that has died in the city has left as much to the town as has he.” The newspaper report continued, “Even those who have said very hard things about him previously are more softened today, and some have acknowledged that they might possibly have judged him too severely. . . . All should join in saying *Requiescat in pace*.”¹⁸

The Unitarian Reverend J. Edward Wright, who had been a member of both the Kellogg-Hubbard and rival library’s board of trustees, officiated at Hubbard’s funeral on July 19.¹⁹ The following weekend, residents thronged to the future “Hubbard Park,” high above the town, “anxious to become familiar with the extent, character and location of Montpelier’s recent inheritance.”²⁰

DESIGNING THE MEMORIAL

Hubbard's will named former Vermont Governor William Paul Dillingham and Arthur D. Farwell, a Kellogg-Hubbard trustee, as his executors. In addition to having authority to distribute his properties, they were instructed to commission his cemetery monument, which would stand as Hubbard's final bid to reclaim his reputation. The will stated only:

It is my request that my body be buried in the family lot in Green Mount Cemetery, Montpelier, in which my father is buried and that my executors erect thereon after my burial a monument or memorial figure at a cost of not less than five thousand and of not more than ten thousand dollars, the expenses within these limits to be at their discretion.²¹

It is unknown whether Hubbard gave his friends any further guidance before his death about his wishes. But Dillingham and Farwell, aware of the public assaults on his reputation, ultimately chose to commission an ambiguous bronze figurative sculpture that departed significantly from the memorial traditions of Hubbard's family and of Green Mount Cemetery.

John Hubbard's Montpelier ancestors rest together in the cemetery before a large granite angel with outstretched wings. Behind the angel stands a rock-face cross, which dominates that section of the cemetery in height. No inscription tells of the angel's date or maker, but it must have been commissioned sometime after Hubbard's father acquired four lots near the center of Green Mount Cemetery in 1864.²²

Those buried before the towering angel include John Hubbard's grandfather, Roger Hubbard (1783–1848), who in the late eighteenth century had become the first of his line to settle in Montpelier. Legend had it that he was a tin peddler from Connecticut. His farm gave the name "Hubbard's Meadow" to an area of town on which some of the more expensive residences were later built. Roger left to his son, Erastus Hubbard (1811–1890), a store, the beginnings of a waterworks, and valuable land, which Erastus laid out into streets and developed. Erastus Hubbard also expanded the system of underground water pipes begun by his father, known as the Hubbard Spring Water System. At one time, the Hubbards were the largest real estate owners in the town. In those flush times, Erastus Hubbard helped to finance the building of the Pavilion Hotel and the second Vermont State House. In the 1840s, however, Erastus Hubbard's vision was damaged by an explosion of some gun powder in his store. As his eyes gradually failed him he came to rely increasingly on his son John to manage his business affairs, primarily developing residential and business real estate. Erastus died in 1890, and John Hubbard was still living with his 84-year-old mother at the time of his own death.²³



Hubbard family angel, Green Mount Cemetery, Montpelier. Erected after 1865. Photograph by Sean McCormally.

The Kelloggs, too, were buried in Green Mount Cemetery. They were interred with Martin's parents and sister beneath an elaborate granite monument on one of the highest locations in the cemetery. The monument depicts a seated woman holding a book with a female child at her side. The figures are raised on a pedestal nearly 10 feet high, which is ornamented with four columns, a large "K" for Kellogg, a wreath and palm leaves.²⁴

.....



*Kellogg Memorial, Green Mount Cemetery, Montpelier. Date unknown.
Photograph by Sean McCormally.*

Green Mount Cemetery, dedicated in 1855, sits on a steeply sloping hillside that once may have been the site of a seasonal Indian encampment at the confluence of the Dog and Winooski Rivers. It was created as part of a national trend beginning in the 1830s to improve urban life and hygiene by building rural cemeteries in picturesque natural settings outside crowded cities. After Green Mount opened, some remains from the crowded Elm Street Cemetery in town were moved there.

At the time of John Hubbard's death in the late 1890s, the cemetery was considered an important and didactic local landmark. A heavy iron gate marked its entrance. An illustrated history of the town, published by the *Vermont Watchman* in 1893, reported:

.....



View of Green Mount Cemetery

The great glory of Montpelier is its cemetery, both for what it contains, its beauty of situation and the perfection of its maintenance. Most of the chief actors in its history lie buried there. Take with you an old man, in whom memory abides, walk with him beneath the trees of this peaceful grove, read, with his aid, the writings in stone there, and you will have almost the perfect story of the town.²⁵

As in any cemetery of the late nineteenth century, monument types varied, but here a great dependence on the granite so available in the region was evident. The granite quarries and carving of immigrant sculptors in nearby Barre, Vermont, were famous. These granite carvers, many of them trained in Italy to work in a highly realistic style, were skillful in replicating a vast range of details and textures—from facial features and hair styles to clothing—in stone.²⁶ The Hubbard and Kellogg stone memorials were two of the most elaborate figurative monuments existing in Green Mount Cemetery at the turn of the century. Few, if any, bronze monuments had yet been erected there.

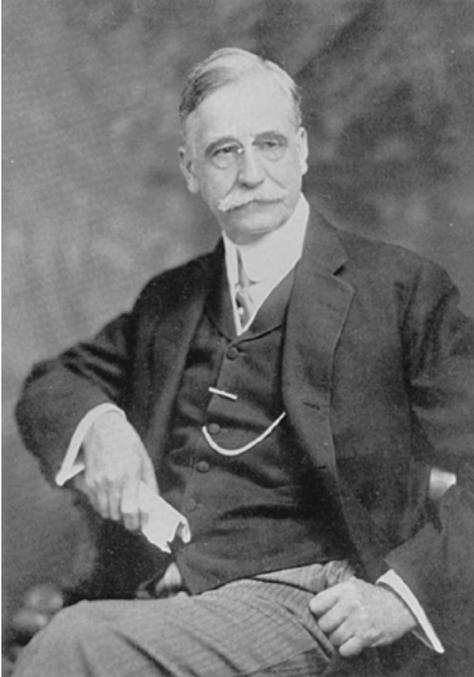
.....

Although a Hubbard family monument—the angel and cross—already existed, John Hubbard clearly wanted a personal, enduring memorial. Hubbard had spent his life in Montpelier, with the exception of three years working in Boston and one year in “traveling in foreign countries.”²⁷

Little is known of Hubbard’s aesthetic or literary tastes. According to the inventory of his estate, he left three oil paintings (“of flowers and dead birds”), displayed in the parlor, and two “Roman photos,” a Montpelier scene, a “bronze female figure,” and two bronze horses in the sitting room. Since he occupied the family home, these objects might have been choices of his parents.²⁸

It seems that the decisions about commissioning a memorial fell primarily on Dillingham of Waterbury, who was at the time of Hubbard’s death a partner in a law firm with Huse and Frederick A. Howland. Dillingham was a Methodist who headed the board of trustees of Montpelier Seminary. In October 1900, Dillingham—like Hubbard, a Republican—was elected to the U.S. Senate at age 56 to fill the unexpired term of Justin Morrill. He was re-elected four times, serving in the Senate until his death in 1923.²⁹

Dillingham had visited the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in



William Paul Dillingham

Chicago, and in 1901 he was chief orator at “Vermont Day” exercises at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. Thus he was familiar with the dramatic architectural sculpture produced for both world’s fairs, including the work of the Austrian-born sculptor Karl Bitter. It was Bitter who had produced the allegorical sculpture groups adorning Beaux-Arts architect Richard Morris Hunt’s Administration Building at the Chicago fair. Bitter was director of outdoor sculpture for the Buffalo exposition, for which he made four equestrian “standard bearer” statues. Dillingham also could have seen Bitter’s work in a number of houses that Hunt, who died in 1895, had designed for New York’s wealthy, including the Biltmore estate in Asheville, North Carolina.³⁰

Bitter, who immigrated to the United States from Vienna in 1889 at age 21, had been to this date primarily an architectural sculptor and sculptor of decorative work. He worked swiftly, with a sure touch, in a neo-Baroque style compatible with his academic training in Austria. He had a studio at Weehawken, New Jersey.

Dillingham apparently commissioned the Hubbard memorial, Bitter’s first major cemetery composition, in the summer of 1901, and Bitter finished the project by the end of the following spring. The assignment was complicated by the need to tuck the elaborate monument into the remaining portion of the Hubbard lots, and Bitter asked Austrian architect Hans Kestranek to design the setting for the sculpture.³¹

Bitter apparently did not know John Hubbard, and he was unfamiliar with Montpelier and its environs. But he understood that a new attitude toward mourning and cemetery monuments was developing among the merchant class in other urban centers of the East. Earlier monuments were usually made of stone, with emphasis on overt expressions of religious faith or “Victorian” pathos. At the end of the century there was a distancing from sentimental mourning traditions and a depersonalization of death in American culture. Now the best monuments, from Bitter’s perspective, were becoming more secular or amorphously spiritual, more like fine art sculpture suitable for a museum—expressions of a high, even rarefied, taste that could be equated with the deceased’s high moral character. From the 1890s to the 1920s, bronze figurative sculpture blossomed in the cemetery, with wealthy families seeking designs from celebrated sculptors. In addition to memorializing themselves, they justified their bronze monuments as adding beauty to a communal landscape—the cemetery—and suggesting models for proper behavior by future generations. Hubbard’s memorial was erected early in this wave and was doubly notable because of the quality of its execution and its location in Vermont, remote from the eastern arts centers.³²

Bitter himself was in a transitional period of his career, and the

.....

Hubbard sculpture may have been crucial for much of his future work. Although little record exists of his thoughts about the Montpelier commission, he did write of a determination to make his next cemetery sculpture, the more stylized memorial to railroad magnate Henry Villard in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Tarrytown, New York, a “modern” piece. His work on the two monuments overlapped, and during this period he seems to have come increasingly under the influence of the overt symbolism of recent sculpture by George Gray Barnard and Charles Grafly and the presence of such work at the 1901 fair.³³

The five-foot-high bronze figure for the Hubbard memorial was cast by the Bureau Brothers foundry in Philadelphia in 1902. The seated male figure, with lips parted and eyes closed, is covered with drapery that swirls in a serpentine configuration like a winding sheet. The garment does not summon up associations with any specific time or place—and in this way it is quite different from the regional granite carvers’ penchant to replicate contemporary costume. It suggests in-



Hubbard Memorial, Green Mount Cemetery, Montpelier. Photograph by Sean McCormally.

.....

stead that this being exists in a realm apart from our world. The figure's right hand clutches the cloth expressively. One side of his upper torso is exposed, revealing a solid, fairly youthful body.

The bronze figure, just thirty inches deep and open in the back, is set against a plain gray granite stele. A stone slab lies in front of the figure, with the name JOHN E. HUBBARD in elegant raised letters. Three steps at the front invite the visitor to walk up to it.³⁴

An inscription, suggesting Hubbard's struggle for peace, is incised between wreaths inset on the curving walls of the granite exedra radiating out to both sides. On the figure's right the inscription begins:

THOU GO NOT LIKE THE
QUARRY SLAVE AT NIGHT
SCOURGED TO HIS DUNGEON
BUT SUSTAINED AND SOOTHED
BY AN UNFALTERING TRUST

On the proper left, it continues:

APPROACH THY GRAVE
LIKE ONE WHO WRAPS
THE DRAPERY OF HIS COUCH
ABOUT HIM AND LIES DOWN
TO PLEASANT DREAM.

These lines, from the conclusion of William Cullen Bryant's *Thanatopsis*, imply that Hubbard died well.³⁵ Despite the public criticism he suffered, he would not go "scourged to his dungeon," but rest in peaceful knowledge that he had lived in virtue and that, as earlier verses of *Thanatopsis* state:

Not to thine resting place
Shalt thou retire alone, nor couldst thou wish
Couch more magnificent. Thou shalt lie down
With patriarchs of the infant world—with kings,
The powerful of the earth—the wise, the good,
Fair forms, and hoary seers of ages past,
All in one mighty sepulchre.³⁶

The inscription did not include the author or title of the lines. It assumed that they would be recognized by educated audiences and would associate Hubbard with a great American bard. Bryant (1794–1878) was the first native American poet to attain worldwide fame; his picture looked down from schoolroom walls across the nation. *Thanatopsis*, titled after the Greek word for "meditation on death," was Bryant's most famous poem, a stately contemplation of death amid nature and an optimistic guide for the emotions of bereavement.³⁷

Proud of his work, Bitter displayed the plaster figure for the Hubbard

.....

memorial in arts exhibitions, offering a complementary mythological explanation for its iconography. He exhibited the figure under the related name *Thanatos*. Thus he added to the patriotic associations with a familiar American poem a link to the type of mythological subject that was second nature to his academically inspired architectural sculpture. Thanatos, the Greek personification of death, was the brother of Hypnos (Sleep) and fatherless son of Nyx (Night). He lived deep in the underworld. On Greek vase paintings, Thanatos is sometimes linked with Hypnos and depicted as a winged youth; in Greek literature, he is sometimes referred to as “black-robed.”³⁸ As sculptors increasingly included



Plaster model of Hubbard Memorial prepared for fine arts exhibition. Karl Bitter papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

examples of their cemetery sculpture in fine arts exhibitions beginning in the 1890s, it was not uncommon to give these pieces allegorical or literary names to protect the privacy of the family or to provide an appealing label for discussing them. In the arts exhibition space, the story of Hubbard's struggle with his fellow townsmen and of the quest to cleanse his reputation was lost. Comparisons were drawn from other realms.

Bitter exhibited plasters of both his Hubbard and Villard cemetery memorials a few feet from each other at the National Sculpture Society's "Flower & Sculpture Exhibition" at New York's Madison Square Garden in November 1902. While his Montpelier sculpture was listed in the exhibition catalogue as "figure for Hubbard Memorial," sculpture historian Lorado Taft wrote that it was "inscribed 'Thanatos'" at the show itself, and other critics also referred to it that way. C. W. Canfield, for example, wrote that winter in *Monumental News*, "The 'Thanatos' of Bitter is a most inspiring study of a draped and seated figure, suave in sweep, soothing and comforting in pose and the thought conveyed."³⁹

The Hubbard figure also was displayed under the name *Thanatos* in the American fine arts exhibition at the 1904 world's fair in St. Louis. Bitter was director of the architectural and outdoor sculpture at that fair. The official exposition handbook commented that the sculptor had succeeded in making "a very impressive mortuary monument by representing the Greek god of death—like sleep as the symbol of a peaceful demise."⁴⁰

A number of arts writers, including Taft, instinctively compared and contrasted the monument with the Adams monument in Washington, D.C., a touchstone for all draped bronze allegorical sculpture in American cemeteries at the turn of the century. In doing so, they evoked the Adams monument's associations with America's cultural and political elite as well as its sense of an ambivalent peace attained through tragedy.

The Adams monument was commissioned by Henry Adams, descendant of two presidents, after the death by suicide of his wife Marian Hooper ("Clover") Adams in 1885. It was created by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the most famous sculptor of his time, and by 1900 was a well-known pilgrimage site for residents and visitors to Washington. Dillingham may have been among those who made the trek to Washington's Rock Creek Cemetery to see it. Bitter certainly was aware of the model that cloaked figure set for funerary sculpture. The Adams monument was unusual in that it contained no words—not even the Adams name. Like the Hubbard monument, it could be interpreted by its audiences in varying ways—sometimes as serene, sometimes as tortured. Adams, for



Adams Monument by Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Rock Creek Cemetery, Washington, D.C., 1891. Photograph by Cynthia Mills.

example, once referred to his monument as “the peace of God,” but the popular name “Grief” was frequently attached to it by others.⁴¹

With all this in mind, sculptor Lorado Taft wrote in 1903 of the Hubbard figure’s “mysterious mien” and ample drapery: “The breathlessness, the swaying arms, the grip of the hand, the pressure of the feet, the tangle of the enveloping shroud give this figure another kind of impres-

.....

siveness from the awful calm of Saint Gaudens's sibyl. Mr. Bitter's conception is less majestic, but has an intensity which grows upon one."

Taft continued, however, to speak of the memorial in words that could have been applied to the famous Adams monument itself:

This unknown being, wrapped in its mantle as in one of [symbolist painter Elihu] Vedder's swirls, this groping, unseeing creation, has in its make-up something of the ideal, of the large and the deep, by virtue of which it seems full of significance. The sculptor must have meant something by it. What its meaning, each must read for himself.⁴²

Bitter's brother-in-law, Ferdinand Schevill, found it necessary in his 1917 biography to reply to critics' assertions that the Hubbard figure was profoundly influenced by Saint-Gaudens' Washington creation. "Bitter's angel of the Hubbard Memorial is not remotely of the same kin," Schevill declared. "It is a lyric figure, half angel and half bird, announcing by its rhythmic lines and every fold of its wide robe that Death is the simple, natural conclusion of existence and visits mortals on the wings of music."⁴³

Interestingly, art historian James Dennis, in his 1967 biography of Bitter, was still wrestling with the same question about the figure's similarity "to the interpretation of grief achieved by Saint-Gaudens for the well-known Adams Memorial." Dennis noted that the Hubbard figure lacks the deliberate androgyny of the Adams monument and commented on its more "animated" shroud, but acknowledged that it shares a quiet center and suggestions of an inner spiritual content.⁴⁴ He suggested that the Hubbard monument also might have been influenced by Bitter's early experience in copying Michelangelo's *Dying Slave*, made for a papal tomb in sixteenth-century Italy.⁴⁵

The Hubbard figure was seen as so close to the Adams monument that *Monumental News*, the national trade journal for monument makers, misidentified it as a work by Saint-Gaudens in a lengthy March 1910 article. A correction had to be run a few months later, stating, "The memorial was modeled by Karl Bitter of New York in 1902, and it is due to him that this correction be made."⁴⁶

A CENTURY LATER

Today, a visitor to John E. Hubbard's Memorial in Green Mount Cemetery approaches the rugged hillside through the stone entrance-way and chapel erected with money from Hubbard's estate. Dedicated June 12, 1905, the "gothic" style building includes an altar, pulpit and pews, with seating for 100 in the chapel and room for sixty-two bodies in a receiving vault. A sealed box was placed in the cornerstone containing a letter addressed to the commissioners of Green Mount Ceme-



Gatehouse and chapel, Green Mount Cemetery, Montpelier. Photo by Sean McCormally.

tery of some future generation, a report on the dedication services and a copy of John Hubbard's will.⁴⁷

The cemetery chapel has fallen into disuse, but the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, in the center of town, is thriving and in 1996 marked its centennial with a look back at the history of its tortured birth. A pamphlet, entitled *Free to All: The Kellogg-Hubbard Library's First 100 Years*, written by Susannah Clifford and published by the library, did not shy from relating the details of "The Library's Turbulent Founding."

Modern scholarship has investigated how the creation of public libraries in nineteenth-century American cities was part of a "paternalistic culture" interested in extending genteel ideas about society and the building of character.⁴⁸ In this case, the town library was the center for an outright duel between two perceptions of virtue.

From birth to death, John Hubbard's life had been centered in Montpelier, where he was educated in the town's public schools, managed his family's business, and was buried. He made sure through the terms of his will that the local contest over his reputation would continue after his death. The executors of Hubbard's will, longtime friends, also did

their best to ensure that Hubbard's philanthropy and a provocative cemetery memorial would have the final say in the contest over how John E. Hubbard should be remembered.

NOTES

¹ This article could not have been written without the generous assistance of, among others: Kellogg-Hubbard librarian Janet Nielsen; Green Mount Cemetery superintendent Patrick Healy; and librarian Paul A. Carnahan and other staff members of the Vermont Historical Society. My thanks go as well to Michael Sherman, editor of *Vermont History*, and to an anonymous reader for his/her kind comments and insights.

² The dispute over the will, which was dated 8 November 1889, is described by Martin Kellogg's friend, John W. Burgess, in his *Reminiscences of an American Scholar* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934), 260–277. Also see "Death Came to John E. Hubbard," *Evening Argus*, 17 July 1899; Jean Latham, "A Decade of Discord: Traumatic Birth of a Vermont Library," *Wilson Library Bulletin* (February 1978): 479–484; and Susannah Clifford, *Free to All: The Kellogg-Hubbard Library's First 100 Years* (Montpelier: Kellogg-Hubbard Library, 1996), 3–4.

³ Erastus Hubbard died October 10, 1890, while the court proceedings were still in progress. Gustavus Hubbard died the next year.

⁴ Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 263.

⁵ "When finally Mr. [H. H.] Cammann offered the will for probate, what was his astonishment and dismay to hear the witnesses to the document swear . . . that they had never been informed the document was a will." *Ibid.*, 261–262. Burgess married into a Montpelier family in 1885 when he took Ruth Payne Jewett as his second wife. His summer home named Redstone is now occupied by the secretary of state's office. Also see accounts of the challenge to the will in the *New York Times* on 10 May 1890, 27 June 1890 and 9 October 1890; and the *Montpelier Daily-Journal*, 11 October 1890.

⁶ Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 263.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁸ *First Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont, 1895–96*, 70.

⁹ Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 266.

¹⁰ See William C. Lipke, *Thomas Waterman Wood, PNA, 1823–1903* (Montpelier: Wood Art Gallery, 1972), 56–57, and Leslie A. Hasker and J. Kevin Graffagnino, "Thomas Waterman Wood and the Image of Nineteenth-Century America," *Antiques* (November 1980): 1039–1040.

¹¹ On the opening of the Kellogg-Hubbard Library, see *The Annual Reports of the Officers of the City of Montpelier for the Year Ending February 1896* (Montpelier: Press of the Watchman Publishing Company, 1896), 98–101; *First Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont, 1895–96* (Burlington: Free Press Association, 1896), 68–70; and *Second Biennial Report of the Board of Library Commissioners of Vermont, 1897–98* (St. Johnsbury, Vermont: The Caledonian Company, 1898), 66–68.

¹² See, for example, "Montpelier City Meeting," *Argus & Patriot*, 4 March 1896, and "Annual City Meeting," *Vermont Watchman & State Journal*, 4 March 1896. Also see protest broadside, "To the Tax-Payers of Montpelier," 29 February 1896, in the collections of the Vermont Historical Society. Burgess credited the local Catholic priest, Father W. J. O'Sullivan, and some of his parishioners with helping anti-Hubbard forces block the motions. Wood had provided O'Sullivan's church, St. Augustine's, with copies of two Old Master paintings, Murillo's *Madonna del Rosario* and Raphael's *Transfiguration from the Vatican*. Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 272–273. "Artist Wood's Generous Gift to St. Augustine's Church," *Evening Argus*, 19 July 1899.

¹³ Burgess, *Reminiscences of an American Scholar*, 273–274.

¹⁴ "Death Came to John E. Hubbard," *Evening Argus*, 17 July 1899.

¹⁵ "Made Public Bequests," *Evening Argus*, 17 July 1899.

¹⁶ "Munificent Bequests," *Evening Argus*, 20 July 1899. The *Montpelier Daily Journal* also hailed the bequests in its front-page headline for 20 July 1899: "Will of John E. Hubbard/Princely Provision for the/Kellogg-Hubbard Library./Gateway, Carriage Porch/and Chapel for Green/Mount Cemetery/Magnificent Gifts to the City of Montpelier./Large Private Bequests."

¹⁷ Will of John E. Hubbard, 4 August 1897. Volume 9, page 782. Probate Court records, Montpelier. Although the Kellogg-Hubbard Library had to wait until 1904 to receive its \$125,000 from the estate, the feud essentially ended after Hubbard's death when the rival library became free to transfer its books there. Clifford, *Free to All*, 7–8.

¹⁸ "Munificent Bequests," *Evening Argus*, 20 July 1899.

¹⁹ "Death Came to John E. Hubbard," *Evening Argus*, 17 July 1899. "Funeral of the Late John E. Hubbard Held This Afternoon," *Evening Argus*, 19 July 1899.

²⁰ “Local Happenings,” *Vermont Watchman*, 26 July 1899.

²¹ Will of John E. Hubbard, Probate Court, Montpelier. The inventory of Hubbard’s estate lists its total value as \$291,169.81, 25 January 1900. Volume 23, beginning on page 454.

²² Erastus Hubbard purchased lots 415 (\$25 transfer J. P. Spillman), 416 (\$25 transfer K. Alexander), 417 (\$21) and 418 (\$12.50) on 2 December 1864, according to Green Mount Cemetery files.

²³ For family history, see: Edward Warren Day, *One Thousand Years of Hubbard History, 866 to 1895* (New York: Harlan Page Hubbard, 1895), 360, 441; “Death Came to John E. Hubbard,” *Evening Argus*, 17 July 1899; and *The Vermont Watchman—Souvenir Edition, 1893*, 61.

²⁴ Kellogg’s parents were Martin Kellogg (d. 25 March 1825 at age 45) and Phoebe M. Kellogg (d. 6 December 1819 at age 26). His sister Sophia W. Kellogg (1819–1820) did not survive to her first birthday. Kellogg had bought lots 558 and 559 in the cemetery on 25 September 1867 for \$500, according to Green Mount Cemetery records.

²⁵ “Greenmount Cemetery,” *The Vermont Watchman—Souvenir Edition, 1893*, 20–21. For the history of the cemetery also see: *The History of the Town of Montpelier* (from Vol. IV of the *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*. Montpelier: A. M. Hemenway, 1882), 532–539 and text of a December 1916 speech by W. S. Smith in cemetery archives.

²⁶ A good example of the regional carvers’ veristic style is the monument honoring Elia Corti (d. 1903) in Hope Cemetery, Barre, N.H., which was created by his brother William Corti and brother-in-law John Comi. See Rod Clarke, *Carved in Stone: A History of the Barre Granite Industry* (Barre, Vt.: Rock of Ages, 1989), 57–58. Another source on the region’s granite carvers is: Gene Sessions, ed., *Celebrating a Century of Granite Art* (Montpelier, Vt.: T. W. Wood Art Gallery, 1989).

²⁷ *Vermont Watchman—Souvenir Edition, 1893*, 61.

²⁸ Inventory of John E. Hubbard estate, 25 January 1900.

²⁹ Dillingham had been elected governor of Vermont in September 1888 and served one term. See “Senator William Paul Dillingham,” *The Vermonter* 6 (November 1900): 51–53; “Vermont Men of Today: William P. Dillingham,” *The Vermonter* 7 (January 1902): 14–16; and entries in the *Dictionary of American Biography* and the *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, 8: 324.

³⁰ Dillingham’s visits to the fairs are mentioned in “Vermont Men of Today: William P. Dillingham,” *The Vermonter* 7 (January 1902): 16. The primary source on Bitter’s work remains James Dennis, *Karl Bitter: Architectural Sculptor, 1867–1915* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967). Some of Bitter’s papers are held by the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

³¹ Dennis, *Karl Bitter*, 92, 275, cites letters from Bitter to Hans Kestranek dated 29 November 1901 and 13 April 1902. These letters, written in German, were once in the possession of Bitter’s son, Francis Bitter of Centreville, Massachusetts. Their present location is unknown.

³² See Cynthia Mills, “Reform in the Cemetery,” chapter six of “The Adams Memorial and American Funerary Sculpture, 1891–1927” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Maryland, College Park, 1996), 263–286.

³³ The desire to work in a “modern” style was expressed in a letter from Bitter to Kestranek, 10 February 1902, according to Dennis, *Karl Bitter*, 94, 275, n13. Susan Rather discusses the influences on Bitter in “Toward a New Language of Form: Karl Bitter and the Beginnings of Archaism in American Sculpture,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 25 (Spring 1990): 3.

³⁴ The figure bears the inscriptions “KARL BITTER Sctpt.” and “BUREAU BROS. BRONZE FOUNDERS PHILA. PA.” It measures nearly 60 inches in height from its self-base. The stele behind it is 6 feet, 1.5 inches wide. Each curving arm of the exedra measures 7 feet, 6 inches in length. The granite slab in front of the figure measures 10 feet, 2 inches from the back wall to Hubbard’s name and is 78 inches wide. According to W. P. Lockington, “Sculpture Work in Philadelphia,” *Monumental News* 14 (December 1902): 695, Jones Brothers provided the Barre granite for the setting.

³⁵ Lines 77–81 of *Thanatopsis*. These lines were among those added by Bryant in an 1821 revision of the poem for republication. The poem originally was written in 1815 and was first published in *The North American Review* in 1817. George McMichael, ed., *Anthology of American Literature* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985), 1: 897–900.

³⁶ Lines 31–39, 44–45, *Thanatopsis*.

³⁷ McMichael, *Anthology of American Literature*, 1: 897–900, and Justin Wintle, ed., *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture, 1800–1914* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 83–84.

³⁸ Michael Grant, *Myths of the Greeks and Romans* (New York: New American Library, 1962), 87–88, 208, 222–224, 238, 267, 275. James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects & Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 284. M. C. Howatson, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

³⁹ The sculpture was listed in the catalogue as no. 30, “Figure for Hubbard Memorial.” *Flower & Sculpture Exhibition*, Madison Square Garden, N.Y., October 30–November 6, 1902, 45. For Taft’s comments, see Lorado Taft, *The History of American Sculpture* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1903), 460–462. For Canfield’s, see C.W. Canfield, “National Sculpture Society Exhibit, New

.....

York," *Monumental News* 14 (December 1902): 691–692. W. P. Lockington, in "Sculpture Work in Philadelphia," *Monumental News* 14 (December 1902): 695, adds: "It is an acceptable piece of modeling, and in the academic draping of the shroud, one feels the delicate taste and handling of the texture that displays the sentiment of the artist. . . . It is entitled 'Thanatos.'"

⁴⁰ *Official catalogue of exhibitors. Universal Exposition. St. Louis, U.S.A. 1904. Department B Art* (St. Louis: Official Catalogue Co. Inc., 1904), 59, no. 2039. *Illustrations of Selected Works in the Various National Sections of the Department of Art with complete list of awards by the International Jury*, sculpture text by George Julian Zolnay, superintendent of sculpture division (St. Louis: Louisiana Purchase Exposition Co., 1904), 383. Zolnay said the figure was placed in the "sculpture court, central pavilion," at the 1904 American exhibition. The allegorical title *Thanatos* was not used when two photographs of the monument were included in a 1904 exhibition at the Chicago Art Institute as nos. 24–25, "Photographs of completed memorial to John Hubbard, erected at Montpelier, Vermont." See *Exhibition of Sculptured Works by Karl T. F. Bitter* (Art Institute of Chicago: 3 to 27 March 1904).

⁴¹ See Mills, "The Adams Memorial and American Funerary Sculpture, 1891–1927" for a full exposition of the monument's creation and reception.

⁴² Lorado Taft comments in his chapter on "Decorative sculptors and men of foreign birth" in *The History of American Sculpture*, 1903, 460–462.

⁴³ Ferdinand Schevill, *Karl Bitter: A Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1917), 41.

⁴⁴ Lois Goldreich Marcus has argued that Bitter had a "continued stylistic dependence" on the work of Saint-Gaudens. Bitter was "indebted to the precedent of the Adams Memorial in his figure for the Hubbard Memorial. . . . Bitter's figure of indeterminate sex conveys a state beyond mortal experience and it is clearly dependent upon the Saint-Gaudens monument." Marcus, "Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture: Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907)," 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 1979), 218–219.

⁴⁵ Dennis, *Karl Bitter*, 92–94. Henry Adams also had stood in awe of the *Dying Slave* (the Louvre, Paris) and discussed it with Saint-Gaudens, so perhaps a common influence was at work on both monuments during this "American Renaissance" period. Henry Adams to Saint-Gaudens, 30 April 1902, J.C. Levenson et al., eds., *The Letters of Henry Adams*, 6 vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982–88).

⁴⁶ *Monumental News* misidentified the maker of the Hubbard Memorial in volume 21 (March 1910). The correction ran in volume 22 (August 1910): 569. Bitter went on to make several other important sculptures in cemeteries in the Northeast, including the Prehn Mausoleum, with the bronze figure of a child inside, at Cedar Lawn Cemetery in Paterson, N.J. (1911–12) and the marble Kasson memorial, a lifesize kneeling figure said to personify the soul, at Forest Hills Cemetery in Utica, N.Y. (1914).

⁴⁷ The chapel was designed by Cleveland & Godfrey, according to *A Second Walk through Montpelier* (Montpelier: Montpelier Heritage Group, 1976), 35. It cost more than the \$25,000 left by Hubbard for that purpose, so Hubbard's funds were supplemented with nearly \$7,500 from the general cemetery fund.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (London: Verso, 1987), 48–51, and Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).