



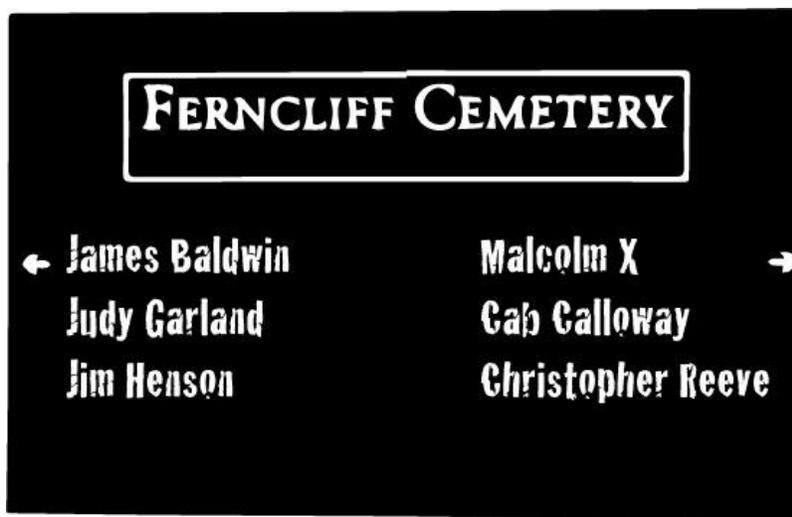
## *Greenburgh's Hall of Heroes: Ferncliff Cemetery Where Memories Live Forever*

*By: Riley Wentzler & Felicia Barber*

Shakespeare had it wrong, the question is not “to be or not to be,” death is inevitable and so at some point we shall all cease to be. The question is “How will I be remembered after I die?” Every culture from The Aztecs, to The Ancient Greeks to the Vikings to the Muslims, the Jews and the Christians has answered this question in a remarkably similar way. The consistent answer has been that those who have lived a virtuous life shall enter a Hall of Heroes. This is the place the Aztecs called “The Land of our Ancestors”, what the Greeks called “Elysium”, what the Vikings called “Valhalla,” the Jews refer to if only briefly as “Green Pastures” The Christians call “Heaven” and The Muslims call “Paradise.”

Whatever name this hall of heroes is given it is certain that once a person has earned their place there, their memory shall live forever. For residents of Greenburgh, this Hall of Heroes is Ferncliff Cemetery located on 280 Secor Road Hartsdale, NY 10530 which fittingly for a hall of heroes even bears the slogan “Where Memories Live Forever.” As a non-sectarian cemetery people from all cultural traditions can be buried there.

Ferncliff Cemetery was established on February 26, 1902 (<http://ferncliffcemetery.com/about/>). It contains three Mausolea: Ferncliff Mausoleum built in 1927, the Shrine of Memories built in 1956, and Rosewood Mausoleum built in 1999 (<http://ferncliffcemetery.com/mausolea-grounds/>). According to Ferncliff staff, there are approximately 148,000 people buried in the cemetery. Here are some of the cemetery’s most famous residents.



### **Author James Baldwin (1924 – 1987)**

James Baldwin was born in Harlem in 1924. His parents were Emma Birdis Jones and the preacher David Baldwin. He attended De Witt Clinton Public High School in New York. At age 14 he became a Pentecostal Preacher. However, three years later, he realized he was gay and left the church entirely. He then moved to Greenwich Village and started writing. His first collection of essays which focused on exposing and combatting racism in America was entitled *Notes of a Native Son*.

He finally became so disgusted with the extent of America's racism that he left the country in 1948 and moved to Paris France. There he wrote his most famous novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain* which was semiautobiographical and explored religious conversion. He then wrote his second novel in 1956 entitled *Giovanni's Room* which explores a man's quest for sexual identity. The following year he returned to the United States and became a major figure in The Civil Rights Movement after writing his second collection of essays *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961) and third novel *The Fire Next Time*. The success of these two volumes enabled him to speak out against racial discrimination and segregation in many interviews. In order to continue to emphasize the fact that America didn't feel like home for many African Americans in the '60s, he wrote his fourth novel *Another Country* (1962). He collaborated with the photographer Richard Avedon on many other anti-discrimination themed works until 1985 and then died in 1987 (MICROSOFT ENCARTA, 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation).

### **Actress Judy Garland (1922-1969)**

Judy Garland was born in Grand Rapids Minnesota in 1922. Her real name is Frances Gumm. Her father owned a theater. This is where her singing career began at age 2. In 1927 when she was five, she and her sisters toured the country as the group The Gum Sisters. They continued until 1935. A year later, she began her career as an actress. Her first major success was Broadway Melody( 1938,) shortly followed by her Academy Award winning performance as Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz* in 1939. Some of her other films include: *A Star Is Born* (1955), *Judgment at Nuremberg* (1961), *I Could Go on Singing* (1963), and her last film, *A Child Is Waiting* (1963). She died six years later in 1969 (MICROSOFT ENCARTA, 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation).

## **Puppeteer Jim Henson (1936–1990)**

Jim Henson was born in Greenville, Mississippi in 1936. He is the creator of The Muppets, which first appeared on television in 1954 as part of a skit for *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and then became the stars of *Sesame Street* in 1969. Later they had their own show *The Muppet Show* from 1976-1981. They have also been in several movies: *The Muppet Movie* (1979), *The Dark Crystal* (1982), and *The Muppets Take Manhattan* (1984). Jim Henson died of pneumonia in 1990 (MICROSOFT ENCARTA, 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation).

## **Malcolm X (1925-1965)**

Malcolm X's real last name is Little. He was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1925. His parents were Earl and Louise Little. His father Earl was a Baptist Preacher who wanted African Americans to be as socially and economically independent of white people as possible, and therefore supported the "Back to Africa" movement.

In 1931 the fiery preacher was murdered. His murder had a profound effect on his son, Malcom. After his mother suffered a mental breakdown due to grief, he was sent to a foster home and a reform school. At seventeen, Malcom became a criminal engaging in drug dealing and armed robbery. At age twenty he was arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison for burglary. In prison, Malcom had a religious awakening after reading some books that explained the teachings of Elijah Muhammad, the founder of The Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam is a group that espouses Black Islam. Black Islam mixes traditional Islamic teachings with Marcus Garvey's principles of Black Nationalism. The result of this synthesis is a religion in which all white people are the devil incarnate and a prophecy of an eventual holy war where African Americans rise up and destroy all white people. Malcom became wholly devoted to this religion. When he was released from prison in 1952, he dropped the last name "Little" and took "X" as his last name, as part of his conversion to The Nation of Islam, when he joined a temple in Detroit. Two years later he established the religion's newspaper, Muhammad Speaks. In 1959 he became the leader of The Nation of Islam. Under his leadership The Nation of Islam helped start many all-black farms, food stores, restaurants, and small businesses which were a tremendous help to many African Americans.

However, The Nation of Islam is not a peaceful organization. Throughout the 1960s Malcom and his followers openly criticized Martin Luther King Jr and similar civil rights leaders who advocated non-violence because they believed that African Americans should create their own moral codes, societies and political states rather than integrate with whites. The group believed that while non-violence worked well for Martin Luther King's goal of integration, a goal they despised, the better goal of true Black Nationalism required a true violent black revolution.

In 1963, this belief led Malcom to make statements about John F. Kennedy's assassination that Elijah Muhammad felt reflected poorly on the Nation of Islam. Malcom was then ordered to stop speaking on behalf of the organization. Malcom was not content to remain a silent background figure, so he left the organization entirely. In 1964, Malcom went on The Haj, the traditional Islamic Pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, the birth place of The Prophet Muhammad. On the Haj he saw many devout Muslims who were white. This changed his view of white people to the extent that he came to realize that Allah had created all people of both races, so all of humanity was one brotherhood. In accordance with his new beliefs, he converted from Black Islam to traditional Sunni Islam. When he came back to the United States he founded the Organization of Afro-American Unity. On February 21, 1965, in New York City, he was assassinated by outraged members of the Nation of Islam while giving a speech on racial tolerance to members of the Afro-American Unity (MICROSOFT ENCARTA, 1993-2003 Microsoft Corporation)

**Jazz Musician Cab Calloway** for information on Cab Calloway read our article **Greenburgh and The Arts** (<http://www.greenburghny.com/Cit-e-Access/news/index.cfm?NID=47278&TID=10&jump2=0>) He is the first artist described in our earlier article.

### **Actor Christopher Reeve (1952-2004)**

Christopher Reeve was born on September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1952, in New York City. His mother Barbara Johnson was a journalist and his father Franklin Reeve was a professor. At age four, his parents divorced, so he moved to Princeton, New Jersey to live with his mother. Upon graduation from high school, he attended Cornell University. In his senior year, he and his classmate, Robin Williams, were the only two students chosen to study to become professional actors at New York's famous

Juilliard School. His most famous role was Superman in (1978). Tragically, in 1995, he fell from a horse and became paralyzed. He died in 2004, at the age of 52([https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001659/bio?ref =nm\\_ov\\_bio\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001659/bio?ref =nm_ov_bio_sm)).

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## About the Authors

We are both interns at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

### **Riley Wentzler:**

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. If you want to learn about more famous residents of the cemetery or more information on those few listed here, and also to help me find employment, you can contact me at: [rjwentzler413@gmail.com](mailto:rjwentzler413@gmail.com)

### **Felicia Barber:**

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government. If you want learn more about my artwork, or help me find employment, you can contact me at: [feliciadbarber@gmail.com](mailto:feliciadbarber@gmail.com)

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