

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DOUGLAS KEISTER has authored more than 35 critically acclaimed books. He also writes and illustrates magazine articles and contributes photographs and essays to dozens of magazines, newspapers, books, calendars, posters, and greeting cards worldwide. His wealth of books on architecture has earned him the title "America's most noted photographer of historic architecture." His book *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism* has garnered a number of glowing reviews. *Sunset* magazine said, "Keister has done for cemetery exploration what Audubon did for birding." Keister has also authored additional cemetery guides titled *Forever Dixie*, *Forever L.A.*, and *Stories in Stone New York*. He lives in Chico, California.

Historians, genealogists and fans of cemetery architecture and symbolism will delight in this informational and visual guide to some of the most well-known eternal resting places in Paris.

THE BIG THREE

- Père-Lachaise
- Montmartre
- Montparnasse

CEMETERIES & MAUSOLEUMS

- The Paris Catacombs
- Saint Vincent
- Auteuil
- Picpus
- Les Invalides
- The Panthéon
- Saint-Étienne-du-Mont
- Cathedral Basilica of Saint Denis

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- Belleville Cemetery
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- Gustave Eiffel
- Maurice Ravel
- And more!

Travel/History

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STORIES IN STONE
PARIS

STORIES *in Stone* PARIS



A FIELD GUIDE TO PARIS CEMETERIES *and Their Residents*



DOUGLAS KEISTER

\$24.99 U.S.

STORIES
in Stone
PARIS
DOUGLAS KEISTER

Paris, city of lights, city of love, city of magic, city of art, city of death. Around twelve million people call the Paris metropolitan area home and millions more call its catacombs, cemeteries and mausoleums their permanent home. With this field guide in hand, cut across a wide swath of the last two hundred years of Paris history through the funerary architecture, memorials and symbolism within 28 of Paris's notable resting places, including GPS coordinates for many gravesites.

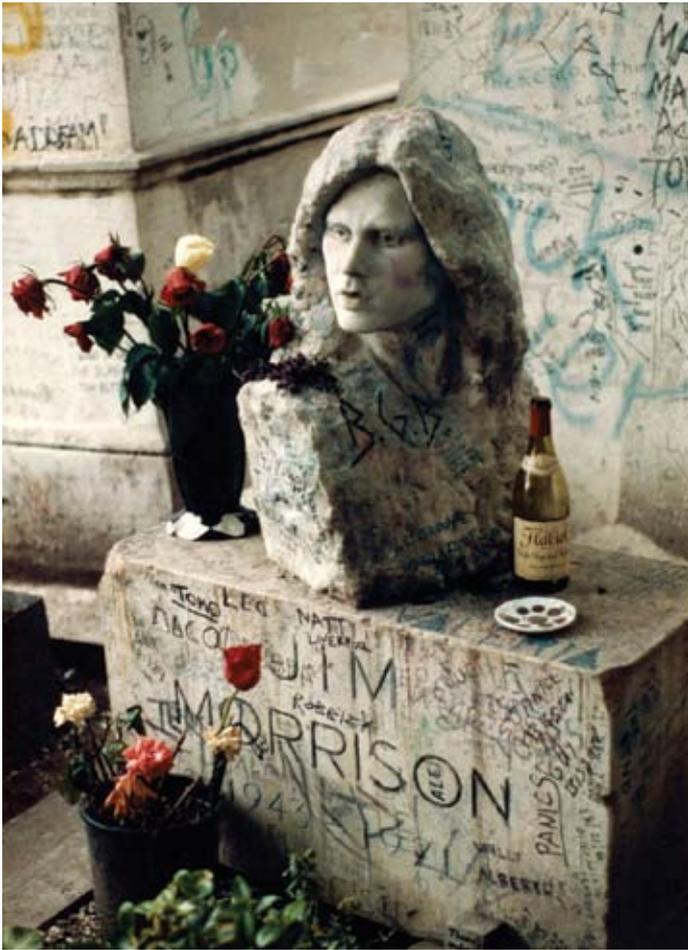


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Jim Morrison grave



Fernand Arbelot grave

PÈRE-LACHAISE

48°∞51'35.95"N 2°∞23'20.51"E (Main Entrance)

Hours: November 6–March 15: Mon–Fri: 8am–5:30pm, Sat. 8:30am–5:30pm, Sun and holidays 9am–5:30pm

March 16–November 5: Closing hours extended to 6pm

Metro: Père La-Chaise or Philippe Auguste for main entrance or Gambetta for upper entrance



Established in 1804, Père-Lachaise has the distinction of being the first garden cemetery in the world. Almost all cemeteries for the next century were, in some fashion, modeled on Père-Lachaise. Prior to the development of Père-Lachaise most burials in Paris were in often ill-kept city cemeteries or in churchyards, known as God's Acres. Moneyed types and church officials were occasionally buried in special monuments or within the walls of a church, but everybody else was pretty much destined to spend eternity crowded together in tiny plots of real estate, often piled one on top of another.

Due to the disastrous overcrowding of Paris' existing cemeteries and the subsequent emptying of those cemeteries and transfer of the bones to the catacombs, a solution of what to do with the dead needed to be found. Enter a small man whose imprint is on much of French history: Napoleon Bonaparte. The French Revolution had led, at least in theory, to the end the separation of classes and that secularization theoretically would apply to their permanent homes in the cemetery. Napoleon assigned Nicolas Frochot with the task of acquiring land for the future burial grounds. His first acquisition was a piece of land owned by Louis Baron-Desfontaines that was also the site of a Jesuit house occupied by Louis XIV's confessor Père François de la Chaise (1624–1709). Frochot then hired architect Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart to design the layout of the cemetery. Brongniart modeled the new burial ground on English estates and created a new environment of eternity that looked more like a park than a cemetery. Thus the garden cemetery was born.

Despite the attractive layout of Père-Lachaise, Parisians didn't flock to the new cemetery to buy plots. Many perceived it as being too far out of town. Catholics declined to be buried in a place that hadn't been blessed and others balked at the price. In the first year of operation, only 13 people were buried at Père-Lachaise. The first burial was five-year-old Adélaïde Paillard de Villeneuve, who was buried in what is now Division 42. Burials inched incrementally forward for the next decade and a half, then, in a move that would gladden the heart of a modern-day marketer, Frochot brokered the transfer of the remains of Héloïse and Abélard, Molière, and La Fontaine to Père-Lachaise in 1817. What self-respecting Parisian wouldn't want to be buried with these icons of the past?

It wasn't long before Père-Lachaise became Parisians' choice for a permanent residence. By the 1820s Père-Lachaise began to be peppered with monuments. Most new residents were content to just stay temporarily in the ground in Père-Lachaise before they were dug up and their bones placed in an ossuary. Whether in the ground or in an ossuary, they'd be rubbing elbows with some high society folks who they were unlikely to mingle with in life. By 1823 about 30,000 Parisians were calling Père-Lachaise home.

Oscar Wilde

October 16, 1854–November 30, 1900

Division 89

48° 51' 42.46" N 2° 23' 52.61" E

It took a number of years after Oscar Wilde's death before he could truly rest in peace. Even now, more than a century after his departure from this realm, there is a constant stream of tourists milling about over his head. Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland, and is best known as the author of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He is just as well known for his own escapades as his literary works. Certain aspects of his not-so-private life resulted in imprisonment for "homosexual acts." Physically broken by the harsh jail conditions, he died in 1900, three years after his release. Legend says that on his deathbed he rehearsed a number of last words, the most referenced is "either the wallpaper goes or I do." Wilde most likely died from complications of an ear infection.

He was interred in an unremarkable grave in Bagneux Cemetery in Paris and resided quietly there for nine years. In 1908, at a dinner at the Ritz Hotel in London, the executor of Wilde's estate revealed that he had received an anonymous gift of £2,000 from a lady "to place a suitable monument at Père-Lachaise and that this work should be carried out by the brilliant young sculptor Mr. Jacob Epstein." Years later it was revealed that "a lady" was Helen Kennard Carew. However, other accounts say that the benefactor was Wilde's longtime lover Robert Ross and that Ross' ashes are enclosed in a small compartment in the tomb.

On July 18, 1909, the night before the transfer of Wilde's remains to Père-Lachaise, the sextons at Bagneux Cemetery dug up Wilde's grave and placed two ropes beneath the coffin. Since it was raining, they placed a couple of tombstones on top of the freshly dug soil to keep it from falling back into the grave. The next day a number of journalists and other onlookers gathered at the grave to witness the exhumation. At some point, one of the tombstones holding the soil in place slipped off its perch, fell into the open grave, and crashed onto Wilde's coffin, splitting it open. For a brief moment, Oscar's face was exposed to the heavens and torrents of mud came rushing in. Wilde's mud-encrusted remains were transferred to another coffin and moved to Père-Lachaise, but his post mortem saga was just beginning.

