

INDIVIDUALITY APPEARANCE QUALITY PRICE

Mausoleum Development for Today's Consumer

— by John Sorenson

The *Age of the Consumer* properly reflects the philosophy of the Baby Boomer generation that shapes so much of the decisions that are made in many different types of industries.

Consumers control everything, including what our profession offers within cemetery and funeral home design. Since the early 2000's, Baby Boomers have become the most demanding generation of purchasers ever, and if cemeteries and funeral homes have not yet responded to this, they are likely behind in times, but still have time to adapt to respond to what the next decades will adamantly insist on, which are *personalization* and *customization*.

For those owners and operators who have responded to the needs of this market, it is clear that there are a dizzying number of options and can potentially be overwhelming to all parties in the process. Space layout, tree placement, landscaping options, water drainage and features, road layout, traffic flow, memorialization options and future care requirements all need to be considered when trying to offer unique burial options for this generation of consumer. For owners and operators who understand this profession, these choices are easier than they are for the consumer, but still can be daunting when considering a proper layout.

Mausoleum options also offer variety and personalization, but to the consumer, this is a much easier and simpler choice since so many variable factors can be eliminated from the process right off.

The real choices are:

Private estate vs. community mausoleum; interior vs. exterior (garden) crypts; side-by-side vs. head-to-head layout, and level or height in the bay.



The ability to offer simplistic, dignified and everlasting burial choices such as these, while also allowing personalization, helps the choice become clearer for the consumer who is unfamiliar with what is involved with this purchase. Ultimately, this results in quicker decisions and higher volume sales since most consumers, particularly Baby Boomers, seek **value** and **simplicity**.

Telling a personal story is simple with mausoleum choices. It is up to cemetery owners and operators to keep an open mind to be able to develop mausoleum buildings that build the proper choices into the layout of the building and type of memorialization allowed on the crypt front, which serves as the consumer's permanent memorial.

Following is what should be considered in the layout of a mausoleum building:

■ **Size:** Over or under-building a mausoleum can be detrimental when it comes to the ability to sell it properly. If over-built, the building will look empty and neglected if

consumers see that there are many crypt fronts without memorialization. Humans are social creatures, even within the aspect of cemetery planning, and they will make choices that lean towards what is more "**socially acceptable**." When they see others have invested in this same type of decision, it makes them feel more confident that it is the right decision for them too.

If a mausoleum building is under-built, the construction costs will become too great to be able to make a profit.

■ **Shape:** Traditional "*cookie-cutter*" garden buildings may be what your cemetery's consumer will support due to the budget, the size of the cemetery and the market it serves. However, there are many ways to take the same number of crypt spaces and shape the building into one that has more architectural appeal and aesthetic interest than a simple, rectangular building (*note the special features in the structure above*).

continued on page 34

Architectural features such as curved niche fronts, fluted pillars, non-traditional granite colors, feature/focal points and landscaping/hardscaping interest make a building go from “ho-hum” to “wow” with minimal added cost.

■ **Options:**

- *Garden crypts* (all exterior fronts) are wonderful options to help keep costs down and year-round visitation options available.

- *Chapel crypts* generally include garden crypt options, but expand the choices to allow enhanced spaces to allow year round comfort and convenience for visitation purposes, but also for gathering spaces for the rest of your lot owners and community members. Chapels should be considered for purposes other than simply a space for crypt owners under that rooftop; the space should be designed and planned for other functions such as full funerals and visitations, grief and bereavement support groups, small community church spaces, seminars and educational series, community organizational spaces or weddings. The possibilities are endless, and your design should be planned out so that Boomers, as well as other consumers, feel comfortable and welcome in the space. Think light, air, warmth, fireplaces, windows, etc.

- *Memorialization options* such as crypt plates or lettering, emblem and photo choices, vase and flower selections and decoration policies.

■ **Height and Levels:** Proper equipment is critical for the safety and operation of crypt entombments. The number of levels will shape the decision on what type of equipment is necessary in order to perform a professional and safe entombment. Additionally, mausoleum buildings can also be constructed with several floors of crypt spaces. This consideration is one to make when space within the cemetery is extremely limited and when local ordinances allow for this type of structure.

■ **Environmental Factors:** Baby Boomers seek to consume products that align with their values, one of which tends to be **concern with environmental health**. Mausoleum buildings, by default, are environmentally sound. Many of the products, such as natural stone, that make up mausoleum buildings are eco-friendly and tremendously long lasting. Mausoleum buildings can be designed to be energy efficient or even energy producing, with the usage of solar panels or products designed for this purpose. Additionally, when burial options are being weighed out for environmental benefit purposes, above ground mausoleum entombment allows the human body’s fluids to evaporate naturally, eliminating any possibility of contact with the ground and earth.

Incorporating the Proper Design with a Mausoleum Development

PHASED DEVELOPMENT:

Canarsie Cemetery has serviced the Brooklyn, NY community for more than 170 years. When it came time to develop the cemetery’s first mausoleum building in 2012, it was proposed that a phased mausoleum garden complex comprised of five buildings be planned out and developed over time. Having the multiple buildings had two beneficial effects:

1. The phasing approach allowed for cemetery owners to properly budget for the project and better understand what the market would support.
2. The development of the multiple buildings took shape to create a nostalgic city-like setting common to the area of Brooklyn during the cemetery’s first years in operation. Using brick veneer and limestone fascia complemented by a gray polished granite, the five structures will complement the surrounding cemetery while integrating architecture from the area’s local history.

PRIVATE ESTATE DEVELOPMENT:

From a private family estate option, the Thom’s family wanted to create an everlasting memorialization legacy by adding a unique, contemporary family mausoleum (*pictured on pages 33 and 35*) that would allow generations of their family to enjoy within Chippianock Cemetery in Rock Island, IL. With the close assistance of the cemetery and the family, a design was developed that created a building that included 38 crypt spaces, 48 niche spaces, 30 traditional in-ground interment options and 16 in-ground cremation options. This would allow for the many different preferences of future generations to utilize the spaces being developed. This development was a classic case of blending “old and new” options, while creating an aesthetically pleasing focal point for the cemetery and constructing an area that reflected a perfect way to bring this family’s vision together.

ADDING ONTO EXISTING BUILDING DEVELOPMENT:

Resurrection Catholic Cemetery in Geneva, IL was seeking an update for the diocese’s existing chapel mausoleum. Since management was interested in adding inventory to their mausoleum building, timing was ideal to also incorporate some updates which would add to the appeal of the building as well. In addition to updating the front half of the building with a new roof and flashing, several retrofitted crypts were integrated off the backside of the chapel building, and a unique cremation walkway and pergola brought the entire project together. This development added nearly 100 crypts and 456 cremation spaces to the inventory for the Diocese of Rockford. In doing so, the beauty from the initial mausoleum development was restored and renewed.



A unique, contemporary family mausoleum built in Rock Island, IL, for the Thoms family helps bridge multiple generations and remains relevant for each.

The key to designing any mausoleum building is to listen to overall goal and vision of the project and then think differently in order to bring a fresh design to a traditional concept. Suppliers within this profession have progressed tremendously over the past years in order to provide products that allow personalization. They can help cemeteries and funeral homes create revenue generation by focusing on the individual needs of that organization.

Cemetery sales success comes from a team that embraces the vision, provides valuable, educational information to the community and believes in the importance and significance of cemeteries and funerals. Mausoleum construction continues to present incredible burial alternatives to the next generation of consumers who are practical, educated and value-oriented with their purchases. These simple facts solidify the significance of mausoleum structures being planned now and for the future within cemeteries across the globe.

The Tribute Companies President, Christine Toson Hentges, represents the fourth generation of her family to own and operate cemeteries in the State of Wisconsin. More information on Tribute's products and services can be found on the firm's Website, www.tributeinc.com.

John Sorenson works for The Tribute Companies and may be contacted at 262.367.9991.

ADVERTISER'S WEBLINK

American Crematory Equipment Co.
www.americancrematory.com

American Cemetery Supplies
www.acsupplies.com

Andover Marker Company
www.andovermarker.com

Biondan North America
www.biondanbronze.com

Conrad Pickel Studio, Inc.
www.pickelstudio.com

Ensure-A-Seal
www.ensure-a-seal.com

Grever & Ward, Inc.
www.greverandward.com

Holy Land Stone Company, LLC
www.holylandstone.com

IMSA
www.imsa-online.com

KRYPROTEK™
www.kryprotek.com

LP Bronze International
www.lpbronze.com

Matthews International
www.matthewsinternational.com

McCleskey Mausoleums
www.mccleskey.com

Merendino Cemetery Care
www.merendino-cc.com

Milne Construction Company
www.milneconstruction.com

Nelson Granite
www.nelsongranite.com

Nomis Publications, Inc.
www.nomispublications.com

Paradise Pictures®
www.paradisepictures.com

Rossato Giovanni s.r.l.
www.italian-memorial-products.com

Strassacker Bronze, LLC
www.strassackerbronze.com

TechniServe, Inc.
www.techni-serve.com

The Tribute Companies
www.tributeinc.com

U.S. Metalcraft®
www.usmetalcraft.com