



LancasterHistory

For Immediate Release

Contact: Emily Miller
Director of Marketing & Communications
717-392-4633 ext. 133
emily.miller@lancasterhistory.org

Reviving History: Discover the Remarkable Transformation of Mount Moriah Cemetery at Upcoming LancasterHistory Event

Experts To Discuss Cemetery Rebirth, Use As Green Space in Lecture Hosted at St. James

LANCASTER, Pa. – LancasterHistory, in collaboration with **The Friends of the Tanger Arboretum** and **St. James Episcopal Church**, is excited to announce a special edition of our Regional History Colloquium on Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2023. We are thrilled to welcome **Kate Benisek**, a landscape architect and professor at Temple University, along with **Jennifer O'Donnell**, the current President of the Friends of Mount Moriah Cemetery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Together, they will shed light on the intriguing history of Mount Moriah Cemetery – once a grand rural cemetery spanning nearly 200 acres in Southwest Philadelphia and Yeadon Borough. They will take attendees on a journey through time, uncovering how this significant landmark went from being a proud and inclusive resting place for Philadelphia's diverse communities to an abandoned and overlooked entity.

Fortunately, the tale doesn't end in despair. In early 2011, thanks to the determined efforts of The

Friends of Mount Moriah, Inc., the cemetery began its transformation into a certified arboretum, showcasing a unique blend of ecological restoration, educational programming, and community events.

“We are thrilled to join with the Friends of the Tanger Arboretum and St. James Episcopal Church to host Kate Benisek and Jennifer O’Donnell in a discussion of the important role cemeteries have played and continue to play in the life of cities in southeastern Pennsylvania” **Dr. Mabel Rosenheck**, Director of Education and Exhibition Planning for LancasterHistory, said. “We hope that the talk can inspire Lancasterians to view cemeteries as green spaces that are vital to both the public history and the public health of our community.”

About The Speakers:

Kate Benisek serves as an Assistant Professor of Instruction at Temple University in the Department of Architecture and Environmental Design. With a rich academic background in history and landscape architecture, she infuses her teachings with a blend of historic understanding and forward-thinking design principles.

Jennifer O’Donnell has passionately served the Friends of Mount Moriah Cemetery for a decade, stepping into the role of president in 2023. Her dedication to historic preservation, especially that of Mount Moriah Cemetery, is evident in her intimate knowledge of the cemetery's records and her contribution of over 150,000 grave photographs on findagrave.com. Professionally, she serves as the Director of Web Communications at Haverford College.

Event Details:

- Location: St. James Episcopal Church, 119 N. Duke Street, Lancaster.
- Date & Time: Wednesday, Oct. 4, 2023. Doors open and reception at 5 p.m., with the lecture commencing at 5:30 p.m.
- Streaming: The lecture will be simultaneously streamed on YouTube Live for virtual attendees.
- Parking: Available on-street or at nearby garages for a fee.

The program is free for all, but in-person attendees will need to register in advance to ensure seating. Virtual attendees should also register to receive the YouTube streaming link. To guarantee your spot or to learn more, please [visit LancasterHistory's website](#) or call (717) 392-4633.

About LancasterHistory

LancasterHistory is a community-based, not-for-profit organization established to educate the public on the history of Lancaster County and its place in the history of Pennsylvania and the United States, to advance the missions of regional historical organizations, and to promote the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of resources representing the history of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania within the broader context of state and national history, including the life and legacy of Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, his house manager, Lydia Hamilton Smith, and America's 15th President, James Buchanan.

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