



*A restoration project of
Eliza Monroe Hay's tomb
in Pere Lachaise Cemetery
Paris France*

In Search of Dead Eliza

Background

In July 2015, Eduardo Montes-Bradley, a friend of the James Monroe Museum, visited Pere Lachaise to locate the grave of Eliza Monroe Hay, daughter of James and Elizabeth Monroe. He had been asked to locate the gravesite and assess its condition. The report he submitted indicated that the condition of the grave was dire.

An excerpt from that report stated:

“According to the authorities of the administration of cemeteries in Paris, when a gravesite is covered by vegetation such as is the case in Elizabeth’s, the city can reclaim the grave, dispose of the remains to the ossuary, and re-sell the space.”



*Visual
Identification of
Gravesite from
photos in
previous report
by Montes-
Bradley*

Based on photo images that accompanied this report, and discussion with staff at James Monroe Museum, I visually identified this sunken grave, overgrown with ivy and weeds, as the Eliza tomb.



Eliza Monroe Hay (1761-1840)

The plot in Pere Lachaise was purchased the day after her death, January 28, 1840 by the American consul in Paris, Daniel Brent. The location of her graveside in Pere Lachaise is recorded as Section 41, Subsection 95, on the 7th row, 13th grave. The orientation is from the fountain on the corner of Avenue Transversale 2 and avenue Greffulhe.



PREFECTURE DE LA SEINE

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
LIBERTÉ — ÉGALITÉ — FRATERNITÉ

**CERTIFICAT
D'INHUMATION** Cimetière parisien d'EST

Le Conservateur soussigné certifie que le corps de
M^{lle} Eliza Monroe Hay
a été inhumé le 29 Janvier 1840 et placé
dans la concession perpétuelle, exclusive, trentenaire, temporaire,
tranchée gratuite, 2e Division,
7e Ligne 95

Acquis par Daniel Brent
Acquis par Daniel Brent
Renouvelée par
le N° 32.

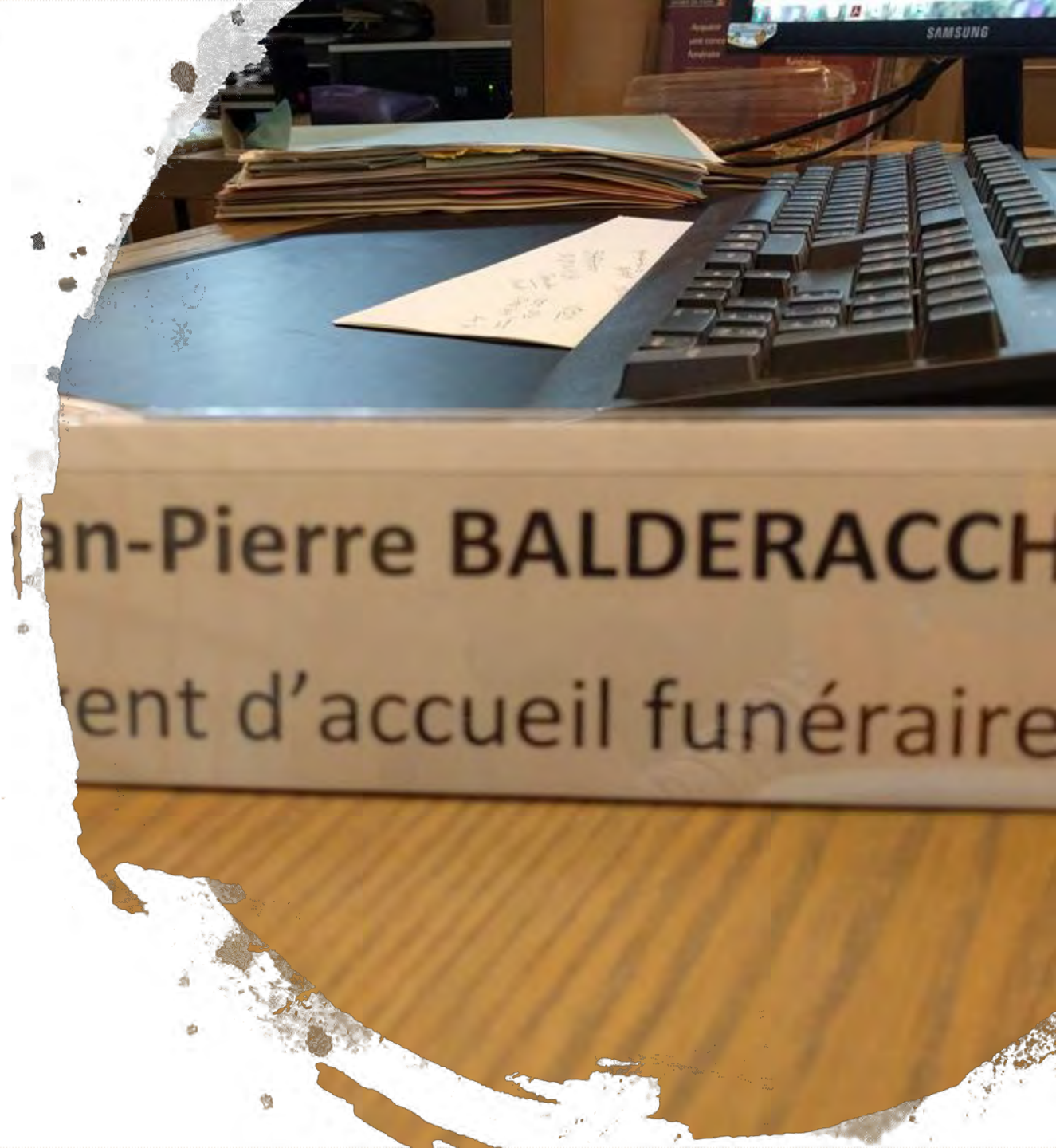
VILLE DE PARIS
16, Rue du Repos
PARIS-XXe
Cimetière de l'Est

15 SEPT. 1961
LE CONSERVATEUR,

A visit to the Pere Lachaise offices

I called the Pere Lachaise Cemetery offices prior to my visit. Jean Pierre Balderacchi, director of the cemetery, sent an email to me in response to my inquiry about permission to restore the gravesite. He shared the following information in an email (excerpts below):

Madame Veuve Elisabeth Kortwright-Hay nee Monroe...died the 27th of January 1840 in her home on the Champs Elysees...and was interred in number 45, acquired on the 28th of January 1840 by Monsieur Daniel Brent consul of the United States in...Pere Lachaise located in the 41st Division...



M Balderacchi's response, (in translation), continued...

Monsieur Brent was entombed the following year in Pere Lachaise...and as none of the inheritors of the estate of Daniel Brent were evident in our records, finally the tomb site was abandoned in 1990 in favor of succession to the State. The remains of Monsieur Brent were reinterred in the Ossuary at Pere Lachaise.

We have no records of the rightful successors to the estate of Monsieur Brent.

Only the rightful successors to the estate of Monsieur Brent in direct family lineage or in legal succession can make any permanent improvements to the gravesite [of Eliza Kortright Hay nee Monroe], as the gravesite remains the property of the inheritors of the estate of Daniel Brent.

I have attached to this email a form with directions as to the establishment of legal ownership of the gravesite of Eliza Kortright Hay nee Monroe.





A Visit with Monsieur Balderacci

Having located the collapsed tomb site that I believed to be that of Elisa Monroe Hay, I decided to visit M Balderacci directly to confirm indeed that the tomb site was accurately identified.

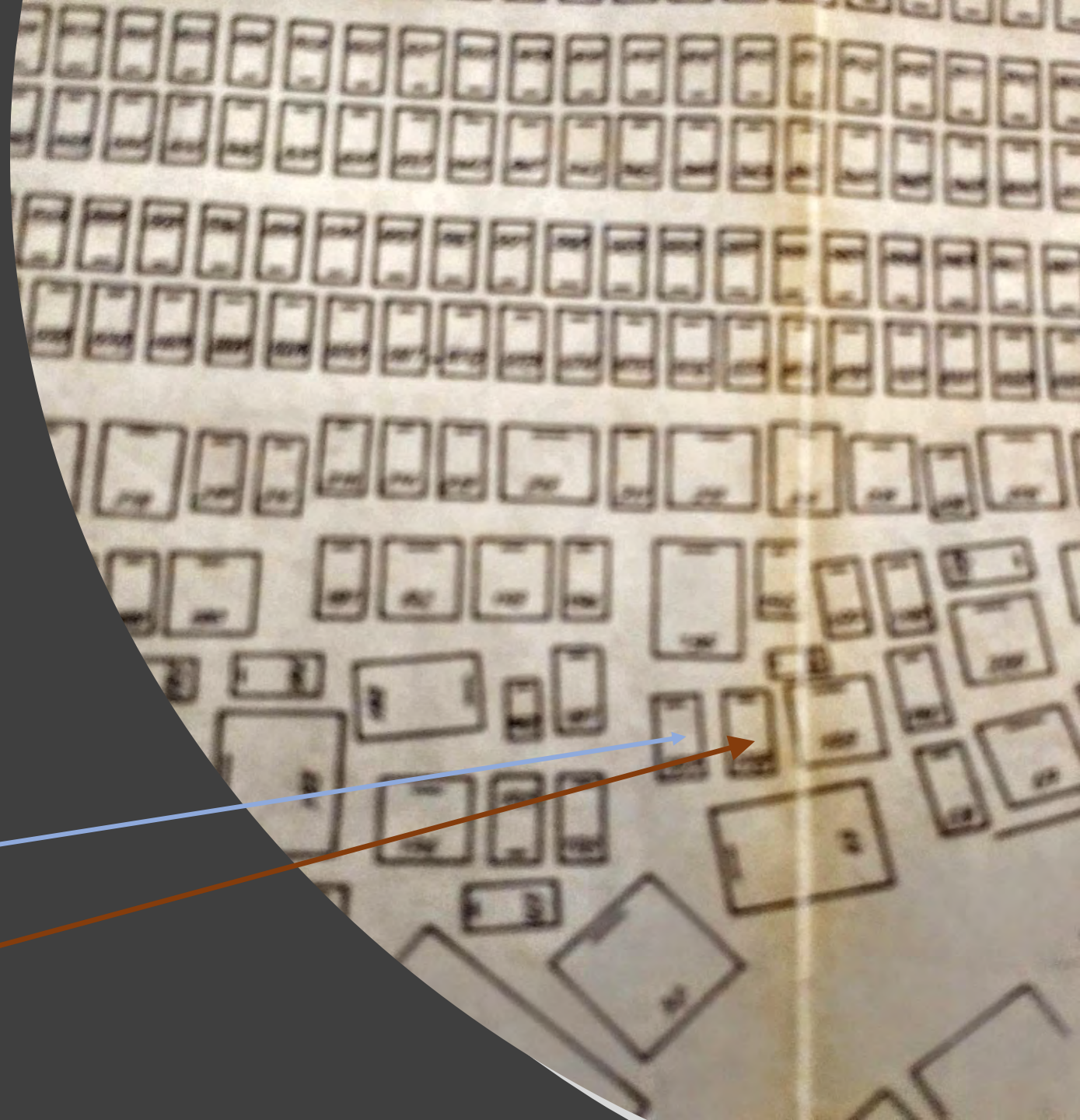
He referred me to the previous email, with the location of the tomb and his direction that no permanent improvements to the tomb could be attempted without the permission of the Daniel Brent estate.

A Look at the Pere Lachaise Tomb Records

I shared with M Balderacci the photos and the visual identification of what I believed to be the gravesite of Eliza Monroe. He said that he did not think that my information on its location was correct. He kindly brought out the plot book of the gravesites, indicated by number, in the American section.

In comparing the location of the collapsed tomb and the location of the tomb of Eliza Monroe Hay, we discovered that the previous identification of the collapsed tomb was incorrect.

Instead, the true tomb of Eliza was adjacent to the one indicated in the pictures.






It is easier to access the tomb site from the far right of the cemetery, via the Rue de Repos, the side entrance. Curving upward, find the stairs to the right.

Here is the pin drop for the exact location of her grave: Dropped Pin near Père-Lachaise, 75020 Paris

<https://goo.gl/maps/w1isRiWWVx32>

A photograph of a man standing in a cemetery. The man is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants. He is standing in front of a large, ivy-covered tombstone. The ground is covered with green ivy. In the background, there are other tombstones and a building with a gothic-style archway.

Here is Eduard
Montes-Bradley, in
2015, at the site
of what was believed
to be the collapsed,
ivy-covered
Eliza Monroe Hay
tomb.

Here is the actual tomb of Eliza Monroe Hay. It is immediately adjacent to the collapsed tomb and obelisque, formerly thought to be Eliza's tomb.





Eliza Monroe
Hay tomb,
ivy removed,
June 2018

The task of cleaning

When M Balderacchi and I visited the tomb to confirm that the simple slab stone was indeed that marking Eliza's grave, he again affirmed that we could not alter the stone in any way without the permission of the Brent estate. We looked for any sign of engraving or location identification on the stone, but there are none. He was confident that this is the Eliza grave.

When I hinted that cleaning the grave and removing the vegetation and the lichen was not the same as permanent improvements, he said nothing in response, but shrugged his shoulders looked away, and shared a French moue as a gesture. He said goodbye, and I thanked him again for his efforts in helping me.

The implication was that we can clean and maintain the stone but cannot mark it in any permanent way.





The task begun

I was relieved to discover that Eliza's tomb was intact rather than collapsed, and to know with certainty its exact location. There were no markings or numbers on the stone; it was simply a crowned slab of limestone. Only its location in the centuries-old records identified it with certainty.

The next day, I visited a hardware store and bought scrub brushes, cleaning supplies, plastic gloves and other items to begin the task. I spent several hours applying soaps, scrubbing and rinsing.

The water source in Pere Lachaise is a pump fountain, located about every three sections throughout the cemetery. One takes a bucket, hooks the handle onto the pump, presses on the pump pedal, fills the bucket to the brim, and totes the water back to the site. It soon became obvious that this was not going to be a one-day endeavor.



A second approach

Realizing that the task of removing the lichen, mold, and remaining ivy trails from the stone slab required a lot more work, I created a flyer to recruit volunteers, and posted it on English bookstore bulletins and at the American church. I had several responses, but in the end one American, a musician and web designer, answered the call.



ELIZA MONROE'S TOMB IN PERE LACHAISE!

*The daughter of James Monroe, 5th President
of US, is buried in Pere Lachaise.*

She hasn't had a facelift in nearly 200
years! Want to help find out if the
inscription is still visible? Want to help
maintain a piece of American history in
Paris? Tomb cleaning happening this
week! Help needed from Wednesday,
June 20 through Sunday, June 24!

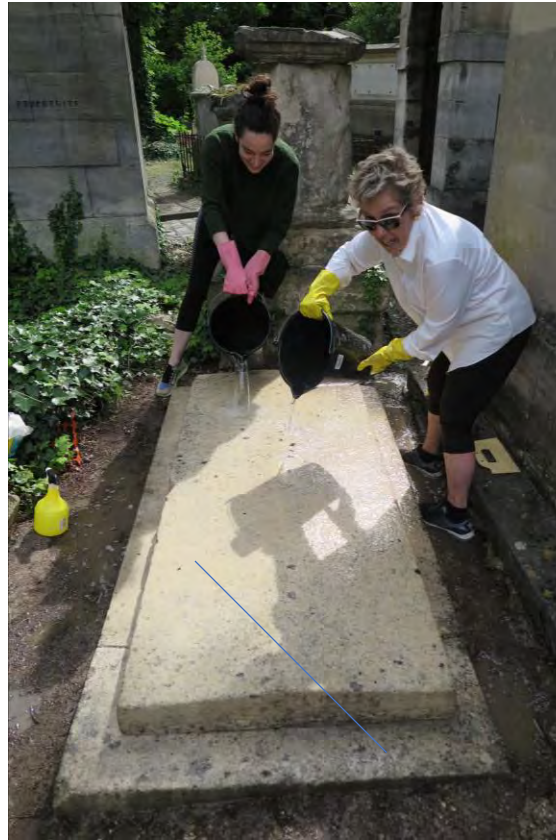
Text +1 540 903 3186, or email
wordlywork@gmail.com for more
information!

A Thorough Cleaning



A second trip for more robust supplies, accompanied by my new recruit. I indicate to her the section on the map at rue de Repos, the side entrance.





We spend several hours scraping, scrubbing, rinsing, and then we're through for the day!



How to mark Eliza's tomb?

We see along the avenues near Pere Lachaise a number of funerary design stores. We decide to investigate, as there are many tombs in Pere Lachaise adorned with sturdy commemorative ceramic floral markers.

We decide that since the markers do not require physical mounting on the tomb, but instead rest on the stone themselves, that we will investigate.



We make the commitment to purchase a large ceramic floral marker and have Eliza's dates and parentage engraved on the plaques.

Eliza's tomb is sparkle white, and free of ivy, lichen and moss.

But there is a crack on the lower right-hand side of the tomb itself. The tombstone and site are shifting in response to the massive weight of the large tomb nearby.

M. Balderacci noted the shift of the tombstone when we were investigating the site earlier. One can clearly see the angle of shift. I took informal measurements of the shift.

He noted that the tomb will eventually crack as the shift continues but anticipates that this will not be soon.



The final chapter

The tomb of Eliza Monroe Hay now has a sturdy weather resistant ceramic marker, with her dates and parentage, in Pere Lachaise. We placed the marker on the low side of the slant, as the stone is crowned in the middle and the marker would not sit firmly at the head of the tombstone (which is to the right in this photo).

While the marker is not securely attached to the tomb, in compliance with the regulations of the cemetery, there are many such markers on tombstones in Pere Lachaise and they remain at rest. The marker was placed on the tomb in September 2018.





Eliza Monroe Hay
1786 - 1840

Daughter of James Monroe
5th President of the United States

Leaving Pere Lachaise by Metro

A final view of the art nouveau map and the bag of supplies, with the job completed.



62

Eliza Monroe Hay's address on Champs Elysees, June 2018



In the original report from Eduardo Montes-Bradley, he notes:

One important piece in the puzzle is that the address of Eliza, the home in which she died, was in 62 as opposed to 92 Champs-Elysees. The 92 corresponds to the former residence in Paris of Thomas Jefferson. Today, 62 Champs Elysees is a magnificent building occupied by Tiffany and Co.