



PRESS RELEASE: Ferris Mausoleum Open House Features Showing of New Stained Glass

Sandy C Gholston to: Archive

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Included below is a press release regarding the upcoming open house that will take place at the Woodbridge N. Ferris Mausoleum at Highland View Cemetery in Big Rapids. Mr. Ferris, the founder of Ferris State University, is interred there with his wife, Helen Gillespie Ferris and their sons, Carleton Gillespie Ferris and Phelps Fitch Ferris. The open house is the first ever for the public and features the unveiling of the recently-installed stained glass artwork to replace one that was vandalized in the 1970s. Any questions regarding this event can be directed to Sandy Gholston, interim assistant director of News Services.

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Sandy Gholston
Ferris State University
Interim Assistant Director of News Services
sandygholston@ferris.edu, (231) 591-2021

Ferris Mausoleum Open House Features Showing of New Stained Glass

BIG RAPIDS – The eternal resting place of Ferris State University founders Woodbridge and Helen Gillespie Ferris along with their sons, Phelps Fitch and Carleton Gillespie, has received a long overdue upgrade that will be showcased as part of an open house for the mausoleum on Thursday, Sept. 1, at Highland View Cemetery in Big Rapids beginning at 2 p.m.

Ferris president David L. Eisler and artist Richard Hanley, of Omnibus Studios Inc., will offer remarks at the mausoleum beginning at 2 p.m. In addition, History Task Force members plan to open the mausoleum to the public from 2 to 4 p.m. as part of Founders' Day activities, as Ferris celebrates its 127th anniversary.

The university's History Task Force has led an effort to dedicate a new stained glass window that was installed in the mausoleum earlier this year. The original Victorian stained glass window was broken by vandals during the 1970s. That damage has been repaired thanks to a new window designed by Hanley.

In addition to the unveiling of the new stained glass window, more history will be made as the mausoleum's interior will be open for public viewing for the first time ever. This special open house will provide an opportunity for visitors to enter the mausoleum and see where Woodbridge, Helen, Phelps and Carlton are interred.

“For 40 years, Omnibus Studios Inc. has been providing restoration for many historic buildings throughout Michigan including The Michigan State Capitol Building and Meadowbrook Hall,” Hanley said. “However, we have never designed and created a piece of stained glass for such an important historic site as the Woodbridge Ferris Family Mausoleum.”

Using drawings of Ferris' torch logo provided by the History Task Force, the Omnibus Studios Inc. design team created an art deco design that was popular in the 1920s and 1930s to maintain authenticity. The authentic opalescent glass used in creating the window came from Kokomo Opalescent Glass Company of Kokomo, Ind., Hanley said. The design uses the Ferris torch logo as well as the university's crimson and gold colors.

"We are honored to provide this stained glass detail for such a significant historic landmark in Michigan," Hanley said.

Mary Kay MacIver, chair of the History Task Force, is excited about the project and the opportunity for the public to catch a rare glimpse of history inside the mausoleum.

"We will unlock history and give the community the first-ever public viewing of the interior of the mausoleum," MacIver said. "The craftsmanship is breathtaking, and I would encourage everyone who has ever been curious to stop by and pay their respects to Woodbridge and Helen Ferris, two individuals who have influenced our community so much, as well as have the opportunity to view the artwork of Richard Hanley. The new stained glass window is truly beautiful and best viewed when the mausoleum is open."

The university community takes pride in the maintenance of the mausoleum area of Highland View Cemetery. Staff members from Ferris' Physical Plant perform regular maintenance of the mausoleum – inside and outside. Financing to ensure the maintenance of the mausoleum comes from an endowment established by Woodbridge Ferris.

"The grounds personnel assigned to take care of the mausoleum are also responsible for taking care of the Alumni Building, Prakken Building and West Building," said Jim White, grounds supervisor. "It is interesting that not only do we take care of the final resting place of the founders, but we also take care of the oldest portion of the campus."

For more information about the mausoleum open house, contact Mary Kay MacIver of the History Task Force at (231) 591-3739 or by email at maciverm@ferris.edu.

To learn more about Woodbridge and Helen Ferris, visit the official website, here: <http://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/founder/>

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Sandy Gholston
Interim Assistant Director of News Services/Social Media PR
Ferris State University
420 Oak Street
Prakken Building 108
Phone: (231) 591-2021
News Services Web site: www.ferris.edu/news
Ferris State University News Blog: ferrisstatebulldogs.blogspot.com/
Ferris State Live: ferrisstate.tv/ferrisstatelive.html

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