

## INTRODUCTION

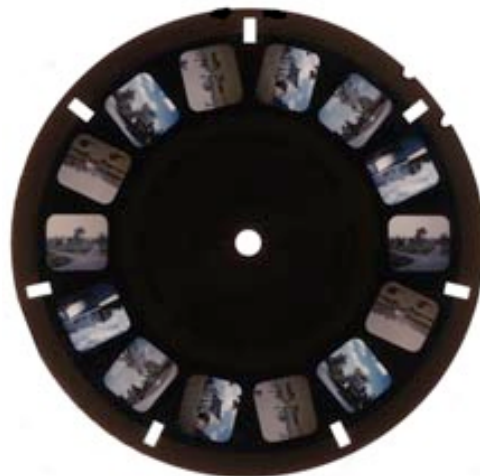
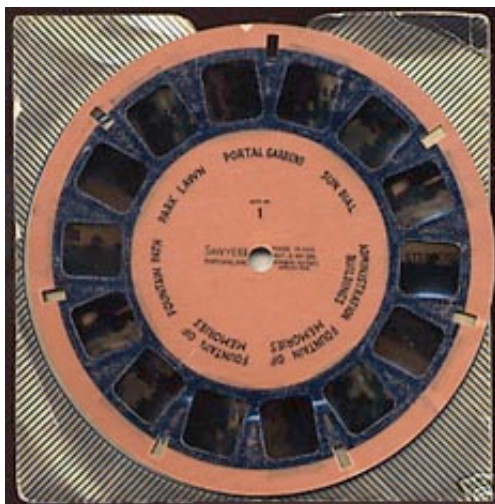
Around 1940, Sawyer's Inc. of Portland Oregon began producing promotional reels for other companies using the blue ring format. Three untitled but numbered 1, 2, and 3 blue ring reels exist in several collections and are all devoted to cemetery scenes. One of the pictures on reel 1 is titled "Little Chapel of the Elms." Using the web, I located a chapel by that name in the Elmlawn Cemetery founded in 1902 and located in New York, just north of Buffalo. The photos of the chapel and other landmarks on the cemetery's web site and those on the first two reels were also similar.

In May of 2008, I visited the cemetery and took pictures of all the recognizable locations. During my stay, I met James Huggins, the president who joined the cemetery in 1969, as well as several more-recently-arrived members of his staff. Although none of them were aware of the three View-Master reels, they gave me invaluable insights into the history of the cemetery related to some of the View-Master scenes. I have incorporated their observations into the descriptions below. None of them could recognize any of the scenes on the third reel, so it is unlikely that these were taken at Elmlawn. Their location remains a mystery, along with how Sawyer's and Elmwood got together.

My thanks to Mary Ann and Wolfgang Sell for scanning the three reels in their collection, and to ebay member whackymuseum for the use of the face shots of each reel taken from his ebay auction page. Also, I am indebted to the staff at Elmlawn for welcoming me and being so helpful. If anyone has additional information on these reels, please contact me, and I will incorporate it into this document.

## THE PICTURES

Below are side by side comparisons of the the pictures I took on my visit to Elmlawn and the original View-Masters, which I enhanced a bit for clarity. Most of the VM pictures were taken in the late afternoon and from a slightly lower angle than mine. Some location were too general to pinpoint and, of course, trees have grown and gotten in the way, landscaping has been changed, etc., so camera angles in some cases had to be changed. The numbers preceding the titles are for reference purposes only and were not on the original reels, whose scene titles were numberless.



Reel 1: This reel contains pictures close to the entrance to the cemetery



1.1 Portal Garden: We are just inside the front gate of the cemetery. The View-Master photographer apparently took this picture from the third floor of the Administration building, a location I did not ask to access.



1.2 Park Lawn: The VM photographer chose a closer view for his second scene, with an open book memorial plaque dedicated to “the president of the Buffalo Burial Park Association 1927-1940.” This dates this photograph no earlier than 1940, and probably close to it, since the bronze in the View-Master picture is still untarnished(see appendix for a close-up of the plaque). Note that it is now set back with plantings in front.



1.3 Fountain Path: There are three shots of this fountain on reel 1. The spray makes a dramatic focal point and, of course, communicated the symbolic value of water in cemetery lore as the source of life.



1.4 Fountain of Memories: The fountain was restored in the 1960s, and all shrubbery was removed since it had grown up to hide all but the spray. Columbarium niches for cremated remains has been added to the front of the fountain pool.



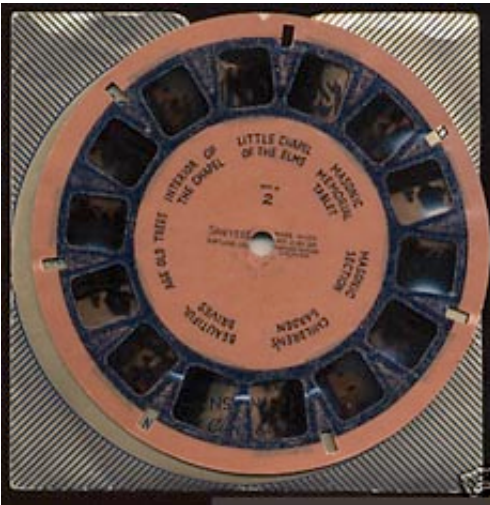
1.5 Fountain of Memories: To me, three views of the fountain were unnecessary, especially since it looks somewhat dirty in this original picture. Did the management feel it was that important? Was the photographer simply filling the reel?



1.6 Administrative Buildings: This handsome Indiana Limestone office residence was completed in 1932 at a cost of \$18,000 and stands at the front gate. We are looking northeast into the cemetery. Note that this VM shot, as many of the original pictures, was taken from a lower angle than mine.



1.7 Sun Dial: Alas, the metal sun dial that once stood on this pedestal is gone, apparently stolen some years ago(a big cemetery problem nationwide). It marks the location of the enurnment garden for cremation remains(see appendix for a close up).



Reel 2: This reel takes us into the interior area of the cemetery.



2.1 Little Chapel of the Elms: The portico was originally designed for carriage traffic. It was torn down and replaced with a much wider structure to accommodate modern vehicles. A large tree makes duplicating the more attractive View-Master shot from down the hill impossible.



2.2 Interior of the Chapel: Changes in the chapel since the 1940s include back lit stained glass windows behind the podium, a new carpet, a Christian cross, and a white ceiling replacing the sky blue of the past. I believe the photographer used some artificial lighting to highlight the pews on the right and the divider in the front.



2.3 Age Old Trees: They are over 60 years older now and unrecognizable.



2.4 Beautiful Drives: This is another scene I could not find during the limited time I had. The cemetery was more wooded in the 1940's than today, partly due to a major storm in October 1970 that took down many trees. Also, tastes have changed and a more open lawn look has become popular since then, partly due to easier maintenance. Whatever the reason, it is a real loss in my opinion.



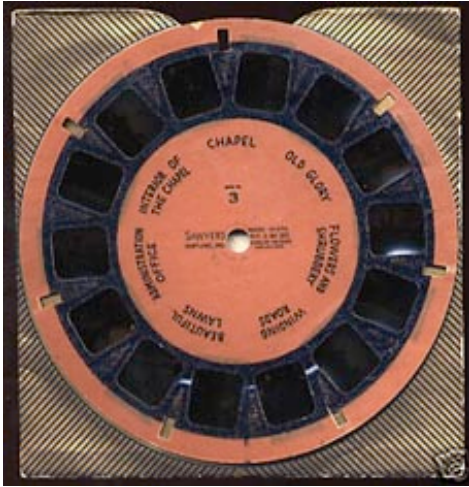
2.5 Children's Garden: This is a small raised triangular piece of ground that has worn away over the years. The View-Master photographer did not have the benefit of the sign on the right and markers to define his picture, but maybe he did not want to.



2.6 Masonic Section: This is one picture taken about the same time as mine. It's strange that the photographer did not wait for the more favorable light used in the next one. Once again, boxwoods are gone.



2.7 Masonic Memorial Tablet: Was the stone really this color? What happened to the blue urns? The addition of the tree in the background certainly makes this space look less like a wasteland. The lawn was being mowed as I took this shot, proof of the care given to the grounds at Elmlawn.



Reel 3: None of the shots on this reel are identified as Elmlawn scenes by the cemetery staff. Therefore, all pictures below are from the original reel. Any help in identifying the location would be appreciated.



3.1 Chapel



3.2 Interior of Chapel



3,3 Administration Office



3.4 Beautiful Lawns



3.5 Winding roads



3.6 Flowers and Shrubbery



3.7 Old Glory

### CONCLUSION

As I have thought about these reels, I wonder why there were no shots to emphasize the the personal service of the cemetery such as a picture of a counselor advising a client regarding suitable memorials, a scene including a lawn maintenance machine, or a guardner tending a flower bed. I would have eliminated one or two of the Fountain of Memories scenes, a general horticultural view like Age Old Trees(2.3) to accommodate these new shots.

Were these really promotional reels for the cemetery or reels produced to sell the concept of View-Master to cemeteries in general, using Elmlawn as an unnamed example? Another possibility is that they were produced as part of the festivities honoring the long-serving president of the Buffalo Burial Park Association. I hope someone will come forward with accurate information to replace my assumptions.

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### APPENDIX



## 1. Additional photographs



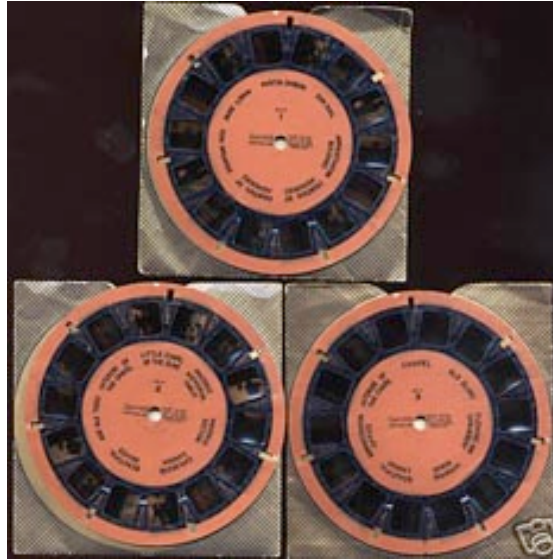
Close view of Herr Memorial Tablet in 1.2 and 1.7 honoring the president of the Buffalo Burial Park Association between 1927 and 1940.



Stained glass windows on the west wall of the Chapel in the Elms to the left of view 2.2



Closer views of weather vane pedestal in 1.7 showing where weather vane originally was attached.



SAWYER'S VIEW-MASTER  
BLUE RING  
COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING REELS  
# 1 - 3  
AND THEIR CONNECTION WITH  
ELMLAWN CEMETERY - KENMORE, NEW YORK USA