

The Garfield Monument

Cleveland, Ohio

By Scott Daniels, Manassas, VA

Many of us have seen pictures in souvenir building books of the Garfield Monument. Most of us have wondered about this place that has been so wonderfully done in miniature. I decided to look into this little known monument.

The buildings is a memorial to the 20th President of the United States. James A. Garfield was in office for only four months before he was assassinated by a disappointed office-seeker. His tragic death two months later shocked the nation. Many of the American people contributed to raise a large sum of money for the Garfield family.

Some of this money was given to the Garfield National Monument Association which began construction of the monument in 1885. Five years later, the monument was completed and dedicated on May 30, 1890. At the dedication was a procession of notables, including President Benjamin Harrison, former President Rutherford B. Hayes, and members of the Garfield family.

This monument is located in Lake View Cemetery, in the suburbs of Cleveland. It sits on a high ridge of ground that is 250 feet above the waters of Lake Erie. On a clear day you can see a great panorama of Cleveland.

The monument is constructed of native Ohio sandstone upon a design by George Keller, an architect of Hartford, CT, who had won the commission in a national competition. John Chapple of London, who supervised the artwork on the mosaics and stained glass windows, assisted Keller. The monument is a combination of Romanesque, Gothic, and Byzantine architecture. It has been called the first true mausoleum in America with the combination of tomb and memorial.

The monument has a three-tiered circular tower 50 feet in diameter and 180 feet high that stands upon a stone terrace. The monument is topped with a conical shaped stone roof, with bands of sunken tile pattern ornaments. On the sides of the square terrace are five life-size bas-relief panels depicting Garfield in different phases of his career as teacher, soldier, statesman, and President of the United States. Inside the monument under the tower is a white Carrara marble life-size statue of Garfield. His tomb lies directly



*The Garfield Monument with Perennial Garden, c. 1990
photo credit: Bill Baughman.
Photo courtesy of Lakeview Cemetery, Cleveland, OH*

beneath the memorial hall.

Today it is said that the ghost of President Garfield haunts the monument. Stories say that Garfield and one of the Rockefellers buried in the cemetery played chess with the tomb stones. People have reported seeing strange lights in the monument itself.

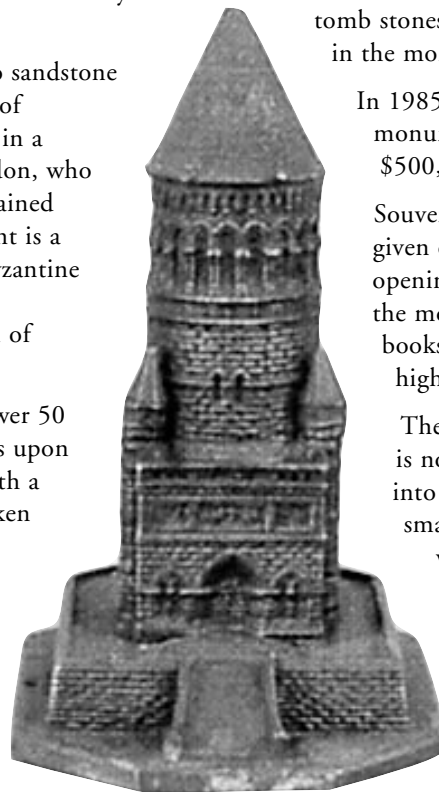
In 1985, a hundred years after the start of the monument, the U.S. government gave a grant of \$500,000 to renovate the monument.

Souvenir versions of the Garfield Monument were given out as presentation pieces on the monument's opening in 1890. There are two known versions of the monument. The first is the one we see in the books. It's very heavy (about three pounds) and 8" high, made of lead and coated in copper.

The second version is made of lead as well, but it is not very well detailed and looks more smashed into itself. Inside the one in my collection is a small tag, but time has taken off what was written on it.

Both pieces are very rare and hard to come by after 110 years. They are truly works of art from the time that lead souvenir buildings were beginning to be made.

So if you find one, or have one in your collection, treat it with care and know that it has a long and interesting history!



Large (8"High) Garfield Monument replica