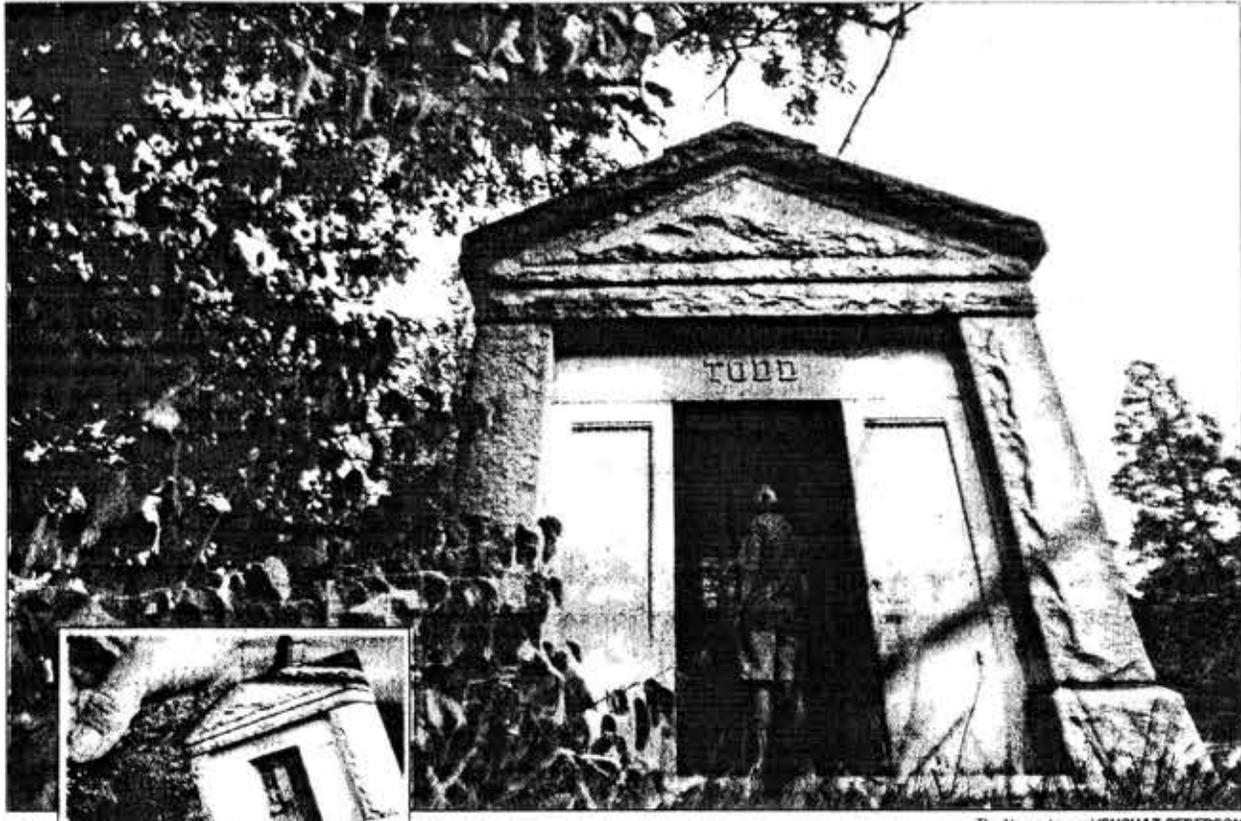


'How terrible it is to steal from the dead'



The News Journal/SUCHAT PEDERSON

Bob Markiewicz, a member of the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery, stands Wednesday in the entrance of the Todd family mausoleum in Riverview Gardens cemetery in Wilmington. Scrap metal thieves recently made off with the crypt's brass gates, seen in the photo at left.



Thieves take metal doors, gates at Riverview cemetery

By TERRI SANGINITI
The News Journal

WILMINGTON — Even the dead are feeling the pinch of a slowing economy.

The rash of metal thefts, pulled off by bandits seeking a quick buck, crept into Riverview Gardens cemetery over the weekend when bronze doors weighing 1,000 pounds were taken from a public mausoleum.

Also hauled away were ornate brass gates that once guarded the Todd family mausoleum and the doors to the McDonough and Porter family crypt.

ONLINE EXTRA

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All that was left behind were the bolts. "How terrible it is to steal from the dead," said Dotty Marx, who has family buried at the cemetery. "Pretty soon they'll be digging up bodies looking for gold teeth."

The investigation into the thefts also revealed that a homeless man had been living in the mausoleum, which houses the remains of 246 people.

Antoine E. Benson, 42, who was arrested on an outstanding warrant, was living in a sleeping bag in a hallway littered with mounds of cigarette butts and heaps of dirty clothes.

Before he was arrested, though, he was able to help police by telling them when the doors were taken.

Also helping was Marx, who has been visiting the cemetery daily since August 2006 to feed a stray dog she's named Slick.

She said she noticed a man fiddling with the mausoleum doors Saturday.

"I watched the man," Marx said. "He didn't seem alarmed as



Dotty Marx of the cemetery's volunteer group looks around the interior of the public mausoleum at Riverview Gardens, where a homeless man was found living and the half-ton bronze doors were stolen.

he was fooling with the doors. They were partly opened and he was trying to close them."

When she returned Sunday, the doors were still there, but they weren't tightly closed, she said.

Monday, they were gone.

"There was a piece of metal that went on top of the doors that was left lying on the lawn," Marx said.

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Cemetery: Some thefts go unreported

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Tuesday, the mausoleum was boarded with plywood.

The thieves also made off with seven grates from inside the mausoleum and four of six vents.

The first funeral was held in the mausoleum in early 1917. The last interment was in May 2002.

The Rev. Tom Davis, who took over the ownership of the former Riverview Cemetery and renamed it Riverview Gardens in 2003, reported the theft Wednesday morning, Master Sgt. Steven Barnes of the Wilmington police said.

"They needed a big truck to carry off those doors," Barnes said.

Officers have asked Diamond State Recycling in Wilmington to be on the lookout for the stolen property, Barnes said.

A state law passed in April tightened regulations for scrap dealers on the resale of copper and other metals.

Violations are misdemeanors punishable by fines of up to \$10,000 and the loss of a dealer's license.

"There is a high premium for copper and brass and those doors were very old and made of brass or bronze," Davis said. "We know the economy is bad, but for this kind of thing to be taking place in broad daylight takes it to another level."

Police in other parts of Delaware said they have received no reports of such graveyard thefts.

Davis said he has made arrangements for a contractor to secure the mausoleum.

What was not reported to police, however, was the theft of the gates from the Todd and McDonough and Porter family crypts.

Cheryl Markiewicz, a board member of the Friends of Historic Riverview Cemetery, a volunteer group that helps maintain the site, said she discovered the gates to the Todd mausoleum missing July 2.

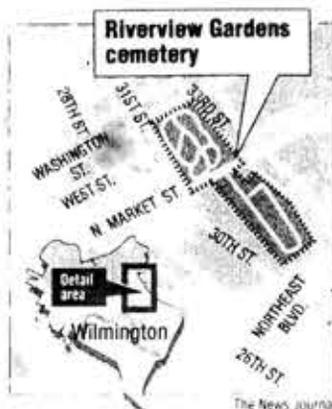
"I drove to the police station right from the cemetery around 3:30 p.m. and spoke to the policeman behind the glass," Markiewicz said. "He asked was I the owner and told me I had to tell the owner, because maybe someone took them to fix them or something. He said the owner had to report."

That mausoleum belongs to the family of William H. Todd, an early 20th-century shipbuild-



The News Journal/SUCHAT PEDERSON

Bob Markiewicz and Dotty Marx stand in front of the public mausoleum at Riverview Gardens cemetery, where plywood stands in place of the doors.



The News Journal

Todd Memorial Park at 18th Street and Baynard Boulevard, Wilmington's memorial to those who died in World War I.

When Markiewicz drove through the cemetery Wednesday, she noticed the doors to the McDonough and Porter mausoleum were gone.

Markiewicz figures the theft must have occurred in the past week. An area resident, Jeff Clark, said the doors were there Tuesday night.

Markiewicz also saw a wreath, which once hung on the mausoleum doors, tattered and discarded on the ground.

"It's just terrible," she said. "The dead can't defend themselves and there is nobody left who cares."

Staff reporter Ira Porter contributed to this story. Contact Terri Sanginiti at 424-2771 or sanginiti@delawareonline.com

ing magnate. He died in New York in 1932 and is not buried in the Wilmington crypt, but has family members there.

Todd donated the Henry August Lukeman sculpture of Winged Victory that stands in