

years, the parents of Clyde Fitch passed on and their remains were entombed with their son. They had no other family members and Clyde Fitch had no children; no endowment was set up to maintain the memorial.

Gradually over time, the mortar holding the blocks of white marble together has worn away and biological growth has soiled the monument. It will take four weeks to gently clean the structure, to remove debris from the mortar joints and replace missing mortar with a compatible mix of lime and sand. Once the project is completed, the memorial will be white again and stable for the next twenty years.

The Friends of The Woodlawn Cemetery established the Entertainers Fund to provide support to mark the graves of forgotten performers and to restore the unendowed memorials of entertainers where there is no family to look after the lot. In recent months the Friends have marked the grave of Sonny Greer and received a pledge to mark the grave of Nora Bayes, Broadway star and composer of *Shine on Harvest Moon*. If you would like a list of The Great Entertainers or would like to make a contribution to the Entertainers Fund contact the Friends office at (718) 920-1469 or email us at: friendsofwoodlawn@msn.com.



*Swan Callendar Mausoleum, Evergreen Plot - While the Fitch Memorial was under construction, the playwright's remains were kept in the tomb of a friend.*



## SONNY GREER REMEMBERED

Each year, the members of the Ellington Society come from Manhattan to visit the grave of Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington. Friends of Woodlawn Members Ulysses LaPradde and Tom Harris organized the 2003 annual outing. They made a special effort to invite Mercedes Ellington, a granddaughter of the great composer and bandleader and jazz aficionado Phoebe Jacobs to join the group and visit the graves of other members of the Ellington Band.

Buried in the Zinnia Plot four rows from the fence line is William ‘Sonny’ Greer, Ellington’s long time friend and drummer. Greer was known as an innovator in the world of percussion, bringing new sounds and a variety of instruments into the main stream. He died in 1982 in New York at the age of 78. For more than twenty years his grave went unmarked until Friends Member Don DeNigris of Domenick DeNigris Inc. donated a marker for his grave. DeNigris cut the stone in a similar style to match the gravestone of Duke Ellington. Society members held a ceremony to dedicate the marker for Greer.

Then the group visited the grave of Ellington friend and internationally known jazz club owner Ada Smith “Bricktop” DuConge. “Bricktop” started out in New York as a singer and went on to own successful clubs in Paris, Rome and Mexico City. She died in 1983 and is buried not far from Sonny Greer in the Zinnia Plot.

Another stop on the Ellington Society tour was the grave of Charles “Cootie” Williams, the trumpet player best known for his growling sound on such hits as *Take the A Train*.

Williams was a composer and co-wrote the jazz classic *Round Midnight* with Thelonius Monk. Although Williams’ grave was marked, his devoted wife Catherine who died in 2000 did not have an inscription. Mrs. Williams was constantly in touch with the cemetery, providing information about her husband for the biography files kept by the Friends. Domenick DeNigris Inc. donated the inscription for the stone, and now the name and dates of Catherine Williams are remembered.

The Ellington Society also visited the graves of Coleman Hawkins, Miles Davis and Lionel Hampton. If you would like information on the Jazz Greats of Woodlawn contact the Friends office at (718) 920-1469 or join us for the Jazz Greats tour scheduled for Sunday September 28th at 2 pm.



*Duke Ellington won nationwide attention in the 1920's through his radio broadcasts live from Harlem's "jumpin'" Cotton Club.*