

## Charles Cemetery Paragraph

What first inspired Cassandra and I to use Facebook in our Gravestone Project focusing on Charles Herbert Collyer, a late World War one Veteran, was how well Facebook's Profile-building feature could make use of and showcase all of the known and recorded personal and professional information about him, such as his photographs, family members, places of residence, and major life events made available through the library, internet records, and the Canadian War Memorial website. For fun, we joined social groups and "liked" pages on Facebook that we felt coincided with what we knew about his interests and personality, and then submitted his account to a website that analyzes the data and patterns of a user's Facebook account to estimate their psychological profile, predicting their sexuality, intelligence, life satisfaction, aptitude for certain careers and more. As we read the results about his horoscope, his career aptitudes, and his love for family, Charles slowly morphed from century-old data and black and white photographs into a three-dimensional, fun-loving, family-oriented young adult, sharing his life online like most youths in our generation. Slowly we began to realize, with increasing humility, the full potential of this initiative to collapse the barrier of time and undo its desensitizing effects on the tragedy of this young person's untimely death. After this shocking and moving revelation, we began encouraging our peers from SASAH to add Charles as a "Friend" on Facebook, and began writing statuses, and comments in what we imaged as Charles' own voice. We then began receiving friend requests from other interested friends and strangers from around the world, curious about

this unique opportunity to interact with Charles both as a source of invaluable information, and as a friend, after his death.

While Charles' personal information was released without his knowledge post mortem, Cassandra and I decided to explore a new frontier for the presentation and portrayal of historical events and figures by creating and managing an account *for* Charles rather than *about* him, to resurrect him with dignity and let him reclaim his own information, identity and youth. While the war deprived him of his connection to his friends and family, we have established permanent links to his contacts or "friends" in a lively social network of young people today, and have given him digital immortality. But in addition to mere life, our cemetery project has also given Charles, a man commemorated for his commitment to duty and morality, an even more important ability: to inspire and better mankind by reaching out to and communicating directly with today's youth and educating them about the consequences and tragedies of war.