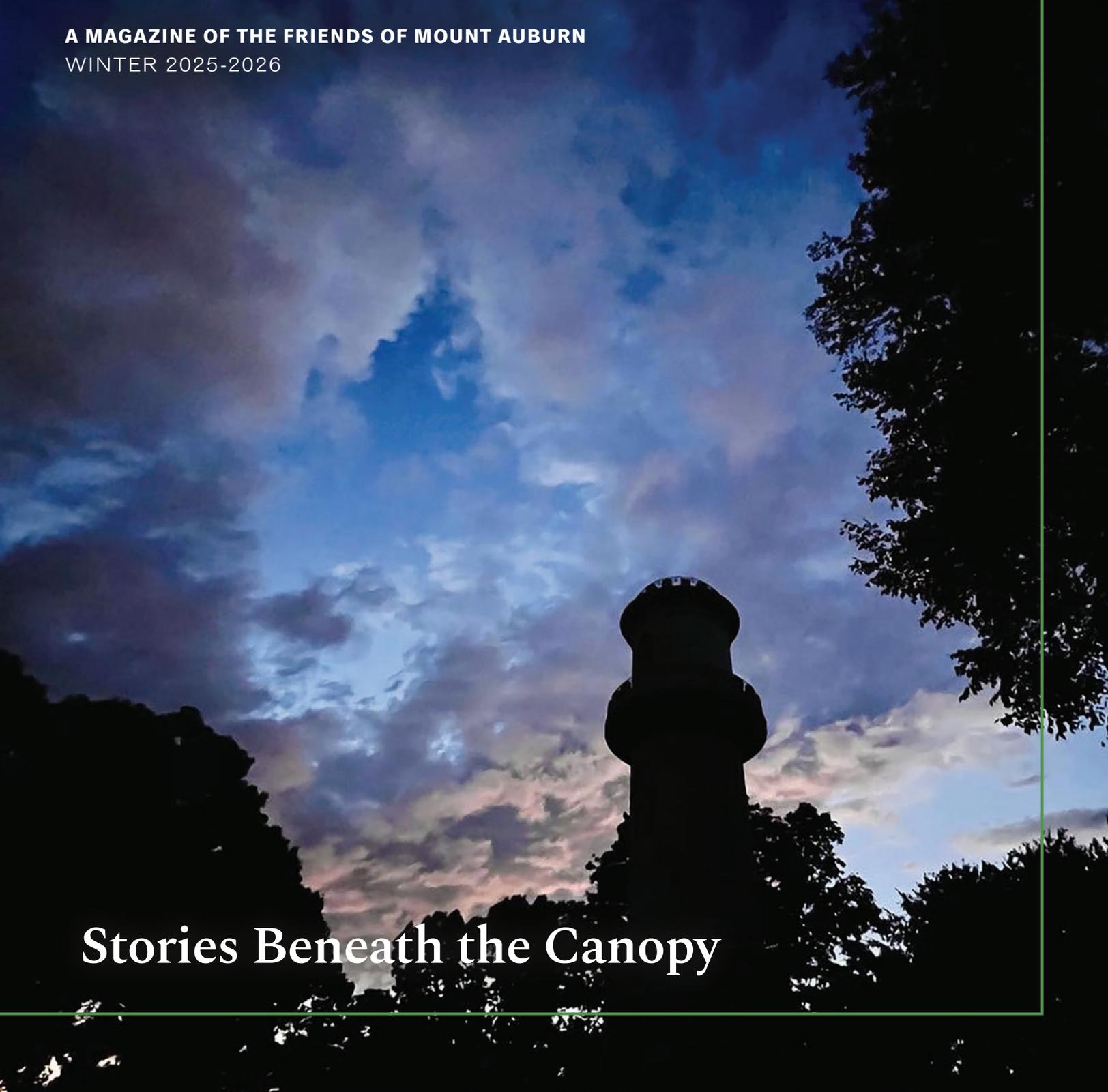


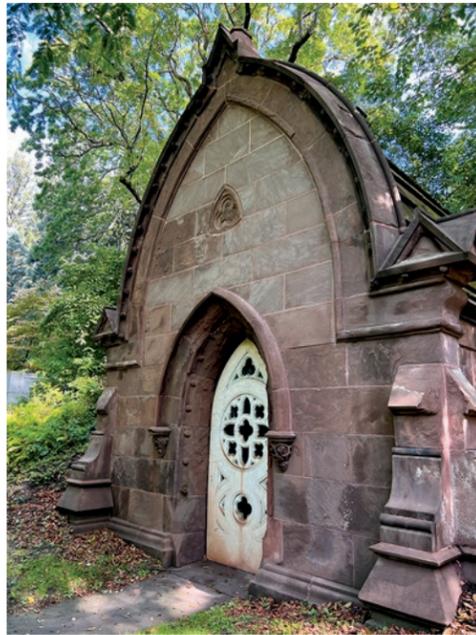
# SWEET AUBURN

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Stories Beneath the Canopy



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: *Jerome Badot, Preservationist*

By Andrew Gambardella,  
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One of six members of Mount Auburn's Preservation Team, Jerome Badot helps maintain and repair hundreds of monuments each year. I walked with Jerome on a sunny Friday morning in September to learn more about everything he and his team do to preserve Mount Auburn's monuments and the historic character of the Cemetery.

**J**erome Badot, born and raised in Newburyport, MA, developed a deep respect for material craftsmanship at a young age. He vividly recalls the pulpy process of making paper with his mother, a former library conservationist at Harvard. His father, a Belgian visual artist to whom he owes his Francophone name, is a painter and photographer. His grandfather was a builder and electrician who built a cottage for the family on the South Shore. Surrounded and inspired by artists and makers, Jerome sought his own creative outlet by playing the guitar from the age of ten. His musical passion would dovetail into his first professional foray into woodworking via the building and repair of string instruments at the Roberto-Venn School of Luthiery in Phoenix, AZ.

From 2016–18, Jerome attended the North Bennet Street School (NBSS)—the first trade school in the country, founded in Boston in 1881—to specialize in preservation carpentry. His class's final project was to recreate the facade and entryway of the Beacon Hill mansion belonging to John Hancock, Massachusetts's first governor and iconic signer of the Declaration of Independence, centered around the original door that NBSS had in storage. (Hancock's mansion was torn down in 1863, an outrage that is said to have ignited the historic preservation movement in Boston.)

I was curious how Jerome went from carpentry to masonry, which is mostly what he does now at Mount Auburn.

"I was looking for weekend work after my time at NBSS and an opportunity came to me to assist with masonry for incredible sites all around Boston, and I thought, 'why not give it a shot?'" That opportunity was with the renowned restoration mason, Fabio Bardini of Florentine Renaissance Masonry.

Jerome learned all about stone, lime, mortars, and traditional Italian restoration techniques, and from there he hasn't looked back. Seeking a more stable work schedule, he joined Mount Auburn's Preservation team in the spring of 2023. Alongside his teammates Julia, Juan, Julio, Greg, and Gus (no, J and G names are not a prerequisite for employment in Mount Auburn's Preservation department to my knowledge!), Jerome helps care for the Cemetery's over 50,000 monuments via a rigid prioritization process.

"Visitor safety is our highest priority," he emphasizes. Preservation staff systematically survey the Cemetery's monuments, checking for potential hazards.

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In addition to resetting troublesome monuments, Jerome has taken on some significant preservation projects, including the removal/cleaning of several Hazel Dell mausoleum doors in conjunction with the accessibility enhancements made to the site, and the stabilization and repointing (repairing mortar joints between stones by replacing with fresh—and, in this case specifically—soft, breathable mortar) of the Lodge Mausoleum at Auburn Lake. The latter was built using Portland brownstone, which is known to fare poorly in New England's humid environment.

Jerome speaks knowledgeably and enthusiastically about Mount Auburn's preservation philosophy, which accepts that materials in an outdoor environment will naturally decay. "There's preservation, which is trying to save as much of the original materials as possible and preventing future damage, and then there is restoration, which is an effort to repair in order to recreate a piece's original condition."

Jerome would like visitors to comprehend the immense amount of work that goes into maintaining the Cemetery's landscape, as envisioned by Mount Auburn's founders. The ongoing, often strenuous labors of Jerome and his coworkers provide meaningful services at the heart of the Cemetery's operations. His favorite aspect of working at Mount Auburn is collaborating with his fellow staff, who boast a wide range of expertise: "I feel like I've learned horticulture through osmosis."

When he's not carefully maintaining Mount Auburn's canvas of monuments, Jerome plays bass and sings backup vocals in the punk band Zip-Tie Handcuffs. Their songs have been featured in MTV's *Ridiculousness*, Showtime's *Shameless*, and, most recently, Hulu's *The Kardashians* (I bet you never thought you would read that name in *Sweet Auburn*). Check out their most recent album, 2024's *Moss*—you won't regret it.

Opposite page, top: The Lodge mausoleum at Auburn Lake.

Opposite page, bottom: Jerome in front of the Magoun monument, one of Mount Auburn's most significant monuments and one of Jerome's favorites.

Below: Jerome and his North Bennet Street School peers in front of the completed John Hancock mansion door project, 2018. Photo courtesy of North Bennet Street School.

