

ITHACA, NEW YORK
Cornell University

Barbara McClintock rests at Cold Spring Harbor, New York

– Kass, LB

Last year, Kass (2016, *Maize Genetics Cooperation Newsletter* 90: 3; online Jan, 2017; <http://mnl.maizegdb.org/90/pdf/03kass.pdf>) brought to the attention of the maize genetics community, the inaccuracy of the report that Barbara McClintock was buried at the Huntington Rural Cemetery on Long Island, New York. Kass reported that “Archivists at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory (CSHL), where McClintock worked in the last years of her life, have no documentation for where McClintock is buried.”

Following up on this paucity of knowledge, CSHL archivist Clare Clark reached out to McClintock’s family for further information on her final resting place. We are grateful to McClintock’s nephew, Peter M. McKinley (her executor), for relating to his sister Marjorie M. Bhavnani, on May 1, 2017, his recollection of the disposition of their Aunt Barbara McClintock’s ashes at Cold Spring Harbor, after her death on 2 September 1992. I very much appreciate receiving the summary of memories that Mrs. Bhavnani submitted to Archivist Clark on May 9th 2017, and for permission to share the memories of her brother. Without Clare’s effort this update would not be possible.

In the spirit of maize cooperation, fostered by R. A. Emerson, founder of this *Newsletter* (Kass, Bonneuil, Coe, 2005, *Genetics* 169(April):1787-1797; <http://www.genetics.org/cgi/content/full/169/4/1787>), I now share, with permission of McClintock’s family, the following recollection of Barbara McClintock’s final resting place – Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory:

Peter McKinley recalled that a woman on the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory administrative staff, whose name he has forgotten [Probably Susan Cooper], suggested he might spread the ashes of their aunt on McClintock’s “experimental lands,” but Mr. McKinley chose not to.

Probably within “a couple of weeks,” but no more than a month after her death, Mr. McKinley deposited the ashes directly off the trail that led along the water from where McClintock lived on the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory campus toward the Sound. He recalled that he wanted to find a place that was “quiet” and “with a view of the Sound.” He looked for “a quiet place with a view.” He thought of how “she liked to be alone” and he remembered that “she enjoyed being on the shore.”

Mr. McKinley recalled that about 1/8-1/4 mile in, the path rises and looks out over the water. At that spot he walked four to five yards off the trail up into the “brush and vegetation” off the path and left the ashes there. He found the site to be “quiet, beautiful.”

McClintock’s nephew said a prayer of his own devising drawing from his being an Episcopalian with “what I thought were appropriate words, showing respect.” He remarked that “it was a solitary event.”

Requiescat in pace, Barbara McClintock; zikhronah livrakha, may her memory be a blessing.