Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery Celebrate 25th Anniversary

by Richard O. Reisem

(Editors Note: In the four issues of the Epitaph in this 25th anniversary year of 2005, I am writing articles in roughly chronological order about the history of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery from its beginning in 1980 to the present time. Part Three begins with the sesquicentennial of Mount Hope Cemetery in 1988, but covers a period from 1985 through 1994, with a few digressions outside of that time frame.)

Part Three: The Friends Organization Grows in Sophistication

Heritage Day, held on October 2, 1988, celebrated the Sesquicentennial of Mount Hope Cemetery, the oldest municipal Victorian cemetery in America. It was 150 years ago that the first burial occurred on August 18, 1838 of William Carter. He was a grocer who died of a fever on August 18, 1838 of anthrax. His death was a tragic event for the community.

Moments before the first decade of the Friends existence had ended, our lively organization had established an "Adopt-A-Plot" program.

Earlier in 1988, on Mother's Day, May 8, the Friends joined the Landmark Society of Western New York and the Rochester Garden Center in a joint fundraiser, charging $2 to visit the Rose Mansion (a bed-and-breakfast at 625 Mt. Hope), the 1867 Ellwanger perennial garden, Mt. Hope Cemetery, and the Garden Center's gardens and headquarters at Warner Castle.

In the spring of 1987, Rochester received a $55,000 matching grant from New York State to restore the gatehouse. The city provided the matching funds to make a total of $110,000 available to repair the slate roof and renovate walls, the bell tower, and more. So, the Friends were proud to show off their new headquarters at the 1988 Mother's Day tour.

Recently, the Friends have undertaken a few major projects in an effort to beautify historic gravesites in Mount Hope. The Friends have participated in this effort to beautify historic gravesites in Mount Hope. The effort included spring cleanup and planting, summer maintenance, and fall cleanup. Many volunteers mentioned that much of the enjoyment of their adopt-a-plot projects came from learning more about the permanent residents they were caring for. In 1990, 25 graves were adopted by individuals, families, and organizations. Today, over 60 historic gravesites are tended by volunteers in this highly successful program that significantly improves the appearance of the cemetery.

There are several flower beds, mostly in the north gatehouse area, that are planted and maintained by volunteers. In 1987, these volunteers included John Pearsall, Jack and Letitia McKinney, Bob and Sally Tompkins, Ed and Mary Olinger, Susan Maney, Gert

The Yaky plot with its attractive planting beds was adopted by Letitia McKinney and Robert and Sally Tompkins. Photo by Frank A. Gillespie.
Rivoli, Bob Hoepfl, Bill Orwen, David Galli, Ed Rosenberg, and the University Garden Club. Many of them are still doing it today. It was John Pearsall who established a particularly striking perennial garden around the Florentine fountain soon after its restoration in 1985.

The attention given to the cemetery grounds by the Friends definitely enhanced the appeal of tours in the cemetery. During the summer of 1986, it was reported that over 2,000 people attended the Sunday and special tours.

In 1985, Carol Riesenberger and I spearheaded an interesting publication project. It was an 8 1/2 by 11, spiral-bound, 20-page book called "Discovering Mount Hope Cemetery, A Book of Games and Puzzles for Young People. A number of people contributed to the project: photographs by Frank Gillespie, drawings by Thao Nguyen, creative contributions by Ann Baker, Fran Coleman, Laurel Gabel, Richard Reisem, Carol Riesenberger, and Shirley Stephens. Together we contrived an inventive, entertaining, and educational way for children to learn about Mount Hope and quite a few other things as well. It was a particularly popular book, and at $1 each, it quickly sold out. (A sample page is reproduced here.)

On a hot July 1987 afternoon, the wood-and-glass cover over the George Ellwanger monument was permanently removed unveiling a marvelous 1874 marble sculpture of St. John. For more years than anyone can remember, this wooden structure largely obscured the fine marble sculpture underneath. The cover had deteriorated to the point of being hazardous. Since there were no relatives in this area to repair it, the cover was dismantled. The cost of the removal was paid for by the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery. Originally, the cover was used for winter protection. Every spring, Ellwanger-Barry nursery staff, who had the appropriate equipment to handle it, removed the cover for the summer months. Finally, one spring long ago, the cover's summer removal was overlooked, and so it had remained over the sculpture ever since. Removal of the cover unveiled an enormous, handsome, marble statue of St. John the Divine with the sculptor's inscription: "N. Cantalamessa Papotti, Roma, 1874." Papotti was a highly respected Italian sculptor, and his works are represented in such distinguished places as the Vatican. Mt. Hope also has another Papotti sculpture, the Weary Pilgrim, on the Erickson-Perkins plot in Section G. Papotti's St. John sits writing the book of Revelation while an eagle is positioned at his left side. St. John is the patron saint of writers. The inscription on the base reads, "I heard a voice from heaven..."

Practically since the founding of the Friends, there have been, in addition to regular Sunday tours, special tours addressing a variety of subjects. Two of them from earlier years stand out. W. Stephen Thomas, director emeritus of the Rochester Museum and Science Center and Friends trustee, led a special two-hour tour for approximately 50 people on April 29, 1990.

**EPITAPH**

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Basic annual membership is $20. Call (585) 461-3494 for a free pocket guide to Mount Hope Cemetery and a membership application. See our colorful and informative web page: www.fomh.org
The tour, "Famous Families of Rochester," took the group from the old section into the new section of the cemetery. Some of the graves included in the tour were those of

The Pigpen Cipher (Secret Code)

This secret code, called the Pigpen Cipher, was used to pass along secret information during the Civil War. The key to understanding the code is shown below.

```
A  D  G  K  N  Q  T  X
B  E  H  J  L  O  R  U  W  Y
C  F  I  M  P  S  V  Z
```

It isn't as difficult as it looks. Try it.

Now, write your name using this secret code.

You can use the secret code to discover the name of a famous inventor who is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery. The tombstone of this man says that he invented the automobile. His stone has an image of his first gasoline automobile.

Here is his name in the secret code:

```
L  O  E  O  L  O  M  O  K  U  U  O  J
```

Write his name:

Lillian Wald (1867-1940), founder of the U.S. Visiting Nurse Service; Clara Louise (Clayla) Ward (1889-1973), Rochester's grande dame and love interest of George Eastman; Jacob Myers (1841-1920), inventor of the first voting machine; Rufus Sibley (1841-1928), partner in one of the great department stores of America, Sibley, Lindsay & Curr Company (Sibley's); Frank Gannett (1876-1957), founder of the Gannett publishing empire; Alexander Millener (1762-1865), General George Washington's drummer boy who led American troops into Revolutionary War battles; and the Reverend Rob Roy Converse (1844-1915), who, with five university degrees, became professor of psychology at Hobart College and rector of St. Luke's Episcopal Church from 1897 until his death.

Alexander Millener's cemetery monument is made of zinc, called "White Bronze."

Workers dismantle the deteriorating cover over the Ellwanger monument.

After the dismantling, the beautiful sculpture of St. John by the famous sculptor, Nicola Cantalamessa Papotti, was revealed.

Photo by Frank A. Gillespie.
tour occurred on April 28, 1991 and was presented by Dick Brown, president of the Friends. About 70 people attended a new Civil War tour created by Dick Brown. Among many interesting discoveries, he verified that at least nine Civil War generals are buried in Mount Hope Cemetery, and he led the group to all of them. The tour also visited the gravesites of other Civil War officers, enlisted men, and civilians, such as Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), founder of the civil rights movement in America; Freeman Clarke (1809-1887), the U.S. Comptroller of the Currency during the Civil War; Alfred Ely (1815-1892), U.S. congressman from Rochester who was captured at the Battle of Bull Run in 1861 and imprisoned by the Confederates; and Hiram Sibley (1807-1888), who founded Western Union Telegraph Company that played a critical role in Civil War communications.

In the spring of 1991, Frank A. Gillespie, with whom I knew from business relations when we were fellow employees at Eastman Kodak, approached me with a question. "I just bought a new lens for my camera," he said, "and I am looking for some suitable sites of still objects where I can test it. Do you have any suggestions?" I introduced Frank to Mount Hope Cemetery, a place where I could attest to the fact that most of the objects there were immobile. He proceeded to take a few photographs, which, as he enthusiastically continued, became more than 80 outstanding black-and-white images. He arranged to display 52 of these cemetery photographs in 16-by-20-inch format at the Link Gallery in City Hall, and the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery staged a champagne reception for the opening of the show on July 12, 1991. Over 200 people attended the reception, and, in the excitement of the stimulating photographic display, they devoured the delicious hors d’oeuvres and drank an enormous quantity of champagne. The show became a huge Link Gallery success, and when it closed on August 12, Frank said to me, "Well, now what? It seems very sad to take these photos down and just put them away in storage." I suggested, "Well, we could publish a book." That book became the large-format, hardbound volume, Mount Hope: America’s First Municipal Victorian Cemetery. It is now in its third printing, having sold out its first printing in less than a year.

In 1992, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery received a unique donation: a beautiful stained-glass window that had been part of the William G. Stuber mausoleum. It was damaged by vandalism, with almost half of its stained glass broken. The window was offered to our organization by Mr. and Mrs. Merritt A. Cleveland. Mrs. Cleveland was a descendant of Stuber. The Friends commissioned Pike Stained Glass to restore the window and Ron Kniffen of UniSet Corporation to construct a lightbox to display it. The completed window was mounted on a wall in the gatehouse, and an unveiling reception was held to thank the Clevelands for graciously funding the cost of repair and the lightbox. William G. Stuber (1864-1959) was George Eastman’s great emulsion maker and third president of Kodak.

I cannot resist telling a great story about Stuber. In the early days of photography, film emulsion-making was more of an art than a science, and many emulsion batches failed for no apparent reason. Stuber encountered such a situation when for more than a month none of this efforts produced a satisfactory emulsion. Late one night, Stuber, in deep frustration and desperation or perhaps for luck, peed into his latest emulsion batch. When he tested it, he was shocked to find it alive, that is, particularly sensitive to light. He noted that he had eaten...
corned beef and cabbage for dinner, and perhaps the cabbage provided a secret ingredient for lively film emulsions. Later, science revealed that Stuber’s secret ingredient, present in cabbage, was sulfur and, thereafter, its source did not require corned beef and cabbage for dinner.

On October 17, 1992, W. Stephen Thomas conducted another of his special tours. This one was about inventors buried in Mount Hope Cemetery. The tour visited the gravesites of ten inventors and their inventions. Some of their inventions include the streetcar transfer ticket (J. Harry Stedman), the fuzzy pipe cleaner (J. Harry Stedman), the first voting machine (Jacob H. Myers), the mail chute (James Goold Cutler), the first gasoline automobile (George B. Selden), the steam-engine governor used in ships, railroad locomotives, and industrial operations (Junius Judson), rubber eyeglass frames (John Jacob Bausch), a fishing reel (Seth Green), the first curve ball in baseball (Richard Willis), and the first machine gun (Dr. Josephus Requa). In his book, Notable Men of Rochester, published in 1902, George Bragdon lists 127 names of inventors and notes that “Rochester furnished a larger number of valuable inventions in proportion to its population than any other city in the world.”

On Saturday, June 12 and Sunday, June 13, 1993, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery and the Landmark Society joined to stage a major house and garden tour on Mount Hope Avenue. The Friends opened the gatehouse at the north entrance and conducted short, 30-minute cemetery tours. It was an opportunity for the more than 2,500 tourgoers to visit the gravesites of Susan B. Anthony, Hiram Sibley, Margaret Woodbury Strong, George B. Selden, and some of the more spectacular funerary sculptures. There were 13 mansions and middle-class houses also on this fascinating tour, one of the largest house and garden tours ever offered in Rochester.

On December 6, 1994, Richard G. Brown (1928-1994)—a trustee of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, former president for four years, tour guide, and Civil War expert—died after a year-long illness. Dick joined the Friends shortly after its inception and made countless contributions to the organization and its goals. He established an especially productive cooperative working relationship with the City of Rochester, which supplied staff expertise and financial help for various restoration projects. Dick was a catalyst in achieving the 1992 repair of the gazebo, the exterior restoration of the gatehouse, and later, its interior renovation, even though he was by then battling his debilitating illness. Besides being a regular Sunday tour guide, he designed a popular Civil War tour and conducted it twice to some of our largest tour attendance numbers up to that time. Dick also acted as a liaison with other community organizations in planning joint activities concerning the cemetery. He was an inspiring president of our organization for four years, enlivening board meetings with his humor and wit. When volunteers were needed, he was the first to pitch in, whether it was sweeping the floor, cleaning the storage room, or planning a new project.

Several years before his death, he purchased a cemetery lot in Section C right along Indian Trail Avenue where Sunday cemetery tours pass. He announced, “You will all see my gravesite on every Sunday tour.”

(The final chapter of this four-part series, “The 1995-2005 Decade,” will appear in the next issue [Fall] of the Epitaph.)

**FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE TRAVEL TO BUFFALO**

by Don Hall  
photos by David Hoffend

Many of the trustees of the Friends of Mt. Hope, their spouses, and a few invited guests took their first-ever group field trip to visit the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo. The trip to one of America’s most beautiful cemeteries was inspired by trustee (and Epitaph editor) Richard Reisem’s latest book (his tenth) on Frank Lloyd Wright’s “Blue Sky Mausoleum” in Forest Lawn, which was completed in September, 2004.

Wright designed the mausoleum in 1928 for Buffalo businessman Darwin Martin and his family, but by the time of Martin’s death in 1935, the family was out of money and the mausoleum was never built. Earlier, Martin had Wright design him a fine home, and in 1905 Martin and his family moved into one of the best examples of Wright’s prairie style homes.

The trustees showed interest in what Reisem told them about Wright, Martin, the house and the mausoleum, and so the idea for a chance to see for ourselves was born. The trip was such a success that it will be repeated on Saturday, October 8, 2005.

We will leave from the south gate of Mt. Hope Cemetery, 1133 Mount Hope Avenue opposite the Distillery Restaurant at 8:30 a.m. in our own video-equipped, motor coach. Our first stop will be at the Darwin Martin House, where we will have a tour of the home, as well as a chance to see the adjacent Wright-designed George Barton house. The Martin House is in the midst of major restoration and reconstruction. After our tour, we will drive by two other Wright-designed homes in the neighborhood, then go to Cole’s Restaurant on Elmwood Avenue for lunch. Cole’s opened in 1934, and the original part of the restaurant has changed little since that time. In the afternoon, we will go to Forest Lawn Cemetery where Reisem will conduct a bus/walking tour, ending with the Blue Sky Mausoleum. We will return to Rochester at 5:30 p.m.

The cost for all of this, plus several (pleasant) surprises, is only $49 per person. If you wish to join us for this fall field trip please send:

1. payment of $49 per person, with checks made out to Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery,
One of our two tour guides welcomes us to Buffalo’s 100-year-old Darwin Martin House, one of the best and largest of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie style architecture.

2. a self-addressed, stamped envelope, including
3. your name, address, telephone number and e-mail mail address (if any) on a separate piece of paper.

Mail to:
Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery
1133 Mount Hope Avenue
Rochester, New York 14620-2752.

In order to enjoy the trip fully, you will need to be able to walk over uneven terrain in Forest Lawn Cemetery, and be able to walk a half block on sidewalks, to our lunch at Cole’s.

If needed, complete refunds will be available through September 24. After that, refunds will be made only if the space can be filled by those on a waiting list. If you do not receive a refund, your fee can be considered a tax-free contribution to the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery.

If you have questions about this trip, please contact tour manager and trustee, Don Hall, 585-461-3799, or by e-mail:
donh22@frontiernet.net.

More information on the Internet at:
http://www.darwinmartinhouse.org/
http://www.forest-lawn.com/
http://www.blueskymausoleum.com/
http://www.fomh.org/

Forest Lawn Cemetery began in 1849 and has 152,000 permanent residents buried on 269 acres. Mt. Hope, America’s first municipal cemetery, was founded in 1838, covers 196 acres, and contains over 350,000 graves. Both cemeteries have 14 miles of roads.

The composite photograph shows two styles of art-glass windows created by Frank Lloyd Wright for the Darwin Martin House in Buffalo. On the left is the “Wisteria” design. The “Tree of Life” design on the right contains more than 700 individual pieces of glass. All of Wright’s art-glass windows for the Martin House were manufactured by the Linden Glass Company in Chicago.
Richard Reisen, author of three books on Forest Lawn Cemetery, listens to a question from one of the tourgoers in front of the world-famous Blecher Mausoleum in Buffalo's Forest Lawn Cemetery. The marble sculptures inside were created by the Swiss-born Italian artist, Franklin Torney.

The Orson Phelps monument in Forest Lawn was created by the famous Italian sculptor, Nicola Cantalamessa Papotti, in Rome in 1876. Papotti also sculpted two large monuments in Mount Hope Cemetery.
BOX LUNCH ORDER FORM

Name: _____________________________

All lunches are $7.50 and include sandwich, salad, dessert, and soda or bottled water.

- Baked Ham & Swiss on Rye
- Shaved Turkey Breast on Natural Wheat
- Stacked Roast Beef on Kaiser Roll
- Double Decker Cheese on Natural Wheat w/Alfalfa Sprouts

Make checks payable to Friends of Mt. Hope.
Cut out form and mail with your check by September 9 to:
Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery
1133 Mt. Hope Avenue
Rochester, NY 14620

JOIN US FOR A GALA VICTORIAN PICNIC

On Saturday, September 17, 2005, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, in collaboration with Rochester Cemeteries Heritage Foundation, Historic Brighton, Landmark Society, Rochester Historical Society, and Susan B. Anthony House, will stage a grand Victorian picnic in the north entrance area of Mount Hope Cemetery. You are invited to join the picnic and help us celebrate 25 years of our organization, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery (1980-2005). The event is free and open to the public, just bring a picnic lunch or buy a box lunch (see order form).

HERE’S THE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

10:00 a.m.:
- Short tours of the cemetery’s historic highlights every half hour.
- Costumed actors talk about the historic figures they represent.
- Demonstrations of raising fallen tombstones with the Egyptian tripod method.
- Participate in a fascinating scavenger hunt with a prize for every winner.
- Tour the gatehouse and see a new exhibit of cemetery photos by Frank Gillespie.
- Staff members, using new computerized records, will locate the gravesites of your friends and relatives.
- Take a carriage ride on the winding roads of the cemetery.
- Watch a parade of historic, horse-drawn carriages.
- Study a photo display of adopted plots in Mt. Hope and guess the winners.

11:30 a.m.:
- Lunch on the great lawn by the 1875 Florentine fountain. Bring your own picnic basket or order a delicious box lunch provided by Classy Cookie & Deli. (See order form.)

1:00 p.m.:
- Ringing of the great bell in the gatehouse tower announcing the program and entertainment.
- Program of distinguished speakers, famous historic figures, singers, and musicians.
- Adopt-a-Plot awards.

2:30 p.m.:
- Resume morning activities.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery is to optimize the cemetery’s potential as a cultural resource through education, preservation, and promotion of Mount Hope Cemetery’s unique heritage.