WHY THE "FLORENTINE" FOUNTAIN?
by Donald S. Hall

The research for this article started out as a simple question: "Why is our fountain called 'Florentine'?" And the research revealed much more information than that. This fountain is located just inside the original entrance to Mount Hope Cemetery, 791 Mount Hope Avenue, opposite Robinson Drive. It was installed in 1875, weighs 14 tons, and is about 20 feet tall.

From my visit to Florence, Italy, some years ago, and online research, I can say that our fountain doesn't resemble the fountains in Florence. So that reason for the name was not likely. The foundry's mark on the right side of the lowest section says, J. L. Mott Iron Works, New York City. Carol Grissom, Senior Objects Conservator at the Smithsonian Institution told me that Mott's catalogs show multi-tier fountains like ours labeled either "Renaissance" or "Florentine", so the name mystery was solved.

The catalogs of the Mott foundry show that their fountains could be assembled from components including a catch basin at the bottom, a center pedestal, one or more pans above that, with various spacers between, topped with an outlet for water. The company's 1893 catalog states, "For convenience of carriage, the fountains are shipped in pieces, duplicate marks or numbers are painted on the parts that join, & everything having been fitted, the putting together is a simple matter."

In addition to fountains, Mott Company manufactured stoves, furnaces, water closets, laundry tubs, multi-head shower nozzles, and a variety of other plumbing supplies, in both cast iron and porcelain. Some of these Mott products are highly desired today. A record price for American folk art was set in October 2006 when a J. L. Mott 62-inch-tall Indian Chief weathervane sold at auction for $5,840,000.

When he was just 30 years old, Jacob Lawrence Mott, Sr. founded the company in New York City in 1828. The foundry was moved to South Bronx, while the sales office remained in Manhattan. The Bronx neighborhood of Mott Haven is shown on current maps, and is just north of the end of I-87. The Mott name is still visible on the brick wall of the foundry. Less than two miles north of the foundry is the J. L. Mott Junior High School. By 1886, the foundry claimed to be melting 60 tons of iron daily. In 1906, it moved to Trenton, New Jersey.
Renaissance when they were available only to the wealthy, since they were cast of bronze, or carved from stone. By the mid-1800s, all kinds of objects cast from iron were available to the average citizen, including fountains.

Mott's main competitor in the fountain business was J. W. Fiske, also located in New York City. Both of these foundries obtained their zinc castings from M. J. Seelig & Co., in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. This explains the great similarity between Mott and Fiske fountains.

Our fountain, like other Mott fountains, is a combination of both metals—iron and zinc. It is topped by a three-foot-tall vase bearer, which weighs 125 pounds. The vase bearer is a classically draped female figure holding a vase over her head with both hands. There are many catalog listings of this figure, which was available from 1875 to 1953. Since our fountain was installed in 1875, our vase bearer is possibly among the first such figures.

Between the first and second pans of the Mount Hope fountain are figures of three classically dressed women. Two probably represent the seasons spring and fall since one holds flowers and the other, a cornucopia of grapes. The third holds a jug—like Rebecca mentioned in Genesis 24:15. Mott catalogs show that they made two different styles of each figure. I found a duplicate of the top part of our fountain in the Evergreen Cemetery, Southgate, Kentucky. That cemetery obviously gave up trying to maintain it as a functioning fountain and converted it to a planter. It was easy to photograph the three female figures, since they were painted light green and were at ground level.

Our fountain is 133 years old, however, for about half of its time in Mount Hope, it's been dry. By 1985, it had not only been dry for 60 years or so, but it was also deteriorated. The Friends of Mount Hope feared that it might collapse under its own weight. Prompted by a gift of $23,000 in 1984 by FOMH trustee John C. Clark III, the city agreed to match the gift with an additional $28,000 to restore the fountain. In 1985, it was taken apart and sent to the Architectural Iron Company in Milford, Pennsylvania. Old photos of the fountain were used in the reconstruction of about 200 of the decorative zinc pieces, which were then cast in iron. For example, of the eight pendant pineapples that dangle at the corners of the lowest pan, four are original zinc, while the remaining four are new cast iron. The eight pineapples are visible in the close-up photo shown here.

The original color of the fountain, as shipped by Mott, was a metallic bronze paint. Later repaints were in green to represent patinated copper, white to resemble marble, and other colors for a total of 22 layers of paint.

It's a wonder that any detail showed through the build-up.

The fountain was only operated intermittently after 1985, and then went dry until the summer of 2006 when cemetery staff and other city workers repaired plumbing and
Originally, the Mount Hope Cemetery fountain spilled water into a ten-sided, cast-iron basin, which was later replaced by a twelve-sided Medina sandstone one. Photo by Donald S. Hall.

replaced an inoperative pump motor. It is now a beautiful sight, and a great subject for photographs.

When I photographed the animal head spouts, I just assumed that they were lions, but Ms. Grissom at the Smithsonian suggested that they were rams' heads. Online I found a photo of another Mott fountain, the Scanlan Fountain in Houston, Texas. It was first located at the Thomas Scanlan residence, then moved to his second residence, then finally relocated to Sam Houston Park after 1972. While it is only 12 feet tall, it contains many of the same castings as our fountain. Here the water flows from the lowest pan into the catch basin through the mouths of goats. The use of this animal was probably inspired by the zodiacal sign, "Capricorn" the sea-goat.

Although the Mott catalog shows the Mount Hope fountain standing in a ten-sided, cast-iron basin, sometime later the original iron basin was replaced by the current, simpler, 12-sided Medina sandstone one.

(Editors' Note: Donald S. Hall is a trustee of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery and a frequent tour guide.)

THE WILBUR COON FAMILY

Wilbur Barry Coon (1870-1926), Father
Esther Levis Coon (1879-1928), Mother
Wilbur Levis Coon (1906-1965), Son
Eleanor Worth Coon (c.1910-2003), Daughter-in-Law
and other family members

by Kelly Beamish

While walking in Mount Hope Cemetery, one comes in contact with thousands of gravestones. Some are unreadable, some have fallen, some are intricately carved. Other gravestones may instantly catch your eye from a distance, such as the Coon family monument. Even though it is set in a secluded area surrounded by mausoleums, the stone is hard to miss. The massive size and beautiful carvings make one take a second glance. Not only is the stone a work of art, but the family that commissioned the stone was one of Rochester's well known families of the early 20th century. The Coons created a successful business that they maintained even during the Depression. Wilbur Barry Coon's success with the W.B. Coon Company allowed family members to live a comfortable, upper-class life in Rochester during the 1900s.

Wilbur Barry Coon was born to Charles Edward Coon and Mary Jane (Jennie) Barry on April 3, 1870. His father, Charles, was born in Yates, Orleans County, New York on July 2, 1844. His mother, Jennie, was born on December 18, 1847 in Springfield, Lagrange County, Indiana. They were married on December 1, 1868. Charles' parents were Israel Coon, born in New Jersey in 1819, who married Huldah Chaffee, born in Onondaga County, New York in 1820. In 1861, when Charles was 17, he enlisted in Company A, 151st Infantry Regiment. He served for four years in the Civil War. After their marriage, Charles and Jennie lived on the Barry home- stead for a few years before they moved to a farm near Batavia, New York, where they lived for about five years. They returned to Somerset, Niagara County, New York, where Wilbur was born, for a number of years before they moved again to Yates Center in 1902. On the farm in Somerset, they lived next to Israel and Huldah and Wilbur's 21-year-old aunt.

Charles was a member of several organizations, including S&P Gilber Pest G.A.R. Yates Lodge, F&A.M., and was a Mason for 58
Wilbur's sister Bertha was also born in Somerset on June 25, 1878. She was a schoolteacher until she married Charles E. Dates on July 3, 1900. Bertha was a member of the United Methodist Church and of the Yates Chapter 215, OES. Until she died, Bertha was very active in her chapter affairs, the church, and the community. She left behind four sons, two daughters, 12 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren, and a niece. My grandmother is one of her 12 grandchildren, and my father is one of her 18 great-grandchildren. When I discovered that the monument in Mount Hope was a memorial for my great-great uncle, I became even more fascinated with his life.

Wilbur grew up in Somerset and attended Middleport High School. He then went on to complete his education at Yates Academy in Lyndonville. After Wilbur left the family home, Charles and Jennie still lived in the house with their daughter Bertha, Jennie's father Samuel Barry, and a few servants. In 1888, Wilbur began working for shoe manufacturers Pryor & Warrant as a bookkeeper and auditor. This insight to the shoe industry was the beginning of Wilbur Barry Coon's career. In 1891, he formed a partnership with Herman Meldola and began making infants' turn shoes on River Street. He moved to the Rochester area in the 1890s, living at 68 Clinton Street in 1899. On April 17, 1901, Wilbur married Esther Levis. He was 31 at the time, and she was 22. They were married in the home of Esther's sister, Mary Levis Usher at 200 Tremont Street. Conducting the ceremony was the Reverend Dr. R. R. Converse. Esther Levis was born on July 25, 1879. She was the daughter of Dora Gay and George Levis from Ireland. After their marriage, Wilbur and Esther moved to 59 Thornadale Terrace, Rochester.

When first opened, Meldola & Coon Company was located at 282 State Street. In 1901, plans to build a six-story brick shoe factory were made. The estimated cost for the new Meldola & Coon factory was $30,000. By 1905, the building was finished and Meldola & Coon now resided at 60 Commercial Street. They began to attract employees by advertising in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle newspaper. From about 1891 to 1910, Meldola & Coon built up a workforce by requesting specific positions frequently. The company was very respectful of their workers. They tried to compromise with the requests of employees by cutting the workday from ten to nine hours. The employees were grateful, and they even promised that they would put forth double the effort.

By 1912, Wilbur was involved in the W.B. Coon Company, which was organized as an outgrowth of Meldola & Coon. The company was still located at 60 Commercial Street. Coon named the company after himself and he was the president. As the company grew, it gradually started expanding from infants' and children's shoes to women's shoes. The W.B. Coon Company put a larger emphasis on foot comfort and shoe service rather than on high style. The shoes were manufactured by the company and were then sold directly to retailers under their own trade names. Like any other factory at the time, there were problems with unions, such as the United Shoe Workers, which requested shorter workdays and higher pay. At one point, the plant locked out the union workers and asked for help from out-of-town citizens, requesting them to come to Rochester to work. Many thought this would be damaging to Rochester's economy and community. The problems were highly publicized in Rochester but were sorted out through a series of meetings involving the Boot and Shoe Manufacturer's Association. Overall, however, those who encountered Wilbur Coon thought him to be an upstanding citizen. He was known for his charming character, although he was shy and reserved, and therefore nearly all of his friends were business related. Those with whom he did business said that his "splendid upright character was known and appreciated." He was very trustworthy, and it was known that his word was "as good as his bond". Despite any problems with unions, workers saw Wilbur Coon as fair and just.

The international success of the W.B. Coon Company certainly paid off for Wilbur Coon. In addition to being president of a world-renowned shoe company, he was also a member of several organizations. These included the National Boot & Shoe Manufacturers Association, Rochester Boot & Shoe Manufacturers Association, Rochester Chamber of Commerce, Rochester Club, Yonnondio Lodge, F.&A.M., Rochester Consistory, The Shrine, and the Hamilton Chapter of Monroe Commandery. Wilbur and Esther were very social, appearing in the newspaper for the entertainments they presented. They lived a fortunate and prosperous life, yet they also gave back to the Rochester community. Wilbur made loans of over $1,000 to people in need. He did this frequently and such loans were recognized by newspaper reports. He was also supportive of relief work by the American Red Cross. He cut workers a lot of slack when they were involved with relief programs and was extremely supportive of their efforts. Wilbur also supported the military by providing large loans to soldiers. He was active within his company and tried to participate with associates. Along with his workers, he played in baseball games against the American Laundry Machinery employees. Several other company presidents took part in these sporting events, which brought together the working class of Rochester.

Although Wilbur spent much of his time at work conducting business, he was still able to have a family. Wilbur and Esther gave birth to son Wilbur Levis Coon and a daughter Esther Jeanette Coon. Wilbur Levis was named after his father with his mother's maiden name, while Esther was named after Wilbur's sister. The elder Wilbur Coon was a hard worker but he took time off from the business to spend time with his family. On January 26, 1926, Wilbur, Esther, their two children, and Wilbur's sister, Esther Jeanette went on a 67-day cruise. They sailed on the S.S. Cynthia, which was chartered by the French Tourist Company. The cruise covered 15,000 miles of Europe, the Mediterranean, and Africa. They visited Madrid, Spain, Tunis,
Egypt, the Tombs of the Kings, the Holy Land, Constantinople, Greece, Sicily, Italy, the Riviera, Monte Carlo, Nice, France, and England. Wilbur, being close to his family, sent postcards frequently back to the United States to his sister Bertha. He told her all about each place they visited and the adventures they had.

When Wilbur returned from his international vacation, he was completely healthy. The trip was taken on advice of his physician to take time off from work. After he had returned home, however, Wilbur became ill for about six weeks from low blood pressure. Most of his business associates were not even aware of his illness. In the last week of his illness, he was unconscious. Wilbur Barry Coon died in his home at Harwood Farms in Rochester on July 13, 1926. He was 56 years old. He left behind his wife Esther Levis Coon, his daughter Esther Jeanette, his son Wilbur Levis, and his father Charles. His funeral was held at 3:00 p.m. at his home, and organizations to which he belonged adopted and released memorial statements.

Wilbur certainly left a legacy on the city of Rochester. At the time of his death, he was doing business of $3.5 million a year, and over 6,000 retail dealers were selling his shoes. His estate alone was worth $717,390, which was received by his wife and children in addition to other assets.

Some of his life earnings were also given to siblings. He was extremely wealthy, and his sister, Bertha Coon, was able to live quite comfortably until age 94 from the interest alone of the bequest she received.

W.B. Coon Company continued to thrive as Esther took over the vice-president position. She moved to 37 Canal Street in East Rochester. On the evening of April 4, 1928, Esther died at Highland Hospital from appendicitis at the age of 47 years. She left behind her two children, Wilbur Levis and Esther Jeanette, and four sisters. The funeral was held at her home that following Saturday afternoon. A year later, on February 27, 1929, Wilbur's father, Charles, died. He was buried in Lynhaven Cemetery.

Besides leaving a successful business and millions of dollars, Wilbur Coon and his wife Esther left, of course, their two children. By the time his mother died, Wilbur Levis Coon was 22. He was born March 9, 1906 in Rochester. Before his father died, Wilbur Levis was already successful in a top management position at the W.B. Coon Company. In 1926, he was named one of the 69 new members received by the Chamber of Commerce Committee for his work with the company.

In 1927, the business of the company continued to grow. In August of the previous year, a large building on Canal Street was acquired from the Utz and Dunn Company. The Coon Company moved their business into this newly acquired factory while the old one on Commercial Street was abandoned. Success continued for Wilbur Levis in 1928 when he was named one of the 54 Top Professional and Business Men of Rochester. Those 54 Chamber of Commerce members constituted the New Industries Bureau for 1928 and were appointed to their positions by Chamber of Commerce President Herman Russell.

It was about this time that Wilbur Levis met his wife-to-be. He became engaged to marry Eleanor Worth on December 1, 1928. They celebrated the engagement at the home of Wilbur's sister, Esther Jeanette, on Harwood Lane. Eleanor Worth was the daughter of Mr. And Mrs. George E. Worth and was born in Middletown, Connecticut. They were married by the Reverend William C. Compton on January 24, 1929 on a Thursday afternoon at the Church of the Ascension. The maid of honor was Eleanor's sister, Mrs. Cyril T. Tucker, whose husband was a prominent Rochester architect. The best man was John Neun. Eleanor wore grey, imported tweed with a navy hat, shoes, and bag. They took a honeymoon cruise of the Mediterranean on the S.S. Cynthia from New York, much like the one he went on with his parents.

When they returned, they planned to make their home at Harwood Farms, East Rochester. During their three-month honeymoon cruise, Wilbur and Eleanor fell in love with the French-style country houses of Europe. But back in the States, their home at Harwood Farms was English Tudor style. So they decided to build a new home that they really loved. Even though this was the Depression, the international success of the W.B. Coon Company allowed Wilbur and Eleanor to create a lavish new house. It was designed specifically to fit their needs and had all of the amenities of the time, such as an indoor swimming pool. Eleanor's
brother-in-law Cyril Tucker, designed the house, which took three years to build. Wilbur and Eleanor were also able to change the name of the street from Scenic Drive to Blossom Lane. At 5,522 square feet, the house made use of ceramic tiles, slate shingles, and wrought iron. Inside, there is a winding concrete staircase surrounded by stained-glass windows. The family room has wooden beams that were made from the wood of special trees that were floated down the Genesee River. The plaster on the walls was done by Italian masons, and there is even a circular millstone from the W.B. Coon Company embedded in the back porch. Off the side of the main house there is a 25-foot swimming pool enclosed by glass. The 50-foot swimming pool was surrounded by glass. The house, still a single-family residence, is located at 35 Blossom Lane in Perinton.

In addition to their extraordinary house, the Wilbur Coons enjoyed an upper-class life in Rochester supported by the success of their company. The two of them were frequently in the social news section of the newspaper. They belonged to Oak Hill Country Club in Pittsford, New York and often entertained there. When Wilbur was not present, Eleanor entertained guests at events that were noted in newspapers. The comings and goings of the Coons included events like the Ballet Monte Carlo in February 1934, which were reported by the newspapers. They were truly part of the high society of Rochester. Wilbur once even received a Lincoln automobile as a surprise gift from a friend.

Although they were part of the upper class, Wilbur and Eleanor were modest in many ways. Like his father, Wilbur gave money to the American Red Cross frequently. They were very close to their family. Eleanor participated in much of Wilbur's business-related social life. During the early 1930s, they had two children. Their daughter Jacqueline was born in 1930, and their son, Jeremy, was born in 1935. In addition to a tight-knit immediate family, Wilbur and Eleanor were close to their siblings. Eleanor's sister was married in their home on Blossom Lane in 1938, and their daughter, Jacqueline, was a flower girl. In 1938, Eleanor and her sister, Barbara Worth took a week-long trip to New York City. They were also close with Wilbur's sister, Esther Jeanette. They celebrated Esther's marriage to Stanford Newton Phelps, of Ann Arbor, Michigan, at their Blossom Lane home in 1930. Esther Jeanette later moved to Detroit, but she and Wilbur still kept in close touch.

On December 30, 1965, Wilbur Levis Coon died from pneumonia in his home at age 59. He was survived by his wife, two children, three grandchildren, and his sister. A private service was held, and if his friends wished, they could make contributions in his memory to the renovation fund of the First Church of Christ Scientist instead of giving flowers. After Wilbur died, Eleanor continued to live in the house on Blossom Lane. The house was passed down through three generations of the Coon family. Her grandchildren recalled that the house was their "grandmother's life", and Eleanor wanted to keep it in the family. She lived there until she died on January 31, 2003. Eleanor was not buried in the Coon family plot in Mount Hope Cemetery with her husband.

Jeremy Coon had a relatively quiet life in contrast to his parents. On April 24, 1971, Jeremy married Katherine E. Roessler. They were married in St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Annapolis, Maryland, which was Katherine's home. Jeremy, along with his niece and nephew, took care of the house that his parents built on Blossom Lane. In 2004, the house received a Historic Home Award from the Landmark Society of Western New York.

As a child, Jacqueline Coon, Jeremy's and Katherine's daughter, attended the private Harleym School in Rochester. She was very involved with her school, especially with theater. When her school performed the play, Macbeth, she played the part of Macduff's son and also a "lady in waiting". She also used her artistic talents creating the set designs. She participated in school dances with the help of her mother. Katherine was on the parent committee at Jacqueline's school and otherwise deeply involved in her daughter's life. Jacqueline later married Rufus (Tim) Fulreader, Jr., who was the son of a prominent family in Rochester. The Fulreaders were involved in the Rochester Volunteer Motor Service, which provided transportation services allowing others to gain access to health and social services. Jacqueline was a member of the First Church of Christ Scientist in Rochester, as well as the mother church, First Church of Christ Scientist in Boston. She and Rufus had two children, Jacquelyn and Gary. At the age of 55, Jacqueline died on January 30, 1986.
It is the traditional symbol of the Christian faith. The cross, which is distinguished by four arms of detailed arches and designs that enhance the flight. The background is full of intricately depicts an angel reading up and pointing toward the sky. Above her head is a dove in flight. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. The dove is mentioned in John 1:32, “And John bore record, saying ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.’” The dove is in flight, which is symbolic of the winged soul, leaving this earth to a different place. The cross on the front of the stone is called a cross patée, which is also known as a “cross patty” or “cross formy”. The arms are narrow at the center and broader as they expand. Each arm shape was thought to resemble a paw, which is called patte in French. The cross is usually associated with the Crusades, often with the Teutonic Knights and the Knights Templar. Often, it is marked on maps to indicate a Christian site (cross patée). Christianity is also expressed on the back of the monument. The Bible verse from Ecclesiastes 12:7 is inscribed in the stone. This verse, again, supports the idea that the soul will continue onward to a new place after death.

The inscription on the family monument in Mount Hope Cemetery is a mistake, denoting her death date as 1985. Jacqueline died from cardiopulmonary arrest and was cremated the day after her death.

Since the Coon family had such extraordinary lifestyles, it would be fitting that their family monument lived up to their reputation. The family stone was designed by Tiffany Studios in New York City in 1927, a year after Wilbur Barry Coon died. It was so massive that it required a specially built railroad car to transport it from New York to Rochester. The stone is white granite, which is gray in color with black specks. It is relatively rare and most of it comes from Rock of Ages Bethel White Granite Quarry in Bethel, Vermont. The monument is located in Section MM, Mount Hope Cemetery. It is surrounded by hedges which make the area seem secluded. There are three small headstones laid in the ground in front of the massive family monument. They bear the birth and death dates of Wilbur Barry Coon, Esther Levis Coon, and Wilbur Levis Coon. The façade of the enormous stone depicts an angel reading up and pointing toward the sky. Above her head is a dove in flight. The background is full of intricately detailed arches and designs that enhance the overall effect. On the very top there is a Greek cross, which is distinguished by four arms of equal length. It is the traditional symbol of Christian faith.

The text on the back of the family monument reads:

Wilbur Barry Coon
1870-1926
Esther Levis Coon
1906-1965
Wilbur Levis Coon
1906-1965

In Memoriam
Jacqueline Worth Coon Fulreader
1930-1985

Then shall the dust return to this earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto the God who gave it.

The stone is signed at bottom right:

Tiffany Studios
New York City
1927

The angel on this beautiful monument is not crying or mourning, but pointing upward. This represents the soul moving onward toward another location, such as heaven. The angel is also looking upward to this same place. Above her is a dove in flight. The dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit in Christianity. The dove is in flight, which is symbolic of the winged soul, leaving this earth to a different place. The cross on the front of the stone is called a cross patée, which is also known as a “cross patty” or “cross formy”. The arms are narrow at the center and broader as they expand. Each arm shape was thought to resemble a paw, which is called patte in French. The cross is usually associated with the Crusades, often with the Teutonic Knights and the Knights Templar. Often, it is marked on maps to indicate a Christian site (cross patée). Christianity is also expressed on the back of the monument. The Bible verse from Ecclesiastes 12:7 is inscribed in the stone. This verse, again, supports the idea that the soul will continue onward to a new place after death.

Wilbur Barry Coon's hard work from the beginning of the 1900s brought him success for the rest of his life. He acquired an extremely large fortune, which enabled him and his family to live quite comfortably. Although Wilbur Barry Coon was obsessed with his work, he still found time to build a strong family that would carry on the success of his business after his death. With the success came the ability to erect a stunning family monument in Mount Hope Cemetery. Although the family has moved on, the stone continues to remind viewers of the great Rochester family, the Coons.

(Editor's Note: The author, Kelly Beamish, is a student at the University of Rochester and prepared this essay as part of the course requirements for Religion 167: Speaking Stones, taught by Professor Emil Homerin, who is also a trustee of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery.)

In 1874, the current gatehouse, the third one to be constructed on this site, was built at the north entrance to Mount Hope Cemetery. It was designed by the most prominent architect in Rochester at the time, Andrew Jackson Warner. He chose to create a handsome stone structure with a central bell tower in High Victorian Gothic style. So this building has every decorative architectural feature of the style, which includes a fancy slate roof.

This is no simple roof of stone tiles. The charcoal-colored slates are cut in three different patterns: straight-edged for the bottom row of tiles, semicircular round-edged tiles, and gothic-pointed tiles. Above the first row of straight-bottom tiles, rows of pointed- and rounded-bottom tiles alternate to the top of the roof, creating an intricate design pattern on the steeply sloped roof sections. Here is truly a roof to attract the eye.

The old slate roof had been deteriorating in recent years. The slate itself is worn from rain and weather. Thin slates crack and fall. But the principal reason for a failing stone roof is the kind of nails used. In 1874, nails were made of iron, which rusts and finally fails, allowing the slates to slide off the roof. The gatehouse roof had deteriorated to the point that water was damaging the plaster walls inside. When the nails begin to fail, it is best to replace the roof completely.
Contemporary roofing practice now includes the application of a tough underlayment material that wasn't available in 1874. Also, today, stone roofers use copper nails, not iron. When the slates are attached, copper nails are driven through the predrilled holes in each tile. The nails pierce the underlayment, which is designed to create a seal around the copper nail. Each successive row of slates overlaps the nailed section, so that the roof has double leak protection: the primary overlapping slates and the secondary sealed underlayment. So, with copper nails and the double seal, the new roof on the gatehouse should last much longer than 134 years. We don't know exactly how much longer the roof will survive, because these new techniques and materials haven't been in use all that long.

Along the top of the gabled roofs there is decorative Victorian cresting. During the roof replacement, this metal cresting was removed, cleaned, repaired, and painted before being reinstalled.

The gatehouse is constructed of rusticated gray stone with a red Medina sandstone foundation. As part of this renovation project, the stone was cleaned with a low-pressure water-and-detergent wash. Minor masonry repointing was also accomplished. It truly looks like new today. In the gatehouse tower is a great bell that has tolled for hundreds of thousands of deceased Rochesterians. Today, the bell rings for festive occasions in this park/cemetery.

Finally, the project includes replacement of broken black and white marble blocks in the entrance portico and vestibule, as well as some plaster repair and ceiling painting in the portico. The portico is supported by two squat round columns of red granite topped by ebullient floral capitals in gray stone. Additional short gray-granite columns and floral capitals decorate the façade and other elevations of this remarkable building. In the main room of the gatehouse, clerestory stained-glass windows depict idyllic landscapes.

The entire renovation project was made possible by a generous grant from the New York State Environmental Protection Fund. The primary contractor is the Leo J. Roth Corporation. Architectural Services, City of Rochester, is supervising the work. The gatehouse renovation is scheduled for completion by the end of July 2008.