Cemeteries have always held a fascination for me. Driving the winding country roads around my home, I would always be delighted to discover little nests of fading stone tablets of local history and hunt to find that one special stone that would intrigue me far longer than any of the rest. Here, in the sprawling grounds of Mount Hope Cemetery, it was one tiny, almost forgotten, innocuous stone, that hides among the waist high monuments to this city’s past residents, which entered me on a quest deep into the heart of Rochester’s industrial roots.

This stone, not far off of Grove Avenue in Range 3, is a tiny table, about knee high, covered with a cloth of intricate lacework that drapes off the table’s edges and brushes the stone beneath. On this table lies a shallow little box, a size that would fit comfortably in your hands, perhaps two open palm widths across, already opened. On the lid is fixed a name: Louis G. Wile, and inside is left slightly ajar, almost as if he left in the midst of playing with it. They knew he was never to return. This tiny box may also be considered a casket in its original sense; it simply holds something precious.

The inspiration for this story is the interesting small marble headstone for little Louis G. Wile (1879-1882), who died of diphtheria. It is close to Grove Avenue in Range 3. Photo by Frank A. Gillespie.

Farewell dear boy sweet darling of our soul
Farewell forever from this vale of grief
Our joy was short but faith and hope console
The hearts which in affliction thou dost leave.

This touching epitaph speaks of the “faith” of Louis’ mourning parents and of his death as a journey. It is suggestive of life after death and preservation of the spirit and is an expression of symbolic immortality in the religious sense. These words served to restore a continuity between the living and the deceased and to mend that “broken connection” that occurs when a loved one has died. Louis’ intriguing stone would also have given his parents a sense of his departure; the table is the perfect height for a child, and the box is left slightly ajar, almost as if he left in the midst of playing with it. They knew he was never to return. This tiny box may also be considered a casket in its original sense; it simply holds something precious.

There is little information on a boy this young. Louis’ interment record says that he died of diphtheria, a common infectious respiratory disease, and was buried the day after his death. There is one newspaper entry announcing the day and cause of his death and which mentions his father’s name, Solomon.

Solomon Wile, or “Sol” as he was called, was a son of one of three Jewish brothers from Bavaria, Germany, who became important pioneers of the clothing industry in Rochester and embodied the American tradition of rags to riches. Bavaria, at that time, was one of forty-odd members of the German Confederation, located in the very south of today’s united Germany, just northeast of Switzerland. Tailors and other skilled artisans saw their economic position worsen as a result of the industrialization that had begun to appear in Germany after 1815 with the defeat of Napoleon.

The brothers immigrated to America among a tide of German craftsmen looking for opportunity, all three within a few years of each other beginning with Joseph, in 1839. Joseph was born December 8, 1812 in Altenglan where he married Hannah (Hanne) Greentree. He worked as a peddler of clothing and dry goods for the first few years, living in New
York City and then Connecticut for a short time before arriving in Rochester in 1847. There, he opened a retail clothing house on Main St. and as W. Peck notes, "succeeded beyond his fondest expectations". Soon after, he began to manufacture ready-made clothing instead of the traditional tailor-to-order, opening one of the first wholesale clothing houses in the city with Myer Greentree under the name Greentree and Wile on Mill Street, which was to become the epicenter of the expanding clothing trade.

The clothing industry was revolutionized with the advent of the sewing machine in 1846, allowing lesser skilled members of the tailor's family (and eventually the craftsmen of large workshops) to contribute, production to increase, and prices to drop. Myer, brother of Joseph's wife Hanne, had previously emigrated from Germany to Rochester in 1843, consequently becoming the first Jew to settle there, and married the very first clothing manufacturer of the city, Elizabeth Baker, who had her own children's business on Front Street. In 1864, with his clothing business booming, Joseph erected what the local newspapers called a "fine mansion" at a cost of over $15,000. This home came to be known as the old "Wile Homestead". The photo gives a glimpse of the street where Joseph and his relatives lived on North Clinton Avenue. Greentree and Wile was succeeded by J Wile and Sons, and in 1874, when Joseph retired from business, it became Wile, Stern and Co. under his sons and son-in-law, whose family was also prominent in the clothing business in Rochester. Joseph died in July of 1892.

Abram and Gabriel Wile, born 1811, and 1820, respectively, soon followed their brother, one after the other, to America. They arrived in 1845 also practically penniless, but by frugality and industry, they acquired wealth. They were included in Joseph's firm, and both became successful and important men of Rochester as well as in their Jewish community. In 1875, under the name Wile Bros and Co., they installed a new cutting machine that enabled five men to do the work of 15 or 20; the newspapers warned of possible job loss, saying that other manufacturers were sure to follow suit. The firm was also known as Wile Brickner and Wile after the depression of the mid-1870s. Abram wed another Greentree, Hancie, in 1839, while Gabriel married Rosa Levi and over the years had 12 children, one of whom was Solomon.

Solomon was born in 1853, grew up in Rochester, and attended the University of Rochester with his cousin, Isaac A. Wile, son of Abram, born in the same year. Ever devoted to their faith and always looking to improve it, the two young college students attempted and succeeded in breaking down religious barriers between their temple and the Unitarian church in Rochester, by inviting non-Jews to lecture at their temple. They graduated in 1872 and were admitted to the bar in 1874, only two of three Jews thus admitted in New York State. Solomon married Millie in December of 1886, and Isaac wed Clara Bier the summer of 1889. The two men practiced together under the name of Wile and Wile for a time until Isaac decided to try his hand in the family mercantile business; but he...
went back to law and, in 1897, became manager for Snow, Church and Company.

Solomon remained a lawyer in the firm of Wile and Oviatt but was also the drafter and first secretary of Rochester Clothier Exchange, a pioneer organization of its time that was to “foster the clothing industry of Rochester, to reform abuses therein, and to diffuse accurate and reliable information among its members”. It functionally allowed the clothing industry to become consolidated and thus more efficient and profitable. From 80 listed men’s clothing shops in 1867, including the Wiles’ business, the industry eventually merged into a handful of large companies in the 1930s.

Numerous letters of appreciation attest to how well respected Solomon was throughout the entire clothing industry, especially from the time of the Exchange’s inception in 1890 to well beyond his run as secretary, which he ended in 1918. He was also secretary for the National Boot and Shoe Manufacturers’ Association for 17 years. He had the pleasure and opportunity to help set the seal of national publicity on the shoe industry on Hoover Day at the Boston Fair of 1921, with Herbert Hoover, then U.S. Secretary of Commerce, during a lull in economic demand for shoes after the first World War.

As a high-ranking member of the clothing manufacturing industry, Sol was one of those German Jews who was later considered to be too busy to give much thought to the conditions maintained in the sweatshops. In fact, he would be one of the key players working against labor unions and workers’ requests for better pay and fewer hours. Since he was a lawyer, he was the tough guy who fought the corporations’ legal battles.

In 1890, Sol turned the Knights of Labor’s boycott efforts against them by charging their leaders with conspiracy and extortion, and as a result, James Hughes, a master cutter and official of the Knights, was sentenced to one year in jail. The Clothier Exchange locked out all Rochester cutters from the industry to force workers to renounce the Knights of Labor. Sol eventually negotiated a settlement with the few Knights officials left to end the boycott, but he gave no concessions on better pay or hours.

In 1903, cutters reorganized under the United Garment Workers Union (UGW) and began a strike for an 8-hour workday. They were ignored, and factories brought in “scab” cutters from elsewhere, leading to some riots. The strike petered out, and Sol later reported that this “open shop doctrine” was highly accepted throughout the industry. Little labor strife occurred in Rochester until the New York City clothing workers went on strike at the end of 1912.

Rochester manufacturers attempted to complete orders for their New York counterparts, so Rochester workers went on strike in early 1913 for an 8-hour workday, 10 percent increase in pay, union recognition, and extra pay for overtime and holidays. Daily parades could be seen marching through the clothing district and good will prevailed for several days.
On January 2, 1931, Solomon Wile was struck and killed by a trolley car at Four Corners near the Powers Building, where he had worked as a lawyer for years. He was 77 years old.

Then, on February 5, strikers discovered an active workshop and threw stones and flowerpots through the windows of the building and demanded that the strikebreakers come out. The proprietor, a 44-year old tailor named Valentine Sauter, fired one shotgun round of birdshot into the crowd, wounding several, and tragically killing 17-year-old Ida Braiman, a young Russian girl, on the day of her engagement to be married. A handful of rioters were arrested, including one girl in the hospital, as was Sauter for Ida’s murder. Several thousand turned out for her funeral. She was buried in Stone Road Cemetery.

After this tragedy, the strike continued for a few more weeks while hunger and cold daily depleted the ranks of marchers. At this point, the Exchange was sure of success and so reopened the factories. Picket lines reappeared and hostility grew between workers and picketers and one day mounted police were needed to open a passage for workers to go home through the mob of picketers. Finally, the Exchange offered a 52-hour week at the old salaries, no overtime, no work on five legal holidays, no discrimination for strike activity or union membership, although no union was recognized.

Aside from business, Sol was an active member in the community. He had a great interest in opera, and he even performed. He was listed in the cast of the operetta *Pinafore*, by Gilbert and Sullivan, which was performed at the Comedy Hall on State Street in 1879 and was hailed by the press as “fantastic”. The Opera Club was soon formed, which performed light operas. In 1882, Rochester had its first music festival, organized by the Rochester Oratorio Society (ROS) of which Sol was a board member. The ROS brought numerous visiting artists to the city, no doubt forging friendships that led to the marriage in 1929 of Sol’s daughter, Lulu Jean, to Marchese Francesco Barbi, a composer of light operas.

Sol’s interest in music even touched his congregation. As president of his temple *B’nai Kodesh* for many years, Solomon was ever seeking to liberalize and humanize the faith into which he was born and by which he lived. He wrote his intriguing and reformative *Hymn Book for Jewish Worship* (1890) that included English and German songs (since a majority of the Jews were German immigrants) and was intended for the congregation and not only the rabbi and choir. In his preface, he expressed the hope that these congregational hymns would make the services more “fervent”.

On January 2, 1931, Sol was struck by a trolley car downtown at Four Corners near the Powers Building where he had worked as a lawyer for years, and died soon after due to injuries from the accident. The driver was not charged; he said that Solomon had become confused and stepped back in the way of the trolley.

Solomon’s simple grave lies next to that of his son Louis. Solomon also had another son, Dr. Ira Wile, graduate of the University of Rochester and renowned physician in Rochester at the time. Ira served in the Spanish American War as a hospital steward, was the founder of the school lunch system in New York City, and promoted sex hygiene. He carried out research in psychology, anthropology, sociology, and medicine, and was also the author of a number of books, including *The Man Takes a Wife* and *Sex Education*. The first book was praised by
University of Rochester's Dean Gilchrist who stated that "college students ought to read it with great profit", and, accordingly, he put out a number of copies in the library for students to do so. Isaac, Solomon's cousin, became the author of *The History of the Jews of Rochester* (1912), a well-known source of information on the city's founders.

With all of my research, I was unable to discover any more clues as to what the box and its mysterious contents mean to the boy Louis, or to his grieving family, but his ancestors proved to be honorable pioneers of his birth city. Interestingly, Louis' interment records show that he died on Pleasant St., not where Solomon was living at the time, but where Myer Greentree lived. Perhaps this shows how close Louis' family was to the Greentrees. I also thought that Louis' epitaph might have come from the hymn book that his father had compiled together, but sadly, it was not there. I did find, to my amazement, that Joseph had a large family monument a few plots away from where Louis' little stone resides, and that Gabriel's family markers are close by as well. Myer Greentree also has a beautiful rose granite monument to his memory, and significantly, the cemetery avenue that faces his gravesite, is named after him as well.

Louis Wile (1879-1882)  
Joseph Wile (1812-1892), great uncle  
Myer Greentree (1818-1890), brother of great aunt  
Gabriel Wile (1820-1904), grandfather  
Abram Wile (1811-1895), great uncle  
Solomon Wile (1853-1931), father  
Millie Wile (1856-1929), mother  
Isaac A. Wile (1853-1908), second cousin  
Ida Braiman (1896-1913), not related  
Dr. Ira Wile, brother  
Lulu Jean Wile, sister

(Editor's Note: Kristen Fitzgerald is a University of Rochester student who prepared this essay as a course requirement of Speaking Stones, Religion 167, taught by Prof. Emil Homerin, who is also a trustee of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery.)
By Nancy Uffindell

Rochesterville was established in 1812, but it became a city on April 28, 1834, when the New York State Legislature issued a charter. 175 years later to the day, Mayor Robert Duffy visited the Nathaniel Rochester family plot at Mount Hope Cemetery to place wreaths at the graves of Col. Rochester, city father, and Jonathan Child, Rochester's son-in-law and the city's first mayor. The Rochester Police Department color guard stood at attendance during the ceremony.

On this rainy Tuesday afternoon, a crowd of umbrella-laden listeners stood while Mayor Duffy led the Pledge of Allegiance and spoke of the contributions of the pioneers during an earlier Rochester. In attendance were three great-great-grandchildren of the city's founder: Peter Dellinger of Brighton, Thomas Hanford of Pittsford, and Adele Shepard of Penfield. Susan B. Anthony (a.k.a. Barbara Blaisdell of Brighton), members of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, and area residents also participated.
For countless decades, the trees at the Lewis Henry Morgan mausoleum—which is sunk into the hillside of Ravine Avenue in Section F, Lot 65—have overwhelmed the site with their dense foliage not only hiding the mausoleum but creating high humidity that is damaging the Medina sandstone of the High Victorian Gothic structure. In recent years, the sandstone has been living up to its name by turning to sand.

Medina sandstone was formed 400 million years ago in the Silurian period. Streams flowing in this area of New York State deposited sand, which solidified under great pressure from water, ice, and increasing layers of sand. Then the water receded leaving the rock. Erosion gradually stripped off the top layers until the hard sandstone was just beneath the surface ready to be mined. The deposit extends from Hamilton, Ontario, through the Niagara gorge, and beyond Rochester to Fulton, New York. Geologists gave the reddish-brown stone the name Medina sandstone, and the area around the village that bears the name of the stone possessed the largest deposits. Almost all of it has now been mined and shipped out, mostly via the Erie Canal, to cities around the world where the stone was fashioned into the massive 19th-century architectural structures that we find not only in New York State today, but also in European cities, especially London.

There are also a large number of Medina sandstone monuments in Mount Hope Cemetery, but the largest of them is the Lewis Henry Morgan mausoleum.

In an effort to slow the crumbling deterioration of the Morgan mausoleum, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery enlisted the aid of Birchcrest Tree and Landscape, Inc., which generously donated the expertise of several staff members to prune the trees and remove overgrown ground vegetation. The result opens the mausoleum area to light and air. And that, we hope, will slow the worsening situation. Because the mausoleum is built into a steep hillside, there is also moisture descending from the hill, which is another factor adding to the problem and not easily controlled.

On the Rochester Day of Caring, May 7, 2009, Birchcrest Tree and Landscape generously volunteered the talents of several workers to trim trees and cut down two others, thereby allowing light and air circulation into the area around the Lewis Henry Morgan mausoleum, formerly considered the spookiest place in the cemetery. The mausoleum’s Medina sandstone is deteriorating, and the newly provided light and air should retard the process. In the photo, Birchcrest employee Brian Krawczyk completes cleaning of the site.

Our thanks go to Birchcrest Tree and Landscape, Inc. for their munificent efforts to beautify and preserve this special part of Mount Hope Cemetery. So, no longer is the shadowy Lewis Henry Morgan mausoleum the spookiest place in the cemetery.

I think that Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) would also be pleased with the light and air. He was Rochester’s great intellectual leader of the 19th century. He was the father of the science of anthropology, a title he gained from his seminal studies of the culture of the Seneca Indians. At his home on South Fitzhugh Street, Morgan built a massive library that was modeled on the impressive one created in Scotland by Sir Walter Scott. Morgan’s library was the intellectual center of Rochester where many notable Americans and foreign friends gathered for lively debate and earnest conversation. Morgan left his estate to the University of Rochester for the advancement of women’s education in memory of his two daughters who didn’t live long enough to receive it.

By Richard O. Reisem

VOLUNTEERS CLEAR FOLIAGE AT LEWIS HENRY MORGAN MAUSOLEUM

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The cast-iron Florentine fountain in the north entrance area of Mount Hope Cemetery was installed in 1875. This is a close-up of the top tier in the three-tiered fountain. Photo by Ira Srole, city photographer.