A THANK YOU

We wish to thank the following people who helped this summer planting and maintaining the flower beds in Mt. Hope: James Caffrey, Kathy Fernandez, Marta Maletzke, Letitia McKinney, Mary Olinger, Edward Rosenberg, Ellsworth Stein, Thomas & Shirley Stephens, Robert & Sally Tomkins, Grauman Wiksten.

We appreciate their efforts in helping to beautify Mt. Hope.

We are updating our list of gardening volunteers. If you had previously volunteered and did not hear from us this summer, please leave your name, address, and phone number on our answering machine (461-3494), and we will notify you next year when we begin gardening.

— John Pearsall

(Our thanks also to John Pearsall for all the work he’s done in the gardens.)

SPECIAL EVENTS

Spring and summer were busy times for The Friends of Mt. Hope. On April 28, Dick Brown started the tour season with a new Civil War tour. Despite a dark, forbidding day, about 70 people came for the tour.

They came well prepared with umbrellas and rain gear, and even though it rained, most stayed to the end.

(Turn to page 4)
SILAS CORNELL
(1789 - 1864)
A PROMINENT QUAKER IN EARLY ROCHESTER
by Jack McKinney

A browser in the various histories of Rochester finds Mt. Hope Cemetery on fairly prominent display, and among early Mt. Hope personages none is more certain of mention than the man who was city surveyor from 1835-1839, Silas Cornell.

It was Cornell who, soon after the city's 1837 acquisition of 53.86 acres of land from Silas Andrus, created a design which was to govern the laying out of the "Old Grounds." What we see in the northern part of the cemetery today is Cornell's work, imaginative and careful in its preservation and use of the area's glacial terrain. Almost nothing comparable is to be found in any other cemetery in the United States.

Writers about these matters often mention that it was Cornell who, deeply impressed by the beautiful cemetery opened in 1831 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, wanted ours named Mt. Auburn, too. It didn't happen; a laborer whose bills to the city were for work done "on Mount Hope" carried the day. The incident, however, is instructive.

Not all surveyors are "mere" technicians dedicated to eradication of all that lies between the transit and the rod. And here, obviously, was a conservationist and an artist at heart.

But this gentleman was more than the maker of Mt. Hope. He was a man of many other parts as well: school proprietor and teacher, cartographer, eminent Quaker, abolitionist, and creator of early Rochester's most famous sundial. He was without a doubt a man of versatility.

Silas Cornell, a schoolmaster who was a relative of the Ithaca Cornells, came to Rochesterville in 1823 from Flushing, Long Island, and lived first on a farm west of the hamlet. His advertisement in the Telegraph of November 11 invited "... 6 or 8 boarders into his family, for the ensuing winter, to be instructed in such of the following branches as may be required, viz: Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, with the use of globes, English Grammar, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Chemistry, Botany, Drawing and Painting, in water colors." Recruitment was apparently successful, for the school operated from 1824 to 1828.
Through the years, Cornell made his mark in many ways. He was a devout Quaker as well as a stout abolitionist. As the former he became clerk of the Quarterly Meeting (Religious Society of Friends) and was a leader of the local resistance to the insurgent Hicksites during the schism of the late 1820's. In this conflict, he had as his main opponents a pair of noted Rochesterians, Isaac and Amy Post. Slavery was also a principal issue, and the anti-slavery movement attracted Quakers from both factions. Some, like the Posts, preferred to remain non-political and adhered to Garrisonian principles, while Cornell and others embraced the abolitionist Liberty Party.

There were other accomplishments. In 1839, Cornell published a wall map of Rochester so complete and so accurate that it immediately became the base plat of the city—the one to which all later surveys and maps were tied.

But for many people today, the most intriguing of Cornell's excursions into hairline accuracy is his design and construction of a sundial which he placed on the front lawn of the old First Presbyterian Church, located on the east side of South Fitzhugh Street, about 1833. He carefully oriented this dial by making observations on the north star and by setting, as controls, two brass plates in nearby buildings. One of these is still in place today in the front wall of St. Luke's and St. Simon Cyrene's Church on South Fitzhugh Street. The old Presbyterian church building was demolished in 1875, and the sundial eventually removed.

A feature of the dial—one which may have made it unique—was a printed table, placed under a metal cover, giving the departure of local clock time from sun time for each day in the year. It is said that there was hardly a Rochesterian with a watch who didn't set it frequently by this ingenious high-tech facility.

In later years, 1847 to 1852, Cornell and his wife, Sarah Mott, became superintendents of the Moses Brown School in Providence, R.I., but they ended their lives in Rochester. Silas died in 1864 and their graves can be found at Mt. Hope in Section G, next to the family plot of the famous 19th century physician, Edward Mott Moore.

A short distance to the east in G, up the hill, is Myron Holley, founder of the Liberty Party. One must conclude that Silas Cornell, by either design or chance, chose his gravesite well.

(Elizabeth Schmidt contributed to this article.)

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I enjoyed reading the Summer '91 newsletter about Frank A. Gillespie's exhibit and am looking forward to it, but I would like to make a minor correction of Richard Reisem's article. If his mention of "a pensive cherub resting on his marble horn" refers to the cherub shown in the picture on that page, the "marble horn" is more likely a torch. What looks like water pouring out is fire. These torches turned upside-down signified the snuffing out of the flame of life and were often used to mark the graves of children.

The cherub shown in the picture marks the grave of Betty Doe, who died of a congenital heart problem while still a baby. Her father was Thomas Doe, a caretaker of Mt. Hope Cemetery just after the turn of the century, and my great-grandfather.

Ms. K. Schaubet, Rochester
SPECIAL EVENTS (From Page 1)

There are at least nine verified Civil War generals buried in Mt. Hope. The tour not only visited the graves of generals, but also those of other officers, enlisted men, and civilians, such as Frederick Douglass, Freeman Clark, Alfred Ely, and Hiram Sibley.

In June, 120 people attended the gardening symposium, Old Time Gardens for Old and New Places, co-sponsored by the Friends, Garden Center, and Landmark Society. A champagne reception was held in July for photographer Frank Gillespie. About 200 viewed his photographs of Mt. Hope that night, and many more saw them during the weeks they were on display.

All of these events were well received. Watch for announcements of future ones.

NEW MEMBERS

Dwight Terrance Alston, Rodger & Sharon Burkhart, Mrs. Merritt A. Cleveland, Mrs. Samuel P. Connor, David C. Hislop, Jr., Jean S. Johnson, Mildred E. Meyer, Carles Perez, H.L. Rees, Mr. & Mrs. Bernard N. Schilling, Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Squires, Robert Titus.

CEMETERY TOURS

The regular Sunday tours end on October 27, and resume on May 3, 1992. Special tours may be arranged at any time by calling 461-3494 and leaving a message.

SLIDE SHOW

The Friends’ slide program about Mt. Hope is available to groups and organizations. Call Ellie Klein at 473-0778 for arrangements.

THE FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY

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