Every spring and every fall I give a tour of Mount Hope Cemetery to a group of high school students from Germaine Colvin’s sociology class at Pittsford Sutherland High School. After our tour on a nice November morning last fall, several of the young tourgoers reflected on their experience in brief essays. Here are some of their thoughts.

One student wrote: “When our class went to the Mount Hope Cemetery, I was not very enthusiastic. But when the tour started with Hiram Sibley and the nice man told us stories about them, I became extremely interested.

“I never knew so many famous people died in our city of Rochester. To the best of my recollection, these were the Sibleys, Susan B. Anthony, Bausch and Lomb, the founder of Rochester, the man who invented the fishing reel, the man who invented the machine gun, and finally the ever great Frederick Douglass.

“I am really glad that my parents allowed me to attend the field trip to Mount Hope Cemetery. I felt I learned a lot about our area. Most of all, I really enjoyed myself.”

Another observant student wrote: “Our field trip to the cemetery was entertaining as well as informative. Our guide was able to give us a tremendous amount of history about our area through Mount Hope Cemetery. I learned about the founder of our city, Colonel Rochester, and got an idea about how it might be like to live during the founding of this city.

“The guide also explained how Rochester was once the flour capital of the world, and Queen Victoria insisted on flour milled in Rochester. We also encountered many other notable graves throughout the cemetery. The graves of Susan B. Anthony and Frederick Douglass were all visited. The guide explained Susan’s role in securing voting rights for women and Mr. Douglass’ thoughts on racial equality. We also discovered that Frederick Douglass had two different birth dates, one on each of his gravestones.

“I was amazed at the sheer size of the graveyard and of the fact that it is one of the oldest municipally owned graveyards in the country. Looking at how the trends in crypts, headstones, statues, and monuments were changed over the decades was very interesting. The biggest thing I learned was that a graveyard is a place of great living history.”
Myron Holley's medallion portrait on his obelisk in Mount Hope Cemetery has long been eroded beyond recognition, while the likeness of his daughter's face on the shared stone is still recognizable. Sallie Holley, one of the twelve children of Myron and Sally House Holley, was born in Canandaigua, New York, on February 17, 1818. Early in her life, she was influenced by her father's antislavery beliefs and his religious liberalism.

While visiting a sister in Buffalo in 1843, she first heard and was impressed by a Frederick Douglass' lecture. Many years later at a memorial service for her before the Women's Suffrage Convention in Washington, D.C., Douglass recalled his initial acquaintance with her. John White Chadwick recorded part of that recollection in his biography of Sallie Holley, *A Life for Liberty*.

On the third day of our motley meeting, made up entirely of men, I observed with some amazement, as well as pleasure, a stately young lady, elegantly dressed, come into the room, leading a beautiful little girl. The crowd was one that would naturally repel a refined and elegant little lady, but there was no shrinking on her part. The crowd did the shrinking. It drew in its sides and opened the way, as if fearful of soiling the elegant dress with the dirt of toil. This lady came daily to my meetings in that old deserted building, morning and afternoon, until they ended. The dark and rough background rendered her appearance like a messenger from heaven sent to cheer me in what seemed to most men a case of utter despair. The lady was Miss Sallie Holley, and this story illustrates her noble, independent, and humane character. She was never ashamed of her cause nor her company.

After her father's death in 1841, Holley briefly taught school in Rochester. In 1847, encouraged by a Unitarian minister who also gave her $40.00 for expenses, she attended Oberlin College on a scholarship. When her money was gone, she worked at various jobs on campus. At Oberlin, she first met Caroline Putnam and formed a friendship that lasted a lifetime. A decisive event in Holley's life during her college years was hearing a lecture by Abby Kelley Foster, a Garrisonian abolitionist. It led to her choice of career.

After graduation in 1851, Holley became an agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society. She lectured regularly and wrote for Garrison's *Liberator*. Caroline Putnam often accompanied her on trips. Although she admitted to a fear of lecturing that never disappeared, Holley was an effective and appealing speaker who drew large crowds. And because she publicly advocated a cause, rare for a woman at that time, she endured the stigma attached to women lecturers that sometimes caused acquaintances to cross the street rather than speak to her.
SALLIE HOLLEY (from Page 2)

Even after the slaves were freed, Holley continued working for their benefit by collecting clothing and lecturing on suffrage for them. In 1870, the American Anti-Slavery Society disbanded. She thought this a mistake.

Does not the simple existence of such a Society in the nation's midst, such a watchful, wise friend, save the poor black race from much neglect, contumely, and wrong? Does not such a fact guarantee a respect and aid they cannot afford to relinquish? (Chadwick, p. 210)

She joined her friend, Caroline Putnam, in Lottsburg, Northumberland County, Virginia, where Putnam had established a school for former slaves two years previously. The operation of this school became Holley's work until her death.

I thoroughly enjoyed the Mount Hope Cemetery field trip."

If you discern in these brief essays an awakening by these students of pride in their community and its history, then you see part of what the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery are striving for.

Many Rochester school children every year learn through these tours that their own community has an interesting and significant history, that they are the heirs of this past, and that their own lives become a continuum of that history. Perhaps life itself finds some of its meaning in a cemetery.

That insight to this meaning of life is available to any student group at no charge. Call us at 461-3494 to arrange a life-enhancing experience for your favorite young people in, of all places, yes, a cemetery.
SYMBOLISM IN MOUNT HOPE

The sheaf of wheat may have several meanings. It can symbolize the cut-off of life and, particularly, in the case of an elderly person, a fulfilled life. It might also represent a divine harvest after life has ended.

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George Parsons
Robert T. Wright

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Anyone interested in adopting a plot for the season, please call 461-3494 and leave a message. If you adopted a plot in the past and have not been contacted within the last year, let us know and leave your phone number.

CEMETARY TOURS

Regular Sunday tours resume on May 3, 1992, at 2 and 3 o’clock. Special tours are available at any time during the year. Call 461-3494 for information.

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