The Cemetery

When I was a kid
I played in the old cemetery.
I'd sit on the tilted stones
and dip my feet in the sunken ground,
I'd read the facts
and study the dates,
Then dream up stories
to match the faceless names.
When I got tired, I'd brace myself,
close my eyes, and face the sun;
It heated through my skin
and warmed my lids.
When the rays touched my tongue
it felt like it was coated with cloves.
Before the sun went down,
I'd pick neglected daisies.
Excitedly I ran home
and gave them to my mother;
She would smile and carefully
place them in a vase.
Now I go to the cemetery
to bring my mother daisies;
I place them in a vase,
close my eyes, and face the sun.

Epitaphs Found In Mt. Hope

"I know I am in the way of duty."
"I die in a glorious cause."

- Albert

These lines, perhaps taken from a letter sent to his parents, are on the gravestone of Albert Hotchkiss, a young cavalryman, who died at Andersonville during the Civil War.

Nancy Brone is a free-lance writer living in Rochester, New York
THE OLD CHAPEL AND ITS ARCHITECTS

HENRY SEARLE (1809 – 1892)
HENRY ROBINSON SEARLE (1836 – 1882)
by Jack McKinney

The time line of the construction of Mt. Hope Cemetery’s major edifices extends from the late 1840s, when a temporary wooden north gate was built, to 1912, when what is now known as the “new chapel” at today’s main entrance was completed. In between, there came the 1859 north gate, the 1862 “old chapel,” and the 1874 north gate and gatehouse.

The story of the old chapel, with its receiving vault, and of the architects, H. Searle & Son, has been little noted in late years. A pity, because both are interesting.

Contemporary Rochester newspaper accounts offer some background. A long June 20, 1861 article in the Rochester Union and Advertiser has a detailed description of the proposed Gothic structure, and tells us also that "...plans and drawings for these works were made by H. Searle & Son, architects, after a minute inspection of all the structures of this kind of any note in the country." It goes on to postulate that "... we are to have something at Mt. Hope which will excel in everything but outlay of money, anything of the kind in the United States."

Construction of the chapel and vault began in the spring of 1861 and was nearly finished by the end of that year. The chapel was activated in 1862 and continued in use until the 1970s. The crematory designed by J. Foster Warner was added to the north end in 1912. The vault, which is still intact, extends deep into the hillside beneath Indian Trail Avenue. Chapel and vault together cost $10,500 and were paid for out of the Mt. Hope fund – from the sale of lots.

At left is the old chapel designed by Henry R. Searle. To the right is the crematory designed by J. Foster Warner.
Henry Searle, who began the Rochester firm which became H. Searle & Son, achieved considerable recognition during his career and is listed in national directories of American architects which have been compiled in recent times. His Rochester credits include the Monroe County Workhouse, City Hospital, Corinthian Hall, and the original 1844 two-story Rochester Savings Bank on the southwest corner of Main Street West and South Fitzhugh Street. In 1868, Henry Searle moved to Washington, D.C., where he worked in the office of the U.S. Supervising Architect.

The son, Henry Robinson Searle, left Rochester in 1865 for Washington, D.C., where he had an illustrious career. Although it was from there that he designed an 1870 third story addition to the savings bank in Rochester, most of his work concerned projects elsewhere. Among the structures he is credited with designing were buildings for the Republican newspaper and for Howard University, both in Washington. It was in this period, too, that he submitted a design for the completion of the Washington Monument which, though never adopted, brought him much acclaim within the profession and membership in the American Institute of Architects. He also joined the Philosophical Society of Washington.

In 1879, Henry Robinson Searle moved again, this time to New York City, where he remained. And it was while in New York that he gained widespread recognition as an acoustician through his development and patenting of highly original designs for the control of sound in assembly halls and other public areas. Among his commissions were the Senate Chamber at the capitol in Albany and the hall of the Union League Club in New York.

He also issued patents for processes covering the treatment of ventilation, and it seems probable that some of his insights had been incorporated in the design of the receiving vault at Mt. Hope.

Considering all of his various accomplishments, it is astonishing to learn that Henry Robinson Searle did not enjoy good health. He died in New York City on October 22, 1882, at the age of only 46, a victim of tuberculosis. The New York Times obituary on the next day listed the old chapel in Mt. Hope Cemetery among his notable credits.

Henry Searle, the father, died in 1892. Both are buried in the Searle family plot at the south end of Section A in Mt. Hope.

Lomb – Bausch Monument

Partly hidden under a huge weeping European beech tree is the Lomb – Bausch memorial. The monument rests on a three-tier foundation. The die of the stone is recessed within a classical temple-like structure with the entablature supported by four ionic columns. Ornamental moldings offset the plain panels.
Mt. Hope Slide Program

The friends of Mt. Hope have an interesting slide program about the cemetery that is available to groups. A member of the Friends will make a brief presentation at the beginning of the show and will answer questions at the end.

Please call Ellie Klein at 473-0778 for information.

Cemetery Tours

The regular Sunday cemetery tours leave from the north gatehouse at 2 and 3 p.m. Special tours are available any time during the year. For information call 461-3494 and leave a message. Someone will contact you.

The North Gatehouse

If you're in the Mt. Hope Avenue area on a Sunday afternoon and haven't seen the refurbished tour reception area, stop for a few minutes. The room has been newly painted, the floor refinished, new lighting fixtures installed, and the walls hung with illustrations of various kinds.

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