The Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery

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The FRIENDS and the Willows

The insignia of the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery, here unveiled for the first time, is the double willow and urn carved on the headstone of William Carter, the first person to be buried in Mt. Hope. His grave lies on the crest of a rise overlooking a beautiful view of the Genesee River, and since the opening of the cemetery has been one of the points of interest on tours of the grounds. In addition to the historic significance of the stone, the willows are emblems of the natural beauty of Mt. Hope and the living dimension of the cemetery that we wish to publicize.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The FRIENDS wish to thank Sally Davidson for the rubbing of William Carter's stone which heads this newsletter.

QUEST

We are looking for a good name for the Friends' newsletter. The editor has run out of ideas, and it is the consensus of the Board that the membership should be asked for ideas. The only reward offered is the satisfaction of seeing the name emblazoned on the masthead four times a year. Please send suggestions to the Newsletter at 791 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, N.Y. 14620. (Likewise, anyone who wishes to contribute in any way to the newsletter will be gratefully received.)

See Mt. Hope in the Snow!!

There will be a special Winter Walk on Sunday, February 22. Guided tours will leave the Gatehouse every hour from 11 am through 3 pm, or those who wish may follow the marked trail which follows the plowed roads. Skiers will have a marked trail which follows the unplowed paths. The Gatehouse will be open for warming from 11 am to 4 pm, and hot drinks will be provided. If the weather cooperates, this will be a chance to see the cemetery in its loveliest season. (Come on, snow!)

The Membership

When the Friends were organized in June, 1980, we had 19 members, mainly the executive board. Our membership has grown from that small group to a total of 115 in just six months.

Most of our members live in the city of Rochester or surrounding Monroe county. We also have members in other cities such as Binghamton, Geneva and Canandaigua. The big surprise was to receive memberships from out of state, for example Kansas, Ohio, Florida and New Jersey.

We appreciate everyone's interest in preserving Mt. Hope Cemetery. All of our members are an integral part of the success of this organization. All monetary gifts and volunteer time are appreciated. People who have volunteered to work on committees will be contacted during February, to start work on the Spring event. Even if you are unable to volunteer time, we need your ideas and information to restore Mt. Hope.

Elizabeth DeBrine
Mt. Hope Rededication Day

Rededication Day was held on October 5, 1980, on the Sunday nearest to the day of the original dedication, October 3, 1838. The event was a great success, with music, exhibits, special tours, speeches and a proclamation by the mayor of Rochester. For those who could not be present, we reprint the text of the mayor's proclamation and of Rowland Collins' remarks.

City of Rochester, Office of the Mayor. By these presents, greetings:

Whereas, on October 3rd 1838, the city of Rochester became the first municipality in the United States to dedicate a rural, landscaped cemetery for the burial of the dead, and

Whereas, in the ensuing years, Mt. Hope Cemetery has been enriched by the planting of exotic, beautiful trees and the raising of stately monuments, and

Whereas, the natural terrain, which is bold and picturesque, combined with the embellishments of mankind, have made this cemetery one of the most beautiful in the country, and

Whereas, for one hundred and forty-two years, Mount Hope has been a monument to the dead, both illustrious and unknown, as well as a quiet refuge for the living,

Now therefore, I, Thomas P. Ryan, Jr., Mayor of the City of Rochester, and I, Paul E. Haney, Councilman-at-Large, do hereby proclaim that this retreat is dedicated to the repose of the dead and the comfort of the living, henceforth and forever.

REMARKS BY ROWLAND COLLINS

Nearly a century and a half ago — one hundred forty-two years and two days ago, to be exact — the citizens of Rochester gathered on this site to dedicate a tract of land for use as a public cemetery to be called Mt. Hope. On that occasion, the Reverend Phœcellus Church spoke for nearly an hour to outline the importance of the occasion for his "friends and fellow citizens." Today, we are gathered to see Mt. Hope Cemetery once more in dedicatory terms.

I have been asked to note (and I shall use no more than one-tenth the time of The Rev. Mr. Church) the chief points of importance of this remarkable public institution for present and future Rochesterians.

First, as the Rev. Dr. Church emphasized, this cemetery is set aside as the place to which Rochesterians have brought, still bring, and will continue to bring, the remains of the bodies of their deceased relatives and friends. Death, as the end of life, is expected and normal. But the gathering of human remains in a place of great beauty not only memorializes the dead appropriately; it also makes visible the calm, the rest, and the hope which are inherent parts of the end of human life.

Second, the natural beauties of this land: the wild slopes of the hills, the dramatic declivities of the glacial kettles, the spectacular views of the river and of the earnestly bustling, growing city give visitors a respite from the anxieties of life and an opportunity for thought and personal growth which can make productive life more possible.

Third, the collection of graves around us has, without specifically being planned as such, given Rochester an extraordinary Hall of Fame. Here we can be reminded, by name, of the notable contributors to the growth of our city. There are around us great journalists, great scholars, great inventors, great statesmen, great military leaders, great teachers, great religious leaders, great writers, great business leaders, great adventurers, and great men and women who dared to try to change the course of history. A cemetery is an unusual Hall of Fame, however, for in the passage of time, it shows, without question that all men come to the same end and that their deeds forever comment on their stone monuments. Halls of Fame are usually designed to enhance public glory and to inspire pride. A cemetery tempers these emotions, not only with the reality of death, but also with the presence of the dust of thousands of citizens who enjoyed no fame but who contributed, in some way, to making our city what it is today.

Fourth, Mt. Hope Cemetery is a work of art of prodigious complexity. Quite literally, thousands of our predecessors have contributed to the intricate variety and beauty of this place: The designers of the roads and burial plot locations, the architects, the sculptors, the monument manufacturers, the gardeners who planted and tended the trees, shrubs, flowers, and grass, the engineers who drained lands and laid water supply lines, the record keepers and the
endless numbers of individual citizens who selected memorial stones, plantings, decorative foundations, fencings and other amenities for family plots and then helped care for their creations. This Cemetery is the planned product of a collective and elective aesthetic. Its beauties are drawn from many sources and its delights are available for all who care to come to see.

Fifth, Mt. Hope Cemetery is an arboretum of venerable and important trees. Some were here before our predecessors tamed the land for burials; others were planted. Collectively, they offer a living record of a phase of natural history with extraordinary distinction.

And Sixth, Mt. Hope attracts wild life—birds and small beasts—which are delightful to human observers. Careful students of our winged compatriots have found this place an unusually rich treasure trove. In sum, we have in Mt. Hope Cemetery a magnificent work of art which has been left us by our famous predecessors in Rochester, by the rich and the poor, by the famous, the infamous, and the quiet humble contributors. This heritage gives each of us a glimpse, not only of our own death, but of its full context. Death is encircled by the cycles of life, by the toil of citizens to make our world a better place in which to live and work. Mt. Hope Cemetery is, supremely, an example of cooperation and success in improving our world, our heritage. Today we gather to re-dedicate this cemetery for the continued use, benefit, and delight of Rochesterians and to re-dedicate ourselves to the preservation and enjoyment of this place.

Henry A. Ward, Pioneer of Science

Henry August Ward (1834-1906) is commemorated by a monument in Section G, near Indian Trail Avenue. It was designed by Claude Bragdon, topped by a boulder of jasper aggregate collected by Ward himself and is unlike any other in Mt. Hope. This is fitting, because Ward was unlike any other Rochesterian buried here.

Ward's adventurous life began at the age of twelve when he ran away from home to follow his father to Chicago. Henry Ward was a nephew of Levi Ward, one of the early mayors of Rochester, and one of the great clan settled around Grove Place, but his interests from the beginning were unorthodox. From the age of ten he studied geology with Dr. Chester Dewey, and resisted all attempts to train him for the ministry. After a year at Williams College, and a course at Temple Hill Academy in Geneseo, N.Y., Henry Ward came to the notice of Louis Agassiz, the great naturalist. Ward was admitted to study at Cambridge, Mass., where he stayed until opportunity arose to accompany Charles Wadsworth of Geneseo to Europe. The two young men studied at the School of Mines in Paris, and travelled throughout the Continent, collecting specimens.

Ward returned to Rochester in 1861 to teach natural science at the very young University of Rochester. In 1862 he opened Ward's Natural Science Establishment on College Avenue, to supply institutions with specimens which he gathered on his trips around the world. Ward's could supply almost anything in the natural world. The entrance to the Establishment was marked by a great arch formed by the jaws of a whale, and his workmen once posed for a photograph while cradling human skeletons, trilobite fossils and stuffed foxes.

Ward combined a talent for popular showmanship with sound principles of scientific research. One of his most successful ploys was to contract with P.T. Barnum to stuff and mount the animals in the menagerie as they died. Barnum exhibited some of them and sent others to Tufts University for the museum. During the 1880's a continual parade of camels, ostriches and spotted hyenas came to Rochester for reincarnation as museum specimens.

During the latter part of his life, Ward became interested in meteorites, which were regarded with great interest by scientists as the only tangible materials known to come from outer space. Ward travelled from Asia to Mexico to collect examples, and built a notable collection. Many of the specimens became part of the Field Museum in Chicago.

Henry Ward died in 1906. While reading a book as he walked along a street in Buffalo, he was knocked down by a car, and died of his injuries. His ashes rest in Mt. Hope, but his brain was given to Cornell University Medical School, and so he continued to contribute to natural science even after death.

Alma Burner Creek

(For more about Henry A. Ward, see: Henry A. Ward: Museum Builder to America, by Roswell Ward. Rochester, 1948)
Probably the most intriguing visitor to the cemetery this past year was Charlie Bell, who stopped by briefly on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Charlie is on the last leg of his run around (literally) the U.S. He is a 27-year-old Princeton graduate who quit his job at IBM to run through every state that forms the perimeter of the United States. He left his home in Pennsylvania in August 1979 and expects to finish in March 1981. In that time he has met thousands of people and listened to hundreds of stories. When anyone asks him (and everyone does), "Why are you doing this?", he replies with a question of his own. "If you could take a year or two off with no responsibilities, what would you do?" The reply to that question could fill an anthology.

Alma and Leon Creek gave Charlie a tour round Mt. Hope, and, it is hoped, gave him some more good stories to add to his collection.

The Weeping Beech (Fagus sylvatic f. pendula) near the Bausch monument in Section C was probably planted around the turn of the century. Its age has been estimated by its height and the diameter of the trunk. It is probable that it came from the nursery firm of Ellwanger and Barry, which occupied the land to the east and south of the cemetery. Ellwanger and Barry were one of the first nurseries in America to sell the European beech and its cultivated forms.

The weeping beech was discovered in England in 1836 and soon became very popular in Europe and North America. It is a beautiful, extremely pendulous tree, which ultimately grows to a height of sixty feet. It is now planted extensively in the United States.

James W. Kelly
Taxonomist
Monroe County Dept. of Parks

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