THE FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY

Vol. 1, No. 3

Rochester, N.Y. Summer 1981

THE GLORIOUS FOURTH

"He died a Christian patriot at Andersonville." . . . "Killed at the Battle of the Wilderness." . . . "Died on board the transport Matanzas." Throughout the entire cemetery are the graves and monuments of men who served or died in the early wars for our country's independence and survival. Although Independence Day is usually reserved for fireworks, ringing of bells and picnics, it would seem also to be a good time to visit the graves and learn about the lives of our Revolutionary and Civil War soldiers. The cemetery shelters both a former drummer boy and a general, and many others of the ranks in between.

SUMMER is a fine time in Mt. Hope. The wildflowers will be creating their own variety of fireworks, as will the rock gardens and cultivated flower beds.

TOURS continue through the summer at 2:00 and 3:00 pm, beginning at the Gatehouse North Entrance. It is wise to apply mosquito repellent, however, since the sylvan Waters continues to breed them to the size (some say) of sparrows. Nevertheless, come up to Mt. Hope and see all the activity.

THE MOORISH GAZEBO that stands next to the North Gate was erected sometime just after the Civil War, which makes it over one hundred years old. For the past few years, however, it has been quietly falling to pieces. We feel that it is now or never for this charming structure, and so it is to be the first restoration project taken on by the Friends. Architect John Bero estimates that the work necessary to repair and replace missing parts, as well as re-stuccoing the roof design, painting the whole in its original colors, will cost $10,000.

The money for the Gazebo Project must be raised by donations from interested friends. All contributions, large and small, will be gratefully received, and may be sent to:

The Mt. Hope Restoration Fund
791 Mt. Hope Avenue
Rochester, New York 14620

Get your "Friends of Mt. Hope" TEE SHIRT and display your allegiance to the world. The shirt is the proper thing to wear while strolling through the vales and hills of Mt. Hope. It invites comment wherever worn and gives dedicated Friends a chance to extoll the beauties of Mt. Hope. The shirt is available every Sunday at the Gatehouse for $5.00
ALEXANDER MILLER (1760-1865) —
George Washington's Drummer Boy

Until recently not too many Rochestrians were aware that Mt. Hope Cemetery is the burial place of one of the oldest veterans of the War of the Revolution or that this person, Alexander Milliner, served in the Continental Army as a drummer boy attached to General Washington's Life Guard. After the War he was a farmer living at Adam's Basin and died at the age of 105 years in 1865 when the Civil War was drawing to a close.

The young boy who enlisted as drummer had a full and colorful army career as he was present at the battles of White Plains, Brandywine, Saratoga, Monmouth and Yorktown. At Monmouth in New Jersey he received a flesh wound in his thigh and almost died from the loss of blood. He not only survived that ordeal but afterwards served in the Navy for five and one half years through the War of 1812, three of them on the U.S. Constitution.

Milliner had clear and accurate memories of his Commander-in-Chief, who frequently after the beating of reveille would pat him on the head and call him "his boy." On one occasion, a bitter cold morning, he gave the young soldier a drink out of his flask. In recollecting Washington, Milliner said, "He was a good man, a beautiful man. He was always pleasant, never changed his countenance but wore the same in defeat as in victory."

At Valley Forge Lady Washington visited the Army. Milliner remembered that she used thorns instead of pins to fasten her dress and the former drummer boy recalled "the bloody feet" of the poor, ill-clad soldiers in the camp. One incident of Milliner's service with Washington involved the General’s athletic prowess: "We were going along one day, slow march, and came to where the soldiers were jerking stones across a pond. 'Halt,' came the command. 'Now, boys,' said the General, 'I will show you how to jerk a stone.' He beat 'em all."

It is exciting to think that when in his late nineties, this sprightly and white-haired little man took out his Army drum, made the trip from his farmhouse near Rochester and played to accompany the marchers in the Fourth of July parades held here on our Main Street at the Four Corners. Last July 4th a group of members of Friends of the Mt. Hope Cemetery held a brief memorial service close to the flag-draped monument of the Milliner family plot. Channel 10 carried pictures of the event in its news summary.

W. Stephen Thomas
Recording Secretary
Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery

A YEW YOU SHOULD SEE

Near the old chapel at the North Gate of Mt. Hope Cemetery, on the west side of the lawn bordering five mausoleums is an unusual evergreen growing between two Nikko spruces. The tree we refer to is a 40-foot European Yew (Taxus baccata). It has soft green foliage, dark green above and yellowish green with lighter lines beneath.

Not to be confused with other shrub-like yews more common as ornamentals in this country is this striking upright tree from England. Although yews do have needle-like leaves, they produce their seeds in fleshy coverings called arils rather than in cones. The bark is reddish and scaly. Yews produce attractive scarlet berries in autumn.

It is appropriate that this particular yew is in Mt. Hope Cemetery because often these trees in England grow in cemeteries and churchyards. Their branches were sometimes used as funeral decorations. Another use was to twine them into wreaths to adorn the heads of mourners at funerals. We should not forget, either, that in the wars during the Middle Ages the English archers drew longbows of yew in their battles with the French.

James Kelly, Taxonomist
Monroe County Parks
During the first two weeks of June Rochester was host to the Smithsonian and their Regional Lecture Series. Two of the lecturers showed special interest in Mt. Hope Cemetery and the Projects the Friends were involved in.

Historian Elise Pachter presented a pictorial journey through Parisian life in the last century as characterized by its sepulchral practices and styles, cemetery art as a unique reflection of a colorful era, in Père Lachaise, Paris (see Smithsonian magazine, Nov. 1978, p.108). Ms. Pachter was able to take a quick tour of Mt. Hope with a friend on a rainy afternoon before her lecture and made reference to it during her slide show. Those of us who heard her enjoyed her lecture and had a talk with her afterwards about our group.

I had the pleasure of meeting James Buckler, director, Office of Horticulture, Smithsonian Institution, at a seminar on Restoring Victorian Gardens and Landscaping at Cornell University, where he was a featured lecturer prior to his lecture in Rochester. We made plans to meet in Rochester the following week. After his seminar on Garden Planning and Design at the Landmark Society we joined Stephen Thomas for a visit with Miss Ellwanger to view her gardens and then a tour of Mt. Hope. Mr. Buckler showed interest in our restoration projects - the gazebo, the chapel, and especially the fountain, on which he found the foundry markings of J.L. Mott Ironworks. This, according to Mr. Buckler, makes our fountain a very valuable piece of Victorian garden architecture.

Throughout the rest of our tour we talked about garden projects and the possibility of restoring the gardens around the fountain.

We also took a trip to Sonnenberg Gardens to view the restoration project that has been taking place for the past several years.

James Engelbrecht
Garden Committee

PLANTS TO SHARE?

If you are dividing perennials or bulbs and have more than you need, the Garden Committee would be delighted to use them in the flower beds. Just call James Engelbrecht (232-6269), or leave a message on the Gatehouse phone (461-3494).

HELP RESTORE VICTORIAN CHARM TO ROCHESTER

Help us with our first restoration project in Mt. Hope Cemetery. $10,000 is the goal to save The Gazebo at the North Gate and to start restoring our Victorian Park.

Name ___________________________ Phone ___________________________
Address __________________________

Donation/Pledge (pledges to be billed)

FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY
791 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester 14620
TOURS: Sundays 2:00 and 3:00, North Gate
CALENDAR

July
Every Sunday, tours at 2:00 and 3:00 pm. Begin at Gatehouse (North Entrance)

July 4
The Glorious Fourth
Visit the graves of Revolutionary and Civil War veterans.

July 11-12
Corn Hill Arts Festival
(The Friends will have a booth.)

July 25
Garden Committee work day. 9:00-12:00 (Gatehouse)

July 26
Garden Committee work day. 1:00-4:00 (Gatehouse)

August
Every Sunday, tours at 2:00 and 3:00 pm

September 13
Annual Meeting of the Friends is planned.

October 4
Heritage Day
Special events to celebrate the anniversary of the dedication of Mt. Hope, October 3, 1838.

This newsletter is published four times yearly by the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery.

Honorary President: Rowland L. Collins
President: Alma Burner Creek
Vice-president: John C. Clark III
Secretary, Recording: W. Stephen Thomas
Secretary, Corresponding: Marjorie Ewell
Treasurer: Elizabeth DeBrine

THE FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY
781 MT. HOPE AVENUE
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK 14620