Before medical and technological advances like antibiotics, intravenous procedures, and respirators, pneumonia was a dreaded and often fatal disease, especially among the elderly. Care givers could do little more than make a victim as comfortable as possible, ensure that the environment fostered rest, encourage the patient to take light nourishment, and pray. Thus, for an early 20th-century physician, a house call might mean spending days, and even nights, at a patient’s bedside.

Such was the case when Susan B. Anthony fell ill early in March 1906. She and her sister, Mary, had just returned to their Madison Street home in Rochester after being featured at the national convention of the Woman’s Suffrage Association. A painful attack of facial neuralgia had prevented Miss Anthony from attending the celebration of her 86th birthday in New York City. Rochesterians learned that the suffragist had come home on March 2 when the Democrat and Chronicle announced: “After a long and exciting life of work for the cause of her sex and humanity, Miss Anthony is now resting from public work.” For the next week and a half, Dr. Marcena Ricker, her physician, tended the famous patient and informed the press daily about her condition, keeping a careful balance between hope and despair.

Dr. Ricker was a unique woman for her time. Born Marcena E. Sherman in Castile, New York on July 23, 1852, she attended local seminaries, eventually graduating from Albany Normal College. Like her patient, she began as a teacher, but after three years, she redirected her career. Joining the first class at the newly established Rochester City (now Rochester General) Hospital Nurses Training School, Miss Sherman completed a two-year program in March 1884 and continued her medical studies at the Cleveland Homeopathic Hospital, becoming one of the small but growing number of females to pursue a medical doctor’s degree. Following post-graduate work in New York City, she returned to Rochester to open a practice devoted to diseases of women and children. As a woman and a homeopathic physician, Dr. Sherman was not invited to join the attending staff of the prestigious Rochester City Hospital, which held religiously to the tenets of “regular” medicine. The Homeopathic Hospital (now Genesee Hospital), however, welcomed her services.

In 1893, Dr. Sherman married Wentworth G. Ricker, a successful manufacturer and inventor, but at a time when married women of means normally spent their lives in homemaking, social activities, and volunteer work, she chose to continue her medical practice. Two years later, Dr. Ricker was appointed a director and attending physician for the Door of Hope, a benevolent institution that gave shelter and medical care to “redeemable” unwed mothers-to-be. Some time in the late 19th century, she and Susan B. Anthony began a close friendship, and Dr. Ricker became the famous suffragist’s personal physician.

The Ricker plot is located in Range 4, Lot 90, of Mount Hope Cemetery. To locate it, enter the cemetery at the south entrance on Mount Hope Avenue (opposite the Distillery) and park near the first stop sign. Directly ahead is the Leake family monument, and behind it is the Macy family monument. The opposite side of the Macy monument reads “Ricker” as shown in this photograph by Frank A. Gillespie.
On Saturday, March 3, 1906, the local newspaper admitted that Miss Anthony was not merely resting; she was recuperating from a bout with pneumonia "as rapidly as a young person could be expected to." The source of this and all the news about the patient’s progress was Dr. Marcena Ricker. Identified at first only as the patient’s physician, Dr. Ricker remained the major conduit of information to the community, making daily reports that offered enough details to satisfy well-wishers so that they would not defile the home with telephone calls and personal visits.

By Monday of the following week, Miss Anthony had taken a turn for the worse. Her fever had spiked, and now both lungs were infected, although one of them was clearing. Because of the seriousness of the situation, Dr. Ricker stayed overnight at the Anthony home to give her feverish and restless patient constant attention. Thereafter, the little house on Madison Street became a hospital for a single patient, with Mary Anthony, nurses M. A. Shanks and Mabel Nichols, and Dr. Marcena Ricker in attendance. The physician, finally revealed in the press as Dr. Ricker, reported that her patient’s condition was critical.

Toward midweek, the tense household was able to relax somewhat, for Miss Anthony’s temperature had stabilized, and she was able to retain a little nourishment. When Dr. Ricker looked in on Wednesday morning, she was sleeping so peacefully that the physician decided not to disturb her for an examination. As the week progressed, the patient became more alert and her spirits heightened. The improvements continued, and by Friday, the physician reported optimistically to the newspaper, “All symptoms are favorable, fully as good as I expected to find them at this time, and the only alarming one is the weakness. When a high fever has existed, it always leaves the patient extremely weak . . . Miss Anthony is holding her own.”

On Thursday evening, March 8, a visitor arrived at the Anthony home. The Rev. Anna Howard Shaw, unaware that her mentor was critically ill and hoping to discuss the movement's strategy in an impending women’s suffrage vote in Oregon, stopped in Rochester on her way west. The visit energized the aging suffragist, but at the same time, it threatened to exhaust her. To keep the house as quiet as possible, Mary Anthony asked local well-wishers to avoid telephoning and telegram messengers and service people to make deliveries at the side entrance rather than at the front door. Now, Dr. Ricker had to exercise her professional authority. All day on Friday, she timed the meetings of the two women, allowing only five minutes per hour to plan for the future of the movement. The carative powers of sleep, she insisted, were essential for her patient’s recovery.

But perhaps the stimulation was more than Susan’s system could handle. On Saturday, her condition started a roller coaster course that would end at a full stop. Saturday night was a restless one, but on Sunday, Dr. Ricker reported that Miss Anthony’s temperature, pulse, and respiration were nearly normal and that she was “eating with relish.” “Her mental condition,” the physician reported, “is a great improvement over Friday. On that day, she was so exhilarated by the presence of the Rev. Shaw that she overexerted mentally . . . She was very direct with me today. (She asked.) ‘How long is it going to be, doctor? . . .

On Sunday, March 11, the long vigil turned into a death watch. Monday’s edition of the newspaper conveyed Dr. Ricker’s diagnosis without its customary Victorian verbal embroidery. “Susan B. Anthony is dying,” the paper reported candidly. According to the physician’s account: “She was exceptionally bright (Sunday) morning. She was able to retain nourishment and was cheerful. At one o’clock, she seemed a bit stronger . . . Miss Anthony said she was impatient to get strong enough to sit up. She said she would try to be patient. At two o’clock, Miss Anthony took some nourishment and said it tasted better than anything she had taken in some time . . . At 3:30 o’clock, . . . she was taken with a sudden pain in the heart and in a few moments became unconscious . . . It looks now as if she would not last many hours.” Again, the physician remained with her patient overnight.

At 12:40 a.m. on March 13, the great suffragist died peacefully with Dr. Marcena Ricker at her bedside. The physician reported the cause of death as “heart failure, induced by pneumonia of both lungs. She had had serious valvular heart trouble for the last six or seven years. Her lungs were practically clear, and the pneumonia had yielded to treatment, but the weakness of her heart prevented recovery.
Perhaps the most interesting thing about the local reporting of Miss Anthony’s final illness and passing is the editorial decision about where in Rochester newspapers the events of her illness were reported. All of the articles, even Miss Anthony’s obituary, appeared on inside pages along with other stories about local events and personalities. The editors of the New York Times, on the other hand, felt that this was a front-page item. Not only was the news of Susan B. Anthony’s death accorded full-column status on page one, but the news of her struggle had also appeared there on the previous Saturday. Whether the local decision was prompted by a conviction that Miss Anthony was one of Rochester’s own and her story belonged with other Rochesterians or by a sense that she was an aging aberration who had campaigned for years in a losing cause, we can only surmise. Nevertheless, the daily reports in the Democrat and Chronicle and the Union and Advertiser make it clear that Marcena E. Sherman Ricker, M.D., played a major role in trying to keep the famous suffragist alive and in disseminating information about her patient’s condition.

After the death of her friend and patient, Dr. Ricker lived a long and active life, not as a woman’s suffrage champion, but as one who dedicated herself to the welfare of women victimized by their inequality, their economic dependence, and their powerlessness. She continued her association with the Door of Hope, which has evolved into today’s Hillside Children’s Center. She was active in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the YWCA. And it was Dr. Ricker’s leadership that led to the establishment of the Fairport Baptist Home for the Aging, which prospered under her direction until her death on January 17, 1933.

We can wonder if Dr. Ricker ever learned that she had been quoted on the front page of the New York Times. But given her selfless dedication to the unfortunate women of Rochester, it may not have mattered to her. Perhaps what might have meant more is the fact that she and her husband rest in the same neighborhood where her intimate friend, Susan B. Anthony, and so many other dedicated and active women lie, in Mount Hope Cemetery.

ROCHESTER MAYOR VISITS EDWIN SCRANTON (1803-1880) IN MOUNT HOPE CEMETERY

by Richard O. Reisem

On a balmy September 28, 2000, Rochester Mayor William A. Johnson paid a visit to the gravesite of Edwin Scranton, who on May 28, 1873 (seven years before he died), wrote a letter to Mayor Johnson - a portentous letter, because it took 126 years from its writing in order to be delivered to the mayor.

Scranton’s letter, which was reprinted in the Epitaph in our Spring 1999 issue, was placed in a time capsule in 1873 with notification in Rochester’s public records that it was to be opened before the end of the millennium. The Rochester Museum and Science Center undertook that effort in late 1999, and the full contents of the time capsule are currently on exhibit at the RMSC.

On the high hill in Section I where Scranton is buried, about 50 people gath-
ered to hear Mayor Johnson say that it was a very special experience to read the letter, arriving as it did from more than a century and a quarter earlier. For the audience’s benefit, the mayor read large portions of Scranton’s missive, which described the village he had grown up in and the significant city that it had become by 1873. Scranton also speculated on the grandeur that Rochester may have achieved by the time the letter was opened at the end of the millennium. Finally, Scranton invited the current mayor to visit him at his gravesite. On September 28, Mayor Johnson accepted that invitation and announced that Scranton might be quite surprised to find that he - Bill Johnson, a black man - was the current mayor. So Johnson added, “I hope that he won’t find any way to let us know that he has heard us here today.”

The city of Rochester is currently preparing a time capsule to be opened in the year 2134, the 300th anniversary of the incorporation of the city. Mayor Johnson is carefully composing his message for the mayor of 2134.

COL. NATHAN PATCHEN POND
Civil War Commander / Rochester Printing Company Founder

by Julia K. Dugan

From Mount Hope Cemetery’s north entrance area, a road climbs unevenly and steeply over paving stones laid many years ago. As one walks from the gatehouse up toward Section C, time seems to stand still. The cemetery opened in 1838, but some gravestones from previous burial sites date back even earlier. At any given point, a person can look at dates on gravestones and find people of many different ages and periods, making Mount Hope a very diverse place. Passing by these tombstones of different times, shapes, sizes, and meanings, one is reminded of the fragility of life and the finality of death. Past Susan B. Anthony’s marker, a tall monument unlike the typical obelisk stands out among the hundreds visible in one of the oldest parts of the cemetery. The southeast side of the monument reads:

COL. N. P. POND
BORN BROCKPORT, N.Y.
SEPT. 11, 1832
CIVIL WAR
1860-1865
ROCHESTER PRINTING CO.
1870-1921
AT REST
JAN. 16, 1921
“FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH”

The northwest side of the monument has the names, Julia Beecher Pond and Susan Moore Pond, with their birth and death dates. Two stone benches are placed in the corners of the lot, each bearing a different phrase and asking the onlooker to sit down, rest, and think. Also on the southeastern side of the family monument, three flat stones lie on the ground, bearing only the names of the aforementioned people.

Julia Beecher Pond was born on July 7, 1851. She died suddenly on August 28, 1887. A special dispatch from Washington, D.C. to the Union & Advertiser in Rochester brought the news. While traveling home from Florida on a train with her husband, Nathan Pond, she was taken ill and became very weak. She died within 30 minutes, around 1:30 in the morning. The daybooks at Mount Hope state that she died of “pulmonary tuberculosis.” Julia was buried in the northwestern corner of Lot 101, Section C, but was moved on July 28, 1921 to the southwestern corner when Col. Pond’s second wife erected a monument in his memory.

Nathan Patchen Pond was born on September 11, 1832 in Brockport, New York. Little information is available about his life, including about his parents and childhood, until the year 1862. On the 10th of September of that year, Mr. Pond enlisted as a private, and he rose to the rank of captain of the 3rd Co. New York State Cavalry. He later became squadron commander of that division. Pond was again promoted in 1863 to the rank of major of the 1st United States Colored Cavalry. Organized on December 22, 1863, these African-American troops were mainly from Virginia. In the 27 engagements involving this division, the most notable battles were at Kinston and Goldsborough Bridge, North Carolina. The Battle of Kinston took place on December 14, 1862; Goldsborough Bridge occurred three days later. Both were Union victories commanded by Brig. Gen. John G. Foster. In January of 1864, Pond rose to Lieutenant Colonel of the 2nd United States Colored Cavalry, which had been organized in Virginia on the same day as the 1st Colored Cavalry.

At the end of the war, Col. Pond was discharged on April 14, 1865, but he remained active in the Grand Army of the Republic organization for the rest of his life. He held many positions in the G.A.R., including State Department Commander in 1900. Pond was thought of as a pioneer in the G.A.R., making constant contributions both personally and financially. Further, in 1870, with Henry Matthews, Col. Pond founded the Rochester Printing Company, which began printing the Rochester Democrat & Chronicle, which was the recent merger of two newspapers, the Daily
Democrat and the Chronicle. The company was very successful, as can be seen in the longevity of the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. In his book, Smugtown U.S.A., Curt Gerling wrote: “The staid old lady of Main Street, the ultra conservative Democrat & Chronicle always made money, usually lots of it.”

Col. Nathan Pond’s family monument, a Greek stele with a palmette motif in the capital, stands in Section C just southwest of Susan B. Anthony’s gravesite. Photo by Frank A. Gillespie.

Nathan Patchen Pond died on January 16, 1921 in Rochester, New York. The daybooks at Mount Hope Cemetery document his cause of death as “lobar pneumonia” at the age of 88 years, 4 months, and 5 days. The Union & Advertiser obituary stated that the funeral ceremony was held on January 19 at 3:00 o’clock at the Monroe Avenue Methodist Church. In addition, the body
could be viewed from 2:15 to 3:00 while under the guard and supervision of the George H. Thomas G.A.R. Post. At 4:15 p.m., Col. Pond's body was placed in the Mount Hope vault for the rest of the winter. On July 13, 1921, with a newly finished tall monument, called a stele, in place, his body was finally laid to rest in Lot 101, Section C, Mount Hope Cemetery.

At the time of her husband's death, Susan Moore Pond had a tablet and portrait painting of Nathan Pond placed in the business office of the Democrat & Chronicle. The tablet read:

Colonel Nathan P. Pond  
1832-1921  
1862 Civil War 1865  
Rochester Printing Co.  
1870-1921  
"Faithful unto death"

Susan Moore Pond was born in Michigan on August 22, 1858. In her lifetime, she was prominent in teaching circles and was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Rochester Colony of New England. She was a member of the Monroe Avenue Methodist Church along with her husband. She died at the Powers Hotel at the age of 84 years, 3 months, and 15 days on December 7, 1942. The cause of death was listed as "cerebral hemorrhage," more commonly known as a stroke. There was a funeral at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Raymond G. Phillips. There were no services for Susan Moore Pond at Mount Hope, and her body was placed in the vault until April 21, 1943, when she was buried beside her husband.

At the time of Susan Pond’s death, the Pond estate was worth a then sizable $555,089. She gave a total of $54,000 to religious and educational organizations and $250,000 each to her two stepdaughters.

The Pond family monument says much about the life and beliefs of the family. Above Col. Pond’s name, and on the feet of the stone benches, there is a calligraphic “P.” Calligraphy of this type is typically considered a sign of wealth and prominence in society. In addition, “Perpetual Care” is carved into the base of the stone. Cemetery lot buyers could choose to buy a perpetual-care option and thereby have the plot tended by cemetery staff, who would mow the grass, rake leaves, etc. in perpetuity.

The family monument, which is a granite Greek stele (a rectangular column with a decorative capital), is approximately 12 feet tall. The capital has a rounded top and is decoratively carved with floral symbols. The flower at the top resembles a poppy, an ancient Mediterranean symbol for eternal sleep and consolation. Flowers generally signify eternal hope, love, beauty, and perhaps most importantly, mortality. The fan-shaped decorative motif that curves in at the left and right sides is called a palmette, a conventional ornament resembling the palm leaf used in Grecian decoration. It symbolizes spiritual victory, heavenly reward, and eternal peace.

The stone benches in two corners of the plot invite the visitor to sit. The engraved message on one bench reads: RESTE YE here and always, in faith and hope and peace “until the day break and the shadows flee away.” The quoted portion is from the Song of Solomon in the Bible. The full verse reads: “Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” This engraved message invites the departed to rest for eternity and also invites visitors to rest and be comforted by these loving words.

The opposite bench is engraved with the following: “I know that my Redeemer liveth therefore, when I shall walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.” The first part is from Job 19:25. That full text reads: “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth” (Job 19:25). These words seem to assure that God is near and may console friends and family as they grieve over their deceased loved ones.

The second quoted Biblical passage is from Psalm 23:4: “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” Here again, we find themes of consolation and divine protection, as well as a testimony to the Ponds’ religious faith.

Felix Adler is quoted in David Sloane’s book, The Last Great Necessity, as saying, "Death should be robbed of the blackness, the gloom, with which it is now invested. The only thing of the dead which deserves to be preserved is the heart's affection." I think that Susan Moore Pond would agree with this attitude toward death and dying. She commissioned the monument for her husband whom she survived by 21 years. The monument is fashioned in a welcoming way but still maintains the eminence that Col. Pond achieved during his lifetime. In addition to other inscriptions, there is a small “AT REST” engraved above his death date. Perhaps this is an indication of a full life with few regrets. The height of the stele and the benches as well are testimony to her love and respect.

The large, granite, neoclassical stele also has social distinction. Compared to the many small, white marble stones nearby, this family plot demands attention. In his book, David Sloane argues that “Americans believe in democracy and equality, but go to extremes to differentiate themselves from others ... even in death.” This is clearly evident with the Pond monument, as it suggests the family's prominent status and class. As evident in Susan Pond's will, however, the Ponds gave to those in need and cared about the betterment of their community.

Finally, in his study of life and death, The Broken Connection, Robert Jay Lifton states: "A sense of immortality, then, is by no means mere denial of death. Rather it is a corollary of the knowledge of death itself, and reflects a compelling and universal inner quest for continuous symbolic relationship." This symbolic immortality is the key concept here as many gravestones contain imagery and epitaphs that attempt to remember and commemorate the deceased person. With Col. Pond's monument, we can see that he was meant to be remembered for his accomplishments in defending his country in the Civil War and serving his community with the Rochester Printing Company. A key phrase on the stone reads: "Faithful Unto Death." Although these words would appear at first glance to be a testimony of his faith,
When Fall comes to Mount Hope Cemetery, leaves float on Sylvan Waters and the trees and shrubs adopt warm colors, the suggestion of which is even possible to see in a black-and-white photograph by Frank A. Gillespie.
they may also allude to his devotion to his lifetime of work and accomplishments, and to his family. This granite stele, standing tall and proud, is an elegant tribute to the family, forever inviting the passerby to remember Nathan, Susan, and Julia Pond.

(Editor's Note: The author, Julia K. Dugan, is a University of Rochester student and prepared this essay as a course requirement for REL 167, Speaking Stones, taught by Professor Emil Homerin.)

FRIENDS OF MOUNT HOPE CEMETERY CELEBRATE 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

by Richard O. Reisen

Our organization, yours and mine, is 20 years old. There was an organizing meeting at Mrs. Rowland and Sarah Collins' house December 6, 1979 at which about 30 people from the community and the city government met to create the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery. The first meeting of the fledgling group occurred on June 4, 1980. We have grown from 19 members on that June 4th day to nearly 400 today.

As part of our two-decade anniversary celebration, the Friends organized a recognition dinner for founders and current volunteers on October 7 at the Spring House. It was a gala affair, which included speeches by Mayor William A. Johnson and Commissioner Loretta Scott applauding the exemplary efforts of the Friends to help restore, preserve, and promote public use of our great cultural resource, Mount Hope Cemetery.

In his comments at the dinner, Mayor Johnson said that he was working to have Mount Hope Cemetery designated as a park. This, he assured us, does not mean picnic tables and tennis courts in the cemetery. Rather, the designation would afford additional sources for funding maintenance and improvement efforts. The cemetery actually functioned as Rochester's first park after it opened in 1838. In those days, citizens did bring their Sunday picnic lunches and enjoyed carriage rides on the winding roads. Even today, it also functions as a passive park where people can walk, run, and bicycle, enjoying the undulating landscape with its forest of varied trees and other flora, not to mention the fascinating collection of funerary monuments.

Another part of the celebration was a grand open house on October 7, when special van tours of the cemetery were given, an elaborate exhibit was presented in the north gatehouse, a scavenger hunt was staged for young people, and bountiful refreshments were served to the public. If you weren't there, we missed you.

Special thanks to trustees Warren Kling and Joan Hunt for leading a group of volunteers in the elaborate planning efforts. The events, as a result of their hard work, were remarkably successful.