Family relationships, religious revivals, temperance, moral reform, and an undying commitment to the abolition of slavery were the ties that bound the Avery and Stanton families together.

Henry Brewster Stanton, who later became the husband of noted women’s rights leader Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was 21 years old when he arrived in Rochester in April 1826. Already interested and eager to become involved in politics, he went to work for Thurlow Weed, editor of the Monroe Telegraph. Weed thought highly of the young Stanton and characterized him as impulsive but amiable and with great promise.

Although not wealthy by any means, Weed was a power in politics. Henry Stanton described him as one of the poorest and worst-dressed men in Rochester who lived in a cheap house in an obscure part of the village and commented that it was unusual for a man so poor to wield such political power. Stanton’s keen powers of observation and his ability to articulate his experiences provided, in later years, a detailed view of events that occurred in the Rochester area and in state and national politics.

While employed as a clerk in the canal office from 1826 to 1827, Henry Stanton had an opportunity to meet many important political figures and began making speeches expressing his political views. In January 1829, he became deputy clerk of Monroe County and officiated as clerk for nearly three years in all courts of record because the clerk himself lived many miles out of town. This experience served him well when he began his law studies.

The Stanton and Avery families may have first met at religious revival meetings several years after Susan Brewster Stanton and her children moved to Rochester.

The arrival of Charles Gradison Finney in Rochester in October 1830 to become minister of Third Presbyterian Church marked a period of religious fervor. Church membership increased dramatically and capacity crowds attended Finney’s revival meetings. Henry Stanton became a convert after listening to the charismatic revivalist speak. He became a close friend of Theodore Weld, Finney’s protégé and co-worker.

Susan Stanton and her sons Henry and Robert and her daughter Frances became members of First Presbyterian Church in January 1830. Susan remained a member until May 1831.

George A. Avery, also a Finney follower, joined First Presbyterian Church on January 3, 1831 and became one of its most active members. He married Susan Stanton’s daughter Frances Mehitable Stanton sometime in the early 1830s.

Henry Stanton was a student at the Rochester Institute of Practical Education and claimed to have studied the classics at various locations in the Rochester area. His brother Robert had been a student at the Oneida Institute. In 1831, they decided, along with their brother George and their friend Courtland Avery, to continue their education at Lane Seminary, a manual labor school near Cincinnati, Ohio. Manual labor schools availed young men of limited means to obtain an education. Finney’s involvement with the seminary was the impetus to enroll as students.

Because of financial concerns, the Stanton brothers and Courtland Avery traveled part of the way to Lane Seminary on a
raft. When the Stantons enrolled as students at Lane, their time as Rochester residents, except for short visits, came to a close.

Student debates on the abolition of slavery and colonization were held at Lane Seminary in 1834. The school’s trustees became concerned when the students discussed these extremely controversial subjects and what effect that would have on the seminary. The trustees decided to end the debates and forbid further student participation in abolitionist causes. The students involved in the debates chose to leave Lane Seminary, a move that brought unwanted notoriety to the school, and they became known as “The Lane Rebels.”

Robert L. Stanton was one of two students who returned to Lane to complete his education. After graduation, he became the pastor of churches in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Ohio. He was president of Oakland College in Mississippi and Miami University in Ohio. Princeton College conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. He served as professor of theology in Danville Seminary and moderator of the general assembly of the Presbyterian Church in 1886. The Rev. Robert L. Stanton, D.D., died and was buried at sea on May 28, 1885 at the age of 76 years.

Many of the Lane Rebels agreed to enroll in Oberlin if the Rev. Charles Finney were appointed professor of theology. Henry Stanton was not among them. Instead, he became a more active participant in anti-slavery causes.

He attributed the beginning of his interest in abolishing slavery when as a small child the soft-singing voice of a family slave lulled him to sleep. He decided that when he reached adulthood, he would become a champion of the oppressed, and he kept that vow.

Henry Stanton intended to continue his education at Oberlin but was appointed general agent of the American Anti-Slavery Society and began the work that occupied a large share of his life for many years. He served as secretary and as a member of the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society and traveled extensively in this country and abroad giving speeches and arranging meetings. While promoting the abolitionist movement, Stanton often withstood attacks by hostile mobs.

Henry Stanton married Elizabeth Cady in 1840, and the couple spent their honeymoon in London where Henry was a delegate to the World Anti-Slavery Conference. After completing his law studies, the Stantons moved to Boston. In the hope of enjoying a less hectic lifestyle, they moved to Seneca Falls in 1847 where Henry was elected to the New York State Senate and served in 1850-1851 as a Democrat. When the Republican party was organized, Stanton joined it. Throughout his life, he was active in politics. Years later he also became a Washington correspondent for the New York American.

When the trustees of Lane Seminary forbade further debates and student involvement in anti-slavery causes, George A. Avery, a successful Rochester wholesale grocer who had been a fund raiser for the school and a financial contributor, voiced strong objections to the trustees' decisions and ended his relationship with the seminary.

Courtland Avery, George A. Avery’s brother and one of Lane Rebels, left the seminary and enrolled as a student in Oberlin in 1835. He was listed as a member of the junior class and a student in the theological department during the 1836-1837 academic year. No annual catalog was published the following year because of the school’s dire financial problems. In the 1838-1839 catalog, he is listed as being in the middle class. That was his last year of attendance. Courtland returned to Rochester and joined his brothers in George A. Avery’s wholesale grocery business.

George A. Avery was a religious man with great concern for the education and religious training of young people. He
devoted his time and financial assistance to moral reform causes and establishing places of worship in the community.

In 1821, the Monroe County Bible Society was founded. The organization’s mission was to distribute bibles without cost to underprivileged families. At various times, George A. Avery served as the organization’s vice-president and treasurer.

The Rochester Anti-Slavery Society was organized in 1833 and the Monroe County Anti-Slavery Society in 1834. George Avery was active in both organizations and held the offices of vice-president and treasurer.

Avery witnessed the many ills of slavery while studying medicine in Virginia. For four years, he observed the poor medical treatment given to slaves. He spoke of the slaves that suffered through many operations and experiments, performed by a doctor’s interest or curiosity, that were unrestrained by law, public sentiment, or the claims of common humanity. Avery commented, “Amongst the many Negro cabins which I saw in Virginia, I cannot call to mind one in which there was any other floor than the earth, any thing that a northern laborer, or mechanic, white or colored, would call a bed, nor a solitary partition to separate the sexes.” He attested to the barbarous inhumanity of various kinds, manifested by persons belonging to the most respectable circles of society.

Involvement in reform movements was a family affair for the Averys. Frances Stanton Avery was an active member of the Female Charitable Society. In 1853, a meeting was held in Rochester to form a Women’s State Temperance Society. Elizabeth Cady Stanton was elected president and her sister-in-law Frances Stanton Avery, Rhoda DeGarmo, and Sarah Fish were elected vice-presidents.

George and Frances Stanton Avery were committed to the abolition of slavery and their home was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Unfortunately, George Avery did not live to see his sacrifices and efforts reach fruition. He died of consumption at the age of 53 years in 1856. The Stanton family’s Rochester activities have remained relatively unknown. Because his wife, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, played such a prominent role in the abolitionist movement, Henry Stanton and his contributions to the abolition of slavery have been largely overlooked by other writers.

The Avery family played an important role in the religious, anti-slavery, and other reform movements during the first half of the 19th century. They were among the many unknown or forgotten citizens of Rochester who lived their lives helping others.

The Mount Hope Cemetery burial site of the Avery and Stanton families is in Section G, Lot 64. Included in the plot are:

George A. Avery, who died in 1856 at the age of 53 years.

His wife, Frances Mehitable Stanton Avery, who died in 1870 at the age of 62 years.

Their children:

Susan M. Avery, who died in 1836 at the age of 2 years.

Henry Avery, who died in 1837 at the age of 2 months.

Anna Avery, who died in 1848 at the age of 3 years, 8 months.

George Stanton Avery, who died in 1848 at the age of 1 year.

Also in the plot are the following:

Solon Avery, who was George A. Avery’s brother.

Courtland Avery, who died in 1866 at the age of 60 years.

His wife, Mary Ann Avery.

Susan Brewster Stanton, who died in 1853 at the age of 72 years. When she was older, she made her home with her daughter and son-in-law, Frances and George Avery.

The following children of Susan Brewster Stanton are buried elsewhere:

Joseph Stanton, who died in 1832 and whose burial site is unknown.

George D. Stanton, who died of cholera in 1834 while a student at Lane Seminary and whose burial site is unknown.

the Rev. Robert L. Stanton, who was buried at sea.

Susan Stanton, Susan Brewster Stanton’s daughter, whose death date and burial site are unknown.

(Note: The author wishes to thank the following for their contributions to this article: Frank A Gillespie, Ruth Rosenberg Naparsteck, Coleen Hurst, Anita Sherman, and the staffs of the following libraries: Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, Oberlin College, Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library, University of Rochester Rare Books and Special Collections.)
on a Saturday afternoon each month from May through October, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery will stage a special theme tour that is free to members. Altogether, there will be six walking tours, and members can attend every one of them free. The public is invited as well, at a very reasonable cost of $3.00 per tour, or $5.00 for an entire family. All tours occur on a Saturday and start at 1:00 p.m. and finish by 3:00 p.m. Lemonade and cookies are served in the gatehouse after the tours. Unless otherwise noted below, the outings start from the north gatehouse on Mount Hope Avenue, opposite Robinson Drive. Ample parking is available inside the entrance.

Each tour addresses a different subject and features a different tour guide who is especially qualified in that subject. Here's the exciting tour lineup for the summer of 2002:

SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1 P.M.: "To Live in Hearts that Love" Tour with Prof. Emil Homerin, Chairman of Religion and Classic Studies Department, University of Rochester.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1 P.M.: Millionaires and Entrepreneurs Tour with Friends Trustee Warren Kling.

SATURDAY, JULY 13, 1 P.M.: The Civil War tour is one of the most popular tours given at Mount Hope Cemetery. Don't miss it!

SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 1 P.M.: Architects and Architecture Tour with Friends Trustee Dennis Carr.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1 P.M.: Civil War Tour with Marilyn Nolte and Civil War re-enactors. This tour starts from the south entrance on Mount Hope Avenue, opposite the Distillery.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1 P.M.: Fall Colors Tour with former City Forester Bill Knapp.
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

A few years ago, my daughter and I decided to observe Rochester’s Women’s Heritage Celebration by taking the feminist tour of Mount Hope Cemetery as presented by the Friends. I was deeply impressed by the presenters and their love for history as they told the stories of those people, long departed, and the impact they had on us today. As I finished the tour with lemonade and cookies at the gatehouse, I resolved that I, too, would become a tour guide and I immediately submitted my name to be used as a volunteer in whatever way I could help. Within weeks I was baking cookies and serving lemonade. I soon learned that guides and receptionists provided the up-front “glamorous” work of the Friends.

For over 20 years, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery have labored to preserve history and educate the public about this gem of a Victorian cemetery located in the midst of the city of Rochester. A corps of dedicated volunteers are constantly working to beautify the grounds and restore the monuments. Others conduct and publish historical research, maintain archives and a library, assist people in genealogical research, coordinate projects with city government and museums, answer phones, prepare web pages, and run the business of an organization with over 300 members.

When asked to lead this dedicated group, I must admit that I felt like the new kid on the block. Eric Logan had been an inspiring president for a number of years, but he had earned a rest. Eric has been a terrific mentor to me. He will be a tough act to follow. I intend to rely strongly on his advice as well as that of the new executive committee: Marilyn Nolte and Rob Hilliard as vice-presidents; Nancy Uffindell, secretary; Ed Olinger, treasurer, and Warren Kling, at-large. The Board of Trustees will ably oversee the organization of the Friends, and I welcome new trustees, Emil Homerin and Paul Sackett.

Our new tour season will begin in May. Gardening began even as the snow melted. Schools are inquiring about special tours for students. New theme tours have been added to our schedule. The Rochester Museum and Science Center is developing a new actors’ tour called “Visionaries and Inventors” to premiere on Saturday, July 20. The season is starting with a bang.

My thanks to everyone who made 2001 a great year. I look forward to 2002 becoming even better.

Joan M. Hunt, president
Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery
FIVE HIGGINS CHILDREN:
"WE LOVED THEM."

by Richard O. Reisem

In Section D, near the north entrance area of Mount Hope Cemetery, there is a large sarcophagus-shaped stone monument memorializing the Joseph and Emily Higgins family. The tragic story of the brief lives of their five children are told in the names and dates on the long side of the stone. The parents outlived each and every one of their children.

Members of the Higgins family buried in the plot include the father Joseph Higgins (1800-1864), the mother Emily C. Higgins (1805-1864), and their five children, listed under the heading “Our Children” in the following chronological order of their deaths: Joseph, Jr. (1833-1835), Jesse H. (1826-1837), George C. (1836-1839), Josephine (1840-1843), and Julia P. (1837-1852).

All five Higgins children preceded their parents in death: Joseph, Jr. died at 22 months; Jesse was 11 years old; George lived 3 years; Josephine was just 3 years old when she succumbed to croup, and Julia died of consumption (tuberculosis) at age 16.

Father Joseph died of cancer of the stomach at 64 years. Mother Emily died of consumption also at age 64 years.

Under the list of five children on the distinctive family stone are the words, “We Loved Them.”
DO YOU WANT TO ADOPT-A-PLLOT?

by Richard O. Reisem

The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery operate an inviting program called Adopt-a-Plot. We’re talking about historic cemetery plots that need a little attention and TLC. Other volunteers like you have adopted over 75 historic family plots in Mount Hope and spend a few pleasant hours each summer cleaning these small lots, planting suitable perennials, weeding and watering if necessary.

Summertime in Mount Hope is truly sublime and spending a little gardening time there is rewarding in many ways. You can meet like-minded folks doing the same thing or you can have some pleasant meditation time to yourself. We’ll help you select a historic plot especially suited to you and your interests. And we’ll guide you in appropriate ways to treat a historic gravesite.

We also have a few openings for receptionists at our regular Sunday tours and at our special Saturday theme tours, so if you like to chat with the public, sign in tourgoers, hand out brochures, sell a coffee mug or two, and serve lemonade and cookies after the tours, you’re in the right place in our handsome historic gatehouse where people register before and gather after the tours.

Whatever your volunteer wishes, you can get involved in some interesting and rewarding activity for as much or as little time as you want. Simply call us at 461-3494 and leave a message. Our Adopt-a-Plot coordinator or Tours coordinator will return your call.
If you're a member in good standing and you decide to leave your current address for a new one, future issues of the Epitaph won't reach you unless you send us your new address. The post office will not forward bulk mail, which is the system by which the Epitaph is distributed to members of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery.

It's easy to let us know about your change of address. You can e-mail your new address to pcorc@aol.com. You can jot it on a postcard and mail it to:

Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery
1133 Mount Hope Avenue
Rochester, NY 14620

Don't miss any of the coming issues of the Epitaph and its interesting stories from Rochester's past, announcements of special free tours and events, and articles about a host of cemetery activities.

THE FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY
1133 MT. HOPE AVE.
ROCHESTER, NY 14620

An agreement between the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery and the University of Rochester Libraries has resulted in the placement of all past issues of the Epitaph on the library's research website. The Friends are honored by this recognition that our quarterly newsletter contains material that is useful in researching local history.

Our newsletter began publication in 1981; the Friends of Mount Hope were organized in 1980. After issues of the Epitaph are are one year old, the Friends permit their placement on the UR website. The newsletters can viewed as full-page documents complete with photographs and illustrations or as text only. An index provides quick access to any subject covered in the newsletters. It is a particularly attractive and easy-to-use website. All of the material is copyright and the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery retain all rights to use of the material in any form. There is also a link to the Friends website at www.fomh.org.

You can reach the UR Library's portion of their website that contains past issues of the Epitaph at:
www.lib.rochester.edu/rbk/epitaph/home.stm

IF YOU LIKE WHAT YOU READ IN THIS NEWSLETTER...

you would also like being part of what we do at the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery. We are a lively, dedicated group who believe that Mount Hope is more than a cemetery. To us, it is a splendid park, a fascinating history museum, a striking outdoor art gallery, an interesting geological area, a beautiful arboretum, a lovely wildflower garden, and an engaging wildlife refuge.

Join us in exploring the many faces of Mount Hope by becoming a member of the Friends.

Here's what you do. Send an e-mail to pcorc@aol.com and we'll send you a membership application. Or print out the membership form at www.fomh.org. Or call us at 585-461-3494 and leave your name and address. Or if worse comes to worse, write to us at the return address below.

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