THE FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY

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JOHN C. CLARK III HONORED

To recognize the generous contributions and extraordinary interest of former president John C. Clark III, the Board unanimously awarded Mr. Clark the distinction of honorary life membership. It is with great appreciation that the Board confers this honor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Plans are being explored for field trips to other significant cemeteries in western New York State, such as Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo.

January 26 and February 16 were Clean-up Days in the Gatehouse. Both days were very successful in scouring away years of dust and grime.

GRAVESTONE STUDIES

The Association for Gravestone Studies will hold its annual conference in Boston this year, June 27-29. Founded in 1977 for the purpose of promoting and preserving gravestones as a part of our national heritage, the membership includes amateurs and professionals from many different fields of interest.

Tours of Boston's historic graveyards (Mt. Auburn and Forest Hills) as well as informal seminars and lectures will be included in the conference.

For further information please contact Conference Registrar, Geraldine Hungerford, Hilldale Road, Bethany, CT 06525.

Laurel Gabel

REMEMBER ME!

Board member Laurel Gabel is leading a new course for the Gannett School of Science and Man, Rochester Museum and Science Center. Titled Remember Me, Early American Gravestones, the course is described as follows:

Graveyards are really outdoor museums — full of history, art, chronicles of religious beliefs, genealogy and sometimes tragedy, scandal or even humor. Slide presentations will survey examples of 17th and 18th century gravestones as well as 19th century Victorian cemeteries. Research, photography, rubbings and the preservation of historic gravestones will be discussed. Final session meets at Mt. Hope Cemetery for a walking tour. Three Thursdays, May 8-22, 7:30-9:00 pm, plus Sunday, May 25, 1:30-3:00 pm, Planetarium. Fee $26.

For a free catalog, call the Gannett School at 271-4320.

MT. HOPE TRIVIA QUIZ
(answers on page)

Q. 1: What kind of monument does William H. Gorsline have?
Q. 2: What is the symbol over the Gatehouse entrance?
Q. 3: Who is buried on the same site where she was born?
Q. 4: What symbol is on the fireman’s hat grave marker for Samuel Bemish?
Q. 5: What landscape architect designed his own family’s tombstones in slate?
BRAGDON MONUMENTS IN MT. HOPE

This area has long been aware of Claude Bragdon's accomplishments as an architect. His several major buildings and scores of elegant homes built between 1885 and 1917 have been praised, preserved, some demolished and later lamented (most notably the New York Central Passenger Station). Others still have their fates in question.

Bragdon (1866-1946) was an artist/designer in many mediums, but most of his paintings and illustrations are either in private collections or are tucked away in libraries and museums. One aspect of Bragdon's art, however, is quite accessible as some very prominent Rochesterians chose him to design their tombstones and many of these are preserved in Mt. Hope Cemetery. Wealthy clients took great pride around the turn of the century in commissioning an artist to create something not available to the general public, and the cemetery as a social gathering place was the perfect place to display such prestige.

Although Bragdon never attended college, he became highly skilled and was asked to design bridges, arches, floats, signs, bookplates, book covers and jackets, stained glass, furniture, and numerous other decorative items. Most of Willa Cather's Borzoi books were of his design. Because of his diverse talents, Bragdon became known as the "Upstate Leonardo."

The tombstones Bragdon designed in Mt. Hope Cemetery include those in the family plots of James Sibley Watson Sr., Hiram Sibley Jr., William R. Seward, Judge William E. Werner, and Henry A. Ward. Individual markers were made for Antoinette Perkins, William Henry Gorsline, and James G. Averell. I have strong suspicions that there are more monuments from his drawing board, particularly some of the mausoleums.

Bragdon's tombstones are generally quite distinctive for their fine detail and unique symbolism. As with his architecture, the personality of the individual client was the primary consideration, but there is usually some quality that identifies Bragdon's art.

Near the Hiram Sibley Sr. monument, directly north of the gazebo, is the stone Bragdon designed for James G. Averell, the son of Emily Sibley Watson by her first marriage. Averell died of typhoid fever at age 27 in 1905. It was for him that his mother financed and dedicated the Memorial Art Gallery.

Two Celtic crosses were designed for the Watson and Sibley families, related by marriage and through their work in founding the Western-Union Telegraph Company. The Sibley cross contains the common funerary symbols of the Alpha and Omega, Bragdon's personal trefoil device and an endless knot motif used often by the architect/mystic.

Seward family center stone
Bragdon was a Buddhist and was later ordained as a Brahmin priest in New York. His firm belief in reincarnation is displayed most strongly through his tombstone designs.

The center marker for the William R. Seward family has a relief sculpture of a woman holding an eternal flame, another reincarnation theme. Seward was the banker/philanthropist who financed the construction of Dr. Algernon S. Cropsey's "Brotherhood House" after the Episcopal parish priest lost the use of his home as a result of his heresy trials.

Professor Henry A. Ward's unusual monument is dominated by a large boulder of jasper conglomerate chosen by the acclaimed mineralogist during a trip to Georgian Bay. A highly polished pedestal was designed by Bragdon to house Ward's cinerary urn in what was a very modern design for 1906.

Other stones like the Gorsline and Werner monuments reflected Bragdon's architectural interest. A tour of monuments designed by and for Rochester architects is being offered this summer in addition to the regular Sunday tours. To make arrangements for this special tour, please contact me at 334-1212 or 334-3789.

Carolyn Swanton

ETYMOLOGY, ANYONE?

Almost since life began, birth and death have been daily events. A sizable vocabulary related to customs following death has developed through the ages in every tongue, presumably even the caveman's, though his terms have not survived to decorate modern English. Interesting derivations can be found in most dictionaries from Webster's practical Collegiate to Murray's massive Oxford. With these tools and no pretense of scholarship, a few of these follow.

Cemetery: Greek Koimētērion — a dormitory or burial ground or sleeping place.

Mourn: Old English — anxious, careful.

Grave: Old English graf (tomb); Mausoleum: from the magnificent tomb of Mausolus, 4th century king of Coria, built by his queen/widow Artemisia, and one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. Bury: Old Western Germanic — to protect cover. Sarcophagus: Greek — limestone used in making coffins. Hearse: originally a temple-shaped structure of wood, used in royal and noble funerals... decorated with banners, heraldic devices and lighted candles. It was customary for friends to pin short poems or epitaphs upon it. Tomb: from Latin tumba through Old French tumba and Middle English tombe. Columbarium: from Latin columba meaning dove, hence a dove-cote.

ANNUAL MEETING

On Sunday, December 8th, about 75 friends gathered at the Garden Center for the annual meeting.

A short business meeting included the election of trustees, the Treasurer's report and the President's report. Our financial situation is stable. President Brown described events and accomplishments in 1985 and spoke of some hopes for the future.

Dr. Harvey Green, Chief Historian of the Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, was the guest speaker. His topic "Death is a Mood of Life; Culture of Consolation, 1865-1900" was both appropriate and of interest.

SUNDAY TOURS

of Mt. Hope Cemetery will begin on May 1st.
To participate in the conservation and beautification of one of America's earliest and loveliest Victorian garden cemeteries as a member of the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery, check your chosen category of membership and send to

Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery
791 Mt. Hope Avenue
Rochester, NY 14620

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name ____________________________________________
Street _________________________________________ Phone __________________
City & State __________________________ Zip _____________

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I cannot join, but would like to contribute $ ____________

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Rochester, New York 14620

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