PRAISE FOR OUR GARDENS

The tour guides, receptionists and visitors to Mt. Hope Cemetery are well aware of how beautifully maintained the gardens are and have given much praise to the small, but dedicated, group of volunteers that work so hard on this project. One of the most adulatory notifications was received by Committee Chairman John Pearsall from Jack Slattery for the Rochester Firefighters' Benevolent Association. Because we were so touched by their sincere appreciation, the letter is being shared with the membership as follows:

Dear Mr. Pearsall,

During my twenty years of active duty with the Rochester Fire department and during a lifetime association with the department, I have seen many kindnesses extended to the department and the individual members. We always try to take the time to say thank you to our benefactors. Sometimes, regrettably, those thanks are "silently" reaching the proper individual or organization. The purpose, then of this letter is to correct one such wrong.

Recently, while meeting with Mr. Robert Schnacky at Trott Monument Company, he mentioned to me that it was through your efforts and those of the other members of the Gardening Committee of Mt. Hope that we enjoy the beautiful flowers at the front of the Firemen's Monument.

Please accept the sincere gratitude of the Rochester Firefighters' Association for your efforts on our behalf.

The Firemen's Monument, as you can well imagine, is a very special place to the Association and to the families of the men who have answered their last alarm.

The flowers do much to enhance the beauty of the monument. I'm sure the choice of "red" flowers was not by chance. It is most appropriate and fitting.

Sincerely, Jack Slattery
For the Association Officers
THE OAK HILL FOLLIES

In 1988 we observe simultaneously the centennial and sesquicentennial of the Rochester park system and of Mt. Hope Cemetery, respectively. This, therefore, the year in which to recall that the northwest corner of Highland Park, directly across Mt. Hope Avenue from the cemetery’s north gate, itself nearly became a cemetery.

Highland Park, between Mt. Hope and South Avenues, was originally a part of the Warner Tract—a very large holding bounded on the north by the old city line (just south of the present Menlo Place) and on the south by Highland Avenue. It was assembled, starting in 1844, by Horatio Gates Warner, who moved to Rochester from Columbia County, NY in 1846 and, beginning in 1854, built the home which has always been known as Warner Castle.

Horatio Warner died in 1876 leaving two daughters and a son, John Bradt Yates Warner, as successors in title. Thirteen years later, there began a remarkable series of events.

On March 16, 1889, the Oak Hill Cemetery Association was incorporated, with John B. Y. Warner and other prominent citizens as officers. Three days later, on March 19, the Rochester Common Council approved an ordinance permitting interments on the Oak Hill property. And three days after that, the cemetery association bought the Warner Tract from John and his sisters.

All of this suggests a well-lubricated political process. But something happened. On May 2, 1889, only six weeks after its original action, the Council retracted it.

Oak Hill litigated the retraction, but in 1891 lost in the New York State Court of Appeals, which ruled that what City Council gives it can likewise take away.

Proceedings of the meetings of March 19 and May 2, and those in between, provide some insight into these events. It must have been a queasy Council which gave the green light, because a committee charged with reviewing the decision was created almost immediately. This panel, through its chairman, Commissioner Halbert G. Thayer, reported on May 2 that “... your committee... has been confronted by the unpleasant fact that a full investigation of the subject does not confirm the earlier views of its members.” Mr. Thayer went on to make mention of inappropriate land use, neighborhood opposition and potential sanitary problems which it might be expensive for the city to remedy.

One suspects the committee was also acutely aware that Oak Hill would be formidably in competition with its own facility right across the street.

Time passed, and fortune apparently failed to smile upon Horatio Warner’s offspring. The land was sold back to John as part of a liquidation of the Oak Hill Association’s assets, but by 1902 property taxes were in arrears and on December 12 of that year the city foreclosed on substantially all of what is now Highland Park between South and Mt. Hope, and north of Reservoir Avenue.

John B. Y. Warner died in 1918. Where does he repose? Not to worry. His father, in 1868, had the foresight to purchase a suitable family plot in Mt. Hope Cemetery. You can find it in Section “L”, right behind the William Bausch mausoleum. The Warners are buried there.

Jack McKinney
The following is a list of possible restoration projects in Mt. Hope Cemetery. The first four items were suggested by two or more people. The Board of Trustees may, therefore, deem it desirable to accord these higher priority than the other recommendations. The projects are otherwise listed in random order, with importance to be decided by the Board.

1. Restore the 1863 Chapel, including a study of future uses.
2. Refurbish the interior of the North gate house, including furnishings.
3. Establish a computer system for cemetery recordkeeping, to aid accessibility to the public.
4. Repair and conserve damaged or threatened monuments.
5. Repair, paint, and extend perimeter fence.
6. Install a quality security system for all buildings.
7. Install markers for cemetery sections.
8. Devise a well-marked self-guided tour or tours with keyed booklets.
9. Set up a permanent exhibit of artifacts relating to 19th century attitudes towards death and funerary customs.
10. Restore the plantings in the "landmark area" of the cemetery.
11. Restore the walkway and roadway around the fountain lawn.
12. Restore the 1911 Chapel, including a study of future uses.

Please be aware that several of these projects might be interrelated. For example, the 1863 Chapel could be restored for use as a museum of funerary objects. The sectional markers could be used as reference points for a self-guided tour. Research on original plantings may yield information on paving materials once used around the fountain lawn.

It is hoped that this list will prove useful in determining future projects in Mt. Hope Cemetery.

TO OUR PRESENT MEMBERSHIP:

We need new members if we are to continue our work in Mt. Hope Cemetery. You can help us achieve this by sharing your newsletter with others about the goal of the "Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery", and what we have already achieved and what our plans are for the future.

Talk up our fine organization and the beautiful, historic cemetery we all want to preserve.

Shirley Stephens
Membership Secretary

HISTORIC CEMETERY CELEBRATES "SESQUI"! MT. HOPE HERITAGE DAY, OCTOBER 2

The City’s Mt. Hope Cemetery was one of the nation’s first great Victorian municipal resources of its kind.

An early focal point for community activities, Mt. Hope today serves as a museum of great funereal sculpture and a beautifully landscaped riverside setting for picnics, walks and tours.

Join us in celebrating this important monument to our City’s Heritage during the Mt. Hope Sesquicentennial in 1988 featuring gazebo fountain and plaque dedication.

Historic tours of the Cemetery are conducted by the Friends of Mt. Hope each Sunday at 2 pm and 3 pm, May 6- October 30. For special tours, call 461-3494.

The Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery are very sad to announce the death of DAVID GALLI, Supervisor of Cemeteries.

His dedication to the maintenance of the cemetery and to the "Friends" will be missed.
MT. HOPE CEMETERY
1838-1988
Membership Rates

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NAME ____________________________________________
STREET __________________________________________
CITY & STATE __________________________ ZIP ______
TELEPHONE __________________________

I cannot join, but would like to contribute $______________

FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY
791 Mt. Hope Avenue
Rochester, New York  14620

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