ADOPT-A-PLOT

As a young girl I was fascinated by graveyards. Each stone had its own history, and I was captured by the tales that many told.

A few years ago I read an article in the Reader's Digest about how a midwest city started a program they called "Adopt-A-Plot" to help maintain their cemeteries.

I mentioned this article and my interest to Richard Reisem, a Friend of Mt. Hope Cemetery, and I was soon involved. When I was assigned to care for the Frederick Douglass' plot, little did I realize that there were so many famous people resting there and that their graves were in need of care.

Spring planting, summer maintenance, fall "clean-up," and the anticipation and planning during winter make the time and work involved seem slight in comparison to the fulfillment derived from the effort put forth.

Maybe for an hour or so you'd like to forget about the pile of phone messages on your desk, or that report due tomorrow--maybe you should forget them the way that I do--Adopt-A-Plot!

Much of the enjoyment in this project comes when you learn more about the person you are caring for. Wherever your interest lies, there can be an association made with your involvement in the project. History has been made by many of these residents, and you can become closer to their history when you volunteer.

Please call 461-3494 and leave a message on the answering machine. Give your name, phone number and interest (Adopt-A-Plot). I'll return your call.

Gert Rivoli

Gert Rivoli Tends Her Plot

"SLEEPERS' CITY"

A history of Mt. Hope Cemetery by W. Stephen Thomas and Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck, "Sleepers' City", is available at the Gatehouse during the regular Sunday tours for $1. The cost is $1.50, if mailed. Please send a check to the Friends of Mt. Hope Cemetery, 791 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, New York 14620 and allow a few weeks for delivery.
OSCAR F. WILLIAMS
(1843-1909)

On the edge of the Spanish-American War Plot in Mt. Hope is a naval cannon, taken from the deck of the Reina Christina, the Spanish admiral’s flagship, after the battle of Manila Bay. It was presented to the County of Monroe by Oscar F. Williams, a man who served as consul-general at three posts during his career, and whose grave lies a short distance away.

Williams was born in Livonia, New York, on June 29, 1843. He attended preparatory school and then spent two years at the University of Michigan. In 1869 he graduated as valedictorian of Cornell University’s first class. Obtaining a higher education had been a struggle for him, since his father died when he was 19 years old.

After graduation, he spent two years in Kansas doing ranching and surveying, until poor health forced him to return east. He married Arabelle Sanford, also of Livonia, in 1872. For the next seventeen years he taught business subjects and mathematics at Rochester Business University (Rochester Business Institute) and also wrote textbooks.

Williams had been active in politics since his college days and campaigned for Republican candidates. He was an eloquent and effective speaker. Benjamin Harrison appointed him as U.S. Consul to Le Havre, France, where he ably served from 1889 to 1893. In 1897 William McKinley appointed him as U.S. Consul to Manila, Philippine Islands, then a Spanish possession. And there began an assignment that turned into a highpoint of his life.

Upon arrival, Williams, anticipating war with Spain, immediately visited arsenals, forts and batteries to collect information. Commodore Dewey, who had been ordered to Hong Kong with a fleet in case of war, requested information and Williams remitted it.

Despite orders from Washington to leave and Dewey’s refusal to sail without meeting him, Williams stayed in Manila. His life was in danger, but he was gathering more information, winding down the affairs of the consulate, and remaining Americans needed protection.

Finally, he acceded to the third order from Washington. War was imminent. He finished his consular duties and placed the remaining Americans on ships bound for Hong Kong or on neutral British ships in the harbor. Williams then sailed to Hong Kong on April 23, 1898, two days before the United States formally went to war with Spain, and joined the fleet 35 miles down the coast.

Williams met with Dewey and his officers, briefing them with his maps and information. When the fleet sailed for Manila, he was aboard the Baltimore. On the night of April 30, 1898, the fleet entered Manila Bay under sporadic fire from shore batteries. Williams was an eyewitness to the battle when it commenced at dawn. During a lull in the fighting he boarded the Olympia at Dewey’s invitation, and observed the rest of the action from the bridge. Later, from a speaker’s platform, he graphically described the battle. His information had been of value to Dewey. Williams received a letter of thanks from the government. Enclosed was a letter from Admiral Dewey. Dewey wrote, “I want to call the attention of the Department to the services of Consul Williams at Manila, which have been invaluable to the Navy and the Nation.”

Oscar F. Williams
After the United States annexed the Philippines, the consulate was no longer necessary and Williams returned home in December 1899.

Already a Filipino insurrection had started that lasted until 1902. Insurgent leaders wanted independence and believed that it had been promised them.

Williams later served as U.S. Consul at Singapore from 1901 to his retirement in 1905. After returning home, he went on the lecture circuit, taking an anti-imperialist position on the acquisition of the Philippines. He was not alone. Other Americans opposed the annexation of the islands, feeling that it was government without the consent of the governed. Also, there were economic and political reasons for opposing it. Williams thought it better to sponsor a “Malay Republic” in the Philippines rather than subjugate a people who wanted independence.

Ill health forced Williams to spend the last year of his life quietly. He died on December 1, 1909. Elizabeth Schmidt
(From reports in the Democrat & Chronicle)
Mrs. Arabella DuBois, granddaughter of O.F. Williams, has shared material she has gathered on her grandfather and a family photograph for this article.

SILENT SENTINELS

Standing guard at each end of the G.A.R. Civil War Plot are two Civil War cannon. H. J. Swinney, consulting curator at the Rochester Museum and Science Center, has identified them as U.S. Siege and Garrison 24-Pounder Howitzers, Model 1841. In regular army use the howitzers would be “mounted either on a heavy two-wheeled carriage with a long trail for siege use, or a so-called ‘flank casement’ carriage for fortress use.” They usually fired explosive shells or anti-personnel rounds.

Swinney provides the following description of the howitzers. The barrel measures 68-3/4” long, and the bore is 5.8” wide. Stamped on the muzzles are “R.H.K.W., MT VIW, and 1863,” followed by the weight and serial numbers of the pieces. The number 1863 indicates the year of manufacture, and R.H.K.W are the inspector’s initials—Robert Henry Kirkwood Whitely. “MT VIW” indicates the manufacturer, who is, as yet, unidentified. They each weigh 1486 pounds. Model numbers are 26 and 38. Above the trunnions (elevating pivots), “U.S.” is stamped on the barrel. The front and rear crosspieces are cast as the letters “U.S.” and intertwined in a gilt-painted monogram. Attached to the rear “U.S.” crosspiece is an elevating screw and wheel, now welded solid.

The howitzers are mounted on cast iron stands built for ornamental or monumental use. Swinney believes that the stands were cast at a government arsenal when the obsolete howitzers became available for such use in the 1880’s and 1890’s. Almost identical howitzers are located in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

Until the night of June 7, 1958, the howitzers stood silently on their mounts. On that night unknown pranksters sawed off the brass plates over the muzzles, loaded the howitzers, and using a long fuse, ignited the charge, which knocked them off their mounts and awoke the neighborhood. The howitzers were remounted, their muzzles cemented into silence, and again they stand at their posts.
ASSOCIATION FOR GRAVESTONE STUDIES
The Association for Gravestone Studies Annual Conference and Meeting will be held at the Governor Dummer Academy, Byfield, Massachusetts, June 22-25. The conference will include tours of Essex County’s early burying grounds, workshops, demonstrations, exhibits, and lectures. For registration contact Rosalee Oakley, Executive Director, 46 Plymouth Road, Needham, Massachusetts 02192.

NEW MEMBERS
The Friends welcomes these new members:
Margaret Fallon
James H. Martin
Jeanne F. McMahon
Tom Sullivan

GARDENING
Spring has arrived and now is the time to think about digging and planting. Anyone wishing to help with the gardens, call 461-3494 and leave a message on the answering machine. Our gardening chairperson, Carol Truesdale, will return your call.

TOURS
The regular Sunday tours resumed on May 7 at 2 and 3 o’clock from the Gatehouse, and will continue through October. Special tours are available by request. Please call 461-3494 and leave a message.

VOLUNTEERS
Volunteers are needed for tour guides, research, gatehouse receptionists, and special events. No experience is necessary. Call 461-3494 and leave a message. Someone will contact you.

THE FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY
NAME
STREET
CITY & STATE ZIP
TELEPHONE

I cannot join, but would like to contribute $__________________.

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