"Fandango" was a name given to the edifice built on the highest summit offering an unobstructed view of Rochester from Mt. Hope Cemetery. It was a favored resting point for the many Sunday strollers and first time visitors to the park-like Victorian cemetery. In proper climate and time of day, the view was splendid, unfolding the true beauty of a growing city nestled near the shore of Lake Ontario.

One needn't climb to the top of "Fandango" to take in the rolling glacial hills that lapped northward toward the city. Whether standing or sitting on the emerald knoll, one saw the quiet neighborhoods, the impressive business buildings along Main Street, the Genesee falling in its northern run to the lake, and miles of lush shoreline. No one could fail to be taken in by this vista.

April 16th of 1871 was a day worthy of a climb to "Fandango." The brightness and clarity of the day surely would afford a spectacular panorama, and thousands made that trek to find an eerie yet glorious sight!

Surely the earth had quaked! Yet how could such a drastic act of nature silently inundate all that was north of Main Street and bring our Canadian neighbors within sight? Was this queer, calm picture an actual transformation of young Rochester or a mirage to be marveled?

Among those gathered that day were some familiar with Canada's claim of Lake Ontario. Awe filled all as Rice Lake and other known sights of Canada were pointed out. For at time this vision was so clear, the forests of the opposite shore so detailed, it was impossible not to believe that a true catastrophe had occurred. It seemed apparent that Rochester's Main Street was now on the shore of Lake Ontario and Canada had become an even closer neighbor.

New arrivals to "Fandango" that day, having heard of the phenomenon, assured all who would listen that Rochester was unchanged. This incredible event would be reported in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper a month later as "The Rochester Mirage."

Old Mt. Hope Observatory
(Courtesy of Robert P. Fordyce)
At the top of a sharp rise in section M of Mt. Hope Cemetery, in the burial ground’s oldest Masonic plot, stands a tombstone inscribed on one side in English and on the other in Polish. “Tu spoczywa Franciszek Salezy Wolowski... Here rests Franciszek Salezy Wolowski, Judge of the Supreme Court of the First Instance of the Kingdom of Poland. Born in Warsaw on January 29, 1805, he died in Rochester on July 12, 1857.... Please pray for him.”

Wolowski’s tombstone—the inscription weathered, a cross that once graced its top now missing—represents the intriguing story of a man who was among the first Poles known to have resided in Rochester. He arrived in the City in the 1850’s, three decades before a group of immigrants from his homeland founded St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish and established Rochester’s Polish settlement. In many ways, he was unlike the artisans, laborers, and peasants who left Poland in search of livelihood at the end of the century. A wealthy landowner who held judicial office, Wolowski was an insurgent who plotted against Tsarist rule of his homeland and was forced to flee the country, settling eventually in Rochester where he taught languages to children and became a Master Mason of Yonnondio Lodge.

A relatively small number of Poles left their homeland in the initial half of the nineteenth century, before the first large wave of Polish immigration brought 3 million laborers and peasants to America between 1870 and 1924. Most of these early emigres were educated members of the gentry, and many were political refugees who had planned or participated in uprisings against foreign rule of Poland, controlled since 1795 by Prussia, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Some were also Masons, upholders of a tradition of Polish Freemasonry that began early in the 1700’s and took on nationalistic fervor during the century of Poland’s partition.

The few details known of Wolowski’s life are drawn from his tombstone inscription, unusual in its length, and from two articles that appeared in the Rochester Union and

“Here rests Franciszek Salezy Wolowski....”

Advertiser in July 1857. “We are pained to announce,” a reporter wrote on July 11, “that Mr. F.S. Wolowski, the well known teacher of French and German languages, was struck down by apoplexy last evening.... He has resided here several years and is very highly esteemed by all who have made his personal acquaintance.” Two days later, the newspaper followed its brief announcement of Wolowski’s illness with a notice of his death that presented an outline of the emigre’s life.

Born in Warsaw in 1805, Wolowski had been a “proprietor of large landed estates” which provided him a “princely income,” and had served the judicial court in Kalisz. In the 1840’s, he became active in a nationalistic organization dedicated to opposing Russian rule. When Wolowski’s membership in this group became known to authorities, he left the country clandestinely and was able to earn a “scanty living” in exile by teaching French.

He settled in Rochester in the 1850’s, where he and his wife, an Englishwoman, opened a foreign language school at the corner of East Avenue and William Street. While a resident of
Rochester, Wolowski gained admittance to Yonnondio Lodge, then one of four Masonic bodies in the city. His death in July 1857 drew the notice of the local press, which described the Pole as a man of “native goodness of heart” who had earned “eminent attainments in both literature and law (but) was destined to die in poverty—a stranger in a strange land.” In addition to his widow, whom he met after fleeing Poland, Wolowski left relatives in Europe: brothers and several children from a previous marriage.

His funeral took place from Christ Church on East Avenue, and a brief announcement beneath his obituary in the Union and Advertiser requested all members of Yonnondio Lodge to attend “to pay proper respect to the remains of their deceased brother.” Wolowski was buried in Mt. Hope Cemetery, in its first Masonic plot, beneath a tombstone offered “as a token of gratitude” by a son in Poland, most likely erected sometime after the father’s death.

Today, Franciszek Wolowski’s grave is difficult to find in the maze of hills and monuments that mark the 196 acres of Mt. Hope. A cross that originally topped the stone has been broken off, and the Polish inscription is illegible. Fortunately, a photo of the tombstone with its cross intact was included in Norman Lyon’s 1935 History of the Polish People in Rochester, accompanied by the full text of the Polish inscription. “Please pray for him,” the inscription requests, “for he had a great heart and distinguished himself with honorable deeds in his own country and in America.... For your prayers, you will have the gratitude of his son, Zygmunt Wolowski.”

Symbolism in Mt. Hope

The hour glass, alone or with wings, is symbolic of the swift passage of time and the shortness of life.

Epitaphs found in Mt. Hope

The Beloved Physician
Theodore Francis Hall
Born October 30, 1827
Died March 5, 1869
Those conceded skill in the councils of his profession whose rare social and sympathetic heart made him at once honored by the rich, loved by the poor All who knew him in life mourn him in death.

Erected by his friends

Carrie E. Tuttle
1831-1910
I do not know about the seed That I have tried to sow with greatest care; but I shall know all things that puzzle so Sometime, somewhere, when I have met my Lord.

(Kathleen Urbanic is a Friend of Mt. Hope who is completing an extensive study of the Polish community in Rochester. In research for Wolowski’s story, she was assisted by Jack McKinney of the Friends of Mt. Hope, John T. Skalny of Craftsman Lodge No. 969 of Free and Accepted Masons, Henry Archacki of Kosciuszko Lodge No. 1085 of Free and Accepted Masons, and Wojciech Przedziecki who provided an English translation of the Polish tombstone inscription.)
A SPECIAL NIGHT FOR MEMBERS

Members of the Friends gathered at the gatehouse on the night of September 13 for the first annual Membership Appreciation Day. It was a time for informally meeting and talking with other members, city officials, and members of the Friends' Board of Trustees. An interested group went on an evening tour. Others enjoyed refreshments and viewed a videotape with a section on Mt. Hope, produced by the Landmark Society, which ran continuously throughout the evening. Approximately 60 people attended.

CEMETERY TOURS

The Sunday tours of Mt. Hope ended on October 29. They will resume in May 1990.

Special tours are available throughout the year and may be arranged by calling 461-3494 and leaving a message.

GAZEBO NEEDS REPAIRS

Recent visitors to Mt. Hope may have noticed the large opening in the roof of the gazebo. Dampness and carpenter ants have damaged the structural wood. The finial was temporarily removed to aid in drying the wood. Michael Spencer is currently working to stabilize the condition, and the City will make permanent repairs in the future.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our new members:

Mrs. David Allyn
David P. Crawford
Nancy Elizabeth Gehl
Mrs. Shirley Cox Husted
Melanie Norton
Pamela A. Raguso & Family
Vera A. Spaulding
Gertrud M. Weymann

THE FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY

Membership Categories:

- Basic $15.00
- Contributing $25.00
- Supporting $35.00
- Patron $50.00
- Benefactor $100.00
- Life Membership $500.00 or more
- Retired/Student $5.00

FRIENDS OF MT. HOPE CEMETERY

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