

*Mount Hope Cemetery*  
*The History of Monroe County by W. H. McIntosh*

“**Mount Hope Cemetery.** No portion of the history of Rochester will be perused with greater interest than that one relating to Mount Hope Cemetery. Thousands people this city of the dead, and scarce a family in Rochester but is linked to this sacred spot, where repose the remains of kindred and friends. Mount Hope is of modern origin. For twenty-four years after the settlement of this city, the dead were interred in the old Buffalo street burying-ground, and other places; and not until 1836 was a movement made for the purchase of cemetery lands, to meet the requirements of a rapidly-growing city.

On the 24th day of August, 1836, Alderman David Scoville, of the fifth ward, offered a resolution in the common council of this city, ‘That a committee be appointed to inquire into the expediency of purchasing Silas Andrews’ lot on the east side of the river, or any other lot in the city, for a burial-ground, and report at a future meeting of the board. Mayor Schermerhorn appointed Alderman David Scoville, Manley G. Woodbury, and Warham Whitney as such committee. Soon after the action of the common council a meeting of the citizens was held, which recommended the purchase of lands suitable for burial purposes. The committee appointed by the mayor also reported in accordance with public sentiment, and, on the 20th day of the following December, Alderman John Haywood, after referring to the foregoing action of the citizens and report of the committee, moved that the common council approve of the recommendation both of citizens and committee, and that the city purchase the ground of Silas Andrews. This resolution was adopted; and, on December 27, provision was made for liquidating the indebtedness incurred in purchasing the land by authorizing an issue of city bonds, amounting to eight thousand dollars, payable in ten years. This loan was negotiated at par by the mayor, Abraham M. Schermerhorn.

January 10, 1837, John McConnell was directed to devise a plan for laying out the grounds. June 22, 1838, Elisha Johnson, mayor, Joseph Strong, Elias Pond, and Isaac F. Mack, aldermen, and Silas Cornell, city surveyor, were appointed a committee to submit plans for such purpose. The report of the committee was adopted on the 3d day of the following July, and William G. Russell appointed sexton. Great interest was manifested in the enterprise, and, in October following, Mount Hope was dedicated with proper public ceremonies, -the address being delivered by Rev. Pharcellus Church, D.D., third pastor of the First Baptist church of this city.

The following is an extract from the address, and may not be uninteresting to the citizens of to-day, who see Mount Hope transformed from its primitive condition to one of the most enchanting burial-places in the country. Mr. Church said, ‘At few points on the surface of the globe has nature been more liberal in its provisions for giving scope to these principles than in the neighborhood of our own city. Rural scenery, undulating surface, inviting features, both of beauty and sublimity, ponds that may be easily cleared and made to present a smooth and shining expanse as of molten silver, a dry and light soil, peculiarly favorable alike to the opening of graves and the preservation of them from the intrusion of water, and a location retired, and yet sufficiently contiguous to our city, are some of the advantages which conspire to make Mount Hope one of the most inviting cemeteries in the world. Good judges, who have visited both, pronounce its scenery

even more bold and picturesque than that of the celebrated Mount Auburn, in the neighborhood of Boston. In the small improvements which have been made on these grounds, how many interesting features have been developed! As we slowly wind round the mount, gradually rising to its summit like life in its advancing stages, we meet abrupt declivities, deeply-shaded valleys, natural arbors, towering heights, with their superincumbent weight of primeval forest, narrow ridges, on which you seem to poise between the deep descent on either hand, while your eye searches in vain for the bottom lands below. And when you stand on the summit itself, how enchanting is the prospect! The smooth current of the Genesee meandering round the base, and stealing its now obvious and now concealed way to the distant lake, like the passing of life through shade and sunshine to the ocean of eternity. Around you see, spread out in ample view, the rich fields of one of the richest countries in the world, sending their loaded harvests to the marts of trade and supplying the staff of life to millions of people. Before you lies the thronged city, with its spires and minarets pointing to heaven, while the clatter of machinery, or the deep-toned bell, or the voices of living multitudes, united to the roar of the neighboring cascades, all send up to heaven a voice as deafening and discordant as the cries of factious clans in the world's tumultuous theatre. Far off beyond the city, the broad blue Ontario skirts the undefined distance, as if to remind you of the boundless fields of existence which eternity will unfold, and to make you feel how few and meagre are the objects subjected to our present inspection compared with those in the distance which a future world will disclose.'

After continuing at some length, and repeating the words, 'The hour is coming when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation,' he formally dedicated the cemetery with the following remarks: 'By the order and in behalf of our municipal board, I do now formally declare this wild retreat dedicated to the repose of the dead, henceforth and forever. In the highest sense in which a transfer can be made, Mount Hope by this act passes from the hand of the living to the hand of the dead. It is an inviolable and unending trust. Nevermore shall the dwellings or occupations of the living obtrude within these sacred precincts. Whatever is here transacted shall be done in furtherance of the ends of this our solemn dedication.

Let this place henceforth be visited to revive the memory of departed friends and to anticipate the exalted scenes of eternity. Here let the lover find a retreat of quiet, weeping over the untimely fate of his betrothed, and to deck her grave with flowers. Here let the father erect his monument to the memory of his noble son, who from the threshold of a promising manhood dropped into eternity. Here let the profligate son catch the inspirations of repentance and virtue as he gazes on the last memorials of his pious parents. Here let the daughter revive a mother's image and endearments,

'While this place of weeping still  
Its lone memorial keeps,  
Whilst on her name, 'midst woods and hills,  
The quiet sunshine sleeps.'

'Here let maternal love find a calm resort to awaken associations of its infant charge, and to dwell with thankful interest upon Him who has said, 'In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my father who is in heaven.' Here let a grateful public pay their tribute to talent, learning, and industry, devoted to the best interests of mankind. And oh, that coming generations may receive, amid these wild and impressive scenes, the inspiring lessons of truth, of piety, and religious hope! May the eye that from this point looks mournfully upon the surrounding landscape be favored, like Moses from the summit of Pisgah, with bright visions of the promised rest in heaven! May the tears which fall upon these consecrated grounds water a harvest of religious fruits, which shall be gathered unto life everlasting! From this mount of vision may 'prayer ardent open heaven!

'Let down a stream of sacred glory  
On the consecrated hour  
Of man in audience with the Deity.'

'From these graves may levity be forever banished, to give place to the awful emotions awakened by the conscious presence of ethereal spirits! Let the step be slow and reverential; let the voice be pitched to tones of seriousness and truth; let the bosom heave with tenderness and love; and let the whole soul bow in devout adoration of Him who holds the keys of life and of death.'

The earliest recorded sale of these lands, as a distinct tract, bears date April 30, 1817, in a conveyance from Elijah Northrup to Eli Stillson, father of the present efficient superintendent, for the magnificent sum of three hundred and sixty-seven dollars. July 12, 1821, Mr. Stillson sold it to John Mastick for two hundred and sixty-two dollars, who disposed of it to Silas Andrews, January 1, 1822, for two hundred and eighty-seven dollars. Mr. Andrews remained the owner until January 2, 1837, fifteen years afterwards, when he sold it to the city for the sum of five thousand three hundred and eighty-six dollars.

The first interment at Mount Hope was made August 18, 1838. In 1859 an entrance was constructed, at a cost of ten thousand one hundred and thirty dollars and seventeen cents. This building was removed in 1874, and was replaced by the present handsome and commodious edifice. It is built of gray stone, and is complete in all its appointments. A handsome marble tablet placed in the wall bears the following inscription:

ERECTED IN 1874-1875.  
*Commissioners.*  
James H. Kelly, Wm. S. Smith,  
Jonathan H. Child, Newell A. Stone.  
*Superintendent.*  
George D. Stillson.  
*Asst. Superintendents.*  
G. F. Stillson, Joseph L. Stone.

A. J. Warner, Architect.

John Mauder, Mason Work.

M. Briggs & Son, Iron Work.

H. S. Hebard, Marble Work.

The chapel and vault were erected in 1860, at a cost of ten thousand four hundred and eighty-seven dollars and ninety-three cents.

The improvements have ever been of a character to render it a beautiful rural cemetery. The limited means of the self-sustaining organization have rendered the erection of elaborate artificial structures impossible, and the managers have never sought to compete with those whose wealth and taste stimulated them to the erection of imposing and costly memorials, but have beautified and adorned the grounds with natural decorations of trees and flowers.

Mount Hope has always been managed without expense to the city: neither is there any enforced taxation upon its lot-owners. Its means have been supplied by that portion of the community who voluntarily make use of it, and it has besides afforded, without cost, interments for more than two thousand persons whose misfortune it was to be deprived of earthly means. The cemetery is owned and controlled by the city corporation, and is under the management of a board of commissioners appointed by the common council, and assisted by a resident superintendent. The present commissioners are Newell A. Stone, James H. Kelly, and William S. Smith. Superintendent, George D. Stillson.

The peculiar beauty of the situation of Mount Hope is so proverbial, far and wide, that a minute description is hardly necessary. It consists of ridges and ravines, most beautifully adapted by nature to the purposes for which it is used, while the continuous outlay of artistic skill has brought it to a state of improvement that renders it a charming retreat; and the people of Rochester have reason to be proud of Mount Hope, one of the most picturesque and beautiful cemeteries in the United States.”

SOURCE: Reprinted from McIntosh, W. H., *History of Monroe County, New York; With Illustrations Descriptive Of Its Scenery, Palatial Residences, Public Buildings, Fine Blocks, and Important Manufactories, From Original Sketches By Artists Of The Highest Ability*. Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign & Everts, 716 Filbert Street, 1877, Pages 111-113.  
<<http://books.google.com>>