



The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery
2020 Annual Report
April, 2021

Each year our Annual Report provides us an opportunity to give our members and the community a brief description of our numerous activities during the preceding year. As an all-volunteer organization, these milestones are a testament to the dedication of our volunteers and the support of our members.

Above all, we must always keep in mind how critical our organization is. Mount Hope Cemetery is a historical treasure, listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This cemetery is a destination stop for visitors and researchers from all over the world. Being a municipal cemetery, it lacks the financial support of other private historic cemeteries of the same vintage. It is the efforts and vision of the Friends of Mount Hope which focus on the history, the preservation, and the beauty of this hallowed place.

A year of challenge – 2020-- provided us opportunities for creativity. How could we fulfill our mission in a year with such a myriad of restrictions? Let's take a look.

Restoration

2020 was an exemplary year for restoration. The Susan B. Anthony area, the focus of two years' work, was prepared for election week visitors. The Anthony Family gravestones were cleaned, and a Victorian fence installed on the adjoining hill to prevent erosion and control crowds. The Gazebo was painted by our painter Emily Sniezyk and a three-year restoration completed. Our major achievement was to repair and reset over 300 gravestones in Sections C and D which were adjacent to the SBA target area. In the Nathaniel Rochester area, 37 stones were repaired thanks to funds from the DAR and the FOMH. Steps were repaired and railings installed throughout the cemetery as a result of a grant from Daisy Marquis Jones. The stone cleaning committee led by Valerie O'Hara continued their Sunday work days to clean stones.

Cradle Grave Program

The cradle graves program grew by leaps and bounds in 2020, thanks to the leadership of Robbie Dreeson. Cradle Graves were popular in the Victorian era. At Mount Hope most of the cradle graves were erected by people of German descent, our largest immigrant group, who brought this custom from their country of birth. Originally most of these gardens would have been planted and maintained by the family of the deceased, but over the last several decades they have been abandoned as families moved away.

The Mount Hope Cradle Grave Gardeners is a program where volunteers adopt a cradle grave which they plant and care for throughout the gardening season.

Last year over 100 volunteers planted 80 of these graves. Another 70 cradle graves were discovered last summer in various sections of the cemetery. Some of these grave gardens were repaired by volunteers, and some more challenging gardens will need to be professionally repaired. Currently there are 33 cradle graves available to adopt.

Care for Gardens and Trees

FOMH volunteers maintained eleven garden plots and four planters in the cemetery. Mary Olinger led our gardening group working in the Fountain area. FOMH provided funds for the annual professional treatment of five iconic trees, trees that were gifts of the Ellwanger Barry nurseries in 1848. FOMH volunteers also maintained the Douglass and Anthony Family plots. A volunteer-created website focusing on the trees in Mount Hope Cemetery (<https://www.plantsmap.com/organizations/fomh>) expanded. Five new trees were purchased, planted, and maintained (watered!). Tom Jones, our tree expert, oversees all our trees programs.

Landscape Volunteers

Our many landscape volunteers led by Tom Jones, Chris Petote, and Tony Filer, work in collaboration with the City of Rochester to work on projects which are suggested in the City's Master Plan. Every week during all seasons our teams are hard at work. The City's 2nd Saturday Program of volunteers is operated by the FOMH.

Removing invasive species is one of the projects of the Friends. We are fortunate to have an enthusiastic group of volunteers.

Daffodils

Our dear friends Bill and Mykel Whitney adopted a kettle near Sylvan Waters and for two years have been working to improve this area. One of their ideas is to plant thousands of daffodils, and they have. We contributed as well. As a result, in a few weeks you will find a paradise of daffodils blooming in and around their kettle. People come just to see this blanket of yellow; they bring their children and take photos. It is becoming a new MH tradition!

Gatehouse Improvements

The Friends of Mount Hope took advantage of tour cancellations to make many improvements in the Gatehouse. We received a generous donation from Don Hall for blinds for all the windows in the gatehouse. The Empire Sofa was refurbished thanks to a gift from Dennis Carr. Dennis was the recipient of the prestigious Community Service Award at the University of Rochester, and was given a gift of money for his favorite charity. The windows were cleaned, and old file cabinets were removed in the office to allow light into the room. Our new archivist Olivia Arnone reorganized all our files and updated all our paper work into new low file cabinets. A new sink was installed. The hall and rest rooms in the basement were painted and decorated.

Lovely paintings were donated by John Bliss. The iconic stained-glass window was restored by Valerie O'Hara of Pike Stained Glass Studios. This window from the Strong Mausoleum in Section M was donated by Douglas and Cynthia Clapp, descendants of Henry A. Strong.

We are grateful to our gatehouse team: Chris Petote, Chris Grooms, Tony Filer, Chris Conway, Tom Jones, Robbie Dreeson, Olivia Arnone, Kristine Klein, Dennis Carr, and Valerie O'Hara.

Bluebird Project

Mount Hope Cemetery is proud to be a "Certified Wildlife Habitat." Our Bluebird Project is part of this initiative. In 2006, 12 nest boxes were placed in the best habitat areas for encouraging bluebirds. Our bluebird project continues today. We are so grateful to Sheryl Gracewski and her team of volunteers who monitor our nests and write us a final report each year. This group monitors our flying squirrel and red-tailed hawk population as well.

Sheryl's report for 2020 is available on our website.

Pop-Up Historian Program

With the cancellation of the entire 2020 tour season, the idea of a Pop-Up Historian Program was born, the brain child of Deb Coffey and Dennis Carr.

The basic concept of the program was that the historian remained stationary while the participants went on a self-guided quest assisted by maps highlighted with featured locations. The program was four hours in length allowing participants ample time to travel to all the stops. The program format allowed for social/physical distancing between people.

From July through October, we conducted four Pop-Up Historian programs. Each of the four programs had a unique theme that connected the stops and stories together.

- Civil War
- Six Degrees of Separation of Susan B. Anthony
- Made in Rochester: Goods, Services, & Ideas of the Flower City
- The South End Saunter

The Pop-Up Historian program proved successful and was very well received by the public. We received many positive comments and compliments.

Most importantly, the program gave our volunteers a sense of purpose, camaraderie, and engagement during a very uncertain time.

Mount Hope Moments Video Project

In lieu of tours, the Friends embarked on a project to produce short videos and post them on our YouTube channel with the purpose of keeping the public engaged with the cemetery and the Friends. Under the leadership of videographer Chris Grooms, nine videos were produced.

Mourning in the Morning

We are very excited and proud of our Mourning in the Morning program. This collaboration with the Rochester Public Library has allowed our members to share their research beyond the Rochester community. Each of these one-hour presentations are available on our website. We thank our City Historian Christine Ridarsky and her associate Brandon Hess for their assistance. We are proud to share our research with the community. We produce 6 programs a year, so you can look forward to our new program in September featuring Sally Millick.

Publications

Throughout 2020, FOMH continued to sell its previously published books about the cemetery. FOMH also printed and distributed to all members four issues of its acclaimed *Epitaph* magazine edited by Richard Reism.

Genealogical Services

As a free, volunteer service to the public, FOMH responded to inquiries for burial and other information, typically from family members and descendants of persons buried in the cemetery. During 2020, FOMH genealogist Nancy Uffindell assisted 120 people from the United States, Canada, England, Germany and Israel.

Public Relations

FOMH maintains an active up-to-date website managed by Jan Wyland and a Facebook page kept current by Chris Petote. Throughout 2020, FOMH communicated with the public via outreach to local newspapers, radio, and TV outlets and reached its members via email alerts (via Constant Contact). Our PR chair, and zoom specialist, is Pat Sorce.

Membership

FOMH membership significantly decreased in 2020, ending the year with 455 members including 53 new members. This resulted from not having tours. However, we continue to be grateful for the generosity of our members, and hope to rebuild our membership numbers in 2021. Membership chair is Kristine Klein.

Old Chapel Restoration Committee

This new 2020 committee, chaired by Chris Grooms, is focused on stabilization of the building and renovation/restoration of the interior chapel space with the goal of making this a usable space for tours, presentations, events, and exhibits. This effort is a collaboration between the City of Rochester and The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery. We are most grateful for a generous donation from a Brighton Family to support this vital project.

In conclusion, 2020 was a year of challenge, but people throughout the community found isolation tolerable by frequent visits to Mount Hope. Members could work on their cradle graves, participate in work projects, and express their creativity through virtual programs.

The vital work of the Friends was able to continue even during a pandemic! Our beautification and restoration projects offered solace and hope to our many visitors during this difficult time.

Patricia Corcoran
President

Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery
Financial Information – 2020

As an all-volunteer organization with a building (the 1874 Gatehouse) provided by the Cemetery, FOMH has low overhead expenses, enabling it to devote a high percentage of its revenues to cemetery improvements. While COVID19 dramatically altered FOMH's earned revenues, FOMH's low overhead couple with gratifying support in 2020 from members, foundations and, especially donors, enabled significant Cemetery Improvement projects to proceed.

The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery Fund, plus five trust account designated for specific mausoleums and family plots, is invested with the Rochester Area Community Foundation. FOMH's budget, as shown below, always excludes trust fund activity. If 2020 investments produced revenues at 5%, as budgeted, FOMH would have ended 2020 with a smaller surplus (\$3,823).

FOMH operates on a "cash basis" that produces different results from an accrual system, as restricted funds (both grants and designated donations) are recorded in the year received, though all monies are always spent as designated. FOMH started 2020 with \$27,695 in previously received restricted funds, received \$44,110 in new grants and designated contributions, used \$44,841 of restricted monies (plus additional FOMH matching funds) on designated projects and ended the year with \$26,964 of unspent restricted funds.

The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery (FOMH) utilizes a CPA firm to prepare IRS Form 990 and NYS CHAR 500 and to provide accounting advice. Treasurer Henry McCartney, a volunteer with over 35-years of nonprofit management experience, oversees FOMH's finances.

January-December 2020

Revenue	FOMH CORE		Trusts
Membership	\$26,459	29%	
Merchandise	\$ 2,501	3%	
Government Support	0	0%	
Grants	\$23,714	26%	
Tours and Events	\$ 885	1%	
Contributions	\$23,946	27%	
Investment Income	<u>\$12,810</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>\$20,227</u>
Subtotal	\$90,315	100%	\$20,227
Expenditures			
General & Admin	\$ 6,502	8%	
Education/Website	\$ 1,409	2%	
Merchandise Expense	\$ 616	1%	
Epitaph Magazine	\$ 7,620	9%	
Tour Expense	\$ 244	0%	
 CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS	 <u>\$ 65,954</u>	 <u>80%</u>	 <u>\$ 2,635</u>
	\$ 82,345	100%	\$ 2,635

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