Genealogical Guide to Monroe County, New York

Cemetery Records and Tombstone Inscriptions

It appears from looking at old cemetery records that New York State did not try to regulate cemeteries until around the year 1900. Few cemeteries in this area have burial records before that time. The records that do exist may be difficult to locate because they are usually kept at a private home for most of the smaller and rural cemeteries. In many cases, the only record of an individual who died in the 18th or 19th century may be a transcription of data from the tombstone collected by a dedicated individual or by a civic or patriotic society. The collection of printed tombstone inscriptions in the Local History and Genealogy Division of the Rochester Public Library is one the best collections available. That said, many of the tombstone inscriptions from the 1920s and 1930s are often incomplete. The library website also has a transcription of all the cemeteries in the Town of Ogden (1803 – 2004) and another transcription of Garland Cemetery in the Town of Clarkson. Both of those are records were compiled by Donald Specht who is active in the Ogden Farmers' Library.

Our Mother of Sorrows Cemetery

One of the first things to be added to the GenWeb of Monroe County website in 1996 was tombstone transcriptions. Although not complete, the records on the cemetery page have become a good source for tombstone and burial records. Donations of burial records came from the Oakwood Cemetery Association in Penfield who also have donated burial records of Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in Fairport. The Town of Sweden donated the burials records of Lakeview/Beach Ridge Cemetery and Brockport Cemetery in Sweden. The GenWeb cemetery page also has GPS coordinates for most cemeteries. Then there are links to maps on Google Maps and Mapquest that will show where cemeteries are located.

The New York State Library also has a large collection of Monroe County tombstone inscriptions, the majority of which are in the over 650 printed volumes of Unpublished Cemetery, Church and Town Records (NYPL 974.7 qD23). Those were compiled by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) starting in the 1920s. Some Monroe County cemeteries have as many as four transcriptions in those volumes. These volumes are indexed by town in a card file in the Local History Division of the State Library. There are also a few other groups of inscriptions available in booklet form.

Note that FamilySearch has filmed approximately the first 400 volumes of the DAR's Unpublished Cemetery, Church and Town Records. The problem is that none of the cemetery records within the volumes are in their card catalog so they are almost impossible to find. The LDS Eastern Stakes Mission compiled an 11 volume collection of cemetery records and tombstone inscriptions. This collection covers much of New York State and New England. The collection is available at both Family History Centers in Monroe County and the Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In 1995 FamilySearch filmed the original burial records of the Mt. Hope Cemetery in Rochester (1837 – 1995). Those microfilms of the the Mt Hope records are available at the Family History Library in Salt Lake

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City and for rent at their Family History Centers around the world. They also have films of burials in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery (1871 - 1915). For smaller cemetery records available, search the FamilySearch Catalog for records by town. A large portion of those records for smaller cemeteries are only available as printed records in Salt Lake City.

The University of Rochester has online images of both Mt. Hope Cemetery (1837 – 2002) and Riverside Cemetery (1892 – 2002) that can be view on this web page. Note that you only should put the first letters of the surname in the search box and select a volume and it gives pages that match your search.

The Rochester Genealogical Society (RGS) has this PDF file that will help you to interpret the burial locations in Mt. Hope Cemetery. They also have digital images of the Mt. Hope plot books that will show other family members buried in family plots. RGS also has an extensive collection of records of Riverside Cemetery. This includes alphabetic indexes that are of better quality than the ones available from the University of Rochester. The collection of Riverside Cemetery also includes burials by date and plot books. They also have burial records and plot ownership records for Fairfield Cemetery in the Village of Spencerport.

Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Rochester has a website with a search page. Search results will give you the date of burial, burial location and age. If you click on "more information" for a person, you get the death date and you can also click on "map" and it will show you the location of the grave. The same information is available at a kiosk in the lobby of the cemetery office (2461 Lake Ave., Rochester, NY 14612). The cemetery claims that the online and kiosk information are complete but research has shown that some of the earliest burials in pauper section are not in the data. Those can be found in original burial records that were filmed by FamilySearch (see description above).

A few Monroe County cemeteries have put their records on their own websites; Maplewood Cemetery (Penfield), Webster Rural Cemetery (Webster), Webster Union Cemetery and Parma Union Cemetery (Parma). The Village of Churchville has a search page that is a combined search in the burial records for the Churchville (also called Cheekside) Cemetery and St. Vincent de Paul Cemetery. Those two cemeteries adjoin each other and both are managed by Churchville.

The Henrietta Public Library has a web page with cemetery records for all cemeteries in the Town of Henrietta. The Ogden Farmers' Library in the Town of Ogden has a collection of tombstone records in three-ring binders. Their records are mostly for the towns in the northwestern part of Monroe County: i.e. Hamlin, Sweden, Clarkson and, of course, Ogden

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Find A Grave has become the largest website of cemetery records for the United States. It has a great collection of records for Monroe County. Most people search for a name but you can also search for cemetery and view all people buried there. Find A Grave also has photos of some of the tombstones. If there is a record of a person without a photo of the tombstone then you can request a photo of the tombstone. In some cases it may take a few years before anyone will get to the cemetery to take a photo.

Billion Graves also has cemetery records from around the globe. It is smaller than Find A Grave but all the records have photos of the tombstone. The volunteers that take photos for Billion Graves have to use a camera with GPS. That means that there also is a map for each person showing where the person is buried in the cemetery.

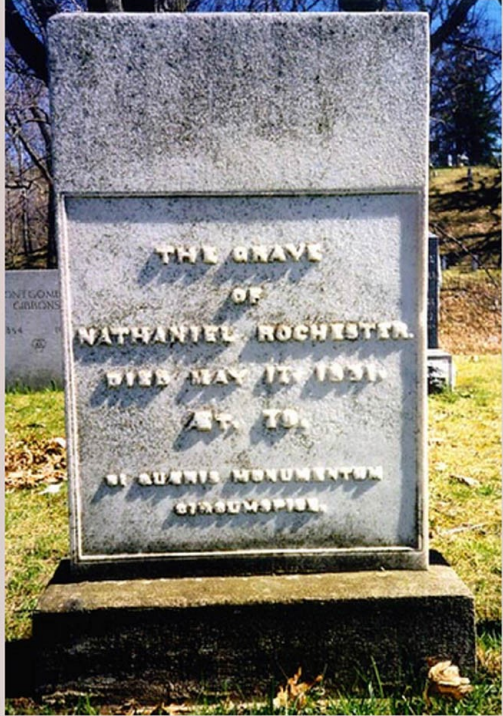A much smaller project with photos of area tombstones is New York Gravestones. That website only has about 1,000 tombstone photos for Monroe County.