

HISTORIC CEMETERIES

By

Shirley Cox Husted

CEMETERIES FOR GREECE

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"Ye fleeting charms of earth farewell--
Your springs of joy are dry.
My soul now seeks another home,
A brighter world on high."

Although Greece is Monroe County's most populous town, many of its citizens did not find their last resting place there. Cemeteries in adjacent areas--especially Riverside Cemetery and Holy Sepulchre Cemetery along the Genesee River, the little cemetery at Kings' Landing near today's Hanford Landing Road, Hincer Cemetery in Charlotte and the West Greece Cemetery (which is actually located across the town line in the town of Parma) today contain the graves of many beloved Greece residents.

In 1798, the dreaded Genesee Fever, now believed to be a form of malaria, killed six men at King's Landing. They were buried on the river bank near the 1798 grave of Elizabeth Hazelton Fish (Mrs. Josiah Fish), in a burial plot nearly opposite today's Lake Avenue gate of the Eastman Kodak Company. Hers was the first death in today's city of Rochester, making the site the oldest cemetery in the city. Eastman Kodak has claimed title to the cemetery, through a quit claim deed.

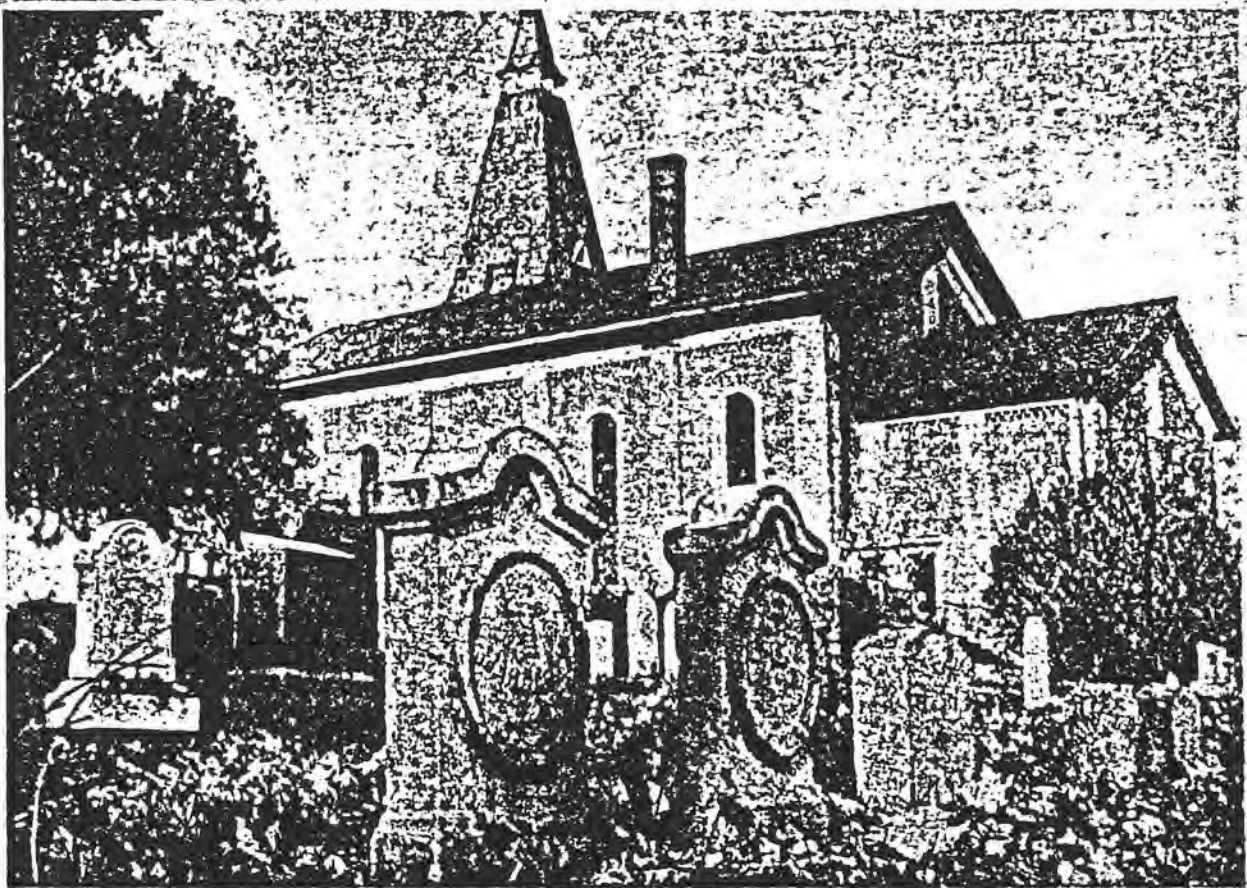
Another burial nearby is that of George Eastman, whose ashes were interred beneath a marble monument on the grounds of Eastman Kodak Company. The land where Kodak stands and the King's Landing site had originally been part of Greece until George Eastman succeeded in his attempt to have it annexed to the city in 1919. Charlotte Cemetery (Hincer Cemetery) then became part of the city also. Vandals struck there in the 1950s.

Charlotte's storied old cemetery contains the graves of sea captains and lighthouse keepers, early pioneers and veterans and one national hero: Sam Patch, a reckless daredevil who leaped to his death in 1829, apparently dislocating his shoulder as he jumped off the high lower falls before a great crowd of onlookers on Friday the 13th. An Irish farmer found his body in the river ice at Charlotte the next spring and he was interred in the cemetery, bringing instant fame to Hinchey Cemetery. A historical marker now stands near his humble grave.

The oldest grave in Hinchey cemetery is that of Elizabeth Currier, who died in 1812. Samuel Currier and his many wives was a colorful hotel keeper at Charlotte. William Hinchey, first white settler on the west bank of the Genesee, (1791) is buried there beside his wife, Mehetabel, who died at the age of 93 in 1839. The gravestone identifying James Stone as the first baby born in Rochester is incorrect: he was born in the Stone tavern at Brighton. Samuel Latta, early pioneer and custom's collector, lies at rest there, near the road that bears his name.

While it has been said that half of Charlotte's population were smugglers and the other half custom house officers, that rumor is untrue, but it might be said that many of them were hotel keepers, as saloons flourished, and some of the innkeepers of the past, including the Latta family, now rest forever from their labors alongside the heroes and patriots in the historic Charlotte cemetery.

Photograph by ACE WATSON



Church at corner of Mount Read and Latta will now be a public library branch.

Incorporated in 1900 under the Ridge Road Cemetery Association, Falls Cemetery on Ridge Road is the largest active cemetery today, thought to be named in honor of William Fall, a tavern keeper. At least one ghost story has survived regarding this cemetery. In the 1940s when a new section of the cemetery was added, bones were found in a rude grave with flat field stones standing on edge around the gravesite. Since no burials had been known to exist in the area, it was thought they might be the remains of an unknown peddler reputed to have been killed at the hotel during a heated argument. It was not unusual, however, for early pioneer graves to be so indicated, with fieldstone outlines, in an era when tombstones were expensive and/or difficult to obtain.

In 1967, when the land including the old Wagner Cemetery was taken for a parking area at Park-Ridge Hospital, that cemetery was dug out at enormous expense and moved, dirt and all, to Falls Cemetery where the 137 pioneers once in Wagner were reinterred. Only twelve tombstones then remained in existence and the names of only 14 of those buried in Wagner were available, based on a DAR survey when 14 stones remained. Some of the pioneers may never had had a tombstone.

The Wagner burial plot at 1543 Lond Pond Road near Ridgeway Avenue, also known as the Big Ridge Cemetery, had burials dating back to 1823. The first known burial in Falls Cemetery was in 1801. There were two Revolutionary War veterans (Captain Charles

Norton and Daniel Warner) and two War of 1812 veterans (including Asa Hurd) in Wagner Cemetery. Asa Hurd's descendant, Dorothy Vincent Clark, initiated court action to block the removal of the graves from the southeastern portion of the hospital plot, but her suit was unsuccessful. Veterans of succeeding wars rest in Falls Cemetery, but there are no records of Wagners in Wagner cemetery and no Falls listed in Falls Cemetery. Family names found in the Wagner cemetery were: Card, Cheney, Demick, Hurd, Norton, Northam, Perkins, Spaulding, Strong and Warner.

When the Ridge-Latona intersection was widened in 1968, highway traffic was routed within a few feet of the headstones. The cemetery fence was a victim of the installation of a gas line along Latona Road that year. In 1974, vandalism occurred just before Memorial Day.

Tombstones from the North Greece Cemetery, 38 Peck Road, were taken up and placed in a circle around a lofty pine tree a few decades ago. Now virtually all have disappeared. When the Daughters of the American Revolution surveyed the cemetery in 1931, nineteen stones existed, for families named: Bence, Benedict, East, Gault, Jennings, Johnson, Kenny, McKenny, Miller, Odell, Smith, Whitacre and Wilkinson.

Betsey Clemons is the first known burial in the Frisbee family cemetery on Frisbee Hill Road. She died in 1833. Edward, Polly, Helen, James, Charlotte and Ida Frisbee also rest here.

At the head of Long Pond Road off Flynn Road lies the grave of Harriet Tennison who died June 17, 1837 at the age of 24.

Nearby, several members of the Massey family are buried in unmarked graves and many other stones in this small cemetery have also disappeared.

The Lowden family cemetery on Lowden Point Road near the head of Long Pond has been protected by Lowden descendants who became prosperous as Bloomingdale's Department Store executives. A fence has been erected to protect the graves of Stephen, Anne, Elizabeth, Jacob, William and Ann Lowden. Elizabeth, an infant who passed away in 1824, seems to be the initial burial. All of the little private burying grounds contain infants' graves, mute testimony to the tragedy of pioneer diseases. "Angels seeking treasures bright, bore them upward to the light."

Three Jewish cemeteries have been established on Britton Road: Beth Chaim and Beth Hakneses at 188 Britton and Bnai Israel Achavas Achim at 340 Britton Road.

In the fall of 1938 a new cemetery on Britton Road near Bennington Drive was planned for members of the Rochester Workmen's Circle and their families. Beth Hakneses Hachodosh sold part of its Britton Road cemetery to Congregation B'nai Israel-Ahavas Achim in 1967.

The three cemeteries have suffered from repeated desecration. Twenty-one stones were topped in 1953, four in the spring of 1958, twenty-eight in November, 1958 in the section owned by the Rochester Jewish Relief Organization,

additional markers were topped in 1962 and in the fall of 1966. In the spring of 1970, vandals struck again in the Rochester Jewish Relief section on the east side of the cemetery. Seventy-eight markers fell at Halloween time in 1971, forty-six in March, 1974. In 1988 additional damage occurred twice on the site at 188 Britton Road, now known as Beth Chaim Cemetery, extending between Forgham Road and the Baltimore & Ohio railroad tracks. On May 13, seventy-four headstones were damaged and on June 26 about 17 headstones were overturned. Two young men were charged with criminal mischief.

Paddy Hill Cemetery adjoining Our Mothers of Sorrows Church, contains the graves of many of the early Irish settlers of Greece, including the venerable priest, Father Louis Jean Maurice, an early priest at Mother of Sorrows (founded in 1829 as the Church in the Woods and dedicated to St. Ambrose); Father Maurice was also the founder of Holy Cross Church and St. John the Evangelist Church. The cemetery dates back to 1829.

In 1970 the Greece Town Board approved Trinity Episcopal Church's request for a columbarium in their church, for the interment of crematory remains. The vault was to be the first of its kind in Greece, with a less than 100 capacity.

Over 200 burials are thought to have been made in the West Greece Cemetery, the first known in 1812. The little crossroads community at the intersection of Manitou Road and Ridge Road West was settled by relatives from Windhall and Bennington, Vermont,

near Hoosick, N. Y. It became known as "Hoosick".

Veterans of several wars rest in the aged cemetery, one of the oldest burying grounds on Ridge Road. Deacon Ephraim Day who died August 23, 1825 at the age of 85 years was a French & Indian War veteran who sailed with Lord Jeffrey Amherst in 1754 when the British attacked Quebec. He later marched with the militia during the Lexington alarm. His neighbor, Orrin Hale also sailed with Amherst and would later help command the Genesee County militia as captain of the 7th artillery regiment. They are buried at Hoosick along with veterans of the Black Hawk Indian Wars.

The graveyard stood by the old sanctuary of the First Congregational Society of Christ of Parma and Greece that once straddled the town line. The church had been organized in 1819 and its sanctuary erected in 1824, the first religious structure on Ridge Road in Monroe County.

When Manitou Road was rebuilt as a WPA project in the 1930s, the highway was straightened. Its course proceeded right through the cemetery. Several residents later spoke of their horror when they passed by and saw coffins cut in two, with bones sticking out from what remained of Hoosick Hill. The debris was carted away to the town dump and much of the earth of Hoosick Hill was used for highway grading work. As Ridge Road was continually widened and ever-increasing traffic passed by, the beautiful old German prayer: "Ruh sanft in dieser stillen"--rest gently in this quiet tomb--became impossible for the pioneer souls at

Hoosick. Despite neighborhood opposition, Parma Town Board approved a miniature golf course next door to the cemetery in 1988, increasing the possibility of vandalism.

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