

## Cemeteries: Not a deadly topic

Chautauqua County Historical Society

October 26, 2002

Thank you for coming. Last week I asked a member about attending today and was told, "Oh no, I don't like that topic at all." But what a perfect topic for an historical society. A Cemetery is a great place to find stories of the past.

I used to wonder why cemeteries were enclosed in elaborate fences, or thick hedges, or walls. And even in unfenced cemeteries, we find individual family plots fenced or curbed? Do you know why? A possible answer was found in a letter to the editor of the *Jamestown Journal* published August 21, 1833, one-hundred-sixty-nine years ago. The letter is signed "A Stranger," but I suspect the author may have been Dr Elial T Foote (of Foote Papers fame) who at that time was much interested in closing the Jamestown Pioneer Cemetery on Cherry Street and the developing a beautiful new cemetery at the Lake View site. He starts by praising the prosperous condition of the village, then gets to his point in the second paragraph.

"I must acknowledge, however, that my feelings were greatly shocked, when I passed your burying ground. Although I might spend my life in your neighborhood very agreeably, I should shudder at the thought that my mortal remains should inhabit your grave yard. Never do I wish my body to be disturbed by the numerous swine which infest your street in the day, and in the night take up their abode with the dead." He continues with the paragraph that gives away his identity.

"Perhaps I know what half your citizens do not, that in your village are two burying grounds. One is in a street which I understand has been lately laid out, and the other-- the present place of interment, is without fence, hedge, or wall. I have on the whole come to the conclusion that your citizens contemplate but a very temporary residence in this strange habitation of the dead."

So, now we know that fences may have deterred wandering animals. But maybe fences were added to deter grave robbers. Dr Thomas Mann of Laona trained young men to the medical profession. Dr Mann realized the need of a solid foundation in anatomy--problem: how to gain that knowledge without access to that visual artifact--a cadaver? We don't know if his students were ever provided with such a tool, but we do know of one unsuccessful attempt to gain same. At the last meeting of our society, Mr Wayne Mori told us about the lives of early Mormons in Chautauqua County, including the Ezekiel Johnson family of Laona. Wayne's research turned up the tale of Elder Brackenbury who arrived in the town of Pomfret in late fall of 1831 and stayed several weeks with the Johnson family, preaching and baptizing many of the Johnsons and others into the Mormon faith. While with the Johnson's, Elder Brackenbury suffered a painful attack of something called "bilious colic" (probably a gall bladder attack) from which he suffered for a week, then died on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1832. He was buried in the Laona Cemetery. Dr Mann's sister, Eunice was married to William Johnson, brother of Ezekiel, so Mann had been called to attend the ailing missionary. Medical science of that day had little to offer a patient suffering from this disease since they knew so little about what was really causing the symptoms-- intense constant pain on the right side of the abdomen, vomiting, fever, restlessness and jaundice. Dr Mann saw the death of this stranger as an opportunity to learn and to teach his students. The very night of the funeral, three of Dr Mann's medical students attempted to remove Elder Brackenbury's body from its grave, but someone in the neighborhood, not sharing Dr Mann's enthusiasm for education, snitched to local authorities, and the body-snatchers were caught in the act. I wonder if they succeeded in other unpublicized attempts. The location of Brackenbury's grave was never marked, but Dr Mann himself died six years later and was buried in that same Laona cemetery where he now rests in a marked grave with several family members. His sister, Eunice's family did not join the other Johnson's in the westward migration with the Mormons. They became stalwarts of another early religious movement in our county--the Spiritualists. They and many of that group of free-thinkers

are buried at Loana This is a good time of year to go there and read their gravestones they weren't born, but "entered earthly life" on a given date And at a later date, "entered spirit life" You see, we can't talk about cemeteries without bringing in all the interesting stories that rise up from them

Genealogists love cemeteries—we get our favorite information, and some disinformation there We have some kind of primeval need to find the final resting place of our ancestors Directors of our own Society can verify that a significant percentage of tourism to our county is generated by genealogical research, many of these visitors come to gaze upon and photograph the grave site of ancestors And this is why members of our genealogical society spend so much time in cemeteries recording inscriptions, and in clerks offices checking burial records, producing these books—all to help the wanderers locate those remains We should never overlook the fact that these traveling researchers bring a lot of business into our county

Genealogists really do plan our vacation trips to include stops in areas inhabited by uncles and cousins of an earlier generation We become quite determined in this pursuit— traveling thousands of miles, sometimes finding nothing Norwood and I stopped in Bond Co IL one summer to find the small, abandoned Dunkard Cemetery in Mulberry Grove Township Three siblings of my fourth great-grandfather, were Dunkards-- members of that German sect of Brethren They migrated west to Illinois after the Civil War There, miles out of town on a dirt road, in grass to our armpits, we not only found tombstones of those great-aunts and uncles, but alongside these relatives of mine, was the grave of one George C Brunson My genealogical psychic power kicked in and I said, "He's from Chautauqua County" Norwood thought I was making it up, but I insisted on a return visit to the library where we learned that George C was indeed born in the town of Chautauqua, son of Abel Brunson and his wife Sally Love Futher, Sally's father was John Love, the victim in one of our county's early murder stories The three Thayer brothers were found guilty of that murder and were hanged in 1825 I still don't know much about George's life in Illinois, or if he, his wife and son Dwight, all buried in that tiny cemetery, were members of that small Dunkard sect whose church is long gone and cemetery abandoned, but be assured that the ghosts of Chautauqua County roam far and wide

You remember that Joseph Damon's name was mentioned by Wayne Mori at our last meeting in connection with the fifteen thousand people that reportedly gathered at Mayville in 1834 to watch Joseph be hanged for the 1833 murder of his wife Our most noted early stone cutter was Martin Damon, who with his notorious brother, Joseph, worked their art in the 1820's and 30's in the town of Pomfret I have seen Martin's signature on a few stones and have heard that Joseph's can also be found, but I have never spotted one with Joseph's signature

Other local early cemetery artists were J B Stutson, working at least as early as the Damons, with several signed monuments in Forestville and Sheridan, L B Hill of Smith Mills, David Scott of Dunkirk Later, in this part of the county, we find stones signed by Samuel Ard, Smith and Mace, and of course, Samuel Nixon or Nixon Bros, of Westfield Ard, who worked only a few years out of Smith Mills had a distinct style, carving rather large monuments in a dark colored sandstone Ard is my favorite among the stone-cutters because he seemed to have convinced his clients to include genealogical information on the stone Even without a signature, one can spot Ard's work by the timber-type font he used to emboss the family surname onto the stone Many of these can be found in the cemeteries of the town of Hanover The Griswold stone pictured shows his signature and includes the wonderful information on Loana Griswold's maiden name and birthplace which we may never have learned except for this tombstone

Nathaniel Smith and his son, Eugene, were early monument carvers in Jamestown P Frederick Mace and his partner, Daniel E Smith signed many stones simply S & M, Fredonia At the time of the 1875 census, every town in the county had a least one person who listed marble cutter as his occupation In the spring of 1886, The *Chautauqua News* carried on a debate about the importance of marking graves First this article appeared Chaut News 17 Mar 1886-- *How important it is that the graves of our dead should be permanently marked; yet*

*how much neglected the many nameless sites in every graveyard bears us witness. It is not always from want of respect for the dead, or from want of means or inclination. It is procrastination—delay. Let those who have been heretofore remiss, hasten to atone for their neglect. We owe it alike to the dead and the living..... How many of the illustrious dead names that are familiar to us as household words, sleep in nameless graves—their last resting place unknown—because their surviving friends neglected to mark the place with a grave stone until too late. But instead of leaving his point as taken, our editor prodded the ego of his male readers*

*In this regard it is said that a woman has a better memory than a man. When a wife survives she almost always renders her last tribute of respect by a monument to her deceased husband. But man, more neglectful, is drawn away sooner by the cares of business and forgets this duty*

The importance of memorials is not the same for all. The week following the editorial, a letter to the editor appeared in the same *Chautauqua News* saying *Let us whisper a few things in your ear. Cemeteries are filled with dead men; that is the proper place for them. Towns, villages and cities should contain live men, men of push; that is the proper place for them. They build up the community, while the former fill up the cemeteries. It is the man of push that brings trade to town, that beautifies it, that increases its productions, that holds out inducements to capitalists to locate and establish industries, that increase the population and wealth—the everything that goes to make a live town. Bury the dead to make room for the man of push.* And this debate goes on even unto the year 2002—strong opinions about use of prime real estate for cemeteries, conflicting with reverence for the dead.

Another problem of cemeteries was and still is, the question of upkeep. The *Chautauqua News* of 2 June 1886 *We need to improve the condition of our cemetery. It is a beautiful location, has a nice lots and fine monuments.. There should be a man constantly employed during the greater part of the year to keep it in proper condition. How many of the 300 owners of lots will pay \$1 a year for this purpose? Can you do the math on that salary?*

Today, NYS law requires public cemeteries to retain and invest a percentage of the sale of lots for the purpose of future maintenance. We could do a whole program, hours long, on cemetery law. We will only state that these govern just about 40 per cent of cemeteries and there are very few cemetery police to enforce cemetery law. In his newspaper teaser, James promised that I would tell you if you can be buried in your own back yard. Yes, if you really want to be. It would become a private cemetery, not under control of “cemetery law,” but please don’t try it without the help of a licensed undertaker and don’t try it in the dead of night. Though not under state law, such burials must be done in compliance with State Health Department regulations. And remember the property may be sold by your heirs, with that same question of future maintenance.

We learned with some amusement that this problem of upkeep crosses the state line into Pennsylvania when we stopped in Bradford to find the grave site of a person we were researching though not related. The family plot had some marked graves but wanting to know who else might be buried there, we stopped at the cemetery office. The attendant was most friendly and helpful. No, she couldn’t look it up right now, but please leave in writing exactly what we were seeking, along with our name and address so she could do the research and mail us the result. The charge we inquired??—no, no charge. The information we sought was sent promptly by mail, along with a bill for \$110 of unpaid “annual maintenance” on that lot.

A major 19<sup>th</sup> century monument maker was Samuel Nixon of Westfield—grandfather of illustrious past-president, Rod Nixon. In the 1865 census, he lists his occupation as marble cutter, in 1870 as marble manufacturer, and in 1875, marble dealer. By this time, he had a large crew of stone-cutters. The personal items in local newspapers of the time let us know that he was busy erecting monuments throughout the county. Aug 4, 1886 Nixon Brothers of Westfield, have lately set fine monuments in our cemetery for Mrs Mary Peck and for Mrs S L Paddock. They have contracts for one for Stephen Cook’s family, one by Frank Button for this father, the late

Alvin Button, and one for Ambrose Balckmer's family Oct 6, 1886 Stephen Cook & sons have just placed in Panama Cemetery a granite monument, 16 feet high Oct 13, 1886 S F Nixon, of Westfield, was here Wednesday and made a sale to H F & R E Sheldon Oct 20, 1886 Ava Hart has recently erected a fine granite monument in our cemetery Nixon Bros of Westfield did the work, and the foundation is laid for two more to be put up This all happened before Grandfather became more famous as a politician Then Mrs Henry H Beaujean ordered a fine granite monument for her lot in the Sherman cemetery from the Nixon Bros Poor Henry, on a trip to scout out the West he was killed in a RR accident in Kansas on the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 1886 This was totally the fault of the Railroad and his young wife could have collected well on behalf of herself and her young daughter, Mary, but we are told in the *News* that on June 2<sup>nd</sup> Mrs Beaujean accepted the \$5000 settlement offered by the RR The following week we are told that she ordered the monument But, you know what? I checked out our Sherman Cemetery book- no fine monument to Henry was found In fact, no stone at all for anyone named Beaujean Town records do show that Henry's body was shipped by the RR from Kansas and buried in Sherman Cemetery on January 29th, but there are no other Beaujean burials listed in the town office Did Mrs Beaujean collect the \$5000 from the RR and move elsewhere? Did Nixon Bros actually prepare the monument for and were stiffed for the work when she absconded?

Did you know that if you are looking for a bargain in a tombstone, you can get such a one that was ordered but never set because of lack of payment? When you visit the cemetery, look for stones that have the area of the family name, usually rectangular, ground about a quarter inch deeper into the granite The previous name and information has been effectively "erased" and your name can now be engraved a little deeper I learned this when the double stone for my parents was set in Forest Hill It did not start out as one of those "bargains," was beautifully done, except that mother's name was on the left and she had been buried on the right Well, Mother didn't complain and it did not seem to matter much to Dad, but some family members were upset, so the ~~was~~ <sup>names</sup> were erased (no charge because of the error) and changed places About that same time a similar double stone was placed on the plot next to my parents, with the names of the couple, the husband, recently deceased, with his surviving wife's name and birthdate also engraved, just as was my Dad's who was still living You will find this situation in every cemetery you may visit But, just a few years later, we noticed that this wife's name had been totally removed from the stone We don't know, but guess that her life took a positive turn and she made other plans

As in every form of art, tombstones had a steady flow of fads and styles. Our area's earliest tombstones were thin slabs of fieldstone or marble in the "sun and moon," "willow and urn", era of the carver's art We have a few examples of these early Chautauqua County designs on the photo sheets Genealogists are always searching for an exact date of birth and some stones give this information Throughout much of the nineteenth century, stones listed just the death date but added the age at death by year, month and day, making it possible to deduce a date of birth We have a computer program that uses this information to calculate the birth date for us (Notice this dating style on the Morrison stone #7) This stone shows a combination of the sun and willow motifs popular in the early 1800's As you tour any cemetery, look for icons of a hand pointed heavenward, opening gates of heaven, a endless variety of crosses You will find only one monument in the county that has torches pointed toward the ground-look at #10 on the photo sheet We couldn't find out much about the life of Martin B Bradley whose large monument is near the front of Forestville Pioneer, and who went to great lengths to advertise to the world his belief that at death, life was forever extinguished No guide to Heaven or Pearly Gates on his stone As a youngster, I remember a visit to that cemetery with my Dad and his boss, Charlie Dye, walking near the Bradley monument, hearing a reference to him as "that damned atheist" The monument tells us only that Martin B Bradley died in 1878 and his wife Fidelia Judson in 1871 The *Dunkirk Observer* informs us that Mr Bradley died in Hart, Michigan, and that a monument costing eight thousand dollars was placed on his lot in Pioneer Cemetery That is all we know about the life of Martin B Bradley, but yet, is that not more than we know of the lives of most as we walk by their tombstones?

When you visit the cemetery, stroll through the old section, progress through the years to the site of the new burials. Note the changes in style and wording. Note the variety of themes—how many different ways to design the drape of mourning? How many different shapes? Visit more than one cemetery and note the differences. When our granddaughter was little, she liked the Catholic cemetery where my sister is buried—so many statues of angels—she called them dolls, running from one to the next to pick out her favorite. Visit Holy Sepulcher Cemetery in Jamestown. Larger than life angels guard the gate there.

Another form that may seem all sameness and boring is the veterans' marker. Not true! Look more carefully. Quite a variety can be found and even more available to the veteran. An emblem reflective of one's belief can be chosen or left off, a marble or granite standing marker, or a bronze plaque can be chosen. The plaque can be attached to the back of a commercial monument or placed on its own at ground level. A niche-sized plaque is available for those strange little apartment structures now in most cemeteries to receive cremains. One can choose the full designation of rank and unit or only the branch of service on these veterans' markers. You may have full date of birth and death, just the years, or no dates at all. Awards, including the Purple Heart can be noted. These are ordered through your friendly neighborhood mortuary. We printed out a copy of the 32 authorized emblems of "one's belief" available—many of which I have yet to observe in Chautauqua County. Do you know that just two years ago some lawyers looked over the rules for giving out these free markers and found that it illegal to furnish a stone or plaque for a veteran who already had a commercially purchased marker? In Chautauqua County alone, were hundreds of these "illegal" markers. Around the world there were millions! To avoid the expense of removing these illegals, the law was changed last December to match the practice in place for a hundred years. Isn't government wonderfully efficient?—saved us all that money!

Yes, you can still order a marble marker from the government, but few marble markers are placed today. By the end of the nineteenth century we sadly learned that the marble, once thought indestructible, was indeed wearing away. Monument makers turned to granite that would last through eternity—or as far into it as we care to think about. That double stone for husband and wife, side by side replaced the over and under style of an earlier day—John J Smith and his wife Anna— sometimes even, "his beloved wife" Anna. We have found with dismay that some of those old stones lacked the wife's given name, let alone her maiden name. Many were buried with only Mrs for a first name. As you wander through the newer sections of any cemetery in the county, you can't miss the double stone fad of today—carved in the form of two hearts, connected by interlocking wedding bands with a message such as "together forever" with the the wedding date permanently engraved. One couple, who don't share our love of visiting cemeteries, decided it was time to preplan and chose their tombstone. They paid a premium, they claimed, to get this unique design they had thought up themselves of interlocking hearts. The next time we saw them, they were quite dejected. They had visited the newly-set stone and found at least ten similar ones in the same row.

We found one dissenter from this "together forever" mentality— A Forestville friend who, upon the death of her husband bought a single grave in Pioneer Cemetery for him and another single grave at the opposite end of town in Prospect Cemetery. "I lived with him all these years," she said, "I don't intend to spend eternity with him."

We have come to the computer age in cemetery art— Now we have engraving of the actual buildings on the farm where decedent lived and died. Occupations and hobbies are symbolized in form of deer waiting for the hunter's aim, grape vineyards, trucks, hot cars, a winning pinochle hand—you name it, it can be engraved on your tombstone. One couple, still living, had Riles and Woolley of Forestville set for them in Forest Hill cemetery a modest stone (#17) with their own unique symbols: his Lincoln Town Car and her pack of cigarettes and cup of coffee. My husband taught me to recognize the difference between engraving and etching. You can spend a little more (actually a lot more) for an etching done by an artist with a diamond stylus. You will see attached to many tombstones a photograph of the decedent. Sadly, some of these have been vandalized, the photo gone, or, if the photo remains, it is cracked or faded. Now instead of attaching your photo to the stone, it is possible to

have a very lifelike copy of your features etched directly onto the stone I don't have an photo of one of these but Mr Woolley says that though expensive, these are excellent in quality and he has set one in the cemetery at Randolph Mr Frank Arnold, the last resident keeper of the Dunkirk Lighthouse, has the likeness of that lighthouse engraved on his memorial The Wawro's, leaders of the local LDS church and library for many years, have the Salt Lake Temple etched on theirs' along with the church precept that makes this sect the world leader in genealogy- "Families are Forever" Perhaps because of longer life expectancy, cemetery art of today has turned away from symbols of grief, to celebration of life

Phallic symbolism was prominent in the late nineteenth century Look at the scene from Forest Hill in Fredonia honoring the publicist Charles Webster, Judge Warren Hooker, and the Howard brothers (#12 & #14) The Howard monument, it was announced in the *Fredonia Censor* in 1890, was the tallest monument in that place and cost ten thousand dollars Other beautiful monuments in that cemetery must also have been very expensive It seems the wealthy families of the nineteenth century competed, as each died, their families provided a more showy display than the last We really should spend more time visiting these galleries to enjoy this art in stone My personal favorite is #13, the elaborate Episcopal cross erected to the memory of Dr Milton M Fenner

Many cemeteries have a unique monument carved to look like a tree stump, some with even more of the tree than one stump We did not include a photo, but in Forest Hill, the Phillips' monument is an example Parents names are on the stump, children of the family who died young have smaller stones that look like cuts from the trunk The most elaborate tree carved in stone in this area is across the county line at Versailles It's worth a fall Sunday drive to see These were ordered at the 1893 Chicago World Fair and the company providing them was soon forced bankruptcy because they had many orders and had not calculated well the cost of production and transportation

This weekend, for ten dollars, you can take the "Harvest Moon" tour through Forest Hill on the Fredonia Trolley Though enjoyable, this is Halloween entertainment and will focus on ghosts and goblins I think it more fun to save the ten dollars to go in broad daylight to enjoy this outdoor art gallery without the dramatic scary stuff We have some flyers here, published by the Barker Museum for a self-guided walking tour I said I would confine today to Chautauqua County, but I implore you, when you travel around the world, check out the cemeteries- unbelievable - you will find that some who lived and died in past centuries in other places had even more money to spend on monuments than our Chautauquans As a history lesson we once took our grandchildren to visit Dred Scott's grave in North St Louis, and in the same cemetery found the family plot of General William Tecumseh Sherman, then the mausoleum of Adolphus Busch, built in 1913 at a cost of \$75,000 and on on to others who in death seemed to try to outpace Busch You will find such work in any major city- and don't forget nearby Forest Lawn in Buffalo

There is one perplexing question we have encountered in our cemetery visits Is any body there? Many stones, you will notice, have no death date engraved If the birth date is within the past hundred years, we can assume, perhaps, that the event has not yet occurred But what of many whose birth date falls well before 1900? Was there no family member or executor left to take care of this duty? Was the small charge for this service too much for the frugal or impoverished heirs, or the procrastination that worried our *Chautauqua News* editor of over a century ago? Or, did the person who set the stone in anticipation of the unavoidable, move on, or chose to be buried elsewhere Each of these are possible, but how are we to know the facts Patrick J O'Connell #3, announced in stone that he was the one who paid for a monument in St Mary's Cemetery in Dunkirk to honor the memory of his sister, Miss Margaret O'Connell who died in 1924 at age 83 Patrick's name and birth date is included but no death date so we are left to wonder, is he is buried there? In that same cemetery are two stones to the memory of one John Maloney, on different lots, one with each of his wives We have to guess that he is buried with his second wife who survived him, but his name, with death date engraved appears on both stones

We worked with Walter Waligora, sexton of Prospect Road Cemetery in Forestville. He showed us the stone of a gentleman he called "Fabulous" Lawton whose wife, Marion died in 1956 but her husband's remains had not shown up to be buried beside her. I'm sure this or a similar story plays out over and over around the world, but here it piqued our curiosity to do a little search. Years before we had known Fabius (not Fabulous) Lawton and his wife, Marion Boss. Yes indeed, it turns out, the year after Marion's death, Fabe remarried and lived happily for another quarter century with his second wife. We found him buried beside number two at Hanover Center. Mr Waligora was quite disappointed when we told him the story. He had envisioned this "Fabulous" fellow, aging gracefully somewhere, waiting to return to Marion. But there will be no **body** there.

We researched the Chesbro family of photos #1 & #2. Interesting that neither Betsey, wife of Gurdon, or Lucretia, wife of Betsey & Gurdon's son James, have a death date engraved, though they were born in 1799 and 1833 and should have been long since gone. Betsey, we assumed died soon after her husband and was the victim of that male neglect mentioned in *Chautauqua News*. But Lucretia, the sister of Norwood's 2<sup>nd</sup> great-grandfather, was left a widow quite young, remarried and moved to Silver Creek. We wanted definite proof there was a body in Sheridan Cemetery where her name had been engraved. There was no evidence of burial with her second husband at Dayton where he has a marked grave beside his first wife. But, when you read old newspapers for amusement, like I do, you eventually learn all. According to the *Dunkirk Observer* for October 9, 1923 Lucretia lived into her 91<sup>st</sup> year, died at the home of her son George Chesbro and was indeed buried at Sheridan Center, but obviously no one bothered to have the date engraved. Maybe our society should write a grant with a mission to have these dates engraved after they have been proved.

In another version of the "Is any **body** there?" story, some thirty years ago, my uncle Curt and his third wife stopped at our house, grinning from ear to ear, having just completed a real estate deal. Each sold a single grave site in Forest Hill, intended for use, each with a former spouse, and traded for a double lot in the same cemetery, further, they had ordered a fine stone to be placed thereon. This couple lived happily together into their nineties. Meanwhile, they moved to Florida, where at their demise, their families decided to leave them. After uncle's death, as a sort-of funeral substitute, my cousins hosted a memorial flower-planting at the Forest Hill plot. Relatives had a fine time chatting while tamping the new floral arrangements, even said a prayer, around the stone that marked the empty graves. Each year his daughters plant new flowers and when we tend my parents graves in the same cemetery, we say "hello" to Uncle Curt in absentia. But a passing stranger may see the stone and note the lack of death date, perhaps noting that they would both be over a hundred by now, and may wonder, "Is any **body** there?"

The most annoying "is any body there" dilemma of the genealogists is the unmarked grave, lamented earlier. We are pretty sure the remains are in a certain cemetery but no stone and no record can be found. I know you have noticed, walking through any cemetery, several stones, then empty spaces. Maybe the spot was marked years ago, but the stone has since disappeared, or maybe the marker was never placed. Try to buy one of those empty spaces in an old section and you will probably be turned down because today's sextons, using power equipment, do not want to start digging into an unknown area. Is any body there? Probably, we wish we knew!

We see in Chautauqua County Cemeteries many memorials to family members buried elsewhere. In Sherman, a unique plate glass monument erected in 1886 to the memory of the Richardson family lists birthplace and date, death place and date for the male line for nine generations back to England in 1615. At least seven of those generations have no body in Sherman. But this also is worth a trip to see—a plate glass monument in near-perfect condition after 120 years.

My love of old newspapers led me to the story of Mary Robinson Lakin who died in August, 1857, her infant son died shortly after. Their two tombstones can be found in Sherman Cemetery, and the record of their burial noted in the Sherman Town Clerk's office. When we read the tombstones a few years ago, we assumed the remains of

mother and son were beneath our feet But the good old *Chautauqua news*, Sep 28, 1887 says Dr S A Robinson, a former resident of Sherman, now living at Staten Island, was in town Monday His father was a Methodist minister and his sister was the first wife of Sherman's Dr Lakin Dr Robinson had the remains of his sister and those of her child, which were buried in Sherman thirty years ago, removed to Staten Island, where they will be interred in the Moravian cemetery " So, no body there! We presume that Dr Lakin by that time was living happily ever after with a second wife and had no objection to this removal But the stones remain in Sherman Who knew?

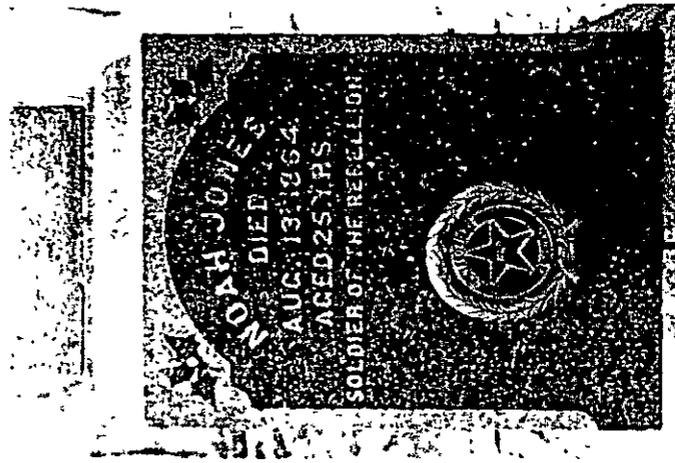
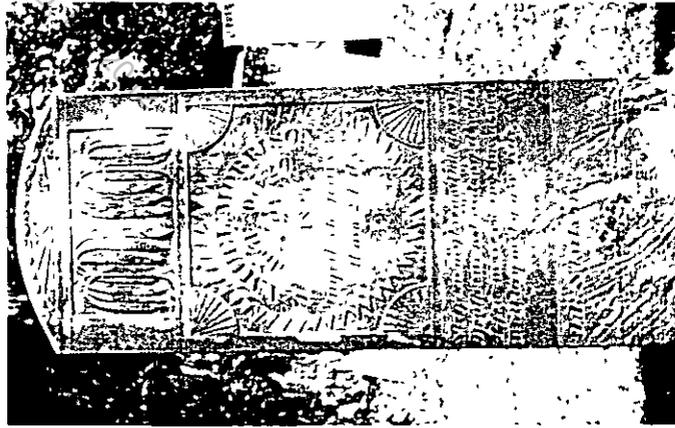
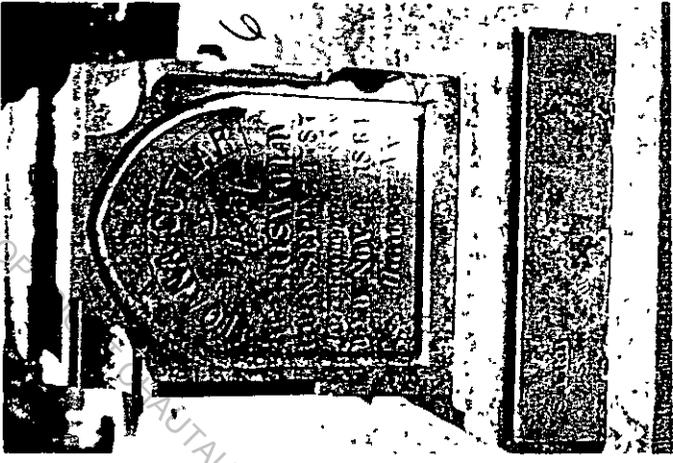
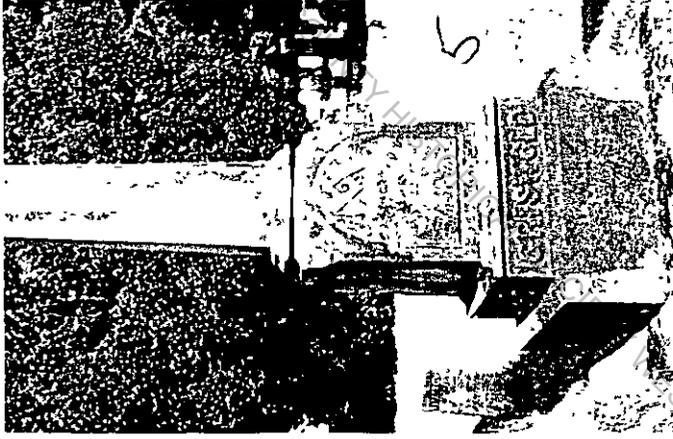
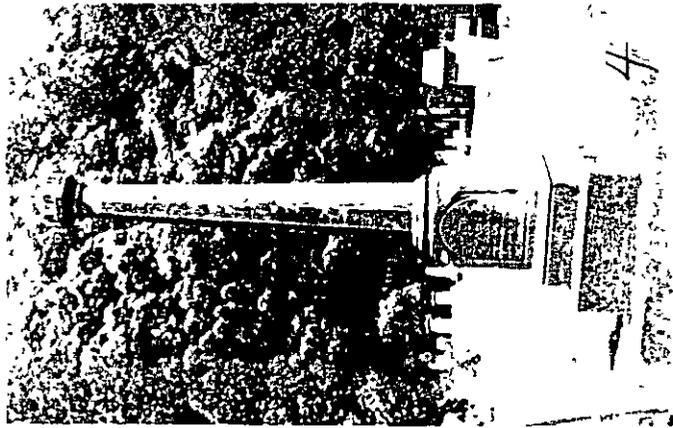
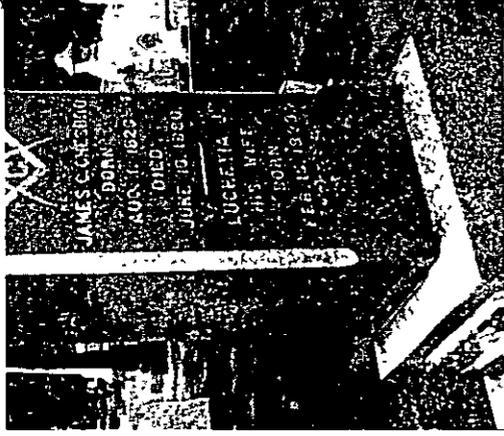
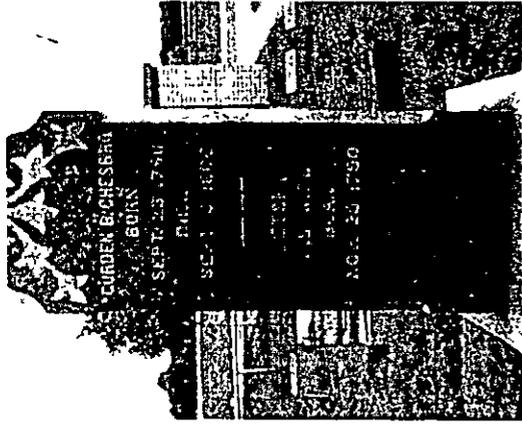
The national news keeps reminding us of the importance of these human remains and the care thereof How often have we heard that modern buzz word, closure? Finding the remains, for some mystical reason brings closure Is that what drives us to know where our seventh great-grandmother was laid to rest?

We are grateful for every fragment of information we can find of persons who lived in our county, if only those two dates on a stone Most do not have biographies in our county histories but a marked grave gives us this bit We can get other clues from those whose space they share in the cemeteries Bless the volunteers who are working today to preserve these memorials Just one year ago, through the efforts of our County Historian, Michelle Henry, the Town of Chautauqua Historian, Gib Hayward, some Boy Scouts and county officials, we had a re-dedication of the cemetery at the site of the old County Home in Dewittville There one monument memorializes over 600 persons who died at the home before 1864 After that date we find individual stones engraved only with a number to identify a thousand more who died from 1864 to 1932 when burials there ceased We have been working to put names to those numbers and are making some progress There is a photo of the 1864 monument on the marked page in the Alms House book I hope the county officials remember that a year ago they promised to maintain this cemetery

Joe Bolivard of Forestville, almost singlehandedly, has worked in cemeteries in the Town of Hanover and as far afield as Clear Creek Cemetery near Ellington to clear brush, repair and reset broken stones in cemeteries His signature project has been to put special markers at the graves of war veterans—note the Ferry monument #8 on the photo sheet showing Bolivard's markers

Sometimes we get disinformation, from markers One such was our highly publicized encounter with Noah Jones whose grave was decorated for many years with a Confederate flag—a practice started innocently but erroneously by our old friend, Fred Kates Research found the truth about Noah and he is now revered as a Union Soldier One real Confederate Veteran is buried here in Forest Hill Dr Matthew Moore removed his family from South Carolina to Fredonia shortly after the Civil War Another wonderful story that we just don't have time to tell

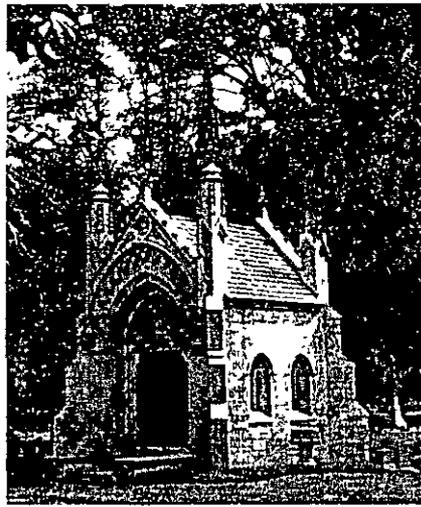
One more important change in cemeteries Remember the Decoration Day of our childhood? Mother watched those lilac buds every spring and it was a disaster when they bloomed and died too early In an ideal year, we would gather arm loads of the purple blossoms, and any other cut flower that could be found, along with any jar that could be used, headed to the cemetery in our model A Ford to decorate the graves Here we were introduced to grandpa's headstone, great-grandpa's beyond the next drive and Aunt Carrie's still-born twins under the hydrangea bush Today, it is Memorial Day we celebrate, always on a Monday, no more cut flowers because glass jars and tin cans have been outlawed We still decorate, using money that Mother did not have, to buy geraniums, colias, verbena and spikes As a summer Sunday ritual we make the cemetery rounds to water when necessary, as it certainly was this past season But what about the future? I hope all of you are more fortunate, but our children live at least two states away Those graves that Mother decorated seventy years ago and those dug since will probably go un-geraniumed Oh please, don't let them come once every ten years and deposit one of those plastic "Mom" and "Dad" arrangements bought at the dollar store Enjoy our cemeteries, their history, their art, and so many mysteries to be explored



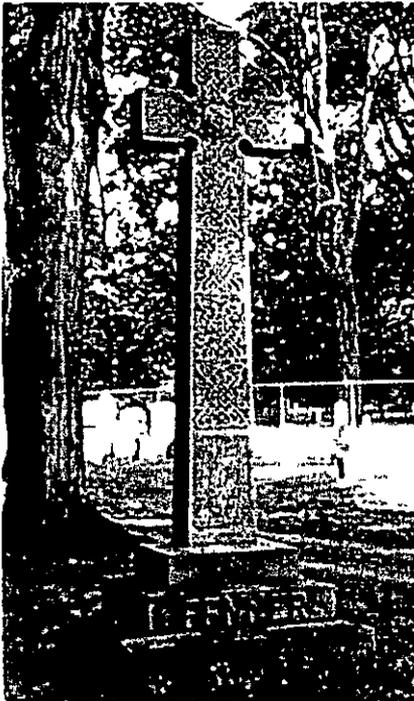
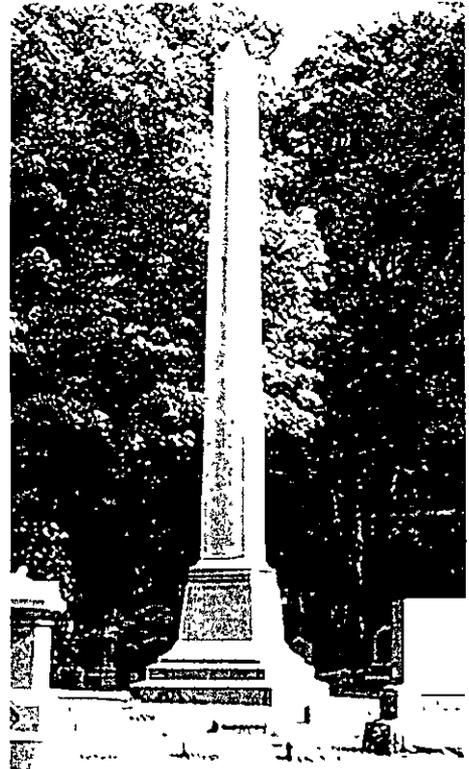
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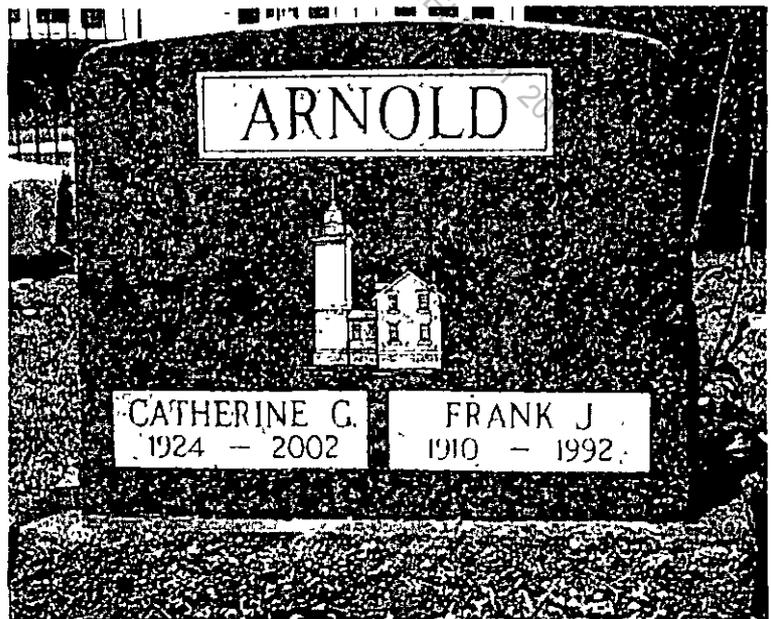
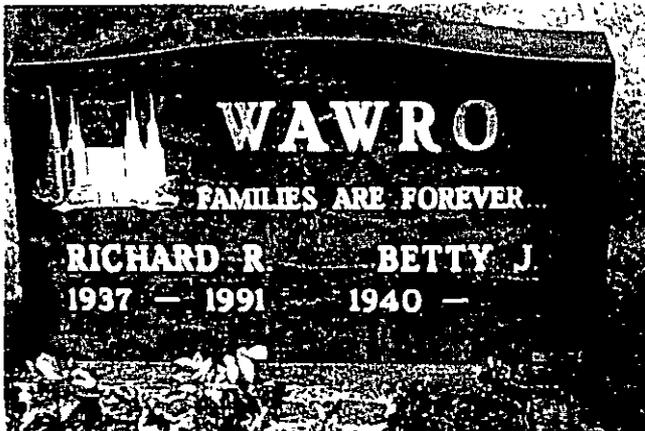
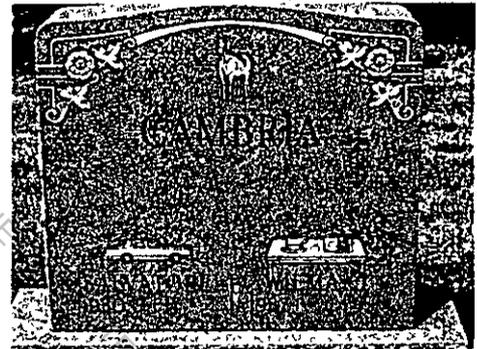
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## Cemetery Photos, all by Norwood J. Barris

1. Gerdon Chesbro stone; no death date for wife, Betsy. *Sheridan Center*
2. James Chesbro opposite face of above stone; no death date for Lucretia J (VanSchoonhoven)
3. Erected by Patrick O'Connell for sister, Margaret. Is Patrick buried here? *St Mary's, Dunkirk*
4. Griswold stone by S Ard of Smith Mills. *Forestville Pioneer*
5. Warren Griswold face of stone showing surname in Ard's signature timber font for surname.
6. Loana Cutler face of Griswold stone with genealogical information. S Ard signed at base
7. Samuel Morrison; ornate willow motif stone carved by J B Stutson. *Forestville Pioneer*
8. John and Susannah Ferry, both soldiers of The Revolution; Bolivard plaques on base. *Forestville*
9. Noah Jones' marker with Confederate flag holder; see story from *Chautauqua Genealogist*.
10. Bradley monument, torches point downward. *Forestville Pioneer*
11. Howard obelisk, designed to be the tallest in the cemetery. *Forest Hill, Fredonia*
12. Adolphus Busch mausoleum; small stones at right mark in-laws, Anheuser graves. *N St Louis*
13. Milton Fenner, ornate Episcopal cross. *Forest Hill, Fredonia*
14. Judge Hooker, Charles Webster; phallic symbols. *Forest Hill*
15. Frank J. Arnold, the last resident keeper of the Dunkirk Lighthouse. *Forest Hill*
16. Wawro; etching of Salt Lake Temple, genealogical creed. *Forest Hill*
17. Cambria; twenty-first century icons; stone by Riles & Woolley, Forestville. *Forest Hill*
18. Exact replica of early memorial to Col Thomas Abell. *Fredonia Pioneer*
19. Detail of above. The original stone is in the basement of Barker Museum, Fredonia.
20. Monument to memory of George L. F. Barrett, Fredonia merchant, age 24.. *Fredonia Pioneer*
21. Detail of unique capstone of Barrett monument with anchor icon.
22. Geiben monument showing occupation of decedent. Photographed at Riles & Woolley shop
23. "Fertile Flats" realistic depiction of Crandall Farm on back of monument. *Ibid.*
24. Thompson; intricate and realistic etching of farmsite with motorcycle. *Hanover Center*
25. Donovan, unique shape, beautifully etched monument. *Hanover Center*