

# EPITAPH

The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery

VOLUME 38 • NO. 2 • SPRING 2018

## 1818–2018 BICENTENNIAL TRIBUTE TO Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881)

### A MILE IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

by Rose O'Keefe

#### Part One Recap

Lewis H. Morgan was born in Aurora in 1818, went to school with Cayuga boys, and learned their language and lore by heart. After graduating from Union College as an accomplished Greek and Latin scholar, in 1844 he moved to Rochester where he started his career as a lowly trial lawyer. Meeting Seneca native Ely S. Parker led to Morgan's role as an advocate for Seneca land claims, and their friendship led to his first major work: *League of the Ho-de-no-sau-nee*, published in 1850 in Rochester. *League* was a priceless contribution to the new science of ethnology (kinship systems) and comparative sociology. He married Mary Elizabeth Steele in 1851, and they bought a row house on Fitzhugh Street.

#### Part Two

After *League* was published in New York, Boston, London, and translated into French and German, Morgan was ranked with the leading scientists of his generation. He was invited to lecture in the homes of merchants, bankers, lawyers, judges, and councilmen in Rochester's fashionable Third Ward, now called Corn Hill. At one of his lectures in 1852, he rejected the concept of original sin and claimed "inequality among men was social

and artificial, rather than innate." He envisioned an ideal society free of divisions by religion, education, property or commercial advantages and believed that, except for slavery, America achieved this ideal.

In 1852 he received an honorary degree from University of Rochester for service during the chartering process. In the mid-1850s, Rochester's scientific renaissance was





Lewis Henry Morgan  
in 1848 at age 30 years

centered at the new university while Rochester's trade in grains, hides, and lumber was declining. Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago outpaced Rochester and the merger of local railroads was a painful change. Morgan's legal work for prominent Rochester businessmen as they opened the south

shore of Lake Michigan to iron mining led to his being elected a director of the Lake Superior Iron Company, which mined and smelt iron ore. As a company director, he went to Marquette, Michigan in July 1855, which at the time was a village of 500. A trip to Toronto by steamer, on to Georgian Bay by rail, then to Lake Huron by boat, and finally through the new canal at Sault Ste. Marie into Lake Superior took Morgan eight days.

During this time, his family grew. Lizzie had given birth to a mentally-challenged son, Lemuel Steele Morgan, in March 1853. Lemuel was a friendly, likable boy who required constant care his whole life. Mary Elizabeth Morgan was born in December 1856, and Helen King Morgan, in 1860.

In 1854, Morgan invited neighbors and university men to form the Rochester Literary and Scientific Club. The group met monthly for 25 years. Third Warders called it the Pundit Club, and the name took. This congenial group helped transform Morgan into a scholar of world renown whose work as a

pioneering sociologist and ethnologist developed separately from his career as a lawyer.

He compiled and had printed a seven-page questionnaire and circular that were sent to missionaries and Indian agents in western territories of America during February and March 1859. Some replied that they didn't have time for such questions, but a Quaker missionary in Kansas replied and turned out to be an avid linguist, who sent a full description of Dakota tribal and kinship systems, which were similar to the Iroquois. In January 1860, the Smithsonian Institution sent Morgan's circular to diplomats on every continent, who passed them on to universities and learned societies. Missionaries in the South Seas and in Asia labored for hours over the questionnaire and some journeyed into wild regions for answers. That spring, Morgan received mailings from



L. H. Morgan's book on the American beaver, an animal he admired for its use of thought, memory, and will in constructing dams that provided ponds for beaver homes and survival.

Barcelona, Beirut, Berlin, Calcutta, Canton, Constantinople, Hawaii, Port Natal, Rio de Janeiro, Stockholm, Tokyo, and Tunis. These were the first of 200 kinship studies returned over the next four years. Morgan worked on them feverishly.



*Lewis Henry Morgan's home was the right hand half of this double house at 124 South Fitzhugh Street.*

In May 1860, Morgan went to Kansas and Nebraska and traveled with the Quaker missionary for five days by horse and carriage. He wrote notes on tales and stories he heard from natives, pioneers, hunters, shopkeepers, hotel managers, ferrymen, and college students.



*Ely Samuel Parker was a Seneca Indian attorney, engineer, and tribal diplomat. He served as adjutant and secretary to General Ulysses S. Grant and was a close lifetime friend of Lewis Henry Morgan.*

After he returned home, without seeking it, Morgan won the nomination for state assemblyman from Monroe County, starting in 1861. If Abraham Lincoln were elected, Morgan hoped for an appointment as U. S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs. When Lincoln won, Morgan's supporters flooded the president-elect with letters, not knowing that the post had been promised to Ely S. Parker.

The loss was a bitter blow and came at the same time

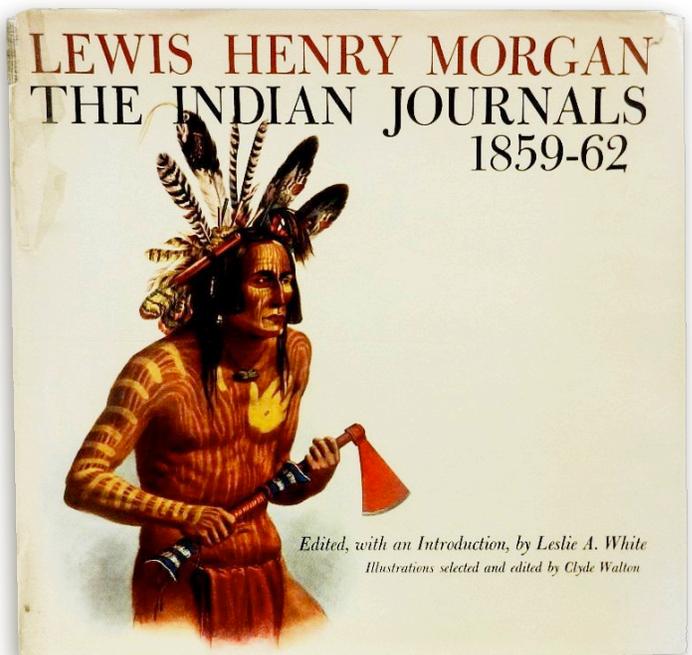
he was receiving harsh criticisms of his kinship studies. He sought relief from the pressure by taking a field trip in July 1861 up the Red River where he gathered his 185<sup>th</sup> questionnaire on family ties.

The paper on Iroquois laws of descent that he presented at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in the fall of 1861 was considered one of the most important contributions ever made to American ethnology. In 1862, he closed his law office, determined to prove the

unity and Asian origin of the American Indian race—and of all mankind.

In May 1862, he took a steamer out of St. Louis for a 45-day trip, 2,000 miles north and west to the foot of the Rockies. The steamer carried supplies from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the tribes of the Dakotas. Morgan traveled with gold miners, missionaries, adventurers, mountain men, as well as soldiers to protect the supplies. Along the way, he learned by telegraph that his oldest daughter Mary was gravely ill. Since he could not return quickly, he hoped the crisis would pass and, at the last possible stop on the Missouri River, chose to go on rather than return home.

For five weeks, the steamer moved between towering bluffs, jagged buttes, mesas, and stunning scenery where he saw antelope, elk, prairie dogs, and massive buffalo herds. He watched bands of ragged native men and women trade buffalo hides, scraped, dried and ready for sale in St. Louis at \$4 a hide—for 38 cents worth of sugar and coffee. In Fort St. Pierre, 3,000 Sioux waited for the annual supplies they received for letting go of their ancestral lands.



*Morgan published the journals of his exploratory trip to America's northwest territories.*

On the treacherous trip upriver, Morgan wrote in his notebooks about customs, traditions, and language gleaned from hunters, traders, miners, horse thieves and



Morgan studied the culture of many American Indian tribes. Here is a young Oneida Indian girl in a tribal costume of Morgan's time.

missionaries. Once the captain dropped off the passengers and cargo, he turned around and began the wild descent, drifting 200 miles a day. In Sioux City, Morgan learned that in May and June, his daughters, Mary, 6, and Helen, 2, had died of scarlet fever. The last entry in his journal stated, "Thus ends my last expedition. I go home to my stricken and mourning wife, a miserable and destroyed man."

After Morgan returned home, he spent the winter drawing plans for a Gothic mausoleum in Mount Hope, which when completed, was the most expensive structure of its kind in the cemetery. He suffered from remorse and decided to dedicate his next book to his daughters, working on *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity* for three years before sending it to Joseph Henry, director at the Smithsonian Institution in 1865. It was incomprehensible to Henry.

Henry doubted it could be revised but sent the 1,500-page paper to a scholar who knew it held a wealth of knowledge and agreed with another expert it should have a thorough revision. For most of 1866, Morgan revised it before resubmitting it.

Morgan had taken up trout fishing in Michigan but gave it up after becoming fascinated by the beavers that thrived in the richest beaver districts in the world. In his 1868 eight-volume series, *The American Beaver and his Works*, he wrote that man was divinely created, separately but indistinguishably from beasts. *American Beaver* was hailed as the definitive study of what he called "mutes"—beasts he admired for their use of thought, memory, and will in constructing dams that provided ponds for their survival.

*To be continued.*



# Morgan's Mausoleum

On August 31, 1863, the *Rochester Union and Advertiser* published an article on improvements in Mount Hope Cemetery. Here is the segment on the Lewis Henry Morgan mausoleum, which was then under construction.



The Lewis Henry Morgan mausoleum, completed in 1863, was the largest tomb freestone (an easily carved sandstone) and the roof slabs are Medina sandstone.

"Rochester has at Mt. Hope the most beautiful cemetery in the United States. . . . In natural beauty, hill and valley, foliage, elevations and surroundings, together with its proximity, it has no rival in the cemeteries named Greenwood and Mt. Auburn. . . .

“The most beautiful and costly structure is the family tomb but recently constructed by Lewis H. Morgan, Esq. It is situated on one of the central avenues, not far up from the Chapel, and when it is completed will be an imposing work. The front of the tomb is purely English Gothic in its architecture, composed of Connecticut freestone, handsomely wrought. The roof is made of heavy slabs of Medina stone, thatched so as

model in most respects and creditable to the owner and builder. It will, when completed, cost above \$4,000, and is the most expensive structure of a private character in the Cemetery. H. Searle & Son were the architects of the work and have shown exceedingly good taste in its design.

“It is be hoped that the example of Mr. Morgan will be imitated by others until there shall be in our beautiful Cemetery many elegant monuments and tombs as evidence of the pride our citizens take in ornamenting the City of the Dead.”



*(Editor's Note: Freestone is so named because it can be freely cut in any direction. Freestone must be fine-grained, uniform, and soft enough to be cut easily without shattering or splitting. Connecticut freestone is basically brownstone, which is a sandstone. Medina sandstone, which is what we have been calling the Morgan mausoleum is also a brownstone and freestone, just a different deposit of it in western New York. We have assumed that the entire Morgan vault, not just the roof, was Medina sandstone because of its quarries being so close to Rochester. Why the builder ordered a sandstone from a more distant location like Connecticut is not known to us, although it may have been that the Connecticut sandstone was softer and therefore easier to be carved for the façade.)*

*in Mount Hope Cemetery at the time. The façade is carved of Connecticut*

to be water proof. The walls are of massive masonry. The tomb contains eighteen catacombs, which are air tight or will be when the front panel is inserted after each has received its deposite of human clay. This tomb is a



# MARILYN NOLTE RETIRES FROM FOMH PRESIDENCY



*Marilyn Nolte was honored at the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery annual meeting for ten years of service as president of the organization.*

After being a particularly active and involved president of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery for 10 years, Marilyn Nolte has retired as president. Her tenure was marked by broad expansion of the activities of the Friends. At the annual meeting of the Friends organization on April 10, 2018, the new president, Richard Reisem, delivered a tribute to Marilyn Nolte.

Richard Reisem said, "I have the privilege this evening to honor the outstanding work of one of our great volunteers. This person has been our organization's leader for the last 10 years. I am talking about Marilyn Nolte, who has just retired from being the longest-serving president in the history of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery.

"Her accomplishments for our organization have been so many and so significant that we could be here all evening recounting them. Suffice it to say that there has not been an activity of our organization that she has not suggested or promoted, and then spent countless hours, days, and months to accomplish it.

"It was Marilyn Nolte who led us into obtaining **grants** to accomplish much of the physical improvements that the Friends have made in the cemetery. It was Marilyn Nolte who inspired the broadening of our tours program that is now one of the most extensive cemetery tours programs to be found anywhere in our country. She worked and obtained a grant to produce a Tree Management Plan for the cemetery. She persuaded me to write several books about this cemetery



*The stained-glass window award was created by Valerie O'Hara, president and chief creative designer of Pike Stained Glass Company.*

and then accomplished research throughout the process of producing them.

“Whatever the Friends were doing, Marilyn was always in the thick of it all. When people in our community and elsewhere had questions about Mount Hope Cemetery and



From left: Valerie O'Hara, FOMH trustee; Pat Corcoran, FOMH vice-president, and Richard Reisem FOMH president.

its permanent residents, it was Marilyn Nolte who provided the answers. In fact, Marilyn was recently honored with an acknowledgement in Leigh Fought's 2017 book, *Women in the World of Frederick Douglass*.

“Our community also recently honored Marilyn Nolte as a winner of the Jefferson Awards for the top volunteers in Rochester. I had the privilege of attending the luncheon of this annual event that was given in her honor at Mario's Restaurant.

“Tonight, we have a token of our appreciation for her noble and expansive contributions to the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery. It is a work of art, a stained-glass window designed and constructed by Valerie O'Hara of Pike Stained Glass.”



## New Officers of The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery

At the May 2, 2018 meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, the following officers were elected to serve for one year:

**President:**

Richard Reisem, richardreisem@gmail.com

**Executive Director:**

Henry McCartney, fomh.henry@gmail.com

**Vice-President and Membership Chair:**

Pat Corcoran, pcorc@aol.com

**Secretary:**

Cam Tran, camyentran@gmail.com

**Treasurer:**

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**Publicity Chair:**

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**Genealogy:**

Anna Jannes: ajannes2013@gmail.com

**Membership:**

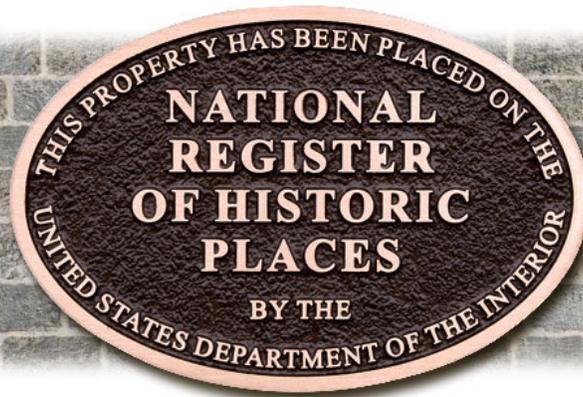
460 paid members in good standing





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Within the last few weeks, we have received confirmation that the entire 193 acres of Mount Hope Cemetery have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The New York State Historic Preservation Office accepted our 60-page application, sending it on to the National Park Service, a division of the U.S. Department of the Interior, which approved it and sent it to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places for implementation. We published an article in the Fall 2017 *Epitaph* in which we reported the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery's saga of applying for this recognition all the way back to 1972. The Keeper of the National Register has now completed his role, so we are granted the right to place a bronze plaque at a suitable place in the cemetery. Look for it soon. —Richard Reisem



Published by the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery, Rochester, NY 14620, a nonprofit member organization founded in 1980.

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Richard O. Reisem, Editor  
 Rose O'Keefe, Associate Editor  
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