

EPITAPH

The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery

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Rochester's Greatest Seed Empire The CROSMAN BROTHERS COMPANY

by Devin Marty



Crosman Brothers Seed Company headquarters at 905 Monroe Avenue, Rochester, NY.

Charles F. Crosman (1802-1865)

Charles W. Crosman (1847-1920)

George F. Crosman (1851-1920)

Daniel T. Crosman (1856-1930)

[no headstone]

The Crosman family founded one of the most successful seed companies in the world. Founded in 1838 by Charles F. Crosman, Crosman Seed soon dominated much of the northern hemisphere in terms of seed sales. They owned the first wholesale and retail store in the Rochester area and remain to this day America's oldest packet seed house. Many family

members are interred in Mount Hope Cemetery, and their family plot offers great symbolic insight into who they were as citizens of Rochester, NY. Today, the company is run by the Mapstone family, and is still a large distributor of seeds around the world.

Known to many as the Flower City, Rochester was once the heart of the country's seed production. Rochester's access to the Erie Canal, its fertile soil, and vast growing fields made it optimal for the mass production of seeds. While a few families in Rochester took advantage of this opportunity, none did better and with more resolve than the Crosman family. Leading the undertaking was Charles F. Crosman, a man who embodied words like "industrious" and "entrepreneur". Together with his family, he would build the vast seed empire that they controlled during the nineteenth century.

Charles F. Crosman was born in Wilmington, Vermont, on November 3, 1802. In 1820 at the age of sixteen, Charles and his family moved to Columbia County, New York, and joined a Shaker community named Mount Lebanon Shaker Village. There, young Charles learned the skills he would need to start and operate his future seed house. According to sources found in the Library of Congress, "The Shakers of Mount Lebanon are perhaps best recognized for their innovative approaches to the design and manufacture of goods based on function and simplicity... as well as in their noteworthy agricultural and industrial pursuits." His time spent learning at "the largest, most successful, and influential of the Shaker communities in America" would give Charles a meaningful advantage over his future business competition.

He remained with his family for 19 years until venturing roughly 200 miles west to Rochester, NY, where Charles started an enterprise that would grow to be the largest of its kind. Upon his arrival in Rochester in 1838, he established the Crosman Company and began mixing, packaging, and selling seeds to local farmers, having

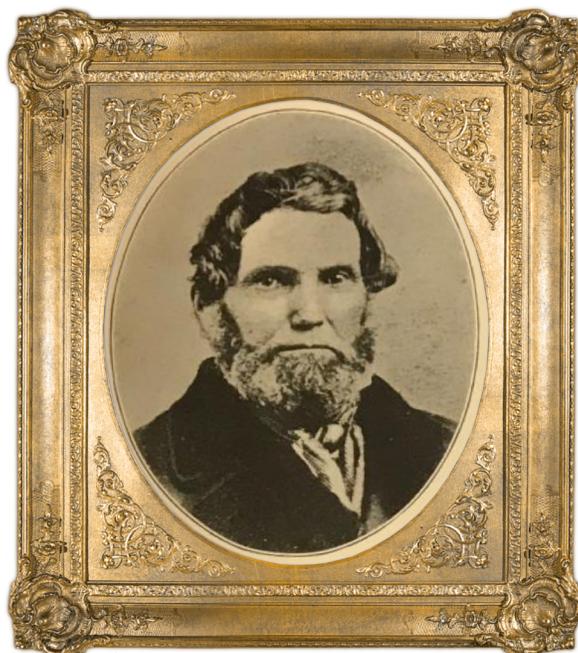
learned a lot about the local market from his business partner Michael Bateham, who had started his own Rochester-based seed company, Rochester Seed Store and Horticultural Repository, just five years prior.

While Charles F. Crosman was developing his business, he was also busy supporting a family. On Aug. 22, 1843, he married Mary L. Wilson of Fenner, NY, and one year later they gave birth to their first child, Sarah. (She would go on to marry a man named George M. Shepard. Both are now buried in Mount Hope Cemetery alongside the rest of the Crosman family.) Over the following years, Charles F. and Mary had three more children, all sons: Charles W., George F., and Daniel T. Crosman. Charles W. and George

F. would go on to succeed their father and run his seed empire with much success, while Daniel T. seemingly stayed out of the family picture. (He is also, according to the plot books of Mount Hope Cemetery, the only one of the children not to be buried with a headstone.)

Born on January 13, 1847, Charles W. Crosman grew up helping his father in several aspects of the seed company. He received a public school education in Rochester, but learned business strategies from his father, who by this time held positions in many business circles throughout the city and in the region. It was always

anticipated that Charles W., as the eldest son, would inherit the company, but upon his father's untimely death in July 1865, and at only the age of nineteen, Charles W. abruptly took control of his father's business. With the help of his brother, George, and with a few years of experience, the company began to experience wild success through innovation. William F. Peck detailed this ascension in his 1907 book, *History of Rochester and Monroe County Vol. 2*: "Charles W. Crosman has for many years been engaged, as a noted writer brilliantly put it, 'in making the world small.' In other words, he has been a factor in systematizing business... carried forward with the smoothness of a perfected machine... [and has] displayed



Charles F. Crosman was the founder of Crosman Seeds.

splendid executive force, unfaltering determination and unabated energy". Apart from their overwhelming business success, the brothers became well known throughout the community as leaders. Charles W. would become known for initiating "discussions which led to the founding of the American Seed Trade Association" in June 1883 and for being president and founder of the American Seedsmen's Protective Association.

As the business continued its remarkable growth, Charles W. married Josephine Godard, daughter of the well-known mayor of Albany, C.W. Godard. The two would live happily until 1920, when, on June 7, Charles died, after losing a fight to lobar pneumonia. His interest in the business would soon pass to investors, as Charles W. had no sons to whom he could entrust the family's company. A similar fate would befall his brother George.

George F. Crosman, born in 1851, grew up with a strong understanding of the seed industry, but also received a more formal education than his brother Charles W. at DeGraff Military Academy. George F. was only 16 when his father died, but he made use of his leadership training to assist his older brother and would go on to become a part-owner and a key part of their nearly overnight success.

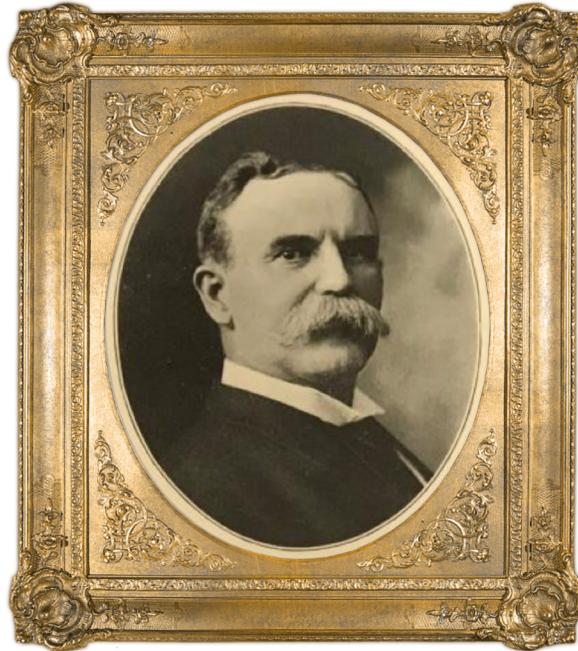
According to John Devoy, author of *Rochester and the Post Express*, "At their seed house [in 1895] on Monroe Avenue, two hundred persons are employed and they have dealings with thirty thousand country merchants... [and] in addition to their Rochester interests they have large establishments at Cobourg and Wellington, Ontario, where large quantities of peas are grown for seed that is sent over the world." This impressive rise from citywide distributor to worldwide supplier demonstrates how well the two brothers worked together. With their resolve and innovative outlook on business and marketing, the brothers would make *Crosman* a household name.

In terms of community activities, George F. was a member of the Chamber of Commerce as well as the distinguished Rochester Club. He was also quite accomplished as a Free Mason; he would earn the title of sovereign grand inspector general of the thirty-third degree of the Supreme Council, a position that, at the time, few had reached. The two brothers would also, in the years 1905-1908, start the Crosman Realty Company and help to turn much of the land surrounding their business into neighborhoods, resulting in what is now Upper Monroe, Rochester.

In 1879, George F. married Ella D. Todd; however she died eight years later of peritonitis. Left with two daughters, Clara M. and Beatrice E., George F. married Gertrude Hollister (1867-1941) in 1901. The two would remain together until George's death in 1920, exactly three months after his brother Charles passed away.

Because neither Charles W. nor George F. had produced a male successor, and due to the limits on woman's rights to own property in 1920s Rochester, none of their daughters would be left the business. This forced the brothers' estates to sell the company off to investors. When the transaction was completed in 1925, the business fell to the management of C. J.

McRoberts and Herbert W. Mapstone; three years later H.W. Mapstone would have full ownership. During this time, the company moved its operations to a new headquarters in East Rochester, where it remains in operation today. The new seed facility took over the factory where the famous Rochesterian Kate Gleason manufactured her Hi-Speed trailer-cars from 1914 to 1925. The 50,000-square-foot seed factory is now managed by five dedicated and hardworking employees, some of which have been working there for over forty years. The Mapstone family prides themselves in being America's oldest packet seed house.



Charles W. Crosman was the eldest son of Charles F. Crosman.

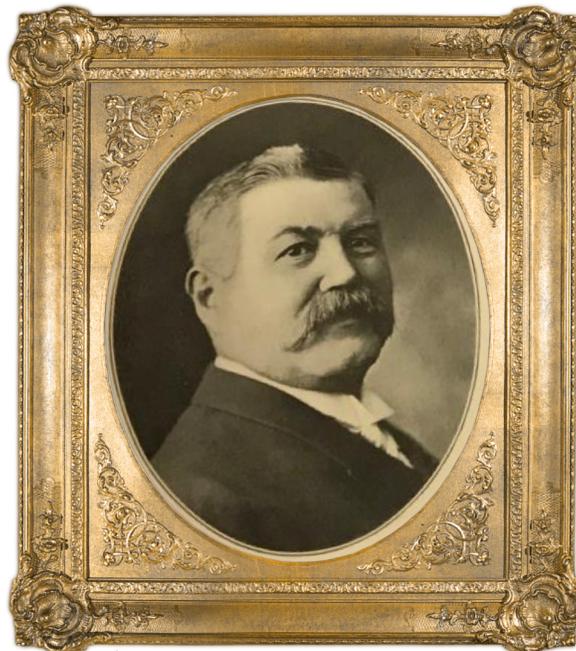
If one wished to pay respect to the Crosman family, they need look no further than Section E, Lot 45 of Mount Hope Cemetery. There, Charles F. Crosman and his wife, along with their children and their significant others, are interred, marked by their respective stones (with the exception of Daniel T. Crosman). While many of the individual stones in the Crosman family plot remain free of iconography, the family monument has several symbols, tastefully placed about the stone. The monument has six distinct features. The first is its structural design, made to resemble a Grecian or a Minoan temple. Engraved into its base is the name – “Crosman”; boldly carved, it is clear who is buried here. The next thing that draws the eye is the carving directly above the name; this pattern wraps around the entire structure and resembles the common egg-and-dart design. This symbol refers to resurrection after death. The dart, or arrow, is a depiction of death, while the egg, which, here, resembles more of a top-down view of a budding plant, symbolizes life.

Looking further, two oak branches climb the sides of the stone, depicted there with both leaves and acorns. The oak is one of the strongest and most well known trees in the world. In 2004, the United States Congress deemed it the national tree of America; furthermore, the cross on which Jesus was crucified is said to have been made from the grand oak tree, a tree that can reportedly grow to a hundred feet in height. The three virtues that come with the carving of the oak branch are longevity, endurance, and maturity. Oaks age slowly, over centuries. They grow strong, and are able to brave the elements; to me, there is no better representation of the Crosman family and their ever-growing seed empire. As eyes follow the ascending oak branches to the roof of the monument, another branch is noticeably draped on the top. That branch strongly resembles the *laurus nobilis*, or a laurel leaf, a plant used in some of history’s oldest crowns and worn notably by Julius Caesar. The plant signifies a special achievement or triumph that was attained, and, in this

case, clearly representative of the business that the family had built from the ground up. Finally, directly beneath the branch of laurel, and lining the roof, is a clasped bundle of wheat. The wheat sheaf is commonly representative of productive life and old age. Most members of the Crosman family lived long and healthy lives, and, from their aforementioned success, it is evident that they lived productive lives as well. A note should be made as to how all of the images chosen to depict the Crosman family are, in one way or another, plant-related.

All in all, the Crosman family fully personified the expression “people are plants”. That is, they were born, they grew, they thrived, and eventually passed, but not without leaving their seeds behind here on earth. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the seed royals of Rochester had picked so much plant iconography to epitomize their legacy.

(Editor’s Note: The author, Devin Marty, prepared this essay as a course requirement for Religion 167W, Speaking Stones, at the University of Rochester in December 2017.)



George F. Crosman was the middle son of Charles F. Crosman.



The Crosman family monument is in Section E.

1818–2018 BICENTENNIAL TRIBUTE TO

Lewis Henry Morgan

(1818–1881)

A MILE IN HIS FOOTSTEPS

by Rose O’Keefe

Part Three

Lewis H. Morgan came from a wealthy farm family that valued a classical education. He graduated from Union College in Schenectady, New York as an inquisitive scholar whose understanding of ancient Greek and Roman history and philosophy led him to study native cultures first in the Americas and then around the world. His law career began in Rochester in 1844 and grew through legal work for local investors in mining and railroads, during a time of enormous friction in society between science and religion.

Morgan became director of Lake Superior Iron Company in 1855 and by 1865, had been Marquette and Ontonagon Railroad attorney for eight years. During his work for them, he had repeatedly lobbied the Michigan State and U.S. legislatures; attended a four-month session of U.S. Congress, and traveled to Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Marquette, Michigan. Then, despite winning a land grant of 250,000 acres for M&O, when the company denied his

final bill of \$15,000 (\$221,978 in 2018 dollars), he stopped working for them.

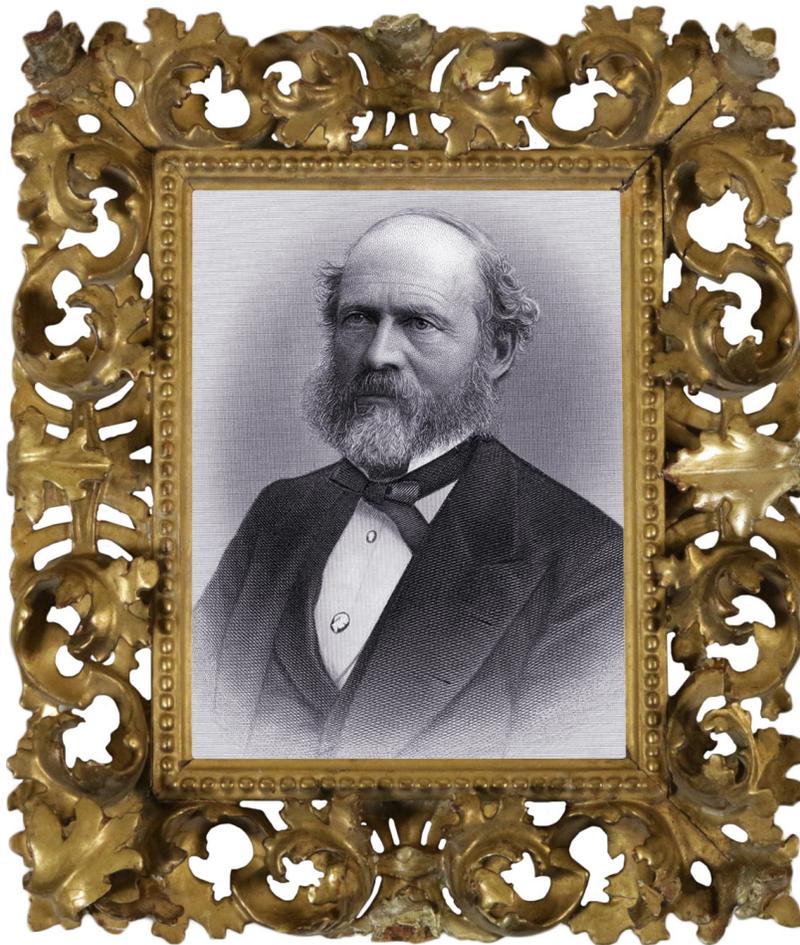
When the M&O fell apart and Morgan lost \$10,000 (\$162,000 in 2018), the insult was worse than the injury. His income came from his own venture, Morgan Iron Company, a blast furnace in Ishpeming, Michigan, which smelted 120 tons of pig iron a week. For eight years after the Civil War, it operated at full capacity, but after its decline and sale at auction in 1877, Morgan still had \$100,000 to his name (\$2,296,325 in 2018).

As the Erie Railroad wars hurt businesses in Western New York, Morgan was asked to run for the NYS Assembly. This bitter battle for control of a local railroad by Wall Street magnates had a direct impact on WNY businesses. When

the New York State Senate investigated the Erie Railroad Company’s use of the Railroad Act of 1850, this favorable bill, which had passed both the NYS Assembly and Senate, was compared to legalizing counterfeit money. The press charged the legislature with corruption and, after one of Morgan’s associates was implicated, Morgan came as close to public disgrace as any politician in Albany.

Despite the fact that he knew nothing of the payments, as a legal expert, Morgan knew the Erie’s stock issue was illegal, but the clash of monopolies against

local companies before state regulations existed, set up irreconcilable conflicts. Since the years when Morgan had learned everything he could from Ely Parker and Seneca natives for *League of the Ho-de-nau-sho-nee* that came out in 1851, he had longed to work in Indian



Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881)



Morgan's library, an addition he added to his house, was the scene of Pundit Club meetings.

affairs for the federal government. He had hoped his work for the Assembly would lead to an appointment as U.S. Commissioner of Indian affairs, but when newly-elected President Ulysses S. Grant gave the post to Parker, Morgan lost all interest in the government.

During his years with the M&O and Morgan Iron, he closed his Rochester law office to study native family systems. Then, after he lost interest in politics, he turned to writing *The American Beaver and his Works*, which came out in 1868. He also submitted a massive study to the Smithsonian Institution in 1865 and spent several years revising it. *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, published by the Smithsonian in 1870, was a giant volume and the most expensive they had ever published.

Morgan had a life-long quest for approval from the scientific community and put all of his efforts into "Conjectural Solution of the Origin of the Classificatory System of Relationships." At his presentation before the Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston in 1868, the experts' lack of emotion led him to believe his paper was a failure. Instead, they were so impressed by his original ideas that they elected him to the Academy.

During a 14-month tour with his wife and son in England and Europe, he met with many scholars and took voluminous notes for his "Journal of a European Trip, 1870-71." He corresponded with many scientists, and scholars came to Rochester to discuss their works with him. Through letters, he kept up with scientific projects around the world.

At the American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting in 1875, he became the sixtieth member of the National Academy of Sciences—an honor he had long sought. Then, for two years he barely left his library working on *Ancient Society, or Research in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization*, published in 1877. His unique concept showed the forms a society had to pass through to advance,

and earned him the title, Father of American Anthropology. Unfortunately, writing *Ancient Society* strained his nerves. His handwriting grew shaky; he became depressed and irritable. Even so, he urged U.S. President Rutherford B. Hayes to set aside land in the nearby Rocky Mountains for an Indian cattle kingdom. When the Gold Rush set off land grabs between the railroads and the Sioux nation, Morgan defended the Sioux's right to protect themselves.

Even though his health was weak, he served as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1880—an honor that was the highest tribute American scientists could bestow on a peer and which recognized the science of anthropology. He continued to overwork, collecting daguerreotypes, drawings, and descriptions of Indian dwellings for *Houses and House Life*

of the *American Aborigines*. This large volume, issued by the Department of the Interior in 1881, fulfilled his dream of serving the federal government as an ethnologist.

For all of 1881 he was confined to home from nervous exhaustion and was allowed no visits from friends or associates. *Houses and House Life* was published a few weeks before his death on December 17, 1881, shortly



Portrait of
Algernon Crapsey

after his 63rd birthday. His close friend, the Rev. J. H. McIlvaine, presented the eulogy; members of the Pundit Club were honorary pallbearers; and their sons carried the casket to the tomb at Mount Hope Cemetery. Morgan had organized the first meeting of a scientific and literary society, which met monthly for 25 years. This congenial group of neighbors and academics helped transform Morgan into a scholar of world renown whose work as a pioneering sociologist and ethnologist, separate from his career as a lawyer.

There's no way to know what the effect of the birth of his first child with his wife Mary Elizabeth "Lizzie" had on him, in 1852. Lemuel was disabled by smallpox and was totally dependent on care from others for his entire life. The deaths of their two daughters, ages 6 and 2 years in 1862, moved him to donate his estate to the University of Rochester for women's education. When Lizzie bequeathed her estate (after her death in 1883) their combined estates were valued at \$80,000 (\$190,300 today).

ALGERNON CRAPSEY ON LEWIS HENRY MORGAN

In his 1923 biography, Rochester clergyman the Rev. Dr. Algernon Crapsey called Lewis Henry Morgan a scientific saint and a humanist in the first ranks of the world's intellectual pioneers. Crapsey wrote about how *Ancient Society* became a socialist classic, because Karl Marx had recommended it to Friedrich Engels who in 1884 published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State: In the Light of the Researches of Lewis Henry Morgan*. For 25 years, it was second only to Marx's *Das Kapital* as the most popular Socialist book, selling tens of thousands of copies at \$.85 (about \$22 today).

Pundit Club members buried in Mount Hope Cemetery:

Edward Mott Moore, M.D., (G); Samuel Allan Lattimore, Ph.D., LL.D., (L); Frederick A. Whittlesey, (G); Judge George Franklin Danforth, (V); William S. Ely, M.D., (V); Martin B. Anderson, (O, UR plot); Lewis H. Morgan, (F); Samuel D. Porter, (G); Rush Rhees, (O, UR plot); George H. Mumford, (V); Rev. Rob Roy McGregor Converse, (MM); James Goid Cutler, (MM); and George Ellwanger, (V). (Read about all of them in Richard Reisem's new book, *Buried Treasures in Mount Hope Cemetery*.)





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EPITAPH

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The Friends of MOUNT HOPE CEMETERY

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Welcome to Our Website

The purpose of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery is to optimize the cemetery's potential as a cultural resource through education, preservation and promotion of Mount Hope Cemetery's unique heritage.

Dedicated in 1838 in Rochester NY, Mount Hope is America's first municipal Victorian cemetery.

Set in a picturesque landscape shaped by retreating glaciers, the cemetery features 82 mausoleums, spalling Egyptian obelisks, winged angels of mercy, a Renaissance garden, fountain, two stone bridges in Gothic Revival style, a Spanish garden, and bell tower.

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Saturdays at 1:00 PM:
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Meet: South cemetery entrance, 1133 Mount Hope Avenue, opposite The Distillery restaurant.
 Admission: \$5/person. Free for FOMH members and children under age 16.
 Tour Guide: Don Hall

www.fomh.org