

MT. PLEASANT CEMETERY

“A few of the enterprising men of Fairport have been much interested for a few months past in grading and laying into lots a most lovely plot of ground, a little south of the village, for a new cemetery....The grounds are on an elevation that overlooks the village and surrounding country, and even some parts of the city of Rochester are seen from the summit.” – *Union and Advertiser, September 13, 1865.* In such a way was Fairport’s Mt. Pleasant Cemetery founded in 1865. There were 250 lots available at a cost of \$22 each.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, burial customs were changing. With the advent of new embalming techniques, which arose out of the needs of the Civil War, it was no longer crucial to have a rapid burial. New wealth, the rise of a significant middle class with more leisure time, and concerns over health, coupled with the new standard of mourning set by Queen Victoria all played roles in the changes. Many more people could now afford grave markers and even mausoleums, all with the requisite symbolic carving, and were looking for a more rural, quiet, and peaceful resting place for their loved ones to replace the often crowded, noisy, and unsanitary burial sites found in town.

The new Victorian cemeteries were laid out as gardens; beauty was intentionally planned with curved roads and pathways, trees, flowers and other plantings. When possible, they were located on a hill with a view and with knolls and valleys that were conducive to Sunday strolls and picnics, as well as quiet mourning.

Mt. Pleasant is clearly in the Victorian mode. It is set on a hill, and was originally accessible by a curving road from East Church Street. The entrance was through a wrought iron gate complemented by a similar fence that surrounded the area. The pathways still wind through the plots and there are lots of trees, which provide shady spots to be quiet or to mourn. When the cemetery was dedicated in September of 1865, a plea was also made for “two thousand dollars to erect a monument in the memory of the men of this town who have given their lives in their country’s struggle...this seems to be just and fitting.” By the following November, the granite column, carved with the names of those who had died, had been erected and dedicated. It still stands.

There are a number of family plots with ten to fifteen members. One of the most significant is that of the DeLand family. Marked by an obelisk and individual stones are twenty-one members of the family, including Daniel and Minerva, the founders of the DeLand Chemical Co., and Henry, builder of the Green Lantern Inn and founder of DeLand, Florida and his wife Sarah. The Benedict family plot has sixteen identified stones and five unknown ones. Gould Benedict who fought in the Civil War, Elmer, who was active in local politics, and Hannah, who served the sick, the poor and the needy for most of her 65 years are among those buried here. The Bown family plot has ten sites. George Bown was a carriage maker who built one of the major commercial blocks in the old village.

Familiar names can be found among the many interred at Mt. Pleasant. Andrew Deal, a former publisher of the *Fairport Herald*, is buried there, as are Byron and Bedent Baird who owned large amounts of property in the Baird Road area, and Smith Morey who owned a clothing establishment on Main Street. George L.G. Seeley, another Fairport businessman and builder, is interred here, as are members of the DeNise, Knapp, and Sperbeck families.

Space does not permit listing more names, but the cemetery with its hilltop location, trees, and winding paths is a quiet place to walk and to remember those who were here before – just as the Victorians had planned.