

The Paths and Fences of Pioneer Cemetery
by Douglas Shepard, 2005

A subscription paper of 24 May 1815 pledged to buy the Burying Ground, which had been in use for some seven years, and to erect "a Suitable fence around the Same." A June 1827 issue of the *Censor* remarked on the "terrible condition of the cemetery" pointing out that cattle roamed freely and there was "no fence to speak of." That suggests some minimal fencing had been done but had been allowed to deteriorate.

During 1828 another effort was made to provide a proper fence which apparently was done since the Village Minutes of 27 June 1832 directed that B. **Taylor** be paid for repair and for a lock for the "gate of the burying ground." (Oversight of the cemetery shifted between the Village and the Town several times over the years.)

The Town reasserted itself in 1837, voting to look into all the burying grounds in the Town. In March 1840 they agreed to pay \$100 "in fencing and enlarging the burying ground in Fredonia." In March 1841 they again referred to enlarging the cemetery and in March 1842 they resolved to raise more money "to fence the burying ground in Fredonia." In November 1842 Squire **White** deeded a parcel to enlarge the ground. The metes and bounds of that transaction began at the northeast corner of the burying ground "as it has been fenced and used," suggesting there was fencing in place. Of course, adding **White's** parcel meant the fencing now had to be extended.

By 1856 complaints about the derelict state of the cemetery began appearing in the *Censor*. In May 1858 the Village and Town discussed building "a wall and securing the bank on the line of Main St.," and in July H. **Smith** was authorized to excavate for the wall.

Starting in January 1867, George **Ryman**, Sexton at Forest Hill Cemetery, began acting as Sexton for Pioneer Cemetery as well. He made notes of each burial he performed and in those notes are references to fences and pathways. He refers to "**Barker's** fence" eight times between July 1869 and February 1892 (**Ryman** died in December 1893.) meaning the fence along George Barker's property just north and east of the cemetery. The fencing at the north and west he called "the new cemetery fence" (21 August 1871) because, in February 1870, the Forest Hill Cemetery Association had purchased the Fairgrounds which abutted directly on the Pioneer Cemetery line. **Ryman** was still referring to the fence that way in September 1882, although he then began using the "Forest Hill Cemetery" designation.

There is an odd, and unfortunately, difficult to read entry for 15 August 1869. The grave of Mr. **Wicks** of Dunkirk "2nd Grave North of Iron Fence of [a name written over] Margaret ___? **Scotch** — near the Gate." "Scotch" might be "**Scott**." If that is so, then the location referred to would be the Scott Lot, #1590-1593. That would mean there was an iron fence above the "notch" and a gate on that side of the cemetery not far above the "notch." The difficulty is that the 1590-1593 graves are all from 1874 on.

Ryman refers to "the gate" six more times. For 3 October 1870 it is near the **Adams** graves (#1091-1096); for 12 December 1872 it is near "Aner wife of Wm. **Cookson**" (#1112); for 15 January 1875 it is close to Mr. **Morley's** grave (#1149); and for 13 October 1886, it is near Mrs. **Parnell's** grave. (Emily **Parnwell** = #1075).

It seems clear that at least one gate was located near the Main St. corner where the driveway opening in the stone wall is today. Graves #9,10,11 and 12 to the right of today's road and #1075,1076 and 1077 to its left all date between 1845 and 1864, so the path and the gate it led from could only have been about the same as today's access.

Another term that crops up in Ryman's notes is "entrance." There are five such references between July 1872 and March 1888. For 20 October 1872 the reference is to "Miss **Baldwin** on the **Button** lot." That is Hannah Minerva **Baldwin** whose grave is #1611. **Ryman's** note adds that her grave was "on the left hand of the steps at the entrance." That would locate the entrance steps, leading from the old right-of-way, as just below grave #1611, where Wendy has located it on her version of the Pioneer Cemetery map.

Since "entrance" is being used at the same time as "gate," it seems clear that pedestrian access was via the entrance, the hearse or other vehicular traffic via the gate. That "iron fence" of 15 August 1869 "near the gate," shows up again in **Ryman's** last entry, 9 December 1893. Mrs. **Congdon's** grave was dug "north of Mr. & Mrs. **Orcutt's** grave and east south east of the iron fence." That seems to mean Mrs. **Congdon's** grave was east of and at the south end of the iron fence. That suggests an iron fence running north and south, which could only apply to the private lots alongside the cemetery, unless **Ryman** was being quite literal about the north-south orientation of the fence, by the compass. But how could a grave be east of such a fence and still be inside the cemetery? The answer is not clear.

Another term that shows up frequently is "alley." It appears first in the 3 October 1870 entry. **Ryman** dug a grave that was "the 4th grave from Alley on the south side behind the **Adams** Graves." (**Adams** = #1091-1096) Above the words "the 4th grave" he inserted "of alley leading from the gate." In other words, by late 1870 at least there were "alleys," defined pathways into the cemetery, and one of them led in from the gate.

A 3 December 1870 entry refers to the "Central Walk." Mr. Henry **Foster's** son's grave was about "6 feet south of John **Sloan's** grave, head to the Central walk" Jonathan **Sloan** was at #769. In 11 January 1874 is a reference to "Main Alley." It was a grave on the east side of the Main Alley running north and south to opposite John **Gilbert's** grave. **Gilbert** graves are at #507-511. This seems to be a reference to a grave somewhere between #404 and #407. The Main Alley running north and south is the lower right hand segment of the loop on Wilder's map. The wording also seems to be making a distinction between the Main Alley and other, smaller, pathways.

A 14 February 1874 entry refers to a grave on the same Tier as Gen. **Risley** "across the alley." In other words, on the same Tier as #1510 but on the other side of the main pathway. A 23 February 1874 entry refers to a grave "close to Main Alley near the gate." A 29 November 1874 grave at #217 had its "Head to the alley west of **Cates** lot." (#200) That alley is the wider space west of Lots #207-247 and east of Lots #281-316. 15 January 1875 notes that Mr. **Morley's** grave (#1149) was "close to the main Alley from the gate." 10 August 1878 Henry **Newman** (#440) was buried on the north side of his infant (#439) on the west side of the alley running north and south by the **Abell** stone (#334) with the foot of the grave right to the alley opposite John **Sloan** on the east (#383?) and James **Thomas** on the west (448?).

On 20 February 1880 the grave of Mrs. **Beach** (Nancy **Beach** = #481) was dug "on the same tier of graves as I. **Onnan** [#480] and Smith [O. L. **Smith** = #479] with the foot of the grave to the further alley." The "further alley" is the wider space to the right of graves #467-481 and left of graves #412-433. On 2 April 1880 Mr. **Zenther's** infant daughter was buried "next to Main alley" on the tier west of the James B. **Sprague** lot. **Sprague** burials were at #895-901 so the Main alley would be the pathway just left of #946-951. On 12 July 1880 a grave on "the **Leveens** Lot," probably "**Lavigne**" at #287 was "north of the main alley from Main Street."

On 2 May 1883 Mrs. **Spink** was buried "south of **Walker** graves" (#399-403), "second grave from the alley in the center of the Yard." The "Yard" is apparently the segment between

Wilder's right-hand loop and **Barker's** fence. That alley was to the right of #303-323 and left of #236-247. That should locate Mrs. **Spink** about at #398. On 1 February 1880 the Town Board agreed to raise \$100 "to expend on the Old Cemetery for a culvert at the entrance and a driveway for carriages, and a second one, if practical, on the westerly side, with other needed improvements." On 15 February 1881 they agreed to raise another \$100 "to complete the improvements." The 1880 use of "entrance" referred to Main St. The next time **Ryman** refers to a grave near the "Main Alley" is on 4 May 1892 where he calls it the "Main drive."

There are a number of other clues to objects and locations within Pioneer Cemetery in addition to the perimeter fences: New Cemetery or Forest Hill Cemetery fence; **Barker's** fence; and the iron fence. There is a grave near the south east corner of Devillo **White's** fence on 7 July 1870. That must mean what **Ryman** called the "new cemetery fence" in 1871.

On 1 May 1876 he described the grave of Horatio W. **Green's** mother, Olive **Green**, as being at the foot of the "**Markham** fence between two other graves." There are **Markham** graves at #991-993, however, it's difficult to understand what the "foot" of a fence would be if it enclosed a rectangle. This location is still unclear.

It was on 21 September 1882 that **Ryman** referred to the "new Cemetery fence" for the last time. The next reference, 16 June 1889, is simply the "Cemetery Fence," again on 7 September 1892, and 23 January 1893. This may mean that the Town had put up its own fence along this northern/western side. A 12 February 1893 entry refers to the "Forest Hill Cemetery hedge." Unfortunately, the precise location is not clear.

In addition to the fence, gate, alley, walk, drive, steps and entrance references, there are a few others of interest. Rufus **Parker's** shop, in the "notch" is mentioned on 19 March 1879 and 7 August 1882. The private **Button** lot is mentioned on 20 October 1872, Miller's lot on 19 March 1879, 7 August 1882, and 19 February 1890.

On 20 December 1883 is the first reference to a grave "in what was called the Episcopal burial ground." which turns out to be around graves #1046-1047. It was Andrew **Kennon's** grave (#1047) "on north side of infant of Rev. **Tyleer**" (#1046). On 12 October 1886 Mary **Barth's** (**Wilder** has "**Bennett**" in error) grave was dug "between Rev. **Tyler's** child [#1046] and a **Ruggles** [#1043] on West Point of the Old Ground." Anna **Gloor** was buried in the Episcopal lot on 10 May 1887, and Mrs. Elizabeth **Heuber** (#1045) south of Rev. **Tyler's** infant's grave in the "Episcopal Ground." On 18 March 1890 **Ryman** noted the burial of "Richard on a pointed lot west of Orville **Lakes**." There was an Orville B. **Lake** resident in Fredonia at the time but it is not clear where his Pioneer lot was. This wording may mean an odd-shaped lot, or the "ear" where the Episcopal ground was located.

Ryman refers to a Balsam tree (11 January 1874); to Maple trees on 29 November 1874, and 22 October 1875; and a Hickory tree on 9 August 1886. The only other reference point is "the corner post of Forest Hill cemetery east corner" mentioned on 23 February 1883.