

EPITAPH

THE FRIENDS OF MOUNT HOPE CEMETERY · VOL. 33 NO. 1 WINTER 2013



Emily Sibley as a young person.



Emily Sibley Watson as an elderly lady.

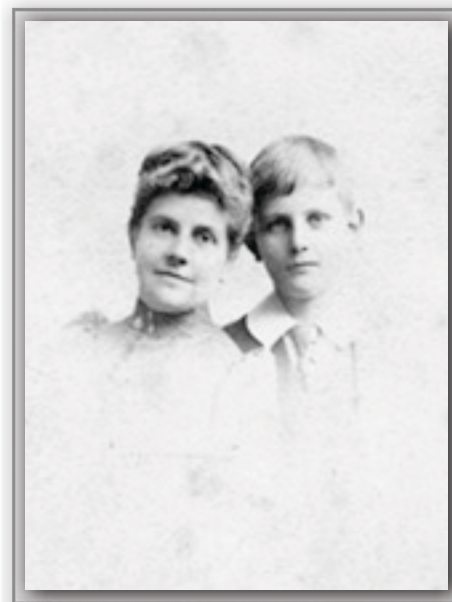
EMILY SIBLEY WATSON, FOUNDER OF THE MEMORIAL ART GALLERY

By Christina Palis

Emily Sibley Watson (1855-1945)
Hiram Sibley (1807-1888), father
James G. Averell (1877-1904), son
and other family members.

Description of the life and accomplishments of Emily Sibley Watson, including the establishment of the Memorial Art Gallery in memory of her son James G. Averell, initiating the Hochstein School of Music, and the Sibley family founding of the Genesee Hospital.

In Rochester, New York, the Memorial Art Gallery contains more than 12,000 works of art in a collection renowned for its quality and scope, spanning more than 5,000 years of art history. The Genesee Hospital provided healthcare to the Rochester community for 112 years. The Hochstein School of Music gives vibrant and diverse music and dance instruction as well as music therapy to children and adults of all ages, backgrounds, and financial means. All



Emily Sibley Averell and her son, James.

of these integral parts of providing healthcare, art, and music to the city of Rochester are indebted to an incredible woman: Emily Sibley Watson.

Emily was educated in Rochester and in Europe. She and her brother Hiram Watson Sibley both attended boarding schools in Heidelberg, Germany. Emily and her mother also accompanied her father to Russia when

he was discussing with czarist officials the possibility of a trans-Siberian telegraph connecting Europe and America. However, the Atlantic cable, laid in 1868, made this unnecessary. Later in life, Emily traveled extensively in Europe, evidenced by her correspondence from Paris and London, and she and her second husband took frequent cruises in their yacht. At the outbreak of World War I, they were in the Baltic Sea on the way to Russia, and they were marooned in Helsinki for an extended period.

The profit that the Sibley family gained from the great success of the telegraph allowed them to be generous to charitable organizations and higher education, as well as generous patrons of the arts. Emily's father, Hiram Sibley, was one of the incorporators of Cornell University, endowing the Sibley College of Mechanic Arts. Emily's brother Hiram Watson Sibley founded the Sibley Music Library, housed in the University of Rochester's Sibley Hall. The Eastman School of Music opened in 1921, and in January of 1922, the collection of music scores and books in the Sibley Music Library were moved to the Eastman School of Music. This library remains to this day both a community music library as well as a vast music library for the Eastman



Hiram Sibley, father of Emily, and founder of Western Union Telegraph Company.



Young James Averell playing his violin.

School of Music. It is the largest university music library in the United States.

Emily's mother, Elizabeth Sibley, was also a generous benefactor; she conceived of the Homeopathic Hospital in the winter of 1887 when she witnessed a woman slipping on icy pavement outside her home. The only hospital available to the woman was on the other side of town, and from that moment Elizabeth vowed to found a hospital that would serve the residents of Rochester on the east side. The hospital opened in 1889 on Monroe Avenue, later moving to Alexander Street. In 1926, the hospital changed its name to Genesee Hospital, and it would remain such until it closed in 2001.

Emily's first marriage was to Isaac Seymour Averell, a banker, on April 27, 1876. The circumstances regarding their split are unclear, but Averell went to Denver in 1884 and did not return. Emily and Isaac had two children together, Louise and James. Louise died at the age of seven from diphtheria.

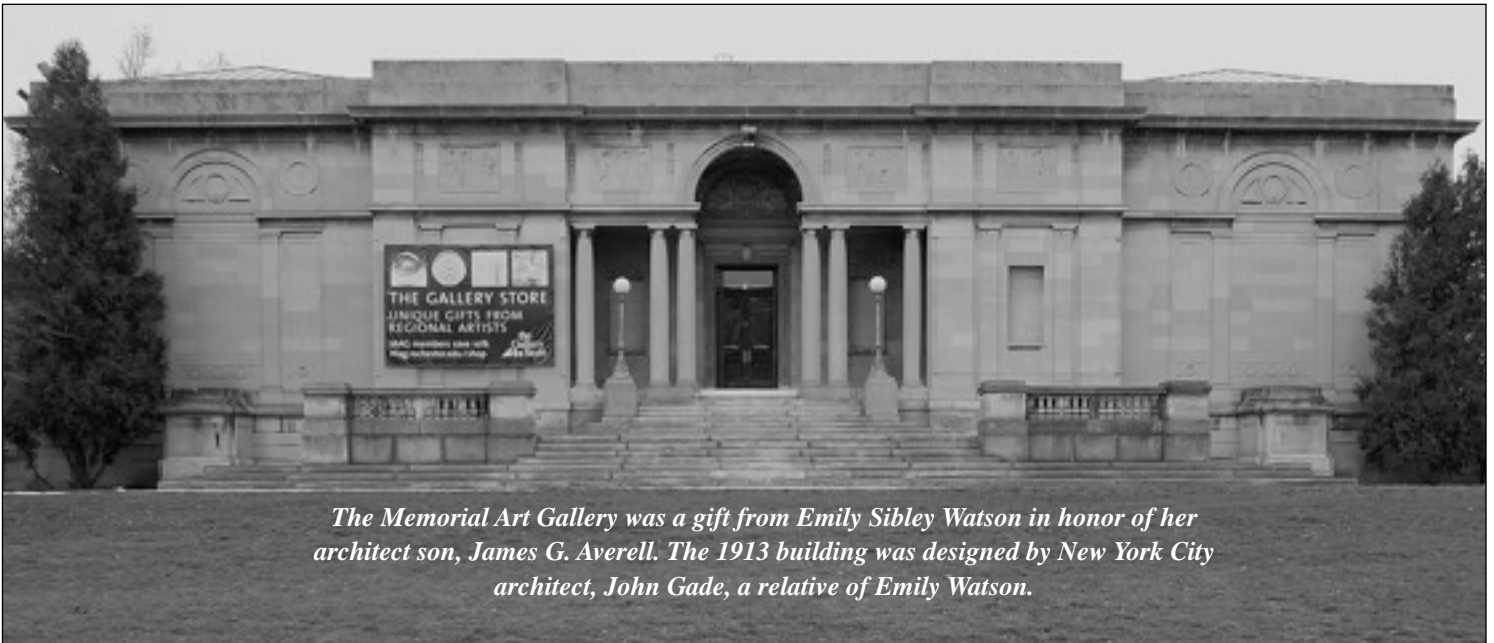
"We must believe that somewhere there must be compensation for our griefs and losses and that our dear children are happy and are living fuller lives than they would here. But this only helps a little when such terrible blows come to us," Emily wrote in a letter in 1914 to her dear friend Adelaide T. Crapsey who had also lost

her daughter, the poet Adelaide Crapsey, at the age of thirty-six. In a letter two years later to Adelaide, Emily again wrote, "But life is full of loss, inexplicable to us. There must be an explanation beyond, surely we shall sometime know and understand and be satisfied. With my love that stretches back into our early years when our little children were all with us..." The tragedy of James' early death is reiterated in a letter received by Emily from Hermann Dossenbach, conductor of the Rochester Orchestra and James' violin teacher as a child: "However I am living that sorrow with you, as is everyone that knew J. G. for to know him was to love him."

The death of her dear son prompted Emily to found the Memorial Art Gallery in his honor. The original building was based on a sketch that James had drawn of the Malatesta Temple in Rimini, Italy during his postgraduate work there. The gallery was also a fulfillment of the dream of Emily's father, Hiram Sibley, to have the art collections he had assembled during his trips to Europe on view in an art gallery to be admired by the public. Additionally, the renowned architect Claude Bragdon, who designed James' tombstone in Mount Hope Cemetery and later would design Emily's tombstone and the Watson family monument, designed the Memorial Art Gallery's first logo and was supervising architect for the building construction.

The gallery was dedicated on October 8, 1913 and was placed in the custody of the University of Rochester, maintaining that it remain "a means alike of pleasure and of education for all the citizens of Rochester". Emily had sent 748 invitations to the dedication, and by the following Sunday, a thousand more visitors had come to see the exhibition. At the dedication ceremony of the art gallery, Robert de Forest, vice-president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, said, "[The Rochester Art Club] dreamed dreams, but I doubt if they ever dreamed so beautiful a dream as Mrs. Watson has turned into reality."

Later in the ceremony, president of the University of Rochester, Rush Rhees, declared, "Over these galleries there hovers perpetually a spirit—as of the young man who loved life and beauty and honor—whose memory has led his mother to give this building to the cause of the spiritual culture of the whole community through the ministries of fine art." Certainly James' spirit permeated the building with his initials carved into the stone wreaths and the statue Memory by William Ordway Partridge inside the entrance. A second wing was added in 1926, doubling the size of the original building. Throughout the years, Emily contributed gifts of tapestries, sculptures, and paintings to the gallery's collection, and she served as a



member of the executive committee of the Memorial Art Gallery for many years.

Emily's second marriage was in 1891 to James Sibley Watson, her lifelong friend and the son of her father's business partner Don Alonzo Watson. James was a banker and philanthropist. They had a son, James Jr. who became an associate in medicine at the University of Rochester Medical School. James Jr. as well as his two children would continue Emily's legacy with involvement in and support of the Memorial Art Gallery.



Emily Sibley Watson was the principal benefactor to young violinist, David Hochstein, in whose memory the Hochstein Music School was established.

Emily was also instrumental in the founding of the Hochstein School of Music. David Hochstein was born on February 16, 1892 in Rochester to Russian immigrants. In 1902, Emily heard David practicing violin at a neighbor's house and recognizing his talent, she decided to become his benefactor. She supported him in his studies in Vienna and Russia, ensuring that he received the finest training available. She also presented him with a Stradivarius violin. Hochstein won numerous awards and traveled throughout the United States and Europe performing and composing. In October of 1917, Hochstein joined the army to fight in World War I and was assigned to the Infantry Division. A year later, he was killed in the Battle of Argonne in France. His body was never recovered.

Emily was also a loyal and generous patron of music within other areas of the Rochester community. She was a patron of the Rochester Orchestra, increasing her subscription to help pay the salary of Hermann Dossenbach, the orchestra's conductor. Her generous support is evidenced also in her frequent correspondence with Dossenbach and his wife. In 1902, she wrote to him, "I send this...with many good wishes for the success of your orchestra. You certainly deserve a lot of credit for its excellent work.... Always count upon me to help you out when necessary." In 1918, papers indicate that Emily contributed five hundred dollars a year for five years for scholarships for students in the School of

Music. She was also a member of the old Tuesday Musicale, one of the city's pioneer musical organizations.

Emily suffered a stroke several years before her death and was confined to her home. She would sit by the window of her house on Prince Street and watch the comings and goings on the street below. At the end of World War II, Army Air Force students were housed in the converted Theological Seminary Building, and each day they would march by Emily's home. When they discovered that Emily had donated money to improve their living spaces, each day they would salute her as they marched by.

Emily died on February 8, 1945 and is buried in Section D, Lot 141 in Mount Hope Cemetery. Her flat stone, as well as the Watson family monument, an elaborately

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Emily Sibley Watson continued to live in the Sibley family house on East Avenue until her death.

carved Celtic cross with intricate endless knots, was designed by famous architect and designer, Claude Bragdon. Her flat stone has a cross with four floral decorations and also a small bird relief next to her death year. The flowers evoke the metaphor of people as plants and death as only a stage in the continuous life cycle. The bird may signify her spirit, continuing song, and her living on in the Rochester community. This motif is echoed in the Watson family monument, which includes a Celtic cross, decorated with an endless knot. The Celtic knot is unbroken; it has no beginning or end. This symbolizes the eternal life after death and also the eternal bonds of love. The endless knot is a recurrent symbol in Bragdon's monuments, reflecting his own belief in reincarnation.

Appearing in the *Democrat and Chronicle* the day after Emily's funeral was an editorial that stated: "Her interest in the Genesee Hospital, in the Rochester Civic Music Association, her special interest in David Hochstein and the establishment of the school in his memory, revealed her genuine desire to use her wealth for the enrichment of the life of all her Rochester neighbors and for the alleviation of their distress. Neither advanced age nor illness dimmed her interest in others or her helpfulness. She was a Rochesterian whose name and personality will be recalled for many years as the cultural inspiration of her benefactions persists."

Certainly the legacy of Emily Sibley Watson resonates through the Rochester community today. She enriched the city's cultural life through her vibrant support of art, music, and culture. Her contributions are still felt today in the Rochester community with new exhibitions at the Memorial Art Gallery, concerts by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and fostering love of music at the Hochstein School of Music.

(Editor's Note: The author, Christina Palis, is a student at the University of Rochester and prepared this essay as part of the course requirements for Religion 167W, taught by Professor Emil Homerin, who is also a trustee of the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery.

FRIENDS RECEIVE GRANT FOR TREE MANAGEMENT PLAN

By Richard Reisem

Last fall, the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery applied for a grant from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for the purpose of creating a Tree Management Plan for the cemetery. The DEC awarded us a grant of \$7,500, which will be matched by a combination of Friends funding, as well as Friends and City of Rochester in-kind services. The grant will be managed by Friends trustee Zakery Steele, who is a professional landscape architect with

Bayer Landscape Architecture, PLLC, Honeoye Falls.

Zak and a committee including representation from the Friends Board of Trustees as well as City of Rochester Department of Environmental Services will define the scope of a Tree Management Plan and determine priorities. The committee will then issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) and invite selected companies to prepare proposals outlining how they would prepare a Tree Management Plan and what it should contain.

In 2008, the city and Friends received grants to prepare a *Mount Hope Cemetery Cultural Landscape Report*, which was produced by Heritage Landscapes LLC and Wendel

Duchscherer Architects and Engineers, PC and completed in 2009. Included in the report was a tree inventory of 2,191 trees in the old section of the cemetery, which is all the land north of Grove Avenue. Inventory analysis provided data on species, tree size, overall health including those at risk, and invasive species—one of which is the Norway maple for which a plan of systematic elimination needs to be established.

A further element of the Tree Management Plan is to provide advice on tree species that should be added over time to the cemetery, because of their appropriateness or to provide recommended levels of diversity to the cemetery forest.



The Friends received a grant to create a Tree Management Plan for Mount Hope Cemetery.

ROC THE·DAY

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**FRIENDS RECEIVE \$721.40
FROM ROC THE DAY**

By Richard Reisem

Last December 12, an epic one-day giving event, ROC the Day, took place in the greater Rochester area. It invited community members to make an end-of-year gift to help out their favorite not-for-profit organizations. Area nonprofit organizations were asked to register at ROCtheDay.org, and the Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery promptly put its name on the list. Donors then went to that Web site on 12.12.12 to make donations to their chosen not-for-profit agencies, thereby contributing to many worthy causes and making a difference in our community.

ROC the Day was produced by United Way of Greater Rochester with sponsorship support from ESL Federal Credit Union and backing from a host of community partners. The daylong event was hugely successful. Every hour throughout the 24-hour day, one ROCstar donor was chosen to receive an additional \$500 added to their gift for the not-for-profit of their choice. The Friends of Mount Hope Cemetery was the lucky recipient of one of those additional \$500, and the donor was Sentry Safe. An additional eleven contributors gave a total of \$221.40 to the Friends of Mount Hope, making the total contribution to the Friends a very nice gift of \$721.40.



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THE DOVE

The dove is the most frequently seen animal symbol in the cemetery. It is a symbol of purity and peace. In the Christian religion, the dove also represents the Holy Ghost as noted in John I of the New Testament: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him." It further designates the highest degree in the Catholic fraternal organization, the Knights of Columbus. In the Book of Genesis, Noah sent a dove out from the Ark to find land after the devastating flood. "And he stayed yet another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came in to him in the evening, and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off; so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth." The dove, with its olive leaf, was an indication that God had made peace with man, hence, the dove symbolizes peace. Our dove pictured here, is a bronze bas relief representation found in Section BB along Grove Avenue in Mount Hope Cemetery.

