

The Frost Mausoleum

"The largest blue stone ever landed here"

When former New York City merchant Thomas Frost died in 1867 and was followed in death by his wife Phebe (Green) Frost in 1868, their descendants, Isaac T. Frost and John G. Frost purchased seven (7) lots in Section A of Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery and set out to erect a family mausoleum designed by John A. Wood which would be of prodigious proportions. The Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle of December 19, 1868 reported the largest blue stone ever landed here was taken to the Cemetery yesterday. It measured 17 feet in length, 9 feet in width, and was several inches thick. The quarry cost for the blue stone - \$1,200. Another area paper estimated the finished cost of the "vault" to be between \$12 and \$15,000 and added "We opine it will require an extra blast upon the archangel's trump to resurrect our Quaker friend, after he has been once entombed in his mausoleum."

In choosing J. A. Wood (1837-1910) as designer of this impressive mausoleum, they chose a man known today for his other designs not only at the cemetery but also in Poughkeepsie and other parts of the country. Wood also designed the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery gates and gatehouse, as well as the monument for Matthew Vassar's nephew, John Guy Vassar. In the City of Poughkeepsie his designs include the Cuneen-Hackett Cultural Center, originally Vassar Brothers Institute and Vassar Home for Aged Men; Maplewood Senior Housing, originally the Poughkeepsie Alms House; and, portions of Vassar College's Avery Hall. Wood's most famous building is the Tampa Bay Hotel in Tampa Florida, a National Landmark structure, which is now the signature building of the University of Tampa.

According to the 1860 U. S. Federal Census for Poughkeepsie (Clinton Point - Post Office] Thomas and Phebe Frost both age 86 were living in the same household as John G. Frost age 44. The Poughkeepsie Daily Eagle of August 6, 1867 reported Thomas Frost died "on the 1st day [Sunday-August 4] morning, at his residence at Clinton Point, in the 91st year of his age." Cemetery Office records reveal his wife Phebe died a little over 8 months later "4th Month 11th 1868.

A Grandson of Thomas and nephew of the original purchasers of the cemetery plots died in 1906 at the home of his brother in Portland, Michigan. A tribute to this Grandson was written to the editor of the New York Times by Joel Benton who appears to have acquainted with the deceased. Benton wrote, "Mr. Frost came of strong and worthy Quaker lineage. He was born in Ulster County, NY, but went to Michigan with his father's family when only two years old. At the age of nine he returned to this city to take a place in the flour, grain, and shipping business of the house of his two uncles, I. T. Frost and John G. Frost." . The Benton Tribute concludes with, "After the funeral service his remains were laid at rest in the family mausoleum in the Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery."

Cemetery Office records reveal the inclusion of 12 crypts within the mausoleum each inscribed with the birth and death dates of the individual whose remains are interred therein. The only exception being the one crypt which remains vacant. The majority of the inscriptions on the crypt panels are inscribed with dates in the Quaker dating form i.e. Born "3rd Month 28th 1777"

This prodigious mausoleum built in 1868 has served the memory of the Frost Family well with the last interment being in 1906. It has now been 138 years since the construction of the mausoleum and the landing in Poughkeepsie of the largest blue stone ever landed there; 100 years since the last interment in the Frost Mausoleum. May they all "Rest in Peace" for centuries to come under the same diligent care they have received in the past and the present under the supervision of the watchful caring hands and eyes of the current Superintendent, Charles Fells.

We can only be left to wonder if the archangel was successful in the calling regarding the resurrection. The writer assumes the resurrection was accomplished with an extra blast on the trumpet.

Prepared by Virginia A. Buechele, August 2006. The Author wishes to extend grateful appreciation to Vicki Fells, Cemetery Office Manager and Annon Adams, Poughkeepsie for their contributions to this article prepared for the Friends of Poughkeepsie Rural Cemetery Newsletter.