

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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On occasion I share this column space with other local historians. This week it's my privilege to have a guest writer and researcher present the following:

## HILLSIDE CEMETERY'S MORTUARY CHAPEL

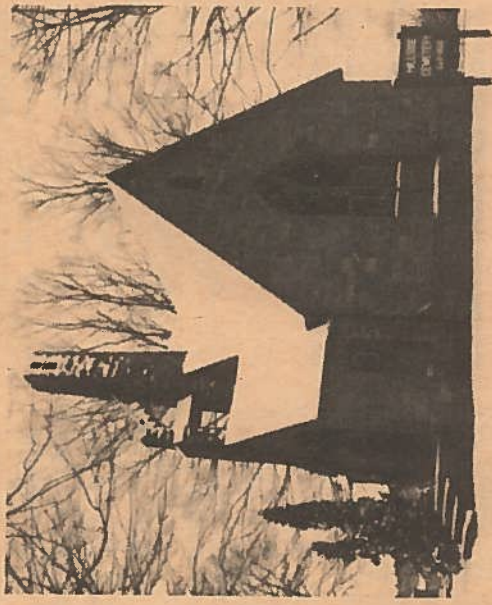
BY RONALD HERLAN

On December 11, 1866 the Holley Cemetery Association was organized at a seven-o'clock evening meeting held in the District School House in the village. Colonel John Berry was appointed Chairman and Nelson Hatch Secretary by motion and vote of the fifteen men present. Nine trustees were elected with annual trustee elections slated for the second Tuesday in December. On January 2, 1867 some 7.74 acres on the east side of what is now the South Holley Road were purchased from Reuben and Marcia True for \$1,000 and \$100 was also paid for the Association's use of the sellers' stone quarry. Money to acquire these future burial grounds was raised by loans from fourteen local citizens in amounts ranging from \$50 to \$150.

At two o'clock in the afternoon on August 17, 1867 the cemetery grounds were dedicated in a service directed by three local clergymen who were supported by the singing of a combined choir of the village churches. Following these ceremonies members of the Association decided to sell lots at ten cents per square foot and to name their burial site Hillside Cemetery. Cemetery records show that eighteen lots were sold on that occasion.

be used, probable cost of same, and as to how funds can be raised in case we have not sufficient amount on hand." Official minutes suggest that this plan was placed on the back burner for a time as a result of Trustee Luther D. Hurd convincing the Board of Trustees at their January 8, 1889 meeting to buy some 12.87 acres of land for \$2,200 from Dr. Samuel W. Gleason which abutted immediately along the southern boundary of the former Salisbury property. One clause of the purchase agreement provided that Dr. Gleason would remove the grapevines, posts, and wires he had set on that land and that the Cemetery Association would stop removing stones from Trues' former quarry now owned by Gleason after April 1, 1890. In 1892 the Trustees won a lawsuit against the Town of Clarendon Assessors for removal of the tax assessment they levied on the Cemetery for grounds unused for burial within the Gleason purchase.

Once again at their annual meeting on December 12, 1893 the Trustees instructed the Executive Committee "to investigate in regard to building a chapel and to report to the Board." At a special gathering held on January 27, 1894, President Edwin Bliss "exhibited plans and specifications drawn by Addison Forbes" (a Rochester architect who also designed St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Holley later that year). Trustee Bennett moved that the Executive Committee "obtain bids for the construction of a chapel according to plans and specifications shown." Nearly two months later, on March 23, the Trustees met to discuss two bids submitted by Ward A. Buell of Albion and W.P. Pembroke and Company of Rochester, the former at \$4,905.55 and the latter at \$3,284. By a vote of 6 to 3 (Vice President Kibling, Secretary Keys, and Treasurer Bennett dissented) Trustee Ely H. Cook's motion was passed to "continue negotiation" for building the chapel "and unless they can obtain better figures to accept the bid of W.P. Pembroke and Co., if satisfied with their respectability and reputation." Finally, on May 3,



First official mention of interest in building a chapel on the cemetery grounds dates from a deed conveying 6.66 acres of undeveloped land from Abraham and Mary Salisbury to the Association on June 8, 1886 at a price of \$1200. It was stipulated as part of the purchase agreement that the Association "shall and will construct and forever maintain upon said premises a chapel and building for burial services" and that a "carriage driveway shall encircle the said building and chapel." A reporter for the **Holley Standard** commented that these improvements would be made as quickly as funds allowed "and will probably be completed within two or three years." Providence, however, operated according to another timetable.

On December 11, 1888 at its annual meeting, Trustee Harrison E. Kibling moved that their Executive Committee "investigate the question of building a Chapel and vault, and to report to this Board at a special meeting to be called by the President, as to the size, style, materials to

1894 three additional bids from Harvey A. Putnam of Holley (for \$3,567), Nervill L. Cole of Holley (for \$3,350), and John O. Ball of Tonawanda (for \$3,197) were presented for consideration by the Trustees. Trustee Alfred Millard moved to accept Nerville Cole's bid and for the Executive Committee to enter into a contract with him. The Committee was also authorized to make any slight alterations in plans and specifications which were deemed necessary or desirable to complete the building.

On an unseasonably warm Saturday, June 16, 1894, Rev. J.W. Fenner of the Holley Presbyterian Church led a cornerstone-laying service for the mortuary chapel. He was ably assisted by other village clergy - Episcopal Rector, Rev. G. Sherman Burrows, Baptist Minister, Rev. A.D. Abrams and Methodist Pastor, Rev. E.M. Snodgrass. Singing was provided by a male quartet consisting of village residents. Part of the ceremonies included the enclosure of a sealed copper box in the cornerstone.

Building began almost at once and the O'Donoghue Brothers of Lockport completed the exterior in the striking Gothic style of rock-faced Medina sandstone. The main chapel for burial services measured some twenty by thirty-two feet. An air shaft ran from the receiving vault in the basement to the steeple for ventilation. Additional space in the basement was set aside for storage of tools and fuel to heat a potbellied stove in the upstairs chapel. Total construction costs, including interior fixtures and furnishings, amounted to approximately \$4,500 according to James G. Simpson, a correspondent for the **Rochester Post Express**, who visited the cemetery early in 1895. He called the structure "a beautiful chapel of artistic design."

The author wishes to acknowledge that Alan Isseihard, Town of Clarendon Historian, provided the photograph of the Hillside Cemetery Chapel and that helpful information and enthusiastic support was offered in preparing this article by Marsha DeFillips, Village of Holley and Town of Murray Historian.