

Getting to know William Watson

9-30-13

On a recent tour at Mt. Albion Cemetery, I pointed out the Watson mausoleum or sepulcher which is certainly one of the noteworthy examples of architecture found there. It is nestled into the side of a hillock across from Red Beach Park and was built by William H. Watson.

Here is his story. Mr. Watson was born at Fort Ann in Washington County in 1814. His parents were extremely poor and his early education amounted to less than 18 months of formal training in a district school. By the age of ten years he was away from home earning a living for himself and developing habits of reliance and industry. At the age of 16 he went to West Troy to learn the trade of printer, but was forced to quit because of ill health. In the spring of 1832 he came to Brockport where he clerked in a dry goods store. From this humble beginning he entered the mercantile life for which his talents were an attribute. Because of a good business sense and trustworthiness, he went into business for himself.

During the next 36 years he was engaged in commercial endeavors in New York City and in the state of Kansas. By mid-life he had amassed a fortune and was recognized as an outstanding business man.

In 1864 he decided to retire from business and purchased the farm just north of Medina. However he was not satisfied and therefore took up an interest in Bignall Manufacturing Company in Medina. Through Watson's counsel and advice, the Bignall Foundry became a most important corporation and industry in Medina for several decades.

He was active in community affairs including being supervisor for the Town of Ridgeway in 1875, Master of the Masonic Lodge in Medina in 1869, and President of the Union Bank of Medina from 1876 until his death in 1888. He was known as a benevolent man and did not restrict his giving to a particular church. He was known to help the sick and destitute, both here and in other places, where he had lived.

William Watson first married Catherine Barr of Albion in 1835. Within a year she died leaving a

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daughter named Catherine who later married William Whipple. In 1842, Mr. Watson married Mary L. Bottom by whom he had one son and three daughters. He outlived his second wife and in 1886 built the Watson Family mausoleum at Mt. Albion. At that time he had his two dead wives exhumed from other cemeteries and their remains placed in the mausoleum. Other members of his family are also buried there, making a total of ten.

It remains uncertain why he chose Mt. Albion rather than Boxwood Cemetery for his family mausoleum. Perhaps it was his first wife's connection or perhaps he just liked Mt. Albion. It remains a mystery.



William Watson