

Sources for Pioneer Cemetery  
By Douglas H. Shepard, 2000

George **Ryman**, who had emigrated from England with his wife in 1856, had been working for Louis **Barmore**, undertaker and cabinet maker, who was very involved with the new Forest Hill Cemetery. On 8 January 1859 **Ryman** was appointed Sexton of Forest Hill Cemetery. At some point an agreement was reached for him to act as Sexton for Pioneer Cemetery as well. He kept a running account of the burials he performed, and the records for 1867 through 1893 are now in the **Barker** Historical Museum.

**Ryman** made no reference to the in-ground markers. The first entry, for 2 January 1867, reads "Child of Mr. **Johnson** on right hand of J. **Mullins** girls grave." A late entry, 26 March 1893, reads "Mrs. Henry **Green** on the north side of her parents." **Ryman** was killed in a railroad accident in December 1893. There are no records between then and 1909 when **Wilder** made his map and register. Of course, whatever markers were erected in those sixteen years probably were still quite legible.

**Wilder** in 1909 surveyed Pioneer Cemetery, made a map of all identifiable gravesites, gave each a number and made a numerical register. Against each number, where there was a legible grave marker, he noted the basic information: name, relationship (e.g. wife of, son of, etc.), date of birth and date of death. On the map, perhaps as a check for accuracy, he very often marked the initials under the grave marker. The initials were supposed to correspond with the full entry in his register (e.g. R.H. for Ralph A. **Howell**, or O.B. for Our Babe). He also made an alpha index for his register.

Around 1985 Jack **Blodgett** did a walk-through of Pioneer Cemetery. He did not refer to **Wilder's** map. He simply started in the lower left-hand corner of Pioneer Cemetery and worked his way up and down the rows noting down as much as he could read of every inscription (e.g. "Sarah P., daughter of M.P. **Lidall** (?) [actually **Lasalle**] died.... (overgrown with grass)...."). At the end of his register, p. 100, he noted, "Loose stones in or near pile by west fence" followed by six entries from those stones. After that he wrote "Stones now missing, read 1952" followed by three entries. (This apparently refers to a register made by his mother who was an active genealogist. He is said to have helped her with some of her work.) Jack had worked as a librarian in New York City from 1948 to 1978. After he retired he returned to Fredonia and joined the Chautauqua County Genealogical Society. After his register was completed, Jack inserted an alpha index keyed to the page numbers of the register.

The three sources differ from each other, because each of the three men had a different goal in mind. **Ryman's** was to have a record of work done to be paid for; **Wilder**, the engineer, wanted a map showing grave placement as accurately as possible; and **Blodgett** wanted to preserve whatever information was left for people doing family history whether he found the site where each stone belonged or not.