

City of Afton, Minnesota
Heritage Preservation Commission
LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION

DRAFT

NAME OF PROPERTY:

Historic Name: Mount Hope Cemetery

Other Names:

SHPO Inventory No.:

Parcel No: 22.028.20.13. 0017

LOCATION:

Street & No.: Upper 34th Street South

City/Town: Afton

State, County, Zip: Minnesota, Washington County, 55001

PROPERTY OWNER:

Owner Name: City of Afton

Owner Phone/Cell:

Street & No.: 3033 St. Croix Trail South PO Box 219

City/State/Zip: Afton, Minnesota 55001-0219

CLASSIFICATION:

<i>Ownership of Property</i>	<i>Category of Property:</i>	<i>Number of Resources within Property</i>	
		<i>Contributing</i>	<i>Noncontributing</i>
private	building(s)		buildings
X public	district		sites
	X site	1	structures
	structure		objects
	object		
		1	0 TOTAL

*Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register of Historic Places: 0*

FUNCTION or USE:

Historic Functions: Cemetery

Current Functions: Cemetery

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LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION

SIGNIFICANCE:

Historic significance: Associated with activities, processes, events, trends or persons of importance to the community, state or nation.

Narrative Statement:

Mount Hope Cemetery is located on a bluff top west of County Highway 21 and south of State Highway 95 on lot 17 outside the Afton Village limits. Its condition is precarious, as it has been vandalized many times over the years and has not been maintained. According to Ken Martens in *The Perilous St. Croix River Valley Frontier*, the area was used as a burial ground a dozen years prior to its formal designation as Mount Hope Cemetery in 1855. There is a discrepancy in how much land was assigned for its purpose. According to Neill, "At the time of the platting of the village of Afton, the proprietors set apart and donated to the village twenty acres in section twenty-two, for a cemetery. It was dedicated in 1855." In *Afton Remembered*, we learn that "It (Mount Hope) was officially assigned five acres but never grew beyond a stingy one-half acre." The name of the cemetery (and the name of Afton) were said to have come from Mrs. Electa Getchell, wife of one of the three men who platted the village of Afton. At the arrival of Decoration Day (today's Memorial Day) young boys from the brick schoolhouse were marched up the hill to the bluff top cemetery to decorate the graves of Civil War soldiers buried there. (Robb)

Mount Hope appears to have been the first cemetery in Afton for white families. Other 19th century cemeteries include Evergreen and the German Lutheran cemeteries (within the original village boundaries), St. Peter's Lutheran in the township and Mounds Prairie, near the Afton-Woodbury Township line. (Grant) There was also an Indian cemetery, located west of the Milwaukee Road tracks near the present day Selma's. Other than the Upper 34th Street roadbed there are no visible boundaries to the cemetery, which is covered with overgrown grass and weeds. Only a very few headstones and memorials have survived the years. There are ten upright markers and many smaller headstones and fragments. An ornamental fence surrounds one of the grave stones. The site was officially used by the city for almost forty years, from 1855 to 1892. It is unknown why its use was discontinued.

Although there does not appear to be an existing register of names of those buried at Mount Hope, some do appear on the remaining stones. Numerous burials occurred for which there are no markers. A number of children rest there, many dying of cholera and diphtheria. There is a rear row at the western edge of the blufftop where they are buried. Fieldstone rocks were used as headstones and footstones on children's graves. Pioneer Christian burial practices included burying the body facing east, so that upon resurrection they would be able to see the "glorious view" of Christ's second coming. (Martens, 2014)

A list of burial sites was compiled by Elizabeth and John Erickson in 1969, noting what names were readable at that time. According to this source, noteworthy burials there include C.S. Getchell and his wife mentioned above, as well as Reverend Simon Putnam, first superintendent of schools in Afton, and his son Myron, both of whom served in the Civil War. Other early pioneers include Charles Cushing, Afton's first school clerk and S.H. Paterson who built the village's first hotel in the 1850s. At least one twentieth century plot was discovered there with a marker labeled "Ott 1980."

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Heritage Preservation Commission
LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION

Mount Hope was nominated as one of Minnesota’s ten most endangered sites in 2002 by the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota.

Narrative Description:

The Mount Hope Cemetery is a 5 acre site that sits on the highest bluff’s edge hill overlooking to the east the St. Croix River Valley. The only higher point in Afton is on the top of the Bissell Mound that is located further west on the prairie flatlands away from the bluff.

The cemetery is entered through a simple portal of two timber posts with a spanning board that reads “Mount Hope Cemetery” in Gothic lettering.

Dedicated in 1855 the grounds are evocative of an early pioneer settlement cemetery. There appears to be no formal layout of the burials, but rather widely dispersed gravesites defined by names carved onto found rocks, simple marble markers, or more elaborate granite monuments. Simple to grand, no tombstones appear to have avoided the ravages of time, nature and/or vandals.

The grounds do show sign of recent efforts to clear brush and straighten stones. However, most of the site remains overgrown with volunteer vegetation that nestles randomly placed or fallen stones that are growing moss and lichen.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT: Founded in 1855, the Mount Hope Cemetery is significant as the first pioneer cemetery for the Village of Afton. Located on a high bluff overlooking the St. Croix River Valley, the graveyard is the final resting place for Afton’s earliest religious, education, civic and business families.

OTHER ITEMS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

<p><i>Related Historic Contexts:</i> Town site Development in Washington County 1839-1955 Immigration and Ethnicity in Washington County ca. 1838-1920 Early Agriculture and River Settlement 1840-1870 Railroads and agriculture Development 1870-1940</p>	<p><i>Significant Person(s):</i> Reverand Simon Putnam Charles & Electa Getchell Charles Cushing S.H. Paterson</p>
<p><i>Period of Significance:</i> 1855 dedication to 1892</p>	<p><i>Cultural Affiliation:</i></p>
<p><i>Significant Dates:</i> 1855</p>	<p><i>Architect/Builder(s):</i></p>

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA:

Acreage of Property: 5.006

Legal Description of Property: BEING PUBLIC CEMETARY CO AUDITORS PLAT # 5 SUBDIVISIONNAME COUNTY AUDITOR'S PLAT NO.5 LOT 17 SUBDIVISIONCD 19125

Boundary Justification: Washington County tax records

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PHOTOGRAPHIC DOCUMENTATION:

Historical Photographs:

Current Photographs:



The entry sign to Mount Hope Cemetery at the top curve of Upper 34th Street South.



A collection of headstones and monument pieces that typify conditions found throughout the cemetery.

City of Afton, Minnesota
Heritage Preservation Commission
LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION



The broken Berry Family monument to the right sits at a gravesite defined by a short iron fence and gate.



Most of the formal monuments in Mount Hope have suffered damage through vandalism. This photograph is looking southwest over the cemetery's somewhat wild grounds.

City of Afton, Minnesota
Heritage Preservation Commission
LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION



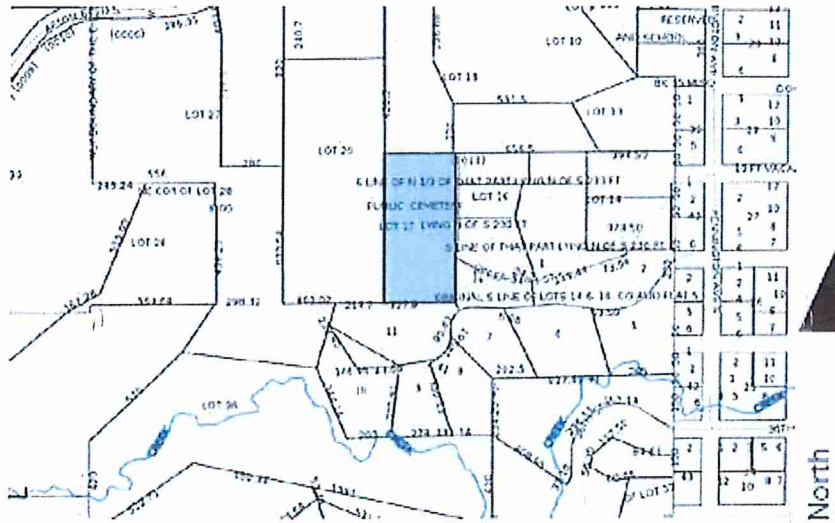
A "white bronze" spelter grave marker for Civil War Veteran Charles Cushing.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH(S) AND SITE MAP(S) OF THE PROPERTY:



Aerial photograph of Mount Hope Cemetery on Upper 34th Street South at the top of the tallest bluff edge overlooking the St. Croix River Valley. The only higher point is on Bissell Mound that is located further to the west on the prairie.

City of Afton, Minnesota
Heritage Preservation Commission
LOCAL PROPERTY DESIGNATION



Parcel Map of the 5 acre cemetery overlooking the Village of Afton. .

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES:

Published:

Grant, Evelyn Bolles. History of Valley Creek and Surrounding Afton Township. Article written for Valley Creek Women's Club, January 1963.

Martens, Ken. *The Perilous St. Croix River Valley Frontier*. Charleston: History Press, 2014.

Neill, Edward D. *History of Washington County and the St. Croix Valley*. North Star Publishing Company, 1881.

Zellie, Carole. *Washington County Historic Contexts*. 1999.

Unpublished:

Afton Historical Museum. Various archives. Fall/Winter 2015-2016.

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FORM PREPARED BY:

Name/Title: Thomas R. Zahn & Associates LLC
Street & No.: 807 Holly Avenue
City/Town: Saint Paul
State, County, Zip: Minnesota, Ramsey County, 55104
Telephone No.: 651-221-9765
Date Prepared: March 30, 2016

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER COMMENT:

Review and comment by the State Historic Preservation Officer pursuant to Minnesota Statute _____; Subd. ____.

Date Submitted to SHPO: _____ Date of SHPO Comment: _____

AFTON CITY COUNCIL REVIEW / APPROVAL:

Designation of property pursuant to: _____

Date of Action: _____