

THE THREE ERAS OF BUFFALO STREET—Era No. 3—Or from the so-called Improvements of the City Council in 1835, to its broken and sinking condition in 1852—16 years. The old Sexton and the old Cemetery.

Sixteen years ago, Mr. Editor, by the operations of the Common Council, the street whose history I write, was left in ruins. Its inhabitants migrated to other localities and residences—its pleasant places became silent places—neglect and desertion increased—the street went to decay, and men quarried stone on its sides, left great cesspools of filth and great piles of offal where they pleased, and everybody used everything as everybody always does, where nobody calls them to account and nobody cares. So sparse was the settlement, that in 1845, when the 8th ward was set off from the 3d, the newly elected Aldermen were denominated “the representatives of the shanty ward.” I do not believe that the projectors of this ruin are to be called to a too strict account—I do not mean to impugn their motives—many of them saw their error when it was too late—and some fell in the general disasters which followed, who had anticipated quite another result.

Over five years had run their lengthened rounds before the downward tendencies of the depredations of Buffalo street began to head back. Substantial citizens have been from time to time going in to occupy and build up the deserted houses and gardens which had gone to waste, until a brighter day dawns upon the citizens of the 8th ward.—The long line of Buffalo-st., so long, and even now, lying in ruins—with her springs undermining her shallow Mc-Adam in the spring-time—and the rains overflowing her in the fall, and the driving storms of winter filling into the defenceless gaps; the sport of every wind and the place for every drift,—is beginning to feel the hand of improvement, and will soon recover, and be the joy and pride of those who dwell upon her sides. As it is true that to oppress men is frequently to exalt them, so will the night of gloom which has so long brooded over this street pass away, and it become one of the choicest places of residence in the city. The 8th ward is high and beautiful in situation—overlooking all the rest. The water and her atmosphere are pure—we drink the early a. phys. before they pass down to our neighbors—and the morning sun shines on us first. Look you, Mr. Editor, from our stand point, now no longer at “Bull’s Head,” but at *Halsted Hall*—see the hand of improvement that is abroad!

I will close these articles by a reference to that old and long neglected Hurling Ground, which constitutes a part of this ward. In the general decay and general neglect this has come in for a full share. Most of the remains of our honored predecessors have been transferred to our beautiful Mount Hope—still the dust of many loved ones, around which memory delights to linger, are garnered there—and my heart has been many times sad to see their graves the sport of every wanton foot, and the memorials of nature and art which had been placed about them by sorrowing survivors, destroyed by sacrilegious hands.—Who that remembers the old grave yard, does not remember the old Sexton Croom—as year after year his great, half-bent form moved like a living spectre among those grounds. With his spade and pick he entombed his hundreds. The gushing tear, the heaving bosom, the sobbing spirit, the breaking heart, were nothing apparently to him. He was used to the mournful melody of “earth to earth—ashes to ashes—dust to dust”—and his hard and sunken face was more marble than mortal.—He could point any sorrowing friend to the unmarked grave that contained the dust of his friend, though he had years ago made it—and he was that taciturn and absent-minded mortal, that the mournful place and his “dread-trade” made him. But he fell at length among the silent inhabitants in the great charnel house he had helped to fill, and I believe has as obscure a resting-place as any of the hosts of forgotten dust who wait with him the call of the Arch-angel’s trump.

Thirty long years have many slept in death in this old burying ground, and hundreds lie here whose names have all faded from the world’s memories, and who are in the *deep midnight of death*! They have mingled with us once, when

“Life had been astir in the village, and clamorous labor
Knocked with its hundred hands at the golden gates of
the morning.”

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“In the heart of the city, they lie, unknown and unnoticed—

Daily the tides of life go ebbing and flowing beside them;

Thousands of throbbing hearts, where theirs are at rest forever,

Thousands of aching brains, where theirs are no longer busy,

Thousands of cooling hands, where theirs have ceased from their labors,

Thousands of weary feet, where theirs have completed their journey.”

Yours, a. a.