

Ripple in Time

The Newell Family of Rochester, NY

By Birx Allen

George H. Newell (1828-1892)

Emma Newell (1878-1881)

Ada A. Newell (1840-1920)

George Russell Newell (1880-1939)

Anne Newell Burgher (1914-1950)

George Taylor Newell (1911-1987)

Ruth Harnden Newell (1916-1996)

John M. Newell (1920-2005)

Keywords:

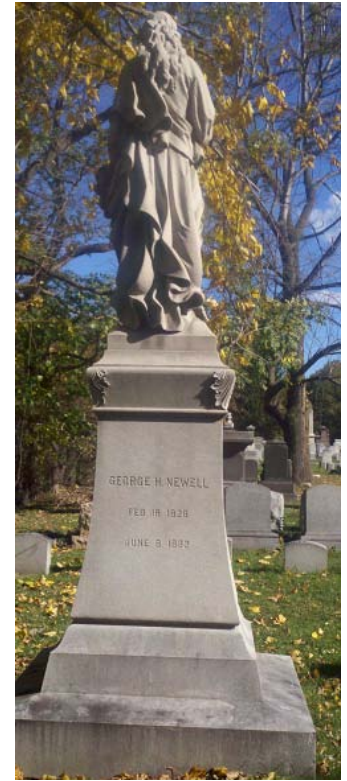
George H. Newell, Emma Newell, Ada A. Newell, George Russell Newell, Anne Newell Burgher, George Taylor Newell, Ruth Harnden Newell, John M. Newell, Empire Moulding Works, Newell Family Monument, Smith Granite Company, James W. Pollette, Rochester Yacht Club, Mathews and Newell Civil Engineering, Marjorie McAllister tug, Newell Cadet, Ship Van Buren, Eastman Kodak, Pearl Harbor Attack Witness, Rochester General Hospital

Abstract:

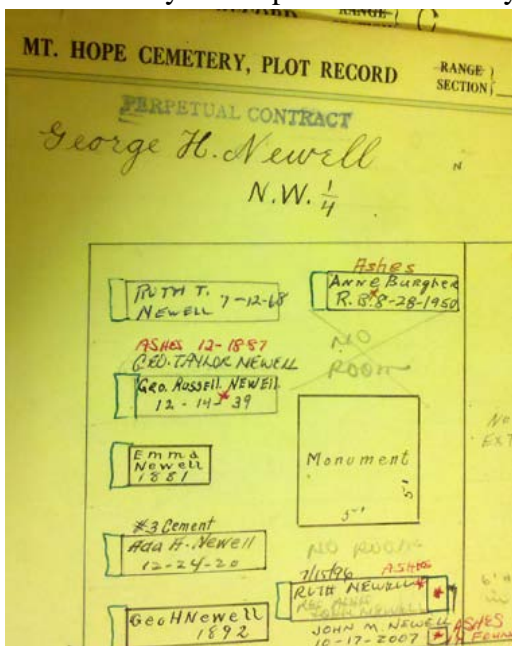
Description and interpretation of the Newell Family monument in Mount Hope Cemetery with details about the lives of George H. Newell (1828-1892), his wife Ada A. Newell (1840-1920), son George Russell Newell (1880-1939), grand-son George Taylor Newell (1911-1987), grand-daughter Anne Newell Burgher (1914-1950), and grand-daughter Ruth Harnden Newell (1916-1996).

Specifically there is much about the life of George Henry Newell through his bibliographies in *History of Genesee Country* (Vol. III. Rochester: S.J. Clarke, 1925) and *Rochester and Monroe County, N.Y.* (Vol. II. Rochester, 1908. 1431-432), along with appearances in the *Rochester Union and Advertiser*. There is significant information on George Russell Newell, as a Civil Engineer, and George Taylor, who designed yachts and other boats, especially to help the World War II effort. The paper contains information about and firsthand accounts by Anne Newell Burgher, who witnessed the Pearl Harbor Attack in Honolulu in 1941. Also includes brief information about other members of the Newell Family

Located in the North-west plot of Lot 205 in the modest back corner of Section C in Mt. Hope Cemetery, Rochester, NY is a memorial for the one of the most influential families in the history of the City of Rochester, NY. Mr. George Henry Newell purchased the 205 x 237 ½ sq. ft. plot on November 3, 1881 for \$118.95 (Mt. Hope Plot Record). The land is marked with a distinguished monument



of a solemn woman watching over the family, which asserts Newell’s refined taste. According to a *City Newspaper* survey, “Everything is exactly right: flowering robes and hair, languid stone garland, a kind of liquid grace.” The monument’s sculptor was James W. Pollette of Smith Granite Company in Westerly, RI (*City Newspaper*, 2000). The woman is an angelic allegorical figure carrying garland, which usually represents victory in death. Mr. George Henry Newell certainly accomplished that victory through the legacy of his family.



Nine members of the Newell family are represented both by the monument and on simple foot stones proclaiming each of their names and birth-death dates. The bodies buried in the plot include, George H. Newell, Ada A. Newell, Emma Newell, and Ruth T. Newell. The ashes of Anne Burgher Newell, George Taylor Newell, George Russell Newell, Ruth Newell, and John Mills Newell were

also deposited on the site. The stunning memorial identifies each member of the Newell Family's final resting place.

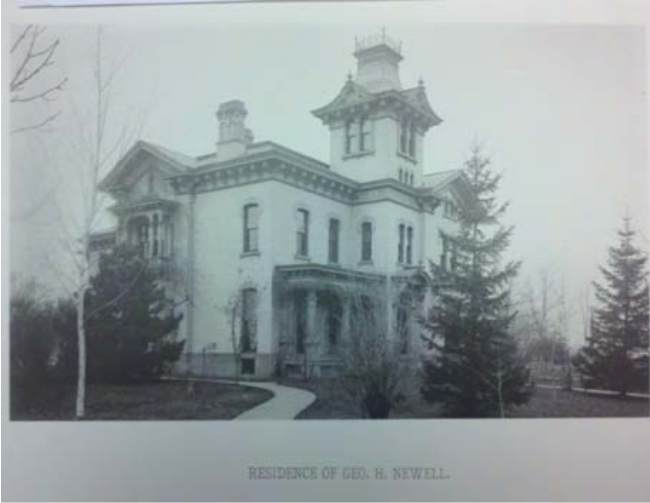


"George H. Newell" [The History of City of Rochester](#). 1895: 264

George H. Newell was born in Roxbury, Massachusetts on February 18, 1828 into an underprivileged family. When he turned fourteen years of age George H. left high school and began apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker, and he learned to be a skilled craftsman. According to his biography found in History of Genesee Country, Vol. III, “that he thoroughly mastered his trade is attested by a number of pieces of furniture made by his hand which are still in use after fifty years of service (Genesee, 614).” At the age of twenty one,

George married Rosetta Bontel who had Newell's first child, a daughter Ella, within the first year of marriage. Ella later became the wife of Herman S. Searle of Arizona (UA, 1892, 5-1).

Mr. Newell came to Rochester in the year 1850 at the age of 22. He brought what little money he had from his carpentry work which, was no more than “a cash capital of but one hundred dollars (Genesee, 614)” to try his best and make a start in a new city. George was employed by the Brewster & Fenn furniture manufacturing company located on No. 53 State Street. The skilled and hardworking Newell quickly received a promotion as a foreman and was able to purchase his first real estate in Rochester on August 14, 1851. The purchase was a home on the northeast corner of Gorham and Cole streets where he lived until 1880. Newell recognized the possibilities his carpentry skill offered, and in 1853 he purchase a lot adjoining his home to start his own business. He left the employment of Brewster & Fenn and began to manufacture high quality furniture of his own. Newell purchased his second home on St. Paul Street in 1880



Pictured: George H. Newell's home on St. Paul Street 1880

Source: University of Rochester Rare Books Department

(shown). George H. was a well informed man who kept up with the technology and innovations of the time. For example, he constructed the first extension table built in the city of Rochester (History of Rochester and Monroe County, 1431). Being a business minded man, Newell

recognized another avenue for profit in making small picture frames from the furniture lumber

waste. By manufacturing picture frames Newell stumbled upon an unrecognized demand in the city. The picture frames sold rapidly and faced much less competition than with the furniture business. The greater demand for picture frames caused them to quickly take the spotlight and greatly surpass the profit of the furniture sales. (Genesee Country, 614-615)

By 1860, Newell had realized the possibility of making a greater profit by devoting all his efforts to making picture frames and mouldings. He thus founded Empire Moulding Works of Rochester, NY. The small factory on the lot next to his house soon became too small, so he purchased additional land on the south side of Gorham Street where he had a stone factory built. Mr. Newell's business continued to grow and he became one of the most prominent

manufacturers in the City of Rochester. Newell continued to expand the factory and created

EMPIRE MOULDING WORKS
AND
PICTURE FRAME MANUFACTORY,
 Picture Frame, Cornice and Room
MOULDINGS,
GEO. H. NEWELL, - Proprietor.
69 GORHAM STREET,
OFFICE, 110 FRONT STREET. Rochester, N. Y.

many jobs, helping to transform Rochester into a prosperous and bustling city. The factory employed

Source: [The Rochester City Directory](#), Vol. 25: 607

approximately “three hundred men and their products were shipped throughout the United States and to England, France, and the West Indies, with branch offices being maintained in London and Paris (Genesee Country, 614).”

The importance of George H. Newell and his Empire Moulding Works is further emphasized by a tragic fire in the factory in 1879 which the UA newspaper documented stating: “Newell’s Picture Frame Factory Burned – Loss \$25,000” The article focused much less on the details of the fire and more on the vast implications it had for Rochester society at the time. “The total loss is thought to be no more than \$25,000. Not the least serious result of the fire is the fact that about ninety employees are thrown out of employment (UA, 1879, 2-5).” The article explains that the fire was supposed to have happened by “spontaneous combustion” and that the upper floor and roof of the stone building were “swept by the fire and a great deal of material destroyed.” The building being valued at \$40,000 was a significant amount of money for the time period proving, as stated in his obituary, that the factory was a “landmark in that part of the city (UA,1879, 2-5).” Since there are advertisements for Empire Moulding Works in the 1900 Rochester City Directory, stating the business address at the same location on Gorham St., it can be assumed that Mr. Newell rebuilt the factory.

George H. Newell was an important employer in early Rochester who helped to draw immigrants and working-class citizens to the city in hopes for factory jobs. Newell took an active interest in the lives of his employees and “no class held him in higher esteem than did the workingmen (UA, 1892, 5-1).”

Newell was not only a business man but cared deeply for the prosperity of the city. A man of positive convictions, which he was always free to state when called upon to do so, Mr. Newell was respected and esteemed by the people of the city. He was public spirited, and always took an active part in discussions and movement to forward the interests of the city (UA, 1892, 5-1).

Newell was a member of the Rochester Board of Park Commissioners and led the negotiations for the purchase of the land for Seneca Park, which was designed by the famous landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. Newell was also a charter member of the Chamber of Commerce and one of its trustees. “He was a Republican in politics. Although he was an influential man in his party, he never sought any office (UA, 1892, 5-1).” Newell also was a member of the 5th ward school board for two terms and a trustee of the Rochester Trust and Safe Deposit Company (History of the City of Rochester, 1895. 264).

Despite Mr. Newell’s prospering business he unfortunately seemed to have terrible luck in his personal life. George H.’s first wife, Rosetta Bontel, died shortly after the birth of their daughter, Ella, after their first year of marriage. Upon his arrival to Rochester, Mr. Newell married Rose Logan, and they had nine children together. Only two of those children, Frank G. and Julia A., lived to adulthood. Newell’s second wife Rose Newell was injured by runaway horse teams on two separate occasions. One article proclaimed:

Frightful Accident- Two Ladies and a Child Injured: The ladies were driving up State street between six and seven in the evening, and when at the railroad crossing they were overtaken by the city horses drawing a lumber wagon. The runaway horses appear to have absolutely leaped upon this single wagon and horse and crushed the vehicle with its inmates, to the ground. Hundreds of people who were near ran to the relief of the sufferers (UA, 1864, 2-1).

In the accident Mrs. Newell’s ear was “partially cut off, had cuts otherwise upon her head, and was severely bruised in body and limbs (UA, 1864, 2-1).” Rose Newell had another similar accident two years later, being thrown from a wagon and severely injured while riding near the railroad crossing on State Street. The Union and Advertiser states, “Mrs. Newell met with an accident some two years since in exactly the same place she did yesterday (UA, 1866, 2-1).” This unlucky wife also died young on August 19, 1875, but she is not buried in the Mt. Hope

Newell plot. Mr. Newell remarried a third time to Ada A. Stocton, formerly Ada Augusta Russell of Hurne of Allegany County, New York. They had two children together, Emma and George Russell. Emma Newell died at 3 years and 3 months old and is buried in the Mt. Hope plot (UA, 1877, 3-4).

With all the tragedy and stress, Mr. Newell's health began to decline. George H. Newell always loved water and in 1872 he had purchased a small yacht called "The Rambler." His obituary in the Union and Advertiser states, "Yachting was Mr. Newell's chief pastime and in fact it was almost a hobby with him. For fifteen years he had helped to keep alive a love of the sport in this section (UA, 1892, 5-1)." A bibliography on George H. Newell in the History of Genesee Country, Vol III documents the following verse as written in his log book. The poem portrays a deep passion for boating and the water.

Farewell the anxious throng with hurrying feet,
The city's murky air and dusty street;
Farewell the fading shore, with straining sail,
Our little bark flies on before the gale.

Swift from our bow we dash the scattered spray,
While in our wake the circling eddies play;
With joy we leave life's busy cares behind,
And loose the fetters from the weary mind.

And now once more we hail with joyful glee,
Our old companions of the rolling sea,
And join with eager heart and ready hand,
Old sportive Neptune and his restless band.

- George H. Newell

George H. Newell was a founding member of the Rochester Yacht Club and had the role of Commodore, a rank above captain, for four years after the Yacht Club was established.

Ironically, Mr. Newell's final demise was provoked by his participation in his beloved sport of yachting. The Union and Advertiser reported "The community will be painfully surprised by the

announcement of the death of George H. Newell, which took place at 6:30 o'clock this morning (UA, 1892, 5-1)." The paper explained that heart failure was the immediate cause of death though he had lung congestion for about ten days prior. At the time, is pneumonia was not considered serious, so he went on a cruise with the Rochester Yacht club.

The club left Ontario Beach May 29th and had scarcely put off from the shore before Mr. Newell was taken with chills. He suffered a great deal during the trip to Sodus, where he was rowed ashore. Congestion of the lungs set in and for three days and night he remained at a hotel in the village with his son, Frank G. Newell, at his bedside. June 2d the sick man was strong enough to be brought to Rochester on a train and he was taken to his home, 709 N. St. Paul Street (UA, 1892, 5-1).

Upon returning home, George H. was restricted to bed rest and his condition began to show signs of improvement, as his lungs were less congested. However, on the morning of his death, "the nurse noticed he was breathing unusually heavy. She asked him if he wanted

anything and he replied no; he would lie down and sleep a little while. He appeared to fall to sleep, but the nurse soon saw him gasping for breath, and he died a few minutes later (UA, 1892, 5-1)." Mr.

George H. Newell died on June 8, 1892 at the age of 84. According to the Mt. Hope Interment Records,

he died of acute lobar pneumonia, which is

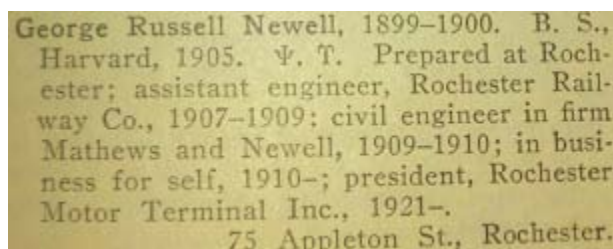
characterized by fluid in the alveoli (<http://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com>).

Mrs. Ada A. Newell, the widow of George H. Newell, continued to live under the care of her son, George Russell, in their home on St. Paul Street, which George H. purchased in 1880 (Genesee Country, 615). She died December 23, 1920, at the age of eighty due to arterio sclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. George H. Newell's eldest son, Frank G. Newell



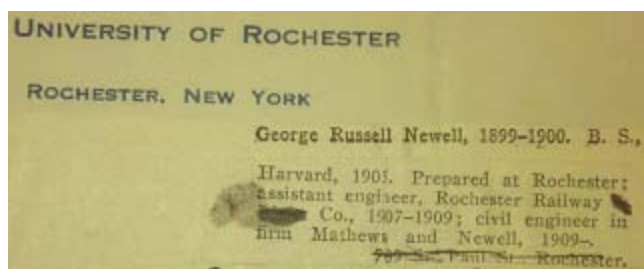
maintained the Empire Moulding Works business until he died at the age of 56 on February 17, 1920. Frank G. Newell was married to Florence Chase, the daughter of Ethan Allen Chase who was a prominent nurseryman of Rochester until he moved to California (UA, 1887, 2-7). Frank G. Newell and Florence Newell had two daughters Helen, who married Lawrence Achilles, and Florence, who remained with her mother. (Genesee Country, 615) The Mt. Hope interment records document that Frank G. also died of arterio sclerosis. George H. Newell's daughter Julia A. Newel married Albert M. Marshall who inherited the Marshall-Wells Hardware Company in Duluth, Minnesota. (UA, 1892, 5-3)

George H. Newell and Ada Newell's son George Russell Newell also became a prominent man in the city of Rochester. He attended the



Source: [The General Catalogue of the University of Rochester: 1850-1928](#), University of Rochester Press

Bradstreet School in Rochester for several years but graduated from Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1899. He enrolled in the University of Rochester as a member of the class of 1903 but attended for only one year. During his time at the University of Rochester, George Russell joined Psi Upsilon fraternity and was a member of the Rochester Engineering Society ("Newell, George Russell," File of Undergraduates, University of Rochester). George Russell transferred to Harvard University in 1901 where he graduated with a B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1905. He returned to Rochester to work first as a draughtsman and then as an assistant engineer for the Rochester Railway



Company from 1907-1909. In 1909 George started a Civil Engineering firm with Irving E. Mathews who was the former chief engineer of the New York State Railways. Their office was

located on No. 103 Main Street. In regards to his business, Newell wrote on the University of Rochester, Biographical Records of Graduates and Former Students, "I am in business for myself doing largely surveying work in the City and surrounding territory." In 1910, George Russell Newell married Ruth Emily Taylor who was the daughter of Frank Taylor, a former president of the Union Trust Company and founder of Taylor Brothers Company. George Russell and Ruth Emily had 4 children, George Taylor Newell (on March 30, 1911), Anne Russell (June 17, 1914), Ruth Harnden (June 18, 1916) and John Mills (August 22, 1920). In 1920, Mr. Mathews left the partnership to take a position in the city engineer's office. George Russell Newell continued conducting the business alone (Genesee Country, 615).

Besides maintaining the engineering office, George Russell Newell was interested in developing real estate, primarily in the first ward because he had inherited property from his father there. Mr. Newell was one of the directors of the First Ward Improvement Association. He was also elected the first president of the Rochester Motor Terminal Company. Adding to his long resume, George Russell Newell was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the Univeristy Club, the Rochester Historical Society, and the Archaeological Society. Like his father, George Russell had a love for the water and was active in the Rochester Yacht Club and the Harvard Club. (Genesee Country, 615) George Russell Newell died on Tuesday, December 12, 1939 at his home on 2690 St. Paul Blvd of Coronary Occlusion at the age of 59 years (Mt. Hope Interment).

George Russell Newell's son, George Taylor Newell was born on March 30, 1911. Like both his father and grandfather (George Henry Newell), Taylor Newell had a fervor for sailing, which he developed at a young age. According to an online biography written by his daughter, Ruth Donohue, Taylor's first boat was given to him by his father at age 12 and was a Star class

sloop. “The ‘Lucky Star’ was his pride and joy and he kept a meticulous log of his sails aboard her throughout his teens. This log is filled with sketches in his fine quick hand of boats and hull designs that appealed to him (Donohue).” The sketch book was not stored at any of the libraries.

According to his daughter Ruth, Taylor Newell attended the University of Rochester. However, the Rare Book Department of the University of Rochester contained no documents verifying his matriculation. Taylor Newell’s true passion was designing yachts. A 1935 copy of *Rudder* magazine includes one his yacht plans, meaning that the design was completed before he reached 25 years of age. His love of sailing and yacht design continued and fairly quickly became his profession. Newell worked in New York at the Sparkman design firm (<http://www.cheoyleeassociation.com>). Ruth quotes:

During that time, and throughout his life, he was almost always designing something at home. There was seldom a scrap of paper in the house that didn’t have a rough sketch of a hull on it. Occasionally, he would even sketch an idea on the white tile in our bathroom and then warn us not to clean it off before he had a chance to get it down on paper (Donohue).

During WWII, George Taylor Newell continued working, and designed mine sweepers to help in the war effort. Newell began to work in Connecticut with another designer C. R. Horton. He primarily designed tugs, barges and tankers for companies such as McAllister Towing and Transportation Company and Esso. One of Newell’s most famous designs was the Marjorie McAllister tug, which according to the *Marine Causality Report*, sank on November 2, 1969 in the Chesapeake Bay area. One of the boats Taylor was most proud of, the Newell Cadet, was a sail boat designed by Taylor at home. An article from *Yachting Magazine* states:

From the board of Taylor Newell of Rowayton, Conn., the Cadet is built in the Cheoy Lee Shipyard in Hong Kong and is distributed in this country by Herbert Hayes Yacht Sales Inc. Her hull is of fiberglass but she has a teak deck and her cabin house is faced with teak, bonded over the basic fiberglass structure. The cockpit coaming, seats and grating are teak as is all other deck trim...No effort has

been made to cheapen the boat in order to make her competitive marketwise with boats of similar dimensions. She is strictly a quality product, according to her designer. (May 1965, p. 71)

According to Ruth, “His own Newell Cadet, ‘Ripple’ was his pride and joy. She was always in ship shape and he was on her every available moment. He sailed her primarily on Long Island Sound and then each spring and fall would take her to and from Bullock’s Point, Rhode Island.” Taylor Newell also drew the blueprints for boats such as "Maria" and "Duchess" which were built by Norge Boats of Norway and Holland (www.cheoyleeassociation.com)



Pictured: Newell Cadet

Source:

<http://sailboatdata.com/VIEWRECORD.ASP?CLASS_ID=560>.

The final boat Newell created was a small “rowing dory name Eggshell (Donohue),” which was reminiscent of a boat from his childhood. In 1979, G. Taylor Newell sadly had multiple strokes that inhibited his short term memory and made him incapable of going out on the water alone. At the time the biography was written “Eggshell” was still in use by Ruth Donohue’s family at Saugatuck Harbor in Westport, Connecticut. G. Taylor Newell died December 17, 1987. The Mount Hope interment records state the actual date and cause as “not given.” However, it documents that the ashes were deposited in the plot on December 18, 1987. Ruth said of her father’s final days,

We marveled at the fact that, although he couldn’t remember what he had for lunch, he could still tell us how to design a propeller. I think his love of designing was summed up for me right before his death when an Intensive Care Nurse came to me and asked me what he did for a living. She was curious because my Father had asked her for a pencil. Thinking that he had some important final note to write, she offered to help him and asked him if he needed anything else. ‘No’, he said, ‘I just feel better when I’m holding a pencil’ (Donohue).



Source: "Newell, Anne Burgher." [File of Undergraduates](#), University of Rochester Rare Books Department

George Russell Newell's daughter Anne Newell was born in 1914. She attended Columbia Preparatory School and was a graduate of the University of Rochester class of 1938, where she was a member of Theta Eta Sorority. In her early adulthood, Anne was employed by Eastman Kodak of Rochester. In September 1941, she decided to transfer to the branch office in Honolulu and sailed across the Pacific on the ship Van Buren. Anne apparently inherited her grandfather's

terrible luck and faced a series of unfortunate events during her travels. An article in her undergraduate file in the

University of Rochester Rare Books Department stated:

On its maiden voyage from New York the ship (Van Buren) ran into the worst storm known on the Atlantic in many years. Passengers were strapped into bunks and fed sandwiches for eighteen days since the galley was completely destroyed and \$1,000 worth of china ruined in the thirty-six hours of chaos. Recovering in the Caribbean the ship ran into the tail end of the Texas hurricane which Anne says was tame. They managed to get through the Panama Canal and on to San Francisco where, after gala night life and excitement, they sailed for Honolulu ... Anne will be living with the Stewart Wilcoxes at 2040 Round Top Terrace, Honolulu, and will be working in the branch office of Kodak there. Her new home is right on the beach near the Royal Honolulu Hotel where broadcasts to America originate. Someday you may hear, 'Hello, Mother, I'm washed up on the shore of heaven safely' (*Rochester Review* Oct-Nov).

Once in Hawaii, Anne worked in the Honolulu branch office of Kodak, where she witnessed the Pearl Harbor attack on the dawn of December 7, 1941. An article from a Rochester newspaper in her alumni file

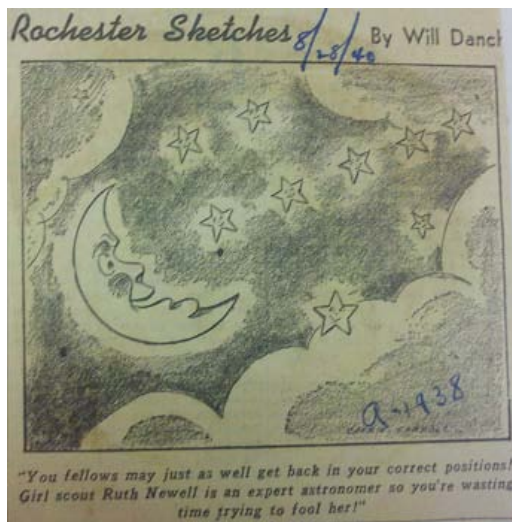
The dawn of December 7th found many Rochester alumnae scattered throughout a war torn world, while others were ready to shift into high gear for Uncle Sam by serving in various capacities in volunteer and professional war work.

Anne Newell '38, Kodak employee at Honolulu, danced to the wee sma' hours at Hickam Field with navy officers while Japanese planes were on the way to bomb Pearl Harbor at dawn. She could not believe the noise was

Source: Newell, Anne Burgher" [File of Undergraduates](#), University of Rochester

quotes, “She could not believe the noise was anything but practice maneuvers until she heard the radio. At that point Anne doesn’t mind admitting, she was plenty terrified (Unknown Source, “Newell, Anne Burgher” File of Undergraduates, University of Rochester).” Like the men in her family, Anne apparently had, despite its danger, a love of being near the water. Years later, Anne married Lieut. John Laidlaw Burgher of Fort Sam Houston Texas. Together Anne and John Burgher had two children John and Mary (File of Undergraduates, University of Rochester). Anne Newell Burgher died of polio on August 26, 1950 (Mt. Hope Interment).

The second daughter of George Russell and Ruth Taylor, Ruth Harden Newell was born



Source: “Rochester Sketches.” [Democrat and Chronicle \[Rochester\]](#) 28 August 1940.

in 1916 and attended Monroe Preparatory School in Rochester, NY. According to the University of Rochester (Office of Alumni Relations Business and Professional Survey 1963), Miss Ruth H. Newell graduated from the University of Rochester in 1938 with an undergraduate B.A. in History and minor in English. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa honor society and also received a certificate in Personnel Administration from Radcliffe College in 1943. She lived on

Knollbrook Rd. in Rochester and was employed by Rochester General Hospital as a personnel director. The only unique information about Ruth is a charming sketch found in her alumnae file at the University of Rochester in which a newspaper references her. Ruth H. Newell died on July 15, 1996 of unlisted causes (Mt. Hope Interment). Her ashes were buried in the Mt. Hope Newell family plot.

George Henry Newell built a strong family that carried on his success and dedication to the City of Rochester even after his death. With the success came the ability to erect a stunning family monument in Mount Hope Cemetery. Although plot 205 in Section C is now full, the beautiful sculpture will always remind us of the great Rochesterian family, the Newells.

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