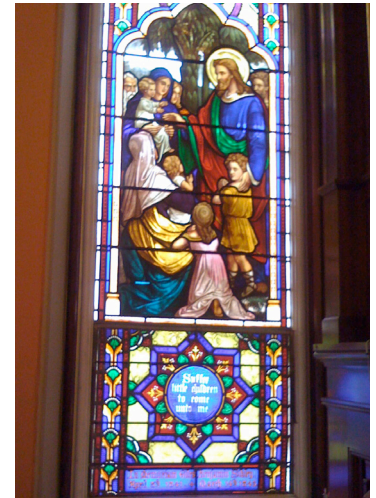


Good Works

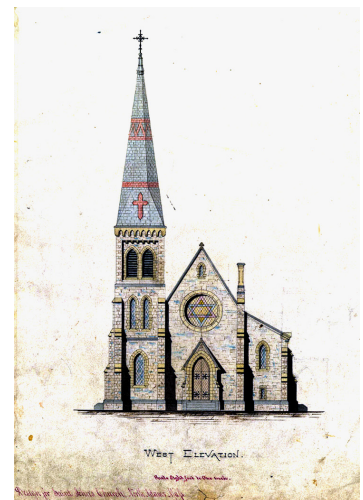
The faith of the Sibley and Watson families was predicated on their belief in a loving God who was actively involved in the affairs of individuals. In the midst of personal tragedies – losing children to illness, a dissolving marriage – the conviction that One existed who was steadfast and comforting imbued their writings and their actions. Going hand-in-hand was their belief that humans were called on by God to relieve suffering and to help those in need. Thanks to the families' affluence, they could act generously and often to improve the lives of others on a grand scale as well as through quiet acts of charity.

While privilege and consumption were often the visible hallmarks of their lives, the Sibley and Watson families' great wealth also founded and benefited religious institutions, health and welfare related causes, cultural organizations, and educational opportunities whose influence lived well beyond their donors' lives. Interspersed throughout their letters are references to affairs of the church, the hospital, the home, and the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. Even while traveling abroad, Emily Sibley Watson prevailed upon her mother to make contributions to these causes on her behalf.

Within the Rochester region and beyond, at least four Episcopal churches, their congregations, and their ministers relied on the Sibley and Watson families for their buildings, their furnishings, and for the fulfillment of their material needs: St. John's Church in Honeoye Falls where the Sibleys and Watsons were early members and supporters; St. John's Church in North Adams, Massachusetts, where Elizabeth Sibley's gift of \$25,000 in 1879 made a new building possible; the church in Sibley, Illinois, donated by Elizabeth Sibley, where Hiram Sibley owned the world's biggest farm; and closer to home, St. Andrew's Church on Ashland Street in Rochester, where Emily Sibley Watson and her mother, Elizabeth Sibley, found their spiritual home and whose minister, Algernon Crapsey, inspired them with his beliefs about faith and social justice and affirmed their own practices.



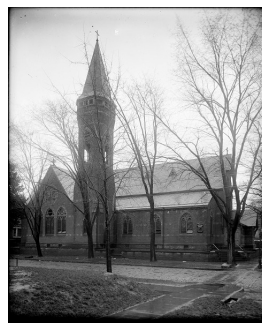
Memorial Window presented by Elizabeth Sibley, St. John's Church, Honeoye Falls, NY



St. John's Church, North Adams, MA



View of Sibley, IL



St. Andrew's Church
Rochester, NY

Albert R. Stone Negative
Collection,
Rochester Museum & Science
Center

Closely tied to their religious philanthropy were the family's efforts to improve the health and comfort of those in need. Best known was their support of hospitals, beginning in the 1860s, with the Sibleys' support of Rochester City Hospital on West Main Street. Elizabeth Sibley was credited with promoting the founding of a hospital on the city's east side, the Homeopathic Hospital, in 1887, which later became the Genesee Hospital. Concern for indigent elderly women and needy children led the Sibleys and Watsons to spearhead the establishment of the Episcopal Church Home on Mount Hope Avenue. Emily Sibley Watson's mother, Elizabeth Sibley, and mother-in-law, Caroline Watson, took shifts throughout the year during which they had responsibility for attending to the food, medical care, and spiritual needs of residents.



City Hospital, Rochester, NY

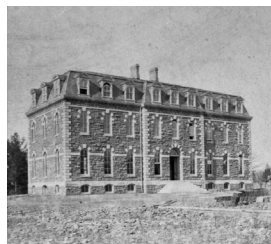


Homeopathic Hospital, Rochester, NY

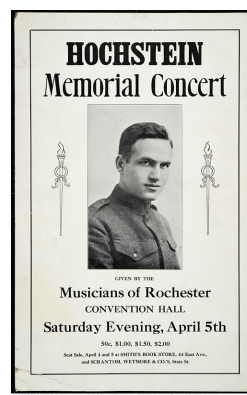
While Hiram Sibley, Elizabeth Sibley, and Emily Sibley Watson did not have formal education beyond high school, if that, they recognized the value that was inherent in the availability of schooling and cultural experiences for individuals and the community. Hiram Sibley's very public gifts of a library to the University of Rochester, and a school of engineering to Cornell University, overshadowed but did not diminish the ways in which his wife and daughter made private, often anonymous gifts that covered the cost of tuition at various institutions of higher learning. Emily Sibley Watson, in particular, launched two initiatives that have enriched the lives of thousands of Rochesterians – the Memorial Art Gallery and the Hochstein School of Music and Dance, both created to honor the memories of two gifted young men, her son James G. Averell and her protégé, David Hochstein.



Sibley Library on the University of Rochester's Prince Street Campus



Sibley School of Engineering, Cornell University



Poster for Hochstein Memorial Concert, April 5th, 1919



Memorial Art Gallery ca. 1913

The list of their charitable acts is quite long and remains incomplete, but their generous spirits permeate the documents that are left to us to study. Whether they acted in the public or the private realm, these individuals were predisposed to act on their concerns for those they knew, and also those who were complete strangers. After her mother died, Emily Sibley Watson dedicated a painting to her memory at St. Andrew's Church. The subject was the story of the gift of the magi, and it was said at the time that nothing could be more appropriate, as Elizabeth Tinker Sibley's name was synonymous with qualities of kindness and generosity. The same might be said for her daughter as well as other members of their extended family, who continually looked to the world around them and found ways to make it better.

—Marjorie Barkin Searl



"Adoration of the Magi" by
George M. Haushalter,
St. Andrews Church, Rochester,
NY. Donated by Emily Sibley
Watson "In Loving Memory of
Elizabeth M. Sibley."

Albert R. Stone Negative Collection,
Rochester Museum & Science Center