



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CORTLAND RURAL CEMETERY

FALL 2016

A Q&A with Trustee Adrienne Traub

In this issue, we take the opportunity to interview our youngest Trustee, Adrienne Traub. A native of Cortland, and a recent graduate of SUNY ESF, Ms. Traub not only brings smarts and energy to the Board, she also brings a uniquely 'environmental' perspective and skillset well suited to the institution's strategic plan focused on reimagining the CRC as a historical, cultural, and natural resource for our community.



CRC TRUSTEE, ADRIANNE TRAUB

Q: It's fair to say you're the youngest member of the Cortland Rural Cemetery Board of Trustees. Why did you sign on when offered a seat on the Board?

A: For some people, cemeteries — and the Cortland Rural Cemetery in particular — simply capture the imagination of passersby. You just can't help but wonder about the lives of citizens past and the rolling hills, brimming with untold stories. It was this bridge to our past, and the cemetery's natural and cultural potential for improving the future of the Cortland community, that peaked my interest two years ago. At 22, admittedly well below the mean age, I became a member of the Board and haven't looked back.

Q: Why should anyone, and particularly younger people like yourself or even the generation after you, pay attention to or care about cemeteries?

A: Whether it's Boston, Pittsburgh, or smaller towns like Williamsburg, Savannah, or even Corning, NY — vibrant, forward-looking communities that are able to attract and retain young people also tend to be connected to and successful at leveraging their past... Be it a historic period or bygone industry. I think the same is or can be true here in Cortland, and the history in our oldest and largest cemetery is one part of that. Beyond that, it's just the right thing to do to honor and remember those who passed before us.

Q: How is your degree in Environmental Biology from SUNY ESF, and your career focus to date on environmental issues, a 'fit' for the Cortland Rural Cemetery?

A: I see the cemetery as an incredible green space, rich in natural history and ripe for transformation. The opportunity to help 'green' Cortland by establishing an accredited arboretum, opening our new cemetrails for hiking, and the potential for developing natural burial space or allowing natural burials at some point down the road all intrigued me. By preserving and enriching our natural spaces within the built landscape, we protect a piece of what makes our community unique.

Q: Tell us more about the idea or goal of establishing an arboretum in the CRC?

A: At first, the Board happened on the notion of promoting our current collection of trees as a way to mitigate financial strain we were experiencing — by raising awareness of the cemetery, attracting visitors, and hopefully increasing financial support. Then it dawned on us that someday, maybe decades from now, the cemetery will reach its capacity for burials — but still need to be maintained. The idea of moving beyond a collection of pretty trees to a full-fledged arboretum stems from this later objective. If we take these steps today, perhaps we'll have a self-sustaining resource tomorrow.





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Newsletter layout courtesy of

Jerome Natoli

Foundations make a difference.

The CRC was blessed by financial support from two of our favorite Foundations in 2016!

First was the JM McDonald Foundation's super-generous grant of \$35,000, focused on making the cemetery accessible to customers and visitors with physical disabilities. Funded by this grant were a composite-wood wheelchair ramp to the cemetery office (btw: the design and materials had to pass muster of the City Historic Commission); renovation of one of our office restrooms, rendering it wheelchair-accessible; general sprucing up of our cemetery office, including new flooring and office furniture; and an electric lift to facilitate wheelchair access to the public art space of our tenant, the Cultural Council of Cortland County.



OUR NEW WHEELCHAIR RAMP, WITH CONTRACTOR BRYAN THOMAS

Second, we received a grant of \$1500 from the Ralph R. Wilkins Foundation that enabled us to build our own book-scanner (aka: PVC-mounted, remotely triggered digital camera). This device, designed and constructed at a small fraction of the cost of professional book-scanners used by historical archives and large libraries, is enabling us to take digital photos of our one-of-a-kind burial record books: This will not only allow us to publish such records online, but digitizing these irreplaceable documents provides a critical back-up should we ever lose the originals to water or fire damage.

We thank both of these Foundations for their support, both recently and over the years: Without question, they've made our institution — and the Cortland community we serve — stronger.

Our Cultural Events Continue!

With a view toward increasing public awareness, relevance, and community support — your cemetery continued to transform itself into a venue for suitable cultural events in 2016.

On October 16, we hosted a local-history talk entitled *Cortland Business District Through the Years*, presented by Kate O'Connell. The one and a half hour talk, to be held in the cemetery's Gibson Memorial Chapel, took attendees on a virtual/historic "walk down the streets of Cortland" augmented by O'Connell's collection of photos, maps and newspaper clippings.



KATE O'CONNELL

Next came our *"Famous Folks & Foliage"* guided walking tour of the Cortland Rural Cemetery, conducted by SUNY Cortland history student William McNeill. (William hails from Brentwood, Long Island and is the first of what we hope will be a long, continuing line of interns from the college — via Professor Evan Faulkenbury's new public history curricula and

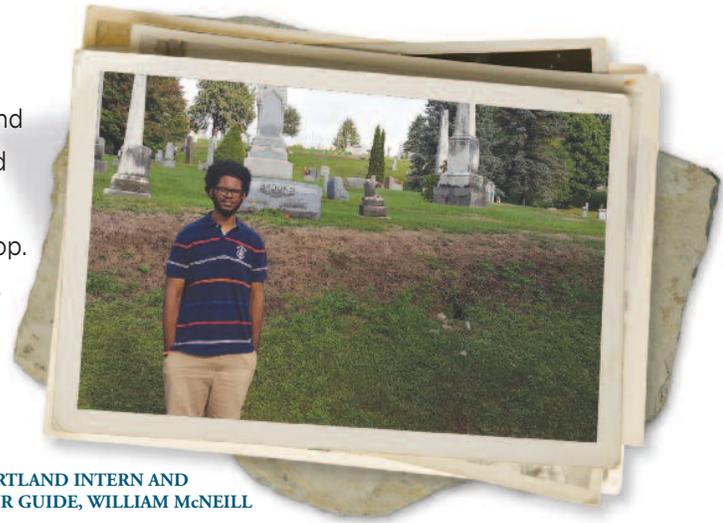
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Our Cultural Events continued...

internship program!) Conducted on two Sunday's, October 23rd and November 13, the tours were free of charge, open to the public, and spotlighted the first 10 stops of our new interpretive 'cemetrail' — with running commentary, anecdotes, stories, and Q&A at each stop.

Lastly, we'll be hosting a reading of miscellaneous Christmas stories in our beautiful Gibson Memorial Chapel, on December 11 (time to be announced). The theatrical reading will be presented by a local group of thespians, and is sure to be a welcome addition to the community's holiday festivities.



SUNY CORTLAND INTERN AND
FALL TOUR GUIDE, WILLIAM McNEILL

A Q&A with Trustee Adrienne Traub continued...

Q: What exactly is an arboretum?

A: Basically it's a consciously designed and proactively maintained collection of trees or other plantings, sometimes shaped by a guiding principle like "promoting native species" or "exposing the public to exotic plants." In addition, an accredited arboretum typically includes programming (in other words, educational outreach to the public) — as well as a well-defined tree management plan, which may include new plantings, proactive care, and removals, often under the supervision of a dedicated arborist.

Q: Where is the CRC now in terms of the arboretum plan?

A: We're really still at the drawing board. But, with thanks to Dr. Stephen Broyles at SUNY Cortland, we've inventoried over 300 trees and tagged 30 notable and different species among them. That's a lot to celebrate, already. Next, our goal is to preserve and protect the existing stock on the cemetery grounds, begin to host educational tree-tours for the public, develop site and species plans, and begin fundraising efforts. Longer term, we hope to achieve a "Level Two" ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation and really put the CRC's arboretum on the map. Think of it as Cortland's more modest version of Cornell's Plantations, only ours will be located right in the heart of the city and augmented by thousands of gravesites.

Q: How can CRC supporters help?

A: We're very much counting on the public's support to move the arboretum project forward. One way to contribute will be to allow groups, companies, families, or individuals to 'sponsor' specific trees, benches, or other functional aspects of the project. Secondly, we're also looking to try crowd-funding through an internet site like Kickstarter or Gofundme. And, we're of course receptive to a major or 'naming' gift. Whatever the method or level of giving, we have every confidence our stalwart supporters will again step forward to make this substantial and lasting impact on the beautification of our grounds.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add, Adrienne?

A: Given the importance of our mission, but also in the face of declining revenues due to fewer and fewer burials, I'm a strong believer in the new ideas and energy we're currently applying to sustain the fiscal and cultural integrity of the Cortland Rural Cemetery. And I am proud to be part of the team!



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Check out our new video!

Planning a trip to Cortland? Check out our video for Visitors and Tourism — located on the video page of our website (www.cortlandruralcemetery.com). This new video demonstrates that Cortland Rural Cemetery is an interesting destination for visitors to Cortland, NY — given our natural beauty, hiker-friendly “cemetrails,” history, and even cultural events. Themed “Memorializing the Deceased. Celebrating Life.”— it features footage from the cemetery and interviews, and was funded by Cortland County, with help from the Cortland County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

CRC'S NEW VIDEO FEATURES INTERVIEWS WITH BOARD MEMBERS, INCLUDING TREASURER KATHY CINCOTTA, WHOSE GREAT-GRANDFATHER ALBERT WARFIELD SERVED AS A TRUSTEE IN THE EARLY 1900s.



Want to continue our progress?

Please consider making a tax deductible gift! Checks can be made out to the Cortland Rural Cemetery and returned using the enclosed envelope.

Thank you for your support!



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