



# Cortland Rural Cemetery

110 TOMPKINS STREET • CORTLAND, NEW YORK 13045

AUTUMN 2006

## Joseph B. Reynolds

By MARY ANN KANE

The hills of Virgil drew 24 year old Joseph Reynolds at the time that Cortland was being designated a County. He is at rest in Cortland Rural Cemetery where those same hills are a perpetual vision from his lofty mausoleum.

Few pioneer in a community where their abilities are so readily recognized that they are regularly sought for leadership roles, responsibility after responsibility. And so it was, with Reynolds, born in Easton, Washington County, immigrated in 1808 from Galway, Sullivan County. Penniless, except for the two cows he drove with him, he swapped milk for their shelter while he cleared land for farmers at 75 cents a day. In a short time he built and operated one of Virgil's early stores, and then a small hotel – the Washington House.

The income from these three occupations was invested in farm land, and in helping organize the Virgil Baptist Church, he donated land for it and for the Town's main cemetery.

He was further initiated into public service during the War of 1812 when he organized a company of riflemen and subsequently became its Captain. Put on reserve status by the State, they were readied for defense of Salt Point (Syracuse). Reynolds' rank eventually reached Brigadier General in the militia.



*JUDGE JOSEPH REYNOLDS.*

*From page 16,  
1876 Atlas of Cortland County*

Continuing his willingness to be accessible to the people, he was elected constable in 1814 and appointed Justice of the Peace the next year, serving for twenty-three years.

He ran unopposed for the State Legislature

*(continued on page 2)*

# Joseph B. Reynolds

*(continued from front)*

in 1818, and in 1821 began eighteen years as an appointed County Judge. At this same time, he was for ten years, beginning in 1825, the Town of Virgil's Supervisor. A lifelong member of the Democratic Party, he was a presidential elector for Andrew Jackson in 1832. From 1834 he served two terms in the U.S. Congress representing Tioga, Tompkins and Cortland Counties.

Although much of his political career operated from the village of Cortland, it was not until 1839 that Reynolds moved from Virgil. That year he married for the third time and built a prestigious home on Tompkins Street. His property extended south to today's Union Street and Owego Street. (Reynolds Avenue being defined much later.) About 1890, this acreage was purchased by Theodore Wickwire, and in an early urban renewal project, Joseph's home was taken down and replaced. The 1855 map of the village reveals a turreted house with elaborate landscaping, although not as extensive as the Randall brothers, and with a dearth of neighbors. The New York State census of that year notes that Joseph's household included four servants, two men and two women – with three Ireland-born. Five years earlier, the federal census reveals that he was owner of 10,000 acres of land (but does not describe where) and he identified himself as a farmer.

Widowed three times, his son from his first marriage, Robert O., became a lawyer. His second wife gave him three children – Lyman, who lived in and developed large plantations in Costa Rica; Catherine, married to Augustus Ballard, died at only 24 years of age;

Josephine, who became responsible for administering the countless accounts, properties, mortgages and stocks of her father, who, surprisingly, left no will. Married to Arthur Holmes in the year following her father's passing, Josephine remained at 55 Tompkins Street until her death in 1888.

Reynolds continued involvement in local affairs while a village resident. The establishment of the Cortlandville Academy, located approximately where the Presbyterian manse now stands, received his endorsement, and he was its first president. When the village was incorporated in 1853, the Hon. Joseph Reynolds was also its first president. He helped to organize and was thus a charter member of the Cortlandville Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons No. 470. His presence and purse were contributed to many civic and legal societies.

Perhaps Joseph Reynolds' most significant donation was funding for 14 acres of land which formed the basis for the Cortland Rural Cemetery, organized in 1853. He presided as president of its first Board of Directors. Six foot two inches, in his mid-seventies, a retired judge, state assemblyman, and member of the House of Representatives, hired out to the cemetery association and with another gentleman, cut the surplus timber in the cemetery for 37 and one-half cents per cord of three feet lengths. (A bonus was the gift of the trees' tops for clearing the brush.)

Judge Reynolds died in September, 1864. He and his family share a place in section M, on a hill in the center of his adopted city, with the view only interrupted by the hills of Virgil, home to his first successes. 🌳

*Mary Ann Kane*

*Director*

*Cortland County Historical Society*

# Cortland County Historical Society —A Community Resource

The Cortland County Historical Society is our community resource for information on historic events, places and people in Cortland County. This membership organization is also the best place to do genealogical research in Cortland County; plus they offer their research services for a nominal fee.

To become a member, or for further information about their services, please call 607-756-6071, email them at: CCHS@clarityconnect.com or write to them at: Cortland County Historical Society, 25 Homer Avenue, Cortland, NY 13045. 🌳

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## How a Cemetery is Funded

We often get asked how the Cemetery is funded. It's a not-for-profit corporation that raises most of its operating revenues by the sale of lots, fees for interments and the installation of markers and foundations for monuments. We are not part of any local government and are not funded by taxes. We have a limited trust fund (Perpetual Care and Permanent Maintenance) which provides only about 15% of the money we need to operate each year.

Costs for labor and energy have been rising substantially. We have been very effective in trying to contain our manageable costs, but our real need is to develop new sources of revenue and build our Trust Funds to the point that they provide support equal to the percentage of the Cemetery lands already sold. Since 80% of the Cemetery land is sold, then 80% of the maintenance operating cost should be coming from Trust Fund revenues.

The Cemetery Foundation has been the principal source of support for capital items (like tractors and trees) and building maintenance and improvement.

As a shift in public usage to cremation has been occurring, and above-ground interment has been more desirable, the Cemetery has shifted to offering both public mausoleum space and cremation niches. The Cemetery will continue to expand its offerings along those lines, along with seeking other new sources of revenue. Meanwhile, your support is greatly needed and appreciated. 🌳

## New Parking Lot

After several years of intensive negotiations, the Cortland Rural Cemetery and Auxiliary Services Corporation at SUNY Cortland (they provide dining services, operate the bookstore and other services) entered into an agreement to lease slightly less than one acre of unused land in the northwest corner of the Cemetery to use for a parking lot for SUNY Cortland. This paid lot, professionally designed and landscaped, is generating income that will provide additional operational money to the Cemetery along with dedicated contributions to the Permanent Maintenance Trust Fund over the 30 year period of the lease. After that time, it will be removed and restored to its original condition so the Cemetery can use it as future demand for space requires. Extensive landscaping and screening is and will continue to be installed as well as new and extensive fencing, along with lighting which does not intrude into the Cemetery at night. In taking an unused field and turning it into a source of temporary revenue, your Cemetery Trustees are trying hard to find the funds necessary to maintain this large and historic Cemetery. 🌳



*New SUNY Parking Lot,  
View from Cemetery Looking South*

## Glass Front Cremation Niches on the Way!

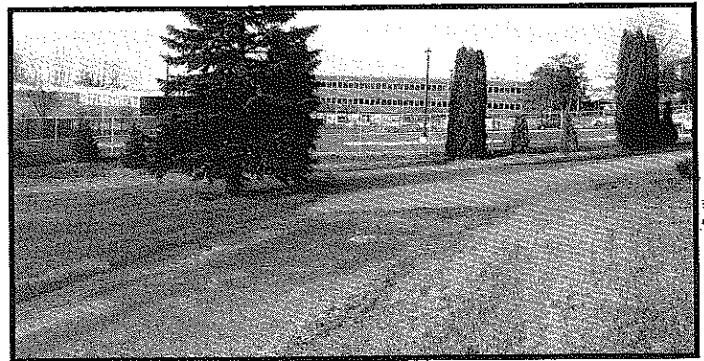
In addition to the beautiful oak cremation niche unit located inside the historic Chapel, the Cemetery will be installing new glass fronted cremation niche units in the Chapel over this winter. Designed to display your choice of urn, these highly desirable niches will provide an indoor, all weather visitation option for family and friends. Built of bronze and stainless steel, with clear glass fronts, and available in various sizes, they are affordably priced and unique to the Cortland area.

The Cemetery also offers a public Mausoleum, allowing another choice in the Cortland community. The Cemetery, while historic in origin, is providing a full range of contemporary choices for your loved one's final resting place. No other Cemetery locally offers such choices. Pricing of the Mausoleum crypts and cremation niches are comparable or less than the total costs of a mid-price range traditional ground burial and memorialization.

If you are interested in the purchase of a Mausoleum crypt, or a niche, or would like more information, please call Cemetery Superintendent Andrew Palm at 607-756-6022 for an appointment.

## Paving the Roads & Paying for Paving

Due to the generous support of our many lot owners and friends, we were able to rebuild and repave some highly used roadways back in 2005, but we still need another \$5,000 to pay the balance of that cost, and we need to start accumulating more paving funds for the future. The Cemetery's operating income can only afford to pay for maintenance, not capital projects. The Cemetery Foundation has been the sole source of funds for road rebuilding and paving, and we continue to ask for your donations, whatever the size you can afford, to maintain the roads. 🌳



Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation

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