



# THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CORTLAND RURAL CEMETERY

FALL 2025

## An interview with our newest (and youngest!) Board Members...

BY JOHN HOESCHELE, CRC TREASURER

*Even though some of the graves in our cemetery date back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, we're lucky enough to have some local professionals born closer to the turn of **this** century who've stepped up to become Trustees at our cemetery. To wit, here's an interview with our three most youthful board members: Sarah Walter, M.S., CCC-SLP, School-based Speech-Language Pathologist with the Stepping Stones Group; Ben Wells, past music director at Cortland High School and current Production Manager & Publicity Coordinator at SUNY Cortland; and Sara Keeney, Junior Consumer Loan Underwriter at Tompkins Community Bank. If you know someone like them, and of their caliber, let us know!*

### Question: Why did you decide to become a CRC Trustee?

- **Sarah W:** As a resident of Cortland with a longstanding family connection to the Cortland Rural Cemetery, becoming a CRC Trustee was important to me because I have an interest in ensuring respectful care for those who have passed and I also feel this is something I can take part in to give back to my community.
- **Ben:** I've long been a fan and advocate of local history, having been a member of the Cortland County Historical Society board at various points, my most recent term including the last 5 years. Developing a connection with CRC feels like a natural extension of the exciting and important work being accomplished there, and I hope to bring new ideas and initiatives that can potentially foster collaboration, continue to develop good-will within the community and ensure a strong future for both.
- **Sara K:** I originally reached out to the CRC Board of Trustees when I worked for KeyBank, where I was asked to learn more about different nonprofit organizations, how they operate, and consider what financial products might best fit for these organizations. Through that process, I learned a lot about how complex the needs were at the cemetery and how hard the board members work in order to meet those needs while operating under NYS guidelines. When I was asked to join the Trustees, I gladly did so in order to help meet the needs of the community I lived and worked in.

### Q: Do you, yourself, have a personal connection to the cemetery (e.g.: relatives buried here, etc.)?

- **Sarah W:** My grandparents, my brother, and generations of my family-stretching back to the cemetery's founding, are all laid to rest at the Cortland Rural Cemetery. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2](#)

SARAH  
WALTER



BEN  
WELLS



SARA  
KEENEY





# CORTLAND RURAL CEMETERY

## Trustees

### President

Ms. Kathryn Cincotta

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Vacant

### Secretary

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### Treasurer

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Mr. Mark Suben

Mr. Ben Wells

### Cemetery Supervisor

Danny Smith

### Newsletter Layout

Jerome Natoli

## Newest (and Youngest)... CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

• **Ben:** I have been researching my family's genealogy since I was in college and discovered that I have ancestors who were some of the earliest settlers in Virgil and Marathon. My 4X great grandparents Sylvester Morris Roe (1801-1880) and Mary Chatterton Roe (1801-1881) are buried in the Cortland Rural Cemetery. Additionally, back when I was in high school, I worked with a Girl Scout troop who hosted a tour of the cemetery with actors portraying various individuals throughout the cemetery or reading about them. I read excerpts from "Stories of Cortland County" at the grave of the author, Bertha Blodgett. Finally, I directed the group of actors who put on a production of the "Tioughnioga River Anthology" by Bill Whiting in 2014, performed under a tent on the CRC lawn. That was great fun!

**Sara K:** I really have no personal connection to the CRC. I just want to do my part!

### Q: In terms of board composition, the CRC board is largely skewed toward older folks. Why is caring for the community's cemetery important to younger people like yourselves?

• **Sarah W:** I feel that there is something special about preserving the stories and memories of those who came before us. It also helps maintain a connection to local history and heritage, which aids in creating a sense of community for Cortland.

• **Ben:** An aging board is a common theme for a great number of organizations. Perhaps particularly for those who deal in old and sometimes forgotten things. While I'm no longer in the youngest of the adult generations, I've been committed to being civically engaged for around 15 years. As an artist and a musician, I have found inspiration from local history and know I come to the table with fresh perspectives and creative ideas. It is certainly time for my generation to begin taking on the bulk of responsibilities and the heavy lifting that will ensure strength in such organizations for the betterment of the entire community.

• **Sara K:** Unfortunately, I think that community service is something that is becoming less and less common amongst people of my age group. I do think it is important to be a part of boards such as the cemetery in order to continue to preserve the final resting place of so many family members of the community. It comes down to if we don't, who will?

### Q: What aspect of the cemetery's operation or board-level management is most interesting to you?

• **Sarah W:** I believe one of the most meaningful priorities is to secure the cemetery's future by respecting its cultural and historical heritage and by working with fellow Trustees to responsibly oversee and maintain the Cortland Rural Cemetery's finances.



*"...I feel that there is something special about preserving the stories and memoirs of those that came before us. It also helps maintain a connection to local history and heritage..."*



## Want to Continue Our Progress?

*Please consider making  
a tax deductible gift to  
the Cortland Rural Cemetery  
and returning it using the  
enclosed envelope.  
Thank you for your support!*



## Newest (and Youngest)... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

- **Ben:** My interests are extremely varied, in life and career. When designing an exhibit for the Historical Society a number of years ago I began to realize that my value of history didn't come from the love of events and dates, but rather in individual stories of the people who made, experienced and shaped that history. For example, a civil war canteen is just that, an object from a certain time, until you add the story of who carried it, where they traveled and what they experienced. The cemetery, being the resting place for such individuals, is a "living" museum of sorts full of lives and stories. You walk CRC and see names from buildings, schools, streets, businesses and common names of families with an important legacy. These should be remembered and valued. One way to do that is by caring for and maintaining our cemetery. In addition, I love organization and record-keeping, regularly contribute volunteer photographs to **FindaGrave** to help others with their research, as well as dabbling in monument cleaning and repair. All little pieces that combine to spark my interest.

*"...I have been researching my family's genealogy since I was in college and discovered that I have ancestors who were some of the earliest settlers in Virgil and Marathon..."*

- **Sara K:** For me the most unique and interesting aspect of overseeing the cemetery are the guidelines and limitations relating to our State-mandated Permanent Maintenance Fund. I am hoping to continue to see that, as the world changes, we might push back on such onerous regulations, to better meet the needs of smaller rural cemeteries like ours, who are barely solvent.

### Q: What do you hope to contribute during your time on the board?

- **Sarah W:** I hope to spread knowledge about the CRC to the rest of the community and to help ensure that the cemetery is well-preserved for future generations.
- **Ben:** I'm excited to support the current strengths of CRC and assist in whatever regular tasks are needed, while also dreaming and scheming of unique, creative and innovative ways to help the cemetery thrive and exist within the continual consciousness of the community. As I become familiar with the status quo within my first few months on the board, I will look forward to shaking things up and keeping a focus on a bright and meaningful future.
- **Sara K:** In my time on the board, I hope to make connections with community members that can make future endeavors easier and more attainable. By that I mean that many of our board members, who've been on the board and in our community for a long time, have connections that help the cemetery operate: For example, when we need a truck, we have Trustees who know folks who might donate one, and so on. The more involved you are in the community, the more you're able to make those connections.



## Remembering Trustee, Warren Eddy

It is with sadness we acknowledge the passing of our fellow Trustee, Mr. Warren Eddy. Originally nominated to, and invited to join, our board by past President Jim Place, Warren served with care, compassion, and distinction as a member of our Board of Trustees for 15 years. He will be missed at our monthly meetings and other functions — but we are glad and honored to have his remains here with us and in our care.



# CRC benefits from Saluting Branches initiative for 4th year

**The CRC was blessed again on September 17th**, for the fourth year in a row, to be the recipient of invaluable support from the Saluting Branches program — a nationwide day of volunteering from arborists and tree care experts who donate their time, talent, expertise, and equipment-use at cemeteries like ours who have dedicated veterans sections.

Not only does this pro-bono care vastly improve the aesthetics of our grounds, it improves safety, proactively helps prevent danger and damage from fallen trees and limbs, enhances the health of our tree stock, and saves us thousands of dollars!

We cannot thank the companies who've donated their services enough. (You can see their names in the pics shown here: Please give them your business if you have need!) And a special shout-out again, to arborist and all around great guy, Jim Maloney, who continues to spearhead this effort at the CRC!



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**CORTLAND RURAL CEMETERY**

Cortland Rural Cemetery

110 Tompkins Street

Cortland, NY 13045-0288

Web: [www.cortland-rural-cemetery.com](http://www.cortland-rural-cemetery.com)

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

## Be an Angel

*Learn how your donation or legacy gift  
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at the Cortland Rural Cemetery.  
Contact us to schedule a private  
consultation and learn about becoming  
a member of our Angel Society.*

[www.cortland-rural-cemetery.com](http://www.cortland-rural-cemetery.com)

