



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CORTLAND RURAL CEMETERY

SPRING 2016

Hubbard Hilltop Markers Re-discovered

BY MARY L. DEXTER

Preface: In the late summer of 2015, CRC friend, supporter, and local historian Mary L. Dexter rediscovered a series of sod-covered, horizontal marble markers in Section M of our cemetery. Ms. Dexter is a native of Cortland who has been engaged in a variety of history research projects all of her life – including unique research done on Jonas W. Stewart II, an itinerant professional gravestone carver whose work from the early 1800s can be found in Cortland County and elsewhere in New England. Ms. Dexter is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a degree in African-American History, a photographer, historical researcher, and genealogist. What follows is her summary of research on the stone markers she recently uncovered, and for which she is leading conservation efforts, at the CRC.

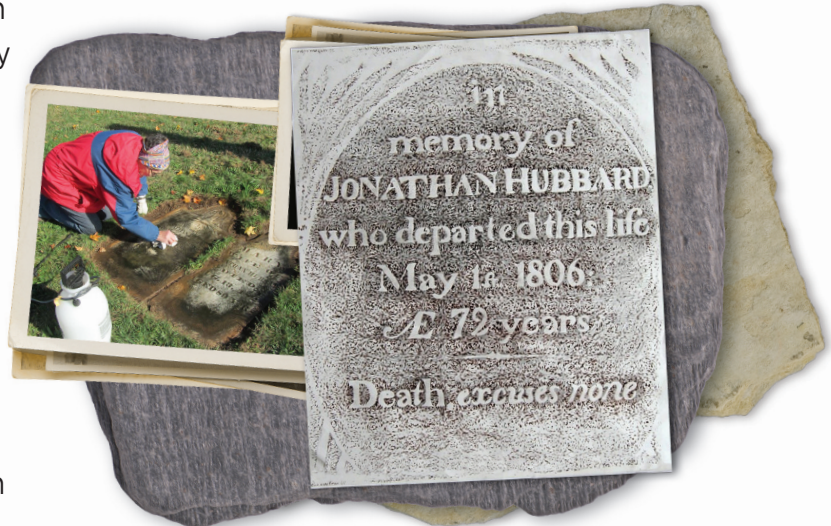
At the top of the hill in Cortland Rural Cemetery's Section M lie four marble grave markers. Their face-up orientation has left them very worn, due to lying skyward for possibly as many as one hundred and fifty years. The name is 'Hubbard' and the death dates are 1805, 1806, 1814, and 1828. The name on the numerous surrounding obelisks is also Hubbard.

Research at the Cortland County Historical Society indicates that "in the mid-1790s, a Hubbard family left Brimfield, Hampden County, Massachusetts and settled in various parts of the Military Tract Town of Homer, Cortland County, New York." The progenitor of this clan was Jonathan Hubbard, Sr. His wife was Mary Keep. They were the parents of a large New England family and four

of their sons -- Jonathan, Jr, Solomon, James and John Hubbard -- accompanied the elderly couple into the dense forests of central New York State prior to 1800. All were respected 'movers and shakers' of their time, with each purchased land and became involved in the political and religious issues of the day.

The marble marker for Jonathan Hubbard, Sr. -- "who departed this life May 1st, 1806" at the age of 72 and concludes with the short and somewhat severe epitaph "Death, excuses none." -- is one of earliest extant grave-stones in the county. The stone to his right remembers "his wife Mary Keep Hubbard who died in 1828." The two stones to the south are markers for "Jonathan Hubbard, Jr, who died Christmas 1814" and Abigail McClure...

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MARY DEXTER CLEANING MARKERS;
PENCIL RUBBING COURTESY OF MARY DEXTER





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Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation Dissolved— After 19 Years of Tireless Support

In the very first issue of this newsletter, dated May 1998, then President of the CRC Board of Trustees Charlie Gibson wrote:

"We are pleased to announce the creation of the Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation and our purpose is the following: The Foundation was established by some interested citizens of Cortland who saw the need for help and the importance of this historic landmark. It has taken much time and effort by many people to finally obtain the IRS's determination that all funds from individuals, corporations, and other foundations are tax exempt, charitable contributions... Now that this phase of the Foundation has been completed, we are ready to start some fund-raising projects to aid the cemetery so that it can be improved both in care of the grounds by plantings and improvements, updates to needed equipment, and some long-range plans which will hopefully put the cemetery in a much improved financial condition."

Today, as the current chair of the Trustees, I am tasked with writing a note to the opposite effect: After 17 years of hard work, tireless effort, and heartfelt dedication to its mission of aiding our cemetery with their time, talent, and treasure -- the members of the Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation were obliged to vote to dissolve their organization at a special meeting held on November 24, 2015.

The primary reason for the decision hinged on the difficulties of attracting new members to their team, but the necessity of this step in no way diminishes the magnitude of the efforts and achievements that preceded it. Here are just a few of the contributions the Foundation has made to the CRC over the years:

- Comprehensive renovation of the cemetery's historic chapel and mausoleum, including the construction of two columbaria for memorializing cremains
- Much-needed guidance on cost-cutting measures, such as seasonal staffing and securing volunteer labor sourced from various community service programs
- Solicitation and repair of used equipment
- Community education and solicitation of individual gifts via this newsletter, Memorial Day celebrations/open houses, and the cemetery website
- Assisting in the negotiations of a land-lease to SUNY Cortland/ASC for its Prospect Terrace parking lot, which yield much needed revenues from parking fees
- Several successful capital campaigns, aimed at achieving specific short-term goals (eg: road repairs, "Centennial tree" plantings, etc.) – and establishment of an Endowment Fund which augments the cemetery's permanent maintenance fund (since its inception, this Endowment has yielded interest enough to enable the Foundation to 'grant' between \$8,000-15,000 a year to the cemetery's operations for use in various maintenance duties.)
- Establishment of an Angel Society, to solicit and recognize major and legacy gifts
- Countless hours, cash donations, and materials donations from individual Foundation members and their families

Speaking of Foundation members, and at the risk of missing someone, let me take this opportunity to list and recognize them for their generosity and years of service (founding members are indicated with an asterisk):

Sandra Baden

Deborah Geibel

Dianne Robinson

Susie Rose Covington

John Hoeschele

John Finn

Sanford Gay

Harvey Kaufman
(deceased)

Dr. James Clark

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(deceased)



Cortland Rural Cemetery

VOL. 1

Historic Chapel Restoration Project

By DINA M. PEARSE

The 75-year-old chapel of the Cortland Rural Cemetery on Tompkins Street would be opened to the public after a two-year renovation. Funds for the \$150,000 project are in hand, a cemetery official said.

"We are just waiting the building to have it all there and done," said Andy Pahn, superintendent of the cemetery.

Rest and winter funds were held at the cemetery this year, but it can be difficult to find on an odd. Lottery days on top of the bill. With the restoration, including a heating system, the chapel can again be used for community events and even funerals, Pahn said.

The cemetery superintendent said no services have been held in the chapel for two years or so. One time the chapel was used for funerals and memorial services as funeral homes took over that market, Pahn said.

The Wilson Foundation has contributed \$1,000 toward the chapel repair, estimated at \$150,000, and Pahn, John Kowalski, chairman of the Wilson Foundation, said his group gave about \$100,000 a year in various charitable organizations in Cortland County.

That \$1,000 will be used to install a fund for an heating system, said Pahn. The Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation will be starting a fund campaign in a couple of months to raise more money. They also plan to open the chapel on Memorial Day weekend to attract potential donors.

Other reports Pahn said are needed include exterior masonry work to fix water falling between bricks, and protective covering on the stained glass windows, especially over one with a couple of broken panes. Finally, some plaster needs repairing and new floor is needed. Pahn said he would like to replace the current entrance that was removed in the 1970's or 1980's.

The chapel was designed by architect George Conable of New York City, formerly of Cortland. The Marshall Company constructed the building and stone chapel with a date of 1922-23 for \$20,000, according to a Cortland Standard article from the period.

Cortland had damaged several buildings in Cortland, including the Cortland Democratic building on Cortland Avenue that housed the weekly newspaper for many years, and the Cortland High School, which is now the Cortland County Office Building.

When Conable died in January 1953, the funeral was held in the chapel, and he was buried in the Cortland Rural Cemetery.

Pahn said chapel restoration will probably take two years. The only significant repair work since the chapel was built was roof repairs a couple of years ago.

The cemetery itself was established in 1853 on a wooded hillside about a mile from the center of the tiny village of Cortland. In November of 1853 a group of men met in the Presbyterian Church to form an association to purchase and build land for a cemetery. Thirteen of the men present contributed life dollars and so used the purchase of the site.



ORIGINAL FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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Finally, allow me to anticipate and answer two questions our past and present supporters are most likely to have in regard to the practical effects of the Foundation's dissolution. (If you have others, by all means contact me.)

- **"Can I still make donations to the cemetery?"** — Absolutely. As a non-profit, we can accept your tax-deductible gift just as the Foundation did. Simply make any checks you are generous enough to make payable to the "Cortland Rural Cemetery" and, if you wish, use the notation line to direct your gift to a specific activity or to our Endowment Fund.
- **"Speaking of the Endowment Fund, what will happen to that?"** — All assets of the Foundation (including the Endowment valued at \$411,000) have officially been transferred, under legal oversight,

to the care of the CRC Board of Trustees who are both inclined, and legally bound, to keep it intact. (In other words, as is the case with the Cemetery's NYS-mandated Permanent Maintenance Fund, the law says the Trustees may only utilize interest generated by this fund, and that, only by official Board vote.)

***Thanks, once again,
to those who served on the Foundation over the years.
You have accomplished your mission of promoting "the preservation and
beautification of the Cortland Rural Cemetery" with honor.***

— John Hoeschele, President CRC Board of Trustees

4th Annual Cemetery Sweep-out Day – Getting it done... With a little help from our friends!

On Sunday, April 24th — we were once again blessed to have members of the community, board members, and staffers 'pitch in' to make sure the CRC is looking as nice as possible for the observance of Memorial Day. Leaves were raked; bushes were trimmed; winter-time windfall and various debris was removed; and a good time was had by all. Once again: A thousand thank you's from all of us to all of you who participated... Our cemetery — and our community — are a better place for your generosity and respect for our institution.



Hubbard Hilltop Markers Re-discovered continued...

Hubbard, his first wife, who died in 1805 when their daughter Abigail was born. When the family first arrived in the mid-1790s, one of them purportedly climbed a tree on the prominent 'hill' rising at the confluence of seven valleys to view the best place for a village. After the southern half of Onondaga County was set apart and renamed Cortland, Jonathan Hubbard, Jr. donated one thousand dollars to facilitate the transaction. Though the nearby villages of Homer and McGraw thought they were better situated for the county seat, Jonathan next mounted his horse and — in an notable, early example of New York State political lobbying — took 'the deal' responsible for the 'site choice' to the three commissioners responsible for the decision. Also of note, the Hubbard family's mechanics were responsible for several grist and saw mills on the Tioughnioga River from Homer to Blodgett Mills.

Five generations of Hubbards are memorialized at Cortland Rural Cemetery, however the records do not reveal when, or by whom, the four marble tablets with the earliest dates were re-located there from a smaller and earlier burial site: That said, CRC officials and local historians believe they were almost certainly among several other very early stones in the cemetery — also marble and installed horizontally — moved to their current location around the period of the Cortland Rural Cemetery's establishment in 1853.

Indeed, an essay on record at the Cortland County Historical Society by local cemetery historian and one-time CRC Trustee, Christine Buck, inventories the cemetery sites in the Cortland area. Her research tells us there was a small family cemetery on the side hill behind 50-60 Tompkins Street. Very early in the city's history, this property was owned by Solomon Hubbard, so it is therefore speculated that he originally buried his parents -- Jonathan Sr. (d. 1806) and Mary (d. 1828), brother Jonathan, Jr. (d. 1814) and sister-in-law Abigail (1805) -- in the small private cemetery on the west side of the 'court house hill' road. (At that time, the road from Homer to Owego rose up and over the 'court house hill' such that the Hubbard cemetery would have been located on the west side of that road near the current Tompkins Street.)

Ms. Buck established another connection between the Hubbard family and Cortland Rural Cemetery in an article she published in the cemetery's newsletter of May 1998 indicating that a David Hubbard sold the original founders of the Cortland Rural Cemetery a total of 12.26 acres of land for \$1478.50 to establish the cemetery's first footprint. (Those founders, the original Trustees of the cemetery, included Joseph Reynolds, Morgan Webb, Abram Mudge, William Barnard, Timothy Rose, Henry Stephens, Horace Goodrich, Anson Fisk, and David Fairchild.) After the sale, the cemetery was obliged by the agreement to maintain a fence between their new acreage and the remaining, unsold portion of the original Hubbard property.

Clearly the Hubbards were an important family in the Cortland community and the in history of Cortland Rural Cemetery. So it is fitting that conservation efforts are currently under way to set each of the early horizontal stones in a new base, to preserve them as best as possible for future generations. Though their marble structures continue to erode due to acid rain, each will be photographed using redirected mirror sunlight to save a lasting image.



Spring Summary...

Highlights of our achievements over the winter and during this spring included:

- A new gate and gravel road allowing access to the cemetery from the West/Water Street side of the cemetery to facilitate entry for winter burials in our Jewish Cemetery; of note, the project was partially funded by the good folks at Temple Brith Sholom.
- A new rules sign at our main entrance, and several new speed-limit signs, were developed and installed with the final dollars from our 2013 McDonald Foundation grant.
- Under the same grant, we completed landscaping around our centralized watering hydrants.
- And the Board of Trustees continued progressing through the early/conceptual stages of our long-term arboretum initiative.

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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CORTLAND RURAL CEMETERY

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