



# Cortland Rural Cemetery

110 TOMPKINS STREET • CORTLAND, NEW YORK 13045

November 2011

## CIVIL WAR HERO & CIVIC LEADER

James C. Carmichael was born in 1829 at Mayfield, Fulton County of a father who immigrated from Scotland and a mother who was born in this country of Scottish immigrants. At age 18 he arrived in Cortland and attended the Cortlandville Academy located about where the Presbyterian manse is on today's Church Street. Not long after he was part of McFarland and Carmichael in a furniture/undertaking business (a common combination at that time).



*A simple but massive block of stone marks the grave of James. C. Carmichael*

With the outbreak of the Civil War he became a volunteer and recruiter for the 76th New York Volunteers, "Cortland's Own," but moved on in the same capacity, to help raise five companies for the 157th NYV, a regiment consisting of Madison and Cortland county men. It reached Washington in 1862 with a compliment of 1050 men. Casualties were heavy as battles were favoring the South until Gettysburg, but the 157th went into action there with just 431 and lost more than 70% from death, wounds and captures. To increase the numbers of his troops, he returned to New York and recruited in Elmira. ( Three monuments on that battlefield honor the 157th, one of which was placed there by Carmichael.) *(Continued on page 2)*

**CEMETERY NEWS** Even *before* factoring in daily office work, excavations for burials, and the incessant mowing required to keep our cemetery beautiful each spring and summer -- protecting our 50-acre property and three old structures against the onslaught of time and nature requires constant vigilance and effort. And 2011 was certainly no exception.

Thanks to interest income from the Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation's endowment – and donations secured by the Foundation from a list of generous private donors and other supportive foundations in the area – our cemetery staff and Board of Trustees tackled a wide range of operational issues this year.

Highlights included:

- > The take-down and removal of several large and dangerous dead or diseased trees.
- > Asphalt repairs of several hundred feet of cemetery roads.

*(Continued on page 3)*

Major Carmichael and troops went on to operating a prison for Confederate officers at Fort Pulaski on an island at the mouth of the Savanna River, and stationing at Hilton Head, S.C. Although these were short term assignments, his legacy includes letters of thanks from former internees and letters of appeal from plantation owners whose workers were running off.



At a place called Deveaux Neck, the rebels location was known, but the opposition was unaware of how closely dug in they were. Cavalry were advanced as a ploy to reveal the enemy's position. Not obtaining the response he desired, Carmichael ridiculed the horsemen and ordered them to follow him forward. A barrage of gunfire met them. A ball struck Carmichael's steed, which reared and tossed its rider into a large cotton field. The rows were built-up enough that the officer was able to roll from one to another and avoided being shot. After all the battles in which he had participated without being injured, landing on the hilt of his sword took him out of action. His horse survived by returning to the line, solo. The 1,000-pound bay had been acquired by Carmichael in the South and he saw to it that it came home with him. For some 15 years it served its owner in Cortland Memorial Day parades and 157th reunions.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Our cemetery has an online presence! It is located at the web address of [www.cortland-rural-cemetery.com](http://www.cortland-rural-cemetery.com). Board member John Hoeschele created it and maintains it on our behalf.

Discharged in the summer of 1865 as a colonel, he refused advancement as a brevetted brigadier general, and began a career as a leader in Cortland's community. He was instrumental in establishing its public school system; founder of the first organized fire company; one of the original incorporators of the Cortland-Homer trolley and the Utica, Chemung, and Cortland Railroad (much later, the Lehigh Valley Railroad); a trustee and president of the Cortland Village Trustees (similar to a common council); an officer in the Cortland Agricultural Association; a trustee of the Cortland Savings Bank and of the Presbyterian Church. His name was inscribed on the cornerstone plaque as a trustee of the NYS Normal School in 1869 and he was a charter member of the Grand Army of the Republic when it organized here that same year.

James Carmichael may have avoided a bullet but war wounds of broken ribs and an injury at the base of his brain from that fall were not left behind at Deveaux Neck. His wife, Henrietta Woodard, was often with him during the war and particularly as he recuperated. However, his health was a problem in civilian life. After a brief move to work in Phelps, NY, he returned to the county's Glen Haven Sanitarium at the foot of Skaneateles Lake seeking treatment in 1888. At his death in 1889, Henrietta commissioned for his church, a delicately carved Scottish oak baptismal with a silver bowl. Renovations of the Presbyterian Church's interior revealed a mixture of discardable items, not so many years ago, stored beneath the sanctuary. Tom Corey realized one piece, at least, had lasting significance, and restored the Carmichael font. Buried in Cortland Rural Cemetery, the Carmichael memorial stone represents in size and shape, the character of the man.

*-- Researched and Written by Mary Ann Kane*

### THANK YOU!

Two long-time members of the Cortland Rural Cemetery Board of Trustees have announced their resignation. Christine Buck and Angela Thurlow who have nearly 30 years of combined service to the Cemetery will be greatly missed. Thank you both for your dedication.

## CEMETERY NEWS *Continued from page 1*

> Repairs of roof leaks that developed in both the cemetery groundskeeper's house and at the Gibson Chapel.

> Replacement of the nearly 30-year old steam boiler system in the cemetery office, which failed in early October. The steam system has been replaced with a donated, used forced hot-air furnace system – with labor the only cost to the cemetery.

> Purchase and deployment of a new, all-terrain lawn tractor pictured above.

> Purchase of two computer stations, a back-up hard drive, and digital camera – as well as cemetery data management software – to kick off the much needed digitization of the cemetery's records and maps.

> Renovation of a house the CRC owns at 10 Sands Street, for use as rental property; after expenses, the Trustees hope to net approximately \$10,000 a year.

*Written by Trustee and Director John Hoeschele*



YOUR GIFTS AT WORK . . .

### GRANTS AND GIFTS

This summer several calamities required action by the Foundation Board. Fortunately, Board members have been personally active in seeking outside support and, in some cases, supplying it themselves.

The McDonald Foundation granted \$30,000 for maintenance and records improvement. The Board spent half of the funds for a new lawn tractor (only one of the four old ones was still working); computers have been purchased and plans are in place for data entry to use the remainder.

The roofs of the Chapel and the groundskeeper's house began to leak badly, collapsing part of the ceilings of both. A sum of \$4,000 granted by the Wilkins Foundation, supplemented by earnings from the Foundation endowment and a generous gift from Board member Margaret Gibson, allowed emergency repairs to be done.

The CNY Community Foundation (Fenstermacher Fund) granted \$6,000 which the Board spent on road repair, tree removal, and grave marker repair. The Cortland Community Foundation added \$8,000 to the road repair fund.



We are happy to welcome to our staff Justin Toolan as Groundskeeper and Roger Beck as Office Manager. Watch for profiles on these new team members in a future issue.

## Cortland Rural Cemetery Trustees

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The Gibson Chapel has undergone significant renovations over the past few years. Spaces are available in its public mausoleum and its columbaria for cremation remains. Visits and consultations can be arranged by calling the Cemetery office at (607) 756-6022.

**Tax-deductible gifts to preserve and enhance the Cemetery may be made to the Foundation. Checks should be made out to the Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation.**



## Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation

Post Office Box 288  
Cortland, NY 13045-0288

### DID YOU KNOW?

Due to changes in burial practices, increases in labor and fuel costs, and a decrease in investment earnings, the funds available to run the cemetery are extremely inadequate. The cemetery needs monies to repair roads, remove dead trees, right fallen monuments, and maintain the grounds. Tax-deductible gifts may be made to the Cortland Rural Cemetery Foundation.

(Envelope enclosed)