

Letter to the Editor

Ovid Bee - Wednesday May 9, 1860

Mr. Editor:

As the subject of a New Cemetery is the topic of conversation here at this time, we thought a description of the beautiful "Rural Cemetery," at Cortland village, would be very acceptable to your readers, if you should think it worth a space in your paper:

CORTLAND RURAL CEMETERY

A meeting was called by the public spirited men of the place in the year 1854, for the purpose of devising a plan and raising means to obtain a site for a new Cemetery; Trustees were chosen, also a President and other officers. Ten or twelve acres of land was bought, beautifully situated on the Stage road between that place and Ithaca, and three fourths of a mile from the village. In the month of August (if we mistake not) of the same year, it was set apart with appropriate services as a resting place for the dead, Rev. D. W. Briston, D. D., and others, some of whom now sleep within its enclosure, conducted the services. In the following month the first grave was made, and now, many, very many, are resting there. Six years have not yet passed since that time, but it is now the admiration of every beholder. During the Spring and Summer months, and even until stern Winter comes, a more beautiful spot cannot be found in Central New York. Those who have visited Mount Hope, at Rochester, which is so highly extolled, say it cannot compare with Cortland Rural Cemetery either in plan or locality. It was put under the supervision of an experienced gardener, who with his assistants, laid it out into lots with broad winding roads and gravel walks, which are now bordered on either side by trees of different kinds, and flower beds of different size and shape, containing an endless variety of shrubs and flowers from the rare green house plants to the more common kinds that flourish in our own gardens.

The Cemetery is situated upon a gradual ascent, the highest point being some two hundred feet above the entrance. The lots are of different shapes according to the situation they occupy, some square, some oblong, others a circle with the lower side from four to five feet about the road, while its upper side is level with the road above. These are often cut into six or eight lots separated by gravel walks and the whole circle enclosed with an iron fence and gates, costing several hundred dollars. There are at present three Vaults, one belonging to the company, in which any can deposit their friends for a short time if necessary. The others belong to Hon. Jos. Reynolds, and Josiah Hart, Esq; they are built into the bank, with stone front and iron doors. The Past Winter more land was added to it, and those who had friends in either of the Grave Yards in town moved them to the Rural Cemetery. It is indeed a lovely spot, just where we could wish to lay those we have loved and lost, to sleep their last sleep. Where the breezes blow among the leaves, the birds sing on the branches and the flowers send forth their perfumes into the air. It is a place where we love to linger, and think of the past, present and future. Of the past, and those who were with us then, and cheered us with smiles and kind words – of the present, their present and ours; their bodies lie in the tomb, the marble shaft points heavenward by their graves, and their deathless spirits are in an Eternal world – of the future, and our prospects of a home with them beyond Jordan's swelling flood. Judging by the number who are to be seen every evening during the Summer, wandering about under the trees and among the flowers, or seated by the grave of some loved one; its beauty is not only appreciated, but it is a loved spot and those who sleep there are not forgotten. It robs death and the grave of its ghastliness, and links it with tranquility and beauty. In conclusion, we would ask, are the inhabitants of Ovid to have such a place as this in which to bury their dead, or must they be buried where it is almost impossible to step without stepping on the grave of some one, or a grave can scarcely be dug

without intrusion. And if some try to fix up their lots and plant flowers, they only make the weeds and briars more conspicuous. It is not now a place of resort, if any go, the dread of trampling on the narrow home of some one, or the uncouth sights that meets the eye on every hand spoil the enjoyment. We may venture to say there are many here who have not visited the graves of their friends for months. It would not be thus if a new cemetery was bought, and laid out with taste and kept with care. Try it and see; get a place for yourselves to sleep the sleep that knows no waking until the trump shall sound, then may you rise triumphant together with your children and your children's children.

K.T.J.

Ovid, May 5, 1860.