

A History of Pleasant Grove Cemetery

Cemeteries record in stone the stories of the people who make up a community. Individual gravestones help piece together the history of a place: its earliest residents, the family ties that forge the community, and the local impact of national and international events. Cemeteries also reveal changing views about death and the relationship between the living and dead. Historians and archaeologists study gravestones and their incised inscriptions and carved iconography as documents of material culture; they help reveal changes in social status, gender roles, ethnic identity, religious views, and a host of other social markers that evolve as a community does. Most importantly, of course, is the act of commemorating the life of a loved one.

The Burial Ground

At Pleasant Grove Cemetery, the earliest documented grave is from November 3, 1805.¹ A chipped slate grave marker with simple carved lettering and without ornamentation commemorates the life of Joanna Brown, who died at 81 years old. Her life spans the tumultuous years when the American colonies forged their own identities and severed ties with Great Britain. Joanna was born c. 1724 in the community of Southold on Long Island. She experienced the Revolutionary War years in New Jersey, where her husband Walter Brown died in 1773. Joanna's son Walter served as a captain in the Continental army. In about 1800, when Joanna was 76 years old, she settled in the Military Tract settlement of Milton (now known as Lansing) with her children and their families. She spent her last years there.²



Joanna Brown's (1724-1805) gravestone in the "Old Burial Ground" at Pleasant Grove Cemetery

In the original "burial ground" on Pleasant Grove Road, the earliest family graves—Brown, Kline, Manning, Cradit, LaBar, Hanshaw, Bush, Apgar—reveal the history of the settlement of Tompkins County. Like Joanna Brown's gravestone, these markers are material reminders of the families who settled in the region after the Revolutionary War as part of the military grants given to veterans.³

The Kline Cemetery, as Pleasant Grove Cemetery was originally known, was non-sectarian. That is, it was not connected to a particular church or religious group. Nor was the cemetery only for people who had resided in Hanshaw's Corners, the small farming community in Northeast Ithaca where the cemetery was located. Families from Lansing, Forest Home, Varna, and Etna also buried their loved ones in the Kline Cemetery, revealing that kinship, business, and other social ties extended across several communities.

The earliest gravestones were local stones like Joanna Brown's, and incised with simple geometric patterns. After the Erie Canal was completed in 1825, granite, marble, and other types of stone could be more easily imported, and the gravestones in the cemetery became more varied and ornate towards the middle of the century.



The double-arched slate gravestone of Methodist minister Anning Owen (1751-1814) and Mary Hartsough Owen (1758-1814)

¹ Local lore has it that some of the Brown family graves may have been moved from the Brown family cemetery in Lansing to the Pleasant Grove Cemetery. (George Apgar, Pleasant Grove Cemetery Association Board Member, Pleasant Grove Cemetery Association Annual Meeting, September 27, 2015.) Dora Pope Warden, *Tompkins County Gravestone Inscriptions*, New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, April 1921, January 1922, and January 1923, http://tcpl.org/local-history/documents/TC_GRAVESTONES/ithaca.pdf

² Find a Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=31546834>

³ A partial list of Pleasant Grove Cemetery graves can be found in Warden's *Tompkins County Gravestone Inscriptions* (http://tcpl.org/local-history/documents/TC_GRAVESTONES/ithaca.pdf) and at the Tompkins County NYGen Website: <http://www.nytopmki.org/cemeteries/tcem081.htm>.

A Rural Cemetery

Another change at the national level affected the Kline Cemetery and other cemeteries in Tompkins County. In 1831, Auburn Cemetery was laid out in a rural setting outside of Boston as a park-like resting place for the dead. The design, with curving paths and ornamental trees and flowers, was immediately copied, marking the beginning of the rural cemetery movement. The rural cemetery was seen as a sanitary place to bury the dead and a peaceful place for families to visit their departed loved ones. Maps of Pleasant Grove Cemetery reveal the change in the cemetery from the simple rectangular “Old Burial Ground” and “Potter’s Field” to a more curvilinear design with a carriage road that wound through the cemetery. By 1877, there were also two large circular areas laid out for family burial plots.



Maps of Pleasant Grove Cemetery: 1870 (left), 1877 (center), and 1884 (right). From the Tompkins County Clerk’s Office.

At the state level, New York’s rural cemetery law enacted in 1847 set rules for the formal incorporation of rural cemetery associations. By 1863, trustees Peter Kline (1823-1912), William McKinney (c. 1825-1910),⁴ and Comfort Hanshaw (c. 1822-1897)⁵ had established the Kline District Cemetery and acquired additional land from the adjoining Bush Farm. They purchased acreage for \$30 from Charles S. and Maria Bush “for the purpose of a cemetery.”⁶

The cemetery trustees came from well-established farm families in the Hanshaw’s Corners area. William and Jane McKinney owned 120 acres of land along today’s Pleasant Grove Road southeast of the cemetery. Peter Kline’s father Phillip Kline owned the red brick “Kline Farmhouse” (currently 830 Hanshaw Road) and the surrounding lands. Peter and Emeline Winters Kline’s 100-acre farm centered on what has become known as the “Cradit-Moore farmhouse” (originally 128 Pleasant Grove Road; moved to 172 Pleasant Grove Road in 2000) south of



The New Topographical Atlas of Tompkins County from 1866 shows the location of the Pleasant Grove Cemetery and the farmhouses of William and Jane McKinney and Peter and Emeline Kline.

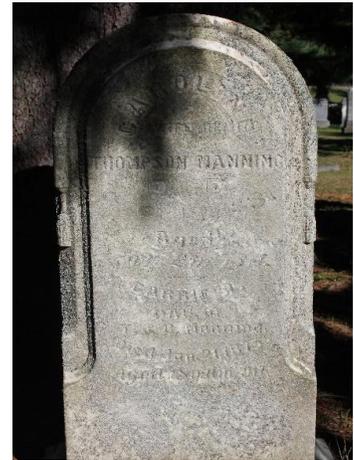
⁴ Year: 1860; Census Place: Ithaca, Tompkins, New York; Roll: M653_868; Page: 519; Image: 523; Family History Library Film: 803868; Ancestry.com. New York, State Census, 1892 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012; Year: 1900; Census Place: Ithaca Ward 3, Tompkins, New York; Roll: 1169; Page: 4B; Enumeration District: 0154; FHL microfilm: 1241169; Name William McKinney; Probate Date 5 Apr 1910; Probate Place Tompkins, New York, USA; Inferred Death Year Abt 1910; Inferred Death Place New York, USA; Item Description Minutes, Orders, Decrees, Vol 55a, 1908-1914

⁵ Name: Comfort Hanshaw; Probate Date: 1 Mar 1897; Probate Place: Tompkins, New York, USA; Inferred Death Year: Abt 1897; Inferred Death Place: New York, USA; Item Description: Letters Testamentary, Vol 10h-11i, 1881-1897

⁶ Tompkins County Clerk’s Office Deed, Ithaca Book 1, Page 437, November 13, 1863.

the cemetery.⁷ Comfort Hanshaw co-owned the Hart & Hanshaw flour mill.⁸ His parents, James and Christina Hanshaw, owned a 92-acre farm just to the north of the cemetery.⁹

In 1869, Kline, McKinney, and Hanshaw served as the original trustees of the newly incorporated Pleasant Grove Cemetery Association, with Kline as president and McKinney as treasurer.¹⁰ In that same year, 13-year-old local resident Carrie Manning (1856-1875) kept a daily diary. She documented her farm chores and school days, as well as keeping track of births and deaths. Funerals and burials were major events attended by many community members, and Carrie mentioned five funerals in that year. On a very cold, snowy day in late January, Carrie and her classmates at the Kline Schoolhouse watched “quite a good many” wagons in the procession for the burial of three-year-old Hattie Bush (1865-1869).¹¹ On July 14, Carrie and her family went to the funeral of Hattie’s grandfather, prominent Lansing farmer Daniel Stroud Bush (1796-1869).¹² She noted that “there were 37 wagons in the procession.”¹³



Carrie Manning’s birth and death dates are noted on her mother’s gravestone. Caroline Drake Manning died in 1881, six years after her daughter’s death.

A framed photograph of Pleasant Grove Cemetery (ca. 1880s) by Joseph D. Eagles shows the entrance marked by an arched gate and a picket fence. At right is a hitched horse and buggy, and at left a circular turnaround for wagons.



⁷ Peter Kline, Farmer, 100 acres; William McKinney, Farmer, 120 acres. *Ithaca Business Directory, 1868-1869*. Tompkins County, NYGenWeb Ithaca Business Directory, <http://www.nytompki.org/bus06.htm>

⁸ US. Census 1870 Year: 1870; Census Place: Ithaca, Tompkins, New York; Roll: M593_1104; Page: 310B; Image: 626; Family History Library Film: 552603; *Ithaca Business Directory, 1868-1869*. Tompkins County, NYGenWeb Ithaca Business Directory, <http://www.nytompki.org/bus06.htm>

⁹ 1850 U.S. Census: Year: 1850; Census Place: Ithaca, Tompkins, New York; Roll: M432_606; Page: 263B; Image: 130; *Ithaca Business Directory, 1868-1869*. Tompkins County, NYGenWeb Ithaca Business Directory, <http://www.nytompki.org/bus06.htm>

¹⁰ Pleasant Grove Cemetery Association incorporated by certificate dated June 5, 1869; recorded in Tompkins County Clerk’s Office Liber 2 of Misc Records at Page 383. (Source: Ithaca Deed Book 829, Page 234)

¹¹ William Heidt, Jr. (editor), *Carrie Manning’s Diary 1869*, DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Inc., Ithaca, New York, 1962, P. 10; Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original Data: *Find A Grave*. Find A Grave. <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi>.

¹² 1850 and 1860 U.S. Census, Ancestry.com; John H. Selkreg (ed.), *Landmarks of Tompkins County, New York*, D. Mason & Co., Syracuse, New York, 1894.

¹³ William Heidt, Jr. (editor), *Carrie Manning’s Diary 1869*, DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Inc., Ithaca, New York, 1962, P. 32.

In 1874, the trustees oversaw the further expansion of the cemetery lot. The cemetery more than doubled in size with the \$1000 purchase of 6.29 acres from farm owners Charles A. and Sarah A. Bush.¹⁴ The cemetery association had a stone “corporation vault” built into a hillside on the southern edge of the cemetery in 1878. The white-frame Gothic Revival chapel, which faces Pleasant Grove Road at the southeast corner of the cemetery, was constructed in 1888, according to a December 8th *Ithaca Daily Journal* article discovered by local historian Mary Tomlan.

A Suburban Cemetery

As the northeast Ithaca community evolved from farmlands to university suburb at the turn of the nineteenth century, Pleasant Grove Cemetery reflected these changes. Faculty, staff, and alumni of Cornell University bought burial lots in the cemetery just north of campus. Nationally recognized Cornell professor of American history Moses Coit Tyler (1835-1900) chose a lot at Pleasant Grove Cemetery in the 1890s, a few years after he had started teaching at Cornell. The purchase made him feel more rooted in the Ithaca community, where, as the professor noted, “I have found my work, my home, my grave.”¹⁵ The *Cornell Alumni News* described the bucolic setting of Pleasant Grove cemetery that had drawn Tyler to the site:

“In [Tyler’s] walks and rides about Ithaca he had early noticed the quiet beauty of a little country graveyard on the road running north from Forest Home. It is on a slight knoll by the roadside and commands a wide prospect of the distant hills. This was the spot he chose for his last earthly abode, and often passing it on his walks he discoursed with his friends of its peacefulness, and spoke of the future with the calmness and certainty of Christian belief. And here his family and a little company of devoted friends laid him to rest the last Sunday of the century. It was a gray winter afternoon, but the landscape had a beauty all its own. The woods stood out dark against the snow and hid the towers of the University but on the still air fell the sound of the distant chimes, which for nineteen years had called the sleeper to his pleasant tasks.”¹⁶



A Celtic cross marks the grave of Moses Coit Tyler, who was a minister before he became a history professor.



After more than 200 years of continuous use by the Tompkins County community, Pleasant Grove Cemetery retains its beauty and peacefulness. It continues to serve as a place of memory and commemoration for families and the broader community: its rows of stone chart the individuals who make up our collective history.

Patricia Longoria, Village of Cayuga Heights Deputy Historian, October 2015

¹⁴ Tompkins County Clerk’s Office Deed Ithaca Book 8, Page 588, February 1870.

¹⁵ Michael G. Kammen, *Selvages and Biases: The Fabric of History in American Culture*, Cornell University Press, 1989, p. 24.

¹⁶ *Cornell Alumni News*, Volume III, Number 14, Wednesday, January 2, 1901.