

## **CHRIST CHURCH AND MANLIUS VILLAGE CEMETERIES: WHAT IS TO BECOME OF AGING HISTORIC CEMETERIES?**

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*work-in-progress*

Christ Church and Manlius Village Cemeteries in Manlius, New York are a prime example of deteriorating and threatened funereal landscapes found in upstate New York. Manlius is the oldest village in Onondaga County, and located at the crossroads of several important state and county routes. This was crucial to its development as a major point of local commerce prior to the opening of the Erie Canal. The Cherry Valley Turnpike (opened 1803), as well as the Seneca Turnpike (opened 1800), passed through the village on what is now State Route 173. With increased settlement came the corresponding opening of community organizations, schools, and churches.

Christ Church in Manlius has the distinction of being the oldest church building in Onondaga County and the oldest parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Central New York. Its cemetery began in 1813 as a public burying ground for the inhabitants of the village of Manlius and its vicinity. Manlius Village cemetery was established at approximately the same time as Christ Church cemetery. Immediately adjacent, the cemeteries provide visual continuity despite separate ownership, hence their consideration as one landscape.

The past several decades have seen the decline of the cemeteries due to disabuse, vandalism, weathering, and disconnection from its church and village populations. The cemeteries were successfully listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007 for containing the historical record of many of the residents of Manlius throughout the past two centuries, as well as the collection of significant nineteenth century funerary art. There is no signage to denote this, or advocacy for the care and maintenance of the cemetery beyond a one-person cemetery committee.

My research involves attempting to secure signage and recognition for the cemetery as a historic site in the oldest village in the county, as well as creating a proposal for cleaning and maintenance of the grounds and many stones. Furthermore, there are a number of unique zinc monuments believed to have been manufactured and sold locally for a limited period of time, located on the grounds, and worthy of further research and attention.

Important questions to be considered include: how can a village and church be engaged in landscape preservation and stewardship in times of increasing economic hardship? What strategies can be suggested that middle-sized or smaller communities might use to preserve these sites without a great deal of effort or monetary outlay? What criteria allowed for the nomination and approval of the cemeteries and how can these criteria be promoted to increase the profile of the cemetery?