

MASON ROAD CEMETERY

Up Mason Road from the center of the hamlet of Egypt is a small, old cemetery surrounded by a white fence. Although many of the stones are still readable, others are worn, some are broken, and judging from the empty areas, many are missing. Land for the cemetery was given by the Ramsdell family who were among the first settlers to come to Egypt in the early 1800's.



They found the land fertile and well watered. In 1816, the year “without a summer,” the fertility of the land was proven when, alone among many areas, Egypt's corn crop was plentiful. According to some sources, that was how Egypt acquired its name – after the land to which the Old Testament Hebrews had gone for food.

Not only was Egypt an area of fertile farms, but it was also half way between Canandaigua and Rochester on the main east-west stage route. As such, it was a logical place for taverns, inns, stores, and liveries to be built. There were three well-known taverns in the hamlet. Cyrus Packard's tavern was the site of Perinton's first town meetings, while Oliver Loud's tavern served as a polling place, a post office and a courtroom. Olney Staples' tavern was the largest and also provided a stable and a change of horses. Other businesses included a tannery, a foundry and a wagon shop. As with most thriving communities, a school and a church were also built, and in 1828 the cemetery on Mason Road was laid out. The hamlet of Egypt was the center of political and commercial activity in the Town of Perinton until the building of the Erie Canal, when the center of power shifted into the Village of Fairport. Nevertheless, the hamlet of Egypt continued to maintain its vitality and identity as a community.

The Ramsdells, a Quaker family, purchased land in the area in 1802. Thomas built his house on Pittsford-Palmyra Road, and his son Gideon built his large, rambling farmhouse on Mason Road where it still stands at #173. That farmhouse is also said to have been one of the stops on the Underground Railroad. Although they gave the land for the cemetery and many of their relatives are buried there, many of the Ramsdells themselves are buried in the Friends' Cemetery in Farmington.

Lucy Ramsdell Lapham, who died in childbirth at the age of 34 in 1827, was the first burial at Mason Road. She was Thomas's daughter and Gideon's sister. Her husband, Fayette Lapham, worked as a millwright on the Rochester Erie Canal aqueduct and ran a foundry in Egypt that manufactured the popular “Egypt plow.” He also owned extensive land in the hamlet and was a leading citizen, active as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Methodist Church and a charter member of the Fairport Masonic Lodge. Fayette and their son (La)Fayette are buried with Lucy.

There are nine members of the Bortle family in Mason Road cemetery. They are descendents of Lucy Lapham Bortle (Lucy and Fayette's daughter). Their gravestones hint of several tragic stories over the years. Leonard died as an infant in 1926; Gordon died in 1942 at age 13, apparently as a result of a bicycle accident. According to sources, Robert was killed in an auto accident in 1966, and his son Jonathan was killed in Vietnam in 1969.

The graves of Oliver Loud, the well-known innkeeper, and his family can be found here on Mason Road. Loud, in addition to being an innkeeper, was known for his weather almanac. He ran a sawmill and a store in the hamlet and served his community as a school inspector and commissioner, a fence viewer, and overseer of highways. His wife, Charlotte, and his children Charles, Cullen, and Susan are buried with him. His tavern was moved to Bushnell's Basin in 1985 where it serves as a bed and breakfast.

Solomon Aldrich, a local landowner, community activist, and patriarch of the Aldrich clan, is buried on Mason Road along with his wife Suza, his son George's wife Mary, his grandson Josiah, and his wife Samantha. The family farmed a large area of land around what is today Aldrich Road.

Eight members of the Wood family are interred in this country cemetery. David Wood moved to Perinton after fleeing from the British in Niagara County during the War of 1812. He purchased land from the Ramsdell family, built a log cabin, cleared land, and left his family a "good farm" when he died in 1844. His wife Margaret, sons David and Jonathan, and their wives Emily and Sarah are buried with him, as are his grandsons Byron and George.

Mason Road Cemetery is unique among Perinton's cemeteries because it includes a "Potter's Field." Usually in the 19th century a community would set aside an area in one of the local cemeteries for the burial of transients, vagrants, and the poor. This area is along the eastern boundary of the Mason Road Cemetery. The most recent example of the use of the Potter's Field occurred in 1985 when unidentified skeletal remains, which had been unearthed at an excavation site, were reinterred at Mason Road in an unmarked grave.

On this quiet parcel of land overlooking both farmland and a subdivision visitors might reflect on how the past and the present as well as the known and the unknown have been brought together in this small country cemetery.