

St. John's Cemetery

(Werkley Cemetery)

GPS: 42.983011, -78.829099
2390 Eggert Rd.
Tonawanda, NY 14150

St. John's Cemetery History

About the Cemetery

(The following is from John Percy's book, *Tonawanda, The Way It Was*, Partner's Press, 1979.)

On the south side of Eggert Road, just north of its intersection with Sheridan Drive, is a cemetery dating back to the mid-19th century marked "St. John's." This burial plot was originally given to the membership of St. John's Evangelical congregation by Jacob Werkley about 1839 or 1840. The Werkley family farms were adjacent to and across the road from the cemetery. An arched gateway, painted white, with the name Werkley Cemetery in block letters, stood over the entrance for many years, but like the pioneer farmers buried there, it has long ago mouldered to dust.

Notable Graves

Though the cemetery association was not organized until 1850, it appears the earliest burial was in 1839. One of the oldest markers is that of Jacob Fries, whose farm lay to the north of the cemetery, and who was buried there in 1875. Two veterans of the Mexican War lie in the enclosure; Heinrich Jacket, born November 11, 1819, died February 5, 1853, and an unknown soldier in the next row to the northwest of Jacket's grave. Both graves were decorated for many years by Scott Post, G.A.R., Tonawanda, N.Y.

Cemetery Deterioration and Restoration

The St. John's congregation intended to build a church in the vicinity of the cemetery but never accomplished their goal. Most of them drifted into either the Tonawanda or Eggertsville Evangelical churches and the cemetery was left by itself sometime after the original plot was enlarged. Several pretentious monuments that had once been erected on the additional land were later removed to what were thought to be more permanent cemeteries. There remain about 125 graves, though only about three dozen markers can still be seen. As time marched on and the original settlers passed away, some of the farms were sold and others sub-divided for modern development. The cemetery association ceased to operate and the grounds were left to individual interest. The fence and arched gate decayed away and the plot became overgrown with shrubs and weeds.

When the old Guideboard Road (now Eggert Rd.) was widened early in the 20th century, several remains were exhumed and re-interred in a common grave. Eventually, under the leadership of the first town historian, Dr. Parkhurst, the town re-surveyed, restored and enclosed with an iron fence the burial ground we see today. The present marker was unveiled and the cemetery dedicated as an historic site on May 24, 1936. Rededication as

part of the town's Bicentennial program took place on Sunday, October 3, 1976 under the auspices of the Tonawanda-Kenmore Historical Society.

St, John's Cemetery Burial Records

For a listing of burials in this cemetery, please visit:

<http://www.interment.net/data/us/ny/erie/werkley-cemetery/index.htm>