

**Wreaths Across America – 2024 – Academy Cemetery  
By Adeline Rudolph**

**Thank you so much for inviting me here to speak today during Wreaths Across America. I'm very proud to be here representing the Town of Canandaigua and Assemblyman Jeff Gallahan. And I know we are all freezing so I'll try to be brief!**

**Last year was my first year experiencing Wreaths Across America. I assumed I'd simply be coming to an event to show support for the hard work and dedication of our Town Cemetery Committee. But the ceremony was so much more meaningful than that.**

**As the daughter an Army veteran, last year's ceremony was extremely moving to me. Like every person called to serve, my dad served his country and his community, but we never took the time to really understand that sacrifice during his lifetime.**

**Dad passed away unexpectedly in 2018 taking many of his experiences with him. But as they say, everyone dies twice, first when they stop breathing and again the last time someone speaks their name.**

**Wreaths Across America gives all of us the honor of speaking the name of the heroes who lived and died in our community. Through this service, we ensure that we take time to focus on the sacrifices made by our veterans and their families, keeping their memory alive forever. Sharing their names is a true honor and privilege for each of us here today.**

**This event opens a special place in my heart and the hearts of so many here. Wreaths Across America keeps our heroes alive, for a moment, in the thoughts of a truly grateful community.**

**Thank you all for your hard work organizing and supporting this event and thank you to our veterans, without whom none of us could stand here in freedom today.**

**Address of the Ontario County Historian  
“Wreaths Across America” Placement Ceremony  
Academy Cemetery, Town of Canandaigua**

December 14, 2024

I am reminded today of Thomas Paine’s famous words, first published on December 19, 1776: “These are the times that try men’s souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot, will in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country.”<sup>1</sup>

In Upstate New York, the weather alone this season would be enough reason to remember Paine’s words. However, I am reminded of his words for the reason we are standing here today. Americans have faced many crises since the nadir of the American Revolution in 1776. Washington’s forces were gathered in the cold Delaware Valley 252 years ago, right now—just a week away—though they couldn’t have known that—from their spectacular crossing of the river on Christmas night and their victory at Trenton; events that changed the course of our war for independence.

Since then, we have faced many crises that have prompted “sunshine patriots” to shrink from the service of their country.

Certainly, the bloody battles in Virginia in 1862-63 discouraged many young men. But not those who enlisted in the 33<sup>rd</sup> NY (the “Ontario Regiment”) the previous year. This very week, in 1862, they were engaged in the terrible fight at Fredericksburg—followed by the infamous “mud march” in January.

And we observed the 83<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack just this past week.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Paine. “The American Crisis.” n. 1. p. 1. Dec. 19, 1776. Available in the Internet at: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_American\\_Crisis#/media/File:PaineAmericanCrisis.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_American_Crisis#/media/File:PaineAmericanCrisis.jpg) (Accessed Dec. 9, 2024).

But the men and women we honor today in Academy Cemetery proved to be of stronger mettle than the summer soldiers and sunshine patriots of those later times. And every day, we benefit from their willingness to take on the obligations of service to their country.

We are gathered here, on this cold December day, to honor local veterans by “decorating” their final resting places. What has brought us here is not unlike the motives of those who turned a private custom, ages old, into a national day of remembrance first called Decoration Day. It’s a little cooler than the kind of day we expect at the end of May, but I think that only sharpens our focus.

However, we are doing more than merely “decorating” the graves of the fallen and the final resting places of those who returned from war to spend the rest of their lives defending our communities economically and socially. We also gather here to remember a handful of young men who served in Mr. Lincoln’s army to preserve the union and put an end to slavery and secession. For some of them, their final resting place is still unknown.

We are doing these things by laying wreathes at these sacred plots—a tradition as old as western civilization.

But we are doing more than that. We are saying the names of the fallen, of those laid to rest, and those whose final resting place is “known but to God.” It has been said that you are not really gone until your name is no longer spoken. We are keeping these defenders of our communities alive still; over more than a century; by coming here, where they are gathered, saying their names, and honoring them with wreathes.

This place; and hundreds of others like it in and around Ontario County; are a kind of archive. The stones erected here record important parts of our history. In few other places are there more complete stories of service and sacrifice; most of them set in the context of family and community. Ontario County contains many, many, cemeteries, burial plots, and church yards.

Together, they comprise our single largest repository of family history—veterans’ history, in particular. They are important reminders—as important as our libraries and archives—as important as our collections of records and books (however we describe them in the digital 21<sup>st</sup> Century).

Like the buildings that shelter other kinds of records, our cemeteries need attention. By coming here today, we are not only remembering the fallen and those honorably laid to rest; we are also calling attention to these places.

We are also focusing our attention on what can be learned here. Sometimes we learn about the composition of our communities and how it changes over time. Sometimes we learn the price of freedom that families pay—not just the price paid by those whose graves receive a wreath today.

And sometimes we are prompted to learn more. Six years ago, I completed a project to identify and locate the graves of the veterans of World War I. After more than 2000 gravesite visits, I thought I had them all. Then little by little, a few more were revealed—veterans all but forgotten. Just this week, I noticed that there were three veterans of the so-called “war to end all wars” buried right here in Academy Cemetery. I also noticed that Earl Stewart Fletcher’s stone cannot be found—or perhaps he never had one. He died before his time, in 1947—in Livingston County—and was brought back here, probably because of family.<sup>2</sup> I have more research to complete!

On a visit here this past week, I also noticed the stone of Anson J. Monks with a flag by its side. Monks was just twenty-two when he enlisted in the 9<sup>th</sup> US Infantry and deployed to America’s first conflict of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century—in the Philippine jungles.<sup>3</sup> However, Monks’ stone doesn’t

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<sup>2</sup> “Earl S. Fletcher.” (Rochester) *Democrat & Chronicle*. Jun. 16, 1947. p. 15. This death notice states that Fletcher died in Dansville, NY and was buried in Academy Cemetery. The graveside service was conducted by the Groveland American Legion Post and the clergy was also from that town.

<sup>3</sup> “Letter from A. J. Monks.” *Clifton Springs Press*. Sep. 21, 1899. p. 3. According to later news stories, Monks died of consumption (tuberculosis) in New Mexico in 1904. He may also have served in China. See: “Clifton Man Died in New Mexico.” *Geneva Daily Times*. May 17, 1904.

mention that far-away conflict or the larger war with Spain from which it sprang. A brief look into the records shows that Anson Monks' brother, Arthur, (not buried here) also served in the War with Spain—twice. Quite a contribution from their nearly forgotten birthplace—Academy, NY.

We will be leaving here before too long. But I implore you not to consider the mission you took on today complete. Visit this place again. Speak the names of the fallen. Consider the information available here; and the lessons to be learned here. Lend your support to the maintenance of this and other cemeteries. And pass on these traditions to our rising generations.

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p. 7. Monks' hometown was Clifton Springs. He was born in Academy which accounts for his burial in Academy Cemetery. See: *Ontario County Times*. May 18, 1904. p. 7.