

Alice Cately Ettling (1851-1924)



Alice Cately Ettling's story is one of remarkable achievement for a woman of her time. Now she lies in an unmarked grave in Section G of the Cortland Rural Cemetery.

Born to pioneer carriage and wagon maker, Shepard W. Cately in 1850, Alice's family moved to Cortland from Tully when she was a young girl. She attended the Cortland Normal school, graduating with its second class in 1871. Alice taught for a few years, then trained to become a nurse. In 1881 she married Henry Ettling of Cortland, had a son named Henry Cately Ettling, and was widowed at age 35.

Alice's father retired from the wagon manufacturer, *Fitzgerald & Kinney*, due to poor health and advancing years, but continued inventing carriage accessories; as *Cately & Ettling*, Alice and her father began manufacturing these specialty items in 1888. Alice must have learned well from her father, for she continued the business after his death in 1898. She excelled as a businesswoman, receiving medals, diplomas, and special recognition from her peers for marketing her father's inventions and seeing that they were adopted by the largest carriage manufacturers.

The 1899 *Grip's Historical Souvenir of Cortland* recounts her business successes as "proprietor of patents known as Cately Carriage Attachments" and also describes her as an "active, shrewd, and enterprising business woman."

Alice is credited with furnishing the capital to develop and manufacture her father's inventions and marketing them nationwide. Most noteworthy were the buggy prop spring and lever, which raised and lowered the buggy top. She was touted as having been the only lady exhibitor at the National Carriage



Builder's Association events and expositions over a period of years. In a man's world of manufacturing, she recounted that she had always been treated with courtesy and had been given a cordial welcome by all.

She continued the business until 1916, in the last few years with her son's assistance. The advent and popularity of the horseless carriage no doubt brought a halt to her business, along with numerous other Cortland wagon and buggy concerns.

Alice was very active in the local community, including: the First Presbyterian Church, the Eastern Star, the Tioughnioga Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Twentieth Century Club. Along with three other ladies, she raised funds to start Cortland's first hospital and served on its board of lady managers. She was also an organizer of the Red Cross in Cortland and was a life member of the Gideons (providers of Bibles to hotel rooms).



Her obituary remembered her as, "alive, alert, systematic and business like. Personally, she was kindly, cordial and friendly, which accounted for the host of friends which she had all over the country." From teacher and nurse; wife and single mother; manufacturer and marketer; community fundraiser and benefactor, Alice Cately Ettling was a genuine, 19th-century success.

Adapted slightly from Memorial Day 2004 article written by Christine Buck for the Cortland Rural Cemetery