

# Quebec Heritage

VOL 4, No. 8

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## News



### On the Trail of the Scots

The Legacy of the Clearances is Carved in Stone

### A Family Affair

Old stones testify to early settlement history

### Losing Ground

The declining state of cemetery heritage conservation

# Quebec Heritage News

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Cover: The graves of three young children—ages 10 years, 1 year, and 5 days—Winslow Presbyterian Cemetery, Stornaway, Quebec. Photo by Matthew Farfan.

## EDITOR'S DESK

*Boneyard blues*

by Matthew Farfan

**B**ack in October 2007, QAHN began its Cemetery Heritage Inventory and Restoration Initiative. Known by the ever-so-apt acronym CHIRI, the pilot project involved three components: surveying and establishing an inventory of old, “at-risk” graveyards founded by English-speaking communities in four rural regions; developing a cemetery conservation handbook; and helping volunteer trustees and historical groups preserve these heritage sites, in part organizing two special conferences—one in the Eastern Townships and one in the Laurentians.

We soon realized that we had a monumental task on our hands just completing the inventory and coming up with recommendations based on our findings. The four regions targeted by the pilot study—Estrie, Montérégie, the Laurentians and the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean—are enormous and far-flung. Because funding for the project didn’t materialize until late autumn, work on the inventory proceeded through October and November at a breakneck pace: fieldwork in graveyards is notoriously difficult with two feet of snow on the ground!

Right off the bat a grading system was developed to help researchers collect data and rate each site, based a scale of 1 to 100 points. We set out a broad list of factors to consider, everything from the legibility of headstone inscriptions to the condition of fences and the governance structure of the local volunteer committee charged with each site’s care. We then recruited fieldworkers who were already quite familiar with conditions at local cemeteries, who could help locate long-forgotten sites and who would be willing and able to dig up (so to speak) information on their history. Heather Darch and Judy Antle from the Missisquoi Historical Society, Sandra Stock of the Morin Heights Historical Association in the Laurentians and Leslie Nutbrown, a genealogist and avid gravestone reader from the Eastern Townships deserve special thanks for their invaluable help gathering this information and providing directions to out-of-the way, little-known burial grounds. The results have been revealing, to say the least. Out of more than 300 cemeteries that QAHN has surveyed so far, 157 have been classified either as at risk or extinct. And the inventory is far from complete.

For example, the Châteauguay Valley and surrounding areas of southwest Quebec—a region thought to contain no fewer than two hundred cemeteries—have not yet been tackled.

Through our research we have identified common trends across the four regions – and all of them

are alarming. The most prevalent problem is an aging population and lack of younger volunteers. And the problem is getting worse all of the time. In some cases, whole communities have gradually died out, leaving only a cemetery with no caretaker. Elsewhere, local cemetery committees have become inactive and maintenance has ceased. Younger generations, we are told, don’t care to get involved.

The CHIRI study also reveals that the structure of many cemetery organizations is weak, at best, even when a church is the official custodian. What’s more, hundreds of non-Catholic cemeteries in rural Quebec are situated on private property, and landowners may be indifferent towards the fate of these cultural sites. This raises legal questions over control, public access and the future preservation of Quebec’s cemetery heritage.

Even where ownership questions present no obstacle, conservation efforts are hampered by a lack of resources. Many small cemetery committees don’t have the financial means to undertake more than minimal yearly maintenance, such as grass cutting. Little if any conservation is conducted on damaged gravestones. And more often than not, repairs that are done are sloppy and amateurish. Protecting these old monuments in the long term will require that cemetery custodians have access to people who are knowledgeable about proper repair techniques.

The natural elements play a role, as well. Cemeteries that are not maintained are soon reclaimed by trees and other vegetation. Topped stones become buried and saturated with moisture, and soon the stones are completely overgrown. Vandalism and theft are all too common occurrences. Paradoxically, cemeteries in the middle of towns can be as vulnerable to willful attack as those on isolated back roads. And those lost in the woods may endure for generations molested only by lichens and moss.

Finally, encroachment is surprisingly common in cases of abandoned or unfenced cemeteries, or of old burial grounds located on private land. Over time, these graveyards may be chipped away at by farmers, developers, and other landowners anxious to reclaim a bit of ground that no one seems to care about anyway.

The threats facing hundreds of pioneer cemeteries are indeed daunting—especially in light of the diminishing rural English-speaking population in Quebec. It is our hope that this special issue of *Quebec Heritage News* will at least bring some much needed attention to this problem. Perhaps together we can find a solution.

LETTERS

**Levity appreciated**

I have just finished reading the latest issue of *Quebec Heritage News* and again find it one of the best reads around. I particularly appreciate the book reviews. Thanks to all involved. Two comments. First, might I suggest that the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network apply to have Marion Phelps named to the Order of Canada. After all, her contribution to the preservation of a very important part of Quebec's history is invaluable. Secondly, I don't know where this Nick Fonda is coming from but he would sure enliven any gathering related to historical events! I will never again be able to look at [Premier Jean] Charest without a grin. Nick is probably closer to the mark than many would admit. People like him garner controversy and thus interest in our history. We need more of his genre in the business of preserving and promoting history.

Again, thanks for a great job not only with the *QHN* but all around.

Beverly Prud'Homme  
Rawdon, Quebec

**Deep feelings evoked**

What, if anything, may I do to help with your cemeteries project? I descend from Joseph Kennedy (1806-1867) / Elizabeth Hews (1819-1897) and George Cox (1817-1892) / Sarah Kennedy (1837-1895), all of whom are buried in Edina Cemetery in the Laurentians. Various great, great aunts and uncles as well as a large number of cousins are buried there and in Brownsburg Cemetery. (I haven't figured out where all the bodies are buried.)

Two years ago I began my genealogy research. When my mother, sister and I had the chance last May to visit the area, my mother was amazed by the

depth of her response to seeing the gravestones in Edina Cemetery. She felt connected. We believe, therefore, it is important to find ways to preserve the memory of our forebears.

Katie Krueger  
Eden Prairie, Minnesota

*Thank you for your interest in this important and overlooked aspect of Quebec's anglophone heritage. The most direct way to assist us in the preservation of these pioneer burial grounds would be to support the volunteer groups who are trying to carry out maintenance and restoration work. For many years, the the Edina Cemetery has been looked after by volunteers on the Dalesville Public Cemetery committee. Perhaps you might consider making a donation towards the site's future upkeep. For more information, please contact Margaret Volkey at (450) 533-6118.*

TIMELINES

**Bound for Chaleurs Bay**

*QAHN heading to New Carlisle to launch latest heritage webmagazine*

The fourth regional heritage webmagazine in the Quebec HeritageWeb series goes online at the end of the month. Directors and staff of the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network and the Committee for Anglophone Social Action (CASA) will launch the *Gaspesian Heritage WebMagazine* on April 28 at the Kempfer House in New Carlisle, on the Baie des Chaleurs.

As part of QAHN's Quebec-wide Internet heritage portal, Quebec Heritage Web, *Gaspesian Heritage WebMagazine* will serve as a guide to the Gaspé region's heritage and history. It is hoped that visitors to the site will come to better appreciate this fascinating part of the province, and eventually visit the Gaspé in person.

Modeled on existing Townships, Laurentians, and Outaouais Heritage webmagazines, *Gaspesian Heritage WebMagazine* will be devoted en-

tirely to the Gaspé Coast and will feature articles spotlighting cultural sites, museums and historical societies, current events and local attractions. The site will also contain a photo gallery, cultural calendar, reviews of Gaspesian books and music, links to other interesting sites and much more. As always, submissions of articles and photographs from the general public will be welcome.

Funding for the new webmagazine was provided through the Community Life program of the federal Department of Canadian Heritage.

CASA, QAHN's partner in this project, and a key content provider for the site, is a non-profit community organization dedicated to serving the English-speaking communities of the Gaspé Coast. Part of



CASA's mission is to protect, promote and preserve the culture and heritage of that community. In the last four years, the organization has interviewed hundreds of community elders to ensure the documentation of the history of the Gaspé. Gaspesian Heritage WebMagazine will compliment CASA's activities and ensure that Gaspesian history remains accessible to all generations both now and in the future.

*Gaspesian Heritage WebMagazine* can be found online at: [www.QuebecHeritageWeb.com](http://www.QuebecHeritageWeb.com).

# Leading the way

*How a group of West Quebecers reclaimed part of their pioneer past*

by Carol Martin



**T**wo cemeteries, within a mile of each other, in Chelsea, Quebec, are current success stories. Nestled in the Gatineau Hills, half an hour's drive from Canada's capital, the villages of Chelsea and Old Chelsea offer a gateway to recreation in the National Capital Commission's Gatineau Park, and a pleasant village core area for residents and visitors to the Municipality of Chelsea.

Fifty years ago, two Protestant cemeteries in these villages were overgrown and apparently abandoned. Their sad condition was not unique, as provincial legislation began in 1900 addressing how to appoint successors to cemeteries held in the name of non-Catholic (Protestant) religious congregations, and in later years referenced "disused and abandoned cemeteries." In Chelsea, informal groups (family-led, or a committee of several persons), which had successfully established and maintained these cemeteries in the 1800s, were unable to meet their needs by the mid-1900s. Lack of maintenance was a symptom of other problems: organization, information and documentation were also lacking.

What changed this, and how did the change happen? Untended property in or near a village centre does get some attention, and in the 1950s several concerned individuals approached municipal officials and the National Capital Commission. Also, the Gatineau Valley

Historical Society was founded in 1962, and its members took an interest in these old cemeteries. Formal organizations picked up where early community leaders and informal leadership had left off. Interest in important personages helped in both cases—fortunately, it was clear that at least one "person of interest" was buried in each of the neglected cemeteries.

The private burial place, now known as the Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery, was still in the hands of a descendant of the Church family who had established the original burial place on the property, when the historical society became interested in it as the site of a hero's grave. In 1956, the centenary of the Victoria Cross raised interest in other wartime awards of that era, including the Queen's Scarf. Queen Victoria crocheted eight scarves, awarded for heroism during the Boer War, and one of the recipients was a Canadian serving with the Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR). When the grave of Private Richard Rowland Thompson was located in this disused graveyard in Chelsea, it was clearly time for local history buffs to take action.

The owner of the land was pleased to sell the burial site to the Gatineau Valley Historical Society, along with a new right-of-way as access and some additional space for parking, all for \$1000, in 1966. One of the problems faced by owners of properties that contain burial grounds is how to discontinue taking responsi-

bility for them. With this new responsibility, the historical society became involved in maintenance, fundraising efforts, and awareness raising. For more than twenty years, beginning in 1986, the Society has organized an annual Remembrance Day Service involving members of the RCR and the community. A cenotaph in this cemetery now commemorates Chelsea's war dead from World Wars I and II, further enhancing its status as a place recalling the community's military history. A sign and small garden at its entrance are inviting, and further signage, a cemetery plan and plaque within it inform the visitor about its history.

Still, after so much effort and care, in a sad incident in December 2006, seven of the fourteen tombstones in this cemetery were toppled or broken off their bases. Although the vandals were not caught, a fundraiser breakfast and public appeal raised money to repair the damaged graves, and the cemetery has been restored again.

Another local graveyard, the Old Chelsea Protestant Burial Ground, was in such poor repair by 1961 that a prominent Ottawan with a summer cottage in Chelsea wrote to the National Capital Commission suggesting that it create "a kind of imaginative memorial" by setting its tombstones into brick walls enclosing a small garden. Although the NCC did not own the property, its historians had noted that Thomas Wright, one of Hull's founders, was buried in this cemetery in 1802—another case where a famous personage saved the day. The Commission, which owned an adjoining property, did not wish to acquire the cemetery, but it began carrying out simple maintenance.

Volunteers from the Ottawa Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society compiled lists of names on the gravestones, and also visited the Church family burial ground and made a listing for it. Ownership was unclear, and involved legal searches to follow up inheritance of the site. It took years, but the Municipality of Chelsea now owns and maintains this burial place. Attractive bilingual signage marks the cemetery entrance, and a plaque tells its history. This is Chelsea's oldest cemetery, and the burial place of the community's founders. Its strategic location, near shops in the heart of Old Chelsea, attracts visitors on a daily basis.

The Municipality of Chelsea enacted bylaws declaring Chelsea Pioneer Cemetery and the Old Chelsea Protestant Burial Ground to be historical monuments, as of 1989.

If you are now thinking that it has taken enormous

effort to save and revive these two Chelsea cemeteries, you are right! And it took a long time, and a great deal of patience and perseverance. But isn't it a wonderful success story, to have two preserved historic cemeteries part of the community once more?

Across Quebec, in villages and rural centres like Chelsea, our early cemeteries offer a treasure trove of historic information. We can begin by knowing what

cemeteries exist in our own regions. We can help by gathering information about individuals and families buried in them, about the ownership of the property itself. We can help by making simple diagrams to record their geography, and by creating signage. We can form cemetery committees (municipal, attached to local history groups, sponsored by local churches) to

manage these activities. We can look within and outside our communities, reminding ourselves and our visitors of this important part of our heritage. We can support and encourage each other in saving our cemetery heritage.

Although this discussion has focused on two Protestant cemeteries, St. Stephen's Roman Catholic Cemetery (also in Old Chelsea, and dating from 1842) is an active burial site, retaining a core of early grave monuments, while adding new burials and changing with the times. Its survival has necessitated adaptation and improved organization. By the 1970s, memory had failed its administrators, who had only sketchy notes for its plot locations, and they embarked on a survey and created plot maps, and began formalizing a series of rules and rental payments. Its regulation does not necessarily preserve its cemetery's history and heritage (for example, modern monuments are infilling plots in its historic section), but it is maintained and financially viable.

*References: NCC files. Private letter, December 12, 1961, from John Starnes, then Acting Assistant Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, to Lt-General S.F. Clark, Chairman, NCC; Gatineau Valley Historical Society research, burial records, including burials without grave markers, tombstone data and other information.*

*Carol Martin is a director of the Gatineau Valley Historical Society (GVHS). She is author of In Memory of Chelsea's Historic Cemeteries (2005) and editor of Up the Gatineau!, the annual journal of the GVHS.*



# Municipal responsibility for heritage protection

In Canada, heritage sites may be designated nationally, provincially and municipally. The level of designation depends on the level of significance of the site. National Historic Sites must be judged to be of national significance; provincial authorities have the power to designate sites judged to be of significance for the province, while recognizing local heritage is up to municipal bodies.

In Quebec, the *Loi sur les biens culturels* empowers local municipalities to cite both buildings and properties, including cemeteries, as municipal heritage sites. Increasingly, municipalities are making use of this legislation to protect sites of interest within their boundaries. Anyone with an interest in protecting cemetery heritage should work with their their local councillors and use this legislation to gain official designation. Municipal citation confers a number of powers that a municipality would not otherwise possess.

Here are some highlights.

- A municipality may refuse to allow the destruction of a designated heritage site.
- A municipality may impose certain conditions on the landowner regarding the conservation of a designated site. These include ensuring that the integrity of the site is respected, that the site is kept in good repair; and that it is not altered without prior authorization.
- A municipality may impose fines on a landowner that does not fulfill these conditions.
- Citation allows, but does not oblige, a municipality to provide technical and/or financial assistance to the proprietor of a heritage site to aid in its conservation, maintenance, restoration and promotion.
- Citation renders a site eligible for funding from the Fonds du patrimoine culturel québécois, and places it in the Répertoire du patrimoine culturel du Québec.

Many cemeteries in Quebec have received municipal citation. There is growing awareness that formal citation offers an important degree of protection for these sites. There are several steps that a municipality must follow. They include the adoption of a by-law, documentation of the property in question and justification of why it is being cited. To learn more about how municipalities can proceed with designating a heritage site in your community, download a copy of the QAHN publication, *Bright Futures Begin in the Past*, available at [www.qahn.org](http://www.qahn.org). Click on "What is QAHN?" in the left-hand menu, scroll to the bottom of page and click on the link entitled, "Relevant Documents."

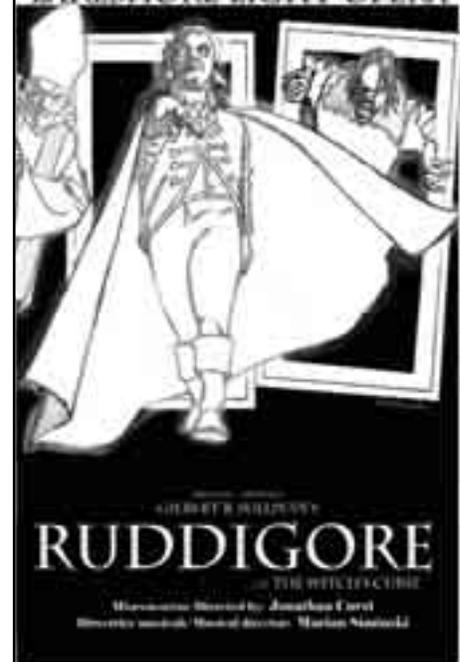


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# Taking the high ground

*Lost River graves recall Laurentian hamlet's colonial origins*

by Sandra Stock

There is a growing concern in Quebec for our vast and varied religious heritage. Regardless of language or denomination, our cities, towns and countryside are populated by empty, or seasonal, or much diminished churches, many of which have old cemeteries attached to them. These cemeteries are of importance to the local historian, the genealogist and anyone interested in the cultural practices and beliefs of our ancestors. There are also many rural cemeteries that either never had a church nearby or that have lost their church building with the passage of time.

In the Laurentians, one of the most interesting—and largest—pioneer cemeteries is located in the little hamlet of Lost River in the Municipality of Harrington. This area was initially settled by Scottish emigrants in the mid-nineteenth century: Frasers, MacMillans, Fergusons, MacCreas, Chisholms and others. Many of the older tombstones in the cemetery indicate the settlers' places of origin – in the Highlands (mostly Inverness-shire) and Islands of Scotland. The notorious Clearances of tenant farmers (to make way for sheep), the failure of the North Sea herring fishery in the 1850s, and the generally depressed state of Highland Scotland at that time sent thousands of people to Canada. The long tradition of emigration and the remarkable tendency of the Scots to prosper in North America probably also played a part.

Irish pioneers settled in this part of the Laurentians, as well. They came from the direction of Morin, Mille Isles, and Lakefield, and settled around Montfort and Laurel in the Municipality of Wentworth North. Morrow, Clifford, Morrison, McClusky, Reid and Beattie were among the first Irish families to arrive in Laurel. These people built the Good Shepherd Chapel on Lost River Road in 1890 on property donated by Albert Morrow. This small Anglican Church has recently been lovingly restored by local residents and still maintains its pioneer atmosphere with its simple wood construction and old-fashioned appearance.



There is also a small cemetery behind the chapel. There are about thirty graves, but many of the headstones are missing. Since the rear-round population is so small, there is great concern about the future of this historic site.

The mountains between Montfort and Laurel, and on to Lost River, were a tough landscape in which to farm -- even by Laurentian standards. The area is one of the highest, rockiest, and (until at least the 1960s) one of the most isolated parts of the district. It was not

until the late 1950s that there was school bus service for local children to attend Morin Heights High School. There was a small elementary school in Lost River (now a private residence) and Jeanie Ferguson Boutin remembers that her mother, Ruby Morrow Ferguson

drove the school buggy (horse power!) in good weather and the school sleigh in winter in the 1940s and 1950s.

On the hill beyond this schoolhouse is the Lost River cemetery. Like a number of other rural Scottish pioneer cemeteries, it is neither adjoined to a church nor located on the main road of a village, but situated on high ground overlooking the community. This cemetery is remarkably well maintained and has graves dating back to the 1870s. Five and six generations of local families are buried there. Many of the earlier stones have interesting symbolism and a few give outlines of the lives of those interred beneath them. However, like the remaining pioneer cemeteries of the area, there is great concern for the future care of this remarkable site.

References: The Porcupine-Le Porc-epic, # 8, Morin Heights Historical Association; Jeanie Boutin and Robert Luck, Good Shepherd Chapel heritage group.

*Sandra Stock is president of the Morin Heights Historical Association.*

## A FAMILY AFFAIR

*Fuller Cemetery headstones bear silent witness to generations of history*

Anthony H. Eldridge, U.E. and John V. Fowles, O.C.



**R**alph Fuller and his wife, Elizabeth Elliott, emigrated from England to Massachusetts before 1617. In that year they had a son, John Fuller. He was born in Massachusetts, the first American-born Fuller. This was three years before the Mayflower sailed from England in 1620, carrying the Pilgrims. John married Elizabeth Emerson.

Chase Fuller was born in New Hampshire in 1752, a direct descendant of John Fuller and Elizabeth Emerson. As a young man Chase worked as a surveyor for the American army during the War for Independence. He married Lova Clough

(1753-1842) and the couple settled in Bridgewater, New Hampshire. Lova bore at least nine children, among whom were Joseph (1779-1872) and Reuben Fuller (1795-1881 or later).

Joseph married Laura Nelson (1784-1851) in 1803 and Reuben married Phoebe Ann Cornwell (1793-1871) in 1817. Shortly after, Joseph and Reuben and their families moved north to Bolton Township, in Brome County, probably to work in the logging industry on and around Foster Mountain. This area of Bolton Township became part of the Municipality of West Bolton in 1876.

When the logging was finished, Joseph Fuller and his family moved to the southern part of what would later become West Bolton. They built a house and farm in Pleasant Valley, part of which is now known as the Lost Nations. Joseph Fuller and his family were among the earliest settlers of European origin in this part of West Bolton.

Five of Joseph and Laura Fuller's sons built farms in the area, which became known as the Fuller Neighbourhood. This bordered both sides of present day Fuller Road. These farms were well established by 1842, according to the national census taken that year. Fuller Road,

which runs from Stagecoach Road to the Bolton Pass Road, was built to serve these farms. The Fullers farmed this neighbourhood for more than 150 years. Peter Fuller, who is 88 and lives in the Edith Kathan home, spent most of his life helping his brother Leman on the farm. He drove a horse and buggy to town (Knowlton) every day, and this well into the 1980s.

The Fullers used a plot of land on one of their farms as a burial ground. This is known as the Fuller Cemetery. It stands on a lightly wooded knoll less than 200 metres west of Route 243, between Knowlton and South Bolton, and 500 metres southeast of Fuller Road. The cemetery covers an area of about 600 square metres and contains at least 33 headstones in varying states of preservation. Volunteers come from time to time to clear brush and keep the cemetery tidy. In 1992, some of the gravestones were repaired with epoxy glue.

According to deeds to the land dated 1946, the cemetery was fenced. Today there is no evidence of a fence. According to the municipi-

ality, the cemetery is not mentioned in the current deeds. Access is across private land, where the old Fuller Road would have crossed the new Route 243, the Bolton Pass Road. Immediately behind and to the west of the cemetery is part of the land that was once farmed by the Fullers. This is now a huge, active and ever-expanding gravel pit owned by Yves Allard. He also owns the cemetery.

Joseph Fuller and his wife Laura Nelson are buried in the cemetery and have inscribed headstones. Their sons Chase (1802-1869), named after his grandfather, and Lemuel (1805-1875) were also buried there under inscribed headstones. The earliest dated headstone is that of Mary Clemmons (1800-1831), wife of Levi Cooper (1774-1848), whose headstone stands next to hers. The most recent burial with a headstone is that of Robert Fuller (1881-1889), the son of Manly Fuller and Mary Elizabeth Ives.

There are at least five small stones with no inscription at all. Perhaps these were stillborn infants or babies who died very young.

Some stones seem to have been used for more than one burial. There may be over 40 people buried in this cemetery.

The Fuller Cemetery has historic significance because it holds the remains of some of the earliest settlers in West Bolton. These men, women and children cleared the land and farmed it, worked in the mills and built roads, schools and churches. It is they who have made it possible for us to live, work and play here and enjoy this beautiful part of Quebec. Many people living in West Bolton today have ancestors lying peacefully in the Fuller Cemetery. It would be a fitting tribute to the people who came before us if we were to protect their last resting place, maintaining and preserving it as part of the heritage of West Bolton and the Eastern Townships.

*Anthony H. Eldridge, U.E., is a fourth generation family history researcher in the Brome County area. John V. Fowles, O.C., is an artist, amateur archaeologist and historian, and retired orthopaedic surgeon.*

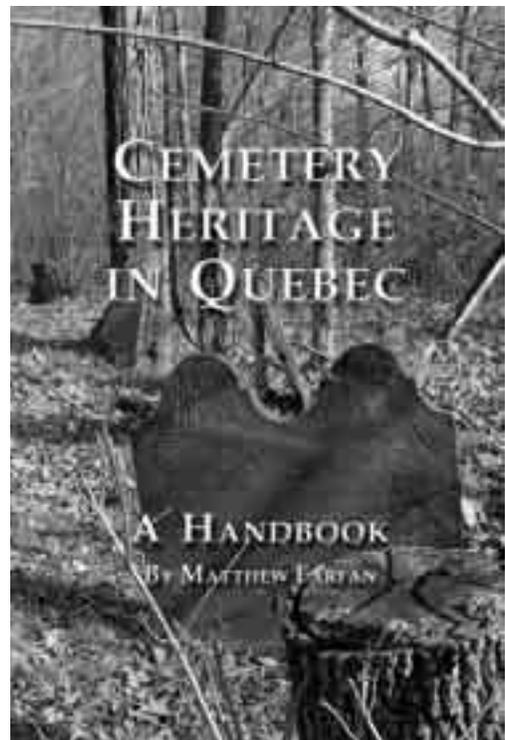
## The reference guide for trustees and caretakers

**A starting point for everyone who's committed to preserving Quebec's pioneer heritage.**

As rural populations dwindle, assuring the care of historic cemeteries is increasingly challenging. This handbook, published by the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network, was written with volunteer caretakers in mind. It regards cemeteries not merely as repositories of the dead, but as tangible links to the past, a part of our heritage to be cherished.

**Price: \$20. Cheque or money order**

To order by phone, call (819) 564-9595 or toll-free in Quebec, (877) 964-0409  
Send email orders to [home@qahn.org](mailto:home@qahn.org)



# ROAD OF THE DEAD

*Travels through a forgotten landscape*

by Sandra Stock



In the fall of 2007, QAHN launched its Cemetery Heritage Inventory and Restoration Initiative (CHIRI). Our objective was to evaluate cemeteries of English speaking communities and / or religious congregations in several areas of Quebec, including the Laurentians.

From a rather rainy but mild October to the early snowfall of mid-November, I traveled throughout the vast and diverse landscape of the Laurentians, sometimes with an enthusiastic assistant, sometimes alone. As time passed and my cemetery visits expanded beyond my familiar home turf of Morin Heights and Mille Isles, the assignment began to take an “Other Worldly” feel. There is a whole geography quite different from what we are used to. The season of the year and the wild natural environment at many of the sites I visited contributed to this feeling. In addition, each cemetery was unique, with its own history and its own present situation.

The most interesting, and emotionally intense, sites were the very old cemeteries, many of which are the only remnants of long-vanished

pioneer settlements. St. John’s Anglican Church and Cemetery of Shrewsbury in the Municipality of Gore was already known to me, but was not the most obscure site by any means. The church is still functioning, albeit seasonally, and there is a concerned group looking into the future of this site. However, a friend and I—after promising not to reveal the location—were taken to another cemetery in the Gore area that pre-dates St. Johns. Off the beaten track and in dense forest, it dates to the 1820s and was the final resting place of twenty-seven Irish pioneers, the first settlers of the district. The remaining stones are small, homemade and without inscriptions. There are footstones as well as headstones and many of the trees that had long ago grown among them are now dead and have been replaced by second or third growth. The extremely tough walk through the bush, and the fact that one has to know what to look for to find this graveyard, have probably protected it from harm over the years. However, our guide was concerned for the future of the burial ground, since so much development is occurring around Gore. The location and story con-

nected to the site have been entrusted to his family as a secret for well over a hundred years.

Other old cemeteries that have outlasted their communities are found at Edina, New Glasgow, Kilkenny, Scotch Road, Rockway Valley and Gray Valley. The oldest extant tombstone, located at Scotch Road, dates to 1818. There are,



however, at several cemeteries, even older graves whose stones have gone missing.

Some cemeteries are located in populated communities, but have either not been in use for years or have become full. Examples of this are the cemeteries attached to Grace Church in Arundel and the United Church in Shawbridge. Others, such as the large, originally Presbyterian, cemetery at New Glasgow, in Sainte-Sophie, reflect a once thriving English-speaking community that has now disappeared. The inscriptions on New Glasgow's stones date from the 1820s and show how this initially Scots settlement evolved into a multi-cultural community. Then, starting in the 1950s, the number of burials dwindled to the point where the site is now virtually abandoned. Indeed, it was difficult to find any information about what organization (if any) cares for it. Some years ago, when the United Church was still fairly active in this area, an attempt was made to hand it over to the local Anglican congregation. However, the Anglicans are also declining and now their few remaining parishioners are concerned about the future of their own cemetery on l'Achigan Road outside New Glasgow.

Edina, another Scots settlement from the early 1800s, is northwest of Dalesville in the Municipality of Brownsburg. This cemetery is situated in an obscure spot on a quiet dirt road. Local residents and descendants of those buried there have attempted to maintain the cemetery, which has seen little use since the 1940s, but

now only one elderly person is attempting to care for the grounds and stones. The change from agriculture to industry, the out-migration of young Anglophones, and the decline in church participation have all been factors in the plight of places like Edina.

The more contacts I made in the region, the more cemeteries I learned about – and almost all of them are at risk or face an uncertain future. Two interesting ones, in the Municipality of Boileau, technically lie in the Outaouais region, beyond the official boundaries of the Laurentides. These were the old communities of Ponsonby, now completely off the map, and Brookdale, now just the name of a road. Settlement had reached northwest to this district around the 1880s, and this sparsely populated, but still quite Anglophone, area, is linked socially, and by the few roads, to Arundel.

After crossing the Rouge River at Huberdeau, and visiting the Rockway and Gray Valleys cemeteries, a friend and I proceeded by what felt like a series of endless dirt roads, hemmed in by thick conifer bush, for many kilometers into Terra Incognita towards the Ponsonby Anglican Cemetery and my contact there. This is virtually at the end of the area of original settlement in the Laurentians. The area had been active in the ear-



ly twentieth century with lumbering operations on the Maskinongé River. The one-time settlement of Brookdale even once had a hotel and a cheese factory. Yet, being just a bit too far for second homes and tourism, the district retains an air of yesteryear – perhaps how Morin Heights and Saint-Sauveur looked sixty years ago. There is an active community life though, and the very attractive Brookdale United Church still holds summer and Christmas services. The closest town – and it isn't very close – is Saint-Rémi-

d'Amherst.

The cemeteries themselves, although individually different, have traits in common. All denominations face the rising sun. All reflect, in the symbolism on the stones, the general beliefs about death and eternity of our cultural inheritance. These beliefs are not necessarily the official teachings of Judeo-Christian denominations. Something much older and probably subconscious was evident to me from viewing so many graves in such a short time. The predominance of large trees, both as ornamentals in the graveyards and as icons on the stones, has persisted from the earliest burials to the most recent. Visual styles have changed with time, but the trees remain. Also, animals figure prominently on the stones. From Victorian lambs and doves to the wide selection of domestic and wild creatures that we see on more recent graves, I encountered a veritable zoo of beasts, birds, insects and even fish. Deer and blue jays led the pack of these perhaps "spirit guides" into the Other World. In addition to wildlife, there were complete scenes of Laurentian lakes, mountains and even homes and boats etched on stones. Musical instruments, skis, canoes and fishing equipment also figured. Even the greatest skeptic has to wonder at this evidence of both a great love for the departed and a hope that eternity offers a landscape similar to the one enjoyed here on earth.

**I**t amazed me to find actual offerings of food, drink and even recreational substances deposited at graves. These were not always litter, but actual presents to the departed. Of course, there were the expected flowers and plants, usually natural, but also of the plastic variety – the bane of cemetery caretakers everywhere.

My final thought after visiting all of these sites, with about half of them really at risk, and all of them potentially at risk in the future, is that a major change of focus has to be taken by communities, heritage organizations, religious groups and individuals if we hope to restore, preserve and maintain these cemeteries. As the best-kept ones tended to be those not strictly aligned with any religious congregation, but under the control of a corporation based in the community, much of this change has to come through the various church organizations. Generally, the people of a local parish are interested and concerned about their cemetery but feel that the church hierarchy has no interest and may in fact wish to "unload" what is after all unprofitable real estate. Even cemeteries at official historic sites, such as Christ Church Anglican in St. Andrews East, are in poor condition and at risk.

Local history, genealogy and heritage tourism are all good reasons to restore cemeter-

ies. Recent developments have shown some inventive ways in which people are working to preserve cemeteries. Knox Presbyterian in Arundel, for example, has a complete photographic inventory of its gravestones on its website. Scotch Road and St. Columban, Irish section, also have good websites and are making efforts towards preservation. However, most of the cemeteries I visited are in need of help as their problems are now beyond the financial and practical resources of their caretakers. Many no longer even have caretakers and require intervention from some other source.

When the snow melts, I hope to visit at least six more sites to add to the thirty-five I saw last fall. The cemeteries are diverse, some have outstanding locations, some are hidden in the forest, some are well maintained, and some are dilapidated, but none are depressing or gloomy. They are all proud testaments to the continuity of life and deserve our care.

*Sandra Stock is president of the Morin Heights Historical Association.*

## Can't get no respect

*The following is excerpted from the website of a U.S. conservation group called Saving Graves, located at [www.SavingGraves.org](http://www.SavingGraves.org).*

Today, all across the world, thousands of small cemeteries on private property are in danger of being bulldozed off, and the land used for crops, grazing, or new development. Left unprotected, many cemeteries fall prey to real estate developers or others who are seeking short term economic or personal goals. These unfeeling people destroy many of these old cemeteries, showing no respect for the dead or their families. They do not appreciate or understand the importance of human burial sites as visible, tangible links to the people who made our history. The inscriptions on their monuments tell us not only their names and dates, but often where they lived, their occupations and affiliations, the manner of their death, personal traits that survivors held dear, and the names of relatives. These inscriptions provide us with invaluable data regarding local, medical, and material history, cultural geography, historical archaeology, folklore, genealogy, and much more—data that in many cases may be found nowhere else.

# THE STONE READERS

*A Townships couple turns graveyard interest into full-time hobby*

by Leslie Nutbrown

Like most people, I never paid much attention to cemeteries when I was young. I would see them alongside roads in travels with my parents and I knew that I had ancestors buried in some of them. But in general, cemeteries were places for kids to avoid. One only went there to visit the grave of a loved one or to attend the burial of a family member, neighbour or friend. Little did I know that one day I would visit and record just about every Protestant cemetery in Stanstead, Compton and Megantic counties and beyond.

I was luckier than many people in that I became interested in family history while I was still a teenager. Many begin this fascinating pursuit later on in life, at a time when their parents or grandparents are no longer alive to pass on to them the family history. However, I knew from a young age that my grandmother -- and hence myself -- were descendants of Hannah Dustin, a famous New England heroine who escaped from her Indian captors back in the 1600s. I began to wonder how many other "famous" people I might be related to. I soon started looking at burial grounds in a different way. Tombstones and church records could offer important clues to the people buried beneath them. So, in my research I gleaned whatever information I could from the tombstones in cemeteries where my people were interred.

After the death of my granddaughter in 2002, I was visiting her grave in Huntingville Cemetery. Since I live nearby, I thought that it might be useful to have the names of everyone buried in the cemetery. So I took pen and paper and walked the entire cemetery writing down information from each stone as I went. I then entered the information into a database on my computer and uploaded it to an internet site called Interment.net, where cemetery records from different countries are stored and where

they can be retrieved by anyone with access to a computer.

Soon after this, I visited Milby Cemetery with my wife Susan. We recorded the names, dates and other important information on all the headstones there and placed them on-line. Sometimes, additional information, such as military service or place of birth, is in-



cluded on the monuments, providing family members with important details for their research.

I recall one burial ground -- the Rose Cemetery near Stanstead -- where the tombstone of one Eleazer Allbee, who was born in Vermont in 1785 and who died in 1864, has the following inscription: "He went into voluntary banishment from his beloved native country during the reign of terror in the third year of the misrule of Abraham the first."

As time went on we visited more and more Protestant cemeteries in Compton and Stanstead and ventured further outward to Sherbrooke, Frontenac, Megantic, Wolfe, Richmond and Drummond Counties. We have received many thank you emails (and requests to do other cemeteries) from people near and far who have appreciated our efforts and who have found some elusive ancestor's name among the records that we have placed on-line.

So, what started as a small project to record the names of people in local

cemeteries for my own use, and as a way of having a record at home without having to go to a historical society or library, has grown into an enriching hobby that has seen my wife and I visit, record and place on-line over 150 cemeteries in the Eastern Townships alone. We have visited and recorded everything from small family burial grounds with just one stone to sprawling cemeteries with over 6,000 burials. And now we have begun to document the Catholic cemeteries, as well. We even make an effort to visit cemeteries when we travel and we now have recorded graveyards in five provinces and six states.

Walking through old burial grounds is a trip back in time. One can imagine the struggles of pioneer families trying to survive two centuries ago in a land that was basically an unbroken wilderness. It is not hard to find evidence of the diseases and hardships that claimed the lives of many young children in the 1800s. The small gravestones erected in memory of those beloved children that appear in almost every old cemetery -- often with members of the same family lined up side by side -- attest to the fact that life at that time was not easy and that any family could expect that at some point someone would succumb to an early grave.

Traveling around the Eastern Townships finding and documenting these scattered cemeteries has given us a lot of pleasure, and this despite the high gasoline prices, mosquito bites and other distractions. We have learned a great deal from these treks and when the snow has gone and the warm weather returns you will likely find us out among the gravestones once again.

*Leslie Nutbrown is a retired teacher. He is the author of the book The Descendants of Thomas Nutbrown, published in 2000.*

## LOSING GROUND

*Abandoned gravesites besepak the state of pioneer heritage conservation*

by Heather Darch



For a number of years, the Missisquoi Historical Society in Stanbridge East has been looking after a number of “orphaned cemeteries” in what was once known as Missisquoi County. The society has provided basic maintenance—essentially regular grass mowing—at no fewer than seventeen pioneer burial grounds. Most of these sites date back to the early 1800s when the first settlers were arriving in this part of Quebec. A number of these sites suffered neglect over the years before being taken under our wing. Some of them are on private property; legal title to others is sketchy at best.

Last fall, the Missisquoi Historical Society jumped at the opportunity to participate in the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network’s sample survey and inventory of rural cemeteries at risk, the first phase of QAHN’s Cemetery Heritage Inventory and Restoration Initiative (CHIRI). We felt that a proper survey of the cemeteries in our part of the province was long overdue. Thus, archivist Judy Antle and myself began the task of visiting each cemetery that we had records for—not just those that we had been looking after, but all of them. Armed with cameras and a detailed grading system de-

veloped by QAHN, we soon found ourselves crisscrossing Missisquoi County in search of graveyards that few if anyone had visited in years. Our findings have been illuminating if not alarming.

Among other things, we discovered that although conservation was being attempted in some cemeteries, not all of it has been good. Gravestone restoration projects have not been well funded and have involved unpaid volunteers working without guidance. It would appear that the theory that “it is better to do something than nothing” is being practised at some sites, resulting in lost stones and lost information. The Missisquoi Historical Society has in the past been guilty of attempting repairs without proper training and we find ourselves uncertain as to how to properly repair stones with a limited budget. In the Mandigo Corner and the Harvey burial grounds, the caretakers obviously have no idea how to conduct repairs and their solution has been simply to stack stones in a corner of the graveyard.

It was disappointing to discover that even though a cemetery may have a legal body overseeing it, this does not mean that basic maintenance, landscaping, security or active preservation are being conducted. In the Pike

River Protestant Cemetery, for example, which apparently has a cemetery corporation, the site is poorly maintained and overgrown and no recent attempts have been made to repair broken stones.

It was also difficult to determine what legal body has jurisdiction over some sites. This will mean time on our part to discover who or what organization (if any) is safeguarding these graveyards. We are almost hesitant to begin knocking on doors as we may well discover that no one will be found and that our list of sites to maintain will multiply. This will be an increased burden financially and will place added pressure on our small group of volunteers. Prior to conducting this inventory, the Missisquoi Historical Society's assumption had been that the seventeen sites we maintain represent about half of the cemeteries in the county. As we have now identified at least sixty-four burial grounds, we see that this is far from the case. And although it has been invaluable to identify more sites, it is to our chagrin that we realize that many of these sites will require a caretaker. The question facing us now is how do we go about securing funds to maintain the cemeteries we already oversee, let alone funds to allow us to adopt new ones?

It has been interesting to discover that the materials used in gravestones, such as marble and limestone, have either become a lasting tribute to the individuals of this county or have weathered into obscurity. It would be useful to re-examine the stones to determine if local materials have withstood the passage of time better than imported stone. It has also been fascinating to examine the stones from an artistic point of view. Although this study did not call for such observations, the motifs, carvings and "folk art" that appear on gravestones should also be recorded in a digital format as they reflect the local handiwork, attitudes and philosophies of the time. Some carvings are quite primitive; others are exceptional. Perhaps some of these designs are unique to the Eastern Townships. A study of epitaphs would also be intriguing. But again, volunteer time and project funding would be required.

Our survey has indicated to us which sites were well documented in terms of their genealogical content and which sites have been neglected. We have also determined that a number of sites need to be re-visited so that vital statistics can be recorded. Unfortunately, this should probably have been done fifty years ago, since many gravestones are now illegible due to weather, acid rain, stone decay and neglect. At the Russell burial ground, in Saint-Armand, rows of stones no longer bear the names or dates of some of our very earliest settlers.

It has been worrisome to find that some sites cannot be located at all. Old maps were in our archives, but when it came time to visit these sites, we were sometimes frustrated in our search. Making things even more difficult, some sites seem to have been renamed. The Bullsberg site, north of Cowansville, for example, may be the Friends site, as indicated on the sign. If this is not the case, then we were unable to locate the Bullsberg site. Once again, a closer search will be required on our part. Conversations with local people may prove useful

but more time and volunteers will be needed.

Levels of security varied from cemetery to cemetery. Some sites were well protected with fences and gates, with signs indicating the name of the cemetery, but many had very little safeguards in place. Even graveyards located beside churches were not necessarily secure. The Bedford Protestant Cemetery, for one, faces vandalism almost annually. Constant repairs to stones are becoming a financial strain on the Bedford Cemetery Corporation.

Quite a few sites were located on private land. Here again, some landowners were willing to give us permission to visit the site, while others could not be reached. Of course, the fact that a cemetery is located on private land does not mean that it is looked after. The Wing burial ground, which is found in an apple orchard, is ignored by the landowner. The Ten Eyck site, in another orchard, has likely been destroyed.

**I**n summary, of the fifty sites that we have surveyed so far, we have deemed over half to be "at risk." Typical problems include: cracked and broken stones; lack of maintenance; lack of vital records; vandalism; and destruction by the natural elements. A number of sites have become lost and are therefore in danger of being lost forever. Some sites have governing bodies, but this is no guarantee that these organizations are active or financially capable of maintaining the sites under their control. A lack of able-bodied volunteers is a growing problem everywhere. And a decline in the English-speaking population and in the number of families with ties to local cemeteries are also contributing to the problem.

Even sites under the wing of organizations such as the Missisquoi Historical Society could be considered "at-risk" if adequate new funding cannot be found or if boards of directors change their priorities. "Active" cemeteries also have concerns for the future. In Clarenceville, an elderly couple who no longer want to be responsible for the local cemetery have been unable to convince the municipality to take on the burden. It is still an active site with several more burials expected. The Missisquoi Historical Society is reluctant to take on this added responsibility, as we are not in the business of digging graves. The future of this graveyard is therefore in peril.

Gravestones and cemeteries need to be recognized for the importance resources they are. How fortunate we have been to have participated in QAHN's Cemetery Heritage Inventory and Restoration Initiative. Our own understanding of sites in this region has increased considerably. So too has our concern for the situation. As a historical society, we face the distressing fact that although our mission is to protect these burial grounds, we have absolutely no funding and very little knowledge of how to solve the growing crisis.

*Heather Darch is curator of the Missisquoi Museum in Stanbridge East.*

# ON THE TRAIL OF THE SCOTS

*Across the Townships highlands, the legacy of the Clearances is carved in stone*

by Matthew Farfan

It was a crisp mid-November day and the sky overhead was a brilliant shade of blue when we arrived at the Sherbrooke home of our guide for the day, Isabell MacArthur Beattie. Isabell, a second-generation Scottish Canadian who learned to speak Gaelic as a child in her home in the high country around Milan, had agreed to take us to some of the old Scottish burial grounds in that out of the way part of Quebec.

It was only later in the day that I learned to my surprise that Isabell was actually a great-grandmother and in better shape than many people half her age. Indeed, as we trudged through fields and forests in search of long-lost Scottish history, we had to be careful not to lag too far behind our guide. And by the end of the day, as we plodded through yet another Scottish burial ground, Isabell said “this has been great exercise.” Pausing to catch my breath, I told her that I couldn’t agree more, and that we could not have found a better guide.

I had set out for Scottish country that bright Monday morning with QAHN executive director Dwane Wilkin, Isabell and her husband Ross. Taking Route 108, we passed through Gould, home to a rather commercial Scottish festival in recent years. We explained to Isabell and Ross that the Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network was conducting a survey of pioneer cemeteries at risk around the province. We had heard that many early burial grounds were falling into disrepair in this part of the Townships, and that some had actually been completely abandoned. Having come from the area herself and being an active promoter of Scottish heritage, Isabell had agreed to take us to some of

the area’s oldest Scottish burial grounds.

As we approached Gould, Isabell explained that the village was one of the first areas in the Eastern Townships to be settled by the Scots. The origins of the village, and the Township of Lingwick that surrounds it, date back to 1838 when the first poverty-stricken Scots from the Isle of Lewis arrived in the area. They settled on lands owned by the British American Land Company, and most of them arrived with little more than the clothes on their backs.



Yet, by all accounts, the country these people came to was a lot more appealing than the one they left behind. Back home, they had been restricted to tiny parcels of land (crofts) for which they had to pay rents—usually in kind—to their landlords. Their lot had been one of extreme poverty, and their lives had been based on a perennial dependence on potatoes, fish and seaweed. Further waves of Scottish immigration to the Townships were encouraged by a disturbing trend in Scotland known as the Clearances.

The Clearances involved the forced eviction of crofters from their lands to make way for sheep. Sheep were more

profitable, especially when tenants were behind in their rents. Making life even more unbearable for the crofters were failures in the potato crop. So hundreds of families immigrated to the Townships, settling on land purchased from the British American Land Company. Life was hard—immigrants were obliged not only to pay for their land, but also to clear it of trees and build road—but at least there was hope. In time, many Scots turned from farming to logging to make their living.

Today, little remains of Gould. There’s a general store, a United Church and a sprawling graveyard filled with stones bearing the names of early Scottish settlers. A short distance out of town is the McVetty-McKerry bridge, the longest covered bridge in the Townships, and named for the Scottish craftsmen who built it in 1893.

A few years ago, Isabell was involved in an initiative of the Presbyterian Church of Canada to erect a monument to the early Scottish Presbyterian churches in the area. Since the first Scottish settlers arrived here in the 1830s, with a congregation organized in 1845, Gould was deemed an appropriate location for the monument. “But the municipality turned us down; they wouldn’t even speak to us. They said that the history of Gould began with the creation of the Catholic Parish in 1908, and that nothing existed before that. Of course, we know our own history a bit better than that!”

A short distance beyond Gould, we passed through Sainte-Marguerite. We used to call this “the French village,” Isabell explained. Further up the highway, to our surprise we noticed that the fields and hillsides were covered in snow. “Does it always snow this early?” I

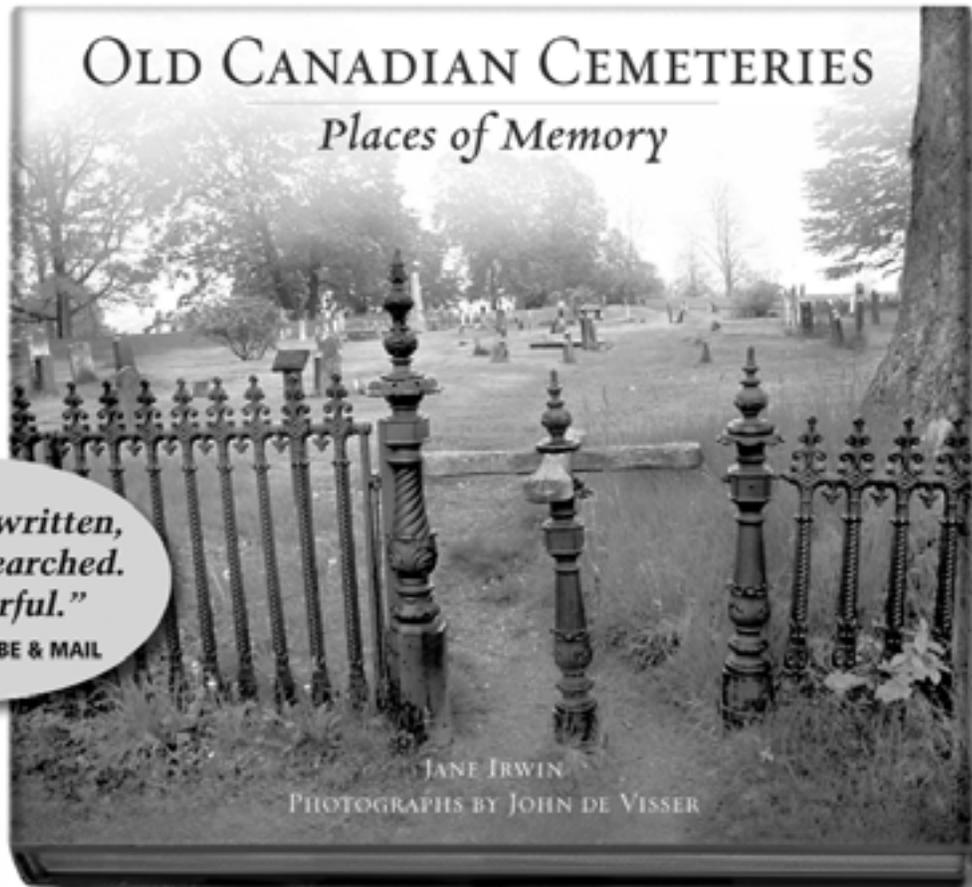
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asked. "Oh yes, this is typical," Isabell explained. "We are up quite high in this part of the Townships, and the snow arrives early." I remembered that as we travel east we head into the Notre-Dame Mountains. At 1,105 metres, Mount Megantic is the highest peak in this range.

**W**e eventually passed a dirt road named Tolsta Road. Tolsta, one of numerous Scottish settlements in this part of the country, took its name from a village on the Isle of Lewis, where most of the settlers came from. A little further on, just past a farmhouse, we noticed a large archway over a cart track leading into a pasture. The sign read "Tolsta Cemetery." In the distance we could see gravestones encircled by a fence. Opening the gate and trudging across the snowy field, we came to an isolated but well kept burial ground with several dozen gravestones. The oldest stone dated to 1851. Cows were grazing in the distance. "So this is what's left of Tolsta," I thought.

Returning to the car, we continued on to Stornoway, where we stopped at the Winslow Cemetery, a beautifully kept burial ground in the centre of the village. Maintained by the Lewis Cemetery Association (named after the Isle of Lewis and formed to look after a number of old Scottish burial grounds), the cemetery occupies a prominent spot across from the Catholic Church. Stornoway itself is situated on the crest of a hill and commands a spectacular view of the surrounding countryside.

Isabell showed us a magnificent monument commemorating the early Presbyterian churches of the area – the monument originally planned for Gould. The red and black granite monument features a map of the area and histories of the various churches that served Scottish communities in Lingwick (Gould), Winslow (Stornoway), Marsboro, Milan, Lake Megantic and Scotstown. The monument tells of how these churches were erected and declined over time as a result of shifting settlement patterns. Appropriately the text is in three languages: English, French and Gaelic. "My Gaelic was a bit rusty, so we had to get some help with the grammar," Isabell laughed. "But when we asked permission to put this up, people here were so enthusiastic; it was

wonderful."

Isabell showed me her grandparents' gravestone. John McArthur and Catherine McDonald, Gaelic Scots from Lewis. Catherine died in 1912; John, age 92, the following year. Strolling about the grounds, we noticed a number of gravestones with inscriptions in Gaelic.

Not far from Stornoway is an old grist mill. Built in 1883 by T elesphore Legendre, the mill operated until about 1940. To avoid icing up during the cold winter months, Legendre placed his mill wheel on the inside. "This was the only grist mill around here," Isabell explained. "My father would bring our barley and buckwheat here to be ground. Barley was used in Scottish barley scones; we also fed it to the pigs. Buckwheat made good pancakes. We also grew oats, but oats didn't need to be ground, since they were fed to the horses. I remember my father coming to the mill when I was a child. It was a long trip and he had to stay over night."

From Stornoway, we headed southeast on Route 161 in the direction of Nantes. Passing through a stretch of level pasture, Isabell explained, "this was my grandfather's farm; there's nothing left now." "Then your grandfather must have moved those boulders," Dwane said, pointing to a line of large stones at the edge of a field. I suggested that maybe Isabell's grandfather had had some oxen to help him. "No," she said. "Oxen were used by the Frangi [the French]. We Scots used horses."

Isabell pointed out a field where St. John's Presbyterian Church once stood. St. John's functioned until 1923. "We thought of putting up a plaque there, but no one would have seen it and it would have just gotten overgrown."

After a couple of kilometres we turned off the main road and headed southwest onto Ballock Road, and then south onto Gisla Road. Gisla, too, recalls a village in Lewis. We continued on through countryside that seemed to me rather isolated – and empty. Empty now perhaps, but not so very long ago this was the main road to Milan, to the south, and the area was filled with farms and families eking out a living from the rocky soil. "I used to deliver mail to the houses along this road," Isabell said. Now, there are no houses, and the road is closed in the winter."

"Our family practiced mixed farm-

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ing.” Isabell said. “We had cattle, barley -- a bit of everything.” Of course, we didn’t think of ourselves as poor, because that was all we knew.” Farming in this country, she explained, was nothing like what it was on Lewis. “For one thing there were no trees on Lewis. And the first thing that the Scots had to do when they got here was clear a forest.” Which is to say nothing about the bitter Canadian winter, I thought to myself.

**A**fter a few kilometres on this bumpy, narrow back road, we arrived at the Gisla Cemetery. Virtually all that remains of a community of the same name, the cemetery was neglected for many years. In recent years, however, a gate has been erected in front of the cemetery with a fence along the road. The sides and rear remain unfenced and give way immediately to bush, bush that seems ever-anxious to encroach upon the graveyard.

At Gisla, our guide showed us the graves of several of her ancestors, including that of Christie MacDonald MacArthur, her mother. Isabel enlisted Dwane’s help in pruning the overgrown rose bush near the grave. “That’s better already,” she said after supervising the operation for several minutes.

Another family member, Donald Morrison, the famous Megantic Outlaw, was buried a few feet away. Morrison became a folk hero in the 1880s after returning home to avenge his parents who had been cheated out of their farm by an unscrupulous money-lender. After shooting a bailiff who had been sent to arrest him, Morrison became the target of the longest manhunt in Canadian history. With the help of local Scottish families who felt his actions had been entirely justified, Morrison eluded capture by hiding out in the countryside for nearly a year from 1888 to 1889. He was eventually captured and, despite the public uproar, tried and sentenced to eighteen years of hard labour. He became a broken man in prison, refusing food and medical treatment, and eventually died the day after his early release in 1894.

“Donald Morrison was my grandmother’s brother,” Isabell explained. “The date on the stone says that he died in 1889, but that’s wrong. When Morri-

son died, the Caledonian Society of Montreal paid for his casket and for the transportation of his body by train to Milan. When the person in charge of inscribing the tombstone met with my grandmother some time later to get the year of his death, she misunderstood the question. Speaking Gaelic and very little English, she thought that they had wanted to know the year of his arrest. So she told them 1889, and that’s what went on the stone. But of course, he died in 1894.”

Many graves in Gisla are unmarked. “A man once came and probed the soil along the fence,” Isabell explained. “He said there were many more people here than it would seem – probably poor



Scots with no money to spend on grave-stones.” A number of monuments have been broken or vandalized and some need re-pointing. Isabell, who sits on the cemetery committee, would like to have them repaired. “This is our history here. But we can’t get them to hold a meeting!”

From Gisla, we continued south until we came to a log cabin by the side of the road. Isabell explained that the cabin was a replica of the one that Donald Morrison’s parents, Murdo Morrison and his wife Sophia, were forced to live in after their farm was stolen out from under them. They couldn’t read or write, so they were easily cheated. The land for the cabin was donated by Isabell’s family, who also paid for the construction. Both this site and the Gisla Cemetery have been declared historic sites by the Municipality of Milan.

Across the highway and up an abandoned road (the old road to Milan), we visited one last remnant of the Scottish

presence in the area: the McIver-Beaton Cemetery. To get to this graveyard, which is completely overgrown by forest, we had to trudge uphill for about half a kilometre, and then cut in through the woods. “It doesn’t look the same in the snow,” said our host, as we crunched our way through the snow and branches. After about fifteen minutes of searching we heard someone say “qu’est-ce que vous faites ici? J’essaie de chasser. J’aurais pu tirer!” It was hunting season and this was a hunter. We had walked right into his sights! When Isabel told the hunter that he was on her son’s land, he led us straight to the graveyard. “Mais retournez au chemin par l’autre sentier,” he cautioned, “comme ça je ne tirerais pas sur vous.”

**T**he cemetery, which is now completely abandoned and forgotten, was once surrounded by pasture with a fine view of Isabell’s childhood home at the bottom of the hill. “You wouldn’t know it now. Things seem to return to nature so quickly,” she said. “I can still remember my brother bringing up Johanna Beaton’s body on a wagon in 1947. That was the last burial here, and it was overgrown even then.”

There among the trees and weeds and snow we discovered the final resting place of some two dozen local Scots -- McIvers, Beatons and MacDonalds mostly. Some of the stones had fallen over, and one was cracked in two. But most were in surprisingly good shape. One had been erected in 1877 to the memory of Catherine McKenzie, a thirteen-year old girl. It was inscribed: “Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.” This sentiment struck me as appropriate not only for the young girl buried here but for the Scottish community as a whole. Better that they had once lived—and died—here than never at all. And though most of the old families have moved away or died out, their traces scattered and fading more with each passing year, they have contributed immeasurably to the rich history of the part of the world we call the Eastern Townships. And their presence will be remembered.

Morrison cabin, Milan. (Matthew Farfan)

# SPIRIT OF THE PLAINS

*How Quebec City's Literary & Historical Society saved famous battlefield*

by Patrick Donovan

In 1899, a pamphlet printed by the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec (LHSQ) began with an ominous prediction: "In little more than two years' time . . . the Plains of Abraham will disappear from view and become transformed into an outlying suburb of the city of Quebec." This wasn't as far-fetched as it now seems. The Ursuline nuns owned the Plains, and the government's 99-year lease with the order was coming to an end. Developers had already divided the land into building lots along nine projected streets. Concern gave way to outrage and mobilization, with the LHSQ at the helm.

This mobilization followed three decades of uncertainty that had begun after the British garrison left town in 1871. The site had become obsolete from a defence standpoint, but soldiers still used the Plains as a parade ground. "Decay, ruin and disorder" settled in after they left. Meanwhile, buildings were sprouting up all around the Plains – new houses on Grande-Allée, and the parliament on the old cricket ground.

A group of concerned citizens banded together in 1876, including LHSQ board member James MacPherson LeMoine. Their goal was to stop the encroachment, landscape the Plains, and turn it into a historic driving park. LeMoine dreamed of "a beautiful park with shady avenues and limpid pools, where both the working class and wealthy citizens could . . . refresh themselves under the green umbrella of pines and maples." Aside from these benefits to the spirit, LeMoine also considered it "a principle of hygiene, a source of health for the working class."

These arguments echoed British Romantic and American Transcendentalist visions of nature. Urban parks grew out of these notions. They were seen as providing both the spiritual and bodily strength necessary to counteract the industrial city, which Dickens described as "miles of cinder paths and blazing furnaces and roaring steam engines, and such a mass of dirt, gloom and misery as I never before witnessed." Birkenhead Park, created in 1847, claims to be the world's first public park. Hyde Park in London and the



Bois de Boulogne in Paris soon followed. The idea took off in North America with New York's Central Park in the 1850s. Montreal established Mount Royal Park in 1876, right when LeMoine was agitating in Quebec City. The initial scheme for establishing a public park on the Plains of Abraham fell through at this time. Little else was done until the Society stepped in at the turn of the century.

By the 1890s, anxiety about the fate of the Plains still lingered, but the Society was the first to begin rallying troops. A formal motion was passed at a LHSQ meeting in 1898, and council members went to work. Earnest appeals were made to historical societies and the media for their support. Letters came in from associations in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Niagara Falls, and even the English National Trust. Articles denounced the government's inaction in newspapers across Canada, the United States and Great Britain. The LHSQ gathered all these testimonials and printed a pamphlet in 1899. This publication was prefaced by a poetic plea from leading Canadian author William McLennan:

Their shades cry to us from its sod  
To guard inviolate their dust:-  
They died for Country, King, and God!  
Shall we prove faithless to our trust?

Armed with this pamphlet, delegates from the LHSQ met the mayor of Quebec and, later, Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier. Their efforts paid off. The federal gov-

ernment stepped in to save the Plains, buying the land in 1901 and leasing it to the city. The Society rejoiced at its Annual General Meeting in 1902, praising the “hearty cooperation of many prominent men outside of our own ranks” without forgetting that “the honors of the initiative remain with our Society.”

The main movers behind this project were LHSQ presidents Philippe Baby-Casgrain and James MacPherson LeMoine. Both dabbled in history and were well connected with the ruling elite. Furthermore, both were bicultural, equally at ease in French and English, which probably shaped the Society’s discourse. In an age of bombastic imperialism where “Britannia ruled the waves” and troops were engaged in South Africa, the focus could have been on emphasizing Britain’s victory and might. Instead, the Society’s pamphlet focused on commemorating fallen soldiers on both sides - “la valeur commune aux deux races.” This was hardly a novel idea, hearkening back to the Wolfe-Montcalm monument erected in 1827 and being a central theme of Confederation in 1867. However, the fact that the ambassadors for preservation were simultaneously Francophone and Anglophone likely helped the Society rally all sides.

Though the Plains were safe from speculators in 1902, some Society members were not fully satisfied. The city of Quebec had shown little enthusiasm for landscaping the park. Furthermore, it was now felt that the Plains needed to be more than a mere urban park, but a commemorative battlefield. Such battlefields had begun appearing as symbols of reconciliation in the United States after the Civil War. Colonel William Wood, a former president of the Society and one of its leading champions, served on a three-person committee to prepare the city’s 300th anniversary. Their report was emphatic that a commemorative park should be created that would stretch beyond the Plains to include the Parc des Braves, site of a French victory in 1760. The anniversary of Quebec City and the creation of a national historic park soon became linked.

The creation of Battlefields Park became the pet project of Governor General Lord Grey and Quebec mayor George Garneau. Lord Grey even dreamed of erecting an “angel of peace” on the Plains, a colossal statue taller than the Statue of Liberty. Mayor Garneau met with federal authorities on several occasions to ensure that all would be ready for the city’s 300th anniversary. Aside from a respectable financial contribution by New Zealand, the British Empire provided little to Lord Grey’s plan. Nevertheless, the money amassed (\$550,000 out of a \$2 Million objective) was enough to enlarge the Plains to their current size. This laid the groundwork for the National Battlefields Commission, which has managed the site ever since.

*Patrick Donovan is Conservation and Interpretation advisor at the LHSQ. To learn more about the history of the Plains, don't miss the following event:*

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## HINDSIGHT

*Freedom fighters*

by Nick Fonda

**Y**es, Kanada has recognized Cosovo! Er, I mean, Canada has recognized Kosovo! And so has Kebec! I mean, Quebec. And awkward as it was for our Konser-vative, sorry, Conservative, government, now that it's done, we're all thrilled. Really.

I mean, we all felt for our Prime Minister. News of a province breaking away and unilaterally declaring its independence makes for a touchy subject in this corner of the Global Village. Especially since Kebec and Quosovo have so much in common. I mean, Quebec and Kosovo, sorry. (They're like two peas in a pod, absolutely every-one mixes them up all the time.)

Much as our PM would have preferred to quietly ignore Kosovo's declaration of independence, in the end, he just had to go along with George. We can give our PM credit for putting it off as long as he did. He wasn't first in line or anything. Actually, George Bush was first in line, but that's because the USA has always been big on independence, er, make that Independence. Americans seem to just love Independence. They even have an annual Independence Day. So, it was natural George would be the first to recognize Kosovo's Independence from Serbia. And of course, being friendly as he is, why he wanted all his friends to join in the celebrating. As George likes to put it to his friends, "You're with me, or you're against me."

If it had just been George, maybe our PM could have put off recognizing Kosovo a lot longer. But with all those advisers and consultants and generals, eventually, someone was bound to tell him that our PM still wasn't on that happy Independence bandwagon. So, our PM did the brave, courageous, noble thing. Of course, here in Kebec, why every single one of us was right behind Danny Turp and Polly Marois. We wanted to join in right off and cheer and open a case of 24 in honour of those liberated Albanians who stood up and just grabbed their own Independence.

Now that we know Kosovo is independent, we're all anxious to sit down to celebrate with that cold case of 24, but just before we do, let us see how this small but wonderful newest nation (still unrecognized by 85 per cent of the countries in the world) achieved its long-awaited freedom. The story really starts quite a ways back with the next-door neighbours, the Albanians and their wonderful King Zog. He's a whole history lesson all by himself. After being a prisoner in WWI he worked his way up from Prime Minister to President and

eventually to King! Albania, which wasn't even a country before 1920, had great scenery but not too much else. This meant that there were lots of Albanians who took to going over the border into Serbia where there were jobs and they could settle down, but maybe we don't have to get into all that. We're all pretty anxious for a cold one so I'll keep this short.

What it comes down to is this: like Quebec, Kosovo enjoys three things, a strategic location, a long struggle for self-determination, and a close and dear friend who isn't afraid to fight for a friend's Independence.

Kosovo, you see, just happens to be on the route of an oil pipeline being built by Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria Oil—headquartered in New York—to bring oil from the area around the Caspian Sea to Europe and, if there's some left over, to the USA. (Everyone in the USA is carefully conserving energy and all, but what's a quiet Sunday afternoon without a NASCAR race or two?)

**J**ust like Quebec had its October Crisis way back when, there were armed soldiers in Kosovo too, just nine years ago. Now, in Kosovo the soldiers had a real war, while the October Crisis, well, despite my nationalist pride, I can't call it a real war. But, it could have been. The problem was October. Let's face it, Quebec is no place to have a war in the wintertime and by October, well, you can feel winter coming.

Having friends willing to fight came in handy during the war in Kosovo. In 1999, as the brave Kosovo Liberation Army struggled to win independence, George got his army to build Camp Bondsteel. (Actually, the locals built most of it, and to avoid disrupting the local economy, George was nice enough to pay the locals the going rate of \$1—\$3 per day.)

Camp Bondsteel is one impressive place. Imagine slicing off the tops of two hills and filling in the valley between them to make a giant launch pad for attack helicopters and room for 7,000 US soldiers. Heck, Camp Bondsteel has everything a well-equipped army would need to fight for anybody's Independence.

So, except for Camp Bondsteel, we've got everything here they have in Kosovo.

Say, we're not doing anything anymore with Mount Orford are we? Wouldn't it look great with the top sliced off?

Small price to pay for Independence, I'd say. Pass the beer this way.

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