



Ottawa

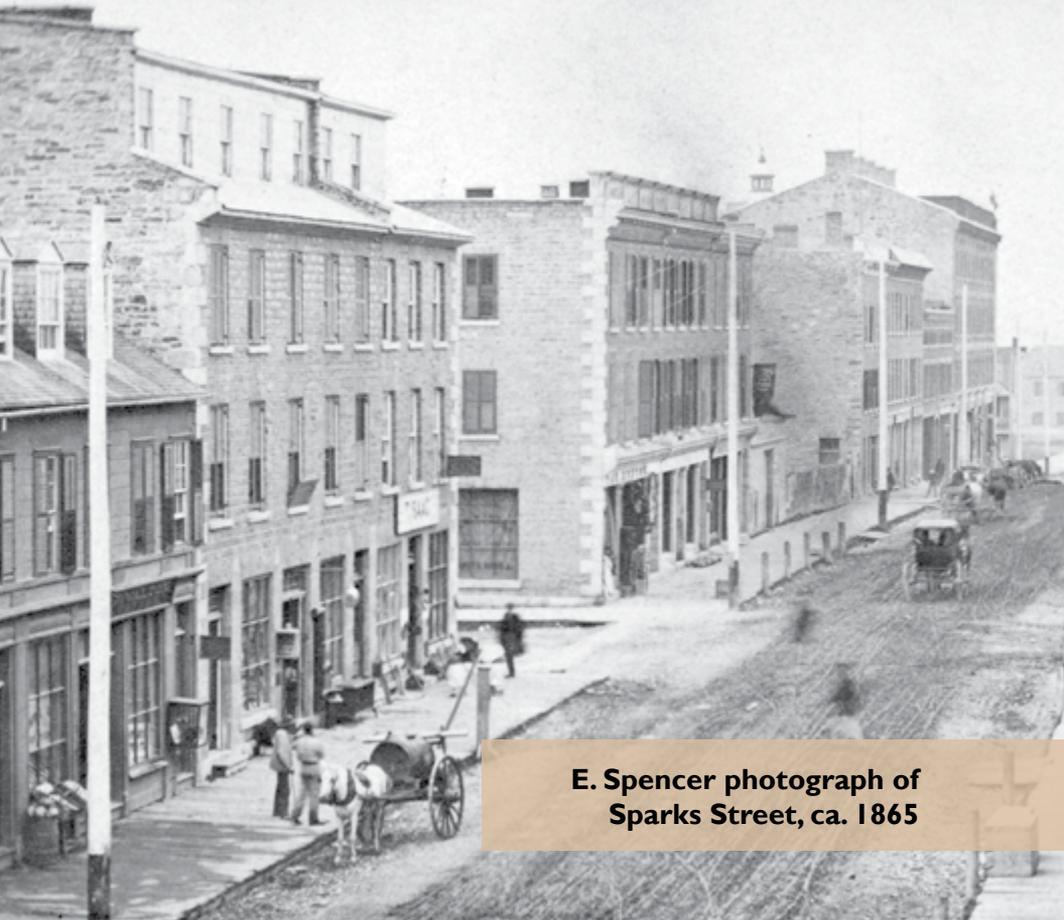


Honouring
the individuals buried at the
Barrack Hill Cemetery

Sunday, September 24, 2017
Resource Centre, Canadian Museum of History



ottawa.ca     **3-1-1**
TTY/ATS 613-580-2401



**E. Spencer photograph of
Sparks Street, ca. 1865**

Bytown in the early 1800s

City of Ottawa Archives

Ottawa's history begins with the Indigenous populations of Canada, who have occupied this landscape from time immemorial. The French exploration of the 1600s was followed by Philemon Wright's first settlement of the land north of the Ottawa River. After the river was bridged, early settlers began to build their homes and lives south of the Ottawa River in what would become known as Bytown.

The war of 1812 would forever change the face of Bytown, as the Rideau Canal was subsequently conceived as a military route. Beginning in 1826, the canal construction brought jobs to the city, boosting the economy and effectively making it a 'boom town.'

However, the sudden influx of people to the area, crowding of poor areas and a lack of hygiene, brought outbreaks of malaria, diphtheria and other diseases that ravaged the population. These diseases caused an incredible spike in deaths, which prompted Lieutenant-Colonel John By, a Royal Engineer overseeing the construction of the Rideau Canal, to commission Barrack Hill Cemetery on a two-acre plot of land in the region of the modern-day Sparks, Elgin, Albert and Metcalfe Streets.

When the Barrack Hill Cemetery was closed ca. 1845, surviving relatives were requested to reinter their families elsewhere. Many were moved to Sandy Hill Cemetery, which now lies beneath Macdonald Gardens Park in Lowertown. However, as recently discovered, some remains were not moved from Barrack Hill Cemetery, probably because some relatives could not afford it, moved away, or entire families had been victims of disease.



Meanwhile, the population in Bytown grew from approximately 1,000 residents in the 1820s to approximately 2,000 in the 1840s. Canal construction, the lumber industry, military and emerging merchant shops supported the community, primarily populated by English, French, Irish and Scottish immigrants. The individuals buried at the Barrack Hill Cemetery were Ottawa's earliest settlers and lived alongside the founders of the nation's capital, who all endured the challenges presented by a frontier community: the seasons, the wilderness, disease and difficult working and living conditions.

Archeological Discovery

Paterson Group

During construction of the Ottawa Light Rail Transit system, human remains were discovered along Queen Street, between Metcalfe and Elgin Streets in downtown Ottawa. Investigations into the origins of these individuals were undertaken in 2013 by Paterson Group. The presence of wooden coffin remains, coffin hardware, rectangular grave shafts, and other indicators of 19th century burial practices confirmed that the individuals were indeed from the Barrack Hill Cemetery, a burial site of great historical and archaeological significance.

Archaeological excavation of portions of the Barrack Hill Cemetery beneath the south side of Queen Street between Elgin and Metcalfe Streets were conducted in 2013 and 2014. During this time, 19 in-place burials, many disturbed burials, and thousands of scattered human remains were found. Many of the bones recovered were crushed, broken, eroded, exfoliated, and covered by a sheath of coffin wood that adhered tightly to many surfaces. The in-place burials were left in their resting places at the end of the 2013 season.

In the spring of 2014, representatives of Paterson Group and the City of Ottawa met with a representative of the Office of the Registrar of Cemeteries of Ontario. Representatives of the deceased were appointed, including the Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa, the Executive Archdeacon of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, and a representative of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa.

In accordance with the Site Disposition Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the appointed representatives, through June and July of 2014, the remains were disinterred with the utmost care and respect by archeologists from Paterson Group, and moved to the Canadian Museum of History for analysis. The agreement stipulated that experts from the Canadian Museum

of History could conduct invasive and non-invasive analysis to determine the circumstances of death, patterns of disease, sex, stature and age at death. The individuals have since been resting at the Canadian Museum of History in a secure and respectful manner.

The intact burials provide insight into the lives of the individuals and practices at the time. The presence of straight pins along the mid-line of many burials, as well as the lack of evidence of footwear, and minimal evidence of clothing in the form of buttons, could suggest the individuals came from poorer families where the clothing was being reused by surviving individuals. All the individuals were found in a supine position, with their heads to the west, in heel-toe shaped coffins arranged in rows and columns, typical of 19th century Christian burial practices.

Following the discovery of the remains, the parties attempted to balance the importance of a respectful reinterment and permanent resting places for the individuals, along with the historical significance and opportunities that the discovery presented for research and education.

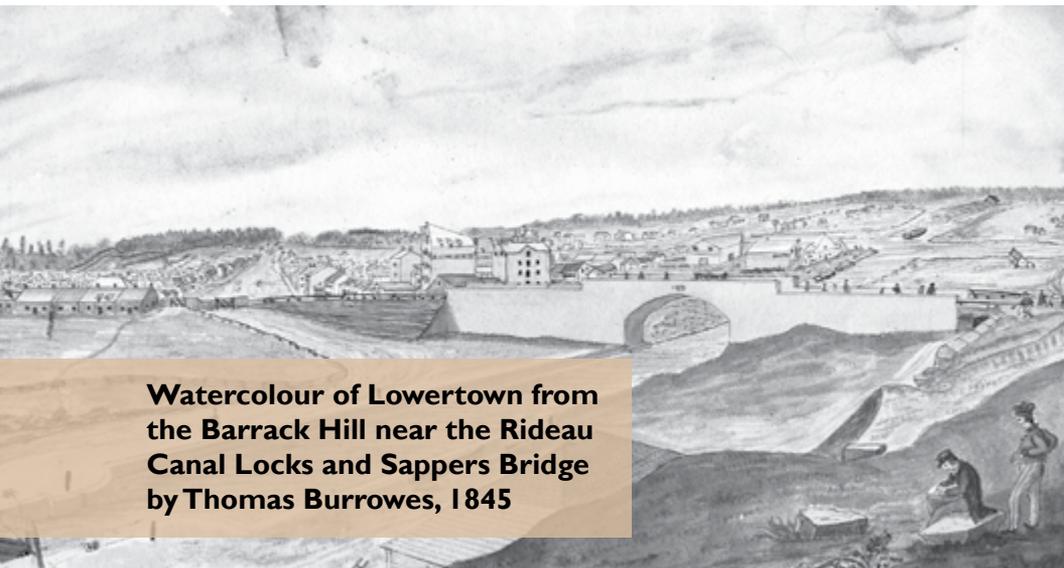
At the outset of the initial discovery, Paterson Group's archaeologists suggested a reasonably high potential that any future ground disturbance could uncover additional intact burials and more disturbed human remains throughout the block of Queen Street between Metcalfe and Elgin Streets. Any individuals discovered during subsequent construction will be respectfully reinterred following the same protocol.



Analysis of Barrack Hill Cemetery Remains

Canadian Museum of History

Scientific archeological analysis, conducted by experts from the Canadian Museum of History, revealed interesting results. A minimum number of 79 individuals were recovered in 2014 from the remnants of Barrack Hill Cemetery, consisting of mainly working-class citizens, and including 32 children and 47 adults.

A black and white watercolour illustration of a town built on a hillside. In the foreground, a large stone bridge with a central arch spans across a valley. The town behind the bridge consists of numerous buildings of varying sizes, some with gabled roofs. The landscape is hilly and appears to be a construction or military site, with some structures that look like barracks or temporary buildings. In the lower right corner, two figures are visible: one is kneeling and working on the ground, while the other stands nearby. The overall scene is a panoramic view of a settlement in a rugged, hilly area.

Watercolour of Lowertown from the Barrack Hill near the Rideau Canal Locks and Sappers Bridge by Thomas Burrowes, 1845

Nineteen primary burials were recovered with anywhere from complete to partial skeletons, and fragmented human remains were found. Residual materials of some individuals included hair, probable hair pins, coffin remains, buttons and pin cherry seeds.

Variable states of preservation were noted with both perfectly preserved skeletal elements, even very fragile child remains, and advanced deterioration of more durable adult skeletal remains. Of the adults, 21 were identified as male or possible male, seven identified as female or possible female, and the sex of nineteen

of the individuals was not identifiable. Evidence shows that the adult males ranged in height from 5'5" to 5'10" while females fell within the 5'1" to 5'3" height range. Indicators of childhood stress, poor dental hygiene, infections, trauma, and repetitive movements were present.

The analysis results showed evidence of difficult lives, including indications of malnutrition and bodily stress, and skeletal degeneration sometimes associated with hard labour. It should also be noted that there is a high rate of infant mortality in the assemblage taken from Barrack Hill Cemetery, a common occurrence in industrial cemeteries, especially those identified with lower socio-economic status.

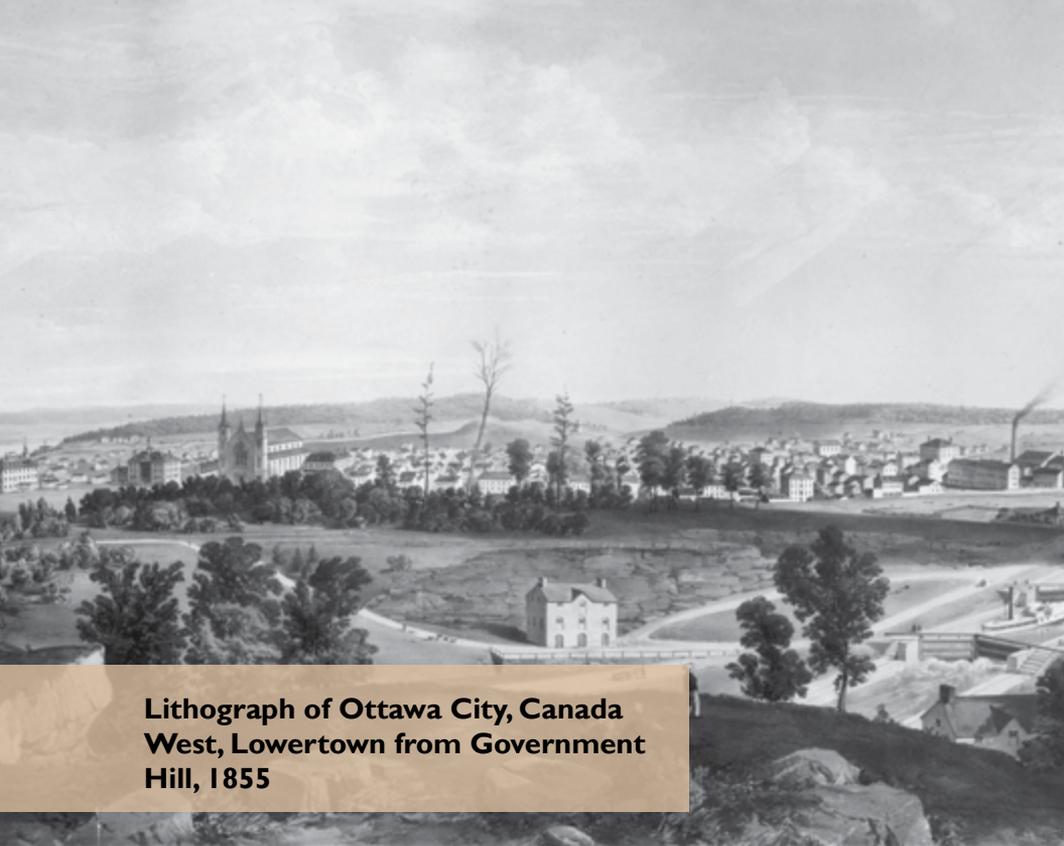
A Respectful Reinterment

Office of Protocol, City of Ottawa

In accordance with the agreement between the City of Ottawa, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa, the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa, Beechwood Cemetery, Paterson Group, the Canadian Museum of History and the Canal Workers Commemorative Group, all partners have endeavoured to respectfully reinter these early Bytown residents in accordance with their faith traditions.

Based on research conducted by the City of Ottawa Archives on funerary practices from the 19th century, steps were taken to follow these guidelines. Caskets were crafted out of pine, painted black, with the human remains wrapped in a shroud. A Public Visitation will be held at the Canadian Museum of History and a private ecumenical burial at Beechwood Cemetery





**Lithograph of Ottawa City, Canada
West, Lowertown from Government
Hill, 1855**

will be held in late September. A private, respectful, ecumenical funeral service including music, poetry, hymns, prayers and a final committal blessing contemporary to the early 1800s will be held in early October, also at Beechwood Cemetery.

A permanent commemorative plaque will be installed at the gravesite at Beechwood Cemetery, Canada's National Cemetery. While we do not know the identity of these individuals, Beechwood Cemetery records will reflect the historical and archeological findings.

Life for these brave people who came to this city in its earliest days was often short, difficult and certainly precious. Their faith and hope would have been powerful motivation and comfort for them in daily life in early Bytown. They most certainly lived by Ottawa's current motto "Advance-Ottawa."

“Not unto endless dark...”

By William Wilfred Campbell

Not unto endless dark do we go down,
Though all the wisdom of wide earth said yea,
Yet my fond heart would throb eternal nay.
Night, prophet of morning, wears her starry crown,
And jewels with hope her murkiest shades that frown.
Death's doubt is kernelled in each prayer we pray.
Eternity but night in some vast day
Of God's far-off red flame of love's renown.
Not unto endless dark. We may not know
The distant deeps to which our hopings go,
The tidal shores where ebbs our fleeting breath:
But over ill and dread and doubt's fell dart,
Sweet hope, eternal, holds the human heart,
And love laughs down the desolate dusks of death.

William Wilfred Campbell, 1860 – 1918, was a Canadian poet. He is often classed as one of the country's Confederation Poets, a group that included fellow Canadians Charles G.D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Archibald Lampman, and Duncan Campbell Scott; he was a colleague of Lampman and Scott. By the end of the 19th century, he was considered the “unofficial poet laureate of Canada.”

Although not as well-known as the other Confederation poets today, Campbell expressed his own religious idealism in traditional forms and genres. In 1891, Campbell settled in Ottawa and eventually died of pneumonia on New Year's morning, 1918. He is buried in Ottawa's Beechwood Cemetery.

The City of Ottawa graciously acknowledges the support of all partners of this event of great historic significance in Canada's sesquicentennial celebrations.

**Beechwood Funeral, Cemetery and
Cremation Services**

Canadian Museum of History

Canadian Museum of Nature

Canal Workers Commemorative Group

Cumberland Heritage Village Museum

Parks Canada

Paterson Group

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa

The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa

**The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of
Ottawa**

Images courtesy of:

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Bytown Museum – page 11

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