







Ottawa

Honouring  
the individuals buried at the  
**Barrack Hill Cemetery**

**Sunday, October 6, 2019**  
Beachwood Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services



[ottawa.ca](http://ottawa.ca)     **3-1-1**  
TTY/ATS 613-580-2401



## Bytown in the early 1800s

### City of Ottawa Archives

The heart of the Algonquin Anishàbeg Nation is the Ottawa Valley where these First Nations Peoples have lived for time immemorial. It was the construction of the Rideau Canal from 1826 to 1832, that changed the demographics of the area that would eventually be Bytown and later the City of Ottawa. The impetus for the building of the Rideau Canal was the War of 1812 and the government's conception of this waterway being a military route.

The construction of the Rideau Canal brought the military and its workers to the area. At the beginning of 1826, canal construction brought jobs and soon settlers came to the south side of the Ottawa River to live and work. This boosted the economy and effectively made Bytown a 'boom town.' This new town was primarily populated by English, French, Irish, and Scottish immigrants.

With the sudden influx of people to the area, the crowding of the poorer areas, and the lack of hygiene, outbreaks of malaria, diphtheria, and other diseases ravaged the population. These diseases caused an incredible spike in deaths that prompted Lieutenant-Colonel John By, Royal Engineer overseeing the construction of the Rideau Canal to commission Barrack Hill Cemetery. The cemetery rested on a two-acre plot of land bounded by today's Sparks, Elgin, Albert, and Metcalfe streets.

The population grew from about 1,000 residents in the 1820s to about 2,000 in the 1840s. This was brought on by canal construction, lumber industry, military, settlers, and emerging merchant shops to support the community. With more people, this brought the demand for more land and Barrack Hill Cemetery was closed around 1845 to accommodate the growing population. The evidence suggests that relatives of the buried individuals were asked to move their family members. Many chose to reinter the bodies in Sandy Hill Cemetery, which now lies beneath Macdonald Garden Park in Lowertown. However, in 2013-2014, it was discovered that some of the bodies had not been removed from Barrack Hill Cemetery. It was most likely a case that family members could not afford the cost, had moved away, or entire families were victims of disease.

The individuals buried in Barrack Hill Cemetery were Ottawa's earliest settlers and lived alongside the founders of the nation's capital. They all endured the challenges of living in a frontier community. Life was made difficult with the changing seasons, living in the wilderness, diseases, and difficult living and working 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 Barrack Hill Cemetery, a burial site of great historical and archaeological significance.

Archaeological excavation of portions of Barrack Hill Cemetery in a small surface parking lot on the north side of Queen Street between Elgin and Metcalfe Streets and screening of redeposited soils from the excavation of the Parliament Station on the Confederation line were conducted in 2016. During this time, six 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.

A Site Disposition Agreement between the City of Ottawa and the appointed representatives, including the Archbishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Ottawa, the Executive Archdeacon of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa, and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa had been agreed upon with the initial finds in 2013. A new Site Disposition Agreement between the same representatives and the private landowner for the surface parking lot was also negotiated, allowing the same process to be followed for all individuals recovered from the cemetery.

In accordance with the Site Disposition Agreements 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 agreements 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 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian burial practices.

Following 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 in 2013 and following these finds, 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 and extending further in redeposited soils from the cemetery. Any individuals discovered during subsequent construction will be respectfully reinterred following the same protocol.

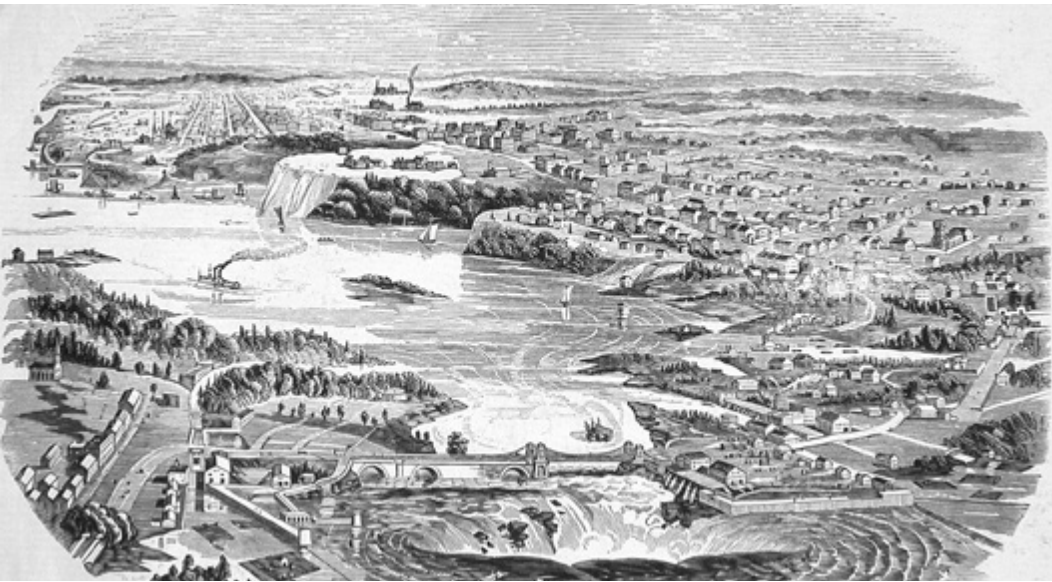


# Analysis of Barrack Hill Cemetery Remains

---

## Canadian Museum of History

Scientific archeological analysis, conducted by experts from the Canadian Museum of History, revealed interesting results. A minimum number of 30 individuals were recovered in 2016 from the remnants of Barrack Hill Cemetery, consisting of mainly working-class citizens, and including seven children and 23 adults.



Thirteen primary burials and one secondary burial were excavated. Three of the primary burial features held no human remains. Two of the burials only contained foot bones and one burial held a single hand, tucked beneath the collapsed coffin wall, apparently missed when the individual was collected for reburial when the cemetery was 'moved'. The remaining seven burials contained anywhere from complete to partial skeletons. The secondary burial, held in the remnants of a metal box, included the partial and fragmented remains of a minimum of 15 individuals. At least five more individuals are represented by single bones and bone fragments found during the screening of

soil collected from various locations on Queen Street. Residual materials found with some individuals included hair, pins, coffin wood and hardware, a button, and possible fragments of a walnut.

The remains were found in various states of preservation with some perfectly preserved and others highly fragmented. Most of the remains exhibited some level of deterioration. Of the 23 adults, 11 were identified as male or possible male, four were identified as female or possible female, and the sex of eight of the individuals was not identifiable. Evidence shows that the adult males ranged in height from 5'5" to 5'8" while females fell within the 4'9" to 5'1" height range. Indicators of childhood stress, poor dental hygiene, infections, trauma, and repetitive movements were present.

The analysis identified evidence of difficult lives, including indications of malnutrition and bodily stress, and skeletal degeneration sometimes associated with hard labour. The lack of evidence for medical and dental interventions, burial good inclusions, and coffin plates all indicate that these people were working class citizens of the burgeoning city of Bytown.

## Forensic Facial Reconstruction

---

### Sarah Jaworski

Among the remains discovered at the secondary burial was a well-preserved skull of a 30 to 45-year-old white male. The cranium was complete and only missing a few teeth and the mandible was missing the right condylar process, part of the temporomandibular joint, as well as some teeth. The condition of the skull allowed for a 3D facial reconstruction of the remains to be created out of clay.

The initial stage for the reconstruction included staff from the Canadian Museum of History conducting a digital scan of the



remains to enable creation of a 3D printed copy of the skull. This technological approach allowed for the remains to rest respectfully at the Canadian Museum of History while the reconstruction was carried out using the 3D printed skull. The use of a 3D printed skull for the reconstruction also ensured that the full reinterment of the remains would be possible.

The Manchester method of reconstruction was used, in which the artist uses both tissue depth pegs on 34 locations on the skull and builds facial muscles and additional anatomy before sculpting the remaining facial features. Each facial feature is sculpted by looking at the bony features of the skull. For example, the eye lids follow the shape of the supraorbital rim, or the upper rim of the eye socket. As the facial reconstruction progresses, the sculpture transforms from a copy of the human remains to a portrait of the individual before his death. The reconstruction of what this individual may have looked like allows viewers to get a glimpse of a resident from the Bytown community in the 1800s.



# A New Resting Place

---

## Beechwood Funeral, Cemetery and Cremation Services

Visitors to Beechwood Cemetery are often astonished to learn that the cemetery's history extends all the way back to a long-forgotten cemetery in Bytown. Barrack Hill Cemetery was located at the heart of the old city, being the final resting place of those early Bytown pioneers and their families. It has been closed for centuries, only to be discovered by those in modern Ottawa.

The people of Barrack Hill Cemetery, although nameless, have found a place of honour among the other great city builders buried at Beechwood Cemetery. This new Barrack Hill Cemetery within Beechwood Cemetery lies beside the National Military Cemetery where thousands of people walk by and read the plaque identifying these early Bytown residents' place in Ottawa's history.

Visitors take a moment and think of the hardships these people endured or mention their own connections to Bytown or Barrack Hill Cemetery. Most importantly, visitors find comfort in the fact that the City of Ottawa, Beechwood Cemetery and other partners have taken care to protect and respectfully reinter the people of Barrack Hill Cemetery.

Barrack Hill Cemetery has become central to the history of Beechwood. With every tour and every group, stories of this forgotten cemetery are shared for these early Bytown residents should be celebrated and always remembered.



# 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 private ecumenical burial at Beechwood Cemetery was held in early October 2019 to reinter 29 of the 30 individuals. A private, respectful, ecumenical funeral service including music, poetry, hymns, prayers and a final committal blessing contemporary to the early 1800s to reinter the final individual took place on October 6, 2019, in the Sacred Space at Beechwood Cemetery.

A permanent, commemorative plaque was installed at the gravesite at Beechwood Cemetery, Canada's National Cemetery for the first reinterment in 2017. A secondary plaque, indicating the number of individuals being reinterred on October 6, 2019 has been installed at the gravesite. While the identity of these individuals is not known, 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 a powerful motivation and comfort for them in daily life in early Bytown. They most certainly lived by Ottawa's current motto "Advance-Ottawa."

# “As Day Begins to Wane”

By Helena Coleman

ENCOMPASSED by a thousand nameless fears,  
I see life's little day begin to wane,  
And hear the well-loved voices call in vain  
Across the narrowing margin of my years;  
And as the Valley of the Shadow nears,  
Such yearning tides of tenderness and pain  
Sweep over me that I can scarce restrain  
The gathering flood of ineffectual tears.

Yet there are moments when the shadows bring  
No sense of parting or approaching night,  
But, rather, all my soul seems broadening  
Before the dawn of unimagined light—  
As if within the heart a folded wing  
Were making ready for a wider flight.

Helena Jane Coleman (1860–1953) was a music teacher, poet and writer. She was born in Newcastle, near the Bay of Quinte, Ontario, the daughter of Francis Coleman and Emmeline Maria Adams, the sister of Albert Evander and Arthur Philemon Coleman. She resided with her brother, A.P. Coleman, in Toronto and spent summer holidays at their cottage in the Thousand Islands (“Pinehurst”). She died, unmarried, in Toronto.

Coleman was educated at Ontario Ladies' College, Whitby, where she received the Gold Medal in Music, and became the Head of its Music Department (1880–1892). She took a one-year leave of absence to pursue post-graduate studies in music in Berlin, Germany.

Coleman contributed poems to many Canadian and American journals. She was a member of the Author's Society, the Canadian Author's Association, the Rose Society, and the University Women's Club in Toronto. She did not publish under her own name until the release of *Songs and Sonnets* in 1906. Her short stories and articles continued to appear under pseudonyms long afterwards.

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

---

**Beechwood Funeral, Cemetery and  
Cremation Services**

**Canadian Museum of History**

**Cumberland Heritage Village Museum**

**Paterson Group**

**Sarah Jaworski**

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Ottawa**

**The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa**

**The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of  
Ottawa**

**Images courtesy of:**

Bytown Museum – pages 1, 11

Library and Archives Canada – cover, pages 8, 10

McCord Museum – pages 2, 5

Paterson Group – page 4

Sarah Jaworski – page 7

