

THE

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# BEECHWOOD WAY

MAGAZINE

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BEECHWOOD



## Letter from the editor

**SPRING IS FINALLY HERE** and it's when Beechwood truly comes to life. Our flowers are growing, our gardens are becoming colourful and bright. We will be welcoming back walkers, families, friends and our local community to come and explore the colourful displays of flowers. And then in May, our tulip displays will bring people from around the region to see and explore.

As for the last 150 years, people will enjoy our amazing floral displays. Interestingly, as early as 1874 (only a year after we were founded), local newspapers were encouraging people to visit. We welcomed it then, and we welcome our community now.

The 150th anniversary has given us an opportunity to look back and celebrate our history. More importantly, it has allowed us to celebrate the stories that have made us, the people, communities, groups and national organizations that have chosen us.

We have so many interesting events coming or currently underway. We are so proud of the programming this year and really feel that we are sharing our passion for our grounds, for our community. Our programming is free and can only be offered because of our donors who have been so kind to support us and continue to help us build for the next 150 years.

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue and take part in the many activities in the coming year.

Stay up to date with Beechwood by following us on social media.

- Facebook (@BeechwoodCemetery, @NMCBeechwood, @cimetiereBeechwood)
- Twitter (@BeechwoodOttawa)
- Instagram (@beechwoodcemetery)
- YouTube (Beechwood Cemetery)

Thank you,

**Nicolas McCarthy**

*Director of Marketing,*

*Communications and Community Outreach*

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Visit us online to learn more about Beechwood, the National Cemetery of Canada, and read back issues at: [www.beechwoodottawa.ca](http://www.beechwoodottawa.ca)

**We want your feedback on how we are doing!**

**Contact:** Erika Wagner at [foundation@beechwoodottawa.ca](mailto:foundation@beechwoodottawa.ca)

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# 150th Kick-off

by Nicolas McCarthy,

*Director of Marketing, Communications & Community Outreach*

**TO CELEBRATE THE INCREDIBLE** milestone of service to the Ottawa community for 150 years, Beechwood Cemetery is celebrating with a free community event each month of 2023. Beechwood is proud to commemorate our history by thanking our families with events that bring joy to the grounds. Below is a recap of the events that have happened so far and what is coming up next!

None of this could have been possible without the families — the ones that continue to visit the grounds and help transform this space into one of national significance.

Every month, we hold our signature events and share images and research on social media.

## **JANUARY**

### **FREE SLEIGH RIDES**

Starting off with a Victorian Winter, Beechwood hired John Cundell Stables to give visitors sleigh rides around the snow-covered grounds. Drawn by two beautiful horses, attendees climbed onto a wooden sleigh decked out in bells. The fresh snow clung to the trees as those who came got to experience Beechwood from a different vantage point. The peaceful and surprisingly warm day brought joy to all those who came.

### **ICE CARVING**

Beechwood was proud to unveil ice sculptures of our 150th logo and Echo the Fox, our companion teddy for children during funeral services. The ice sculptures are a fitting tribute to all those buried at Beechwood, who helped transform Bytown into the vibrant city of Ottawa.

Beechwood was proud to commission the Canadian Ice Carvers Society, the founders of the NCC's Crystal Garden International Ice Carving Competition to create the works of art.

We shared video about the original Beechwood founder, each video celebrating their role in the community and within Beechwood.



## FEBRUARY

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

During Black History Month, Canadians celebrate the many achievements and contributions of Black Canadians and their communities who, throughout history, have done so much to make Canada a culturally diverse, compassionate and prosperous country.

On February 23, those who attended heard stories of Ottawa's Black Community, those buried within our cemetery grounds and the guest speaker Councillor Rawlson King who shared his experience at City Hall. Newly re-elected, Councillor King provided an inside look at his journey to City Hall, his first term, the major events he navigated and his re-election.

We share so many stories about Ottawa's Black Community from Author, Playwright and School Dr. Lorris Elliot, to Ethnocultural Equity Leader Isis Minerva to the First African-Canadian Career Flying Officer Lt. Colonel Kenneth Jacobs and so many more.

## MARCH

### IRISH HISTORY MONTH

On March 28, those who attended this event heard a historical review of early Irish Anglo-Irish figures, which led to Wellington and the foundation of Bytown, with a survey of Irish heritage sites, which when combined helped to tell the Irish immigration story in the 19th century.

The guest speaker was His Excellency Dr. Eamonn McKee, Ambassador of Ireland to Canada, Jamaica and The Bahamas. Dr. Eamonn C. McKee is an Irish diplomat, currently Ambassador to Canada, Jamaica and The Bahamas.

In a packed Sacred Space, the Ambassador shared the complicated colonial history of both Canada and Ireland, and how the newly arrived Irish played a role in this colonial history. The talk looked at the role of the Irish in the creation of Canada and how many of the national figures are descendants of Ireland.





The stories shared celebrated the Irish history that is so intertwined in the fabric of our nation.

We shared research about a Napoleonic War Veteran, George William Bake, the legacy of the Hurdman Brothers and the Legendary spy Frank Pratt, who will have a complete article in the fall issue.

## **APRIL**

### **PHOTO DISPLAY**

After a thorough investigation into the Beechwood Cemetery photo archives, a collection of 150 of the best photos were selected to be put into an outdoor walking display. Visitors had a chance to see some of the oldest and never before published photos, along with the most beautiful photos ever taken. Underneath each image was a description and date, much like what one would find at a museum. This photo collection was a rare look into the changing landscape of Canada's National Cemetery. We encourage everyone to come and take a walk and enjoy the display.

We are sharing great stories of people who were pioneers in the medical field here in Ottawa.

Make sure you visit Beechwood's Instagram or YouTube for these great videos.



# The Foundation of History

by Erika Wagner,

Fundraising and Program Coordinator

**TWENTY-TWO YEARS AGO**, the Beechwood Cemetery Foundation was created to protect this historic land and bring light to those whose accomplishments had faded with time. We keep their stories alive through the Foundation's programming, both with the tour program, where interacting with the public can reveal lost stories brought forth from loved ones or avid historians, and with our Great Canadian Plaque Program. The GCPP is a fantastic way to allow the public a way to learn history by walking the grounds.

In recent years, the Foundation has taken action to be more inclusive in our celebration of history. With new resources to be able to dive deeper into the past, information about women, those from diverse international backgrounds, Indigenous and LGBTQ+ have come to the forefront of our research. Beechwood is proud of the steps to add more inclusivity to our historical educational tools.

None of this could be possible without the generous support of our donors. The donations are what allow Beechwood to continue to share history with the local community; to host groups for free and promote the Canadian spirit, a mosaic of diversity and inclusion. Our plaques do come at a cost but enrich the experience of those who wander our grounds. This year, thanks to our generous donors, Beechwood was able to purchase four new historical plaques.

With each plaque comes an unveiling ceremony. Everyone from the community is invited and encouraged to come. It means the world to the families of the plaque recipients, and often is a fantastic way to learn about those that directly impacted and shaped our lives.

With your continued support, Beechwood will continue to add to the GCPP, growing in inclusion, diversity and honouring those who have earned the right to be celebrated.

If you know of someone buried at Beechwood who earned incredible accomplishments, please reach out to [foundation@beechwoodottawa.ca](mailto:foundation@beechwoodottawa.ca) to share their story. We collect and treasure each story in our Historical Portrait Book, which is an educational tool many use to find and study history. As we continue to fundraise, Beechwood will continue to add plaques throughout the property.

This year we will be unveiling plaques for these incredible individuals:

- **Bertha Wilson**  
– Supreme Court Justice

**May 14th @1:00 pm**

- **Isis Officer**  
– Race relations Officer with the Ottawa Police
- **Margarite 'Grete' Hale**  
– Community Leader
- **Joseph Currier**  
– One of Beechwood's founding members





# An RCMP Tradition - Maintaining the Legacy

Kevin M. Mole

*Committee Chair, RCMP National Memorial Cemetery at Beechwood*

**THIS YEAR 2023** marks the 150-year anniversary of both Beechwood Cemetery and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). Each founded in 1873, Beechwood has been the final resting place for hundreds of former Mounted Police officers and their families dating back over 130 years to the time of the original North-West Mounted Police.

On dedicated grounds within Beechwood, the RCMP National Memorial Cemetery welcomes the Canada-wide RCMP community of serving, former employees, veterans and their families. On a beautiful hilltop setting, this site is framed with a grand Bison entrance, a Main Monument, flagpoles, several intricate fixtures, the Fallen Member Cenotaph & Honour Roll, a parade square and 5 main pathways that traverse the cemetery. RCMP families, members and groups gather regularly to attend services, memorials, troop-reunions and to join with the public in reflecting on the many sacrifices and achievements of those who serve, have served and will serve in the future.

To honour that proud tradition and help maintain that legacy, a group of volunteers representing RCMP Veterans and the RCMP have worked closely with Beechwood to develop the Commemorative Pathway Plaque Program. It is a small but significant initiative that studies the history of the RCMP (NWMP and RNWMP), records many of its important people, groups, events and key accomplishments and then memorializes them on informative plaques that are placed along the pathways in this cemetery.

In addition to bilingual inscriptions and images, each commemorative plaque is equipped with a near field communication (NFC) device. The NFC allows visitors and students who have smartphones and tablets the opportunity to link directly to a website that provides additional explanation and detail on the subject background.

In the initiative's first year 2019, commemorative plaques were installed along the pathways to honour three Mounted Police members who were recipients of the Victoria Cross of Valour – awarded for acts of extreme bravery in the presence of the enemy.



- Sgt. Major Arthur Herbert Lindsay Richardson of the North-West Mounted Police – South African War (July 5, 1900) is the only-ever serving member to be awarded the Victoria Cross. The Sgt. Major’s plaque was installed on the cemetery’s Parade Square.
- Cst. Michael John O’Leary discharged from the Royal North-West Mounted Police in order to return to Ireland and re-join the Irish Guard for the War effort – First World War (February 1, 1915). Cst. O’Leary was highly decorated having fought in both World Wars. He also served with the Ontario Provincial Police.
- Cst. George Randolph Pearkes discharged from the Royal North-West Mounted Police in order to join the Canadian Army for the War effort – First World War (October 31, 1917). Throughout his military career, he served in several high command positions including Second World War appointments as Major General - 1st Canadian Division, Officer Commander in Chief - Pacific Command before retiring from the military. Cst. Pearkes later went on to become Canada’s Minister of National Defence and the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia.

Other commemorative plaques have been installed along the pathways in recent years to recognize:

- (2020) the role of the No1. Provost Company (RCMP) of the 1st Canadian Infantry Division and the 12 RCMP members who were killed while serving in the Second World War,
- (2021) the 60th anniversary of RCMP Civilian Members and their critical importance in providing technical support to policing operations across Canada, and
- (2022) the value of Public Service Employees in providing administrative support to the RCMP across Canada.

And this year 2023, planning is underway to unveil commemorative plaques that honour:

- RCMP 2nd Man – the hundreds of spouses of RCMP members working in remote and isolated detachments who regularly volunteered to carry out police support functions (May 23rd).
- Cross of Valour – the late Cpl. Robert Teather received Canada’s highest civilian honour for bravery in a 1981 underwater rescue in British Columbia (May 28th), and
- South African War 1900/02 – the North-West Mounted Police and its members’ service fighting in that War (Veterans’ Week, November 5th).





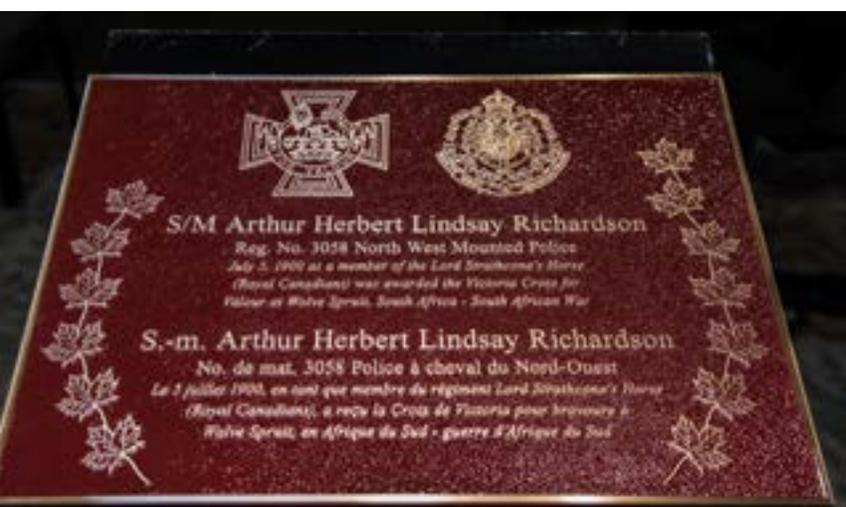
The committee continues its work to identify and review other historically important RCMP subjects. The list includes:

- Various involvement and actions in the War(s)
- Service to Indigenous communities
- Musical Ride
- RCMP Guidon
- Concert & Showband
- International Policing CIVPOL
- 1920 Dominion Police amalgamation
- Voyage of the St. Roch
- Air Services
- Covert/Undercover Operators
- Northern Service
- Marine Division
- International Liaison

Another important project currently underway will identify the nearly 300 Mounted Police members who are interred throughout the greater Beechwood Cemetery. A commemorative plaque will then be erected within the RCMP National Memorial Cemetery listing each of their names, regimental numbers and dates. An inscription will declare that these members and their service are not forgotten, and that their memories are being brought together to be recognized along with their colleagues at that site. Families of some of these members have indicated that they would receive great comfort from this gesture.

The committee continues to seek suggestions for meaningful subjects to consider for the plaques, raise donations to support the costs of the program and with the help of Beechwood staff, organize commemoration ceremonies.

Through the efforts of this collaboration, we hope to raise awareness of the importance of the RCMP, the dedication of its men and its women throughout Canada's history, and to maintaining the legacy of those who have come before us.



# John Egan

## Lumber Baron, Politician, Pillar of the Community

by Michelle Mondoux,  
*Aylmer Heritage Association*



**JOHN EGAN WAS BORN** in Lissavahaun, County Galway, Ireland, on November 11, 1811, in the wake of the widespread uprising of 1798. Daniel O’Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell, whose relentless efforts had led to some measure of emancipation for Irish marginalized by British laws, influenced young lads to seek a better life elsewhere.

It was no different for young John Egan whose father had died when he was nine years old. His older brother inherited the land and it is possibly then that he decided to try his luck in America. Many residents of County Galway had left for Lower Canada, and John Egan heard the call of the timber in the North American forest.

Soon after he arrived in the area in 1830, Thomas Durell, a leading lumber merchant in Clarendon Township, hired him as a depot clerk. His job consisted of purchasing supplies for the growing number of lumber camps and handling administrative duties.

He had a plan: to adapt to North American customs, to learn as much as he could and to become the wealthiest man in the region. Charming and elegant with exceptional oratorical qualities, he expressed himself in a most powerful tone of voice.

With his horse and box-sleigh caparisoned in the French-Canadian manner, he wore a grey capot, a sash, a toque, moccasins and mitts. He soon became a familiar figure in the surroundings as he made his way through the settlement, buying hay, oats, pork and other commodities needed for the shanties.

Having acquired experience and developed a network of friends and colleagues, he saw the advantages of settling in Aylmer. He opened a general store on Principale Street to supply lumber merchants and loggers. He also started in the trade himself.

In early 1837, he formed the John Egan and Company at Aylmer with Henry LeMesurier, a leading timber exporter at Québec, William Henry Tilstone and Haviland LeMesurier Routh. They exported lumber to Europe. He employed 3,500 men in 100 shanties and bought necessary supplies from farmers such as 1,600 oxen and horses.

With his vast timber concessions, John Egan founded the villages of Eganville, Ontario, and Quyon, Québec.

Egan protected his friends and if you said anything to jeopardize their reputation he took the means to correct the situation. Such was the case with Andrew Powell, a Bytown lawyer. Powell had stated publicly that One of Egan’s intimate friends was no gentlemen. In the summer of 1838, he invited Powell to settle the case by duel. Shots were fired, they both missed and Powell withdrew his remarks.

Along with Charles Symmes, Robert Conroy and Harvey Parker, they financed Aylmer’s first grist mill and sawmill in 1839. By the 1840s, his store had become the largest in town. A devout Anglican, he gave generously to the establishment of Christ Church in Aylmer.

Nine years after arriving in Lower Canada, then 28 years of age, he married Anne Margaret Briscoe Gibson of Bytown on August 13, 1839. Born in Tipperary, she was the eldest daughter of Captain William Gibson.

John and Ann Margaret had ten children, two of whom died in infancy. Their first son, William James, was born on August 16, 1841, followed by Louisa, John LeMesurier, Frances Anne Matilda, William Francis, Henry Kelly, Amelia, Sarah, Aurelia and Adele Josephine.

In 1840, he had a large, elegant stone mansion built on Principale Street at the east entrance to Aylmer. Named Mount Pleasant, the house with its large windows and inserts of bird’s eye crystal, its oak-panelled rooms and ballroom, was among the most prestigious in the area.

Built on 30 acres of land purchased from John Wright in 1840, the Georgian-style mansion had a balanced facade, 2 ½-storey grey stone with quoining of dressed stone, a pitched roof and side gables. The large front windows with multi-pane tops, a double front door with a flat transom and side lights were matched by an inner vestibule door of equal style.

Visiting Governors-General and other dignitaries and decision-makers were entertained there at lavish banquets and balls. Mr. and Mrs. Charles Symmes, Robert Conroy, Harvey Parker, Joseph Aumond, Dr Peter Church, Judge McCord, Charles Devlin, Thomas Bingham Prentiss, Alexandre Bourgeau, William McLean, Ruggles Wright, George Bolton, Robert Klock, Henry Friel, Franklin Bronson, Nicholas Sparks and others were on the guest lists.

He was the first warden of the Sydenham District in 1841 and a justice of the peace. In 1846 he was appointed Major in the Battalion of the Ottawa Militia commanded by Ruggles Wright. He served as Lieutenant-Colonel of the 4th Battalion. He was also a committee member of the Bytown Emigration Society presided by Thomas McKay.

He served as a member for both Pontiac and Ottawa Counties at the Legislative Assembly in Quebec City. On August 30, 1847, he was chosen as Aylmer’s first Mayor.

John Egan died of Cholera while in Quebec City at the age of 46 years. He was buried in the west side lawn on his property, which had been consecrated as a private burial ground.

When Robert H. Wright bought the property in 1903, the burial ground was deconsecrated and his remains were relocated to Beechwood.