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Letter from the editor

A 150TH ANNIVERSARY is a milestone moment, and Beechwood Cemetery has celebrated and honoured every one of the 150 years. We have had the opportunity to welcome new groups for new events and seen historical groups come back and celebrate together.

For the first time since 1938, family, friends and fellow Freemasons came together to honour those in the Freemason's Burial Plot. Beginning with a short walk past former Grand Masters, the ceremony took place in front of the monument honouring Masons who have passed.

We also unveiled the 150 Pictures A Visual Walkthrough, 150 Years of Beechwood Cemetery. This Picture Gallery celebrates the history of Beechwood from the very beginning in 1873 to the present day. The 150 curated images provide a visual history from the very first mention of Beechwood Cemetery in 1863 on the MacKay Estate Map to the unveiling of the military's Indigenous sacred symbols in 2022 to milestones in the development of the National Cemetery of Canada.

Spanning over 600 feet (182 metres), the display consists of 150 curated images printed on aluminum panels (2 feet tall by 3 feet long) installed on Section 112. Each image has a brief bilingual description. Beechwood invites everyone to come and visit this unique and meaningful display that celebrates our relationship with the communities we serve.

As September has arrived, our Annual Historical Tour will bring more visitors to Beechwood and they will learn about several people who have shaped Beechwood and truly make us A Place for the Living.

As always, we hope you enjoy this issue and take part in the many activities in the next few months. 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

We want your feedback on how we are doing!

Contact: Erika Wagner at foundation@beechwoodottawa.ca

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Beechwood Cemetery World Record Attempt

by Sarah Salter

OUR FAMILY ATTENDED the World Record attempt at Beechwood Cemetery. We were very excited to try and help set the World Record for chalk drawings. Our Nanny and Papa work at Beechwood Cemetery so it was cool to visit them at their work. When you walk through the cemetery it is so peaceful. They have beautiful gardens and we enjoyed exploring the various sections.

The chalk drawings created by others were amazing. Some of the drawings were so realistic and they felt like they were popping off of the pavement. We loved being creative with the chalk drawings we did. "I loved drawing the Beechwood 150 year sign" (Clara 13). "I loved drawing the backhoe and gator that my Papa drives" (Tessa 10). The whole event was super well organized and the staff was very helpful and kind. All of the other people creating the artwork were very friendly and respectful. There was even the radio station 101.7 there to play music while we drew. There was a lot of excitement around trying to break the record. We can't wait to hear if we broke it!





Calls to Action - Bryce Cedar Lights

by Erika Wagner

THE FIRST NATIONS CHILD & FAMILY CARING SOCIETY, alongside Beechwood Cemetery Foundation, gathered at Beechwood Cemetery to honour Dr. P.H. Bryce and shed light on the work that's yet to be done towards Truth and Reconciliation.

Dr. P.H. Bryce was a Canadian doctor and a leader in the field of Public Health who blew the whistle on the conditions of residential schools. In 1907, Dr. P.H. Bryce reported on how the conditions of the residential schools were leading to a high number of child deaths.

Unfortunately, the Canadian government chose to shelve his report and recommendations and Dr. Bryce was eventually ousted from public service. Over 100 years later in 2015, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued 94 Calls to Action to redress the legacy of the residential school system and advance reconciliation. As of 2023, just 13 of the 94 Calls to Action are completed.

Using string lights wrapped around two cedar trees next to Dr. Peter Henderson's Grave, the lights symbolize The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. The TRC issued the Calls to Action alongside residential school survivors in order to remedy the legacy of the residential school system and ensure that future generations of First Nations, Métis and Inuit children have opportunities to grow up safely at home, be healthy, get a good education and be proud of who they are. Lights lit orange symbolize the 13 completed Calls to Action and the clear lights symbolize those Calls to Action that remain uncompleted.

The Cedars for Bryce and 94 Calls to Action Lights will be a visual display allowing all those who come to visit Dr. P.H. Bryce's burial space to see a constant reminder that the 94 Calls to Action issued by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada have not been completed. Hopefully as time passes, more of the lights will change to orange as steps towards Reconciliation take place.

Learn about the 94 TRC Calls to Action at: https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/indigenous-people/aboriginal-peoples-documents/calls_to_action_english2.pdf





A History of The Ottawa Masonic Burial Plot in Ottawa, Ontario, at Beechwood Cemetery

by RW Bro. Allen B. Wright

THE MASONIC LODGE SYSTEM was first developed to, among other things, help socially and in benevolence toward its members and families. In 1855 in Ontario, when our Grand Lodge was formed, there was no public safety net within our communities in which anyone could rely. This was one of the prime motivators for those who joined the fraternity. Charity was, and is, an important concept taught to everyone initiated into the Order.

Up until the early 1960s, Canadians, for the most part, had no official help from public sources. Taking notice of Saskatchewan's health care reforms, brought about by Tommy Douglas's provincial government, the federal government under John Diefenbaker (a local mason) put together a national health care plan that was finally instituted by the next government leader, Lester Pearson.

Freemasons believe in charity, and the greatest form of charity, one mason toward another, is to aid in the final disposition of a brother's mortal remains when he has gone to the Grand Lodge Above.

In modern times it is hard to imagine the hardship placed on families when tasked with the preparation and transportation of the dead for a journey even to the next town prior to the widespread use of the automobile. The lack of understanding of disease transmission even led to an Ottawa Ordinance to only allow cemeteries to be outside the boundaries of the city. This added even further complexity to the problem. Even a cemetery, previously in Sandy Hill, was moved, and they primarily ended up at Beechwood, which was just outside the municipal boundary at the time. It stood to reason that local masons would step in to help avoid the forced impoverishment and distress of relatives when entrusted with a brother's care.

The Ottawa Masonic Board of Relief was constituted with the enactment of its bylaws on December 3, 1875. It helped masons and their families through many concerns, also including taking care of an indigent mason's burial when entrusted to their care. In January 1876, the Board bought the land in the new Beechwood Cemetery, which had been previously established in 1873, known as the "Masonic Burial Plot," costing \$350. The first burial seems to have happened in grave number 1, two years later. It is likely Beechwood was selected since most local masonic lodges met in downtown Ottawa and the cemetery had its office on Sparks Street, in the heart of the city. Interestingly, while never a mason, Tommy Douglas also rests in another part of Beechwood Cemetery.

The idea of establishing a District-wide Masonic Burial Plot was not original

to Ottawa, however our example pre-dates the pattern of similar likenesses found in Toronto and Sarnia. The initiative seems to have originated in the United States in the latter half of the 19th century. The earliest I have found of this masonic practice was a monument found in New York State unveiled in 1872.

The Masonic Burial plot at Beechwood is in section 37, lot number 83. It is 20 feet (6.1m) east to west and 50 feet (15.2m) north to south. It has been used exclusively for indigent masons. Name markers are not part of the service provided by the Board to protect the privacy of a brother who may have distressingly died in poverty. There have been some exceptions to our long-held practice of not publicly identifying those within the gravesite or joining other family members. There has been newspaper reports, probably placed by family members, reporting specific burials, and one family has had a marker placed in the grass and in one other case, at the expense of her family, the wife of a departed brother, after pre-deceasing her, had her ashes deposited next to him. While the Plot has space for 24 full casket burials, only cremated remains are interred, thereby making room for 750, all placed in an easterly orientation. There are fewer than 100 in total laid to rest at the plot as of the end of 2022, most of them prior to the 1940s. However, there have been a few laid to rest there into the 2010s.

On Thursday, May 31, 1888, at the conclusion of a Grand Lodge Communication, held at the Byward Market Building in Ottawa, the Deputy Grand Master led a large delegation of masons and their families to Beechwood Cemetery to unveil a monument on the plot land.

The report discovered in the Ottawa Citizen of Friday, June 1 states:

“The scheme of a Beechwood burial plot was inceptioned by the late Right Worshipful Bro. Kerr, who, in conjunction Bro. E. D. Parlow, Chairman of the Burial Plot Committee, and Bro. S. W. H. Baldwin, Secretary Treasurer, were largely instrumental in carrying the scheme to a successful issue, being ably assisted by the following brethren, also members of the committee, viz:

H. P. Webb, Builders Lodge, A. Walsh, Prince of Wales, A. Perriton, Eddy Lodge, W. C. Teague, Fidelity, And, Thomas Kennedy, Chaudière Lodge

Some dozen of the deceased brotherhood have already been buried in the plot. The extra cost of the plot and monument is in the vicinity of \$2000 (almost \$63000 in 2023 dollars). It is one of the most tasteful and imposing structures in the cemetery and is composed of two heavy granite bases surmounted by stonework bearing the words “Masonic Burial Plot” and various emblems of the Order, upon which rests the altar, with a volume of the sacred law open thereon, surrounded by four polished red granite columns, which support the upper part, upon which also are inscribed various emblems. The whole is surmounted by a Polished granite globe symbolical of the university of masonry.”

Reports of the unveiling of the 13 feet (4m) tall by 4 feet (1.2m) wide monument at the Masonic Burial Plot, as well as the consecration of new lodge facilities and an “At Home” held on the same day, can also be found in the 1888 Grand Lodge Proceedings:

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In addition to the ceremonies of Consecration and Dedication reported herewith, a large number of brethren assembled in the afternoon of the same day and went out to Beechwood Cemetery where the beautiful monument on the Masonic Burial Plot was unveiled, and an excellent address was given to the brethren and the public present by R. W. Bro. Walkem. In the evening of the same day an “At Home” was held in the Masonic Hall, attended by fully a thousand friends of the brethren. The day’s proceedings wound up with a banquet in honor of Grand Lodge.

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Probably the most important Masonic event of the year, so far as the Capital is concerned, was the consecration and dedication of the new Masonic Hall, on May 31st. A special communication of Grand Lodge was held, and in the presence of over two hundred city and visiting brethren, R. W. Bro. R. T. Walkem, D. G. M., performed the solemn duties devolving upon him in a most impressive manner. The new Temple, for such it may well be designated, was built by Bro. E. Wallace, and has been leased from him by the city Lodges for the term of ten years. It contains a large Lodge room, handsomely furnished, with commodious anterooms, refreshment room, lavatories, etc., in fact possesses every convenience, and is certainly a hall of which the Ottawa District have every reason to be proud. Later in the day, R. W. Bro. Walkem, attended by a large number of brethren, proceeded to Beechwood cemetery, and there in the presence of several hundred spectators the acting Grand Master unveiled the beautiful monument recently erected on the Masonic burial plot.

Other details of note include the purchase of perpetual care for the site in 1921. Also, very interestingly, after the unveiling, and at least until the 1930s, where there is a sporadic journalistic record, that every year, on June 24th (St. John Baptiste Day – who is the patron saint of Freemasonry) the local brethren would have a remembrance service at the plot in memory of our past brethren. I wonder if there is an appetite to re-kindle that tradition? I intend to explore that possibility.

Thank you.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people who helped collect many of the details in this report:

- Our Grand Historian, VW Bro. Marshall Kern,
- The President of the Ottawa Board of Relief, VW Bro. Devon Fermyole
- Ottawa 1 District Historian, W Bro. Neil Lilllico and
- Past Master of Acacia Lodge and a staff member at Beechwood Cemetery, W Bro. Chris Wanna.
- I took the photo of the monument.

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