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### Joseph Scriven buried at Bewdley

# 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus' was written by Port Hope Man

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus," one of the world's best known religious hymns, was written in a small frame house in Port Hope, and the man who wrote it is buried a few miles north in a cemetery beside highway 28 near Bewdley.

He is Joseph Scriven, native of Seapatrick, County Down, Ireland.

And his song is known worldwide:

What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All sins and griefs to bear.  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer.  
Oh, what peace we often forfeit,  
Oh, what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer.

The hymn was discovered by a friend who visited him while he was sick in his little house in Port Hope. When the friend asked if he had written the poem that was on the table, Scriven replied that "The Lord and I did it between us."

It had been a long route that had brought Scriven to this area, and it was only after death, that his name was famous.

Educated at Trinity College in Dublin he was the son of a Royal Marines captain, and as a boy, had dreams himself of the military life and attended Addiscombe Military Seminary in London. But his health failed and he dropped plans for the military.

When his bride-to-be drowned the evening before their wedding, Scriven decided to make a new life, and came to Canada to forget. The year was 1844 and he was 25 years old.

Arriving in the wilds of the Rice Lake area, he taught school and became a tutor to the Pengeleleys who were at Rice

Lake. Some years later, a romance developed with Eliza Roche, but she died in 1855 after a brief illness and before they could be married. Twice, the ill-fated Scriven had lost his lady love.

It was Eliza's death that prompted the writing of What a

But by his death, his hymn had caught on, and those who knew him sensed that greatness had been amongst them. Scriven was buried in the Pengeley family cemetery and a large monument was erected at his grave, bearing the stanzas of the hymn. You can see it

### Hymn now sung around the world was written when Scriven's fiancée died

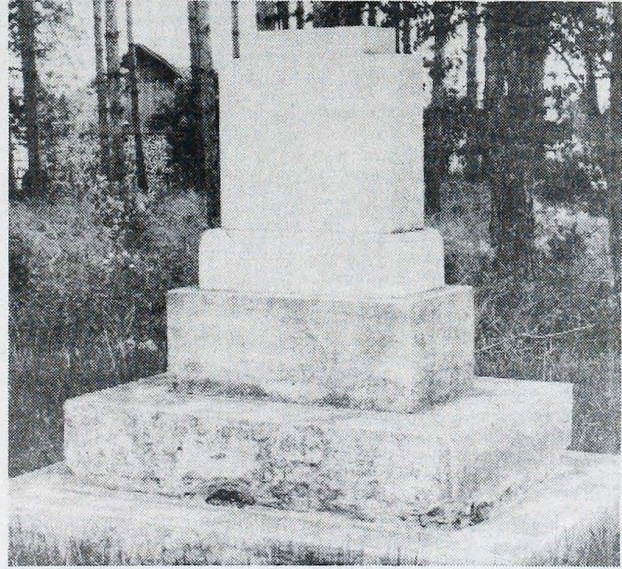
Friend We Have in Jesus. He sent a copy of it to his mother who was still living in Ireland.

As the years rolled by, he became more distressed. His health was poor, he was short of money and he had a fear of becoming physically helpless. On October 10, 1886, the people of Bewdley were shocked to find Scriven's body in the flume of a dam near Rice Lake. It was never known whether his death was an accident or suicide.

today on the east side of highway 28 just south of Bewdley village.

The hymn continues to inspire people throughout the world. It has been sung in Russia. It has been sung at the Vatican. It was sung at Terry Fox's funeral.

And here, where it was written, it has a special significance as a reminder of a man who kept his faith while his world closed in around him.



SCRIVEN'S STONE NEAR HWY. 28

## Scriven stamp proposed

A proposal that a stamp be issued in 1986 to honor Joseph Scriven, a Port Hope resident for many years and author of the hymn What A Friend We Have In Jesus, has been made to Canada Post Corp., according to the latest issue of the United Church Observer.

The proposal has been made by the Pembroke centre of the Royal Canadian College of Organists, the Observer story states. The centre has contacted the federal postal department, the president of Canada Post, and the headquarters of the College of Organists in search of support for the stamp.

A 1986 issue is requested because that year will be the 100th anniversary of Scriven's death, says the Evening Guide's Wesleyville correspondent, Edna Barrowclough.

Mrs. Barrowclough notes that she will make a motion that a letter be sent in support of the stamp when the executive committee of the East Durham Historical Society meets this week.

Scriven is buried in the private cemetery of the Pengeley family in Bewdley. The words of the famous hymn are inscribed on his tombstone.

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