

The Picton Times

WILLIAM TELLS

IT WAS CUSTOMARY, perhaps still is, to clean the grounds and decorate the plots of Ameliasburg cemetery on the second Wednesday of June each year. Many of those interested in the cemetery within a radius of 10 to 15 miles assembled to work on the plots and graves.

ABOUT 200 PERSONS could be seen carrying jugs of water and pots of flowers on this June day of remembrance, back in 1893. Young and old were busy, each trying to make his plot or the graves of his deceased relatives equal to those surrounding it.

THEY CAME WITH scythes, rakes, spades, lawn mowers, knives, sprinklers and every kind of agricultural or horticultural implement required for the purpose.

NOTWITHSTANDING the busy season there were representatives from the Dempseys, Piersons, Pecks, Sagers, Wannamakers, Weeses, Crouters, Onderdonks, Babcocks, Delongs, Roblins, Petersons, Pulvers, Cunninghams, Blakes, Roses, Bonters, Williamsons, Rosebushes, Rushes, Bryants, Prices, Mercers, Joneses, Welbanks, Harmons, Wilsons, Staffords, Brickmans, Alyeas and many others.

THE HISTORY of the cemetery might not be uninteresting. It is located on the east half of lot 93 in concession 1, of Ameliasburg. This lot was located and drawn by Capt. John Bleeker (grandfather of Thomas Howard Bleeker of Trenton) and by him sold to Capt. James Peck for \$400 on January 1 A.D. 1800.

ON THIS LOT John R. Bleeker was born, July 17, 1789 and was the first white child born in the township. Capt. Peck removed from Sophiasburgh to this lot, March 1st A.D. 1800. John R. Bleeker was born in a log house which was torn down about 1832.

CAPTAIN PECK and his family resided upon the lot till his death in August 1836, in his 78th year. In 1825, his wife died at which time, Mr. Peck gave one acre of land for burial purposes to the trustees and in 1893 David R. Pierson was the only surviving trustee and he was 95 at that time.

MR. PECK'S WIFE was the first white woman buried in this cemetery. At the death of Captain Peck, the east half of this lot became the property of his son, James Peck, who, as the first acre became filled up, donated another half acre adjoining for the same purpose. This also in the course of time became filled up.

JAMES PECK JR., died December 17, 1882, leaving this property to his son John G. Peck, who caused a survey and plan to be made of the old cemetery as well as an addition which he made composing present cemetery.

SINCE YEARS LATER there was a meeting called of the owners of plots which resulted in the formation of a voluntary association, and Mr. J. H. Peck was requested to prepare a constitution and by-laws for the future management of the association, and this was subsequently carried out. The management was entrusted to a president and vice-president and not less than five or more than nine directors.

THE FIRST PRESIDENT chosen was the late Peter Dempsey, who occupied that position until his death in 1890. Mr. J. H. Peck was elected first vice-president. The interest taken in making the cemetery more attractive increased from year to year. For eight or ten days prior to decoration day parties could be seen busily engaged in improving the graves of their respective great-grandfathers, great-grandmothers, grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters, where stones and monuments were erected with proper inscriptions of their respective births, age and deaths. Not a few of the people, advanced in years, purchased and erected monuments such as they desired, upon which could be cut or engraved the inscriptions when their time came.

THE SECOND WEDNESDAY of June each year was firmly established a decoration day for the cemetery and here each annual decoration day, folks from Trenton and Belleville, as well as from Ameliasburg and other places, appeared.

THE ANNUAL MEETING was also held on the same day. The officers elected in 1893 were: W. R. Dempsey, president; J. H. Peck, vice-president; D. H. Delong, J. W. Anderson, W. Peck, H. G. Stafford, W. H. Redner, G. Williamson, R. W. Harmon, R. N. Hunt, S. W. Dempsey, directors. W. H. Peck was secretary and Aaron Pierson, treasurer.

