

Quinns and friends gathering in Castleton

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The descendants of William and Elizabeth Quin will get together officially for the first time in three years this July 20.

William and Elizabeth emigrated from Glenavy Parish, County Antrim, Ireland in 1841 just prior to the years of the potato famines. Famine and cholera was prevalent. They left a country where the average lifespan was 19 years in rural areas. After a six-week sailing they stopped for a short time with their eight children in Port Hope before homesteading on a farm east of Hastings.

They spent their first winter huddled together in a shanty before building a 20 by 24 foot log house in the spring. Family member Roseanne Quinn has evidence that William paid 43 pounds, 15 shillings to the Canada Company after bargaining for the deed to his Percy Township land on December 1, 1842.

Ten years after they arrived they had managed to put 15 acres under cultivation, owned one cow, two sheep and seven pigs. The area was so recently settled that it was too far for the children to go to school.

As the children grew up they began to move away. Remarkably, the family knows where all eight children are buried. As recently as 1970 the family had a list of known-living relatives that included descendants of five of the eight children who survived childhood in that original family.

Half of them were buried in Norwood. Two died out west and William H. Quin the direct ancestor of Roseanne Quinn and John Carter, was buried in Castleton. A copy of his 1834 baptismal certificate is in Roseanne's files.

Roseanne relates the story of the family finding the grave sites of the original Quins. For 20 years Charles Quinn and his son Clifford scoured cemeteries throughout this area with Bill and Harold Quinn looking for the graves of William and Elizabeth. Their persistence was rewarded in 1968 when Clifford and Bill waded through deep snow in the Norwood Cemetery to find their resting place. At the same time they found the grave of Helena Quin, the first wife of Thomas McMurtry. After her death at age 23, Thomas married her younger sister Jane.

The family tree traces the family through five generations and notes the births and deaths and spouses of even those in the first two generations.

But this year's reunion will find mostly descendants of William H. Quin. Those from the early generations who moved west have been lost.



1998. They are highly detailed and draw a mural of farm life in simpler times.

In it are warm accounts of his grandparents. Clifford seemed to be in awe of his grandmother who could make a band and tie a sheaf of grain, throw it in the air and have another one tied before the first hit the ground.

His father's first car was a 1923 Ford Model T. Clifford remembers his dad driving home late one night from the Barnum and Bailey Circus in Belleville. The car acted up and his dad stopped at the Wooler Garage. No one was in so his dad got several gallons of gas and left the money inside the unlocked building for the owner.

The motor from their second car was removed and used for a sawing machine when the car was discarded.

Getting to town in the winter was a different experience as they hitched up the sleigh and went cross country for parts of the trip to sell produce.

Every March they would go to Castleton Pond and cut ice for summer use. The horses would pull loads of them back to the ice house where it would be buried and covered with sawdust. The ice lasted until August.

One year the horses fell through the ice. They were unhitched and pulled out safely.

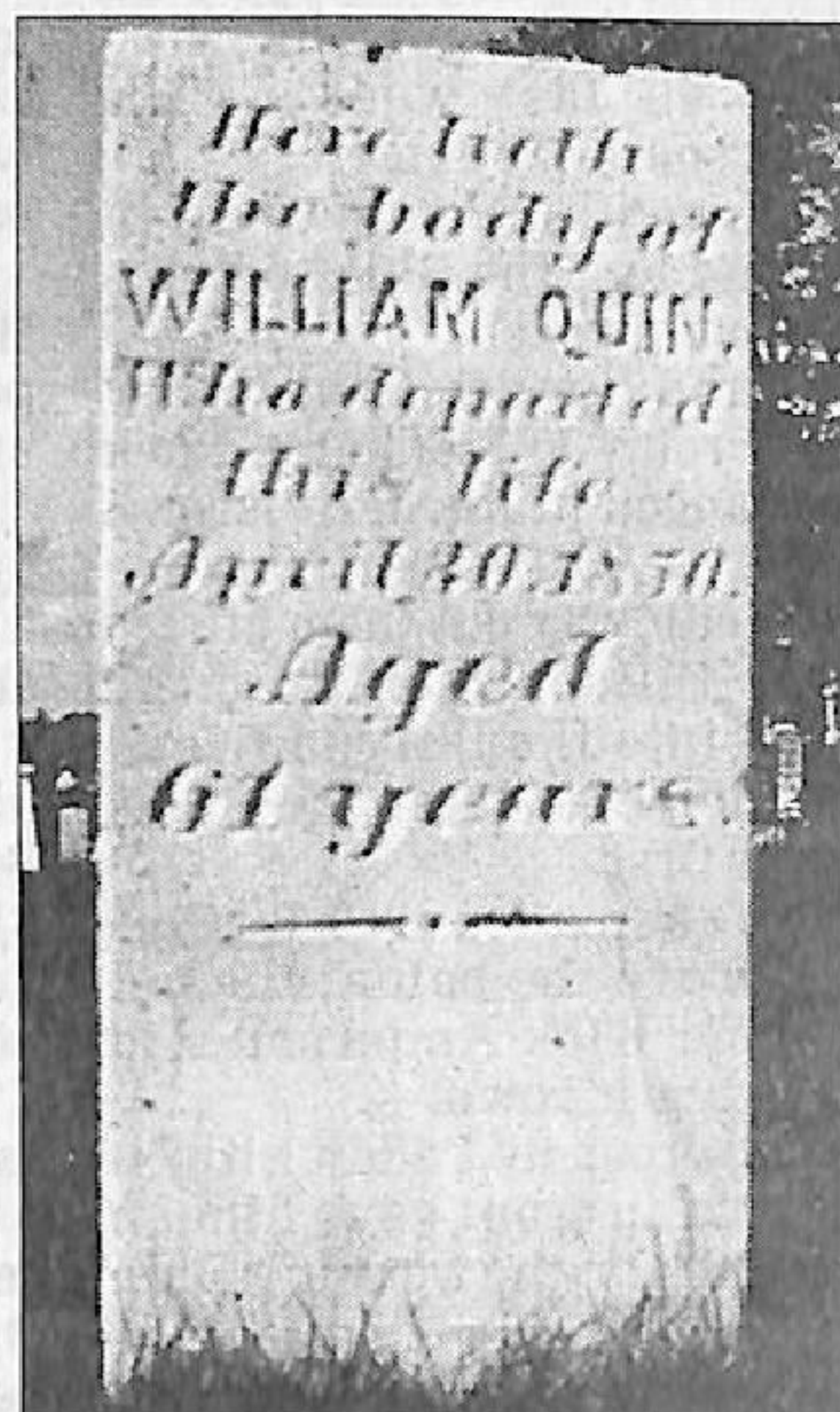
In 1942 tractors were used for the first time to cultivate. It was the beginning of the end for the draught horse. The early models ploughed about an acre an hour.



PHOTOS COURTESY ROSEANNE QUINN

LEFT: Daddy's girl - Roseanne Quinn in her father Clifford's arms in the early fifties.

ABOVE: William H. Quin and his wife Mary Ann sat for this picture sometime after they were married in 1865.



There are no known pictures of the original Quin parents, only this marker in the Norwood