

# Dedicate cairn at historic Providence Chapel cemetery

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SECOND SECTION

### Stone records 1813 date first burial

Special tribute was paid to the pioneers of Erin and Esqueving townships at a touching memorial service and dedication of a cairn at Providence Chapel burying ground, Sunday afternoon.

The old cemetery, at the corner of the Ninth Line and the Town Line between Erin and Esqueving townships, has been restored by committee from the district interested in preserving the Canadian heritage. A cairn made from the tombstones of early settlers enhances the burying ground which clustered around the site of Providence Chapel, an early place of worship which has vanished almost without a trace.

First burial in the cemetery was made in 1813, a date which conflicts with the official view that the first settlers in the area did not arrive until 1818. The tombstone of Jane Lynden, wife of Arthur Lynden, very emphatically declares however, that 1813 was the date of interment.

An error? Kathryn Sinclair, who is assisting her father, Norman Sinclair of R. R. 1, Georgetown, in compiling a history of the burying ground, doesn't know. But the Sinclairs would like to know any other information available on this picturesque corner between two townships.

Miss Bea Hilts, venerable and lively historian of the Ballinafad district, remembers passing Providence Chapel when she was a child but knows little else of the spot. What denomination was the chapel? Perhaps a clue exists on the same tombstone which records the first interment. Jane Lynden was a faithful member of the W. M. Church, which refers to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, forerunner of the present United Church of Canada. Saddlebag preachers came to the Ballinafad district in the early years of settlement to look after spiritual needs of the settlers.

It was appropriate then that Rev. K. C. Johnston, minister of Ballinafad United Church, should preside for the memorial service and dedication of the cairn. In a brief address, he looked back to the Old Testament - to Joshua - referring to the text where the prophet talks of stones having tongues to bear testimony to the past.

For the many gathered from places as far away as Frankfurt, Indiana, Kitchener, Erin, Linthouse, Georgetown, Islington, Ballinafad, Acton, Willowdale, Toronto, Hillsburg and Milton the stones did honor to their forefathers. The land for the burying ground was donated by Patrick McEnery. Appropriately again it was a grandson of the original settler, Bob McEnery of R. R. 1, Georgetown, who unveiled the cairn, made strong by the craftsmanship of Eugene Logan of Ballinafad.

Women from Ballinafad W. I. — Mrs. Jesse McEnery and Mrs. Bill McLean — unveiled the plaque on the restored gate to the cemetery. Ballinafad W. I. initiated the restoration of the grounds as a centennial project in 1967.

A committee was formed with Norman Sinclair as chairman

and including Mrs. Garnet Sinclair, Bob McEnery, Mrs. Bill McLean, Mrs. Jesse McEnery, F. J. Shortill, J. P. Kirkwood and Mrs. Frank Smith. They completed the project and planned Sunday's service, assisted by Kathryn Sinclair.

Many loads of fill were brought in to level uneven ground. Brush and small trees were cut down and the grass and weeds levelled. The cairn, fashioned from Tombstones, often battered by weather and neglect, presents a mosaic of pioneer life in the district.

A plaque for the cairn donated by Georgetown Jeweller John Boughton, who lives nearby, will be installed when finished.

Names familiar to the townships predominate among the tombstones. The recall the forefathers of the Anthonys, the Sinclairs, McLeans, McEnerys, Binnies, McKays and many others.

M.P.P. John Root, a fond collector of sables and history of the early days in Erin township, brought greetings from the province and spoke of the lessons to be learned from those hardy settlers who lived in a wilderness. There's been a great change for the better, Mr. Root said, and we owe so much of it to those who have gone before.

Erin township councillor Donald Matheson spoke in a similar vein of sacrifices and hardships the pioneers experienced in carving homes out of the wilderness. "The least we can do is keep the cemetery in good condition," he said, congratulating those who set the example for other burial grounds in the township which may need restoration.

Times may change, Mr. Matheson said, but we come into the world and go out, in the same manner as the settlers.

The congregation sang Faith of Our Fathers, living still and recited Chapter 44 from Ecclesiasticus. Let us now praise famous men and our fathers that begat us... and it ends the people shall tell of their wisdom and the congregation will show forth their praise.

Mrs. Norman Sinclair and Ernest McEnery sang an appropriate duet with Mrs. McEnery at the piano.

Friends, relations and acquaintances took the opportunity to meet under the maple trees on the quiet grounds after the ceremonies.

Last burial in the Providence Chapel burying ground was in 1962 — Catherine McKay.



BEA HILTS, ENERGETIC Ballinafad native and historian meets another avid history buff in M.P.P. John Root. Miss Hilts has written several accounts of Ballinafad's early days for The Free Press.—(Staff Photo)



SUNDAY'S MEMORIAL service at Providence Chapel burying ground was a mecca for people from as far away as Indiana. Many attended the service at the corner of the 9th line and the Erin-Esqueving border. Rev. K. C. Johnston presided.—(Staff Photo)



EARLIEST BURIAL in the Providence Chapel burying ground was in 1813 as this stone, pointed out by Kathryn Sinclair, shows. Official records however, show the first settlers arriving in 1818, five years later. No one has unravelled the mystery yet.—(Staff Photo)



PLAQUE installed on the restored gate was donated by Ballinafad W. I.—(Staff Photo)

CAIRN UNVEILED Sunday incorporates cemetery restoration, a centennial project of Ballinafad W.I., was taken over by a committee and put in shape again. Last burial was in 1962.—(Staff Photo)

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