

Group looking to restore DeForest Pioneer Cemetery

By Julie Slack
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

A historic Milton cemetery that's in need of repairs has garnered the attention of the Southern Ontario Paranormal Society (SOPS). SOPS will hold a fundraiser dubbed the DeForest Restoration Project on Sunday, Oct. 20 at the Halton Region Museum from noon to 4 p.m. Organizers hope to raise money at the event — that will feature guest speakers, feature film experts, a silent auction and film showings — to repair the DeForest Pioneer Cemetery.

Located on the north-west corner of Walker's Line at Derry Road, the pioneer cemetery has some 75 grave markers — most of them toppled over, some lying under foliage and brush — in a shaded, well-treed lot.

The cemetery was originally a family plot. One of the earliest markers that exists is that of Abraham DeForest (1767-1842). The cemetery grew to include other families in the surrounding areas close to the original DeForest homestead.

SOPS field researcher Linda Smigelsky said seeing the cemetery in its current condition saddens her.

Kneeling to wipe leaves and foliage off one

of the headstones, Smigelsky pondered the historic graves. Many of the markers simply say 'mother' while several others indicate that children are buried there.

One of the largest tombstones is that of William Campbell, who died July 16, 1886 at 75, and his wife Isabella Campbell, who died November 10, 1903 at 79. Several smaller stones lie around the grave and simply state 'child.' The cemetery got its name from founder Abraham DeForest and his wife Elizabeth, who emigrated from New York State in the early 1800s and made their home on a 200-acre parcel of land where the cemetery is located.

According to Burlington Historical Society records, Abraham's father Isaac, one of three brothers who went to New York from France in 1600, was a Loyalist and was imprisoned with his son. While they were attempting to escape, Isaac was shot, but Abraham escaped to Niagara-on-the-Lake before settling in what was then named Nelson. Records show Elizabeth received the Walker's Line and Derry Road land from the Crown.

Other stones in the cemetery include names like Thomson, Sweeney and Campbell. Fellow SOPS field researcher Steve Genier said based on his research, most are prominent families



Southern Ontario Paranormal Society's Linda Smigelsky and Steve Genier are organizing a fundraiser to help restore the DeForest Pioneer Cemetery. *Julie Slack / Canadian Champion*

from the Milton area from 1849 to 1910.

One of the larger headstones is that of George Shields, who died December 11, 1853. Another is for John Harris.

"The cemetery holds the remains of early settlers to this part of Ontario who forged a life and built a community here," he said. "Their place of rest should not be left in such a degraded condition."

Most recognizable to those driving past the

cemetery along Derry Road is likely the rusted, cast iron fence that encloses one visible gravestone of a Sweeney family member.

Councillor Cindy Lunau, who represents Ward 3 where the cemetery is located, said she applauds any organization that sets out to take on such a task.

The cost to repair and upgrade the cemetery isn't in the Town's budget, she said.

"It's a historic cemetery like so many of them and it's now owned and controlled by the Town," she explained, noting the Town is responsible for grass cutting, but not the restoration of the tombstones. "Work that needs to be done is outside of the normal budget."

Taking into consideration how much it cost for the restoration of a similar pioneer cemetery 10 years ago, the Ebenezer Cemetery, Lunau figures the restoration could cost \$75,000.

At Ebenezer, some 50 markers were restored and re-sleeved, which basically involved taking the limestone tombstone and placing stainless steel bars on the outside edges.

She said there are four other virtually abandoned cemeteries in her ward alone that she can think of.

A non-profit organization, SOPS has investigated ghost sightings at the DeForest Pioneer Cemetery in the past. SOPS founder, 23



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

• 905-878-7252 • TTY: 905-878-1657 • 1-800-418-5494 (Rockwood/Guelph)

www.milton.ca



Milton
Public
Library

Updates to the Master Plans:

Community Services Department
&
Milton Public Library

Community Input Event

October 22, 7:30 - 9:30 pm
Milton Sports Centre (Banquet Room)
605 Santa Maria Boulevard

Come to this session to provide input into key issues. Voice your opinions on how the Town of Milton and the Milton Public Library can improve your community facilities, programs and services.

Save a Seat

Contact Denise Black by Friday, October 18 (contact information on right)

Project Background and Updates

- Town of Milton: www.milton.ca
- Milton Public Library: www.mpl.on.ca

Contact Information

Town of Milton
Denise Black
Recreation Services Analyst
Phone: 905-878-7252, ext. 2539
E-mail: masterplans@milton.ca

Milton Public Library
Kari Veno
Marketing & Communications
Co-ordinator
Phone: 905-875-2665, ext. 3295
E-mail: masterplans@mpl.on.ca

Laurier Milton Lecture Series

October 2013 to May 2014

Wilfrid Laurier University is pleased to partner with the Town of Milton and the Milton Public Library to present the fifth Laurier Milton Lecture Series.

Upcoming lectures:

- **October 9:** Where Did All The Baby Bottles Go? Chemophobia, Precaution and Politics in Canada's Decision to List BPA as "Toxic"
- **November 13:** Superhero Comics and Why We Should Care About Them
- **December 11:** Globalization and the University

Presented by:

LAURIER
Inspiring Lives.



Milton
Public
Library

Funding partner: Milton Public Library
Supporting contributions from: Milton Canadian Champion, TVCOGECO and Cogeco

To Register: visit www.milton.ca or contact Milton Public Library at 905-875-2665.



Dates: Lectures are held the second Wednesday of every month from October 2013 to May 2014

Time: 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Location: Milton Centre for the Arts, 1010 Main St E

Admission: FREE