

*Gravesites of the
Mature Province:
Town and Country*



Canard Stone

Fort Alexander Anglican Church Cemetery, Sagkeeng First Nation

First Nations cemeteries in Manitoba can be disturbing places. First, you will often encounter scores, even hundreds, of completely anonymous markers, simple crosses or other evocative forms that distinguish each grave. These areas of a cemetery are usually older, with wooden markers lost to erosion or fire, and so the mass-produced metal markers are typically the only effective way to at least situate a gravesite. More recent sections of many First Nations cemeteries bear another level of sadness – these are areas whose markers are all too revealing, containing the names of a great many young people whose lives have been cut short by despair or violence. These can be truly heart-wrenching places. Where other cemeteries, with their many expensive markers, lull visitors into passive and objective viewers, many First Nations cemeteries demand that you feel the pain and the loss.

But even in the pain there is beauty. For example, at the Fort Alexander Anglican Church Cemetery, a small marker denotes the gravesite of Barbara Canard. This handsome little stone—remarkably of marble, and with a carefully sculpted capping feature—advises that she died on November 15, 1918. This was just four days after the Armistice ended World War I, and the date and Ms Canard's age (48 years) also suggests a cause of death – influenza. Her death was at the height of what is still called The Spanish Flu, which from late 1918 to early 1919 killed between 20 and 50 million people world-wide, many, like Barbara Canard, at the height of their healthy lives.



Besides being of marble—almost unheard of in a First Nations cemetery—Barbara Canard's stone is remarkable for its use of Cree words as part of the epitaph. A full translation of the text has been elusive, but the word at the end of the first line—*ish piming*—is a close Cree approximation for Heaven.



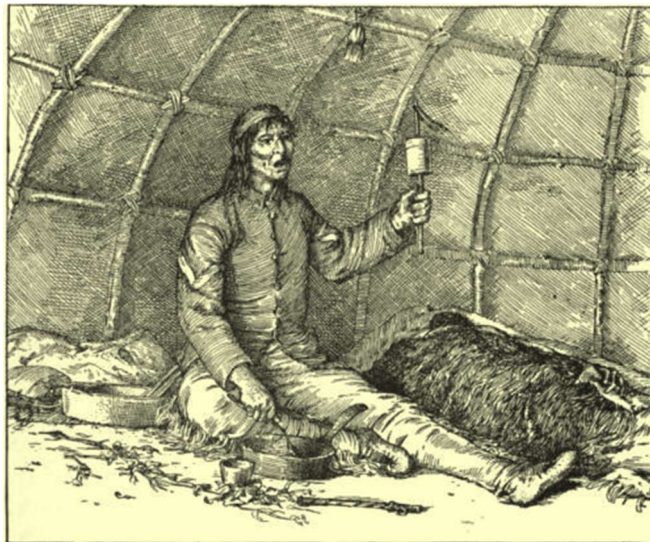
Victorian Funerary Traditions

ABORIGINAL BELIEFS ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE

In nearly all areas of North America, before the arrival of European explorers, fur traders, and especially missionaries, Aboriginal peoples held broadly similar beliefs about the human being having more than one soul – a "free" soul that can detach itself from the physical body, still maintain its individuality, and survive death; and a "vital" soul, often identified with the breath that animates the body and does not survive death.

The realm of the dead is characterized quite differently among Aboriginal societies. In many cultures, the otherworld is a lively copy of the present one, with many traditional Plains societies conceiving the deceased existing on a rolling prairie, hunting bison, living in tipis, feasting and dancing. In other Native American societies, the afterlife is a pale, gloomy realm. And the Inuit accept the notion of reincarnation as their primary concept of what occurs after death.

Early Aboriginal peoples were also influenced by the complex ideas and practices carried out by shamans, those special people who were looked to for their healing powers and also for their ability to mediate between the living and the world of the spirits – most often in the form of animals and the forces of nature, but sometimes also the spirits of the dead. This last aspect of shamanism was highly valued, as it was not uncommon for the deceased to require assistance when they couldn't find their way to the realm of the dead or if they wanted to remain around the family for some reason. When a lingering spirit began to bother the living the shaman was called in and, entering a trance state, convinced the deceased to leave and even conducted the spirit to the realm of the dead. In many cultures the Milky Way Galaxy was often viewed as the path souls take during this journey.



An Ojibway midew (shaman) in a mide-wiigiwaam (medicine lodge). This image courtesy Wikimedia Commons: The Bureau of Ethnology – J.W. Powell, Seventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, American Government Printing Office, 1891, page 159.

Crowell Stone

Argyle Cemetery, RM of Yellowhead

Argyle Cemetery, northwest of Minnedosa, in the sensuous rolling countryside that defines that part of the province, is a haven for contemplation. It's a true country graveyard, rather isolated and perhaps even forlorn at times. It's hard to imagine many strangers visiting – it's a place of local interest, of rural pride. But its handsome markers and its impressive setting, on a slight rise in the landscape that allows for views into the nearby fields—in early summer a carpet of bright yellows and light purples, the brief flowery expression of canola and flax—make it a gem. And the presence here of one of the province's finest obelisk gravemarkers makes the graveyard a real destination.

Only because it is so starkly outside the prim Victorian cemetery conventions that would have favoured English Gothic motifs, the obelisk as a gravemarker is captivating. The form was extremely popular and graces numerous Manitoba graveyards. It's easy to see its appeal: the tall, elegant shaft, monumental in character even when it's small, with an inherent dignity that attends its stark, simple form.

The paradox of its favour for cemetery use is that it's not a Christian symbol – it's an Egyptian one.

Representing a ray of light, the obelisk had its origins in Egypt around 2650 BC, gaining great popularity in the early 19th century after Napoleon Bonaparte brought one of the great Luxor Obelisks back to Paris and set it up in the Place de la Concorde. An exotic object of considerable mystery, the obelisk was a hit. Its appearance in cemeteries in England required some fancy marketing footwork, particularly in appeasing a xenophobic local religious community of the 1800s. The solution was quite simple: apply Christian symbols on the shaft.



Above, the elemental power of the obelisk is reinforced through the use of rough limestone in this exceptional gravemarker at Argyle Cemetery. The expertly chiseled shield on a lower section, seen at left, bears the name Robert E. Crowell and his particulars: he died on November 12, 1887 at aged 42 years and two months. An additional inscription beneath offers this thought: “Divided We Fall.”



Victorian Funerary Traditions **COFFINS**

The headstone was the obvious, and eternally visible, expression of a person's—and family's—social place in Victorian and Edwardian societies. And so it was not unreasonable that a great deal of expense was devoted to this everlasting expression of a life lived. But the other key physical aspect of the funeral—the coffin, or casket—was also often the object of considerable material costs, design embellishments,



and of course great expense. Many poorer families naturally turned to much more modest containers, but those of the middle- and upper-classes invariably looked to elaborate and expensive coffins for the final send-off, and so the coffin became the centre-piece for funerals of this period. Well-crafted, elaborately appointed, polished, excellent for both display and transport of a dead human body, the casket was a cultural benchmark for what made a “decent” send-off. An anonymous country funeral (above, courtesy Wikimedia Commons), suggests the kind of solemn grouping that likely would have attended the burial of Robert Crowell at Argyle Cemetery. Even in humble circumstances, note the elaborate coffin that was used to protect and convey the body.

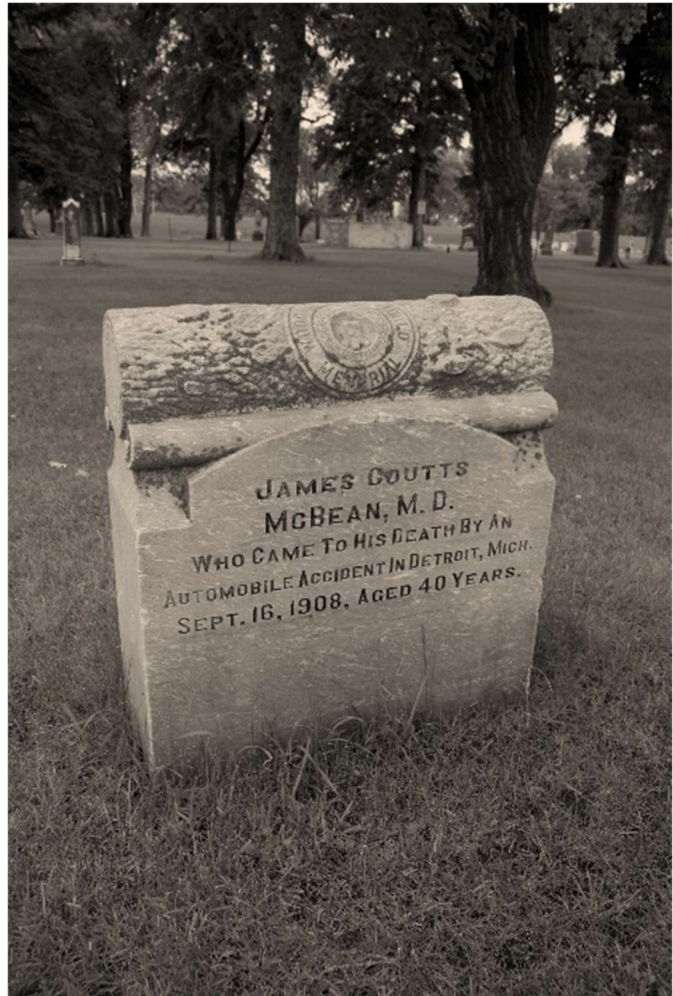


This image (from Wikimedia Commons) of an old coffin shows the traditional shape that has come to define burial chambers from the 19th and early 20th centuries – a hexagonal form tapered at the head and feet to ensure security of the body within. Coffins had detachable lids, so that the body could be viewed by family and friends, and then nailed shut for the actual burial. While the terms “coffin” and “casket” have sometimes been used interchangeably throughout history, it is now common to define a coffin as having the hexagonal form and a casket as a rectangular shape.

McBean Stone

Emerson Cemetery, Emerson

A modest but interesting gravestone in the Emerson Cemetery combines a simple boxy shape with a cut-log element resting at the top. The timber is inset with a large label identifying James Couetts McBean, M.D., the occupant, as belonging to a benevolent fraternal association called Woodmen of the World. That association was well known in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for providing its members with a gravemarker upon their deaths; the marker could be of any design but had to have the Woodmen's crest included – as was done for Dr. McBean's stone (see Elk Marker entry, page 144, for a fulsome discussion of fraternal gravemarker symbolism). Altogether, it's a handsome little marker, well worth some further exploration for the way the design has been carried out. And in fact that lingering reveals a striking piece of information in the grave text: "WHO CAME TO HIS DEATH BY AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT IN DETROIT, MICH[IGAN]." The doctor was killed on September 16th, 1908, aged just 40 years.



It is an interesting coincidence that Dr. McBean's death occurred in Detroit, which was to become the focus for the automobile industry, and also for increasing efforts to improve auto safety. The first gasoline-powered vehicle driven in Detroit was built by engineer Charles Brady King in 1896, and went 20 miles per hour, which was described in the newspaper as "tearing along the street at a lively rate, dodging people and teams." At first, speeding vehicles were not a big problem, with only a few of them on Detroit streets, but the situation grew serious quickly. As early as 1908, auto accidents in the city were recognized as a menace: in two months that summer, 31 people were killed in car crashes (Dr. McBean was presumably one of these victims) and so many were injured they went unrecorded. Soon thousands of cars jammed Detroit streets, driven by inexperienced drivers. In the first decade of the 20th century there were no stop signs, warning signs, traffic lights, traffic police, driver's education, lane lines, street lighting, brake lights, driver's licenses or posted speed limits. Our current method of making a left turn was not known, and drinking-and-driving was not considered a serious crime. By 1916, one-fourth of the entire Detroit police force—250 officers—was used for managing traffic. After World War I, as accidents continued to soar, drivers were being labeled in newspapers as "remorseless murderers." In Detroit, a former Ford Motor Co. executive named James Couzens, a short, cigar-chomping Canadian, became Detroit's commissioner of street railways. Couzens and his department were to implement scores of improvements to reduce traffic fatalities: pedestrians were required to cross at designated corners. the first traffic lights were installed, one-way streets were devised, and the first U.S. stop sign was used in 1915. The City of Detroit by the 1920s must have been confident that they had solved the traffic dilemma. But in the 21st century we know this was not to be the case – the mayhem continues: in the United States there were approximately 38,000 auto-related deaths in 2019, and in Canada there were 2,100 people lost in car crashes in 2018.



I Remember **VEHICULAR ACCIDENTS**

The death of Emerson's Dr. McBean in an automobile accident was certainly news at the time; and more newsworthy for its novelty. More common, but equally fascinating for newspaper readers of the Victorian era, were accounts that dealt with the contemporary equivalent of the car crash – the accident with a horse, and often a horse and wagon. The following handful of recollections collected from old newspapers and local histories are not actually exceptional – but only reminders of the commonality and simple acceptance of such terrible fates.

"Word was brought into town that Bob Whitney had been thrown from a mowing machine in the hay field, and had received very severe injuries. The accident is supposed to have happened in the following manner: Young Whitney was cutting grass with a mower, and as he was on rather rough ground the machine was set high to avoid the lumps. It is supposed that one of the nuts which held the seat came off, and as the machine went into a rut, the horses started, and in holding them the seat swung around on the single fastening. Whitney then made up his mind to jump. He stood up with that end in view, and it is supposed that the jolting of the machine threw him over on the wrong side. The machine is a back-action arrangement, and Whitney fell before the knives. The injuries which he received were terrible ones. The left hand was completely cut off just above the wrist, and again his arm was cut off some four inches higher. The right arm was cut entirely to pieces, the doctors taking about four inches of bone out. This arm was nearly cut off, only a few muscles and pieces of skin remaining. The whole of the inside of his left leg, from the knee up, was cut out, and there was an ugly cut on the chest. As he lived, so he died, a brave, true-hearted boy, showing a noble resignation during his suffering, and the spirit of a man in his solitude." (From *The Nor'Wester*)

"Michael Cirka came to Canada from the West Ukraine in 1926. He stayed with his cousins the Halosis for a few years, then worked for farmers. In 1927 his wife Maria and daughter Anna came. He bought property, but kept working out, until 1934 when a loaded wagon passed over him and killed him. Anna and Maria went to Winnipeg, where they both worked in sewing factories." (From *Franklin Turns a Century*)



"John Greszczuk and his wife Frances and sons left their home land in Zuhew, in the district of Trembowla, in the Western Ukraine, and arrived in the Brokenhead area in 1899. They purchased 160 acres along the Brokenhead Road, at a place later named Cromwell. The daughters Antoinette and Katherine married and moved away, living with their respective families in Winnipeg. Carolina, who was born in 1896 died in a farming accident under a horse-drawn disk-harrow on May 9, 1907, at the age of 11." (From *They Stopped at a Good Place*)

A Winnipeg automobile accident, from June 14, 1919. (Archives of Manitoba)

Graham Stone

Virден Community Cemetery, Virден

The historical periods covered for this project, the reigns of Queen Victoria and King Edward—1837-1901 and 1901-1910, respectively—were periods when the Gothic Revival style was ubiquitous – for architecture obviously (especially for churches and public buildings, as a reminder of an enduring connection to Great Britain, and that culture), but also for many other physical objects: furniture, toys, gravestones.

If Morden's Hill Monument (featured on page 112) is mostly about weight and grandeur, a marker in the Virден Community Cemetery is about delicacy and light. The gravestone for Moretta Winnifred Graham, who died aged 26 in December of 1918—likely a victim of the Influenza Epidemic of 1918-19—is one of the most ambitious explorations of Gothic Revival design in Manitoba. Commissioned by her husband Frederick Montgomery, the marker includes this epitaph: “Just as the morning of her life was opening into day. Her young and lovely spirit passed from earth and grief away.”

This remarkable monument has many of the qualities and features of the Gothic Revival – the overall vertical sensibility, here stretched up via corner columns; the doubly-curved gable features that form a sheltering canopy; and the many elaborate and elegant details. It's not strictly Gothic Revival, but the urn atop the composition nearly feels like a pinnacle, another typical feature of that style.





Victorian Funerary Traditions **UNDERTAKERS**

Virden Cemetery contains more than 6,000 graves, and so it's not possible that all of the bodies interred here would have been handled by the Carscadden family, long-time undertakers and funeral directors of Virden. But many were. And the quiet, dignified ministrations first of T. Arthur Carscadden, and then of his nephew Roy Carscadden, brought many Virdenites solemnly and quietly to their final resting places.

In the mid-1800s dying and death in Manitoba were family affairs. The sick were nursed at home by family members and when someone died the family prepared the decedent for viewing and burial. They washed, shaved, dressed and smeared the corpse with camphor to mask the smell of decay. And the deceased looked natural – that is, waxy, pale and slightly bloated. Funeral rituals and the emotional storms that attend them were, before about 1920, traditionally the affairs of women. Just as most people ailed in the comfort of their homes, it was most often the case that mothers, grandmothers and daughters attended to their care and for their dying at home. Upon death it was left to the women of the house, or the local church, to wash and dress the body, apply make-up and style the deceased's hair, to maintain mourning rituals and to tend to the graves.



By the turn of the century, members of the growing middle class were able to pay others to tend to the dead, and so the local furniture maker, who had long been associated with the construction of coffins, stepped into the breach, offering to “undertake” embalming of the deceased. In Virden there were a few furniture dealers who were able to provide this service: George Healy, C.P. Burgess, G. Ireland, W.H. Lee, and T.A. Carscadden. The furniture maker's technique was unsophisticated. He dragged his cooling board, buckets and chemicals to a home and lifted the corpse onto the board which was rested on chairs. Formaldehyde and arsenic were pumped into the cadaver while blood was drained out. The corpse may have looked doughy but it was not stale. And with the dead's bodily decay retarded, the family had time for closure, were freed from the unpleasant aspects of beautifying dead kin, and buoyed by mourners from afar who now had time to travel to the funeral.

The gravestones marking the resting places of Arthur and Roy Carscadden, in the Virden Cemetery, are both modest but dignified, and it is a comfort that both men are nestled amongst many of their customers. A rendered version of an old photograph of Roy, above (who died in 1959), brings to life the admonitions in an article located in the Manitoba Archives Newspaper Scrapbook (M23, p. 234), which lays out what will become the standards for the funeral industry for the future. Entitled “Suggestions for the Guidance of Funeral Directors” author W.P.



Hohensuch, advises: “He must be a gentleman, a sanitary scholar, a mechanic, an artist, a businessman and a leader. His behaviour should be dignified, his life pure, his character spotless. In personal appearance he must always be neat and clean, his place of business orderly and conveniently arranged, his paraphernalia and tools always in good repair and in their proper place.”

Nurses carrying a casket from the Gardiner Funeral Home in Winnipeg in 1918, likely attending to a colleague during the 1918-19 Spanish Flu epidemic. (Archives of Manitoba)

Falk Stone

Schoenthal Cemetery, Altona Area

Mennonite cemeteries account for hundreds of the 900 cemeteries in Manitoba enumerated by the Manitoba Genealogical Society. That's certainly an impressive number for a comparatively small group of people, and a closer examination reveals that many of these are not more than a single grave, and that many more are small pioneer gravesites containing a few markers. Larger scale Mennonite cemeteries are associated with the late-19th century farming villages south of Winnipeg that have come to define the pioneer heritage of this group. And then there are the large community cemeteries associated with Mennonite communities in the southeast of the province – at Steinbach, Altona, Winkler and others.

Given key tenets of the Mennonite faith—modesty and humility—we would expect the markers of Mennonite graves to be simple and straightforward. And indeed they nearly all are – like the little stone at the long-lost farming village of Schoenthal, near Altona. A translation of the inscribed text reveals the grave (*Hier ruht*; Here Lies) for Gertrude Falk, with simple additional facts (born in 1889 and died in 1956) with the assurance that she is safe in Jesus's arms, noted in the final line (*Selig in Jesu Armen*). But even this modest stone is enriched by some simple, but evocative design qualities.



First off is the use of Gothic lettering for the text. This choice, so familiar in the 21st century for showy texts, is in this case a strong (perhaps even proud) connection to the deceased's Germanic heritage, for it was the Germanic states of Medieval Europe that popularized and refined this text form. And the marker itself, a short tablet, gains quiet majesty with an elegant sculptural feature – created by a doubly-curved incision to form a nearly crown-like cap for the stone.



I Remember

MENNONITE BURIAL PRACTICES

The cemetery at Blumenfeld, southeast of Morden, features a poster board with a fascinating account of death and burial practices in that Mennonite community:

“The People of Blumenfeld have had the experience over many years of losing loved ones. Ever since Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him has the world lived in tears and sorrow as loved ones are laid to rest. We can go as far back as the 1800s when people died in Blumenfeld, there was no hospital or under-taker to take care of the deceased body. When a person died in the village, it was custom for two volunteer women to attend the home of the deceased and wash the body. The body was placed on a board until a shirt-style gown was sewn to the body and until the casket was made. Then the deceased was laid into the casket. The body was covered up to the chest with a white sheet. The sheet and a black ribbon were tacked to the casket to hold it in place. One of the women who prepared the bodies was Mrs. George F. Klassen. Another is believed to be Mrs. Henry Martens, later in the 1930s Mrs. Jacob Klassen and Mrs. John W. Dyck attended to the tasks.

“The caskets were homemade with an average price of \$1.25 - \$1.75, if better quality wood was used. The caskets were painted black. The carpenters who made the caskets were Mr. Henry Martens and Mr. Jacob Neufeld. Later on, Mr. Cornie P. Penner and Mr. Jacob V. Neufeld built the caskets.

“Whenever a person died, the village people helped. For example, some people would bring lard, butter, or milk for the purpose of baking buns for the funeral. The dough would be prepared and then it was brought into various homes to be baked. By the end of the day, the buns would be taken back to the home of the deceased. The buns were baked the day before the funeral.

“In summer, a few families would have the funeral at their home under a tree-shaded place. The rest of the funerals took place in the village school. On the day of the funeral, someone with a horse and wagon would drive along the street to pick up chairs, benches and tables set outside by people to be picked up and taken to the school. All the school desks were carried outside, and the gathered chairs and benches were arranged for the funeral. The body was brought to school and to the cemetery by horse-drawn wagon. After burial the people would come back to the school for “Faspa.” Faspa consisted of coffee, home-made buns and sugar cubes. Cups and saucers were brought from various homes. It was custom for friends and relatives to go to the home of the bereaved family for breakfast the day after the funeral. The people would sing a few songs, sometimes had a short message and would return home after some visiting.

“As there were no undertakers in those days, it was at times cumbersome to keep the bodies in good condition until the day of the funeral. There was no problem in the winter if the body was laid in a place where it would freeze. The problem was evident in the summer when it was hot and especially if there were thunderstorms. A few bodies, after they were prepared, were laid in shallow graves at the deceased’s yard to try and prevent an ill odour. Even this was sometimes in vain. At one funeral, the body was left outside the church. After the funeral service, the body was taken to the cemetery and buried. In August of 1938, a boy 18 years old was working as a hired man for a farmer at Rosenfeld. The farmer asked the boy to shoot his dog, the boy tried to please his boss, but luck turned against him and the boy got hurt. He was rushed to the Altona hospital where he died the next day. His body was brought to his parents’ home in Blumenfeld. His family worked desperately to preserve the body for the day of the funeral. The family poured cold well water onto the roof and walls of the lean-to where the body was kept – but to no avail. The body had to be taken to the cemetery and buried before the day of the funeral on account of the ill odour. The funeral was held at his parents’ place in a nice tree-shaded area in the front yard.”

Hill Monument

Hillside Cemetery, Morden

Hillside Cemetery is one of the province's most picturesque graveyards, with a slightly undulating terrain that makes for a very pleasant walk. The many interesting gravemarkers and the catalogue of information can keep you here for hours. A visitor enters through a large arched gate at the north end of the cemetery grounds and then makes one's way south, up the hill. As you gain ground to the southwest, you can see a fine sculptural urn emerging from the last fold in the landscape – surely marking one of the typical granite shafts found in so many of Manitoba's cemeteries. But when you finally reach the crest of this final hill, the memorial you encounter will take your breath away. For this—the Hill Family Monument—is certainly one of the largest and most ambitious gravemarkers in the province. It is a stupendous tour-de-force of design, with plinths and columns and a stylized entablature and, as if this were not enough, a towering canopy and a gigantic urn festooned with roses. This grand stone marks the final resting place first for Eliza Hill who died in 1898, and also for her husband James who died in 1907. James, a successful Morden-area farmer, clearly poured his grief and loss into a form that still seems capable of holding a thousand more emotions.





Victorian Funerary Traditions MONUMENT MAKERS

The Victorian and Edwardian preference for stone memorial monuments naturally led to the development of a sophisticated industry to meet this demand: stone cutters, stone carvers, and graphic designers and epitaph writers (both required for the effusive images and texts that adorned many markers). In Manitoba, notable monument-making operations were located in larger centres like Winnipeg, Brandon and Portage la Prairie. Smaller facilities were situated in important regional communities. In Neepawa there was Guinn Brothers. And in Morden there was Selley and Patchell, who likely had some part to play at least in the erection of the Hill Monument in Hillside Cemetery.

It is important to note that Manitoba's monument outfits were typically in the retail end of the industry. They did not usually cut and design the markers, but instead offered customers options from catalogues from eastern American and Canadian stone-cutters, as well as from department stores, like Sears Roebuck (out of Chicago). The local Manitoba businesses added names, dates and personal information in the prescribed blank spaces identified on the selected marker.



Left: View of Guinn Bros. Monument Makers – in Neepawa (from Neepawa, Land of Plenty). The image shows 10 people, suggesting a busy operation. It also shows the blank faces of stones on the left-hand side, ready to be carved for a grieving family. The gentleman at the left-centre stands beside what appears to be a finalized memorial, with names carved on at least two sides. This stone likely was brought to the shop from the local cemetery, where the name and information about the latest departed family member was added.

Right: An extract from the Memorial Department section of the Fall 1910 Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalogue showing two of the more modest offerings. Advertising copy atop this section advises that these stones were cut from "the world's best Royal Blue Vermont Marble," [and these] "are offered at half the price that you can buy from your nearest marble dealer." The option on the left was available for \$5.10, "for marker and base but without lettering; trimmed with tracing and beveling." The marker was 1 foot six inches in height (including base) and was 125 pounds. The text also notes that "for sunk name and date letters [were] 6 cents each; for sunk verse letters 2 1/2 cents each." The slightly grander option at right was available for \$7.65, weighing 206 pounds and measuring 24 inches high. The same costs for lettering were applicable.

Wilson Stone

Newdale Cemetery, Newdale



In the history of the Wilson Family, once of Newdale, the birth of triplets in 1900 must have been a source of wonder. But in the sad calculus of life and death, the dismay and exaltation of parents Mary Cecilia (DeWitt) and William Wilson was quickly turned to dust – within a matter of just a week the three little girls had slipped away. First to go was Maggie, on the 24th. Then Lily on the 27th. And finally Olive on the 29th.

There is no recorded account of the cause of the babies' deaths – undoubtedly it was one of the common deadly afflictions that laid waste to so many of the young in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles. And maybe it was whooping cough, an especially fearsome affliction, as noted in compelling and frightful detail opposite.

Mary and William did have five more children, in addition to their first-born, Mary Edith, from 1896—Fred in 1903, Violet in 1905, who like her three sisters died in infancy, Cecil in 1908, Georgeana in 1910 and William in 1911—but the exotic design of the stone that marks the triplet's burial place surely suggests an abiding desire for remembrance. The gravemarker becomes a command for attention and pity for the little girls. And perhaps it also recalls the long-dead parents, still watching over their babies in the careful choice of unusual design.

The gravemarker for the Newdale triplets is unique in Manitoba. The three stout pillars, each commemorating one of the girls, and inscribed with her name and date of death, are linked near the top with an encircling brace. The monument is small, almost easily overlooked in the glories that abound at Newdale Cemetery, but the result is so dignified, so striking in its originality, that it commands attention. And it's only then, when one bends down to examine the stone faces, that the reality of the situation brings you up short – this is more than an elegant design; it is a sombre and stately call to memory.



I Remember

PROFESSOR WATSON DESCRIBES THE WHOOPING COUGH

No more vivid description of whooping cough, also known as pertussis to those with a clinical bent, has been presented than that of Professor Thomas Watson when he lectured students in London in the early 1800s. It could have been this deadly affliction that claimed Newdale's Wilson sisters.

“It begins with the symptoms of an ordinary catarrh, arising from cold. The child has coryza [a head cold], and coughs; and mothers and nurses are aware that the disease commences in this way, and express their apprehension lest it may turn to the hooping [early spelling of whooping] cough. After this, the catarrhal stage, has lasted 8 or 10 days, or a fortnight, or sometimes a day or two longer, what kind of cough begins to be heard which is so distinctive. It comes on in paroxysms, in which a number of the expiratory motions belonging to the act of coughing are made in rapid succession, and with much violence, without any intervening inspirations; till the little patient turns black in the face, and seems on the point of being suffocated. Then one long-drawn act of inspiration takes place, attended with that peculiar crowing or hooping noise, which denotes that the rima glottides [opening between vocal chords] is partially closed, and which gives the disease its name. As soon as this protracted inspiration has been completed, the series of short expiratory coughs, repeated one immediately after the other till all the air appears to be expelled from the lungs, is renewed; and then a second sonorous back-draught occurs; and this alteration of a number of expiratory coughs, with one shrill inspiration goes on, until a quantity of glairy mucus is forced up from the lungs, or until the child vomits or until expectoration and vomiting both take place at once. During the urgency of the paroxysms, the face becomes swelled and red or livid, the eyes start, the little sufferer stamps sometimes with impatience, and clings to caregivers to diminish the shock and jar by which his whole frame is shaken.”

Newdale Cemetery, northwest of Brandon, is one of the most striking burial places in the province. With sculpted coniferous trees marking its eastern and northern boundaries, tall pine trees at its centre, and a gentle sweep of prairie fields as far as the eye can see, Newdale also contains a concentration of gravemarkers that not only describe the wealth of Victorian-era designs, but also on closer inspection some of the poignant stories that have affected the people of Newdale over the years.



McKenzie Stone

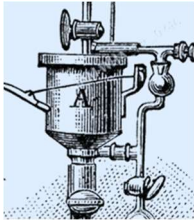
Burnside Cemetery, R.M. of Portage la Prairie

The small cemetery at Burnside, just west of Portage la Prairie, offers a notable example of the power contained in height and weight. A majestic red granite tower dominates the little graveyard, grandly announcing the presence of the McKenzies – Kenneth, Jane and son Thomas. It overshadows, literally, smaller stones nearby. And it is a near-perfect example of the material and technology that would revolutionize gravestone manufacture, and of the appearance of cemeteries themselves.

Many headstones profiled in this project are created with imported slate and marble or local limestone. It was not until the late 19th century that granite, one of the hardest of stones, gained prominence in Manitoba cemeteries, as it did throughout North America. Its use, or one of its impersonators—gneiss, anorthoste, gabbro, basalt, syenite—all distinguished from granite by colour comparison, since granite appears only in light grey, various shades of pink and orange, and less frequently green—needed technological innovations to lead to its success. The adoption of new stone-cutting processes, including the use of the lathe and polishing techniques, and acid etching and sand-blasting, allowed craftsmen to apply the kinds of elaborate designs that Victorians still demanded. The result was the emergence of a whole new generation of gravemarker fashions and creations. Elaborate tower confections and hefty, dramatic boxes came to dominate the cemetery landscape. The sculptural possibilities of turned stone, routed out with acid and sand, produced ravishingly beautiful surfaces, twinkling with polished quartz. The new possibilities in lettering and design motifs were endless.



The stone for William Smith at Belmont is an extraordinary granite marker, displaying on its broad face the kinds of bold and intricate graphic details possible with sand-blasting and acid etching.



Victorian Funerary Inventions

GRANITE GRAVESTONE MANUFACTURING

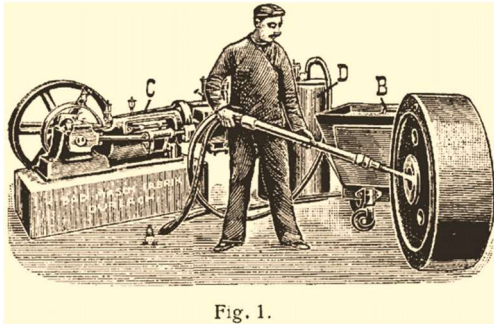


Fig. 1.

Benjamin Chew Tilghman was an American soldier and inventor, born in 1821, whose insights into the effects of wind-blown sand on windows in the desert inspired him to develop a technology that would change gravemarker production forever. In 1870 he invented a patented sandblasting process (as suggested in the image opposite), detailing the applications for his technique to sharpen files, engrave bottles, and clean boilers of rust. By 1891, his sandblasting technique was being employed in Vermont's marble gravestone manufactures to inscribe letters and other details. Around the same time that Mr. Tilghman's sand-blasting machines were gaining interest, a new material was being explored for its use

for gravestone manufacture – granite. While granite is much harder than marble, it is very difficult to cut and finish, due to its hardness and uneven grain. And it weighs substantially more than marble, making its transportation more expensive. It would take the development of railways to favour granite over marble. It did not take long for a dramatic rise in the popularity of granite gravemarkers. In the eastern United States very fine-grained, high quality granite was being quarried, with many operations employing thousands of men to cut and finish the stones into building blocks, sculptures and monuments.

The first examples of granite gravestones, often in obelisk form, were rather modest in their decorative appeal, but it did not take long for mass production, stock patterns and new sculptural approaches to overtake the industry. It also did not take long for most local monument outfits to order pre-made markers from manufacturers and to have them shipped to their rail-side operations where the simpler tasks of lettering were undertaken. And by the turn of the century a polychromatic approach gained popularity, combining the main granite feature with a rugged limestone base and a finely carved marble sculptural feature.



Examples of the power and glory possible with granite, either as an emphatic solitary statement (left, at Griswold Cemetery) or as a grouping (right, at Elmwood Cemetery in Winnipeg, where scores of majestic granite heaps jostle for attention).



Gudmundson Stone

Hnausa Community Cemetery, Hnausa

A granite stone at Hnausa Cemetery, for members of the Gudmundson Family, exhibits a novel capping detail and an abstracted etching that suggests a water motif. This design feature is likely a subtle reference to the heritage of the Gudmundsons, and in fact to all of the graves in the cemetery. For this is an Icelandic burial ground, one of many in Manitoba's Interlake region.

Being a maritime people, Manitoba's Icelandic community's cemeteries are often found near the province's big lakes – Winnipeg and Manitoba. As seen with the Gudmundson stone, Icelandic cemetery design and gravemarker forms are not markedly different from prevailing Canadian customs. The stones are for the most part like any others – fine marble and granite tablets and towers, crypt-lids, even Celtic crosses. The primary difference, clearly seen even at a distance, is the use of the Icelandic language and alphabet, with its distinct letters and accents. Because stones of any culture contain only the most basic of information, it is possible, even without knowledge of Icelandic, to work one's way through a rough translation, at least of the opening words of an inscription: *Dain* and *Faedd* – Born and Died, for a female and for a male *Dainn* and *Faeddur*.

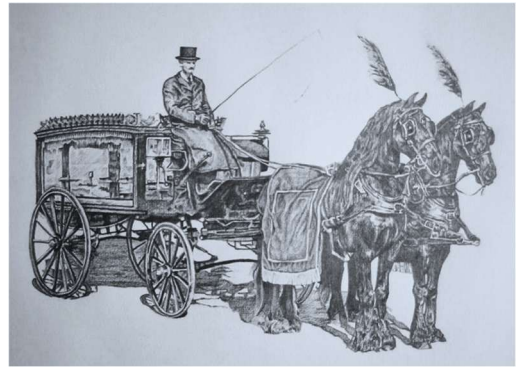


The Icelandic cemetery at Riverton brushes up against the water of the Icelandic River. An old access point, still marked by a bell at the river's edge, is a reminder that visitors once visited the cemetery by boat, and perhaps even brought coffins here by water.

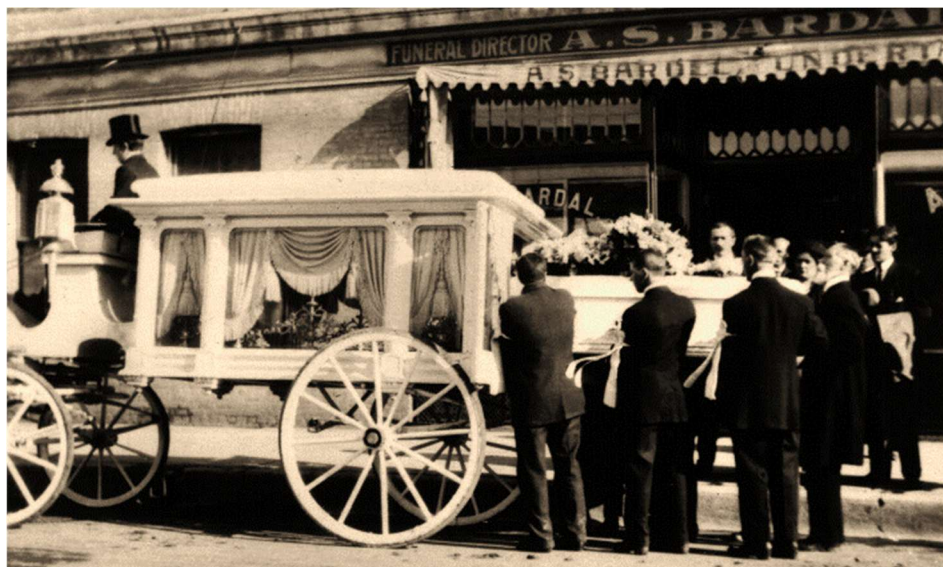


Victorian Funerary Traditions HEARSES

Of all the physical accoutrements that accompanied the Victorian-era funeral—the obituary, the flowers, the mourning clothes, the coffin, the gravemarker—nothing approached the hearse for pomp, drama and expense. Horse-drawn carriage hearses had been developed in the 17th century, but it was only in the early 19th century that a specific style of hearse emerged (seen at right). These elaborate carriages were often constructed of mahogany, with intricate carvings and black velvet drapes. Glass-sided hearses gained popularity through the century, with Victorian by-passers often keen to see the coffin, and judge its expense. The hearse was also often filled with cut flowers, another considerable cost. And it was not just the hearse that was the focus of attention – there was considerable care taken with the driver and the team of horses pulling the hearse. Drivers and assistants naturally wore full mourning coats, with crepe bands around their top hats. The horses of the team, from two to four depending on the size of the hearse, were kitted out with ostrich feather plumes – these made popular after the Duke of Wellington's funeral in 1852, in which the rare ostrich feathers were used, a historical reference to medieval English funeral traditions. And even this modest detail was indicative of a family's wealth – those of modest means might afford two plumes, while three or four suggested material comfort; six plumes defined wealth, while seven plumes were reserved for the truly rich. A poor family might afford a hearse with one horse, a mourning coach with a single horse, an elm coffin covered in black with handles, a mattress, pillow, side sheets and coachmen with hat bands and gloves, and an attendant with a silk hat band. A more elaborate affair would see four horses, two mourning coaches with fours, twenty-three plumes of ostrich feathers, and velvet coverings for hearse and horses.



In Manitoba, all of the major undertaking operations would have had the most up-to-date hearses and accompanying carriages and accoutrements. One of the bigger operations in the early 1900s was that of A.S. Bardal Undertakers of Winnipeg. Arinbjorn Sigurgeirsson Bardal, born in Iceland in 1866, emigrated to Canada in 1886, settling in Manitoba and working on a construction gang for the Canadian Pacific Railway. He started a transport business and moved into the nascent funeral industry in 1894. That operation continues to this day. Undertakers across Manitoba would have been impressed by Bardal's use of a white horse-drawn hearse and finely-dressed attendants (seen below) ca. 1910. (Archives of Manitoba)



Brownlee Stone

St. Andrew's Anglican Church Cemetery, R.M. of St. Andrews

A handsome little marble marker with crisp and decisive lettering advises of the death of a little boy:

IN MEMORY OF HERBERT NAYLOR
SON OF REV. C.E. & A.D. BROWNLEE
DROWNED
IN THE RED RIVER
JUNE 3RD 1906.
AGED 2 YEARS, 8 MOS.

It's an emphatic and pathetic statement. And it is a reminder, found too often in older cemeteries, of a common killer. Waterways were Manitoba's earliest avenues of transportation, bearing first the canoes of Aboriginal peoples, then the York boats of the fur traders and finally the barges, flatboats and river steamers that defined movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Thus Manitobans have for centuries been familiar with this province's impressive waterways, and they have been keenly aware of their dangers. Aboriginals living along the lakes and rivers in Manitoba, eminently comfortable using waterways for transportation and a source for food, were no strangers to summer wind storms that could easily capsize, destroy a fragile canoe, and submerge its occupants. Early explorers, impressed by the huge size of Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis and Lake Manitoba, though eager to use these great water courses, also recognized the potential for high swells and treachery caused by



strong prairie winds. They fathomed that in the spring, as the ice softened, their fellow voyageurs often met with frigid deaths as they portaged over thin ice. In the late 19th century, rivers and lakes became home to flatboats and river steamers carrying passengers and goods across the province. Loading docks served as central meeting places and were a common site of drownings. And as commercial fishing developed in the early 1900s on the big lakes, the turbulent nature of those treacherous waters claimed the lives of many fishermen.

A trite myth about drowning is that it is a painless, almost pleasant way to die. The great English writer Virginia Woolf chose drowning for her suicide in 1941, hoisting a large stone into her coat before walking into the still waters of the River Ouse, outside her home in Rodmell. Survivors, however, of a near-drowning tell us the experience is horrifying. The "drowning process" begins with the victim holding their breath, an automatic response to the presence of water near the larynx. As anyone who has held their breath underwater knows, this period is brief, lasting at most a minute and a half, quickly followed by a panicked rush to the surface. For those unable to reach the air in time, or determined to remain underwater, what follows next must be terrifying. The larynx first spasms, the victim goes into shock, and then the larynx abates as the victim actively breathes in liquid. The lungs quickly fill with water, and the drowning victim lapses into unconsciousness upon which the brain ceases functioning. The hapless sufferer asphyxiates.



I Remember **DROWNING**

Behind farm accidents, drownings were the most common cause of accidental death in the early days of the province. The following recollections suggest some of the details of this kind of accident, as well as the moral tenor of the times in which they transpired.

"A Norwegian in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company was drowned in the river opposite Fort Garry on Sunday before last. The body was found the day after, and duly interred. He was bathing himself in the river, when, it is supposed, a sudden cramp rendered him helpless. We will not say that this was a summary judgement for profaning that day, but it might be so, and is certainly a warning. Last fall one James Woolrich was drowned near the same place while under the influence of liquor, and his corpse could not be found at that time. It was discovered the day before yesterday opposite Bouvett's, on Point Douglas. In floating down it was arrested by a raft of wood which was fastened there. Louis Galerneau, with whom Woolrich used to board, got the corpse decently interred." (From *The Nor'Wester*, June 11, 1862)

"Recollection of Annie Howland: The poor young man, only twenty-three, was trying to cross the river on a fallen tree to cut short the way home, and being of very poor sight and very nervous, he lost his balance and being entangled in the branches below was never seen alive again. His body, recovered after five days, lies buried on the bank near the spot where he was drowned." (From *They Stopped at a Good Place*)

"When a new house (for the Omans) was being raised the workmen left a trapdoor to a basement of water open. A little daughter aged four named Ethel after Ethel Averill was sent to call the men to the supper meal and was drowned. Also a new young brother died during those early years. Their graves lie in the little All Saints Anglican Church Cemetery across from the Sid Proven property." (From *Minnedosa. Valley Views*)

"But all of a sudden a sad bereavement struck, two of the brothers drowned in Lake Manitoba early in May 1901. Sigurdur and Jon were out on Birch Island with their brother Bjorn, who had settled there, the three having been in partnership at fishing the winter before. They were waiting for the ice to break up on the lake in order to go home and fulfill a plan they had to establish a sawmill in the bush on their father's farm. As soon as the ice broke, Sigurdur and Jon set out for home on a sail boat. On passing over a reef about a mile from shore, the boat struck an isolated rock, which was just below the lake surface and the boat capsized. Although both men were strong swimmers, they succumbed to the ice-cold water." (From *Taming a Wilderness. A History of Ashern and District*)



This apparently unremarkable stone in Elmwood Cemetery in Winnipeg advises of the deaths of Miles O'Reilly Jarvis and of his son Herbert Hugh Higginson Jarvis, drowned in Lake Winnipeg on September 6th, 1909. The stone of course remains mute about the horror of that day, and of the ongoing grief of a wife and mother.

Renuart Monument

St. Pierre-Jolys Roman Catholic Church Cemetery, St. Pierre

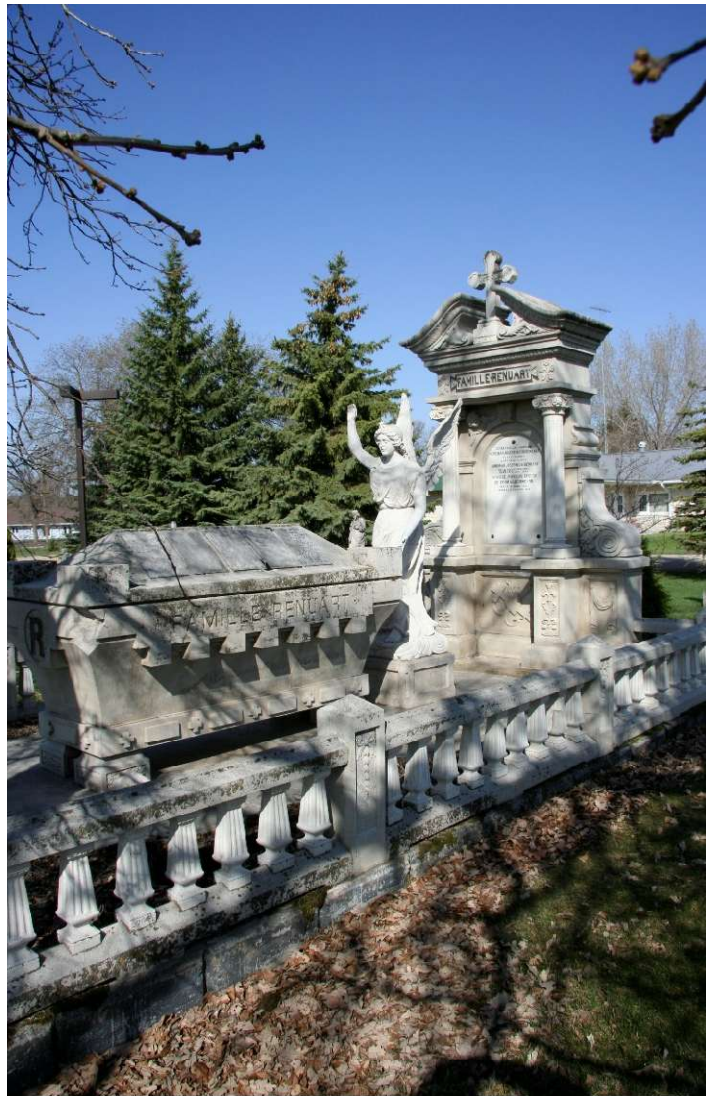
There are many reasons to visit the cemetery at the Roman Catholic Church at St. Pierre-Jolys. But one of the most compelling is to see one of Manitoba's most fantastic grave memorials.

The monument for the Renuart Family—Famille Renuart—is a shockingly bold and expressive marker. Combining powerful Baroque elements, like the broken pediment, detailed columns and graceful side scrolls, along with a stout fence around the whole composition, the designer also embellished the creation with many finer details, including various flowers and distinct Christian symbols like the heart and cross. A winged angel stands resolutely at the head of the vault bearing many names, her raised arm marking an eternal benediction over the family.

The monument seems to be suffering from neglect, suggesting the absence of surviving family in St. Pierre. Perhaps because of that the whole piece has a grand poignancy about it – it is still a proud and powerful presence, but can such a monument ultimately endure without the living?

The Renuarts – A Family History Revealed on a Stone

The Renuart memorial boasts the names of nearly a dozen family members, and in the details can be read the typical tribulations of nearly any pioneer family: the babies who died too young (Adhemar-Joseph-Victor who lived barely a day in May of 1889, Adhemar-Joseph-Eloi who lived for three years (1905-1908), Blanche Pourboix who succumbed at age two, and Noel Latreille whose dates 1914-15 describe a short, short life); the promising lives cut short (Leonne Rougeau (wife of Leon Renuart) dead in 1931 at age 21 and Rose Latreille, 1895-1918, likely a victim of the 1918-19 Influenza Epidemic that killed her at age 23; and then the elders who watched it all unfold, until their own demise (Edwidge Marcoux (wife of Edouard Dumesneil), 1843-1914; Louis Edouard Dumesneil at age 82 in 1920; Elise Douillez (wife of Victor Renuart) aged 80 at 1924; Victor Renuart at age 66 (no death date; only that he expired at Little River Florida); and finally Father Joseph-Adonias Sabourin, 1880-1956.



Mandziuk Marker

St. Elias Ukrainian Orthodox Church Cemetery, Sirko

Compared with the cemeteries of other faith groups, where you can find distinctive, even unique gravemarkers, many pioneer Ukrainian cemeteries in Manitoba, like the Ukrainian Orthodox Cemetery at Sirko (in the R.M. of Stuartburn), present an alternately powerful presence – a swath of nearly identical markers. All white, all about the same height, all with a distinctive version of the Christian cross, and all enhanced with delicate graphic outlines, decorative motifs and Cyrillic letters carried out in starkly contrasting black paint. The marker for Onufry Mandziuk (translation courtesy Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy Archives and image courtesy Village Churches “Silskiy Tserkvy,” Manitoba Ukrainian Canadian Student Society) is a fine example of the type. The elaborate cross design is known as the Byzantine or Orthodox Cross, a variation of the traditional Latin Cross, and has been employed in eastern European churches since at least the 6th century AD. Traditionally the Orthodox Cross has an additional short and angled crossbar below the main bar that is thought to recall St. Andrew, who was crucified on an X-shaped cross, and who is thought to have brought Christianity to Russia. Over time, however, many versions of the cross have dropped the short crossbeam. The Orthodox Cross also often incorporates a trefoil element, seen in the floriated ends of the bars and at the top, and also in the extensions along each side.



In the Old Country these crosses would have been carved using marble, but in Manitoba the absence of that material, and its great expense, led nearly all early Ukrainian communities to produce these markers first in wood and then using a form into which concrete was poured. The marker featured here includes a common decorative feature seen on Ukrainian memorials – the asterisk contained in a circle. This symbol represents the sun in the spring, and is a reminder of rebirth, and of Christ's resurrection.

While the cross for Mr. Mandziuk is a fine example of the type, and notes that he "sleeps" (or lies) here as of 23 June 1937, the actual details of his death are completely shocking. For Mr. Mandziuk was murdered, by a neighbour, the result of an argument over property lines and hay-harvesting rights. The dichotomy revealed here—of the interesting stone and the actual cause of death—is a reminder of the ongoing mysteries that we must keep in mind when contemplating any gravemarker.



This view of St. John's Church at Gardenton (a few miles west of Sirko)—constructed in 1899, and thus the oldest Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada—shows the rows of white crosses that typify a traditional Ukrainian cemetery. A close look will reveal that while the markers appear identical, each in fact is a variation on the theme – a few have the canted crossbar, each has its own unique base, and all have the distinctive floriated elements but in individualized placements. The image also suggests the interesting visual and ecclesiastical association between the design of the gravemarkers and the onion domes of the church behind.

Armitage Markers

Miniota Cemetery, R.M. of Prairie View

Miniota Cemetery is a charming little landscape that slopes gently down to the Assiniboine River Valley. Stately granite markers dotting the decline fashion a tableaux of tranquility and serenity. But beneath its placid veneer, sad memories live on, the kind that are all too familiar to Manitoba's pioneer families.

Just a few short steps into the cemetery, concrete canopies like wee beds that define so many rural graveyards, bring us up short. Diminutive, they obviously mark a collection of tiny bodies below. There are five of them in all and Mrs. Armitage, in an excerpt from the area's local history book, plainly outlines the children's sad fate. "I was a girl of 22 and I came from Toronto on a harvest excursion [in 1905]. I arrived in Miniota about 7 p.m. and Herb was of course there to meet me. We were married that evening by Reverend William Hodnett in the living room over the store. We drove down the valley and I remember it was a lovely moonlit night. In 1906 our first son Charles Alexander was born. Dr. Chalmers and Grandma Mitchell were in attendance. Charles was the first of nine children, all born at home with Dr. Chalmers as our doctor. We lost three children: Willie died of rheumatism in 1916 at the age of six years. In 1918 Kenny, age four years and Margaret age fourteen months passed away both of diphtheria." Not three



feet from the collection of the three little Armitage children are the graves of Dr. Chalmers, who delivered Mrs. Armitage's children, his wife (who likely died in the influenza epidemic of 1918-19) and his own babies who died in infancy – Jean, John and Baby.

The deaths of Kenny and Margaret Armitage, and perhaps also of the Chalmers children, were a familiar scourge among settlers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Diseases like diphtheria, whooping cough, scarlet fever and measles were among the most frightening childhood maladies. The calm recollection of Mrs. Armitage belies the actual horror that must have attended the realization of the presence of such diseases, especially diphtheria, a cruel killer. Once called "the strangling angel of children," diphtheria has been a dreaded childhood illness for more than 2,000 years. Diphtheria is caused by the bacterium *corynebacterium diphtheriae*, which usually enters the body via the mouth or nose, and even through the eyes, ears or genitals. The symptoms, and severity of the disease, depend on where in the body the bacteria enters, and on whether or not the diphtheria toxin makes it into the blood stream. If the diphtheria is limited to the nose, it begins as a common cold. Soon, the nasal discharge turns to a foul-smelling pus that can erode the skin of the nose and upper lip. If the bacteria land in the back of the throat, the most common spot of attack, diphtheria causes a more serious disease. For the first day or two, it seems like a normal sore throat, with a low-grade fever. Then a white or grey membrane typically appears in the back of the throat. It is this leathery membrane that generated the name of the disease, which is taken from the Greek word for leather. Diphtheria may cover the tonsils, the roof of the mouth, and the sides of the throat, even extending down to the larynx and windpipe. Any attempt to remove this membrane results in a bloody mess. In mild cases, the membrane sloughs off and the child returns to normal in a week or ten days – unless the toxin has moved elsewhere in the body, such as the heart or the brain. As if this juncture of the disease was not gruesome enough, it is at this time that major swelling starts, with bad cases appearing to erase the neck muscles, jaw and collarbone. Coma and death may occur within a week. Diphtheria runs its course, usually by settling matters, one way or the other, in seven to ten days.



I Remember

DIPHTHERIA – THE STRANGLING ANGEL

So common were the deaths of young children that many pioneer recollections suggest a nonchalance, or acceptance at least, that attended their loss: "Michael and Rosalie Froehlich raised six children and lost some during the flu and diphtheria epidemics." But surely this kind of offhandedness belies the horror that must have attended the realization of the presence of these diseases, especially for diphtheria, for this was no mild killer:

"The disease which caused the greatest loss of life in Pleasant Point was diphtheria around 1890. Two families suffered heavily. About 1887 and 1888 four members of the Stratford family died. And in 1890 Ida, Minnie and Jennie Thompson died on November 1, 7 and 10. The girls realized when they became sick that there was no hope of recovery, and each chose the neighbour who with his team and sleigh would drive her coffin for burial." (From *Carberry Plains. Century One*)

"The saddest story of all was the use of the lake by the neighbours of the Siglunes area, to gather for a multiple funeral. The Jorundur Eyford family had given shelter to a family from Clarkleigh in those early pioneer days. Unknown to anyone, a member of the visiting family was a diphtheria carrier. Shortly after their arrival, five of the Eyford children were stricken with the dread scourge, with medical aid not closer than Winnipeg, the little ones started to die, one by one. Desperate for help, word was gotten to the city and Dr. Brandson came all the way out there. He arrived in time to save the last victim, a girl named Emma. The four dead children were buried in a cemetery on a point north from our farm. The Eyford family had lost a child previously and since it was buried there, so would the four little caskets be placed beside the first grave." (From *Taming a Wilderness. A History of Ashern and District*)

"Davy Gill's first wife died, leaving him with three small sons, William, Richard and Albert. In 1886 he married Mathilda Kerr Wray. Mrs. Wray had arrived in Portage la Prairie in 1882 only to learn that her husband had been killed in a train crash while travelling through Wisconsin with their household belongings. During that first winter she suffered further loss in the death of two of her three small sons during a diphtheria epidemic." (From *Neepawa. Land of Plenty*)



An anonymous portrait of three dead siblings in their coffins. (Archives of Manitoba) It is probable that they succumbed to one of the many terrible diseases that took so many young lives in pioneer-era Manitoba – perhaps victims of a diphtheria epidemic.