

A Short Journey into the Past History of Sherbrooke

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Eighty-eight years ago the citizens of Sherbrooke became concerned about the condition of the Union Cemetery, located on Belvedere Street and Rand Drill Lane. This property had become overgrown with weeds and bushes and was being used as a lover's lane, a place to drink and a public toilet. Being so close to the railroad yard it was also the hang-out for tramps waiting for a train out. It was not safe for women to walk there after dark. At this time a group of local business men got together to see what could be done to remedy the conditions. After preliminary talks, a public meeting was held in the board room of the Eastern Townships Bank to raise the money to buy a piece of land from Mr. William Farwell for a new cemetery. The meeting chaired by Mr. Wm. White with Mr. Sam Morey as secretary, proposed issuing bonds valued at one hundred (\$100) each bearing interest at 3% per year till redeemed by the company, later named the Elwood Cemetery Company of Sherbrooke. In all \$4400.00 was subscribed for and \$3600.00 was used to purchase the land.

The meeting was then adjourned to Jan, 24th so Mr. E.B. Worthington could arrange, through the Lt. Governor of Quebec for the charter for a cemetery and to have a constitution and a set of bylaws written and approved, these being duly presented to the bond holders for approval, and acceptance noted. It is interesting to note that after 88 years these bylaws are still in use with only minor changes, thus showing the thought and planning of the original committee.

At the second meeting it was moved by D.G.Loomis, seconded by Mr. Tuck, that the plans as drawn by Mr. S.H.Bracket of St. Johnsbury, be accepted in their general features, and was unanimously adopted. Moved by Sam Morey (a man who played an important part in developing the cemetery) seconded by W.A. Morehouse, that a committee consisting of Jas. Davidson, William White, S.F. Morey, W.A. Morehouse, and A.N. Greenshields be set up to examine and recommend lot prices and report back. At this meeting a roads committee was also formed consisting of Robert Arkley, Clark Gordon, Dan Loomis, T.J.Tuck, and A. N. Greenshields.

On the 9th day of June, 1890, being the 2nd Tuesday of June and the day named in the constitution, the first annual meeting of the lot owners was held in the board room of the Eastern Townships Bank with Hon. E.T.Brooks in the chair and Messers W.A. Morehouse, G. Gordon, William. White, Jas. Davidson, W.S. Dresser, T.J. Tuck, W. Farwell, Dr. Hyndman, A.H. Foss and Sam Morey present. The appointment of the Trustees was made, Messers T.J. Tuck, W.A. Morehouse, A.H. Foss nominated by their respective churches, Messers E.T.

Brooks, Wm. White, S.F. Morey, C. Gordon, and Jas. Davidson and A.G. Loomis elected by ballot. The various congregations were advised to take the necessary steps to have the grounds consecrated to cemetery use, subsequently the grounds were consecrated by the Lord Bishop of Quebec during the summer of 1890.

The ground plan as submitted by Mr. Bracket was accepted with some small changes, the Hon. E. T. Brooks was elevated president, Wm. White vice-president of the company by acclamation, a post demanding a lot of their time during the setting up period. In the original setup the lot owners were allowed to do some decoration of their own lot but in 1928 it was necessary to change this ruling because of the added in upkeep to the company. A system of perpetual care was then installed where by for a predetermined sum a lot owner could obtain special care for his-her lot. This money was invested in a special fund the interest from which was to be used, on a pro rata basis, to improve the appearance of participant member's lots. Around this same time it was decided to charge an added amount to the purchase price of the lot to cover permanent care of the turf on the lots, this sum also put into a separate fund the revenue only to be used for care of turf and avenues in perpetuity.

The Records of the Elmwood Cemetery Co. contain the names of many of the city's prominent business men who have held office for periods of from one year to as many as 40 years in varying capacities: among others Sam. Morey, Messers Lawrence, J. R. Tuck, Foss, Greenshields, A.M. Sangster, J.R. Sangster, C.W. Cate, J.P. Wells, Wm. White, Jas. MacKinnon, A.G. Campbell, C.L. Campbell, W.S. Dresser, Dr. Hyndan, Jas. Davidson, Dan Loomis, A.S. Johnson, E.T. Brooks, M.C. Rymill, G. Liddel, G. Arkley, Addie, Artie Gunning, L. Stevenson, Harry Sampson, Wilkie McCaw, P.M. Robins, Jon McLeod, A.G. Lomas, W.A. Morehouse, Clark Gordon, Wm. Farwell, Neil Dinning, Eric Webster, Lem. Clark, Jim Low, J.M. Wark, Halton Clark, G. Sangster, Harry Grundy, Everett Nicol, F.E. Kerridge, D. Duncan, (present superintendent) M. Armstrong, J. Rugg, J. Davidson, M. Campbell, Wm. Lavallee, D. Wright, etc. For anyone whose name I have omitted (I am sure there are some) I apologise. My memory is not as good as it once was.

When bouquets are being passed out for those men who helped make the passing of our loved ones easier, the late John McLeod could well head such a group. I had the privilege of working with John for a number of years, at any time when I was in Hospital John took over for me.

Some of the more important dates events I can recall are- In 1896 lots were sold with the price added for perpetual care eliminating the worry about annual collections; in 1910 a meeting to authorize the purchase of a further piece of land and to get permission for further power from Quebec to deal in real estate, another bond issue to cover the costs involved was agreed upon.

During the next few years the cemetery was regraded and all lot enclosures were removed to permit better care of the cemetery.

In 1913 the plans to move bodies from the Union Cemetery to the Elmwood were first brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees and the Congregational Church and questions of cost, permits, etc. were arranged but the actual work of removal did not get started until 1918 when L. Stevenson was directed to allow Union lot owners to select lots in any part of the Elmwood Cemetery to be used to re-inter bodies of their families of a size not to exceed that used for same in the old Union Cemetery; where monuments or other grave markers were in place they were to be placed in the new location. When no markers or claimants were available a section was set aside to put the remains after they were suitably boxed. Each body was given a separate grave and a suitable space was left to put any remains that might turn up at a later date. To my knowledge this happened not more than three times. In 1916 a bridge was built by Mr. R.N. Arkley spanning the ravine that divided the north and south parts of the cemetery.

In 1917 a bylaw was passed prohibiting the sale of any lot to any person of an area greater than that required for the use of his own family and no resale of a lot or transfer to another person for any reason but on a signed statement from the owner to the cemetery authorizing a third party to use the lot for interments would be honored. At this time there appears to be a shortage of lot owners willing to get involved in the management of the cemetery. This is unfortunate since the general well-being of the company is dependent on the interest of the members. All owners of at least 100 sq.ft. of land are members. It requires the attendance of at least 7 elected members to form a quorum and this has not been obtained at all recent meetings so all decisions are controversial. In 1932-33 frost was 4 ½-5 ft. deep in the graves. During the period 1939-1946 the shortage of competent help and the effect of the wage and price board made proper care of the grounds very difficult and seriously affected the financial standing of the company, the general account at that time owed the Permanent Account and the bank several thousand dollars and the members were asked to help make up this deficit, the response led by the trustees who donated \$1000.00 each to as low as \$25.00 from other members. This drive brought \$4530.00 over the next five years and coupled with unusually good lot sales (the probable result of improved services and grounds) put the company in a position to improve conditions for the employees and indirectly the lot owners in general. At about this time it was decided to sell a strip along the north side of the cemetery to relieve the company from the burden of paying a city street tax of \$25,000 at the same time permitting the paving of the most of the avenues in the cemetery. At this time the balance of section D was completed and all the remaining avenues paved, thus letting all avenues be used during the whole year.

During my years at the cemetery I helped in arranging for some twenty-six hundred funerals, each funeral was special to someone, whether pauper or millionaire and each received the same special care. A stroll through the grounds will introduce you to such old families and early settlers as Hon. W.B.

Ives, 1841-1899, Frances Buck, Geo. Stearns, Samuel Brooks, M.L.A., H.H. Bryant, Rev, Jas, Robertson, first minister of Plymouth Church, 1776-1861, Andrew S. Johnson, pioneer in asbestos mining 1848-1926, Geo.D. MacKinnon, Col. John J. Penhale, D.S.O.V.D., Walter Allatt, baker, Last Post Lot for Veterans, Newton construction; John Edwards, Naoum Cassar (normy) Armstrong wholesalers; A.C. Skinner, telephone pioneer. Jeweler; Frederick Bradley, DDS, F.N. McCrea, M.P., Lt.Col. Lewis Bayley; John Woodward first interment in cemetery; H.C. Wilson, John McKecknie, G. Arkley, Sylvester Jenckes, Foss brothers makers of Fossmobile, Walter Blue; J.A. Bothwell, paper; A.G. Cambell; Hon. C.B. Howard; Judge Enright, Judge Wm. White, Judge E.T. Brooks, W. Paton, J.S. Mitchell, Dan Loomis, J.R. Sangster, Lt. Col. King, A.M. Sangster, Channell, Sir Joseph Adolphe Chapleau, K.C.M.G, in his lifetime Lt. Governor of Quebec; all these and many more who together helped to make our City a place to be proud of. Many of these old family names are still found on the city rolls.

History is where you find it and on a warm summer day where better to search than in a well- kept cemetery in a beautiful setting of flowering plants and shrubs; or what cause more deserving of your support than the final resting place of our loved ones.