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### **Plans Underfoot to Restore Christ's Church Cemetery!**

**Editors note; Unfortunately, the authorities representing Christ Church rejected any support from PMHA at this time.**

This Sunday, April 17th, I am going to become an Anglican. Please don't tell my Roman Catholic priest! Mind you in today's world most clergy would be happy with a decision such as this, so long as I continue in a faith where God, however we see that God teaches us to be caring for others, and. . ., a lot of other good things as well! But, I am not going to get into a debate about that! In reality, Father Haynes Hubbard, has not converted me! After the 11:00 a.m. Sunday Service at Christ's Church in Port Maitland, I am going to talk with the membership about how they can rehabilitate Christ's Church Cemetery without mortgaging the farm, or church! Then I will return to my Roman Catholic roots.

When Christ's Church Cemetery was established, it was intended to be the burial ground for citizens of all denominations of Sherbrooke and Dunn Townships. During different periods, and depending to some extent on the priest at the time, this intent was kept religiously or not so religiously. While one priest may have been more generous in his interpretation, another may have been a bit less yielding. A couple years ago I wrote the story of how the Port Maitland, Cemetery, which is attached to Christ's Church Cemetery came about after a controversy over who could be buried in Christ's Church Cemetery, and who could not.

My short lived conversion to Anglicanism is about the cemetery, not my straying from my own flock. The cemetery has a tremendous historic importance to our community. One of the finest and forward thinking breeches of the cemeteries rules occurred when the ships *Commerce* carrying members the 69<sup>th</sup> Regiment, and the *Despatch*, collided a short distance from the mouth of the Grand River in 1850. Unfortunately due to the destructive 1926 fire, of the old Christ's Church the cemetery records were destroyed. There remains some debate as to just how many sailors from the *Commerce* are buried there. The commonly accepted number seems to be twenty-five officers and privates. In addition to these, are Doctor Grantham and his eighteen-year-old, male servant from off the *Despatch*. None of these men were from Sherbooke, nor Dunn Township, and some of them may not have even been Anglican, yet Father Adam Townley, permitted their burial at Christ's Church. We can be thankful to Father Townley for this indiscretion. When Father Townley, allowed these sailors to be buried in Christ's Church Cemetery, he gave a piece of Anglican history to the community. Though it is true the deed belongs to the Anglican's, the spirit within belongs to all of us. This community, no matter their religious persuasion share with the Anglican's their love for the place. In a sense we too own Christ's Church Cemetery along with our Anglican neighbours.

Our parish community still have many descendants of early pioneers. These pioneers settled the land and fished the lake in and around Port Maitland. They build many of our homes and prayed in our church. They built our church! Notice how I am really getting into this Anglican thing! It has been long held that the first burial was that of William George Spratt, who died September 24, 1841. After some research I have found church records that tell us the first burial was of a three-year-old by the name of William Smith who was buried on June 16, 1841. Wm. George Spratt, was the third burial, following Henry James Carter, the infant child of John and Sarah Carter. Wm. Spratt does however, have the earliest visible tomb stone.

The old girl, is falling into disrepair. In conversation with some of Christ's Churches members, some tell me they

too are feeling a bit overwhelmed with the work that lays ahead in view of their own frailties. Their words, not mine! The purpose of my meeting with the full parish is to encourage its members to form a committee to oversee the restoration of the cemetery. The parish is small and the cost is high. I believe if they; I did said they; (after Sunday I go back to the "Real Catholic Church.) work with their children, their grandchildren and their neighbours, much of the work can be done through their own Stewardship. The parish can be assured they will have the support of the Port Maitland, Festival of History. Maybe we will even be able to find a dollar or two to support this project! There are some rather large monuments in need of straightening, and many smaller ones which just need to be shown more respect. In January of this long winter, I took some photos at Christ's Church and found many graves lying under water. Though I well understand this has little effect on the remains laying below, it is somewhat unpleasant for family members to see this. A bit of well-placed soil and some grass seed will fix this problem.

Over the years, many stones may have slowly slipped below the grass. As result of the records being destroyed, there could be pioneers buried there with stones marking their grave, yet the stone is not visible and our ancestor is lost to time. This will be one of the major concerns of the parish if they choose to take on this project. It is not a difficult task but does require a number of volunteers.

The project will require people, some heavy equipment, rakes, and shovels, and of course soil and grass seed. It is my hope a restoration committee will get out into the community and solicit your talents. Workers need to eat and where better to share a pot-luck picnic than on the shores of Lake Erie while volunteering your talent. I cannot urge the Anglican parishioners more than this. Come and hear what I will suggest. All you have to do is look across the river to Lock 27, to see what little money, and a lot of heart has done for that formerly ugly pile of old rocks. We urge you to become an Anglican for a day. . . , or two! If you do not see your way to Christ's Church on the 17<sup>th</sup> but wish to help out, please give me a call and I will put you in touch with members of Christ's Church who I am sure will welcome your assistance.

If you have items, you wish to have written about or pictures you would be willing to lend me, please drop me a note. Let me know how you feel about these articles. William (Bill) Arthur Warnick 180 Rosslyn Ave. South HAMILTON, ON L8M 3J5 e-mail [wwarnick@cogeco.ca](mailto:wwarnick@cogeco.ca) Phone 905 531-4350.