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Who is Buried in Christ's Church Cemetery, Port Maitland?

Shortly before Earl Siddall died he told me of a visit he received from Keith Topp of Toronto and how Mr. Topp sent him a newspaper clipping referring to an incident at Christ Church Cemetery, Port Maitland - a letter to the Editor of the Dunnville Chronicle.

It reads; "Port Maitland August 30, 1900 -A circumstance occurred last week at a funeral here, which should make so-called Christians blush for shame. An old lady, whose husband was laid to rest in the cemetery here some years ago, died, and her relatives at her request brought her here for burial. The funeral service, also at the request of the deceased, was arranged to be conducted by a Methodist preacher. But what was the surprise of everyone present, when at the gate of the cemetery, the rector of our church stopped the procession and informed the relatives that if he could conduct the service, all right, but if not, he forbid the Methodist preacher to do so. The relatives, anxious to carry out the wishes of the deceased would not accede to the demand made, and while the interment took place inside, the Methodist preacher had to stand outside the fence and read the service. Had this happened in South Africa under Kruger's rule I would not be surprised, but in Canada, a land boasting of freedom both in church and state, it seems like returning to the dark ages. Although we are proud to have the church in our midst yet the majority even of the members of the church do not endorse what took place at this funeral. If it is a church rule, as some say it is, not to allow burial services by other denominations, the quicker that rule is changed the better. I have mentioned no names, but every fact stated above can be proved by asking anybody who was there. Thanking you for your space, I remain."

Yours truly
Consistent Christianity'

Naturally I felt much as the writer and wondered who this Anglican minister was and what would cause him to take this action! I also wanted to know who the poor soul was waiting to be buried and causing so much concern. The minister was the Rev. A. W. H. Francis. Since seeing this article, I have looked for information about Rev. Francis and at every turn found him to be well-liked and respected. I found not one hint of even an ounce of prejudice.

Patience is its own reward for those who have it. It seems I have it! The reason for Rev. Francis's actions is found in an earlier newspaper clipping from the Dunnville Gazette dated April 6, 1894.

Here (in part) is what the Gazette wrote; 'A meeting was held in St. Paul's schoolroom Dunnville, on 29th March to learn the conditions of the trust upon which the churchyard of

Christ's Church Port Maitland, is held . . . The Rev. Maurice W. Britton who presided at the meeting, stated that when he first came to the Parish it had been represented to him that the graveyard was "free to all denominations" and had been so used for years. Wishing to satisfy himself as to the exact position of affairs, he examined the documents which stated the terms of the trust, and found that so far from the graveyard being "free to all denominations," it was distinctly stated that the ground was to be used for the free burial of such inhabitants of the Townships of Dunn and Sherbrooke as were to be buried "according to the rites of the Church of England." The attempt to administer the property according to the terms of the trust deed had caused hard feeling and disturbance, many people feeling that an attempt was making to deprive them of their rights. None regretted more than he the irritation which had arisen, but he knew that the Incumbent and Churchwardens were in the same position as if executors of a will; they were bound by the terms of the deed, and were not free to exercise their own judgement. . . The matter had been referred to the Diocese, and their judgement was that in all the points the present action of the Church Corporation was the only course open to them. It was clearly shown that the title of the land was vested in the Church of England, and that if the people of the Townships desired the disposal of the ground, the deed gives them the right to acquire it for £500 (\$2,000 in 1900). Until therefore they do this it remains subject to the trust for which it is vested in the Bishop. . .'

Reverend Britton, may have opened a can of worms he could not close and in doing so upset the apple cart; for within a few months he was no longer the minister at Christ Church! From documents found in the History-Genealogy Room of the Dunnville District Heritage Association I have learned how the matter was resolved. *Mr. William Splatt, himself an Anglican having been witness to this awkward event and owner of land adjacent to Christ's Church Cemetery donated one acre of his property for the Port Maitland Cemetery.* Eventually the former township of Dunn, and now Haldimand County would oversee the operation of the Port Maitland Cemetery. It was not until I purchased my little piece of land at Port Maitland Cemetery this spring that I became aware of what few others already knew; there are two cemeteries within the one fence where Christ's Church sits.

Unfortunately, as the Christ's Church 'cemetery records' were destroyed in the 1926, fire which levelled the original church I have not unequivocally determined the name of the poor soul who was the subject of this 1900, controversy. I have a fair idea culled from saved parish 'burial records' and could likely name the lady, but at this point that would be speculation.

If you have items you wish written about or pictures you would be willing to lend, 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 Phone 905 549-6086.

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