

# KEITH BLADES

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## **Old Wesleyan Methodist Cemetery [also known as “Burial Ground”]**

Further to a recent visit to the Cemetery with Deputy mayor Minnille It was agreed a summary overview of the current issues and further actions should be prepared.

### **1. Formal address**

Lot 13, west half, 1 acre, concession 9; 5716 County Road 29, Mississippi Mills

### **2. Summary Background Information.**

The Cemetery was opened in 1827 and closed 1947. A restoration project was undertaken in 1979 where the majority of the marble slab markers were lifted and placed, in groups of 3 or 4, into concrete cairns. A few slab markers remain in their original locations, as do obelisks. The assumption is that original burials were not disturbed.

### **3. Historical Significance**

The cemetery contains the burial plots of the Teskey and Shipman families, founders of Appleton and Almonte respectively. The Teskey plot is enclosed in a low stone and concrete surround with cast iron railings.

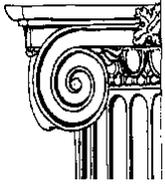
The cemetery, containing these and other early settlers to the area, undoubtedly mean it is of the highest significance within the Municipality and Lanark County. The cemetery is currently not designated under the Ontario Heritage Act.

### **4. Current Status and Condition Overall**

The cemetery is maintained by the Municipality of Mississippi Mills. Maintenance appears to be limited to grass cutting.

Vegetation in the form of brush and small trees is invading the cemetery along the boundaries and beginning to obscure markers. Trees within the cemetery have matured to the point where they are contributing to the overall worsening condition of markers and the overall impression of lack of care.

The cemetery is bordered on the west side by an iron fence and gates mounted to concrete block piers faced with granite fieldstones. It is assumed that this was installed as part of the 1979 restoration. The masonry piers are currently partially collapsed, and the fence and gates are heavily rusted.



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The marble markers corralled into the concrete cairns are becoming increasingly deteriorated as a result of the incompatibility between the respective materials. Obelisks have fared better, although tilted in most instances. Tops of these are often found to be broken off, sometimes located nearby or missing altogether. There are other partial remains of markers to be found, typically along the boundaries.

## **5. Specific issues related to the deterioration of marble markers set in concrete.**

While well-meaning at the time, this intervention has accelerated the deterioration of the marble slabs. Differential movement between the materials has resulted in cracks extending into and across the marble slabs. Inscriptions are becoming less legible as a result of salt action forming from the concrete, together with the inclined positioning of the slabs.

Photographs over a 20-year period would suggest that the accelerated pattern of deterioration will result in increasing difficulty conserving these markers.

### **Proposed Actions.**

#### **1. Obtain survey information that accurately defines the boundaries of the cemetery.**

Action: by MM.

#### **2. That the interventions to the fence be undertaken as a separate project to the conservation of the cemetery and the markers specifically.**

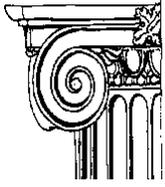
The iron fence is in fair condition and can be cleaned of rust and repainted. Various approaches are available, both with the cleaning methodology and coating materials. Ideally, a long-term approach should be considered to extend the frequency of maintenance.

The iron gates are in poor condition and will require more extensive intervention.

It is recommended that the present masonry be demolished and replaced with more substantial iron details that can act as hinge points for the pedestrian and vehicle entrances. The bronze plaques can be reinstated on the new ironwork.

Action: TBD.

#### **3. Removal of invasive vegetation at boundaries and selected locations within cemetery. Define Boundaries.**



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Action: by MM

- 4. Carry out Preliminary Condition Survey of all extant burial markers and prioritize conservation requirements and develop preliminary budget estimates.**

Action: Specialist conservators experienced in cemetery marker conservation; TBD.

- 5. Conduct historic research concurrently with overall program to provide additional information.**

It is understood further documentation may be available on the MVTM database.

Action: MM Heritage Committee

- 6. Explore funding/ grant opportunities and designation of the Cemetery under the Ontario Heritage Act.**

Action: MM Heritage Committee.

I believe this summarizes the discussion on site with proposed actions. I have reference photographs, extending back 20 years. The Heritage Committee should form part of an overall task force to assist the Municipality with this project.

Keith Blades  
November 2024.