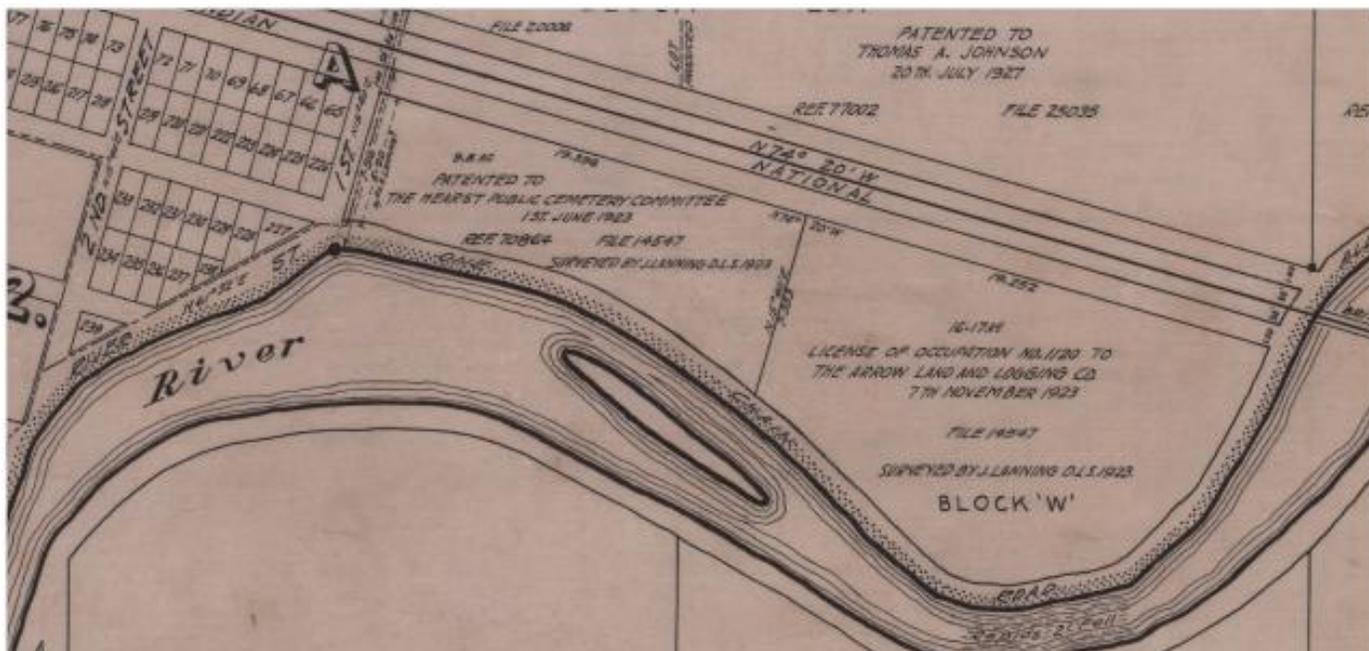


THE HEARST PUBLIC CEMETERY (THE RIVERSIDE CEMETERY) by Ernie Bies



Detail from Plan of the Town site of Hearst, Compiled by W. F. Weaver, O.L.S. 1936

The Hearst Cemetery Committee was formed in about 1916 by five Hearst residents. The committee approached the Crown Land agent and requested that a ten acre parcel of land on the eastern outskirts of the town be reserved for a cemetery. The Department of Lands and Forests made the reservation and said they would make a free grant for a public cemetery on payment of a nominal patent fee of \$5.00 and submission of a survey plan. Two survey plans were submitted in 1921, the second of which showed that part of the 10 acre reservation had been subdivided into cemetery plots and in some bodies were buried. The Provincial Board of Health gave its approval in the summer of 1922. Following that, the Arrow Land and Logging Company made an application for a sawmill site immediately east of the proposed cemetery lands. There was an encroachment on the cemetery lands by about 132 feet, but not over the specially selected plots shown on their plan where some bodies were already interred. The cemetery committee consented, by letter, to the leasing of this 132 foot strip to the sawmill operators with the condition that it revert to and become part and parcel of the cemetery lands proper at the termination of the sawmill lease.

The chairman of the cemetery committee was R.A. Douglas and the Secretary was Harry E. Powell, (pictured on right), a well known builder in Hearst who would later serve as Post Master and Mayor. In a letter dated January 23, 1923, Presbyterian minister Reverend Joseph Irwin expressed concerns to Ontario Premier Ernest Charles Drury that the newly incorporated town of Hearst was now in the hands of men who might put commercial interests ahead of those of the Public Cemetery. In a letter dated February



14, 1923 Premier Drury assured Rev. Irwin that the rights of the cemetery committee would be fully respected if they followed the recommendations made by Beniah Bowman, Minister of Lands and Forests. This was detailed in the Bowman-Drury memo of February 12, 1923.

On June 1st, 1923, the 9.8 acre parcel of land, just east of First Street, was patented to the Hearst Public Cemetery Committee and is still in use today. On November 7th, 1923, a licence of occupation, No.1120, was granted to the Arrow Land and Logging Company for the approximately 16 acre parcel to the west, bounded by the cemetery on the west, a 66 foot road allowance along the Mattawishkwia River on the south and east, and by the railway on the north. Both of these parcels were surveyed by J. Lanning, O.L.S. in 1923. Levesque Lumber relocated their operations from Ritchie and Kabina to a new sawmill operation on the Arrow Lands in Hearst in 1963 where they operated for the next three decades before going out of business. Currently the property is being used by Tembec Industries as a lumber drying plant.

Now known as the Riverside Cemetery, many of Hearst's pioneers rest there. What sets the Riverside Cemetery apart from others is the record of the diversity of cultures that made up this town of ours. English, French, Scottish, Irish, First Nations, Finn, Slovak, Yugoslav, Bulgarian, Russian, Chinese and German are just some of the nations represented here forever.



The stories of many pioneers, some tragic, can be found in the 2009 book, Clayton's Kids, Pioneer families of Hearst Public School. An excerpt from a story, written by Judy Halme Tanguay, describes hardships faced by her grandparents, Herbert and Minnie Bryant, who were early pioneers of Wyborn.

“Life was hard and farming was a struggle. On a cold, snowy Friday in October 1920, their thirteen-month-old son, Harold, died. Herbert built a small coffin, and Minnie lined it with her silk slip, and they carried their small son in a horse-drawn cutter to the Hearst Protestant cemetery. Here he lies, in an unmarked grave. The following Monday, Minnie gave birth to a daughter, Rita.”

They dealt with tragedy one day and had to carry on the next. Thus was the lot of many of the pioneers of Hearst but they persevered and the town will soon celebrate its one hundredth year of incorporation.

The locations of some of the early graves were lost over the years as markers deteriorated. A large bronze plaque was erected by the town in 2002 which lists more than 100 names of these lost graves. It is interesting to note that unnamed and unbaptised babies were allowed to be buried on cemetery grounds. One of these was “Bubnick Baby Boy”, who died at birth on March 17, 1924. This was the twin brother of well known local businessman Alex Bubnick. Two other names on the plaque are early pioneers Nell Woodward (pictured on right) who settled in Hearst



before 1920 and Jenny May Banks (on left) who joined her husband George in 1921 on their homestead in what was to become Bradlo.

One lost grave that was not listed on the plaque belongs to Ernie MacKenzie. He worked for Driftwood Lands and Timber and had purchased a farm east of the Jan and Anna Bies property in Bradlo. Mackenzie was killed in a railway motor car (speeder) accident in 1948 and was buried at the Riverside Cemetery.

Unfortunately the location of his grave has become lost over the years. Following Ernie's death his brother Eddie took over his farm but moved away shortly after.

Young Bill Bies was traumatised by attending the funeral but remembers it clearly. Recently, while visiting the cemetery, Bill advised town officials that he thought the MacKenzie grave site was plot number 422, adjacent to the graves of Raymond and Elizabeth Fournier.

There are probably others whose stay in Hearst was short and they are remembered by few.

References and acknowledgements

Ontario Archives, Hearst Cemetery, 1923, File MS 1665, series of letters between Rev. Joseph Irwin of Hearst, Ontario Premier Ernest Drury, and the Department of Lands and Forests.

Attached as Appendix 1

A Short History of the Hearst and Area Sawmills, Hearst Public Library, 2006, online document.

Clayton's Kids, 2009, Bryant story by Judy Halme Tanguay, Banks and Woodward references and photos.

Doug Rosevear, Olga Stevenson Bies, Bill Bies remembrances.

Appendices

1. Ontario Archives file MS 1665, Hearst Cemetery, 1923, letters between Rev. Joseph Irwin and Ontario Premier E.C. Drury
2. Photo of bronze plaque erected in 2002 listing unmarked graves.

APPENDIX 1. Ontario Archives file MS 1665, Hearst Cemetery, 1923, letters

Hearst, Ont.
23rd Jan. 1923

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
JAN 26 1922
TORONTO

Honourable Sir

I am writing to you in the interests of your Hearst Public Cemetery. For about five years we have been working on the task of providing a decent Public Cemetery for Hearst and district and now, when we thought our task almost accomplished we find that all our work threatens to go for nothing.

After securing the sanction of the Provincial Board of Health for the suggested site, application was made to the Gov. in the usual way and met with a generous response. Surveys were asked for and these (two) were made and sent into the Dept. In the second plots were marked and in some of these bodies are now buried.

The Department for some reason or other did not hasten to provide the necessary deed - it has not yet arrived and a new danger threatens as you doubtless know. Hearst is now

incorporated and our affairs are largely in the hands of men who are not likely to be much interested in our Public Cemetery and may in a thoughtless moment sacrifice its interests to some other of more apparent commercial value.

It appears that a company now buying logs in Heart proposes to build a saw-mill on the river bank on or near the Cemetery grounds. It is reported that the Company is quite satisfied to accept a position near the Cemetery ~~at~~ - a position which will not interfere with our ten acres. If in the working out of the plans an eastward section of the 10 acres were found requisite - a temporary lease I suppose, could be given. But other reports state that in deference to this Company, westward our Cemetery is to be swung westward from its present position - instead of eastward from the present grave. Now westward the ground is low and muddy. Even our present position is low - I have buried bodies when we had to bale out 18 inches of water. But it is improving every year and is the only worthy site for a Cemetery. Needless to say, we have ample

!!!

Confidence in the good faith of your government to feel that our cemetery rights will be conserved and that we will not suffer if, for any technical reason, our application has not been seen right through to the giving of the required deed.

Many of our people here feel strongly on this matter, but they hate the idea of having this small issue made the occasion of a cleft between the two sections of our new-incorporated town.

I know you are enormously busy, but if you can give this a little personal attention, the results will help us all and deepen our already great indebtedness to you and to your Gov.

Ever
yours very truly
(Rev.) Jos. A. Irwin.

TORONTO.
JAN. 26.
1923.

Dear Sir,-

I have before me your letter of Jan. 23rd, and I am taking the matter up at once and personally, with the Department of Lands and Forests. When I have received from them a statement of the case, I will reply to you further.

Yours very sincerely,



Rev. Jos. A. Irwin,
HEARST, Ontario.

Original Letter Sent

TORONTO.
JAN. 27.
1923.

MEMORANDUM:

THE HON URABLE BENIAH BOWMAN,
Minister of Lands and Forests

I am sending you copy of a letter which I have received from Rev. Joe. A. Irwin, of Hearst, Ontario. You will note that he too complains of the dilatoriness of the Department in carrying out a matter which he thought was settled, that is, in regard to the cemetery location at Hearst.

I would be glad if you would give this your immediate attention in order that settled conditions may be reached. I may say that I think it would be a lack of faith, if conditions are as Mr. Irwin states, that you should fail to give the promised deed and allow the disturbance of their cemetery by a saw-mill site.

E. D. Dwyer

TORONTO,
FEB. 14,
1923.

Dear Mr. Irwin,-

I have taken up the matter of your letter of January 23rd with the Minister of Lands and Forests, and have from him a memorandum which I think covers the question adequately, a copy of which I am attaching for your information.

Mr. Bowman suggests that the proper course for you to take will be to get in touch with the Hearst cemetery committee and get such action taken as will allow the Department to deal with the question in a satisfactory manner. I am personally assured by Mr. Bowman that nothing will be put in the way of such action once conditions have been complied with at your end.

I sincerely hope that you may be able to follow the course outlined by the Minister and that you may get such a settlement as will adequately meet your needs.

Yours very sincerely,

Rev. Jos. A. Irwin,
HEARST, Ontario.





OFFICE OF THE
MINISTER OF LANDS AND FORESTS



MEMORANDUM for the Honourable Mr. Drury, Premier:

I return herewith letter of Rev. Joseph A. Irwin of Hearst, with respect to the Hearst Public Cemetery.

In looking into the situation I find the facts as disclosed are briefly these: Some seven years ago the Crown Land Agent at Hearst advised that a Committee of five had selected a cemetery plot for the town, containing ten acres more or less. The Department thereupon made the reservation and stated that it would consider making a Free Grant for a public Cemetery on payment of the nominal Patent fee of \$5., and that it was possible a survey would be required to properly describe the parcel, and sought information as to whom the grant should go as the town was not incorporated.

There the matter rested until 1916 when on further inquiries the Department pointed out that as there was no corporate body established the Cemetery Act should be followed and certain sections of the Act applicable to the case were forwarded to the Agent.

In 1921 a survey plan showing how part of the land had been divided into cemetery plots was received and in March of 1922 an application was received from the Cemetery Committee, duly appointed, and a ruling was made that the ten acres should be reserved from disposition for any other purpose until there was made an attempt towards bringing about an organization under the Cemetery Act.

The Act requires the assent of the Provincial Board of Health and that assent was given late this last summer, following which an application was made for a sawmill site immediately East of the cemetery plot and running over on the plot some 132 feet, but not near the special lots shown on their plan, into which the cemetery plot was subdivided. The Cemetery Committee have given their consent in the form of a letter to the two-chain strip being leased to the applicants for mill site purposes, on condition that it would revert to and become part and parcel of the cemetery lands proper, at the termination of the sawmill lease, - so that the fears entertained by Mr. Irwin that any danger threatens as a result of the action of the Crown is not justified.

I would suggest that if Mr. Irwin has reasonable grounds for opposing the action of the Hearst Cemetery Committee he should immediately take up that matter with the Committee, the Chairman of which is R. A. Douglas, and the Secretary H. E. Powell, both of whose signatures are attached to the letter addressed to the Department on the 22nd January this year, endorsing the application of the applicants for the mill site.

As the Department has intimated it is quite prepared to issue Patent to the Cemetery Committee when proof is filed of its constituted authority, for the whole ten acres, and then allow the committee to deal with the saw mill site applicants, or the Department would include the extra two-chains in the lease, of an additional sixteen acres to the other applicants for a sawmill site.

Toronto, February 12th, 1923.

Bonah Bowman
Minister.

APPENDIX 2. Riverside Cemetery Bronze Plaque (2002) listing unmarked graves.

