

McGuigan Pioneer Cemetery Merrickville, Ontario



The McGuigan Cemetery is one of the oldest burying grounds not only along the Rideau River but in Eastern Ontario. It was in use for approximately one hundred years between 1800 and 1900.

The tombstones now standing on the small knoll overlooking the Rideau River tell a large part of the role this pioneer cemetery played in the history of the area.

United Empire Loyalists were the first to be interred here, followed by British soldiers, decommissioned following the War of 1812, and finally, unknown workers who died during the construction of the Rideau Canal in 1832, their places consecrated only with unmarked slabs of slate.

History Discovered

In the early 1960s, Alice Hughes, Delmar Thompson and Harold Richardson, in pursuit of their incredible task of recording the inscriptions on all of the graveyards in Merrickville-Wolford, heard of an overgrown and abandoned plot of stones and markers set back off the road between Merrickville and Burritt's Rapids on Leeds Grenville County Road 23.



Crawling and scrambling through the under bush they came upon a few toppled stones barely visible among the weeds.

Years of abandonment and disuse had left the few markers toppled in a tangle of bush, but the early inscribed dates on the markers immediately spoke to the importance of the site they had discovered.

An initial site survey was conducted and Wolford Township, over several years, provided help in cutting trees and clearing bush. Research revealed that the land upon which the property rested had been owned by Miles McGuigan who was discharged from the British army in 1815 following the settlement of the war of 1812.

During this reclamation, volunteers from the recently created Merrickville and District Historical Society took on the cleanup task, and modest improvement to the site was accomplished.

In 1976 the Historical Society undertook a significant restoration of the site. With assistance of the Ontario Government, a New Horizon grant and the active participation of a Smiths-Falls based Katimivak. The restoration was completed and an official opening of the site was conducted on July 25th 1981.



McGuigan Cemetery is located at 448 County Road, 23 (Burritts Rapids Road). 1.5 km east of Merrickville and 8 km west of Burritts Rapids. A path leads from the south side of the road about 100 metres to the entrance of the cemetery.

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Collar Hill Cemetery Merrickville Ontario



Collar Hill Cemetery is located in a quiet corner within the central Village of Merrickville. It contains the grave of William Mirick, founder of Merrickville who was born at Springfield, Massachusetts, on April 30th, 1760. His ancestors had migrated nearly 125 years earlier, in 1636 from Wales to Massachusetts and prospered there.

William came to Canada in 1888 as an United Empire Loyalist and the same year married Sylvia Comstock. In 1793 he first came to this area and with his U.E.L. grant built the mills around which grew the Village of Miricks Mills, now Merrickville.

William Mirick died in 1844 and Sylvia some 8 years later. Both are buried, in Welsh tradition in above ground stone crypts.



Burial crypt of William and Sylvia Mirick and the Mirick's daughter Charlotte and her husband Elisha Collar.

Although the McGuigan Cemetery was still in use in the mid 1800s the concept of family burial plots was common for families who had the property. In Collar Hill you will find the grave markings for other Mirick family members and perhaps close associates.

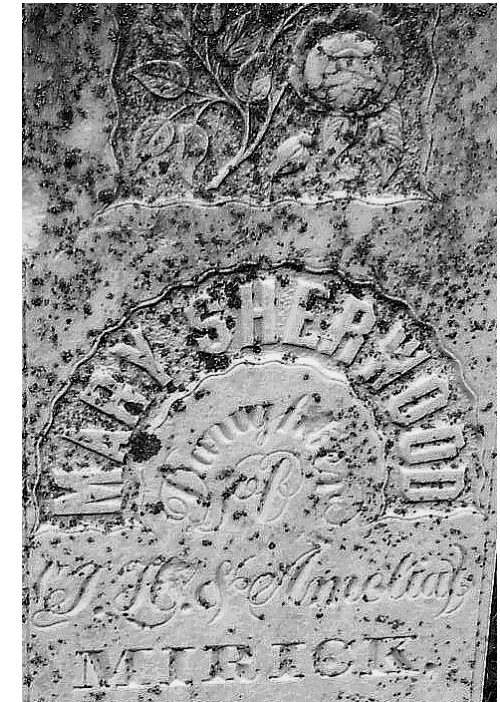
Adjacent to William and his wife Sylvia lie the crypts of his eldest daughter Charlotte and her husband Elisha Collar whose pioneer family had built a home on a hillside adjacent to the Mirick property and for whom the cemetery is named.

Beside the four tombs an original stone bench sits to allow for quiet reflection.

There are few remaining grave stones visible but the nearest one tells a poignant tale. A simple rectangular white stone with an elegantly framed pastoral scene bears the name of Mary Sherwood. Barely a year old, was she Mirick's granddaughter, and daughter of his youngest son Terrance and wife Amelia.

While Collar Hill appears to be a Mirick family plot, other names such as Reuben A Knapp, a son of Joseph Knapp UEL was born 1810 in Montague Township. He died in 1866.

During the mid 1800s Reuben Arcle Knapp was Reeve of Montague Township. It is not known whether he earned his right to interment in this special cemetery through this achievement or through a possible marriage in the Mirick clan.



Mary Sherwood
Daughter of
T.H. & Amelia
MIRICK

Born July 17th 1855
Died July 30th 1856

The Merrickville & District Historical Society is responsible for the upkeep of both cemeteries, together with the Corporation of the Municipality of Merrickville-Wolford which provides lawn cutting and care.