

Decades-long Battle to Save Pioneer Cemetery Recognized with Heritage Award

2017 OHS Cemetery Preservation Award presented at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, Toronto, June 23, 2018

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In 1967, The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) established an awards program to recognize individuals, organizations, corporations, and authors who have contributed significantly to the preservation and promotion of Ontario's heritage.

The Cemetery Preservation Award recognizes an individual or not-for-profit heritage organization for having demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the preservation and protection of cemeteries in Ontario. The 2017 Cemetery Preservation Award goes to **Richard Hatt, Shaune Copeman, and the late Jim Green** for their work in preserving and restoring the **Cooley-Hatt Family Cemetery**.



Richard Hatt accepting the 2017 Cemetery Preservation Award from Chair of the OHS Honours and Awards Committee Ian Radforth (right) and Co-Chair of the OHS Cemeteries and Preservation Committee Janie Cooper-Wilson (left).

Two decades ago what was originally believed to be a small, inconsequential family burial site was revealed to be an exceptionally large, provincially significant United Empire Loyalist cemetery that served Ancaster Township in the earliest years of settlement.

The Cooley-Hatt Cemetery holds the mortal remains of an estimated 100 United Empire Loyalists, including successful businessman; politician; founding father of Dundas, Ontario; and War of 1812 veteran, Major Richard Hatt (1769 – 1819)—as well as his wife, Mary Kate Cooley (1758 – 1816) and several of their children, many of whom died under the age of eighteen. A tenacious crusade spearheaded by Cooley-Hatt descendants was carried out to prevent a land-development company's efforts to relocate the remains of their ancestors to make way for a residential housing complex.

The Ontario Historical Society championed the case, which subsequently became the subject of impassioned debate in the Ontario Legislature regarding the interpretation of what is considered to be “in the public interest.” Although, Bill

149 was extinguished when the Legislative Assembly of Ontario was prorogued in March 2010, the battle remains ongoing to enact stricter amendments to the current regulations and thus ensure the protection of Ontario cemeteries.

The Cooley-Hatt Cemetery case has been significantly instrumental in generating intensified public awareness, sensitivity, and vigilance regarding the extreme vulnerability of our sacred spaces, historical sites, and the estimated 1500 unapproved cemeteries in the Province of Ontario. The Honours and Awards Committee is delighted to recognize Richard Hatt, Shaune Copeman, and the late Jim Green with the Cemetery Preservation Award. The award was presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Ontario Historical Society at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Toronto, Ontario on June 23, 2018.

Founded in 1888, the Ontario Historical Society is a non-profit corporation and registered charity dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Ontario's history for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. To learn more about the OHS's Honours and Awards Program, or to submit a nomination, please visit <https://www.ontariohistoricalsociety.ca/index.php/categories> or contact the Society's offices by telephone or e-mail.

-The Ontario Historical Society-

Contact: Daniel Dishaw - ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca - 416.226.9011

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