

OHS Cemetery Preservation Award Presented to Rev. Dr. Donna Mann

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OHS Cemetery Preservation Award presented June 15, 2019
at Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto

The Cemetery Preservation Award recognizes individuals or a not-for-profit heritage organization that have demonstrated an outstanding commitment to the preservation and protection of cemeteries in Ontario. The Ontario Historical Society is pleased to present the 2018 Cemetery Preservation award to Rev. Dr. Donna Mann for her extraordinary efforts to restore, preserve, and maintain the West Bentinck Presbyterian Cemetery, located in the Township of West Grey.



Chair of the OHS Honours & Awards Committee Dr. Ian Radforth (left) and Chair of the OHS Cemeteries and Preservation Committee Janie Cooper-Wilson present the 2018 Cemetery Preservation Award to Rev. Dr. Donna Mann (centre).

In the early 1860's, a congregation of staunch Scottish Presbyterians formed in what was then Bentinck Township under a minister from Chesley, Ontario. Eventually, a location for the church was agreed upon when Andrew Storrar donated the land for the establishment of the church and a cemetery. Mr. Storrar was the first burial in 1872. Unfortunately, accurate records were not kept until 1877 and by 1922 the membership had dwindled and the church was officially closed. Five years later, the church building was sold, torn down, and moved to Elmwood, where it was used as a community hall and later a library. As a result, the cemetery containing the graves of the early pioneers was left behind, becoming the victim of vandalism and neglect. In 1966, concerned residents removed trees and scrub brush and gathered the fallen tombstones, placing them in a block.

and those interested in the occult. Rev. Mann has always considered preservation of the past to be of major importance for historical and educational purposes. She possesses a special passion for the preservation of historical sites, especially where churches have been closed and the associated cemeteries have been abandoned and neglected. Such was the case with the West Bentinck Presbyterian Cemetery where the graves of the early Bentinck pioneers had been shamefully disrespected. Rev. Mann's fearless endeavours over the next two decades to bring about public awareness of the site were not in vain. Through her dedicated and highly competent leadership, the site was rededicated on June 28, 2015 and the dignity of West Bentinck Presbyterian Cemetery restored.

By the time Rev. Mann became actively involved in the 1990's, the Bentinck Cemetery had been permitted to devolve, once again, into a place for partying teenagers, vandals,

Founded in 1888, the Ontario Historical Society is a not-for-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-

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