

Cemetery Preservation Award Recognizes Exceptional Community Collaboration to Realize Potter's Field Monument

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The 2021-22 OHS Cemetery Preservation Award is presented to the Potter's Field Monument project, recognizing Aly Boltman, and John and Shirley Reaburn as the steering committee which led the work, supported by a number of integral individuals and organizations in Grey County. 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.

Owen Sound's Greenwood Cemetery Potter's Field was established in 1858 as a final resting place for the indigent, located on the north side of the chapel, on the east side of the ravine. To date, over 1,200 burials of the community's most vulnerable citizens have been recorded, including hundreds of babies, children, orphans, seniors, homeless, poor, and outcast. These unfortunate individuals lay in their graves completely unidentified and forgotten, without any visible markers to indicate anything about the lives they had lived.



Aly Boltman Responds



In 2018, when Aly Boltman was leading a cemetery tour as part of Owen Sound's Doors Open event, two anonymous donors approached her about funding a monument for Potter's Field. These generous community members were later revealed to be John and Shirley Reaburn of Georgian Bluffs. The public was asked for input regarding the design of the proposed monument, and volunteers worked with Sanderson Monuments to create an appropriate memorial, which was inspired by the Black History Cairn in Harrison Park, designed by Bonita Johnson deMatteis.

Once the initial positive steps had been taken, a successful application was made to the federal government's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to secure the necessary funding to research and learn more about those interred at the Site. The Potter's Field Research Project was led by Dr. Naomi Norquay of York University, in partnership with Grey Roots Museum and Archives.

Many of Owen Sound's earliest Black citizens—who fled slavery in the United States and arrived via the Underground Railroad—and several generations of their descendants are interred in Greenwood Cemetery's Potter's Field. The Indigent Plot Narrative Stories, the result of a year of research by Norquay and Lobo, have now also been released through the archives to complement the monument.

Congratulations are extended to the steering committee, as well as a number of invaluable supporters of the project, including Terri Baird-Jackson, Dr. Naomi Norquay, Dr. Rachel Lobo, Grey Roots Museum & Archives, The City of Owen Sound, The Grey County Black Heritage Society, Tony Miller, and countless members of the community for their input and support bringing the Potter's Field Monument to fruition.

Terri Baird-Jackson Responds



Shirley & John Raeburn Respond



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

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