

THE STORY OF THE SHINGWAUK CEMETERY

SHINGWAUK
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A Paper read in connection with the pilgrimage to the
Shingwauk Burial Ground, 7th June 1954,
by Canon F. W. Colloton

On the day of our pilgrimage to the grave of our first
Bishop, it is fitting that we should give some thought to the
little burial ground where the bodies of himself and his wife
await the Resurrection.

The Shingwauk Home was founded by the Rev. Edward Francis
Wilson, an Englishman who devoted nearly the whole of his
ministry to missionary work among the Indians. The first
building was erected at Garden River in the summer of 1873.
It was opened on the 23rd September of that year with sixteen
pupils. Five days later it was burned to the ground, fortunately
with no loss of life.

Undaunted by this disaster, Mr. Wilson secured land east
of the then Village of Sault Ste. Marie, and there erected the
second Shingwauk Home. The foundation stone was laid on the 30th
July 1874 by the Earl of Dufferin, the Governor-General of Canada,
who with his wife was passing through the Upper Lakes at the time.
The Home was formally opened on the 2nd August 1875 by the Bishop
of Huron and the Bishop of Algoma. At the time of the opening of
the Home contained fifty pupils, equally divided between boys and
girls.

The early days of the Shingwauk were attended by a number of
deaths among the pupils. Tuberculosis was then a terrible
scourge among the Indians, and modern methods of combatting the
disease were not available. Many of the pupils were badly in-
fected before coming to the school, and it is not surprising
that some of them should not be able to withstand the dread
disease.

In the first issue of "The Algoma Missionary News" (which
succeeded a little paper called "The Algoma Quarterly"), dated
the 1st July 1876, Mr. Wilson wrote: - "It is sad to think that
wherever there is life in this world there is death also. No
sooner is the solemn silence of the forest broken by the stroke
of the axe of the pioneer settler, and the log snanty is seen
with its blue smoke curling up among the dark trees, and chil-
dren and dogs, and perhaps a yoke of oxen, making the scene
lively - then, ere a little, the sod has to be broken and the
grave dug for one of the woodsman's family. People living in
the Old Country, or in civilized parts of Canada, would wonder
at the numerous little grave yards, and even single graves, to
be found scattered over these wild regions. Half way to Garden

River there is a solitary grave on the top of a stony hill. A little above the Sault there is another single grave enclosed by a fence. and some have private grave yards in their own grounds, jealously kept and guarded.

"And so we have followed the example of the country, and have set apart 'God's Acre', a little spot, retired, peaceful, on a gentle slope, near to a little lake, surrounded by a thick growth of young fir trees and birch. It is only a chain square, and our boys have built a stone wall around it. People who have seen it are charmed by its appearance. The gate is of a somewhat ecclesiastical design, surmounted by a cross, and painted white. In the centre of the ground is a little flower bed with rose bushes, mignonette and other flowers; and in the middle of the bed a rock work with moss, ferns and wild flowers clambering over it." Mr. Wilson notes that there were at that time three graves, those of Hannah Weezhoo of Walpole Island, aged 13; Solomon Corning of the Sarnia Reserve, aged 8; and that of a young woman, a nurse in Mr. Wilson's family.

This little burial ground was the gift of Mr. William Stratton, the owner of the adjoining lot; and it was consecrated by Bishop Fauquier on the 2nd June, 1876. Mr. Stratton's wife is buried in the south-east corner of the cemetery.

When Mr. Wilson was on Lake Nipigon, visiting a band of Indians who had waited nearly thirty years for a missionary of the English Church (promised them in 1850 at the time when the Indians surrendered their lands to the Crown), the Chief, Oshkopskeda, entrusted his little son, Ningwennine, to be educated in the Shingauk Home. After due preparation the little boy was baptized by Bishop Fauquier, who gave him his own name, Frederick. He died at the age of 14, and the Bishop read the service at the grave.

One of the most notable of those early pupils was William Sagucheway, a native of Walpole Island, who came in the summer of 1875. His Indian name was Wehsashkung, "Shining Light". He was a bright, intelligent lad, and accompanied Mr. Wilson on his visit to England in 1879. He was a devoted Christian, and exercised a splendid influence among the children of the school. But he too had in him the seeds of the dread tuberculosis. Towards the end of 1881 word came that the Bishop's wife had died in New York, and soon afterwards the Bishop himself died in Toronto. It was the Bishop's wish that they should be buried in the Shingauk Cemetery, and (as Mr. Wilson writes) "preparations had to be made for this. The road to the cemetery which was blocked in places by large boulders and old pine stumps had to be cleared and levelled. William, of course, was called into service for this, for no one could clear a road through a rough tract of land better than he. He was busy preparing for the spring examinations, and very anxious to be victor; but books were laid aside without a murmur, and he shouldered his pickaxe and shovel, and in company with two or three other big boys set cheerfully and heartily to work. It seemed strange that his last work should be preparing this road to the cemetery along which his own body was to be carried before those of the Bishop and Mrs. Fauquier arrived. That hard work, with taking a chill, was probably in some

measure the cause of his death." He was buried on Ascension Day 1882. Had he lived he was shortly to have entered a theological college to prepare for the Sacred Ministry, but it was not to be.

The remains of Bishop Paquier and his wife arrived at Sault Ste. Marie on the 21st May 1882, in charge of their two sons. A rustic catafalque of fir branches and black drapery had been erected on the site of the proposed Memorial Chapel, and thither the bodies were conveyed immediately on arrival, Indian boys standing on guard. The funeral was the following day. Nearly all the leading people from the village and country round about attended. The sad procession wended its way from the site of the Chapel to the little burying ground, and the bodies of the Bishop and his wife were laid to rest in the vault which had been prepared, "in sure and certain hope".

In course of time the original cemetery became too small, and a piece of land adjoining to the west, on Shingwauk property, was added. This was consecrated on the 9th August 1885 by Archbishop Kormaloe. When the Shingwauk property was conveyed to the Crown, in preparation for the erection by the Government of the present school, this cemetery, together with the site of the Chapel, was excepted from the conveyance, and remains the property of the Church.

In this cemetery there rest the souls of other faithful servants of God, - Cowan Gillmor, the devoted missionary and Archbishop of Algoma; Canon Benjamin Philip Fuller, for twenty years Principal of the Shingwauk Home, and his wife and daughters; Alfred Greaves, a faithful priest of the Diocese of Algoma; Lulu Margaret Nettrell, patron of the Home, and Ida McNeil, her faithful assistant; Michael Lacelle, a former Shingwauk boy and for many years a respected citizen of Sault Ste. Marie, and throughout his life loyal to his own school, and others.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord;
and let light perpetual shine upon them.

Such is the story of the "God's Acre" we are to visit this afternoon.