

Crypt cryptogram over the Crosshill crypt

By Philomena Rutherford

It happened in Canada, said the syndicated feature in The Kitchener-Waterloo Record. Further down it explained that it happened more precisely in Rushes cemetery near Waterloo.

And from there we took the trail of the Bean tombstone, described as one of the most unusual in Canada.

It marks the grave of two women, presumed sisters, both of whom were married to one Dr. Samuel E. Bean, a pioneer doctor in western Ontario.

Such information as remains on them and him is concealed in the cryptogrammic epitaph on the marble slab above the graves.

But to get to it we had first to find Rushes cemetery.

Well, we reasoned, what was near Waterloo 100 years ago is probably close to downtown today, so we phoned City Clerk Durwood Preston, a man more knowledgeable about Waterloo affairs than most.

No, he had never heard of Rushes cemetery. He suggested we try one of the oldtimers around town, who might remember the name and its location from their youth.

Fred Shinn, who delved into Waterloo's past with his Over the Years column in the Waterloo Chronicle, seemed a likely choice, so we chased him around Waterloo Square's mall and finally cornered him.

"Cemeteries, I'm not interested in," said the sprightly octogenarian blandly. "Not ready for one yet. Do you feel you are?" he said, turning the tables.

Back in the office, it was suggested the land registry office might help. They had every speck of land in the county registered, we were told.

We had some difficulty locating them in the phone directory, divorced as they are from other Waterloo County numbers, but we did unearth them eventually.

"Our records are all filed under lots and lot numbers," they told us. "We wouldn't even know where to start looking."

Next day we began again.

We drew blanks on two phone calls, and then decided to do some research in Waterloo Public Library, before contacting the historians.

The county engineer's office seemed a good place to start, but we had no luck there either. However they suggested funeral directors might help us, and we gladly took the tip.

This led us to Edward Good, MPP, who is turn suggested we try the historical society or some of the Bean Rush families in the area.

The staff was helpful, but couldn't help us. They had nothing on the mysterious doctor nor his taste in tombstones.

In fairness we must admit we later learned that A Guide to Waterloo County, published by Waterloo Trust and Savings Co., which they showed us, did contain information on the cemetery's location.

However, properly listed as it is under Wellesley, we failed to find it, as at this time we were without clues to its location.

The reference department of Kitchener's public library seemed a last resort. We have never yet stumped them with a problem, but were hesitant about calling since our queries must sometimes tax their patience, although they assure us this is not so.

Not only did the staff provide the information right off the bat,



BEARS MESSAGE—This Rushes cemetery tombstone bears a cryptic message.

but they even produced a map to show how to get there.

And from that moment on, we are confirmed believers that a good reference library is the greatest asset to which any community anywhere can lay claim.

Rushes cemetery lies between Wellesley and Crosshill in Wellesley Township.

We failed to find out why it is so named, and didn't unearth too many facts about the enigmatic doctor whose wives are buried there.

It seems he moved elsewhere following the double bereavement.

One can deduce from the monument remaining that he was a man with a taste for youthful brides who didn't live too long, and that moments of sorrow left him calm enough to compose cryptograms.

Apparently he came to Linwood from Philadelphia, where he married his first wife, Henrietta Furry.

The late John Hammond, a caretaker at Rushes cemetery, and

father of Jean Hammond, superintendent of staff at Preston Springs Gardens Rest Home in Preston, is reputed one of the earliest decoders of the tombstone's message.

He copied it down while waiting for a funeral cortege and broke it after several months deliberations.

He also told an earlier researcher that there had always been some question of the medical qualifications of Dr. Bean.

Mrs. Maureen Williams, children's librarian for Waterloo and a native of Linwood, checked with her 80-year-old mother for us, to see if any folklore of the doctor remained, but neither had ever heard of him.

When Henrietta died in 1865 she had been married for little more than seven months, for almost three of which she was ill.

Her husband had special funeral cards printed for the event.

The black-bordered mementos must have astonished the mourners, but there is nothing on record to show their reactions.

The message was as follows:

F E F I L Y L D O G A D E V I L — S E
O O R R O S R E H Y B D E T T E R Y &
R W M 2 S R A E Y 23 D E G A S K G A T
5 I O O O W N I L N I D E I D E E D J
Y N N D N A C O T M I H H T — E R 10 E
E G T T A P L E D A L I H I D W H & T
A H H H D H O B N A E B P W N I C S O
R U S E A I R N E H M Y N T I F U H M
S S & 27 L A N R M N A R I N H O M T O
& B 17 T E T I I E I E R D E E S — N S
D A D H A O N E M O R U E W B S O O —
I N A O V S P T T A H F I & S E O M S
E D Y F I A E N N M A R R D D N O 7 E
D & S S N M U E L B E A N M N L I D H
H A S E G A L L H E R F R I E L F E S
A L H P 1 8 6 5 A F T E R A N I O I A
P L E W A S A M O D E L W I F E I R R
P W H O K N E W H E R — W A S M A R E
Y I N T H E L O R D — P E A C E T O H

Reading counter-clockwise from the centre letter, and allowing for spelling discrepancies, the inscription is:

"In memoream Henriettah Furry Bean born in Penn. Married in Philadelphia to Samuel Bean M.D. & went with him to Canada leaving all her friends behind—Died in Linwood the 27th of Sep. 1865 after an illness of 11 weeks aged 23 years 2 months & 17 days she was a model wife 1 of 1000—Much regretted by her sorrowing husband & all who knew her—Was married 7 months & 10 days—Lived a godly life for 5 years & died happy in the Lord—Peace be to her ashes—So mote it be."

As wives go, Henrietta may well have been one in a 1,000, but for all that her bereaved spouse must have seen distinct possibilities in someone called Susanna, believed to be her sister.

Nineteen months to the day of his first wife's death his second bride died. There is no record of when he married her. (The provincial registrar's records go back only as far as July 1, 1869).

The doctor had a marble slab erected above the graves with the following epitaph:

S V W E T B S A 15 S T M O R E
E I R T E 2 Y D & H N S 10 H E
M I A D 17 & S H T N O A R M T
N A Y D H D N E F S M Y E H E
E N S O W M A B E O 2 D 26 T T
E V & E I R O M I F S G E E E
H R S 27 D I I E T W R 7 A O M
H T S E S M E R E T E L I E S
Y E A I P H N I T A Y R I P M
E W N 8 6 5 A G E D 23 A P E L
E R N H S N W F W O I D T D H
I G A I 2 D I E H D E 27 H G O
T F R M O B T R N W N E V N A
F S O G D U A E O I H A E M Y

To decode it, one starts with the seventh letter from the top and the seventh from the left hand side. Proceed counter-clockwise at first, then start zig zagging up and down until reach-

ing the numeral five in the 11th line from the top.

Here it's plain sailing in a straight line for a while, before one has to revert to zig zagging.

If you persist long enough, the following message will be revealed.

"In memoriam Henrietta last wife of S Bean MD who died 27th Sep 1865 aged 23 years 2 months & 17 days & Susanna his 2nd wife who died 27th April 1867 aged 26 years 10 months & 15 days. 2 better wives 1 man never had they were gifts from God but are now in heaven may God help me so to meet them there"

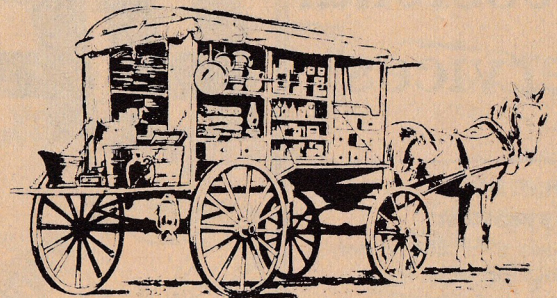
Above the inscription is a hand pointing upwards, beneath which is the name Bean, followed by the names, Henrietta and Susanna.

Below it is the invitation, "Reader! meet us in heaven."

Mrs. Lorne Rennie, secretary-treasurer of Rushes cemetery, which is run by a perpetual fund established from donations, informs us the cemetery is still in use, and plots are still being sold there.

She is also one of the people who succeeded in breaking the tombstone's code.

From minutes in her posses-



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