

GONE HOME

BEAN

HENRIETTA

SUSANNA

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

READER MEET US IN HEAVEN

MYSTERY MARKER — This replica of a 115-year-old cryptic gravestone will be unveiled in Wellesley Sunday.

Record Photo

# Replica saves coded epitaph for posterity

By Record Staff Writer

CROSSHILL — One of Ontario's most unusual tombstones will be assured a permanent place in Wellesley Township history Sunday.

A replica of the stone, with its coded epitaph that has puzzled amateur historians for more than a century, will be unveiled at 2:30 p.m. in Rush's cemetery, three kilometres south of here.

For 115 years, the white marble stone has marked the Bean plot at the south end of the cemetery between Wellesley and Crosshill.

When it was found that some of the letters had been partly worn away by the weather and that moss had grown over others, experts from Superior Memorials of Kitchener were asked to have a look.

The verdict: The stone was too fragile to be re-engraved and too weather-worn to warrant restoration.

But Superior officials were so impressed by the unusual grave marker that they took rubbings of the inscription and offered to donate a light grey granite replica.

The old stone will be placed beside the new one, which "should last for all time because granite is very hard," said a Superior spokesman.

Why is the stone so unusual and worth saving?

It's because of the cryptic epitaph written in 1867 by Dr. Samuel G. Bean for his two wives.

The cryptogram, which wasn't decoded for many decades, measures 15 letters across and 15 letters down with the inscription beginning in the centre at the seventh letter across and the seventh letter down.

Decoded, it reads: "In Memoriam. Henrietta, 1st wife of S. Bean, M.D., 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 a man never had. They were gifts from God and are now in Heaven. May God help me, S. B., to meet them there."

The epitaph's author was a medical doctor. When Henrietta, whom he had married in Pennsylvania, died at Linwood, Bean had funeral cards printed, also in code.

Bean is not buried with his first two wives, but beside his third wife, the former Annie M. Wankmiller, in Strasburg cemetery.