

THE BURLINGTON CEMETERIES FOR THE FRENCH CANADIAN CATHOLICS

Leo A. Fleury 164 Saratoga Ave. Burlington, VT 05401, January, 1983

PART I MOUNT ST. JOSEPH CEMETERY

As the Catholics came to our part of the Champlain Valley to settle, there came an early need for a sacred burial ground. A final resting place was needed for their aged, their infants and young as well as adults taken back to the Lord in their prime. In the previous historical writings about the Catholic Church in our area, very little has been mentioned about the church cemeteries. It is a subject upon which few people care to dwell but yet death is a natural progression of life and a certain reality.

In Burlington from 1763 when it was chartered as a town, the public burial ground was two acres on Colchester Avenue, now part of Green Mountain Cemetery. The crowded condition and irregular plan of this original cemetery occasioned the establishment of a second cemetery. It was called Elmwood and had been used from 1794 - but not laid out in an organized plan until 1813. A listing of the monuments in the latter made in 1942 does not reveal any obvious "Catholic" families.

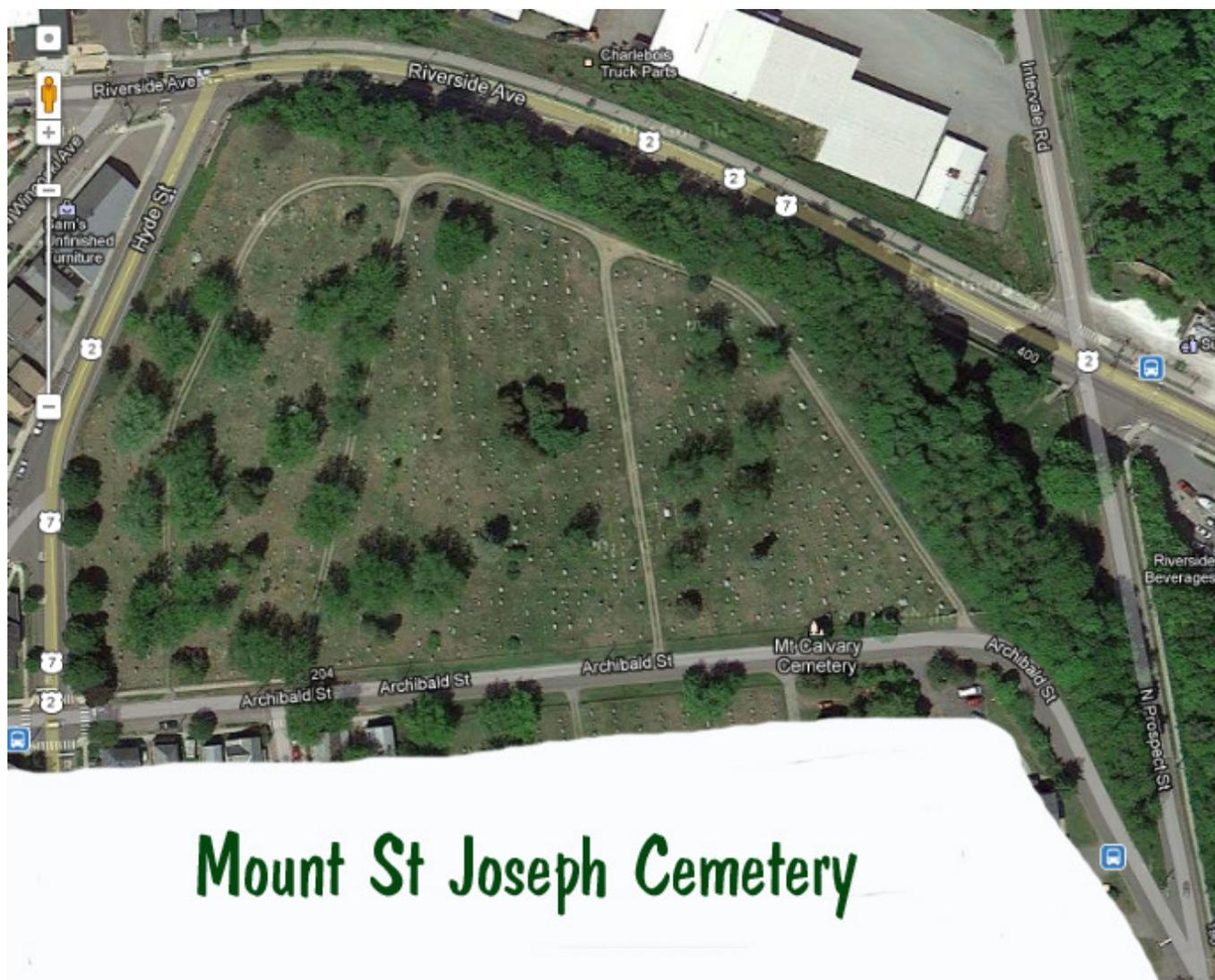
The oldest Catholic cemetery is Mount St. Joseph, which is situated on the north side of Archibald Street and extends from Prospect Street on the east to North Willard Street on the west. The original land was obtained from Col. Archibald Hyde in November 1830 and was for a few years the site of the first Catholic chapel in Burlington. Adjoining lots were secured which enlarged the original lot to its present size of about five acres. The lower tip of this property was deeded to the City of Burlington in 1893 to extend Willard Street beyond Archibald St. through to the Lower Road (Riverside Avenue). Previous to 1850 there was no record kept of burials in Mount St. Joseph Cemetery. Since this was the only cemetery for all Catholics in the greater Burlington area, it is estimated that during the period of 1831 to 1856 there were at least 5,000 burials. This number increased another 4,162 from 1856 to 1904.

The St. Joseph parish burial records beginning in 1850 show the burial on December 3rd of Rosalie, the daughter of Francois Xavier and Zoe (Suprenant) Robert, who died at the age of one year and ten months. During the year 1855, the cemetery was enclosed anew. The Canadian congregation contributed \$334.73 for the entire south part where there was the main gate as well as the smaller gate next to their first St. Joseph's Church. The other part of the fence on the north east was the charge of the Irish congregation and cost them the sum of \$181.00. On November 2nd of that year, the two congregations were gathered together with His Excellency, the Bishop of Burlington, assisted by his priests and Oblate Fathers from St. Joseph to solemnly bless the cemetery which was intended for the burial of both the Irish and Canadian Catholics of Burlington. The west part of this land was not blessed, with the northernmost part of this section fronting on the main road being reserved by the Bishop for the burial of infants dying without baptism and other persons who for grave reasons would be excluded from the cemetery proper.

A few days later, the Bishop held a meeting at which tentative regulations were discussed for the future use of the cemetery. In summary, a priest was to designate the gravesite instead of random choice of the parishioners as heretofore. Those who already had enclosed family lots would be permitted to continue to use them in the future. When a member of a new family not already having a lot died, they could enclose a new gravesite with room for two other graves. The enclosure was to be done immediately, however, so that the next burial would be in regular order. Strangers and those who would not need a family lot would be buried at the new part of the cemetery which would be marked off with stakes.

Even though the French Catholics continued their separate worship in their church in their mother tongue, their burials continued in the one Catholic cemetery, Mt. Saint Joseph, until 1878.

The Winooski congregation of about 850 French Catholics was separated from St. Joseph's parish in May 1868, with their own mission chapel being established. Their cemetery adjoining the church property was first used in June 1868. It would also serve the French Catholics from Colchester and Essex. From this beginning the parish of St. Francis Xavier was subsequently organized, with the construction of their own church in 1870.



PART II MOUNT CALVARY CEMETERY

According to his journal, Monsignor Jerome Cloarec, Pastor of St. Joseph's, bought two lots of land to the west of the church on Archibald Street in 1878. The first lot was purchased from Henry Loomis on January 23 for the sum of \$500 and two days later the lot adjoining the first was purchased from Rev. Cardinal for the sum of \$650.

With the approval of Bishop DeGoesbriand, these five acres of land were prepared for use as a cemetery for the future use of the parishioners of St. Joseph's Church. The Bishop also permitted the French Canadians of St. Joseph's who already had lots in the old St. Joseph Cemetery to continue to bury their dead there. However, those not already having lots there would only be allowed to use the newly established Mount Calvary Cemetery.

On July 4th of that year the land was consecrated by the Bishop of Burlington, assisted by Father Cloarec; Father Clavier, Pastor of Richmond; Father Brelivet, Pastor of Enosburgh Falls; and Father Yvynec, curate of St. Joseph's. The south-west part, next to the fence and separated from the rest of the site by a fence of iron wire, was not blessed or consecrated but was reserved for the burial of infants dying without baptism and adults who were not allowed a church burial.

The story on how this land was prepared for cemetery use was best sketched in a remembrance published during the 1930's in a Burlington Free Press article. An extract follows: "It was on Thanksgiving Day, when more than 200 parishioners answered Father Cloarec's call to clear the land of brush and grade the half-dozen acres which from the casual observance appeared like a colossal job. But, encouraged by the good Father, men and boys with horses, plows, picks, shovels, saws and rakes went at their jobs with a will such as was never before or since witnessed. Among the most enthusiastic was a Mr. Forand, who, with his pair of fine dapple grays drawing a double plow, did yeoman service. Others prominent in the parish in those days and who joined in the work included the Cabanas, Varennes, Bacons, St. Pierres, Rousseaus, Menards, Lucks, Laurents, Saltuses, Langlois, Duhamels, Limoges, Parents, Beaupres, Ruels, Gosselins, Turcots, Robilliards, Lamoras, Beausoleils, Nantells, and scores of others who labored assiduously from 7 o'clock in the morning until darkness set in.

It was a most wonderful sight to behold as the 200 or more men and boys knelt as the good Father gave them his blessing, followed by a loud chorus of hurrahs which closed the day's labor. Wages were very meagre in those days, and the parish receipts were hardly sufficient to meet expenses. Hence the call for assistance in grading the new burial grounds, which was responded to with loyalty, devotion and love on the part of all toward their devoted pastor." From this first beginning of Mount Calvary Cemetery in 1878 it was supervised and managed by the pastors of St. Joseph Church, until an association was established in 1936. Father Cloarec started an account book in 1878 with the purchase of the land. It recorded the sale of lots and cemetery expenses until 1933 when it concluded shortly after the death of Father Proulx. A separate journal was kept to record the collection of the annual \$1.00 stipend for cemetery care before the days of endowments or perpetual care agreements.

In the first year in 1878 three large family lots were sold to Joseph Gratton, Stephen Martel and Joseph Roberge in that order. In addition, nine other regular lots at \$2.00 each and four small lots ("petite fosses") were sold at \$1.00 each during that first year. The first recorded burial was that of Elizabeth Chasse. By 1880 a "fosseyeur" (sexton) was employed. Mr. St. Jacques is the first name mentioned in this position from 1887, and he was followed by Mr. Rene Lavoie who held this position until his death in 1902. Their pay was based on the number of grave openings, etc. Mr. Louis Gagnon, who succeeded,

was the first with a regular weekly salary plus any extra help needed during the summer season. Mr. Gagnon was succeeded in 1918 by Henry Lander and Joseph L. Deforge from 1928 through 1936.



PART III MOUNT CALVARY ANNEX (POMEROY STREET)

After forty years in service, more space was needed for future expansion. An exchange was arranged with the Ladies of Nazareth for a large plot of land, consisting of about three acres on the south side of the original cemetery, across Pomeroy Street. The Burlington firm of McIntosh & Crandall, Civil Engineers, was engaged in 1920 to draw up a plan for dividing the land into grave lots in an organized manner. The result was ninety lots consisting of seven hundred and forty graves. In the summer of 1921, the Mount Calvary Cemetery Annex was fenced in and seeded into lawn.



PART IV NEW MOUNT CALVARY CEMETERY (PLATTSBURGH AVENUE)

Again, the subject of future expansion was addressed when in 1935 the Valade farm off North Avenue became available. Louis and Josephine Valade and their young family had come to settle in Burlington from Plattsburgh, N.Y. in 1915, where he had worked as a blacksmith. Mrs. Valade died in August 1935 in the midst of negotiations, so was laid to rest temporarily in the Luck family lot in the old cemetery. One year later, on August 15, 1936, Louis Valade deeded a large parcel of his farmland to the diocese for the sum of \$6500. This became known as the New Mount Calvary Cemetery. The property ran along the easterly line of Plattsburgh Avenue for nearly 1,040 feet frontage for a depth of nearly 600 feet, comprising over fifteen acres.

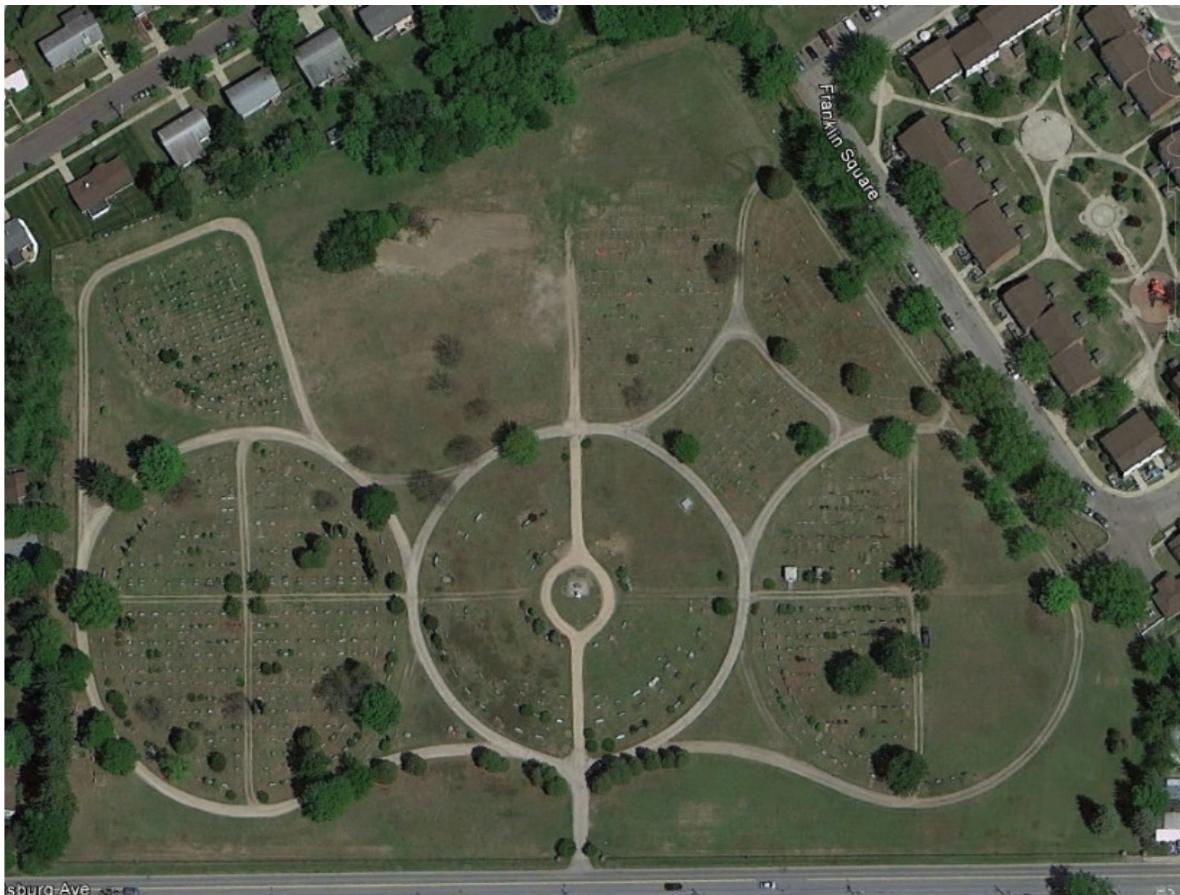
Mr. Valade retained his house and barns with a piece of land at the northern end of the cemetery. He resided there until his death in November 1937 at the age of seventy-nine. Mr. and Mrs. Valade were then laid to rest together in a large family lot in the new cemetery which was once their farmland. Even though the New Mount Calvary cemetery has been in use since 1936, there is today enough expansion room for another thirty-five years at the present rate. We have now entered an era when cremations are not uncommon. A special lot has been reserved in this cemetery for the deposit of ashes.

This cemetery is well designed and landscaped and on the avenue side is enclosed by a high iron fence with heavy gateways of native redstone. This cemetery, unlike its predecessors, has not been solemnly consecrated but each grave is blessed at the time of its use.

At the time this third cemetery was added to St. Joseph's parish, it became evident that the pastor needed helpful relief in the management and supervision of them. In November 1936, Father Pariseau with E.A. Luck, A.R. St. Pierre and Victor A. Bergeron, drew up Articles of Association to organize the Mount Calvary Cemetery Association, Inc. It was created as a permanent organization for the sole purpose of aiding in the management, care and embellishment of the Mount Calvary Cemeteries in Burlington. Although its title rests with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, the cemetery is expressly used for the burial purposes of St. Joseph's Parish.

After the retirement of Joseph Deforge as sexton, the new association hired Mr. Joseph L. Myers as cemetery superintendent in 1937. After his death in 1958, his son Bernard Myers succeeded him for about a year. At that time his brother, Harvey, took over the reins, coming back to live in the old sexton's house at 253 Archibald Street where he resides today. At this point, the Myers family have faithfully served the parish for forty-seven years in the care and management of the Mount Calvary cemeteries. In 1938, under Mr. Joseph Myers, a new cemetery indexing card system was established for all internments. It supplemented the original cemetery map, showing lot ownership but not necessarily all internments.

In the center of the old Mount Calvary Cemetery is a granite cross which tops the monument marking the priests' lot for those serving St. Joseph's parish who wish to be buried there. The first was Father Francois Yvinec who had previously served the parish but at the time of his death in 1892 was curate at Newport. In addition, Father J.M. Duglue, who died in 1897, and Father J. M. Coathuel, who passed away in 1902, are laid to rest here. Elsewhere in this cemetery is the Marion family lot; Father Edmund Marion, former pastor of St. Anthony's Church in Burlington, is buried with his parents. At the far end of this cemetery there is a special area for the religious ladies of Nazareth School.



TO LIVE IN HEARTS WE LEAVE BEHIND IS NOT TO DIE

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Miss Iris DeForge, daughter of Joseph DeForge

Note: On 25 Nov. 2012 I scanned Leo's project and added photos of the cemeteries. John R. Fisher Sr.

Note: In 1991, Anne Marie Dunton published a book of grave inscriptions of the 3 Mount Calvary Cemeteries. This is the only source of information of burials before 1938. There are old maps with the names of the Lot Owners but they are not indexed. John R. Fisher Sr.

Note: In Aug 2012, John Fisher headed up a project and digitized all the Lot Purchase cards and the Burial cards from 1938 to 2012, a total of almost 10,000 cards; and all new info is updated about monthly.