



It seems that everything today has a shelf-life, and that is particularly true in Canada. In the Old World, buildings, monuments and even cemeteries last for centuries; tourists clamour all over them, searching for clues to mysteries and selecting the best spots for the ideal memorable photograph or selfie. Here in the New World, high rises barely last a century; when they become out-dated or no longer useful, they are razed to the ground. Some communities have taken steps to stem the losses of edifices significant in their heritage. Several Huron County towns have seen the value in preserving century-old buildings some of which can be found in the communities of Goderich and Seaforth and closer to home, our own Olde Town Hall, which was saved from the wrecker's ball in the 1970s. Within the municipality of South Huron there are many buildings that have been identified as being worthy of preservation because of their long-standing historical connection to the early families who chose to locate in Usborne and Stephen Townships as well as the fledgling settlement of Exeter in the mid-1800s. The South Huron Heritage Advisory Committee has created a historical plaque recognition program for both residential and commercial structures that are still part of the heritage landscape in and around the Municipality that acknowledge the original owners and the historical significance they made to the community in which they lived and worked. In addition to these brick and mortar structures there is another landmark that also reflects those early settlers and is worthy of recognition and that is the Exeter Cemetery, established in 1864. Although it is a modest site, it contains the remains of many individuals who created a settlement on the banks of the Aux Sable over hundred and fifty years ago. The men and woman buried there grew a town, fought in two world wars, defended 'the Empire' whenever it or its values were threatened and lived decent lives that eventually attracted most of us to the this community.

2019 marks the 155<sup>th</sup> “birthday” of the Exeter Cemetery and the Exeter District Heritage Foundation (established 1976) would ask that the Municipality of South Huron with the endorsement of Council, give its support to the Foundation’s request to initiate a campaign to raise sufficient funds to purchase a new fence of a similar design that would replace the original which was removed in 2018 because of its state of disrepair. Since the original letter of concern from the Heritage Foundation was submitted to Council in July of 2018 (copy included) followed by its subsequent publishing in the Exeter Lakeshore Times-Advance, there have been many residents of the Municipality and its neighbouring Communities who have expressed their dismay at the removal of the cemetery fence and have questioned what is being done to remedy the situation. It has become very evident from the number of inquiries received by Foundation members, along with the many comments about the less than appealing esthetics of the cemetery – especially along Airport Line, there is strong support from the public to have the perimeter of the cemetery enclosed by a decorative iron fence that will once again create a distinguished and reverent appearance for the final resting places of many and which will endure for generations to come. The Heritage Foundation would also like to see this become a reality and is ready to move forward to organize a fund raising campaign, should the project be approved.

As part of its research, a number of cemeteries in and around South Huron, have been visited by members of the Foundation to get a sense of the different heights and styles of fencing surrounding the properties-photos of which are included for your review. In addition, some preliminary costs have been obtained for a sampling of fencing materials available, to help determine how much of a budget will be needed to complete the project which will require approximately 2400 linear feet of replacement product. At present, based on the information contained in a May 2018 Staff Memo regarding the cost to replace the fence at that time, indications are it will be necessary to raise between \$90,000 and \$115,000 and would be dependent upon the supplier, price increases, the design chosen and the cost per section based on the length and height, which has yet to be determined. This would be a decision that would require Council and Municipal Staff consultation.

It is hoped that funding for a replacement fence can be accomplished through donations from the public, service organizations and possibly, though with current belt tightening by the provincial government less likely, heritage grants, all of which would assist to offset the cost without any impact on an already stretched Municipal budget. One option might be to have 8 foot sections of the fence (or more) that can be purchased as a memorial tribute to families and their relatives buried in the Exeter Cemetery with a plaque or other form of recognition acknowledging contributions made specifically in memory of their loved ones.

Since the Heritage Foundation does not have charitable status, the group has approached the South Huron Community Fund to determine if it would serve as an intermediary to accept donations on behalf of the Foundation and to issue tax receipts from the Fund to those financially supporting the project.

**From The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport:**

“Ontario cemeteries are a tangible link to ordinary individuals as well as famous people in our past. Many are an irreplaceable part of the Province's cultural heritage. Their cultural heritage landscape, monuments and vegetation are part of our built environment, with their own unique history, development and growth. Older cemeteries are a tangible link to ordinary individuals as well as famous people in our past. The inscriptions on their monuments instruct us about local, medical and material history, cultural geography, historical archaeology, folklore, genealogy and much more.”

Nineteenth century Nova Scotia politician and journalist, Joseph Howe, astutely recognized the value of preserving our heritage when he offered this observation:

“A wise nation preserves its records, gathers up its monuments, decorates the tombs of its illustrious dead, repairs its structures and fosters national pride and love of country by perpetual reference to the sacrifices and the glories of the past.”

The Exeter and District Heritage Foundation, with your support, welcomes the opportunity to put this statement into action.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.