
Avondale Cemetery: A Heritage Walk



History of Avondale

Stratford's tranquil Avondale cemetery opened in 1871. It was reported in the *Beacon* of December 2, 1870 that several members of town council had met with Mr. J.G. Kirk, the provincial land surveyor. The meeting was to review the land and provide general instructions to make a plan for the layout of the proposed cemetery. The cemetery continues to be operated by the City of Stratford's Community Services Department, which maintains its park-like setting with many trees and flower beds for all to enjoy. The original cemetery was laid out with winding roadways and circular garden areas, some of which are still recognizable today. Some of the older areas have been replanted to reflect what they may have looked like in the nineteenth century.

The Catholic cemetery area was developed in 1883 when the London Diocese purchased land adjacent to the public cemetery. It was later sold to the City for a nominal fee on the understanding that the religious nature of the area would be maintained. Catholic areas are designated by Saints' names.

Over the years, several small mausoleums or vaults have been built as family burial sites. The large one near John Street was built privately during the 1920s by the Canadian Mausoleum Company. It is now part of the public cemetery.



Walking Tour

Please print map as well.

This brochure provides a route for viewing some of the interesting monuments in the older areas of Avondale. While intended as a walking tour, most of the sites described are visible from the paved roadways.

The guide is intended to provide a general location for monuments that may interest both historians and those who simply wish to amble through a heritage cemetery. As you walk along the rows, take the time to read inscriptions and ponder the symbols appearing on some monuments. They have meanings that we no longer immediately recognize. Some of the symbolic language is interpreted for monuments on the tour.

The main entrance for the cemetery is located on Avondale Avenue. This entrance is preceded by an arched bridge, built in 1909, over the tracks of what was originally the Grand Trunk Railway.

After crossing the bridge, turn left. On your right is the Hamilton Family Vault.

- 1. HAMILTON – The Hamilton Vault was erected in 1917 by Dr. William H. Hamilton in memory of his parents and family. Note the neo-classical columns and Celtic cross above the pediment.**

CHAPEL - The yellow brick building just past the Hamilton Vault is the Cemetery Chapel.

Keeping the railway tracks to your left, proceed down the hill towards John St. Two examples of `broken column` stones, symbolizing a life cut short, can be seen on your right.



- 2. LUPTON – The Lupton marker has a broken column with wreath. Was this chosen because daughter Victoria Mary died at the age of 16? The nearby Petty family stone features a draped column.**

As you continue down the hill towards the John Street gate, Block I is on your right. Here are many children`s graves – their small monuments often include sleeping lamb figures.

Proceed towards the John Street gate and turn right, keeping the grey Mausoleum building with the flag pole to your far left.

As the roadway begins to curve you will see a number of simple grey headstones – most with crosses etched on them. Many of these mark the graves of veterans of World Wars I and II. Similar stones appear throughout the cemetery as they were sometimes placed near family markers.

Just past the military graves is a wooden post. Look up the row that it marks towards the back of the yellow brick Chapel to see the stone of Adelina King – about 8 stones from the roadway.



3. KING – a small stone tree stump with two shortened trunks marks the resting place of Adelina King. She died at age 24 during the height of the 1918 Spanish influenza epidemic – one of the over 130 people who died during the outbreak in Stratford. The severed tree trunk represents a life cut short.

Continue on the roadway until you see the Jezard and Ackersviller family markers. Looking between them, again towards the back of the yellow brick Chapel, you will see the Makins marker.

4. MAKINS – under the trees, several rows up, sits the low grey monument, with etched Celtic cross, of James Cardwell Makins. Makins was Crown Attorney for Perth County. Later, he served as a justice of the Supreme Court of Ontario.

Continue on the paved roadway until you see the Jamieson vault on your right. Stop at the beginning of the left fork.

5. JAMIESON – this vault is visible from the roadway. It features grey square cut granite blocks with a plain iron grill in the gate of the entranceway. Thomas H. Jamieson Sr., a WWI veteran and life-long railway man, is interred here along with his wife Margaret and other family members.

Look up the hill to the right with the grass path curving up towards the back of the Chapel to see –



6. ROBERTSON – on the hillside sits the rose granite marker of Dr. William Norrie Robertson. This simple monument belies the colourful character of Dr. Robertson who participated in the Yukon gold rush and wrote *Yukon Memories: Sourdough Tales of Chaos and Changes in the Klondike Vale* to chronicle his adventures there.

Continue along the left fork of the paved roadway.

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Block Q stretches along the left side, next to the Avon River. The far end – adjacent to the foot bridge to the T.J. Dolan Natural Area – contains part of the unmarked Potters Field. While some civic cemeteries have clearly separated areas for burials done at public expense, this is not the case in Avondale. Block K is next along this roadway, on your right.

7. **ROBINSON** – at the top of Block K is the picturesque Robinson vault with off-white rough cut stone blocks and an artistic grille at the entrance.
8. **RANKIN** – Near the Robinson vault, about mid-way up the slope and to the left of the grass path, is the grey marker of Dr. James Palmer Rankin. He was a prominent local medical doctor and a member of the Senate of Canada.
9. **MONTEITH** – On your right, about midway down the section at the back, stands a large white monument. Behind it a gray pulpit-style footstone honours Jay Waldo Monteith. He was Mayor of Stratford, MP for Perth and federal cabinet Minister of Health and Welfare.

Proceed along the paved roadway to the grass path between the wooden posts for Blocks K and O. Block O, on your right, is a large area with several stones of interest.

10. **MEIER** – Note the female figure with her back to the roadway. This classical mourner brings flowers to the grave of Henry Meier who died June 27, 1918.



A bit farther along, in the row next to the roadway on your right, you will see --

11. **TROW** – an ornate Celtic cross honours Arthur J. and Alvin Spencer Trow. These brothers were both killed in action in WW I and buried in France.
12. **ROBERTSON** – another example of a memorial marker put up by families for soldiers who are buried overseas. This one honours Ernest Drever Robertson, who “Gave his life over Belgium July 14, 1943.”
13. **McLAGAN** – a tall Celtic cross marks the grave of George McLagan. He was the founder of the McLagan Furniture Company and deeply dedicated to the advancement of Stratford’s Parks Board.

Still on the right, just before the wooden marker for the end of Block N, is the Deacon marker –

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14. **DEACON** – Notice the granite cross erected for the first rector of St. Paul’s Anglican Church, Rev. Daniel Deacon.
15. **ROSS** – Look up past the S marker post about 4 rows. Note a small black marker – 2 stones west of the Killer family marker. Here is the plot of Elsie Gertrude Ross, a nursing sister in the Canadian Army Medical Corps in World War I. She died of pneumonia while serving at a convalescent hospital for returning soldiers. She was buried here in 1916 with full military honours. Such tributes were rare for nursing sisters. Miss Ross’s name appears on page 156 of the Canadian First World War Book of Remembrance. The Victorian Order of Nurses place flowers here every Remembrance Day – continuing a tradition started by a son of one of Miss Ross’s patients.



Follow the paved roadway around the curve, past Block U on your left until you reach a fork in the paved roadway. Turn left into the St. Patrick Block.

When you reach the next fork, keep left and stop just before the white post marking the roadway into the St. Henry block on your right. The Walsh marker and nearby memorial bench should now be on your left.

16. **WALSH** – Joseph Walsh was a prominent businessman who helped develop the park system in Stratford. Note the Alpha and Omega symbols (beginning and ending) at the top.

Turn right at the St. Henry Block wooden post and proceed on the paved roadway between St. Henry and St. George Blocks.

On the right, in the St. Henry Block, are a cluster of black crosses marking the graves of a number of nuns. On the left, across from the nuns’ crosses, in the first row of St. George Block is a recent addition –



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17. DURKIN – A modern granite stone with an etched megaphone was placed here in 2006 as a memorial to Stratford Fire Chief Hugh Durkin who died fighting a horrific fire at Knox Presbyterian Church in 1913.

Look back to your right, just beyond the nuns' crosses, and note the two large Celtic crosses. The second one honours –

18. KILROY – Very Rev. Edmund Kilroy was the incumbent here when St. Joseph's Church was consecrated in 1886. Among other contributions he spear-headed purchase of land to aid in the combination of Roman Catholic and Protestant cemeteries here. Many pioneer families were moved here from St. Joseph's Cemetery in Ellice Township after the Catholic sections were established.

19. DUGGAN -- On your left, where the roadway intersects, an angel stands with wings spread. This is one of the largest and most impressive figures in the cemetery and marks the Duggan family plot.



Look beyond the Duggan marker, towards the St. Andrew Block, and note the stone with a statue of a kneeling mourner –

20. GRAHAM and BELL – The kneeling figure atop the stone portrays the agonizing grief felt by families of soldiers lost to war. Pte. W. Stewart Bell died on December 25, 1942.

You now have several paved roadways in front of you. Take the first right past the Wingfelder marker.

21. DEVLIN – On your right, as you come to the curve in the roadway, stands a figure clasping the arms of the cross. This Victorian era symbol marks the resting place of Felix Devlin who operated Devlin Brewery on St. Patrick St. for many years.

Continue straight across the intersection on the paved roadway (between Blocks T and W/V). Look to your right to see –

22. HYDE – A conical black obelisk marks the resting place of Anna Mickle Daly, third wife of Col. J.C. W. Daly. Mrs. Daly rests here with relatives while Col. Daly is interred in the Daly Vault located in Block G which you will pass later in your tour.

23. BALLANTYNE – On your right, at the east corner of Block V, a black square marker about 6 feet high marks the plot of Thomas Ballantyne who was elected to the Ontario parliament five times and was the first Speaker to preside in the current Queen’s Park legislative buildings.

Block R is on your left side as you follow the curve back towards the Chapel.

24. IOOF Memorial - On your left you will now see the back of a majestic figure dominating the memorial erected by Avon and Romeo IOOF Lodges in 1913. Lodge members are buried in this area with small flat markers. A stone bench nearby was “Erected by the members of Avon Lodge #41 on the Occasion of our 145th Anniversary, 1861-2006.”

25. IDINGTON – Look up to your left to the centre of Block L to see the large, grey granite monument of John Idington. He was Crown Attorney and City Solicitor and, eventually, a Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada. The etched thistles honour the family’s Scottish heritage.

26. SNAZEL – As you approach the back of the Robinson Vault , seen earlier in the tour, keep looking to your left at Block R. Note the grey granite stone of the Snazel plot, carved to resemble a pile of logs with a scroll spread over them. The logs represent a life cut short.

Look to your right for a front view of the statue of a female mourner bringing flowers to the grave of Henry Meier (10) as seen earlier from the back.

Turn left and up-hill at the intersection to the rear of the Robinson vault (7), keeping the Heinbuch family marker to your left.

Turn right toward the Chapel. From the parking area, you will be able to see –

27. **MacFARLANE** – To the right stands a tall pink granite pillar honouring Robert MacFarlane. Born in 1835 in Lanark County, he set up his law practice in Stratford in 1857 with Daniel Home Lizars, who went on to be a Crown Attorney and County Judge. MacFarlane also practiced with John Idington. MacFarlane was a Liberal member of parliament, having beaten T.M. Daly in a hotly contested election. He was re-elected in 1867 to represent the Perth South riding in the first parliament of the new Dominion of Canada. He died in office in 1872, just thirty-seven years old. Most members of the House of Commons, including Sir John A. MacDonald, accompanied his body to the train station in Ottawa. He was brought back to Stratford by “a deputation from St. Marys, Downie and Stratford” and was buried here with his infant son. The Beacon reported that “the funeral was perhaps the most imposing ever witnessed in town.”
28. **ROBB** – Behind the Chapel is the pale rose granite pillar marking the graves of Andrew and Samuel Robb. Andrew was Mayor of Stratford and died in office in 1881 at the age of 29. Samuel was Land Registrar for Perth for many years.
29. **MONTEITH** – Just beyond the Robb pillar is the large black granite monument with a classic draped urn on top symbolizing death of the flesh. Andrew Monteith was a Perth County Councillor as well as a Stratford Town Councillor. He was elected to the first parliament for the new province of Ontario in 1867 and subsequently won a federal seat.
30. **LIZARS** – On the right side of the grassy path running down the hill, is the marker for Daniel Home Lizars and his wife Esther Longworth Lizars. The Lizars family were highly respected and influential early residents. Their daughters Robina and Kathleen famously wrote *In the Days of the Canada Company* – a frank commentary on the early history of the Huron Tract published in 1896.
31. **McCARTHY** – Halfway down the hillside behind the chapel in Block H is a grey granite square with a horizontal, round pillared top. Here lies John A. McCarthy Jr., Stratford Police Chief who died fighting the Knox Presbyterian Church fire in 1913. (*Not really visible from parking lot. Best viewed from the paved area to the rear of the Chapel.*)



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You can end your tour here knowing that you have seen some of the most historically interesting and picturesque parts of Avondale Cemetery.

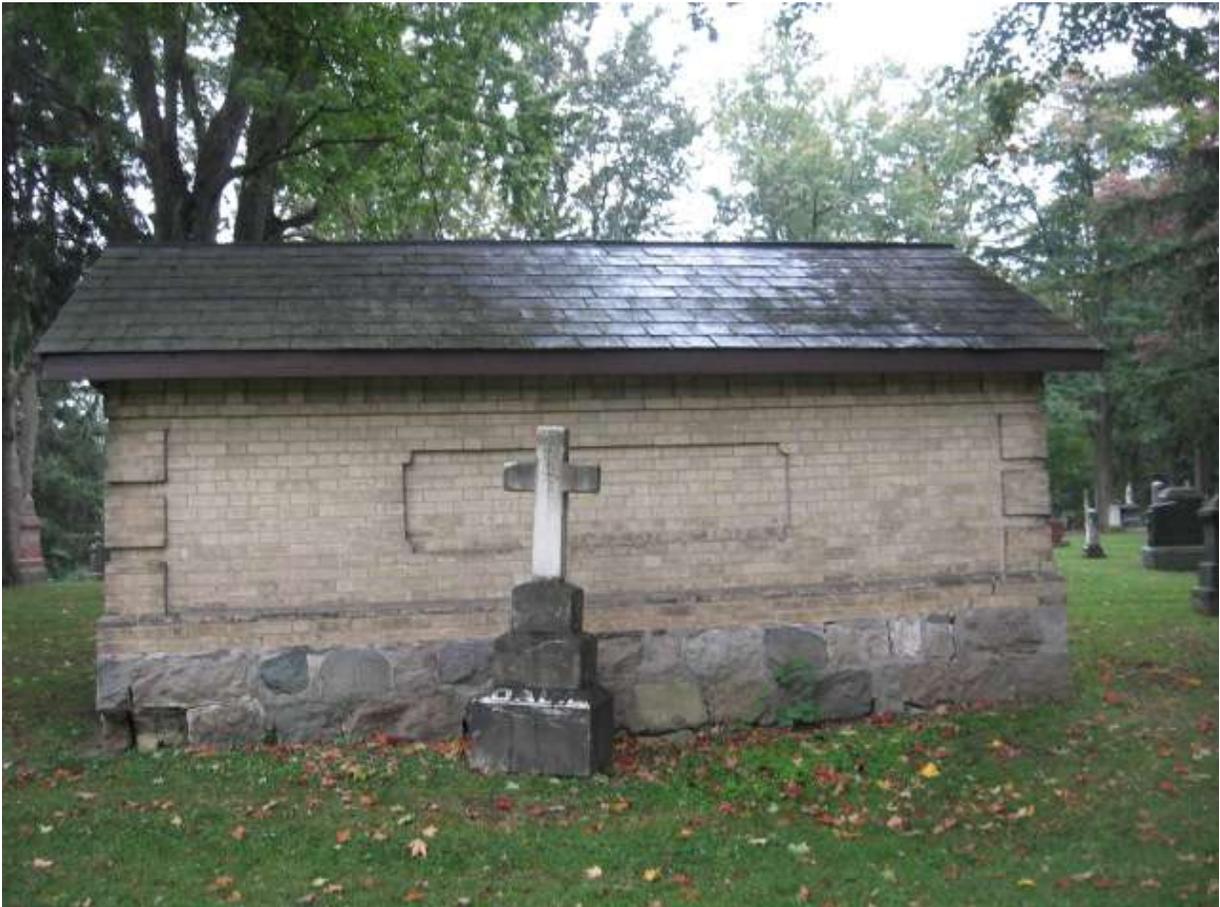


However, if you would like to continue, turn around at the Chapel and go back along the paved roadway between Blocks G and H. (The MacFarlane pillar will be on your left now.) Pass the wooden marker for Block L.

32. BARNSDALE – On your right, in the middle of Block G stands a large square slab with an undraped urn on top, symbolizing sorrow. Elijah Barnsdale owned Barnsdale Trading Company which dominated Market Square for many years.



33. DALY – The unmarked yellow brick vault on your right, one of the earliest features of the cemetery, is the Daly family vault. Here rests Col. John Corry Wilson Daly, Canada Company agent and Stratford's first mayor, among many other accomplishments, along with his second wife, Sarah Reeve Daly. Several of Daly's descendants are buried in or near the vault, including his son Thomas Mayne Daly and grandson Thomas Mayne Daly II. Both were prominent politicians. Daly's son was Mayor of Stratford as well. His grandson was a federal cabinet minister.



Continue straight on the paved roadway that you are on, passing the roadway that goes off downhill to the left. Block F is on your right side and Block L is now on your left side.

34. SHARMAN – Almost immediately past the wooden marker for Block L, on the left, a tall narrow rose granite pillar topped with a draped urn honours John Sharman. The monument is reminiscent of Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square in London.

As you approach the curve in the paved roadway, look left for a front view of the IOOF Lodge memorial (24) as seen earlier on the tour.

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Follow the curve of the driveway back along Block L to Block E. An impressive black monument on your right dominates this area -- the resting place of James Trow.

- 35. WOODS – Just before the Trow marker, stands another grey stone with a large draped urn on top. James Peter Woods was a Perth County Judge and a founder of the Stratford Water & Gas Works.**
- 36. TROW – A figure of a mourning woman bringing flowers marks the grave of James Trow, a member of the first legislature of Ontario for the riding of Perth South and a federal MP from 1872-1891.**
- 37. MODERWELL – 2 stones past the Trow site, a smaller black stone honours Robert Moderwell, Perth County's first Sheriff from 1853-1872.**

Continue along the paved roadway past Block D (on your right) – curving to the right to come out to the main driveway.

Turn left at the brown maintenance shed and pass St. Cecilia Block (on your left) which is the Catholic children's section.

At the far end of this area stretches the New Soldiers' Section (with flag pole).

Pass the Kawalecki vault on your right and turn left to see the New Soldiers' Section.

Proceed along beside the newer areas, keeping the open grassy area to your left.

- 38. After a distance, on the right, is the COLUMBARIUM WALL. A Columbarium is an area with niches for urns. This wall was erected in the 1990s.**
- 39. Looking ahead, you will see the NEW MAUSOLEUM on the right. Work was completed on it in 2002.**

Follow the paved roadway around the new Mausoleum and turn left, keeping the open grassy area with memorial benches to your left to see –

- 40. CHRIST THE KING COLUMBARIUM. The magnificent statue on top was at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church from 1959 – 1999. However, the statue is believed to be over a century old.**

Follow the paved roadway around Christ the King Columbarium, turning right again to enjoy a front view of the building and statue.

Move forward along this roadway to Block 8.

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Turn left at the two small triangular flower beds which are centred in the roadway between Blocks 8 and 4.

After turning, look to your right to see a large unsculpted boulder with a simple plaque honouring several Orr family burial sites.

- 41. ORR – the cluster of markers here includes that of R. Thomas Orr. He was the driving force behind the Stratford parks system and a keen local historian.**



Look to your left, in the first row of Block 8 to see –

- 42. HORNER – This marker honours Sgt. Samuel Hopkins Horner. The grey pulpit style stone was cleaned and rededicated in 2004. A plaque in the ground in front was added to mark this grave of a member of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police.**



Look to your right to see two more recent markers –

- 43. HOYLE WERNER SKALITZKY – This impressive geometric sculpture, reminiscent of flames or sails, includes a very detailed family history.**

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Farther along, still on your right is the Doubrough family marker.

44. DOUBROUGH – “Tip” Doubrough was a pipefitter for Canadian National Railways. His side of the family’s monument features a large illustration of a CNR steam locomotive with the Stratford repair “shops” in the background, reminding us that Stratford was, for many years, first and foremost a railroad town.

Turn right and proceed past the large, round flower bed. Continue toward the main entrance, once again passing the New Soldiers’ Section and the Kawalecki vault.

There are many interesting markers to admire as you make your way back to the gates. For example, as the Daly vault comes into view again on your right, note the marker for George Fishleigh Davey –



45. DAVEY – On your right, near the marker post between Block E and Block G is a white limestone pillar carved to represent a tree trunk with an anchor tied to the base. This represents a life cut short but the anchor speaks of hope of resurrection and safety in a heavenly harbour. George F. Davey was only 47 when he died. He left a young widow, Sarah, and three children under the age of 7.

From here, proceed to either the Avondale Avenue entrance or go down the hill and out through the John Street gate.



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This tour was originally created by Lynda Greve, Chair of the Perth County Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, for Stratford Doors Open, 2006.

It was revised and illustrated for Stratford Heritage Week-End, 2009 by Betty Jo Belton, Archivist at Stratford-Perth Archives.

While every attempt has been made to ensure accuracy throughout the guide, comments, corrections and suggestions for improvement would be most welcome.

Please contact the Stratford-Perth Archives if you are interested in finding more information about ancestors buried at Avondale Cemetery.

Stratford-Perth Archives

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Rules for Visitors

- Cemeteries owned by the City are sacred and devoted to the burial of the dead and the provisions and penalties of the law will be strictly enforced in all cases of disturbance, wanton injury to property and disregard for the rules, or conduct unbecoming to a cemetery;
- All visitors shall conduct themselves in a quiet, orderly manner and shall not disturb any service being held, by noise or other disturbance;
- Visitors shall travel through the cemetery by roads and shall not drive over burial lots, pathways, or service paths;
- Children under twelve (12) years of age must be accompanied by an adult, who shall maintain close contact with them and be responsible for their actions;
- The carrying of firearms or the discharging of the same while within the cemeteries, except where used for the firing of volleys at a burial, is prohibited;
- No picnic, party, or other large assembly will be permitted on the cemeteries' grounds other than a funeral or memorial service;
- When a society or association desires to hold a memorial service, they should make application to the Manager at least fifteen (15) days prior to the desired date. The association or society securing this permission shall assume responsibility for any damages done to the property in the cemeteries during this time;
- Any complaints by lot owners or visitors shall be made to the Manager and not to workmen on the grounds;
- No person shall drive a vehicle at a rate of speed greater than 20 kilometres per hour within the cemetery;

