

Statement of Heritage Value: Mountain Mennonite Cemetery

Prepared by the Town of Lincoln Municipal Heritage Committee on May 10, 2012

Description of Heritage Place:

Mountain Mennonite Cemetery is located in Campden on the south side of Regional Road 73 (Fly Road) and the west side of Tintern Road in Lot 7, Concession 7, in the former Township of Clinton, now in the Town of Lincoln, Ontario.

This pioneer Mennonite Cemetery was connected with the Mountain Mennonite Church, which was under the direction of the Moyer Mennonite Church in Vineland. The church was located to the east of the cemetery. The church, or meeting house as it was called, was built sometime between 1843 and 1845.

Due to a gradual drop in attendance, the church discontinued services in the fall of 1908. The church/building was later sold, and relocated in 1918. The cemetery, however, then remained in the control of the Moyer Mennonite Church until the property was turned over to the Town of Lincoln in 1965.

The heritage place is the cemetery itself.

Heritage Value:

The heritage value of the cemetery resides in its significant historical value as a burial place for many Swiss Mennonite families which settled in Lincoln County, Upper Canada from 1786 - 1826.

Shortly after the American War of Independence (1776-1783), Swiss Mennonites from Bucks County, Pennsylvania following the path taken by the United Empire Loyalists and Butler's Rangers, looked for farmland in British-controlled Upper Canada. The first families Albrecht/Albright, Kulp/Culp, Hahn/Haun, Overholt, Tufford, and Ruth/Rott settled in the area in 1786. A second wave of immigration took place after 1791, when Lieutenant-Governor John Graves Simcoe offered people living in New York and Pennsylvania inexpensive farmland in Upper Canada. He also offered Mennonites coming to Upper Canada from America exemption from having to take part in future military service. The Mennonite families that came after 1791 were: Albrecht/Albright, Althouse, Meyer/Moyer, Fretz, Hunsberger/Honsberger, Kratz in 1799; Fry, Hoch/High, Houser, Hunsberger/Honsberger, Meyer/Moyer, Wismer, Fretz, Grubb/Grobb, Hipple, Rittenhouse in 1800; Culp, Geisinger, Hoch/High, Swartz in 1802 - 1803; Gross in 1814-1816, and Funk in 1826.

The first Mennonite Church in Upper Canada, the Moyer Mennonite Church, was organized in 1801 and was located near the west end of the present-day walled pioneer cemetery in Vineland. As families grew, and more Swiss Mennonites arrived, the settlement expanded to the outer reaches of Clinton and Louth Townships comprising Lincoln County, and was affectionately known as 'The Twenty'. About 1843, an associated branch church or meeting house was built in Campden by the Moyer church congregation. A second branch church was also erected in Jordan at about the same time, on the exact site where the Jacob Fry house sits today, on the grounds of the Jordan Historical Museum.

A review of the official cemetery transcription shows that at least 240 burials have taken place at Mountain Mennonite Cemetery in Campden. Refer to O.G.S. Publication #3380 Cemetery Transcription - 1962 - 1989 prepared by the Niagara Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society. The most numerous burials are those of the Moyer, Michener, Sievenpiper, Houser, Rittenhouse, Fretz, Culp, Wisner, Eckhardt, Funk, High, Honsberger, Tufford and Kratz families, but also many other families from the Campden and Vineland area.

Heritage Attributes:

The key attributes which relate to the heritage value are that there are many founding Swiss Mennonite families from Bucks County, Pennsylvania (and their descendants) buried in Mountain Mennonite Cemetery in Campden.

David Moyer donated the land on the north-east corner of this farm to the church and cemetery. A copy of the 'Deed of Gift' is registered in the Municipality of Lincoln Land Registry office. It was drawn November 10, 1843, signed by the grantor David Moyer on August 10, 1844 and registered on the 9th day of June, 1845. The purchase price for the half acre was five shillings (\$1.00). The grantee was Abraham Kratz, "one of the Elders of the society called Mennonists" who were to have this property "for a place of public worship forever."

The 'grantor', David Moyer (1777-1850), was the brother of Samuel Moyer, the first schoolmaster at 'The Twenty' and a noted Fraktur artist, who also ran the first Mennonite Singing School. David and his brother Samuel farmed side by side on Fly Road. The 'grantee', Deacon Abraham Kratz (1805-1885), was the youngest son of Rev. Valentine Kratz, the first Mennonite minister ordained in Canada.

Other significant individuals and families buried in the Mountain Mennonite Cemetery are: Michener, Orth, Rittenhouse, Manasseh-Tufford, Grobb and Moyer.