

## UPDATED HISTORY OF BELLEVUE CEMETERY – MAY 2022

In the City of Gatineau, the three oldest settlers' burial grounds that became cemeteries are, the Leamy family burial ground – now Notre-Dame (1st known settler burial in 1809), the eastern burial ground - now St. James Cemetery (1st known burial in 1821), and the “western burial ground” – now Bellevue (1st known burial in 1830).<sup>1</sup>

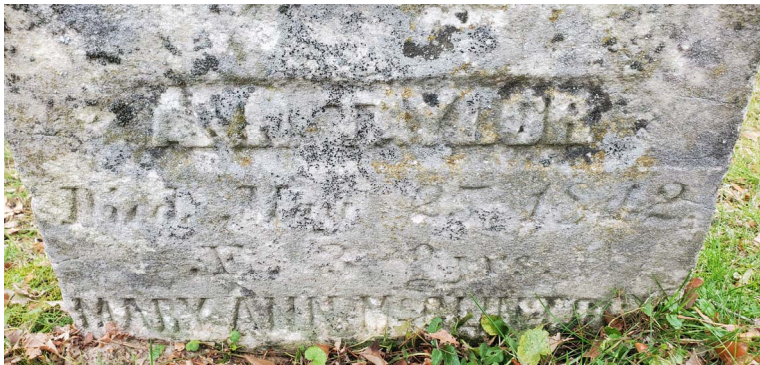
From 1802 until 1806, Bellevue Cemetery's land belonged to **Philemon Wright Jr.**<sup>2</sup>, who then conveyed the land back to his father, **Philemon Sr.** in 1806.

In 1808, **Gideon Olmstead** bought the land.<sup>3</sup> Sometime in 1822,<sup>4</sup> Gideon donated the first acre of land to create the burial ground, which was later to be used by the three Aylmer Protestant churches.<sup>5</sup>

Gideon called it the *Upper Cemetery* (the *Lower Cemetery* being St. James in Wright's Town) but most people called it the *Olmstead Cemetery*. When it was enlarged by the Conroy family (Robert and Mary), it became the *Olmstead-Conroy Cemetery*, and then sometime

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Taylor was reported to be the oldest burial in the oldest section of Bellevue, as recorded in the “official” history of the cemetery published in 1986. However, in the fall of 2021, the headstone was cleaned with water and the beam of a flashlight was obliquely played onto the date to reveal that Ann Taylor's burial date was in fact 1842, and not 1812. The other name on the headstone is that of Mary Ann McClintock, whose burial date was revealed to be 1849. Now, the oldest known burial in the cemetery is that of 12 yr. old Anna Heath, who died in Feb. 1830.



<sup>2</sup> Philemon Jr. was also the owner of the Britannia Farm for which the road was named and he was the founder of the embryonic village known as Turnpike End, which later becomes Aylmer.

<sup>3</sup> Wright Archives, Sale of western half of LOT 12 Ranges 1-2, Gatineau Valley Historical Society, document A-049

<sup>4</sup> *Le Chemin d'Aylmer – Aylmer Road*, Diane Aldred, pg. 144

<sup>5</sup> In 1906, Ottawa historian Anson Albert Gard (1848-1915) wrote the first history of Bellevue Cemetery in his book entitled *Pioneers of Upper Ottawa-The Humours of the Valley*. In that history, Gard writes:

*“First of importance is the name of Gideon Olmstead. It was he who gave the original Acre. He gave it with but a single proviso: ‘Free to all but one. No Rollins must ever be buried herein.’ Poor Rollins, who lived on a farm a short distance to the west, took this so to heart that he sold out and returned to the States.”*

before **Anson Gard** writes the history in 1906, the Stewart family gave it the name *Bellevue Cemetery*.

Gideon and his wife **Esther Andrus** are both buried there, along with many children and descendants. After Gideon's death, on May 14, 1837, lot 12 was split up into parcels of 30 acres by the ten Olmstead children, and sold to Mary McConnell's brothers, William McConnell, Jonathan McConnell. A piece was also sold to Thomas Roberts.

**Mary McConnell** married **Robert Conroy** and she eventually bought the cemetery and three adjacent lots with a view to enlarge the cemetery from 1869-1872. The large Conroy cemetery plot was established in 1872, and in 1873, Mary sold her first cemetery lot to the Church family. The "new" cemetery was laid out by **Bolton McGrath** in 1884.

The Conroy family continues to hold the cemetery in the family's hands, managed by Mary's sons, **Robert and William** until 1902, when it was sold to Samuel Stewart, who operated it until his death in 1919, at which time it is inherited by son, **W.H. Stewart**.

In 1945, **Rev Archie Casselman**, Minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church established the Bellevue Cemetery Company to ensure it's continued use by the Protestant community of Hull, Eardley and Aylmer. It is directed by the three churches of Aylmer and two directors. The company purchased the cemetery from W.H. Stewart in 1945.

Historically the cemetery should be referred to as the Olmstead-McConnell-Conroy-Stewart Cemetery. Today, however, it is simply called the **Bellevue Cemetery**.

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4x g-grandson of both Gideon Olmstead & Philemon Wright

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