

# Coverdale and Wesleyan Union Cemeteries, Coverdale Road, Riverview

## Outline

This note will briefly outline the history and significance of the over 200 year old Wesleyan Union Cemetery and Coverdale United Church Cemetery, located in the western end of Riverview. Both of these cemeteries contain the remains of over 800 former residents that now comprise the Town of Riverview and beyond. The Wesleyan Union Cemetery has transitioned from management and ownership of the United Church of Canada to an Incorporated not for profit comprised of 12 Volunteer Board of Directors in 2020, that has continued to maintain and operate the cemeteries.

## History of Riverview area cemeteries:

- **Coverdale Cemetery**

The history of cemeteries in the now Riverview area began in the early 1800's with the construction of the original Wesleyan Union Methodist Church at the corner of the Coverdale and Turtle Creek Roads in 1828. An informal church group had been in place since the 1780's in the area and the construction of a church on donated land was predated by a small cemetery located adjacent the church. That church was replaced by a larger structure in 1865, that remains today and is the oldest structure in the now Town of Riverview. In 1928 the United Church of Canada was formed, and the Wesleyan Union Methodist Church evolved to the Coverdale United Church. The Coverdale Church was dissolved in 2017, and sold to a private individual, who did an extensive renovation and turned it into a beautiful residential property. The church was designated as a provincial historic site.

The adjacent cemetery was used from 1819 until the last burial of J. Hazen Gunning in 1936, whom the Village of Gunningsville was named after. That **Coverdale Cemetery** contains approximately 65 graves, although it is suspected to contain a larger number of unmarked graves.



The **Coverdale Cemetery** received extensive rehabilitation in 2019, with financial assistance from the Province of New Brunswick and the Cemetery funds in repairing many broken or buried stones; the first rehabilitation in it's over 200 year history.

- **Wesleyan Union Cemetery**

The Wesleyan Union Cemetery was formed in 1865 after donation of property now located at 1331 Coverdale Road, just west of Turtle Creek. It has expanded into additional properties in the past 200 years and contains the final resting place of over 850 area residents. This cemetery continues to be an active burial place of persons, with no particular affiliation, although from 1985 until 2020 it was owned and managed by the Coverdale United Church. With the dissolution of the Church a decision had to be made as to the upkeep and future use of the cemetery. The United Church of Canada had no interest in managing the cemetery. A group was formed as an interim Board of Directors. Financially, the Cemetery Funds are solvent and able to carry the maintenance of the cemetery into the future. Although under the former Municipalities Act (NB) and now Local Governance Act (NB) Municipalities can include in their responsibility's ownership and maintenance of cemeteries, the feeling of the Board of Directors was that the group was financially self sufficient and did not require any municipal intervention.

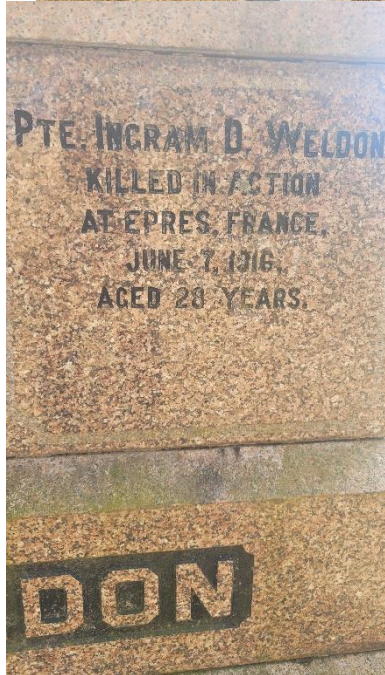
In 2006, a presentation to Riverview Town Council was made, which resulted in a Motion of Council passed unanimously to assist the Wesleyan Union Cemetery with services or materials but no financial aid. (Copy of Motion of Council and correspondence attached).

The Wesleyan Union Cemetery, more than perhaps any other entity or land, represents the history of Riverview and its residents and founders. Some of the significant burials include:

- Honourable James T. Ryan, MLA for Albert County (1821-1892)
- Honourable Sanford Ryan , MLA for Albert County (1900-1908)
- Councillor Edgar Mitton, Councillor – Town of Riverview
- Remains of 4 O'Brien children – Drowned in Saxby Gale, Oct 1969
- Byron Dobson – Builder of much of the original residential housing in Riverview beginning in 1946.

Many of Riverview's early farmers, business owners, teachers, young men who went to World Wars I & II and gave their lives.....and residents , who founded Riverview are buried in this cemetery.





The Wesleyan Union Cemetery received extensive rehabilitation in 2021 and 2022 with funding assistance from the Province of New Brunswick and cemetery funds. All maintenance, insurance and other related expenses are facilitated by Wesleyan Union Cemetery funds and investments. We anticipate the Cemetery will be financially self-sustaining into the next century.

## Discussion

Riverview has not been well known for its protection or knowledge of its history in part that most of the Riverview residents, which was predominantly founded after World War 2, settled here from other communities. Some of those residents are buried in their hometowns or Moncton cemeteries.

A private cemetery was begun in the 1980's, known as Alderwood Cemetery and contains over 700 graves of area residents.

The Wesleyan Union Cemetery is governed by 12 individuals from the community as a not for profit board. We are not looking for any financial assistance from the Town of

Riverview. We feel there is an opportunity to educate the Town Council of Riverview of the history and significance of this final resting place of Riverview's early history.