

St. Ninian's Pioneer Cemetery Heritage Project

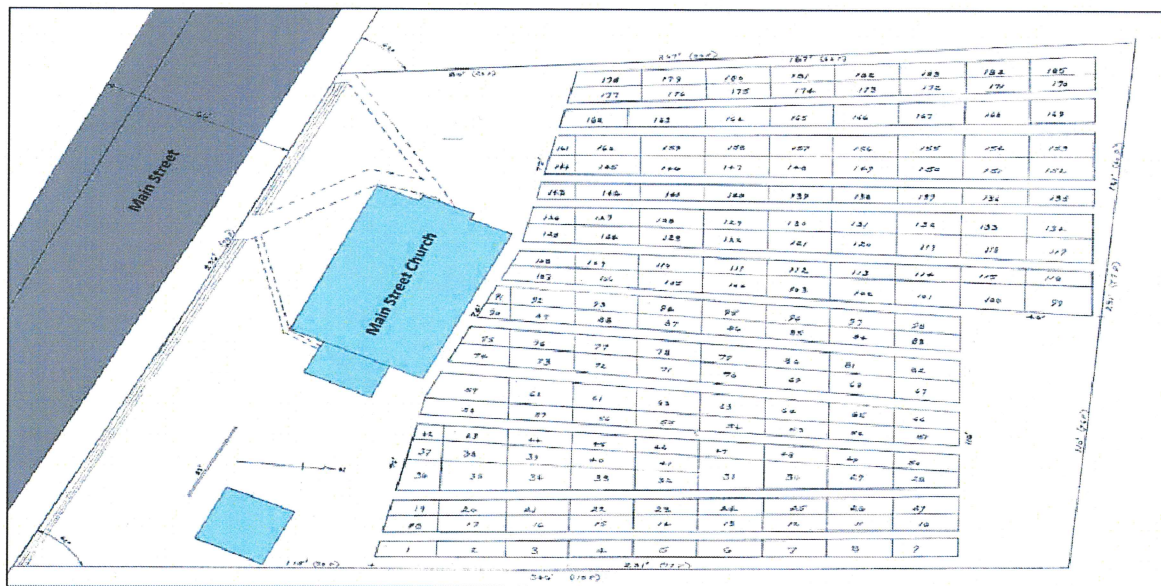
We pass by the old cemeteries (sic) where lie their bones, without a thought of them; we are not disposed to think of them, there is no money in it; we cannot, in very many cases, point out their graves..." [Casket, 26 March 1914 (William D. Cameron)]

Brief Cemetery History

In 1805 a small chapel and the first catholic cemetery in Antigonish was developed on a small parcel of land on the south side of Main Street, where the current Bergengren Credit Union, Bank of Nova Scotia and former Oak Manor are located. The deed was made out to St. John's Parish (changed to St. Ninian's Parish in 1812).

In 1824 Father Fraser obtained a parcel of land on the north side of Main Street and constructed a new church (72' long X 45' wide on current Ultramar / Irving site) which could accommodate 800 parishioners. The cemetery was located north of the church (current location of the John Paul Centre, Opportunity Shop and How Club) and was laid out to contain 185 plots, each of which could hold 6 burials. In 1874 the new St. Ninian's Cathedral was officially dedicated and the former church on Main Street was converted into a school, which subsequently closed in 1917.

The last burial in the Main Street cemetery occurred in 1877. One of the most notable burials in the Main Street Cemetery was that of Bishop Fraser on March 6, 1851 with 1400 people in attendance. Despite his wishes to remain buried alongside his people, his remains were transferred to a vault under the Cathedral on October 29, 1879. Since the last burial in the Main Street Cemetery, three buildings and a parking lot have been constructed on the cemetery site. In 1981 the remaining 46 headstones were laid flat, in a semicircle formation, at the back of the cemetery property. In 2020 these headstones were removed for safe storage, and to protect them from further deterioration due to the elements, with plans to eventually reinstate them back in the cemetery.



1841 Cemetery Plot Plan

Pioneer Cemetery Heritage Project Plan

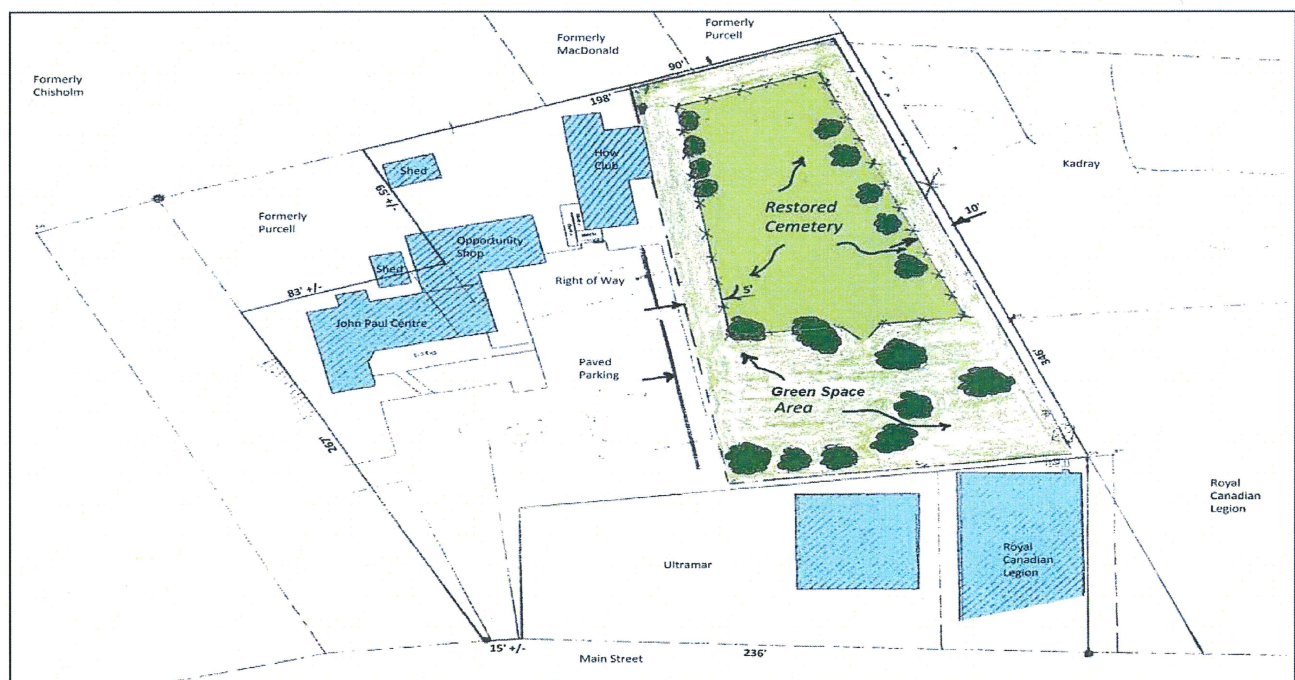
The Main Street Pioneer Cemetery is a hidden treasure that has been long forgotten, neglected and disrespected for many decades. It is essential that the current generation accept responsibility to salvage and enhance what remains of the cemetery in honour of our forefathers. Objectives of this project include creation of:

- A beautiful heritage site to recognize the pioneers buried there, who established and developed our community.
- A place where the religious and educational history of our community can be passed on to our citizens, tourists and future generations.
- A welcoming, accessible, and environmentally friendly green space of serenity and relaxation.
- A respectful place that can host appropriate public functions.

Generally, the **three year plan** includes cleaning / repairing and standing the remaining 46 headstones, installation of wrought iron fencing, solar lighting, a celtic cross, benches, landscaping, signage, development of a website / facebook page and installation of QR (Quick Response) Bar Code posts. These posts will permit visitors to scan the codes with their cell phones, which will then connect them to a website site for historical information. The conceptual plan developed has an estimated cost of \$260,000. A campaign for private / public fundraising has been initiated. **All donations are greatly appreciated and tax receipts can be issued. Should you wish to make a donation, please specify that it is for the "Pioneer Cemetery", and submit a cheque, money order or e-transfer payable to:**

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Conceptual Plan