

An Historical Walking Tour in Camp Hill Cemetery



The Friends of the Public Gardens decided in 2019 to extend its stewardship role to the Camp Hill Cemetery, located just across Summer Street from the Halifax Public Gardens. We have undertaken to raise the public profile of the Cemetery by advocating for improvements to the grounds and the grave markers. We are also developing activities that encourage people to walk in the Cemetery.

The Cemetery, which is the final resting place for many notable figures in Nova Scotia history, was part of the 'rural cemetery' movement when it opened in 1844. It is intended as a place of refuge, spacious with lush greenery and beautiful grave monuments; it is a place to walk, to bird watch and enjoy nature, and in past times, it was even a popular place to picnic!

In 2020 the Friends hired Michael Nearing, a recent university graduate of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), as a Summer Intern. Michael was asked to compile the research done on individuals in the Cemetery and using that knowledge, to create a walking tour highlighting the stories of some of the people buried in the Cemetery.

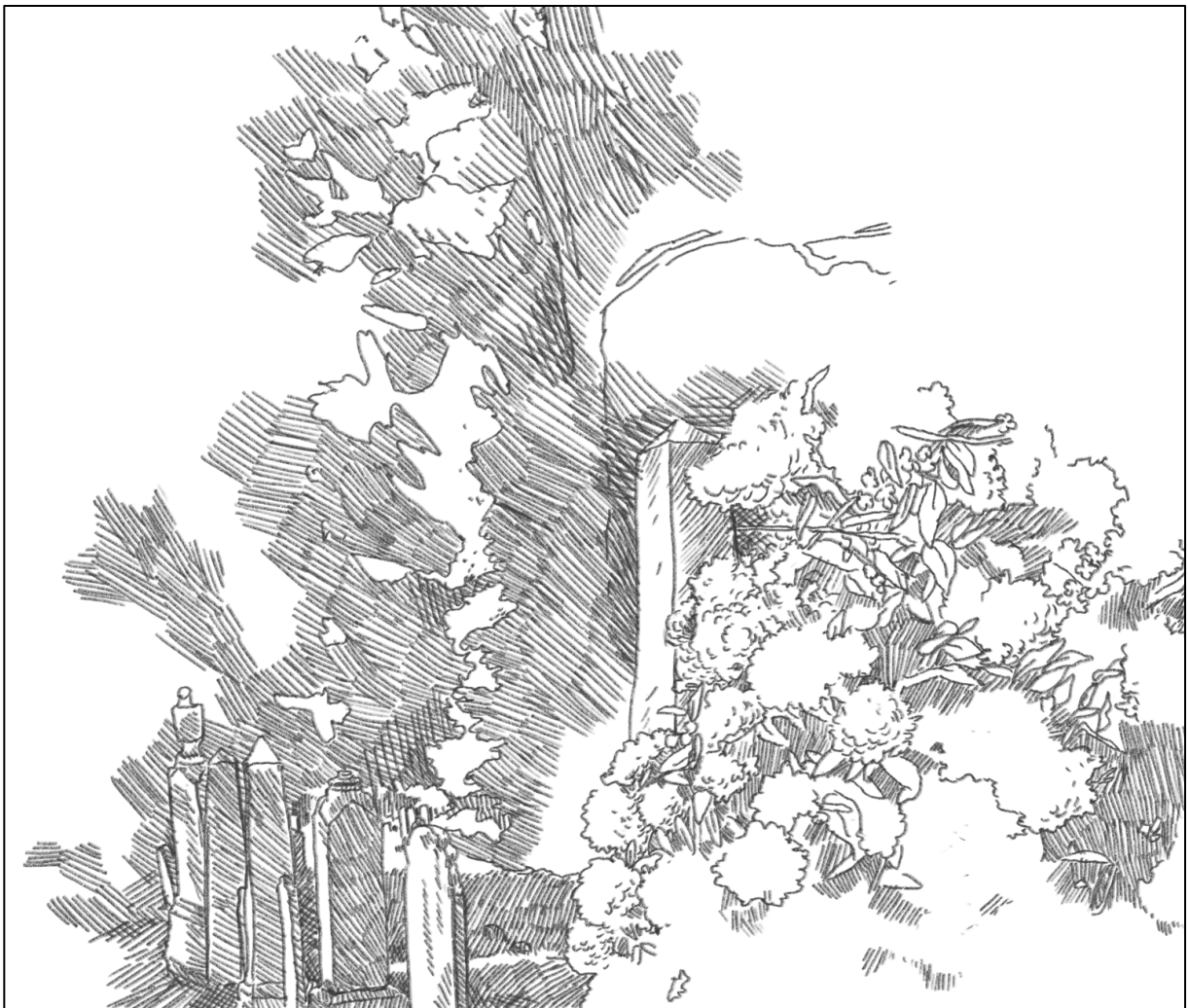
Front cover of the brochure created by Michael Nearing, offering a self-guided tour of the Camp Hill Cemetery.

Cemetery Walking Tour, Continued from page 1

Michael created an hour-long tour with 10 stops, at which he tells short written stories about individuals from a wide range of backgrounds and from various periods in NS history. This tour comes packaged in a beautiful brochure Michael created, complete with a map of the Cemetery drawn from scratch, and many original illustrations.

With additional funding from the federal Canada Summer Jobs program this fall, The Friends were able to hire Deirdre Morrison, an audio engineer, to convert Michael's tour into an audio tour that can be accessed using a mobile device. The audio tour format allows for expanded stories to be told at each stop. These engaging histories are great to listen to even if you don't plan to visit the Cemetery in person or if you don't have a cell phone. The final page of this newsletter has the information on how to access the Camp Hill Cemetery Audio tour on our website.

On the following pages is an excerpt from Deirdre's audio tour script featuring Abbie Lane, a prominent Haligonian, who is also honoured in the Halifax Public Gardens.



Cemetery scene in Camp Hill Cemetery. Illustration by Michael Nearing

Abbie J. Lane (1898 – 1965)

The following is an excerpt from the Camp Hill Cemetery Audio Tour Script by Deirdre Morrison

...Just as the path begins to turn, on your right, you will find the gravesite of Abbie J. Lane. This single-piece headstone is made of polished, black granite. The marker features a roof-shape design with a small, grey cross and detailed accents carved into the top corners.

Abigail Jacques Lane was a politician, council member, and radio broadcaster. Lane was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1898. Early in her childhood, Lane's father passed away and she moved to Brooklyn, New York with her mother. In New York, Lane attended Public School 47, but was expelled in eighth grade for refusing to salute the American flag.

Lane returned to Nova Scotia and completed high school in Truro. She later worked as a dance instructor at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, where she taught waltz lessons. Soon after, Lane married and relocated to Halifax, settling in a large house in the West End of the city. Lane developed an extensive network in Halifax and was well-connected to the city's women's organizations.



During WWII, Lane took on a variety of jobs. She supported nurseries, emceed community events, escorted war brides across the country, and served as a first aid worker with St. John Ambulance.

In 1940, in an attempt to move away from the constant pull of volunteering and part-time work, Lane accepted a position as an editor at the Halifax Chronicle. Lane reported on women's affairs but was met with frustration as she was often not taken seriously. Lane had a sincere confidence and honesty about her, and she shared her opinions without reservation. The Chronicle, however, was not supportive of her forthright writing style, and on several occasions the newspaper refused to publish her stories.

Abbie Lane Fountain in the Halifax Public Gardens. Photo by Judith Cabrita

Abbie J. Lane, Continued from page 3

In November of 1944, the Chronicle opened a small radio station, CJCH. The "CH" in the call letters stood for Chronicle-Halifax. Lane became a commentator for the station and quickly developed a strong voice in the Halifax community. By 1948, the Chronicle merged with the Halifax Herald and Mail, putting an end to Lane's role in the newspaper industry. Set on expanding her role in the community, Lane continued to work as a radio commentator and became even more active throughout the city—making regular appearances on local stations.

In 1951, Lane successfully ran for a seat on the Halifax City Council. She was elected as councillor for the district of Ward 2 and served until her death in 1965. In 1954, Lane was also appointed deputy mayor of Halifax, making her the first female deputy mayor of the city.

Lane advocated for the representation of women in politics and took an active interest in public education. Optimistic and determined, Lane took on numerous roles in the community. She was the chair of the Halifax Board of School Commissioners, president of the Halifax Welfare Bureau, president of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, and an active member of the Halifax City Planning Commission.

Lane was a well-known supporter of mental health initiatives and served as the director of the Canadian Mental Health Association, and board member of the Halifax Mental Hospital, and the Grace Maternity Hospital.

Following her death in 1965, the Abbie J. Lane Memorial Building was created to honour Lane's contributions to Halifax and her work with the Canadian Mental Health Association. The building is part of the QEII Health Sciences Centre and provides mental health and addictions services across the province.

Abbie Lane is remembered as one of the most prominent women in the public life of the Maritimes.



Cemetery Walking Tour, Continued from page 2



The brochure “An Historical Walking Tour in Camp Hill Cemetery” will be available for free from our Horticultural Hall desk in the Halifax Public Gardens starting this season – assuming COVID-19 restrictions are eased and we are allowed to open our kiosk the year!

The Audio tour can be downloaded to your mobile device from our website by copying this information into your browser <https://halifaxpublicgardens.ca/audio-tours>. You can also play the Audio tour directly from our website and spend an enjoyable 50 minutes in your home learning about the Cemetery and some of the notable people buried there.

A link to the Audio tour is also available from the Camp Hill Cemetery facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Camp-Hill-Cemetery-100385648690458>. Just copy this information into your browser to take you to the page. This facebook page has up-to-date information on what is happening with the Camp Hill Cemetery.

Would you like to help out with projects such as these?

The projects we featured in this newsletter only happen because many different volunteers at the Friends are willing to:

- prepare applications for funding and recruit employees,
- do background research to develop future tours in history, horticulture and cultural events,
- handle the finances, mentoring and paperwork in support of our employees, and to
- communicate and advertise the results.

If you have skills in any of these areas and want to help, we would be thrilled. Just email infohalifaxpublicgardens@gmail.com and let's have a discussion.

We are also looking for potential board members to serve for a 2-year term beginning in April 2021. Ours is a working board with no permanent employees. We need people that will take an active interest in all areas, contribute to discussions on planning and strategy, but also be willing to take on responsibilities as needed. Key expertise needed on the Board include:

- graphic design, social media management, computer skills and financial expertise

but most of all we need folks who are generalists, who have the willingness to take on an unfamiliar task, the ability to learn what they need to complete the work, and then get it done. If this is you, we may have some satisfying volunteer opportunities for you. Contact us at the email address above, or speak to one of our current board members.