

# An Interesting Summer Recording Cemeteries

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We did it! Good Lake R.M. #274 is finally done and we enclose the last sheets covering Uspanska, Gorlitz's St. Peter & St. Paul, and a private cemetery we found near Gorlitz. We also enclose the final updated sheet on the locations of the various cemeteries in the R.M.

Thank you for your kind comments in the September Bulletin. You probably noticed the R.M. number was listed wrong in the article. Thank goodness we hadn't been doing \*224--for that drive we would have needed more than our usual thermos of coffee and bunwiches!

Little did we know what doing an entire municipality would entail. But it turned out to be a most interesting project. We talked to a number of people we otherwise would not have met and we learned a great deal about the early history of our settlers in this area. People, once they knew what we were doing, were very helpful. Some, like Elmer Gruber of Springside and Peter Ostoforoff of Canora, went out of their way to get information for us--our sincere thanks to them.

We found old names that we had heard our parents mention many years ago. We found names that neither of us, nor other people when we asked them, could ever remember hearing before. We found well-kept cemeteries. We found abandoned cemeteries. We found isolated graves. But most of all we found satisfaction in being able to contribute, in our own small way, to the preservation of part of the history of our community.

There is nothing more tranquil than a remote country cemetery. Neighbours who perhaps feuded through the years over fence lines or other grievances now peacefully share the same small acreage. We ate our lunch many times parked just outside the gates of some isolated churchyard far from the sounds of any traffic and discussed the changes that had occurred in that district since many of the pioneers had been laid to rest. In some of the cemeteries we were among old friends and in almost every cemetery we were among people we knew. A

sad place at times when one saw the number of babies and very young children who died during those earlier years.

We also found that equality of the sexes has come a long way! On some of the old headstones it seemed more important for a woman to be listed as to whose wife she was and how many years she had been married to her husband rather than mention her age. In some cases they didn't even bother with her first name--just "wife of so & so".

Many of the cemeteries had interesting stories associated with them and people were willing to share these. There was the man in one cemetery that we were beginning to think had been buried twice. It turned out that the old headstone from his grave, when it was replaced by a newer double one for him and his wife, was 'borrowed' by another family to use as a temporary marker for someone in their family who had just died. However that family moved to Ontario and the old original 'wrong name' headstone still marks the grave of their family member who died in the 1950's.

In another case the church was being moved from a cemetery location to a nearby village. Problems arose in the moving and it was left overnight by the side of the road. It mysteriously burnt and the cemetery records burnt with it.

At our last cemetery, nearly a mile from any buildings, while Bill was down on his knees with his head near the ground trying to decipher some of the barely legible writing on one of the older, deteriorating concrete headstones, he suddenly said "I hear a phone ringing"-- my first thought was "I didn't hear him correctly"-- my next thought was, "we've been doing cemeteries TOO long!" He repeated his remark and when I listened carefully I too heard the phone. What a relief! It wasn't coming from below ground but from an outside phone bell at a grain elevator nearly 3/4 of a mile away across the fields.

It HAS been an interesting summer.