

# The London and Middlesex

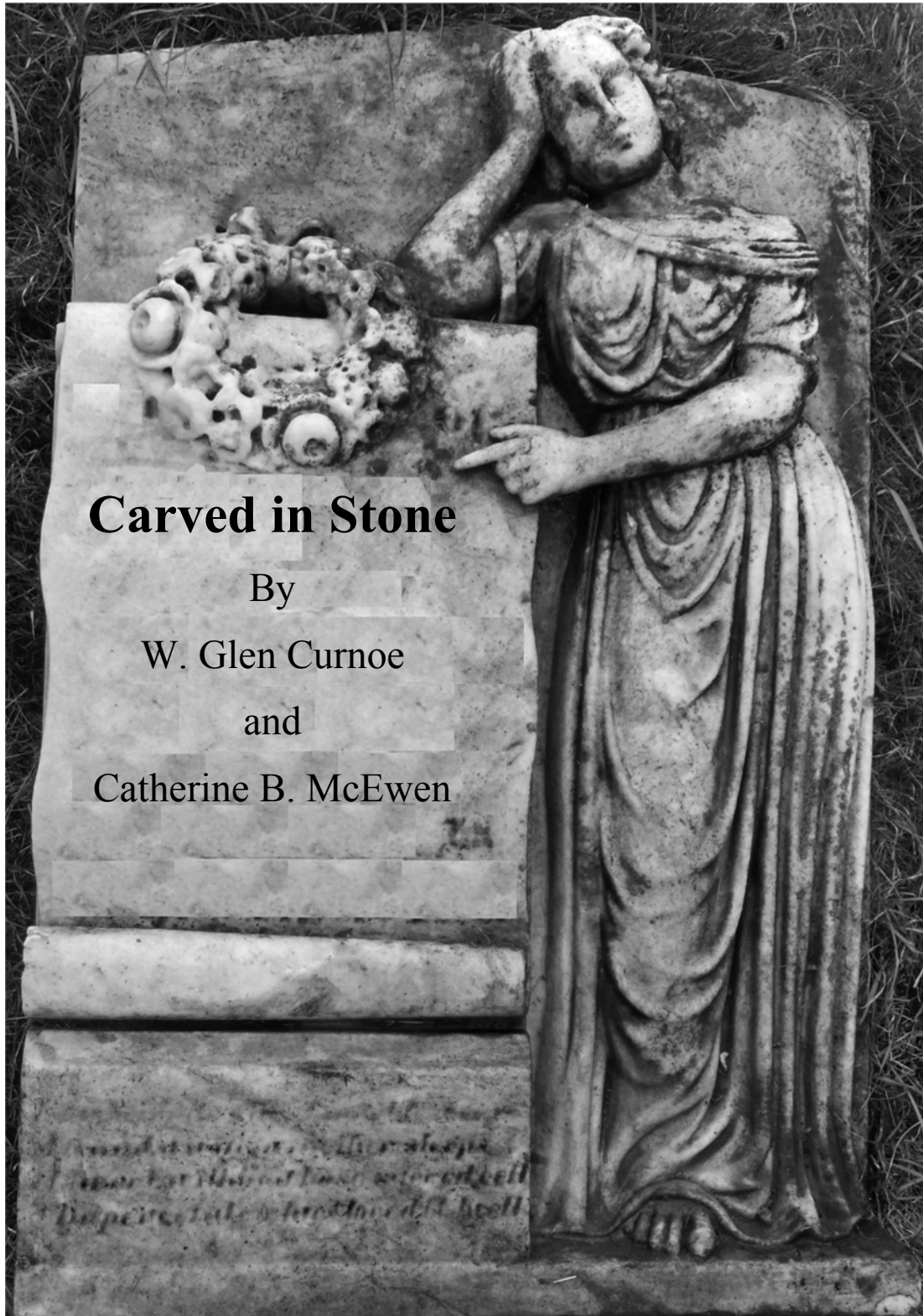
2019

# HISTORIAN

Volume 27



Official Journal of  
The London and Middlesex Historical Society



## Carved in Stone

By

W. Glen Curnoe

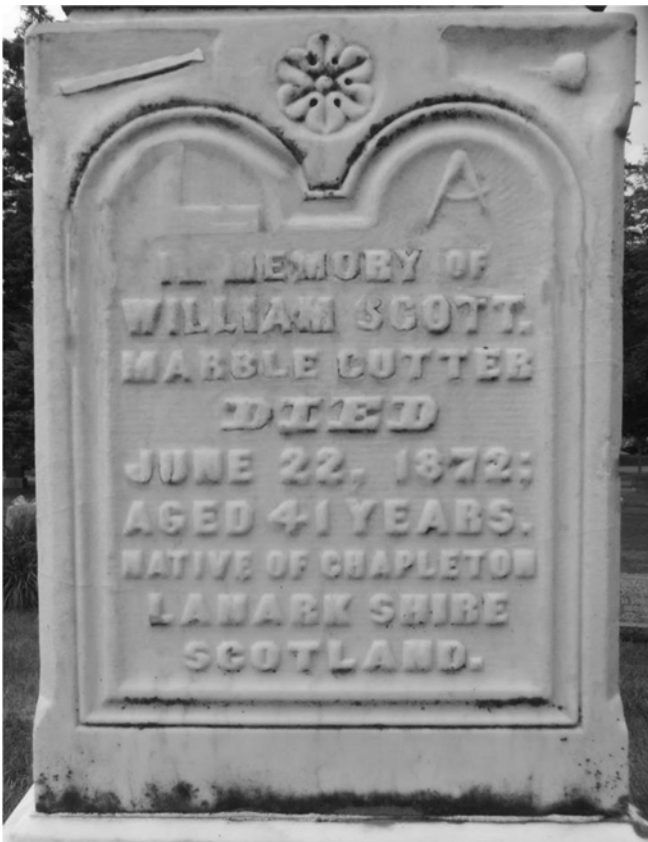
and

Catherine B. McEwen

### Early headstone carvers in Middlesex County

When European settlers came to North America they brought their burial traditions with them. As a result, most cemeteries in London and Middlesex County resemble ones in the old countries. Since there were few trained headstone carvers in pioneer days, the first burial sites often had wooden signs or crudely chiselled natural fieldstones for markers, but gradually, professionally carved headstones began to appear. Most carvers or cutters in this region came from the British Isles so their types of tools, such as the round mallet, various chisels, the square and a pair of compasses, were the ones used here.

Not all headstones were signed, but as more of the early ones fall prey to weathering, acid rain and vandalism, fewer of the carvers' names remain readable. The marble cutter would usually chisel his name, or the name of his employer, near the bottom of the stone's face. As a result, that information was lost in some cemeteries when broken stones are reset into fresh concrete in restoration projects. Thankfully, more recent technical advances are helping to eliminate that problem. Few examples of signatures on the upper front of stones exist, and only one stone was found with a signature on the back. It is Lyman Burley Griffith's marker in Longwood Cemetery north of Melbourne which is signed "Teale & Wilkens, London."



A headstone cutter's monument in Kincardine Municipal Cemetery showing his tools of the trade.



A stone reset in concrete that hides the bottom part, in Trinity Anglican Church Cemetery, Birr.



### Headstone materials

Various types of sandstone, limestone, slate, marble, or occasionally, granite were used. Colours and patterns varied according to the quarries from which the materials were mined. Vermont was a prime source of workable, white marble, along with white or grey varieties from Italy and Egypt, while most limestone came from Scotland.

Transportation of stone was expensive because of its weight, so freight rates by ship, rail or wagon were calculated according to the type of stone being moved. For example, marble weighs 72.57 kilograms per cubic foot, while red granite weighs 81.64 kilograms and black granite weighs 90.72. Thus, shipping costs could be calculated by measuring rather than weighing the load. Stones were also precut to appropriate sizes and sometimes decorative motifs were already carved.<sup>1</sup>

### Identifying early London carvers

Some eighteenth century headstones exist in Ontario, however the carvers have seldom been identified. The oldest known burial in London's pioneer Brick Street Cemetery is that of Eliza Griffith who died in 1819, but her simple marble stone is unsigned. The earliest verified date of death in Bostwick Cemetery is for Phoebe (Corlis) Norton who died on August 9, 1823. Her brother, Daniel Corlis, died on April 25, 1826, and was buried in the new Lambeth Community Cemetery, but neither of their headstones is signed.

So far, the earliest documented carver in London was Irish-born Thomas Francis (1803-1867). He and his first wife lived in Pugwash, Nova Scotia, in the 1830s, where at least three sons were born. He and his children were located in London by the mid-1840s where he carried on his business on Dundas Street. He also had a shop in St. Thomas, as he advertised in the *Canadian Freeman* on August 11, 1846,

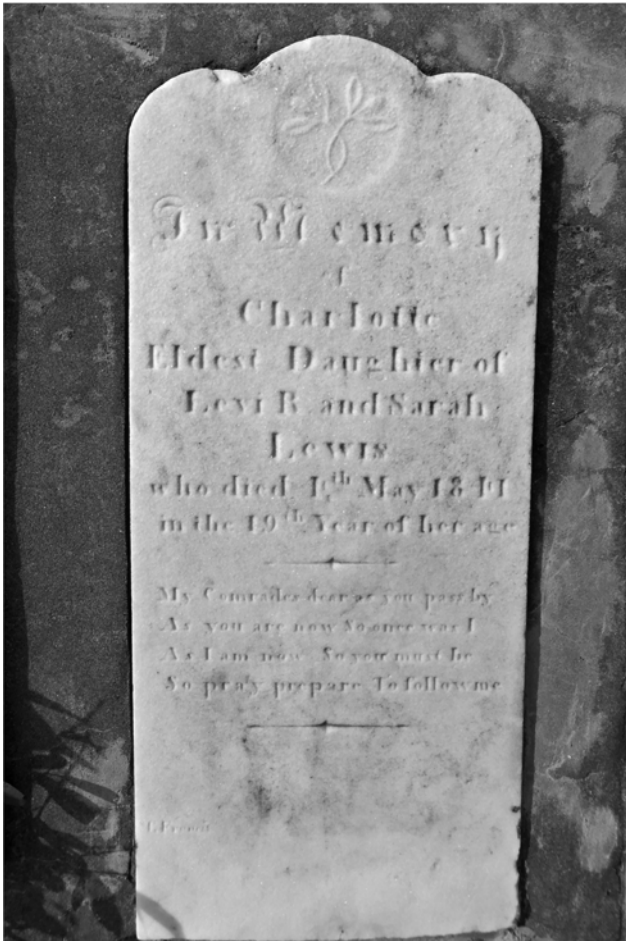


Headstone of oldest known burial, 1819,  
Brick Street Cemetery.

that he had finished grave stones in stock there, priced from \$5 to \$30. There is a good example of his work in a cairn of headstones on the west side of Colonel Talbot Road, several kilometers south of Lambeth. The white marble marker is for Charlotte Lewis who died on May 4, 1841. The stones were saved from the churchyard of North Street United Church after its demolition.

Widower Thomas Francis married Jane, a young Englishwoman, and had three more sons in London in the early 1850s. After Francis suffered a stroke, the right side of his body was affected and he had to give up his chosen profession. He recovered enough to become an inspector at the city market for a few years before buying the Ivy Green Hotel just west of the York Street bridge in 1861. His irrational suspicions of his youthful wife led to serious marital problems.





North Street United Church Cemetery. Stone carved by Thomas Francis, earliest known stone carver in London.

Because of his verbal and physical abuse, she obtained a separation from him in 1866, whereupon he put the hotel up for sale. She bought it and ran it successfully, keeping their sons with her. After his wife refused all his attempts at reconciliation, Francis went to the hotel in September 1867 and threatened her with a revolver. She deflected his aim enough that the bullet missed her and she ran from the building. The situation soon ended with his suicide inside the hotel.<sup>2</sup>

The oldest Francis son, Daniel, born in 1837 in Nova Scotia, may have learned the carver's trade from his father. Neither Thomas nor Daniel created artistic masterpieces but Thomas' stones featured neat lettering

and clean designs. A unique stone signed "D. Francis, Talbot St." can be found in section U of London's Woodland Cemetery. It commemorates Lt. Charles Hopton's three young children. Since the last child died on September 7, 1853, and Daniel Francis moved to St. Louis, Missouri, in 1857, he must have been a teenager when he created that stone.<sup>3</sup>

London's population rose from under 4,000 in the late 1840s to approximately 15,000 by 1857. A number of qualified marble cutters arrived in the area in the 1850s. One such man, Andrew McClure, was located at The Junction, an early name for Lambeth, in 1853. By February 1854, he had set up shop in London on the north side of York Street, between Ridout and Talbot streets. Very little is known about him or how long he remained there. A few examples of his work can be found in Tiffany and Christ Church cemeteries in Delaware, as well as in Brick Street and Woodland cemeteries in London.

### More London Carvers

John William Smyth (1828-1899) was born in Devonshire, England, where he trained as a marble cutter before coming to Canada in 1850, stopping first in Brantford. He moved to St. Thomas by 1853 where he and Reuben Hammill formed the St. Thomas Marble Works. After Hammill & Smyth dissolved their brief partnership on November 26, 1853, Smyth moved to London. He and William Anderson announced the opening of Smyth & Anderson on Dundas Street on September 1, 1854. Anderson was born around 1824 but little is known about him. After their partnership broke up in 1858, Anderson & Co., marble dealer, Market Square, was listed in the 1862-63 London directory, but Anderson stopped advertising and seems to have worked for other people.

John Smyth carried on a successful family business which lasted for three generations. It became known as Smyth & Son in the 1880s when Frank W. Smyth (1862-1936) joined his father. The company produced more headstones than any other local shop and their markers can be found throughout a wide area. The Smyths used a distinctive trademark on many, but not all, of their earlier stones. Sometimes their name was not inscribed but only the swirling mark they used to identify their work. In due course, F.W. Smyth was joined by his son John Wilkinson Smyth (1893-1959) and the firm continued until 1946.

J.W. Smyth linked up with a young Devonshire-born architect named Silas H. Weekes (1854-1881) in 1878-79. An advertisement in the London Free Press in 1878 illustrates the overlapping nature of this partnership.

*WEEKES & SMYTH, ARCHITECTS, &c. &c.,-  
Office over Smyth & Weekes' Marble and  
Stone Works, Nitschke Block, corner Dundas  
and Wellington streets, London, Ont.*

Unfortunately, Weekes' career was short-lived, as he died from tuberculosis at the age of 27. He was buried with his family in Mount Brydges Cemetery.

Another early carving enterprise was Fraser, Meikle & Company, which evolved into Meikle & Buchanan on Dundas Street by 1856. John G. Taylor worked for George Meikle and A.S. Buchanan at that time, but the business stopped advertising in the fall of 1859 and faded from the scene. J.G. Taylor, who was born in East Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, around 1823, was still listed as a marble cutter in London in the 1861 census but may have returned to the United States soon after that.

John Purchase Capron (1809-1865) immigrated to Westminster Township from Devonshire, England, in 1851, along with several other relatives. He won a prize for engraving at the Middlesex Agricultural Society's exhibition on October 7 that year, indicating a high level of skill. A few of his headstones survive in cemeteries at Lambeth, St. John's Arva, St. Peter's, Woodland and Brick Street, where he is buried. Two signed "Capron, London" headstones for members of the Shenick family were seen by late local historian Raymond Crinklaw in 1976. He reported that they were cemented into a patio floor at the rear of 286 High Street – but no one can locate them now.

Another marble and stone business was operating in London by 1856 which included men who would be future leaders in the trade. Although R.M. Lucas & Co. bore the name of Richard Minchin Lucas, he was an accountant in the Gore Bank, not a marble carver. His partner, John Robert Peel, who had trained as a carver in England, had arrived in London around 1855-56. George Powell also worked for this short-lived company, which was located on the south side of Dundas Street, east of Clarence Street.

Fellow countrymen John R. Peel (1830-1904) and George Powell (1818-1893) soon formed a new partnership. An advertisement for Peel & Powell appeared in a London newspaper on November 29, 1856. Their marble works was located on the southwest corner of Richmond and King streets. When they decided to go their separate ways in 1866, Powell and his oldest son George Jr. remained on the premises and Peel moved to a different site on Richmond Street. Powell ran his family's enterprise under the name of Powell & Son until his death in 1893, although sons Walter and Samuel had also joined the firm. They continued until 1896 before going out of business.



Wood carving of beaver over front entrance of the former George Powell residence, 146 Wellington Street.

**G. POWELL & SON**

DEALERS IN  
ALL KINDS OF

**Marble,**  
**Freestone,**  
**Fire Grates,**  
&c., &c.



A LARGE VARIETY  
**Monuments,**  
**Marble and Slate**  
**Mantelpieces**

*Marble and Granite Works*

153 to 163 King & 367 Richmond Sts.,

LONDON, = ONTARIO.

Ad for G. Powell & Son, London City and Middlesex County Directory, 1888-89.



J.R. Peel's oldest son, also named John Robert (1852-1900), worked for his father as a stone cutter, as did his next son, Francis William (1854-1903). Frank W. left London around 1881-82 and moved to Detroit where he had his own marble works. Five headstones signed "F.W. Peel, London" have been found locally, while numerous J.R. Peel stones can be found throughout the region.

Gardarius or Gardonius Diego Ozbourn may be the earliest London-born carver. Various spellings of his name have been found but he was usually identified as G.D. Ozbourn. In 1835, Nathan and Sarah Ozbourn moved their growing family from Pickering, Ontario, to London where their son was born in 1839. When he married Emma Cowley in 1858, his residence was given as London City, but nothing is known about his training as a marble carver.

G.D. Ozbourn proved to be a jack-of-all trades for he was listed as a carriage maker in London's 1861 census, then a marble dealer in the 1863-64 city directory and a livery stable keeper the following year. Meanwhile, "Ozburn" & Brett was recorded on Strathroy's assessment rolls in 1864 as that town's first marble workers. An old headstone for the Brown family, signed "G.D. Ozbourn, Strathroy", is in St. George's Anglican Church Cemetery at 12656 13 Mile Road in Middlesex Centre. Ozbourn was also recorded as a farmer in Westminster, London and Delaware townships in the 1860s and 1870s before the family moved to Le Sueur, Minnesota, in 1879, where Ozbourn died in 1893.

The Teale family of carvers were also noted for their connection with early London military history. Christopher Teale, born in England in 1819, had joined the army as a band boy at the age of thirteen and came to Canada with his father's regiment in the 1840s. After Christopher resigned from the army in Lower Canada in 1851, he brought his family to

London. He became a London constable in 1855 and joined the Seventh Regiment of London Light Infantry, playing in its band until his death in 1885. Several of his sons also served in this regiment.

Emanuel Teale (1839-1904), Christopher's oldest son, apprenticed in London after moving from Quebec. He was first listed in the 1863-64 city directory as a marble dealer and sculptor on Richmond Street. By 1866, he and his brother Charles had formed Teale Bros., wholesale and retail marble dealers. Their brothers Christopher and Walter also worked as marble cutters.

Meanwhile, in 1864, a talented German-born marble carver and sculptor had arrived in London via the United States. Henry A. Wilkens (1831-1907), as he was known here, had brief partnerships with Charles Schraeder in 1865 as H.A. Wilkens & Co., and with John W. Bunning in 1866 as Wilkens & Bunning. Then Emanuel Teale and he formed Teale & Wilkens in 1867. That lasted until the spring of 1869 when Wilkens became the partner of Thomas W. Dyas, a surveyor and architect. Dyas & Wilkens were the architects for a number of buildings in London and Strathroy during the following year. After the dissolution of their partnership in late April, J.W. Smyth announced in both London newspapers on May 4, 1870, that Wilkens had been hired as his new foreman.

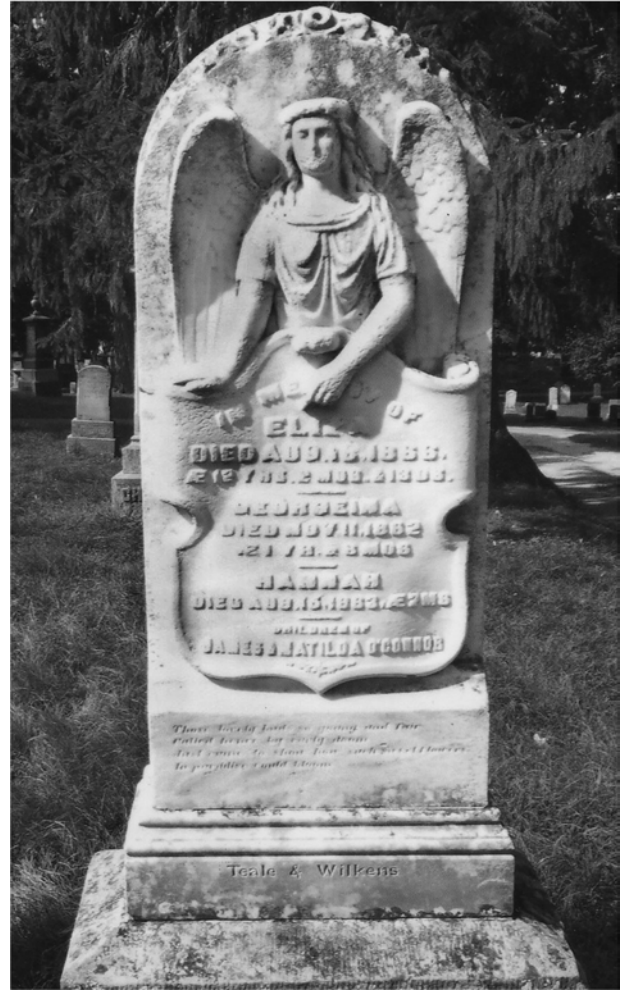
Within two years, another change took place when Wilkens and carver Samuel Hooper formed Wilkens and Hooper. That pattern of change continued when they dissolved their partnership on January 5, 1874. After that, Wilkens worked alone at architectural projects until 1877, as well as headstone commissions for a longer period. A number of his monuments and headstones were executed in a more sculptural style than most of those created by his fellow artisans. Indeed, he advertised that he was a sculptor

rather than a carver. A large Wilkens & Hooper memorial to the Chisholm family in the Old St. Thomas Churchyard features a central three-dimensional figure which can be attributed to Wilkens based on the style. Another excellent example of his work is a headstone in Woodland Cemetery for the O'Connor children.

Wilkens remained in London for a few years after the death of his wife Ella in 1877 before relocating his family to Hamilton by 1879. When he moved to Buffalo, New York, in 1885, he reverted to his German name of August A. Langebahn, which he retained until his death in 1907. No explanation for his use of the Wilkens name has been discovered. Neither his wife nor his second son have headstones to mark their graves in London and his resting place in Buffalo is also unmarked. The exception is a small marble stone inscribed in archaic German in section R of Woodland Cemetery for their young daughter who died in London in 1874. No last name is given but it is for “unsere theure Augusta” and is signed “H.A. Wilkens, London”.

Wilkens's former partner, Emanuel Teale, along with his brothers Christopher and Walter, continued in the stone business in one way or another, but not in partnership with each other. Walter worked for other companies such as J.R. Peel, J.W. Smyth and J.R. Hughes, before joining the Wright Lithographing Company in London as a polisher of lithographic stones. Christopher also became a stone polisher at Southam Printing and Lithographing after 1900, while their brother Charles worked at a variety of other jobs over the years.

Samuel Hooper, mentioned previously, was born in Devonshire, England, in 1853 where he trained as a marble carver. His family moved to Canada in 1869 and settled in London. Samuel must have been quite talented since H.A. Wilkens took him into partnership



O'Connor Stone, Teale & Wilkens.  
Carving of Angel by Wilkens.

in 1872. When they parted ways in 1874, he and Frederick St. George Thomson went into business as Hooper & Thomson until 1878. After T.J. Heard bought Hooper out of his business in 1879, the latter moved to Winnipeg where he continued as a marble cutter for many years.

Like many of this area's marble carvers, Thomas J. Heard was a native of Devonshire, England. He was born there on December 10, 1853, and was the eldest son of a stone mason. He was working in London by 1874 and joined John Williams in 1877 to form Williams, Heard & Co., but Williams headed his own company from 1878-80 before leaving the region.



Old St. Thomas Churchyard. Chisholm memorial.

Meanwhile, Heard took bricklayer Samuel J. Flory into partnership in 1880 since they had contracts in the building field which needed the expertise of a brick mason. Heard & Flory lasted into 1882 but after Thomas married Mary Matheson, her father became a partner in Matheson & Heard. Marble carver John Matheson was born in Scotland around 1830. He and his wife Catherine came to Woodstock, Ontario, in 1856 where he was in the marble trade for 20 years before moving to London. Matheson and Heard split up by 1886 and each had his own establishment.

Thomas Heard's father, George, and his brothers, Robert and William, worked for him before Thomas moved to Detroit around 1890 where he continued in the marble business. He moved to Vancouver in 1911 and

died there in 1913. Mary (Matheson) Heard, the first of his three wives, died in London in 1893 and was buried in the Matheson plot in Woodland Cemetery. Her father, John, was buried there in 1896.

William Manuel Dwyer (1850-1910) was born near Dublin, Ireland, the son of a soldier. His family moved to Quebec in 1855, then came to London around 1863. He became a marble cutter in Ingersoll where he married Maria O'Callaghan in 1871 and they lived with her family. Dwyer had his own marble works there by 1874, as well as a shop in London. They moved to 591 Richmond Street in London in 1882. Dwyer was also a musician with the Seventh Regiment band. He and his family are buried in St. Peter's Cemetery.



John R. Hughes, mentioned previously, was born in Wales around 1833 and arrived in St. Thomas where he worked as a marble cutter. He was married there in 1858 and eventually opened his own business in 1874. After his wife died, he and his son Warren moved to London around 1880 and opened their marble and granite works on Dundas Street west. They continued until J.R. Hughes' death in 1899.

Three Kelly brothers came to London in the early 1860s. Their Irish-born father had been posted to various places while in the army. The eldest son John was born in Gibraltar in 1845, then James was born in New Brunswick around 1849 and Joseph was born at Niagara around 1851. Joe was an apprentice marble cutter in London with Wilkens & Bunning by 1866. Meanwhile, John Kelly (1845-1891) was married here in 1864. He had a shop on Clarence Street until about 1876 when he moved to Harriston in Wellington County. James Kelly and Isaac Stansfield formed James Kelly & Co. and Joe Kelly worked there as a cutter.

Trouble erupted between the Kelly brothers in 1878 over wages. Joe was upset enough that he took a piece of marble from Smyth & Weekes' shop on the northeast corner of Dundas and Wellington streets and hid it in his brother's shop on Waterloo Street. Although Joe returned the slab to its owners before Detective Wigmore could search the Kelly premises, Joe admitted to the theft. After Smyth wrote to Kelly and Stansfield accusing them of stealing his marble, he received their written denial.

A hearing opened in Police Court on March 24, 1879. The magistrate acquitted Kelly and Stansfield of receiving stolen marble but sent Joe to trial for larceny. When the grand jury threw the case out of court, Joe was released from jail, but was re-arrested soon

after for threatening Isaac Stansfield who had been a witness against him. The sad story of the two brothers ended with the untimely deaths of James in Sarnia in 1880 and Joseph in London in 1881.

### **Some Strathroy carvers**

As mentioned, Ozbourn & Brett were the first marble workers in Strathroy in 1864, followed by Frederick Schultheis the next year. He and his wife were born in Germany and had several children in the United States before they arrived in Strathroy. They lived at his marble works on the Market Square until 1871, the same year that stone cutter John Hambly (1851-1921) was first listed in the town's directory. His family had immigrated to Northumberland County from Devonshire, England, in 1855, then moved to a farm near Strathroy around 1870. John boarded in town with the family of Wellington Miles and may have apprenticed to Frederick Schultheis.

George C. Brown had opened the Western Marble Works on Centre Street in Strathroy by 1872 and a year later, Brown & Hambly became a partnership. Hambly also worked in Michigan for a while. When he married Mary Moore in Strathroy on March 20, 1876, his residence was listed as Port Huron on their marriage certificate. He opened the New Marble Works at Centre and Thomas streets in Strathroy by 1878. Hambly had various partners over the years including Mr. Graham, William D. Fletcher, Robert H. Coutts and John Hueston. Eventually, three of his sons joined the family firm in 1917 and carried on until the 1950s. The Hipple family continued the business as Strathroy Monuments.

### Other Middlesex carvers

While many companies from beyond this area served the local headstone trade in the nineteenth century, the following men also owned marble and stone works: James A. Armitage, Lucan; Darcy J. Augustine, Strathroy and Ingersoll; H. Bartlett, Glencoe; George Bawden, Lucan, Parkhill and Exeter; Augustus Blessing, Strathroy; Bowley & Son, Strathroy; Brown & Northcott, Strathroy; Burrows, Glencoe; D.B. Campbell, Strathroy; J.B. Campbell, Glencoe; Thomas Coutts, Strathroy; William Elliott, London; Harper & Mimna, Wardsville; Hooper & Nisbet, London; Caleb Jones, Dutton, Glencoe and London; Samuel Keast, London; John Lappin, Strathroy; A.E. Marshall, London, Glencoe and Lucan; Mimna Bros., Wardsville; J. Niblock, Parkhill; Daniel C. Parker, Glencoe; and Teale & Howe, Strathroy.

By the late nineteenth century, granite began to surpass the softer stones in popularity for monuments. Several shades of the highly-durable product were imported from Sweden, Scotland and Ohio, but most of the granite came from New Brunswick and Quebec. Since its hardness made hand carving virtually impossible, machinery was needed for cutting, etching and polishing the headstones, and metal tags were attached to the backs to identify the makers. As a result, the traditional carver's job largely came to an end.

### Epilogue

The authors of this article spent several years doing field trips, both individually and jointly, to cemeteries in London and Middlesex County. Information was recorded on the remaining signatures of the marble carvers and/or stone cutters – the terms being interchangeable. While most cemeteries are accessible to the public, some rural ones are tucked away in the middle of farms with no

way of getting to them without the landowner's permission, or sometimes, their assistance.

Mrs. Lamont is an excellent example of one of these helpful landowners who kindly transported both researchers up hill and down dale by ATV through the family farm to their abandoned cemetery perched on a bluff above Gold Creek. On another occasion, Wally and Connie Hardwick and Mel Murray conducted Glen Curnoe on a trek to several of Westminster Township's derelict and overgrown graveyards, well hidden behind fields of corn. Rusted or locked gates, as well as an assortment of fences, were negotiated without suffering a serious fall. Since most cemeteries tend to be on higher ground, mud or water was seldom a problem.

Subsequently, each carver was researched through old newspapers, articles, directories, library and archives files, cemetery records, the census and on-line sources. This is the first compilation of London and Middlesex County's former headstone and monument craftsmen.







Lamont Cemetery.



Collected headstones, Cade/Gillam Cemetery, Mill Road, southeast of Mount Brydges.







**List of stone carvers**

(from collage on opposite page)

**Column 1:**

D. Francis, London  
Ozbourn & Brett, Strathroy  
Brett & Schultheis, Strathroy  
Capron  
Heard & Flory, London  
Teale & Wilkens, London  
F.W. Peel, London  
F. Schultheis, Strathroy  
G.D. Ozbourn, London  
Jno. Kelly, London

**Column 2:**

J.W. Smyth, London  
Hooper & Thomson, London  
A. McClure, London, C.W.  
T. Francis  
Matheson & Heard, London  
First Premium Marble Works,  
Anderson & Fuller, Lon. C.W.  
Teale, London  
Hooper & Nisbet, London  
J.W. Smyth

**Column 3:**

A. McClure, Junction  
T.J. Heard & Co.  
Powell & Son, London  
J.G. Taylor, London  
Smyth & Weekes, London  
Peel & Powell, London  
S. Keast, London  
S. Hooper, London  
Smyth. J.W., London  
Fraser, Meikle & Co., London



Brick Street Cemetery. Belinda Teeple, d.1859. This is one of the few examples with the signature near the top of the stone just below the carving. It reads Capron on the left and London on the right.



Lambeth Municipal Cemetery William J. Howlett, fireman, d.1874.  
Hooper & Thomson, London.



St. Ann's Cemetery, Adelaide. Henry Parker, blacksmith, d.1873. Carver unknown.





London Fire Department Pumper, c. 1874. Private collection.



David Wilkie and Caleb Jones, c. 1908 on the former site of the John R. Peel Marble Works, 493 Richmond Street, London. Private collection.



Woodland Cemetery. Great Western Railway Monument, 1857. Peel & Powell, London.



North Street Cemetery. Sabrina Smale, d. 1872. Stone carver unknown.



Cade/Gillam Cemetery. Aaron Simmons, d. 1872. The final handshake.

### End Notes

Title page photo: Longwoods Cemetery, Alice Griffith headstone

1. William Hicks Casey, *J.W. Hutchinson, Monument Maker and Mayor, Aylmer, Ontario*, 1993, pp. 18-19
2. *Canadian Free Press*, September 27, 1867, p. 1.
3. *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, June 25, 1875, obituary for Daniel Francis who died June 22, 1875.

**Photographs:** by Glen Curnoe

**Collage:** compiled by Alan Noon