

LAKESHORE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL CEMETERY
C.1890–1979



"The Hospital for the Insane, Mimico" (later Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital) in 1918 some 1.5 miles south of the cemetery. Photo courtesy CAMH Archives.

Alternate Cemetery Names:

Ontario Hospital (New Toronto) Cemetery

Ontario Hospital Cemetery (Mimico)

Mimico Hospital Cemetery

Mimico Asylum Burial Grounds

Potter's Field Mimico

Evans Avenue Cemetery

Compiled by:
Edward Janiszewski
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INTRODUCTION:

The Mimico Branch Asylum was established in 1890 as an annex of the Provincial Lunatic Asylum (PLA, 1850–1998, more recently called the Ontario Hospital [Toronto] and the Queen Street Mental Health Centre), to alleviate overcrowding at the Queen St. and Ossington Avenue location. The institution's names have included Mimico Asylum (c.1894); Mimico Hospital for the Insane; the Ontario Hospital, New Toronto (1920); and Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital (LSPH, c.1961–79). There is clear evidence that the inmates helped to build and maintain the infrastructure of the institutions in which they were housed.

Soon after the new asylum opened, a burial ground to accommodate the indigent patients from both the PLA and Mimico was proposed. These grounds have subsequently been referred to as Potters' Field (Mimico), Mimico Hospital Cemetery, Evans Avenue Cemetery, Ontario Hospital Cemetery (New Toronto), and Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital Cemetery, and now remain unnamed and all but forgotten. (With the closure and partial reintegration of the LSPH with the Queen Street Mental Health Centre in 1979, the cemetery was closed to new interments.)

The cemetery is located on approximately four acres on partial lots 54 and 55, Concession III W, County of York, in the southwest portion of the current City of Toronto. Formerly the nearby district was designated as the towns of Mimico, then New Toronto; and later the Township, then Borough, then City of Etobicoke, Ontario. No formal street address exists, but it lies at the northeast corner of Evans and Horner

Avenues. The cemetery is bounded by the Gardiner Expressway (formerly the Queen Elizabeth Way, QEW) on the north; Horner Ave. entrance and exit ramps to the Gardiner Expressway on the west; and Evans Avenue on the south, where an entrance through a chain-link fence exists. There are no parking facilities, save lots belonging to commercial properties on the south side of Evans Ave.

The grounds include a Roman Catholic section primarily to the west and on the southern quarter, and a Protestant (i.e., Church of England, later Anglican) section on the east half and on a northwesterly part of the site. Local priests and ministers officiated at the burial ceremony if the religion of the person was known. Graves occupy approximately three-quarters of the property, with a 26-foot-wide, possibly originally tree-lined, roadway through the middle of the whole property.

The cemetery was under threat of private sale since 1999. In 2007, the Ontario Cabinet revoked the sale and arranged a property management firm to improve and maintain the site.

This transcription of the death and burial information was compiled by the author during mid-2004 to mid-2005 with a view to memorializing these pioneers of Upper Canada and Ontario, and to informing and educating future generations about the contributions of our ancestors, regardless of their perceived limitations.

The Burial Grounds of the former Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital

The “Mimico Branch Asylum” opened its doors on January 21st, 1890, as an annex to the Provincial Lunatic Asylum (PLA). Construction had begun in 1881, and as early as spring 1888 patients from the PLA were transported to the 125-acre “North Farm” of the Mimico Branch Asylum to cultivate the land. The grounds of the farm were located about 1.5 miles north of the lake, where the new asylum was going up. (1) In 1976, Dr. Ian Bond stated that “[Mimico Asylum] in fact had been largely built by patient labour brought in from 999 [Queen St. West, the street address of the older facility].”(2)

In May 1890, correspondence from Dr. Daniel Clark, the PLA Medical Superintendent, to Provincial Inspector R. Christie recommended that

“...twenty-five (later revised to 11.16, currently about 4) acres owned by the Government north of its farm in Mimico be set apart as a burying ground for the pauper dead of Toronto and Mimico Asylums.” As late as June 27, 1891, despite government approval for the use of “a certain portion of the 11 acre lot and North of the concession at Mimico” for burials, Dr Christie was still urging Kivas Tully, the Department of Public Works chief architect, to make haste in establishing the grounds. (3)

The enumeration of those buried at this site, now at the northeast corner of Evans and Horner Avenues, shows the first plot and grave assignment for a patient to die at Mimico on March 10, 1890. Subsequently, 29 further interments are recorded before the referenced dates of “establishment” on December 5, 1891, and the “first burial” on February 2, 1892. (4)(5) These 30 people show up on the death records for both PLA and Mimico. Whether these first 30 individuals were initially buried at Mount Pleasant

Cemetery, as was the practice at PLA, and later re-interred at the Mimico burial grounds needs further research. Apparently no one from the PLA was interred at the Mimico grounds despite the initial proposal's scope.

It is clear from the death and burial records that there are 1511 individuals buried in the Roman Catholic and Protestant sections, including ten infants born to inmates who were stillborn or lived only a few weeks, as well as one of their mothers. Evidence of several Aboriginal individuals, two "unknown" persons and one woman incorrectly documented as to her plot and gravesite has been found. One individual is noted with two spellings of his last name, but the same plot and grave location. Finally, it appears that an infant and an unrelated adult, their burials separated by many years, share one grave and two males share one grave. The last burial occurred on March 26, 1974.

The Mimico Branch Asylum, later Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, closed and partially "re-merged" with Queen Street Mental Health Centre in 1979, formally closing the burial grounds to further interments.

A publication by the Ontario Genealogical Society (1992) lists the 154 flat grave markers for the period between 1957 and 1973. (6) It was stated even then that the majority of markers were sod-covered.

While under the management of the Ontario Realty Corporation the property was to be sold for \$300,000 in 2000 to the numbered company 1385521 Ontario Limited, owned by Mr. George Damiani, who intended to build a crematorium. Provisions of the sale included the restoration of the existing burial grounds, and the highlighting of the historic significance of the property. (7) The proposed sale did not receive Cabinet approval.

Unfortunately, since the closure of the hospital the property had been left unmarked, untended and in need of renewal. Markers for individual graves and plot location markers needed to be uncovered, made level or replaced. The overgrown shrubs, trees and grasses needed attention. Sunken graves needed to be leveled, gopher and foxholes made walking hazardous, and generally a new landscape design is still required. The property management firm hired by the government has been addressing many of these deficiencies.

This site was 115 years old in 2005. We should strive to respect the resting-places of those that preceded us and set an example for future generations as to how to acknowledge each person's contribution to society.

Since January 2006, the Lakeshore Asylum Cemetery Project (LACP), a group of representatives from the Psychiatric Survivor Archives of Toronto (PSAT), Among Friends Community Mental Health Agency, the New Toronto Historical Society, the Friends of the Archives at CAMH, and local residents have met to advocate for the memorialization of this cemetery. Planning includes the placement of a monument, spring and fall vigils, landscape renewal, and fundraising for these purposes. A website is maintained at <http://www.psychiatricsurvivorarchives.com/cemetery/index.html>

References cited:

1. Mr. John Court, archivist, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, personal correspondence.
2. "History of Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital," Dr. Ian K. Bond, unpublished article, July 1976.
3. "Selected Sources for the Burying Grounds north of the Mimico Asylum (a.k.a., Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital: Humber College, Lakeshore Campus)," prepared by Pleasance Crawford, Landscape Design Historian, 28 Jan 2000.
4. "Cemetery Record—Ontario Hospital: New Toronto," no date, register of burials 1890–1974. From the Archives of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
5. Ontario Archives microfilm: Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital, RG 10, Series 20 H-3 "Registers, Rolls and Books, 1890–1963. Vol. 1–33." MS 3559 and MS 3560.
6. "Ontario Hospital Cemetery (Mimico), City of Etobicoke, Ontario," Ontario Genealogical Society, Toronto Branch, 1992.

7. Ontario Municipal Board Decision /Order #0106 issued; Jan 23, 2001, OMB File number M00046.

ONTARIO HOSPITAL (NEW TORONTO) CEMETERY RECORDS

Location and Description of the Records:

I) "*Cemetery Record, Ontario Hospital, New Toronto*"

The original document is held at the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, 250 Yonge Street, 34th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5B 2N5. Access is available through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office.

A copy for viewing is available through the archivist for the Archives of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health located at the, 1001 Queen Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M6J 1H4.

This is a handwritten record of the grave and plot designation for those interred and disinterred, by last name and given name. Catholic plots are *lettered* sequentially (ranges A–G and K–S) and the pages alternate with Protestant plots mostly *numbered* sequentially (1–20, plus H, I and J from the lettered ranges). Fourteen individuals were removed to other cemeteries for interment and are included herein.

II) "*Burials*"

This record can be accessed in the same locations as the "Cemetery Record" above. It contains handwritten groupings in order by the first letter of the surname of the interred. The dates of burials are often, though not always, noted and the plot and grave number always appear beside the name.

Unfortunately, this was a transcription from a previous record, and during its creation errors in the plot and grave designations for the first several entries of each letter of the record were made. When the burials record was compared to the original "*Cemetery Record*," a pattern emerged wherein the designation of some of those buried in the Catholic plots were assigned numbers (i.e., A became 1, B became 2, and so on). In addition, the grave numbers of the Protestant plots were increased by 50 (e.g., grave # 75 is actually grave #25). These errors were addressed and corrected in the composite version, which forms part of this publication, which now matches the map of the burial grounds of 1939 (Rev. 1943) by the Department of Public Works of Ontario (Archives of Ontario, RG 15-13-2-635, BP-1, L-126, "Burial Grounds—Ontario Hospital, New Toronto").

III) "*Death Records*"

The original records are with the Archives of Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 77 Grenville Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1B3. Microfilm of these records are accessible within "RG 10, Series 20-H-3" for Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital.

Due to the difficulties experienced with the legibility of the previously noted records, it was decided to try to confirm spellings and dates with the use of the "Death Records." Most, but not all, inconsistencies were addressed using the "Death Records" as the *primary* source of information, the "Cemetery Record" as *secondary*, and lastly the alphabetical "Burials" record.

It must be noted that there were no death registers available between 1927-01-29 and 1936-01-02, nor after 1963, though many dates of burial are in the alphabetical "Burials" record. There remain 11 individuals with neither death nor burial dates.

IV) *"Ontario Hospital Cemetery (Mimico), City of Etobicoke, Ontario,"* published by the Ontario Genealogical Society, Toronto Branch, 1992. This document offers a brief history of the cemetery and transcriptions from the 154 flat stone markers for the period 1957–1973, including plot and grave locations. This information is included in the "Note" section of this composite version.

V) Photo Credit: COVER ILLUSTRATION: Central floral garden and carriageway of "The Hospital for the Insane, Mimico" (later Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital) in 1918, showing the Administration Building (right) and two of the clinical cottages. Photo courtesy of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) Archives.

Prepared by Ed Janiszewski
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