

**In Silence We Remember:  
The Historical Archaeology of  
Finnish Cemeteries in Saskatchewan**

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University of Saskatchewan  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

Above-ground archaeological techniques are used to study six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan as a material record of the way that Finnish immigrants saw themselves – individually, collectively, and within the larger society. Findings are overlaid with data about the social identity of Saskatchewan Finns drawn from oral and documentary records. Variations in the expressions of social identity provided by the different Finnish cemeteries are identified and explored. Also, four areas in which major changes in social identity occurred over time are identified and discussed: family structure and relationships, ethnicity, views of death, and social values and beliefs. Finally, a four-stage pattern of change in social identity over time that took place in all the Finnish cemeteries is described, and it is suggested that this pattern may be one that was shared by other immigrants to the western plains. A fuller understanding is developed of the immigrant experience, the nature of ethnicity, the factors affecting social identity, and the processes of cultural change in the settlement of Canada's prairie region.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGS	Association for Gravestone Studies
CCF	Co-operative Commonwealth Federation
CPR	Canadian Pacific Railway
DFC	Dunblane Finnish Cemetery
FHC	Finnish Heritage Cemetery
FOC	Finnish Organization of Canada (also called FSOC)
FSOC	Finnish Socialist Organization of Canada
HIGH	Highland Cemetery
NFCCC	New Finland Community Cemeteries Committee
NFN	New Finland New Cemetery
NFO	New Finland Old Cemetery
NUM	Nummola Cemetery
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RM	Rural Municipality
SARM	Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities
SHC	Suomalainen Hautausmaa Comppania [Finnish Cemetery Company (Highland)]
SSHC	South Shaunavon History Club
VAC	Veterans Affairs Canada

# CHAPTER 1

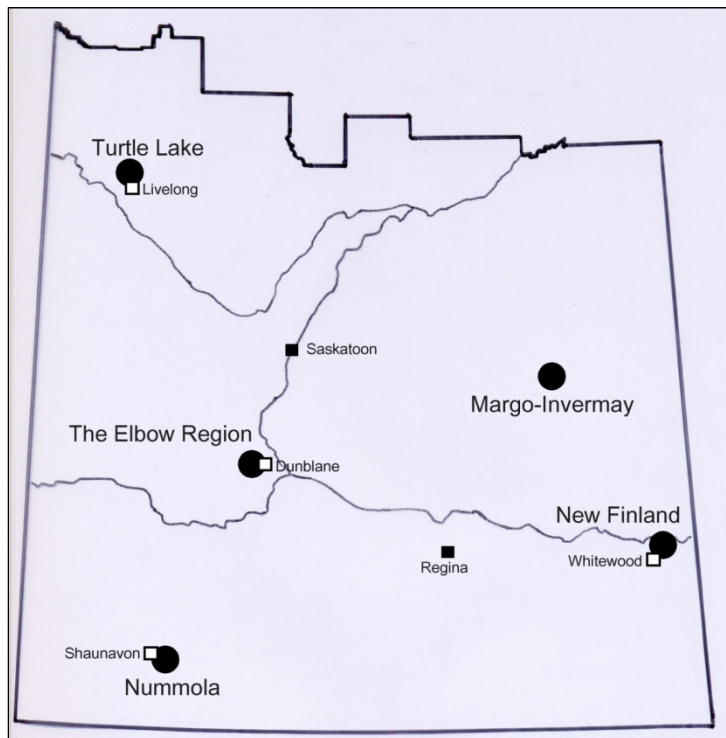
## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Finnish Communities and Cemeteries in Saskatchewan

From 1880 to 1930 Finns were among the thousands of immigrants who responded to an offer of land from the Canadian government and settled in what is now Saskatchewan. By 1931, there were 2,313 people of Finnish ethnic origin in Saskatchewan (Pedersen 2004:158), most of them living in back country areas where they formed communities marked by some combination of schools, halls, stores, churches, and cemeteries. As shown in Figure 1.1, Finnish communities were established in five widely

separated areas:

1. *New Finland*. This area in the southeastern corner of the province encompasses 435 square kilometres around the former postal district of New Finland and is ringed by the towns of Wapella, Whitewood, Rocanville, and Tantallon.
2. *The Elbow Region*. The area of Finnish settlement in this region extends along both sides of the bend in the South Saskatchewan River and up into the Coteau Hills, covering parts of the rural municipalities of Coteau, Victory, King George, and Loreburn, and including Finnish farms near the towns of Strongfield, Hawarden, Macrorie, Birsay, Dunblane, Lucky Lake, Beechy, Wiseton, and Dinsmore.



**Figure 1.1:** Areas of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan, loosely based on a provincial map in SARM 2005:92 (note: dots do not mark an exact location or indicate settlement size since settlements were scattered and size varied over time).

3. *Nummola*. Located in the southwestern corner of the province near Shaunavon, the Nummola settlement included parts of the disbanded school districts of Nummola and King Albert.
4. *Margo-Invermay*. This relatively small Finnish farming community is found in east central Saskatchewan near the towns of Margo and Invermay.
5. *Turtle Lake*. A number of Finnish families settled in northern Saskatchewan in the rural municipality of Mervin, where they made a living through mixed farming, hunting, fishing and/or tourism. Other Finns established vacation homes in this area.

All five rural Finnish communities experienced dispersal and decline after 1930 as the first and second generations of immigrants passed away, and most of their descendants moved, intermarried and were acculturated to the mainstream Canadian way of life (Anderson and Niskala 1981:179). By 2001, the Canadian census showed that in Saskatchewan, half of the 3,675 people who claimed Finnish ethnic origin were now living in the cities of Saskatoon and Regina, and only 745 people were of solely Finnish descent (Statistics Canada 2001). Less than a hundred Finns lived in New Finland, 300-400 remained in the Elbow region (Anderson 2005:332) and the remnants of the Finnish communities at Nummola, Margo-Invermay and Turtle Lake had been largely integrated into their local, multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. All Finnish halls, stores and schools in the province have now closed, and only two rural Finnish churches are still functioning.

At this point in history, the most visible and consistent remains of the Finnish settlements in Saskatchewan are cemeteries. New Finland has both an Old Cemetery (NFO) and a New Cemetery (NFN); the Elbow region includes the Finnish Heritage Cemetery (FHC) near Loreburn, the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery (DFC) near Dunblane, and the Highland Cemetery (HIGH) near Birsay; and Nummola is marked by the Nummola Cemetery (NUM) in the rural municipality of Grassy Creek. The Finns in the small communities around Turtle Lake and Margo-Invermay did not establish their own cemeteries and tended to be buried in nearby multi-ethnic cemeteries. Nevertheless, in 2010 the existing Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan provided 971 graves for examination, and taken together, they constitute a large, reasonably representative sample of the Finns buried in the province. Moreover, all but one of the cemeteries has been in continuous use for over a century. These six cemeteries therefore offer the historical archaeologist a valuable opportunity to learn more about how the immigrant Finns adapted to life in Saskatchewan, focussing less on historical events and more on what individuals

and communities found meaningful in their past and important in their hopes for the future in a new land.

## **1.2 Research Goals and Questions**

Cemeteries may be viewed as created landscapes of memory (Holtorf and Williams 2006). They not only provide a place to dispose of the dead; they commemorate the individuals being buried and interpret who these people were for the benefit of present and future generations. There is a recursive relationship between cemeteries and the communities they serve. Mortuary materials and processes “make meaningful statements about the past in the given cultural context of a present as well as evoking aspirations for the future” (Holtorf and Williams 2006:238). This on-going shaping of the past for the benefit of the future can include the conscious or unconscious omission of memorials to particular people or events as well as the selection of memorial texts and symbols that present people or events in a particular light. As a landscape of memory, the cemetery provides opportunities to forget and reshape the past as well as remember it.

At the core of the role that cemeteries play as landscapes of memory is the notion that each grave memorial expresses something of the social persona of the person it commemorates (Tarlow 1999:10). As a collection of these memorials that has usually been organized into lots and designated burial areas, the cemetery may therefore be “read” by historical archaeologists as an expression of social identity at various levels, including the individual, family, class, ethnic group or community (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1971; Deetz 1977; McGuire 1982; Tarlow 1999; Mytum 2004).

In this study, the ethnic cemeteries at Nummola, New Finland and the Elbow are examined for indications of how Saskatchewan Finns viewed themselves, or at least how some of them wanted their dead to be remembered by those who came after them. Since mnemonics of the dead often change over time, and such changes may signal an alteration in personal, local or world views, shifts in the way Saskatchewan Finns were memorialized may provide clues to the way that they adapted culturally to external factors (e.g., powerful historical events such as the Great Depression or two world wars) or internal needs (e.g., to communicate in English rather

than Finnish). Long after the settlement period in Saskatchewan history has ended, the cemeteries of Finnish immigrants can continue to communicate with us about the past.

An above-ground archaeological study focussed on social identity in Finnish immigrant cemeteries promises to contribute valuable information to what is known about the immigrant experience of Saskatchewan Finns. Most of the existing literature on the Saskatchewan Finns has been written from an emic perspective by people with Finnish heritage who wished to celebrate the Finnish culture and honour their forebears (Pedersen 2004:8). Most academic studies of the Saskatchewan Finns, which will be reviewed in the next chapter, have been drawn largely from interviews, memoirs, photographs and local histories and supplemented with information from official records. Two scholars (Hännikäinen 2010a; Alanen 2005) have included physical evidence in their studies, but one focussed strictly on New Finland while the other looked only at buildings and did not include cemeteries. A study based on cemetery evidence from the three largest areas of Finnish settlements may now be helpful in affirming, correcting or adding to the written histories. Also, the different areas of Finnish settlement have usually been treated independently to date, and there is a need for an integrated consideration of Nummola, New Finland and the Elbow region that examines some of the similarities and differences in their histories and social constructs (Pedersen 2004:9-10). It has been pointed out that studies of ethnic groups have tended to overlook differences of religion, race, class or size among settlements and consequently failed to recognize variations in the way that settlements with the same ethnicity experienced cultural change (Loewen 2002:14). Moreover, in the multicultural milieu of the western plains, the focus on writing local histories has created a tendency to see settlements as “ethnic islands” without recognizing their role in the development of sub-regional, inter-ethnic identities (Loewen 2002:12-13).

By using independent, complementary lines of evidence from the material, oral and documentary records, this research hopes to provide a broad, balanced study of Finnish immigrant communities in Saskatchewan over a period of more than 100 years. It is also hoped that this study will result in new information and insights that contribute to our growing understanding of ethnicity, the factors that affected the values, beliefs and relationships of immigrants to the western plains, and the process of cultural change that characterized the settlement history of western Canada.

The research questions that guide this thesis are:

1. Do the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan express the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns? If so, how?
2. Do these expressions of social identity vary over time? Do they vary within each settlement and/or between the settlements? If so, how and why did variations occur?
3. What does the pattern of social identity expressed in Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries, in combination with information from the oral and documentary records, tell us about the Finnish immigrant experience, ethnicity, and the process of cultural change in the context of the settlement of Canada's western plains?

### **1.3 Theoretical Foundations**

Many of the ideas used in this thesis are identified and discussed in the literature review in Chapter Two. It should be acknowledged here, however, that in order to answer the research questions that have been posed, a basic understanding is required of three foundational concepts: social identity, ethnicity and acculturation. None of these concepts is simple, and there are competing theories that attempt to define and explain them (for some examples, on social identity, see Tajfel and Turner 1986, Cohen 1994, and Stets and Burke 2000; on ethnicity, see Barth 1969, McGuire 1982, Lightfoot and Martinez 1995, Meskell 2002, Lucy 2005, and Jenkins 2008; and on acculturation, see Redfield et al. 1936, Berry 1997, Skuza 2007, and Kramer 2010). It is outside the scope of this thesis to review the diverse perspectives that exist with respect to social identity, ethnicity and acculturation and propose a firm definition of each concept. Nevertheless, some key choices have been made from the various definitions that have been offered, and they are presented below in order to clarify the way in which these words are used in the chapters that follow.

With respect to social identity and ethnicity, it is accepted here that both are flexible mental constructs that may change. Moreover, both are shaped by a combination of internal and external perceptions of how an individual or group is seen and interacts with others.

Harold Mytum notes that cemeteries are valuable sources of information because they contain memorials that are specifically "designed to encapsulate certain culturally important features of the deceased" (Mytum 2004:137). In the context of the cemetery, a selection has been



made among the many elements that make up the complex social identity of an individual or group to fit the conventions and constraints provided by a grave marker. Mytum (2004:137) points out that “[i]n many cases, there is an element of conscious selection, made within a subconscious framework.” Grave markers may express conscious elements of social identity that set the individual apart as well as normative elements of social identity that indicate the individual is a member of a family, community, ethnic group, or other collective. Moreover, in many cases it is the family, friends and community of the deceased that craft the social identity expressed by a grave marker, not the individual being memorialized. Cemetery research therefore needs to take into account the many ambiguities involved in studying social identity in grave markers and refrain from interpreting grave markers as direct expressions of social identity by the deceased. Instead, grave markers need to be interpreted critically and in context as culturally mediated expressions of social identity that involve both conscious and unconscious choices by one or more individuals embedded in a multifaceted social environment.

Ethnicity is one element of social identity that is vitally important in studying the cemeteries of people who immigrated from a particular country, such as Finland. Mytum points out that since ethnicity is constructed rather than inherited, “many aspects of mortuary behavior in a group’s homeland will not necessarily carry an overt cultural association. Funerary customs, burial and commemoration will be part of normative culture, but when immigration or emigration highlights differences between groups, then such behaviors may become powerfully overt” (Mytum 2004:145). Again, reference to context and history is needed in order to determine whether gravestone symbols, styles or texts should be interpreted as indicators of ethnicity or some other element of social identity. For example, although wheat is frequently used as a motif on Finnish graves in Saskatchewan, and it is a motif also found on graves in Finland, it is not really accurate to consider wheat a marker of Finnish ethnicity because it is ubiquitous on graves throughout Saskatchewan and appears to have religious connotations and symbolic meanings related to agriculture and the land that go beyond any particular ethnicity. On the other hand, the lily of the valley, which is the national flower of Finland, may be regarded with more confidence as a symbolic expression of Finnish ethnicity when it is found in a Finnish cemetery in Saskatchewan.

The need for a careful, pragmatic approach to the identification of ethnicity is underlined by numerous problems that arise in studying the Finns. Most Finns arrived in Saskatchewan at a

time when Finland itself was in the process of developing a national identity (Ollila 1998:128). Some came as Russians, since Finland was a grand duchy of Russia until it achieved independence in 1918, and parts of the former grand duchy were later absorbed by Russia. Other immigrants spent enough time in the U.S. to acquire American citizenship, and many were born there, never having lived in Finland at all before arriving in Canada. Moreover, Finland itself has linguistic and cultural sub-groups, including the Swedish-speaking Finns who often associated in Canada with Swedes rather than Finns. Members of this sub-group assimilated easily into the mainstream population and cannot be readily identified as Finns (Roinila 1997). A few Swedish-speaking Finns who immigrated to Saskatchewan were found in the course of this research, and at least one, who had married a Finnish-speaking woman, lived in one of the province's five rural Finnish-speaking communities. Any Swedish-speaking Finns in the Finnish communities were generally invisible, however, apparently taking to heart the admonition given by one Saskatchewan Finn to his Swedish-speaking son-in-law, "Puhu perkeles suomia, vaikkei tuu ku sana päiväs" [Speak Finnish, dammit, even if it's only one word a day] (Virtaranta 1996:98). As a result of these variations in nationality, culture and language, the term "Finn" is used loosely here to describe anyone who was born in Finland or has Finnish ancestry.

The term "acculturation" refers to "those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (Redfield et al. 1936:149). Acculturative changes are a typical outcome of immigration, i.e., "the act of moving from one place to another" (Kramer 2010:384). However, immigration does not necessarily mean that one culture assimilates another or that the impact of cultural contact is one-sided or lopsided in effecting change. Nor does it mean that to identify with a new culture, a group has to lessen or lose its identification with its own culture. In this thesis, it is recognized that the process of cultural change initiated by immigration is varied, multi-dimensional and multi-directional (Skuzza 2007:448-449). Any term used to describe this process, therefore, needs to convey a certain neutrality. Unfortunately, repeated use of the term "acculturation" to describe at least partial absorption of one culture by another has burdened it with so much conceptual and emotional baggage that many historical archaeologists now choose to avoid it altogether. In this thesis, the more general term "cultural change" is generally used as a neutral alternative that preserves the original understanding of acculturation.

More will be said about ethnicity and cultural change in the final chapter of this thesis, which draws broad conclusions about the immigrant experience of the Saskatchewan Finns. It is pointed out that changes in ethnicity occurred not only from the Finns' encounter with the mainstream culture that provided the economic, political and social structure for western Canada, but also through the history and experiences they shared with others living in rural Saskatchewan during and after the settlement era, including other groups of European settlers and other Finnish immigrants who had different beliefs and a different way of life. It is suggested that the Finns were part of a "polyethnic rural culture [that] developed as immigrant groups followed different Old World cultural agendas and confronted a state that had different policies for different groups" (Loewen 2002:19).

#### **1.4 Thesis Organization**

This thesis has seven chapters, supplemented by a list of references and several appendices that provide data to support points made in the text. Following the introduction is a review of the literature related to the above-ground archaeology of historical cemeteries on the western plains. All articles and books selected for review contributed in some way to the author's understanding of the culture and history of the Saskatchewan Finns or added to the growing body of information on cemeteries and deathways that provided the theoretical framework for this research. Chapter Three outlines the methods used to gather and analyze data from the material record provided by the six Finnish cemeteries as well as the documentary and oral records related to the Saskatchewan Finns. Chapter Four provides information gleaned from the material, documentary and oral records related to the immigration of Finns to Saskatchewan and outlines how the cemeteries were developed in each Finnish community. Similarly, Chapter Five presents a demographic profile of the people buried in the six Finnish cemeteries drawn from all three strands of evidence. The sixth chapter, however, concentrates on the material evidence in the cemeteries, analyzing numerous aspects of the cemeteries as expressions of social identity. This lengthy, detailed analysis shows numerous ways in which the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns is expressed in their cemeteries and provides a definitive answer to the first research question for this thesis. The first section of Chapter Seven addresses part of the second research question, discussing some significant variations among the Finnish cemeteries in their

expressions of social identity. The second section of Chapter Seven deals with the research question regarding changes in social identity over time and outlines how family relationships, ethnicity, views of death, and social beliefs and values evolved over a period of more than 100 years after the first Finns immigrated to Saskatchewan. This chapter also addresses the third research question by describing a pattern of cultural change that the Finns appear to have experienced in common with at least some other immigrant groups on the western plains.

For those who may be interested, some additional information about the research and the Saskatchewan Finns has been included in the appendices. Appendix A consists of the grave marker record form used in this research, and Appendix B lists all writings directly related to the Saskatchewan Finns that were identified in the course of my literature review. Also, appended to the thesis are tables with data regarding the immigration of people buried in Saskatchewan's Finnish Cemeteries (see Appendices C, D and E) and the kinds of grave marker motifs found in the cemeteries (see Appendix F).

It should be noted that words and passages in Finnish appear frequently in this thesis. In most cases, a translation into English is given in square brackets next to the original Finnish text. All translations framed in this way were provided by Peter Gallén for the purpose of this research. If the translation is not given in square brackets and accompanied by the original text, it was either provided by the author cited for the translated text, or the citation provides the name of the translator as well as the author.

On another housekeeping note, I should clarify that the photographs, drawings and maps in this thesis are mine unless they are attributed to someone else in the caption.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE ABOVE-GROUND ARCHAEOLOGY OF FINNISH CEMETERIES ON THE WESTERN PLAINS: A LITERATURE REVIEW**

Research into Finnish immigrant cemeteries requires an acquaintance with a wide range of literature drawn from two main areas of study: Finnish history and culture, and deathways and cemeteries. This chapter looks at some of the relevant literature from each of these areas that applies to the era of Finnish immigration to Saskatchewan (from circa 1890 on).

#### **2.1 The Finns and Finnish Culture**

There is a vast literature on the Finns and Finnish culture, much of it available only in Finnish. Within the time constraints of this study, only a few key works dealing specifically with the Saskatchewan Finns could be translated into English. Fortunately, however, the literature in Finnish is supplemented by a significant amount of research in English that has been conducted by both Finns and their descendants around the world. From this smaller but still large body of literature, a few works have been selected for review, including all academic research that has focussed directly on the Saskatchewan Finns. Given the constraints of time and space, only a glimpse is provided of the more general literature in English that applies to Finnish immigrants throughout Canada and the U.S.

A comprehensive bibliography is provided in Appendix B of all publications that were found containing material that specifically discusses Finns who settled in Saskatchewan. These publications include academic studies, poems, works of fiction, and articles and books describing the Finns, their communities, and/or their history in this province. While only the academic studies are reviewed in this chapter, some of the other works are cited in subsequent chapters as information and insights have been drawn from them. Almost all the academic studies relate to the settlement of New Finland, with some references to the Finns in the Elbow, Margo-Invermay and/or Turtle Lake regions. To date, there is one publication devoted to the Elbow region and another to the Margo-Invermay region. Little to no academic material has been produced about Nummola.

An early analysis of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan is found in a paper given by Saskatchewan sociologist, Alan B. Anderson, at the 1979 Finn Forum in Toronto (Anderson and Niskala 1981). Anderson carried out extensive research in the 1970s and 1980s into ethnic settlement in Saskatchewan, gathering data from various ethnic groups about key factors in the maintenance of ethnic identity, such as language preference, religious affiliation and intermarriage. Drawing on interviews with Saskatchewan Finns conducted by Brenda Niskala, Anderson identified three areas of Finnish settlement in the province (New Finland, the Elbow region and Turtle Lake), and he briefly described the settlement history and cultural characteristics of each area. Although his analysis omitted the Nummola and the Margo-Invermay Finns, his predictions regarding the maintenance of Finnish ethnicity in Saskatchewan have proved remarkably accurate. Anderson foresaw that the maintenance of Finnish culture in this province would likely depend on the large families of endogamous Laestadian Finns in the Elbow region since the church-based New Finland settlement was dwindling through intermarriage and secularization, and there was a tendency for Finns without any church affiliation to assimilate readily with the surrounding population.

In 1980 the New Finland settlement was visited by Pertti Virtaranta, a professor of Finnish language at Helsinki University, Finland. Virtaranta was interested in the form of Finnish used in New Finland. He identified the speech of most New Finlanders as a very strong, well-preserved dialect from South Ostrobothnia sprinkled with finnicized English words (Virtaranta 1982:78-82). He noted the contrast between the dialect used in New Finland and “suomen yleiskieli” [standard Finnish], which New Finlanders would have encountered primarily in Finnish literature and visits by church dignitaries. In his articles, Virtaranta also outlined the history of several New Finland families and commented on the local culture as he experienced it while staying with community members and conducting extended interviews with many residents (Virtaranta 1982, 1983, 1996). Virtaranta’s observations were published in Finnish in the publications of Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura [the Finnish Literature Society].

Not exactly an academic work but worth considering here because it is based on extensive primary research is *Red Finns on the Coteau* by Larry Warwaruk, which tells the story of the socialist and communist Finns who settled in the Elbow region (Warwaruk 1984). This compelling book describes the ideological divisions amongst the Finnish immigrants and the repressions that the communists experienced from a Canadian society politically intolerant of the

radical left. Warwaruk, who is a resident of the Elbow region himself, was able to gather photographs, documents, newspaper articles, and oral accounts about a sensitive part of the Finnish immigrant experience in Saskatchewan that has often been ignored or treated cursorily in local histories. Although Warwaruk does not provide citations or a literature review, his book makes an important contribution to the limited pool of information available about the Saskatchewan Finns outside New Finland.

In the 1990s and 2000s New Finland was studied several times by researchers viewing it through the lenses of cultural geography or history. In 1995 Outi-Kristiina Hännikäinen, a student in cultural geography at Helsinki University, spent three weeks in New Finland doing field research on the cultural landscape of the settlement (Huhtala 2001:42). She examined and recorded old buildings, also gathering information about the settlement from interviews with local residents (Hännikäinen 1998; Kaskinen 1999). This experience eventually led her to undertake doctoral research that examined the cultural landscape of the settlement more widely. In 1999 she returned to the settlement for another three weeks to supplement her data on the buildings with information about the cemeteries, place names, and the names of the New Finland settlers. Her doctoral dissertation, which is written in Finnish, traces changes in these elements of the cultural landscape, which she links to changes in the social identity of the New Finland settlers, focussing largely on changes in their sense of “suomalaisuus” [Finnishness] (Hännikäinen 2010a). Hännikäinen could identify surprisingly few signs of “Finnishness” in the cemeteries and noted many of the theoretical and practical difficulties that arise in determining ethnicity from material culture and names. Her analysis formulates five cultural landscapes in New Finland that correspond to five stages in its historical development. Roughly translated, New Finland began as “uudisasutuksen ja instituutionisoitumisen maisema” [a landscape of settlement and institutionalization], became “ristiriitaisen suomalaisuuden maisema” [a landscape of conflicted “Finnishness”], then moved to “yhteisöllisyyden ja semiassimilaation maisema” [a landscape of community and semi-assimilation] that was followed by “assimilaation ja deinstitutionisoitumisen maisema” [a landscape of assimilation and de-institutionalization], and finally became “uusidentifikaation ja muistamisen maisema” [a landscape of ethnic re-identification and remembering] (Hännikäinen 2010a:194).

While Hännikäinen’s research is thoughtful and well-grounded in the theories of her discipline, it is confined to New Finland and does not include the cultural landscapes constructed

by Finnish immigrants in other areas of Saskatchewan. Moreover, her study tends to see Finnish immigrants within the context of emigration from Finland rather than immigration to Saskatchewan, focussing on the loss/retention of “Finnishness” rather than the shared immigrant experience of society-building in the physical, economic and social environment of the western plains. As Hännikäinen herself notes, researchers inevitably bring their own backgrounds and biases to their research, and in this case, it may be presumed that she has researched what is arguably of the greatest interest to Finns and cultural geographers, while I bring both a Saskatchewan and an archaeological perspective to the same material. Perhaps Hännikäinen’s most valuable contribution to this study is her clear understanding of the New Finland cemeteries as landscapes of identity that are seen, shaped and described by the living and used not only to remember the past, but also to forget and revise it (Hännikäinen 2010b:14-15).

In 1999 Lynn Hintz, a descendant of the New Finland settlers and a history student at the University of Regina, wrote an Honour’s essay on the women who immigrated to the settlement, gathering information about their experiences through interviews with women in the descendant community. Noting that women are often overlooked in the writing of histories, Hintz describes the role of these women in terms of their work, their place in the church and community, and their contribution to the maintenance of ethnic identity. She describes a culture that is essentially conservative, pietistic and patriarchal, in which women “may have often felt, with the multiple burdens of community, work and family, like an imprisoned bird, unable to fly freely” but they were also able to live full lives (Hintz 1999:57). Hintz offers her research as one of many studies that are needed of the complex environments in which women live in order to develop a common core of understanding of the history of immigrant women.

In 2004 Maureen Pedersen, a graduate student in history at the University of Regina and another descendant of the New Finland settlers, examined historical documents, oral histories and local histories to produce a detailed analysis of the process by which New Finland was settled. Her thesis (Pedersen 2004) explores the major events and factors that shaped the development of this particular Finnish community. Comparing New Finland to other ethnic communities in Saskatchewan and applying models of settlement on the Canadian prairies, Pedersen concludes that the Finnish immigrant experience was similar to that of other immigrants to the western plains. She attributes the retention in New Finland of certain aspects of Finnish culture to the ethnic clustering of Finns in a relatively isolated geographic area.



In 2005 Arnold Alanen, a professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, published an article that examined the Finnish vernacular architecture and landscapes in Canada's prairie provinces (Alanen 2005). His article covered all five areas of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan, showing how farmsteads, saunas and granaries were built with traditional tools and methods combined with local materials and building practices that varied regionally. Alanen also interviewed the Alamusa family, which settled near Margo in 1904, and in 2009, he published his analysis of the rural landscape and life of the Alamusas, drawing on the family's collection of historical photographs (Alanen 2009). Alanen's research in the prairie provinces added a new element to the extensive work he had already published on Finnish immigration to North America and pioneer homesteads in the U.S. and Canada (e.g., Alanen 1981). It also looked beyond New Finland to include the smaller but still significant groups of Finns who settled in other regions of Saskatchewan, where they developed distinctive histories and cultures.

The research literature still lacks a holistic study of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan. Anderson's early effort described the major regions of Finnish settlement but missed the Nummola and Margo-Invermay Finns, did not include research into the material culture of Finnish immigrants, and traced the Finnish presence in this province to only the 1970s. Most other studies of the Saskatchewan Finns have concentrated on New Finland, providing extensive information about its language, history and cultural geography without placing New Finland in relationship to the later Finnish settlements in Saskatchewan. Alanen's research into the landscape and material culture of the Finns in Canada's prairie provinces began to take a more holistic perspective, but it did not include an analysis of the Finnish cemeteries. The present research into the six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan may therefore be regarded as contributing new information to the research literature that will further the development of a more complete understanding of Finnish settlement in this province.

Building this understanding requires placing the immigration of Finns to Saskatchewan in the context of the Finnish diaspora, the dispersal of Finns to countries around the world that began in the late nineteenth century and continued during the political, social and economic upheavals in Finland to approximately 1930. Chapter Four is devoted to outlining how the Finns arrived in Saskatchewan, drawing on the extensive research that has been carried out on Finnish immigration and the Finnish immigrant culture in North America. Some of this research may be

found in the *Journal of Finnish Studies*, the *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* and *Finnish Americana*, or in publications issued by institutions such as Siirtolaisuusinstituutti [the Migration Institute] in Turku, Finland, and the Department of Finnish Studies at Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario. New research on Finns in North America and around the world is often presented at the international Finn Forums held regularly since 1974 to explore “aspects of the social and political dynamics of the historic and ongoing Finnish presence in the world” (Harpelle 2010:2). Most of the continuing research on Finnish immigration focusses on major centres of Finnish settlement, however, and it seldom mentions the relatively small number of Finns who settled in Saskatchewan and in 1981 constituted only 2.5% of the Canadian Finnish population (Lindström-Best 1985:2). While the broad literature provides valuable background information, therefore, and is cited frequently in subsequent chapters, it will not be reviewed here in order to keep this chapter to a manageable length. However, a few pieces of research from the general literature that proved especially helpful in understanding Finnish immigrant culture in North America are worth mentioning. They include the two volumes on the Finnish diaspora drawn from the second Finn Forum (Karni 1981), the social histories of Canadian Finns produced by Varpu Lindström (Lindström 1992, 2000), the special edition of the *Journal of Finnish Studies* on “Exploring Ostrobothnia” (Vähämäki 1998), and Sirkka Paikkala’s definitive research into Finnish surnames (Paikkala 2004).

## **2.2 Cemeteries and Deathways**

There is an extensive literature on death and mortuary practices, to which historical archaeology has so far contributed only a small part. To provide a reasonably concise, coherent overview of the literature that was influential in shaping this thesis, the research related to death is divided into two categories: cemetery studies in archaeology and other disciplines, and historical and ethnographic studies of deathways. In the first category, most studies selected for review focus directly on cemetery landscapes and grave markers rather than bodies, coffins and buried grave goods, since that is the primary research interest in this thesis. An effort has also been made to review literature pertinent to the cemeteries of the western plains rather than attempt to cover the numerous studies that deal with cemeteries too far removed in time and space to shed much light on the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan.

### 2.2.1 Cemetery Studies

Some notable early studies of cemeteries in North America were carried out within the discipline of cultural geography. According to geographer and folklorist, Fred Kniffen (1967:426), a “geographer’s approach to the study of cemeteries was exemplified by Larry W. Price,” who explored 214 cemeteries in Illinois, classifying them as “undifferentiated,” “small family plot,” “rural activity focus,” or “population center.” Price related these categories to demographic and economic changes that spanned the decades from the pioneer era to the present. He also provided an early categorization of tombstone styles and noted how the dominant style changed in Illinois cemeteries from crude locally-carved sandstone markers to plain marble markers, followed by granite obelisks, then low, wide granite tablets, and finally bronze plates flush with the ground (Kniffen 1967:426-427). Price’s approach in categorizing cemeteries and sequencing tombstone styles was influential in cemetery studies and paralleled some of the techniques developed by historical archaeologists James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen.

In 1971 geographer Richard V. Francaviglia built on the cemetery studies of Price, among others, in an examination of five Oregon burying grounds that found cemeteries to be “miniaturizations and idealizations of larger American settlement patterns” (Francaviglia 1971:501). His research examined both the spatial and architectural elements of the cemeteries, approaching them as total cultural landscapes with both spatial and temporal variability. He developed nine tombstone types and traced their use from 1870 to 1970, associating particular types with particular periods in Oregon history and noting fluctuations in the degree of elaborateness in mortuary displays. Looking at spatial patterning in the cemeteries, he noted increasing racial segregation among the graves, an ongoing tension between the built and natural elements of the cemeteries, and variations in the way that cemeteries expanded. Francaviglia concluded that cemeteries are an element of the cultural landscape that “may bridge the nebulous gap between conscious and subconscious motivation in the manipulation of form and space” and “may tell us a great deal about the living people who created them” (Francaviglia 1971:509). Francaviglia’s approach to the cemetery as a cultural landscape was later employed by Outi-Kristiina Hännikäinen, whose study of the New Finland cemeteries has already been discussed.

Most early cemetery studies, however, were carried out by antiquarians and genealogists, who established in North America a tradition of avocational research in cemeteries that continues through organizations like the Association for Gravestone Studies (AGS), which was founded in

1977 to promote the study of gravestones by anyone interested in “art, history, art history, genealogy, archaeology, anthropology, conservation, or material culture” (Brown 2005). Many highly readable avocational books and articles on cemeteries have been published. Most are selective rather than systematic in what they study, however, and they tend to take a personal rather than an analytic approach to cemeteries. Two examples of this sort from the western plains are Nancy Millar’s collection of interesting stories from prairie graveyards (Millar 1994) and Randy Adams’ personal exploration of cemetery art in rural western cemeteries (Adams 1999).

Numerous other publications, including *Markers*, the AGS annual journal, blur the line between avocational and academic research, and contain material of both popular and scholarly interest. The 1988 edition of *Markers*, for example, included articles on Ontario and Nova Scotia gravestones by geography professor Darrell A. Norris and museum personnel Deborah Trask and Debra McNabb (Norris 1988; Trask and McNabb 1988). Norris analyzed over 5000 gravestones with respect to form, symbolic motifs, height, materials, orientation, manufacture, date of birth, family plots, death sheds, ethnicity, status, and diffusion. He noted that rural Ontarians of the nineteenth century were “neither wealthy nor inclined to conspicuous display” in their cemeteries (Norris 1988:144). He related changes in gravestones to the history of Ontario and the wider changes occurring in the material culture of North America (Norris 1988:124-125). He also revised the form categories developed by Francaviglia and defined five functions for gravestones: 1) to memorialize the individual, 2) to position the family in the community, 3) to celebrate belonging and reinforce the social order, 4) to express current artistic tastes and trends, and 5) to reflect consumer choice within an emerging mass material culture.

The article in *Markers* by Trask and McNabb added to Trask’s earlier published work on Nova Scotia gravestones and gravestone carvers, in which she described changes in gravestone styles, materials and symbols from the early eighteenth century to the late nineteenth century, traced some stones to particular suppliers, and discussed specific local Nova Scotia stone carvers that she was able to identify (Trask 1978). This influential book, which saw gravestones as a source of information about the burial traditions of regional historical groups and enterprises, drew eclectically from earlier regional studies of gravestones and gravestone carvers (e.g., Forbes 1927) as well as archaeological and historical studies of cemeteries (e.g., Deetz and Dethlefsen 1971; French 1975).

The work of Norris and Trask inspired other studies of cemeteries in areas of eastern Canada (e.g., Shimabuku and Hall 1981). Unfortunately for this thesis, however, almost all the stones that these studies describe predate even the earliest ones in the historical cemeteries of the western plains, which tend to have quite different styles, materials and symbols. While the cemetery studies in eastern Canada are useful in providing some general ideas and methods, they serve here primarily to underline the regional and temporal differences among cemeteries in North America.

Archaeologists were slow to consider research in historical cemeteries, probably because of “the moral consensus that the sepulcher should be inviolate” (Bell 1994:2) and the assumption that archaeological investigation must involve excavation and disturb human remains. As a result, cemetery studies by archaeologists tended to be confined to prehistoric contexts until the 1970s when a new appreciation of the archaeological potential of gravestones began to develop (Mytum 2004:4). Contributing to this new appreciation was the development of historical archaeology as a sub-discipline of archaeology and the emergence of cultural resource management as a framework for the excavation of historic cemeteries, with most reports filed in the “gray literature” on archaeology held in government offices. Most early archaeological excavations of historic cemeteries took a cultural-historical approach that identified particular mortuary practices with particular ethnic groups and used them to illuminate the group’s history (Tarlow 1999:10).

Archaeological interest in above-ground cemetery studies was sparked by the publication of landmark research conducted by historical archaeologists James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen on Massachusetts gravestones from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They presented gravestones as ubiquitous elements of material culture that provide manageable evidence of changes in our collective ideas (Deetz 1977). From the distribution of changes in traditional gravestone designs and epitaphs, they were able to trace the temporal and regional pattern of cultural change as Puritan beliefs and attitudes broke down in the eastern U.S. (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1971, 1978). The sequence of change was epitomized by the replacement on gravestones of the grim death’s head motif, representing the Puritan emphasis on mortality, with the more benign cherub motif, representing immortality, and then the urn and willow motif that conveyed an increasingly impersonal view of death (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1978). Adopting the seriation techniques that Deetz and Dethlefsen had tested so successfully in Massachusetts

cemeteries, numerous studies followed that traced the evolution of iconography in various cemeteries in eastern North America and compared it to the evolutionary sequence of gravestone motifs that they had described (e.g., Gorman and DiBlasi 1981; Shimabuku and Hall 1981).

The joint work of Deetz and Dethlefsen, which sought patterns of broad cultural change in cemeteries, reflected the trend in archaeology towards processualism. Processualists challenged the traditional approach to cemetery studies and criticized culture histories as lacking any underlying theory and relying solely on convention or authority (Binford 1971). They put forward functionalist models that treated material culture as evidence of systemic adaptation to ecological and social environments. Two concepts emerged that were significant for cemetery studies: the idea of complexity as an indicator of cultural evolution, and the “social persona,” the idea that a composite of the social identities that the dead had in life could be studied through analysis of their treatment in death (Tarlow 1999:10-11).

Working on his own, Dethlefsen continued to emphasize the importance of seeing the cemetery as a “material expression of the *systemic* history of the *community*” in which visible relationships may be perceived among cemetery attributes such as spacing, design, form, and composition (Dethlefsen 1981:141-142). Gathering extensive numeric data about Florida gravestones, he developed gravestone types (tablet, obelisk, pulpit, block, joint stone), and established a pattern of change in these types that indicated five stages of cultural evolution in Florida society up until the end of the 1950s.

By 1983 historian James Hijiya found that the study of death had become “almost a fad” in America (Hijiya 1983:339). His brief history of American gravestones and attitudes towards death attempts to provide some much-needed order and criticism to the research produced on the sequence of change in gravestone styles in the eastern U.S. His article ends with the following succinct summary of the cemetery research to date:

Looking back to the seventeenth century from the vantage point of the twentieth century, one sees important changes in styles of gravestone carving and in the attitudes to death that they reflect. The original Plain Style is the one most difficult to interpret, indicating a resigned attitude toward death but indicating even more clearly an absence of skills, tools and money. After the late seventeenth century, however, the meaning of the stones is more apparent. The styles change from the Death’s Head and the Angel, which are prospective, anticipating heaven or hell; to the Urn-and-Willow and the Monument, which are retrospective, commemorating past lives; to the Modern Plain Style, which is, so to speak, no-spective, looking neither forward nor back. In the eighteenth century death was a

religious phenomenon, a matter between man and God. In the nineteenth it was a social phenomenon, between living people and dead ones. In the twentieth it is no phenomenon at all [Hijjiya 1983:361].

James Deetz, meanwhile, used his work in cemeteries to develop a new theoretical approach to cultural change in archaeology. He saw changes in gravestones and other elements of material culture in terms of structuralism, which “holds that human thought is organized and functions according to a universally shared complex of oppositional structures that are mediated differently by different cultures, or by the same culture at different times” (Deetz 1988:222). For Deetz, the essentially medieval world view brought to America by the Puritans gave way over time to the new mental structures of the Georgian world view, which was manifested in cemeteries and other elements of American material culture by such traits as whiteness, order and artificiality (Deetz 1988).

In the 1980s there was a growing realization that the complex circumstances that shape material culture can be obscured rather than revealed by overreliance on the associations between artifacts (Tainter 1978:21) or simplistic categorizations that relate artifacts to status or ethnicity (Bell 1994:13-17). Aubrey Cannon also pointed out that although prehistoric archaeology seldom had the historical context to interpret mortuary expressions convincingly, historical archaeology, by drawing on documentary resources and emphasizing the general over the particular, was able to “establish common base patterns of change in mortuary expression” (Cannon 1989:456). Cannon undermined the idea of cultural evolution by suggesting that memorials in English cemeteries over the past two centuries follow a cyclical pattern of increase and decrease in the degree of competitive mortuary display, and therefore cultural change in cemeteries does not necessarily occur in stages (Cannon 1989:438-442). Many archaeologists began to recognize that mortuary objects and practices need to be understood in social and historical context, and there was a call for greater emphasis in cemetery studies on gathering site-specific and regional information to supplement the material evidence (Bell 1994:23).

The logical positivism on which processualism was based came increasingly under fire. It was deemed deterministic and antihumanistic when applied to human behaviour, and it resulted in an overemphasis on the “technomic” functions of artifacts while overlooking the active role of the individual in society (Bell 1994:13-17). A wide variety of postprocessual approaches to historical archaeology in cemeteries were developed. All of them agreed that material culture

encompasses contradictory human responses to circumstances, and cemetery studies must take into account tradition and history, both of which are in active use and constantly being reinvented (Bell 1994:17-18).

Marxist archaeologists like Mike Parker Pearson and Randall H. McGuire concluded that cemeteries were best studied within the realm of ideology. Parker Pearson (1982) suggested that mortuary ritual serves to idealize and legitimize power relations, and he oriented his own study of Danish Iron Age burials to reconstructing the recursive, changing relationship between the living and the dead over a period of a thousand years (Parker Pearson 1993). McGuire proposed a theory of ethnicity in which competition provides the motive for ethnic group formation, ethnocentrism channels this competition along ethnic lines, and the differential distribution of power determines the nature of ethnic relationships (McGuire 1982:170-173). Lynn Clark's study of ethnicity, class and consumer choice in twelve cemeteries in New York tested McGuire's theory and concluded that it required modification. Clark pointed out that ethnicity and class, though interrelated, are not synonymous, and they interact in complex ways to inform consumer choices regarding grave monuments (Clark 1987). McGuire's own research in New York cemeteries confirmed that gravestones do not directly reflect stratification in the community, but they do represent a dialogue between the living and the dead about ideals regarding death, family and class (McGuire 1988). These ideals changed markedly with the expansion of capitalism and industrialism in nineteenth century America, replacing the community cemetery characterized by equality among the dead with upscale garden-like cemeteries with owned plots, competition, and a public forum for reinforcing divisions among people based on patriarchy, power and wealth. In the 1940s, social stratification diminished in the New York cemeteries as changing family and social structures led to plainer, more standardized, more intimate memorials that reflected a growing distance between the living and the dead. McGuire suggested that the cemeteries played an active part in the negotiation of relationships between power groups and ethnic groups, and they needed to be studied within a wider social and cultural analysis (McGuire 1988:475).

Another trend in the 1980s was a growing interest in ethnic cemeteries "as largely untapped resources for the study of the evolving patterns of ethnicity in American culture" (Meyer 1993:3). Thomas Graves, for example, found ample material evidence in one Ukrainian cemetery that the spirit of Ukraine was still alive in Ukrainian Americans and being expressed in



their graveyards (Graves 1993). In Canada, the federal government's newly adopted policies related to multiculturalism prompted the issuing of a *Material Culture Bulletin* devoted to Ukrainian Canadians that included two cemetery studies. One by folklorist Bohdan Medwidsky (1989) examined commonalities and differences among the grave markers in three Ukrainian cemeteries that he chose as a representative sample of the culture of Ukrainian settlers in east-central Alberta. The other article, by historian Enrico Carlson-Cumbo (1989), examined contemporary Ukrainian grave markers in four urban Ontario cemeteries. Carlson-Cumbo found these markers to be different from those in rural Ukrainian cemeteries in the degree of regulation, the emphasis on individual status and achievement, and the more standardized use of Ukrainian symbols and images, and he concluded that the markers represent a "final statement of identity" on which today's "seeming homogeneity of Ukrainianness is simply a reflection of current reality" (Carlson-Cumbo 1989:80). The studies by Medwidsky and Carlson-Cumbo had a local or regional focus, but the introductory article to the *Bulletin* by geographer John C. Lehr provided a broader discussion of Ukrainian cemeteries as part of the Ukrainian sacred landscape, which is itself "a metaphor for assimilation, change and acculturation within Ukrainian communities in the Canadian West" (Lehr 1989:3). This perspective is similar to that of historian Frances Swyripa, who sees the establishment of burial places as a key part of the process by which Ukrainian settlers made the land they inhabited into a symbolic space that expressed their regionally-based ethno-religious identity (Swyripa 2003:46; Swyripa 2010:67-74).

Historical archaeologist Harold Mytum noted that the contextualized, personalized cemetery studies offered by many postprocessualists tended to ignore the broad normative trends that processualism tried to uncover (Mytum 2004:8). Perceiving that multi-level analysis and interpretation are needed, he combined study of cemetery memorials with information from historical documents to show how memorial trends from the eighteenth century on responded first to public health requirements and then became expressions of private sentiment (Mytum 1989). He also used language differences on Welsh gravestones to show how different social persona, distinguishable by region, time, status and religious affiliation, were established for the deceased and communicated to cemetery visitors (Mytum 1994). In another study, he showed how mortality symbols on memorials in West Ulster were used differently by Protestants and Catholics to communicate their separate religious identities (Mytum 2002). Mytum concluded that "functionalist studies still have much to offer, at the level of production and distribution, and

in terms of defining large scale social, ethnic, and cultural variation” (Mytum 2004:8). He provided his own large scale view of cemetery studies in *Mortuary Monuments and Burial Grounds of the Historic Period* (Mytum 2004). This book encompasses cemetery research in both Europe and North America, discusses both theoretical and practical considerations in undertaking such research, links studies of cemeteries to studies of deathways, and recognizes the overlap between postprocessual approaches involving structural, contextual and symbolic studies and similar studies already carried out through art history, architectural history and landscape studies.

A sign of the growing maturity of cemetery research in archaeology was the publication in 1994 of a 419-page bibliography on the historical archaeology of cemeteries by Massachusetts archaeologist Edward L. Bell (Bell 1994). This extensive compilation focussed mostly on North America and was complemented in 1999 by Sarah Tarlow’s more theoretical overview of the archaeology of death that included a British perspective (Tarlow 1999:9-18). It was further extended in 2004 by Harold Mytum’s comprehensive overview, which included a run-down of the major theoretical frameworks used by archaeologists in cemetery research (Mytum 2004:5-11). Bell, Tarlow and Mytum all accepted that archaeological thought on cemetery research evolved through three stages that reflect parallel theoretical developments in the foundations of prehistoric archaeology, which Bell described in terms of a movement from traditionalism to processualism and then postprocessualism (Bell 1994:1-54). This “typology of archaeologies follows the standard pattern in the Anglo-American world” (Chapman 2002:686), and even though not everyone accepts it entirely, the typology is familiar and useful in tying the theoretical foundations of the historical archaeology of cemeteries to movements in the mainstream of archaeological thought. It has consequently been used loosely here to discuss the development of the historical archaeology of cemeteries, although it is recognized that shifts in theoretical orientation have not always been clear, simple or sequential (Tarlow 1999:16).

In 1999 historical archaeologist Sarah Tarlow, a student of noted postprocessualist Ian Hodder, published *Bereavement and Commemoration: An Archaeology of Mortality*, which presented her major findings from extensive cemetery studies on the Orkney Islands (Tarlow 1999). Among them are a change in memorialization practices after the Protestant Reformation’s repudiation of the idea of purgatory changed the relationship between the living and the dead, and an abrupt expansion in gravestone memorialization at the end of the eighteenth century that

she links primarily to a shift in emotional sensibility that she terms affective individualism. Tarlow argues persuasively for an archaeology of emotion (Tarlow 1999:20-49), showing that material evidence related to death and bereavement cannot be fully understood without reference to feelings as well as beliefs. Of vital importance in this approach to archaeology is recognition of the metaphors that construct emotional experiences within social contexts. Believing that human understanding of death must be at the centre of the archaeology of death, Tarlow published an overview of the development of modern views of death (Tarlow 2011), which is examined in the next section of this chapter with other literature on deathways.

The last 15 years have seen the publication of several useful North American studies of cemeteries at a local or regional level. Architectural historian M. Ruth Little (1998) examined cemeteries in North Carolina, providing detailed, contextualized information about manufactured grave markers and their makers as well as an analysis of traditional or folk markers and their makers. Noting that “graveyards reveal volumes about ordinary people and the gentry” (Little 1998:269), she uses them to trace the history of the local population, including stories about the ethnic groups within it. She also notes a recent renaissance in grave art in North Carolina after many years of commercial standardization.

Closer to home, historian Corrine Lenfesty (1998) based her Master’s thesis on a detailed examination of historical documents and cemetery monuments, which traced the development of funerary practices and customs in Lethbridge, Alberta. Although her research was conducted in urban, multi-ethnic cemeteries, her findings indicate parallels between the Lethbridge cemeteries and Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries that may be attributed to their development within much the same historical and cultural context. Lenfesty identified four historical stages in the development of mortuary practices in Lethbridge: an early period (circa 1880-1920) characterized by romanticism and colonialism; a transitional period (circa 1920-1945) of growing consumerism, professionalization, and cultural homogenization; a conservative period (circa 1945-1970) of conformity, informality and uniformity; and the recent period (circa 1970 on) marked by restructuring of the family, diminished sense of community, globalization and individualism (Lenfesty 1998:4-7). She also concludes that the modern phenomenon described as “denial of death” can be perceived in the funerary practices of the people of Lethbridge as they became dominated by bureaucracy and commerce (Lenfesty 1998:169). Lenfesty’s work will be

referenced in the final chapter of this thesis as similarities are noted between the social histories of the Saskatchewan Finns and the diverse peoples of Lethbridge.

Anthropology student Lenore Cebulski (2008) undertook a cemetery study that hoped to find evidence of ethnic identity in the graves of Catholic German Americans in four cemeteries, one in Baltimore, Maryland, one in Richmond, Virginia, and two in southeastern Pennsylvania. She found that German identity was expressed inconsistently and sometimes weakly in these cemeteries, and she concluded that since collective ethnic identities are fluid and permeable social constructs, gravestone studies must recognize that “identity was constructed in localized, historically contingent ways” (Cebulski 2008: 57).

A recent publication of note is the avocational study of old Canadian cemeteries by Jane Irwin (Irwin 2007). This coffee table book includes some Saskatchewan cemeteries in a stunning visual tour of selected historic burial places across Canada that attempts to rouse public interest in studying and preserving them. Carefully researched and sourced, Irwin’s book introduces readers to ways of approaching cemeteries as sources of historical and cultural information. She gives an overview of cemetery history in North America and provides pointers on how to read gravestone styles, symbols, materials and epitaphs. Irwin’s research is like that of most avocational researchers in that it is not grounded in a specific theoretical framework but “was based around what archaeologists would term a culture-historical approach... [a] largely inductive and descriptive endeavor [that] often contains elements of functionalist interpretation and contextualist explanations” (Mytum 2004: 5). Unlike most avocational research, however, which is local or regional in focus, Irwin’s book provides a pan-Canadian view of cemeteries that crosses regions, ethnicities and time periods.

Another visually-oriented book that includes numerous black-and-white photographs of gravestones is the examination of Rocky Mountain pioneer cemeteries by art historian Annette Stott (2008). Her regional study links gravestones to the development of the monument industry, looks at all classes of cemetery art with respect to gender, religion, ethnicity, class and national origin, and explores “the social context that best reveals the importance of the visual culture of death and memory in the second half of the nineteenth century” (Stott 2008:xi). Some of the background that Stott supplies to explain what she sees in these pioneer cemeteries has a bearing on the cemeteries of the western plains, and the themes of diversity and unity that she distills from the cemeteries certainly apply. However, the cemeteries she examines tend to be larger,

more ethnically diverse, and more expensive and elaborate in their mortuary art than the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan, allowing few, if any, direct comparisons.

In concluding this review of the literature on above-ground studies of historical cemeteries, it should be explicitly noted that almost no archaeological studies of this sort were found for the western plains, at least in the published literature. It is always possible, of course, that other archaeological research on historical cemeteries is buried in the “gray literature” of cultural resource management reports filed with various provincial and state governments. Parks Canada, for example, studied the cemetery at Batoche as part of its broader archaeological investigations at that site but the findings have not been published for public consumption.

There are likely several reasons for the apparent lack of archaeological interest in historical cemeteries on the western plains. For one thing, cemetery studies have clearly been carried out within many other academic disciplines, e.g., social history, art history, folklore, cultural geography and cultural anthropology. It may be that the broad applicability of the information to be gathered from cemeteries, and the wide variety of uses that are made of it, have induced historical archaeologists working on the western plains to leave above-ground cemetery research to others. In fact, in Saskatchewan, the provincial government has allocated responsibilities for cemetery studies and cemetery preservation to the Saskatchewan Genealogical Society, a voluntary association that receives funding to compile basic cemetery data and serve people interested in tracing their personal ancestries. Only a few historical cemeteries in this province have been designated as heritage sites requiring protection. Contributing to this treatment of cemeteries has been the perception that historical cemeteries on the western plains have less heritage value than older cemeteries in Europe or eastern North America. Most of Saskatchewan’s historical cemeteries were created at the time when mortuary practices in North America were shifting to feature mass-produced grave markers that reflected the emergence of large-scale funeral industries. Instead of locally made and artistically distinctive graves, they tend to have more standardized and commercialized burials that many find less worthy of study. So far, historical archaeologists have tended to be involved in studies of western plains cemeteries only when most of the evidence to be examined is buried, and excavation is necessary. Above-ground materials may be noted in these excavations, but study of them is secondary to the examination of bones, coffins and materials interred with the bodies.

The potential of Saskatchewan's historical cemeteries as archaeological resources has yet to be recognized.

### 2.2.2 *Deathways and the History of Cemeteries*

In 1959 W. Lloyd Warner published *The Living and the Dead: A Study of the Symbolic Life of Americans*. He described how cemeteries and death rituals, such as Memorial Day, reflect deeply held, unconscious beliefs about life and death. His chapters on American cemeteries characterize them as meeting places where the living can commune with the dead. Within the cemetery, the dead person is given a physical location, a grave plot, that the living can visit, and even though it may be believed that physicality and time are no longer relevant to the dead, who are presumed to have entered eternity, there is comfort to the living in this arrangement. As Warner puts it, “[l]ocation of the dead in time and space helps to retain their reality to those who wish to continue their relations with them” (Warner 1959:282), allowing time-bound physical beings to communicate with loved ones who have been translated to a spiritual, eternal plane. Marking graves and putting names on them is therefore a vitally important act because it allows people to continue visiting, caring for and honouring their dead. Symbolically, cemeteries serve Americans as meeting places on many levels. They are points of intersection for the living and dead, sacred and profane, physical and spiritual, time-bound and eternal, past and present, and the individual, family and community.

Warner examines two telling metaphors sometimes used for American cemeteries, namely the city and the garden. Warner points out the appropriateness of these metaphors since our cemeteries are generally planned, regulated, pleasant landscapes. Like towns and cities, they have roads, walkways, and plots that are sold to be developed and used by the owners in keeping with cemetery policies. They also have older and newer neighbourhoods, and areas that may be identified with particular families. Moreover, in the cemetery, the dead coexist in relationship to each other in a way that tends to reflect their relationships in life, making the cemetery a reflection of the living community and an expression of its values, beliefs and fashions. Warner suggests that a city of the dead is an effort by the living to gain some control over death by placing the dead in living time and space and marking their location with material signs that maintain a familiar system of meanings and feelings (Warner 1959:282). He also points out that while the city expresses human dominance and the imposition of order, nature also has a strong

presence through the planting of grass, trees and flowers and the use of organic symbols. In the context of the city of the dead, nature is “fashioned and expressed within the limits and control of men and society” to become “a miniature, symbolic replica of the gardenlike dwelling area of a better-class suburb” (Warner 1959:282). In spite of these limits and controls, however, nature in cemeteries retains its unconscious symbolic connotations of fertility, life, growth, decay and death (Warner 1959:282). Warner suggests that on an unconscious level, the cemetery is essentially a female symbol.

The more obvious female symbolism involved with the insertion of the body into the open grave which then encloses it in the “body of Mother Earth” is not acceptable at the conscious level to members of our culture. Unconsciously, the open grave and the uterus are compatible; they also fit with our social assumptions about rites of passage [Warner 1959:284].

To support this suggestion, Warner cites various ways in which cemeteries are portrayed in English literature as a maternal resting place. It is an unconscious understanding of the inevitable cycle of life and death that makes the natural landscape of the cemetery “subtly, almost subliminally, a reminder that the return to the earth of mortal remains [is] essential to provide the elements for the continuance of life” (Irwin 2007:35).

Whereas in the 1950s Warner conducted his own cemetery studies to gather data for his exploration of the symbology of death in mainstream America, later writers seeking to understand American deathways had access to a wide-ranging research literature that placed mortuary practices in ethnic, regional and temporal contexts and traced their seemingly infinite variety. By the 1960s, cemeteries had proven their value as a sensitive indicator of societal trends, and studies of cemeteries across North America and around the world were producing a vast amount of data with which to construct understandings of both contemporary and past deathways.

Jessica Mitford (1963, 1998) examined the funeral industry in North America, creating awareness about changing views of death and raising questions about the escalating expense of funerals now that they were organized by professional funeral directors. The controversy created through social criticism of the funeral industry widened the audience for publication in the 1970s of more academic studies of North American deathways. Among them was an examination of

*The Victorian Celebration of Death*, a set of attitudes towards death that were imported from Europe to America around the end of the nineteenth century (Curl 1972).

Also influential at this time was *Death in America*, a volume of eight essays edited by David E. Stannard that explored American attitudes towards death across time, regions, religions, and ethnic groups. There are three essays of particular interest to this study. One by Jack Goody (Goody 1975) compares the modern American view of death to the different views held in past cultures and other regions of the world. He notes:

The lack of *communitas*, of *gemeinschaft*, the growth of individualism, involves a certain withdrawal from each other's personal problems including their deaths and their dead, unless these occur within the context of national calamity. Aligned with this change is the shift of responsibility, even for one's own parents and children, onto the resources of the state rather than of the individual or even of the community. The individual's links run direct to the state, mediated by income tax officials and the appropriate ministry, rather than by kith or kin.

Hence only the bare bones of death are seen today in Western societies. With smaller households and low mortality, each individual experiences a close death very infrequently, if we understand close in both a spatial and social sense [Goody 1975:7].

Goody's observation of the cultural distancing of Americans from death is reinforced by Stanley French's essay on the significance of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston as the beginning of the "Rural Cemetery Movement" in North America (French 1975). Arising from both romanticism and the social philosophy of the Enlightenment, a new attitude towards graveyards swept across America in the late nineteenth century, epitomized in many minds by Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston, Massachusetts. French characterizes Mount Auburn as an institution for moral education, instruction in art and history, the inculcation of patriotism, and recreation/tourism. Philippe Ariès ends the volume with an erudite explanation of how death has lost all meaning in western societies, becoming "merely the opposite or reverse of what is actually seen, understood, spoken of" (Ariès 1975:158). Although "the alienation of the dying person, the suppression of mourning" (Ariès 1975:153) continue, the vast American funeral industry has invented new rituals, such as funeral parlors and slumber rooms in which to view lifelike embalmed corpses, that create the comforting illusion of the dead as still present. Ariès suggests that the American refusal to relinquish lavish funeral rituals represents the triumph of death over the prevailing individualism and indicates a crisis of individuality in modern society.



In 1991 David Sloane published a valuable historical overview of the development of deathways and cemeteries in America (Sloane 1991). It begins by describing how the rural cemetery movement arose in reaction to the crowded, unsanitary, unpleasant cemeteries that had evolved in many cities, leading many immigrants arriving on the western plains during the settlement era to establish new cemeteries at a comfortable distance from the living in peaceful rural settings (Sloane 1991:2). The rural garden-like cemetery became the dominant model continent-wide, providing a peaceful counterpoint to the business of modern life and taking on educative as well as spiritual functions. Given the Victorian sensibilities of this era, a great deal of time and money were devoted to death and mourning, which not only resulted in elaborate grave markers and cemeteries but also encouraged entrepreneurship and the development of death as a profitable industry (Sloane 1991:129). Cemeteries began to market their services and streamline landscapes and markers in the interests of efficient maintenance (Sloane 1991:133-139). At the same time, some people were placing greater value on science and questioning traditional religious views about life after death (Sloane 1991:146). By the end of World War I, cemeteries were characterized by a general “retreat from sentimentality” (Sloane 1991:99). They now served primarily as memorial parks where people, who were increasingly isolated from death by the intermediary role played by the death industry, engaged in meditation and acts of remembrance (Sloane 1991:159). Cemeteries now looked to the future as well as the past, serving the living in a positive way as well as memorializing the dead (Sloane 1991:164). While the early rural cemetery model had been inclusive of everyone in the community, memorial parks encouraged people to be buried in neighbourhoods filled with people like themselves, and this exclusivity tended to turn memorial parks into conservative, white middle class cemeteries (Sloane 1991:187-190).

Adding another dimension to the mainstream history of American cemeteries traced by Sloane was *Ethnicity and the American Cemetery* edited by Richard E. Meyer. This book of essays published in 1993 emphasized the impact of ethnicity on deathways, providing individual examples from cemetery studies (e.g., Graves 1993) and an annotated bibliography on the literature of “necroethnicity” in America (Meyer 1993:222-237). It was also about this time that Bell’s comprehensive bibliography on the historical archaeology of cemeteries appeared (Bell 1994). The works of Sloane, Meyer and Bell recognized the growing body of research into

historical cemeteries and met the need to pull together the wide range of theories, methods and findings that were being produced by numerous studies in a variety of academic disciplines.

In 1997 a new book was published that explored changing attitudes towards death in the United Kingdom and contained two essays of particular interest for their applicability to North America. In the first, Alan Wilkinson traced how war eroded Christian themes about judgment and the afterlife, often replacing them with liberal theology or secular thought. The result was a diffusion of attitudes towards death that was further shaken by the spectre of nuclear war, death on a scale that “confronts all people with their shadow side, and believers with the shadow side of God. It also threatens the secular concept of immortality as the participation in an unbroken chain from the past which reaches infinitely into the future” (Wilkinson 1997:162). In the second essay, Lindsay Prior characterizes contemporary attitudes towards death as “actuarial” in nature (Prior 1997). He examines scientific representations of death in the modern and postmodern eras to show how death has been deconstructed to become in the twentieth century “very much tied up with the notions of a controllable and calculable universe – a universe which can supposedly be mastered through human praxis” (Prior 1997:177).

Until recently, historical archaeology contributed little to the general research literature on the history and ethnography of death. Work by historical archaeologists is not found in any major historical or ethnological study of deathways in North America, a fact that Edward Bell flagged in 1994 as a “discipline-wide concern” (Bell 1994:33). Historians and ethnographers may have ignored historical archaeology because they preferred to use documents and people as sources of information rather than material culture, or as Bell has suggested, they may have found “the archaeological literature (largely unpublished) [to be] inaccessible, largely technical, and also incomprehensible” (Bell 1994:33).

In 2011, however, Sarah Tarlow, a historical archaeologist with extensive experience in the above-ground study of British cemeteries, published an interdisciplinary examination of beliefs regarding the dead body in modern Britain and Ireland. Drawing on evidence of mortuary practices from archaeology and a wide range of textual sources, she identified religious, scientific, social and folk beliefs about the body and the nature of death. In modern society the body may be treated forensically as a material object to be studied, religiously as the insignificant corporeal remains of a being who now exists in the spiritual realm, or socially as a relic of a unique person that retains power and even a degree of sentience. Noting that these

incompatible beliefs are often expressed simultaneously, she suggests that there is a degree of “balkanisation” within the modern mind with regard to the body (Tarlow 2011:16). Empirical evidence and myth work together to shape deathways. Tarlow outlines ethical implications for archaeological research that include the need to contextualize the “right” approach to the study of human remains and base it on an understanding that human action is often “the product as much of muddle, emotion and habit as calculation and planning” (Tarlow 2011:202).

### **2.3 Some Observations from the Literature**

This necessarily cursory overview of the literature related to the above-ground study of Finnish immigrant cemeteries in Saskatchewan makes it clear that ideas, insights and methods of value to the study are to be found in a variety of disciplines. There is no one right way to approach the study of these cemeteries, and an interdisciplinary approach is likely to add depth and solidity to any findings. Fortunately, historical archaeology is an elastic discipline capable of incorporating elements from a variety of disciplines, including the symbology of art history and material culture studies, the cultural landscapes of geography, the socio-economic and political narratives provided by social history, the ethnic and cultural definitions and trends established by anthropology, and the contextual detail provided by folklore and local history. While full justice cannot be given to any of these other fields of study, it is hoped that incorporation of a variety of ideas and approaches can be managed coherently to produce a richer, more interesting study than would be possible through a narrower theoretical and methodological framework.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Historical Archaeology in Cemeteries

In historical archaeology, cemeteries are treated like archaeological sites and archaeological techniques are applied to gather information from them. The entire site is recorded and analyzed as well as the unburied artifact assemblage that it contains. Inscriptions, historical documents, and/or oral histories are used to date the artifacts from each grave and provide information about the people buried there. The result is a time-controlled study that takes into account a wide range of information about the dead, and taps into this mass of data to understand past and current lifeways, deathways, beliefs, and relationships. From the diffusion and evolution of designs, styles and epitaphs, inferences are drawn about broad cultural changes that occurred within the cemetery population. Above-ground historical archaeology in cemeteries is characterized by:

1. A holistic approach that examines each cemetery and each artifact in detail and in context;
2. An integrated approach to gathering cemetery data that cross-references material evidence with documentary and oral evidence;
3. Use of the cemetery population as a sample of a past living population about which some conclusions may be drawn regarding lifeways and deathways;
4. An effort to learn about what was common or routine in the lifeways and deathways of the cemetery population as well as what may be considered beautiful, unusual or important;
5. A focus on changes over time in styles, designs, symbols and epitaphs that may indicate broad cultural changes; and
6. Identification of differences between and within cemeteries that may indicate cultural variations and groupings.

This chapter outlines the historical archaeological approach taken to the six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan. Prior to conducting any field research, ethical considerations were identified, and steps were taken to ensure the research met acceptable ethical standards. Data-gathering involved field research in cemeteries where Saskatchewan Finns are buried as well as a review of documentary evidence related to Saskatchewan Finns and some interviews with

current residents in the province's Finnish communities. Field work concentrated on five cemetery attributes that might act as indicators of social identity at the individual, family or community level, namely, spatial relationships between and within cemetery sites, grave treatments, symbols, epitaphs, and names. Analysis of the data gathered on each indicator included the examination of possible differences in identity between and within cemetery populations. It also included the identification of changes over time that suggested broad shifts in certain social values, attitudes and beliefs of the Saskatchewan Finns. The material evidence from the cemeteries was then overlaid with the evidence from historical documents, local histories and oral interviews. Points of agreement and difference were noted, and the evidence from all sources was synthesized into conclusions about the variations in the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns and the ways that this varied social identity changed over time.

### **3.2 Research Ethics**

The research was exempted from a formal review by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board on the understanding that grave markers and other sources of data in cemeteries open to the public may be treated as public statements. It was also understood that any questions directed to living research subjects would be confined to gathering clarifying information about the cemeteries and the people buried in them. The names of informants would be kept confidential.

An effort was made to establish local support for the research in each area that it was carried out. Permission to record information in each cemetery where Finnish burials were located was obtained from the authority in charge of the cemetery. Written permissions were obtained from the towns of Dinsmore and Shaunavon, the rural municipalities of Coteau, King George, Grassy Creek and Mervin, the cemetery associations for Highland, Dunblane Finnish, Lance Valley and Holt/Mosten Cemeteries, the Jackson/Johnston families for Finnish Heritage Cemetery and the directors of St. John's Lutheran Church in New Finland who administer the Old and New cemeteries there. It was made clear that all research activities in the cemeteries would do no physical damage, respect the sacred nature of the sites, and be as unobtrusive as possible, for example, refraining from research on Midsummer's Day and other days when the cemeteries were likely to be visited extensively. An offer was made to involve local residents in

data-gathering activities in the cemeteries, and although no one accepted the offer, numerous residents visited the cemeteries while the research was in progress to learn more about the study and share stories about the people buried there. All the authorities provided access to existing cemetery maps, registers and historical records, although these were not always complete or in good shape. As the research progressed, all cemetery authorities were provided with a list of the Finns buried in their jurisdiction with a short biography attached to each name. It was emphasized that these lists were works in progress and any corrections would be welcome, although only a few were received. In some cases, translations that had been made of cemetery documents in Finnish were also provided to the cemetery authorities as a courtesy. In addition, the researcher was able to assist the Jackson and Johnston families in arranging for further archaeological work in Finnish Heritage Cemetery that resulted in the location there of up to 27 lost graves.

In order to raise awareness of the potential of cemeteries as archaeological sites, the opportunity to participate in the cemetery field work was advertised to avocational archaeologists through the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society. Unfortunately, most people who expressed interest in this opportunity were prevented from participating by bad weather or logistical problems, and in the end, only a few volunteers contributed to the data-gathering process. Although most data were gathered personally by the researcher, forms and a manual were developed to assist volunteers in recording grave markers and ensure that all records were consistent and reliable.



**Figure 3.1:** Volunteer Yvonne Cyr recording a marker in the Old Cemetery, New Finland.

Since the research was restricted in the information that could be gathered from living subjects, formal interviews with local residents were not conducted in New Finland, for which reasonably extensive oral and written records were already available. However, 10 members of the Finnish descendant communities in the Elbow and Nummola regions were interviewed during the summer of 2010 to gain a better understanding of the Finnish cemeteries in those

areas. These informants each gave written permission for the use of the information that they provided in writings and presentations related to the research.

In analyzing the data, it was recognized that some information was potentially sensitive. Much of this information was drawn from official documents or had already been published in newspapers, local histories or academic studies. Nevertheless, wherever possible, care was taken to keep sensitive information confidential by aggregating data to avoid the identification of individuals and sometimes communities.

As the research progressed, it became clear that the history of the Saskatchewan Finns includes serious internal conflicts that have often been ignored or glossed over in the literature. This research tried to neither focus on nor ignore the areas of division. Where discussion of them was warranted, an effort was made to present conflicts in a balanced way that recognized the different cultural perspectives of various groups. It is hoped that at this point in history, the religious, political and social conflicts among the Finns are distant enough to allow open discussion of their roots and how they affected the settlement of Finns in this province.

### **3.3 Data Gathering**

The field work and oral interviews for this research took place in the spring, summer and fall of 2010 while the documentary research spanned the three-year period in which the research was conceived, conducted and distilled into a thesis. Each type of data-gathering tended to inform the others, e.g., oral interviews told us of the existence of Finnish Heritage Cemetery, which had not been mentioned in the literature, while the six Finnish cemeteries provided a sample of Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan who could be traced in the documentary evidence, and the local histories and historical documents provided the background necessary to understand the styles, symbols and inscriptions on grave markers. At times these three strands of data did not convey exactly the same information, which called for some extra work to explain or reconcile the differences, and frequently the superimposition of three different perspectives created a complex picture of Finnish social identity that was difficult to interpret. Nevertheless, the use of three independent sources of data helped to provide the holistic, integrated perspective of Saskatchewan's Finnish immigrants that is the goal of above-ground historical archaeology.

### 3.3.1 *Field Research*

Field work was carried out from May to September, 2010, as weather permitted and permissions to engage in cemetery studies became available. In all 39 days were spent in the field to record all grave markers and features in the Old and New cemeteries in New Finland, Nummola Cemetery, Highland Cemetery, Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and Finnish Heritage Cemetery, plus identified Finnish graves in nine multi-ethnic cemeteries: Hillcrest Cemetery (near Shaunavon), Livelong Cemetery, Elmhurst Cemetery (in the RM of Mervin), Dinsmore Cemetery, Dunblane Cemetery, Lance Valley Cemetery (near Beechy), Holt/Mosten Cemetery (near Wiseton), Lakeview Cemetery (near Lucky Lake), and Hill Point Cemetery (in the RM of Victory). Only rural cemeteries were examined since the early Finnish settlements were all located in rural Saskatchewan, and most urban Finnish burials resulted from the secondary migration of Finns away from their original settlements. Over 1200 burials were recorded in these rural areas.

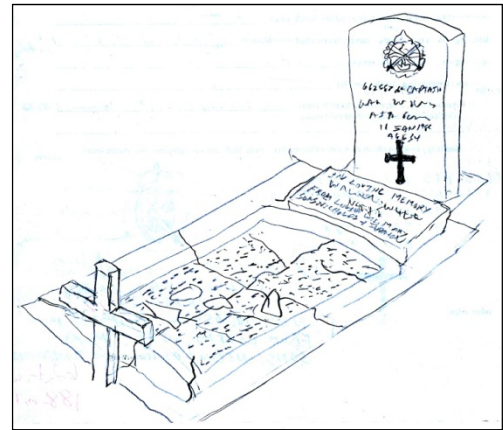
Maps were obtained from cemetery authorities for most of the cemeteries, making it unnecessary to map the sites. Many of these maps were oversized or in poor condition, however, and had to be redrawn. Not even a poor map existed for Finnish Heritage Cemetery, which lost all of its records in a flood of the rural municipality office in which they were stored. Fortunately, the work done by Stantec Consulting Ltd. in conducting an electromagnetic resistivity survey of this cemetery resulted in a helpful map that included lost graves and provided basic information regarding cemetery location, dimensions and design (McLeod 2011). In addition, with the assistance of a volunteer technician using a Sokkisha Total Station Set 5A, a survey was made of the marked graves in Highland and Dunblane Finnish cemeteries. The Total Station surveys resulted in detailed maps of the actual distribution of grave markers in those two cemeteries.

Photographs were taken of all Finnish graves along with cemetery features, such as gates, fences, trees, or buildings. A form was filled out for each marked grave to ensure the grave was described and recorded in a comprehensive, consistent manner that would allow comparisons (see Appendix A). The form treated grave markers like archaeological artifacts, recording grave location, measurements, materials, decorations, and maker's marks, and categorizing them by type and style. In addition, note was made of any grave accessories, such as fences or vases, landscaping, grave offerings, and the condition of the grave. The names of the deceased in each



grave were recorded to facilitate cross-referencing of the marker data with the data gathered on the people buried there. Each individual received a unique burial number and each marker a unique marker number for the purposes of data analysis. All text found on each grave was copied exactly as given and, where necessary, translated later into English. Symbolic motifs and decorative elements on the graves were both described and photographed. A pencil sketch of the grave markers was also made in many cases to help clarify visual details (see Figure 3.2). All data were entered into an electronic data base.

A basic problem was encountered early in the field research, namely the need to use accurate, consistent terminology to describe and classify grave markers. As noted in the previous chapter, cemetery studies have been carried out in numerous academic disciplines, each with its own conceptual framework and terminology. Moreover, most published studies deal with cemeteries in Europe or eastern North



**Figure 3.2:** Field sketch of a grave with two stone markers, a foot cross and a badly cracked grave cover.

America that concentrate on grave markers dating to a period earlier than 1890. The terminology in these studies is not only used inconsistently; it is also of limited use when applied to the range of markers found in the Finnish cemeteries. For example, the very common Saskatchewan practice of using a concrete grave cover as a marker does not appear in the many cemetery studies that focus on gravestones. The trade literature provided by the manufacturers and suppliers of grave memorials also proved to be of little help. Since their primary concern is to market particular wares, the terms they use to describe grave marker materials and forms vary widely and tend to be more colourful than they are precise. The Association for Gravestone Studies is apparently working on this problem, but for the purposes of this thesis, grave marker terminology had to be developed that adequately covered the range of grave marker variation found in the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan. Categories and terms were borrowed or adapted from both the trade literature and cemetery studies to develop the classification system given below, drawing particularly on Francaviglia (1971), Little (1998) and Irwin (2007). The system includes five grave marker types that show five basically different approaches to the

design of a memorial to the deceased, and layered onto these types are 10 stylistic forms that provide wide variation within some of the basic approaches.

*3.3.1.1 Grave Marker Types:* The grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries may be divided into five basic types that differ in their components and design: base-and-die markers, monoliths, flat markers, grave covers, and others. Each type is described below and an example is provided in Figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3:** An example of each major grave marker type found in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries – base and die, monolith, flat marker, grave cover, and other.

The *base-and-die* type of marker includes all markers in which the main part (the die) is placed on one or more bases. Each base is considered part of the overall design of the marker and some are decorated or inscribed. The die and the base(s) may be made of stone or concrete, or a combination of the two. The dimensions of the die vary widely, and the face on which a base-and-die marker presents the inscription may be vertical (i.e., upright), horizontal (i.e., flat), or slanted. The use of a base tends to make a marker larger and more imposing, while also providing a practical protection against damage to the marker from moisture and lawn mowers.

The *monolith* consists of a single piece of stone, or occasionally concrete, placed directly into or on the ground. At times a concrete pad may have been placed beneath the monolith to stabilize it, but this pad is often buried, and since its function is strictly practical, it is not considered part of the design. Monoliths are three-dimensional markers, although the face may be vertical, horizontal or slanted. Size, dimensions and forms vary widely.

A *flat marker* is a relatively small marker made of metal, stone or concrete. It is placed flat on the ground, rising no more than 8 cm above ground. Flat markers are generally meant to

be viewed from above as two-dimensional markers. They may also be referred to as grass markers, although here that term is reserved for discussing the flat marker in terms of its form.

The *grave cover* is made of concrete or fiberglass and, as its name implies, it covers the entire grave. Grave covers are moulded in one piece, often at the grave site, and most have three parts. All grave covers have a flat ledger covering the area occupied by the coffin. Almost all have a rounded vault that covers the bottom section of the ledger up to where the head of the deceased may be presumed to be. At the head there is usually a built-in pillow on which the inscription has been impressed or an inscribed plaque has been laid. Occasionally, there is no pillow, and the head of the ledger itself is inscribed, or a monolith or base-and-die marker bearing an inscription has been placed at the head of the grave. In the latter case, the marker is classified as base-and-die marker with a grave cover rather than as a grave cover that is in itself a grave marker.

The *other* type of grave marker is a relatively small, miscellaneous category. It includes a variety of markers that are idiosyncratic and often homemade. Some are etched metal or plastic plaques fastened onto metal stakes, pieces of concrete or wood, or crosses made of overlapping pieces of wood, flat metal, or steel pipe. This type also includes inscribed natural fieldstones and a few vernacular grave markers that use machinery parts or other materials at hand to create a one-of-a-kind marker (see Figure 3.4 for an example).

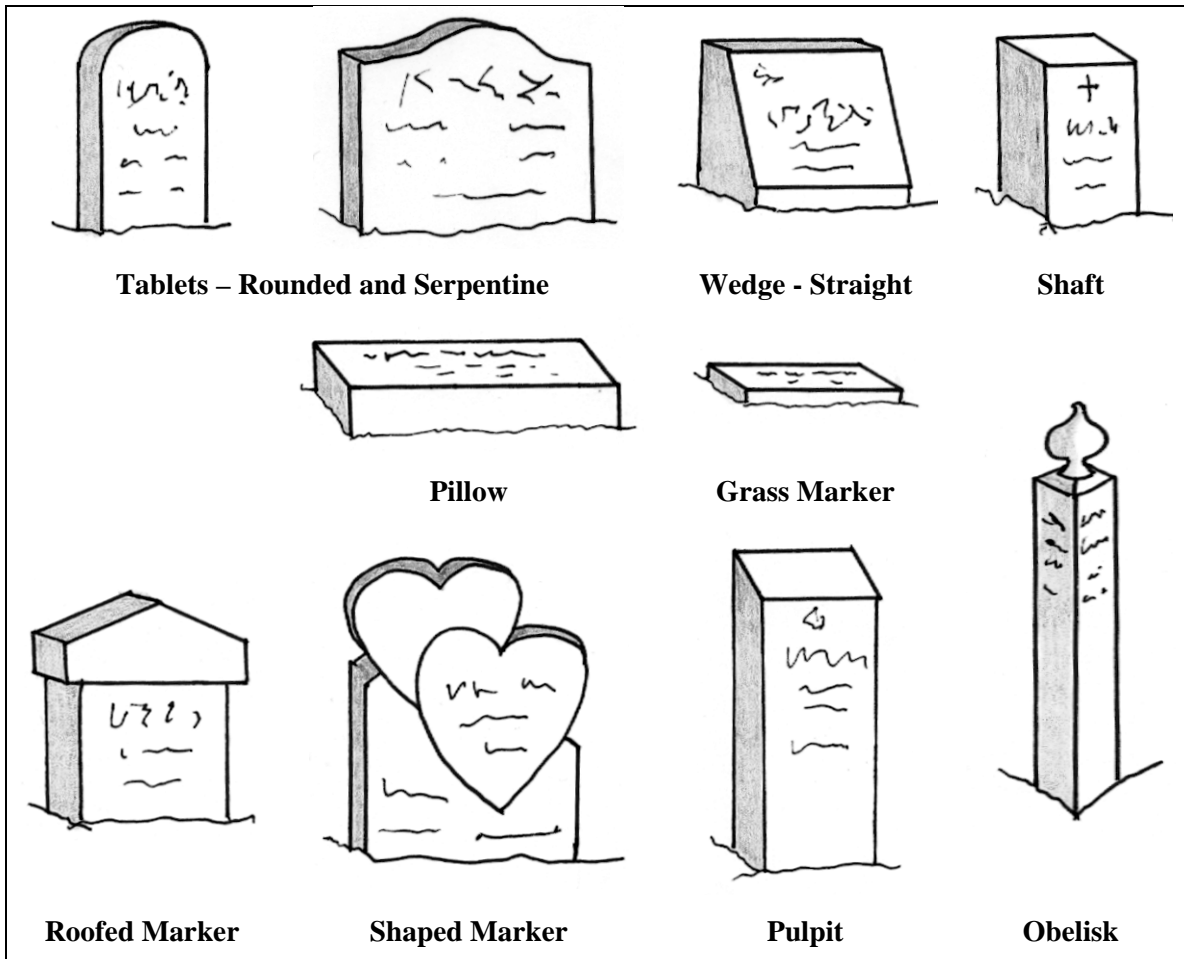


**Figure 3.4:** A marker made from a crankshaft.

**3.3.1.2 Grave Marker Forms:** Grave marker form refers to the basic shape taken by the part of the marker that is the core of the memorial to the deceased. Typically it presents at least one face on which is inscribed name and dates, along with symbolic images and epitaphs. The monolith type of grave marker has only one part, and the monolith as a whole represents the grave marker form. However, other types of grave marker can have multiple components. With base-and-die markers, the die represents the form of the marker, and with grave covers, the built-in pillow generally represents the grave marker form. A metal, plastic, glass or stone plaque attached to the face of any grave marker type is considered to be a design element of the marker rather than a grave marker form in itself. On the other hand, plaques that constitute the entire grave marker

and are not attached to another component integral to the grave marker design may be considered to represent the grave marker form. For example, a stone plaque placed directly on the ground would be categorized as a flat marker with the form of a grass marker, even though the same stone plaque placed on a concrete pillow would be considered a component of the pillow form of marker.

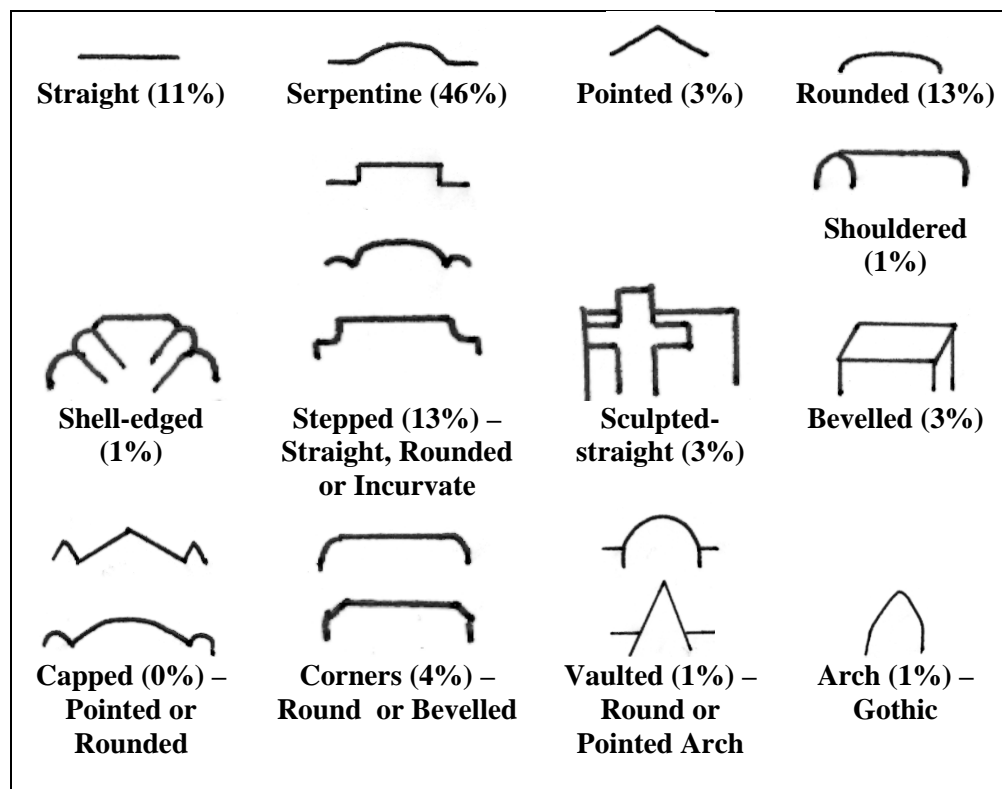
Most grave markers in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries take one of the 10 basic forms sketched in Figure 3.5. The exceptions fall into the “Other” category of grave marker types and include homemade crosses and signs, inscribed natural fieldstones and idiosyncratic vernacular markers. A description of each of these forms and the exceptions is provided below.



**Figure 3.5:** Major forms of grave markers in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries.

The most common grave marker form in the Finnish cemeteries is the *tablet*, an upright slab with relatively little thickness in comparison to the height and width. The slab presents a

vertical face for the inscription, which may be taller than it is wide or wider than it is tall. The tablet form appears 158 times, with numerous variations in silhouette. The top of the tablet, or tympanum, most commonly has a serpentine edge, but other edges are also found. Figure 3.6 categorizes the different lines of the tympanum found on the tablets in the Finnish cemeteries and indicates the frequency with which each tympanum was used as a percentage of all tablets. At times the tympanum combines some of the lines shown, e.g., a stone may have straight-stepped corners with a serpentine silhouette or have beveled corners plus the sculpted top element of a cross or other sculptural feature of the face. The top of a tablet may also be decorated with a figure, such as a cross, lamb or dove. Tablets may or may not be set on a base, and while most have been commercially manufactured, a few tablets have been made locally from concrete or local rock rather than purchased from a commercial supplier.



**Figure 3.6:** Tympanum outlines of tablets in the Finnish cemeteries.

A *grass marker* is a flat marker that lies flush with or slightly above the surrounding grass (see Figure 3.7). All of the 136 flat markers in the Finnish cemeteries are grass markers,

rising no more than 8 cm above the ground. Some consist of plaques fastened onto square or rectangular platforms of stone, concrete, or wood that have been buried so that only the upper surface is exposed. Other grass markers are single, inscribed pieces of stone, bronze or concrete. Often it is difficult to tell the original height and size of the marker due to movement of the surrounding soil that exposes functional concrete bases or slowly buries much of the marker's upper surface. Grass markers vary from large, commercially manufactured bronze or granite companion plaques set in concrete to crude concrete rectangles impressed with the name and dates of the deceased. Almost all grass markers are rectangular.



**Figure 3.7:** A concrete grass marker.

The *pillow* is the most common grave marker form in the cemeteries if the pillows built into most grave covers are taken into account. There are 147 grave cover pillows in the cemeteries, and the pillow form is also used 77 times with other grave marker types. As the name implies, the pillow is a flat, rectangular marker that resembles a pillow in its dimensions. It is more than 8 cm high and meant to be visible above the ground when viewed from the side. It may or may not have a base, and it has either a horizontal or a slanted face for the inscription, although a family name may appear on the side. Sometimes a plaque bearing the inscription is fastened onto the pillow.

Forty-nine markers take the form of a *wedge*, i.e., they are thicker at the bottom than they are at the top, often creating a slanted face for the inscription. They are too tall to look like pillows, which may also have a slanting face, and they may or may not be set on a base. As with tablets, the wedge tympanum is often serpentine (39%), but it is seldom rounded (2%). More often than tablets, wedges have a straight tympanum (31%), and the corners are sometimes rounded or beveled (18%). The tympanum may also be stepped (10%) or capped-rounded (4%).

The *obelisk* form is found in 17 markers in the Finnish cemeteries. They are all tall, slender markers that are square in cross-section and set on at least two bases. Unlike true obelisks, most do not taper towards the top, and none culminates in a pyramid at the apex. In this context, they are unlikely to represent the sun as they were intended to do in ancient Egypt (Keister 2004:16). All but one are topped with cross-vaulted arches that give them a neoclassical flavour, and most are crowned with a decorative element, such as a sculpted urn, which adds to

their height but is easily broken off and sometimes missing. The obelisks are generally made of marble, but one is made of granite and another of concrete.

The *pulpit* form of marker has the general dimensions of a lectern, with a beveled top slanting forward to hold a carved book or part of the inscription. Eleven stone markers in the Finnish cemeteries have this form. Of these, six have been carved into a realistic representation of a pulpit while the others have a more abstract shape. Pulpit markers are set on at least one base, and tend to be among the taller, more imposing monuments (see Figure 3.8). They are made of marble or granite.

The *shaped marker* form is characterized by a shape other than the rectangle or square typically used for tablets, wedges, pillows, etc. In the Finnish cemeteries, there are nine stone markers that have a distinctive shape. Of these, three have abstract shapes, two are heart-shaped, one is shaped like a shield, one is diamond-shaped, one has the form of a cross, and one has the shape of a book lying open. All these shaped stone markers have been set on a base and are made of marble or granite. The only other shaped markers in the cemeteries are a pair of newly painted white wooden crosses, each bearing a small metal plaque.



**Figure 3.8:** A marble pulpit.

Markers that have the *cross-sign* form act as holders for a plaque or sign. This form is defined by its function rather than artistic or symbolic considerations. In addition to the single stone cross and two wooden crosses that are described above as shaped markers, there are ten small metal crosses in the Finnish cemeteries that serve primarily as sign posts. They are similar in size, style and purpose to two small metal markers that consist of a metal plaque on a metal stake, and consequently, these crosses and signs are grouped together here as a single form of marker. Markers with the cross-sign form are small and often handmade. Some are replacement markers put in place long after the burial to indicate the location of graves that have lost their original markers.

As one might expect, the *fieldstone* form of marker uses an unshaped fieldstone as a memorial to the deceased. In the Finnish cemeteries, there are two markers with this form. One is homemade and has a barely legible, scratched-on inscription, while the other has an inscription carved with professional skill and tools onto a square, hollowed-out flat surface.

There is only one example of the *shaft* form in the cemeteries – a small monolith from the 1980s that is made from pale pink granite flecked with black and white (see Figure 3.9). This stone is square in cross-section, like an obelisk. However, it has no base and is short, thick, and flat on top.

There are two *roofed markers*, one of concrete and the other of stone. Both have a tablet form but are covered with a peaked roof made of the same material. Both roofed markers have the same shape, reminiscent of a small-scale mausoleum, and they display simple, elegant neoclassical lines.

Idiosyncratic markers with an unclassifiable form may be grouped together in the “Other” category. All are folk or vernacular markers, i.e., they have been crafted by family members or local artisans rather than purchased commercially. One is a largely disintegrated wooden structure that may have been a display box. Another is a large flat piece of rusted sheet metal that appears to have been part of a larger marker, and the third is a large crankshaft that has been planted upright in the ground and the cavity filled in with a material that has been inscribed.



**Figure 3.9:** A small shaft.

### 3.3.2 *Documentary Research*

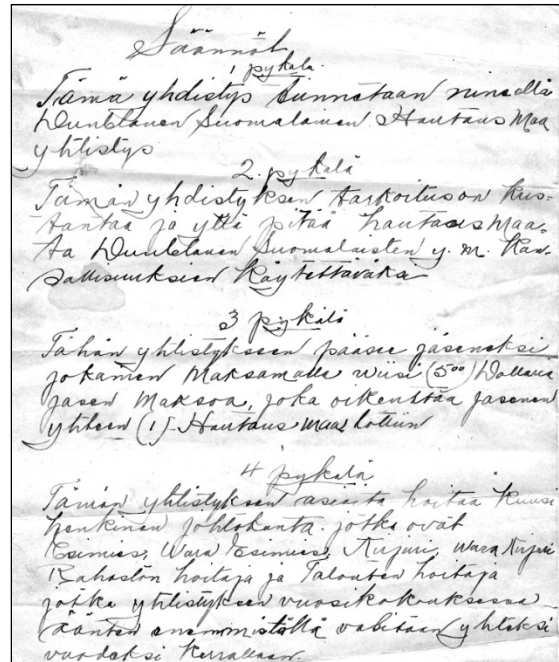
The first step in the documentary research was to compile a bibliography of literature related to the Saskatchewan Finns, which was found to include academic studies, local histories, memoirs, poems, novels, magazine and newspaper articles, and government reports (see Appendix B). Particular attention was paid to the local histories that included information about Finnish settlers in Saskatchewan. In all, 31 local histories were scanned for information that, in combination with the information from the cemeteries, was used to construct at least a partial biography for almost every person buried in the cemeteries. The local histories also contributed to the development of a short history of each cemetery in relationship to its Finnish community.

Adding substantially to this pool of information were the death registers, minutes of cemetery committees, account books, and other documents preserved and made available by various cemetery authorities. Gaps in information were sometimes filled by reference to available birth or death certificates, census documents, homestead records or genealogical records. Also, two Finnish-language newspapers, the socialistic *Vapaus* [*Liberty*] and the



conservative *Canadian Uutiset* [Canada's News], were found to include occasional reports from or on the Finnish communities in Saskatchewan. These reports proved useful in documenting and explaining differences in perspective among the Finns during the period from approximately 1919 to 1930.

Many cemetery documents, some of the academic studies and histories, and the Finnish newspapers were written in Finnish (see Figure 3.10 for an example). Translations were provided by Peter Gallén, who also assisted by identifying a wide range of Finnish-language literature that might be of value to the study. With his help, information was gathered about cemeteries in Finland that was useful in understanding the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan. He was also instrumental in acquiring and searching Finnish-language publications for information about emigration from Finland.



**Figure 3.10:** A cemetery association constitution handwritten in Finnish (original on file in the records of the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery Company).

### 3.3.3 Informants and Oral Histories

As noted earlier, 10 informants in the Elbow and Nummola regions were interviewed in the summer of 2010 to gain a better understanding of the cemeteries in those areas. With their help, an additional Finnish cemetery was located, the graves of Finns were located in some multi-ethnic cemeteries, some burial customs were clarified, grave marker suppliers were identified, grave treatments were explained, relationships between the deceased were established, and key events in the history of the cemeteries were described. Numerous stories were told that provided insight into family histories and the way that individuals were memorialized. The help of these informants was invaluable and deeply appreciated.

Use was also made of the taped interviews with New Finlanders recorded in the 1980s through the New Finland Oral History Project (Saskatchewan Archives Board 1982). Interviews in English were reviewed for pertinent information, and in a few cases, sections of interviews in Finnish were translated.

### 3.4 Analysis and Synthesis of the Data

Based on the material, documentary and oral evidence, a short history was developed of each Finnish cemetery that was examined for differences and similarities in funerary customs and the practical and social functions fulfilled by each cemetery (see Chapter Four). Variations in cemetery history were examined as evidence of possible differences and similarities in the people and communities that the cemeteries served.

The populations found in the six Finnish cemeteries were also used as a sample of Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan. The information compiled about these people from all sources was analyzed in two ways. First, the experience of each Finnish immigrant was traced from place of birth along the path by which the person immigrated to Saskatchewan and found a final resting place. This analysis revealed a provincial and regional settlement pattern around the Finnish cemeteries that separated immigrant Finns into independent communities defined at least partially by ideologies that differed according to the timing and route of immigration. This information is presented in Chapter Four as a general preface to the individual histories developed for the six Finnish cemeteries. Second, the admittedly spotty information available about the cemetery populations was analyzed to construct a suggestive rather than conclusive demography of the Saskatchewan Finns according to age, gender, marital status, family, occupation, causes of death, social conditions, and burial rates (see Chapter Five). This demography was also used to identify and understand the absence of some Finns who lived in Saskatchewan but are not found in the Finnish cemeteries.

Analysis of the material data from the six Finnish cemeteries concentrated on understanding what each indicator of social identity communicated about the people buried there (see Chapter Six). With respect to spatial relationships, data regarding the location of the nine multi-ethnic cemeteries in which Finns are buried was included in the analysis in order to add a regional component to the province-wide settlement pattern derived from the tracing of individual immigration routes and histories. In addition, comparison of the location and design of the various cemeteries confirmed the existence of differences in the way that they were conceived and used. The Total Station maps of the Highland and Dunblane Finnish Cemeteries were used primarily to examine the actual relationships between graves within these cemeteries.

The data gathered on the grave marker types and forms used in the Finnish cemeteries were analyzed, along with the information on grave marker materials, size, and decoration and grave landscaping. Analysis focused primarily on variations in these grave elements between the cemeteries and over time, but note was also made of some variations by age and gender. From a wide range of data regarding grave treatments in the cemeteries, some broad stylistic trends in grave memorialization were identified. Unmarked graves were also analyzed to determine who was not memorialized in the cemeteries. Information from the maker's marks found on some stones was compiled into a brief historical outline of how markers were supplied to the Finnish cemeteries. Note was also made of any differences between cemeteries in the grave offerings found there during the field season. Symbolic and textual information on the grave markers was analyzed to identify dominant or recurring themes, again paying attention to variations by cemetery and over time. Special attention was paid to the use on grave markers of the Finnish language and variations in the inscription of Finnish names. Drawing on all the data provided by the physical evidence in the cemeteries, the first research question for this thesis was answered. It was concluded that the six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan express the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns, and a generalized description of that identity was articulated.

Following analysis of the immigration patterns, demographic profile, and the indicators of social identity in the Finnish cemeteries, the findings were synthesized into two strands that addressed the last two research questions posed for this thesis (see Chapter Seven). The first strand looked at the variations between the cemeteries and their significance with respect to the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns. The second strand synthesized the evidence in the cemeteries of cultural changes over time within the Finnish communities with respect to family relationships, ethnicity, views of death and social attitudes and beliefs. The sequence of cultural change was divided into four stages that are described in the context of immigration to the western plains.

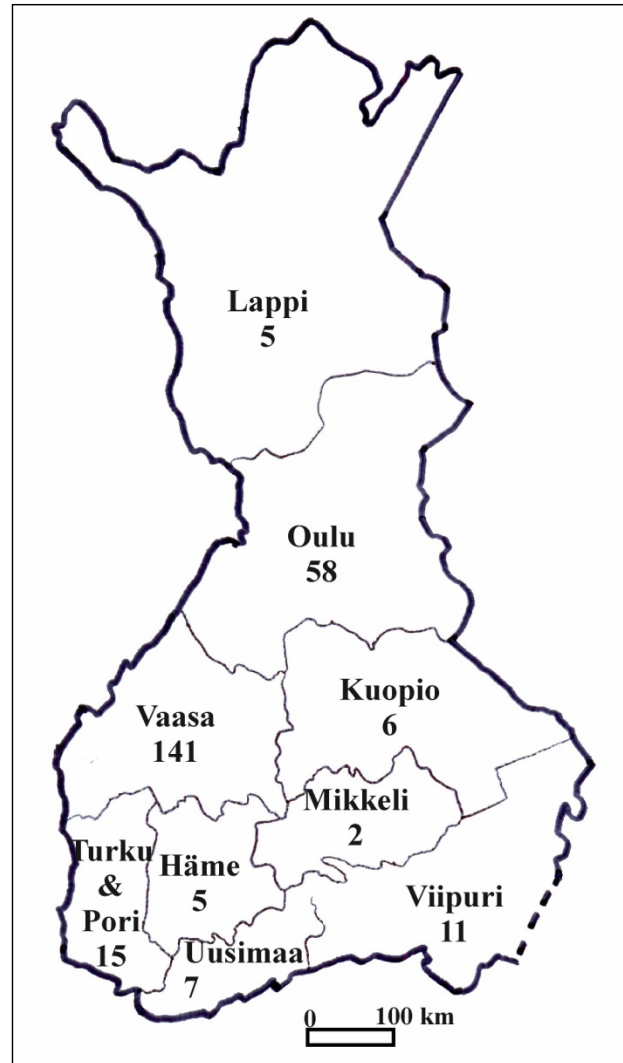
## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF FINNISH CEMETERIES IN SASKATCHEWAN

#### 4.1 The Great Migration

Most Finnish immigration to Saskatchewan occurred during what the Finns have called the “Great Migration” to North America, which took place from 1867 to 1930, peaking in the years from 1890 to World War I (Kero 1974:3). During that period, about one-third of the Finnish emigrants to North America came from South Ostrobothnia, an area in western Finland that experienced a difficult transformation from a stable rural society to a modern, economically diversified society (Toivonen 1963:3). Even more specifically, 52% of the emigrants between 1870 and 1914 hailed from the lääni or county of Vaasa (Niemi 1998:62). The prominence of Vaasa in the Great Migration is demonstrated in Figure 4.1, which indicates that more of the immigrant Finns buried in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries were born in Vaasa than in all the other Finnish counties combined.

The societal factors encouraging emigration from Ostrobothnia were many, diverse and interrelated (Toivonen 1963; Kero 1974; Niemi 1998; Pentikäinen 1998; and Ylikangas 1976, 1998). They included a system of primogeniture that continually increased the number of landless agricultural workers, farm overpopulation, the loss of traditional sources of income that



**Figure 4.1:** Finnish counties from which the Finns buried in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries emigrated, showing the number from each county. County borders are from the period 1921-1938 (Karni 1981, vol. 2:xiii).

had supplemented the farm economy (e.g., tar-burning and ship-building), famines and food shortages, urbanization, the shift of the political and economic centre of Finland from the west to the south, oppressive class distinctions, compulsory military service under Russian rulers, a general lawlessness that contributed to a high rate of violent crime and the stereotyping of Ostrobothnians as “puukkojunkkari” [knife-fighters], revivalist movements within the Lutheran church, political clashes between socialists and conservatives, and the effort at the turn of the century to Russify Finnish society, which prompted a nation-wide cultural awakening and gave rise to Fennomania (a Finnish nationalist movement).

In addition, there was the “American Dream” that enticed many Finns to try to improve their fortunes by seeking work in North America. As exaggerated accounts of freedom and wealth came back to Finland from Finns who had ventured abroad, “American fever” developed, and emigration simply became the fashionable thing to do (Niemi 1998:71). The following translation of an excerpt from a 1929 magazine article illustrates how Nummola, for example, was portrayed to potential emigrants as a prosperous, modern agricultural centre where Finns were sure to prosper:

About eight miles southeast of Shaunavon the Finnish community begins. There may be found the Nummola settlement, which consists of about thirty farmers. In this group there are even some big farms, 600-1200 acres (250-500 hectares) in area. The soil is quite fertile and never needs fertilizing. In general, newly ploughed prairie cultivated for the first time gives the best crop. It might be mentioned that the owner of the largest farm in this district, Mr. John Nyman from Ylistaro, got over 15,000 bushels (circa 7,000 hectolitres) of wheat in one year. Moreover, if N:o 1 [sic] wheat comes to the grain elevators from anywhere, it comes first from the Finnish farms in the area. By the way, 1927 was a record year in Canadian wheat production, exceeding the wildest dreams. When threshing started, the elevators at the railway stations filled immediately and the railways were not able to send enough grain cars, although they tried their best. The farmers’ grain bins also filled up soon, and in the end, there was no other option than to pile the grain into big mounds in the fields. This had not happened before, but now that sight is common across all prairie districts [Kuitunen 1929:315-316, translated by Peter Gallén].

This chapter looks at how the six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan were established, beginning with the Great Migration from Finland. The people buried in the cemeteries are linked to their birthplaces in Finland, and the major paths that they took to Saskatchewan are traced. The reasons that these Finns emigrated and their pattern of settlement in Saskatchewan are

explored. Against this important background information, a brief history is provided of each Finnish cemetery in Saskatchewan, focussing on events that affected its development and operation. Some information is provided about the policies, administration and mortuary practices of the various cemeteries, noting how they changed over time and varied between the communities. The chapter ends with a consideration of the practical and social functions of the Finnish cemeteries.

## **4.2 Finnish Immigration to Saskatchewan**

There is no information about the birth place of 53 of the 971 people known to be buried in the Finnish cemeteries, but at least 319, which represents 33% of the population in the cemeteries, were born in Finland (see Appendix C).

The arrival of the first Finn who settled in Saskatchewan is well-documented (Schelstraete 1982:13-14). David Kautonen left Finland in 1886 to avoid repayment of a large loan, and he filed for a homestead in what is now New Finland in 1888. Kautonen's disappearance forced the co-signer of his loan, Johan K. Lauttamus, to cover the debt, which left him in financial difficulty. After receiving a letter from Kautonen encouraging him to come to Canada, Lauttamus and his family left their home in Kauhava, Vaasan Lääni, and arrived in New Finland in 1890. They are buried in the New Finland cemeteries among the total of 46 males and 40 females born in Finland who immigrated to New Finland in the 1890s.

Most early Finnish immigrants to Canada did not arrive as a result of newspaper ads or other recruitment efforts by Canadian authorities or employers (Kero 1976:9). A handful of people now buried in the Old Cemetery immigrated from British Columbia in the 1890s, and they may have come to Canada in response to an attempt by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1883 to recruit workers. One such immigrant was a CPR section foreman in B.C. when the Last Spike was driven to complete the transcontinental railway. He subsequently sent for his family and moved with them to a farm near relatives who had settled in New Finland (Schelstraete 1982:122). However, as even this example shows, it was usually personal connections, rather than advertising or recruitment drives, that drew Finnish settlers to Saskatchewan.

When the first emigrants settled in Canada, they wrote to their friends and relatives in the home parishes and promised to help the newcomers to get work in Canada. Those leaving the Finnish village like to emigrate to localities where they could meet old friends and relatives, who could help them in overcoming the difficulties the immigrants had to face on their arrival in the New World. In this way emigration from a particular locality tended to be directed in the same destination (or destinations) in the USA or Canada. A tradition was born, and these traditions were very strong among the migrants [Kero 1976:12-13].

Kautonen, and other early immigrants who joined him in New Finland, actively raised awareness of their growing settlement through letters to acquaintances back in Finland and visits to the enclaves of Finns who had already emigrated to the northern United States. At least 71% of the New Finland settlers of the 1890s were born in Vaasa, but only 40% went there directly from their homeland. Almost all the others (58%) went first to Sweden, other parts of Canada, or various areas of the United States. Most often they came to Saskatchewan from Michigan, where they had been working in the copper mines at Calumet or the iron mines at Ishpeming when word reached them that a Finnish farm community was forming in New Finland. As shown in the table in Appendix E, the Old Cemetery has the highest proportion of burials of immigrants who arrived directly from Finland (19%) while the Finns buried in the New Cemetery are just as likely to have arrived from Michigan.

The Finns in both cemeteries who arrived early from the mining areas near Lake Superior “came directly from a traditional folk society with its predominantly agrarian values and lifestyles,” and they may be characterized as conservative, right wing and nationalistic (Alanen 1981:35). They had found that work in the mines was dangerous and unhealthy. Moreover, the living conditions for families in mining communities were less than ideal. The corporate mining environment was paternalistic, and increasingly, early Finnish immigrants clashed with compatriots who immigrated later and had absorbed the class-conscious idealism of the rising socialist movement in Finland (Alanen 1981). As a result, some Finnish families in Michigan were more than ready to revive their agrarian roots and try farming further west in either the United States or Canada (Hoglund 1994). One Finn who came to Saskatchewan is said to have selected New Finland as his destination because there he would never have to hear a mining whistle again (Saskatchewan Archives Board 1982:R-14921).

From 1900 to 1910 Finnish immigration to Saskatchewan spread beyond New Finland. In this decade, settlement moved north to the Margo-Invermay region, and it also began along the

South Saskatchewan River at the point where the river curves, creating the region known as the Elbow. Finns settled in this region around Loreburn and Dunblane as early as 1904. The burials in the Finnish cemeteries show that 74 people, comprised of equal numbers of males and females, arrived in Saskatchewan between 1900 and 1910. Of these, 39% were buried in the Elbow region, 34% in the New Finland New Cemetery and 26% in the Old Cemetery (see Appendix D). A decreasing proportion of the immigrants arriving in this decade came directly from Finland (30%), and more came from the U.S. (57%). Moreover, in this period, only 21% of the immigrants who came from the U.S. were arriving from the mining centres in Michigan. They came from nine different states, with the highest percentage arriving from North Dakota (33%). As a result, the burials in the Finnish Heritage and Dunblane Finnish Cemeteries have a high proportion of people who emigrated from either the Dakotas or Manitoba, which acted as a mid-way point on the immigration route from the U.S. to the Elbow region.

By this time, many Finnish immigrants to the U.S. who had first worked in the mines had moved west and either homesteaded or purchased farm land. Arriving late in the agricultural expansion of the U.S., they frequently settled on “leftover” lands that all too often demanded hard work in return for a bare living (Hoglund 1994:51). It was these Finns and their children in the American west, many of whom had been born in the U.S., who now moved north into Manitoba or Saskatchewan in search of more land and better prospects. They tended to share the conservative, family-oriented values of the earliest immigrants, but among them were Finns whose political and religious beliefs reflected their different point of origin in Finland.

Forty-three percent of those buried in the cemeteries who immigrated between 1900 and 1910 may be traced to their birthplace in Vaasa, but another 20% hailed from the county of Oulu, with the remainder spread amongst six other counties. In this decade, therefore, the locus of emigration from Finland had moved further north and become more diffused. Moreover, the Finns arriving in this period had deeper experiences than the early immigrants with the dislocations of urbanization and the growing political and economic unrest in their homeland. A general strike in 1905 had demonstrated the growing strength of socialism in Finland, provoking a backlash fueled by a mixture of conservative, religious and nationalistic sentiments (Shearman 1950:57-58). Oulu was a major centre of both political and religious unrest. It was largely from there that Laestadianism, one of the revivalist movements that arose in Finland in response to the clericalism and orthodoxy of mainstream Lutheranism (Pentikäinen 1998), spread to the rest of



the country and across the Atlantic Ocean. A group of Laestadians who had emigrated to North America established an Apostolic Lutheran Church in the farming community of Rolla, North Dakota (Kontio 1989:32). Among the immigrants to Saskatchewan in 1900-1910 were numerous Laestadian families who crossed the border from the Dakotas to homestead in the Elbow region along the South Saskatchewan River. A number of these families came from farms around Rolla, bringing with them a strict lifestyle based on fundamentalist religious beliefs that did not include involvement in politics (Anderson and Niskala 1981:164-165).

The cemeteries indicate that in the next decade from 1910 to 1920, at least 96 Finnish immigrants came to Saskatchewan, the highest number in any decade (see Appendix D). Thirty-eight percent of these people were buried in New Finland, and their arrival marked the virtual completion of settlement in that area. Approximately half are buried in the Elbow region, and 13% are buried in the Shaunavon area. The largest group from this period (39%) may be found in Highland Cemetery. These burials in Highland Cemetery mark the westward extension of Finnish homesteading in the Elbow region to the hills and river plains around Macrorie, Birsay, Lucky Lake, Beechy, Wiseton and Dinsmore. By the 1920s, this broad area was being enthusiastically touted as “one of the largest Finnish agricultural regions in Saskatchewan and perhaps all of Canada,” encompassing 108 farms with a total area of 25,920 acres supporting through cultivation and animal husbandry some 200 Finns with 300 children (Oikarainen 1921:156, translated by Peter Gallén). Relatively few of the immigrants who are buried in Highland Cemetery came directly from Finland, with one large group arriving from the Laestadian farms of North Dakota and another large group coming from the mines of Michigan.

It was after amendments to the Dominions Land Act in 1908 opened up the drylands of Saskatchewan for settlement (McManus 2011) that the Nummola area received a wave of Finnish immigrants who followed a different route to Saskatchewan than the previous waves of Finnish immigrants. The cemeteries show that those who came from the U.S. moved north from mining areas further west than Michigan as well as from Michigan itself. Some had spent time as gold miners in Ontario before heading to Saskatchewan, and the largest group moving into the district came from the Alberta coal mines (see Appendix E).

Although it is not reflected in the burials in the Finnish cemeteries, some Finnish families were also homesteading to the north in the Turtle Lake district from 1910 to 1920. The first Finnish settler, Jeremiah Kahtava, arrived there in 1912 and was joined by several other families

who often found it a difficult area to farm (Anderson and Niskala 1981:161). Some moved south to the Elbow region, while others diversified their economic base with hunting, fishing, lumbering or resort development. Turtle Lake served as a vacation area for many Saskatchewan Finns (Anderson and Niskala 1981:178-179), but the small rural community of Finns living there never developed its own ethnic institutions in the form of a church, hall, school or cemetery.

The point of emigration is unknown for only 3% of this last and largest wave of immigrants buried in the cemeteries. Forty-seven percent of them arrived from the U.S., 42% directly from Finland and 8% from other provinces in Canada. Thirty-one percent were born in Vaasan Lääni, 25% were from Oulun Lääni, and the birth places of the rest are either unknown or distributed among the other Finnish counties. Some of this new movement into Saskatchewan still involved chain migration, whereby new people from Finland and the U.S. joined relatives and friends already settled in the province. However, a significant change in the pattern of immigration is signalled by the fact that 64% of the immigrants from 1910 to 1920 were male. Most immigration to this point had involved families, with approximately equal numbers of males and females arriving to take up farming on the prairies. More of the later Finnish immigrants were single males with few family ties and different reasons for immigrating.

Many coming from the U.S. now favoured socialism rather than conservatism, and many showed little interest in religion. "By 1912, socialism had been adopted as a way of life by more than 10 per cent of the Finns in America, and the movement gained strength in subsequent years" (Alanen 1981:35). The Finns working in the Lake Superior mining region were increasingly split by political and religious differences. In spite of their desirability as hard workers, some had gained a reputation for the whole group as radicals, labour militants, drunks and brawlers, which prompted some of the more moderate and temperate Finns to move elsewhere (Alanen 1981:45). Strikes occurring in the mining regions during this decade also left some Finnish miners unemployed, and some of those unemployed Finnish miners moved west and eventually took up some of the last homestead land available in Saskatchewan.

Moreover, immigrants arriving at this late date directly from Finland were leaving a country embroiled in a civil war that has been described as "a hopeless tangle of conflicts, hatred and suspicions" that dissolved into bloodshed after many decades of repressed violent feeling (Shearman 1950:60). The Finnish civil war of 1918 pitted the German-backed conservative Whites against the Russian-backed communist Reds, and in the bitter aftermath of the White

victory, many Finns, both White and Red, sought refuge outside their country. In this period, many people emigrated from Finland individually, some with prepaid tickets, and they selected their destinations based on information about previously established Finnish communities (Lindström-Best 1985:17).

It is difficult today to identify the Saskatchewan Finns who held radical socialist beliefs since Finnish communism was thoroughly repressed in Canada (Lindström 2000:121-131; Warwaruk 1984:91-97). At first it was feared that Finnish socialists would promote a Russian-style communist revolution in Canada, and later during World War II, even non-socialist Finns were regarded with suspicion because Finland had allied itself with Germany in order to repel the invasion by Canada's ally, the U.S.S.R. Also, "[t]o be a Red was to be a monster as perceived by the children of the McCarthy era" (Warwaruk 1984:97). As a result, the Finnish socialist organizations and clubs in Saskatchewan eventually destroyed their libraries and records, and there is almost no documentary evidence about the people who belonged to them. In their published family histories, most people with Finnish heritage have been careful not to mention any family involvement with socialism. The most that is usually said is that a family member went to Karelia, Sointula or Webster's Corners (all places where Finns attempted unsuccessfully to establish utopian socialist communities).

Finns committed to socialism immigrated to all the Finnish communities in Saskatchewan, but given the pattern and timing of the successive waves of immigrating Finns, the number of Red Finns settling in New Finland was smaller than the numbers settling in the Elbow region and Nummola. For one thing, there was no longer land available for newcomers to New Finland, and also, the established landowners in Saskatchewan's oldest Finnish settlement were not prepared to accommodate radical socialism within their community. Whereas socialist Finns coexisted with the religiously and/or politically conservative Finns in Nummola and the Elbow region, albeit uneasily, New Finlanders who were members of the Finnish Organization of Canada (FOC) complained that their efforts to meet and organize were actively and successfully blocked by the church Finns in their community.

[W]e are surrounded here by Synodists, Laestadians and all sorts of sects who walk in religious reactionary darkness. These black forces try in every way to disrupt us, both in public and in secret, by slandering our local's activities and the entire revolutionary

workers' movement. With such devious acts they have succeeded in keeping us until now in a state of infancy. [*Vapaus*, 10 March 1925:3, translated by Peter Gallén]

Many immigrants with radical socialist leanings moved on from New Finland, some of them heading to the Elbow region where there were more like minds and they could live according to their political beliefs.

After 1920 Finnish immigration to Saskatchewan slowed to a trickle. Only 18 of the people buried in the cemeteries arrived in the 1920s, four in the 1930s, and one in each of the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s. The majority arrived from other provinces in Canada and were equally split in their origins between Vaasan Lääni and Oulun Lääni. Thirty-six percent are buried in Highland Cemetery, 24% in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, 24% in New Finland and 16% in Nummola Cemetery. What was already becoming significant in the 1920s, however, was not the number of people immigrating to the province's rural Finnish communities, but the number of people who were leaving.

The Finnish population in Saskatchewan peaked in the 1930s and then declined steadily (Pedersen 2004:158-160). First the droughts that began in the 1920s combined with the economic depression of the 1930s to drive many Finns off the land, especially in the dryland areas of Saskatchewan. Then World War II "set in motion a migration of Finnish Canadians from rural areas to the cities, as Finns left to pursue well-paying jobs off the farm" (Pedersen 2004:120). Farm mechanization, urbanization, intermarriage and the closure of rural schools also contributed to the decline of the rural Finnish population (Pedersen 2004:121-122). By the 1950s, very little remained to mark the original areas of Finnish settlement, but prominent among these markers were the Finnish cemeteries.

### **4.3 The Old and New Cemeteries in New Finland**

The Old Cemetery came to be in 1891 with a  
Mysterious death and the loss of a settler's  
Children. The New Cemetery formed in 1900  
Is nearer the church and both are well cared  
For with trees and flowers to honor the dead.

- Excerpt from "A Century of Continuing Faith" by Betty Maki [Birt 1993:66]

The mysterious death mentioned in this poem likely refers to a story about the first burial in the Old Cemetery that is not included in most histories of New Finland. The story goes back to 1891 when there were only a few settlers in the area, including David Kautonen. One version says that David Kautonen confessed to murder on his deathbed (Virtaranta 1982:58). He revealed where he had buried the body and asked that he be buried on sanctified land. Another version says that a neighbouring Swede pressed Kautonen to repay a debt (Birt 1993:21-22). Kautonen lost his temper, killed the Swede with an axe, and chopped his body into pieces. He then buried the pieces in gunny sacks on the north side of a knoll on a property homesteaded by a Swede that was right next to the Lauttamus land.

The murder was kept secret for generations by the Lauttamus family until Kautonen, who had no children, was long dead. The land on which the murder victim is alleged to be buried is the site known locally as Kautosenmäki [Kautonen's Hill], and today it is part of the Old Cemetery in New Finland, located at SW36-17-1-W2 (see Figure 4.2).



**Figure 4.2:** Kautosenmäki, New Finland, in 2010.

There may be something to this colourful story but corroborating evidence is needed. Homestead records show that David Kautonen homesteaded the land in question in 1888. In 1893, he sold it to Thomas Bond, and he died many years later in 1909 (Schelstraete 1982:155). According to a bill of sale dated to 1902, John Thomas Bond sold the 3.9 acres of land, already described as a “cemetery,” to the Evangelical Lutheran congregation of New Finland, which had been founded in 1893 (Schelstraete 1982:59).

Two years before this sale, in 1900, another four acres of land in New Finland, forming part of the homestead of Antti Jarvi at NW24-17-1-W2, had also been dedicated as a cemetery, just down the road from Kautosenmäki (Schelstraete 1982:60). The two public cemeteries became known as the New Cemetery and the Old Cemetery, respectively, even though the Old Cemetery was formally established a short time after the New Cemetery.

According to a note in an early register of funerals (1913-1982) kept in the New Finland Lutheran church, the first burials were recorded many years after the fact, based on notes provided by a church official. The earliest register entry is for a one-year-old boy who died in June, 1897, and he is recorded as buried in the Old Cemetery although he is memorialized with his family on an obelisk in the New Cemetery. The name of another infant who died even earlier in 1896 is not included in the register but appears on another obelisk in the New Cemetery, with the location of the grave marked by an initialed footstone. The earliest named, dated and located burial in the Old Cemetery is that of a fifteen-year-old boy who died in 1897. He is memorialized with a hand-carved granite marker, but his burial is not recorded in the register of funerals. To confuse matters even further, at least one marked but illegible grave marker in the Old Cemetery is attributed to a teenager whose death can be dated to only the 1890s, and there are some early deaths in New Finland recorded in local histories for which no markers or burial records can be found. It may be that these burials took place in the cemeteries, but all material or written record of them has either been lost or was not available for this study. Many graves on Kautosenmäki, in particular, are unmarked and unlocated, which is why the northwest section of the Old Cemetery containing the hill was eventually closed to further burials (Schelstraete 1982:60). All that can be said with certainty about the earliest New Finland burials, therefore, is that in the 1890s, there were deaths that likely resulted in burials in both areas now marked as cemeteries.

The minutes of the earliest meetings of the Evangelical Lutheran congregation of New Finland show that five years after the congregation was established, the immigrant Finns began electing at each annual meeting a man to serve as their “pappi” [pastor or minister], whose chief duty was to provide the sermon at church services. They also elected another man to baptize children, read burial rites and look after the communion wine. In addition, they decided each year to invite the Suomi Synod, the Finnish Lutheran organization based in the U.S., to send an ordained priest to their community once during the year to carry out specific religious functions. Fees were levied to finance the connection with the Suomi Synod that caused perennial difficulty in the settlement, where many were struggling just to survive. These practical and financial pressures, as well as disagreements about the relationship with the Suomi Synod, created fluctuations in the membership base for the church. While the Suomi Synod offered the closest North American equivalent to the state church of Finland, many immigrants had brought other versions of Lutheranism with them to North America that vied with the Suomi Synod for

primacy. Now able to exercise a higher degree of religious freedom, the Finns in Saskatchewan formed divergent churches that included the National Evangelicals, Apostolic Lutherans (Laestadians) and Finnish Pentecostals. At times the members of these churches blended seamlessly with the Suomi Synod Finns, and at other times, they went their own separate ways.

As the main institution that brought the immigrant Finns together, the Lutheran church was vital to most New Finlanders, and feelings tended to run high over points of disagreement. Personalities and personal relationships, as well as beliefs and values, frequently affected individual decisions regarding religious life, including in which cemetery a family would be buried. The divisions that emerged among the New Finland Lutherans were lamented by Rev. Arvi Saarisuu, a minister who tried to unite them under the umbrella of the Suomi Synod:

Departure from the congregation has often resulted from the quiet, invisible influence of Mammon, starting with the neglect of miniscule membership fees and then moving to a more complete quitting. Few have had any burning reasons of conscience for their departure. Mammon and lack of love on both sides have been the main causes for separation. The embers of quarrels have, of course, been fanned from various directions, but the locals have made miniscule use of their brains in shaping minds to achieve peace.

It still seems that today the locals are quite slow and unbending in taking the first humble steps to conciliation. Therefore they continue to feast in three, four table settings, when there are not enough of them to fill even one table. That way they avoid all discomfort and presumably are content with the discord created. One group feeds from the table of disbelief, another from the table of license, a third from that of lovelessness, and a fourth from the table of false gods. If things were right, they would all feast at the table of faith on the lovely fruits of love and Christ's sacrifice. But try to bend this people to that end, even if you have the faith of Abraham and the wisdom of Daniel [Saarisuu 1940:57, translated by Peter Gallén 2010].

Saarisuu's colourful historical account of New Finland tends to be dismissed as "vague and shifting on matters of detail" as well as "heavily laced with metaphoric language and personal speculation" (Schelstraede 1982:57). Nevertheless, his perception of a certain stubborn independence on religious matters among the immigrant Finns may be worth noting.

The Suomi Synod was characterized by the traditional clericalism and patriarchy of the state church in Finland, while immigrant conditions tended to favour a church that gave a stronger role to the people and included a voice for women within the church (Lindström 1992:123). When such differences in point of view were aggravated by family feuds and power struggles within the community, unity proved impossible. It was reported that "[t]he animosity

that arose even to skirmishes continued...for a long time, causing quarrels and making the pastor's activities more difficult. During the congregation's evening gatherings, horse tackle was broken and horses were let loose" (Raivio 1975:231 quoted in Hännikäinen 2010a:136, translated by Peter Gallén). Approximately 30 Lutherans dissatisfied with the Suomi Synod broke away to form New Finland Kansallis Seurakunta (the National Evangelical Congregation), which differed only slightly in its theology but rejected the religious tradition of elitism and male dominance (Hintz 1999:43). This new congregation split from the mainstream around the time that the New Finland cemeteries were being formally established, and the split appears to have provided impetus for the creation of a second cemetery (Hännikäinen 2010a:136-139). The National Evangelicals rejoined their colleagues in 1907 when the community's first church building was constructed, but they broke away again in 1919, initiating an unsuccessful law suit over who owned the church building. Eventually, however, the primacy of the Suomi Synod was firmly established. In 1934, after building a parsonage for the ministers appointed by the Suomi Synod at a location five miles from the church, the church building itself was relocated to land next to the new parsonage (see Figure 4.3). The Church was now conveniently close to the New Cemetery, and after the National Congregational church eventually disbanded, the New Cemetery became the most popular burial spot for all Lutherans in New Finland, except those living near the Old Cemetery and those who had family buried there.



**Figure 4.3:** The relocated St. John's Lutheran Church in 2010.

As noted earlier, radical socialists living in New Finland also struggled in what one organizer, who had just completed a cross-country tour on behalf of the Finnish Organization of Canada, considered to be "vanhoillisimman suomalaisen asutuksen Canadassa, ollen siellä Synoda, kansalliskirkko y.m." [the most conservative Finnish settlement in Canada, there being the Synod, the national church, etc.] (*Vapaus*, 4 June 1925:2). After forming an FOC local, New Finland communists purchased land in the centre of the community on which to build a hall, recognizing that "activity in the work of communistic enlightenment cannot achieve results



unless we get a building of our own” (*Vapaus*, 10 March 1927:3, translated by Peter Gallén). However, its members were too few and too poor to raise the funds necessary to start building (*Vapaus*, 17 January 1927:3), and their effort to expand FOC membership in New Finland was blocked by their inability to “do revolutionary agitation at the events organized by the reactionaries” (*Vapaus*, 10 March 1927:3, translated by Peter Gallén). Eventually, after an appeal for financial assistance to communists outside New Finland proved unsuccessful, the key figures involved in trying to build a communist hall moved away, and the FOC local in New Finland faded into obscurity.

Also moving away were some Apostolic Lutherans who found a more congenial place to live in the Elbow and other regions settled by a large number of Laestadians.

The adherence of most New Finlanders to the Suomi Synod was as pragmatic as it was ideological, however. In 1931, the congregation decided for economic reasons to join the United Lutheran Church in America, which offered an alternative to the financially troubled Suomi Synod. Now called St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, the congregation was dwindling in numbers due to rural depopulation and secularization, with the latter prompting Pastor Stan Richards to comment, “The saddest moments of my ministry were to invest so much time and travel in confirmation and to see the young children of God reject the church and the standards upheld for nearly a century by so many of the church’s faithful members” (Schelstraete 1982:56). In 1964 St. John’s entered into a partnership with Lutheran congregations in two nearby towns in order to manage the cost of a shared pastor, and in recent years, the church has been served on a part-time basis by an Anglican minister.

The New Finland cemeteries suggest that the splits among the Finns in New Finland were generational to some degree. The Old Cemetery was the main burial place for the first wave of immigrant Finns. Sixty-three percent of the Finnish-born immigrants who arrived before 1900 are buried in the Old Cemetery (see Appendix D). In fact, 41% of the total population of the Old Cemetery consists of people born in Finland, with another 3% born elsewhere in Europe, 46% born in New Finland, 5% born in Canada outside New Finland, 1% born in the U.S., and the birth place unknown for the final 4% (see Appendix C). In contrast, in the New Cemetery, Finnish-born immigrants account for only 28% of the population, another 1% were born elsewhere in Europe, 53% were born in New Finland, 4% were born in Canada outside New Finland, 8% were born in the U.S., and the birth place is unknown for the final 7%. These figures

suggest that the population found in the Old Cemetery had the earliest and strongest connection with Finland while the population found in the New Cemetery was more strongly connected with Finns arriving later from elsewhere in North America. There is, therefore, a good probability that those buried in the New Cemetery tended to be less traditional, less conservative and more independent in their thinking on religious and social matters.

Regardless of these differences, there does not appear to have been any difference in the mortuary practices used in each cemetery. Burials in both the Old and New Cemeteries were conducted in the same way according to Lutheran tradition. This tradition dictated that religious matters were the concern of men, and women played supportive rather than leadership roles in the church (Hintz 1999:36-43). Funeral services were held in the church, presided over by a pastor when one was available. In the early days, men sat on one side of the church while women and children sat on the other. Bodies were prepared for burial by women in the community, but the religious functions associated with burials were arranged and carried out by male church leaders. Midwives were allowed to perform lay baptisms for infants who died at birth, but bodies were blessed by either a male pastor or male church member appointed to carry out that duty. For some burials, the parish register of funerals notes that there was a “packed church,” while for others, there was no memorial service, only a graveside blessing. One recorded Finnish custom was the *Kuakka Vieras* [Hoe Visitor], which allowed uninvited and perhaps unwanted guests to attend a wedding or funeral service in the community as long as they were holding a garden hoe (Schelstraete 1982:100).

The Old and New cemeteries were each managed by a committee until 1985 when a single New Finland Community Cemeteries Committee (NFCCC) was formed (NFCCC 1985:1). The merger coincided to some extent with the establishment of the New Finland Historical and Heritage Society, which reflected the new policy of multiculturalism and support for heritage preservation that emerged in Canada during the 1980s. Cemetery committee minutes for 1985 record the decision to keep the Old and New cemeteries as “ethnic cemeteries,” with “anyone living in the community to have access to a lot providing they have roots here,” and in 1989, the committee decided to transfer the land titles for both cemeteries to St. John’s Lutheran Church. Most committee meetings were held in conjunction with the annual cemetery mowing and cleaning day held in June. This event was generally well attended, bringing the community of New Finland together for a celebration of Finnish heritage, and in subsequent years, proposals to

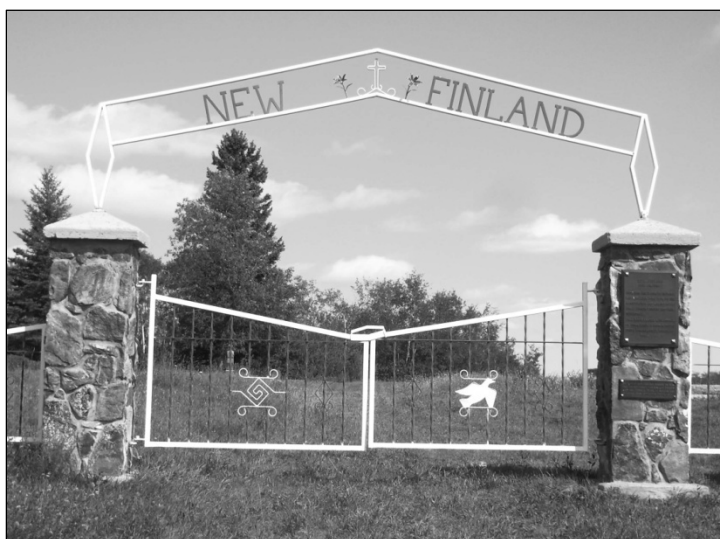
turn management of the cemeteries over to the church were rejected as long as the twice-yearly clean-up days (see Figure 4.4) drew enough people to supplement the work of an appointed caretaker in maintaining the cemeteries. The caretaker was a community member who, in return for a stipend, not only undertook maintenance duties, but also acted as chair of the cemetery committee and kept the cemetery records.



**Figure 4.4:** Cemetery work crew in New Finland, June 2, 1914. Saskatchewan Archives Board R-A24831.

A major challenge for the committee was always keeping families involved in maintaining the graves of their relatives as plots sank, planted bushes and trees overgrew the graves, fences and concrete borders fell apart, grave markers disintegrated, and grave covers became unsightly and/or illegible. Numerous efforts were made to contact plot owners and remind them of their obligations to care for their lots. After a decision was made to put single people without families in a designated lot, a lot was donated in 1987 for “itinerants,” i.e., individuals with a short-lived or tenuous connection to the Finnish community. Over the years cemetery maps were updated, lots were staked to facilitate burials, further tree planting was disallowed, crumbling corner markers and concrete lot perimeters were removed, an outhouse was built at the New Cemetery, some unmarked graves were given a marker, and a decision was first made, then rescinded, to remove all grave covers from the cemeteries. Maintenance costs were covered by donations and the sale of lots, which in 1985 were set by the committee at \$50 for a lot 16 feet by 22 feet.

The job of maintaining the cemeteries was made easier by the New Finland Historical and Heritage Society, which assumed the role of preserving and documenting Finnish culture in the region (Maki et al. 1985). The society received enough money from the sale of local history books and the federal government's New Horizons Program to undertake a major upgrade of the cemeteries in the early 1980s (Huhtala 2001:35-36). Old fences were removed, fence lines were cleared and leveled, and new posts and fence wire were installed. Ornamental metal gates with stone pillars were erected at the entrances to both cemeteries and dedicated with due ceremony in 1985 (see Figure 4.5). In addition, a marble stone was placed in the Old Cemetery to recognise David Kautonen as New Finland's first settler. About this time an effort was also made to compile a complete list of all burials in the cemeteries, both marked and unmarked. The historical and heritage society has continued to take an interest in the cemeteries, using them and St. John's Lutheran Church as focal points for the ongoing exploration and celebration of New Finland's heritage. In particular, the annual midsummer celebration of Juhannus in June has become an important heritage event that attracts visitors to the community and the cemeteries.



**Figure 4.5:** The ornamental gates of the New Cemetery.

#### **4.4 The Finnish Cemeteries in the Elbow Region**

The first Finns to settle in the Elbow region came around 1905, crossing the border into Canada from Rolla, North Dakota (Blashill 1976:27-28). At first they homesteaded on the river plain east of the South Saskatchewan River, around Loreburn, Strongfield and Glenside, bringing their families with them. As deaths, mostly of children, began to occur among the settlers, the Finns began to use a portion of the land homesteaded by Magnus Sarvela at NW36-26-6-W3 as a burying ground. All records related to burials at this location were lost when the office of the

Rural Municipality of Loreburn No. 254 was flooded, so it is not known who is buried there or when they were interred. The cemetery site still has five stone markers that memorialize seven individuals, and in 2010, Stantec Consulting Ltd. located another 27 possible burials in the immediate vicinity of these markers by measuring differences in electromagnetic ground conductivity to a depth of 1.5 metres (McLeod 2011). To date, only a small number of these additional burials have been identified (local resident, personal communication, 2011). The earliest known burial at the site dates to 1908, and the latest one dates to 1943. In the 1940s the burying ground fell into disuse and was neglected until about 10 years ago when two Finnish families with a few members still living in the area began to care for the site. They installed a chain link fence to protect the graves, erected a metal sign naming the site Finnish Heritage Cemetery, and began to search for information regarding the unmarked graves. Recognizing that the existence of the cemetery has depended on the cooperation of each owner of the land, the families are also pursuing avenues to provide the cemetery with official status and a measure of protection for the future.

It was soon after the Finns began to settle on the east side of the river that Finnish homesteading began on the west side around Dunblane. As more and more Finns began to congregate in that area, some Finns around Strongfield and Loreburn sold their farms and moved across the river to join them. For some, one of the reasons for moving may have been the political climate on the east side. The pages of the Finnish newspaper, *Canadian Uutiset*, describe in detail a conflict between conservative and socialist Finns over control of the Strongfield Finnish library, which was won resoundingly by the majority of conservative Finns in the area and led to the restriction of the library to works that were not in any way “väkivaltais-vallankumouksellista, hallitusvastaista, eikä myöskään uskontoa häväisevää” [violently revolutionary, anti-governmental or profaning religion] (*Canadian Uutiset*, 7 August 1924:6).

In contrast, on the west side of the river, there were enough socialists to support the establishment of three locals of the Finnish Organization of Canada (Lake Coteau, Coteau Hill, and Dunblane/Macrorie). The FOC hoped that these locals would exert a critical influence on the area in developing the leftist movement among Saskatchewan farmers (*Vapaus*, 4 June 1925:2). However, socialism meant many different things to the Finns who frequented the region’s Finn halls. Their ideological orientation could be socialist, social democratic, communist, co-operative, syndicalist (International Workers of the World), utopian, or anarchist (Kostiainen

1988:263). Some were “hall socialists,” more interested in social and educative opportunities than the promotion of a particular political ideology. Others were divided on such issues as labour unionism, the FOC, the communist party, bolshevism, and local autonomy (Warwaruk 1984:31-41). Most simply saw socialism primarily in terms of a better life for the farmer.

Farmers Union, Wheat Pool, Communist Party and Finnish Organization intermingled on the Coteau. Many belonged to all four. They worked together, from planning signature drives for the Wheat Pool, to organizing a May Day Festival. Farming was the common bond [Warwaruk 1984:35].

To serve the growing Finnish community on the west side of the river, a new burying ground was set up on land settled in 1909 by Herman Laukkanen at NE19-26-7-W3, known locally as Laukkasenmäki [Laukkanen’s Hill]. One local history states that the first burial at this location was a man killed on May 6, 1914, by a runaway team of horses pulling a wagon (Coteau History Committee 1981:19). Yet a woman is buried there whose family history states that she died on April 28, 1914, and there are some indications that burials may have occurred at this location even earlier. A stone marker in the cemetery memorializes a baby boy who died in 1905, although he shares the marker with a sister who died later, and his name may have been added to her marker even though he is buried elsewhere. The timing of the first burial is therefore uncertain. However, by 1915 the land had become the accepted burying ground for the local Finnish community because in that year, a letter was written to the federal Department of the Interior inquiring as to how it might be formally established as a cemetery (Saskatchewan Archives Board homestead records, file 1922086).

The Spanish influenza epidemic that swept through Saskatchewan in 1918 resulted in at least six burials on Laukkasenmäki. In 1918 a community meeting was held at Finland School to form a cemetery association (Coteau History Committee 1981:19). A board was elected, and the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery Company was incorporated on November 24, 1919. According to the account books and other records kept by the board, ten community members each paid \$1 per share for 50 shares in the company in order to provide \$500 in start-up capital for the cemetery. Thereafter, annual meetings were held to elect the board, lots were sold (initially at \$5 apiece), and clean-up days were scheduled twice a year for families with relatives buried in the cemetery. A farmer who lived on land near the cemetery, became its initial caretaker, receiving payment

for his services. Occasional fund-raising activities, including levies on lot owners, were carried out in order to meet the major costs of replacing fences or improving the site.

The first handwritten constitution of the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery Company states: “Tämän yhdistyksen tarkoitus on kustantaa ja yllä pitää hautausmaata Dunblanen Suomalaisten y. m. kansallisuuksien käytettävänä” [The purpose of this association is to finance and maintain a cemetery for the use of Dunblane Finns and other nationalities] (Dunblane Finnish Cemetery Company 1918-). The cemetery was therefore intended to serve the larger community in the Dunblane district as well as the Finns, and its shareholders included both communist and church Finns, reflecting the mixed population that had settled in the area. However, in practice, non-Finns were not buried in the cemetery unless they married into the Finnish community. Moreover, over time, the church Finns came to dominate the elected board, and they objected to the holding of communist burial services in the cemetery. These burials followed much the same pattern as a Christian burial, with a service at the deceased’s home followed by interment in the cemetery, accompanied by communist speakers, songs and symbols (see Figure 4.6). Minutes of cemetery company meetings were either unnecessary, not recorded, or lost for many of the years that the cemetery company has operated, but it was apparently decided at some point that henceforth only Christian burials would be allowed in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery (local resident, personal communication, 2010).



**Figure 4.6:** A communist funeral service in the Elbow region, date unknown. Photo courtesy of Larry Warwaruk from the collection of the late Laurence E. Hauta.

This decision to exclude non-Christian burials from the Finnish cemeteries may have led some atheistic Finnish socialists to choose burial in one of the multi-ethnic cemeteries in the Elbow region, e.g., the town of Dinsmore cemetery, Lakeview Cemetery near Lucky Lake, or the Holt/Mosten cemetery near Wiseton (it may or may not be significant in this regard that the Holt/Mosten cemetery faces north, making it the only cemetery in the region that does not follow the Christian practice of placing a burial so that the body faces east). By 1967 when the Dunblane Laestadian Church was established almost within view of Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, the cemetery was being used mostly by Finns in the Elbow region who belonged to the Laestadian faith.

The same policy of excluding non-Christian burials was adopted immediately at Highland Cemetery, which served the Finns in the Rock Point and Big Valley school districts. Like Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, Highland Cemetery came into use in 1912, when two infants were buried on a hill partially surrounded by a large slough on the land of Salmo Raisanen at SW3-26-9-W3. By the end of 1917, the number of burials on the hill had climbed to 18, which prompted the community to begin legalizing the burying ground as a cemetery. On August 20 of that year, a meeting was held to form the Suomalainen Hautausmaa Comppania (SHC) [Finnish Cemetery Company]. At this meeting Finns elected the first board, and adopted guidelines for the operation of the cemetery. A regulation was approved and recorded in the minutes that “Jokainen joka hautaa Ruumiin Tähän suomalaiseseen hautaus maahan niin sille pitää antaa Kristillis siveellinen Hautaus” [Everyone who buries a body in this Finnish cemetery must be given a decent Christian burial] (SHC 1917:29), and men from the community were appointed to carry out the priestly and church functions related to burial.

Both the Highland and Dunblane Finnish cemetery companies faced a challenge in getting clear title to the lands on which their cemeteries had grown. The farmers who provided the lands had, like many immigrants trying to establish farms in the Elbow region, accepted advances of seed grain and fodder through government programs set up to assist settlement on the prairies. These debts remained as liens on their land, accruing interest at the rate of 5% per annum. With large families, some bad years of drought and hail, and in some cases, the complications of ill health and hospitalization, many homesteaders who accepted aid through these programs were not able to pay off their growing indebtedness completely before they died. As a result, any sale or donation of their lands was not entirely valid. Faced with this kind of



situation, both cemetery companies had to go through many years of negotiation, lawyers' fees, and correspondence with government officials before they were able to obtain clear title to the lands they managed. The copy of renewed title finally on file in the records for the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, for example, dates to 1972.

Another problem shared by Highland and Dunblane Finnish cemeteries was the difficulty of maintaining the graves through voluntary labour by lot owners, particularly after families moved away from the Elbow region. Clean-up days, donations and levies augmented the minimal income from the sale of lots to keep fences and graves in good repair, but over time, graves sank, markers disintegrated, and vegetation overgrew the sites. Highland Cemetery, which always had an active caretaker who was paid a minimal fee, made sporadic efforts to upgrade its grounds. To give just a few examples, in 1949, a treed area was developed in the cemetery to shelter and enhance the graves; in 1979, an effort was made to raise funds for the installation of black plastic plaques on all unmarked or illegible graves; and in 1994, a set of ornamental metal gates were ordered to mark the entrance to the cemetery. Interest in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery appears to have faded in the 1940s, but revived in the 1980s when the board was reorganized and the position of caretaker was replaced by that of vice-treasurer. The cemetery has been maintained since that time without major repairs or improvements.

#### **4.5 Nummola Cemetery**

The first person to die and be buried in the Nummola Cemetery near Shaunavon was a two-year old girl who contracted pneumonia in 1910, the same year that her family moved from the mining community of Gold Rock, Ontario, to homestead there along with two other Finnish families (South Shaunavon History Club 1981:324). She was buried on a small hill not far from her family's farm, and she was soon joined by a Finn from Canmore, Alberta, who had arrived in 1910 only to die a year later of "miner's consumption," which he is said to have contracted from a coal mine explosion (SSHHC 1981:327). Canmore, like other mines of the period, was a dangerous place to work, which led the Finns there to establish a socialist hall that was part of a "Finnish immigrant associational network knitted together by family ties, internal migration, trade unionism..., and ethnic organization (Seager 1983:10). At least 11 of the Finns buried in Nummola Cemetery or the nearby Hillcrest Cemetery outside Shaunavon lived in Canmore

before moving to southwest Saskatchewan to occupy some of the last homestead land available in the province. Another six came from mines in Gold Rock, Ontario.

By 1913 there were about 40 Finnish families in the area (SSHC 1981:466), and some banded together to form a local of the Finnish Organization of Canada. At its peak in the 1920s, the local had about 25 members (*Vapaus*, 14 March 1922:4), whom the FOC considered another potential avenue for promoting socialism in Saskatchewan (*Vapaus* 4 June 1925:2). Members of the Nummola local were leaders in the drive to build a hall that would serve as a central gathering point for local Finns and also a venue for socialistic activities. The hall was used for athletics, drama, social events, dances, movies, classes, weddings, receptions, and elections, but only once for a funeral (SSHC 1981:466-468). It was also the meeting site for planning Nummola School, which was built in 1915, and for organizing a Finnish cemetery association.

Over time, more deaths inevitably added to the population on the burial hill, and on March, 1918, again around the time of the Spanish influenza epidemic, the Nummola Finns met and decided to start proceedings to legalize as a cemetery five acres of land around the burying ground. Handwritten minutes in Finnish exist for the first three meetings of the fledgling cemetery association, at which a three-person committee was elected to pursue the matter (Nummola Cemetery Association 1918). It was also decided that each family would mark and maintain the plots of family members, a fundraising dance would be held to raise money for the upkeep of the cemetery, and the day for putting flowers on graves would be May 31. Apart from a grave register, which is not complete, no further records were found for the Nummola Cemetery Association. Neither the cemetery association nor the cemetery appear to have achieved the “legal” status that was originally envisioned, although the Finnish community continued to bury people there intermittently. At some point the quarter on which the cemetery is located changed ownership and came into the possession of the Nyman family.

As a community, the Nummola Finns were hard hit by the droughts that plagued the drylands of southwest Saskatchewan during the 1920s and 1930s (McManus 2011). Many people in the area simply gave up their farms and moved away. In 1921, largely for financial reasons, the Finn hall became a mutual company owned by shareholders, and while the FOC continued to use the hall for meetings, hall activities began to be more community-oriented and less focussed on socialism. During the 1940s, as communist activity was suppressed throughout Saskatchewan,

the hall became a cooperative association, and Nummola School closed. It was also about this time that Nummola Cemetery fell into neglect, although burials continued to take place there.

The cemetery association had long been defunct when responsibility for Nummola Cemetery was taken over by the Rural Municipality of Grassy Creek No. 78. In 1968 the RM had the cemetery surveyed and mapped. Today it is maintained by an informal coalition of the rural municipality, local families with loved ones buried there, and interested members of the Nyman family. Dispersal of the Finns who settled the area has made community clean-up days unfeasible, and there is no definite plan for managing and maintaining the cemetery in the future.

It appears that most Nummola Finns were not strongly religious since, although many declared on formal documents that they were Lutheran, no Finnish Lutheran church was ever established in the district. Weddings and funerals were carried out as needed by the minister most readily available, who might represent the Baptist, Lutheran or United Church. Social life revolved around the local schools and Nummola Hall. Funeral services were usually carried out at farm homes by an available pastor, and were followed by interment at the cemetery. For a young child, the service would be short, and the casket would be simple and small, as shown in Figure 4.7. This photograph also shows that Saskatchewan Finns continued, at times at least, to follow the popular Finnish custom of covering burial caskets with cloth that was sometimes intricately draped (*Helsingin Sanomat*, March 27, 2012). Adults were typically buried in a wooden casket, covered with flowers and carried by pall bearers (see Figure 4.8).



**Figure 4.7:** A cloth-covered casket. Photo courtesy of Viola Maddess.



**Figure 4.8:** The funeral for a Nummola woman in 1946; her children and grandchildren are present, and men from neighbouring farms are the pallbearers. Photos courtesy of Viola Maddess.

#### **4.6 The Practical and Social Functions of the Finnish Cemeteries**

The histories of the six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan show some striking similarities. All began in a rather ad hoc way when people in the various Finnish communities died and an acceptable way of disposing of their bodies had to be found. Like most immigrants from Europe, the Finns accepted the convention that human bodies should be buried, and when the first deaths occurred in each Finnish community, someone stepped forward to offer a piece of land that was deemed appropriate for this purpose. The burying ground had to be well-drained, accessible by road, centrally located among the farms forming the rural community, not too far away from churches, schools or halls where funeral services might be held, and at the same time, not uncomfortably close to human habitations or work areas. On a practical note, the Finns preferred that their cemeteries did not take up good agricultural land, and they preferred sites that could be easily prepared and maintained without undue strain on community time and resources. The sites also had to meet any requirements and regulations established for cemeteries by the Saskatchewan government. It is no accident that all the Finnish cemeteries are centrally located on land that is often gravelly, hilly, bordered by sloughs, windswept or otherwise difficult to cultivate. All feature a hill or a height of land that not only provides good drainage but a view over the surrounding countryside.

This view was an important aspect of the social function performed by the Finnish cemeteries. Like most people, the Finns wanted cemeteries that were permanent and pleasant enough to mitigate anxieties about leaving loved ones there and eventually joining them in death (Warner 1959:280). The dominant funerary trends in Europe and North America at the turn of the nineteenth century favoured cemeteries that were deliberately located at a distance from centres of human activity and provided a park-like setting suitable for philosophical and moral instruction (French 1975:78). Within the constraints provided by the natural environment and a pioneer lifestyle, the Finns designed their cemeteries as attractive, lasting features of the local rural landscape, and some of them, particularly in New Finland, are now valued as places where people with Finnish ancestry can come to experience a sense of shared history and culture. Although some are isolated, almost invisible within the surrounding landscape, giving privacy and solitude to cemetery visits, the cemeteries are also a tangible, immutable sign to anyone passing by that a Finnish community settled in this area. In this way, they perform the same

function as historical monuments, inculcating a sense of history that can promote patriotism or ethnicity (French 1975:81; Swyripa 2010:200-213),

Each cemetery not only helped to define the deceased as Finns socially but to make social, political and religious distinctions between the different communities of Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan. These distinctions will be explored in depth in Chapter Six and discussed in Chapter Seven, but it is probably appropriate to note here that many of the distinctions are linked to the different histories of the Finnish communities. The New Finlanders, for example, affiliated their cemeteries directly with the local Lutheran church, which was modelled after the patriarchal state church that served the conservative, agrarian Finland they had left behind around the turn of the century. The most traditional segments of the New Finland community tended to be associated with the Old Cemetery, while those born in North America were buried in the New Cemetery, gradually leaving the Old Cemetery less used and visited. Later Finnish immigrants tended to bypass or leave New Finland, and some are buried in the Elbow region or Nummola. Many who moved into the Elbow region found a more compatible kind of religion-based life with the strict Laestadian Finns who had immigrated from the Dakotas in the early decades of the twentieth century. Others joined one of the FOC locals in the Elbow region and centred their lives more on politics than religion. In the Highland and Dunblane Finnish cemeteries, a growing group of Laestadian Finns eventually outnumbered the non-religious and socialist Finns who also settled in the region. Over time the more secular Finns in the Elbow region chose to be buried in neighbouring multiethnic cemeteries, identifying in death more strongly with their neighbours from other countries than the Finns who managed the ethnic cemeteries. In Nummola Cemetery, the influence of the church was minimal. The Finnish community in this area was well-organized and tightly knit, but nevertheless, it disintegrated quickly under the cumulative weight of environmental, economic, political and social hardships. In each Finnish cemetery may be seen an outline of the nature and the history of the community it served.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE FINNISH CEMETERIES**

#### **5.1 The Nature and Purpose of the Demographic Profile**

In this section the demographic data recorded from the grave markers and cemetery records for the six Finnish cemeteries have been used to develop a demographic profile of the people buried in the Finnish cemeteries. The cemetery data have been supplemented with information found in family histories, most of them published in the local histories for the geographical areas that include the Finnish cemeteries. Additional information was drawn from some available official documents, genealogies and histories provided by local residents or officials.

It should be noted that these sources are not always entirely consistent with one another. A birth place or birth year may be different, and there are varying versions of how an individual lived and died. Where conflicts exist and cannot be resolved, reliance has been placed first on the grave markers (on the basis that this is primarily a study of cemeteries and the information found there has literally been “cast in stone”). Next information has been drawn from official documents, and if these are incomplete, from the histories written by family or community members. None of these sources is infallible, however, and it is likely that errors have occurred. Nevertheless, these problems did not arise frequently, and usually the discrepancies in information were minor. Overall, the demographic picture created here of the Finnish cemetery population would not change substantially if different choices were made with respect to the uncertain pieces of data.

It should also be acknowledged that the demographic data from the cemeteries and records are fragmentary. Extensive records were not available for all the cemeteries, and the local histories that were used vary in scope and thoroughness. As a result, the cemeteries are not equally represented in the data set, and even the cemeteries with the most extensive records and most detailed local histories have numerous gaps in the information they provide about individual burials. Moreover, even if the cemetery data were complete, the cemeteries themselves provide only a sampling of the Finnish immigrant population in Saskatchewan. Therefore, the aim here is not the development of a comprehensive demography of the Saskatchewan Finns but the exploration of specific population characteristics that may have

contributed to their sociocultural identity and the identification of population changes that may have modified that identity.

There are 971 individuals known to be buried in the six Finnish cemeteries in marked or unmarked graves. At least some demographic information is available for almost all these individuals, and wherever possible, specifics have been recorded regarding each individual's date of birth, sex, marital status, number of children, date of death, cause of death and occupation. From these facts information has been extrapolated about age, family life, economic activities, health and social conditions, and burial rates. Given the partial and uneven nature of some of the data, it was sometimes pointless to compare cemeteries or trace changes over time.

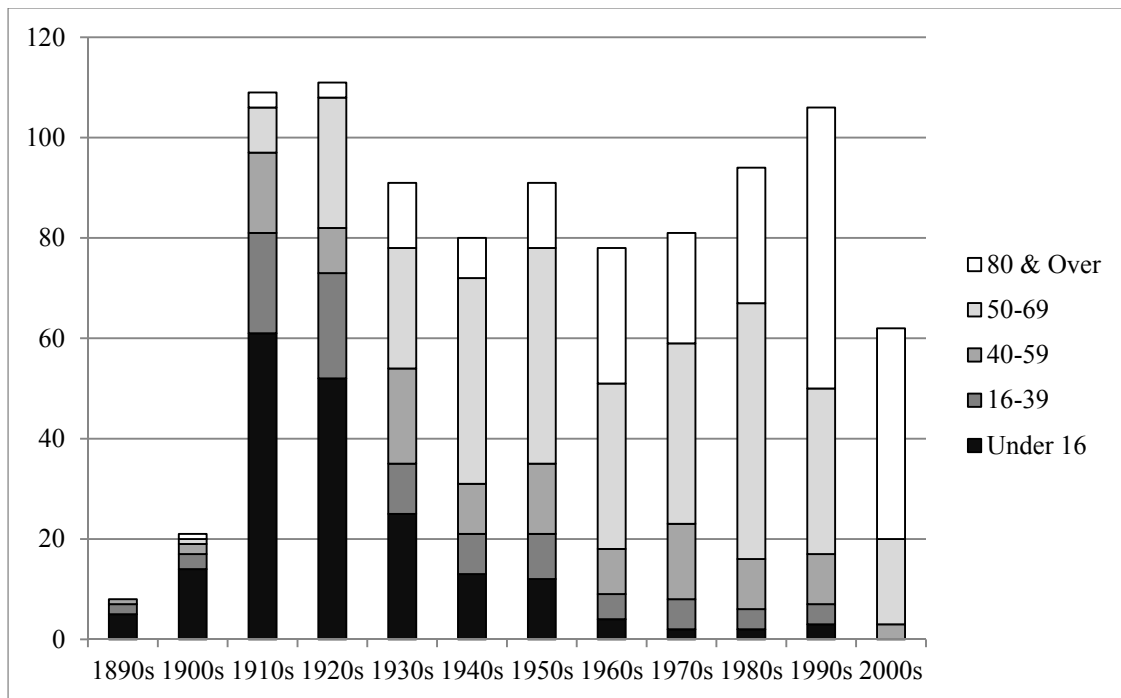
In addition to presenting the demographic data that outline who is buried in the Finnish cemeteries, this section also identifies some Saskatchewan Finns who the data indicate are not buried in the cemeteries and considers why they are absent.

## **5.2 Age at Death**

Some information about birth and death dates is available for most of the people buried in the Finnish cemeteries, making it possible to calculate their age at the time of death. For some people, however, only the years of birth and/or death are known, leaving a calculated age that is accurate plus or minus two years. Where the full age is known in months and days as well as years, ages have been rounded up or down to the nearest year. Using this procedure, it is possible to classify the deceased with reasonable certainty as children under the age of 16, adults aged 16 to 39, middle-aged adults aged 40 to 59, aging adults aged 60 to 79, and the elderly aged 80 or more. The young age of 16 was set as the threshold between childhood and adulthood because in the early days, some Finns were already married by age 16 (two New Finland girls even married at the tender age of 14, according to Lindström 1992:66), and many earned their own living at that age. Using these age categories, it was found that 20% of the people buried in the cemeteries are children, 10% are adults, 12% are middle-aged adults, 32% are aging adults, 22% are elderly, and insufficient information was available to calculate the age of the remaining 4%.

However, the overall age distribution is less interesting than the changes in age distribution that took place over the decades, which are shown in Figure 5.1. The number of children buried in the Finnish cemeteries went down steadily after reaching a peak of 61 people

in the 1910s. In contrast, the number of elderly people has gone steadily up. This reversal over time in the age distribution of the cemetery population occurred in all cemeteries except Finnish Heritage Cemetery, which was not in use after the 1940s. The dramatic change likely reflects the improvements in living conditions and health care that occurred as the province became more settled. In the 1930s, infant survival rates rose and the initially high number of deaths related to childbirth fell dramatically. Also at that point, there was a drop in the initially high number of burials of people aged 16 to 39, which was due at least in part to the effects of the 1918 Spanish flu epidemic and the toll that tuberculosis took on many Finnish families before modern medical treatment for the disease was available.



**Figure 5.1:** Graph of number of people in the cemeteries in each age group by decade of death.

In the next chapter, which examines grave markers in depth, it is shown that age was a significant factor in how people were memorialized in the Finnish cemeteries. Some children, particularly infants, were buried unnamed and without a grave marker. Where markers were provided for children, they tended to be smaller, less expensive, less varied and less elaborate in style. By reaching adulthood, people appear to have achieved a higher social status as full members of the Finnish community that was signified on their deaths through a greater degree of



public recognition in the cemeteries. In contrast, mourning for the infants buried without names or memorialization tended to be kept within the family.

### **5.3 Family Life**

Although the sex of 29 infants is unknown, 97% of the cemeteries' inhabitants can be identified by sex. There are 405 females and 537 males, for an overall ratio of one female for every 1.3 males. More males than females were buried in the cemeteries in every decade except in the 1910s, 1920s and 2000s, when the numbers were almost equal. These figures suggest that overall more males than females were living in Saskatchewan's Finnish communities. However, this disproportion does not appear to have developed until later. The 1911 Census showed that the numbers of Finnish immigrants in the prairie provinces were balanced by sex (Pedersen 2004:27), and male burials in the cemeteries did not begin to exceed female burials noticeably until the 1930s. This pattern suggests that males became dominant in numbers only with the last and largest wave of immigration to Saskatchewan, a possibility that is confirmed by examination of the different male-female ratios in the various Finnish cemeteries. The widest disparity is found in Highland Cemetery, where 102 males were buried compared to 64 females. Finnish Heritage Cemetery and the New Finland cemeteries have a ratio of males to females that is almost equal, while the ratios for Nummola and Dunblane Finnish Cemeteries are the same as the overall ratio of one to 1.3. Thus the areas of the province that were settled later appear to have been settled more heavily by men than women.

The higher number of men in the cemeteries may also be due in part to the greater tendency of Finnish men to stay in their home communities without bringing in non-Finnish spouses. This phenomenon is reflected in the marriage data available for 434 men and 318 women over the age of 16 who were buried in the cemeteries. Thirty percent of the men never married compared to 10% of the women (many of these women were ill and died young). In Nummola Cemetery, 26% of the cemetery population consists of unmarried adult men, most of them bachelor farmers. The percentage of unmarried adult men is 24% for Highland Cemetery, 21% for Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, 15% for the New Finland New Cemetery, 12% for the New Finland Old Cemetery, and 0% for Finnish Heritage Cemetery. Finnish men may have been handicapped by Finnish reticence and/or poor English in finding non-Finnish marriage partners

in North America. Finnish women, however, almost always married (Hintz 1999:10). Moreover, they appeared to understand the advantage provided by scarcity and enjoyed the greater freedom they had here in selecting a marriage partner. As one Finnish woman put it in an interview:

But parents didn't care if you don't marry a finn [sic] man. I don't think they cared we marry a Chinaman. Well, maybe they do,... This country you can marry whoever you want. I don't care how poor and how rich; if you feel like it, you can marry [Silverman 1984:164].

While in Canada as a whole, few Finnish men married non-Finns, about 17% of Finnish women chose to do so (Lindström1992:64), which accounts for the appearance in the Finnish cemeteries of English and Scandinavian names, such as Buckley and Voxland. In the favourable marriage climate for women in early Saskatchewan, many widows also remarried. Thirty-four of the women buried in the Finnish cemeteries had two or three spouses, compared to 24 of the men who had multiple marriages.

Most of the Finnish women buried in the cemeteries had large families. Average family size was five children, although it rose to six children for the women buried in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and dropped to an average of four children for the women in Nummola Cemetery. Although the number of children did go as high as 16, most of the time it ranged from two to six children, and only occasionally went above 10 children. The differences in average family size between Dunblane and Nummola may well reflect different economic circumstances and/or different beliefs regarding the role of women. The beliefs of the Laestadian Lutheran Church people living around Dunblane favoured large families, while more secular views, along with economic hardships, may have constrained family size in the Shaunavon area.

The analysis of grave markers in Chapter Six shows some differences in the treatment of men and women in the Finnish cemeteries. The patriarchal nature of Finnish immigrant society is signified by both the wife's adoption of the husband's surname, which is the common practice in Canada, and the tendency in the oldest Finnish cemeteries to place the wife's name on a spousal grave marker in a position subordinate to that of her husband. Women tend to be memorialized with other family members more often than men. They are also described more often on grave markers by their family role (e.g., as wife or mother). Furthermore, some women have their marital status designated by the title "Mrs." or are identified in relationship to their spouses (e.g.,

as the “wife of...”). No significant differences were found in the styles and size of the grave markers provided for men and women, which may be interpreted as an indicator of equal social status in death.

#### **5.4 Economic Activities**

The occupational data available for those buried in the Finnish cemeteries are spotty, but it is clear that in all parts of the province, Saskatchewan Finns were primarily farmers and farm wives. References in local histories or cemetery records to having taken up one or the other of these occupations, or both, at some point in life, were found for 557 of the people buried in the Finnish cemeteries. It is also clear from these sources that farming was a multidimensional occupation in Saskatchewan’s Finnish communities. Very few farm families, at least initially, could survive through agriculture alone.

Finnish farm families were resourceful in finding services that they could provide for additional cash. Sometimes they utilized skills that they had acquired in other occupations in Finland, and at other times they hired out their skills, knowledge and equipment related to farming. Thus there are references to Finnish farmers and their sons who worked as farm labourers, stone masons, blacksmiths, veterinarians, carpenters, harness-makers, violin-makers, mechanics, and draymen, and did custom threshing, combining, weed-spraying, wood-cutting, baling and trucking. Many also hunted, trapped and fished, while others played instruments in a local dance band. Farm wives and daughters also contributed money by producing knitted goods, marketing eggs and cream, acting as midwives, sewing or altering clothes, doing farm chores, and providing cooking, home care or housekeeping services. The pressure on most of the people buried in the Finnish cemeteries to make extra money appears to have been steady and relentless, letting up only in recent decades.

The mixed resources offered by the treed landscape of New Finland facilitated a diversified economic approach, while those living in the Nummola and the Elbow regions were more often forced to leave the farm to find additional income. Many young people were able to purchase land and start farming only because they spent time away from home working for the start-up capital they needed to get going. Finns from all areas of the province frequently sought seasonal employment, often in British Columbia, Alberta or Ontario, in mines, lumber camps,

railway construction sites, and pulp mills. In addition, many were employed part-time in their own region delivering mail, running the local post office, driving buses or taxis, and constructing or maintaining municipal roads. The sidelines pursued by Finnish farm families are in many ways an inventory of the range of economic opportunities available in rural Saskatchewan.

Not many Finns living in rural Saskatchewan established businesses, but those who did ran small stores, cafés, barber shops, garages, or shops offering specialized services such as shoe repair. People who did not farm might find employment in towns as a waitress, town foreman, store clerk, secretary, garage mechanic, caretaker, hotel domestic, maintenance man, nurse's aid, hospital worker, or telephone company employee. The professions are represented among the Finns by only a handful of people who worked as a teacher, nurse or minister/pastor.

Since most Finns in rural Saskatchewan made their living through manual labour, they tended to be stereotyped as labourers and domestics, a tendency that created a social barrier between them and the "English" who often employed them (Hintz 1999:44). Although outside employment gave them opportunities to learn English and learn about mainstream Canadian culture, many immigrant Finns, especially the women, were more comfortable within their own community, and working out only served to reinforce their sense of ethnicity.

In contrast, those buried in the Finnish cemeteries who lived much, if not most, of their lives outside the Finnish communities show a wider range of occupations. They engaged in many of the occupations already mentioned, e.g., farm labourer, carpenter, lumber camp worker, road construction worker, or miner, but among them may be found an anthropologist, architect, aeroplane factory worker, countertop installer, machinist, cattle buyer, communications technologist, hydro worker, house builder, property developer, and the owners of businesses selling cars, furniture, and trailers. There can be little doubt that the wider economic opportunities available outside the Finnish communities was a huge factor in the decision made by many Saskatchewan Finns to leave their home areas. By the third generation, Saskatchewan Finns were well-represented in urban white-collar occupations and no longer felt stereotyped.

## **5.5 Health and Social Conditions**

Some information about cause of death is available for 266 of the 971 people buried in the Finnish cemeteries. Some of this information is drawn from cemetery registers, family

histories, and official documents, and most of it relates to the early decades of Finnish settlement. There is only a small amount of information publicly available on the causes of death for people buried in the cemeteries after 1950. In examining this limited body of information, it is important to remember that in the 1920s and 1930s, ailments were often described and diagnosed differently than they would be today. As a result, some comments regarding cause of death are puzzling rather than helpful, e.g., a death by “cramps” could indicate a wide variety of possible ailments. Nevertheless, a scan of the causes of death that could be identified provides a graphic illustration of the many, varied dangers faced by the Finnish immigrants.

Stillborn infants, premature infants and infants with weaknesses and congenital defects leading to death account for 61 (23%) of the deaths for which a cause is known. In addition, five Finnish women died in childbirth, three of them during the 1918 flu epidemic. As noted earlier, this high rate of mortality associated with childbirth declined for both mothers and children after the 1930s, presumably as medical assistance became more readily available to people in the rural areas.

The next leading cause of death was heart disease and stroke, which accounted for 50 deaths and appeared to be on the rise in the 1940s. It was followed by accidents, which averaged about four in each decade from 1910 to 2000. Accidents claimed the lives of at least 38 Finns, both adults and children, and were remarkably varied. There are five drownings, all males, usually in the South Saskatchewan River. Five lives were lost in farm accidents involving farm machinery. In the early decades, when horses were used on the farm, three deaths came from runaways and/or horse-and-wagon accidents, while in later decades, traffic accidents involving cars claimed the lives of four people. There were three accidents involving self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Another three people died in fires or from smoke inhalation. The practice of using strychnine to kill vermin on the farm led to two deaths by poisoning. Two young adults were killed in industrial accidents while working away from their home communities. One pregnant young woman died from complications suffered after a fall from a wagon. Other accidental deaths occurred when an individual was hit by a train or froze to death on the prairie. Three deaths, not counted among the accidents, were due to infections, at least one of which resulted from a wound that did not heal.

There were 29 cancer-related deaths, seven of them described as stomach cancer. Most involved adults, but a few children died of leukemia and other cancers affecting the young.

A major cause of young deaths up until the 1940s was tuberculosis. Fourteen people buried in the Finnish cemeteries are known to have died of this infectious disease. However, this number may not encompass all the Saskatchewan Finns who died of TB. Many were sent to Fort San, which opened in 1917. There they were either cured or died, and the unfortunate ones may have been buried in a cemetery outside their home area. The disease tended to run in families, so some Finnish families experienced repeated heartbreak as child after child succumbed to it. One teenager with TB is said to have spent her last months living in a granary so that she would not infect the other members of her family (local resident, personal communication, 2010).

Two men with a history of working in coal or iron mines died of what is termed “miner’s consumption.” This diagnosis is questionable, and the men may actually have died from tuberculosis. Nevertheless, the diagnosis is a reminder of the unhealthy working conditions in the mines where many young Finns spent time before immigrating to Saskatchewan and to which they periodically returned in an effort to support their families and maintain their farms.

Another scourge in immigrant communities was influenza, which will be discussed here with pneumonia since, particularly in the early years, the two were often treated as one interrelated disease. Eleven deaths in the Finnish cemeteries are attributed to influenza while 14 are attributed to pneumonia. Nine of the identified influenza deaths occurred during the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918, which hit the Elbow region of the province hard. Eight deaths due to Spanish flu are recorded there, five in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and three in Highland Cemetery. The Spanish flu was deadly to pregnant women, and three of the flu deaths involved young women who did not survive the combined rigors of flu and childbirth. The 1918 flu epidemic also led to the deaths of at least four Nummola Finns.

The rough-and-ready nature of medical care up until the 1940s is reflected in the death of six people in operations. Three of these operations were for appendicitis, and may reflect the difficulty that rural people had in reaching hospitals in time for surgery to be successful. At least one person buried in the Finnish cemeteries died of appendicitis without having received an operation, while a Finnish woman who received an emergency appendectomy on her kitchen table survived thanks to the skill of the local doctor (Schelstraete 1982:162).

There are three deaths attributed variously to dysentery, diphtheria and typhoid that suggest problems with the quality of drinking water on some farms. The diphtheria death was attributed directly to drinking impure water from a prairie slough.

So-called “childhood” diseases are recorded as taking the lives of five people. There are two deaths from whooping cough, two from meningitis and one from polio.

Other causes of death include gastritis and other problems with the digestive tract (5), kidney disease (4), liver disease (1), rheumatoid arthritis (1), diabetes (1), epilepsy (1), lupus (1), emphysema (1), Parkinson’s disease (1), senility (1), and internal hemorrhage (1).

One death recorded in the St. John’s Lutheran Church Register of Funerals in New Finland was related to “an obvious bondage – alcohol – to remind us of our own bondage(s) & need for God’s grace.” Alcohol abuse was an acknowledged problem in the Finnish communities, leading in New Finland to the founding of the Goodwill Temperance Society in 1919 (Schelstraete 1982:52-53). Certain individuals are described in all the local histories as prone to bouts of drunkenness, but since these books are celebrations of local heritage, social problems naturally tend to be minimized.

The reputation of the immigrant Finns as short-tempered and prone to fighting, particularly when drunk, is sometimes acknowledged (Lindström 1992:107; Schelstraete 1982:69; Birt 1993:19-20), but none of the people buried in the Finnish cemeteries are recorded as having met a violent death. Acts of violence did occur. For example, the impetus for founding the Goodwill Temperance Society was one Finn who fired a shotgun at a neighbour over a dispute that arose while they were drinking (Johnson 1962:70). There is also the unconfirmed story about a murder committed by David Kautonen, the first settler in New Finland (Birt 1993:21). Certainly, social events such as weddings, which tended to be “wet,” often led to disruptive or violent behaviour (Virtaranta 1996:81, 95). On occasion a fight took place between the Finns and their Hungarian or Swedish neighbours, although the English, aware that it was the habit of Finnish men to carry one or more knives at all times, were thought to avoid altercations with them (Virtaranta 1996:95). In short, there are indications of violence in the Finnish communities that underline the absence of acts of violence in the historical record. It may be, as the Rev. Saarisuu once suggested in his old-fashioned style of Finnish, that Canada’s English-based culture of peace and justice tamed the hot-blooded Finns:

Life in the old days in New Finland attempted to be a continuation of the life that was lived in the wide-open fields of Häme, Kauhava and Lapua at the time when the emigrants left those places. The hot blood of the knife fighters burst forth here, too, in one way or another, but when the generation born here knew naught of those ancient brawlers, the

fighter as an idol slowly died down. The locals say that the influence of the adjacent English is the reason for this. The English, you see, considered the fighting habits of New Finland to be bad and unmanly, and through close contact, they passed on higher ideals and were thus able to achieve more peaceful neighbourliness [Saarisuu 1940:63, translated by Peter Gallén].

More likely, however, the Finnish settlers kept their distance from their neighbours, discouraged local conflicts with exaggerated stories about the ferocity of knife-wielding Finns, settled their differences among themselves, and drew the attention of the police and other authorities to their settlements as little as possible (Birt 1993:19-23; Schelstraete 1982:69).

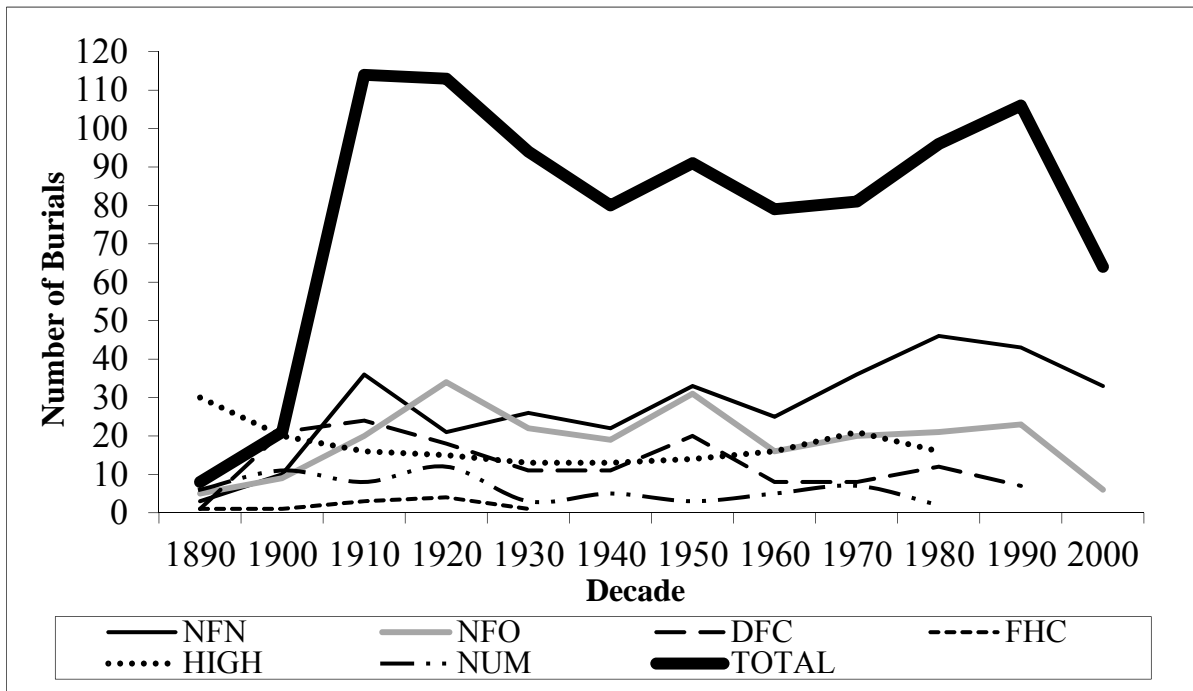
Similarly absent are any acknowledged cases of suicide in any of the Finnish cemeteries. There are a few cases that may have been suicide but were accepted by community consensus as an accident (local resident, personal communication, 2010). Four Finns whose deaths were declared to be suicide are buried in multi-ethnic cemeteries, not one of the Finnish cemeteries. All are men; two are middle-aged, one is in his prime, and one is a teenager. Three used a gun to commit suicide while one hanged himself. Members of their families are buried in the same multi-ethnic cemeteries, perhaps because they found it important to be near their loved one and it may not have been possible to bury a suicide in the local Finnish cemetery.

Any examination of the causes of death needs to recognize that, often deliberately, the historical record tells only part of the story behind a death. For example, the death of a woman who died from drinking an abortion concoction is likely to be recorded as due to a generic cause, such as “heart failure,” without providing any further information. There is a natural tendency in many records to avoid any reference to alcoholism, violence, suicide, mental illness, poverty, and other social problems, and occasionally it is necessary to gather additional information and/or read between the lines to understand the truth of a situation.

## **5.6 Burial Rates**

Figure 5.2 shows the number of burials in each Finnish cemetery in each decade, as well as the overall total of burials by decade for all the Finnish cemeteries.





**Figure 5.2:** Graph of the number of burials in the Finnish cemeteries by decade.

The number of burials peaked in almost all cemeteries in the 1910s and 1920s, which were decades that provided challenging health and living conditions for the immigrants settling in Saskatchewan. These decades also correspond to the period in which the earliest immigrants would have begun to die of old age. In the 1930s the number of burials fell sharply and remained relatively low until the 1970s, when the burial rate rose again.

Four eras may be discerned in Table 5.2 that roughly correspond to generational changes in the Finnish population. The period up to 1920, which shows the highest burial rates, marks the life span in Saskatchewan of the earliest Finnish immigrants. After 1920, when homesteading and immigration were virtually complete and the Finnish settlements acquired better services and living condition, burial rates drop. At this point, the next generation began to move away from the Finnish communities for a variety of reasons, often encouraged to do so by major world events such as the Great Depression and World War II. In the period from 1940 to 1970, burial rates stabilized at a low level, suggesting that the second- and third-generation Finns now being buried were living in smaller, and in some cases, disintegrating Finnish communities. After 1970, the number of burials in the Finnish cemeteries increased, mostly due to additional burials in the New Finland New Cemetery. The fact that the New Cemetery experienced its highest

numbers of burials after 1970, while the burial rate in the Old Cemetery did not increase, confirms that by 1970, the New Cemetery had become the primary burying ground in New Finland. This change may be linked to the new role that evolved for the New Finland cemeteries in the 1980s as a result of Canada's new policies promoting multiculturalism (Hännikäinen 2010b:15). It was a time when pride in one's ethnic heritage was being encouraged, leading some people with Finnish ancestry to regard New Finland as a place to holiday or retire or visit in order to get in touch with their cultural roots. Some who had moved away from New Finland now made provision for the return of their bodies after death for burial in the New Cemetery.

## **5.7 Absence as Artifact in the Finnish Cemeteries**

Archaeologists have found that in some cemetery contexts, much may be learned by examining who is absent from the cemetery and why (e.g., Lever 2009). Given the large size of the families that the Finnish immigrants produced, the noticeable decline in the number of burials in the 1930s cannot be explained solely on the basis of improvements to the Finnish immigrants' health and quality of life. From 1930 to 1970, many children of Finnish immigrants were not buried in the Saskatchewan communities of their childhood, which raises the question of where these people went. While a definitive answer to the question cannot be given, some suggestions may be made based on information gleaned from local histories and the cemeteries:

1. *Exogamous Marriages*. The sons of immigrant Finns are buried in the Finnish cemeteries more often than the daughters, even though the bodies of numerous women who worked, married and died outside the community have been returned for burial there. This fact indicates that many women who married outside their Finnish community appear to have been buried with their husbands and children in other cemeteries.
2. *The Search for Money and Employment*. The number of part-time and seasonal jobs and businesses that Finnish farm families needed to survive indicates that a significant proportion of them struggled economically. The droughts of the 1920s and 1930s made additional sources of income absolutely necessary for most farm families, and the Great Depression made employment of any kind very difficult to find in Saskatchewan. Many young people left the province to find work, and sometimes whole families left. Only a small number of those who left returned to Saskatchewan to be buried in the Finnish cemeteries.

3. *The Search for Utopia.* Some Finns who settled in Saskatchewan were socialists who tried to pursue their political ideals in conservative rural communities where they frequently clashed with White and religious Finns (Warwaruk 1984:65-83). When the work began to build a socialist industrialized state in Russian Karelia, many of these Reds, who were struggling with crop failures, low incomes, ethnic discrimination, and political repression, decided to join other North American Finns who had bought into the idea of building an ethnically Finnish enclave in socialist Karelia. Nearly 100 people, consisting mostly of young adults with their families, left the Elbow region for Karelia in the 1930s (Warwaruk 1984:83), and a few additional people went there from other areas of the province (Schelstraete 1982:130). Some of these young idealists were shot by the Stalinist regime, which saw them as politically dangerous. Some of their families remained in Russia; others were able to leave but chose to live in Europe or the U.S., while still others resettled in Canada but not in their original communities. Only a few returned to Saskatchewan, and none appear to be buried in the Finnish cemeteries. As a result, a large slice of that particular generation is absent from the cemeteries, leaving only traces of its existence in the form of a few isolated graves. For example, Dunblane Finnish Cemetery includes the grave of a four-year old who died before his family moved to Karelia (Coteau History Committee 1981:360). The family returned to Canada a few years later, and its other members are buried in B.C. or Ontario. Only one small child remains in the cemetery to tell the family's story.

A few other Finnish idealists from Saskatchewan moved to British Columbia where they were part of the utopian Finnish socialist community known as Sointula [Place of Harmony] (e.g., Schelstraete 1982:110, 284).

4. *Political-Religious Differences.* As will be shown in Chapter Six, the pattern of Finnish burials in Saskatchewan reveals a tendency among socialist Finns to be buried in town or rural multi-ethnic cemeteries rather than one of the Finnish cemeteries. Most Finnish cemeteries were Christian, and their policies did not always accommodate Finns with secular or atheistic beliefs. These Finns tended to be buried elsewhere, and in combination with the emigrations described above, this tendency was another factor contributing to lower burial rates in the Finnish cemeteries in the middle of the twentieth century. Also, faced with non-acceptance, some socialist Finns simply left Saskatchewan to find a more politically compatible place to live, usually B.C. or Ontario.

5. *Military Service.* At least nine men buried in the cemeteries were veterans of World War I, 16 were veterans of World War II, and two were members of the Canadian Armed Forces of today. However, the Honour Rolls in the relevant local histories show that many more Saskatchewan Finns served Canada in the military than are recognized as former soldiers in the cemeteries. Military service in Canada gave these men training and employment that they could not find in their home communities. While the 17 veterans noted above represent those who chose to return to a Finnish community in Saskatchewan, at least to be buried, many others may have accepted the opportunity provided by the military to find good jobs and make their lives elsewhere. Each major world conflict likely contributed to the lowering of the mid-century burial numbers in the Finnish cemeteries by drawing away some people who might otherwise have lived and been buried in the Finnish communities.
6. *Retirement from Farming.* Some Finnish men and women who managed to stay on their farms during the droughts, the Depression and the wars experienced prosperity in their later years and were able to retire from farming. According to the local histories, many then moved away from the land they had farmed. Either they moved to nearby centres where services for the elderly were better than in the isolated rural areas, or they moved to be close to children who had relocated years earlier. In some cases they sought a more propitious climate or cultural milieu. At any rate, when they died, most were buried in the place to which they had retired, lowering the number of older people buried in the Finnish cemeteries.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **INDICATORS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN THE FINNISH CEMETERIES**

Each cemetery is a material expression of the way that particular individuals, families and communities dealt with the challenges that inevitably arise when someone dies, and each one records how changes occurred over time in customs and beliefs related to death. However, cemeteries also provide a considerable amount of information about the lifeways as well as the deathways of the people buried there. Examined as artifacts of material culture, the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan are a multi-dimensional expression of Finnish immigrant culture that includes numerous general indicators of how Saskatchewan Finns saw themselves and their communities and how their social identity changed over time.

With this in mind, this section explores six facets of the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan as indicators of the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns. First, a spatial analysis of the cemeteries is carried out in order to learn more about the relationships between the cemeteries and their Finnish communities, between the Finns and other communities in the area, and between the Finns and the natural environment, as well as the relationships between the Finns buried in each cemetery. Next the treatment of graves within the cemeteries is examined systematically to identify trends and differences among and within the cemeteries with respect to grave marker types, styles and decoration. In addition, the major suppliers of grave markers to the Finnish cemeteries are identified. The symbols, epitaphs and names recorded on grave markers in the cemeteries are then analyzed for the evidence each of these grave marker attributes can provide about the way that the Saskatchewan Finns viewed themselves and their world. The material evidence in the cemeteries is shown to be a rich source of information about the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns.

#### **6.1 Spatial Relationships**

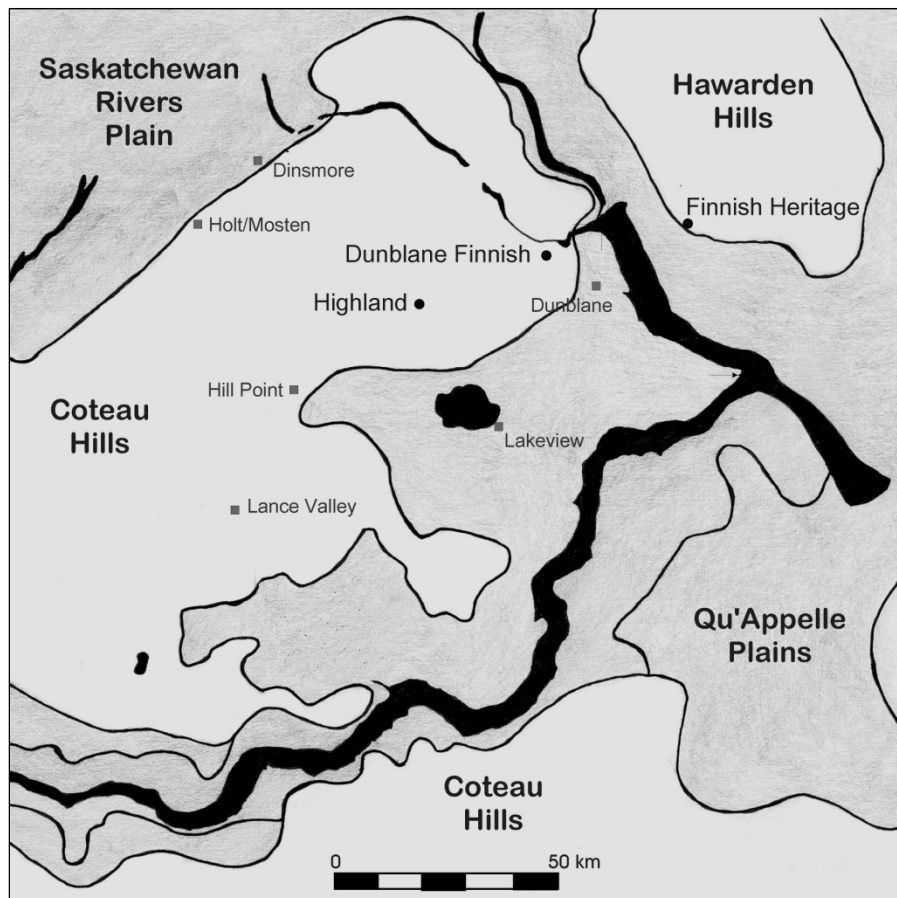
##### *6.1.1 Cemetery Location*

All the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan are rural cemeteries located at least several kilometres from the nearest town or village. Each one represents a response to the problem of how to dispose of the dead bodies of family members, friends and neighbours. In some cases

bodies were interred in small private graves, often on the family farm, but the existence of the cemeteries shows that at some point in each area, people came together as a community to establish larger public burying places.

*6.1.1.1 Cemeteries as Community Markers:* To a large extent, each Finnish cemetery can be regarded as a geographic marker for an area where rural Finnish immigrants coalesced into a community. These communities were defined by a shared natural environment as well as a shared sociocultural background, and in most cases, they were also physically marked by other shared facilities, such as a hall, church, store or school.

The connection between cemetery location and settlement patterns is clearly visible among the Finns who settled in the Elbow region (see Figure 6.1).



**Figure 6.1:** The Elbow region of the South Saskatchewan River showing three Finnish cemeteries and six multi-ethnic district cemeteries in which Finnish immigrants are buried. Divisions between physiographic regions are based on Richards and Fung 1969:40.

As one early Finnish immigrant described the Elbow region, “The Finns do not form a cohesive entity here because the settlement is divided by some smaller Swedish and Norwegian groups: also a few Englishmen and even Canadians are lost among us” (Oikarainen 1921:158, translated by Peter Gallén). Spread over a large area and intermingled with other ethnic groups, these Finns tended to form smaller communities, each based in a particular district marked by a cemetery.

As described in Chapter Four, Finnish Heritage Cemetery was created to serve the earliest Finnish settlers on the east side of the South Saskatchewan River, particularly in the RM of Loreburn No. 254. The east-side Finns visited their counterparts on the other side of the river, but the fact that some of them eventually gave up their east-side homesteads and moved across the river to be part of a larger Finnish community indicates that the Finns on each side of the river lived more or less separately. Immediately opposite on the west side of the river in the RM of Coteau No. 255, Dunblane Finnish Cemetery served the Finns who populated the river plain, especially those who lived within Finland School District No. 3089. In Finnish, which is a tongue-in-cheek amalgamation of Finnish and English that was used among Finnish immigrants to North America (Virtaranta 1982:78), these people were referred to as the “Flatlaiset” [people of the flats] while those who homesteaded further away from the river on the Coteau Hills (known locally as the Finn Hills), were called the “Hillikko” [people of the hills] (local resident, personal communication, 2010).

The hill people who farmed the hilly terrain covered by Big Valley School District No. 2872 and Rock Point School District No. 3994 formed a close-knit community that tended to bury its dead in Highland Cemetery. However, further west in the part of the Coteau Hills that spreads into the RM of Victory No. 226 and the RM of King George No. 256, many Finns did not use Highland Cemetery but chose to be buried with their closest neighbours in multi-ethnic district cemeteries. The same choice was made by the Finns who settled even further to the northwest where the hills revert back to river plain around Wiseton and Dinsmore. In the most western part of the Elbow region, at least 136 people with Finnish ancestry are buried in the multi-ethnic cemeteries of Lakeview, Lance Valley, Holt/Mosten, Hill Point, and Dinsmore.

In most cases, the decision regarding burial in a particular cemetery indicates identification with and allegiance to the community that the cemetery serves. The loyalties of those who chose to be buried in the Finnish cemeteries along the South Saskatchewan River were both ethnic and regional, while the Finns further west who were buried in multi-ethnic

cemeteries appear to have had a different set of allegiances. They chose not to be interred with the Finns in the existing Finnish cemeteries, and any desire to be identified as a Finn after death was not strong enough to motivate them to create and maintain their own Finnish cemeteries. Their choice of burial place may be significant when the history of settlement in the region is considered.

The Finnish burials and cemeteries in the Elbow region appears to replicate on a smaller scale the overall pattern of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan, whereby late-arriving, often more socialistic Finns bypassed or moved out of established, conservative, church-oriented Finnish communities and were integrated into multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, eventually choosing burial with their neighbours in multi-ethnic cemeteries.

*6.1.1.2 Relationships to Surrounding Towns and Other Cemeteries:* A scan of the cemeteries in the towns and villages surrounding the Finnish communities in all areas of Saskatchewan shows that it was not uncommon for a Finnish immigrant to opt for burial in a nearby town or another rural cemetery rather than in the local Finnish cemetery. Some Finnish communities, and even some Finnish families, are visibly divided by burial place, with numerous members buried in the local Finnish cemetery and numerous members buried in one or more multi-ethnic cemeteries serving the same geographic area. For example, there are 59 Finns buried in the Nummola Cemetery and 64 buried in Hillcrest Cemetery, the town cemetery for non-Catholics just outside Shaunavon. The question is: why would some Finns choose alternative burying places?

Part of the explanation undoubtedly lies in the fact that Finnish farmers often retired to the nearest town, where they died and were consequently buried. Another part comes from the marriage of beloved children or other relatives to non-Finns, and the choice that was sometimes made to be buried near them rather than with the Finnish community. Still another part of the explanation appears to lie in the neglect of some of the Finnish cemeteries and the understandable preference for burying loved ones in a cemetery that would be predictably well-managed and maintained. It is also possible, however, that some degree of separation or alienation from the Finnish community was occasionally a factor in the choice to be buried elsewhere. For example, all four Finns who are known to have committed suicide are buried in a nearby town cemetery or a nearby rural, multi-ethnic cemetery. Their burial location suggests



that, perhaps for religious or social reasons, their families found it more appropriate or comfortable to inter their loved one at a distance from the Finnish community.

The cemeteries indicate a complicated relationship between the Finnish communities and the nearby towns and rural areas. Burials outside the Finnish community sometimes indicate lines of division and exclusion within the community. These lines could be social, political, economic, or religious in nature. A choice for burial outside the community solidifies the separation by giving the deceased an identity in death that is not explicitly Finnish. The large number of town burials for the Saskatchewan Finns likely arose from a combination of factors, but it indicates that other identities (e.g., occupation, class, region, or religion) were as important to some Nummola Finns as their ethnic or community identities.

The choice of burial place expresses a lack of cohesiveness among the Saskatchewan Finns in a somewhat different way in New Finland. The New Finlanders established two cemeteries at nearly the same time, just over two kilometres apart, to serve a single, relatively compact and well-defined farm community of Finnish Lutherans. The local histories describe the establishment of the cemeteries without explaining why two were needed. However, congregational rivalries within the local Lutheran church, layered over personal and family rivalries, were likely at the bottom of the decision to found the New Cemetery (Hännikäinen 2010a:136-138; Lindström 1992:122-123). As a result, for many years in the history of New Finland, when the time came to bury a loved one, families had to make a choice whether to use the Old or the New Cemetery. Their choice was not always consistent with which cemetery was closest to the home farm or their church, and it frequently communicated to the community where the family's religious and social loyalties lay. By carefully sifting the evidence in church records, local histories and grave markers, Hännikäinen was able to associate the Old Cemetery with the Suomi Synodists and the New Cemetery with the National Evangelicals (Hännikäinen 2010a:137-138). It may also be worth noting that of the individuals identified in the local histories as belonging to the Apostolic Lutheran Church, all who are buried in New Finland were buried in the New Cemetery. Even today, out of 121 family names found in the New Finland cemeteries, only 15 (12%) appear in both cemeteries. While the religious and personality conflicts that led to the creation of two cemeteries have not been recorded and their influence has largely faded with time, the cemeteries still testify to the seriousness of the divisions that once complicated life in New Finland.

*6.1.1.3 Relationships to the Natural Environment:* Each Finnish cemetery has a different character that stems in part from the topography, climate and vegetation of the area in which the cemetery is located. The Finns who immigrated to Saskatchewan settled in different natural environments, which not only shaped their relationship to the land that they settled, but may also have influenced the way that they handled burials and looked at issues of life and death.

The New Finland New Cemetery is the largest and most park-like of the Finnish cemeteries. Located near the church and the centre of the community, it opens to the west onto a well-travelled gravel road (see Figure 6.2). It is bordered on the north by a smaller road and on the east by a stand of bush, and on two sides it overlooks pastures and cultivated fields framed by remnants of the poplar forest that once covered the entire area. Planted mature spruce trees shelter the oldest part of the cemetery, and the entire area is covered with grass. Since the cemetery is nearly filled, numerous gravestones are visible to passersby on the grid road, which contributes to the settled look of the area. Although it is rustic, the cemetery is a prominent feature of the local landscape. Taken in association with the church, it asserts the identity of New Finland as an established agrarian church-oriented community.



**6.2** The New Cemetery in New Finland. Saskatchewan Geospatial Imagery Collaborative (captured January 2012 from [www.flysask.ca/wms](http://www.flysask.ca/wms), NAD83 at E710878 m, N5593421 m).

In contrast, the New Finland Old Cemetery is almost hidden in a wilder, less settled part of the local landscape (see Figure 6.3). The long, gravelled road accessing the Old Cemetery crosses a slough and can be difficult to drive in bad weather. The turn-off onto the road is not marked, and the cemetery is screened from passersby on the main road by thick natural tree growth consisting mostly of poplars. On three sides the cemetery is bounded by woodland, pastures and fields, and on the third side, a small road is partially visible through a fringe of bushes and trees. The birds and animals populating the slough and the surrounding bush give the

feeling of a wildlife sanctuary to this place of quiet solitude. Though the two cemeteries are similar in many ways, the New Cemetery is an open, integral part of the agrarian landscape while the less-used Old Cemetery is a place set apart deep within it. The secondary role that the Old Cemetery currently plays in New Finland is underscored by its location and setting.



**Figure 6.3:** The New Finland Old Cemetery is to the right, reached by a long access road. Saskatchewan Geospatial Imagery Collaborative (captured January 2012 from [www.flysask.ca/wms](http://www.flysask.ca/wms), NAD83 at E711163 m, N5595406 m).

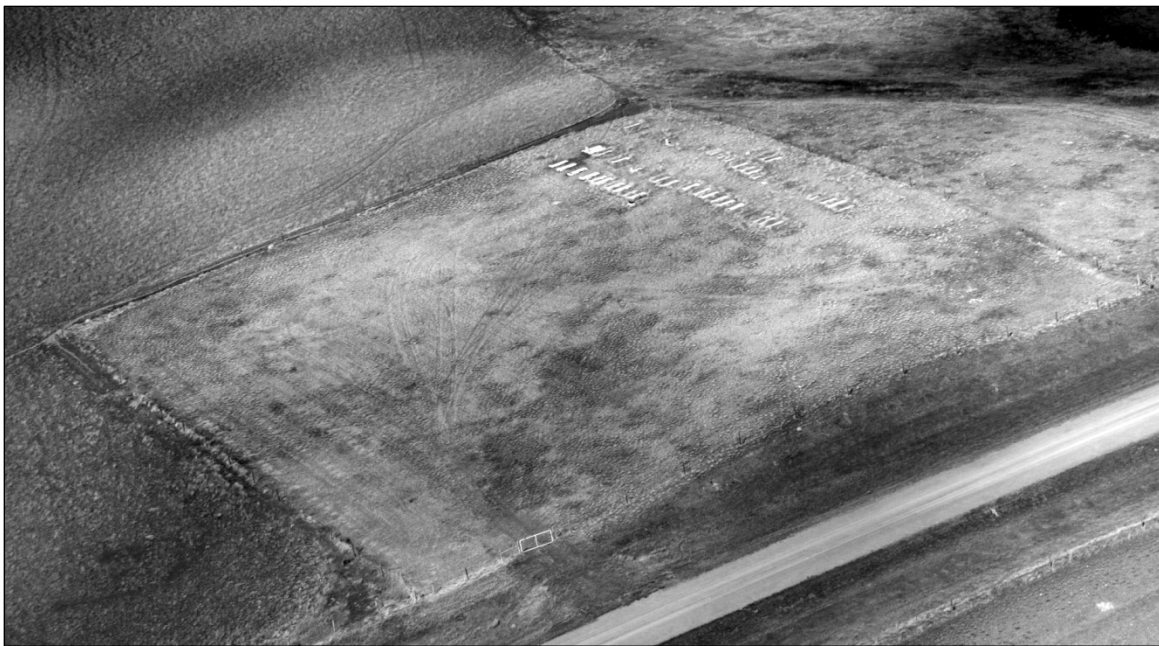
Dunblane Finnish Cemetery is also off the beaten track, but its location high atop a windswept hill makes it visible for miles around (see Figure 6.4).



**Figure 6.4:** Dunblane Finnish Cemetery looking out across a valley.

The view from Dunblane Finnish Cemetery is beautiful, and the open, unsheltered setting underlines the wilder aspects of nature. No trees have survived here. In death the Finnish pioneers make do without the shelter of trees just as many did in life when they had to build sod homes rather than wooden ones on the bare Coteau Hills. Very little can grow in the dry, gravelly soil of the cemetery, but a variety of hardy prairie plants have taken root and decorate the graves with small, low-growing flowers throughout the spring and summer. This is not a cemetery that encourages visitors to linger and contemplate; it has largely been given over to nature and to death. However, its hilltop location makes it an ever present reminder of mortality for locals who know that the faint white line in the distance marks the fence and stones of a cemetery. Since 1967 when the Dunblane Laestadian Lutheran Church was built nearby, the cemetery has also been conveniently close to the major meeting place for most of the community it serves, visible on a regular basis to those with family buried in the cemetery.

Nummola Cemetery also has a bare, windswept setting on a smaller hill (see Figure 6.5).



**Figure 6.5:** Aerial photo of Nummola Cemetery in 2007 by Kevin Smith. Used with permission.

Although the cemetery is located next to a grid road that has steady rural traffic, the Nummola graves are concentrated in a few rows on top of the hill in the corner of the cemetery farthest from the gate. The grave markers are invisible to casual passersby, and the road access is

overgrown to an extent that it does not invite people to stop and look around. Without signage at the gate, it is doubtful that most people driving by would even know that a cemetery was there. In the summer the grave markers are almost invisible in the sea of waving prairie grass, and in the winter they are largely buried in snow. There are no trees or flowers or walkways that would facilitate visits to the graves. Except for the markers and fencing, Nummola is barely distinguishable from the open agricultural lands around it. In this area, the prairie appears to be barely kept at bay by grain fields and a few sparsely scattered farmsteads.

Like Nummola, Finnish Heritage Cemetery rises from an open landscape of large grain fields (see Figure 6.6), but it is located very close to the gravelled road that runs by it. Although small, with only five gravestones still visible, its presence is noticeable to anyone travelling the road by car. Untreed and often covered with tall grass in the summer, the cemetery blends into the cultivated river plain that surrounds it. Its



**Figure 6.6:** Looking south at Finnish Heritage Cemetery from the road.

chain link fence and prominent sign set it apart as a burying ground, however, as does its location on a slight rise in the otherwise flat landscape. The sign declares the current purpose of the cemetery in celebrating the Finnish heritage of some of the area's original settlers.

A natural environment of bare rolling hills interspersed with treed valleys has been both shaped and accommodated in the construction of Highland Cemetery (see Figures 6.7 and 6.8). Although Highland Cemetery is now bordered on the south by a large grid road, it is reached by a poorly marked, sometimes muddy, older road that turns off the grid road, winds behind a slough, and opens onto the cemetery from the north side. The hill in the middle of the



**Figure 6.7:** Highland Cemetery entrance looking south.

cemetery screens the entrance from the grid road, giving Highland Cemetery a privacy and quietness that it would not otherwise enjoy. Although the hill itself has been somewhat flattened to facilitate burials, it provides a fine view over a large bush-rimmed slough to the west and south that attracts numerous water birds as well as local residents interested in canoeing or picnicking. Mature spruce trees shelter the north side of the cemetery, which is where most graves have been placed, while the hill itself provides shelter from southerly winds. A tall carragana hedge further shelters the cemetery to the east. Although the cemetery has been seeded to grass, many wildflowers also grow there, and it is frequented by numerous birds and animals. Highland Cemetery is a secluded place where one is close to nature, but here a successful effort has been made to make the landscape kinder, almost cozy, for the deceased and their families.



**Figure 6.8:** Highland Cemetery showing the main grid road, smaller access road and surrounding sloughs. Saskatchewan Geospatial Imagery Collaborative (captured January 2012 from [www.flysask.ca/wms](http://www.flysask.ca/wms), NAD83 at E347696 m, N5672619 m).

The six Finnish cemeteries exhibit somewhat different relationships to nature and the cycle of life and death. In the New Finland cemeteries and Highland cemetery, attempts have been made to landscape the area so that it is pleasant for human visitors. These attempts recognize the restrictions imposed by prairie conditions on any effort to adapt the suburban garden model of the cemetery to the challenging climate of Saskatchewan. The developers of these three cemeteries did not go so far as to try to capture the “prairie spirit” in the cemetery

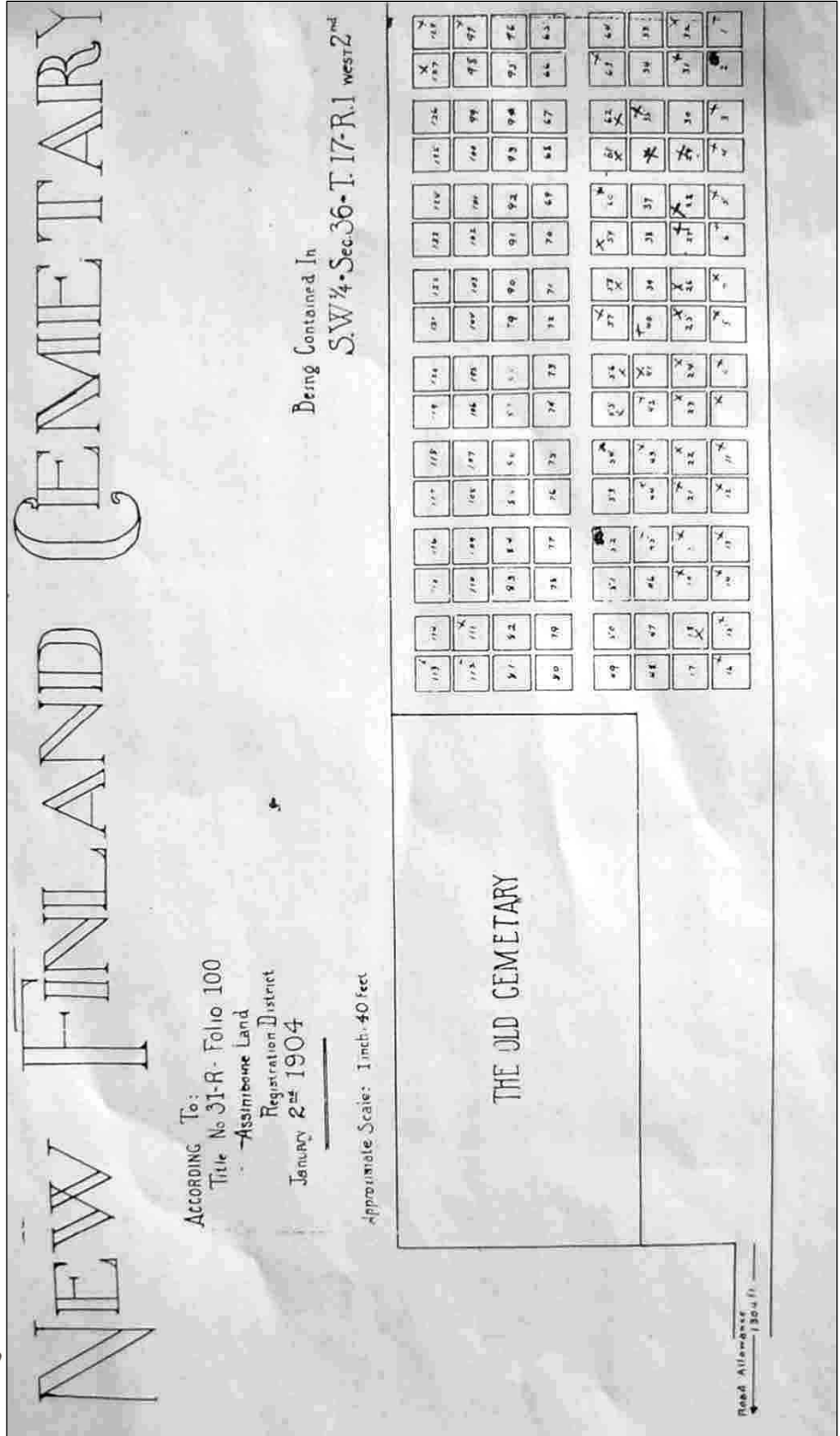
(Miller 1915), e.g., by using horizontal lines or native plants, but they did choose locations where hardy domestic plants, trees and grasses could flourish with little attention. Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, Nummola Cemetery and Finnish Heritage Cemetery, on the other hand, have been placed in locations where landscaping attempts, if indeed any were made, have proved futile. As wild prairie cemeteries, they exhibit either less effort to control nature or a less successful effort to control nature than the other three more park-like cemeteries.

Warner (1959) has pointed out that on a symbolic level, cemeteries are bounded, set apart, controlled with rituals, and made pleasant with art and landscaping to provide a place where people can face the reality of death. The cemetery is “an external symbolic object made safe by tradition and the sanctions of religion” (Warner 1959:28). If Warner’s views about cemetery symbology are accepted, the wilder Finnish cemeteries may be seen as exhibiting less interest in control over death or perhaps a more fatalistic and accepting view of death as part of the natural cycle. The more developed cemeteries signal greater concern to put the living in a pleasant, manageable relationship to the dead.

### *6.1.2 Cemetery Design*

As noted earlier, all the Finnish cemeteries began as a “Boot Hill,” i.e., remains were buried and marked in a designated spot without any regulation or regard to an overall plan. As the number of dead grew and the decision was made to formalize the burying ground as a cemetery, plans were drawn up to organize and record all burials. Officials were appointed to ensure that these plans were followed and the cemetery finances kept in good order. All the cemeteries were similar in that they used a grid system to organize burials, and they followed the Christian practice of orienting graves so that the deceased face east in anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ on the Day of Resurrection. Differences between the cemeteries emerged, however, that reflect differences in the history and character of the various Finnish communities.

In New Finland, the hill in the Old Cemetery had been used for burials for more than a decade before the cemetery was registered. Since these disorganized early burials could not be integrated into a systematic burial plan, the hill area was ignored when the rest of the cemetery was surveyed into lots in 1904 (see Figure 6.9). The survey divided the cemetery into lots approximately 6 m x 6 m (20' x 20'), about the same size as the lots in the New Cemetery, which was initially surveyed at about the same time (see Figure 6.10). The plan for both cemeteries is



**Figure 6.9:** Plan for the New Finland Old Cemetery, 1904 (from a photocopy provided by St. John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church).



NEW CEMETERY  
New Finland, Sask.  
NW ¼ Sec. 24 Tsp. 17 R. 1 West 2<sup>nd</sup> (NW Corner)



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
48	47	46	45	44	43	42	41	40	39	38	37
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
72	71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64	63	62	61
GATE											
73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84
96	95	94	93	92	91	90	89	88	87	86	85
97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108
120	119	118	117	116	115	114	113	112	111	110	109
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132
144	143	142	141	140	139	138	137	136	135	134	133
145	147	149	151	153	155	157	159	161	163	165	167
146	148	150	152	154	156	158	160	162	164	166	168

Notes:

168 numbered lots; 8 graves per lot

Lot size: 6.7 m x 5.1 m (22' x 16' 10"); 1.8 m (6') walkway on the north side of each lot

Flat marker stake on SW corner of each lot

New survey August, 1994; ½ lots on south border surveyed Aug. 10, 1998

**Figure 6.10:** Plan for the New Finland New Cemetery, 1998 (redrawn from a photocopy provided by St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church).

straightforward in that it is built around a central avenue that allows access to all graves from the entrance road. The available land on either side of the access is then simply divided into square lots with a walkway space between them. The resulting grid of blocks and straight rows is also used in the other Finnish cemeteries and is dominant in cemeteries across Saskatchewan, perhaps because it is reminiscent of the grids of blocks and straight streets that shaped most small Saskatchewan towns.

Most lots in the New Finland cemeteries have 2-3 burials in them, but up to 11 people have been buried in some lots. The lots are large and were probably intended to serve as family lots. Although it is common in all the Finnish cemeteries, and probably cemeteries throughout North America, for graves to be grouped primarily by family, thus creating specific areas of the cemetery that belong to particular families, most of these groupings are informal. Someone in the family realizes that if family members are to be buried next to each other, which tends to be the preferred option, a number of adjacent plots need to be purchased ahead of time. The necessary plots are acquired, and as they are filled, they cumulatively make a particular area of the cemetery a memorial to the family. However, in the New Finland cemeteries, there are 18 lots that may be regarded as more formal groupings of graves by family, five in the Old Cemetery and 13 in the New Cemetery. These family lots are marked visually and set apart from other lots by a border landscaped or constructed around them, by a stone bearing only the family name surrounded by footstones or grass markers for the individual graves, by a single central gravestone that memorializes all the individuals buried in the lot, or a combination of the above. There are two stones bearing only the family name that are clearly family markers, as well as nine additional gravestones (obelisks, tablets and wedges) that may also be considered family markers because they list all burials in a lot containing at least four burials and function as the primary or only marker in the lot. Most of these family markers, but not all, are found in lots bounded by a curb, fence, hedge, terrace or other edging that separates them from nearby graves.

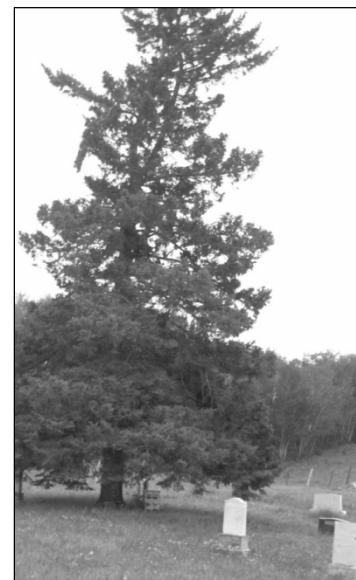
In New Finland 54 grave markers are found in these formalized family lots. This number represents 16% of all grave markers and 22% of all burials in New Finland. Leaving out the family name stones and anticipatory markers, the earliest dates on each marker in the family lots date the establishment of most of these lots to 1930 or earlier, but they also show that these lots have been used steadily across the decades: 1890s - 2 markers, 1900s - 2 markers, 1910s - 7 markers, 1920s - 8 markers, 1930s - 4 markers, 1940s - 5 markers, 1950s - 4 markers, 1960s - 4

markers, 1970s - 2 markers, 1980s - 6 markers, 1990s - 4 markers and 2000s - 3 markers. As the New Cemetery has filled, however, new land surveyed into lots has decreased the lot size by half. The new lots no longer facilitate large family groupings, although they accommodate the companion burials that became dominant in the last half of the twentieth century.

The design of the New Finland cemeteries around family lots may reflect the early establishment of these cemeteries, the relatively high number of people born in Finland who are buried there, and the fact that these cemeteries are administered by the church. In describing the cemetery culture of Finland, Viitamees (2002) notes that all cemeteries in Finland are administered by the church (with one exception), and most lots have only one grave marker. A gravestone with the family surname is put up soon after the lot is purchased, and the names of individuals are added to it as family members die until the lot is filled, providing on the stones an ad hoc representation of the family tree. The focus on family lots in the early history of the New Finland cemeteries may therefore be an offshoot of burial norms brought from Finland.

The use of family lots may also signal an exceptionally strong sense of family in New Finland. This interpretation is suggested by the inclusion in two different family lots of plaques that memorialize family members who have been buried elsewhere but wanted to have a presence in the family monument. One such plaque, provided by a woman who moved away from the community, states that she and her husband “were always drawn to their ‘Prairie Homes’ in Saskatchewan” and while interred in B.C., they “leave behind in this land many wonderful memories and their roots.” Such plaques were not found in the other cemeteries.

The New Finland cemeteries are also notable because they are the only ones that make any provision for visitors. Some of these provisions are rudimentary, including the planting of sheltering spruce trees and the construction of an unpainted wooden outhouse in the bushes on one side of the New Cemetery. In each of the New Finland cemeteries, however, on a small hill under a tall spruce, there is a bench for visitors built of concrete blocks and painted boards (see Figure 6.11). A small metal plaque on one of these benches states that it was built in 2005 by a community member as a centennial project. Cemetery benches are a



**Figure 6.11:** A spruce shades a small bench with a view of the cemetery.

convenience often found in Finland (Viitamees 2002), but in Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries, they are found only in New Finland.

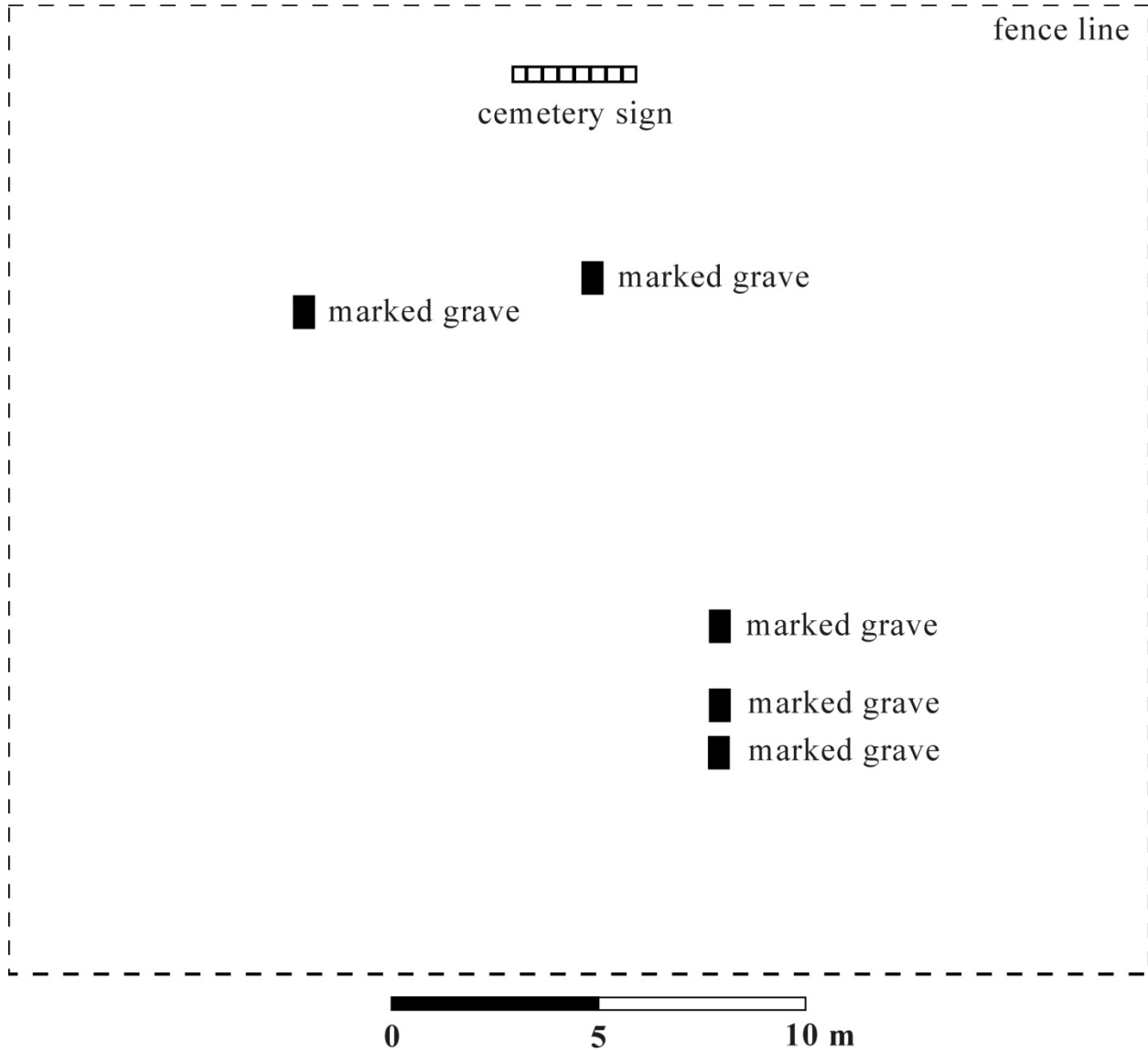
Another provision for visitors to the New Finland cemeteries is a gated entrance that includes fieldstone cairns with plaques providing background information about the New Finland settlement. Identical gates have been placed at the entrances to both cemeteries. Designed locally, the iron and steel gates are painted in the blue and white colours of the Finnish flag and decorated with a white cross, white dove, red prairie lilies, and an angular Finnish-looking motif. The mixture of symbols on the gates declares the sociocultural identity of the New Finland community as rooted in Christianity, Finnish heritage, and the land of Saskatchewan. A marble wedge-shaped gravestone recognising the first settler in New Finland has also been placed on the hill in the Old Cemetery. Although the Finnish cemeteries are not generally designed as places for people to linger and meditate or gather as a community, except on burial and clean-up days, these relatively recent arrangements indicate that the New Finland cemeteries have acquired a public face and purpose as well as the private one of serving the families with loved ones buried there. Visitors to the New Finland cemeteries are expected, particularly in June on Juhannus day, and the cemeteries have been somewhat re-organized as heritage destinations.

Little can be said about the design of Finnish Heritage Cemetery since the cemetery map has been lost. The size of the cemetery could only be estimated when the current fence and sign were erected, and the dimensions of individual graves have not been determined. Nevertheless, the five grave markers still visible in the cemetery appear to indicate that the graves were laid out in rows (see Figure 6.12). This arrangement suggests that the land was surveyed into regular rectangular lots in the same way as the other cemeteries. The recent geophysical survey of the cemetery confirmed this possibility, showing 27 possible unmarked graves laid out in four rows that include the visible grave markers (McLeod 2011:8). Undisturbed areas suitable for possible future interments have now been marked on each side of the existing graves.

The original plan for Nummola Cemetery, if one existed, was also lost with the disintegration of the cemetery association that organized it. The only map of the cemetery is based on a survey carried out when the RM of Grassy Creek took it over in the 1970s. Some graves mentioned in existing cemetery records have not been located and are not shown on the survey map (see Figure 6.13).

FINNISH HERITAGE CEMETERY  
Rural Municipality of Loreburn #254

NW ¼ Sec. 36 Tsp. 26 R. 6 West 3<sup>rd</sup>



Notes:

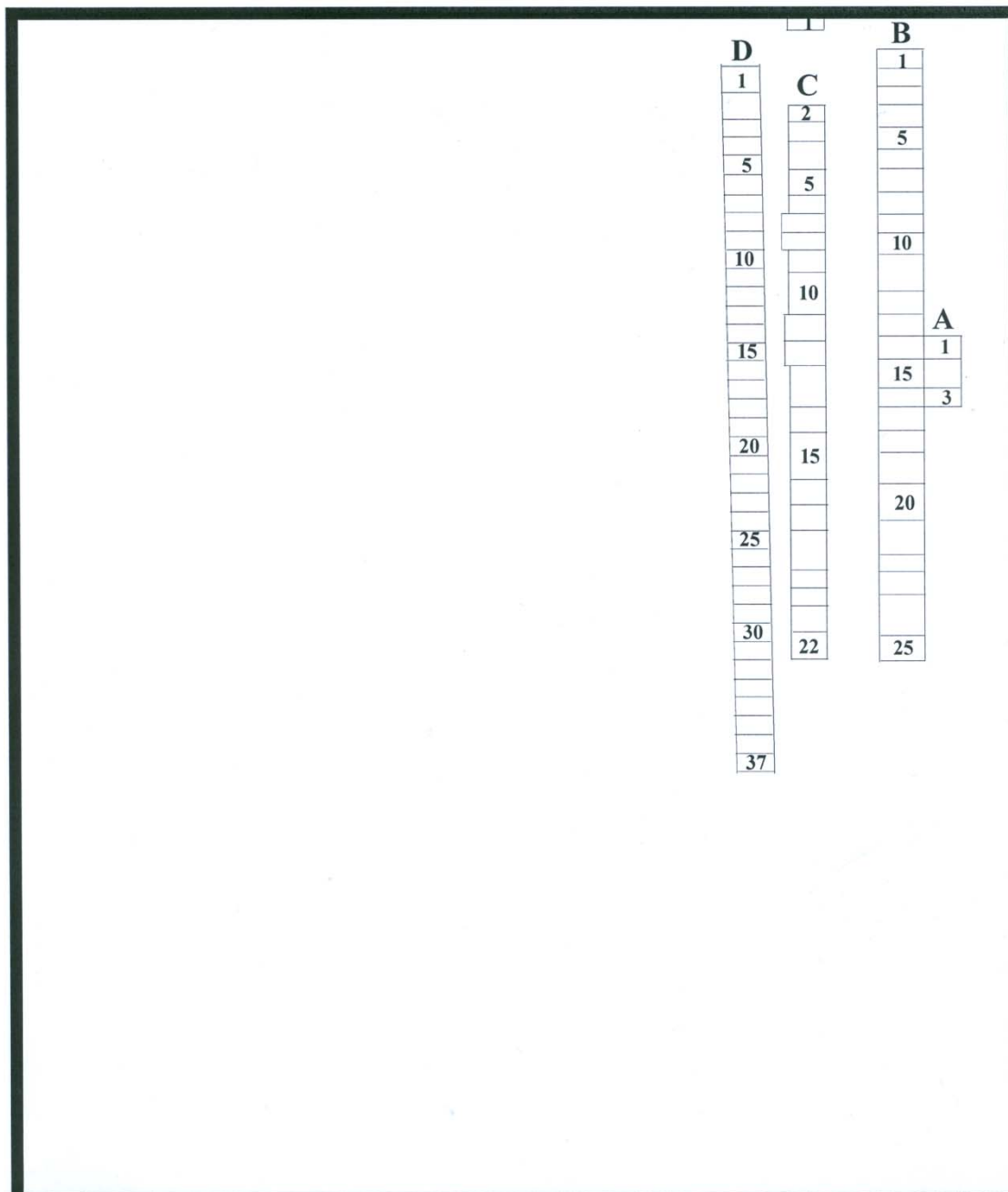
5 marked graves, adjacent unmarked graves known to be present

Graves located in the centre of fenced area in rows running north-south, lot sizes unknown

Fence dimensions: 27.4 m x 25.9 m (90' x 85')

**Figure 6.12:** Map of the visible features in Finnish Heritage Cemetery in 2010

NUMMOLA CEMETERY  
Rural Municipality of Grassy Creek #78  
SE ¼ Sec. 29 Tsp. 7 R. 17 West 3<sup>rd</sup>



Notes:  
Cemetery dimensions: 95.4 m x 80.5 m (313' x 264')  
4 rows, lot sizes irregular

**Figure 6.13:** Map of graves in Nummola Cemetery (redrawn from photographs of the survey map provided by the Rural Municipality of Grassy Creek).

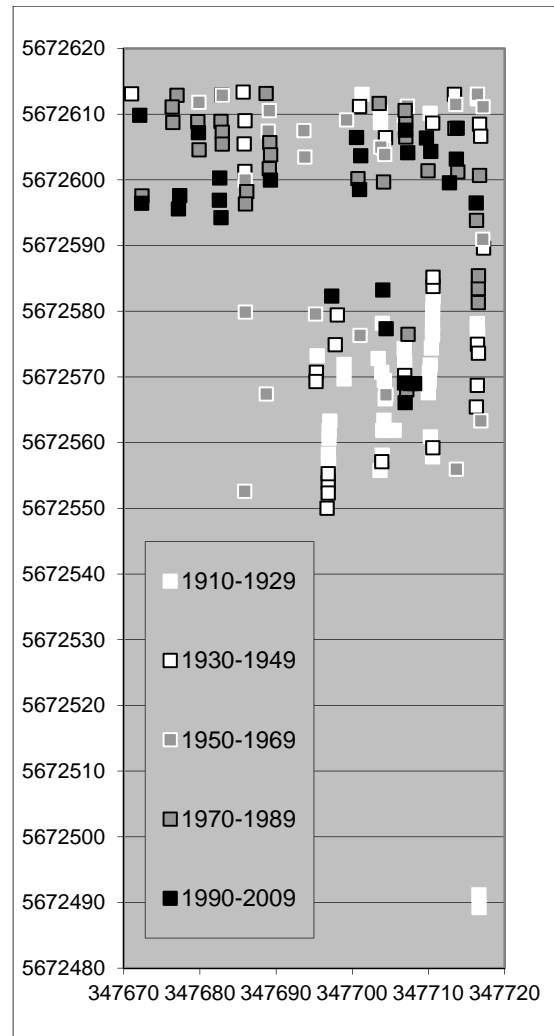
The graves in Nummola Cemetery are organized into four rows that are not exactly aligned and divided into lots that vary in their dimensions. Nummola appears to be the most egalitarian of the cemeteries in that cemetery plots were free, and people were buried together as they died, with only some loose grouping to give a degree of proximity to family members. Grave plots here do not mark territories staked out by families, but simply show the gradual accumulation of dead within a small community. The fact that everyone is buried close together gives an impression of solidarity in the face of death. The striking emptiness of most of the cemetery testifies to the unfulfilled expectation of its founders that Nummola would serve a growing community and over time need considerable space to accommodate succeeding generations of people descended from the original Finnish immigrants. However, many Nummola Finns are also scattered throughout Hillcrest Cemetery, the multi-ethnic Protestant cemetery just outside Shaunavon, which has served in some ways as a sister cemetery to Nummola (see Figure 6.14).



**Figure 6.14:** Aerial photograph of Hillcrest Cemetery near Shaunavon, where many Nummola Finns are buried. Taken in 2007 by Kevin Smith. Used with permission.

Highland Cemetery features a small hill in the centre of a long, narrow space. In the map of grave markers shown in Figure 6.15, each grave marker in Highland Cemetery has been assigned a shade on the grey scale by the year of the first burial it marks. The colours categorize the markers as falling into one of six date ranges: 1910-1929, 1930-1949, 1950-1969, 1970-1989 or 1990-2009. In the figure, the most recent date ranges appear the darkest and the oldest date ranges are the lightest. The concentration of most lightly shaded marker points in the centre of the figure confirms the early use of the hill area as a burying ground, with most dark-coloured, later burials located to the north near the gate.

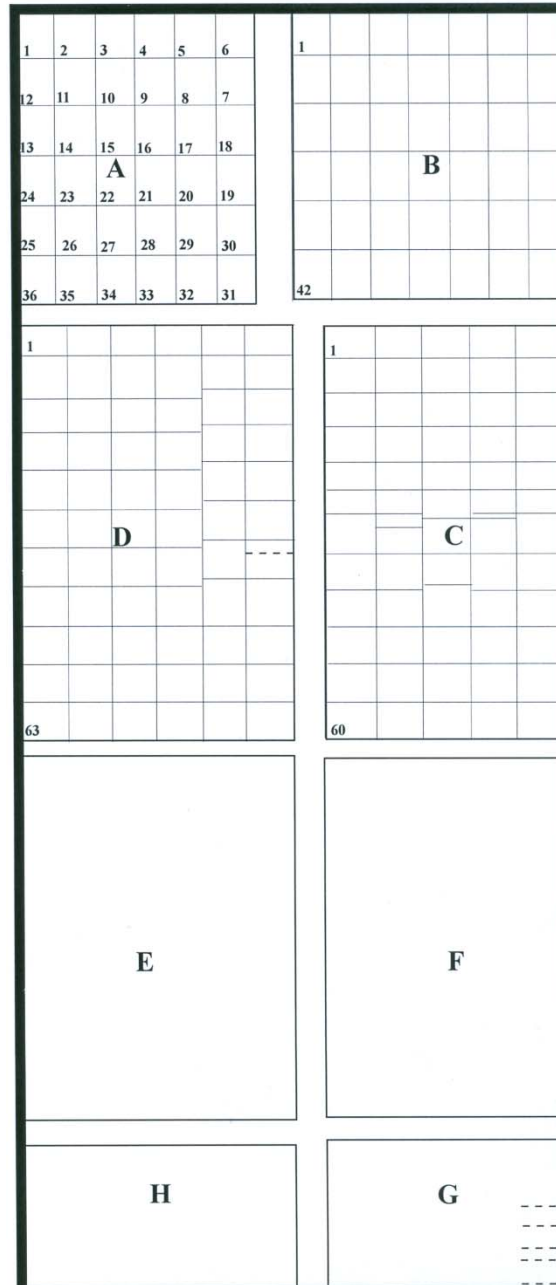
Like Nummola, Highland Cemetery was planned to provide enough land for many more burials than have been needed to date (see Figure 6.16). So far burials have been confined to Blocks A, B, C, part of D, and part of G. Highland is a little different from the other cemeteries, however, in that its land has been divided into blocks that are not all the same. In other cemeteries, all lots were created equal and sold to community members at the same price. In Highland Cemetery, the plots in blocks A and B are larger and considered to be placed in a more desirable location. Consequently, they are sold for a slightly higher price. Also, Highland is the only cemetery to make specific provision for people who lack the means to cover the expenses of a burial. Block G, which is located far away from the other blocks in a less desirable location next to a major grid road, has been reserved as a kind of “potter’s field” where half-lots are available at a cheaper price. There are five known burials there, but there are now only two small blank concrete pads marking these graves. It is not known exactly where any of the particular individuals in Block G were buried.



**Figure 6.15:** Map of Total Station survey of Highland Cemetery in 2010 by author with volunteer assistance, showing each grave marker and indicating time of first burial.



HIGHLAND CEMETERY  
 Rural Municipality of Coteau #255  
 SW ¼ Sec. 3 Tsp. 26 R. 9 West 3<sup>rd</sup>  
 Gate



Notes:

Fence dimensions: 46 m x 140 m (150' x 425'), divided into 8 blocks with 64 numbered lots  
 Lot size: 2.4 m x 3 m (8' x 10') in Blocks A & B, 2.4 m x 2.4 m (8' x 8') in Blocks C, D & G, 0.6 m (2')  
 between all lots in all blocks (Blocks E, F and H not in use)

**Figure 6.16:** Plan of Highland Cemetery (redrawn from photocopies of block plans provided by the Highland Finnish Cemetery Company).

The plan for Dunblane Finnish Cemetery is the most complex of the six Finnish cemeteries, featuring a wide central avenue that terminates in a large turning-circle for vehicles. The cemetery is divided into an east side and a west side, with three blocks of graves that cross-cut the two sides in rows A, B and C (see Figure 6.17). This design may not represent a vision for the cemetery so much as a diligent observation of the regulations respecting cemeteries that appear to have been put out by the provincial government around the time the plan was drawn up. A government leaflet found among the cemetery records lays out the following requirements for drives, walks and plots:

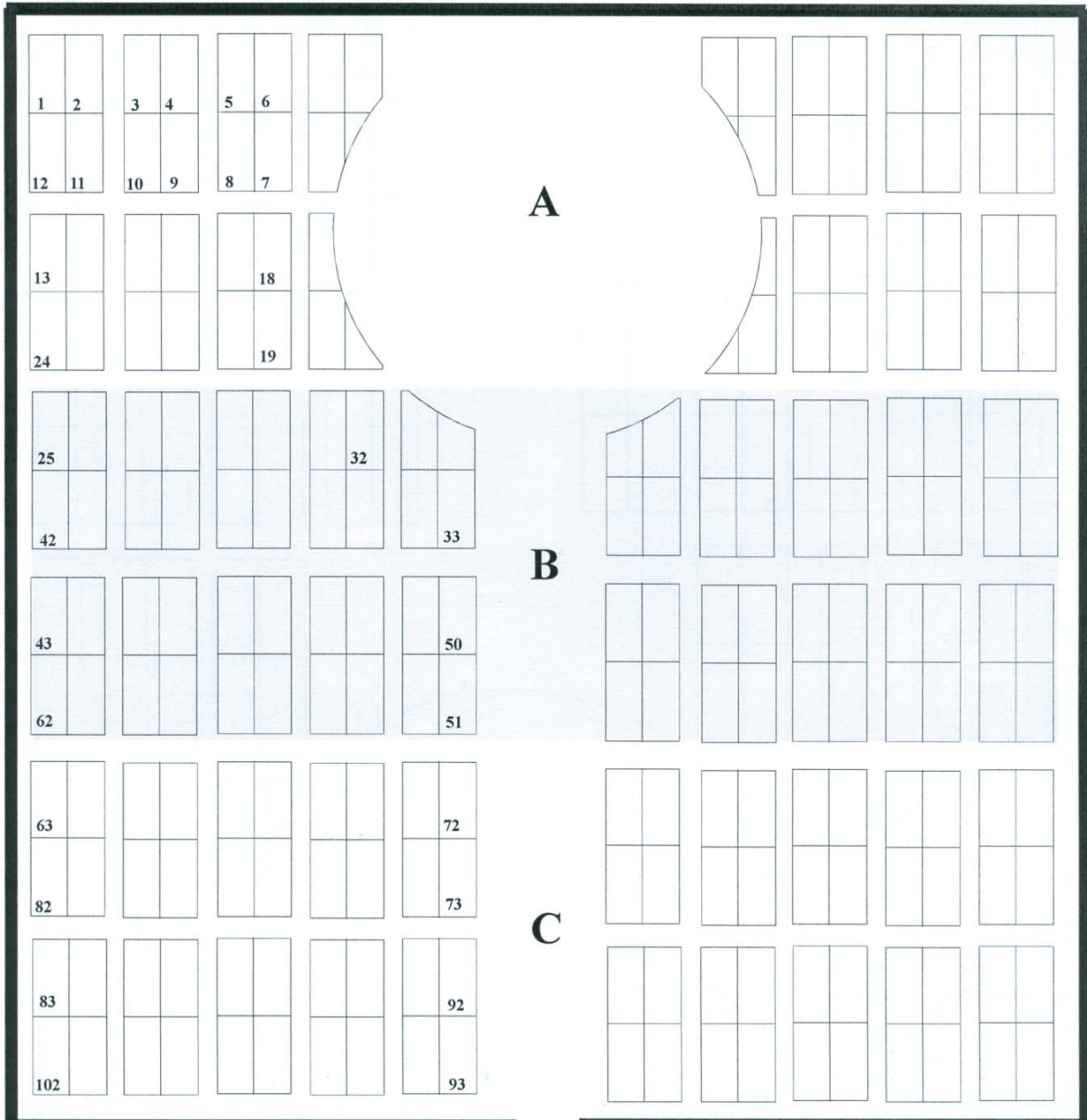
- Unless the cemetery plot adjoins a road allowance or street, connection thereto must be provided by a right of way at least 40 feet in width.
- In every cemetery of four acres or over in area a driveway must be shown of at least 30 feet in width between plot boundaries and a turning point 50 feet in diameter must be provided unless the driveway has access to a road allowance at each end.
- Every plot must be accessible from a walk at least 6 feet in width between plot boundaries. Cross walks may be laid out not less than 3 feet in width [Board of Highway Commissioners ~1913:1].

The spaciousness of Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, which was the last of the Finnish cemeteries to be incorporated and organized formally, may well be due to a higher level of regulation experienced in its design and establishment in comparison to the other cemeteries.

In the large burying ground provided by Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, the graves are spread out, partly to avoid encroaching on old unmarked burials, partly to provide private spaces in which particular families can congregate their dead, and partly to provide proximity for members of the same generation who lived and worked alongside one another. A 2010 survey that located the stones marking known graves in the cemeteries (see Figure 6.18) shows that the burials to date have taken place in blocks B and C, the two areas closest to the gate. Graves are distributed broadly and raggedly on both sides of a central avenue. There are a number of early graves on the east side, while the west side tends to have more recent graves. Numerous unmarked graves are present on the older east side, and it is likely that some of the empty spaces there also contain unknown graves. The cemetery's fence line is skewed because it is oriented to magnetic north while the survey is oriented to true north. Figure 6.18 also shows that burials in the cemeteries did not always follow the plan. For example, there should be a visible path, empty

# DUNBLANE FINNISH CEMETERY

Rural Municipality of Coteau #255  
NE ¼ Sec. 19 Tsp. 26 R. 7 West 3<sup>rd</sup>



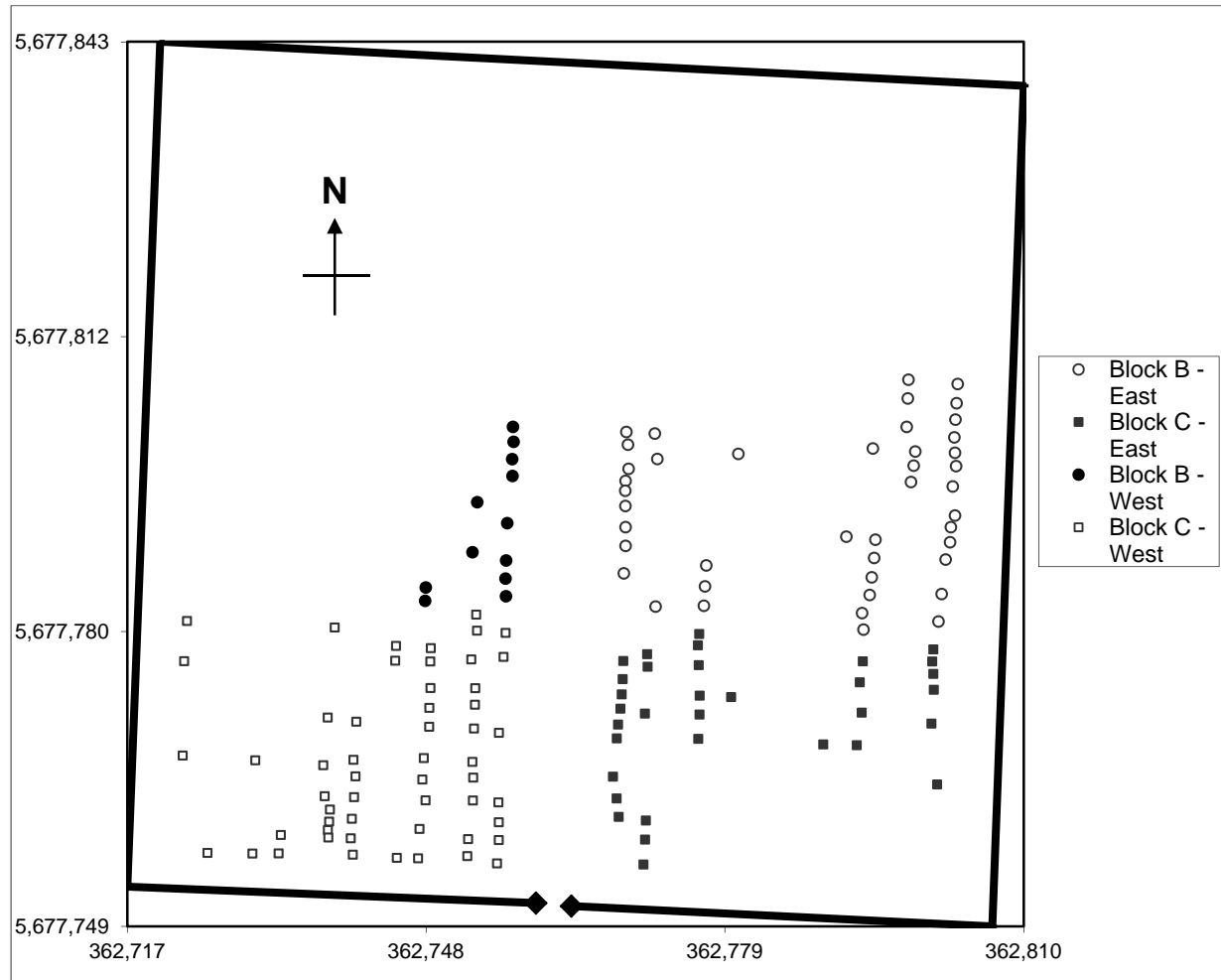
Notes:

Cemetery dimensions: 89.9 m x 89.9 m (295' x 295')

East and west halves subdivided by rows into blocks A, B and C; 3-4 plots in each lot

**Figure 6.17:** Plan for Dunblane Finnish Cemetery (redrawn from photographs of the full-scale cemetery map kept by the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery Company).

of graves, that marks the boundary between Blocks B and C, but this path is not obvious because there are two burials in the planned walkway, one north of Block C - West and the other south of Block B - East.



**Figure 6.18:** Map of Total Station survey of Dunblane Finnish Cemetery in 2010 by the author with volunteer assistance, locating each grave marker and indicating the cemetery blocks in use.

In reality, people were buried in these rural cemeteries pretty much as circumstances dictated. In the winter it was often difficult to place a grave exactly where it should be according to the plan, and on hills or in gravelly soils where the ground tended to slump, graves were dug in places that were stable enough to bear them rather than in the exact spot laid out in the plan. Some cemetery areas proved to be unsuitable for burials, due to moisture or soil problems or encroachments by other graves that left too little area. Also, it was difficult to deny someone the

right to be buried near a loved one, even though it messed up the overall design to fit a burial into a space where one hadn't been planned (see Figure 6.19). In Highland Cemetery, for example, lots that were intended to hold two burials frequently hold up to four people, although some of them are urn burials. This adaptability is an overriding characteristic of the Finnish cemeteries.



**Figure 6.19:** The small white grass marker in the centre of this photo has been placed in a walkway so the deceased could be buried next to family members.

Over time all the cemeteries that were in continual use experienced the need to change or deviate from original ideas or plans in order to serve their communities effectively.

### 6.1.3 *Groupings within the Cemetery*

According to the burial traditions of at least some people in Finland, there is significance to the part of the cemetery in which a person is buried (Manninen et al. 2010). The east and south sides mark the most desirable locations because of their association with the dawn and the Resurrection, and all graves are oriented so that the deceased is facing east. The north side of the cemetery, which is associated with the dark and the devil, tends to be the burial place for criminals, people who have drowned, suicides, women who have died in childbirth, and unchristened children. These traditions do not appear to have been followed in the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan, however. All graves are oriented east-west, and the cemeteries have tended to be filled first on hills or near entrances. There is no sign that the north side of the cemeteries is associated with “darker” burials. The graves of known atheists, people who have drowned, women who died in childbirth, and infants, both christened and unchristened, may be found throughout the cemeteries, interspersed with other graves. There are no known burials of criminals in these cemeteries. As noted earlier, Finns who committed suicide tend to be buried in cemeteries serving neighbouring towns or villages.

There was also a tradition in most parts of Finland (Karelia is an exception) of distinguishing between the rich and the poor by burying them in different areas of the cemetery (Manninen et al. 2010). This tradition disappeared over time in Finland and may not have been

carried to North America, since there is little evidence of this practice in Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries. Nevertheless, the Saskatchewan cemeteries vary in their practices of allocating graves. In Nummola, where burial plots are not individually owned, burials have taken place side by side as deaths occurred, with no apparent reservation of burial plots ahead of time. In Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and the New Finland cemeteries, lots have been sold and reserved for the use of the owners, resulting in a spontaneous self-selection into particular groups within the communities. All lots sold for the same price in these cemeteries. In Highland Cemetery, the price of lots varies, creating three groups of graves with different status associations. The most expensive, most frequently purchased lots are on the north side of the cemetery, the slightly less expensive lots are on the hill in the middle of the cemetery, and the lots designated for the poor are located on the southern side of the cemetery.

In discussing the family lots in the New Finland cemeteries, it was observed that the primary factor in the grouping of graves within the Finnish cemeteries is family. Even when people with different family names are buried next to each other, probing will usually reveal some kind of family connection between them. Thus, in one set of contiguous graves in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, Anna Rikkilehto, whose son, Olaf, changed his name to Johnson, lies next to her daughter-in-law, Wilhelmina Johnson, who was born a Sarvela and is buried next to her sister, Ida Sarvela, and her parents, Maunu and Anna Sarvela, as well as Magnus, Edith and Toivo Hjelt, three children of one of her brothers who changed his name to Hjelt. In this case, the names Rikkilehto, Johnson, Sarvela and Hjelt all represent one family grouping, and Maunu Sarvela, the last in the group to be buried, has actually been placed in a walkway to be near the other family members.

In addition to revealing the connections between family members, burial groupings can also reveal disconnections. A story of complicated family relationships may be read in the pattern of burials left by one family of Finnish immigrants. A girl who died in infancy is the only family member buried in the neighbourhood Finnish cemetery. She was followed in death by one of her brothers, a labourer on the home farm, who committed suicide as an adult and was buried in a multi-ethnic cemetery outside a nearby town. When their mother died in middle age of natural causes, she chose to be buried with her son in the multi-ethnic cemetery. Two of her other sons left the community and led successful lives elsewhere, but when they eventually died, they were buried back in their home neighborhood next to their mother and brother. Their father

had remarried, and when he, too, committed suicide, he was buried in the multi-ethnic cemetery, but at a short distance from his first wife and sons. When his second wife died, she was buried much further away from him with her own family. The spatial distribution of the graves for this family is telling since it suggests strong supportive relationships between some family members and the absence of such relationships between others.

The relative strength or weakness of family relationships is often indicated when individuals have to decide with whom they want to be buried. Cases may be found in the cemeteries in which different people with more than one spouse have decided variously to be buried with the first spouse, a later one, with both or with neither. In each case, the decision likely says something about family relationships. Similarly, the children of the Finnish immigrants and each generation of their descendants have had to choose whether to be buried with their family of orientation or their family of procreation. The family of orientation is the one into which they were born, while the family of procreation is the one that they create by marrying and producing children (Warner 1959:288). The two are generally in competition, and each one tends to be expressed in a different type of burial. Extreme emphasis on the family of orientation is seen in large lots or areas for extended families, where the founding mother and father have a central place, the lineage principle is important, and succeeding generations of family members are arranged in a hierarchical relationship to the founders. In contrast, emphasis on the family of procreation is seen in small graves for individuals or married couples and their unmarried children.

It is difficult to quantify how many burials in the Finnish cemeteries fall into each of these categories, given the tangled relationships that exist between the Finnish families. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that most burials, particularly those that occurred after 1940, emphasize the family of procreation. No family lots were created after that date, burial plots around most of the founders have been filled, and the majority of people in all the cemeteries therefore tend to be buried with their spouses and not necessarily near their parents. There are interesting exceptions, however. The Highland and Dunblane Finnish cemeteries and the New Finland cemeteries all contain examples of families that have maintained a strong presence in the area and buried succeeding generations in expanding rows, which has created a strong, though perhaps unconscious, emphasis on the family of orientation in those cemeteries. In some cases, people who have left the community and returned after death to be buried with their families of

orientation may not be making a sentimental gesture so much as claiming a certain valued status as a member of a locally important family.

Although family relationships dominate the cemeteries, they are by no means the only relationships that may be discerned in the spatial patterns made by the graves. It is no accident, for example, that two prominent Finnish families in the Elbow region are buried adjacent to each other in a single cemetery block. The two men who founded these families were part of a small group that immigrated together to homestead in the district, and their closeness in death reflects a life of shared experiences as farmers and neighbours. The importance of the bonds between neighbours may also be seen in the graves of the handful of non-Finns who chose to be buried in one of the Finnish cemeteries, usually because they lived in the same rural area and felt a greater connection to the Finns, regardless of ethnic and religious differences, than they did to the people in the nearby towns. Over and over the arrangements of the graveyard tend to reflect in death something of the preferences and loyalties that people had in life.

## **6.2 Grave Treatments**

In the six Finnish cemeteries, there are 624 markers that memorialize 814 of the 971 people who are buried there. Included in marked graves are 463 males, 339 females and 12 infants whose sex is unknown. On five graves, individuals were memorialized more than once when additional markers were added to their graves. The 624 markers also include eight that do not mark an actual burial. There are two memorials for three people who were buried elsewhere, three anticipatory markers that five living people have installed in anticipation of their deaths, and three family name stones, i.e., stones that give the family name in a family lot and are complemented with individual markers for family members.

The vast majority of the grave markers show the location of inhumations, but the burial registers for the cemeteries show that at least 16 mark an urn burial for a cremated body. Urn burials are a relatively new development in the cemeteries, with the earliest one recorded in the registers taking place in Highland Cemetery in 1963. Urn burials have since taken place in all the Finnish cemeteries in operation after this date. More than half appear to have been in Highland Cemetery; however, this may be a function of what information was kept in the burial register rather than a reflection of the actual occurrence of urn burials in the other cemeteries.



For each marker placed in the Finnish cemeteries, a choice was made about the appropriate grave marker for the person or people being memorialized. Exactly who made this choice is seldom recorded, but usually the type and style of grave marker was chosen before death by the deceased or chosen on behalf of the deceased by close relatives or friends, most commonly after death. Markers that memorialize more than one person, however, may occasionally have been installed after the death of a second or third individual. Moreover, there are cases in which families have chosen to install an additional or replacement marker on a grave, particularly where the inscription on the original grave marker has deteriorated to the point of illegibility or the original marker itself has deteriorated or disappeared. When no family members are available to perform this service, community representatives have sometimes chosen a replacement marker, often a simple plaque or cross of standardized dimensions and materials. As a result, it is difficult to date with precision the time that every grave marker was installed or to identify with certainty who made the decision as to marker style. In this analysis, graves are dated to the decade of the first burial, and it is assumed, unless other information is available, that grave marker selection was carried out within the family. Although these assumptions may be incorrect in some cases, it is believed that the exceptions are few enough to allow conclusions to be drawn about general trends in grave marker styles.

Also, this section keeps in mind Jane Irwin's observation about the reading of cemetery monuments in Canada. After noting that grave markers are places of personal and family memory, she concludes: "Ultimately, grave monuments are neither personal nor familial, but more general reminders of the past. They are the essential markers of the long historical memory of generations and our cultures" (Irwin 2007:223). It is the long view of style that is perhaps most significant and is sought in this analysis, recognizing that the contemporary meaning to be found in grave markers and graveyards has its roots in the varied, overlapping meanings that these material remains had for the individuals, families, and communities involved, and that these meanings frequently changed over time.

### *6.2.1 Grave Marker Types*

In Chapter Three, five basic approaches to grave marker memorialization found in the Finnish cemeteries were defined as five grave marker types: base and die, monolith, flat marker, grave cover, and a miscellaneous "other" category. Table 6.1 shows the number of datable

markers of each type that were found in the cemeteries for the decades from 1890 to 2010. Base-and-die markers, which comprise at least a third of the markers installed in each decade, have been used most frequently. A small but steady number of monoliths have also been installed over the decades. Flat markers have been used steadily and frequently, but their popularity fell noticeably during the 1960s and 1970s. In this period, grave covers, which were introduced into the cemeteries relatively late (after 1910), were being used extensively, peaking in popularity from 1930 to 1980. They offered a large, neat monument that promised protection for the entire grave and little need for maintenance. It is possible that they also reminded immigrant Finns of the large stone ledgers once used in Finland to mark the graves of high-status individuals (Manninen et al. 2010). In recent decades, however, grave covers have been banned or discouraged in some cemeteries due to problems that appeared over time with lichen growth, sinking and cracking, and damage during mowing.

**Table 6.1: Grave marker type by decade**

Decade	Base & Die	Monolith	Flat Marker	Grave Cover	Other	Total
1890s	4	1				5
1900s	9	1	1			11
1910s	34	2	24	5	4	69
1920s	25	4	18	11	4	62
1930s	30	2	17	14	1	64
1940s	25	2	10	19		56
1950s	26	2	10	22		60
1960s	15	4	7	26	1	53
1970s	28	6	2	20	2	58
1980s	31	5	19	19	1	75
1990s	34	5	18	10	3	70
2000s	24	2	7	1		34
Total	285	36	133	147	16	617

Table 6.2, which includes seven grave markers that were not included in the table above because they could not be dated, shows that the marker types are not distributed evenly among the six Finnish cemeteries. While base-and-die markers are used frequently in all cemeteries, they are dominant only in the New Finland cemeteries and Finnish Heritage Cemetery. Grave covers, on the other hand, clearly dominate Nummola and are also widely used in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and Highland Cemetery. They are not used to a great extent in the New Finland cemeteries. Flat markers are notably more popular in Highland Cemetery than anywhere

else, while monoliths are located mostly in the New Finland Old Cemetery, where a significant number of folk or vernacular markers are found, and Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, where many stone pillows do not have bases.

One possible explanation for the variation in grave marker types by cemetery may be found in the varying number of individuals that the markers are intended to memorialize. The percentage of grave markers that memorialize only one individual are as follows for each cemetery: 96% - NUM, 88% - DFC, 87% - HIGH, 60% - FHC, 59% - NFO and 53% - NFN. Companion markers, which may memorialize a married couple, siblings, parent(s) and child, or friends, comprise the following percentages at each cemetery: 4% - NUM, 13% - DFC, 13% - HIGH, 20% - FHC, 30% - NFO and 42% - NFN. The New Finland cemeteries are the only ones that, in addition to individual and companion markers, include large family markers in large family lots, sometimes accompanied by smaller individual markers or footstones. Base-and-die markers, which tend to be larger, are often the choice for memorials that commemorate numerous individuals, while flat markers tend to memorialize no more than two people, and grave covers are used strictly for individual graves. To at least some extent, therefore, the varying distribution of the grave marker types reflects different approaches to memorialization of the deceased in the cemeteries.

**Table 6.2: Grave marker type by cemetery**

Decade	Base & Die		Monolith		Flat Marker		Grave Cover		Other		Total*	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
HIGH	31	21%	3	2%	56	38%	57	39%	1	1%	148	100%
DFC	26	28%	12	13%	7	8%	39	42%	8	19%	92	100%
FHC	4	80%	-	-	1	20%	-	-	-	-	5	100%
NUM	5	11%	2	4%	2	4%	36	80%	-	-	45	100%
NFO	78	57%	15	11%	32	23%	9	7%	4	3%	138	100%
NFN	144	73%	5	3%	36	18%	6	3%	5	3%	196	100%
Total	288		37		134		147		18		624	(100%)

\* Total percentages may not always add up to 100 due to rounding.

Another possible explanation lies in the fact that stone memorials tend to be larger, more elaborate and more expensive, while flat markers are less expensive due to their small size and grave covers usually involve cheaper materials. For many Finnish families, it may have been more feasible to purchase modest, individual markers as needed rather than invest in a large

family plot with a monolith or base-and-die marker that adequately memorialized numerous family members. The decades in which monoliths and base-and-die markers outnumber the less expensive flat markers and grave covers fall before 1920 and after 1950, which may reflect greater purchasing power among Saskatchewan Finns during these periods and/or a greater willingness during these times to put hard-earned money into cemetery memorials.

### 6.2.2 Grave Marker Styles

Within the broad grave marker types, there is a great deal of stylistic variation due to differences in form, materials, size, and decoration. This section describes each of these stylistic elements in the Finnish cemeteries and points out some stylistic trends that emerge over time.

*6.2.2.1 Grave Marker Forms:* Ten grave marker forms have been identified in the Finnish cemeteries and are described in Chapter Three. This chapter concentrates on describing how the various forms were used, analyzing them according to their distribution by cemetery, decade, age and sex.

The distribution of the various grave marker forms by cemetery is shown in Table 6.3. Tablets have been used frequently in all cemeteries. A preference for upright rectangular gravestones is characteristic of cemeteries in Finland, where this stone form is referred to, with some irony, as “matkalaukku” [a suitcase] (Kiikka 1990:5). This preference is echoed in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries, and is also common in cemeteries across Saskatchewan.

**Table 6.3: Grave marker form by cemetery**

	HIGH	DF C	FHC	NUM	NFO	NFN	Total
Tablet	19	16	3	4	45	71	158
Pillow	63	52		38	29	42	224
Grass Marker	56	8	1	2	32	37	136
Wedge	7	4			17	21	49
Obelisk	1	1			5	10	17
Pulpit	2	2			4	3	11
Shaft						1	1
Roofed					1	1	2
Shape		1	1	1	3	5	11
Fieldstone						2	2
Metal Cross-Sign		7				3	10
Other		1			2		3
Total	148	92	5	45	138	196	624

The unusually high proportion of grass markers in Highland Cemetery is explained in large part by the concerted effort made in 1979 by the cemetery authorities to ensure all graves were marked. At that time approximately 35 small plastic plaques were attached with screws to graves where markers were illegible or missing, usually to a grave cover pillow or a small, low concrete base. Similarly, the high proportion of pillows in Highland Cemetery, Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and Nummola Cemetery can be explained by the prominence in these cemeteries of the grave cover marker type. The percentage of pillows in each cemetery that consists of the kind built into a grave cover is as follows: 90% - HIGH, 80% - NUM, 75% - DFC, 31% - NFO, and 17% - NFN. The heavy use of grass markers and grave cover pillows in the cemeteries outside New Finland again underlines the tendency in these cemeteries to use individual markers rather than the companion and family markers favoured in New Finland. While the ratio of burials to markers stands at approximately 2:1 in New Finland, in Nummola Cemetery and Highland Cemetery, the approximate burial-to-marker ratio is closer to 1:1. Dunblane Finnish Cemetery also has a high ratio of burials to markers (2:1), but in that cemetery, the ratio is distorted by a large number of unmarked graves.

Table 6.4 shows the distribution of grave marker forms by decade, leaving out three markers categorized as “Other” and combining in one column the shaft-style marker from the 1980s and the two roofed markers from the 1930s.

**Table 6.4: Grave marker form by decade**

Decade	Tablet	Pillow	Grass Marker	Wedge	Obelisk	Pulpit	Shaft-Roofed	Shaped	Field Stone	Cross-Sign	Total
1890s	1			1	3						5
1900s	5		1	2	2			1			11
1910s	19	5	25	5	6	3		2		3	68
1920s	15	13	18	3	3	6		2		1	61
1930s	22	18	16	2	2	1	2			1	64
1940s	13	22	10	8	1	1					55
1950s	13	29	10	7				1			60
1960s	6	33	7	5				1		1	53
1970s	8	38	2	8						2	58
1980s	18	30	20	4			1	1		1	75
1990s	23	23	18	2				1	1	1	69
2000s	12	12	7	2				1			34
ND	3	1	2					1	1		8
Total	158	224	136	49	17	11	3	11	2	10	621

Among the markers from the earliest years of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan are a number of handmade tablets, wedges and grass markers that demonstrate the independence and resourcefulness of isolated pioneering communities. These often crude markers of stone or concrete appear alongside an equal number of elaborate, commercially-carved grave markers, which include obelisks and pulpits. These imposing markers appear most often in New Finland, often in large family lots. Tablets and wedges were also made commercially and were used steadily over the decades. After 1910 the grass marker came into widespread use, possibly as a cheap alternative to elaborate, expensive gravestones in marking individual and companion graves. It was also the form of choice for replacement markers provided by communities when the original markers disintegrated, disappeared or became illegible. Grave covers with built-in pillows were used extensively after 1920, and they quickly became dominant in the Finnish cemeteries outside New Finland. Obelisks and pulpits disappeared at this time, and the variety of markers in the cemeteries narrowed after the 1930s to four staples: the pillow (usually part of a grave cover), the tablet, the grass marker, and the wedge. The number of pillows declined abruptly after 2000 as maintenance problems with grave covers were acknowledged, and in the last three decades there has been a resurgence of less standardized, more creative grave markers, often involving individualistic shapes or materials.

Some of the trends seen in the grave marker data likely reflect changing views of the family and society. The family marker with the father's name surrounded by satellite markers represented the dynastic, patriarchal view of society held by at least some of the early immigrants to New Finland. This view was eventually challenged by economic and social realities that saw children move away in search of work or spouses, creating a narrower view of the family that emphasized the partnership between husband and wife. This change is marked in the cemeteries by the growing number of companion markers for spouses, which tend to be tablets, pillows or wedges, and the replacement of family plots with informal family groupings of individual and companion markers. The recent appearance of more personalized, atypical markers suggests a new emphasis on the individual rather than the family or group.

Another major influence on grave marker forms was undoubtedly the availability and affordability of particular styles. Market factors affecting the purchase of grave markers will be explored later at more length in the section of this chapter that presents the available data about the suppliers of grave markers to the Finnish cemeteries.

In all the Finnish cemeteries, the dominant pillows, tablets, grass markers, and wedges tend to be modest, practical, and standardized in form. Particularly in the Nummola and Highland Cemeteries, and especially from 1950 to 1980, there appears to have been little desire to create cemetery monuments that draw attention. It is possible that burial in one of these cemeteries was an expression of belonging that was reinforced by using much the same forms of cemetery marker as everyone else. For many decades in modern Finland, there was tight regulation of cemetery markers that prevented much variation in size, material or elaborateness (Kiikka 1990:5-6), resulting in “suitcase cemeteries,” such as the one shown in

Figure 6.20. Only recently have the Finns begun to notice divergence from the norm of modesty in the cemetery (Yli-Kovero 1999a). It is possible that the Saskatchewan Finns’ preference for low-key memorialization came with them from their homeland. However, Irwin has noted that after World War I, there was a trend in Canada as well towards wider, lower, and more uniform



**Figure 6.20:** A cemetery in Ostrobothnia that displays neatness, precision and uniformity. Provided by Kaj Höglund, Ostrobothnian Museum, Finland.

headstones, and later grass markers were favoured (Irwin 2007:222). While these trends appear a little later in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries, they suggest that the Saskatchewan Finns’ restraint in using cemetery markers for personal or familial display or expression also reflects a general, long-lasting tendency in Canada.

It may or may not be significant that a few, more creative grave marker forms appear in the Finnish cemeteries after 1980, when Canada implemented a policy of multiculturalism. The policy introduced a new view of immigrant cemeteries as valuable heritage properties, and may have encouraged some people to invest more money and creativity in grave markers.

In Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries, there are some differences in the grave marker forms used to memorialize people of different ages. Of the 814 people buried in these cemeteries who have marked graves, 82 are infants who died under the age of one year, 67 are children who died between the ages of one and 16, and 665 are adults who died at age 16 or older. In analyzing

the marker form used in the memorials for the people who fall into these age groups, all markers were considered, regardless of whether the marker was individual or shared, anticipatory or actual, or duplicated a memorial also provided by a family stone or additional marker.

Significant differences among the cemeteries emerged in the way the graves of infants and children are marked as opposed to the graves of adults. In the New Finland New Cemetery, there are 18 family or combined parent-child markers and only 13 separate markers for the graves of infants and children (7% of all the grave markers in that cemetery). The New Finland Old Cemetery also has five combined parent-child markers and contains 13 individual markers for infants and children (9% of its markers). Dunblane Finnish Cemetery is the only cemetery outside New Finland to use combined parent-child markers. It has two, but it also has 10 individual markers for infant and child graves, representing 11% of the grave markers there. Three markers out of five at Finnish Heritage Cemetery are for infants or children, while Nummola Cemetery has 10 such markers, representing 22% of the total. The highest use of individual grave markers for infants and children occurs in Highland Cemetery where 38 grave markers (27%) fall into that category.

Of the people who were buried with individual markers rather than sharing one with at least one other person, 50 were for infants, 36 for children and 379 for adults. The number of marked graves for infants peaked in 1910 when there were 13, and the number dwindled over the decades until there was only one per decade in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, and none at all in the 2000s. There are three infant markers in Nummola, eight in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, eight in the New Finland Old Cemetery, 15 in the New Finland New Cemetery, and 17 in Highland Cemetery, largely due to the effort made there in the 1970s to ensure all graves were clearly marked by at least a black plastic plaque fastened to a concrete rectangle (see Figure 6.21). Twenty additional markers may be found on which infants are not memorialized individually but with their parents, grandparents or siblings.

Half of the infant markers are grass markers, including 15 black plastic plaques (all in Highland Cemetery), one rusted steel plate, and nine small gravestones (three grey granite, three



**Figure 6.21:** A black plastic plaque screwed to a concrete grass marker memorializes an infant death.



white marble, and one each of red granite, black granite and grey sandstone). Infant graves are also marked with 10 concrete grave covers, two pillows (one of concrete and the other of bronze), two small metal cross/signs, a white wooden cross with a metal plaque, a grey granite wedge, a block of white marble, and eight relatively small stone tablets, of which five are white marble and the others grey, red or black granite.

A third of the individual markers for children aged one to 16 are located in New Finland, a number that is disproportionately low for the cemetery populations there. The number of individual child markers by cemetery is: 12 - HIGH, 8 - NFO, 7 - DFC, 4 - NFN, 3 - NUM, and 2 - FHC. The number of individual child markers by decade is: 1910s - 10, 1920s - 11, 1930s - 3, 1940s - 6, 1950s - 0, 1960s - 2, 1970s - 1, 1980s - 0, 1990s - 2 and 2000s - 0. The decrease in the number of individual child markers after the 1920s may be largely explained by the drop in child mortality rates that occurred about that time. However, in interpreting the numbers, it needs to be kept in mind that many children were not given individual markers, while many others were buried without any memorial, and some were not buried in the cemeteries at all. Twenty-four markers were found in the Finnish cemeteries on which children were memorialized on markers shared with parents or siblings, and it is likely that many Finnish families decided to inter their dead infants and children on or near the family farm rather than place them in a cemetery. Burials of Finnish immigrant children that are unmarked or located outside cemeteries are certainly known in Saskatchewan, but since many have not been documented, it is impossible to determine the number buried this way. Finally, as discussed later in the section on unmarked graves in the Finnish cemeteries, infants and children account for a high proportion of the unmarked graves, either because they were given less substantial markers that disintegrated easily or they were not considered to warrant a grave marker at all. In some societies in which very young children are not considered to have a social persona, death rituals and memorials are reserved for those who have lived long enough to become known outside the family and go through the rituals that establish them as full members of society (Layne 2006:34-35).

Grave marker forms used for children are generally smaller and relatively inexpensive. They include 12 grave covers, 12 tablets, six black plastic plaques on concrete, one wedge, one pulpit, one shaped stone, one white wooden cross, one metal cross/sign, and a filled, inscribed crankshaft. As shown in Figure 6.22, these simple, inexpensive markers often provide moving memorials.

The adult markers in the Finnish cemeteries take the following forms: 123 grave covers, 80 grass markers (which include 51 stone markers, mostly of granite or marble, 15 black plastic plaques on concrete, six bronzes, four concrete rectangles, and four metal plaques on concrete), 69 tablets, 41 stone pillows, 27 wedges, nine obelisks, seven pulpits, seven metal crosses-signs, five shaped stones, three glass panels on concrete, two inscribed fieldstones, one shaft, and one roofed marker. The adult marker forms are clearly more varied than those used for infants and children, and they show a greater range of expense and elaborateness. They also suggest that adults had a different social status in the community, and adult deaths required a higher degree of memorialization than the deaths of infants and children.



**Figure 6.22:** A homemade concrete grave cover with the name of a four-year-old inscribed with marbles, most now missing.

Examination of the grave marker forms by sex reveals that there is no great difference between the forms chosen for males and females. Of the 624 markers in the Finnish cemeteries, 299 mark graves that include only males, 175 mark graves that include only females, 139 grave markers include a mix of males and females, and for 11 grave markers, the sex of the deceased could not be determined. The marker forms chosen for males include grave covers (32%), grass markers (23%), tablets (20%), stone pillows (9%), wedges (6%), obelisks (2%), shaped markers (2%), small metal signs and crosses (2%), pulpits (1%), inscribed fieldstones (1%), idiosyncratic other markers (1%), and one example each of a shaft and a roofed marker (1%). The markers for females are slightly less varied and include grave covers (30%), grass markers (25%), tablets (19%), stone pillows (10%), wedges (6%), pulpits (3%), small metal signs and crosses (3%), obelisks (2%), shaped markers (1%), and an idiosyncratic wooden marker (1%).

A noticeably greater proportion of females than males are buried with someone of the other sex, almost always a spouse or a child, and these mixed-sex markers take the form of a tablet (45%), stone pillow (23%), wedge (20%), grass marker (9%), obelisk (4%), pulpit (1%) or shaped marker (1%). The number of male-only burials indicates that not only did the Finnish communities have a high number of unmarried men compared to the number of unmarried

women, but men were more often memorialized in individual graves while women tended to be memorialized with one or more others in a family-oriented marker.

It may be worth noting that there are 105 grave markers on which the names of husband and wife appear side by side. This name placement for a married couple became more common after 1970 and reflects the taste for spousal companion markers that began to flourish about that time. There are 89 markers with this name arrangement in New Finland, 29 in the Old Cemetery and 60 in the New Cemetery. None are found in Nummola; Finnish Heritage Cemetery contains only one; Dunblane Finnish Cemetery has three; and Highland Cemetery has twelve. In the New Finland New Cemetery, the wife's name is placed to the right of her husband's, in what may be regarded as a secondary or subordinate position, 87% of the time, and in the New Finland Old Cemetery, this placement is used 65% of the time. In contrast, the wife's name is to the right 33% of the time in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and 42% of the time in Highland Cemetery. Although by no means conclusive, these differences may point towards different degrees of patriarchy in the various Finnish communities.

*6.2.2.2 Grave Marker Materials:* Sixty-five percent of the grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries are made of stone: 43% of granite, 20% of marble, and 3% of other stone materials. It should be noted, however, that in cemetery parlance, the terms "granite" and "marble" are used loosely. In a note on stone terminology in Saskatchewan, Pearce and Guliov explain:

...a few words are appropriate for the geologist whose understanding of shared terms differs from that of the stone craftsmen. For the stone specialist, igneous and metamorphic rocks that have a fine to coarse granular texture and take a high polish are called granites. A dark gabbro, anorthosite, pyroxenite, amphibolite, etc. with a "granitic" or fine texture is called a black granite. Similarly, distinctions between true granites, granodiorites, diorites, monzonites or recrystallized metasedimentary rocks are made only on the basis of colour – they are all granites to the stone craftsman.

A similar heresy is to be found in the term marble. Marble includes the true recrystallized carbonates but also serpentinites and other rock types that show marble-like textures and patterns and take a high polish. Dense, indurated carbonite rocks like the Red River Formation dolomites, volcanic rocks, fine-grained dark metasediments with *lit-parlit* bands, feldspar augen, etc. may be termed marbles [Pearce and Guliov 1996:9].

In identifying stone markers as either granite or marble, this section follows the approach of the memorial industry in using the terms to designate categories of stone based on general

appearance. It is recognized that these designations are often geologically inaccurate, e.g., most grave markers described as black granite are actually dark gabbro, but they do serve to reflect the way that the makers and purchasers of the markers probably saw the stones.

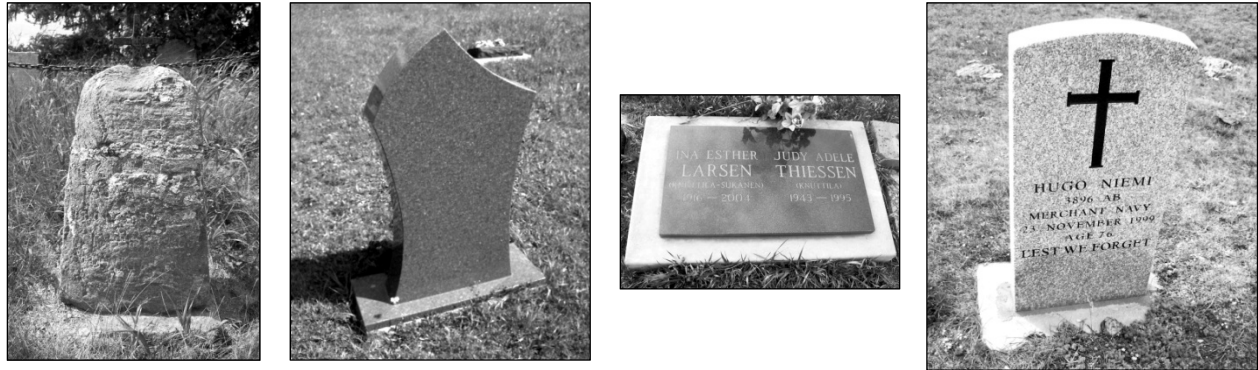
Table 6.5 indicates the materials used for grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries by decade. The table shows the material on which the inscription was placed, so a grave cover made of concrete is shown as concrete if the inscription was impressed onto a built-in pillow, but as marble if the inscription was carved onto a marble plaque placed on the pillow. Consequently, the number of markers made of concrete or fiberglass, two materials that were often used to hold a stone or metal plaque, is lower than the frequent use of these materials would lead one to expect. Undated markers are not included in this table, e.g., anticipatory markers that memorialize a person who is still living but expected on death to be buried in the marked plot.

**Table 6.5: Grave marker materials by decade**

	1890s	1900s	1910s	1920s	1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	Total
Granite - black	1		3	4	12	7	9	11	11	20	31	21	130
- grey		3	4	5	4	5	7	2	5	12	11	8	66
- other			2	1	4	3	2	8	15	15	15	3	68
Marble - white		4	8	11	10	8	14	7	7	10	3		82
- grey	2	4	10	11	6	4	2		1	2			42
Other Stone			5	1	1	6	3	1					17
Fieldstone											1		1
Concrete	1		18	16	19	18	21	20	13	5	5		136
Fibreglass									2	2	1		5
Bronze			1	2			1	1	1	4		2	12
Other Metal			4	3	1			1	2	4	4		19
Plastic			13	7	6	4	1	2	1	1			35
Glass			1		1	1							3
Wood				1									1

Stone, especially marble and granite, has always been the most popular marker material in the Finnish cemeteries. Even when people turned to more economic alternatives for a memorial, such as the concrete grave cover or a flat marker, many Finns continued to place on the marker at least a small plaque of white marble or black granite. Marble, both white and grey, was the stone material of choice up until the 1930s, when granite became more popular. For the

last ten years, marble markers have not been used in the cemeteries, and grave markers are almost exclusively made of granite (see Figure 6.23). Granites were usually grey or black up until 1970, when red granite and granites of mixed colours began to be used frequently. These coloured granites added touches of colour to the Finnish cemeteries, which are noticeably dominated by the sombre neutral colours of white, grey and black.



**Figure 6.23:** Some examples of the many granite markers: a crude grey tablet, a shaped and polished stone of red granite, a polished grass marker of black granite, and the standard military tablet of Barre granite that is provided for qualifying Canadian veterans.

In the Finnish cemeteries, the degree to which a granite marker is polished varies. Numerous granite stones are polished on all sides, while others have unpolished sawn surfaces and only the face bearing the inscription polished. Still others have been rough cut on the sides and back. It has been observed that the cemetery culture of Finland values neatness and precision over a more natural look, including a preference for exact rectangles in gravestone forms (Viitamees 2002). The number of rough-cut stones in the Finnish cemeteries may indicate a change in the preferences of the immigrant Finns, perhaps expressing an aesthetic appreciation of markers that resemble natural stones (there are also two field stones used as markers in the cemeteries that might indicate this). Rough-cut and polished stone surfaces are generally more expensive than plain sawn ones (Yli-Kovero 1999b).

The other material that appears frequently in the grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries is concrete, usually whitewashed or painted white, or coloured white during the mixing of the concrete. There are 137 concrete grave markers, most of them pillows built into grave covers or small concrete grass markers. In addition to these common concrete forms are 17 grave markers that date to the 1940s or earlier and represent resourceful efforts to mark graves when stone

markers were not commercially available or affordable. Most of these concrete markers are found in the New Finland Old Cemetery, but there are several in Highland Cemetery, two in the New Finland New Cemetery, and one in Nummola Cemetery. About half are simple tablets or pillows used for children. The other half attempt to replicate in concrete the forms of expensive stone markers. Some examples are given in Figure 6.24. The poor condition of many of these concrete markers suggests one reason why concrete has fallen out of favour as a marker material in recent decades.



**Figure 6.24:** Examples of concrete markers: a tablet ornamented with a cross and soul effigy; a plain, illegible wedge; a child’s tablet with a pink-painted base; and a thick cross-vaulted obelisk.

There are 179 graves in the Finnish cemeteries that have a grave cover made of either white fiberglass (39) or white concrete (140). Most have a built-in pillow at the head of the cover made of the same material as the base and the vault, but 34 either have the inscription letters impressed in the flat, wet concrete at the head of the grave, which is the case on two homemade concrete grave covers for children, or they have a marker on or near the head of the cover, usually a tablet, stone pillow or wedge, often placed on a stone base. While most grave covers with built-in pillows have been inscribed directly, 33 have an inscribed plaque on top of the pillow, such as the one shown in Figure 6.25. These plaques were often sold along with the grave cover by the company providing the cover. The popularity of grave



**Figure 6.25:** A concrete grave cover with built-in pillow and stone plaque.

covers may be attributed to several factors: 1) they were relatively inexpensive; 2) they were large, imposing and perhaps reminiscent of the ledger stones used in Europe to mark the graves of the wealthy; 3) they could be homemade, made at the grave site by local people who provided this service as a side business, or made by a local memorial company without the need to import material from elsewhere; 4) they prevented walking on the grave; 5) they promised to lower the need for grave maintenance activities such as mowing and watering; 6) they had an aesthetic appeal based on neatness, whiteness, and symmetry; and 7) their resemblance to a bed reinforced the idea of death as sleep. While grave covers of this kind do not appear to have been used much in Finland, they may reflect the preference shown in Finland for a cemetery environment exhibiting a high degree of human control, with tidy, precisely marked graves in an orderly park-like setting, which, in the eyes of some people, can make cemeteries appear “somehow too clean and sterile” (Viitamees 2002).

Bronze markers appear in the Highland, Dunblane and New Finland cemeteries three, four and five times, respectively, always in the form of a plaque of moulded bronze placed on a concrete base to form a grass marker (see Figure 6.26). The death dates on four of these bronze markers are as early as the 1910s and 1920s, but these are likely replacement markers put in place decades after the burial. Bronze markers became available much later, with the first small one appearing in New Finland in the 1950s. Half of the markers made of bronze are companion grass markers like the one shown above, while the rest mark individual graves.



**Figure 6.26:** A bronze grass marker.

As noted earlier, all plastic markers in the Finnish cemeteries are small plaques attached to graves in Highland Cemetery that were unmarked or had illegible markers. A majority of the metal markers appear to serve this purpose as well in the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and the New Finland cemeteries. Most metal markers are small, vertical or cross-shaped sign posts of steel pipe, chrome, or aluminum strips. Their purpose is to hold a small metal plaque, and some were likely put in place long after the burial. Other metal markers include a cut-out metal plaque attached to one grave-cover pillow in Highland Cemetery, and a series of four crudely inscribed metal plaques screwed onto wooden boards or concrete slabs in the New Finland cemeteries (see Figure 6.27 for an example). These memorials appear to have been placed fairly recently on

selected graves that lacked a marker, and they have a childish quality.

Three markers (one each in the Nummola, Dunblane Finnish and New Finland Old Cemeteries) have a large black etched-glass panel inserted vertically into the face of a concrete tablet.

Unfortunately, the glass has been broken in two of these markers (see Figure 6.28). The fragility of glass likely explains why it was not favoured as a grave marker material even though it could be etched easily and cheaply to create decorative effects similar to carved stone.

Wood is used a few times in the cemeteries as a base for plaques. There are also two recently painted white wooden crosses with small metal plaques (see Figure 6.29), and another grave has the remains of a wooden box that may have been a memorial. Given the reputation of Finns as skilled wood-workers, the lack of wood markers in the cemeteries is striking. Finns in Saskatchewan may have simply preferred stone or concrete as longer-lasting marker materials, or they may have made wooden grave markers that have now disintegrated. Hännikäinen (2010:146) states that there were once more wooden markers in the New Finland cemeteries, but she does not provide any details.

*6.2.2.3 Grave Marker Size:* The size of grave markers is of interest because size is sometimes used as an indicator of socioeconomic status. There are questions as to whether or not this practice is helpful or misleading. Factors like market supply and transportation networks may also influence grave marker size, for example, and Clark (1987) has suggested that size is as much a function of ethnicity as it is of class. Nevertheless, size is examined here for possible information about the Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan.



**Figure 6.27:** A metal plaque attached to a wooden base.



**Figure 6.28:** A cracked glass-faced marker.



**Figure 6.29:** Wooden crosses for two brothers who died in the 1920s.



Given the range of variation in grave marker forms and materials, it is by no means a simple matter to find a logical basis on which to compare marker size. Two approaches are used here. One is to look at the overall height of grave markers by decade and cemetery, focussing for the sake of comparability on only one type of marker, in this case the most common type – base-and-die markers. While this approach excludes a great many markers in the cemeteries, it does indicate some general trends. The other approach, which is more inclusive of the range of marker forms and materials, is to measure the area of the grave marker face, i.e., the main part of the marker holding most, if not all, of the inscription. Again, looking at grave marker face area by decade and cemetery gives some understanding of how different cemeteries developed over time.

The tallest of the 288 base-and-dye markers in the Finnish cemeteries is an obelisk dating to 1919 that has three bases and is 175 cm tall (see Figure 6.30). The use of more than one base was confined to the period prior to 1950 and was linked to the use of more elaborate grave marker forms, such as the obelisk and pulpit. These tall forms were almost always made of granite or marble and were therefore among the most expensive markers in the cemeteries, even though the lower bases were usually made of cheaper materials, such as sandstone or concrete. Tall markers are concentrated in New Finland, particularly in the New Cemetery, although a few also appear in the Highland and Dunblane Finnish Cemeteries. There are none in the Nummola or Finnish Heritage Cemeteries. Each base added an average of 15-



**Figure 6.30:** A grey marble obelisk, New Finland.

20 cm in height to the monument, making it more imposing, and the overall intent of these tall markers was clearly to project size. As noted earlier, many are found in family lots with borders, and they often memorialize the immigrant founders of Saskatchewan’s Finnish families.

The average height of upright base-and-die markers in the Finnish cemeteries peaked at 94 cm in the 1920s and then declined steadily to 81 cm in the 1930s, 73 cm in the 1940s, 67 cm in the 1950s, 65 cm in the 1960s, and 53 cm in the 1970s, rising slightly in recent decades to 64 cm in the 1980s, 59 cm in the 1990s and 58 cm in the 2000s. These numbers reflect the greater use of spousal companion markers with the low, broad form shown in Figure 6.31.

Although the height of base-and-die markers decreased in the Finnish cemeteries after 1930, the face area of all markers (624) actually rose after that date, although somewhat unevenly. Having averaged under 2000 square cm up until 1930, the average face area changed as follows: 1930s - 2263 square cm, 1940s - 2407 square cm, 1950s - 2442 square cm, 1960s - 2409 square cm, 1970s - 2286 square cm, 1980s - 2194 square cm, 1990s - 2345 square cm and 2000s - 2465 square cm. The increase in average face area was less noticeable in the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and the New Finland cemeteries, but in Highland Cemetery, face area expanded from an average of 2270 square centimetres in the 1930s to 2671 square cm in the 2000s. Although later markers in that particular cemetery are lower, they are also larger in area, due primarily to the number of large granite companion gravestones placed there. A marked increase in marker size is also indicated for the Nummola Cemetery, where the average face area of markers also rose from under 2000 square centimetres before 1930 to approximately 3000 square centimeter by the end of the century. In the case of Nummola, however, companion markers were not common, and the increase signals a movement towards larger grave cover pillows and plaques.



**Figure 6.31:** The spousal companion marker of the late twentieth century tended to be broad and low and had a large face area for decoration and inscription.

The size data, although indicative of changes in grave marker forms over the decades, provide only limited insight into the socioeconomic status of the deceased. For example, although the face area of Nummola markers increased, the type of marker, the grave cover, remained constant, and while the height of grave markers decreased in New Finland, the money spent on tall monuments appears to have been transferred to broad companion markers of expensive granite. In both cases, the changes in the size data do not necessarily mean significant change in the social or economic status indicated by the marker. Marker forms and materials in the Finnish cemeteries appear to be more useful than size in determining wealth or class.

*6.2.2.4 Grave Marker Decoration:* Only 353 (57%) of the markers in the Finnish cemeteries are decorated, i.e., they have at least one element of carving or ornamentation in addition to the inscription and any lines or stylized graphics that frame or organize the inscription. Some grave marker forms, most notably grave covers and grass markers, tend to emphasize simplicity and/or are too small to bear much decoration. The dominance of these forms in Nummola, Highland and Dunblane Finnish Cemeteries may help to explain the marked differences in the distribution of decorated grave markers among the Finnish cemeteries. The percentage of decorated grave markers is 100% in Finnish Heritage Cemetery, 82% in the New Finland New Cemetery, 72% in the New Finland Old Cemetery, 48% in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, 26% in Highland Cemetery and 16% in Nummola Cemetery. It is also notable that the percentage of decorated grave markers has varied by decade: 1890s - 75% , 1900s - 82%, 1910s - 44%, 1920s - 53%, 1930s - 53%, 1940s - 52%, 1950s - 52%, 1960s - 38%, 1970s - 62%, 1980s - 63%, 1990s - 69%, and 2000s - 85%. There appears to have been a greater taste for ornamentation in grave markers in the earliest and latest decades of the cemeteries' histories, with a tendency towards plainness in the six decades from 1910 to 1970.

Grave accessories that complement the grave marker are scarce in the Finnish cemeteries. There are three stone vases, one on a grave in Highland Cemetery and the other two on a grave in New Finland. In addition, there are 38 footstones, most of them made of marble and dating to the 1930s or earlier. However, in order to accommodate lawn mowing, many have now been removed and no longer serve their original purpose of marking the lower boundary of a burial (see Figure 6.32). Some have probably been lost. Some footstones in family lots have been laid horizontally to serve as a grass marker rather than to delineate the foot of a grave.

There are no real examples of artistic grave sculpture in the Finnish cemeteries, although 29 small standardized figures may be found on the top of markers. Twelve of these figures are crosses: four plain iron crosses on top of vernacular markers in the New Finland Old Cemetery and eight crosses of stone or concrete found in the New Finland Old Cemetery (3), New Finland New Cemetery (3), Highland Cemetery (1), and Dunblane Finnish Cemetery (1). Five of these crosses are

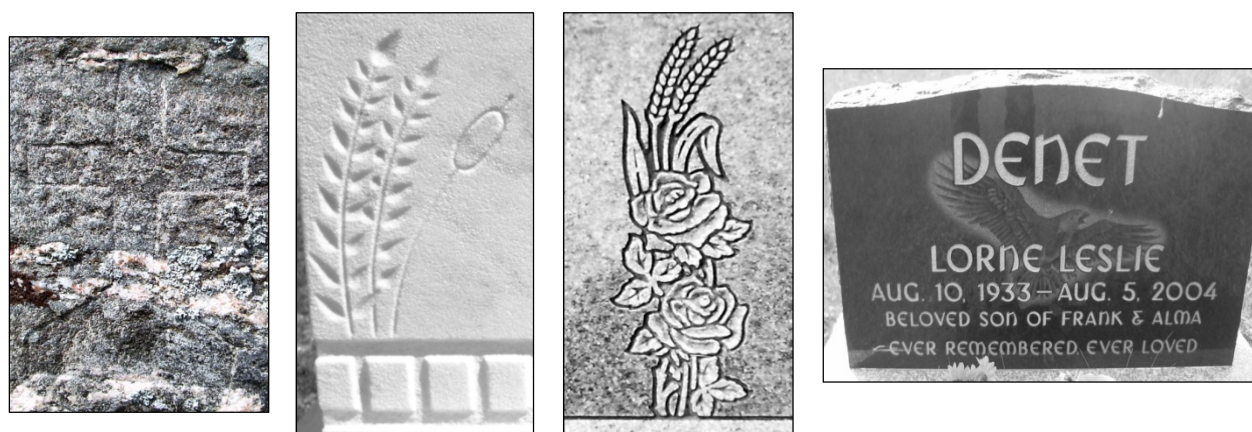


**Figure 6.32:** A footstone used as a prop for a tilting headstone.

upright Latin crosses, four are Calvary crosses, one is a slanted Latin cross, and one is a fallen rustic cross. Six of the obelisks in New Finland are topped with a stone figure in the form of an urn (3), acorn (2) or crucifix (1). Lying on six of the pulpits is a sculpted open book, presumably a Bible, a figure that appears twice in each of the Highland and Dunblane Finnish cemeteries and once in each of the New Finland cemeteries. In the New Finland Old Cemetery, one marble tablet marking the grave of a child is decorated with a sculpted dove, while two children's graves in Highland Cemetery and one in Finnish Heritage Cemetery are similarly decorated with the stone figure of a resting lamb.

In addition to the accessories and sculpted grave marker elements described above, small round plaques bearing photographs of the deceased have been embedded on five gravestones in New Finland, four memorializing a married couple and one an adult male. All other decoration of the graves in the Finnish cemeteries focusses on motifs worked directly into the grave marker material. Moldings and impressions are found on some concrete markers, while carved decoration is common on stone markers.

The method of stone-carving on markers varies widely from the scratching and pecking carried out on homemade gravestones to the technologically advanced laser-etching on some recent markers of black granite (see Figure 6.33). Most stones in the Finnish cemeteries have been carved through sandblasting, a versatile technique that can be used to cut a simple outline for a flat image or employed with great sophistication and additional cost to give variation in depth and texture so that an image becomes more three-dimensional and realistic. Lettering on the grave markers is usually plain, with cut or raised block letters in a simple font that is readable rather than ornate.

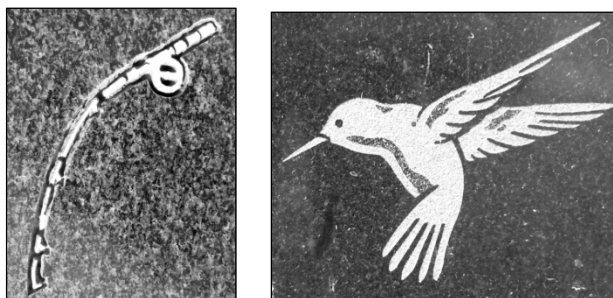


**Figure 6.33:** A range of stone-carving techniques may be seen in these images: pecking, carving, sandblasting enhanced with flashing and outlining, and laser-etching.

Technological advances have clearly influenced the decoration of grave markers over the decades. Early vernacular markers that were shaped by hand have only a few, crudely executed decorations. They contrast markedly with commercially-sold markers that used skilled carvers and air-pressure chiseling, sand-blasting, laser-etching or other new stone-cutting techniques to produce increasingly complex designs on even the hardest stone. The carving on most markers in the Finnish cemeteries was relatively simple before granite markers became common. At that time new techniques became available for carving even hard stone and began to be used extensively as a way of giving carvings depth and detail. Ten markers that date to later than 1980 make extensive use of flashing and other new techniques to cover at least part of the marker with scenery that includes the sky, the horizon and some figures of people, buildings or animals in the foreground. All but one of these stones with scenery are granite tablets or wedges that act as companion markers; the exception is a granite grass marker for a single adult. Recently, shallow, durable laser-etched designs on black granite have appeared in the cemeteries, although examples are still few due to the cost of laser-etching. Whereas at one time granite was considered too hard for detailed, nuanced carvings, it is now the preferred platform for sophisticated methods of stone-cutting, which create markers that are both decorative and durable. The use of granite is undoubtedly related to the emergence of another trend that emerges in the cemeteries after 1980, namely, the personalization of markers by adding symbols to the marker that may be associated with the deceased (see Figure 6.34).

Breaking down all the impressed, molded and carved decorations on the grave markers into separate elements, one can count 567 decorative elements on the grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries. A few markers have up to five such elements while most have only one or two. These elements are not evenly distributed among the

cemeteries, with 46% found in the New Finland New Cemetery, 30% in the New Finland Old Cemetery, 12% in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, 9% in Highland Cemetery, 2% in Nummola Cemetery, and 1% in Finnish Heritage Cemetery. These percentages do not always parallel the percentages of markers found in each cemetery, suggesting that there was a preference for



**Figure 6.34:** Two personalizing symbols found on grave markers: a fishing rod and a hummingbird.

decorated markers in the New Finland cemeteries and a preference for plainer markers in the Nummola and Highland cemeteries.

Over half of the decorative elements consist of flowers or greenery, some of which are stylized, cannot be identified, and appear to be added for their decorative rather than their symbolic value. Most decorations have some religious or spiritual significance. Symbolism in the cemeteries is discussed in a later section of this chapter, and all decorative elements, including the 29 sculpted elements discussed above and the six grave cover decorations discussed below, are listed in Appendix F, where they are divided into 18 categories presented in alphabetical order in columns: Animals/Birds (18), Angels (10), Books (33), Christ Signs (24), Crosses (96), Flowers (213), Greenery (67), Hearts (4), Heaven (14), Hobbies/Work (5), Mourning (5), Prayer (9), Scenery (10), Shapes (10), Structural (8), Sun/Stars (5), Wedding (6) and Wheat (64).

Grave marker pillows are seldom decorated, although in a few cases, a simple Latin cross has been impressed into the wet concrete. Any efforts at grave cover decoration generally concentrated on the vault. In New Finland two vaults are decorated with metallic crucifixes laid lengthwise, and two more have fibreglass crosses that look like metal. As shown in Figure 6.35, this kind of fibreglass cross could be purchased in the 1950s from a memorial company, along with the grave cover itself. The most common decorative technique, found on 151 grave covers, was to embed in the vault a sprinkling of stone chips, gravel, broken glass, or, in one case, crushed concrete. This decorative layer varied in density and colour. In 48 cases (32%), it is entirely white, but in 69 cases (46%), some black rock has been included to add visual drama. One grave in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery uses black gravel to create the image of a black Latin cross lying



**Figure 6.35:** An ad for a grave cover with a decorated vault (REMCO 1950s:2). The decorative cross cost \$9.95 while the grave cover cost \$119.00 (\$128.95 for both). Provided with the permission of REMCO Memorials.

lengthwise on the otherwise white-sprinkled vault. Another 31 markers (21%) give additional colour to the white or white/black mixture with grey, beige or pink stones and/or small amounts of broken green, blue, or clear glass. In the remaining three cases (2%), the vault is too overgrown with lichen to determine what decorative material might have been used.

*6.2.2.4 Stylistic Trends in the Grave Markers of the Saskatchewan Finns:* At times, form, material, size, and decoration come together to give a grave marker a distinct style that may be named, described and used to show connections with other grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries that share many of the same attributes. Four broad, successive stylistic trends may be discerned in the Finnish cemeteries, which are referred to here as the neoclassical, utilitarian, commercial and individualist styles:

1. *Neoclassical Style.* Prior to 1920 the grave markers placed in the Finnish cemeteries were either relatively crude vernacular markers or commercial stones of marble or granite that took the forms of obelisks, pulpits, wedges or tablets. Stylistically, both reflect the tastes and beliefs of Europeans at the turn of the century. There are a few markers that have medieval stylistic elements, such as gothic arches or lined inscriptions, but the great majority favour the more romantic neoclassical style popular in Europe at the time of most Finnish immigration to Saskatchewan. In the nineteenth century, Europeans had rediscovered the monuments of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans and were using elements of them for their own purposes in their cemeteries (Irwin 2007:230-233). Small versions of the obelisk, for example, were not installed as heliographs but as reminders of biblical stories set in Egypt (Irwin 2007:230), while vaguely Roman columns, arches and scrolled-arm benches added a touch of grandeur and culture to many grave markers. Such neoclassical architectural elements are found on numerous early monuments in the Finnish cemeteries (see Figure 6.36).



**Figure 6.36:** A small stone with a Roman-style scrolled-arm bench.

Although roofed markers do not appear in the cemeteries until the 1930s, they, too, may be regarded as neoclassical in their resemblance to miniature mausoleums, named for the tomb

of Mausolos at Halicarnossos, Greece (Irwin 2007:224). Also characteristic of neoclassicism are decorative elements such as draperies (signifying mourning and the mystery of death), urns (cinerary containers representing the material change of the body in death), and laurel leaves (emblems of victory), which may be found on ten markers in the Finnish cemeteries. The colours of gravestones in this era are sombre, mostly grey with added drama provided by occasional stones of white or black.

2. *Utilitarian Style.* After 1920 a stylistic change is noticeable in the grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries. Ornate markers with neoclassical decorations begin to disappear, while plain grass markers and grave covers grow in popularity. Marble gravestones become fewer and fewer, although white marble monuments, representing innocence or purity, continue to be used, mostly for children. The pillowed grave cover becomes ubiquitous outside New Finland, and white concrete becomes the dominant material in the cemeteries up until the 1960s. This 40-year period from 1920 to 1960 coincides with a generational change in which grave markers are chosen by people who have never lived in Finland and have grown up on pioneer farms with few material goods. The period also includes the Great Depression and the devastating droughts that marked forever the farm families that survived them through hard work and resourcefulness. Most people in this era invested less money in grave markers, and the ones they chose tended to be simple, uniform and utilitarian.

The white grave cover, which expresses values of frugality and solidarity, is the typical grave marker choice at this time. Made locally of concrete, or occasionally fiberglass, and requiring little or nothing in the way of decoration or epitaph, it was not only inexpensive and convenient to install, but also reinforced the identification of the deceased with the region in which they lived. The resemblance of these memorials to a bed, with pillow and cover, added a human touch, perhaps signifying much-needed protection from outside forces of nature and society. At the same time, the grave cover was large and somewhat grand. Its sheer size, whiteness and straight lines may be interpreted as a forceful assertion of the highly valued Finnish concept of “sisu,” which translates roughly as “stamina” or “guts” and implies a proud ability to persist against all odds. The white concrete grave cover is found in many rural cemeteries throughout Saskatchewan and is, in many ways, a symbolically appropriate marker in pioneer communities, whose residents endured great hardships in carving a place for themselves out of the wilderness. Such a memorial



makes a strong statement in the rural Saskatchewan landscape, claiming the land in which people are buried and imposing human order on the wild forces of nature. In its uniformity and plainness, the grave cover seems to have been particularly appealing to socialistic Finns.

The trend towards utilitarianism was present but less marked in New Finland, where grass markers and small stone pillows were more popular than grave covers from 1920 to 1960. This difference may reflect the religious and political conservatism of New Finland, which tended not to attract or retain Finnish immigrants who had different beliefs and lifeways. Plain, uniform grave covers without symbols or epitaphs may not have been to the taste of many New Finlanders, who cherished their church and may have wanted to use grave markers as expressions of their religion or sense of community. Alternatively, the relative absence of grave covers may reflect the strong emphasis on family that is evident in New Finland. Whereas grave covers are used on individual graves, grass markers and pillows could be used in family plots and could serve as markers for groups of people.

3. *Commercial Style.* After 1960, when marker choices were being made by third- and fourth-generation Finnish Canadians, the Finnish cemeteries begin to be dominated by granite companion markers, usually black. Although granite had been used steadily in the cemeteries up until that time, it now began to be the material of choice for tablets, wedges, pillows and grass markers. As will be discussed later in this chapter, some of this stylistic preference may be due to changes in the memorial industry supplying grave markers to Saskatchewan. In this period, cheap granites became available through globalization of the market place and new technologies emerged for carving and colouring stone. As a hard, durable medium that is amenable to fine, detailed decoration, granite facilitated the ability of companies to market increasingly complex, personalized forms and decorative motifs. Buyers were provided with catalogues of popular designs and epitaphs from which they could choose something within their means to memorialize their loved ones. Even families that were not able to spend much on a marker could usually afford a small granite plaque set in concrete, and for the few who preferred something different, alternatives were sometimes offered, e.g., a grass marker made of bronze. After 1960, however, granite markers were the overwhelming favorite of both memorial companies and consumers.

Commercial-style markers were marketed on the basis of almost endless possibilities for personalization in terms of size, form, decorative motifs, lettering and epitaphs. In reality,

the Finnish cemeteries show a narrow range of choices, with most stones appearing rather similar. Black granite dominates, although some red, pink, brown and multi-coloured granites were also chosen, adding colour to the Finnish cemeteries for almost the first time. The overall size of markers remained much the same, although tablets used as companion markers became consistently broader and lower in form and often had a serpentine tympanum. Companion markers expressing the bond between specific people, usually a husband and wife, became the norm in cemeteries, perhaps reflecting the fact that the cemeteries were now burying mostly middle-aged or elderly couples. In commercial-style markers, this bond was often further expressed through decorative motifs that include hearts, joined wedding rings, joined hands, or wedding scrolls. The addition to a basic gravestone design of a decorative motif associated with individuals was characteristic of commercial-style markers, and examples may be found in the Finnish cemeteries that include occupational crests, family name initials, a fishing rod, hummingbird, eagle, violin, bells, carpentry tools and flowers of many kinds, but most often a rose. This sort of superficial personalization did not diminish the similarity of the stones, however, and may be regarded as a consumer option tailored in standard ways to pass as an expression of individuality. The same may be said of the increasingly elaborate designs carved or etched onto the face of markers.

4. *Individual Style.* A small number of grave markers that have recently appeared in the Finnish cemeteries signal the possible emergence of a new, more individual style. These markers begin to make real use of new technologies and a globalized market place to create memorials that are personal expressions related to the deceased. The designs, materials, and epitaphs are less standard, and the bereaved appear to have been more involved in the design process, as well as willing to spend more money on grave memorials that are meaningful to them. Some memorial companies now market their services in working with families to create grave markers that are unique and personal rather than selected from a range of offerings in catalogues.

To date, critiques of both the financial and social impact on people of contemporary funerary customs and the funeral industry in North America (e.g., by Mitford 1998 or Ariès 1975) and concerns about the environmental impact of traditional burial practices appear to have had little effect on the Finnish cemeteries. Stylistically, most Saskatchewan Finns have

accepted the current social and economic status quo, but again, there are a few signs in recent decades of possible change, e.g., a natural grave marked only with flowers and solar lights. It is possible that at least some people are asserting their individuality by rethinking their relationship with death and choosing not to follow norms set by the funeral industry.

### 6.2.3 *Landscaping of Graves*

Within the landscape of the cemetery, individual families often make an effort to beautify the graves of loved ones with decorative plantings. Such efforts are not always successful. Any gardening at Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, for example, has been defeated by a harsh climate and gravelly soil, and there are only stumps and garden plot borders to indicate that people tried at various times to grow shrubs or flowers on particular graves. Nummola Cemetery and Finnish Heritage Cemetery, which are both located on bare grassy knolls, show no sign that planting of anything but grass has ever been attempted. However, in Highland Cemetery and the New Finland cemeteries, graves are found with a variety of hardy garden plants that have survived the Saskatchewan climate. In most cases the plants are merely decorative, but occasionally they may have significance. It may or may not be a coincidence, for example, that a chokecherry bush is growing on the grave of two children with the family name of “Tuomi,” which means “bird cherry.” The chokecherry is the North American equivalent of the Eurasian bird cherry.

In Highland Cemetery, there are five graves covered by lilac bushes, five by carraganas, one by a spruce tree, one by a pine tree, and one by a chokecherry bush, as well as one grave with peonies and another with lilies. In the New Finland Old Cemetery, the corners of one family lot are marked with small beds of greenery and flowers, and individual graves are found that are covered with spruces (3), potentillas (2), creeping ground cover (2), lilies (1) and peonies (1). The New Cemetery benefits from the shade and shelter provided by 20 mature spruce trees, most planted by a community member who loved trees (Schelstraete 1982:270). In addition to these trees, scattered among the graves are plots bearing lilac bushes (3), peonies (12), rose bushes (3), potentillas (1) and carragana bushes (1). However, many more unwanted plants of this kind were cleared from the New Finland cemeteries during a general clean-up and re-landscaping that occurred in 1983 (Huhtala 2001:35). More planting may have gone on than is now visible.

As noted earlier, family lots occur only in New Finland, with five in the Old Cemetery and 13 in the New Cemetery. The way in which these lots are marked varies widely

(examples may be seen Figure 6.37). In the uneven terrain of the New Cemetery, some lots have been raised and leveled, creating terraces that visually mark the lot. In one case, the raised lot has been covered with grass and marked with a single family stone listing all burials. In two others, the lot borders have been marked with poured concrete and the interior filled with gravel.

Concrete curb borders are found a total of nine times in the New Finland cemeteries, sometimes enclosing gravel but usually grass. Two

other family lots are bordered with fences made of metal posts linked by chains, although one is now missing the chains.

These fences may be later installations to highlight and protect ancestral graves. Other ways of demarcating family lots that appear only once in the cemeteries include a carragana hedge, a curb made of wooden posts enclosing a fill of stone chips, the corner plantings of flowers mentioned earlier, and the alignment of footstones or grass markers along the periphery of the lot.

Only two family lots have a stone marker

that bears only the family name, with individual markers for each burial in the lot placed around the family name stone. In some family lots with a visible border, graves are individually marked, but others contain a central marker that lists all those buried there.

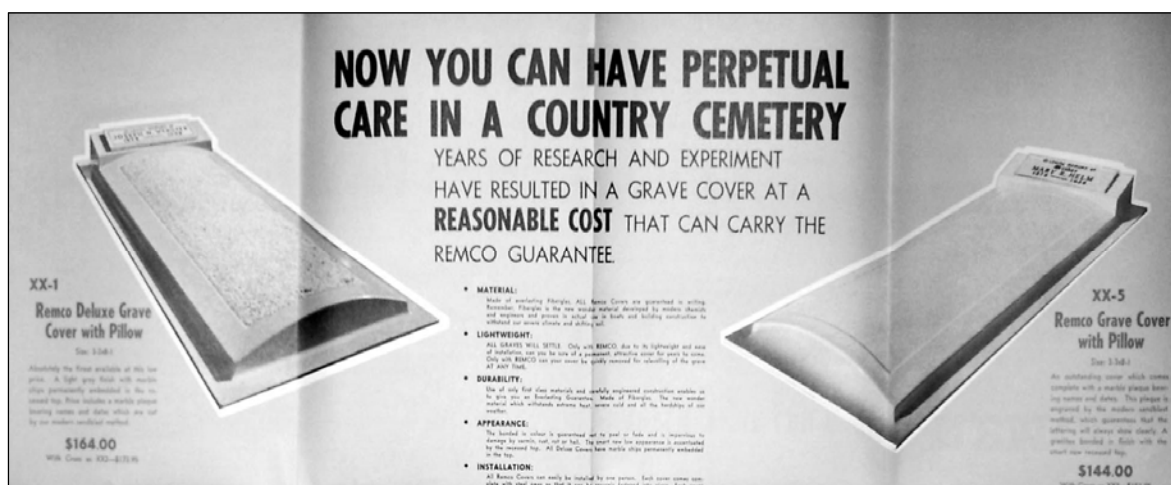
Borders are used infrequently on individual graves, but examples are found in all the cemeteries except Nummola. Highland Cemetery has nine graves bounded by a poured concrete curb, and in one area, four graves are linked by concrete pads laid between the graves to indicate one family. In Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, a concrete curb borders one side of one grave, and another is outlined with bricks. Finnish Heritage Cemetery has a grave with a black rubber lawn edging enclosing a layer of crushed red brick. In the New Finland Old Cemetery, iron posts at the foot of one grave indicate the presence of a vanished fence, while four other graves are outlined with fieldstones, horizontal wooden posts, a concrete curb and black plastic lawn edging enclosing a bed of white, crushed rock. The New Cemetery, which has the highest incidence of



**Figure 6.37:** A view of the New Cemetery with family lots in the background; on the left are two lots bounded by concrete curbs, and on the right may be seen a terraced lot and a hedged lot.

family lots, has relatively few grave borders: three with concrete curbs, one outlined by a bed of white, crushed rock, and one with white crushed rock enclosed by corrugated concrete blocks.

Grave covers deserve some mention here since they were popular among the Saskatchewan Finns at least partly because they promised a solution to the problem of landscaping and maintaining a grave. As shown in Figure 6.38, their great selling point was the provision of perpetual care at a low price.



**Figure 6.38:** Part of a pamphlet promoting grave covers in Saskatchewan (REMCO 1950s:2-3). Provided with the permission of REMCO Memorials.

Unfortunately, even the technologically advanced fiberglass grave covers available after the 1950s proved susceptible to lawn mower damage, lichen growths, soil movement and breakage from trampling. Of the 179 concrete and fiberglass grave covers in the Finnish cemeteries, many are now in poor condition. Others have been removed.

### 6.2.4 Grave Offerings and Care

The important role that cemeteries play as symbolic meeting places between the living and the dead may be seen in the fact that 148 grave offerings were found in the Finnish cemeteries during the field work carried out in the spring and summer of 2010. These offerings varied from the ubiquitous artificial flowers to solar lights, ceramic and glass ornaments, objects associated with the deceased (e.g., a handmade mobile with a wrench, pipe and bottle opener), and even in two cases, written notes to the deceased sealed in waterproof containers. Such

objects provide mute testimony to the desire of many Finns to maintain a relationship with their dead by communicating with them and caring for them.

Eighty-four percent of these offerings were found in New Finland, indicating a high degree of interaction between the living and dead in both the Old and New cemeteries. However, not too much can be made of this percentage because the number of grave offerings visible in a cemetery at any one time is influenced by winds that often sweep them away, the policy of the cemetery in removing old flowers and ornaments, and the time of the year in which the grave offerings are counted. The New Finland offerings were recorded in August after the annual midsummer celebration, which is a popular time to visit family graves and place offerings there.

Hannon has suggested that grave offerings decrease at a predictable rate following burial (Hannon 1990). He found that in one American cemetery, the number of graves decorated with flowers on Memorial Day decreased by 2% each year as the living who placed the flowers either died or ceased to contact their dead. The Finnish cemeteries support this finding to the extent that they show greater numbers of offering on newer graves. They also indicate that the nature of offerings can change over time. The personal handwritten note to a relative or friend, for example, gives way after a generation or more to objects that pay homage to ancestors that people have never met (see Figure 6.39). This type of offering honours the family or the collective rather than the individual, and it tends to express an ancestral rather than personal connection with the dead. In ethnic cemeteries, it may be taken as an expression of identification with the ethnic group.



**Figure 6.39:** A small wooden cross left on a grave by Americans researching their Finnish ancestry.

Also testifying to the importance of the cemetery as meeting place are events like the community clean-up days, which are held in most of the Finnish cemeteries. These work bees often take on the character of a community picnic and may be regarded as symbolic rituals in which the community interacts with its dead in a more positive way than during interments. Such events, which involve collective action and express group strength, tend to give people a feeling of power over death (Warner 1959:248) as well as a sense that the dead are still part of the

Finnish community. Participation in the collective caring for the Finnish cemeteries publicly expresses and reinforces one's identification with the Finnish community.

#### 6.2.5 *Grave Marker Suppliers*

While most grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries are commercial products that are best considered in the context of mass markets and consumer choice, a small number are made by hand out of local materials and are markedly less sophisticated in design and execution. They belong to the category known variously as folk, traditional or vernacular markers. Since they co-exist in the cemeteries alongside the commercial products, they are considered here along with the companies known to have supplied one or more grave markers to the Finnish cemeteries.

*6.2.5.1 Vernacular Markers:* There are 24 vernacular markers, some of which have already been mentioned, and all appear to be functional rather than artistic in intent. The earliest, dating to 1900 or earlier, are three rounded tablets chiseled from granite, with inscriptions that are now pretty much illegible and plain crosses of forged iron embedded in the top. All three are found on the hill in the New Finland Old Cemetery. In the 1910s the Old Cemetery also acquired a small, undecorated pentagonal concrete grass marker and an iron crankshaft placed upright and filled to hold a plaque memorializing a dead child. Two graves in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery that date to the same decade have vernacular markers consisting of dark grey pipes welded together to form a cross. In the 1920s and 1930s, three white concrete tablets and two wooden crosses were added to the Old Cemetery, and in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, three vernacular markers date to this period: a small concrete grave cover and two crosses made of metal pieces welded together to hold a metal plaque. However, since three more small metal cross-signs of this kind mark burials in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery that date to the 1960s and 1970s, it is quite likely that the two markers for burials from earlier decades were also installed at this time and backdated. There are also four crude, even childish, markers in the New Finland cemeteries that have not weathered enough to have been put in place over the graves at the time of burial. One is a cross made of two pieces of chrome riveted together and the other three consist of etched metal plates fastened to grass markers of wood or concrete. These markers may be commemorative pieces placed by family or community members on graves that had long gone unmarked.

The vernacular markers of stone and concrete in the Old Cemetery attempt to replicate traditional tablet forms with limited tools and materials. The tablet shown in Figure 6.40, for instance, resembles tablets that might be seen in a Finnish churchyard, even adopting the medieval custom of separating words with periods and incising lines to keep the text horizontal. Other vernacular markers appear to be resourceful attempts to use whatever materials of wood or metal are at hand to indicate the location of a grave and give the name of the deceased. All of the vernacular markers represent an inexpensive alternative to commercial grave markers, which may have been unaffordable or unavailable. The fact that all are contemporaneous with commercial stones may indicate that cost was the big factor in the decision to make rather than purchase a grave marker, but it is also possible that some of the early commercial markers were installed later on unmarked graves alongside the earliest vernacular markers, which were handmade because there were no other alternatives at the time.



**Figure 6.40:** A naïve concrete marker.

*6.2.5.2 Commercial Suppliers:* There are 62 grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries that have maker's marks, i.e. company names carved, painted or otherwise attached to the back of a grave marker to indicate who supplied it. These marks indicate that up until the 1930s, the main source of supply for the Finnish cemeteries was Somerville Co., which was established in Brandon, Manitoba, in 1896 by William Somerville (Somerville Memorials 2011). The company opened an office in Calgary in 1903, which still exists. It was the now defunct Brandon office, however, that supplied 14 gravestones to the Finnish cemeteries, eight to the New Finland New Cemetery and two each to the New Finland Old Cemetery, Highland Cemetery, and Dunblane Finnish Cemetery. Somerville provided seven obelisks, three pulpits, two tablets, one roofed marker and a wedge, most of which were made of grey marble, although two obelisks were of dark granite. These large monuments were likely shipped from Brandon to the railway station nearest the cemetery.



Following the same route would have been three grey marble tablets supplied by C. H. Peirson, one to Nummola Cemetery and two to the New Finland Old Cemetery. This company was also located in Brandon, and its mark appears on gravestones from the 1920s and 1930s.

Likely coming from the south rather than the east was a white marble diamond-shaped tablet for a child found in Finnish Heritage Cemetery and marked “Silverson, Moose Jaw.” The Moose Jaw office of Silverson Co. would have been on the path followed by Finnish immigrants from North Dakota to homesteads around Loreburn in 1908, the year in which this child died. The stone is not particularly large and could have been either carted north or shipped by rail.

Another supplier of gravestones was Sears, Roebuck & Co. who made tombstones readily available to rural communities throughout North America through its annual catalogues and its special supplementary catalogue of tombstones (Schroeder 1971). It is difficult to determine how many of the markers in the Finnish cemeteries arrived via the catalogue, but at least one stone in the New Finland Old Cemetery appears to have been obtained in this way (see Figure 6.41). Marking the graves of a husband and wife who died in 1917 and 1919, respectively, this stone is a variation of the model selling in the 1908 Sears, Roebuck & Co. catalogue. In 1908 Sears, Roebuck & Co. shipped tombstones like this by rail to the nearest railway station and added the third or fourth class freight charges to the cost.



**Figure 6.41:** A relatively modest tombstone available through Sears, Roebuck & Co. around 1908 (Schroeder 1971:161).

In 1924, the grave monument market in Saskatchewan began to change. Thomas L. Reeson founded Regina Monumental Co., which established branches in Saskatoon and Prince Albert, eventually becoming known as REMCO Memorials. REMCO installed two black granite memorials in New Finland New Cemetery in the 1930s, and gradually squeezed out the other companies that had been operating there to become the major supplier to the Finnish cemeteries across Saskatchewan. There are 32 stones in the cemeteries that bear the REMCO name, and many more were likely installed by REMCO although no company mark is visible on them. There are 16 stones with the REMCO mark in the New Finland New Cemetery, nine in Highland Cemetery, five in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, and two in the New Finland Old Cemetery. REMCO monuments were often chosen with the assistance of REMCO's carefully developed network of authorized local representatives who were trained to provide the bereaved with information and a communications link with the company. The REMCO stones are made of granite, and black granite tablets and pillows were by far the company's most popular offering among the Saskatchewan Finns.

In spite of the dominance of REMCO, a few other companies have managed a foothold in the New Finland cemeteries. W. P. Monumental Co. of Regina has placed six stones, all granite tablets or pillows, most dating after 1990. Also, stones have recently appeared bearing the marks of two local firms: Matthew's Monuments of Melville, which has placed two granite tablets and two granite pillows, and Melville Memorials, which has supplied a black granite plaque.

Nummola Cemetery, which has no REMCO memorials, is unusual in that it includes one grave cover pillow with a maker's mark. This concrete grave cover was installed locally by Carruthers Grave Covers of Shaunavon, which confirms the widespread practice among the Finnish immigrants of using local businesses to install grave covers as well as the larger monumental companies. In Highland Cemetery, for example, most grave covers were installed by members of the local Ylioja family, who produced concrete grave covers as a sideline to farming and prided themselves on providing high-quality covers more cheaply than could be obtained from other sources (local resident, personal communication, 2010). Competition for the grave cover market appears to have been fierce, with REMCO and other companies responding to their competitors with new materials, finishes, models and guarantees, as well as salesmen who made the rounds of rural communities.

In addition to the commercial markers bearing maker's marks are nine gravestones that have the standard form and decoration of a military marker for a Canadian veteran. The government department of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) has long assumed responsibility for ensuring that all veterans receive a dignified burial, but in 1995, its grave-marking program was delegated to a non-profit organization called the Last Post Fund. Through the program, financial assistance is available to cover the cost of a military-style tablet or grass marker for qualifying veterans. These markers are all made of Barre grey granite, a stone named for the granite quarry in Barre, Vermont. They are generally ordered and put in place by the local funeral director in charge of the burial.

It may be seen in the Finnish cemeteries that major changes in grave marker styles and materials tend to parallel changes in supply. For example, marble gravestones disappeared with the companies who supplied them, and as REMCO became a dominant force in the province's gravestone market, granite stones began to take over. It is difficult to tell whether changing tastes affected the kind of monument company chosen to supply gravestones, or the companies themselves were instrumental in changing mortuary fashions. Nevertheless, to date, developments in the gravestone industry have paralleled developments in consumer choice, with the market forces of capitalism generally catering to the steady demand in the Finnish population for rather standard, reasonably priced products. The individual, artistic touches once provided by local gravestone carvers or people who made their own memorials have reappeared only recently with what appears to be a new upscale market for grave markers that are more unusual and personal.

#### *6.2.6 Unmarked Graves*

Cemetery records indicate that at least 163 people are buried in unmarked graves in the Finnish cemeteries, 53 in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, 46 in the New Finland Old Cemetery, 30 in the New Finland New Cemetery, 18 in Nummola Cemetery and 16 in Highland Cemetery. In addition, electromagnetic ground resistivity tests carried out in Finnish Heritage Cemetery in 2010 have indicated the presence of up to 27 unmarked graves (McLeod 2011). Three of these newly discovered graves may be attributed to three individuals for whom death certificates have been found stating that they were buried in Finnish Heritage Cemetery. Similarly, death certificates or cemetery records exist that allow the attribution of some of the unmarked graves in

the other cemeteries. However, in addition to these graves that are unmarked but have been located and/or attributed to an individual, there are likely more that are not included in the numbers given above because they are now completely lost to current memory. Dunblane Finnish Cemetery has such a high number of unmarked graves only because the cemetery map notes 15 plots that bear signs of a burial, either through depressions left in the earth or the accidental uncovering of burial materials or bones, as well as plots that community members have identified as belonging to a family member. Such notations have not been made on the maps for the other cemeteries, although the oldest section of the New Finland Old Cemetery has been closed to further burials because of encounters with grave remnants when excavating new graves in that area. It is quite possible that there are additional unmarked graves in all the Finnish cemeteries that have yet to be discovered.

The reasons that a grave is unmarked are seldom documented. Some recent graves have been left unmarked until the deceased's spouse has died, when a companion marker will be installed to memorialize both people. Some older graves were likely marked at one time, but the markers were made of perishable materials that have now disintegrated. A few graves may have been left unmarked as a matter of choice because of the deceased's religious, political or environmental beliefs. The number of unmarked graves in a cemetery is often influenced by the degree to which cemetery boards and the community they serve work to replace disintegrating or missing markers. Highland Cemetery, for example, has a low number of unmarked graves because of the concerted effort made in the 1970s to ensure that every grave had at least a small plastic plaque giving the name and dates of the deceased.

From the birth and death dates available in funeral registers, local histories, and other available documents, the age at death can be calculated for all but 27 (17%) of those buried in unmarked graves. Of the other 136, 14 were stillborn, died at birth or died within a few weeks of birth, while another 27 did not survive their first year. Thirteen more did not reach their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, for a total of 54 child deaths, representing 33% of all the unmarked graves. Of those who lived to adulthood, 32 (20%) died before reaching the age of 60, and 50 (31%) died as adults aged 60 or older. In comparing these figures to the comparable figures for marked graves, what stands out is the high percentage of graves for children and infants among the unmarked graves (33%) compared to the percentage of marked graves that contain children and infants (18%).

It is also likely that the number of unmarked infant graves in the Finnish cemeteries is actually much higher than these figures represent. There is some evidence that stillborn babies and babies who died soon after birth were sometimes buried in the Finnish cemeteries in unmarked graves without the fact even being recorded in cemetery records. For example, one person recalled that as a child, he was briefly shown the body of a sister who had died at birth. Although there was no marked grave for her or any mention of her in the cemetery records or family histories, he was able to obtain a death certificate showing that an unnamed sister was indeed interred in one of the Finnish cemeteries (local resident, personal communication, 2010). This female infant may well be in one of the unmarked, unattributed graves that the cemetery is believed to have.

The presence in the Finnish cemeteries of so many unmarked graves for unnamed infants may be regarded as an instance of “when absence is the artifact” (Lever 2009:414). These graves suggest that a major strategy used by the Finnish immigrants to deal with infant deaths was to minimize their loss. Rather than inform the community of the death and mourn it publicly, which is an alternative strategy strongly advocated today by a number of groups in North America (Layne 2006), many Finns preferred a quick, private interment without memorialization that enabled them to forget what had happened and move on. As will be seen later in the section on names in the Finnish cemeteries, even parents who buried dead infants in marked graves often chose to give them only the family name, not a personal name.

The lack of a name and/or memorialization does not mean that the Finns did not care about these children. Local histories tell of Finnish midwives performing lay baptisms for dying infants, and it is moving to see several grave markers in the cemeteries where parents, dying decades later, include on their own memorials a footnote acknowledging the death of an infant son or daughter. The strategy of minimization was most likely a practical cultural response to living conditions in which people with large families were working too hard to survive to devote much time or energy to mourning. For numerous ethnic groups that settled on the western plains, the death of a infant was an all-too-frequent occurrence that could not be given undue attention and was not actively remembered.

The fact that all the graves in the “potter’s field” block of Highland Cemetery are unmarked indicates that lack of money may sometimes be the reason that there is no marker. There is too little information about most unmarked graves, however, to make a direct

correlation between poverty and unmarked graves. Moreover, even Finnish families whose local histories talk openly about their struggle with extreme poverty usually managed some kind of marker, perhaps a simple grave cover or concrete grass marker. Also, the community sometimes stepped in to assist very poor families with a functional marker of that kind.

There may be a difficult-to-verify relationship between unmarked graves and those families that moved away from the cemetery area. Lack of family in the area certainly played a role in the neglect of some graves and the failure to replace disintegrated grave markers, as indicated by the effort made by Highland Cemetery in 1979 to find families and ask them to provide financial support for the cemetery's effort to mark all graves (local resident, personal communication, 2010). Also, according to the information available from local histories and records, one third of the adults buried in unmarked graves were unmarried. Some of these people were immigrant bachelor farmers or hired hands who had no family in Saskatchewan to bury them or maintain their graves. However, some of those in unmarked graves did have family connections close by, and in these cases, lack of a marker may say something about family values or relationships.

A final consideration in understanding the unmarked graves in the Finnish cemeteries is the fact that the absence of a memorial often allows the deceased to be forgotten. There may simply be some people in the cemeteries that no one particularly wants to remember, and consciously or unconsciously, markers on these graves are not installed, maintained or replaced. The cemetery is, quite literally, a place where certain life stories can be buried forever if there is no will among the living to remember them. For example, in the Finnish cemeteries, there appears to be a high number of unmarked graves among those adult Finns who can be identified as socialists or socialist sympathizers by scanning the pages of *Vapaus*. There are 40 such people buried in the Finnish cemeteries, including people with families as well as single men and women. Fifteen or 38% of them are in unmarked graves. In at least some of these cases, the absence of markers may represent an act of forgetting. In the documentary record as well, Saskatchewan's Finnish communities have tended to consign to oblivion the story of Finnish socialism in Saskatchewan. The conflicts between Reds and Whites were painful, there is a desire to free future generations of old stigmas and political divisions, and as the saying goes, history is always written by the victors.

### 6.3 Symbols

Cemeteries are filled with signs that, when their meaning is understood, become symbols. W. Lloyd Warner makes the following distinction between sign and symbol:

*A sign*, in the language of symbolism, is any form of perceptible token whatever – word, gesture, painted signal, complex composition in any medium, ritual acted out, even silence on occasion – that is made, and/or accepted to stand for a meaning beyond just what it physically is. I.e. [sic], a sign is something that points to a meaning. A *symbol* is the complete unit or combination of sign and meaning. Experience of a symbol means the recognition of meaning from the sign [Warner 1959:104].

Warner's distinction is useful because it captures the role of cemeteries as a point of interaction between the past and the present. The decorative motifs, colours, plants and other signs that they contain in abundance become symbols only when visitors to the cemetery attach meaning to them. As in any human interaction, it is always possible that the meaning received is not exactly the meaning that was intended, but symbolism always has its reference point in the present understanding of signs left in the past. When signs are not recognized and accepted, a carved rose is just a rose and a hillside bench is just a bench, but when meaning is attached, the rose may be a symbol of beauty while the bench may represent an invitation to stay and think about the deeper matters of life.

#### 6.3.1 *The Symbolic Functions of the Cemetery*

In addition to the practical and social functions identified in Chapter Four, the Finnish cemeteries fulfill the symbolic functions that Warner (1959) pointed out in his analysis of symbolism in American cemeteries. Although not all the cemeteries were actually consecrated by the church, all are treated as sacred places. Each one is set apart from the everyday life of its community and situated on a piece of land that is clearly bounded by fences, hedges, roads or natural features, such as sloughs or stands of bush. There are signs and grave markers to indicate that this land is a cemetery, thus invoking expectations for the kind of respectful human behaviour that is typically associated with churches and other sacred sites. Each Finnish cemetery serves as a meeting place for the living and the dead, with all of the spiritual and emotional implications that such a deeply symbolic role entails.

The Finnish cemeteries also act as cities of the dead, albeit to varying degrees. All assign land for burials and include planned roads and walkways, while the most highly planned and organized cemeteries sell grave lots of varying value and designate areas for particular populations, such as the poor or itinerants. Pressure is put on owners to keep cemetery lands and neighbourhoods in good condition, and there are elected boards to make decisions on behalf of the deceased and their living relatives. In many respects, the cemetery is a shadow of the living community, employing familiar social and economic institutions and processes to organize the dead in much the same way as the living are organized.

Mitigating the symbolism of the city of the dead is the symbolism of the garden, representing the forces of nature as opposed to the agency of humankind. As noted earlier in describing the relationships that various Finnish cemeteries have to the natural environment, nature has a strong presence in all the cemeteries. In some, however, nature is wilder and less controlled, suggesting a more relaxed or fatalistic attitude towards the natural cycle of life and death, while in other cemeteries, noticeably more effort has been expended to control death and make the cemetery a more human and pleasant place for the living to meet the dead.

One symbolic role that appears to be played by the Finnish cemeteries was not recognised by Warner in 1959, namely the role that cemeteries play in providing immigrant communities with an ancestral home. Inherent in most cemeteries in North America is a celebration of the family (Irwin 2007:35). To varying degrees, cemeteries are filled with family burial areas and monuments that testify to the endurance of family lineages and enable people to trace their roots. People are encouraged to plan ahead and invest in cemetery lots as part of their estate planning, thus providing linkages and continuity among their descendants. This focus on family is clearly evident in all the Finnish cemeteries. The grave markers in these cemeteries express family values, usually religious in nature, for the comfort and inspiration of following generations, and in a setting far from Finland, ethnic roots are acknowledged through epitaphs, symbols, and the opportunities that the cemeteries offer to congregate with people of Finnish ancestry. Social networks and family connections are perpetuated through burials, clean-up days and other activities in the cemeteries. In numerous cases, people who have moved away and died elsewhere ask to be buried in one of the Finnish cemeteries because the Finnish community was a formative influence in their early years and they feel a deep allegiance to both their family and the community of immigrant Finns. Even people who have never lived in one of the rural Finnish



communities in Saskatchewan make pilgrimages to them to learn about their ancestors and experience the sense of “coming home.” For a large group of people with Finnish ancestry across North America, Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries are places to visit, learn about and reinforce their ethnic and family heritage, and feel that they belong. For these people, their roots are not so much in Finland, which has come to feel remote and foreign, but in the settlements founded by their immigrant ancestors and marked by cemeteries.

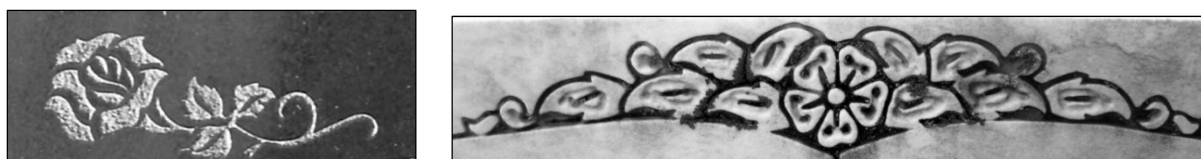
### 6.3.2 *Grave Marker Symbols*

Apart from a few idiosyncratic motifs that are used on grave markers to represent individual personalities or lives, the decorative motifs in the Finnish cemeteries tend to fall into three major categories: flower symbols, Christian symbols, and symbols of the land. These categories are not mutually exclusive, since most of the scenery features plants or animals and has spiritual connotations, while numerous flowers, fruits and greenery have come to represent religious ideas. Also, in considering the messages conveyed by the symbols in these categories, it needs to be acknowledged that these messages may not always have been read or accepted by the people who chose the marker. The appeal of many images lies only in their familiarity or decorative value. For example, in the almost exclusively Lutheran context of the Finnish cemeteries, it is difficult to explain on any other basis the carving of rosaries on three grave markers for people who were almost certainly Lutherans. The rosary is a recognized symbol of Catholicism, not typically used by Lutherans, but it is a Christian symbol and an attractive embellishment. Here the rosary is probably best regarded as a pretty Christian decoration.

*6.3.2.1 Flower Symbols:* Flowers are a poignant symbol on grave markers because they encapsulate both the beauty and brevity of human life (Irwin 2007:262). Moreover, in addition to this generic symbolism, there is a language of flowers in our culture, long used by gardeners, florists and others to communicate certain thoughts, particularly on special occasions like weddings and funerals. While there is not always agreement on exactly what is expressed by each species or colour of flower, and certain flowers, such as the rose, have many levels of meaning, some commonly accepted symbols do emerge from the flowers found on grave markers. When competing messages are attributed to a specific flower, which happens quite often, it is generally the religious message that is most relevant in understanding the Finnish

immigrants to Saskatchewan. For example, it is more likely in context of the Finnish cemeteries that a trillium represents the Holy Trinity (Lawrence 2007:201) than expresses the Victorian social convention of modest beauty (Greenaway 1884:56). This section examines primarily the flower imagery in the cemeteries that has religious implications or associations with particular places. Special attention is paid to the rose because it is not only the most dominant symbol in the Finnish cemeteries, it is also a symbol with a long history and great complexity.

The rose is by far the most common symbol in the Finnish cemeteries and perhaps in cemeteries throughout Saskatchewan. It is usually in the form of either a domestic rose or an open, flat flower, although rosebuds and climbing roses also exist. It may be highly stylized or rendered in realistic detail. In the Finnish cemeteries there are 80 depictions of the flat rose and 54 depictions of the domestic rose (see Figure 6.42).



**Figure 6.42:** Stylized representations of a domestic rose and a flat or wild rose.

The domestic rose, available in numerous colours that each have symbolic meaning, is a garden flower that has become a staple of the florist industry because of its identification with love and beauty. Sometimes characterized as the queen of flowers, the rose is associated with the Virgin Mary and can stand for religion and healing. The cultivation of roses of varying shape, size, fragrance and colour is the mark of a master gardener, and in many ways, the perfect beauty of the domestic rose has come to represent both the garden and the gardener in the personalized imagery found on contemporary gravestones. Since World War II, a red domestic rose, particularly one held in the hand, is often a symbol of labour, socialist and democratic parties, but none of the domestic rose motifs studied here appear to have this connotation. In religious terms, the red rose may represent Christian martyrdom, while the white rose associated with the Virgin Mary conveys innocence and purity.

The flat rose is sometimes interpreted as a wild rose, i.e., the common shrub rose that grows wild throughout western Canada. However, it is also a European symbol with many religious and political connotations. Most flat roses have five petals, which are identified with

the five wounds of Christ, and some have leaves that appear in sets of three suggesting the Holy Trinity. A white flat rose with five petals is associated with Marshal Gustaf Mannerheim, who led the White forces in the Finnish war of independence and later established the prestigious Order of the White Rose, one of Finland's highest honours (Klinge 2000). Also, the Luther rose, a symbol of Lutheranism, is a flat white rose with a small cross superimposed on its centre.

As a symbol, the rose is so fraught with possible meanings that it is difficult to discern exactly what its message might be, if any, on any particular grave marker. It is likely, however, that in most cases, the message is a blurred one that involves fleeting beauty, the garden, love, ethnicity, and political-religious ideals of purity and martyrdom. The very popularity of the rose on gravestones may lie in the breadth and the vagueness of the symbolism underlying its beauty.

The national flower of Finland is the lily of the valley, which symbolizes innocence and purity (see Figure 6.43). There are five older, white-marble grave markers decorated with this flower, two in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and three in the New Finland New Cemetery. It may have been used in the cemeteries to evoke thoughts of Finland.



**Figure 6.43:** Lily of the valley.

A motif spread evenly throughout the cemeteries and the decades is the Western Red Lily or prairie lily, which appears on four granite grave markers. As an emblem of Saskatchewan, the prairie lily may also be read as a symbol of regional and cultural identity. Other plant species native to this province that appear as decorations include the dogwood, fern, and cattail. The only emblem of Canada found in the cemeteries is not a flower but the maple leaf, which appears on one military grave marker. On the whole, flowers associated with countries, regions and ethnicities represent a minor theme in the symbolism of the cemeteries. It is far more common to find flower motifs with religious meaning.

The number and variety of religious flower symbols on the grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries, especially the Old and New cemeteries in New Finland, indicate that many Finnish immigrants were well versed in Christian symbolism and appreciated the messages of hope and eternal life that carefully chosen flower motifs could convey. These spiritual flower messages are consistent with the primarily religious epitaphs that the Finns chose for their grave markers. Some examples are given in Figure 6.44, beginning with the lily, the flower most often portrayed

on grave markers after the rose. A versatile symbol that lends beauty and spiritual significance to funeral bouquets and mortuary art, the lily is used 15 times in the Finnish cemeteries, often appearing at the foot of a cross. It is most likely a symbol of death and resurrection.



**Figure 6.44:** Some religious flower motifs in the Finnish cemeteries. From left to right are a lily, daffodils, dogwood, trillium, and a passion flower.

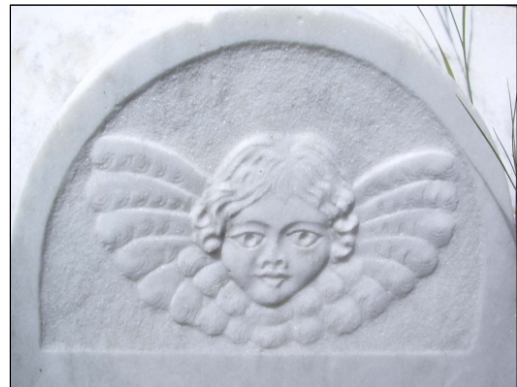
As a perennial spring flower in the cheerful Easter colour of yellow, daffodils are a metaphor for hope that is used six times in the cemeteries. Another spring flower, the iris, is used in this way once, while the dogwood, which often flowers during Easter, appears five times. One legend has it that dogwood was used to make the cross on which Christ was crucified (Lawrence 2007:204), and therefore, its white flower signifies the death and resurrection of Christ.

The three petals of trillium have made it a popular Christian symbol for the Holy Trinity. It is found twice in the cemeteries, while the passion flower, which is found once, takes its name from the way its physical structure may be interpreted to represent the Passion of Christ. For example, the petals symbolize the disciples of Christ, excluding Judas, and the three stigmas represent the three nails used to fasten Christ to the cross (Lawrence 2007:203).

*6.3.2.2 Christian Symbols:* The Christian orientation of most flower imagery in the Finnish cemeteries is echoed in the other images found on grave markers. The most common Christian image is the cross, which stands for Christ the Redeemer (Lawrence 2007:199) and Christ's triumph over death (Irwin 2007:245). It appears 96 times, usually in the form of a Latin cross, which centres a crosspiece horizontally on the upper half of an upright shaft. The Calvary cross, which includes a representation of the hill on which Christ's cross was placed, is found on 12 grave markers. There are also examples of other forms, such as the crucifix, sunburst cross,

Greek cross, trefoil cross, and rustic cross, which is carved to look like it is made of bark-covered pieces of wood. Occasionally, a cross is portrayed as slanted or fallen, signifying that a person has fallen in death.

Among the few religious symbols in Nummola Cemetery are two soul effigies or winged angel heads (see Figure 6.45). Descended from the grim winged skulls of earlier grave markers, soul effigies were a popular grave decoration that allowed a lot of room for individual imagination and interpretation, and at times they lost much of their religious meaning (Trask 1978:15). For some, the effigy was a cherub performing the duty of bearing souls to heaven. For others, it was a guardian angel watching over the dead, and for still others, it was a representation of the deceased translated into an angel in heaven or simply an attractive spirit form. In all, five soul effigies are found in the cemeteries, along with five angel figures, most of them on the graves of children, often childlike in form, and usually praying.



**Figure 6.45:** Soul effigy.

The open book and the scroll are images frequently seen in the cemeteries, often used to frame an inscription. These images bring to mind the Bible and scrolls bearing scriptures, but they may also be seen to signify literacy and the value that immigrant Finns placed on reading. They had unusually high literacy rates, due largely to the work of the Finnish Lutheran church in making sure that all Finnish citizens were able to read the Bible. All three Finnish settlements served by the Finnish cemeteries organized a lending library that supported reading in Finnish. Among other things, the 33 images of books and scrolls in the Finnish cemeteries may reflect the pride that many Finns took in being literate (see Figure 6.46).



**Figure 6.46:** A motif combining an open book (Bible) with the flat rose, ivy, and oak leaves with an acorn.

The grave markers in the New Finland cemeteries have the most elaborate, explicit Christian imagery. Five markers bear motifs that involve a chalice, grapes and/or grape leaves, images that invoke the Last Supper and the equation of wine with Christ's blood in communion

rituals. Christ is often portrayed figuratively as an anchor of hope, a crown of victory, the lamb of God, or a sun of righteousness (Lawrence 2007:199; Irwin 2007:250, 256), or through a christogram such as INRI (an acronym drawn from the first letter of each word in the inscription written on Christ's cross to mock him as Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews), IHS (an abbreviation using the first three letters of Christ's name in Greek), and the chi-rho (a superimposition of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet) (Lawrence 2007:199). Three markers set the biblical text, "In my Father's house are many mansions," beside a scene depicting the city of God (see Figure 6.47). Many gravestones are carved with symbolic greenery that includes ivy leaves, oak leaves and acorns, trefoils, tri-leaf sprigs, palm branches, and olive branches. Ivy stands as a reminder of human weakness and dependence on God, the oak for strength and endurance, palms for Christ's martyrdom and victory over death, trefoils and tri-leaves for the Holy Trinity, and olive branches for victory and peace (Lawrence 2007:196-208).



**Figure 6.47:** City of God.

Pulpit-style markers often bear an elaborately carved scene that, with minor variations, is found in many prairie cemeteries (Lenfesty 1998:190-191). The scene, which appears seven times in the Finnish cemeteries, shows an archway, a neoclassical symbol of transition and triumph (Irwin 2007:197). In the archway is an open gate that leads to heaven or God's spiritual kingdom, often indicated by an elevated crown, anchor or other symbol for Christ. The implication of the scene is that the deceased has won entry into the kingdom and is with Christ.

The lamb or the dove often appear as a sculpture or a carving on the grave markers of children. The lamb can represent either the child who is eternally cared for by Christ the Shepherd, or it can represent innocence sacrificed, as Christ the Lamb of God was sacrificed to save humanity (Irwin 2007:256). The dove may signify the Holy Spirit or hearken back to the biblical story in which a dove bearing a branch in its beak lets Noah know that the flood waters covering the earth have receded (Irwin 2007:258-259). Both the lamb and the dove bearing a branch are symbols of innocence, meekness and peace.

6.3.2.3 *Symbols of the Land*: Since all the Finnish cemeteries served rural agricultural communities where people spent their lives working the land, it is not surprising to find that the land and agriculture figure largely on their grave markers. Some newer markers represent this connection between people and the land directly through a sketch of a natural landscape, but most convey the connection indirectly through a wheat symbol. Saskatchewan is famous for its wheat production, wheat sheaves are prominent on the provincial emblem, and in many ways, wheat has become a symbol for the province and its people. Saskatchewan Finns are proud of their contributions to farming progress, and many of them figured prominently in the formation of Wheat Pool committees and Farmers Union locals (Schelstraete 1986:20-21, 26-34).

There are also religious meanings that Finnish Lutherans may have attached to the wheat symbol. Wheat can stand for the earthly harvest and the Second Coming of Christ as described in Revelation 14:14-15 (Irwin 2007:88). According to the Bible, Jesus told several parables involving wheat, e.g., the parable of the sower (Luke 8:4-15) and the parable of the grain of wheat (John 12:24-26). The good farmer is a religious as well as a social ideal to which many Saskatchewan Finns would have related. The grim reaper carries a scythe, suggesting that his harvest of human souls parallels the human harvest of ripe grain (Keister 2004:131). Wheat appears in the Finnish cemeteries as the pictorial representation of a life well-lived, work well-done, and a person well-prepared for death.

There are 64 markers with depictions of wheat, 47% of them in the New Finland New Cemetery, 20% in the New Finland Old Cemetery, 17% in Highland Cemetery, 11% in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, and 5% in Nummola Cemetery. All but a few take the form of a wheat spray, in which 2-4 stalks of ripe wheat are overlaid and sometimes intertwined. Two older gravestones, one in the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and the other in the New Finland Old Cemetery, outline a wheat bouquet that contains a higher number of wheat stalks, and one stone in the New Finland Old Cemetery depicts a wheat sheaf. Interestingly, on 13 of the 15 spousal companion stones found in the Finnish cemeteries that provide a personal symbol for each of the husband and wife (see Figure 6.48 for an example), the man is



**Figure 6.48:** The typical male-female symbolism of wheat and rose.

symbolized by a wheat spray while the woman is symbolized by a flower (rose or prairie lily), vegetable garden and/or a hummingbird. The wheat spray appears to express a masculine connection with the land, since it was largely men who cultivated the wheat fields, while a feminine connection is expressed through symbols related to the garden, which was close to home and cultivated mostly by women. This division of labour by sex was typical in many pioneer farming communities and instantly recognizable by most people in Saskatchewan. It was also deeply rooted in Finnish tradition.

Once a Finnish woman was married she became known as the *emäntä* (the mistress of the house), the one who takes care of the home and the children. This role was separate and distinct from the role that men played as *isäntä* (the manager of the farm)...[W]omen rarely did “men’s work” and men certainly did not do “women’s work” [Hintz 1999:33].

Since all ten grave markers that bear landscapes were created when more advanced carving techniques became available, they date to no earlier than 1960, and most were created after 1990. It is noteworthy that four of them depict scenes with mountains that do not correspond to Saskatchewan or Finnish landscapes. Most likely these were stock landscape designs that were offered by the grave marker suppliers and chosen because they express the beauty of nature and reflect the deceased’s love of the outdoors. Alternatively, they may actually reflect the landscape of a beloved place near mountains, perhaps a vacation home. Another three scenes are stylized treed landscapes in which people are moving towards a setting or rising sun. They, too, appear to be stock designs with a generalizable meaning. The two newest stones with landscapes, both in the New Finland New Cemetery, are remarkable for their detailed, realistic depictions of two different agricultural ways of life, one focussed on grain and the other on cattle (see Figure 6.49). Pride in and love for the land and an agricultural way of life is strongly conveyed in both of these scenes.



**Figure 6.49:** Grave marker designs with landscapes that celebrate the land and agriculture.



## 6.4 Epitaphs

An epitaph is an inscription on a grave marker that makes a statement related to the deceased. Typically it accompanies the name and dates of the deceased and enhances the dead person's memory with a comment, additional information, or a short literary composition. Only 63% of the grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries bear some text in addition to the name and dates of the deceased. It has been suggested that the scarcity and terseness of epitaphs on the grave markers for Finnish immigrants is related to the expense of having messages engraved on gravestones (Hännikäinen 2010a:150), but although expense may have been a deterrent in some cases, it is doubtful when the charges for early grave markers in western Canada are considered.

[T]he fact is that words on a gravemarker did not normally cost extra; nor do they now. The marker and installation came as a package with words included, as many as you liked. There would be additional charges for words added to an existing gravemarker, but generally speaking, the words ordered up at the time of purchase were not limited by a charge per word or per character [Millar 1994:25].

The decision of the Saskatchewan Finns not to say much, if anything, on their grave markers may be due as much to their cultural values as their economic circumstances. Finns are famous for their sparing use of words in many contexts (Sajavaara and Lehtonen 1997), and the fact that in Finland, few modern graves bear epitaphs has suggested to at least one researcher that in the cemetery at least, Finns prefer visual symbolism to textual communication (Viitamees 2002).

Discernible themes that appear among the 37% of grave markers that do have epitaphs are discussed below, along with special classes of epitaphs, inscriptions that indicate family roles and the use of the Finnish language rather than or in addition to English.

### 6.4.1 *Epitaph Themes*

Seven themes have been identified in the epitaphs in the Finnish cemeteries. In descending order according to frequency of use, these themes are: remembrance, religion, rest or sleep, love, history or biography, grief or mourning, and expression of personality. Each one is discussed below.

*6.4.1.1 Remembrance:* By far the most frequent theme appearing in the epitaphs is remembrance of the deceased. Almost half (48%) of the epitaphs make some reference to memory. Of these, 150 simply use the stock phrase “In Memory of” or “In Loving Memory of,” while another 41 are variations on the theme. Most variations just embroider the theme slightly (e.g., “Lovingly Remembered by All” or “Sacred to the Memory of”), but occasionally they express a commitment to the departed (e.g., “Gone But Not Forgotten” or “Your Memory Lives Always”) or they express sentiment at the memory (e.g., “A Beautiful Memory Lingers,” “Fond Memories Still Remain” and “The Song Has Ended But the Melody Lives On”). The more expressive and sentimental variations tend to occur on later grave markers, a trend that is noticeable in all the themes appearing in the epitaphs.

It should be noted that the theme of remembrance is expressed somewhat differently outside the New Finland cemeteries. The phrase “In Memory of” or “In Loving Memory of” is the only epitaph on 88% of the grave markers with epitaphs in Nummola Cemetery, 47% of the grave markers in Highland Finnish Cemetery, 33% of the grave markers in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, and 20% of the graves in Finnish Heritage Cemetery, while in the New Finland Old Cemetery and New Cemetery, it appears by itself on only 19% and 8% of the grave markers, respectively. Part of the explanation for this difference may lie in the fact that outside New Finland, many Finns favoured a grave marker that consisted of a white concrete pillow at the head of a white concrete grave cover. On this style of marker in particular, it appears to have been customary simply to impress the phrase “In Loving Memory” over the deceased’s name. The adoption of this style and this epitaph in the Nummola Cemetery is particularly marked.

In contrast to the theme of remembrance is the Finnish phrase, “Tässä Lepää,” which appears on 16 older grave markers in the Highland and Dunblane Finnish Cemeteries and the Old and New Cemeteries in New Finland. Roughly translated, “Tässä Lepää” means “Herein Rests.” Unlike the more prevalent phrase, “In Memory of,” it draws attention to the mortal remains rather than the memory of the deceased. It does not appear on graves after 1951 and is never translated into an English equivalent, which would probably be “Here Lies.” It signals an old-fashioned view of the grave as a depository for the dead and a reminder of mortality that at the time of Finnish immigration to Saskatchewan was already giving way to the modern view of cemeteries as landscapes of memory.

6.4.1.2 *Religion*: On 102 grave markers there is a quotation from the Bible, a phrase from a hymn or prayer, a religiously oriented bereavement verse, or an expression indicating a religious belief or doctrine. As shown in Table 6.6, this religious theme is not proportionately distributed in time or among the six cemeteries.

**Table 6.6: Religious epitaphs by cemetery and decade**

Decade	HIGH	DFC	FHC	NUM	NFO	NFN	Total
1890s					1		1
1900s			1		1	4	6
1910s		3			1	4	8
1920s	1	2	2	1	4	2	12
1930s	1	1			5	3	10
1940s		1			2	3	6
1950s		2			4	3	9
1960s		1			1	1	3
1970s	2				2	2	6
1980s	1	1			3	9	14
1990s	2	5			3	9	19
2000s		2		1		5	8
TOTAL	7	18	3	2	27	45	102

The religious theme is particularly prominent in the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, Finnish Heritage Cemetery and the New Finland Old and New cemeteries, and its use declined markedly in all cemeteries during the 1960s and 1970s. The use of religious texts rebounded again after 1980, most strongly in the New Cemetery at New Finland.

Lutheranism was adopted as the state religion in Finland in the sixteenth century, and up until 1985, over 90% of Finns going to church were members of the state Lutheran Church (Lindstrom-Best 1985:3). It may be assumed, therefore, that if those buried in Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries followed any religion, most, if not all of them, were Lutheran. This assumption is born out through a perusal of official records, which virtually always list the religion of Saskatchewan Finns as Lutheran. In North America, however, Lutheranism developed a number of independent branches that have changed over time. Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries include people who were at various times members of the Apostolic Lutheran Church (which had several variations), the Finnish National Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Pentecostal Lutheran Church, the Suomi Synod, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada (Schelstraete 1982:46-59).

A few religious epitaphs in the New Finland New Cemetery, where the religious theme is most concentrated, reflect some of the basic tenets of Lutheranism. For example, Lutherans believe in original sin, salvation by God's grace through faith alone, and Jesus Christ as the embodiment of God's grace in the redemption of sinners. These beliefs underlie two epitaphs: "Jumalan Armolahja On Iankaikkinen Elämä Kristuksessa" [God's Gift of Grace Is Eternal Life in Christ] and "Mä nukun haawoin / Kristuksen ne puhdistaa / Mun syntisen eloin / Kaunistukseni on / weres kuolosi" [I sleep with the wounds of Christ, who cleanses them. The Beautification of my sinful life is in your blood of death]. Also, the Lutheran belief in the Bible as divinely inspired by God is reflected in the following epitaph describing the treatment of the saved, which appears to be based on a literal reading of Revelations 7:9-17: "Mull' kruunun kirkkaast' / kullasta Kunnian Herra / antaa, saan Kiitokseni / armosta Istuimen eteen / kantaa; Siel pannaan / palmut käsiini, Walkoiset / Waatteen ylleni, / karitsan Weres pestyt" [To me the Lord of Glory gives a bright crown of gold, By grace I am allowed to bring my Thanks up to the Seat. There palms are put into my hands, White Robes put on me, washed in the Blood of the lamb]. Religious epitaphs written in Finnish, such as these, appear only in the New Finland cemeteries and date from 1899 to the 1950s.

Direct Bible references or quotations appear on at least 20 epitaphs, all but three in New Finland. These texts are drawn from both the Old Testament and the New Testament, with the most popular being Psalm 23, "The Lord Is My Shepherd," which is used five times. Other texts come from Isaiah (1), Job (1), the Song of Solomon (1), Psalms (1), Matthew (3), Mark (1), Luke (3), John (1), Corinthians (1) and Revelations (2). The emphasis on the New Testament reflects a general trend in these epitaphs to focus on eternal life after death through Christ's sacrifice.

Songs have provided another source of religiously themed texts for epitaphs. They range from "Mun turwani ja toiwoni" [My refuge and my hope], which is an old hymn in *Uusi Suomalainen Wirsikirja* [*The New Finnish Hymn Book*] (Læthén 1880:284), to "Beyond the Sunset," a popular funeral hymn composed in the 1930s by two Quakers, Virgil and Blanche Brock (Osbeck 1985:48-51). Other examples include "Asleep in Jesus," "Saints of God Have Peace Forever," "To God Be the Glory," "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," "The Lord Is My Keeper," and "Oh Lord, Abide with Us." These song-linked epitaphs may reflect the strong role that music played in the religion and life of Saskatchewan Finns. It is not unusual for the biographies of

immigrant Finns in local history books to note that an individual had a fine voice or some other musical talent appreciated in the community.

The theme of eternity is dominant among the religious epitaphs, reflecting the belief or hope that the deceased enter another plane of existence after death, a thought that is in keeping with the symbolic role of cemeteries as places where the living can meet the dead (Warner 1959:281). References to eternity provided in texts or symbols comfort the living with the thought that the dead, though physically gone, are still spiritually alive. In addition, many Lutherans believe in a physical resurrection of the dead on the day of Christ's Second Coming, when loved ones will be eternally reunited. The metaphor of sleep, which implies that the dead will at some point awaken to an eternal life, is used on 20 epitaphs in the Finnish cemeteries, most often in the form of the phrase, "Asleep in Jesus." The expectation of eternal life for the deceased, either now or in the future, is expressed on another 15 epitaphs through phrases such as "Eternal Life," "In Blessedness Eternal" or "Until the Day Breaks."

A common metaphor among the religious epitaphs is the "better place" to which the deceased have gone, which is variously conceptualized as heaven, a home or house, or the hands or arms of Jesus or the Lord. Implicit in this "better place" is safety and the absence of care or troubles. There are 27 epitaphs which express the hope of a better place in terms such as "Our Father's House Above," "In God's Keeping," "In Heaven Is a Home for Me," or "Into Thy Care, O Lord." The idea of the "better place" is a particular expression of the theme of eternity in terms that are easily understood and emotionally satisfying.

Another common element of the religious epitaphs is the association of death with peace. Even leaving out epitaphs that include the common phrase "Rest in Peace," there are 21 epitaphs in the Finnish cemeteries that mention peace. The most commonly used phrase is "Peace, Perfect Peace," which appears ten times, but other examples include "At Peace with God," "He Fell Asleep in Peace," "God's Peace" and "Forever at Peace." Most of these epitaphs are explicitly or indirectly referring to the religious concept of God's peace, a state in which the deceased is at one with God or in harmony with God.

*6.4.1.3 Rest/Sleep:* Although the words "rest" and "sleep" have religious connotations on some epitaphs, they also express a general recognition that death means the end of activity. The dead no longer have to meet demands or fulfill needs, which is an attractive prospect if day-to-day life

is seen as a process of continual work and worry. Like most early settlers in rural Saskatchewan, the Finns experienced hard labour and challenging times, and it may be more meaningful than trite that many of their epitaphs express the hope that the dead are “at rest.” As noted earlier, “Tässä Lepää” [Herein Rests] appears on 16 epitaphs. In addition, “Rest in Peace,” perhaps the most common epitaph in common parlance, appears on 38 grave markers, sometimes in a Finnish form such as “Lepää Rauhassa.” Other forms of the rest theme are used on 39 grave markers, e.g., “Sweet Be Thy Rest,” “Gone to Rest” or “Resting Where No Shadows Fall.” In all, the rest theme is part of 93 epitaphs (23%) and is distributed proportionately among the Finnish cemeteries, with the exception of Nummola Cemetery, where it does not appear at all.

Related to the rest theme are epitaphs that refer to work by the deceased. The most common of these is “Life’s Work Well Done,” which appears six times in the New Finland cemeteries. Work is also mentioned in one epitaph in Highland Cemetery, and a single New Finland New Cemetery epitaph reads “A Day of Duty Done, A Day of Rest Begun.” Acknowledgement of work is thus a minor theme that appears in eight (2%) of the epitaphs.

*6.4.1.4 Love:* The word “loving” is usually added to the most common epitaph expressing remembrance (“In Memory”) so that 110 of these expressions (73%) read “In Loving Memory.” Given the frequency with which the idea of love is attached to memory of the deceased, it becomes interesting and perhaps significant when the addition is absent. For example, in one cemetery, only one grave out of 28 that bear this epitaph states simply “In Memory” rather than “In Loving Memory,” and it is found on the grave marker of a man whom the local history identifies as a bachelor. It is tempting to speculate whether or not at the time of this individual’s death there was no one attached to him closely enough to express love on his epitaph. However, in this case, as in most cases, there is no evidence to indicate whether or not the omission was deliberate or significant.

Expressions of love are also frequently, but not routinely, attached to descriptors of the deceased’s role in the family, using phrases such as “Beloved Son,” “Our Dear Mother,” “Precious Daughter” or “From His Loving Wife.” These phrases may be present on the grave marker itself, or they may have been cut into footstones or impressed into the foot of grave covers as a complement or addition to the text on the marker. For the purpose of epitaph analysis, they may be considered part of the epitaph because they work with the inscription on

the grave marker to make a statement in relationship to the deceased, and the same message is conveyed regardless of whether it is presented on the grave marker or close to it. Of the 240 descriptors used in the Finnish cemeteries to designate the family role played by the deceased, 30 (12%) are accompanied with a word or term expressing love and affection. In all, 29 (7%) of the graves with epitaphs include a phrase that expresses love for the deceased in this particular way.

Love appears as a more deliberate, direct theme in only 24 (6%) of the epitaphs in the Finnish cemeteries, and 14 of these are found in the New Finland Old Cemetery, where they comprise 14% of the epitaphs there. In this cemetery and the other five, epitaphs that have love as a theme are spread more or less evenly across the decades. The most commonly used phrase is “Ever Remembered, Ever Loved,” which appears in the cemeteries nine times, sometimes with minor variations in wording. Other expressions in this vein include “Our Darling,” “Forever Cherished,” “Always in Our Hearts,” “Much Loved by All Who Took the Time to Know Him” and “One Precious to Our Hearts Is Gone / The Voice We Loved Is Stilled.”

Expressions of love between husband and wife begin to emerge in the epitaphs after 1990, by which time companion markers had become the norm. There are five epitaphs that record the marriage date for the couple being memorialized, and another six that include phrases such as “We Worked Together in Happiness / Now We Rest Together in Peace,” “Together at Rest,” “We Shared the Gift of Love” and “Together Forever.” Of the 11 epitaphs (3% of all epitaphs) that express spousal love or emphasize the bond between spouses, five are found in Highland Cemetery.

*6.4.1.5 History and Biography:* A relatively minor theme in the epitaphs is the provision of details about life of the deceased. Five epitaphs indicate the place where the deceased was born. In one case, Finland is designated as the birth place; in another, Hongajoki and Kylä Karvia, Finland, are given as the birth places of a husband and wife; a third cites Hamlin County, North Dakota, as the place of birth; and two more epitaphs indicate that the deceased were born in New Finland. The place of death is mentioned once in an epitaph (Macrorie), and the place of burial is given on two memorials for people who were born in New Finland but lived and died elsewhere.

One anticipatory companion marker identifies with acronyms the occupations of a married couple as a member of the Canadian Forces and a Licensed Practical Nurse. Another grave marker states that the deceased was a “World War II Veteran,” but apart from military

graves, which have a standardized epitaph and may be treated as a special class, there are no other texts recording the occupations or affiliations of the deceased.

Five epitaphs indicate with pride that the person buried here was a pioneer. One epitaph on a companion marker in Highland Cemetery characterizes a married couple as “Pioneers Together at Rest.” Accepting that the “use of *pioneer* to describe themselves and the formation of pioneer societies are indications of...self-awareness of one’s part in history” (Stott 2008:19), it appears that this awareness was in place in 1981 when the first member of this couple was buried. Such awareness appears much earlier in the New Finland Old Cemetery where a crude concrete grave marker records that the deceased, a woman who died in 1921, was the first Finn to come in 1890: “Hän Oli Ensimmäinen Suomalainen Tullu W 1890.”

Other markers that fall into this pioneer theme were clearly placed on graves in the New Finland Old Cemetery sometime after death to identify the deceased as early settlers. The marble marker for David Kautonen, who filed the first homestead claim in 1888, was provided by the community in 1986 (Huhtala 2001:39) and identifies him as “Our First Settler 1888.” Also, a granite plaque for a married couple who homesteaded in the area from 1895 to 1914 records the geographic location of their homestead and states that it was provided by neighbouring families, who apparently recognized and appreciated their role in breaking the land. A similar but more informal recognition is provided for another husband and wife who died in 1985 and 1990, respectively, and are memorialized in a small homemade marker, consisting of a small metal plaque fastened to a board set flat on the ground, on which someone has crudely scratched the location of their homestead and the words “Lovingly Remembered By All.” In connection with the pioneer theme, it may be relevant to note that when the New Finland community decided to honour its pioneers in 1967, a fieldstone cairn memorializing the earliest settlers was erected, not in either of the cemeteries, but in the yard of St. John’s Lutheran Church (Schelstraete 1982:49). The cairn bears the names of 28 people who settled in the area prior to 1895, most of whom are buried in New Finland in either the Old Cemetery (12) or the New Cemetery (9).

Taken all together, there are only 15 instances where epitaphs in the Finnish cemeteries are used to provide biographical or historical information related to the deceased.

*6.4.1.6 Grief and Mourning:* Explicit expressions of grief are rare in the Finnish cemeteries, comprising only 2% of all epitaphs, and they usually appear on the grave markers of children.



Epitaphs on children's graves are discussed below as a special class. The only direct recognition of grief for a deceased adult is found in the New Finland cemeteries in the form of a brief statement that the individual was "Deeply Mourned."

*6.4.1.7 Personality:* Even more rare in the Finnish cemeteries are epitaphs that describe the personality or qualities of the deceased. There are only five (1% of all epitaphs), one in Nummola Cemetery, two in the New Finland Old Cemetery, and two in the New Finland New Cemetery. They include a memorial plaque for a couple buried in another province that expresses the couple's attachment to New Finland and records the "shelter, nourishment and loving care" that they provided to Finns visiting them. Other epitaphs falling into this theme are "While Others Looked for Rainbows / She Was Happy with the Rain," "He Liked His Friends," "Laughed Often, Loved Much" and "The Lord Gave Them Strength, Patience, Wisdom."

#### *6.4.2 Special Classes of Epitaph*

The epitaphs placed on the children's graves and military graves have significant differences that warrant separating them out as two special classes of epitaph.

*6.4.2.1 Children's Graves:* Even when the graves of infants and children are marked, either individually or as part of a family, many of them have no epitaph or are memorialized only with a reference to their place in the family. Of the graves with individual markers, 37 have no epitaph. A reference to family role, such as "Baby," "Hänen Tyttö Lapsensa" [His Infant Daughter], "Son of ..." or "Lapset Pois..." [Children Taken from...], is the only memorial text for a child or infant on another 21 of the graves with individual markers, and 15 references of this kind may also be found on the 25 combined family or parent-child markers, functioning in this context to set apart the names of infants and children. There are a total of 36 references in the Finnish cemeteries that identify an infant or child by family role. This kind of memorial acknowledges the biological birth of a child and gives the dead child a place within the family.

There are, however, longer epitaphs on 30 individual markers for infants and children, some of which differ from those used for adults. Seven still use the short ubiquitous phrase "In Loving Memory;" three invoke the peace theme in the form of "Peace Be Thine" or "Rest in Peace;" six use the metaphor of sleep, particularly the phrase "Asleep in Jesus;" and three

present the idea that the child has moved to a safer, better place, e.g., “Safe in the Arms of Jesus,” “In God’s Keeping,” and “Too Good for Earth God Called Him Home.” This last phrase is a famous one borrowed from Abraham Lincoln, who is said to have uttered those words on the death of his 11-year-old son, Willie. In this and several other epitaphs for infants and children, thoughts have been drawn from sayings, prayers, hymns and biblical texts of special meaning to children. An example of each would be “Jeesus Lasten Paras Ystävä” [Jesus the Best Friend of Children], “I Pray the Lord My Soul to Keep,” “Jesus Loves Me,” and “Jesus Called a Little Child Unto Him.” Only two epitaphs for children, one dating to 1913 and the other to 1921, are expressed in Finnish.

Of the few explicit expressions of grief in the Finnish cemeteries, the most moving ones relate to the death of a child. Two are found in Highland Cemetery and one in the New Finland Old Cemetery: “The Place Made Vacant in Our Home / Can Never More Be Filled,” “Darling We Miss Thee” and “How Much of Light, How Much of Joy / Is Buried with Our Darling Boy.” An uncharacteristic epitaph in the New Finland New Cemetery expresses in personal, heartfelt words how the parents felt when a little girl passed away in 1997: “Our Little Sunshine / So Precious So Sweet So Loved/ Your Beautiful Blue Eyed Smiles / Have Filled Our Hearts With / Love and Joy That Will Last / An Eternity Until We Meet / Again Our Little Angel.”

*6.4.2.2 Military Graves:* There are nine military grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries. The most recent were placed in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery over the bodies of a Captain of Air Operations in the Canadian Forces, who died in a plane accident in 1989, and his father, a veteran of World War II who had served in the Merchant Navy and died in 1999. The son received a military headstone as a matter of right because he died in action, but unless veterans die receiving a disability benefit as a result of their military service, they have to apply for a military headstone and qualify through a means test that establishes their financial need (VAC 2009). Most veterans buried in military graves in the Finnish cemeteries appear to have applied for this type of grave marker.

The epitaphs on military graves must meet the inscription standards of Veterans Affairs Canada. In addition to the name and dates of the deceased, they provide rank and military unit, and sometimes the phrase “Lest We Forget.” This phrase appears on three military markers in the Finnish cemeteries.

In addition to the military burials at Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, there are four in the New Finland Old Cemetery and three in the New Cemetery. One marker in the Old Cemetery states that the deceased, who died in 1939, served in World War I as a Private in the Canadian Forestry Corps. All other New Finland military markers recognize the service of World War II veterans buried there between 1951 and 1985. They honour two Gunners in the Royal Canadian Artillery, a Private in the Canadian Infantry Corps, a Private in Depot Battalion, a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Canadian Air Force, and a Rifleman in the Regina Rifle Regiment.

#### *6.4.3 Family Roles and Relationships*

As noted earlier in considering epitaphs related to infants and children, it was a common practice in the Finnish cemeteries to include a word or phrase on grave markers, grave covers or footstones to indicate one or more roles that the deceased played in the family. There are 208 graves that have a reference of this kind, representing 34% of all marked graves, and in 72 cases (12%), they are the only words about the deceased apart from the name and dates. An emphasis on family role is most obvious in the Finnish Heritage and Nummola cemeteries, where a reference to family role is present on 80% and 78% of marked graves, respectively, compared to 37% in Highland Cemetery, 29% in the New Finland New Cemetery, 28% in the New Finland Old Cemetery, and 23% in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery.

Separating out the family role references by gender, deceased women are referred to, in either English or Finnish, as “Mother” 75 times, “Wife” 21 times, “Daughter” 10 times, “Sister” four times, “Grandmother” four times, and “Granddaughter” once, for a total of 115 references to a female family role. In the Highland Cemetery, the title “Mrs.” is also used five times to indicate that the deceased was a married woman. In contrast, deceased men are referred to, in either English or Finnish, as “Father” 68 times, “Husband” 13 times, “Son” 30 times, “Brother” nine times, and “Grandson” once, for a total of 121 references to a male family role. These references show strong emphasis on the parental role of both men and women, but the role of “wife” tends to be more prominent for women than the role of “husband” is for men. The graves also recognize considerably more sons than daughters, and while grandmothers are present, no grandfathers are recognized. Possible explanations of these differences may include the patriarchal nature of Finnish society, the tendency of sons to remain and be buried with their

birth families while daughters married out of the community, and a longer life or more active family role for grandmothers than grandfathers.

The remaining family role references are not gender-specific. They consist of “Parents” (4), “Child” or “Children” (6), and “Baby” or “Infant” (21). The frequency with which “Baby” appears reflects both the commonness of infant death and the practice of using the term in place of a first name for an unnamed child who died at birth or very soon afterward. As discussed earlier, many immigrant Finns absorbed their dead children into the family rather than give them individuality and membership in the community through the process of naming.

#### 6.4.4 Finnish Language

Many of the grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries are inscribed with a mixture of Finnish and English. At least one word in Finnish appears on or beside 61 grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries. Table 6.7 shows these grave markers by the decade of the earliest burial they record and the cemetery in which they are found.

**Table 6.7: Use of Finnish on graves in the Finnish cemeteries**

Decade	HIGH	DFC	FHC	NUM	NFO	NFN	No. of Uses
N.D.					1	1	2
1890s					2	1	3
1900s					2	2	4
1910s	2				1	9	12
1920s	1	1			5	3	10
1930s	1				3	7	11
1940s	1	2		1		1	5
1950s	1	3			1	1	6
1960s		2					2
1970s	1	1					2
1980s		1				2	3
1990s					1		1
2000s							0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>61</b>

The earliest and most frequent use of Finnish on grave markers was in the New Finland cemeteries, which were founded earlier than the others. Both Highland and Dunblane Finnish Cemeteries, which were founded after 1910, show a small amount of Finnish steadily in use right

up until the 1980s, while in the New Finland cemeteries, usage peaked from 1910 to 1930, then declined abruptly to a steady but small amount, mostly in the New Finland New Cemetery.

Among the graves counted in Table 6.7, there are 30 references in Finnish to family role, and in seven cases, these references are the only Finnish used. The number and kind of family roles can be broken down as follows: “Isä” [Father] - 11, “Äiti” [Mother] - 9, “Waimo” or “Vaimot” [Wife or Wives] - 3, “Lapset” [Children] - 2, “Isoäiti” [Grandmother] - 2, “Poika” [Son] - 1, and “Tyttö” or “Tyttö Lapsensa” [Daughter or Infant Daughter] - 2. In addition, the single use of Finnish in Nummola Cemetery is “Isän Muistolle” [To the Memory of Father], and one epitaph in Highland Cemetery is addressed to “Äiti Kulta” [Mother Dear].

On nine grave markers the only Finnish used gives the age and/or dates for the deceased. Finnish is used for this purpose on a total of 31 inscriptions, but on two grave markers in the New Finland Old Cemetery, the dates are almost obliterated and cannot be read. Of the remaining 29 dates in Finnish, 11 are found in the New Cemetery, 10 are found in the Old Cemetery, five in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery, two in Highland Cemetery, and one in Nummola Cemetery. The format and wording used in the dates varies over time. Two inscriptions relating to burials in 1897 and 1900 use the old-fashioned date format shown below (“S” is an abbreviation for “Syntynyt” [Born] and “K” is an abbreviation for “Kuollut” or “Kuoli” [Died]):

S. 18 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>4</sub> 54	[Born February 4, 1854]
K. 19 <sup>9</sup> / <sub>26</sub> 00	[Died September 26, 1900]

Two other early grave markers follow the medieval custom of separating words with periods rather than spaces, as in the example given below from New Finland:

TOIVO	[Toivo
HEITPERG.SY	Hedberg.Bo
NTYI.TM.K.28P.	rn.January’s.28Day.
KUALI.HEL.K.1.P.1904	Died.February’s.1.Day.1904]

This example is also notable for using the word form, “Kuali,” instead of “Kuoli,” flattening the vowel sound. This form may well indicate the way the word was actually spoken by the New Finlanders, whom Virtaranta found to speak an Ostrobothnian dialect (Virtaranta 1982:78). Another colloquial form of “Kuollut” that is more often used in the Finnish cemeteries drops the final consonant, as in the following example and probably in most everyday speech:

SYNTYNYT 21 JOULUKUUN W-1910 [Born 21 December Y-1910  
 KUOLLU MAALISKUUN 14.P-1917 Died March's 14<sup>th</sup> Day 1917]

As in the above example, some of the older inscriptions in Finnish use “Wuotta” rather than the more modern “Vuotta” for the word “Year,” in the same way that “Waimo” is sometimes used rather than “Vaimo” for the word “Wife.”

Since Finnish words are often lengthy and difficult to fit into the limited space on a grave marker, abbreviations are often used, e.g., “IKÄ 42 VTT. 11 KK 16 PÄIVÄ” [Age 42 Years 11 Months 16 Days]. The struggle to present the diacritical marks in the Finnish language on grave markers is evident in the variations of the word “Päivä,” which also appears as “Päivä,” “Päivâ,” and “Paiva.” In later decades, Finnish is adapted to a shorter, simpler form of presenting dates that sometimes parallels the way that they are presented in English:

Heinäk 14, 1872 [Jul. 14, 1872  
 Toukok 17, 1931 May 17, 1931]

On grave markers in Finland, which tend to be family stones, the names are generally presented in “family tree” order, with the oldest at the top, children beneath, then grandchildren (Viitamees 2002). This patrilineal order is found on some Finnish family stones in Saskatchewan. The stone shown in Figure 6.50, for example, places the name of the father (Isä) below the family name, then gives the names of his two wives, and below them, provides a list of the children buried with them that each wife bore. However, other family stones in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries simply list names in the order that people died.



**Figure 6.50:** Names given in “family tree” order.

Leaving out the Finnish words related to dates and family role, there are 45 epitaphs in Finnish in the Finnish cemeteries: 19 in the New Finland New Cemetery, nine in each of the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and the New Finland Old Cemetery, seven in Highland Cemetery, and one in Nummola Cemetery. All of the Finnish epitaphs outside New Finland and half of those in New Finland are found on the grave marker for a single individual, while the other half in New Finland are found on 11 spousal companion markers, two parent-and-child markers and one family grave stone.

Apart from words related to age and dates, the most common Finnish phrase used in epitaphs is “Tässä Lepää” [Herein Lies], which appears 16 times and is found in all the cemeteries except Nummola Cemetery and Finnish Heritage Cemetery. There is only one variation to this phrase, “Täs Lepää,” which is likely a colloquialism.

The second most used phrase is “Lepää Rauhassa” [Rest in Peace], which appears only three times in the New Finland cemeteries but is used seven times in Highland Cemetery and four times in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery. Included in these numbers are variations such as “Nuku Rauhassa” [Sleep in Peace] and “Levätkää Rauhasa” [plural form of Rest in Peace], which each occur once, “Uinoas Rauhaisasti” [Sleep Peacefully], which occurs once in Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and once in Highland Cemetery, and “Rauhan Lepo” [a form of Rest in Peace that uses “rest” as a noun], which occurs three times, always in the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery. The single use of “Rauhasa” rather than “Rauhassa” is likely another colloquialism, showing that the word was often spoken with a soft rather than a hard “s.” “Uinoas Rauhaisasti” is an old-fashioned phrase that may reflect biblical language rather than common parlance.

Highland Cemetery includes only the standard Finnish epitaphs identified above, but Dunblane Finnish Cemetery has two that are less commonplace, “Muistos Elää Ainian” [Your Memory Lives Forever], and a lovely poem: “Nuori Ihminen / Kukka Keväimen, / Kukoistaa Ja / Lakkaa Kerran [A Youth / Like a Spring Flower / Blossoms and / Dies Once]. Only secular epitaphs in Finnish are found in these cemeteries.

In contrast, apart from the standard Finnish epitaphs, only two are found in the New Finland cemeteries that are not explicitly religious in nature. One is the biographical note, “Han Oli Ensimmäinen Suomalainen Tullu W 1890” [She Was the First Finn to Come Year 1890] and the other is “Vaivoista Levossa” [At Rest from Troubles]. The concentration of the religious epitaphs in Finnish in the older New Finland cemeteries reflects the fact that the bulk of these epitaphs appeared between 1910 and 1940.

As noted earlier in the section on religious epitaphs, those in Finnish reflect Lutheran beliefs that emphasize the themes of eternity, peace, rest, and love. The importance of faith is shown in epitaphs such as: “Ilomme On Suuri Herrassamme / Pelastus Todistus Sydämmissämme” [Our Joy Is Great in Our Lord / Salvation a Proof in Our Hearts], “Autuaat Uskossa Jeesuksen Veren Armossa” [Blessed in the Faith, in the Grace of the Blood of Jesus], and “Sillä Sinä Olet Toivoni: Herra, Herra, Sinä Olet Ollut Turvani Nuoruudestani Saakka

P.S.71:5” [Because You are My Hope: Lord, Lord, You Have Been My Refuge Since My Youth. Psalm71:5]. Most religious texts appear to be chosen because they are meaningful to the deceased or their families, and there are only a few that are used more than once. “Herran Hallussa” [In the Care of the Lord], “Oi Herra Luoksemme Jää” [Oh Lord Abide with Us] and “Herra Antoi Herra Otti / Ja Hänen Nimensä Olkoon Kiitetty” [The Lord Gives, the Lord Takes Away / And May His Name Be Praised] each appear twice in the New Finland cemeteries.

A number of deviations from standard written Finnish may be found in the Finnish epitaphs. Some have already been mentioned, including “Täs Lepää,” “Levätäkää Rauhasa” and “Kuollu” or “Kuali.” These word forms may reflect the dialect used by Ostrobothnian Finns. Another possible example of this sort is “Kunnes Kohtataan,” which should read “Kunnes Kohdataan” [Until We Meet]. However, it is also possible that some of the deviations from standard Finnish found on grave markers reflect the primary use of Finnish in Saskatchewan as a spoken rather than a written language. Some New Finlanders who spoke Finnish fluently noted in the 1980s that they were not comfortable reading or writing in Finnish (Virtaranta 1982:66). Examples of deviations from modern standard Finnish that may be simple misspellings or carving errors include: “Joylukun,” which should be “Joulukuun” [December] and “Jeesus Lasten Paras Vstä Vä,” which should be “Jeesus Lasten Paras Ystävä” [Jesus Children’s Best Friend]. In addition, a few deviations may represent archaic variations of Finnish no longer in common use, e.g., “Iso Äiti” rather than “Isoäiti” [Grandmother] and “Heinä Kuun” rather than “Heinäkuun” [literally “Hay Month,” which is July].

## 6.5 Names

All the people buried in Saskatchewan’s Finnish cemeteries followed the double naming system that predominates in Canada, i.e., each person had a surname and one or more given names. The surname was hereditary and served to indicate that the name holder belonged to a certain family (Paikkala 2004:808), while the given names provided the name holder with individuality within the family.



### 6.5.1 Surnames

There are 276 different surnames used in the six Finnish cemeteries. Of these, six surnames belong to non-Finns who were neighbours of the Finnish immigrants, including one Estonian man in Nummola Cemetery, two Hungarian couples in the New Finland Old Cemetery, and an adult and two infants with English surnames in Highland Cemetery. Since the relatively small Finno-Ugric language group includes Estonians and Hungarians as well as Finns, it is possible that these particular Estonian and Hungarian farmers had an affinity with their Finnish neighbours that accounts for their burial among them. The adult Englishman buried in Highland Cemetery is said to have asserted that since he had lived among the Finns most of his life, he might as well be buried with them (local resident, personal communication, 2010).

Another larger set of non-Finnish surnames entered the cemeteries when a woman with Finnish ancestry married a non-Finnish man. The families formed by such exogamous marriages generally had Finnish heritage but non-Finnish names, and occasionally they included non-Finnish relatives of the husband, e.g., a mother, uncle, or sister, who had no Finnish heritage. Forty-two non-Finnish surnames are found in the Finnish cemeteries as a result of a marriage.

Removing from the list of surnames found in the cemeteries all the non-Finnish surnames described above leaves 174 surnames that may be broadly categorized as Finnish. These names were held by individuals with Finnish ancestry who either inherited the surname from a Finnish ancestor or acquired it by means other than marriage to a non-Finn. Not all of these names can be traced back to Finland, however, since some immigrant Finns adopted surnames in Finland or North America that were borrowed from other ethnic groups or invented surnames that were not part of their Finnish heritage. The surnames are Finnish in the specific sense that they were or became the permanent surnames of immigrant Finns and were passed down to their descendants.

It is recognized that the 174 Finnish surnames in the six Finnish cemeteries do not include all the surnames of Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan. Some Finnish immigrants moved away and were buried in other provinces or other countries. Others chose to be buried in Saskatchewan elsewhere than the six Finnish cemeteries. An exhaustive search of all cemeteries that might include Finns was not feasible within the scope of this thesis, but an examination was made of one additional cemetery in the Shaunavon area (Hillcrest Cemetery), two in the region of Turtle Lake (Elmhurst Cemetery and the town of Livelong Cemetery), and six on the Coteau (the Holt/Mosten, Hill Point, Lance Valley and Lakeview cemeteries, and the cemeteries for the

towns of Dunblane and Dinsmore). In these nine cemeteries, 239 additional burials of Finns with known surnames were located. These burials added 39 new “Finnish” surnames to the sample provided by the six Finnish cemeteries. This addition raised the total of Finnish immigrant surnames available for analysis to 213, and although these names still do not represent a complete inventory of all Finnish immigrant surnames in Saskatchewan, they do represent an extensive sample. Regions with additional cemeteries that could at some point be examined to extend the sample even further include Saskatoon, Regina, Whitewood, Tantallon, Wapella, Esterhazy, Carnoustie, Frontier, Outlook, Invermay and Margo.

*6.5.1.1 Regional Differences:* “Maki” is the most common Finnish surname found in the 15 rural cemeteries that were examined. It was found 32 times, closely followed by “Lauttamus” (31 times), “Johnson” (27 times), “Knuttila” (27 times), “Koski” (26 times), “Kangas” (25 times) and “Simonson” (23 times). “Maki,” “Koski,” “Kangas,” and “Johnson,” which are names often adapted from other Finnish surnames, each appear in four or more cemeteries, while “Lauttamus,” “Knuttila,” and “Simonson” are more confined to a particular region. “Lauttamus” and “Knuttila” are common names in the New Finland cemeteries, while “Simonson” is a name that appears in cemeteries only in the Elbow region.

Dividing the surnames according to the areas of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan reveals that there are 114 different Finnish names used in cemeteries in the Elbow region, 90 in New Finland, 33 in the area around Shaunavon, and nine in the Turtle Lake district. It is striking that the names used in these settlement areas do not tend to overlap much. Only 23% of the names used in the Elbow region are found in the other regions, while New Finland has an overlap of 27%, the Shaunavon area has an overlap of 33% and Turtle Lake has an overlap of 22%. If overlapping surnames are interpreted as an indicator of the degree of interaction between the Finnish settlement areas, the Shaunavon area Finns appear to have had the highest degree of interaction while the Elbow region and Turtle Lake Finns had the least interaction. All areas appear to have been isolated enough from one another that migration and intermarriage were exceptional rather than commonplace occurrences.

*6.5.1.2 Gender:* The naming system in all the cemeteries is patrilineal, i.e., surnames were passed down through the male line. With one exception, the married women buried in these

cemeteries adopted their husbands' surnames. The exception is found on one grave marker in New Finland dating to 2000, in which a married woman has used a hyphenated name that combines her maiden and married names. More commonly, Finnish women who wished to be remembered by their maiden names added it to their grave markers in parentheses or as a separate statement. This addition occurs 12 times in the Finnish cemeteries, with 83% of these additions occurring on burials after 1985. Such recent interest in preserving maiden names may suggest a change in gender attitudes, perhaps as a result of the feminist movement that was coalescing in Canada and elsewhere during the 1970s. For the most part, however, the social system evidenced by the names in Finnish cemeteries is decidedly patriarchal. In this respect, it reflects the dominant social system in Canada as a whole, as well as the patriarchal social system that came to dominate Finland (Paikkala 2004:559-560). Patriarchy was fully institutionalized in Finland from 1929 to 1985 in the form of a law that required all Finnish women who married to take the surnames of their husbands (Paikkala 2004:562).

*6.5.1.3 Origin and Meaning of Finnish Surnames:* The Finnish surnames found in Saskatchewan cemeteries are best understood in the context of Finnish history, particularly the social and political trends that prevailed at the time most people left Finland for North America.

Prior to 1809 Finland belonged to the Kingdom of Sweden, and long after Swedish rule ended, Swedish remained the language of the upper classes in Finland, including the gentry, the clergy, government officials, and the intelligentsia, while the Finnish language and Finnish names characterized the peasantry. When permanent surnames began to be assigned and recorded for various purposes, they were often given by Swedish-speaking officials and took a Swedish form. Patronymics were used extensively, e.g., Olson, which means "Ole's son." Alternatively, names were given that reflected the Swedish habit of combining the words for natural phenomena, e.g., Holmström, which combines "holm" [island] and "ström" [stream]. The Swedish influence on surnames was especially strong in Western Finland, which was the area that supplied the majority of emigrants to North America, because of its long history of economic and cultural exchange with Sweden as well as the presence of Swedish-speaking Finns, the largely regional minority that spoke Swedish as their first language. Moreover, some Finnish immigrants went first to Sweden or Norway, where they adopted Scandinavian names before moving to North America. Once there, some immigrants even reverted to the early

Swedish surnames held by their families, realizing that these names were more easily pronounced and used than Finnish surnames by the largely English-speaking population of North America. For example, a family with the finnicized Swedish surname of “Hemminki” once again became known in Saskatchewan by its Swedish name of “Hemming” (Schelstraede 1982:122).

As a result of all these historical and geographical factors, the Finnish names found in Saskatchewan’s cemeteries show a noticeable Scandinavian influence that is also found in Finland itself (Paikkala 2004:797). There are 27 Swedish names in the sample, including eight Swedish patronyms. Another four surnames are patronyms in the Swedish style but they use male given names in English or Finnish to form the patronym, e.g., “Johnson” or “Jaakobson.” New Finland also has at least three grave markers that finnicize a Swedish name, creating “Holma” from “Alholm,” “Flykti” from “Flykt” and “Heitperg” from “Hedberg.” Swedish influence can thus be detected in at least 34 names or 16% of the sample.

The presence of finnicized names in the New Finland cemeteries reflects both the prevalence of the Finnish language in that area and the current of Finnish nationalism that some Finnish immigrants brought with them to Saskatchewan. Finland began to develop a system of permanent, hereditary surnames only after 1850, and a uniform system was not fully implemented across the country until the Surnames Act of 1921. The naming system that Finland instituted in stages from 1850 to 1921 was in large part a unifying measure intended to minimize class, linguistic, cultural, and regional distinctions (Paikkala 2004:9). It accommodated the growth of Finnish nationalism and persuaded those who had surnames imbued with family history and high social status to bow to social and political pressures demanding unity and equality. The change was by no means smooth, as many Swedish-speaking Finns and upper class Finns who had adopted Swedish names were reluctant to relinquish designations that reflected their family history and social position. A massive name change demonstration took place in Finland in 1906, in which 70,000 Finnish names were adopted by both ordinary people and members of the intelligentsia. The demonstration showed the strength of the movement to finnicize names, but it was only one spectacular event in a trend already well underway in the late nineteenth century (Paikkala 2004:800).

Pushed by practical considerations imposed by industrialization and urbanization, Finnish society had already asked its soldiers, civic officials, artisans, students, subscribers to newspapers, those who used banks, and many others to adopt permanent surnames (Paikkala

2004:800). Most notably in the context of this research, everyone who applied for a passport had to give a surname before travelling abroad. Thus, in many respects, the new requirement in Finland to have a permanent surname was an administrative necessity rather than an ideologically motivated measure. Thousands of people in Finland had been quietly taking on permanent surnames as part of a large-scale trend towards modernization of the Finnish economy and social norms. For many Finns, it was an official or administrative decision that formalized as permanent surnames the bynames by which they were already locally known.

Many Finns, including some who already had Swedish surnames, chose to adopt as surnames the name of the estates where they lived. A place name in Finnish may be indicated by using the locative case of a noun, which adds the suffix “-la” to the root word. “Ketola,” for example, is the locative case of “keto” [dry meadow] and translates roughly as the Place of the Dry Meadow. Similarly, “Seppälä” means the Place of the Smith, “Mikkilä” means Mikki’s Place and “Pohjola” means the North Place. Whereas at one time such locative names had often changed when an individual changed place of residence, they now became permanent, hereditary surnames that followed people wherever they lived. This way of developing locative surnames was characteristic of Western Finland, so it is not surprising perhaps that 47 (22%) of the Finnish surnames in the cemeteries are locatives of this kind.

Another 35 (16%) of the names in the cemeteries end with the suffix “-nen,” which also serves to associate a person with a place and was traditionally used in Eastern Finland instead of “-la.” Examples include “Häkkinen” [Person from the Corral Place], “Toiviainen” [Person from the Hope Place], and “Mustonen” [Person from the Dark Place]. It is unlikely that most of these names are linked with Eastern Finland, however, because in the late nineteenth century, the Finnish National Romantic movement promoted the adoption of distinctly Finnish names that combined a concept from nature with the “-nen” suffix (Paikkala 2004:800-803). The reference to nature was considered an expression of National Romantic ideals while the “-nen” suffix itself became a Finnish symbol. Called the Virtanen-type name by Finnish names researcher, Sirkka Paikkala, many names with an “-nen” suffix that were adopted during this period actually reflected the way Swedish names had been given in Finland more than they did the name-giving customs of eastern Finland, which were deeply rooted in the concrete history of the name holder within the peasant culture of the region (Paikkala 2004:801). Few people buried in

Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries came from eastern Finland, and consequently, those who have names with the "-nen" suffix likely have a Virtanen-type name ("virta" means stream).

The other type of new Finnish surname emerging at the end of the nineteenth century has been dubbed by Paikkala the Laine-type. It moved away from relating people to their place of residence and signalled Finland's transformation from an agrarian state to an urbanized, industrialized nation (Paikkala 2004:802). The Laine-type name ("laine" means wave) was shorter and had no suffix but also tended to draw on a concept from nature. It was another reflection of growing nationalism in Finland and the desire to remove class distinctions from the Finnish naming system. Adopted widely in the cities, Laine-type names were popular among people who had already acquired more or less permanent surnames but wanted to modernize or finnicize their names (Paikkala 2004:803). It is hard to identify this type of surname with any certainty in Saskatchewan's cemeteries because so many names have been shortened or altered after arrival in North America. Possible examples include "Korpi" [Wilderness], "Tammi" [Oak], or "Hirvi" [Moose].

Other sources of permanent Finnish surnames included personal characteristics, occupations or family histories, which often were already used as bynames for the individuals involved at the time a permanent surname was chosen. Some possible examples from the cemeteries include "Kumara," which is derived from the word for "hunched" or "bowed," and "Kako," which may be translated as "daft." "Rautio" indicates the occupation of "smith." The Raketki family is said to have acquired its surname when an ancestor named Tervonen was dubbed "Rocketki" by the Russians who couldn't pronounce his Finnish surname. This byname became permanent and was modified to "Raketti" [Rocket] after emigration to North America (local resident, personal communication, March, 2011).

Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries thus reflect the profound change that was occurring in the Finnish naming system at the time most emigrants left Finland for North America. From 1850 to 1921 Finland was developing a uniform system of permanent, hereditary surnames that minimized class distinctions, modernized social customs and administrative practices, and expressed the emerging Finnish national identity (Paikkala 2004:9). The surnames used in the cemeteries reflect these processes at work, showing traces of both Swedish influence and Finnish nationalism, agrarianism and urbanization, and class distinctions and socialist ideals. Analysis of

the surnames indicates points of unity and division within the Finnish population that have been carried over into the Finnish immigrant population of Saskatchewan.

*6.5.1.4 Modification of Finnish Surnames:* Many Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan were buried with surnames that modified or completely changed the name which they used in Finland. In some cases this change occurred in Canada, but immigrants who lived in one or more other countries before settling in Canada often arrived with surnames that had already undergone considerable modification (Kolehmainen 1939:35-36). The motivation for change was usually the difficulty that many Finns experienced in using Finnish names within a larger culture that was not Finnish-speaking.

The Finnish language has a markedly different structure than the English language that formed the dominant linguistic framework for immigrants to Saskatchewan. As a Finno-Ugric language, Finnish bears little relationship to English. It not only contains two additional vowels not found in English (“ä” and “ö”) and numerous diphthongs that are not present or said differently in English (e.g., “uo,” “au,” and “ie”), Finnish consonants generally have a harder sound than in English and the soft consonants “b”, “d” and “g” are uncommon. Also, Finnish frequently uses double vowels and double consonants that are articulated in a way not readily imitated by English-speakers. As an agglutinating language, Finnish incorporates prepositions and other information into nouns in the form of suffixes, so that a noun like “talo” [house], for example, may be written in 15 different cases, such as “talossa” [inside the house] or “talosta” [from inside the house]. The result is long words that are made still longer by the tendency in Finnish to combine simple words to make composite words, e.g., “punatiilitalossani” [in my red brick house], which combines “puna” [red] with “tiili” [brick], “talo” [house], the preposition “in” [the suffix “ssa”] and the possessive “my” [the suffix “ni”]. Proper pronunciation of these long words usually requires the ability to recognize each root word and the Finnish habit of stressing the initial syllable of a multi-syllable word, as opposed to the English tendency to place the stress elsewhere. Since Finnish is not widely spoken, most people in Saskatchewan during the settlement period would have been unfamiliar with its characteristics and had difficulty pronouncing, spelling and understanding the names of their Finnish neighbours.

There are numerous examples in the historical record of Finnish names that were misspelled or misheard by an English-speaking official recording a Finnish name on an official

document. To illustrate the extent of the problem, one need only refer to a set of official documents issued between 1920 and 1940 to Finns with the name of Tryyki. Approximately half of these documents spell the Tryyki surname correctly. The other half spell it “Trykki,” which likely reflects how an English-speaking recorder would have pronounced the name unless corrected, making it sound like “tricky.” Similarly, the Finnish surname of Raappana is frequently rendered in records as “Rapanna” or “Rappana.”

The cemeteries in Saskatchewan vividly illustrate the problems that Finnish immigrants encountered in using their language and traditional names. Figure 6.51 shows a grave marker with two notable errors and an attempt at correction. First, the Finnish name “Liina,” which is a common first name for a woman, has been carved as “Lüna,” and in addition, the diacritical marks have been omitted for the word “elää” [lives] and indicated later by hammering in a small metal piece over each letter “a.” The carver of this stone was likely unfamiliar with Finnish.



**Figure 6.51:** A grave marker inscription with two errors in the rendering of Finnish.

Overall, 76 (33%) of the 213 surnames studied here have been changed in some way from an earlier form that has been recorded in local histories or is present in the cemeteries. Only a few names were abandoned completely and replaced by an unrelated surname. Like other Finnish immigrants throughout North America, whenever Saskatchewan’s Finnish immigrants found it necessary, they altered their surnames through new spellings, shortening, transliteration, translation, reinvention or new pronunciations (Kolehmainen 1939).

At least 38 names accommodated English forms of pronunciation by simply changing the spelling of the surname, turning “Aalto” into “Alto” or “Peräsalo” into “Perasalo.” Over time the



Finnish vowels “ä” and “ö” virtually disappeared and were replaced by the closest English equivalent.

Thirteen families went further and developed a transliterated form of their surname so that “Mäki” became “Mackie,” for example, while “Wiiki” became “Wigg.” One family opted for meaning over phonetics and translated its surname into English, so that “Mäki” became “Hill.” In 12 cases the surname was shortened by dropping suffixes or part of a composite name, thus turning “Kemppainen” into “Kemp” and “Ylisaari” into “Saari.”

Nineteen families adopted completely new surnames. Of these, some simply picked an appealing English name, so that “Norman” replaced “Vehkajärvi” and “Jackson” replaced “Perkiö,” while others invented patronymic surnames for themselves in the Swedish mode. For example, not long after their arrival in North America the Finnish sons of Mattias Jokikorpela and Wilhelm Smedberg both chose to be known by their fathers’ given names. They took the surnames of “Mattson” and “Wilson,” respectively.

Many Finnish family histories include a story about how the family changed its surname. The Simonsons relate the following story:

Over 150 years ago, in 1845, Heikki Koitjarvi was born on the fringe of the settled areas of northern Finland, deep in the backwoods. When the family moved to the shores of Lake Simo, their name changed, according to Finnish custom, to correspond to the location, or “house”, where they lived. The name became Simontaival meaning “on the road to Simo.” Simojarvi was a nearby settlement. Older members of the family recall that when Heikki came to America he did not accept the English pronunciation of his name, which sounded like “Simon-devil”. He changed it to Simonson. The name Heikki also became Anglicized to Henry, and in 1874 he had signed his name, Henry Simonson, in his diary [Simonson, 1992:i].

The Simonson story underlines how Finnish surnames were adaptable before the great push in Finland to assign permanent, hereditary surnames to every individual. For some immigrant Finns, their surnames had shallow roots and were readily changeable. Such adaptability was clearly characteristic of one immigrant who took the almost generic name of John Johnson, only to find that the area where he homesteaded already had a Finnish farmer of that name; he simply added a “t” to the surname so that his family became the Johnstons (local resident, personal communication, 2010). Given these and other examples, it may be that, in some cases at least,

the decision to change a Finnish surname was less an abandonment of Finnish ethnicity than a manifestation of a traditional Finnish flexibility and practicality with respect to surnames.

There are 137 surnames in the cemeteries in which no change in the written form is visible, representing 64% of all surnames. It is worth noting, however, that where some names have retained letter combinations that are difficult for someone unfamiliar with Finnish to pronounce correctly, these names have often acquired the local English pronunciation, so that “Luhtala” sounds like “lootala,” “Lindroos” sounds like “lindross” and “Kamppi” sounds like “campy.” Adaptation has still taken place but in the oral rather than the written form.

### 6.5.2 *Given Names*

There are 451 given names on the grave markers in the six Finnish cemeteries and the grave markers for Finnish immigrants and their descendants in the nine cemeteries added to the sample for name analysis. Of these, 236 are men’s names, and 215 are women’s names. In numerous cases, these given names do not represent the names that individuals received at birth, but they may be taken as the names by which the dead are intended to be remembered.

The cemeteries indicate the layered nature of the Finnish naming system, with pagan Finnish names modified during the Christian era and displaced or altered throughout Finnish history by political or economic influences coming from other countries (Paikkala 2004). The priests who created Finland’s first records of given names in the fourteenth century had a Swedish or Latin orientation and tended to give out names from the Bible or church history rather than codify the pagan names of Finland. In many cases, given names from the Lutheran religion were adapted to the Finnish sound system, transforming a biblical name like “Caleb” to “Kaaleppi,” and a name of Latin origin like “August” first to “Aukusti” then “Kusti.” Many given names, such as “Arvid” and “Signe,” were borrowed from Swedish during the period of Swedish rule in Finland, while German influence may be seen in names like “Wilhelmiina” and “Herman.” Numerous Finnish given names were anglicized after immigration to North America, with “Yrjö” becoming “George” and “Ruusa” becoming “Rose.”

The most frequently used names for men are, in descending order by the number of uses, “John” (81 times), “William” (31 times), “Henry” (19 times), “Walter” (19 times), “Charles” or “Charlie” (18 times), “Jacob” (15 times), “Alfred” (11 times) and “Toivo” (11 times). The names of women are more diverse, with the most common ones being “Maria” (33 times), “Mary” (16

times), “Anna” (15 times), “Ida” (15 times) and “Sylvia” (10 times). All of the most common given names, with the single exception of “Toivo,” are common across English-speaking North America. The prominence among immigrants from all countries of the almost generic names, “John” and “Maria,” has been attributed variously to convenience and the need to fit in.

The external influences evident in the given names of Finns in Saskatchewan make it difficult and somewhat pointless to try to classify these names as ethnically Finnish. Some distinctively Finnish names can indeed be identified, e.g., “Lempi” [Love], “Vieno” [Gentle] and “Rauha” [Peace] for women and “Toivo” [Hope], “Armas” [Beloved] and “Urho” [Hero] for men. However, other names that have been deemed traditionally Finnish (Hannikainen 2010a:240), such as “Maria” or “Anna,” are also used extensively by many ethnic groups in Saskatchewan and cannot be interpreted convincingly as a marker of Finnishness. Given names reflect the history and experiences of a people, which in the case of the immigrant Finns to North America, involved contacts with numerous cultures that influenced their name choices. The name pool in the Finnish cemeteries reflects the historical layers in the Finnish naming system, the travels of an immigrant people through other countries and provinces before reaching Saskatchewan, and the same pressing need that was noted for surnames, namely, the need for a name to be convenient and meaningful in a predominantly English-speaking milieu.

In discussing the given names of Finnish immigrants, it is worth noting that Finnish parents not only gave their children names that had a tradition within the family, which is a common enough practice in many cultures; they sometimes took the name given to a child who died and gave it again to another child born later. For example, after an infant named Aili died, her parents buried her in an unmarked grave and gave the name Aili to another daughter born to them some years later. This recycling of names may indicate the importance of keeping some names alive within the family. It may also be interpreted as kind of forgetting, in which the identity of the dead child is blended with that of a current child, both perpetuating and obliterating her memory.

## 6.6 Some Conclusions Regarding Social Identity in Saskatchewan's Finnish Cemeteries

Having reviewed a wide variety of material evidence from the Finnish cemeteries, it is possible to answer conclusively the first of the research questions posed for this thesis. The cemeteries do express the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns. In fact, they offer a wide variety of information that may be cross-referenced with the oral and documentary evidence to create a clearer, more detailed understanding of Finnish culture in Saskatchewan.

Taken together, the six Finnish immigrant cemeteries in Saskatchewan are remarkable primarily for their conformity, modesty and functionality. The cemeteries were designed according to prevailing beliefs and fashions in North America and Europe to meet Saskatchewan conditions and regulations. Moreover, the mortuary customs of the Finnish communities appear to have developed in much the same way that mortuary practices did in the rest of rural Saskatchewan as the funeral industry developed, farm incomes rose or fell, and the tastes of the day changed. On the whole, the Finnish cemeteries would draw little attention in Saskatchewan except for their ethnic exclusiveness and a noticeable restraint in mortuary styles.

The choices that the Saskatchewan Finns made regarding cemetery landscapes and grave markers do not signal a strong desire for individual expression and memorialization. Over all, there are few idiosyncratic markers, and the great majority of memorials fall within a range of sizes, materials and designs typical for their time and place. Inscriptions and symbols tend to be few and rather standardized. Part of this conformity is probably due to the participation of Finns in the local economy, which saw them purchase memorials and funerary services from the stock offerings marketed to them in rural Saskatchewan. The plainness of their consumer choices, however, suggests that for many Finns, it was more important to identify the dead as a member of the community than draw attention to the individual or even the family. The values of the Saskatchewan Finns appear to emphasize belonging and respect within the community, perhaps even discouraging self-expression outside a certain modest range of acceptable personalization and innovation. These values are consistent with cemetery culture in Finland, where at times there has been such a high degree of church regulation that "Suomalainen pelkää, että tulee leimatuksi, jos laittaa kiven liian korkeaksi" [the Finn fears that he will be labeled if he makes the stone too high] (Yli-Kovero 1999a). Even in the absence of such tight regulation in

Saskatchewan, Finns have tended to be careful to choose grave markers according to community ideas of what is respectable and proper in terms of memorialization.

In summary, the predominant collective social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns, as expressed in their cemeteries, may be described as frugal, practical, resourceful, conservative, respectable, agrarian, and culturally Christian.

However, there are interesting differences among the Finnish cemeteries in terms of the social identity they express, and these are discussed in the next chapter. The strong imposition of community values in these cemeteries may also be indicated by the high proportion of “forgotten” dead, the people with unmarked graves whose memory is not actively preserved by the community. Some infants without a social persona, radical socialists, suicides, itinerants, misfits, and, at times, the impoverished have been allowed in the cemeteries to disappear from memory. Meanwhile, memory is preserved of people who made significant contributions to the community or whose families continue to be part of the community. In this all too common process of forgetting that occurs in most cemeteries, some darker moments in Finnish immigrant history have undoubtedly been minimized and the Finnish community’s image of solidarity and respectability has perhaps been exaggerated. To some extent, the process of neglecting to remember what is socially unacceptable has looked outward to the wider society, maintaining a more desirable image of the Saskatchewan Finns, but it has also looked inward, passing on to future generations an uncomplicated, untarnished portrait of the group that evokes a unifying sense of regional and ethnic pride.

The next chapter also explores some of the changes in social identity over time that may be seen in the Finnish cemeteries. One of the social functions of these cemeteries was to assert the ethnic identity of the people buried there, but this identity was not static. Ethnicity changed over time along with other elements of the Finns’ social identity, leading the Finns through a process of cultural change that was also experienced by other immigrants to the western plains.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **VARIATIONS AND CHANGES IN SOCIAL IDENTITY**

This chapter pulls together some of the ideas brought forward in earlier discussions of the documentary history, demographic data, and material evidence related to the people buried in the six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan. It also addresses directly the last two research questions for this thesis, which relate to variations and changes over time in the social identity of these Finns. First, the variations in social identity that may be perceived in the different Finnish cemeteries are summarized and explained. Next four areas in which major changes in social identity occurred over time are identified and discussed: family relationships, ethnicity, views of death, and social values and beliefs. Finally, a pattern of changes in social identity over time that took place in all the cemeteries is described, and it is suggested that this pattern may be one that was shared by other immigrants to the western plains.

#### **7.1 Variations among the Finnish Cemeteries as Expressions of Social Identity**

The aggregated social identity for the Saskatchewan Finns presented at the end of Chapter Six describes most accurately the majority of Finns, i.e., those in the larger Finnish communities. When applied to the smaller communities, it is somewhat misleading because in Saskatchewan, Finnish social identity varied by region. At least some of these variations are expressed in the ethnic cemeteries that the Finns established even though they are only faintly discernible in their written and oral histories. Discussed below are some of the variations that emerge with respect to religion, politics, social status and ethnicity. In summarizing the points of variance, it is pointed out that since the Finns in this province formed communities with somewhat different histories and cultures, it is important to avoid thinking of them and other ethnic groups as if they were cohesive and uniform.

##### *7.1.1 Religion*

New Finland, the province's oldest Finnish community, shows two slightly different faces in its two cemeteries. Of the two, the Old Cemetery may be described as more traditional and more oriented towards the regional neighbourhood. It is populated by many of the early

settlers in the area, most of whom were born in Finland but also including a few born in Hungary. The social identity conveyed by the New Cemetery is more defined by the church and more emphatically Finnish, and most of the people buried there were not born in Finland. After a period of religious debates and conflicts, religion in both New Finland cemeteries narrowed to mean the form of Lutheranism espoused by the Suomi Synod, which replicated in North America the politically and religiously conservative views of Finland's Lutheran state church. The predominant identity of the New Finlanders as "church Finns" of this kind is symbolized in the community by the visual, historical and social prominence given to the imposing structure of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is close to the New Cemetery. The cemeteries are managed as part of the church, and as such, they play an important role in shaping and preserving the social identity of the New Finland farmers and their descendant community.

In contrast, the Finns in the Elbow region did not have their own Lutheran church building until the 1970s when the Laestadians built a church near Dunblane. People met for church services in individual homes, and the region's cemeteries were run cooperatively by community associations. At first the Dunblane Finnish Cemetery was mixed in its religious and ethnic orientation, and as a result, non-Finns, communists, secular Finns, and Lutherans of various kinds could be buried in there. Eventually, however, both of the cemeteries established by Finns in the Elbow region became explicitly Christian and Finnish. The non-Christians and non-Finns in the areas served by the cemeteries buried their dead in nearby multi-ethnic cemeteries, while the Finnish cemeteries came to serve primarily the growing population of Finnish Laestadians. Due to these shifts over time in the population served by the cemeteries, religious identity in the Finnish cemeteries in the Elbow region is not as dominant or defining as it is in the New Finland cemeteries, although it certainly has a strong presence among some of the people buried there.

In Nummola Cemetery, the presence of religion is minimal. The cemetery was established by a community association, which did not sell lots and placed all burials close together in loose family groupings. Grave markers were remarkably uniform, with the vast majority consisting of plain grave covers of white concrete. There was no Finnish Lutheran church in this area, although the settlers established schools and a hall. All of these facts combine to suggest the presence of a predominantly secular or atheistic world view among the Nummola

Finns. While most Nummola residents were still nominally Lutherans, religion did not play a dominant role in everyday life.

The examination of religious symbols and epitaphs in the six cemeteries reinforces the variations in religious identity described above. Marked differences in the degree to which religious symbols and epitaphs are used indicate a much greater religious influence in New Finland than in the other communities. The religious references in Nummola Cemetery are very few, and some appear to be more sentimental and decorative than indicative of deep religious convictions, e.g., the use of soul effigies on grave markers for children. Nummola Cemetery conveys a lack of interest in religion within its community. The grave markers in Highland Cemetery also tend to be plain, but in this case, the lack of decoration, symbols and epitaphs may reflect the anti-materialist views of the Laestadian faith. Many Laestadians are buried in the Elbow region among more mainstream Lutherans and secular neighbours. This intermingling with communists and socialists may also be partly responsible for the less frequent use of religious references, since at least some of the people buried in the Finnish cemeteries here were atheists, secularists or non-practising Lutherans. Dunblane Finnish Cemetery seems to be the most varied of the six cemeteries, mixing grave markers that display the same kind of religiosity found in the New Finland cemeteries with a high proportion of unexpressive, plain markers and unmarked graves. Displayed within the six Finnish cemeteries, therefore, may be found a spectrum of Finnish relationships to religion that run from intense piety to the avoidance of anything to do with churches or spirituality.

### 7.1.2 *Politics*

The leftist leanings of many Finns may have led in some Finnish cemeteries to a general aesthetic that puts little emphasis on creating elaborate or decorative grave markers. Those who do not believe in eternal life after death are perhaps less likely to make a large emotional or material investment in marking graves. Although they are difficult to identify today, there were numerous declared communists among the Saskatchewan Finns, including Emil Wilen, a Nummola homesteader who later moved to Ontario where he briefly served the communist movement as an editor of *Vapaus* (SSHC 1981:238). Certainly Nummola, the burial place for the greatest number of the 92 Finnish socialists identified in this research, has the plainest, most uniform and most unexpressive memorials of all the Finnish cemeteries. Collectively, however,



the Nummola graves constitute a strong expression of solidarity and equality that may be interpreted as reflecting the political views of the people buried there. That expression appears to be made repeatedly in the other cemeteries by the similarly plain, unexpressive marker choices made for other identified socialists.

There is nothing in the epitaphs and symbols on any of the Finnish graves that is overtly political, however, and the political ideology of most people buried in the cemeteries could not be determined simply by looking at their memorials. It may be that the strongest political statement in the Finnish cemeteries consists of the high number of unmarked graves for known socialists. One interpretation of this absence of memorialization is that it represents an act of forgetting by the descendants of the Finnish socialists and the predominantly non-socialist Finnish communities.

It is worth pointing out that the act of forming a cemetery has sometimes been political in nature for the Finns. The decision to form a second cemetery in New Finland signaled a power struggle in that community. Also, the preferred place of burial for the Finns in the Elbow Region underwent noticeable shifts, first across the river from the east-side cemetery to the cemeteries on the western side, and then away from the Finnish cemeteries altogether to neighbouring multi-ethnic cemeteries further to the west. These shifts may be interpreted as reflections of the changing political, social and economic allegiances of the Finns in the Elbow region.

### *7.1.3 Social Status*

In the New Finland cemeteries, there are large family lots and numerous imposing gravestones that contrast with simple concrete grass markers and unmarked graves. Assuming for the moment that expense and elaborateness in grave markers are sometimes indicators of the socioeconomic status of the deceased, it may be inferred that larger, more decorative memorializations were used to convey the social and economic position of particular individuals and families in New Finland. The same practice is visible in the Dunblane Finnish and Finnish Heritage Cemeteries, although to a lesser extent because family lots were not the basis of their design, and individual or companion stones tend to be smaller and less elaborate than family stones. In Nummola Cemetery, there are few carved gravestones, and they date mostly to the prosperous years before 1930. The vast majority of graves in Nummola are marked by concrete grave covers that lie side by side with little variation. Highland Cemetery is also dominated by

relatively uniform grave covers, but its lots vary by price and the different areas of the cemetery have status connotations. The most elaborate grave markers tend to be found in the choice blocks near the cemetery gates, while unmarked graves are found in a block designated for the poor. The display of socioeconomic status through grave plots and markers thus varies among the cemeteries, with the New Finland cemeteries appearing to be the most stratified and Nummola Cemetery the most egalitarian.

The egalitarian nature of Nummola extends to both sexes and all age groups, and there is also little differentiation among the grave markers in Highland Cemetery with respect to sex and age. In Dunblane Finnish Cemetery and the New Finland cemeteries, patriarchy is more evident, with women and children given fewer individual markers and identified primarily in relationship to their role in the family.

The cemeteries themselves display variations that suggest differences in the socioeconomic circumstances of the communities they served. Nummola Cemetery, which served a farming community that became poor and disintegrated during the droughts of the 1920s and 1930s, has benefitted from few improvements, and its neglect is consistent with the plain, inexpensive grave markers in the cemetery. In Finnish Heritage Cemetery, the gates and sign are recent additions to a similarly neglected cemetery that was forgotten for decades after the Finnish community it served was absorbed into the larger society. Dunblane Finnish Cemetery has received minimal but steady upkeep since its early decades, while the Highland Cemetery company has enlisted the help of its lot owners several times to improve the cemetery property and ensure all graves are properly kept. New Finland has also worked to beautify its cemeteries and make them a source of community pride. In each case, the economic status of the communities is reflected in the extent of their efforts to maintain their cemeteries, with more prosperous communities devoting more time and resources to their cemeteries, especially in good times.

There are no special memorials in any of the Finnish cemeteries for heroes, dignitaries or high achievers. The graves of pastors and local leaders are not distinguishable from the graves of others in the community. Apart from the military graves provided by the government, no memorials to war heroes are present. Early pioneers are the only group accorded any special recognition in the cemeteries, and the few memorials recognizing their contributions are all confined to the New Finland cemeteries.

#### 7.1.4 *Ethnicity*

As noted earlier, all the Finnish cemeteries perform the basic practical and symbolic functions of a cemetery. It should be reiterated, however, that the New Finland cemeteries have moved in recent decades into a new role as heritage destinations. While the Nummola and Finnish Heritage cemeteries have been resurrected as family and neighbourhood burying grounds, and the Highland and Dunblane Finnish cemeteries now function primarily as a burying ground for the growing population of Laestadian Finns in the Elbow region, the New Finland cemeteries have become more than a burying ground for local people with Finnish ancestry. They mark New Finland as the ancestral home in Canada for a large number of people descended from the original Finnish immigrants, and they have become a rallying point for celebrating Finnish heritage. The committee managing the cemeteries has embraced this role, accommodating it with gates, plaques, benches, and other material elements that invite visitors. These elements are not present as yet in any of the other cemeteries, where Finnish heritage still tends to be taken for granted rather than celebrated. However, the naming of Finnish Heritage Cemetery and the recent efforts to recreate at least some of its lost history seem to indicate a desire to have the cemetery play an educative role with respect to Finnish history and culture.

#### 7.1.5 *Summary*

Looking at the variations among the Finnish cemeteries described above, it can be concluded that they reflect variations in social identity among the Saskatchewan Finns. The dominant social identity expressed in the New Finland cemeteries shows the influence of a patriarchal, conservative church that places high social value on family, land, and Finnish ethnicity. This identity reflects the agrarian roots and political and religious background of the earliest immigrants to New Finland, who established these cemeteries. Cemeteries that were established later included more Finnish immigrants who had experienced the social, political and economic changes in Finland after 1900. They also included more people with Finnish ancestry who had sojourned in Canada or the U.S., where they had experienced labour unrest in mines and work camps as well as the challenges of marginal farming. The different backgrounds of the settlers in the Elbow region produced cemeteries in which social identity was mixed. Here political and religious conservatives were buried among socialists, communists and apolitical religious fundamentalists. In these cemeteries, the role of religion is less visible, status

distinctions between people are less pronounced, and the common bond of Finnish ancestry is less prominent, perhaps acting mostly as a backdrop to the political and religious differences that tended to dominate the lives of many Finnish immigrants to the Elbow region. The social identity of those buried in Nummola Cemetery is only nominally Christian, exhibits a frugality that likely reflects the economic hardships experienced by the Nummola Finns, and demonstrates a high degree of equality and solidarity among the members of the community. Although Nummola and New Finland share a social identity that stems from Finnish ethnicity, they may be envisioned at opposite ends of the range of variation encompassed by that identity. The Saskatchewan Finns were not all the same, and in discussing them as an ethnic group, care needs to be taken to recognize the differences among them and ensure they are not treated as a homogenous group.

## **7.2 Changes over Time in the Social Identity of the Saskatchewan Finns**

The indicators of social identity examined in the previous chapter clearly demonstrate that not only did the social identity of the Saskatchewan Finns vary, it has changed markedly over time. Moreover, there are similarities across the cemeteries in the kind and timing of these changes that suggest a pattern of cultural change was shared by the Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan. Drawing from the documentary, oral and material evidence, this section examines several major areas of cultural change in the Finnish communities served by the cemeteries and outlines four stages in the sequence of change. It is noted that the pattern of cultural change experienced by the Finns does not appear to be unique or even unusual. In fact, it may reflect the immigration experience of other ethnic groups that settled on the western plains and, individually and severally, underwent identity change as a new culture began to coalesce and develop in the physical, economic and social environment of Canada's prairie provinces.

### *7.2.1 Areas of Cultural Change*

There are at least four major areas in which cultural change among the Saskatchewan Finns may be seen: family structure and relationships, ethnicity, views of death and social values and beliefs. Each of these areas is discussed below, relating developments over time to the documentary and material evidence.

*7.2.1.1 Family Structure and Relationships:* The family structure of the early Finnish settlers was not markedly different from the dominant model of the family found throughout rural Saskatchewan (Loewen 2002). Finnish settlers lived as families on their farms in homes placed far enough from neighbours to provide independence and privacy but still close enough to allow visits to community buildings and friends and family members settled in the same area. Trips to the nearest town and visits to non-Finnish neighbours were rare in the early days, leaving the Finnish communities isolated and inward-looking. Contacts with Finland were few, mostly by mail. The local church, hall and school provided a bridge between families that were otherwise reliant on family connections and neighbours for emotional and practical support. Families were large, with women marrying early and producing large numbers of children. Children grew up on the farm, assisted their parents with farm and household chores from an early age, and when they were full-grown, often worked out to earn their own keep or gain extra money for the family. Girls married into nearby families, while boys either worked alongside their parents until they inherited the farm or were able to acquire their own farms in the same area. Family plots were purchased in the local cemetery where the farmer and his wife were buried with their children ranged around them. Given the number of children and the frequency of child deaths, children gained presence in the family and community over time as they grew older, while those who died very young often did not have a social persona.

Within the family, the father was in charge of the farm, the family's finances, religious matters, most interactions with the town and non-Finns, and most major decisions. The wife had responsibility for house and garden, child care and medical matters, as well as helping out on the farm, earning extra money by producing and selling hand-made goods or dairy products, and providing practical supports for church, school and hall. Women tended to be more isolated from outside influences than their men or their children, who were exposed in school to the English language and mainstream culture. Children, both male and female, were expected to acquire at least a basic education, but generally speaking, the welfare of the family unit came first.

Over time this land-based patriarchal family form that was general to the western plains, and specific to the Saskatchewan Finns, began to break down, although it has been deliberately retained to some extent by Laestadian Finns who maintain a traditional way of life based on large families and strict gender roles. Once the arable land in Saskatchewan had been divided up into farms, there was little future in farming for most of the children of immigrants. Those who could

not make a satisfactory living out of farming had to find other occupations, and many moved away from the Finnish settlements in search of an adequate livelihood. Daughters who attended multi-ethnic schools and worked out in multi-ethnic milieus experienced a new freedom in choosing marriage partners, with a significant number marrying non-Finns who introduced them to new ideas and lifeways. Sons also found jobs and marriage partners that led them into lives very different from subsistence farming on the western plains. More than one Finnish farmer was distressed to find that when the time came for him to retire, there was no one in the family who was inclined to take over the family farm (Hummasti 1990:93). In the Finnish cemeteries, family lots were no longer in demand, and by the 1930s, the emphasis in the cemeteries had moved from the family of orientation to the family of procreation. The family you created took precedence over the one into which you were born, and where you came from was less important than where you were going. In terms of the family framework for forming social identity, emphasis had moved somewhat from the past to the present and the future.

Contributing to the breakdown of the patriarchal family was the arrival in Saskatchewan of socialist Finns, including women who played public leadership roles within the socialist movement. Many Finns of the Elbow region were moved by the 1921 speaking tour of Sanna Kannasto, an eloquent Sudbury Marxist who advocated freedom and equality for all (Warwaruk 1984:23-24). Less successful in challenging traditional gender roles was a deaconess sent by the United Church to do missionary work in the Elbow region, where she was chauvinistically dismissed by some Finns as “Reikä Pappi” [the Pastor with a hole] (Warwaruk 1984:24). The Lutheran church remained a bastion of patriarchy, but later Finnish settlers tended to allow greater equality and a public presence for women, eschewing family graves in favour of individual plots and grave markers for both men and women, although many of these graves still memorialized women primarily in relationship to their role in the family. Such increase in the number of memorials in cemeteries has been linked to the rise of “passionate/compassionate individualism” whereby “the relationship of the deceased to their spouse and immediate family took greater importance, and new metaphors, especially that of sleep, were used to figure death” (Tarlow 1999:173).

A shift in family relationships that was universal across North America is manifested in the Finnish cemeteries by the dominance of companion markers, usually for spouses, after 1970. These markers demonstrate a depth of connection between people that is sometimes romantic in

tone and different from previous markers in the overt sentimentality expressed for and between the deceased. The bond celebrated here is personal and heartfelt, not contextualized within religion, the family or the community, and it expresses a new emphasis on the emotional ties between husband and wife in the Finnish communities. Children may occasionally be added to these graves and markers, but their presence is always secondary to the spousal relationship that is the bedrock of the family. For many Finns, this shift in emphasis may have reflected the smaller number of children being produced, and a redefinition of the purpose of the family to lessen the emphasis on procreation. Smaller families were becoming the norm for most Finns, and since many children moved away, they were less often buried near their parents.

Another change seen in all the cemeteries is the increasing rarity and importance of child graves. As living conditions and health supports improved for the Finnish settlers in Saskatchewan, child deaths were no longer commonplace, and by the late twentieth century, the death of a child was an unexpected occurrence that provoked a higher degree of mourning and memorialization than was found in the early decades of the century. At the same time, graves for the very elderly became the norm and often received a lesser degree of memorialization than had been accorded to the very long-lived in the early days of settlement. Family and social values appear to have shifted to give greater prominence to youth and less prominence to the old.

*7.2.1.2 Ethnicity:* Mixed in with the literature on Finnish culture and history are numerous studies of the Finns as an ethnic group, many of which explore the impact of immigration on ethnicity. The major works used in this thesis to trace, explain and provide statistics on Finnish immigration to North America and, ultimately, Saskatchewan are referenced in Chapter Four on the establishment of the Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan. In this chapter, works are identified that show the evolution in ideas about and attitudes towards the Finns as one ethnic group among the many that immigrated to Saskatchewan during the settlement era.

Early in the twentieth century the Finns “invading” North America were seen as a racial-cultural blend of Nordic and Asiatic peoples characterized by strength, efficiency, thriftiness, honesty, courage and the ability to endure, making the Finn “an ideal pioneer, a splendid blazer of the trail” (Van Cleef 1918:194). This enthusiastic assessment was tempered somewhat by the belief that there were two groups of Finns. The majority were temperate, conservative Finns who gravitated towards an independent life on isolated farms, but there was also a minority of less

trustworthy socialist Finns, mostly concentrated in mining and lumber camps, who sometimes manifested the less desirable qualities of suspiciousness, antipathy to authority, violence and unreliability (Van Cleef 1918:212). The perception that there were two kinds of Finnish immigrant extended to Saskatchewan, where the immigrants to New Finland were described as consisting of a few unreliable “Catholics, pacific and lacking energy” who compared unfavourably with the Lutheran majority, who, although they were fond of drink and easily incited to fight when under the influence of alcohol, were honest, hard-working and “first of all the European immigrants...[f]or hardiness, industry, resourcefulness, and all ‘round competency in meeting pioneer conditions and cleaning up a rough country” (Hawkes 1924:699, 704). Immigrant Finns themselves were generally pleased at the positive external assessments of their ethnic character (Schelstraete 1982:21), although one educational tool developed to teach Canadians about the Finns and Finnish culture felt compelled to add cleanliness, hospitality, idealism, love of music and appreciation of education to the list of Finnish virtues while vigorously repudiating any racial connection with Asia (Heinonen 1930:1-4, 143-150).

Donald Avery (1979) provides a rather different portrait of Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan. He points out that in reality, “the deep-seated Canadian myth of the primacy of the land” served to obscure the need of the international capitalist market to provide workers for agriculture on the western plains (Avery 1979:18). In his view, Canadian immigration policies were developed to ensure that the “best immigrants would be those willing to roam the country to take up whatever work was available – railroad construction in the Canadian Shield in the summer, harvesting in Saskatchewan in the fall, coal mining in Alberta in the winter, and lumbering in British Columbia in the spring” (Avery 1979:17-18). The Finns were valued immigrants simply because in exchange for cheap land, they were willing and able to act as a cheap, reliable source of seasonal labour. When the less compliant among them formed labour and political organizations to improve working conditions and salaries, these Finns found themselves classed among the “dangerous foreigners” in Canada. For example, in 1919, *Maclean’s Magazine* included the Finns in a series of articles exposing “evil associations of alien radicals” (Avery 1979:92).

In Saskatchewan, the various areas of Finnish settlement acquired different socio-political reputations (Warwaruk 1984:18-19). In the 1920s *Vapaus* advertised regular monthly meetings of FOC locals in all three areas of Saskatchewan that have ethnic cemeteries. Reports



from the locals to comrades across Canada indicated that their membership in this decade reached at least 25 in Nummola (*Vapaus*, 14 March 1922:4), 60 in the Elbow region (*Vapaus*, 25 February 1927:7), and an unknown number in New Finland. In spite of the efforts of Finnish communists to organize in Saskatchewan, however, New Finland as a whole held to the predominantly White values of its ancestral base in Ostrobothnia, and those who attempted to establish a local of the FOC there had to acknowledge they were unable to “release the youth of the community, who have been raised in the clutches of the Synod, from their old ways and conservative ideas” (*Vapaus*, March 10, 1925:3, translated by Peter Gallén). New Finlanders with Red sympathies learned to keep a low profile or leave the settlement. Meanwhile, the more evenly divided Finns of the Elbow region managed, for the most part, to get along at school, sports activities, and other social events simply by avoiding political talk (Lindström 2000:161). Underneath the social niceties in the Elbow region, a small, openly White faction was known to support the political repression of a larger, actively Red faction, while most Finns, whose views were predominantly apolitical, religious or nationalist, preferred to keep their distance from the conflict and the “totally inhuman, unfeeling, automatized picture of a communist” that pervaded Saskatchewan culture (Warwaruk 1984:97). Meanwhile, the Nummola Finns contained a core of active communists who coexisted with other Finns in the area and provided the hall and programs that brought Finns together culturally as well as politically. It was the Nummola local of the Finnish Organization of Canada that in 1922 sponsored the following resolution expressing concern about the politics of farmers on the prairies:

Because the only difference between the exploitation of rural paupers and wage earners is in the form, we propose that the FSOC convention resolve to impress upon the [Workers’ Party of Canada] convention the necessity to endorse and encourage extension of our activities among the farming population [Eklund 1987:198].

It was also a committed comrade from Nummola who donated \$7.25 in 1929 for the ultimately unsuccessful legal defense of *Vapaus* and its editor, Arvo Vaara, on charges of sedition and libel (Wallace and Thompson 1993:115-116). A letter accompanying the donation stated:

Samalla lähetämme lämpimän tervehdyksemme toveri Vaaralle vankilan muurien sisälle toivoen samalla, että tulee aika, jolloin köyhälistö nousee valtaan, pudistaen harteiltaan harvainvallon.

Pyydän tovereita kaikkialla toimimaan tämän asian eteen, joka on meidän kaikkien yhteinen asia. – Toveruudella: -- Kommunistin kynä.

[At the same time we send our warm greetings to comrade Vaara inside the prison walls hoping at the same time, that the time will come, when the poor will rise to power, shaking from their shoulders the power of the few.

I ask comrades everywhere to act on this issue, which is a common issue for us all – In comradeship: -- The communist's pen] [*Vapaus*, 10 March 1929:2].

The radical socialism espoused by at least some Nummola farmers was considered undesirable by other immigrant Finns, who did little to counter the branding of communist Finns as "un-Canadian, un-British, immoral, and un-Christian" (Wallace and Thompson 1993:115).

*Canadian Uutiset* ridiculed the socialists among the Finns as ignorant and easily led:

Kun heidän lukumääränsä vähäsen kasvoi, venyttivät he kaulaansa, josta johtui se, että pää kohosi korkeammalle ja niin silmillä näki etäämmälle, joten eivät aivoillaan enää voineet kaikkea näkemäänsä arvostella puhumattakaan siitä, että vielä näköpiirin ulkopuolellakin olisi ollut paljo nähtävää ja niin uskoivat he kommunismilla olevan mailman yliherruuden, vaik'ei se heidän lähimmässä ympäristössään ollutkaan vielä ehtinyt kansan sivistyspyrinnöitä hävittää.

[When their numbers grew a bit, they stretched their necks, which made their heads rise higher so their eyes could see further, with the result that their brains could no longer evaluate all that they saw, not to mention that outside their vision there would have been much to see, and thus they believed that communism dominated the world, although in their immediate neighbourhoods, it had not had time yet to destroy the people's desire to become civilized] [*Canadian Uutiset*, 7 August 1923:6].

In return, the socialists in New Finland branded religious, conservative Finns as reactionaries who actively blocked and undermined any efforts by enlightened leftist Finns to organize and propagate their beliefs [*Vapaus*, March 10, 1925:3]. When the dust settled, however, social and political repression from both Finns and non-Finns, when combined with drought and grinding poverty, prompted many socialist Finnish farmers in all parts of the province to move away from Saskatchewan. Within a few decades, radical socialism either disappeared or became invisible among the Saskatchewan Finns.

The repression of radical socialism left a bitterness within Saskatchewan's Finnish communities that may have been compounded by lack of recognition of this painful part of the Finnish immigration story, at least until Larry Warwaruk published *Red Finns on the Coteau* (Warwaruk 1984). Red Finns are mentioned only obliquely or cursorily in local and family

histories, and the lack of memorialization of socialists and socialism in the Finnish cemeteries has already been noted. Whether conscious or unconscious, this tendency to avoid recording, or even mentioning, the conflict has served to partially erase an uncomfortable part of the past and maintain an identity for Saskatchewan Finns that is primarily religious and conservative.

There were also religious divisions among Saskatchewan's Finnish immigrants, and when added to the political divisions, these splits made it difficult for the Finns to come together as an ethno-religious group in the same way that Ukrainians and Mennonites managed to do in Saskatchewan and across Canada (Swyripa 2010). For the most part, the two largest Lutheran groups, the Synodists and Laestadians, separated into independent communities, while the number of atheistic and secular Finns in Nummola gave that community a non-religious character. There was little communication between the communities, and in isolation from each other, they created somewhat different ethnic identities for themselves. The most secular and political of these identities have now been lost with the disappearance of Nummola and the integration of the socialist and non-church Finns of the Elbow region into multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, the Laestadian Finns of the Elbow region have concentrated on pursuing their own path according to the dictates of their religion, connecting primarily with other Laestadians in Canada, the U.S. and Finland. The more mainstream group of Lutheran Finns in New Finland has worked in relative isolation to preserve and celebrate its particular conservative, agrarian church-oriented way of life. Saskatchewan Finns have tended not to connect with Finnish organizations elsewhere in Canada, perhaps because their concerns and priorities have often been different from the majority of Finnish Canadians, who may be generally characterized as urban or socialist. Also, like other prairie inhabitants struggling to survive on the western plains, many Saskatchewan Finns may have seen "little relevance" in the values of central Canada and "consequently beg[un] to develop an inward-looking regional self-awareness" (Blishen 1986:5).

Varpu Lindström has suggested that a "small ethnic community, defensive about its own reputation in Canada, naturally prefers to silence any aspect of its history that has negative connotations and trumpets its positive achievements" (Lindström 2000:4). She has written a history that traces the vicissitudes in the relationship of Finnish immigrants to the rest of Canada through the world wars of the twentieth century:

First there was the strong anti-communist sentiment and the Civil War in Spain, followed by the glorification of “heroic” Finns and “gallant little Finland” during the Winter War. Finns were seen to be on the side of democracy fighting Russia – the common enemy of both Finland and Canada. The communist organizations were declared illegal, only to be resurrected a few years later as ideological allies of Russia, Canada’s new ally. Finland, still fighting its age-old enemy, was now on the wrong side (although on the same side it had always been) because of its status of co-belligerent with Germany and its invasion deep into Russian territories. Now the nationalists were silenced, or their voices at least severely toned down, and the formerly “heroic Finns” were declared, albeit reluctantly, “enemy aliens.” The Cold War shifted the politics again in favour of anti-communism; Finnish nationalist, religious, and non-political organizations flourished [Lindström 2000:255].

Saskatchewan Finns carried on throughout these difficult shifts in attitude, trying to demonstrate their loyalty to Canada while recognizing their ties to Finland and remaining true to their varying political and religious beliefs. In 1940 some Finns in the Elbow region sent clothing, quilts and money to Finland, while in 1943 others sent aid to Russia (Warwaruk 1984:91-93). At the same time numerous Saskatchewan Finns volunteered to fight in the Canadian army and made donations to the Red Cross to support the Canadian war effort. In New Finland, according to one man who recorded his memories of the war era, “[j]ust about every family had boys in the services....because by that time, well, we were Canadians, not Finns really, if you know what I mean. Our loyalty was here.” (Saskatchewan Archives Board 1982:R-14929). Although a close eye was kept on them, no evidence of disloyalty to Canada was found among the Saskatchewan Finns. For example, an RCMP report on the loyalties of the Margo-Invermay Finns during the war was forced to conclude, “All of these [Finns] are hereditarily socialistically-minded, practically all of them are supporters of the C.C.F. party, but, so far as can be ascertained, none are in any way subversive” (Lindström 2000:185). The decades of external suspicion and scrutiny that Saskatchewan Finns endured may well have contributed to the repudiation of the radicals among them. The Finnish socialists just made it too difficult for the majority to enjoy trust and regard within Canadian society, given the “nativistic fear of an unassimilated immigrant group” that prevailed at the time (Wallace and Thompson 1993:115).

Numerous studies of emigrants from Finland have expressed concern regarding the loss of various marks of “Finnishness” that range from fluency in the Finnish language and the valuing of Finnish ancestry to the use of Finnish names, character traits (e.g., honesty and “sisu” [guts]), behaviours (e.g., hard work, cleanliness and drunkenness), objects (e.g., knives and

saunas), affiliations (e.g., Lutheran church and workers' organizations) and knowledge of Finnish cultural-historical icons (e.g., the Kalevala, the author Aleksis Kivi and General Mannerheim) (e.g., Susag 1998; Kankaanpää 2006; Hännikäinen 2010a). Regardless of how "Finnishness" has been gauged, however, it has been found to diminish over time among Finnish immigrants, prompting the following observation:

Integration and assimilation reduce over time the differences that distinguish one group from another, or from the original settler group. Immigrants merge in two or three generations into a common American people and ethnic distinctions become less and less meaningful. Ethnicity becomes symbolic, a matter of choice, to be noted on the basis of name or some other signifier on occasion, of little matter for most of one's life....  
[Korkiasaari and Roinila 2005:99]

The validity of much of the recurring research to determine the degree of "Finnishness" in populations of immigrant Finns is questionable. It has been pointed out that researchers tend to imprint their own interests on the results, and often they fail to take into account the complex, interacting factors that shape identity, neglecting, for example, to recognize how many so-called Finnish traits are shared by other Scandinavian or immigrant peoples (Ollila 1998). Even worse, such research can become a denial of the vibrant cultural life of immigrant Finns:

...Finnish-Canadian culture – when divorced from its Canadian context – is made to appear a slavish imitation of various cultural patterns found in Finland or, even worse, as a stagnant reservoir of faded memories and archaisms from a remote Finnish past. Furthermore, the apparent "corruption" of the Finnishness in this culture by "foreign" accretions lends additional support to the view of the decadence of Finnish-Canadian cultural life. This, of course, entirely ignores the issue that the Finnish immigrants to this country actually partook in a dynamic process whereby they transformed their Finnishness to conform with their unique needs as expressed in this new, alien Canadian environment [Laine 1981:4].

From this perspective, the Saskatchewan Finns may be seen to have relinquished many markers of their ethnic heritage that had become unnecessary or insignificant, while retaining what was practical and important. The modifications in Finnish surnames, for example, demonstrate a degree of cultural flexibility and pragmatism that facilitated life on the western plains for many Finnish immigrants.

After the Canadian government in the 1970s officially adopted and implemented policies that supported multiculturalism within a bilingual and bicultural framework, some of the external pressures that had bound immigrant Finns together appeared to relax. Although ethnic groups were encouraged to maintain their cultural heritage, they also found that the weakening of ethnic boundaries gave them a new freedom to integrate themselves into the mainstream culture. A cultural crisis developed among the Finns, whereby it was recognized that “if a Finnish element is to continue to survive in Canada’s cultural landscape, it will only do so if the Finnish-Canadian community is able to recognize and cope with this freedom that has been given to its members to choose for themselves their cultural identity” (Laine 1981:3). The paradox of multiculturalism in legitimizing a current state instead of leading to social change was noted critically by some Finns, who saw that it “de-politicizes identity and diversity and homogenizes differences to dominant cultural values, that are middle-class, white, and Judeo-Christian” (Chahal and Mäki 2002:61). It has also been observed that multicultural policies tend over time to strengthen those ethnic groups able to get money and support from government, and as a result, both within and among ethnic groups, less conservative elements are at a disadvantage and become weaker (Burnet 1976:38).

When the Saskatchewan Finns are viewed within the current federal and provincial framework of multiculturalism, there are signs that these concerns about their future are well founded. To date, only one group of Saskatchewan Finns, the New Finlanders, has pursued government grants and consciously undertaken, in a modest way, to preserve, present and promote their Finnish history and culture. At least partly because of the efforts of the New Finland Historical and Heritage Society in publishing history books, hosting tours, bringing people together in ethnic celebrations, and improving the cemeteries and church as heritage destinations, all Saskatchewan Finns tend to be identified with the conservative, agrarian, mainstream-Lutheran New Finlanders. Those with Finnish heritage in other parts of Saskatchewan who would describe themselves differently are often invisible to those outside their communities. The successful heritage activities in New Finland illustrate the way in which immigrant ethnic groups engage in the “willful construction of self” by “drawing together evidence that is taken for Finnish identity and weaving it into a coherent whole within which subsequent generations insert themselves as the central actors “ (Virtanen 2009:230). It remains to be seen, however, if the increasingly integrated and dwindling numbers of people with Finnish

ancestry in New Finland will be able to maintain the effort to pass on their ethnic identity, particularly as the settlement has never developed strong links with Finns elsewhere in the province or across Canada. It is already clear that the few remaining descendants of the Nummola settlers, who are now well-integrated into the surrounding population, are unlikely to revive and maintain the particular Finnish cultural identity that their ancestors brought to the southwest of the province.

The same may be said of the secular Finns in the Elbow region. In that part of the province, the Finnish element of the population is not only surviving but thriving within the context of a particular religion, Laestadianism, which continues to be meaningful to its adherents as a guide in everyday life. Some Laestadian youth choose to attend school in Finland for a time in order to become better acquainted with the Finnish language, religion and culture (local resident, personal communication, 2010). As a result, links have occasionally been created between Saskatchewan Finns and natives of Finland that have refreshed the sense of ethnicity within the Finnish Laestadian community. Finnish heritage is still a distinctive identifying factor within the Laestadian church, but even there Finnish language and traditions are now used rarely, and religion, not ancestry, tends to be the dominant bond between members. On the whole, it remains to be seen whether or not Finnish ethnicity survives as a factor affecting everyday life in any of the original areas of Finnish settlement in Saskatchewan. As an element of social identity, it may well have become symbolic rather than significant.

*7.2.1.3 Views of Death:* The Finnish cemeteries were established at a time when the rural cemetery movement was redefining the relationship between the living and the dead. As a result, a few older graves are primarily an old-fashioned expression of human mortality, as signified by the epitaph “Tässä Lepää” [Herein Lies], which draws attention to the decaying mortal remains of the deceased. Whether this phrase is present or not, any fear inspired by the consciousness of mortality is often mitigated on the early graves in the Finnish cemeteries by Christian epitaphs, symbols regarding eternal life, and the prospect of an eternal reunion with loved ones. The body, which Lutheran doctrine says will be resurrected at the second coming of Christ, is placed near the burials of other family members, given a marker, and often memorialized as part of the family awaiting resurrection together.

Over time most of these explicitly religious messages and the expressed expectation of resurrection and reunion diminish, and the social identity expressed in the Finnish cemeteries becomes noticeably more secular. More grave markers appear that either lack textual and symbolic messages or bear more pleasant symbols and epitaphs that focus on remembrance of the deceased rather than human mortality. This non-expressive type of grave marker may indicate a secular or socialistic view of death that looks to the cemetery for the comfort of group membership and a sense of solidarity over time, with the individual of little importance in comparison to the group as a whole. At the same time, more expressive grave markers provoke remembrance of the deceased and contribute to the role of the cemetery as a landscape of memory where the living can meet and learn from the dead. Both types are consistent with the general denial of death that characterizes modern deathways throughout North America (Ariès 1975) and has influenced the kind of memorials found in historical cemeteries elsewhere on the western plains (Lenfesty 1998:168-169).

At one time in Saskatchewan's Finnish communities, most deaths occurred in the home, the dead were prepared for burial by family and friends, funeral services were held on the farm, and community members pitched in to transport, bury and memorialize the dead. Deaths, particularly of children, occurred frequently, and direct experience with the dead was thus an ever present, personal part of life. In the early days of settlement, loved ones were memorialized with either vernacular grave markers or purchases from the competitive memorial industry that developed in response to the money to be made in providing fashionable grave markers to the bereaved. In addition to memorializing specific people, commercial markers were expressions of the social and cultural norms that guided the families of the deceased in choosing a marker.

After 1930, death was mediated for most people by doctors, hospitals and funeral directors, who managed all the details involved in caring for the dying and the dead, creating a comfortable distance between the living and the dead. Moreover, as better health care made deaths in the community less frequent, occurring most often among the elderly, funerals also became less important as community events and were more often attended by only the family and close friends of the deceased. Investment in death rituals and memorializations became less intensive as rural Saskatchewan experienced the breakdown of families and communities during the Great Depression and times of war. As noted earlier, memorials began to focus less on families and more on companion markers for spouses, while greater attention was paid to the



commemoration of the now-rare deaths of children. There was a reaction to the commercialization of deathways and the growing expense of burying the dead, which resulted in the emergence of cheaper marker alternatives, such as grave covers and grass markers, many of which were made locally. Overall, grave markers became more and more standardized as the memorial industry offered the bereaved convenience and economy in choosing from catalogues of markers, decorations and epitaphs. Often the family, now both physically and emotionally distant from the death of a loved one, was content to leave memorialization of the dead largely in the hands of death professionals, who supplied the market with popular and profitable goods and services. Interest in using memorials to make an individual statement about the deceased was limited, and emphasis was placed on achieving a respectable level of commemoration according to community standards and expectations.

The increasingly commercialized, distant and bland view of death expressed in the Finnish cemeteries did not change much as economic and social stability returned to rural Finnish communities during the post-war era. The growing popularity of granite grave markers showed more willingness to spend money on grave memorials, but markers remained noticeably standardized with respect to the views of death they conveyed. At this time cremated bodies began to be buried in the cemeteries, indicating that belief in the resurrection of the body had waned. Epitaphs and symbols regarding reunion with loved ones after death continued to appear, but they seldom had explicitly religious overtones, and there was greater emphasis on the primary function of cemeteries as places in which to dispose of the dead. In this era, increasing emphasis on science and technology tended to make death “something that *happened* to people – when things didn’t work out right, or an accident occurred, or the medical profession failed” – rather than “something that people *did*” (Lenfesty 1998:28). There was a general turning away from the reality of death that minimized the need for cemeteries to act as a meeting place for the living and the dead and reduced interest in the maintenance of cemeteries as places of memory (Prior 1997). The Finnish cemeteries were regarded as a necessary, but not a prominent or central part of community life, and some fell into neglect as the communities they served were integrated into the larger society. As shown in Chapter Four, the rate of burials in the ethnically Finnish cemeteries slowed during this period as many Finns chose to be buried elsewhere for a variety of reasons.

Around 1980 signs of a revitalized relationship between the living and the dead seem to have emerged in some Finnish cemeteries. In New Finland, the burial rate rose in the New Cemetery as the settlement began to play a role as heritage destination, attracting visitors and an increasing number of burials of people with Finnish ancestry who had moved away. Most of the Finnish cemeteries were repaired and improved at this time, acquiring a new significance as places for marking and celebrating Finnish history in a province that was now officially multicultural. The cemeteries began to play a meaningful role in providing descendant communities of Finns with a historical sense of their genealogical roots and a geographic home within North America. In this context of increasing emphasis on family and ethnic history, the individualization of graves became of greater interest to families burying loved ones in the cemeteries. Greater effort was put into selecting, and occasionally designing, markers that made a specific statement about the deceased. The provision of grave markers with greater artistic merit and educative value certainly supported the emerging role of cemeteries as places of instruction in history and culture. However, this new attention to grave markers as memorials to unique lives that deserved to be remembered may also indicate an effort by some Finns to reclaim their relationship with death. This possibility is also suggested by the fact that after 1980, a few Finns purchased markers in advance of their deaths, which allowed them to oversee the design and installation of their own memorials in the Finnish cemeteries. The personal planning and design of death, even when carried out in collaboration with death professionals, may be seen as lessening the distance between the living and the dead that was characteristic of the preceding decades.

*7.2.1.4 Social Values and Beliefs:* Some changes in the social values and beliefs of the Saskatchewan Finns have already been mentioned, e.g., the general trends towards secularism, commercialism and individualism that may be seen in the Finnish cemeteries. Another change over time that is evident in the cemeteries relates to socio-economic status. In the period that the earliest Finns immigrated to Saskatchewan, Finland had not yet experienced the ideological and aesthetic reforms that began about 1910 and led to strict regulation and conformity in church-governed cemeteries (Knapas 2007). At the turn of the century in Finland, grave markers were still being used to communicate the socio-economic status of the deceased and celebrate the contributions of societal leaders (Lindgren 2009:14-83). As a result, some of the earliest markers

placed in Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries show, in a modest way appropriate to a pioneer setting, a tendency to display social status. The obelisks, pulpits and expensive tablets of granite and marble placed in the cemeteries prior to 1930 may be read as indications that the families and individuals memorialized by them possessed some combination of wealth, culture or influence within the community. The disappearance of these more elaborate memorials after 1930 and their replacement with less costly, more standardized markers may be due to economic conditions, but also, perhaps, to the late immigration of more socialistic Finns. The majority (65%) of the 92 graves that could be associated with socialists or socialist sympathizers by scanning the pages of *Vapaus* are either unmarked or have a very standardized, inexpensive marker, almost always a grave cover. The grave cover, at least outside New Finland, was the most popular form of memorialization for the Saskatchewan Finns, and it appears to indicate that many Finns believed in social equality. In the cemeteries, this egalitarianism is manifested as a disinclination to make distinctions among people based on money or social position.

However, even within New Finland, which has few grave covers, most grave markers after 1930 tend to be modest and standardized, and do not communicate a wide range of differences in socio-economic status. Moreover, religious leaders and people who played a prominent role in the community are not provided with markers of special distinction in New Finland or in any of the Finnish cemeteries. The tendency for grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries to be rather similar in size, style and expense appears to cross religious and political lines within the Finnish communities, suggesting that later immigrants to Saskatchewan were guided by the social norms that were becoming firmly established in Finland at that time, namely to keep grave markers uniform and unexpressive (Knapas 2007). These norms would have been particularly influential since they were compatible with the cemetery culture in most rural immigrant communities in Saskatchewan.

A general disinclination to stand out or appear ostentatious has been found in historical cemeteries throughout the western plains (Lenfesty 1998:45; Millar 1994:53-66). The egalitarian emphasis in the Finnish cemeteries may also reflect the cooperation and interdependence typical of people in pioneer societies. In settling a new land, everyone counted, and display or differentiation in the cemetery simply became inappropriate.

Against the backdrop of many decades of uniformity and conformity in the Finnish cemeteries, it may be significant that socio-economic differences have again become more

visible in more recent grave markers. Perhaps as memories of the pioneer era have receded and people with Finnish ancestry have become an integrated part of multi-ethnic rural regions, some of the old cultural restraints on showiness and inequality have loosened. General improvement in the economic circumstances of farmers in the post-war decades certainly made it possible for many Finnish families to spend more on grave markers. It may also be that the new value placed on ethnic heritage made them more willing to use cemeteries as places to make statements about their families and communities for the edification of both outsiders and their descendants. At any rate, after 1950 grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries gradually began to grow in size, use more expensive materials, and exhibit personal touches. This trend suggests that the Saskatchewan Finns of today may be less reticent than their forebears about making distinctions amongst themselves that reflect wealth and achievement.

### *7.2.2 Stages of Cultural Change Experienced by the Saskatchewan Finns*

The notion of stages in the development of ethnic communities on the western plains is certainly not new. To give just a few pertinent examples, Lenfesty's examination of the evidence from multi-ethnic cemeteries and historical documents in Lethbridge found four stages in the historical development of mortuary customs among the peoples who immigrated to southern Alberta (Lenfesty 1998); Pedersen's history of New Finland viewed the settlement as passing through three stages of development from an early homestead frontier community to a formally established community with key institutional structures and services, and finally becoming a post-frontier community with links to external events and organizations affecting many communities (Pedersen 2004:131-132); and Hännikäinen's study of the cultural geography of New Finland found changes in social identity among the immigrant Finns according to five stages shaped by historical developments both within and outside the settlement (Hännikäinen 2010a:194). Each of these studies was shaped by different interests and research questions, but their findings are not incompatible with each other. This section attempts to contribute refinements to the basic idea that they raise, namely that cultural change occurred in discernible stages for immigrants on the western plains. The evidence from the six Finnish cemeteries in Saskatchewan, and the available documentary evidence related to them, indicate that the social identity of immigrant Finns has undergone changes over time that may, with some overlap, be divided into the four ragged but distinct stages described below. It is noted that these stages

closely parallel those described by Lenfesty for the multi-ethnic cemeteries in Lethbridge, although the timing of some of them is slightly different. On the basis of these similarities, it is suggested that numerous cemeteries across the western plains may have evolved in similar ways. By extension, it is further suggested that the cultural change experienced by at least some of the many different peoples who immigrated to the western plains may have proceeded according to the same stages, as cemetery changes are interpreted here as indicators of change in immigrant social identity.

*7.2.2.1 Establishment (ca. 1896-1920):* In their first three decades of use, the Finnish cemeteries acted primarily as the final resting place of immigrants born in Finland, many of whom came to Saskatchewan with their families via the U.S. The gravestone styles preferred in the cemeteries in these early days suggest that the primary cultural point of reference for these people was Finland. They congregated in farming communities where they could comfortably interact primarily with people who shared their language, religion and customs, and new immigrants continued to come from Finland, renewing ties with the old country. Finnish was the language of everyday life. Finnish farms and communities tended to be independent and self-sufficient, operating mostly in isolation from neighbouring communities and maintaining only a remote connection with Finland through friends and relations. Community life was dominated by the church, as it had been in Finland, although there were on-going conflicts between competing ideologies.

The focus of each Finnish community in this era was on settling the land and establishing the institutions necessary for community life, such as church, school, hall, store, and cemetery. What was built tended to be modelled on what had been left behind in Europe and modified to suit the new physical, social and economic environment. Deaths were frequent and funerals were community events, making the cemetery an institution of importance within the community. Over time the Finns established burying places for their dead that were guided by the prevalent idea of the garden cemetery, but also met Saskatchewan regulations, accommodated the prairie climate, and reflected local beliefs and circumstances. Economic, political, social and religious factors combined to create cemeteries that differed in design and emphasis. Nevertheless, choices in grave markers tended to follow the neoclassical funerary fashions of the day and expressed differences in socio-economic status. Families were large, and patriarchal family structures

placed emphasis on the family of orientation, resulting in family lots in the earliest cemeteries. Epitaphs and symbols were used sparingly and were formal rather than personal in tone. Most were religious, expressing Lutheran doctrines concerning resurrection and the reunion of the family in an eternal afterlife. The Finnish language was used on some epitaphs from this era, along with the Finnish forms of family names.

*7.2.2.2 Utilitarianism (ca. 1920-1950):* Saskatchewan's Finnish communities experienced significant external economic, political and social pressures during this era, which included the Great Depression and World War II. There were far fewer people who had been born in Finland, and most people now identified with their birthplace in Saskatchewan. Finnish farm families were less self-reliant but contributed to the local economy by providing labour and developing small businesses to supplement their farm income. More material goods were now available for purchase, and items ranging from farm machines to grave markers were actively marketed in the rural areas through catalogues and sales representatives. Like other ethnic groups in Saskatchewan, the Finns supported the Canadian war effort and worked to make their loyalty clear while maintaining sympathy for and ties with Finland. English as well as Finnish was used in everyday life, and became more dominant in cemetery epitaphs. Children, who had now received their schooling in English, often found that they had to move away from their home communities to find a livelihood. Family lots were no longer established, and cemetery burial patterns emphasized the nuclear rather than the extended family. Fewer deaths resulted in less interest in the cemeteries, and the poverty experienced by many farmers prevented much monetary investment in grave markers. Expensive neoclassical marble and granite gravestones largely disappeared, and concrete began to rival stone as a material for grave memorials, usually taking the form of a plain grass marker or pillowed grave cover. This utilitarian style of grave marker remained popular for the next forty years, favoured in certain Finnish communities as an expression of egalitarian and/or non-materialistic values.

By the 1920s, Saskatchewan had become what Hännikäinen has termed “ristiriitaisen suomalaisuuden maisema” [a landscape of conflicted “Finnishness”] (Hännikäinen 2010a:194), as political and religious divisions among the Finnish immigrants to Saskatchewan became deeper and more apparent. Drought and poverty among Saskatchewan farmers had provided fertile ground for socialism, but the radical socialists among the Saskatchewan Finns never

gained widespread support and were eventually suppressed. Over time each Finnish cemetery came to serve a more homogenous Finnish community of a particular political and/or religious stripe, with some cemeteries barring non-Christian burials and giving little recognition to the burials of communists.

*7.2.2.3 Conservatism (ca. 1950-1980):* World War II and the dispersal of the young from the Finnish communities to become, not only labourers, but also soldiers, businessmen and professionals had expanded the consciousness of Saskatchewan Finns and created a social network that extended far outside the province. Social identity was now rooted in Canada, although connections were also felt with other people with the same ethnic or religious affiliations. As the economy had improved, Finnish farmers had enough disposable income to share in the growing use of technologies that made life on the farm easier, more efficient and more pleasant. Consumerism and secularism grew during this era, with fewer Finns attending church and, like most people, acquiring an ever more distant relationship with death. The role of the Finnish cemeteries diminished even further, with some falling into disuse and neglect. Although plain utilitarian grave covers and grass markers continued to be used, most grave markers were now stones selected from the items promoted by the memorial industry, which provided a respectable level of memorialization without requiring much personal investment in the death process. The tendency to select within a stock range of memorial options resulted in overall conformity in the cemetery markers from this era and the emergence of a commercialized style. Granite companion stones became the typical marker, underlining a new social emphasis on spousal relationships. Fewer Finnish given names appeared on grave markers, while given names popular in the larger English-speaking society became common, and Finnish surnames were often modified for convenience. Epitaphs tended to be stock phrases and more informal, while the same decorative motifs of wheat and roses appeared regularly, varying mostly as technological improvements in stone-cutting allowed greater detail.

*7.2.2.4 Individualism (ca. 1980 on):* To a large extent, the Finnish cemeteries are still in the Conservative stage, but there are signs of a change among some grave markers installed in 1980 or later. Greater creativity has been exercised in providing grave markers that are less standardized and more indicative of the life and personality of the deceased. Some of these

markers diverge from the commercial style only in their choice to invest in more options offered by the memorial company to personalize the marker (see Figure 7.1). A wider variety of colours, shapes, finishes, and decorative motifs have been used on numerous recent granite markers, indicating both a new interest in cemetery memorialization and a willingness to diverge from the stylistic norm. In addition, there are a few, more markedly creative graves that have taken a noticeably different approach to memorialization (e.g., see Figure 7.2). Unlike earlier vernacular grave markers, these atypical markers do not appear to have been installed because the bereaved lacked money or did not want to spend their money on a standard gravestone. They appear to have been installed because someone wanted to make an individual statement. As Finns living in rural Saskatchewan have achieved a level of affluence never enjoyed by their forebears, some have also become more willing to display individuality and stand out within the community.



**Figure 7.1:** A marker shaped like part of a violin and personalized on the back with a motif of violin and roses.

The new individualism in grave memorials may reflect weakening face-to-face family and community connections in today's globalized society. Increasingly, people are interacting with each other via communication technologies and are open to the influence of a wide range of media communicating across regions, ethnicities and ideologies. Individualism also reflects a globalized economy that has made a wider variety of memorialization options available. Even Finnish farmers in rural Saskatchewan now have the means to find and purchase unusual grave markers from an intensely competitive memorial industry. Globalization has provided a range of granites and other materials that are routinely imported for use in affordable gravestones. Technologies have been developed for carving and decorating stone memorials quickly, cheaply and efficiently, and today memorial companies in Saskatchewan market their wares using strategies that promise responsiveness to the particular



**Figure 7.2:** A partially hollowed, inscribed natural fieldstone placed on a concrete slab.



circumstances surrounding each death and offer to work cooperatively with the bereaved in the design of uniquely personal memorials.

To date, there has been little evidence of any changes in the burial practices of the Saskatchewan Finns in response to the criticisms that have been made of modern death industries and their detrimental effects on society and the environment (Mitford 1963, 1998; Ariès 1975). Although the number of urn burials of cremated remains is rising in the Finnish cemeteries, a typical burial in the era of individualism is still an inhumation with casket. Moreover, the burial is now marked by an increasingly large base-and-die marker of granite that has often been imported, polished and etched with detailed, decorative motifs.

It is worth mentioning again that at least some of the Finnish cemeteries have experienced recent renewal as they have begun to play a more prominent social role as heritage destinations. Finnish Heritage Cemetery and the New Finland cemeteries are being used to assist people with Finnish ancestry in developing a sense of their past by marking a tangible spot where their families set down roots in North America. Often the people choosing to be buried in these cemeteries are not farmers but professionals and business people from outside the community. They have not lived much, if any, of their lives in the farming communities that the cemeteries traditionally served. In addition, the communities are providing retirement or vacation homes for Finnish descendants. Today the Finnish language still appears on grave markers in the cemeteries, but now it is used as a heritage language rather than the language of everyday life.

The new attention to individuality in grave memorials in the Finnish cemeteries certainly reflects the rise of consumerism, socio-economic differentiation, and a nostalgic form of ethnicity, but it also shows greater concern to mark each death as the end of a unique life that is valued and deserves to be remembered. It is possible that in a changing, uncertain world, a new sense of mortality has been engendered that has revitalized the role of cemeteries as relatively permanent landscapes of memory. If so, the distance between the living and the dead may be narrowing again as people seek greater involvement in the processes of dying and place greater value on grave memorials.

### *7.2.3 Summary and Some Final Words*

Table 7.1 provides a point-form outline of the stages of cultural change experienced by the Saskatchewan Finns that is intended to summarize some of the major findings of this

research. It must be emphasized that the outlined stages do not have clear, precise temporal boundaries. Cultural change is deceptively neat when presented in a table of this sort, and to hold true at all, the stages need to be regarded as broad trends that had exceptions, varied in their intensity among the cemeteries, and proceeded along a ragged temporal front.

**Table 7.1: Major stages of cultural change for the Saskatchewan Finns**

Attributes in Each Stage	Establishment 1890-1920	Utilitarianism 1920-1945	Conservatism 1945-1980	Individualism 1980 on
Birthplace	Finland, U.S. and Canada	Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan	Saskatchewan
Cultural Orientation	Finland and U.S.	Saskatchewan	Canada; international awareness	Canada; global awareness
Relationship to larger society	isolation	interaction and dispersal	assimilation	heritage preservation
Economics	self-sufficient	part of local economy; growing materialism	part of national economy; consumerism; growing emphasis on technology	part of global economy; information and communication revolution
Language	Finnish	Finnish and English	English	English, with Finnish as a heritage language
Names	Finnish names	Finnish and English names	North American names	global pool of names
Religion	Lutheran church	religious divisions	growing secularism	both secularism and piety
Family	large patriarchal families	smaller nuclear families	spousal relationships	individual
Mortuary Style	formal; neoclassical	non-expressive; utilitarian	informal; commercial	creative; individualistic
Social Values	status distinctions	uniformity	conformity	individualism

There are definite parallels between the stages presented here for Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries and the four stages that Corrine Lenfesty has outlined for the multi-ethnic cemeteries in Lethbridge, Alberta. The parallels suggest that a similar pattern of culture change may have been experienced by many ethnic groups immigrating to rural areas on the western plains. This similarity is not surprising, since the Finns and other immigrant groups did not develop a cultural life on the western plains in isolation.

The fact was that the globalized wheat economy and the intrusive modern state worked in tandem to integrate immigrant farmers into a wider Canada. The homestead system, local markets, the structures of municipal government, and public school legislation, simply left social boundaries quite porous. The result was a high degree of inter-ethnic co-operation. Ethnic farm communities possessed simultaneous identities, their own particularistic, Old World-base sense of peoplehood, an emerging sense of Canadian citizenship and a strong pull to a local or regional polyethnic culture [Loewen 2002:12].

What cemetery research may be revealing is something of the process by which immigration to the western plains produced shared social and cultural change over time among a diversity of rural people who melded their heritage with a particular natural environment, an established but continually changing political and economic framework, and cultural understandings worked out alongside other immigrant groups. The Finns who came to Saskatchewan shaped their own cultural development in a series of rational and emotional choices that reflected inherited cultural values but adjusted them to contribute to an emerging pluralistic society. Other small, rural immigrant groups may have made many of the same choices, and the result may be a common pattern of cultural change that needs to be explored by further research in the historical rural cemeteries of the western plains.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**GRAVE RECORD**

CEMETERY \_\_\_\_\_ Marker ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Recorder \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Grave Family Name \_\_\_\_\_

First & Middle Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ ID # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ID # \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Block \_\_\_\_ Lot # \_\_\_\_ Plot # \_\_\_\_ Grave Type:  burial  urn burial  mixed  other

Monument Type:  monolith – upright/horizontal/slanted  base & die - upright/horizontal/slanted  flat marker  
 grave cover with marker  unmarked  other

Marker Style:  tablet  pillow  wedge  obelisk  pulpit  grass marker  shaped  
 roofed  natural rock  shaft  other

Marker Form (if shaped) \_\_\_\_\_ Tympanum \_\_\_\_\_

Foundation \_\_\_\_\_ Maker's Mark \_\_\_\_\_

Base - Lowest:  
material \_\_\_\_\_ dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D) finish \_\_\_\_\_

Base - Middle:  
material \_\_\_\_\_ dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D) finish \_\_\_\_\_

Base - Highest:  
material \_\_\_\_\_ dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D) finish \_\_\_\_\_

Marker:  
material \_\_\_\_\_ dimensions: \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D) finish \_\_\_\_\_

Statuary/Structural/Functional Elements \_\_\_\_\_

Symbols/Motifs/Decorations \_\_\_\_\_

Lettering \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription:

Grave Cover:

material \_\_\_\_\_ inscription \_\_\_\_\_

finish/decoration \_\_\_\_\_

dimensions: overall \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D) vault \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D)

Footstone:

material \_\_\_\_\_ inscription \_\_\_\_\_

dimensions \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D) decoration \_\_\_\_\_

Grave Border:

inscription/symbols \_\_\_\_\_ dimensions \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D)

material \_\_\_\_\_ finish \_\_\_\_\_

Lot Border:

inscription/symbols \_\_\_\_\_ dimensions \_\_\_\_\_ (L) \_\_\_\_\_ (W) \_\_\_\_\_ (D)

material \_\_\_\_\_ finish \_\_\_\_\_

Landscaping \_\_\_\_\_

Repairs/Additions \_\_\_\_\_

Mortuary Gifts

\_\_\_\_\_

Monument Preservation:  Good  Significant Wear/Damage  Poor Issues \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Sketch:

## APPENDIX B

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## APPENDIX C

### THE BIRTH PLACE OF PEOPLE IN THE FINNISH CEMETERIES

**Table A-1: The number of people buried in Saskatchewan's Finnish cemeteries by cemetery and place of birth, with summaries for the Elbow region and New Finland\***

BIRTH PLACE	ELBOW SUMMARY	DUNBLANE FINNISH CEMETERY	FINNISH HERITAGE CEMETERY	HIGHLAND CEMETERY	NEW FINLAND SUMMARY	NF NEW CEMETERY	NF OLD CEMETERY	NUMMOLA CEMETERY	TOTAL
Unknown	22	15	3	4	31	22	9	0	53
AB	4	3	0	1	3	2	1	2	9
BC	0	0	0	0	5	1	4	0	5
MB	2	2	0	0	5	4	1	0	7
ON	1	0	0	1	6	5	1	2	9
QC	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
SK_Elbow	126	52	1	73	2	0	2	0	128
SK_NF	9	7	0	2	283	176	107	0	292
SK_Nummola	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	30	31
SK_Other	10	4	0	6	4	2	2	1	15
Finland	29	14	3	12	30	14	16	9	68
FI_Häme	1	0	0	1	4	3	1	0	5
FI_Kuopio	2	1	0	1	4	1	3	0	6
FI_Lappi	5	1	0	4	0	0	0	0	5
FI_Mikkeli	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	2
FI_Oulu	47	22	1	24	10	3	7	2	59
FI_Turku-Pori	7	3	0	4	6	4	2	2	15
FI_Uusimaa	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	1	7
FI_Vaasa	18	9	0	9	117	62	55	6	141
FI_Viipuri	1	1	0	0	10	6	4	0	11
England	1	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	3
Hungary	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	3
Sweden	0	0	0	0	3	2	1	1	4
Norway	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Russia	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
North America	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	3
United States	4	0	0	4	1	0	1	0	5
US_Michigan	15	3	0	12	24	23	1	4	43
US_Minnesota	9	4	0	5	0	0	0	0	9
US_Montana	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	3
US_N. Dakota	13	5	0	8	1	0	1	1	15
US_S. Dakota	7	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	7
US_Wisconsin	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>339</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>567</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>971</b>

\*Data compiled from grave markers, local histories, local records, and funeral registers.

## Appendix D

### Saskatchewan Finns by Cemetery and Decade of Arrival

**Table A-2: The number of people born in Finland and buried in a Finnish cemetery in Saskatchewan by cemetery and decade of arrival in Saskatchewan\***

Decade of Arrival	Dunblane Finnish Cemetery	Finnish Heritage Cemetery	Highland Cemetery	New Finland New Cemetery	New Finland Old Cemetery	Nummola Cemetery	Total
Unknown	10	0	8	7	9	3	37
1880s	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
1890s	0	0	0	31	54	1	86
1900s	25	3	1	25	19	1	74
1910s	10	1	37	24	12	12	96
1920s	6	0	5	3	0	4	18
1930s	0	0	3	1	0	0	4
1940s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1950s	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
1960s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1970s	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
1980s	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
1990s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2000s	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	51	4	55	93	95	21	319

\*Data compiled from grave markers, local histories, local records, and funeral registers.

## Appendix E

### Points of Emigration to Saskatchewan for Saskatchewan Finns

**Table A-3: Number and percentage of people buried in a Finnish cemetery in Saskatchewan by cemetery and point of emigration to Saskatchewan\***

Point of Emigration	Dunblane Finnish Cemetery		Finnish Heritage Cemetery		Highland Cemetery		New Finland New Cemetery		New Finland Old Cemetery		Nummola Cemetery		Total	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
<b>Unknown/SK-Born</b>	84	54%	6	60%	96	55%	222	66%	132	57%	32	49%	572	59%
<b>AB</b>	2	1%	0	0%	1	1%	4	1%	0	0%	10	15%	17	2%
<b>MB</b>	12	8%	0	0%	1	1%	5	1%	1	0%	0	0%	19	2%
<b>ON</b>	0	0%	0	0%	3	2%	12	4%	5	2%	4	6%	24	2%
<b>Canada – Other</b>	0	0%	0	0%	3	2%	2	1%	8	3%	0	0%	13	1%
<b>Finland</b>	10	6%	0	0%	13	7%	41	12%	44	19%	5	8%	113	12%
<b>Europe-Other</b>	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	3	1%	5	2%	0	0%	9	1%
<b>US-MI</b>	1	1%	0	0%	21	12%	37	11%	14	6%	4	6%	77	8%
<b>US-ND</b>	28	18%	2	20%	23	13%	1	0%	1	0%	3	5%	58	6%
<b>US-MIN</b>	1	1%	0	0%	9	5%	2	1%	0	0%	1	2%	13	1%
<b>US-SD</b>	5	3%	1	10%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	1%
<b>US-Other</b>	12	8%	1	10%	3	2%	6	2%	22	9%	6	9%	50	5%
<b>Total</b>	155		10		174		335		232		65		971	

\*Data compiled from grave markers, local histories, local records, and funeral registers.

## Appendix F

### Decorative Motifs on Grave Markers

**Table A-4: Decorative elements on grave markers in the Finnish cemeteries by category**

<p><u>Animals/Birds</u> (18)</p> <p>4 lambs, resting</p> <p>2 sculpted lambs, on top</p> <p>2 doves, sitting</p> <p>1 sculpted dove, on top</p> <p>1 dove, standing</p> <p>1 dove, flying with ribbon</p> <p>2 doves, flying with branch</p> <p>2 eagles, soaring</p> <p>2 hummingbirds</p> <p>1 bird silhouettes, flying</p> <p><u>Angels</u> (10)</p> <p>5 soul effigies</p> <p>3 praying angels</p> <p>1 child angel</p> <p>1 baby angel</p> <p><u>Books</u> (33)</p> <p>19 open book panels</p> <p>8 scroll panels</p> <p>6 sculpted Bibles, on top</p> <p><u>Christ Signs</u> (24)</p> <p>6 IHS</p> <p>5 grapes/grape leaves</p> <p>3 crowns</p> <p>3 crown and cross</p> <p>2 chalices</p> <p>1 anchor</p> <p>1 sun in heaven</p> <p>1 chi-rho</p> <p>1 INRI</p> <p>1 head of Jesus</p> <p><u>Crosses</u> (96)</p> <p>55 upright Latin</p> <p>5 sculpted upright, on top</p> <p>1 black gravel on vault, Latin</p> <p>4 sculpted, on vault</p>	<p>2 slanted Latin</p> <p>1 sculpted slanted Latin, on top</p> <p>1 fallen Latin</p> <p>1 sculpted rustic fallen Latin, on top</p> <p>6 Calvary</p> <p>6 sculpted Calvary, on top</p> <p>4 forged iron, on top</p> <p>4 trefoil</p> <p>1 Greek</p> <p>1 sunburst</p> <p>1 crucifix</p> <p>1 sculpted crucifix</p> <p>2 unidentified</p> <p><u>Emblems</u> (7)</p> <p>1 Canadian Forces</p> <p>1 other military</p> <p>1 nursing</p> <p>4 family name initials</p> <p><u>Flowers</u> (213)</p> <p>80 open roses</p> <p>54 domestic roses</p> <p>3 climbing roses</p> <p>3 unidentified roses</p> <p>1 rosebud</p> <p>13 lilies</p> <p>5 lilies of the valley</p> <p>4 prairie lilies</p> <p>2 calla lilies</p> <p>6 daffodils</p> <p>5 dogwood</p> <p>3 bell flowers</p> <p>2 morning glories</p> <p>2 trilliums</p> <p>2 water lilies</p> <p>1 cattail</p> <p>1 daisy</p> <p>1 iris</p> <p>1 passion flower</p> <p>1 sunflower</p> <p>1 thistle, stylized</p> <p>1 tulip</p> <p>1 flower basket</p> <p>1 flower bouquet</p>	<p>19 unidentified flowers</p> <p><u>Greenery</u> (67)</p> <p>27 ivy leaves</p> <p>10 oak leaves &amp; acorns</p> <p>2 sculpted acorns, on top</p> <p>7 palm leaves or branches</p> <p>6 olive leaves or branches</p> <p>2 wreaths, laurel or olive</p> <p>2 acanthus leaves</p> <p>2 trefoils</p> <p>2 tri-leaf sprigs</p> <p>3 leaves &amp; berries, unidentified</p> <p>2 greenery, unidentified</p> <p>1 fern</p> <p>1 maple leaf</p> <p><u>Hearts</u> (4)</p> <p>3 hearts</p> <p>1 heart border</p> <p><u>Heaven</u> (14)</p> <p>7 gates of heaven, open</p> <p>3 city of God motifs</p> <p>3 cloud panels</p> <p>1 clouds and stars</p> <p><u>Hobbies /Work</u> (5)</p> <p>1 bar of music</p> <p>1 fishing rod</p> <p>1 handbells, crossed</p> <p>1 tools – hammer, saw, level</p> <p>1 violin</p> <p><u>Mourning</u> (5)</p> <p>2 tasseled draperies</p> <p>1 urn carved</p>	<p>2 sculpted urns, on top</p> <p><u>Prayer</u> (9)</p> <p>3 praying children</p> <p>3 praying hands</p> <p>3 rosaries</p> <p><u>Scenery</u> (10)</p> <p>3 foothill scenes</p> <p>3 setting sun scenes</p> <p>1 cow pasture</p> <p>1 vegetable garden</p> <p>1 grain field</p> <p>1 mountain lake</p> <p><u>Shapes</u> (10)</p> <p>3 shields</p> <p>2 circles</p> <p>2 linked-diamond borders</p> <p>1 border of circles, trefoils &amp; lozenges</p> <p>1 fan motif</p> <p>1 tied bow</p> <p><u>Structural</u> (8)</p> <p>3 tree trunk pillars</p> <p>2 church windows</p> <p>2 scrolled-arm benches</p> <p>1 arch &amp; columns</p> <p><u>Sun/Stars</u> (5)</p> <p>3 rays</p> <p>1 five-pointed star</p> <p>1 setting sun</p> <p><u>Wedding</u> (6)</p> <p>3 joined rings</p> <p>2 joined hands</p> <p>1 wedding scroll</p> <p><u>Wheat</u> (64)</p> <p>60 wheat sprays</p> <p>2 wheat bouquets</p> <p>2 wheat sheaves</p>
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