

SARAH KAST McGINNESS HONOURED

by Edgar Clow, U.E.

Sarah Kast McGinness, United Empire Loyalist, 1713-1791

Sarah Kast grew up in German Flats, New York, beloved by her Indian neighbours. She married Captain Timothy McGinness, killed in 1755 at the Battle of Lake George. During the American Revolution her persistent loyalty to Britain resulted in imprisonment, confiscation of property and a son lost in a fire. Nevertheless, Daniel Claus, Superintendent of Indians, persuaded her to spend the crucial winter of 1777 with the Six Nations, ensuring their continued loyalty and eventual migration to Ontario. She died September 9, 1791 and is believed buried in St. John's Cemetery, Bath, Ontario.

On Sunday, September 8th, 1991, in St. John's Anglican Churchyard at Bath, Ontario, a granite memorial with bronze plaque was ceremoniously unveiled to the memory of Sarah Kast McGinness, United Empire Loyalist, who died September 9th, 1791, aged 78 years.

The McGinness Project as it came to be known began as an unwritten pact between two people: Evelyn Drew, past president of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada and also of the Bay of Quinte Branch, and Edgar Clow, President of Colonel Edward Jessup Branch (Brockville-Prescott), both descendants of the Loyalist lady. In the end, close to 150 descendants from across North America banded together to erect the memorial and participate in the unveiling ceremonies.

The event had the classic earmarks of the Loyalist creed, crystallized into action in a unique way "...to preserve the history and traditions...of the Loyalist families before it is too late...to erect...monuments, memorials...desirable to perpetuate the memory of the United Empire Loyalists." Most of the preliminary planning by Evelyn Drew and Edgar Clow was inspired by the late Dr. H.C.



Commemorating the 200th anniversary of the death of Sarah Kast McGinness. Shown standing, from left to right: Jon Wannamaker; Evelyn Drew, Dominion Councillor, Picton; Edgar Clow, Pres., Col. Edward Jessup Branch, Brockville; Arnold Nethercott, UEL Pres., London; Russell Sills, Pres. Bay of Quinte Branch, Stirling; Catherine Evans, Kingston; Verna Hill, Deseronto; Tex Joyner; and (seated) Barbara Hopper, Nepean. Riflemen Wannamaker and Joyner, 2nd Batt., King's Royal Yorkers. Drew, Evans, Hopper, and Clow are all descendants of Sarah Kast McGinness. Photo: Wes Rochester

Burleigh's earnest espousal of the McGinness cause. In 1950 and again in 1977, he had written of SARAH's exploits in the American Revolution, deploring that so few knew about her. Other authors, such as Catherine Crary as quoted in Mary Archibald's chapter on "Sir John Johnson" in *Eleven Exiles* (Dundurn Press, 1982), had preserved the rudiments of the story. In the February 1989 issue of *The Loyalist Gazette*, LCol Wm. A. Smy had documented much of Sarah's story in "A Recounting of a Woman's Service in the Revolution." In March 1989 in *Ontario History*, Janice Potter referred to her deeds in "Patriarchy and Paternalism: The Case of the Eastern Ontario Loyalist Women," which further brought the story to the attention of Ontario readers.

It was Bill Smy's February article, however, that gave Evelyn Drew and Edgar Clow the opening they needed. In the

Spring 1990 *Loyalist Gazette*, they announced their campaign to erect a historical marker. By midsummer, reaction began. The first response was from Mrs. Mossie Moorby of Newmarket. Her Toronto branch newsletter *Fidelity* later became a booster of the project. Within days, Barbara Hopper of Nepean, who had been working independently and simultaneously on a similar but even more comprehensive project, enthusiastically contacted the original sponsors. Shortly thereafter, Catharine Evans of Kingston, who had been researching McGinness history for years, joined the team. The wheels were in motion.

The Ontario Heritage Foundation, approached in the early stages with a request to erect their classic blue and gold plaque, revealed they could not consider a McGinness marker until 1994 because of a large backlog of requests. The committee, however, wished the commemoration to be a Heritage Years

project to coincide with the bicentennial of Sarah's death. Another arm of the Ontario Ministry Of Culture And Communications indicated it would assist with the erection of a local plaque. Their offer was accepted by the sponsors who believed this was the minimum the province owed to Sarah. The Minister herself, Karen Haslam, in a message read at the "Ceremony of the Stone" by Nancy Drew, commended Sarah's acts of heroism and took particular note of her rapport with the Mohawks.

Premier Bob Rae, whose enthusiasm for Loyalist themes had been suspect by some UEL members, sent a message which drew prolonged applause. He said *"...the courage and belief Sarah Kast McGinness had in her convictions are exemplary traits for all of us, but they are particularly important for Sarah herself because she was a woman determined to stand up for herself and what she believed was right in a time of war and unrest. At this time in Canada's constitutional history, we can learn from people like Sarah who were willing to sacrifice themselves for many of the things we now take for granted. The monument and cast bronze plaque unveiled today are a fitting and lasting tribute to a woman who lived an extraordinary and remarkable life."*

The unveiling ceremony was preceded by a church service in St. John's Anglican Church, which was attended also by rank and file members of Bay of Quinte Branch as their annual church parade. Here the Rector of St. John's, Rev. Kenneth Blaber, extolled the virtues of Sarah's loyalty and sacrifice, citing also the example of her contemporary Molly Brant of the Mohawks. Hymns from the 1700s were sung, the psalm was lead by Meribeth Clow of Bradford, and scripture selections were read by Donald Drew of Ottawa and Kevin Hopper of Toronto.

The "Ceremony of the Stone" which followed was presided over jointly by Evelyn Drew and Edgar Clow. After being introduced by Russell Sills, president of Bay of Quinte Branch, warm greetings were expressed by Arnold Nethercott of London on behalf of the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada. Rev. Maurice Mcleod, Branch Chaplain, gave the prayer of dedication

prior to the unveiling of the memorial by Barbara Hopper, her 11-year-old daughter Victoria Hopper, Catharine Evans and Verna Hill, the latter representing the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte. Mrs. Hill was also the keynote speaker, revealing Mohawk philosophy in many fields, including the place of women, and the kindred spirit of loyalty that Sarah would have experienced in her dealings with them - a mutual loyalty and respect spanning most of her lifetime. A tribute to Mohawk friendship is a concluding line in the plaque "Sken Non Enhsatonrishen," the Mohawk way of saying "Rest in Peace."

Refreshments and a social hour followed, providing a satisfying and emotional opportunity for Sarah's extended family and friends to get to know one another - some made the trip from as far away as Belgium; and Texas. Edgar Clow thanked numerous people who had helped bring the project to fruition, in particular Rev. Blaber, his congregation and their cemetery board, who had cooperated so fully in the project. He paid tribute to the work of Barbara Hopper who wrote, produced and mailed the 20-page Project Information Kit and Fund Request to 110 descendant families. He thanked her for "A Stone for Sarah", published in the Spring 1991 issue of *The Loyalist Gazette*, and for other articles on Sarah in the *Napanee Beaver*, and genealogical publications in Canada and New York State.

The four members of the McGinness Project Committee are deeply grateful for the financial support and overwhelming trust and faith demonstrated by the descendants. It was an honour to have been allowed the free hand to realize a dream which should now be perpetuated even further. At the time of this writing, a sizable sum remains in The McGinness Project account after covering the expenses of the memorial. It is proposed that this be used to establish a "Sarah Kast McGinness Endowment Fund" within the United Empire Loyalists' Association of Canada to become an actual *working* tribute to a woman whose name truly belongs on the list of those who helped create Canada.

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Group wants Ottawa memorial to honour Canada's settlers

(Reprinted from *The Ottawa Citizen*)

A memorial to honour Canadian settlers could be built in Ottawa within a year.

"One common experience all Canadians have, in nothing else, is that all of us who are here now are settlers," said John Gregorovich, chairman of the Toronto-based Settlers' Memorial Committee.

Talks are being held with the National Capital Commission to find a site in Ottawa. NCC spokeswoman Heather Bradley said they haven't decided whether they will give a site or where the site might be. But, she said, "it looks very positive. They're a good group."

A federal site is only provided if the subject of commemoration is of national significance.

A national competition to design the memorial representing past, present and future settlers is expected to begin following approval from the NCC.

"It will be a challenge to Canadian artists to create a symbol of unity that works for all sectors of Canada," said Peeter Sepp, the project administrator. He hopes to receive NCC approval early in the new year and have a finalist by the end of 1992..

The memorial project was conceived by the Ukrainian-Canadian community to commemorate the centennial of group settlement by Ukrainians in Canada.

Gregorovich estimates it would cost \$425,000 to prepare the site and build the memorial. The Ukrainian-Canadian community has already donated \$115,000 and hopes to provide the rest in the future.

At least a dozen ethnic groups, such as the German Canadian Congress, have expressed interest in building their own memorials near the main memorial, to represent their settlements.

*Editor's Note:
Comments are welcome!*