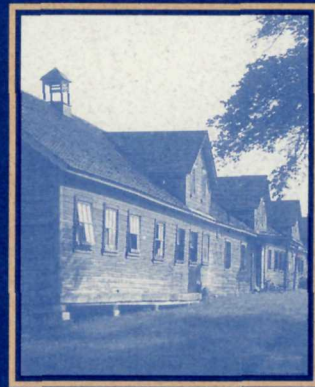


Supplement

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

GROSSE ÎLE



NATIONAL
HISTORIC
SITE



DEVELOPMENT
CONCEPT



Environment Canada
Parks Service

Environnement Canada
Services des parcs



INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT



CANADA'S GREEN PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The information document **Grosse Île National Historic Site - Development Concept** was issued in March 1992 as part of the public consultation program outlining the Canadian Parks Service proposals to preserve and develop this new national historic site.

This public involvement exercise, an integral part of any planning for national historic sites, is designed to inform interested organizations and the general public of the proposed development concept and to make sure that the information conveyed is properly understood. It offers interested groups and individuals the opportunity to express their point of view on the subject so that the Department is aware of the public's concerns and interests, and to accommodate those concerns consistent with our available resources and legislated mandate.

Information meetings were held in Montmagny (March 17, 1992), Québec City (March 24, 1992), L'Isle-aux-Grues (March 25, 1992), and Montréal (April 8, 1992). The public hearings took place in Montmagny (April 22, 1992), Québec City (April 28, 1992), and Montréal (May 20, 1992). During the hearings 32 briefs were presented.

In **Montmagny**, the main concern was the project's impact on the economy and the tourism industry. There, the public requested that the Canadian Parks Service recognize the Côte-du-Sud as the main access route to the site.

At the hearing in **Québec City**, four of the nine briefs deposited were presented by organizations involved in pleasure boating on the St. Lawrence River.

At each place, several interesting recommendations and suggestions regarding the presentation of themes in the history of Grosse Île were submitted as well.

At the public hearing in **Montréal**, several Canadians of Irish descent mentioned the significance of Grosse Île in Irish history and expressed their disagreement with the proposed Development Concept. They maintained that the historic facts related to the causes of the Irish emigration during the Great Famine had been distorted and that the project planners showed indifference toward the vestiges of the past associated with the tragedy of 1847. In their opinion, the commemoration theme (Immigration to Canada via Québec City from 1800 to 1939) does not do

justice to the Irish dimension of the site.

From the start of the consultation exercise, numerous individuals of Irish descent or origin from across Canada and the United States have sent their comments to the Canadian government. In general, these people expressed similar concerns about the Irish dimension of Grosse Île.

In light of the reactions and comments received, the Canadian Parks Service has concluded that the March 1992 document did not fulfill its mission of informing the public. It is indeed somewhat vague on certain points, particularly those of specific concern to the Irish community. In addition, some readers have interpreted passages of the document in ways that were not intended.

This information supplement is intended to expand upon and clarify certain points before continuing with the public consultation exercise.

Grosse Île A COMMEMORATIVE SITE

Many letters from individuals of Irish descent refer to the Canadian Parks Service's proposals to develop Grosse Île as a "theme park". If by "theme park" it is understood that the island would become an "amusement park", as typified by Disneyland, the Service wishes to reassure the public that it intends nothing of the sort. The national historic sites managed by the Canadian Parks Service - including Grosse Île - are essentially commemorative sites. They relate to *themes* of Canadian history. Their objective is to help the public understand and appreciate Canadian history and to protect and develop their cultural resources with all the care that this precious, irreplaceable heritage deserves.

The national historic sites system began in 1917 when Fort Anne in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, opened. It currently includes some 114 sites across the country. These sites illustrate a number of themes in the history of the Canadian people. They remind Canadians of our rich, diverse past. Some examples are: Port au Choix, Newfoundland, a witness to the maritime archaic culture; the Lachine Canal in Quebec, a milestone in industrial development and in transportation in Canada; Bellevue House in Kingston, Ontario, restored to the era when John A. Macdonald lived there as a young lawyer in 1848; York Factory in Manitoba, heart of the fur trade in the West; and the remains of Kitwanga, a fortified native village in British Columbia.

Commemorative Monuments and Burial Grounds PRECIOUS HERITAGE RESOURCES

Que of the threads that runs through the many letters that the Service has received is the concern that development will desecrate the graves of those who perished on the island or on board the ships destined for it, and that the Service has failed to appreciate the meaning that the place has for descendants of Irish immigrants. On the contrary, the Service understands the importance of the island as a shrine for the Irish people; it values the burial grounds and the monuments there as a significant and irreplaceable heritage, and intends to care for them scrupulously. The Canadian Parks Service is inescapably obliged to do so as the agency that bears responsibility for their preservation.

Because Grosse Île has significant commemorative monuments and burial grounds, and because their future has been the cause of so much apprehension, it is deemed advisable to describe them in some detail in this document.

COMMEMORATIVE MONUMENTS

Aside from the commemorative plaque installed in 1980 by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada and the gravestones in the cemeteries, Grosse Île has four commemorative monuments.



THE MEDICAL OFFICERS' MONUMENT

"As might be expected, the scenes witnessed on the island evoked a desire to commemorate both the revered dead and the heroic survivors. First among the monuments, and still standing today, is that raised by Dr. George M. Douglas to honor his medical colleagues and to pay tribute to the unfortunates they could not save."

Marianna O'Gallagher*

The Medical Officers' Monument was erected in 1847-48 and stands on the edge of the cemetery in the west part of the island, known as the "Irish Cemetery" or the "Cemetery of 1847".

*
O'Gallagher, M. *Grosse Ile, Gateway to Canada 1832-1937*, Quebec City, Carraig Books, 1987, 188 pages.

The monument bears the following inscriptions on its four faces:

East side:

IN THIS SECLUDED SPOT LIE
THE MORTAL /REMAINS OF
5 424 PERSONS WHO /
FLYING FROM PESTILENCE
AND FAMINE IN /IRELAND IN
THE YEAR 1847 FOUND /
IN AMERICA BUT A GRAVE

West side:

ERECTED BY
DR. GEO. M. DOUGLAS /
MEDICAL SUPERINTENDENT
AND EIGHTEEN /
ASSISTANT MEDICAL
OFFICERS ON DUTY IN 1847 /

South side:

TO THE MEMORY OF /
DR. BENSON, OF DUBLIN /
WHO DIED IN THIS HOSPITAL/
MAY 27th 1847 /
DR. ALEX^r PINET, OF /
VARENNES DIED JULY 24/ 1847 /
DR. ALFRED MALHIOT, /
OF VERCHERES, DIED JULY 22 /
1847. /DR. JOHN JAMESON /
OF MONTREAL, DIED AUGUST/
2nd 1847, AGED 34 YEARS

THESE GENTLEMEN /
WERE MEDICAL ASSISTANT
OFFICERS /OF THIS HOSPITAL
AND ALL DIED /
OF TYPHUS FEVER
CONTRACTED IN /
THE FAITHFUL DISCHARGE OF
THEIR /DUTY UPON THE SICK



North side:

IN / MEMORY OF /
DR. ALFRED PANET,
MEDICAL OFFICER OF THIS /
ESTABLISHMENT /
WHO DIED OF CHOLERA /
JULY 1834.

DR. ROBERT CHRISTIE
MEDICAL ASSISTANT /
WHO DIED OF TYPHUS /
IN THIS HOSPITAL
JULY 2nd / 1837

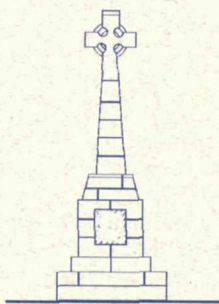


The Medical Officers' Monument

Photo : Canadian Parks Service
Louis Jacob

Nég. 124/00/PR-6/S-38-6

THE CELTIC CROSS



Few individuals are as qualified to speak about this monument as Marianna O'Gallagher, Québec City historian and granddaughter of the architect of the monument, Jeremiah Gallagher. The following passages are from her book, *Grosse Île: Gateway to Canada*.

"That the Irish should be the ones to raise the largest monument on Grosse Île to honor the immigrants is not surprising. Consider that the majority of immigrants in the first half of the nineteenth century were Irish. The death of thousands of their fellow countrymen in misery on that island was the sharpest memory etched in the hearts of the Irish in Canada in the late nineteenth century".

"That the Irish of Quebec City at the turn of the century spurred the enterprise and carried it to a grand conclusion is not surprising either, for the events of 1832 and 1847 had made an indelible impression on the Irish of Quebec, and proximity to the island had always nudged dormant memory. Besides, the events of 1847 had forged a link between the Irish and the French Canadians. What set the movement afoot was the fiftieth anniversary visit to the island in the summer of 1897 by a group of the Ancient Order of Hibernians".

"Twelve years of slow steady work ensued and finally in 1909 a monument was unveiled and a book launched, both of which served to preserve forever the memory of 1847".

"The monument consists of a Celtic Cross of gray Stanstead Granite, forty-six feet high. The monument in the standard five sections of a classic Celtic Cross stands on a base 15 x 13 x 2 feet; above it is a second base of 13 x 10 x 2 feet".

"Originally the inscriptions were carved in ebony panels, but these have been replaced by granite. The inscriptions on three sides offer the same message, in Gaelic, in English and in French:"



The Celtic Cross

This aerial view shows the strategic location of the commemorative monument, atop Telegraph Hill, in the west sector of the island.

Photo : Canadian Parks Service
Robert Piette

Nég. 124/00/PR-6/S-07-7



"SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF THOUSANDS OF IRISH EMIGRANTS, WHO, TO PRESERVE THE FAITH, SUFFERED HUNGER AND EXILE IN 1847-48 AND, STRICKEN WITH FEVER, ENDED HERE THEIR SORROWFUL PILGRIMAGE. ERECTED BY THE ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS IN AMERICA, AND DEDICATED FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION, 1909."

(original text in English)

"THOUSANDS OF THE CHILDREN OF THE GAEL WERE LOST ON THIS ISLAND WHILE FLEEING FROM FOREIGN TYRANNICAL LAWS AND AN ARTIFICIAL FAMINE IN THE YEARS 1847-48. GOD BLESS THEM THIS STONE WAS ERECTED TO THEIR MEMORY AND IN HONOR OF THEM BY THE GAELS OF AMERICA. GOD SAVE IRELAND!"

(English translation of the original text in Gaelic)

"À LA PIEUSE MÉMOIRE DE MILLIERS D'ÉMIGRÉS IRLANDAIS QUI, POUR GARDER LA FOI, SOUFFRIRENT LA FAIM ET L'EXIL ET, VICTIMES DE LA FIÈVRE, FINIRENT ICI LEUR DOULOUREUX PÈLERINAGE, CONSOLÉS ET FORTIFIÉS PAR LE PRÊTRE CANADIEN. CEUX QUI SÈMENT DANS LES LARMES MOISSONNERONT DANS LA JOIE."

(original text in French)

"In addition to gratitude to French Canadian clergy, the principal theme expressed in the inscriptions and elaborated in the speeches and sermons was that of the terrible sufferings of those people, and the desire of their descendants to honour them with an everlasting memorial".

"For many a summer after that event the Ancient Order of Hibernians sponsored an annual pilgrimage from Quebec City to the Monument. There is no doubt that more than one generation realized the significance of the events commemorated and had their memories formed by the solemnity of the ceremonies carried out there each year".

►
**Restoration Work
on the Celtic Cross**

In 1989, the Canadian Parks Service closely examined the masonry of the monument, then repointed the stone. They raked and redid about 65% of the joints.

Photo :
Canadian Parks Service
Jacques Beardsell

Nég. 124/00/PR-6/S-126-6



THE CROSS OF REMEMBRANCE

The Cross of Remembrance, sculpted of wood, represents a stylized Christ on a cross. It was erected in 1989 during the celebrations for the 80th anniversary of the Celtic Cross. Created by Claude Tardif of Montmagny, the monument was erected by the Corporation pour la mise en valeur de la Grosse-Île.

The inscription on the copper plaque reads as follows:

CROIX DU SOUVENIR,
À LA MÉMOIRE DE TOUS
CEUX QUI REPOSENT
SUR CETTE ÎLE,
BÉNIE LE 20 AOÛT 1989
À L'OCCASION DU
80^e ANNIVERSAIRE DU
DÉVOILEMENT DE
LA CROIX CELTIQUE.
DON DE LA CORPORATION
POUR LA MISE EN VALEUR
DE LA GROSSE ÎLE.

The names of the Corporation board members follow. A much smaller crucifix, identical to that of the monument, rests on the altar of the Catholic chapel.



THE COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUE IN THE ANGLICAN CHAPEL

A rectangular wall plaque (85 cm by 55 cm) in black stone, framed in wood painted light brown, hangs inside the Anglican chapel.

The inscription in colored Gothic letters reads as follows:

IN MEMORIAM /
IN MEMORIAM OF THE
THOUSANDS OF PERSONS /
OF MANY RACES AND CREEDS
WHO, VICTIMS OF /
PESTILENCE, LIE BURIED IN
NAMELESS GRAVES /
ON THIS ISLAND.

Although there is no date on the plaque, it is believed that it was created and hung in the 20th century.

THE BURIAL GROUNDS

From its opening in 1832 to its closing in 1937, the human quarantine station on Grosse Île was the site of three cemeteries located in the three occupied sectors of the island: the west, centre and east. At this stage in the research, little is known about their location, their use or their fate after 1937.

The Basics: a Hospital, a Cemetery

It seems likely that the main criterion for choosing the burial sites was their proximity to the place where the immigrants died, that is, the hospital. The epidemics, and the great contagion that characterized many of them, made this essential.

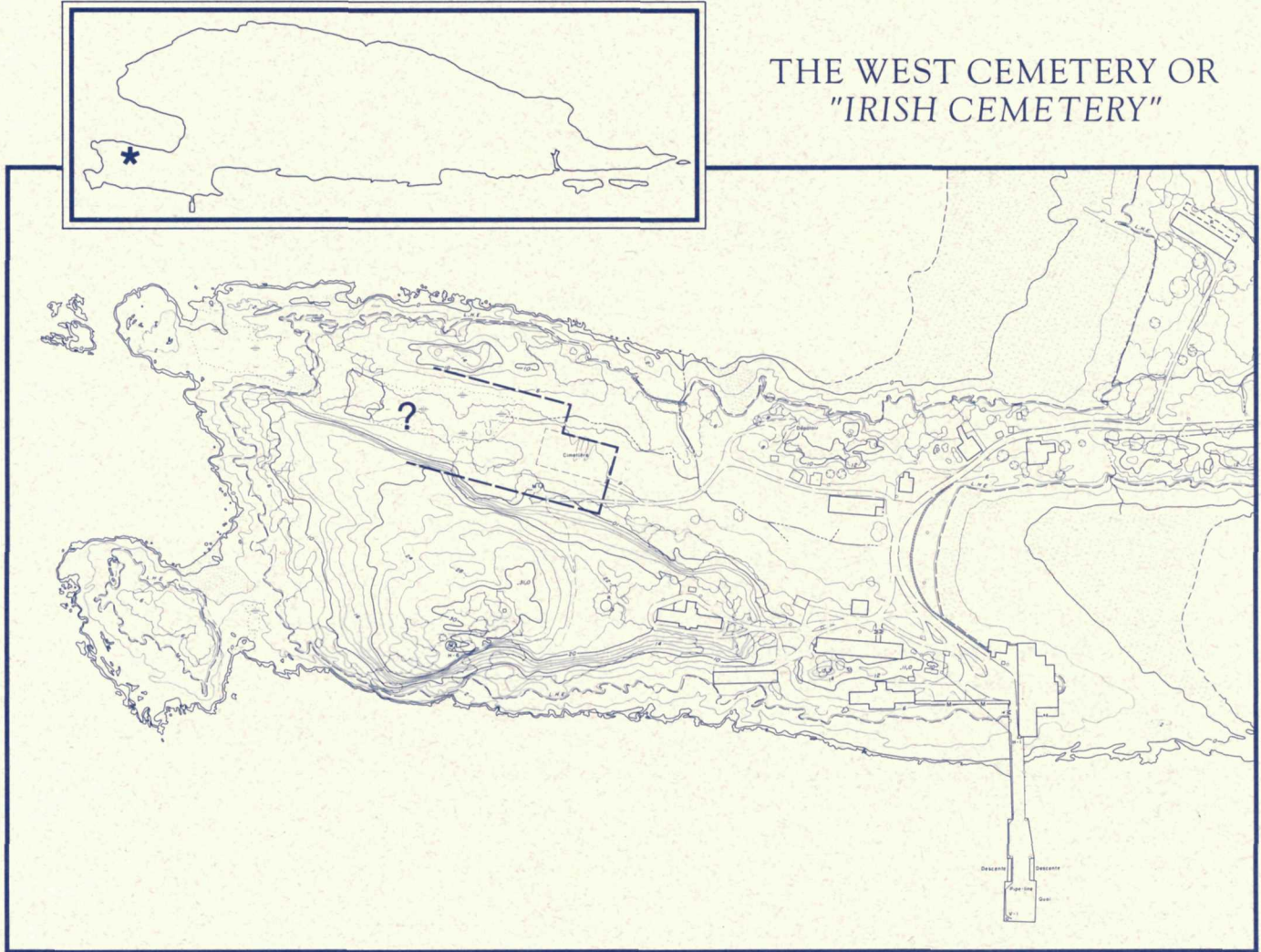
Over time the quarantine station witnessed four changes in its layout. During these changes, the sectors of the island reserved for healthy immigrants and for sick arrivals were switched. Thus, the hospitals on the island moved from the west sector of the station to the east.

The following is a summary of the moves:

- 1) From the station's opening in 1832 to late in 1847, all arrivals, regardless of their state of health, were kept together in the west part of the island.
- 2) From 1848 (or the end of 1847) to 1865, the hospitals stood at the east end of Grosse Île; the immigrants who had been spared the disease occupied the west end of the island.
- 3) In 1866, Superintendent Von Iffland moved the hospitals back to the west end of the station, where they remained until 1875-1880, and the healthy visitors went downstream to the east sector.
- 4) From 1875-1880 until 1937, Superintendent F. Montizambert returned to the former set-up: the health division was brought back to the west, while the hospitals took up the east end of the station.

This brief summary shows that the cemeteries used on Grosse Île over the years occupied several places. Let us now examine those locations.

THE WEST CEMETERY OR "IRISH CEMETERY"



The boundaries shown here, drawn according to old maps, are approximate. The cemetery as seen today occupies only a small part of the original one, whose west boundary remains difficult to determine.

As mentioned above, the first cemetery occupied part of the west sector of Grosse Île, probably from 1832, the year of the cholera epidemic, until 1847 inclusively, the year of the typhus epidemic. It then occupied an undetermined

space in the south-west of Grand Bay, or Back Bay, now more commonly known as Cholera Bay.

This cemetery is the one that, even in the 20th century, has often been called the "Irish

Cemetery" because the Irish were the main victims of the cholera (1832, 1834) and typhus epidemics (1847). It is also traditionally known as the mass graves for the many victims of the epidemics in 1832, 1834 and of course 1847.

The boundaries of that cemetery as now visible are evidently artificial and include only part of the burial ground. Various burial registers and lists of deaths, for lack of tombstones, recall the memory of numerous immigrants who were buried there. Considering that in 1847 almost all of the deceased seem to have been buried in this cemetery, it is most likely the main burial ground on Grosse Île.

Since 1849, the West Cemetery has been known as the "Old Cemetery" (as well as the "Irish Cemetery") because a new one was opened in the east sector of the island in 1848.

It was probably divided from the beginning (1832) into two parts, one for Catholics, the other for Protestants. After 1837, the documents for the cemetery (or part of the cemetery?) referred to "Catholics".

It is quite possible that the two religious groups shared the cemetery from 1832 to 1847. Now, nothing more is known about this. Indeed, the few registers we do have at our disposal list the deaths of both Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, the West Cemetery was the only one on the island from 1832 to 1847.

The Irish Cemetery

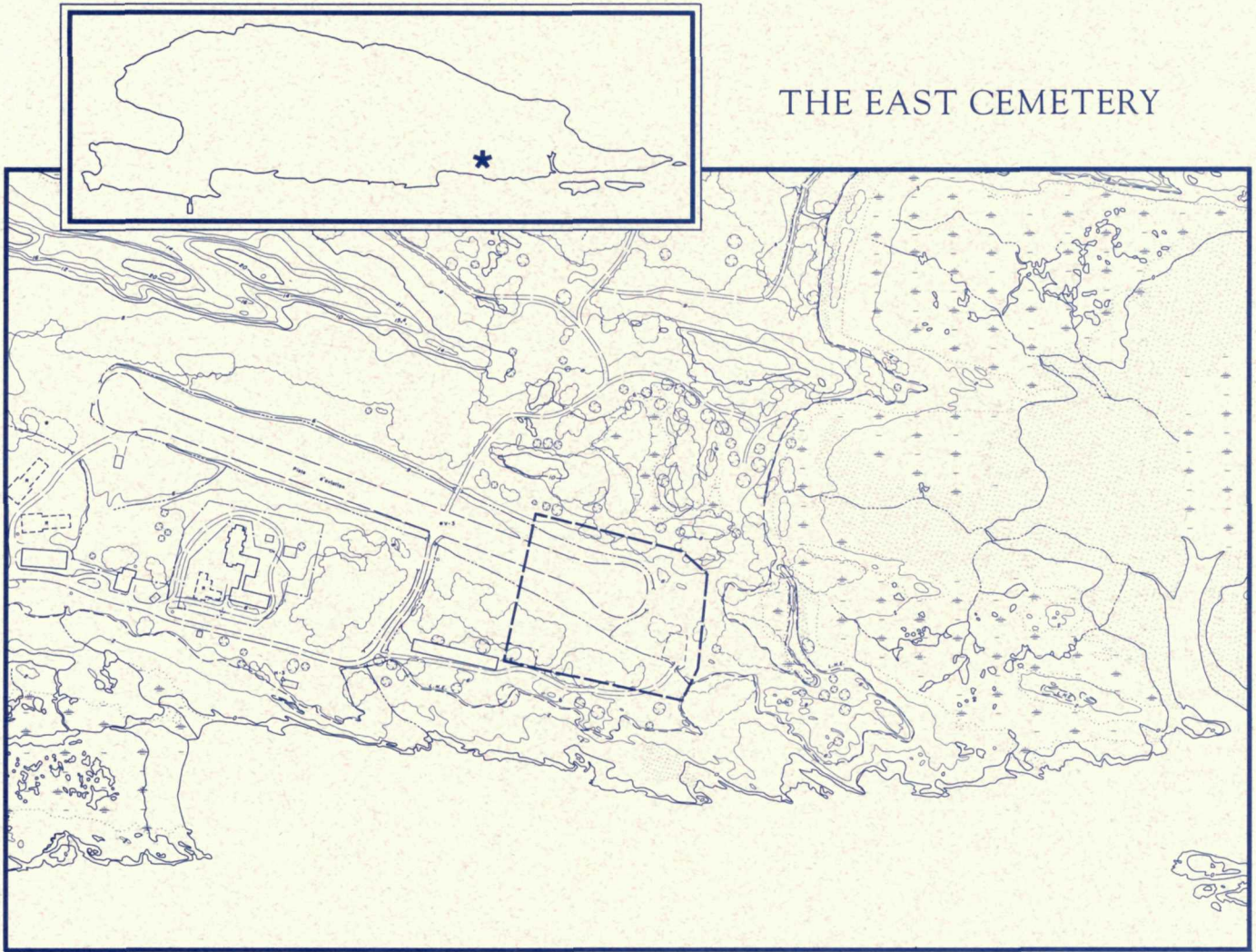
The fences that once surrounded the cemetery (primarily to keep livestock away) have now disappeared. Only small white crosses, installed by Agriculture Canada early in the 1980s, signify the presence of the mass graves of several thousands of Irish immigrants, victims of typhus in 1847.

Photo :
Canadian Parks Service
Robert Piette

Nég. 124/00/PR-6/S-29-8



THE EAST CEMETERY



The boundaries shown here, drawn according to old maps, correspond to the largest possible surface that the cemetery could have covered. These boundaries are approximate.

Toward the middle of the summer of 1847, the west sector of the station being over-populated with patients, a dozen buildings (including the Lazaretto) were erected at the east end of the island to lodge the healthy immigrants. Convalescents were transferred there. By the next year the medical authorities had learned

that it was necessary to isolate the sick from the well in a more careful manner. They decided to use the new buildings for hospitals. Only the healthy would live in the west end of Grosse Île.

Thus a new cemetery occupied a piece of land directly to the east of the new hospitals.

A map of Grosse Île drawn in 1850 shows, for the first time, the new cemetery. It occupies approximately 8500 square metres. A broken line, running east to west, divides the site into two unequal parts; it most probably represents the boundary between the Catholic and Protestant burial grounds.

From 1866-1868, and until 1875-1880, Superintendent Von Iffland established the sick sector at the west end of the island again and, as explained below, a new cemetery was opened near the hospitals. We do not know whether the East Cemetery was used during these years.

It was certainly used again from 1880-1881 (maybe even from 1875) when F. Montizambert reinstalled the hospitals permanently in the east end of the quarantine station.

There is a detailed record of this cemetery dating from 1913. The west part, reserved for Protestants, measures about 58 000 square feet (5400 square metres). Several tombs and lots have been identified, and a charnel house stands in the middle.

The east part of the cemetery is devoted to Catholics. There is no indication of a charnel house from that period, but several tombs have been identified. In the northeast corner of the Catholic

cemetery, a space 24 feet by 24 feet is reserved for the «unbaptized», probably children.

According to an estimate of the cemetery's original boundaries as they appear on old maps, a landing strip occupies the north part of the cemetery.



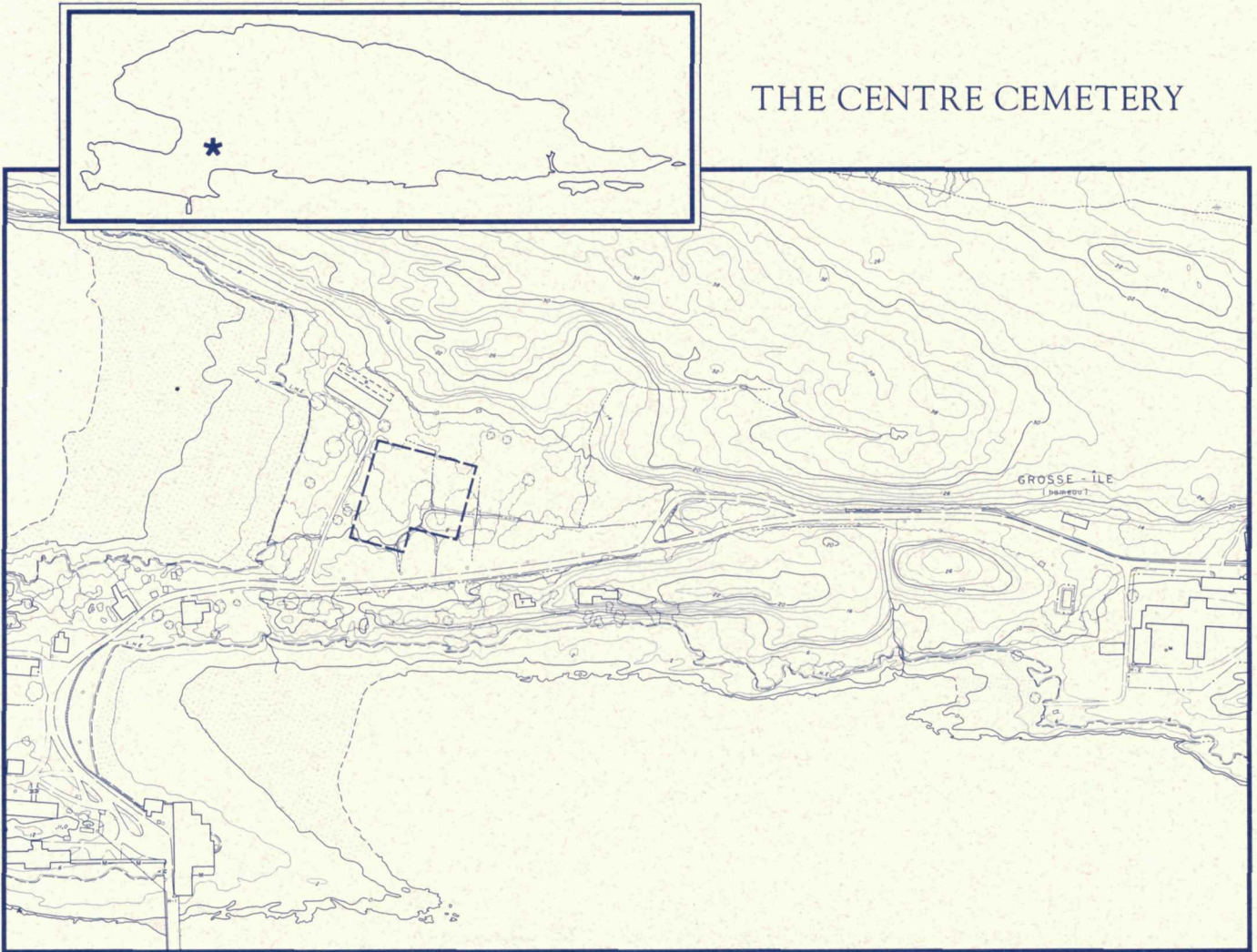
The Cemetery of the East Sector

In the present landscape, the cemetery is limited to two small areas, one of which lies next to the Lazaretto. It includes some 20 tombstones and other funeral monuments. Most of them belong to immigrants who died early in the 20th century.

Photo :
Canadian Parks Service
Robert Piette

Nég. 124/00/PR-6/S-36-4

THE CENTRE CEMETERY

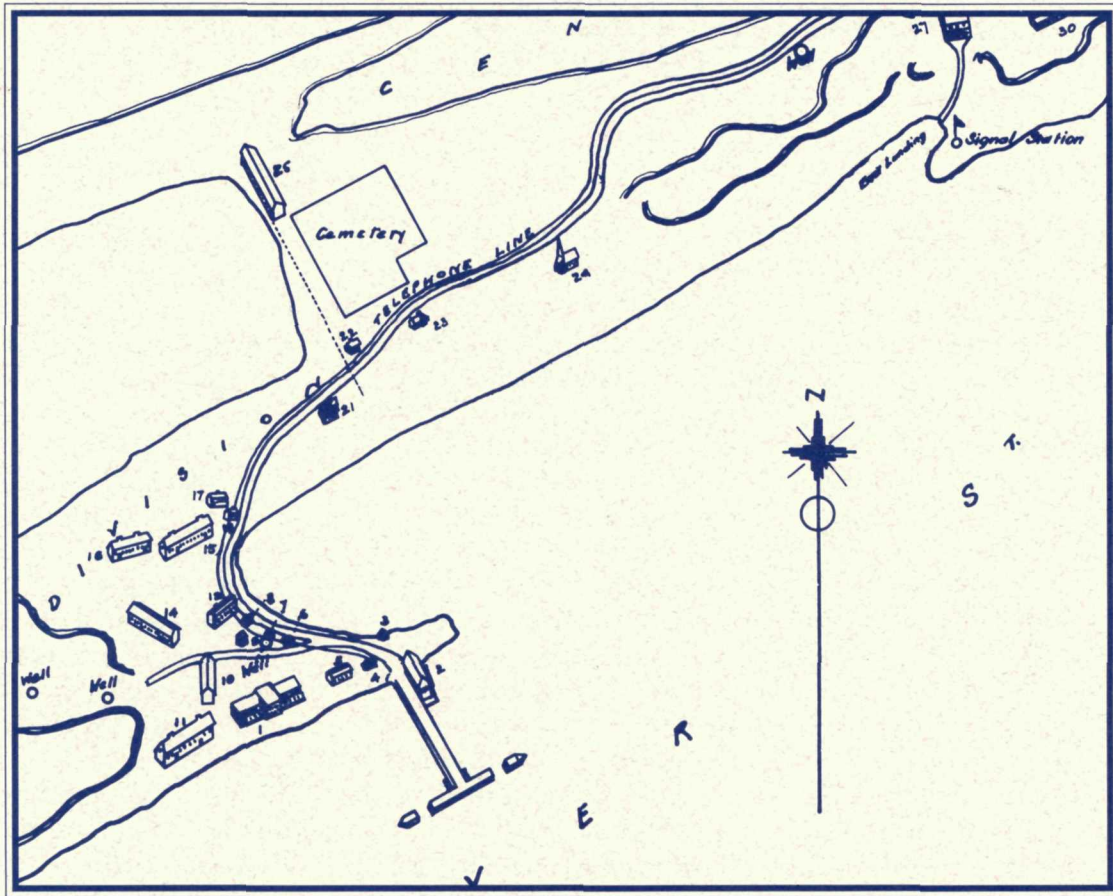


The boundaries shown here, drawn according to old maps, are approximate.

In 1866, Von Iffland reorganized the divisions of Grosse Île and brought the sector for the ill back to the west end of the island. Because he expected a serious cholera epidemic, he built an extra hospital at «Back Bay» especially for cholera patients.

It is no coincidence that shortly afterwards, in 1868, a third cemetery was opened on Grosse Île, also behind «Back Bay» and right next to the cholera shed. The new burial ground was located north of the island road. It is referred to as the Centre Cemetery

because the site now belongs to that section of Grosse Île; however, it is important to note that the documents of the time located the third cemetery (and the cholera shed) in the west part of the station.



▲
 A map of Grosse Île drawn in 1893 shows the third cemetery lying in a former pasture facing the Protestant presbytery. Its surface measured "a square arpent and a half" (a square arpent is roughly 36 800 square feet) in 1868; it is not known whether it was enlarged later.

Photo: Public Archives of Canada, NMC 96128

The use of the cemetery after 1881 (when the hospitals returned to the east end of the island) is unknown. Today, the site of the cemetery is entirely covered with vegetation and nothing there testifies to its existence.

Over the years, Grosse Île used three different cemeteries in which it seems Catholics and Protestants lie side by side. One of the key characteristics of the burial grounds was the requirement that they be near the hospitals.

This is the only premise that explains their frequent change of location.

HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION IN THE 19th CENTURY

The following footnote in the Development Concept provoked the strongest reaction from concerned descendants of Irish immigrants, and was viewed as a serious understatement of events in Ireland.

"Vast numbers of Irish had left their country since the 1820s to escape overpopulation, repeated food shortages, the re-allocation of land by landlords and, from 1845", the Great Potato Famine".

It is clear from the hundreds of letters the Service has received that the writers believe that the Canadian Parks Service is misrepresenting or downplaying the causes of Irish emigration after 1820 and is diminishing the extent of the tragedy in Ireland.

The Canadian Parks Service accepts these comments as sincere expressions of individual views about events in Ireland. In the proposed Grosse Île project the focus is on *immigration* to Canada via Québec City and the St. Lawrence River, not from the perspective of the history of each country whose emigrants Canada welcomed, but from the perspective of Canadian history, as the Parks Service mandate and the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada's recommendations stipulate. However, within this

context, the factors affecting the movement of European peoples to North America generally and Canada specifically will be elaborated.

It is proposed that the larger story told at Grosse Île be one of arrival and dispersal of various immigrant groups over a long period of time, including the Irish for whom arrival often involved death or treatment for illness, and for whom the island has a special meaning. The Service wishes to show all possible sensitivity to those members of the public who attach special importance to the struggles and hardships of their own ancestors, but it is not intended to use any historic site in the national system to tell the history of people in their original homelands beyond the borders of Canada.

WHY A MARKET STUDY?

Aside from commemoration, one of the Canadian Parks Service's objectives is to encourage the public to visit national historic sites so that they can appreciate their historic value and resources. This objective reflects the fact that national historic sites belong to all Canadians.

To prepare the management plans for each of the national parks and national historic sites, the Canadian Parks Service conducts market studies. These studies are part of a research and analysis program that will estimate the number of potential visitors for a site, help identify their interests, and understand their ideas about the site and the services to be offered.

One of the main components of a market study is an analysis of present and potential visitors' sensitivity to possible variables of a visit. That is how it is determined how people feel about such variables as access to the site, the price they expect to pay for services there, and the size and kind of promotion appropriate to encourage potential visitors to come to the site.

A market study was requested in 1990 for Grosse Île National Historic Site and a sensitivity analysis was conducted on the aspects mentioned above. The results are summed up on pages 59 to 62 of the Development Concept.

Many individuals of Irish descent in both Canada and the United States, and several in Ireland itself, reacted strongly to a passage from the analysis of potential visitor wishes (p. 62) referring to the promotion of the site:

"It is also felt that there should not be too much emphasis on the tragic aspects of the history of Grosse Île. On the contrary, the painful events of 1832 and 1847, which have often been overemphasized in the past, need to be put back into perspective, without robbing them of their importance".

Based on this passage, representatives of the Irish community have generally attributed to the Canadian Parks Service the intention of minimizing the importance of the tragedy that Irish immigrants experienced in 1832 and 1847. Such is not the case.

The passage in question expresses the personal opinion of individuals who participated in the market study; that is, that **promotion of the site** for future tourists - which was the specific issue they were addressing - should not be based solely on the tragic events of 1832 and 1847.

The Canadian Parks Service has no intention of minimizing the tragedy suffered by the Irish immigrants or by any other immigrant groups who came to our shores. Use of the word "overemphasize" was, in any case, inappropriate.

CONCLUSION

Partly due to inadequate explanation in the original Development Concept, hundreds of people have received the impression that the Canadian Parks Service is not developing a national historic site at Grosse Île, but rather a tourist destination that will ignore the poignant human stories in the island's past. The intentions of the Service may be expressed clearly and succinctly:

- The Service does not intend to build any structures over, on or around the burial places on the island, or hide them in any manner. They will be respected and protected.
- The existing commemorations - the monuments built to honour the immigrants who perished on the island and the people who tried to save them - are known to be significant heritage resources. They will continue to be visible and accessible to all, and they will be scrupulously cared for and respected by the Service.
- It is proposed to tell the story of immigration via the St. Lawrence River for the period 1800-1939, including mention of all the nationalities represented in these crucial years of

Canada's enrichment. The Service does not intend to attempt to interpret the history of immigrants' homelands but rather to emphasize their arrival in Canada. Given the prominence of the Irish among those who came to Grosse Île in its first 30 years, and their sufferings, their story will be given due weight when the site is interpreted, over and beyond the physical reminders of that story as represented by the existing monuments and graves.

- The Service agrees that the expression of the immigration theme as "Canada: land of welcome and hope" should be dropped; the tragic dimensions of events on the island make it inappropriate. The story told, and the theme, is **immigration**; simply that.

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