

Mr. Mark Phillips
Chief Administrative Officer
West Hants Regional Municipality
76 Morison Dr., P.O. Box 3000
Windsor, NS B0N 2T0

April 12, 2024

Subject: Sainte-Famille Cemetery, 419 Gabriel Road, Falmouth (PID 45249406)

Dear Mr. Phillips:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Amis de Grand-Pré (Friends of Grand-Pré) to request that the West Hants Regional Municipality take ownership of Sainte-Famille Cemetery in order to ensure that it is protected and maintained in perpetuity. We would be handing over an Acadian burying ground that served from 1698 to 1755 and that is now a provincial and a municipal heritage property.

According to the archaeological surveys carried out in 1996, there are an estimated 300 graves. However, there are no gravestones since Acadians marked their graves with wooden crosses.

If the West Hants Regional Municipality accepts our request, we would make a commitment to promote the site and to share our contacts and expertise as required. For over 25 years the Committee for the Preservation of Sainte-Famille Cemetery and the Amis de Grand-Pré have beautified and maintained the property and publicised the importance of this pre-Deportation Acadian site in West Hants not only for the Acadian community, but for the public at large. We have conducted many small tours to Sainte-Famille Cemetery and to Fort Edward for tourists from Louisiana, France, Quebec and the Maritime Provinces.

On page 2, I outline the **heritage value** of Sainte-Famille Cemetery and list the **assets** of the property. On page 3, there is a photo of the granite sign marking the entrance to the cemetery.

I thank you in advance for the attention you give to our request.

Respectfully yours.



Sally Ross
Secretary
Les Amis de Grand-Pré

cc. Susan Surette-Draper (President, Amis de Grand-Pré)
Lucille Amirault, Ken Belfontain, Jacqueline Favracque,
Anne Landry Cameron (Committee members)

Heritage Value of Sainte-Famille Cemetery

- 1) As a pre-Deportation Acadian site, Sainte-Famille Cemetery is a symbol of municipal and provincial significance. The cemetery was used by Acadians from 1698 to 1755. The adjoining church was burned in 1756.
- 2) Other than dykes and a few place names, the Acadian heritage in the Regional Municipality of West Hants is invisible. The built heritage was burned or destroyed when the Acadians were deported in 1755. Sainte-Famille Cemetery is a rare surviving Acadian site.
- 3) Established in 1698, Sainte-Famille Cemetery is the earliest known cemetery of settlers of European origin in West Hants. It has been well documented by historians and archaeologists. In 2023, Dr. Jonathan Fowler of Saint Mary's University conducted surveys with ground penetrating radar and will continue this research in May 2024.
- 4) Sainte-Famille Cemetery is closely connected to the history of Fort Edward. Acadians from Sainte-Famille Parish were deported from Windsor.
- 5) Sainte-Famille Cemetery is intimately connected to the Acadian farmers who played a significant role in the lasting agricultural development of the marshlands on both sides of the Pisiquid (Avon) River.
- 6) Today, descendants of the Acadians who settled in Pisiquid (today's West Hants) live in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Quebec, Louisiana, and France. The Amis de Grand-Pré have conducted private and group tours in West Hants for Acadians from all these locations.

Description of the Assets of the Property (3/4 of an acre)

- 1) an interpretive panel on a wrought iron base providing the history of the cemetery (the original panel was replaced in 2019)
- 2) four large rectangular granite stones donated by Mr. Jim Bremner, believed to have been cut by Acadians in the 1700s for the foundations of their houses on the property now known as Castle Frederick.
- 3) one small flat grey granite monument installed in 2004 by the Landry and Trahan families, from Canada and Louisiana
- 4) one large black granite monument which bears the bilingual bronze plaque indicating a designated Provincial Heritage Property (2017) and the bronze plaque indicating a designated Municipal Heritage Property (2019)
- 5) one large vertical grey granite stone which serves as a road sign indicating Sainte-Famille Cemetery 1698-1755 (installed in 2022)
- 6) two stone posts for flag poles (for flying the Acadian flag and the Acadiana Parish flag of Louisiana)
- 7) a memorial walkway comprised of over 350 inscribed bricks purchased over the years by Acadians from France, Louisiana and Canada.
- 8) two benches
- 9) gravel driveway and path
- 10) well maintained lawn
- 11) several hard wood trees (maple and linden)
- 12) rugosa rose hedge that forms part of the eastern boundary of the property
- 13) three adjoining flower beds, a small burning bush, small forsythia and legacy lilac bushes

“The designation as a Municipal Heritage Property illustrates and promotes the respect the Municipality of West Hants has for the historical significance of the Sainte-Famille Cemetery.” – Abraham Zebian, Warden, The Municipality of the District of West Hants, unveiling ceremony September 19, 2019.



“It is very meaningful to know that the resting place of our ancestral family members at the Sainte-Famille Cemetery is protected, and to know that their descendants will always be able to visit the site.” – Gayle Breaux Smith (Lafayette, Louisiana) whose ancestors were deported in 1755 from Fort Edward.