

A Canadian Connection to Robert Burns

Isabella Ferguson Brown, the great-granddaughter of the poet Robert Burns, died in May 1870 at the age of 10. She was buried in the plot of a family friend, Alex MacKenzie in Guelph Ontario.

Robert Burns, was the eldest son of Jean Armour and Robert Burns. He was born in 1789 at Ellisland. He started a career with the excise (as did his father) and moved to a posting in London. His daughter, Jane Emma Burns, was born there in 1831. In 1833, Robert & his family returned to Dumfries.

Jane Emma grew up there and married Thomas Brown, a foreman carder in a local tweed mill. They had two daughters, Isabella Ferguson and Jean Armour Burns. The Bard's grand-daughter, Jane, her husband and their two daughters immigrated to Guelph, Canada, in 1869. They attended Chalmers Presbyterian Church where they were befriended by the Mackenzie family also from Dumfries, who had settled in Guelph in 1851. MacKenzie was a clerk of the Guelph surrogate court. Thomas worked at a local woolen mill. Soon after their arrival Isabella, fell ill and died, then only ten years old. Alexander MacKenzie allowed them to use a grave in his family plot in the Union (Woodlawn) cemetery. The Brown family returned to Scotland after a few years.

Isabella's grave remained unmarked until May 25, 1958 when the following inscription was cut into the lower part of the tombstone:

ISABELLA F. BROWN
GREAT GRANDDAUGHTER
ROBERT BURNS-POET

The Robert Burns Society of London Ontario erected a bronze plaque at the roadside in 1999



View of the Roadside Plaque and tombstone.

There was a report about the plaque being erected in the 1999 Burns Chronicle.

