

CHARPENTIER, Napoleon

Napoleon Charpentier, originally from Quebec, died in 1885 from wounds received at Fish Creek during the Riel Rebellion. The following is a quote from an article from the *Saskatoon Phenix*, dated October 26, 1905:

"The name of the dead soldier was Napoleon Charpentier, a member of A Battery of Quebec. In the engagement at Batoche, he was shot in the leg while on duty at one of Captain 'Gat' Howard's gatling guns. The shot entered below the knee and came out in the thigh. The limb was amputated at Nutana hospital, but Charpentier died after the operation, and was buried in the Old Soldier's cemetery, on the banks of the Saskatchewan."

It is assumed that it is the grave of Napoleon Charpentier that was part of the following news item from the *Saskatoon Phenix*, dated August, 1904:

"THE VOLUNTEER'S GRAVE AT NUTANA 'He is only a soldier, whom nobody knows'. A soldier who did his duty, during the trying time of the North-West Rebellion. The graves of the Canadian soldiers in South Africa are shown in photos, and long histories have been written of the care that have been taken of these graves. But here at our own doors, we have an example of what may happen to those South African graves any day. The coffin or part of the coffin of at least one of these brave men, who fought for home and fatherland, lies now exposed for all to see in the grave yard at Nutana. Who is to blame? A land slide occurred there some months ago, carrying away that portion of the ground which adjoines (sic) the river, and has been left that way ever since. It is well known that a number of those who fell during the rebellion, were buried on this spot, and now their remains are lying around as an evidence of what a grateful people and country will do for its dead. The proper authorities should look into the matter, and at once."

An October 26, 1905 article stated that Col. Laxier of Winnipeg, Manitoba, a veteran of the rebellion, along with a number of others, were responsible for re-interment of the remains to Woodlawn Cemetery.



The headstone is very weathered and, although legible, is obviously quite old. It is assumed this was the original headstone which was either transferred from Nutana Cemetery when his body was moved, or set at the time of re-interment. It reads:

GUNNER N. CHARPENTIER
DIED
FROM WOUNDS RECEIVED
IN ACTION
AT FISH CREEK
24. APRIL 1885.

The re-interment took place before the establishment of Woodlawn Cemetery and its subsequent takeover of St. Paul's Catholic Cemetery (as the previously established cemetery was known). Woodlawn's original records state that the first burial was in 1906, and that a number of early graves were marked unknown. Reference to N. Charpentier's re-interment could not be found, even though the newspaper records of the time were so definite. A search of records at the cemetery office finally turned up an old ledger, which listed a number of graves which were previously "unknown", including N. Charpentier's. Once the Block and Lot where the reburial was supposed to have taken place was found, a grave nearby that was listed in the records as having a headstone or marker was found in order to locate Charpentier's grave.

As the early administrators of the Woodlawn Cemetery had not found it necessary to update the records of the early burials, and there had been no previous interest in these gravesites, this gravesite had rested unknown and unlisted since 1905. As there are approximately 46,000 actual burials in the cemetery, the Administration, until now, couldn't possibly begin tracking these early burials. The records are now more complete.