

Wood Mausoleum & Cemetery

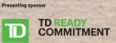
History and intrigue brought back to life at this final resting place



The Vault



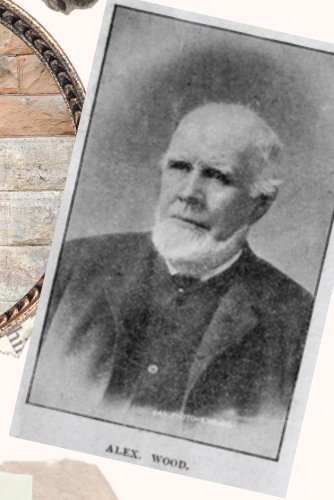
Rideau Lakes



The history of this impressive 19th-century stone vault and private cemetery is intriguing! Found almost at the township line on Highway 29, the Wood Mausoleum and Cemetery's official address is 229 County Road 29, in the Township of Rideau Lakes. Known as "Vault Hill" for many years, the exterior of this mausoleum, built in 1895, exhibits a beautifully mortared stone façade, and cast iron gates. The mausoleum was actively in use from 1895 to 1932.

Alexander Wood

Wood Mausoleum is of historic significance to the building of Smiths Falls and South Elmsley. This is the final resting place of Alexander Wood, co-founder of the wildly successful Frost & Wood Company, which sold farm implements all across Canada. They were one of the largest manufacturers in the country and the largest employer in the area. At this time, Wood was also known for acquiring a lot of real estate. The Wood Mausoleum and Cemetery was constructed for Alexander Wood's entombment, after the Wood family purchased the acre of land in South Elmsley for \$100 on a farm facing the Maple Vale Cemetery. It was only for use by the Wood family and friends.



The Cemetery

The ornate nature of the mausoleum with its mortared front facade, cast iron gates and vaulted ceiling denoted the importance of the Wood Family. Interestingly, people are typically buried in cemeteries with head in the west, feet in the east; but at Wood Cemetery, they are buried north and south! There is a portion of the cemetery at the side of the former vault (where bodies were kept over the winter) where it's denoted on a map that five children are buried. The last burial at the Wood Cemetery took place in 1949, after which it was abandoned. A map created in 1986 shows a cast iron maple leaf was discovered underground and placed in the vault, but later went missing.

Bringing it back

Trees and brush grew up and the cemetery was lost to time. Vandals broke a number of the gravestones, smashed and opened a tomb, and even stole headstones –including the headstones from three WWI veterans' gravesites. The original padlock even contains a bullet hole! Since then, an enormous volunteer effort has brought the cemetery back. In 2017, decorated First World War veteran Lt. Donald R. Wood (a grandson of Alexander Wood) was given a proper veterans' headstone recognizing his war efforts. Now, it's the lone marker directly in front of the mausoleum. The Township of Rideau Lakes has assumed ownership of the cemetery and is maintaining it - even refurbishing Agnes Lamb's tomb, which had fallen into disrepair and was crumbling.



doorsopenontario.on.ca/rideaulakes