

On the west side of Dempster Beach lays a flat stone, approximately 38"x20" in size, embedded in sod and grass and about 15' from Lake Ontario's shoreline. On this stone there is engraved, rather crudely, a man's left profile. Below the head are the numerals 1776 and below this date is a Masonic Emblem. How does this stone happen to be there?

According to an oral statement from Robert Anderson, a summer resident of Dempster Beach and a member of the Masonic Lodge, this is the "tale" he learned through researching County, State, and Masonic Lodge and Masonic Records.

Sir William Johnson, a strong Mason, a Tory, and founder of Johnstown Village, had helped establish a Masonic Lodge in Johnstown (N.Y.). He died in 1774 and his son also a Mason, was afraid in 1776 that the colonists would capture Johnstown—a British stronghold. So he gathered other stories and some friendly Indians took the Masonic "regalia"—some of which were made of sterling silver- and fled west to Ft. Stanwix. Still fearful of being captured by the colonists, they all set forth for Ft. Oswego via canoes on the Oneida – Oswego Rivers, portaging where necessary. At Fort Oswego, Johnson found no British Garrison to aid him-and smallpox had besieged his group as well. The Indians took off for Ft. Niagara, via the Lake Ontario shoreline and the stories decided to head for Kingston, Ontario, Canada, as it was a strong British town. They were still lugging the Masonic items with them: (These items were entrusted to the Masonic Lodge in Kingston upon their arrival there. Many, many years later through the inter-communication of the Johnston, Kingston and other Lodges, the regalia was returned to the rightful "owners" in Johnston, N.Y.)

And now to the Dempster Beach Stone: It is conjectured that one of the men in the Kingston bound Loyalists died in route, either from accident or illness, and was given a proper burial at the Dempster Beach site. Presumably one of his Lodge Brothers must have carved the face and inscriptions on the flat stone lay upon his grave. No names of the men are given in available records, thus it's an "unknown soldier" buried by the shore of Lake Ontario about 10 miles east of Oswego. Except for the 1776 stone, which is weathering badly, this gravesite lies unmarked, unattended, and un-registered as far as it's known, with any Historical Society or other agency. Sad-but let's not lose tract of this site: (Current owner of shore lot is Joe Wallace, who has kept the grass mowed up to the stone, praises be!)

Jane, Jencks – 1987