Burlington Heights
By: Paddy Chitty

This is the place where
my Irish grandfather came ashore
from a January trek
across the Bay, a five mile plod
to work. Climbed cliff-face steps, crossed
to the cemetery office where he kept the books,
and died.

This is the place where I come to walk
graveyard paths, snake tombstones,
and earthworks built by British troops in The War 1812.

This is the place where men, women, children,
Irish seeking a better life perished
in tents and shacks along the shore,
blamed for cholera,
denied help and Sacrament.
Five hundred dumped in this gruesome ground
covered with lime, gravel,
dirt.

This is the place where those who survived
the scourge, slogged
building McNab’s Dundurn.
Sixteen hours a day for mud and limestone,
Corktown land,
no better than what they left.

This is the place where the road was widened
bones, and bones, and bones
unearthed, carted off,
reinterred without ceremony or monument
in a pit in the Protestant cemetery.

This is the place where my family, immigrants
from County Tyrone, and those born here, rest
in two marked graves near the building
where Grandfather died.

Where I come alone
 to sing their leaving,
this grieving song.

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