

## **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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