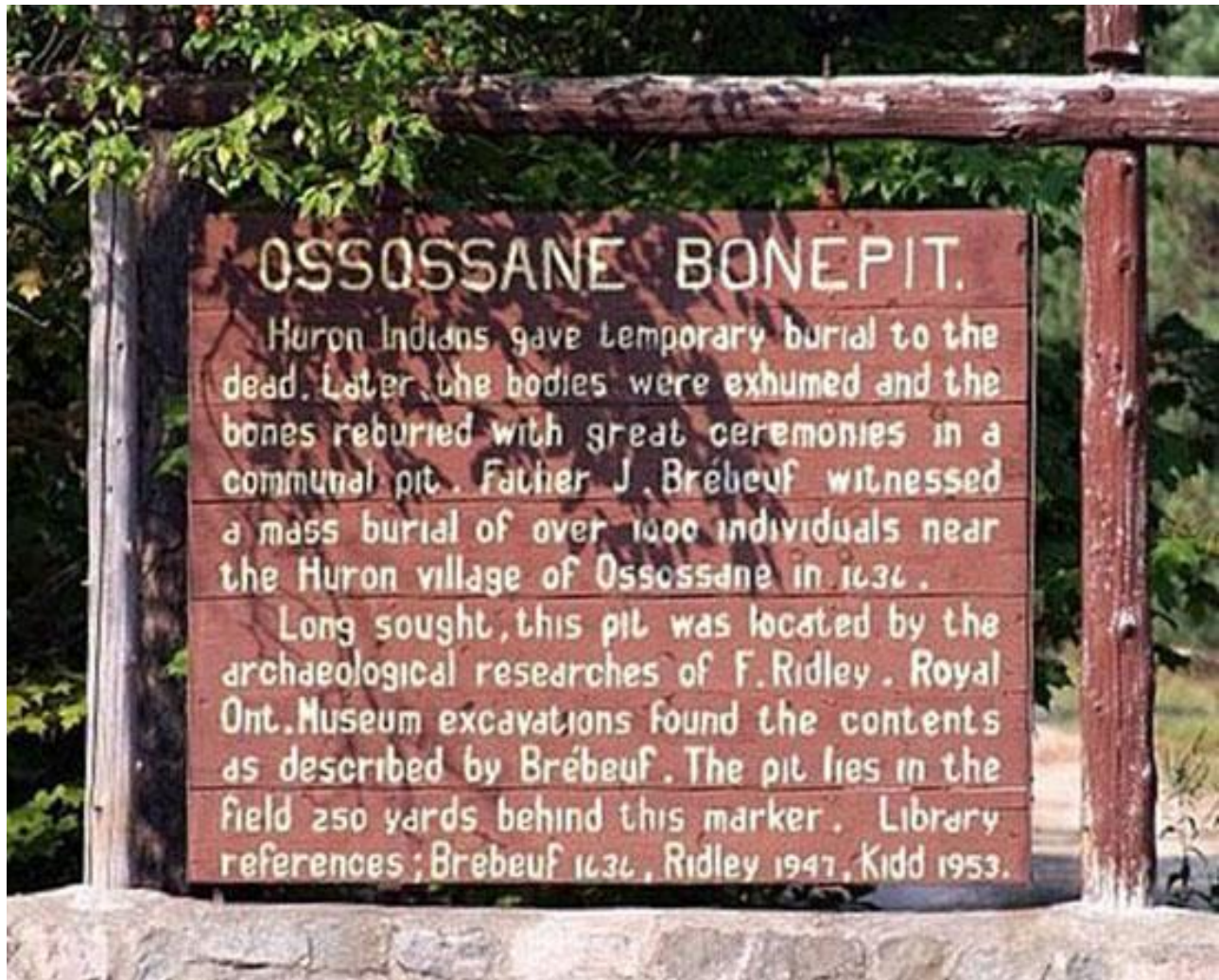


Ossossane Ossuary



The Ossossane Ossuary is located on County Road 6 South.

This Huron Ossuary was located in 1946 by Frank Ridley. After years of research and tracing the Great Huron Trail, Ridley found what he believed to be the location of the Ossossane Ossuary. With the help of a team of ROM archeologists led by Kenneth E. Kidd the site was excavated to reveal that Ridley had found the Huron burial site. More than 600 bodies were discovered along with sacrificial artifacts including clay pipes, European beads, stone discs, pottery fragments and totems.

This area in the Township was the site of the Wendat or Wyandots Aboriginals, more commonly known by the French term as 'Huron.' Tribes of the Huron aboriginals within the area would

gather every 10-12 years to have a mass burial, with a different village as the host site each time. Ceremonies occurred at the end of the winter months, just before agriculture tasks began. This particular ceremony at Ossossane was recorded as “The Great Feast of the Dead,” by Jesuit missionary Jean de Brébeuf in his diary on May 12, 1636. Brebeuf provided a detail account of the burial, which aided Ridley in later locating the site.

This mortuary ceremony united the different Huron villages, thus not only serving as a mourning and celebration of life gathering, but also a diplomatic purpose. They occurred over 10 day periods, which included preparing the bodies, feasting and the burial. Brebeuf compared the size of the burial site to the Palace Royal in Paris. When Kidd’s team excavated the area they found that the burial pit measured 24 feet in diameter. While surrounding the site there was dozens of post molds, ranging from 6 to 12 inches in diameter. These posts would have held up a platform surrounding the ossuary about 55 feet in diameter. Hundreds of people would have climbed the platform to hang the bone bundles of loved ones, wrapped in the beaver furs, along with presents to the dead. A few leaders remained on the platforms and spent hours announcing the deceased and their offerings. The pit was also lined with beaver pelts while the names were being announced. The bodies of the most recent were then added to the pit first, followed by the bone bundles. Brebéuf was particularly impressed by the way a spiritual and emotional connection was created with the human remains. He recorded that when the feast commenced, men and women would carry their loved ones’ bones to the edge of the burial pit, unwrap the beaver bundles with tears streaming, and say their final farewells. The beaver pelts were folded over the mass of bones and the rest of the pit was filled with mats, bark and sand.

There is no index for the souls buried at this location.