History: This burial ground was used by people of African descent who started arriving late 1840’s to settle along the newly surveyed (Old) Durham Road. Location Tickets, issued after completion of the survey of the land and road in 1849, set the requirements for settlement. When these were fulfilled, Crown Patents could be issued. Many of the 16 families who arrived in spring and summer of 1849, came from Wellington County settlements near the Garafraxa Road (Wellesley and Peel Townships.) Most had originally come from the United States and it is assumed that largely they were refugees from slavery. All these settlers had been in Upper Canada for at least 8 years; many for over 12 years; others more than 20 years. The 1851 census shows almost every 50-acre lot along the Durham Road settled by a Black family with the parents born in the USA, while showing Upper Canada as the birthplace for many of their children. The 117 listed Black settlers actually represent 11% of the total 1851 Artemesia Township population. Over time, the Black settlement diminished. Some intermarried with White settlers and gradually integrated into White society. Many others left their marginal farms to seek paid employment in Owen Sound, Collingwood or other urban centers. In the 1930’s, the farmer who then owned the land reputedly removed the headstones, ploughed the land and planted potatoes. It is not known what happened to most removed headstones or remains, although rumors still circulate.

In 1989, a group of interested citizens formed the Old Durham Road Pioneer Cemetery Committee to restore the burial ground and register it as a cemetery. 1990 they found four headstones in a nearby pile of rocks. These were placed at the site in a display case and October of that year, Lieutenant-Governor Lincoln Alexander unveiled a memorial granite boulder which had an inscription that honored these early pioneers of African descent. In 2015, the Cemetery Committee refurbished the site. The original memorial is once again fully visible and thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the four historic grave stones are now safe-guarded from damage in a covered pavilion designed to evoke memories of cemetery dead houses, roadside chapels and rural structures such as log cabins and covered bridges. The monument symbolizes safe passage and is oriented due north, as a way to commemorate the many paths to freedom taken by refugees from slavery.
**Cultural Significance:** The Old Durham Road Pioneer Cemetery and the Old Durham Road School across the road from it are among the few remnants of a vibrant and successful Black settlement that existed near Priceville from the late 1840s. The fact that by the 1880s few of the original Black settlers remained, in no way diminishes their contributions as pioneers and exemplary role models who emigrated as free people or bravely fled as refugees from slavery.

**Top Left:** 2015 monument dedication  
**Above:** 1990 granite memorial dedication by Lieutenant-Governor Lincoln Alexander  
**Below:** the four recovered headstones

**Designation** - Bylaw 2016-48 Municipality of Grey Highlands protects the actual location as well as all onsite structures and artefacts. For more information re the bylaw:  