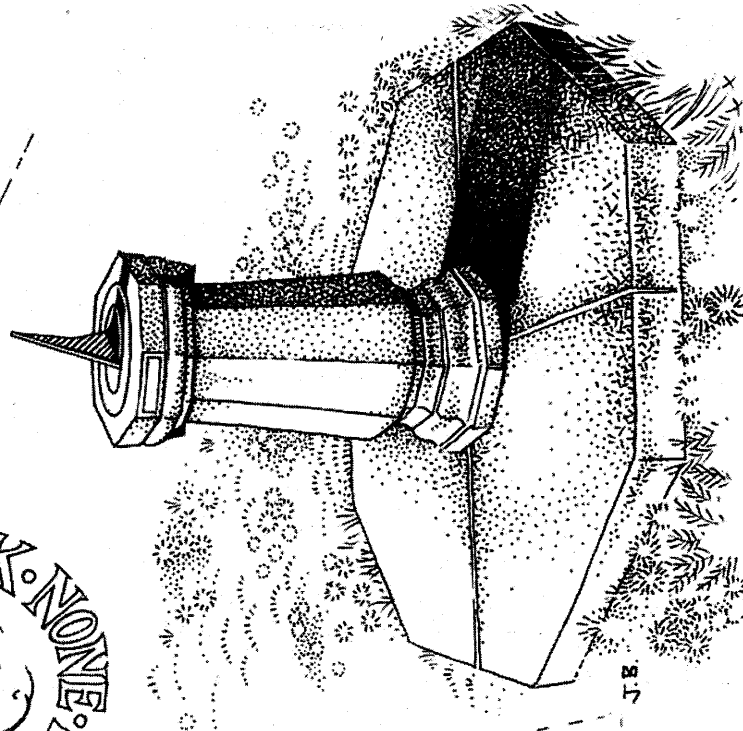


Sundial recalls a young girl



The *Daily Colonist* of June 1, 1922, printed an obituary that read " ... There passed away yesterday morning at St. Joseph's Hospital, after a brief illness, Mable Marjorie Teresa Napier, only daughter of Mr. and Mrs. G.P. Napier of 15 Hampton Court [now called Cook Street]. The little girl was 12 years of age. Private service ... no flowers. The remains will be forwarded to Vancouver on tonight's boat for cremation."

That day, a service was held at Thomson Funeral Home on Quadra Street at 7:30 p.m. Later, the little girl's body, accompanied by her parents, sailed on the midnight boat. A heart-rending journey.

Marjorie Napier, as she was known, was a student at St. Ann's Academy. She became fatally ill with pneumonia shortly after her first communion and died on May 31, 1922. At that same time, a fire was finally dying out after destroying the Basilica of St-Anne-de-Beaupré in Quebec. Victoria felt sympathetic ties — after all, it was a Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec that had instructed missionaries to establish a presence here in the mid-1800s.

Marjorie's parents managed to acquire a piece of stone from the basilica ruins and a sundial pedestal was carved from it. The sundial, dedicated to their daughter, stands in the Academy grounds near the Blanshard Street entrance. The dial was made from copper on which North is marked with a fleur-de-lis. Around the edge are the words "I mark none but sunny hours."

The motto is a popular favourite. A longer version on some larger sundials reads "Let others tell of storms and showers, I'll only mark your sunny hours."

Another — even longer version — says;

"Serene I stand among the flowers

And only count life's sunny hours

To me dark days do not exist

I'm a brazen old optimist."

Ah, bless those sensible sundials — they never spring forward and they never fall back — they simply say "A clock the time may wrongly tell, I never if the sun shines well!"

Cartoonist and graphic artist
John Bryant lives in Victoria.