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May – June 2014

Volunteers needed

The Old Cemeteries Society is looking to recruit a few volunteer cashiers/ticket sellers so we have a pool in case unexpected circumstances arise. If you are able to help, please phone Sharon Welsh, 250-995-1322 or email afterprior@telus.net.

You're being surveyed!

Your executive would like to know what activities, functions and volunteer events each of you are interested in. This will help the executive to plan activities for the coming months based on your likes. Look for a survey to come your way either by email or post. Please help us by filling it out promptly.

Cleaning & Restoration:

Sharon Welsh & Wilf Bruch

Mark the date on your calendar and join us for a few hours each Saturday as we make a difference at Ross Bay Cemetery. Our first work party will be held on **Saturday, May 10th from 10am until noon**. An email will be sent out to the membership each week with a notice as to where to meet for cleaning & restoring. This year the plan is to take a final sweep through the areas we have cleaned the past several years and remove moss, clean headstones and repair sunken stones. As reported last year, several areas in the cemetery do not have water as the underground water pipes in Block N, O, P & Q are cast iron and are broken. Restoration work will start at Ross Bay Cemetery in June. We have a number of broken and sunken monuments to fix and a couple of sites to rebuild. This is physical work and we will be working during the week and on some weekends. If you are able and willing, e-mail Wilf at wbruch@shaw.ca

BC Historical Federation Annual Conference

This exciting two-day event will take place on June 6th and 7th in a number of Cloverdale venues. Featured are speakers, a walking tour, a field trip by bus as well as a visit to Fraser Valley Heritage Railway and BC Vintage Truck Museum. Registration is open to anyone interested in history. For more information email: conference@bchistory.ca <http://bchistory.ca/conferences/2014/index.html>

"Mobilize, Victoria: A City Goes to War"

- a three day Living History event at Fort Rodd Hill.

Dates: 8th to 10th August 2014

Victoria-Esquimalt Military Reenactors Association - www.vemra.ca - will present two heady and chaotic days of reenactments of events surrounding the 1914 mobilization for World War 1 in Victoria, with a focus on the 22 days (August 4th to 26) prior to the sailing of The First Contingent from Victoria.

Activities: Enjoy a public picnic, fun and games 1914 style, music by the bands of the 5th Garrison Artillery and the 50th Gordon Highlanders, learn foot and arms drill, dine on boiled salt beef and

hardtack, enjoy high tea and chilled period sodas, learn how to support soldier's families, and experience the smells and sounds of a firing range.

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing...." - a lecture series which will include such topics as:
Premier McBride and his submarines-
The Ross Rifle: The Devil you know-
"You expect me to eat that?": Soldier's field rations of 1914-
First to Serve: Victoria's Nursing Sisters-

Anyone interested in participating as a costumed historian, costumed visitor, or willing to deliver a short lecture on an appropriate subject (no costume required) please contact Simon Sobolewski www.vemra.ca or phone 250-893-1860.

150th Anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference Sam McBride

The Charlottetown Conference set the stage for the founding of Canada. By coincidence there were two unrelated Fathers of Confederation named John Hamilton Gray -- one from New Brunswick, and other (my great-great-grandfather), was the leader of the colonial government of Prince Edward Island at the time and served as host and chairman of the conference. He is buried in Charlottetown. Last year, the organizers of the Sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) of the Charlottetown Conference decided to commission a bronze street sculpture of the two John Hamilton Grays interacting at the conference. The sculpture will be unveiled in September 2014 as part of the anniversary celebrations.

The Victoria angle is that the New Brunswick John Hamilton Gray moved to Victoria in 1872 to take a position as justice on the Supreme Court of B.C. He died at age 75 in 1889 and is buried at Ross Bay, the only Father of Confederation buried west of Ontario. Artist Nathan Scott of Victoria won the commission and is doing the sculpture.

I recently visited the gravesites of both John Hamilton Grays (Charlottetown and Ross Bay) to see how they compare, and posted photos and story on my blog at www.thebravestcanadian.wordpress.com. I think the Old Cemeteries Society might find this story of interest for their tours. It is quite surprising for me to see the grave of my great-grandfather Frederick Peters (former premier of P.E.I. who came to Victoria in 1897 to set up a law practice with Sir Charles Hibbert Tupper) at Ross Bay being so close (about 50 feet away in the Anglican section) to the grave of the John Hamilton Gray who was NOT his father-in-law. Unfortunately, the text on the Peters tombstone has faded in the years since his death in 1919, but you can still see the words Father and Peters, as well as memorials to his sons Gerald Peters and Jack Peters who died in WW1.

You can contact me, Sam McBride, at 202 – 719 11th Avenue, Castlegar BC, V1N 1J7, e-mail sammcbride@hotmail.com or phone 250-365-9860.

A link with the past Wilf Bruch

Harper's New Monthly Magazine, volume 41 issue 244, published September 1870, has an excellent article titled "The Mediterranean of the Pacific". The article also contains some interesting engravings of the Pacific Northwest including Victoria and Nanaimo.

<http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=harp;cc=harp;g=moagrp;xc=1;q1=mediterranean%20of%20the%20pacific;rgn=full%20text;view=image;seq=0491;idno=harp0041-4;node=harp0041-4%3A1>



Photos by Susan Henderson

Discovering Family

Wilf Bruch



The Old Cemeteries Society often gets requests for help in locating the final resting place of ancestors and we do our best provide what information we can. Sometimes the inquire produces a story of its own and brings to life a forgotten pioneer. In September 2011 Charlotte Skofstad contacted the OCS office about her great grandfather, Robert Ridley. She had come across documents that indicated he had died in Victoria and wanted to know if we could find him and his wife Christina and if there was a headstone.

Leona Taylor and I took up the task and found that both were buried in Ross Bay Cemetery. Robert Ridley died on December 7th 1898 and is buried in plot G019W8 with no marker. We found Christina had died May 9th, 1900 and buried in plot C31/32 E23. There was no marker on this plot either. This bothered me because I remember seeing that name on a marker somewhere in the cemetery. So it was back to the database and another search of the area around the unmarked grave site. The search proved successful and I found the small marker on another grave nearby. In early April of this year Charlotte and her husband were finally able to visit Victoria. Leona and I took them to Ross Bay Cemetery to visit these graves and talk to us about a forgotten Victoria pioneer.

The following is quoted verbatim from material published by the Pioneer Society:

“Robert Ridley takes care of Pioneer Hall, been here since 1858... left Eng in 1837, sailing on a vessel of which his father was Master. Bound for Aus, afterwards wrecked on CA coast May 10, 1838, without loss of life. He then went upon a Spanish vessel engaged in the opium trade in E Indies, and when the English declared war against China he entered their navy. When the war was over he returned to CA before there were 50 houses in San Francisco. Ridley sailed a vessel of his own upon the coast till the war broke out between US and Mex, when he piloted the NY volunteers from Monterey to La Paz, Mex, and subsequently shipped as a pilot in USN. Soon after peace was declared in 1848, gold was discovered in CA, and he subsequently went to mining. He mined a great deal, but lost in the long run.

In 1858 he came to Victoria during the gold excitement, when there were 5,000 tents pitched here. He went to Fraser Rv, mined a while and then came back, and afterwards prospected all over BC, following up all mining excitements and engaged in a vain pursuit for wealth. At times he was fairly well to do, and other times flat broke.

In 1861, Ridley and 4 companions, all of them old sailors, organized and fitted out an expedition for the Fraser Rv headwaters. The party started out in 20 canoes, and after a troublesome trip, full of hardships and perils, the little party, which had dwindled down to 2 canoes, reached their goal. Prospecting was continued up the streams, gold all the time getting coarser and coarser and prospects brighter and brighter, until their provisions were gone and they were faced with starvation. They made their way slowly back on foot, reaching home after a tedious trip, and leaving behind them a district - the Cariboo - which has since turned out many millions.

In 1871 he started up the Skeena to the rich mines that had been discovered there, but after indifferent success he started back to Victoria in fall of 1872. He joined a party and started down the Skeena in a canoe. While passing through the rapids the craft was swamped and 3 out of the 8 were drowned losing all their gold, furs and outfit. After a long and wearisome journey Ridley reached Pt Essington barefooted, bareheaded and coatless. He was fortunate to find there Morris Moss and other old friends, who replenished his wardrobe, and he took passage to Victoria, with Captain Lewis. He reached home penniless and an old man, whose prospecting days were over, and finally settled down to quietly live out his life among friends and civilization. He was employed on the Government dredger, but is now caretaker of the Pioneer Society rooms. He was present when the British men-of-war issued the famous declaration to China, and compelled that nation to open its ports to civilization. [G 019 W 08 - Dec 7, 1898]

Oct 26, 1898, 5 - Poor ‘Old Bob Ridley’, pioneer of the Pioneer Society is very ill. Aged 80, he has been on the Coast since 1837, while his residence in BC dates back to 1858. Dec 8, 6 - Died Dec 7 at V, Robert Ridley, 80, n/o Bristol, Eng. In the brief history of his adventurous career published yesterday, from data obtained from an old scrapbook of his, the fact was omitted that after leaving the govt dredger he went to

work for Joseph Spratt at Albion Iron Works, remaining there until Spratt's death. Pallbearers: Lt Col the Hon E G Prior, E Crow Baker, James Robertson, E J Thain, Noah Shakespeare, James Muirhead. G 019 W 08 "

Robert met his wife to be, Christina Pasquala Saes, in Peru where they married. Her family was Castilian and had immigrated to Peru. Robert and Christina had three daughters, Charlotte, Mary Amelia and Martha. This summer we will remount Christina's marker on a new base in the correct location and the family is looking into placing a marker for Robert Ridley.

Last Words

Siddhattha Gautama (Buddha) ca. 563-483 BC

"Work hard to gain your own salvation."

He advocated what Buddhists call the Middle Way - the path of moderation, separate from the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. Other sources translate his last words as "All compound things are subject to breaking up. Strive on with mindfulness."

Membership Renewal

A reminder that your Old Cemeteries Society membership fees are due. If you haven't renewed, please do so ASAP. If you have renewed, thank you.

When renewing your membership for 2014, please complete the form below and return it with your payment.

Dues are: Individual - \$30.00; Household - \$45.00 and Student - \$20.00

Check applicable category

OCS membership

Donation (any amount is appreciated; income tax receipts are given for donations of \$10 or more.)

Name(s) _____

Mailing Address _____

E-mail _____

Telephone _____ Amount enclosed _____

Make cheques payable to OCS and mail to OCS, Box 50004, RPO Fairfield Plaza, Victoria, B.C., V8S 5L8

Please note that the OCS issues membership cards only on demand. Please indicate so if you want one.