



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE OLD CEMETERIES SOCIETY  
OF VICTORIA, PUBLISHED SIX TIMES PER YEAR

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### May – June 2012

#### OCS Spring Meeting



#### **May 16 (Wednesday)**

**7:30 pm** at James Bay

New Horizons, 234

Menzies Street. Guest

speakers will be Ann-Lee

and Gordon Switzer. They

will discuss the contents of

their new book, *Gateway*

*To Promise: Canada's*

*First Japanese*

*Community*. Copies will be

available for sale.

Wilf Bruch will present a

short slide presentation of

desert cemeteries in

Arizona.



#### May – June Tours

May is Asian Heritage Month and three tours are planned on this theme.

**May 6. *Chinese Cemetery*.** The first tour of Asian Heritage Month will be conducted by Victoria City Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe who will lead a tour at the Chinese Cemetery, a National Historic Site, including her grandfather's grave. **Meet at the cemetery, foot of Crescent Road, off King George Terrace.**

**May 13. *Japanese at Ross Bay*.** The second tour of Asian Heritage Month will be conducted by Gordon and Ann-Lee Switzer who are writing a book about Japanese in Victoria. RBC includes graves of about 150 Japanese, including the wife of Canada's first Japanese immigrant.

**May 20. *In Honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee*.** The Queen is celebrating her 60th anniversary on the throne. A team tour will relate stories of notable people buried at RBC to help mark the Jubilee in a memorable way. You won't want to miss this special tour.



**May 27. Chinese at Ross Bay.** Chinese were buried at RBC before the Chinese Cemetery was created. Many were exhumed and sent back to China; some were moved to the cemetery at Harling Point; others were washed out to sea in a violent storm in 1909. Historian John Adams will talk about this amazing part of RBC's history.

### **Summer Work Schedule**

Wilf Bruch

May is the normal time to start our cleaning, recording and restoration work at Ross Bay Cemetery. We are working on formalizing our goals for the summer months but will not be ready in time for this newsletter. So, watch for update emails as we get ourselves organized.

We have applied for a summer student to do recording and hope to receive approval in the beginning of May. Jane Bruch has everything in place and ready to go as soon as we get the word. If you want to help on this project, please email her at [wbruch@shaw.ca](mailto:wbruch@shaw.ca).

Cleaning and restoration work is expected to concentrate in section U & V but schedules are not ready yet. Watch for update emails in May.

### **Row Marker Project**

Wilf Bruch

Slowly but surely we are working to complete this project. 2011 saw the completion of the third belt near Dallas Road. We are hoping to complete the project in 2012. This last phase of the project will entail choosing visible locations along the formal paths winding through Ross Bay Cemetery. This will give everyone a starting point from the roadways. If you have a spot to recommend, please let us know. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this project financially and with volunteer labour.

### **Pioneer Square Management Plan**

A second Open House was held on March 28, 2012 at Christ Church Cathedral. It was attended by about 75 citizens, including some OCS members, who viewed display panels with background information and updated recommendations based on the responses to Open House No. 1 (see

[http://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Parks~Rec~Culture/Parks/Documents/pioneer\\_square\\_P2\\_web.pdf](http://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Parks~Rec~Culture/Parks/Documents/pioneer_square_P2_web.pdf) and

[http://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Parks~Rec~Culture/Parks/Documents/PioneerSq\\_OH2\\_Displays\\_web.pdf](http://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Parks~Rec~Culture/Parks/Documents/PioneerSq_OH2_Displays_web.pdf) . The draft Management Plan can be viewed at

[http://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Parks~Rec~Culture/Parks/Documents/PioneerSquare\\_MgmtPlan\\_OHdraft.pdf](http://www.victoria.ca/assets/Departments/Parks~Rec~Culture/Parks/Documents/PioneerSquare_MgmtPlan_OHdraft.pdf)

Some 80 questionnaires were completed at the open house and online through the City of Victoria Pioneer Square website. In general, the feedback received was very positive for the vision, and the majority of the goals and actions.

The Pioneer Square Advisory Group (Don Reksten representing OCS) will be meeting on May 9 to review the results of the open house and to consider any potential revisions to the draft plan.

You can keep up to date with plans for Pioneer Square at the City of Victoria website, or leave a message for Don at [oldcem@pacificcoast.net](mailto:oldcem@pacificcoast.net).

### **Vic150 Celebration Project "1862: and Beyond"**

OCS was successful in receiving a \$500 grant from the *150 People and Places* program of the Greater Victoria Spirit Committee. This was not quite as much as the amount we applied for but it did assist us in producing a booklet titled "1862: and Beyond". It is a special edition of our journal *Stories in Stone* for Spring 2012. The *British Colonist* newspaper is the basis for much of the information about daily life and events in Victoria in 1862. Numerous annotations and biographies of selected 1862 arrivals provide more information about some of the people, events and places mentioned in the newspaper articles; illustrations include portraits and gravesites.

Many thanks to John Adams, Fern Perkins and the authors Leona Taylor and Don Reksten for completing this project before deadline and under budget.

Copies are being provided to local community archives, Greater Victoria schools and the Greater Victoria Public Library. OCS members will receive a free copy; additional copies, and copies for general distribution are \$5.00.

### **Stories in Stone**      Fern Perkins, editor

Many thanks to our guest editors, Don Reksten and Leona Taylor, for their hard work on the recently published Special Anniversary edition of *Stories in Stone 1862: and Beyond*. Its unique format reminds us of the newspaper of the day, 'The Colonist', and the colonial society it represented. It is now available for sale.

Look for some intriguing articles with little known stories about Victoria's finest buried in our Old Cemeteries in the next edition of *Stories in Stone* to be published this fall.

Both the Victoria Firefighters and Police have local historians who are happy to share stories of those who have gone before. Some of these local heroes died in the line of duty.



### **Walking the Dog**

Thanks to Mike Bieling



What to do about dogs in cemeteries? Should they be off leash or on? Should they be banned? Are dogs and their owners a nuisance to be borne stoically? More creatively, might dogs and their owners be seen as a resource? Two entirely unrelated cemetery authorities tackled this question in entirely different ways.

In Courteney BC the local council recently gave third reading to a bylaw amendment that would ban other than working police and service dogs from Courteney Civic Cemetery. Until now dogs have been permitted in the cemetery on leash, provided owners pick up after them. Trouble is, too many people aren't following the rules, allowing their dogs to run freely, desecrating graves and uprooting plantings.

In Washington DC, the Historic Congressional Cemetery, founded on Capitol Hill in 1807, had become overgrown and a drug war zone by 1990 due to official neglect and a lack of maintenance money. The grass was three feet high and dog walkers were afraid to go there except in groups. Now the drug dealers are gone, the grounds are well groomed, and the paths are paved.

How did this happen? A dog walking group was formed and members asked other dog walkers to pay a tax-deductible membership fee of \$200 per year and an additional fee of \$50 per dog. Members are expected to pick weeds, clear trash, and prevent non-members' dogs from using the grounds. Funds collected are used to maintain the grounds.

### Mysteries Abound at St. Peter's, Quamichan

The following is excerpted from *Tales the Tombstones Tell: A Walking Guide to Cowichan Valley Cemeteries* by T.W. Paterson. Tom hopes to have the book out by early June.

The first grave in this cemetery, that of an unidentified "young man from Gloucestershire," dates to 1866 or '67, according to St. Peter's late historian, David Williams. Identified only by his last name, **Jordan**, he died in November 1866 of consumption, the *British Colonist* noting that his was "the first death from natural causes occurring in the district" (a reference to white settlers only). His grave is in one of the first north-south rows, just below the west wall of the church. With almost two acres to work with, would you not think that, having broken ground for that initial interment (and hard ground it is), priest and parishioners would have carried on from there and worked their way outwards in a series of neat and orderly grids?

Instead, they leapfrogged a hundred feet or so to the west, to the edge of today's tree line, and the outer perimeter of this original, smaller cemetery, today known as the Old Section, to resume the next burials. Did they find the ground easier to dig? Some of the grave markers of this row are numbered, indicating that this was to be the practice. Such, however, is not the case. Symmetry, of course, does not really work in this situation, either. Although single graves are the same size, family plots can upset the orderliness of what were meant to be neat rows. And as the years pass, as wildflowers and other indigenous plants take over and headstones are placed facing this way and that, before you know it, individual plots can become blurred even indiscernible.

All of which adds to the charm of St. Peter's, one of the Valley's—one of the Island's—prettiest cemeteries. If you have to die (and you are Anglican) this is the place to go.

Suffice to say that, as indicated by the dates on the headstone and the official register, the cemetery started out with less than a neat and set pattern, which leaves us to wonder at the reasoning behind some of these anomalies. One of the mysteries here is the choice of grave site for St. Peter's first rector, the **Rev. David H.B. Holmes**. He is remembered for having, in accordance with the Anglican dogma of the day, denied full religious service to **Archibald Dods**, who was drowned at the age of four years and 10 months. "The whole affair was very painful and very remarkable," Holmes wrote in his annual report (a fact that, historian Williams thought might have indicated pangs of conscience). "The father himself never came to church... I wished him to have the children baptized but he would not."

When he was approached about the lad being interred in St. Peter's, Holmes told the father, "it [sic] could be buried, but that the service could not be read; the bell could not be tolled; the body could not be taken into the church; and I could not put on a surplice; but for humanity's sake I would be present and say a prayer and give an address at the grave...."

By the time of the grave-side service, scaled down though it was, Holmes obviously was troubled by his by-the-book response to the grieving, disbelieving father, as he proceeded to read "the most telling address I ever delivered". Immediately following the service, those attending entered the church to witness the lad's two surviving siblings being baptized.

Holmes compared the Dods service with that of only a day later for **Mary Evans**: "What a triumph of the Cross over infidelity!"

Which brings us to Holmes's gravesite. He died, aged 79, in 1915. That is 20 years after miner Fred Beech committed murder and suicide on Mount Sicker. Fred Beech is at St. Peter's, which does not recognize consecrated/unconsecrated ground as do some churches. Hence **Fred Beech** sleeps among the righteous and the holy, in his unmarked grave that places him head to head with the Rev. David Holmes! The fact that such an unlikely juxtaposing of the murderer-suicide and the man of God is recorded in the cemetery register makes us wonder, a century and more later, what the parishioners of the day were thinking of. Mind you, Beech's other immediate neighbours could make the same objection to his presence in their midst.