

**KAMLOOPS
FUNERAL
RECORDS
INDEX**

1888-1974

KAMLOOPS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY
British Columbia, Canada



KAMLOOPS FUNERAL RECORDS

Index 1888 - 1974

Transcription and compilation by

KAMLOOPS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY

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Under Ground: A brief history of Kamloops cemeteries

by Elisabeth Duckworth

Curator at the Kamloops Museum and Archives

One of the earliest recorded deaths of an individual to take place in Kamloops was that of Samuel Black, a fur trader murdered at the Fort in February 1841. He was interred shortly after near the Fort which was located on the site of the Kamloops Indian Reserve. This was only temporary, however, because it was requested that his body be taken from Kamloops to the Hudson's Bay Company cemetery at Fort Vancouver, now Washington, where other company officers were buried. An historical account relates that upon crossing Monte Creek near its outlet to the Thompson River, his coffin fell off the horse transporting it and broke beyond repair. The decision was made to bury him there, although the location of his final resting place is not known.

Apart from the Indian cemetery, which probably dates from the fur trade period, the earliest cemetery in Kamloops was likely in connection with St. Joseph's Mission located in the vicinity of the present-day Weyerhaeuser pulp mill. This was probably a Catholic, rather than a secular cemetery. Sources indicate that Thomas Spelman, a hotel owner, was buried there in 1884. Unfortunately, no reference has come to light of other burials that have taken place there. At any rate, the mission site at the west of Kamloops was abandoned when it was moved to town in 1888. When the first Sacred Heart Cathedral was built in 1887 a new Catholic cemetery was located on the grounds at Second and Nicola.

With the arrival of the railway and many settlers in the 1880s the growth of the town of Kamloops meant that a public cemetery was needed.

John Peterson, a pioneer rancher who pre-empted land on the site of what is now downtown Kamloops, provided property for a cemetery plot near his house just east of the mouth of Peterson Creek, at what is now Eighth Avenue and Lorne Street. The land was offered to the government agent John Tannatt Ussher in 1876, who, ironically, was subsequently murdered by the infamous McLean gang in 1879 and buried there.

When the New Townsite Syndicate purchased Peterson's property in 1884 title to the cemetery was included in the sale. Argument followed about the syndicate's fee charges for burial. Peterson himself had to pay \$8 for the burial of wife in 1892.

This cemetery arrangement lasted until 1898 when the city bought land for a new graveyard which became Pleasant Street Cemetery. Pioneer Cemetery continued to be used for burials in pre-existing family plots until 1901, although it did not belong to the city.

The cemetery bylaw of 1899 provided for a caretaker appointed by city council, whose job was not only to keep the cemetery in good order but to supervise all burials and keep all records. Fees for single grave lots were set at \$7 with interment \$5 for adult, \$3 for children under 14.

Subscriptions were taken for cleaning up the old Pioneer Cemetery, but over the years it became overgrown and derelict. Unfortunately it was vandalized, as was the headstone of J.T. Ussher, and eventually transformed into a small grass park with some of the surviving headstones moved to the corner. The former cemetery was even used briefly as a baseball park in 1949. In 1962 the provincial government passed an order that the city should look after the site. A plaque for Ussher was reinstalled in 1978.

About the same age as the Pioneer Cemetery was one created by the Chinese community in the 1880s and used exclusively by them. This was located in what is known as Powers Addition. It was first reported in 1887 but certainly dates from the beginning of railway construction in the area when the Chinese laborers were given a land grant in 1885. Chinese burials could date even earlier in the vicinity since it is known that a few hundred Chinese prospectors worked in the area of Tranquille in the 1860s.

The Chinese cemetery is unique in that it complies with the laws of geomancy, or sacred geography, of Southern China, built overlooking the plain and river of the Thompson Valley and facing north. The latest burial in the Chinese cemetery took place in the early 1970s. Most cemeteries, of course, are built on higher ground and sloping land for the drainage.

Another cemetery, which is presently owned by the province but will eventually be turned over to the city, was created in conjunction with the Old Man's Home built in 1894 on Columbia Street and torn down in 1972 on the site of the new Kamloops courthouse. This cemetery, two hectares off Sixth Avenue, contains over 1,000 utilized plots, the last interment taking place in 1974.

Hillside is a new cemetery for Kamloops, located in Sahali and opened in 1951. There are approximately 11,000 people buried at Hillside with room for 30,000 more. This may seem an incredible number for a six-hectare site, but it is understandable considering 42 per cent of deceased people in Kamloops are cremated.

Cemeteries are part of our heritage, human heritage one might say, that should be preserved. Indeed, those managed by the City of Kamloops are protected by municipal bylaw as well as the Provincial Cemeteries Act.

Cemeteries, of course, provide valuable information for the genealogist and may be the only clue to the lost generation of a family. Transcribing information from cemeteries generally should begin with geographical research, including maps and local histories. Ranchers are quite knowledgeable about rural and family cemeteries. The researcher should always respect private property and make enquiries about entering cemeteries.

In reading inscriptions on headstones, white or yellow chalk are generally all one needs highlight the inscriptions

for tracing or photography.

Several kinds of material have been used for headstones which can give an idea of the age. Indian graves were usually identified with wooden crosses after the arrival of the missionaries. Sandstone was most common before 1850, before Kamloops was founded. Marble was used from 1830 through 1870s. In the Pleasant Street cemetery there are many good examples of brown granite tombstones from the turn of the century which came from Sweden. Grey and polished granite is certainly the most common in recent materials used.

The City of Kamloops has records of burials at the two major cemeteries dating from 1900 for Pleasant Street and

1951 for Hillside. There are none, however, of Pioneer. The B.C. Vital Statistics Act requires a burial permit and acknowledgement of registration of death information be maintained so that there is information on file of the name and owner of plots, names of the deceased, age, where born, where died, date of death, date of burial, sex, cause of death, name of physician, religion, marriage date, etc. The Kamloops Museum and Archives also has invaluable information on individuals who have passed away and are part of our community's human history.

The preceding article originally appeared in The Daily News, Kamloops, BC, 8 Feb 1997, p C13. It is reprinted here with permission.

Kamloops Undertakers: A timeline showing the available indexed funeral records

1884	Brothers Marshal P and James Gordon establish a furniture store.	Records indexed
1888	M. P. Gordon brothers funeral records begin.	Records indexed
1904	Joseph Lynn Gordon buys out brother Marshal on 24 Feb	Records indexed
1926	George E. McPherson acquires Gordon's Funeral Parlors on Oct 25. The business name is changed to McPherson's Funeral Chapel	Records not available for indexing
1948	Brothers Bruce and Grant MacLeod purchase McPherson's Funeral Chapel. The business name is changed to MacLeod Bros Funeral Chapel.	Records indexed
1918	R.H. Dwyer, employee of J.L. Gordon, establishes a second funeral home called Dwyer's Funeral Home.	Records indexed
1952	Don Schoening purchases Dwyer's Funeral Home on Apr 24. The name is changed to Schoening's Funeral Service.	Records indexed
1961	George Wright and Ernie Harberd bought out Schoening Funeral Service. The old business name is retained	Records not available for indexing
1968	George Wright buys Ernie Harberd's interest in the business. There is no change in the business name.	Records not available for indexing
1974	MacLeod's Funeral Chapel records indexed only to 27 Dec.	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Kamloops Family History Society undertook the task of indexing the Kamloops funeral registers in September 1996. Society volunteers met 7:00 - 9:00 pm every Wednesday evening at the Kamloops Museum and Archives to extract and transcribe information from the funeral records. This phase of the project was completed in June 1998.

Concurrently with the transcribing of records, other society volunteers entered the information into a computer database for processing and still other volunteers proofread the computer input. Data entry was completed in July 1998.

The total time spent by the volunteers in completing the indexing of the funeral registers is conservatively estimated at more than 1100 hours. Those who gave generously of their time in various phases of the project are listed below.

Transcribing records: Mary Ayers, Elenore Chamberland, John Corbishley, Enid & Warren Damer, Jane Ellen Doubt, June Duck, Mabel Fowler, Eileen & Don Gordon, Pamela Hambrook, Mary Lynne Harding, Pat King, Donna Mazur, Joan Nethery, Arlana Nickel, Norma Rosen, Sylvia Whalley

Data entry: Frances Bishop, Peter Botham, Deanna Coates, Doug Foreman, Marilyn Ivey, Shawne MacKay, Donna Mazur, Norma Rosen.

Proofreading: Elenore Chamberland, Barbara Clark, Joan Conley, June Duck, Gill Gaiser, Pamela & James Hambrook, Mary Lynne Harding, Sylvia Whalley.

Publication preparation: Frances Bishop designed the cover, prepared the cemeteries location map, and shared her expertise and knowledge in preparing documents for publication.

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INTERNET ADDRESSES

BC Archives (Access British Columbia births, deaths, and marriages indexes, subject to privacy considerations):

http://www2.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/textual/governmt/vstats/v_events.htm

TNRD Library (Locate obituaries 1990 - 1998 on the *Kamloops Daily News* index):

<http://www.tnrilib.bc.ca/public2.html>

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The Society also wishes to thank Ron for the many months it took him to turn all the transcribed material into this very useful and worthwhile book which will be a valuable addition to any genealogical library.



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