



Maple Ridge Cemetery: The final resting place of most of the municipality's pioneers.

The Cemetery

By Edmund Pope, from The Weekly Gazette, April 11th, 1938

The first interments were Kanakas, relatives and friends of the wife of William Nelson, who lived right on the bank of the Fraser River right opposite my place.

Nelson was a white man married to a Kanaka widow, a most worthy and virtuous woman, and very highly respected by all the pioneers along the Fraser. Mr. Nelson had a strip of land reaching from the Fraser River nearly down to where Mr. Smart now lives, on the east side of Laity Road.

Mrs. Nelson's friends and relatives were buried there in what is now the extreme south-west corner of the cemetery, and such interments were made, probably, in the middle

1870s—the place was then a quiet spot in the forest.

In the middle 1870s or early 1880s Mr. Nelson gave the council—which had then been formed some time—a quarter of an acre for burial purposes. George Howison, who owned the land (where Brown's greenhouses are now), also gave a quarter of land adjoining that given by Nelson, and the council had a deep drain put around same, and later had it fenced. No record of burials were kept at that time, and the first whites interred were one Wickwire, from Haney; a Mr. Thorne who owned the land where D. Spencer's farm is now, and in 1882, Edward Muench, who resided on the south side of the river opposite Maple Ridge. Then one Francis Sinclair was laid to rest in 1883.

Population was increasing by that time and demands were made for space in the "Silent City"; and many children of the pioneer families were put to rest in this spot.

Interments were not recorded until 1897, but before this time, the original half-acre donated by Misters Howison and Nelson was found to be too small for the increasing demands upon it, so, about 1895 a further half acre was purchased from Mr. Nelson and the same area for George Howison, making the cemetery then one and a half acres. This proved adequate for about twenty years, when it was again found necessary to get more land.

About 1915 or 1916 three and a half acres adjoining were purchased from John Donovan and his partner, the land then being in its primitive state.

Contracts for clearing and stumping was let to G.D. Madill and W.J. Stevens. After clearing and leveling, a land surveyor plotted out the land, and the first lots sold for burial purposes in 1917.

A system of tile undermining has been carried out, and drains running from seven to nine feet deep have been put in so that now the cemetery is regarded as the driest and best drained of its kind in the Fraser Valley.

In January 1897 J.W. White was appointed commissioner, to have charge of, and, attend to the cemetery. In January 1898 E. Pope was appointed, and has been appointed continuously every year since.

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No Hindoos have ever been interred there, and no Indian men, but in the past thirty years three Indian women and one Kanaka woman, wives of the earliest white pioneers, have been laid to rest. Two portions of the cemetery have been apportioned: Asiatic, and a large number of Japanese sleep there, and about half dozen Chinese there, who after a number of years, have been exhumed and their bones returned to China. The last of such exhumations was carried out a week ago.

The following who served the Municipality as Reeves lie in the cemetery: William Ansell, Robert Blackstock, Henry Dawson, W.J. Harris, George Howison, William Isaac, D.C. Webber and also Councilors: Nelson Carter, John Callaghan, T. Bosomworth, Alex G. Denoon, John Hammond, Thomas Haney, Alex McDonald, John McKenney, J.M. Webster, J.J. Wilson, and J. M. Dale. (W.J. Harris was also a member of the B.C. Legislative Assembly), James Rolley.

As to teachers, I cannot recall more than two, Richard Trembath, and Miss Annie Haney; and preachers only one, the Reverend R. Jackson, who died at Walnut Grove in 1909.

The number of interments recorded to date is 518, which with about twenty or more I know of unrecorded before 1897 will run the total up close to 550.

The space available now will probably be ample for the next ten or twelve years.

I remember a diphtheria epidemic years ago when I had to bury children at midnight by the light of lanterns in a blinding snowstorm

I am not sure if William Edge, who lived opposite Haney, and who was fatally injured by the rush of water over his farm when the slide at Carr's Hill went out and buried at Maple Ridge or not, but I think he was, that was in 1879 or in early 1880.

Mrs. Haney Sr. saw the slide go out, and, probably knows the date.

Mr. "Jim" Best was the first to cross over to the Edge place after the inundation, and spent the night with Edge before he died. Mr. Best cannot tell us the dates.

Edward Julius Muench, a former Cariboo teamster

and later pioneer farmer in Langley, was buried backwards. His friends placed his grave marker at his feet instead of at his head.

Some of the other first people to be buried here were relatives of Mrs. William Nelson of Nelson's Landing; they were Kanakas, brought from the ...[illegible].

There are a variety of headstones, including early wooden grave markers, such as one that marks the resting place of Andrew Holdsworth, killed at Westminster Junction July 12, 1910.

Among the prominent early settlers here may be counted Thomas Haney and his wife Anne.

Mary Berry Charlton Storey is buried between her two husbands, Alfred Temple Charlton on one side, and his cousin William Storey on the other.

Also buried here is Mr. Jiro Inouye, the pioneer of the Japanese settlers in Maple Ridge, who settled here in 1907. In recognition of his leadership his many friends erected a rounded boulder from the Alouette River in his memory.

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