

# The Chinese Cemetery in Victoria\*

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The original location of the Chinese Cemetery at Harling Point in Victoria — the oldest Chinese cemetery in Canada — is a disputed topic among oldtimers. Some say it was originally established near Beacon Hill Park; others advance Ross Bay as the location; still others remember it situated behind the Saanich Municipal Hall and buildings (figure 1). This paper evaluates these various claims and gives something of the history of the cemetery's establishment.

The Quadra Street Cemetery, which occupied what is now Pioneer Square, was the first cemetery in Victoria, in use from 1858 to 1873. The northeast corner of the cemetery was set aside for the Chinese people and became the first "Chinese cemetery" in Victoria.<sup>1</sup> As the Quadra Street Cemetery became overcrowded, Ross Bay Cemetery, facing Ross Bay, was laid out in October 1872 and opened for burials in the following year.<sup>2</sup> A search of Ross Bay Cemetery's Burial Records reveals that the first Chinese who was interred there, on 18 March 1873, was listed as "Chinaman No. 1."<sup>3</sup> The ensuing Chinese who were buried there were recorded in similarly derisive terms as "Chinaman No. 2," "Chinaman No. 3" and so on. Probably the caretaker found it difficult to spell Chinese names and did not bother to try. It was not until 4 October 1880 that Chinese names were recorded in the Burial Records. From 1873 through 1909, a total of 1,178 Chinese were buried in the Ross Bay Cemetery (figure 2). Considering that the average annual Chinese population in Victoria during this period was about 2,000, the annual death rate — about 38 per thousand — was not very high in those days. The record

\* The financial support provided by the University of Victoria is gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>1</sup> C. Ffrench, "The Burial Places of Early Victoria (Part 3)," a newspaper clipping xeroxed by John Adams. (Name of newspaper and date of publication unknown.)

<sup>2</sup> J. Adams, *Historic Guide to Ross Bay Cemetery* (Victoria: Heritage Architectural Guides, 1983), 4-5.

<sup>3</sup> Burial Records, Ross Bay Cemetery, Victoria.

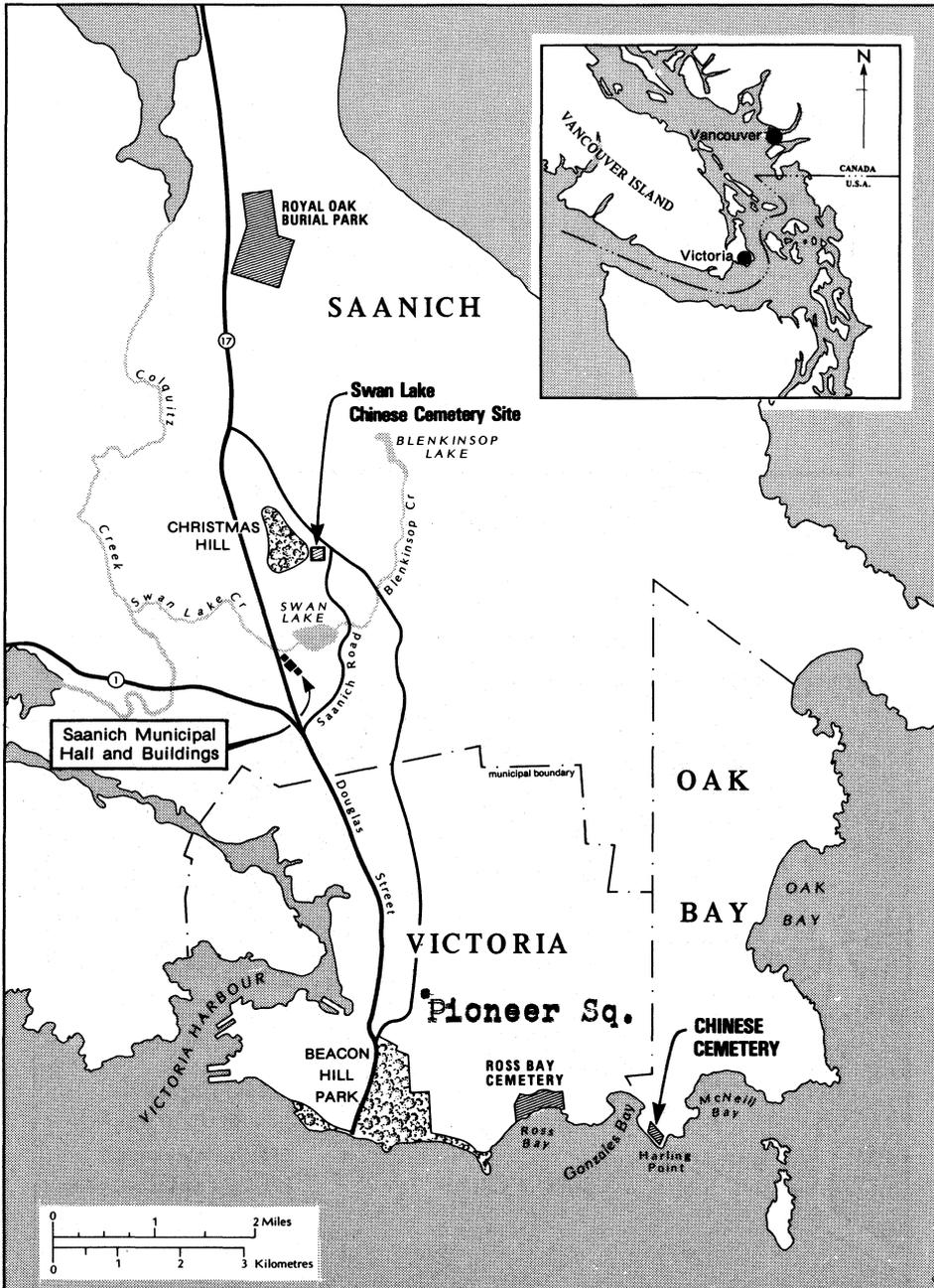


FIGURE 1  
Locations of Chinese Cemetery sites.

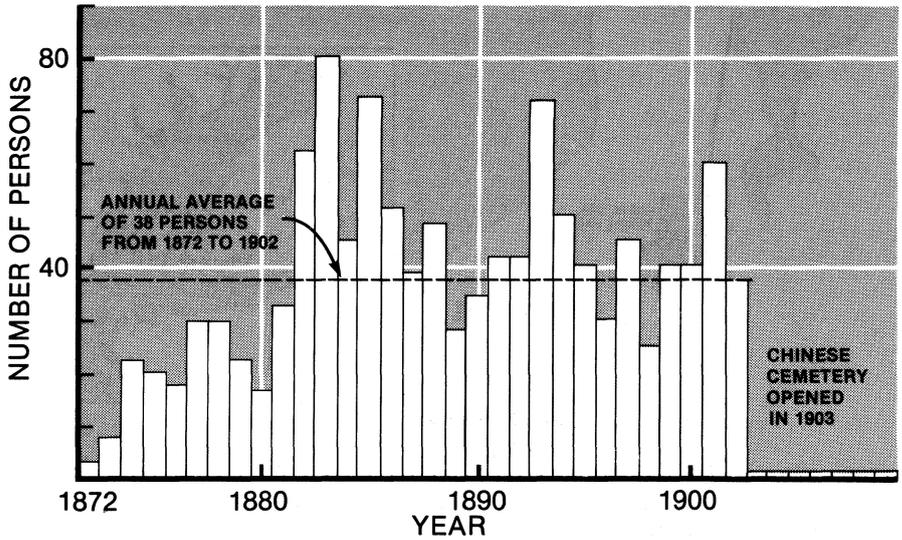


FIGURE 2

Number of Chinese buried in Ross Bay Cemetery, 1872-1909.

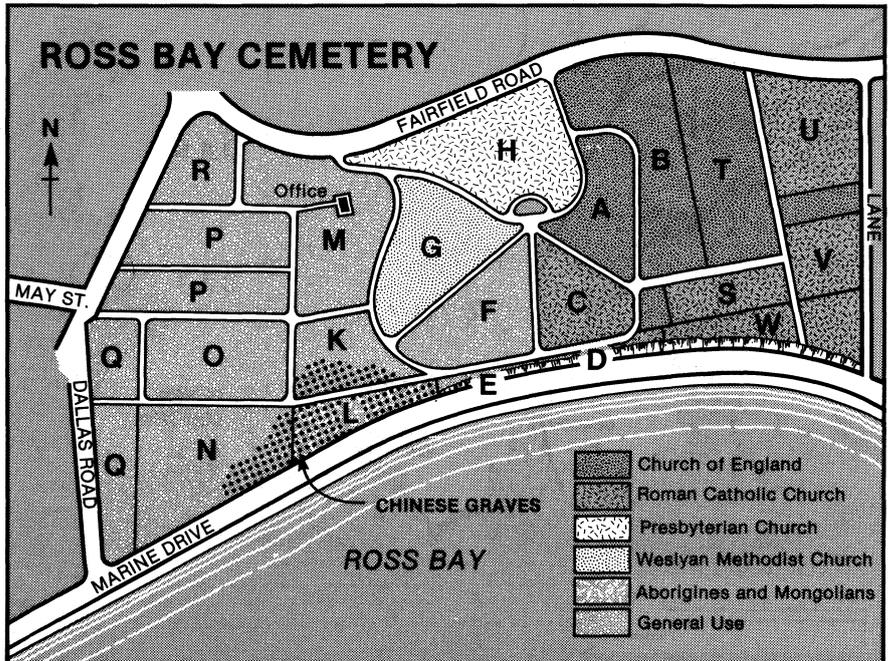


FIGURE 3

Location of Chinese graves in Ross Bay Cemetery.

shows that most of the Chinese died very young. Of the 513 Chinese whose ages of death were recorded, about 60 percent died between the ages of twenty and forty (table 1). This might be due to two reasons:

TABLE 1  
*Chinese Buried in Ross Bay Cemetery, 1872-1887*

<i>Age of death</i>	<i>Number of persons</i>
Under 20	44
20 - 29	140
30 - 39	175
40 - 49	87
50 - 59	54
60 and over	13
Total	513

SOURCE: Burial Records, Ross Bay Cemetery, Victoria.

first, in those days most of the Chinese people in Victoria were young; second, when they became too ill, they would try to return to China, if it were possible, and die at home rather than in a foreign country, believing that their souls would not repose peacefully unless they were in their own land.

The Ross Bay Cemetery was divided into twenty-one blocks, of which eleven were initially reserved for the exclusive use of Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Methodists, with the remainder allotted to general use (figure 3). Block L was specifically set apart for the burials of "Aborigines and Mongolians" who were not attached to any churches.<sup>4</sup> Because of this segregation policy, all the Chinese graves were located in Block L. When it was fully occupied, they spilled over to the adjoining Blocks N and K. The Chinese set up an altar at the southwestern corner of Block L, which in time became known as the "Chinese Cemetery."

According to their traditional customs, the Chinese people usually went to visit the graves of ancestors, relatives or close friends during the Qingming Festival in the second or third month of the lunar year, and during the Chongyang Festival in the ninth lunar month. (This would be in March or April, and October, respectively, in the western calendar.)

<sup>4</sup> "The Ross Bay Cemetery: Rules and Regulations," *B.C. Gazette*, 9 Aug. 1873, 7.

As the Victoria Chinese generally did not have families nearby, various county and clan associations organized trips in the Qingming and Chongyang festivals to the "Chinese Cemetery" at Ross Bay to tidy up the graves of their fellow members; light joss sticks and candles; burn paper money and ingots of silver and golden foil; and offer fruit, wine, roast pigs, steamed chickens and other sacrifices to the spirits of the dead. After the worship was over, some food was usually left behind on the graves. As this custom became known to the Siwash Indians, they came at night by boat from Discovery Island to Ross Bay and stole the food from the graves.<sup>5</sup> At the beginning, some Chinese wondered why the native Indians feasted on roast pigs, steamed chickens and rice after every Chinese visit to the cemetery, but it did not take them long to solve the mystery. Legend has it that the Chinese had a fight with the pilfering Indians and, after this incident, ceased the practice of leaving food on the graves.

The Ross Bay Cemetery was built on a slope dipping gently westward. All the churchyards were located on its higher grounds, where some places were thirty feet above the marine drive. The western section was low-lying, almost at sea level. It was usually flooded after a heavy rainstorm, and lashed by high waves whenever the sea was rough. Furthermore, according to the Chinese concept of *Feng Shui* (Wind and Water), the featureless and low-lying land was ill-portending and unsuitable for burials because it had poor *Feng Shui*—i.e., was in discordance with Nature. Accordingly, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Victoria decided to establish its own cemetery at a better location.<sup>6</sup>

In 1891 the CCBA purchased a piece of land near Swan Lake with the intention of using it as a cemetery.<sup>7</sup> The exact location of the property was not known until it was ascertained by the author by the application of an ideal *Feng Shui* topographic model.<sup>8</sup> The lot, covering an area of 8.75 acres, was situated on the southern slope of Lake Hill (now called Christmas Hill), about half a mile north of Swan Lake.<sup>9</sup> The site was near two creeks and a lake and flanked on both sides by ridges on which Lake Road and Saanich Road were eventually built (figure 4). Accord-

<sup>5</sup> *Victoria Colonist*, 23 Oct. 1901.

<sup>6</sup> For brevity, hereafter "the CCBA" or "the association" refers to the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association of Victoria.

<sup>7</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1902. Minutes of meeting on 30 May 1902.

<sup>8</sup> Chuen-yan David Lai, "A Feng Shui Model as A Location Index," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 64 (1974): 506-13.

<sup>9</sup> Land Registry Office, Victoria, Conveyance from Alfred Williams to the CCBA, 30 Oct. 1891. *Register of Absolute Fees*, vol. 9, pp. 165-66, no. 5405a, and vol. 13, p. 144, no. 13036a.

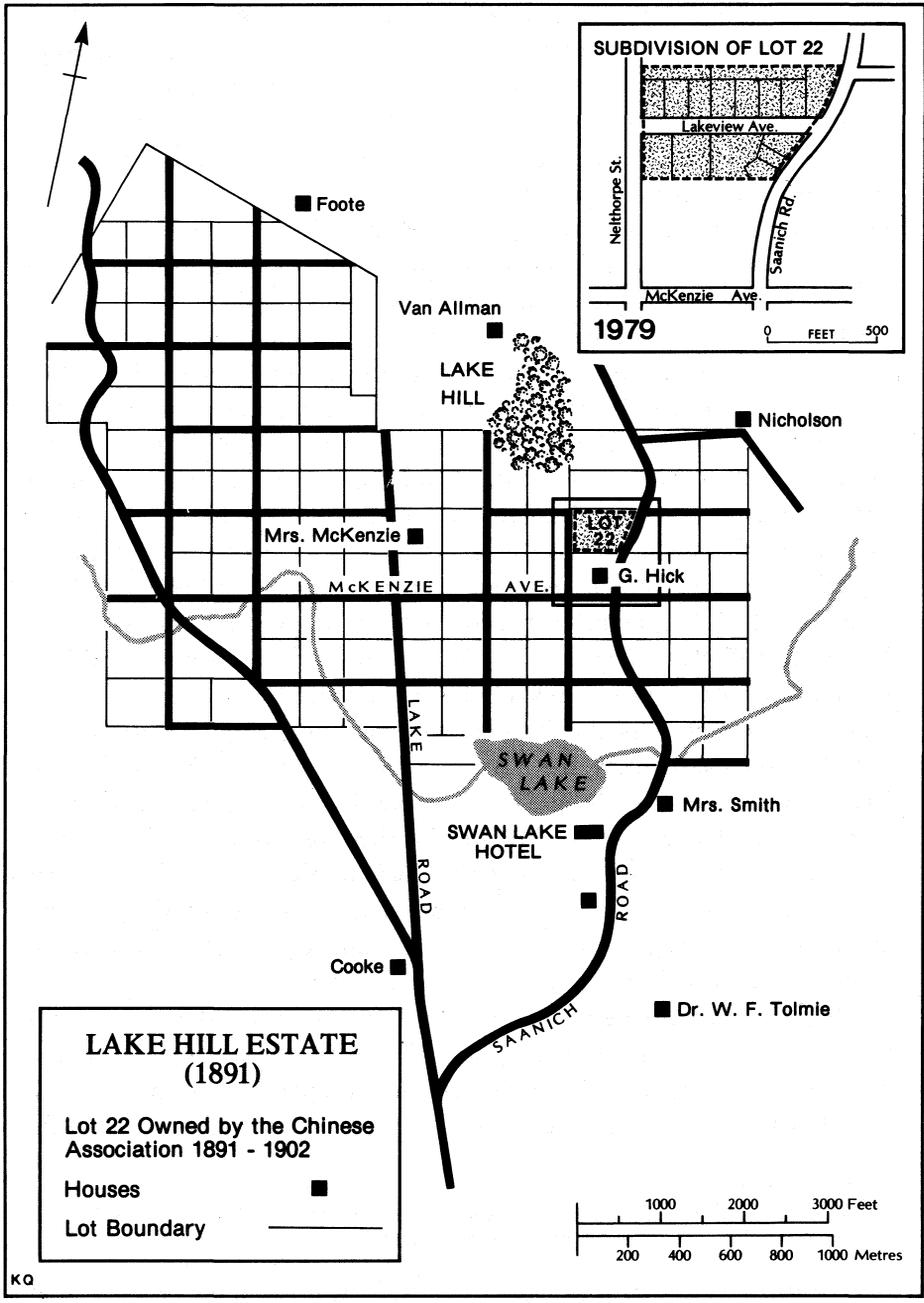


FIGURE 4

Location of the Chinese Cemetery site north of Swan Lake.

ing to the *Feng Shui* concept, water was an emblem of wealth, and mountain ranges were life-giving breaths of Nature. The site had good *Feng Shui* — i.e., was in harmony with Nature. It was an auspicious spot where, in geomantic terminology, the “Azure Dragon,” the higher ridge on its left, and the “White Tiger,” the lower ridge on its right, converged. Although the lot was a propitious site for a Chinese cemetery, it had never been used as a burial ground because George Hick and other property owners in the neighbourhood objected to such a use.<sup>10</sup> The site was left empty for over ten years after it was purchased.

Over time, the “Chinese Cemetery” at Ross Bay became so fully occupied that some graves had to be dug close to the marine drive. After several heavy storms, the wind and waves eroded a few waterfront graves and swept away the Chinese remains. In view of this situation, and because of the problems with the Swan Lake site, the CCBA finally decided in May 1902 to sell the Swan Lake lot and look for another piece of land suitable for use as a cemetery.<sup>11</sup> Within a year the CCBA found a piece of land which had good *Feng Shui*. It was located at Foul Point (now called Harling Point) between Foul Bay (Gonzales Bay) and Shoal Bay (McNeill Bay) (figure 5). The site, backed by Gonzales Hill, is flanked on both sides by rock platforms of higher elevation and commands an open view of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. In geomantic terms, the site was guarded by the “Azure Dragon” on its left and by the “White Tiger” on its right and was embraced by a wide stretch of water — a symbol of wealth and affluence. Furthermore, it was believed that the souls of the deceased hovering over their tombs would enjoy viewing passing vessels bound for China. Accordingly, in 1903 the CCBA purchased a lot covering an area of 3.5 acres,<sup>12</sup> and Foul Point then became known as Chinese Point because of its cemetery.

Although the Chinese people got the city’s assurance that they could use the property as a cemetery, they still worried that residents of the neighbourhood, like those in Swan Lake, might oppose such use. In order to test reaction, a mock funeral was arranged in the fall of 1903.<sup>13</sup> As

<sup>10</sup> Lai, *op. cit.*, 512.

<sup>11</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1902. Minutes of meeting on 30 May 1902, and Land Registry Office, Victoria, Conveyance, CCBA to George Hick, 4 June 1902, D. D. Pocket 25482.

<sup>12</sup> Land Registry Office, Victoria, Conveyance, Mary Williams to the CCBA, 3 April 1903, D. D. Pocket 987.

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication with Lim Li Bang, formerly an influential leader in the Chinese community in Victoria.

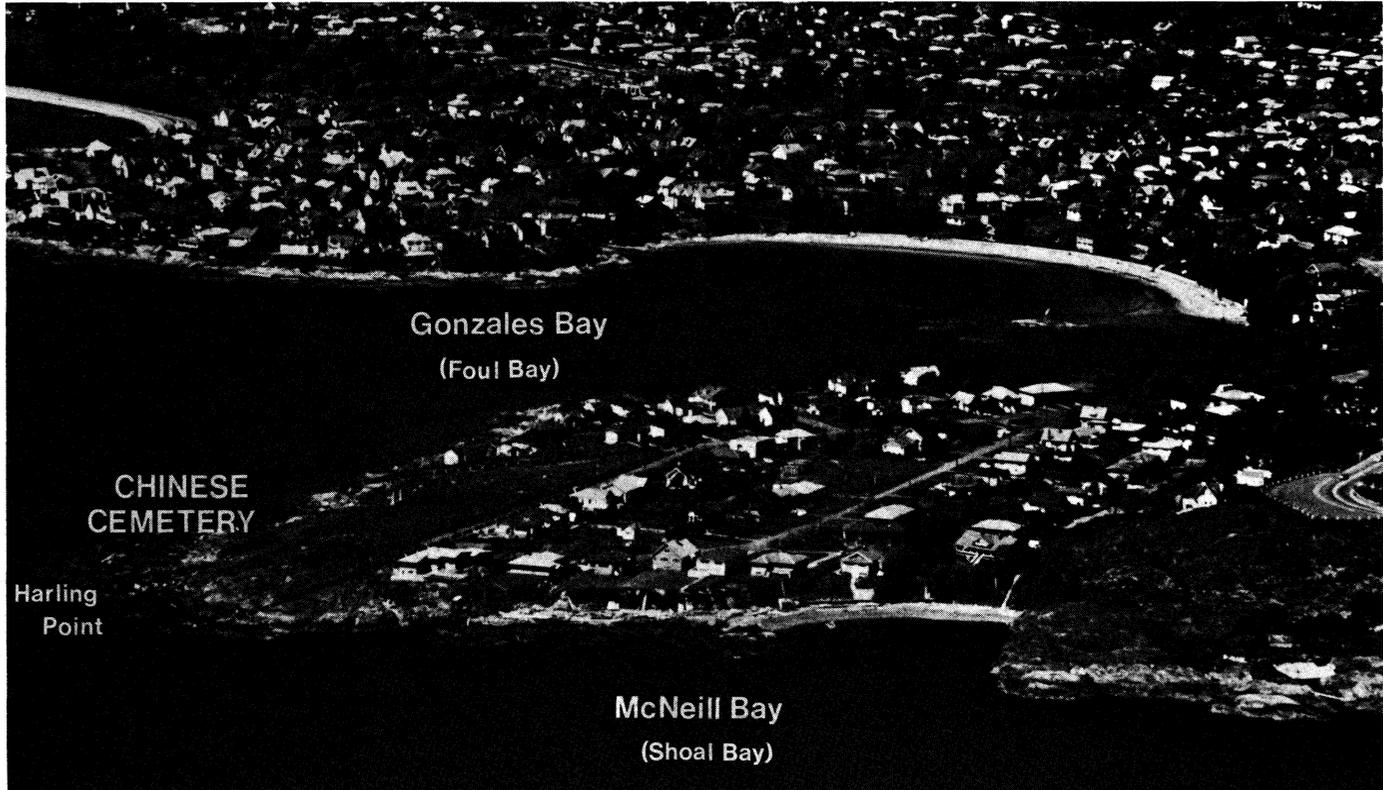


FIGURE 5

Chinese Cemetery at Harling Point.

was expected, a Caucasian resident fired a shotgun to interrupt the "funeral" and threatened the "mourners." The police were immediately called and arrested the man. After this incident, the Chinese were able to use the cemetery without further harassment from its nearby white residents. When the Municipality of Oak Bay was incorporated in 1906, the Chinese Cemetery fell under the jurisdiction of the new municipality within whose boundaries it lay.

About three hundred Chinese graves still remained in the Ross Bay Cemetery, although only one or two Chinese a year were buried there after 1903. In March 1909 workers of the Ross Bay Cemetery, while filling in the bank, dug up several Chinese graves and left the skeletons bare.<sup>14</sup> This prompted the CCBA to request the City of Victoria Council to waive the city's exhumation fee of six dollars per grave; it would then dig up the remaining Chinese graves and remove them, together with the Chinese altar, to the new Chinese Cemetery. The request was granted by Council because some councillors did not like the Chinese to be buried alongside whites.<sup>15</sup> After 1909 very few Chinese were buried in the Ross Bay Cemetery.

In the old days the overseas Chinese people believed that after a person's death his soul still existed and hovered over his tomb. If he died in a foreign country, his soul would be homeless and therefore unable to rest until his body was shipped back to China and buried in its home village. As it was expensive, if not impossible, to ship the body back to China, it was common practice to bury it for seven years. In the seventh year the grave would be opened and the bones dug up. They would be thoroughly cleaned, spread out on the ground until they were completely dried under the sun and then packed into a wooden crate. Crates of bones from Chinese communities across Canada were sent to Victoria and stored in a wooden "bone house" in Chinatown until the quantity was large enough to warrant a shipment in bulk. In 1907 the CCBA built a brick house in the Chinese Cemetery for the storage of the bones and erected a woden hut nearby for a caretaker to look after them.<sup>16</sup> Before 1909 each clan or county association organized its own shipment of bones. In order to reduce shipping costs, the CCBA decided to centralize the shipment and entrusted the Taishan Association with the responsibility for collecting all the crates of bones across Canada, storing

<sup>14</sup> *Victoria Times*, 30 March 1909.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 April 1909.

<sup>16</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1907. Minutes of meeting on 1 July and 30 July 1907.

them in the brick house and shipping them to China once every seven years.<sup>17</sup> The first centralized shipment took place in 1909.

After the 1920s the CCBA was confronted with financial problems. Although the cemetery was exempted from taxes on land and improvements, the association still had to pay the frontage tax because the Municipality of Oak Bay imposed a blanket tax on all properties, assessed on lot frontages, for sewer and water taxes. For three years — 1918 to 1920 — the CCBA was actually in arrears, owing the municipality \$270.65, which included water and sewer taxes, interest and penalty.<sup>18</sup> Only by using its hospital funds was the CCBA able to prevent the municipality from selling the property,<sup>19</sup> something that happened again in 1930. Taxes continued to be a problem until, in 1966, water and sewer rates were included in the mill rate, from which the Chinese Cemetery was exempted.<sup>20</sup> They were, however, always paid in the end; the complaint that the Chinese people did not pay tax on their cemetery was therefore wrong.

The CCBA faced not only the problem of maintaining the cemetery but also the threat from the municipality to terminate its use. In September 1927 some nearby residents lodged a complaint to Oak Bay Council that the Chinese Cemetery prevented the building of roads and general improvements in their neighbourhood and was a serious bar to urban development.<sup>21</sup> Council itself felt that the waterfront site of the cemetery was very attractive and should be put to other uses. Accordingly, it consulted its solicitor to determine whether it had the power to prohibit the Chinese from using the cemetery. The solicitor told Council that it did not have the power since the site had been a burial ground long before the municipality was incorporated.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Council informed the CCBA that it did have the authority to prohibit further burials in the cemetery and requested the association to consider removing the

<sup>17</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1908. Minutes of meeting on 22 May 1908.

<sup>18</sup> Assessment Roll and Collector's Roll, 1920, the Corporation of the District of Oak Bay.

<sup>19</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1920. Minutes of meeting on 10 Dec. 1920; Land Registry Office, Victoria. Certificate of Indefeasible Title vol. 1, fol. 28, no. 99 I; and Register of Tax Sale of Oak Bay Municipality, 1920 and 1930.

<sup>20</sup> Assessment Rolls and Tax Sale Rolls, 1910-1965, Oak Bay Municipality.

<sup>21</sup> *Oak Bay Municipality Correspondence*, no. 3501, a letter from Councillor Crease to CCBA, 6 Nov. 1927.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 3501, letters from Dodwell and Lawson to Oak Bay Council, 16 Sept. and 7 Oct. 1927.

cemetery in five years' time.<sup>23</sup> In response to this threat, the CCBA immediately engaged a solicitor to communicate with the Council on its behalf. In the end, Council declared the caretaker's house uninhabitable for not having a sewer system and forbade him to live there.<sup>24</sup> After that it began trying to expropriate the cemetery without compensation. A good opportunity to do this came in March 1933 when Council received a petition from eighty-eight property owners and residents in the neighbourhood of the cemetery, complaining that their properties were falling in value and becoming undesirable for residential purposes.<sup>25</sup> They complained that the Chinese interred the bodies at a depth of only three to nine inches, and that their custom of exhuming corpses was detrimental to the health of the community. The cemetery, they asserted, had no sanitation and was not taxed.

The complaint led to an investigation of the Chinese Cemetery by Dr. W. P. Walker, the Medical Health Officer of Oak Bay. After his survey of the site, he found the accusations unfounded. He reported to Council that the Provincial Board of Health approved the method of shallow burial because it would permit oxygen to percolate through the soil and accelerate decomposition; if deep burial was used in damp, compacted soil, oxidation would be slow, and anaerobic bacteria would generate unpleasant gases and pollute the atmosphere.<sup>26</sup> Because some residents claimed that a body had recently been buried with only a few inches of soil over it, two medical doctors went with a complainant to inspect the grave site. Investigation of the grave revealed that the coffin was covered by soil to a depth of over twenty inches. When the coffin was exposed, no odour whatsoever was perceptible to the three inspectors. One of them also inspected other graves but could not detect odours in any part of the cemetery, nor was the complaint that the cemetery had no sanitation substantiated. Inside the caretaker's hut, a small privy covered by a solid board was found. A large concrete tank at the edge of the Chinese Cemetery was used to hold solids during summer months. When large volumes of water passed through and diluted the sewage during the winter months, direct discharge into the sea would take place. Odours would be detected if crude sewage was liberated and washed upon

<sup>23</sup> *Oak Bay Municipality Correspondence*, no. 3501, correspondences between Council and CCBA, 4 Nov. and 29 Nov. 1927.

<sup>24</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1927. Minutes of meeting on 13 Nov. 1927.

<sup>25</sup> *Oak Bay Municipality Correspondence*, no. 7706, a petition.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 7600, a letter from Dr. Walker to Dr. H. E. Young, Provincial Medical Health Officer, 19 April 1933; and a letter from Dodwell and Lawson to Council, 23 March 1933.

the rocks. "It may well be," concluded one of the medical men, "that the cemetery is getting blamed for a nuisance created by the living."<sup>27</sup>

Council consulted its solicitor again to look for a means to stop the Chinese from using the cemetery. The argument that it was a threat to public health still seemed the best one to use. Accordingly, Council approached Dr. Young, the Provincial Medical Health Officer. After investigation, he found the cemetery to be no health threat, and felt that in trying to stop burials, Council was unreasonably attempting to make unlawful something which had been lawful for a great many years.<sup>28</sup> On 8 June 1933 Council met the CCBA representatives, threatening to close their cemetery and advising them to get another burial site. The CCBA representatives asked Council to give them one in exchange for the Chinese Cemetery site, but their request was not accepted. Eventually the association was permitted to continue to use the cemetery, provided that it installed two water closets in the cemetery and connected them with municipal sewers. The matter was thus solved. In the following year, however, the Chinese Cemetery was in the news again, though in a much different way. On 15 January 1934 Dr. Fred Harling tried to rescue two persons from the waters off the Chinese Cemetery during a storm and died as a result of exposure.<sup>29</sup> To commemorate his brave deed, Council renamed Foul Point or Chinese Point as Harling Point.

While the CCBA was battling with the municipality, it continued to use the cemetery and to exhume remains. The last shipping of bones from the Chinese Cemetery to China was carried out in 1930. Another shipment was scheduled in 1937 but was prevented by the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. Crates of bones which had been sent to Victoria from other cities across Canada were stored in the "bone house" in the cemetery, awaiting delivery to China when the war was over. In the meantime the CCBA stopped exhuming remains, and the available tomb sites were soon occupied. Graves were dug between the existing tombs and in any unoccupied space in the cemetery. Some were only a few inches apart. By the late 1940s the cemetery was occupied by more than a thousand graves, and there was a rumour that some had been dug above others. Finally, the CCBA closed the cemetery in 1950. More and more people had, in the meantime, come to use the Royal Oak Burial Park (see figure 1). In 1977 several associations — the Chinese Freemasons and Dart Coon Club among them — purchased a plot in the

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 7600, a letter from Dr. Walker to Dr. Young, 19 April 1933.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 7600, a letter from Bodwell and Lawson to Council, 23 May 1933.

<sup>29</sup> *Victoria Times*, 16 Jan. 1934.

Royal Oak Burial Park and set up a tombstone in memory of their deceased members (figure 6). The CCBA also bought a plot and erected a tombstone there to commemorate all the Chinese people who had died in Canada (figure 7). All these association tombs are in fact monuments since they contain no remains.

After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, the shipping of bones to China became impossible. In 1952 the CCBA considered selling the Chinese Cemetery and buying another piece of land for reburying the bones in the "bone house" and the remains in the cemetery.<sup>30</sup> The plan was dropped because of the high cost of exhuming more than a thousand graves and reburying the remains elsewhere.

Four years later the association considered the disposal of the cemetery again. In March 1956 it proposed to Oak Bay Council that it would sell the Chinese Cemetery property to the municipality in order to use the proceeds to purchase another cemetery site near Elk Lake or Royal Oak.<sup>31</sup> Council turned down its proposal. Instead, it consulted its solicitor to see if it had any power to enforce the removal of remains from the cemetery should it cease to be used as a burial ground.<sup>32</sup> After Council was told that it had no authority to do so as long as the remains were not a nuisance, no action was taken.

From time to time rowdies would break open the wooden door of the "bone house" in the Chinese Cemetery, take out the bones and throw them at one another. An iron gate replaced the wooden door. On one Hallowe'en night some mischievous teenagers nonetheless threw fire-crackers into the "bone house" and nearly caused a fire. The CCBA then covered up the entrance of the "bone house" with a cement wall. In 1960 the association decided to raise funds to rebury hundreds of crates of bones in the "bone house." Within a few months it succeeded in collecting \$18,000.<sup>33</sup> The association officials started to record all the crates of bones and classified them according to their county origin (table 2). The results of this effort revealed that about 70 percent of the deceased had come from the Four Counties and 18 percent from the Three Counties. This burial record corroborates the author's previous

<sup>30</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1952. Minutes of meeting on 19 Sept. 1952.

<sup>31</sup> *Victoria Times*, 21 March 1956.

<sup>32</sup> *Oak Bay Municipality Correspondence*, no. 7600, correspondence between Messrs. Crease, Davey & Co. and Council, 9 March and 15 March 1956; and letter from Council to CCBA, 20 March 1956.

<sup>33</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1960. Minutes of meeting on 12 May 1960; CCBA Annual Report, 1961. Minutes of meeting on 1 March 1961.



FIGURE 6

A tomb set up in Royal Oak Burial Park by the Chinese Freemasons in September 1977.

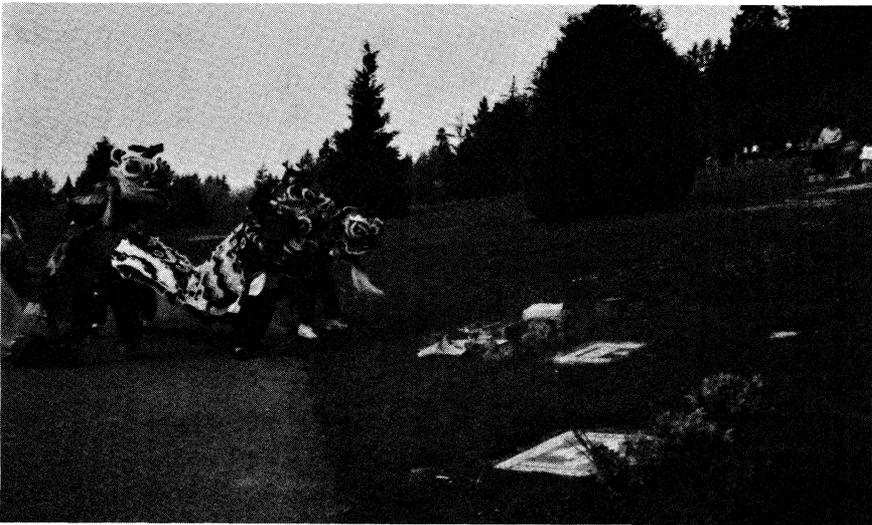


FIGURE 7

The CCBA and the Wong Association erected their tombs in Royal Oak Burial Park, April 1984. The worship ceremony was started with the lion dance.

TABLE 2  
*Home Counties and Surnames as Recorded  
 on Crates of Bones, 1960*

	<i>Tai-shan</i>	<i>Kai-ping</i>	<i>Xinhui</i>	<i>En-ping</i>	<i>Panyu</i>	<i>Zhong-shan</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>
Huang	57	6	14	1	0	5	6	89
Ma	79	0	1	0	0	0	0	80
Li	46	1	18	3	3	3	3	77
Zhou	0	18	1	0	28	1	3	51
Lin	14	0	16	2	3	5	0	40
Chen	15	0	7	8	3	1	2	36
Liang	6	10	4	4	1	0	0	25
Yang	0	1	1	0	22	1	0	25
Tan	5	17	3	0	0	0	0	25
Xie	2	12	0	2	8	0	0	24
Liu	11	0	3	0	3	3	2	22
Wu	7	6	3	3	1	0	2	22
Cao	2	0	0	0	19	0	0	21
Su	0	0	2	0	16	0	0	18
Zheng	2	1	0	11	0	4	0	18
Guan	1	13	1	0	0	0	0	15
Zhang	2	6	4	1	0	0	2	15
Yu	5	4	5	0	0	0	0	14
Other*	56	26	29	28	41	15	21	224
Total	310	121	112	63	148	38	49	841

\* Includes fifteen unidentified crates having no names.

research on the home county and clan origins of overseas Chinese in Canada. Based on the donation receipts to the CCBA in the early 1880s, nearly 64 percent of the donors had come from the Four Counties and 18 percent from the Three Counties.<sup>34</sup> In both cases, people from Taishan county topped the list and constituted an overwhelming majority of the Chinese in Canada.

<sup>34</sup> Chuen-yan David Lai, "Home County and Clan Origins of Overseas Chinese in Canada in the Early 1880s," *BC Studies* 27 (1975): 6.

On 25 June 1961 copies of a notice were sent out to all Chinese communities across Canada asking them to come to Victoria before August 15 to collect the bones of any deceased relatives they might have there. When the date was due, the CCBA started counting the unclaimed crates of bones and numbered them at 820. They were then grouped according to home county and reburied in thirteen mass graves. The ceremony took place on 15 October 1961 and was probably the last elaborate Chinese funeral in the city.<sup>35</sup>

Throughout the 1960s the CCBA had too little funds to hire a permanent employee to look after the cemetery. Whenever nearby residents complained that the cemetery was overgrown with grass, the association asked for voluntary donations from various associations or individuals and engaged a person to tidy it up. It was, however, never regularly tended and was littered with garbage and broken bottles. Nearby residents frequently complained that the cemetery was a fire hazard during the summer when it was overgrown with grass. Finally, in August 1977, the CCBA employed the Stuarts, a nearby family, to look after the cemetery. They immediately filled up some of the hollows with sod, levelled the uneven sites, repaired and painted the fences, and tidied up the property. With their untiring efforts and great concern for the preservation of its natural beauty, the condition of the cemetery was greatly improved.

The number of graves in the Chinese Cemetery is still unknown. In July 1970 several directors of the association went to the defunct cemetery and for the first time conducted a crude counting of the grave sites. They estimated that about 970 graves might still exist, but their exact locations were unknown.<sup>36</sup> In June 1977 the author conducted a survey of the number and distribution of graves in the Chinese Cemetery. There were 13 mass graves, 71 graves having tombstones without inscriptions and only 240 graves having tombstones with inscriptions (figure 8). In addition, there were many grave sites without tombstones, or traces of graves where bodies might have been dug out or still be buried. Barring excavation of the entire cemetery, it will not be possible to find out how many graves are there.

Another survey of the Chinese Cemetery in March 1986 revealed that many graves had been damaged by vandalism. Grave tablets were broken or pulled out of the ground and scattered about. Many grave sites cannot

<sup>35</sup> *Victoria Times*, 16 Oct. 1961, and *Victoria Colonist*, 17 Oct. 1961.

<sup>36</sup> CCBA Annual Report, 1970. Minutes of meeting on 5 July 1970.

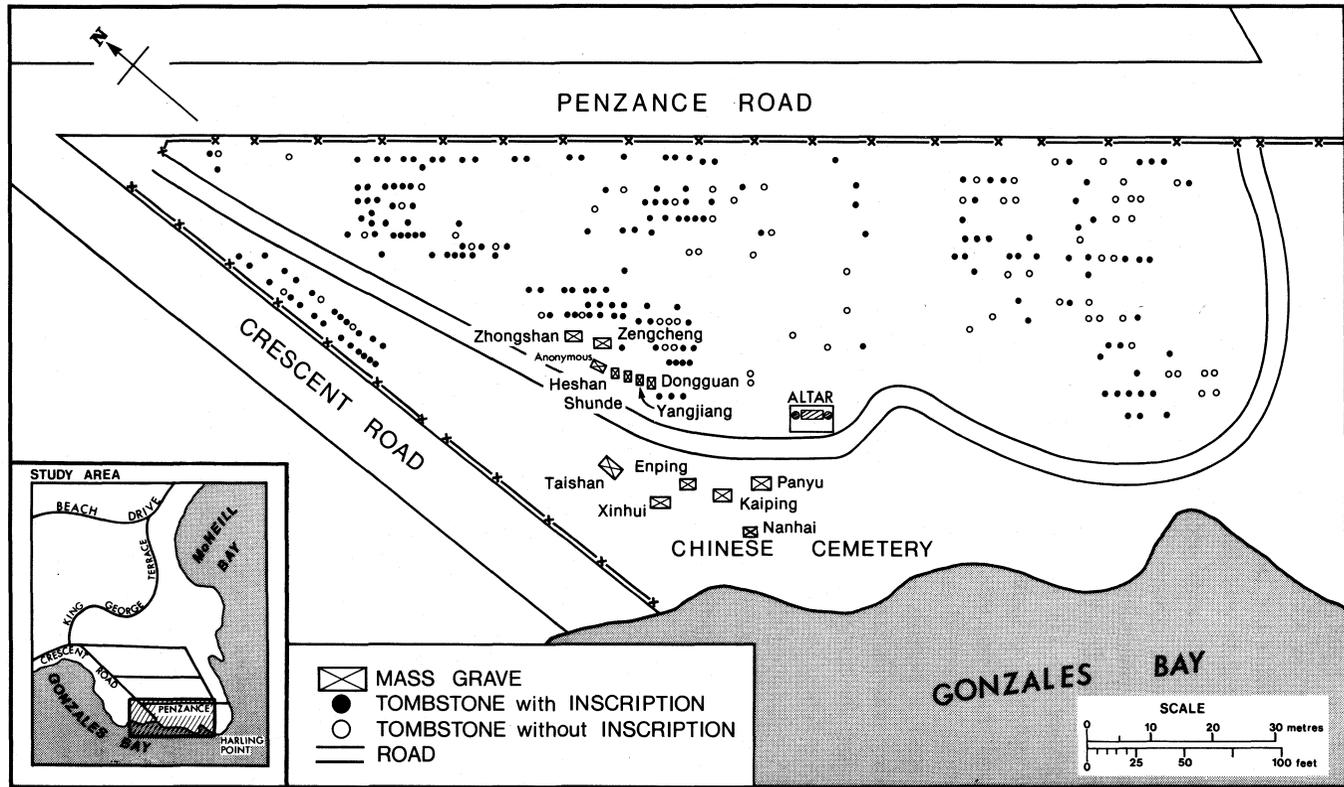


FIGURE 8

Distribution of graves in Chinese Cemetery, 1977.

be identified because their tablets have been removed and the graves overgrown with grass. The survey could identify only about 300 grave sites still marked by tombstones. The inscriptions revealed that Taishan people constituted 21 percent of the identified tombsites in the cemetery (table 3). The result of the survey thus confirms the view that Taishan people constituted the majority of the Chinese people in Canada during the early days.

From time to time real estate investors express interest in purchasing the Chinese Cemetery property for apartments or other development. Some people in the Chinese community would like to landscape the cemetery and develop it into a Chinese garden or park; some would prefer to sell it and use the proceeds for worthwhile community projects; and some do not want to exhume the graves and disturb the peace of the dead. The author, together with other conservationists, would like to preserve it as one of the places in Greater Victoria which still retains something of its natural character. In the spring the cemetery is carpeted

TABLE 3

*Classification of Tombstones According to County and Clan Origins of the Deceased, 1986*

County	Clan									Total
	Li	Zhou	Huang	Xu	Lin	Chen	Ma	Fang	Others	
Taishan	13	0	18	1	4	2	8	0	17	63
Kaiping	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	20	28
Xinhui	7	0	2	0	4	3	0	0	8	24
Enping	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	6	8
Zengcheng	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	24	45
Panyu	0	16	2	11	0	0	0	0	4	33
Zhongshan	10	0	1	0	3	0	0	7	3	5
Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
Unidentified	0	10	3	2	1	4	1	1	68	90
Total	32	31	28	14	12	11	10	8	157*	303

SOURCES: Data were based on the survey of the Chinese Cemetery which was carried out in March 1986.

\* Includes fifty-six deceased whose clan origin could not be identified.

with a great variety of wild flowers, including a few endangered species such as the White Fawn Lily (*Erythronium oregonum*), the Early Camas (*Camassia quamash*) and the Chocolate Lily (*Fritillaria lanceolata*). Macoun's Meadowfoam (*Limnanthes macounii*) is one of the rarest plants in the world, so much so that as recently as 1965 it was thought by U.S. researchers Howard Scott Gentry and R. W. Miller to be extinct.<sup>37</sup> However, Dr. Adolph Ceska, auxiliary curator in botany with the B.C. Provincial Museum, discovered it in a few localities on south-eastern Vancouver Island.<sup>38</sup> The Chinese Cemetery harbours one of the thirty-five populations of Macoun's Meadowfoam,<sup>39</sup> and is therefore not only an important historic site but also a natural wilderness endowed with rare wildflowers growing on and around the graves. Many people come to the Chinese Cemetery on Sundays to enjoy its wild flowers, natural landscape and tranquillity. Once a year, during the Qingming Festival, various association representatives and individuals bring roast pigs, steamed chickens and other offerings first to the Chinese graves in Royal Oak Burial Park and then to the Chinese Cemetery to pay respect to the dead. After the festival is over, the Chinese Cemetery remains quiet and deserted for the rest of the year.

At present the CCBA has no intention of selling the cemetery; nor does it want to disturb its wilderness character and quiet simplicity. However, a comprehensive plan should be designed and carried out for the beautification of the cemetery and preservation of its natural environment before further damage is done to the grave sites.

<sup>37</sup> T. Pawlick, "Meadowfoam Microcosm," *Harrowsmith* (October 1980): 43.

<sup>38</sup> B. Funke, "Meadowfoam: Can a Dwarf defend a Gentle Giant?," *Wildlife Review* 4 (Winter 1982-83): 30.

<sup>39</sup> Pawlick, *op. cit.*, 49.