

Albert Head Cemetery

This small, virtually unknown cemetery, is located a few hundred feet from the water's edge on DND property at Albert Head. It is not accessible to the public.

In the late 1800's, British Columbia was the gateway to the Dominion and through her doors



passed thousands of immigrants, many of whom were of Chinese origin. With some of them came the dreaded disease of smallpox. At that time the Dominion government was ill prepared to protect the country from typhus, cholera and smallpox which were quite common in some parts of the world. As the number of immigrants increased, public pressure forced the government to act and a

quarantine station was formally set up in 1884. It is believed that a quarantine station of sorts existed at Albert Head in Metchosin as early as 1882 but no proof has been found. On September 9th, 1884, the Daily British Colonist reported that "Mr. Hayward will commence the construction of the quarantine buildings at Albert Head today. The buildings and the wings will be 160 feet long by 50 feet wide." A further article on October 12th 1884 stated that the two storey buildings would be completed by November.

Until 1891, the building at Albert Head saw only a handful of patients at any given time. That all



changed in December of 1891 when the Empress of China arrived in Vancouver with a confirmed case of smallpox causing a public outcry for action. In April 1892 the Empress of Japan arrived in Vancouver from Yokohama where it was reported that over 900 deaths had been attributed to smallpox. On

board the Japan, another case of smallpox was found and the ship was ordered to the quarantine station at Albert Head. The newspapers of the day reported that "at Albert Head yesterday a city of tents sprang up in an hour when 500 Chinamen were placed there by the health officer". This station was short lived. In 1893 the quarantine station was moved to William Head.

There are at least three burials at Albert Head. The first is that of Edwin Barry (Barrie) who died July 17th 1892 of smallpox. This young man, aged 17 and a half, was employed as a carpenter at the "Whitaker home in Spring Hill" and has the only stone monument. There are also two markers in the form of wooden crosses bearing the inscription: "Patient of the quarantine station, known only to God". It is believed that the first is the grave of Thomas Burrows (Burroughs) a 26 year old waiter employed by the old Victoria Hotel who died July 13th 1892 of smallpox. The second reputedly is the grave of William Short who died of the same disease on July 15th 1892.

There are rumors that there may be as many as 40 victims buried in a "slit trench" on this site but so far there is no confirmation. There may be a fourth burial. On July 30th 1892, the Daily British Colonist reported that a Charles Little had been sent to Albert Head to bury a Mr. Burns. Other than this one reference, there is no other information or confirmation of his burial at Albert Head.

In the 1930's the original picket fence was replaced and the area cleaned up. The last documented visit to this almost forgotten cemetery was in 1984 when a small group of reserve naval officer cadets cleaned up the site and repainted the fence.

This information was gathered from several sources including articles by John Adams, Bart Armstrong and the Daily British Colonist.