

Shady Creek Cemetery



Shady Creek Cemetery is a non-denominational community cemetery that has served Saanich since about 1894. In this year, Robert John who owned a 250 acre farm running along East Saanich Road from Shady Creek to Stelly's Cross Road, is reputed to have donated the land for the cemetery. It is believed that the first burial was one of his young children. The burial ground eventually became known as "Shady Creek" due to the fact that the second Shady Creek Methodist Church was built on the adjoining land. This property was also donated by Mr. John. The cemetery's location beside the church naturally makes it appear that the cemetery belongs to the church, but it does not. In fact it is

the smallest operating cemetery in the greater Victoria area.

Unfortunately, the earliest burial records for this cemetery have been lost and no photographs from the cemetery's first decades have been found. It is difficult to know exactly who is buried in the oldest portion and what it looked like before it assumed its present form. It is however fair to assume that Shady Creek Cemetery once had numerous wooden headboards surrounded by ornate wooden grave fences. There are very few old stone monuments as only the wealthy could afford them. Time and the odd grass fire have destroyed all the old wooden headboards.



In 1981 the Victoria Genealogical Society conducted an inventory of the gravestones and found 116 families with headstones. The Sluggetts had the largest contingent. The oldest dates recorded actually pre-date 1894 which is said to be the date Robert John donated the land. For example, John Dawson's stone records his date of death as 1884 and Mary Everton's date of death is 1892. Then there is Luke Sidwell's stone inscribed 1873. There are three possible explanations for these stones: they were erected long after the person's death, they were moved from elsewhere (possibly a gravesite on a family farm) or the cemetery was in use prior to 1894.

One of the largest family plots at Shady Creek is that of the Alexander family, one of the well-known early black families in Victoria. Charles and Nancy Alexander and many of their descendants are at peace in this tranquil acre.

Even though Robert John moved from this area long before his death, he chose Shady Creek as his last resting place. At the time of his death in 1905, he was the warden at the provincial jail (on Hillside Avenue where S. J. Willis School now stands). A special train was arranged to carry his body from Victoria to Saanich.

There are many unknowns at this tranquil little cemetery and the Old Cemeteries Society would be grateful for any and all information about the families buried there. If you have any old photos or stories, please share them by sending them to us or contact us for pickup.