

Heritage Week Self Guided Tour – Boundary Bay Cemetery

856 56 Street, Tsawwassen

Welcome to this self guided tour of the Boundary Bay Cemetery. This cemetery is a heritage site listed on HistoricPlaces.ca. It tells part of the story of the early settlement of South Delta, and is an important place of memory, history and identity. This tour is just one way to look at the history of the cemetery and the story of the community it represents. To help you with the questions, there are some surveyor's flags posted near some of the markers mentioned.



The Boundary Bay Cemetery has been used officially since 1891. At that time, it was poorly drained and heavily treed. It took many years to create this park like setting.

We should note that there were other burial sites around delta before that time. Some may have been used for thousands of years, but they are found by accident when digging for other purposes.

For this self guided tour, you will need to go to the southeast corner of the cemetery –that is the far end of the cemetery from the entrance, and to the right.

In this part of the cemetery are some of the oldest families of Delta. You can see many

needle-like markers called obelisks. The shape comes from the Middle East, and was very popular in the late 1800s, especially among people associated with the Masons. The obelisks took on the meaning of fatherhood, strength and power.

Thought Question: What does the use of obelisks in this early section suggest about how families viewed their role in the community?

Obelisks can also be practical. They were usually placed in the centre of the plot, memorializing people on all sides.

Activity: How is this true for the Burr family?

We can also see differences in the style. The Burr family obelisk is styled in an early Art Deco motif, with stylized palm fronds, vines and rounded arches. The Martinolich family has a much more ornate marker, with carved columns, a large cross, and inlaid images. This marker is carved in a Greek Revival style. The Tamboline family has a marker that seems to be somewhere between the two.

Thought Question: What do you think this difference suggests? Does it have to do with the year the marker was created or are there other reasons?

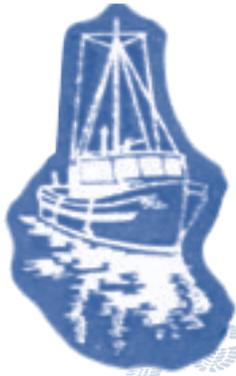
Among the larger stones you will see small stones. These are usually white, upright, and may have a sculpture of a lamb or rose on them.



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Delta

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Activity: What do these stones represent? What does this suggest about life in Delta?

One of the more unique markers is the one for John Kirkland and his wife, Letitia

Clarke. It is found in the very southeast corner by the fence. Note how the design is carried through the plot markers.

Thought Question: Why do you suppose the family chose this kind of marker as a memorial?

The Ladner family chose a different style of marker for William and Mary Ladner. Note its heavy, austere presence. William Ladner's nickname was 'The Squire'.

Thought Question: How does the marker give clues about the values of the person or family of the person memorialized?

Nearby, there is a marker with a small cup shaped stone in front. Also nearby is a marker with benches for people to sit on.

Activity: What do these markers invite people to do?

Also located in the cemetery is a marker for Arthur Mills. The date on this stone and the design should tell you a bit about Arthur. He fought on the Western Front during World War

I, but he caught two serious illnesses. He was sent home and admitted to hospital, but he never recovered. These casualty of War markers are not often seen in Canada, as most of them are in Europe.

Thought Question: What other illnesses were a problem at this time?

37 million people died in World War I. Near the end of the War, 21 million people around the world died due to the Spanish Flu. It was a very difficult time for people, as there was a lot of sadness.

Activity: If you have time, you can go to the middle of the cemetery, and find the markers for deceased members of the Chinese community. Can you find markers that have other languages on them?

There are many things that we can learn from cemeteries. They tell us the names of people from the past, what was important to them, their life and their struggles. Even a small cemetery like this shows some of the customs of other countries. This information can be shared through symbols such as headstones. These markers can also lead us to think about other questions we might ask ourselves.



If you have other self-guided tour ideas, please contact us at 604-952-3837.