



BC Black History Awareness Society
OUR ROOTS RUN DEEP

Gravesite Restoration Project



BC Black History Awareness Society

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BCBHAS Gravesite Restoration Project

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Project Overview

Ross Bay Cemetery is an important resource that BC Black History Awareness Society uses to educate residents and visitors on the history of the Black presence in the area and to preserve the history of the group invited by Sir James Douglas that influenced the development of the area and British Columbia. The BCBHAS annual tour of the cemetery during Black History Month is particularly important.

More than 50 Black settlers and their descendants are buried at Ross Bay Cemetery. Some graves are not marked, and the markers of others have deteriorated. Through volunteers, the Old Cemeteries Society cleans, restores, and preserves markers. This can be a daunting task – the cemetery is 27.5 acres with an estimated 30,000 interments.

In the summer 2023, BCBHAS began a project to preserve some grave markers of Black settlers and restore them as much as possible to their original condition. The scope of the work was PRESERVATION - to maintain and stabilize the existing form, material, and integrity of the gravesites and CONSERVATION – to retain the original memorials, grave markers, tombstones and plot curbing.

To successfully do this work required that we obtain support of Ross Bay Cemetery and Old Cemeteries Society, find a restorer, identify which graves could be candidates for preservation, prepare a budget, obtain permission from the City of Victoria as owner of the cemetery, put together a project team, and secure a grant through BC Heritage Foundation.

At the beginning of July 2023 Heritage BC informed us that we had received the grant from the Heritage Legacy Fund!

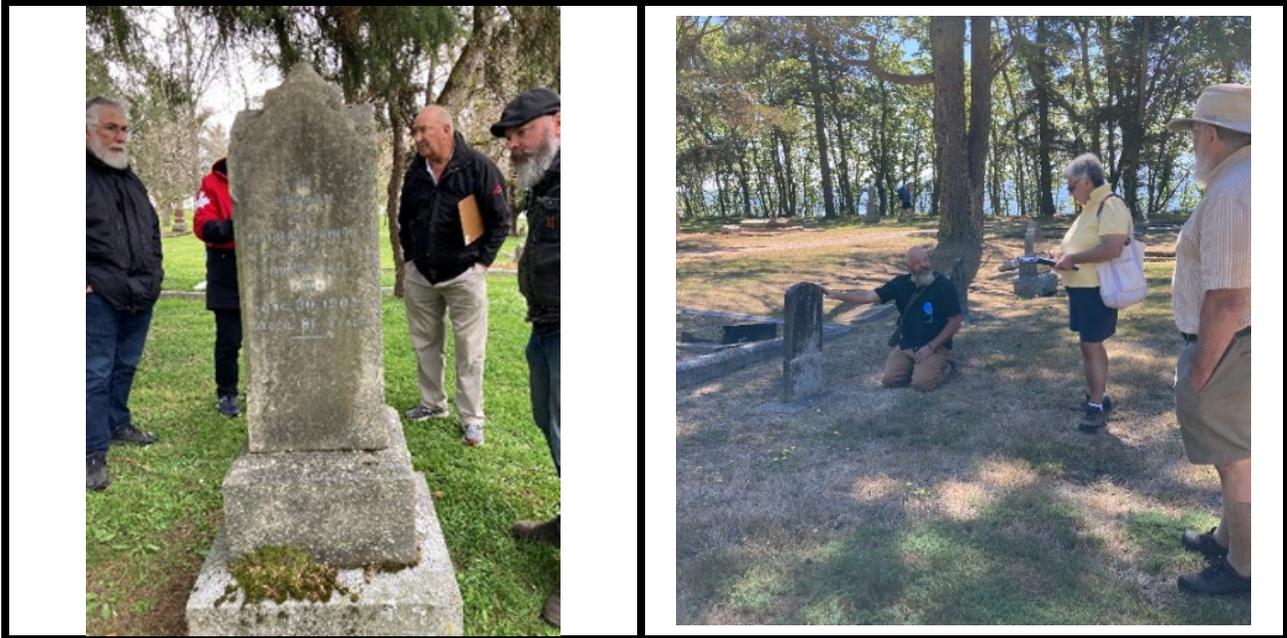


Project Team: The Project Manager was Door Gibson. She is Captain, Retired; Member of the Order of Military Merit; recipient of the Canadian Forces' Decoration; and a BCBHAS member. We hired an expert in conservation, Shawn Thibault, Ravenstone Masonry & Conservation Inc.

<https://www.ravenstoneinc.ca/>, to do the professional restoration work. The project team members were Wilf Bruch, Ross Bay Cemetery, John Adams and Gerry Buydens, Old Cemeteries Society; and from BCBHAS: Paul Schachter, JD, Board Treasurer, and Fran Morrison, Board Secretary.

Team members meet with Shawn at Ross Bay Cemetery to review the condition of the markers and discuss the specifics for the preservation for each marker.





The preserved grave markers and plot coordinates are:

BOND: Willis and Martha Bond	G32 E12
BOOTH: 1. Samuel and Julia Ann Booth, and oldest son Hiram 2. Youngest son Andrew and 5 children/grandchildren of Julia and Samuel - Clarence, Hiram John, Andrew Victor, Rita Louise, and Alfred Samuel	G50-E9, G51-E9 G50 W10, G51 W10
CHARITY: 1. Cornelius Charity 2. Daughter Adele Charity	G42 E18 G43, E18
GISCOME: John Robert Giscome	R77 E0
POINTER: Nathan and Sarah Pointer; and son William	G45-46 E12
RICHARDS-EVERTON: Clarissa Richards; her sister Sophia and brother-in-law George Everton	F12-13 E20

**By preserving these 8 grave markers,
the lives of 20 historically important people
are being acknowledged and honoured.**

[Acknowledgements, Photo Credits, and Additional Sources](#)

Thank you, Ross Bay Cemetery and the Old Cemeteries Society. For decades they have supported, promoted, and been an advocate of our work. We look forward to a continued mutually supportive and committed partnership.

“This project would not have been completed without the dedicated, passionate, devoted restoration; artistic perfection of Shawn Thibault of Revenstone Masonry and Conservation” Door Gibson

Photographers: John Adams, Door Gibson, Tracy Guinchard, Fran Morrison, Shawn Thibault.
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Additional Sources: Sherry Edmunds-Flett, Crawford Killian, Old Cemeteries Society, Royal BC Museum and Archives - Genealogy database, City of Victoria Archives

Links:

[Old Cemeteries Society](#)

[Ross Bay Cemetery](#)

[Ravenstone Masonry and Conservation](#)

1. Martha and Willis Bond

Condition: The grave marker is a white marble tablet, with the top broken and a missing corner. It was re-erected in a concrete sleeve some years ago. Lead lettering needed cleaning, the marker needed to be straightened and the missing top restored.



In the workshop – design and addition of the missing top, broken corner repaired



BOND BIOGRAPHY

Willis Bond arrived in Victoria in 1858. His wife Martha and their two children, Martha and John, arrived a few months later. Bond was a well-known and respected influencer in the community. [“The Indefatigable Willis Bond”](#), one of the stories in the BCBHAS Digital Museums Canada (DMC) online exhibit, tells the story of his career and exploits.

Bond was a strong community ally up to his death. One instance, about a year before he died, was the case of Mr. Andrew Jackson Bennett, a Black immigrant from Australia, who owned and operated a farm in Saanich. At about age 55, Bennett was thought to be mentally unstable and was held in the provincial jail for “safe-keeping.” The community worked with Bond for Bennett’s release. While Bennett was staying with Bond, it was discovered that \$1200 had been misappropriated from Bennett’s bank account. Bond and a lawyer were able to recover the funds. *Colonist*, Feb 21, 1892 “Andrew Bennett’s Case”, p. 3

Willis Bond died that same year on December 22, 1892. We don’t know what became of their son John. Their daughter, Martha, was listed in the 1901 Victoria census as a nurse. Willis’s wife, Martha, continued living in their home on View Street until her death in 1903.

2. Samuel and Julia Ann Booth, sons Hiram and Andrew, and five grandchildren

Condition: Two markers were restored. The marker for Samuel and Julia and their oldest son, Hiram, a white marble tablet with no curbing, needed to be cleaned. (G50-E9, G51-E9). The second marker for their youngest son, Andrew and his five children, Samuel and Julia's grandchildren. A white marble column with a granite base, needed straightening and cleaning. (G50/51-W-10)

	<p>SACRED TO THE MEMORY of HIRAM JOHN THE BELOVED SON of JULIA ANN and SAMUEL JOHN BOOTH Who Departed This Life November 30 1876 AGED 20 Years 6 Months and 10 Days Then saith his disciples, Lord if he sleep he shall do well</p>	
	<p>HIRAM and CLARENCE - BOOTH - BORN FEB 24, 1889 DIED IN INFANCY - ANDREW VICTOR BOOTH DIED JUNE 25 1891 AGED 18 MONTHS -- I shall go to them but they shall not return unto me.</p>	

	<p>RITA LOUISE BOOTH DIED FEB 24 1893 AGED 19 MONTHS</p> <p>----</p> <p>ALFRED SAMUEL BOOTH DIED SEPT 20 1893 AGED 7 MONTHS</p> <p>--</p> <p>They are only gone before. They are not lost.</p>	
	<p>In Loving Memory of ANDREW S BOOTH DIED SEP 2 1894 AGED 32 YEARS</p> <p>-----</p> <p>HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP</p>	

BOOTH BIOGRAPHY

Samuel Booth sailed from New York to the Isthmus of Panama, then went on to California by a pack of mules. Julia was from Maryland. Their first son, Hiram John, was born in 1856 in California. A second son, Andrew, was born in Victoria in 1861.

In the summer of 1864, Samuel Booth partnered with three men, George Munro, John Tyrel, and William Dyer, to form the Industry Company. They had discovered gold on the Leech River, about 40 miles west of Victoria. On August 4, 1864, the local newspaper reported, "This splendid specimen of gold appears to be entirely pure. On being weighed it was declared to contain 4 ounces, 6 dwts, \$73.20!!". Unfortunately, the run was short-lived and other significant finds did not materialize there.

Julia and Samuel were active and respected community members for over a decade when they were devastated by the death of their oldest son, Hiram John, on November 30, 1876. He had celebrated his 20th birthday 10 months before and was making a livelihood as a caulker. About a month later, December 14, 1876, the Colonist reports that Samuel Booth had donated three gold nuggets to the Reformed Episcopal Grammer School towards the purchase of awards for the school's Christmas pageant participants. Their son, Andrew, was a recipient of a second prize.

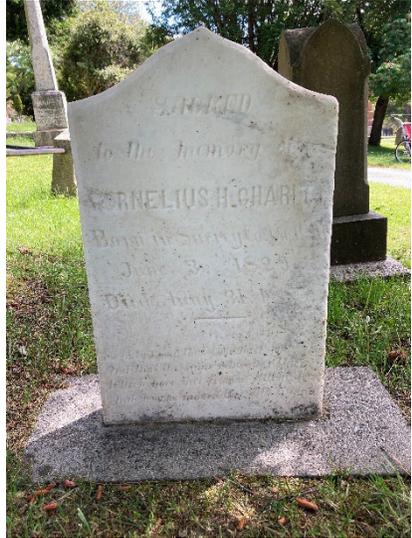
In 1885/1886 Booth decides to continue prospecting and spent some time in northern BC with Henry McDame, who had also prospected with John Giscome.

On May 16, 1888 in Victoria, Andrew, now 27 years old and working as an Expressman, married Louisa Pierre, daughter of Thomas and Anne Pierre. The Pierre's owned and operated a tailoring business. On May 22, 1890, Andrew and Louisa were blessed with the birth of twins, Hiram and Clarence, but both children tragically died in infancy. After that, the families continue to be faced with endless sorrow and unimaginable heartbreak – three more children/grandchildren died in infancy - Andrew Victor, Rita Louisa, and Alfred Samuel. Three years later, tragedy struck again for Julia and Samuel and their daughter-in-law. On September 2, 1894, their son Andrew died at the age of 33.

Julia and Samuel found the strength to carry on for many more valuable years. Julia passed away at age 87 on March 16, 1916. Samuel died the following year, age 91, on December 12, 1917 and is buried next to Julia.

3. Cornelius Charity and daughter Adele Charity

Condition: Two white marble tablet markers, deteriorated, cracked curbing, needs cleaning

	<p>Sacred To The Memory of ADELE Beloved Daughter of C.H & M.J. Charity Born in Chatham Ontario CANADA Died October 24 1874 Aged 20 years 10 months</p>	
	<p>SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF CORNELIUS H. CHARITY Born in Surry County, VA June 8 1829 Died May 31 1885</p>	

CHARITY BIOGRAPHY

Cornelius Hamlin Charity, a boot and shoemaker, resided with his family in Chatham, Ontario until 1861. His wife, Martha Jane, took an active part in the Charity shoemaking business. They had two daughters, Eleanor and Adele. Adele was born in 1853 in Chatham, Ontario. In the 1861 Canada Census, Cornelius was listed as a shoemaker and Martha as a shoe binder. That same year the family moved to Victoria, but it does not appear they were there for long.

The Charity family moved up and down the west coast between Victoria and California a few times - moving whenever and wherever prospects were best for Cornelius's shoemaking business.

Adele died in Victoria on October 24, 1874 – she was 20 years old. The family continued their west coast travels. In 1879 Cornelius was listed in the California Voters Registers, but then apparently returned to Victoria on his own, as Martha was living with her daughter Eleanor and son-in-law Francis Seymour in Portland, Oregon. Cornelius died, May 31, 1885 in Victoria. His death certificate was signed by daughter Eleanor.

4. John Robert Giscome

Condition: One heritage marker, with curbing; one white marble plaque placed in 1988. White marble tablet and plaque needed cleaning; Granite curbing needed cleaning. Cement ledger needed cleaning.

Some preservation work took place in May 1988 by the Victoria Black People's Society, and they installed the plaque.

<p>Head stone:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">JOHN R. GISCOME DIED JUNE 24, 1907 AGED 75 YEARS</p>	<p>Plaque:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">JOHN GISCOME BORN ENFIELD ST. MARY JAMAICA. AMONG THE FIRST BLACK SETTLERS TO VICTORIA IN 1858. ALONG WITH HENRY MCDAME FROM THE BAHAMAS, PROSPECTED IN NORTHERN B.C. 1907</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VICTORIA BLACK PEOPLES SOCIETY</p>
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GISCOME BIOGRAPHY

John Robert Giscome was from Jamaica. In 1862, he and Henry McDame, who was from the Bahamas; embarked on a one-year, 560 km trek to explore northern BC and northern parts of what is today the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

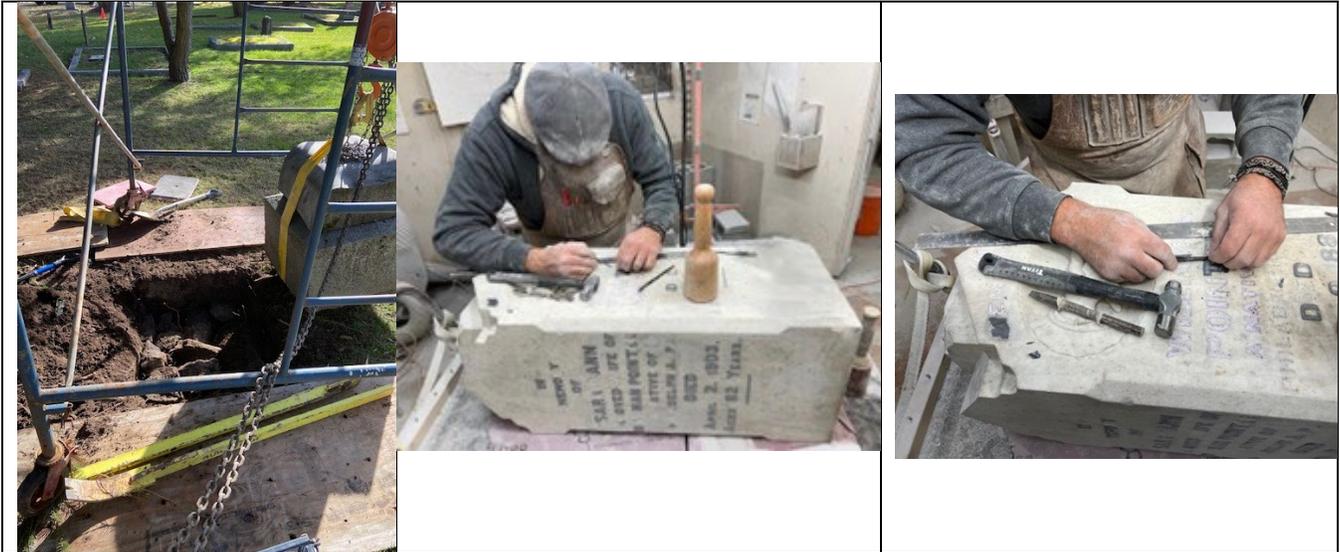
Giscome, Giscome Canyon and Giscome Portage Trail all bear his name. The creek on which Henry McDame found gold, became known as McDame Creek.

John Robert Giscome, remained a bachelor. When he died in 1907 at the age of 75, he left his fortune which was valued at \$21,000 (over \$700,000 in 2024) to his landlady, Mrs. Ella Cooness.

Giscome's and McDame's travels and explorations are chronicled in these two articles. On this website "[John Robert Giscome](#)" and "[GOLD](#)" one of the stories of the BCBHAS Digital Museums Canada (DMC) online exhibit.

5. Nathan and Sarah Pointer, and son William

Condition: One white marble column with flush lead lettering on a granite base. The column and base needed cleaning, and the base needed to be straightened.



At the cemetery: the marble column is removed, the base is excavated in order to level it.
In the shop: lead lettering is replaced.



IN
MEMORY OF
**WILLIAM H.
POINTER,**
A NATIVE OF
PHILADELPHIA, PA
DIED
JUNE 9, 1886
AGED 43 YEARS



	<p style="text-align: center;">IN MEMORY OF SARAH ANN BELOVED WIFE OF NATHAN POINTER A NATIVE OF PHILADELPHIA, PA DIED APRIL 2, 1903 AGED 82 YEARS</p>	
	<p style="text-align: center;">IN MEMORY OF NATHAN PONTNER A NATIVE OF MILFORD, DEL. DIED AUG 30, 1903 AGED 81 YEARS</p>	

POINTER BIOGRAPHY

Sarah was from Philadelphia, and Nathan was from Delaware. They would have arrived sometime in 1858 with two daughters, Sarah and Johanna and a son, William. By February 1859, Nathan began advertising regularly in the Colonist as owner and operator of a “gentlemen’s furnishings store” selling men’s clothing imported from London, New York and Philadelphia and other merchandise that included dressing robes, cashmere comforters, opera scarves, gloves, and silk umbrellas. Sarah was a dressmaker. The business flourished as evidenced in the tax assessments of July 1, 1863. Nathan Pointer's clothing store had one of the highest annual tax assessments at \$2,600.00.

Their son, William, remained a bachelor but did travel back to the US at some time. The oldest daughter, Sarah, moved back to San Francisco where she married William Herbert Carter on January

27, 1869. In 1880 their second daughter, Johanna, married James Edward White in Victoria, a harness maker originally from Massachusetts.

Tragedy struck in June 1886 when their son, William, age 43, died. He was living in Olympia, Washington. Then in March 1889, their son-in-law James died, age 36. He is also buried in the Ross Bay Cemetery. (Block G Plot: 47 W 20)

In the 1901 Canada Census, the oldest daughter, Sarah, was recorded as back in Victoria with her husband and two children. She was working as a dressmaker.

Two years later on April 1, 1903, Sarah died, age 82, at their home on 193 Johnson Street, and less than five months later, Nathan died on August 30, 1903, age 81. They had five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Commemoration: In June 1986, the city of Victoria initiated the “Fort Victoria Brick Project” to commemorate early Victoria settlers. 1000 commemorative bricks were laid along Government Street and in Bastion Square. This commemorative brick for Nathan and Sarah is in Bastion Square.



6. Clarissa Richards; her sister Sophia and brother-in-law George Everton

Condition: One white marble tablet, has a visible mend and was badly mended; recently re-erected in concrete sleeve. No curbing. Needed cleaning. Needed straightening.



CLARISSA RICHARDS

Died

Aug 4, 1890

Aged 80 years

Also her sister

SOPHIA EVERTON

Died

April 27, 1903

Aged 90 years

GEORGE EVERTON

Died

Aged 78 years



RICHARDS AND EVERTON BIOGRAPHY

The Richards arrived with other families who had moved to California from Florida and then later to Vancouver Island. Clarissa was born in Florida in 1810, was married there and gave birth to daughter Victoria there as well.

Her husband, Fortune Richard, was one of the three delegates sent to Vancouver Island by the Pioneer Committee of the Black community in San Francisco early in 1858. The others were Wellington Moses and a man named Mercier. Of these, Fortune Richard is the only one who stayed in Victoria. Wellington Moses was a barber and spent his time in Barkerville. Variousy, Fortune worked as a carpenter, as a shipwright and in a livery stable. Their first home was on Fort Street. Beginning in 1869, the family lived on Topaz Ave. Fortune was also a captain in the Victoria Pioneer Rifle Corps, but it seems he returned to the US after Clarissa's death.

Clarissa was part of the group of women who were avid supporters of their churches and an advocate for women generally. Author Crawford Killian writes "Clarissa Richards in 1885 signed a petition to grant women the right to vote."

Sophia and George Everton were both seniors when they were married. Killian explains: "In 1892, Sophia at the age of seventy-nine married a white Englishman, a widower named George Everton, who was sixteen years younger." In the census the year before, 1891, George is listed as "dry goods pedlar." Sophia died in 1903 at the age of 90. George was 78 when he died in 1907.