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May- June 2019

Tribute to Mifflin Gibbs

What: Unveiling of memorial plaque

When: Saturday May 04 at 2:00 p.m.

Where: Irving Park, corner of Menzies & Michigan Streets

Please RSVP by Saturday, April 27, to Mavis DeGirolamo maviche@shaw.ca

Mifflin Wistar Gibbs organized a group of African Americans to emigrate to British Columbia, beginning in 1858. He worked as a merchant and became active in politics, serving on Victoria City Council from 1867 to 1869. In 1868, Gibbs was the [Salt Spring Island](#) delegate to the Yale Convention, an important step toward British Columbia's decision to join Canada in confederation. Gibbs and many of his followers returned to the United States following the Civil War. He settled in Little Rock, Arkansas, and had a distinguished career there. He is buried in the Oakland and Historic Cemetery.

Cleaning at Ross Bay Cemetery

Sharon Welsh will be stepping down from coordinating the cleaning bees and we are looking for someone to volunteer to take over.

Please contact the office if you or if you know someone, who would like to volunteer.

- No experience necessary;
- Must enjoy working with an excellent group of volunteers;
- Likes working in the cemetery on Saturday mornings – washing, scraping, sweeping, etc;
- Needs to enjoy speaking with locals and visitors about the Old Cemetery Society and the Cemetery;
- On the job training available until you're comfortable.



BC Historical Federation conference registration now open

Join us in Courtenay, Cumberland and Comox June 6-9! [Registration is now open for our annual conference.](#)

Learn more about our conference and view package options on [our conference pages.](#)

Registration closes [May 15.](#)

Questions about your membership?

- Read about [Membership in the BCHF.](#)
- Contact us at membership@bchistory.ca.

To learn more about the BCHF:

- [Visit our web site](#)
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The British Columbia Historical Federation encourages interest in the history of British Columbia through research, presentation and support.

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Tribute to Drew Waveryn Linda Richards & Yvonne Van Ruskenveld

Drew Waveryn is leaving the OCS Board after 7 years, and will truly be missed. He was one of the original founders of the OCS and his name is on our charter. He served on the Board for a number of years when we first started up, before taking a break.

Drew has contributed to a number of publications through the years including "Craigdarroch Castle's Quarterly" and Jim Alessio's book, "Edna Wallace Hopper, the Eternal Flapper" as well as taking photos for the Victoria Heritage Society and adding to the "Empress of Asia" website. He has a vast postcard collection and is willing to share the images with societies.

Drew has been active in the theatre here in Victoria and not only has he acted in Langham Court plays, but he did the set decor for their production of “Blythe Spirit” to great acclaim by the critics. He is one of only 98 life members of the Langham Court Theatre Society.

He volunteered for years at Craigdarroch Castle as a docent and a researcher. He was instrumental in the repatriation of Robin W. Dunsmuir from Singapore to the family plot in Ross Bay Cemetery. The cemetery where Robin had been interred was being removed and housing built over it. Any unclaimed ashes were going to be thrown into the sea. Drew was able to contact the family just in time and Robin is safely in Ross Bay Cemetery.

Thank you so much for all the incredible tours, for your talk at last years AGM, and for being responsible for the OCS Facebook page (especially the deer photos).

We will miss you and hope that you visit us often. Enjoy your retirement.



Drew conducting a theatre tour at Ross Bay Cemetery

National Museum of Funeral History [Diane Persson](#)

“Any day above ground is a good one.”

That’s the motto of the National Museum of Funeral History in Houston, Texas, founded over 25 years ago to educate the public and preserve the history of death care (www.nmfh.org). Founded by a funeral director to display artifacts of the funeral services industry, it has over 30,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space. Starting with an exhibit of vintage hearses, it now has 15 permanent exhibits on a wide range of funeral-related topics from the history of embalming and cremation to a collection of unusual coffins and caskets, including fantasy coffins from Ghana. The collection of elegant horse-drawn funeral carriages includes this one, made in Quebec in 1900 for children’s funerals.



Hearse used in the funeral of Grace Kelly and the state funeral services of U.S. Presidents Ronald Reagan and Gerald R. Ford are there. There's an elaborate glass-paneled funeral carriage made in Germany in 1850; a 1916 Packard funeral bus, large enough to hold the coffin, pallbearers and up to 20 mourners; and a 1921 motorized hearse with opulent hand-carved wooden panels typifying the extravagance of hearse manufacturers of the era.



Another exhibit tracks methods of preserving human remains through the centuries, from Egyptian embalming rituals developed more than 5000 years ago to an embalming station on a Civil War battlefield. The equipment required for embalming was so extensive that observers frequently commented on how the process was “quite an undertaking,” leading to use of the term “undertaker.” One moves from the history of embalming to cremation, which is becoming the most popular form of disposal of a body. Modern cremation sheds light on the seemingly endless possibilities for memorialization, from scattering ashes in a special place to wearing them in a locket around your neck. Their hallmark exhibit, *Celebrating the Lives and Deaths of the Popes* includes three-dimensional scenes and multi-media presentations that give a sense of attending a Pope's funeral.

Finally, *Thanks for the Memories*, provides an up-close and personal look at the grand farewells for some of the world's most iconic figures. See authentic printed memorial folders and memorabilia used for Michael Jackson, Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra, Elizabeth Taylor, John Wayne and others, and there's even a section dedicated to famous animals, including Old Yeller, Lassie, Benji and Mr. Ed.

And of course, one can't visit the museum without ending up at the gift shop, where choices range from books (mourning art and jewelry), Day of the Dead items, plus mugs, t-shirts, and novelty items ('the only difference between a rut and grave is the depth'). As the largest educational center on funerary customs in the US and perhaps in the world, it should be on your list of unusual museums.

Scenes from the Wei Wai Kum First Nation Cemetery at Campbell River

Bente Svendsen



Tombstone Oddities

Walter Skold of Freeport, Maine, reads a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem while posing in Eastern Cemetery in Portland, Maine. Skold, the late founder of the Dead Poets Society of America, can be inducted to the society of fallen bards now that he's a published poet. Skold visited the gravesites of more than 600 poets and one of his criteria was that the subjects had to be published. Thanks to his sons, Charles and Simon, he's becoming a published poet in 2019, posthumously, with his poetry book: *"The Mirror is not Cracked."* In the second photo Skold discusses the design of his tombstone with carver Michael Updike, son of writer John Updike. Skold died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack at age 57 on January 20, 2018.



Last Words

Dan Dodds 1949-2011

"This is the fish of my dreams."

Said after catching a 28 lb. salmon, the biggest fish he'd ever caught. He thereupon fell into the water and drowned. The fish was barbecued and eaten at his funeral.

Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your OCS membership and for the board to thank you for your past support of our activities. Please circle type of membership: Individual \$30 Family \$45 Student \$20
Donations are greatly appreciated. \$_____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____

E-MAIL: _____ Please make

cheques payable to The Old Cemeteries Society and mail to P.O. Box 50004, RPO Fairfield Plaza, Victoria BC, V8S 5L8

NB: Membership cards are issued only if requested.