

YALE PIONEER CEMETERY, YALE, BRITISH COLUMBIA

This cemetery was published in BCGS Journal, Nov 1, 1972, Volume 2, Number 1, page 2-3 when it was copied with permission from Whatcom Genealogical Society Quarterly, Vol. 3, No. 1, page 5-6. Then recorded in June 2007 by Pearl Phillips and Valerie Hooper of the British Columbia Genealogical Society. Bruce Mason and Darla Dickenson of the Yale and District Historical Society provided further information about the people buried in the cemetery from the museum holdings.

Yale was named in the early 1800's after James Murray Yale, a HBC clerk, when it was a stockaded fur post of the Hudson's Bay Company. James Murray Yale is not buried in this cemetery but in the Victoria Pioneer Square Cemetery in Victoria, BC. In the 1850's Yale, as a Hudson's Bay Company post, was a stop on the gold rush trail to gold found on Fraser river bars and from the Thompson River. In the 1880's Yale was a base for the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway which was built as part of the agreement of British Columbia joining Canada.

St John The Devine Church was erected around 1870 although church services had been held in various buildings in Yale prior to this. The current building is the original and is the second oldest church in mainland BC. Most burials in this cemetery would have been from this church. At that time Yale was being considered as the site for the capitol of mainland of British Columbia. (Victoria, as Fort Victoria, was established as the capitol of Vancouver Island in 1849 and the two colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia were joined in 1866.)

The cemetery was established around 1860 on donated land. The oldest known burial was John Smithe or Smith in 1860. The cemetery is located between two creeks and on very steep and uneven ground. Do wear good shoes if you are visiting here. The graves appear scattered but if you consider the number of unmarked graves, then the markers would probably be in rows facing east. There are railway tracks at the bottom of the cemetery which have cut off some of the early graves that would have been where the tracks presently are and in the piece of land between the tracks and the river. If you cross the tracks to the land by the river do so with caution; there are many trains using the tracks and the land is overgrown and near the river bank which is not too stable. We did not explore this land for markers.

The present Village of Yale is located at what is considered the beginning of the Fraser Canyon. At its height Yale had a population of 15,000. Today the population is around 400, with approximately 200 living in the village of Yale. The museum is located in an 1870 Victorian house that can be visited daily from April to October. The St John The Devine Church is part of the museum.

Reference:

Historic Yale, British Columbia, Yale & District Historical Society, self published, 1954.

British Columbia Chronicle: God and Colonists, Helen B. Akrigg and G.P.V. Akrigg, Discovery Press, Vancouver 1977.

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Yale is a small community located in the Fraser Canyon approximately 22 km (~15 miles) north of Hope, BC on Highway #1. The cemetery is located, if coming from Hope, across the road from the "Welcome to Yale" sign. On the east side (river side) of the road you will see the cemetery sign, "Pioneer Cemetery". The legal description is Kamloops Land Title Office, the fractional NE ¼ Sec 10, Township 7, Range 26, West of the 6th Meridian, YDYD.



Then you will see the white cross that is the entrance to the cemetery.



It is safe to park on either side of the highway provided you pull off far enough. It is not recommended that you drive down the grass road to the cemetery as this will involve backing out uphill and on to the highway.

The cemetery area was selected in June 1860; it was on the western boundary of the Yale Township and between two creeks, All Hallows and Graveyard. This is an unregistered cemetery with its own endowment for upkeep. There are few burials currently and recent burials were all in family plots. At present the cemetery is owned by the Anglican Church of Canada and managed by the Yale and District Historical Society.

The Yale & District Historical Society will accept donations for the upkeep of the cemetery at
Yale & District Historical Society
Box 74
Yale, BC, V0K 2S0 phone 604-863-2324, fax 604-863-2495

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The cemetery was recorded digitally and the recording is available on CD only. There is a plot map with the graves numbered. The numbering begins at the top and to the left as you enter the cemetery..

The recording is recorded in 3 parts. Part one includes photographs of grave markers currently seen in the cemetery. Part two includes known burials with no markers. And part three is an index.

Part 1, the photo sections is organized in 4 columns:

- Column 1 gives the name and birth/death dates (if known)

- Column 2 is a photograph of the grave marker

- Column 3 is a transcription of the inscription

- Column 4 is further information as found in the Yale Cemetery burial records.

Please note that the information on the grave marker and that in the burial records do not necessarily agree.

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SOME GENERAL VIEWS OF THE CEMETERY



View from the entrance down



View from the bottom looking up

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