

A PROPOSAL

FOR

THE KAMLOOPS CHINESE CEMETERY MEMORIAL PARK

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July 1987

1. Kamloops Chinese Cemetery

1.1 Historical Background

The Kamloops Chinese Cemetery was established probably in the late 1880's when the Chinese railway workers were buried in a piece of land (2 chains x 2 chains) at the south-eastern corner of the present cemetery property. (Figure 1) This two-chain parcel of land, covering an area of 0.4 acres, was situated outside the city limits, and apparently alienated by Dominion Patent in 1892 in favour of Kwong Lung in trust for the Chinese Cemetery. The cemetery was excepted from a Crown Grant to Mr. Fernie who later sold the property to Mr. Bowers. As the original site was fully occupied by graves, the adjacent lands were acquired, and the cemetery property was expanded. Today, the Chinese Cemetery covers an area of about 0.75 acres, of which 0.5 acres are occupied by graves.

The Chinese Cemetery was previously maintained alternately by two associations - the Kuomintang and the Chee Kung Tong - until 1956. In 1956, the Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Association (KCCA) was formed and entrusted with the responsibility to look after the cemetery. However, it should be noted that many members of the KCCA were also members of the two associations. In March 1971, the Chinese Cemetery was registered under the Crown after the KCCA decided that the cemetery property be given to the provincial government.

The former entrance to the cemetery was situated on the

western property boundary, and worshippers had to trespass on private property before they could reach the cemetery. In June 1971, the western entrance was closed, and a new entrance was built on the northern side. Today, the northern entrance of the cemetery is accessible by an unpaved public road.

In April 1979, the Chinese Cemetery was officially closed to future burials, and the land title to the cemetery was later transferred to the City of Kamloops. In 1985, there was a proposal for designating the Chinese Cemetery as a heritage site.

This brief historical background is based on the materials of the Government files on Kamloops Chinese Cemetery, and the author's interviews with Mrs. May Chow, Messrs. Danny Chow and Jaime Jung. Since the information about the history of the Chinese Cemetery is meagre, and incomplete, more research work is recommended.

1.2 Designation As a Heritage Site

After the obliteration of Kamloops' Chinatown, the Chinese Cemetery is the only historic landmark of the Chinese community in the city; it was the former burial site of the Chinese railway workers. However, it does not have any feature of great heritage value:

- (a) The Chinese Cemetery was not established according to the Chinese traditional "Feng Shui" concept.
- (b) The graves of the Chinese railway workers in the two-chain parcel of land had been dug out, and their

grave markers (wooden boards or poles) had been removed or rotten. Most of the burials on this original plot are more recent than those in the northern section of the cemetery. Accordingly, some Chinese people wrongly assume that the oldest section of the cemetery is located at its northern end.

(c) According to Mr. Danny Chow, the altar, incinerator concrete pillars, and picket and barbed wire fences were erected in the 1960's. None of these features has any heritage significance.

(d) The gravel walkway in the cemetery is unsightly, and has lost its function after the closure of the western entrance.

Although the Chinese Cemetery does not have any structures of great heritage value for preservation or restoration, it is an important historic landmark. Instead of being designated as a heritage site, the Chinese Cemetery might be redeveloped as the Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Memorial Park.

2. The Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Memorial Park Project

2.1 Objectives of the Project

- (a) To preserve the Chinese Cemetery as an historic landmark of the Chinese community in Kamloops.
- (b) To commemorate the Chinese railway workers and other workers who died of accidents or other causes during the construction of the C.P.R. in British Columbia.

(c) To pay tribute to all the people who had helped build the two transcontinental railways, C.P.R. and C.N.R. which meet at Kamloops -"the meeting place."

The park would be dedicated to the Chinese as well as non-Chinese Canadians, who were involved in the two trans-Canada railway projects. It would be developed as a tourist attraction and would become an asset to the City of Kamloops.

2.2 Sources of Funding

A fund-raising committee be established to approach the federal, provincial and municipal governments for funding, and to ask the C.P.R., C.N.R, and other organizations and individuals to make contributions. Tax-deductible receipts will be issued to all the donors. Individual donors who have each contributed \$100 or more, and corporation donors who have each contributed \$500 or more more, will be commemorated on a plaque to be installed in the cemetery.

2.3 Stages of Development

The Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Memorial Park Project should be carried out at three stages.

(1) First Stage (August - December, 1987)

(a) To construct a decorative cemetery gate

(b) To plant a hedge around the cemetery. The hedge should not be too high otherwise it will block the view of the Thompson River from the cemetery.(Figure 2).

(2) Second Stage (1988)

(a) To engage a landscape architect to design the details of the memorial park. (If the architect is unfamiliar with the Chinese garden landscaping, a small amount of fund be allocated for the engagement of an expert on Chinese symbolism to advise the architect.)

(b) To engage a researcher to carry out a study of the history of the Chinese Cemetery.

(c) To organize Memorial Park fund-raising campaigns.

(3) Third Stage (1989 -)

The implementation stage

The official opening

2.4 Conceptual design of the proposed Memorial Park

The proposed features include a moon-shaped gate, a pagoda, a pavilion, decorative walkways etc.

(Figure 3 to 5).

3. The First Stage of Development (Aug.- Dec. 1987)

3.1 Establishment of a Memorial Park Committee

This committee may be established by Council and chaired by an alderman. It should include the Chinese people who were previously much involved in the management of the Chinese Cemetery, and representatives from the non-Chinese

community, the City's Heritage Advisory Committee, the City's Department of Parks, and Kamloops Museum and Archives.

Mr. Kent Wong will play a very important role as a coordinator, and work closely with the Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association and the Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Association. Although the latter association may be defunct, the support of its members is vitally essential.

3.2 By-law

A by-law be passed, if necessary, to make sure that any construction in the properties on the western and northern sides of the proposed memorial park will not block the view of the river from the southern end of the cemetery.

3.3 Preservation of Headstones

The objects in the cemetery which worth preserving are the brick gravestones and wooden head-boards, on which Chinese inscriptions were written or engraved. These objects reveal that in the old days, the Chinese workers were so poor that they could not afford even a proper gravestone. Instead, a piece of wood or brick was used. The scattered wooden head-boards and brick gravestones should be collected and stored. In future, they would be erected together in a particular spot inside the Memorial Park.

3.4 Planting the Hedge

The barbed wire fence should be removed and replaced by a hedge which should not block the panoramic view of the river from the southern end of the cemetery.

3.5 Construction of a Moon-shaped Gateway

The construction of an arch is expensive and costly to maintain. A brick moon-shaped gate will be cheaper and does not need much maintenance.

3.6 A survey of the location of grave-sites

An inventory of the graves in the cemetery should be taken and their locations should be marked on a large-scale map. This map should indicate the areas where burial sites are not evident on the ground.

APPENDIX

Itinerary of Meetings and Visits, 4 - 6 July 1987

- 4 July - Morning: To visit the Chinese Railway Workers' National Monument, next to the Historic Yale Museum.
- Evening: Meeting with Mrs. May Chow, Mr. Wing Chart Chow, and Mr. Danny Chow.
- a) to collect information about the history of the management of the Chinese Cemetery, and the leadership structure of the Chinese community in Kamloops.
 - b) to organize a public meeting with representatives of the Chinese community on 5 July
- 5 July - Morning: A survey of the Kamloops Chinese Cemetery with Mrs. May Chow, and Messrs. Kent Wong, Danny Chow, and Jaime Jung.

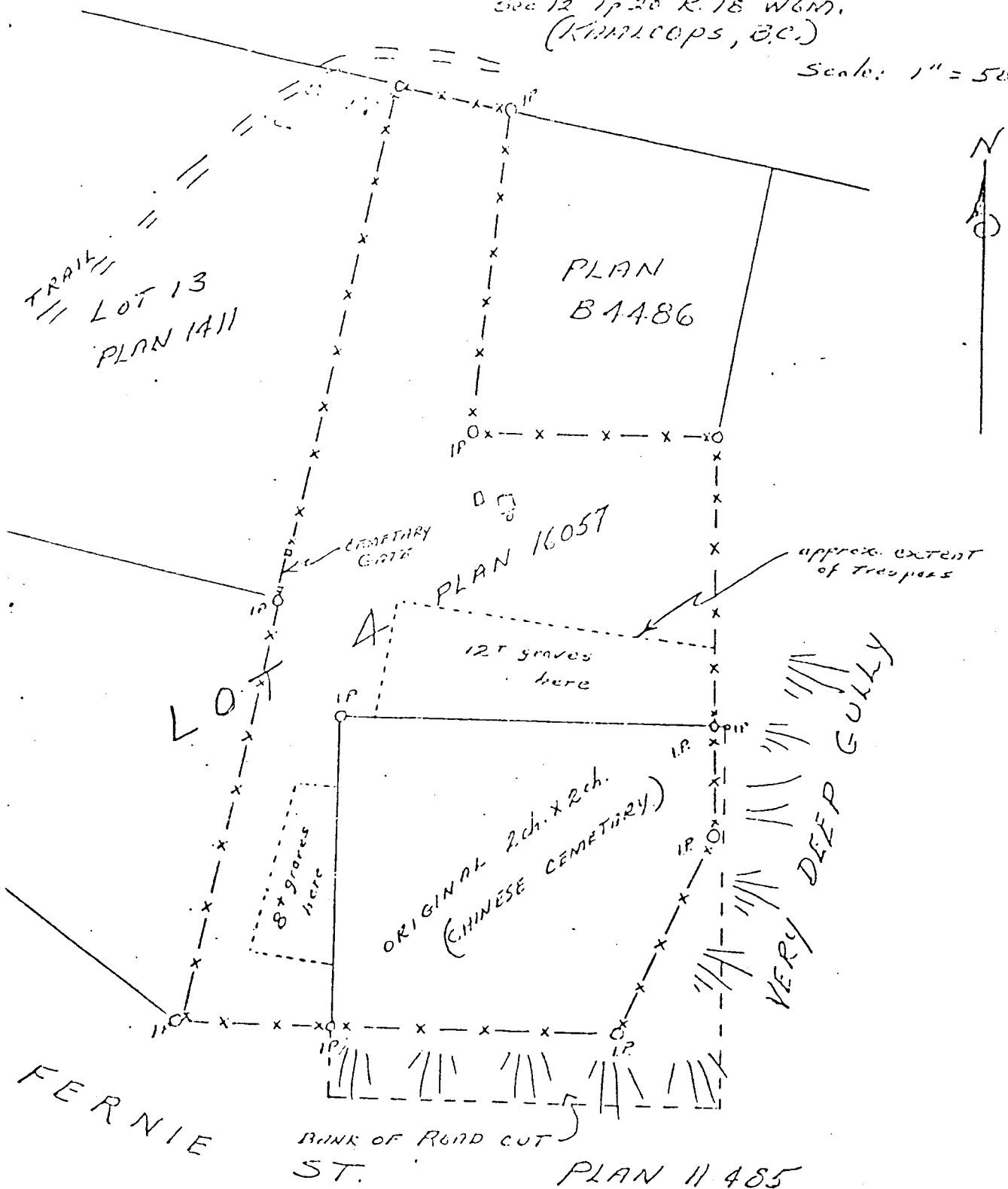
- 12.00: Lunch meeting with Mrs. May Chow, and Messrs. Kent Wong, Danny Chow and Jaime Jung.
 - a) to discuss the question of fund-raising for the cemetery beautification project
 - b) to talk about the idea of asking China to donate a pair of stone lions.
- 2.00 p.m. Public Meeting with the Chinese Community in the assembly hall of the Chee Kung Tong. Presentation of the conceptual plan to representatives of the Chinese community. Audience included members of the Kuomintang, the Chee Kung Tong, Dart Coon Club, Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Association, Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association. The meeting was chaired by Mr. Kent Wong. Participants at the meeting unaminously supported the proposal for a Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Memorial Park.

6 July - 10.00 a.m. Presentation of the Chinese Cemetery Beautification Project.

The meeting, chaired by Mr. Kent Wong, was held in Kamloops Museum & Archives. Audience included representatives from Kamloops Heritage Advisory Committee, Department of Parks, and other departments of the City of Kamloops, Kamloops Chinese Cultural Association and Kamloops Chinese Cemetery Association.

SKETCH SHOWING
 Trespass of graves into
 LOT 4 Plan 16057
 Sec 12 Tp. 20 R. 16 W6M.
 (KIMBLEPS, B.C.)

Scale: 1" = 50'



INFORMATION FOR P.O.C.

September 1969

D. SNIDER
 KIMBLEPS.

KAMLOOPS CHINESE HERITAGE CEMETERY SOCIETY

Greenspace Neighbourhood Committee

KCHCS members agreed:

1. For the City of Kamloops to purchase the private lot from Dr. & Mrs. Sennewald and create a green space/park with other lots surrounding the Chinese Cemetery.
2. The Chinese Cemetery will **NOT** be a part of the Park.
3. It will be a green space park, grass and trees. Be left in its natural state.
4. Not a playground.
5. Any development must be in keeping with the historical, geophysical and ethnic qualities of the Chinese Cemetery.
6. Oriental garden must be Chinese.
7. The Kamloops Chinese Heritage Cemetery Society to have design approval.
8. Suggested name: "Chinese Pioneers Heritage Park".
9. Focus is to be on the Chinese Cemetery **NOT** on any particular individual.
10. **Most important that the qualities of the Chinese Cemetery are preserved.**