

## WILLIAM OLIPHANT



William Oliphant was born in 1850 in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire. In 1871 he was a seaman aboard the ship *Windward*, a sailing whale ship plying the waters of Davis Strait and the east coast of Greenland. He married Helen Shaw, from Maybole Scotland, on 25 June 1875 in Glasgow. Their first of 11 children, daughter Helen, arrived in 1877, followed by a son in 1879. By 1881, they were living in New Jersey where the next 5 of their children were born.

In 1905 they emigrated to Canada and settled in Edmonton where William is involved with the coal business. He moves to Victoria shortly after and becomes a speculative house builder and land developer, an occupation that soon involves him in several court cases revolving around surveying and flooding of his land. His property consisted of land from Vancouver to Cook and Oliphant to Park Blvd. He builds his own home at 1023 Oliphant St. which has been designated as a heritage house.

William Oliphant was the prime founder of the Victoria Lawn Bowling Club. He was an avid and accomplished player. On May 4 1910, the *British Colonist* newspaper reports that Wm. will play a game against ex alderman JA Turner, both of whom are excellent bowlers. (Turner is also a founder of the club and follows William as president in 1913.) To quote the newspaper - *"Mr. Oliphant will appear in all his regalia, white duck trousers, with regulation jersey and a tartan tie. These are the clothes he wore on a tour of the Old Country with a rink which swept most of its opponents off their feet, and he has developed a sort of superstitious faith in them. Without them, he does not believe that victory would be as likely to shed its radiance upon him. They are a charm so potent that local rivals regard them in a spirit akin to dread."*

A while later the *British Colonist* writes:

*"Wm. Oliphant, the doyen of Victoria bowlers, the Scotsman largely responsible for the introduction of the game in this city, is going to take his place among competitors in Saturday's opening games in tartan tie and other regalia which has seen the smoke of many a furiously exciting engagement. That adjective looks a little strong for application to a quiet bowling match but under the circumstances it is justified. For there are going to be some hair raising contests. Must be as anyone must realize if glancing over the list of competing skips. The names include citizens well known to Victoria's commercial and journalistic life. On their ordinary vocation they are harmless enough but on the green in the midst of a heated fight, the pleasantest dispositions becomes as exciting and as critical as the blue pencil manipulator of a metropolitan daily."*

In 1916, William returns to Alberta to attend to his coal mine interests and lives there until moving to Los Angeles in the 1920's. His wife Helen dies there in 1926 and he returns to Mill Bay. But he is in ill health and dies in Victoria soon after at the home of his daughter on June 10, 1929. He is buried with his wife in Los Angeles.

He is commemorated by Oliphant Street and Oliphant Lake in the Cowichan Valley.