

# RECORDINGS FROM THE BC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

## BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

### Vancouver Island – Victoria Area

#### BRETHOUR FAMILY CEMETERY (1965), SIDNEY, BC

C80 part 2

**Recorded by** Beth Macdonald in July 1965

Located on Artesian Road near the Victoria International Airport.

A history of the Brethour family is followed by the transcriptions of the cemetery.

#### **HISTORY**

It is unlikely that any other community in British Columbia as much to the generosity and vision of any one family as Sidney on Vancouver Island does to the Brethours. This family came to the Saanich Peninsula from the Rhine Valley by way of Ireland about one hundred years ago.

Away back the Brethours first left their ancestral homeland under threat of the War of the Spanish Succession, intending to emigrate to New York. But their vessel was wrecked when it sought shelter in the Shannon River's mouth during a gale, and the Brethours remained in Limerick County for over a century. They held land on the Earl of Southwells's estate, deeded to them for a shilling an acre "for as long as the grass grows green and the water runs in Ireland".

But in 1833 still seeking opportunities offered in a new and exciting country, members of the Brethour family set sail for Canada where they settle in Georgia Township, York County, Ontario. This narrative concerns largely the life and experiences of Samuel, a son of the family who was born in Rathkale, County Limerick, and who was sixteen when his family emigrated to Canada. In 1844 he married one Margaret St John of York County and they had eleven children – seven sons and four daughters.

In order to make provision for the future of this large family, Samuel Brethour and his family came out to British Columbia by railway as far as San Francisco. There they boarded the S.S. Prince Albert to Victoria, arriving on April 10, 1873. But the eldest son William settled in Kansas, USA, and unfortunately a daughter Margaret died in Ontario when she was only three years old.

Soon after they came west Samuel and several of his sons went up the Fraser River seeking land, but being afraid of floods because at that time there were no dykes, they returned to Victoria. Learning of their plight a Mr. Sandover assured them that he would show them good land and hitched his horse to a buggy and drove them all through the Saanich Peninsula.

Here Mr. Brethour immediately saw a land of promise and he then purchased land which now includes part of Victoria International Airport and the town site of Sidney. He later divided this land into farms of approximately 100 acres each, which he gave to his sons.

According to the records the father and two sons cleared a site for a home from heavy virgin timber in Mary 1873. Another son, Henry, came out a week later to be the cook, and the remainder of the family took possession of their new log home the following home.

It was a time of hard work for the Brethours. The first year they slashed and burned sixty acres, fenced the entire farm, and with a yoke of oxen ploughed forty acres amidst stumps, and threshed eighteen hundred bushels of grain in the fall of 1874. But by the following year they had their own team of horses, and William Thomson of South Saanich – the first European settler on the Saanich Peninsula – threshed four thousand bushels for them.

On the distaff side of the family Mrs. Brethour was very actively engaged as a church worker, and also a fine nurse devoting much of her time to caring for the sick. She thoroughly enjoyed sharing the hardships and pleasures of life with her husband. Both of them were involved in work for the betterment of the community.

Unfortunately Mr. Brethour only lived four years to enjoy the comforts of his new home in the West. He died on March 18, 1877. He was the first to be buried in the plot which had been placed in perpetual trust for a family cemetery. Today the airport stands on this hallowed ground where I understand forty members of the family are buried.

In the spring of 1883 Mrs. Brethour contracted pneumonia while nursing her youngest son, Philip, who was then ill with typhoid fever. Mrs. Brethour died on March 17 that year and her young son three days earlier.

After the death of their father the five sons carried on in his footsteps, working side-by-side in their respective homes each on his own one hundred acre tract.

Their three sisters were living nearby. First there was Mary, who married William Robertson and they were living on a farm at the corner of the present East Saanich and McTavish Roads. Next there was Annie who married B. H. Smith, M.A. – the collector of customs at Nanaimo. Lastly there was Georgina who married Dr. E. B. Paul, M.A. – then principal of the Nanaimo High School, and later first head of Victoria College.

In 1891 four of the brothers – Julius, Wesley, Henry and Samuel Jr – incorporated their waterfront land. It was then that the town was registered as Sidney, and named after the island lying directly east of it.

In 1891 Julius invited James J. White to come out to Sidney from his native Ontario to start a sawmill. His nephew Jim White, age 24, came out the following year. They formed the Toronto and BC Lumber Company, Ltd., which operated a mill on the site which is now occupied by Mitchell & Anderson's Hardware store. It was at this location that railroad ties were produced for the Victoria & Sidney Railway which was by then under construction.

While Jim White was still operating the mill he was appointed first Victoria & Sidney station agent. He married Samuel Brethour's granddaughter Estelle Brethour.

But Jim White gave up railroading to go into business with his brother-in-law, R. B. Brethour. Later they joined forces with the Trading Company to operate the Sidney Canning Company.

This was another forward step in the commercial life of Sidney. At first they canned clams and later processed fruit. When it was in full swing handling fruit the cannery employed as many as one hundred persons.

The entire block, from First Street to the sea was given by Wesley Brethour for the site of a mill. Next Henry added land to the north. The block behind the present Sidney Hotel site was provided for a railway terminus. This as well as the next block were given by Julius. Later all the waterfront property of Oakland Avenue was donated by John for a factory. This in time became the site of the Sidney Roofing Company's first plant.

Prior to the Second World War, Sidney was still quite small, although there were several industries there and three railways crossing the Saanich Peninsula. But the establishment of the Patricia Bay Airport – now the Victoria International Airport, and the large number of Commonwealth Air Force personnel Stationed there during the war infused new life into the small community. Yet the town's growth was slow.

Just about that time the population of Sidney took an unprecedented jump and it has never stopped growing since.

To celebrate the one hundredth anniversary of the landing in British Columbia of Samuel Brethour, his wife and family, a large family picnic was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Thomson. More than two hundred, representing up to the seventh generation since their arrival in Sidney.

Written by Bea Bond, Sidney, BC (no other source information)

**The following is excerpts from a newspaper article – by Valerie Green in The Islander, p 8 but no other source information.**

The Brethours have the distinction of being able to trace their ancestors back to the Huguenots, the French Protestant communities of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Brethour ancestors moved to an area known at that time as the Palatinate, a term formerly applied to two German provinces on the Rhine River.

Amongst these Brethour settlers were the grandparents of Samuel Brethour, the Sidney pioneer. Samuel

Himself was born in Rathkale, Ballingren, County Limerick on Aug. 28, 1818. They (the family) landed in Montreal in the spring of 1834, then they traveled on to Toronto, finally settling in Ontario, near Lake Simcoe.

On arrival in Victoria, Samuel Brethour and his large family made their home on Pandora Street near the old Methodist Church. Their home was actually a double home, with the other half being occupied by a Mr. And Mrs. Stephen Sandover, another famous old Central Saanich pioneer family.

Julius Brethour, the second son, was mainly responsible for promoting the old Victoria and Sidney Railway which commenced operations in 1894. Julius Brethour was the first president of the Victoria Sidney Railway company.

Another enterprise the Brethour brothers engaged in was the curing and marketing of pork products. Yet another son, Henry Brethour, was the first male teacher to teach in a public North Saanich school in that area.

### Monumental Inscriptions

<p><b>1.</b> Large grey obelisk – polished granite</p> <p>Robert <b>CRAWFORD</b> Died Dec. 23, 1892 Aged 49 years Gone to a better land</p>	<p><b>10.</b> granite outline</p> <p><b>BRETHOUR</b> In memory of John <b>BRETHOUR</b> Died Oct 30, 1922 Aged 76 years</p>
<p><b>2.</b> granite flat lawn marker</p> <p>Austin <b>MURALL</b> 1896</p>	<p><b>11.</b> raised lawn marker</p> <p>Leslie <b>BRETHOUR</b> 1888</p>
<p><b>3.</b> granite flat lawn marker</p> <p>Thomas <b>ROBERTS</b> 1888</p>	<p><b>12.</b> granite outline – 2 lawn markers</p> <p>Keith B. <b>SLATER</b> 1923 Kenneth <b>SLATER</b></p>

	1926
<p><b>4.</b> small granite outline- no dates</p> <p>Joseph <b>WHITE</b></p>	<p><b>13.</b> granite outline</p> <p>Emma S. <b>BRETHOUR</b> Died April 27, 1892 Aged 37 years</p>
<p><b>5.</b> large red obelisk – polished granite</p> <p>In memory of Jane Beloved wife of John <b>BRETHOUR</b> Died June 16, 1890 Aged 38 years Resting till the resurrection morn</p>	<p>Our father Henry <b>BRETHOUR</b> Died Feb 7 (no year) Aged 84 years</p>
<p>In memory of</p> <p>W. H. <b>BRETHOUR</b> Son of J &amp; J Brethour Died Dec 9, 1917 Aged 38 years</p>	<p><b>14.</b> granite outline – rectangular monument of broken base</p> <p>In loving memory of James Wesley <b>BRETHOUR</b> Died Nov 1, 1917 Age 61 years</p>
<p><b>5.</b> In memory of</p> <p>Philip E. <b>BRETHOUR</b> Aug 9, 1883 April 8, 1968</p>	<p>Flora Mary <b>BRETHOUR</b> Beloved daughter of James Wesley And Jessie <b>BRETHOUR</b> Died Oct 28, 1897 Aged 12 years</p>
<p>Winnifred Beloved wife of Philip <b>BRETHOUR</b> May 23, 1897 Feb 16, 1977</p>	<p><b>15.</b> raised lawn marker</p> <p>Gordon DIXON 1914</p>

Helen Sydney <b>MORRIS</b> Aug 17, 1927 – April 8, 1977	<b>16.</b> raised lawn marker  Helen Joyce ( <b>no family name</b> ) 1918
<b>6.</b> illegible – small granite flat marker	<b>17-19</b> unknown
<b>7.</b> ? small flat granite marker	<b>20.</b> raised lawn marker  George J. M. <b>BRETHOUR</b> 1929
<b>8.</b> ? small flat granite marker	<b>21.</b> raised lawn marker  Henry B. <b>SMITH</b> 1925
<b>9.</b> granite outline – small raised lawn markers  M. Elizabeth <b>BRETHOUR</b> 1928	<b>22.</b> raised lawn marker  William <b>ROBERTSON</b> 1894
Julius <b>BRETHOUR</b> Pioneer	<b>23.</b> raised lawn marker  Mary <b>ROBERTSON</b> 1893
Magdalen <b>BRETHOUR</b> Pioneer	

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**MAP**

