

## Background of the Springfield New Hampshire Cemeteries

### Introduction:

“Gravestones are one of our earliest examples of art and written history, readily available and in their original locations.

History of an entire town may be present only in the graveyard. The local history may be here and nowhere else.

Graveyards record the lives of all, signifying past experiences and recognizing the commonality of us all.” Lynette Strangstad,, *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*.

### Beginnings of Springfield Cemeteries:

The first indirect mention that would eventually lead to a town cemetery can be found in the Protectworth Charter, August 7, 1775.

“[Fourth Point] That before any division of the land be made to any grantees, a tract of land as near the center of the said township as the land will admit of, shall be reserved and marked out for town lots, one of which shall be allotted to each grantee of the contents of one acre...”

This is on what we call Cemetery Road today, but was then part of the King’s Highway. The land is what we of the 21 century call Old Pleasant View Cemetery. As Protectworth became incorporated into Springfield and more families began arriving, new steps had to be taken for burials.

April 14, 1789

...”Whereas the inhabitants and settlers in said town are destitute of a proper place for a training field, burying ground, and other public uses and praying this Proprietary to grant five acres for ye said those purposes, and said Proprietors being disposed to comply with their request, Therefore

“Voted that if the said inhabitants can find five acres within any of the lots belonging to the Proprietors of said town south side which shall be by the selectmen of said town thought suitable for said use the town shall have five acres for said publick uses forever. Provided the same be laid out in a square form and shall be kept enclosed by said town so as not to injure the Proprietor of said lot out of which the same may be taken by laying the same common and the Proprietor or owner of said lot shall be satisfied for the same out of the proprietor’s other lands after he shall have executed a deed of the same to said town for said uses.”

Eventually a stone wall was built around the area that held the training military ground, the meeting house, pound and the cemetery. The exact location of the meeting house in the cemetery is unknown, but believed to be near the training ground and town pound. The meeting house, built September 1779, was moved in 1851 from the cemetery lot to its present location (2002) at the intersection of the Four Corners Road and Main St. The original town pound built of wood in 1788 was rebuilt of stones in 1808 to hold stray domestic animals. It is still located in its original spot (2002) against the South wall of Old Pleasant View Cemetery.

In 1852, the selectmen voted to enlarge the burying ground and fence the same so as to take in all of the town land. (Chas. McDaniel p.332) [was this more of the same land on the west side of the Old Pleasant View Cemetery, or was this what we now call the New Pleasant View cemetery on the north side of Cemetery Road?] The Old Pleasant View Cemetery measures North wall, 546 feet, East wall 309 feet, South Wall, 375 feet and the West wall 150 feet, 6 inches.

There is an ongoing survey of the stones in OPV. The oldest stone, or first burial found to date is that of Sarah Philbrick, 45yrs, 5mo.10das, who died in 1792. She was the consort of Samuel Philbrick. There may have been older stones lost or destroyed.

The soldiers’ monument in OPV cemetery was dedicated on 19 November 1910. This was erected to memorialize the 27 Revolutionary War soldiers, 19 War of 1812 military, 73 War of the Rebellion soldiers, 2 in the calvary, 12 in heavy artillery, five in the veteran reserve corps and 1 U.S sharpshooter. It was thought fitting to place the monument on the location of the old training and muster ground and in front of the location of the first meeting house dedicated in 1899. The guns of the militia were kept in the entry of the meeting house.

Nothing officially has been found about the landscaping of OPV cemetery. Seventeenth and eighteenth century graveyards were usually very simple. It was in the mid-nineteenth century and Victorian Era that cemeteries became more elaborately designed to resemble parks. Bushes and shrubs were planted. (Strangstad, p.53.) Over 100 years later we can find examples of these plantings and more ornate stones in OPV. Cedars of Lebanon (relationship to holy land) made lovely little shrubs. In 2002, they are large trees crowding out some of the stones. There are remains of lilac and snowball bushes from the past. Along the west wall could once be found lilies of the valley. The “graveyard pink” that is ground cover on many graves is not a bad idea from the past. It keeps down the weeds and helps to protect the stones from mowing equipment. For many years, and probably not planned, low bush blueberries covered the middle to southern section of OPV. This also has some value as a ground cover, and enjoyed by those who knew of the berry patch!

### **Additional Graves and Cemeteries in Springfield:**

The town cemeteries are Old and New Pleasant View, Star Lake Cemetery on Striker Road, and Fowlertown Cemetery. Anyone buying property with a cemetery on it does not own the cemetery, but land around it. There must be a right of way to the cemetery. The main cemeteries in Springfield are Old Pleasant View and New Pleasant View. There have been a couple of burials in the 1990s in OPV, but there are no new lots. The main cemetery in service in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is NPV which has been enlarged. No survey has been done on New Pleasant View at the present (2002). Star Lake Cemetery on Striker Road is on the Daniel Thorne property. It is in poor condition. There are probably stones missing along at least one of the walls. Fowlertown, abandoned in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in East Springfield, is difficult to reach. The Springfield road leading to it is subject to gates and bars. It can be reached through Wilmot, but then there is a walk from Piper Pond to the cemetery.

There are several private cemeteries around Springfield. There are also individual graves that may have belonged to people who died of smallpox or diphtheria.

On the left side of the Old Grantham Road in the Washburn Corner area, before the house on the right (2002) there are several broken stones. They are more like field stones around a mound. That is all that is known at present.

The Davis cemetery is located on the right side of the New London Road, not too far from the Georges Mills Road intersection. It is a private cemetery with a trust fund. The stones are interesting.

Messer Cemetery is located on the left side of Messer Hill Road, when leaving the New London Road. It also is a private cemetery and has a trust fund. There are interesting stones from several generations of the family.

The Barden Cemetery is on Deep Snow Road on the left side up the hill. It is not too far past the intersection to the Old Grafton Road. There is a house on the left before you reach it. Barden Cemetery does not seem to have a trust fund and is in poor condition. One of the headstones was broken off and the remainder of the stone could not be found. It resides at John Rego Perotta and Rick Cole’s house near the above mentioned intersection.

Up the Old Grafton Road, across from Tilson’s Windy Ledges and not too far from the Grafton line, on the right, setting back a short distance from the road, is the gravestone of Jonathan Currier.

The Dutchman Pond Cemetery is on the right side of Webster Pass Road after leaving the Dutchman Pond Road and across from the pond. There is a revolutionary soldier, John Collins, buried there. There is difficulty getting access to the cemetery to do a proper survey.

According to Edward Smith, who once lived on Shad Hill, on a “wooded crest between Shad Hill and Old Grafton Road,” there are one or two small graves near some cellar holes.

On the George Hill Road, beyond the old Charles McDaniel (Patten) property, on the left side of the road and in back of the newer houses (1996), gravestones can be found.

Revolutionary war soldier, James Boyce is buried on what was the James T. Colby Farm on Hogg Hill.

Stephen Heseltine is buried off the Old Boston Post Road on the David Kezar property. Mr. Heseltine ran a stagecoach station where the Kezar home is now located at the intersection of 114 and the Georges Mill Road. He contracted small pox. Mr. Morgan, a neighbor, came to visit him, not knowing what the illness was, and also contracted the disease. They were taken to the pest house located on the Old Boston Road, not too far from their homes. They both died and were buried near each other. Mr. Heseltine’s grave has been found, but not that of Mr. Morgan.

Other Springfield people may have been buried in surrounding towns. Daniel Heath, a Revolutionary War Veteran, and one of the original seven Heaths who came to Springfield after the Revolutionary war, is buried in the George Hill Cemetery in Enfield, NH. There may be Springfield people buried across the Grafton line near Robinson Corners and Prescott Hill roads. Other Springfield people are buried in the Stocker Pond Cemetery in Grantham. This is the Heath Gore area that was once part of Springfield and now part of Grantham.

There is more in depth information in folders at the Springfield Historical Museum, surveys, pictures, people known to be buried in cemeteries, etc.

**Trust Funds:**

The first trust funds for the cemeteries were put into use in 1894. Some of them have been for the care of the lot only, while the others for care of the lot and balance for cemetery care. A trust fund purchased in 1894 for \$50.00 or \$100.00 does not make much interest in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A list of the trust funds can be found in the town office.

Compiled by Patsy Heath Caswell

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