

Old Burial Ground

Main Street, Walpole, Norfolk County, Massachusetts

GPS: N 42.14954 W 71.24060

Location: This cemetery is located on the corner of Main Street and Kendall Street.

Layout/Condition: This is a small cemetery. It is approximately 70' by about 70'. It is encircled by a rock wall. The walls along the 2 streets are mortar and stone retaining walls, and the other 2 walls which abut private property are traditional fieldstone rock walls. This cemetery is maintained by the town of Walpole, and it is in good condition. All but one or two stones have fallen over, the rest remain standing. There is one burial tomb in this cemetery, which has fallen in on its self, from age, burying its occupants. This cemetery is owned and cared for by the town of Walpole, and it is in very good condition.

Usage: The first burial was Mary Clap in 1714 and the last burials were in 1863; Joshua Stetson in February and Chloe Day in May.

Stones: There are approximately 152 headstones. Most still have their footstones. There is just under 200 people buried here. The majority of the headstones are slate tablets, and they are in very good shape. There are a few marble tablets, and one marble family stone. These stones are not in good condition, as they have eroded, and show signs of damage from pollution.

Cemetery History: On April 2, 1705, a "half-acre" of land was set off from the farm of Eleazer Clapp, in exchange for three acres of land on Major's Plain, for the express purpose of using this land for a "Buryal Plas". It is reported that in the early 1900's after many years of neglect, an industrious cemetery care taker re-set and reorganized the headstones so they would "look better", setting them in a largest to smallest fashion.

Families: In this cemetery rests the remains of many of the earliest settlers of Walpole; Allen, Robbins, Clapp, Hartshorn, Smith, Fales, Blake and Kingsbury are buried in this cemetery. In 1726 there only 45 families on the tax roll, by 1765 there were 785 people living here, and by the first census the the United States, the population had tipped the scales at a little over 1000 people. Most of the earliest families have ancestors who sleep in the Old Burial Ground.

Transcription Notes: This cemetery has been transcribed several times. The first known transcription was done in 1900 by Thomas A. Dickenson, which was published in the Dedham Historical Society's Register, January 1901; vol. XII. The next known transcription was done in the late 1960's / early 1970's by Betty Cottrell and Frank Larrabee of the Walpole Historical Society. The third transcription was completed in 1998 by Derick Hartshorn. This fourth transcription, done in the Spring of 2006, by Laurie Kearney and Sandy Andressi, is not only a "transcription" but also included photos of each stone and corresponding notes. It compared all transcriptions, and includes notes where there are inconsistencies were found with any or all of the previous transcriptions. Also, noted were Derick Hartshorn's "columns" delineation, which he used to help locate each stone. When standing in the cemetery, it is hard to "see" the columns, so this fourth transcription includes "grave numbers" counting from front to back, to "order" the stones. Hopefully, a visitor to this quaint cemetery, will be able to locate their ancestor!