

Walpole Plains Cemetery

Plain Street, West Walpole, Norfolk County, Massachusetts

GPS: N42.13815 W71.28311

Location: The Plains Cemetery is on Plain Street which is off West Street in West Walpole.

Layout/Condition: This is the second oldest cemetery in Walpole. It is approximately 200' long by 60' wide. It is surrounded by a stone wall. On the street side, this wall is mortar and rock, with two entrance gates. The other three sides are fieldstone rock walls. This cemetery has two distinct sections, the old and the new. The Plains Cemetery is owned and cared for by the town of Walpole. The over all condition of this cemetery is good.

Usage: The first recorded burial is Deborah Smith, in 1731. (Although it is possible others were buried here before the 1731 date). This cemetery is still being used today, but very few interments have happened in the last 50 years. Mostly people who live in West Walpole request to be buried there.

Stones: There are approximately 150 headstones in this cemetery, and there is over 300 people buried here. In the oldest sections (10, and 9) near the receiving tomb, the headstones are mostly slate tablets. Only a very few of these stones still have their corresponding footstones. In the center sections (8, and 7) headstones are a mix of slate and marble tablets and a few elaborate family monuments too. They are mostly in fair condition, as they show the ravages of time through erosion. In the newest sections (6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1) most of the stones are large granite family monuments.

Cemetery History: The Plains is the second oldest cemetery in Walpole. A small section (section 10 and 9) is believed to have been set aside for a burial place as early as the 1720's. Residents of West Walpole, either did not own plots in the Old Burial Place (on corner of Kendall and Main), or felt it was too far away, and requested land in West Walpole, the "Plains". The piece of land that was chosen was located in a field between two main roads. Today's Plain Street now connects those roads, and undoubtedly was the path cut into the ground by those heading to this cemetery.

In May of 1803, shortly after a new road had been agreed to be built from Thomas Clap's to Stop River (Lincoln St.), this cemetery was enlarged, to meet growing demands. An addition of about 60 rods (sections 8, 7, 6 and 5) was made to the burial grounds on the southerly and easterly sides, but mostly easterly. Residents of West Walpole paid Seth Clarke \$13.00 for this land. This "sale" is recorded in the Norfolk County Deeds on April 27, 1807 (bk. 28 pg 10). The names on the "bill of sale" are: Ezekiel Boyden, Samuel Boyden, John Boyden, Seth Clarke, Joshua Clap, Oliver Clap, James Dupee, Aaron Fales, Samuel Guild, Nathan Kingsbury, Jacob Kingsbury, William Kingsbury, Seth Kingsbury, Daniel Kingsbury, Otis Partridge, Henry Partridge, Nathan Pond, Jr. Asa Smith, Moses Smith, Jr., Henry Smith, Royal Smith, Samuel Smith, Sr., and Samuel Smith, Jr. On December 31, 1883, the estate of Jeremiah Hartshorn, sold to the town of Walpole for \$1, ??? acres of land, to expand the Plains Cemetery (bk 553, pg 98). Bring the Plains Cemetery to its present size (Sections 4, 3, 2, and 1). However, this last land addition extends the size of this property to the edge of West Street, where the Revolutionary War Memorial is located.

In 1905, Isaac Newton Lewis concerned with the decay of this cemetery, formed the Walpole Plain Cemetery Association. He communicated with many of the descendants of those buried in the Plains, seeking their help, and in return, he offered to erect and donate a receiving tomb. A spot in the southwesterly section of the cemetery was selected for the receiving tomb. In addition to having the tomb built, Isaac Newton Lewis, donated 34 Maple trees that were planted around the borders of the cemetery. In April, 1962, the Town of Walpole assumed total management of the Plains Cemetery.

Transcription Notes: Other names for this cemetery are "The Old Plain Cemetery," "The Plains Cemetery", and "West Plains Cemetery". There have been several transcriptions over the years of this cemetery. The earliest, we have found, was done in the late 1920's, called "The Records of the Old Cemetery on Walpole Plains," and can now be found at the New England Historical and Genealogical Society. The second, was compiled in the late 1960's - early 1970's by Betty Cottrell and Frank Larrabee of the Walpole Historical Society. The most current transcription was completed in the Fall of 2006, by Laurie Kearney and Sandy Andressi. Care was taken to compare other transcriptions. Also photos and descriptions were taken of all the stones.

And One More Thing: At the corner of West and Plain Streets, Isaac N. Lewis erected a circle of "memorial" stones to acknowledge American Revolutionary War soldiers. The soldiers were from the West Walpole neighborhood. (which also included some men from Franklin, now Norfolk), the names on these stones are: Lt. Alex Orr, Fisher Hartshorne, Corp. Increase Bliffin, Noah Cross, Pierre Bourde, John Acute, Alvin Clark, George Bleu, Corp. Jeremiah Fales and Sgt. Spencer Wood.