

Form E - Burial Ground

Located within Sturbridge Common Historic District (NR: 11/9/77)

Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Assessor's # USGS Quad Area Form #
Sturbridge A 801

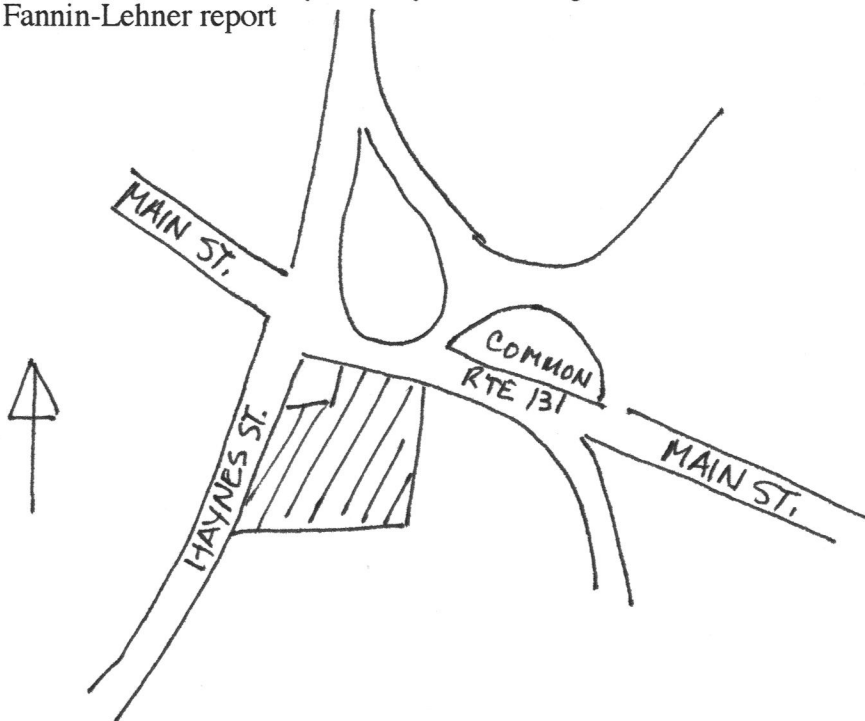


Town Sturbridge
Place (neighborhood or village) n/a
Address Main Street
Name Old Burial Ground
Ownership public
Approximate Number of Stones 530
Earliest Death Date June 30, 1750
(Edmund Livermore)
Latest Death Date Sept. 21, 1887
(Dolly Weld; stone appears 20th cen.)

Landscape Architect n/a

Sketch Map

also see attached row-by-row layout showing stone locations from Fannin-Lehner report



Condition well-maintained as a whole; many stones weathered and/or broken; 157 stones currently undergoing conservation

Acreage 1.14 acres

Setting located within Sturbridge Common Historic District; surrounded mainly by 18th - 19th century residential and public institutional buildings

Recorded By Candace Jenkins
Preservation Consultant

Organization Walker•Kluesing Design Group, for
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Mass. Dept. Environmental Management

Date May, 1999

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Community **Sturbridge**
Property Name, Address **Old Burying Ground, Main Street at Haynes**

Area (s) **A** Form No. **801**

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT

Describe landscape features, gravestone materials, designs, motifs, and symbols that are either common or unusual. Note any known carvers.

The Old Burial Ground in Sturbridge Center is prominently located near the southeast corner of Haynes and Main Streets. This site is opposite the Town Common and within the Sturbridge Common Historic District (National Register: 11/9/77). Both burial ground and common were part of the original six acre meetinghouse lot purchase of 1733. Together, these two open spaces form a historically and visually significant green space at the heart of the community.

The 1.14 acre cemetery consists of irregular terrain that slopes gently uphill toward the red brick Center School (1855) which stands at the southeast corner of Haynes and Main Streets. The burial ground is maintained in rough turf and heavily planted with mature hemlock, white pine, and oak trees. Hemlocks dominate along the western edge, pines in the southeast corner, and oaks to the north along Main Street. The overall character of the burial ground is informal, with no buildings or structures present.

The parcel is enclosed by a dry-laid stone wall approximately 3' tall and 30" wide. The wall was erected in 1794 and at least partially rebuilt after the Civil War. The highly visible Main Street leg consists of fieldstones at the base with upper stones becoming increasingly flat. The uppermost stones are large enough to span the entire width of the wall, thus forming a coping course. Other sections of the wall are rougher, especially to the west and south, and may represent the original 1794 construction. Lichens are found on most of the wall

A pedestrian entrance is located near the center of the north leg. It is framed by mortared stone posts that measure approximately 3' x 3' x 6' and carry decorative wrought iron gates. This feature clearly dates to the late-19th century rebuilding. Vehicles can enter from Haynes Street at the southwest corner of the burial ground. There is no formal circulation system of paths or roads and no paving.

The burial ground currently contains approximately 530 head stones; others have probably been lost over time. The stones are roughly arranged in rows and all face west. The greatest concentration is in the northern half near Main Street.

Dating from 1750 - 1887, the stones represent a variety of materials and motifs. Slate is by far the most common material, but marble, red and brown sandstone, and schist examples are found as well. A small number of graves are marked by simple fieldstones that lack inscriptions.

Most of the 18th, and some early-19th, century stones typically display rich foliate borders and tympana with winged heads. Some of the heads are quite naturalistic and carved in low relief. Other heads are incised and more stylized, and some are wigged. Early-19th century stones display the urn and willow motif that characterizes that period. Some later stones have geometric ornament. There is only one tomb and two monuments. Several carvers are identified in a 1996?? conservation report by Fannin-Lehner. (see attached list)

continued

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Community **Sturbridge**
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VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT *continued*

Individual Stones

Experience Wheelock (d. 10/21/1765)

This slate (14-12) is one of the oldest in the burying ground. The tympanum contains a stylized, winged "Boston skull" with a foliate border framing the text.

Lt. Samuel Freeman (d. 12/31/1772)

This slate (19-4) is an example of a naturalistic winged head in the tympanum. Rich foliate borders frame the sides and base of the stone. It is attributed to Boston carver Henry Christian Geyer. Similar slates by Geyer include Lt. George Watkins (d. 2/28/1773; 14-2) and Elizabeth Freeman (d. 8/30/1772; 18-6). Others are attributed to Newton carver, Daniel Hastings; they include Capt Nathaniel Walker (d. 2/8/1783; 32-7) and Mary Paine (d. 1/22/1789; 32-11).

James Deneson (d. 5/22/1785)

This large, handsome redstone marker (15-14) is probably the work of Ezra Stebbins II (1760-1819). The crowned head within the tympanum is typical of the "Longmeadow School". The scrolled borders are especially rich. His epitaph reads:

My flesh shall slumber
in the Ground
till the last trumpets
Joyful Sound
then burst the chains
with sweet surprise
and in my Savior's
Image rise

The adjacent stone (15-15) of his wife Experience (d. 3/17/1780) is very similar.

Samuel Hamant (d. 1790)

This stone (28-5) also contains a crowned head in the tympanum, this time framed by small wings and headed by an eight-sided star. It has a rich scrolled border. This stone is attributed to Ezra Stebbins I (1731-1796) The epitaph states:

Then once for all we die,
That die we may no more
But live in Bliss Eternally
The face of God before

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Community **Sturbridge**
Property Name, Address **Old Burying Ground, Main Street at Haynes**

Area (s) **A** Form No. **801**

VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT *Continued*

Describe landscape features, gravestone materials, designs, motifs, and symbols that are either common or unusual. Note any known carvers.

Silvanus Curtis (d. 7/23/1800)

The overscaled tympanum of this schist stone (17-21) contains a winged and wigged head whose hair appears to stand on end. It also displays a geometric border. Frederick Manning of Windham, Conn. is thought to be the carver. The nearby stones of family members are similar.

Loring Chapin (d. 6/15/1823)

The vertically elongated tympanum of this slate displays the drapery motif that is characteristic of the early-19th century. The frame consists of classical columns.

Gordis (d. 1840) and Ursula (d. 1839) May

This pair of rectangular marble stones display simple geometric carving.

See attached list of known carvers from Fannin report

- END -

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Explain religious affiliations, major period of use, and evaluate historical association of this burial ground with the community.

The Old Burying Ground is a remarkable Colonial period artifact that has survived as one of the primary physical documents of the settlement and early history of Sturbridge. It was the community's first burying ground, and marks the site of its first Congregational meetinghouse. It remains today as the primary physical link with the 17th and 18th century origins of Sturbridge and its early families. It also provides an excellent record of Colonial period New England funerary art and taste.

The land that now comprises the Town of Sturbridge was granted in 1729 to a group of forty-two proprietors, most from the Town of Medway. The settlement was known as Dumer and then New Medway before it was incorporated as the Town of Sturbridge in 1738. At that time, the population numbered 50 men, presumably with families, for a total of approximately 250. By 1776, the population had grown to 1,374.

Continued

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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Community **Sturbridge**
Property Name, Address **Old Burying Ground, Main Street at Haynes**

Area (s) **A** Form No. **801**

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE *Continued*

Explain religious affiliations, major period of use, and evaluate historical association of this burial ground with the community.

Six acres of land, lying near the geographic center of the fledgling community and at the intersection of the Brookfield-Woodstock and Brimfield-Oxford Roads, were purchased in 1730 as a meetinghouse site. By 1740, a proprietary meeting listed the uses of this six acre parcel as "a meetinghouse place, a burying place and a training field" indicating that the Old Burying Ground was laid out in the 1730s. These six acres remain the core of Sturbridge Center today. Now the site of the Town Hall (1838), Center School (1855), Joshua Hyde Library (1896), and Federated Church (1922), in addition to the 1730s burying ground and town common, the two latter elements remain the constants around which the town center has evolved.

The first meetinghouse was erected in 1733 and consecrated by the Rev. Joseph Baxter of Medfield. (Barber 1840: 607) The building measured 50' long x 40' wide with 22' between the plates and sills. It was finished like the meetinghouse in Grafton. (Clark 1838: 28) The First Congregational Society of Sturbridge was formally organized and the first minister ordained in 1736. Early pastors of the church included Reverend Caleb Rice (1736 - death in 1759), Reverend Joshua Paine (1761 - 1799), Reverend Otis Lane (1800 - 1819), Reverend Alvan Bond (1819 - 1831), Reverend Joseph Clark (1831). (Clark 1838: 33-33; 37-38; 39; 41-42)

Most of Sturbridge's early citizens are interred in the Old Burial Ground including the first three ministers. Other of note include Experience Denison, the first white child born in Sturbridge, James Dennison, father of the Southbridge school system and one of Sturbridge's first settlers, and Moses Marcy who called the first town meeting. Some stones testify to personal and family tragedy like that which afflicted Jephthah and Hannah Plimpton when they lost three infants between 1826 and 1832. The earliest gravestone present today is that of Edmund Livermore who died on June 30, 1750. Livermore was one of the fourteen original freemen who formed the first church. It is possible that earlier graves exist that were not marked originally, or whose markers have disappeared over time.

Sturbridge prospered as an agricultural community in the 18th century, achieving a population of 1,704 in 1790 and 1,927 in 1810 when the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike was laid out through the town center. This larger community was able to rebuild their meetinghouse in 1784-1787, and to enlarge the burying ground and improve it with a perimeter wall in 1794.

Town meeting voted to build a stone wall around the burying ground on May 12, 1794. The wall was funded by free donation. Construction was supervised by the commissioned officers of each company of militia in the town. According to the Reverend Joseph S. Clark in his 1838 *Historical Sketch of Sturbridge* committee was chosen to report in what manner it should be done:

"That it be done by free donation; that the commissioned officers of each Company of militia in this town be a committee to inspect and see to the work; that they give notice to all persons within the limits of their respective companies to attend with teams and tools sufficient to wall said ground on the 16th, 17, and 18th days of June next. (Clark 1838: 23)

Continued

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE *Continued*

Explain religious affiliations, major period of use, and evaluate historical association of this burial ground with the community.

The town adopted the report unanimously. After the Civil War, the wall was at least partially rebuilt.

By 1840, the Sturbridge population stood at 2,004, and the village center encompassed about 30 dwelling houses, a Congregational Church and a Baptist Church (Barber 1840: 608). At least some of the town's prosperity in the mid-19th century derived from steady growth in its textile, leather, shoemaking, and metalworking industries. Both population (2,291 1860; 2,213 1875) and value of manufactured goods peaked in the 1860s and 1870s. By 1915, the population had fallen to 1,648 (MHC: 10)

The Old Burying Ground, with stones dating from 1750 - 1887, was in use during the town's greatest period of prosperity.

- END -

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

- Barber, John Warner. *Historical Collections, Being a General Collection of Interesting Facts, Traditions, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes & Co. Relating to the History and Antiquities of Every Town in Massachusetts, with Geographical Descriptions.* Dorr, Howland & Co. Worcester. 1838/1840.
- Clark, Joseph. *Historical Sketch of Sturbridge, Mass. from Settlement to the Present Time.* Brookfield, Mass. 1838.
- Davis, George. *A Historical Sketch of Sturbridge and Southbridge.* Power Press of O. S. Cooke and Co. West Brookfield, Mass. 1856. p. 136.
- Fannin-Lehner Preservation Consultants. *Gravestone Inventory and Conservation Assessment: Old Burial Ground, Sturbridge, Mass.* 1995. copy available at Sturbridge Town Hall.
- Levine, Herbert. *In Pursuit of the Nucleated Village Part I.* unpublished research paper. Old Sturbridge Village. September, 1971.
- Sturbridge Bicentennial Souvenir Program.* June 18, 1938.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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Community **Sturbridge**
Property Name, Address **Old Burying Ground, Main Street at Haynes**

Area (s) **A** Form No. **801**

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form



Check all that apply:

- Individually Eligible Eligible only in a historic district
 Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of Significance By: Candace Jenkins

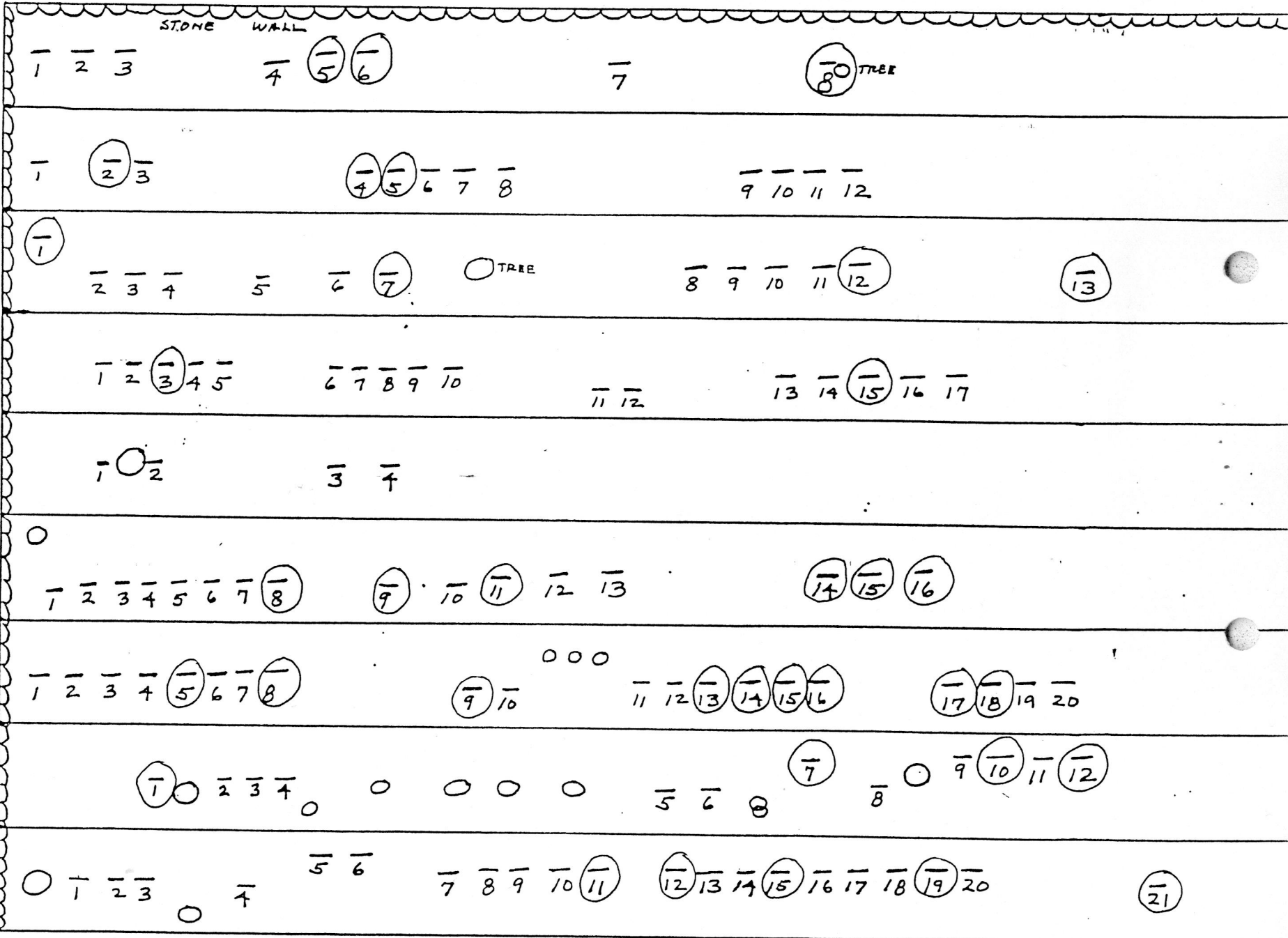
The Old Burial Ground is a contributing element within the Sturbridge Common Historic District (NR/SR: 11/9/77). It is also one of the most historically significant sites within the town on an individual basis. The site possesses integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and associations, and meets National Register criteria A and C on the local level with a period of significance extending from the 1730s to the 1880s.

The Old Burying Ground meets criterion A due to its unique and intimate associations with the early settlement and history of Sturbridge. The open, informal character of the landscape, the types of stones, and their inscriptions and art work possess an unusually eloquent ability to bring the early history of Sturbridge to life. This is especially important since the burying ground is the sole extant resource associated with large numbers of Sturbridge's 18th century leaders and general citizenry. The burying ground and town common are the constant elements around which the town center has evolved

The Old Burying Ground meets criterion C as a diverse and generally well-preserved graveyard that illustrates the changing tastes and fortunes of both Sturbridge and its larger New England context. Several stones have been identified as unusually fine works of gravestone art produced by noted stone carvers including Nathaniel Emmes, John Just and Henry Christian Geyer, Daniel Hastings, Joseph Sikes, Jr., and Ezra Stebbins II.

The Old Burying Ground meets criteria Exception D because it contains graves of persons of transcendent importance to Sturbridge, their age, and their distinctive gravestone design and craftsmanship.

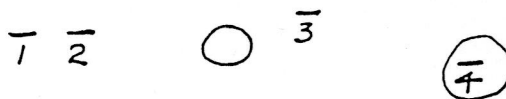
ROW
1
PLIMPTON
2
HEBARD
3
CUTTING
4
JOB H
DUNTON
5
DUNTON
6
PLIMPTON
7
CYLENDA
PLIMPTON
8
JOHN
PLIMPTON
9
MIRIAM
WIGHT



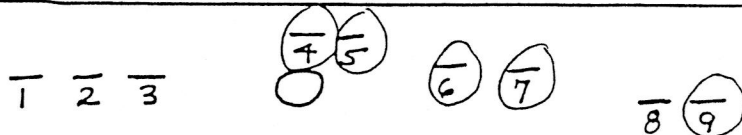
STONE WALL

ROW

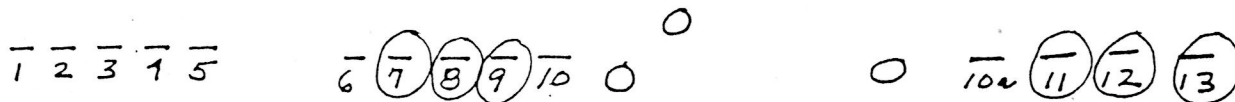
10
AARON
BRACKET



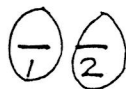
11
SAMUEL/LUCY
HOBBS



12
ABIGAIL
BOYDEN



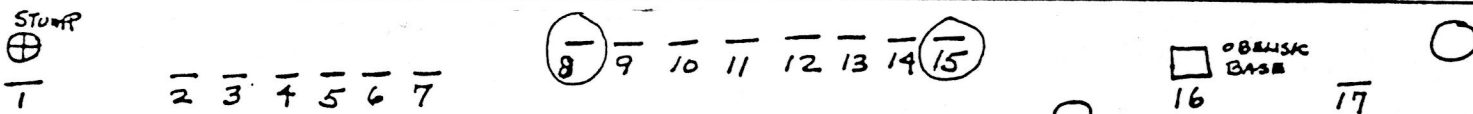
13
THOMAS
CHENEY



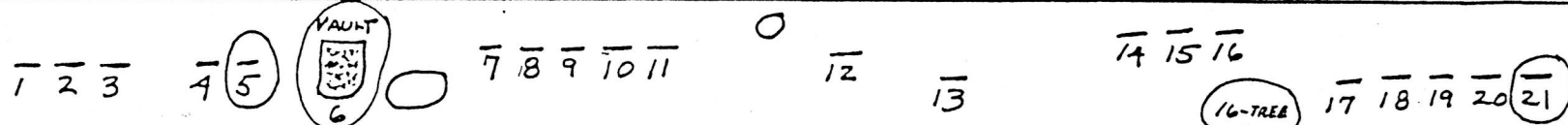
14
GEORGE
WATKINS



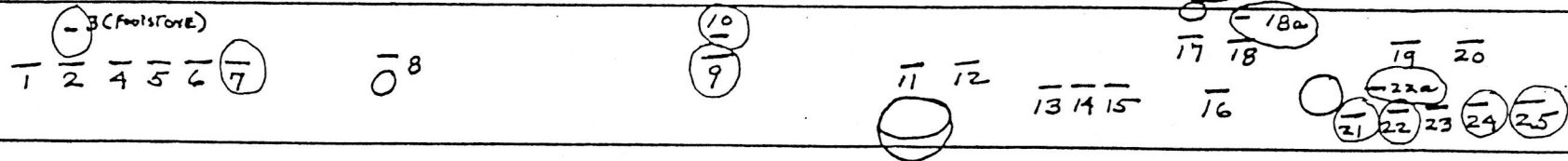
15
CATHERINE
PARKER



16
JOHN
HILL



17
SUBMIT
NEWELL



18
INFANT
LANE



STONE WALL

Compiled by Fannin-Lehner

Based on research completed by Mary Barnes

19
EUNICE
PUTNAM

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

20
HANNAH
ALLEN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

21
ABIGAIL
PARTRIDGE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

22
ELIZ.
ALLEN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

23
JACOB
DRAPER

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

24
ILLEGIBLE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

25
ILLEGIBLE

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

26
DANIEL
FISK

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 20a

27
DAVID
FISK

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

STONEWALL

MAIN STREET

GATE

ROW
28
ELIZABETH
CHAPPELL

1 (2) 3 4 5 6 7 (8) (9) 10 11 (12) (13) 14 (15) 16 (17) 18

29
COL. MOSES
MARCY

1 (2) 3 4 (5) 6 (7) 8 9 10 (11) 12 13 14

30
RHODA
RICE

(1) 2 (3) 4 5 6 (7)

31
JANE
NEWELL

(1) (2) 3 4 5 (6) (7) 8 9 10 11 12 (13) 14 (15) 16 17 18 19 20

32
P. W.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (8) 9 10 11 12 13

14 15

MAIN STREET

33
CHESTER
WALKER

16 (1) (2) 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 (10) 11 (12) 13 (14) (15) 16 17 18 (19) 20 21

34
NATHANIEL
WALKER

1 2 (3) 4 (5) 6 7 8 9 (10)

35
EMILY
HEBARD

STONE WALL

1 2 3 4 (5) (6) 7 8 (9)

36
ENOCH
COREY

1 2 3 4 (5) 6 (7) 8 9

Form 601

Compiled by Fannin-Lehner

Based on research completed by Mary Barne

ROW BY ROW LAYOUT
OLD BURIAL GROUND - STURBRIDGE MA

STU.801

11/96

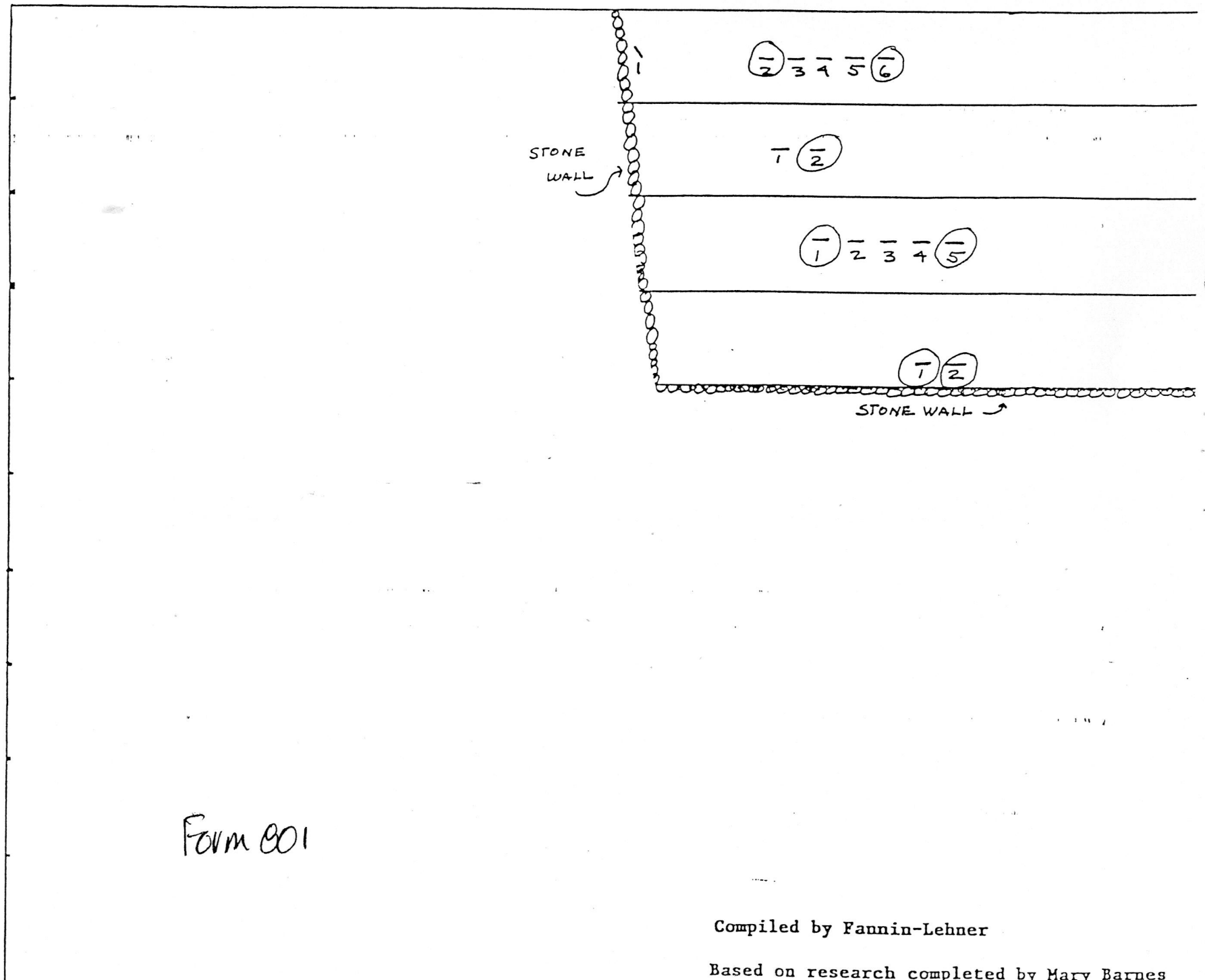
ROW
37
UNREADABLE

38
LOVINA
BDWEN

39
LUCY
CLARK

40
DINAH
SCOTT

MAIN STREET



Form 801

Compiled by Fannin-Lehner

Based on research completed by Mary Barnes

MHC
Form 001

FANNIN • LEHNER

PRESERVATION CONSULTANTS

PRELIMINARY GRAVESTONE CARVER LIST**OLD BURIAL GROUND
STURBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS**

BOSTON STYLE SKULL: (Often by the John or Abraham Codner, Henry or Joshua Emmes, John or Joseph Lamson or Robert Fowle. See entries below)

SAMUEL or CALEB CHAPIN. Bernardston, Massachusetts.

CODNER OR CODNER SHOP: ABRAHAM Codner, d. 1750; WILLIAM Codner (father of John Codner) (1709-1769), Boston; JOHN Codner, d. before 1783. "For over sixty years, William Codner and his sons, Abraham and John, supplied neatly carved skulls and winged faces for Boston's gravestone market. Codner cherubs are characterized by a full, chubby looking face with an attached cap of curls that seldom extend below the line of the eyebrows. ... Perhaps most distinctive is the overly ample dimpled chin. ... Codner was capable of great artistry when a commission demanded it. ... William Codner died in 1769 and is buried at Copp's Hill, Boston." (Laurel K. Gabel, Association for Gravestone Studies Newsletter, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 1986, p. 6.)

NATHANIEL EMMES (1690-1750), Boston. Also **HENRY Emmes** (1716/17-1767) and **JOSHUA Emmes** (1719-1772), Boston. "If probate payments are any indication, one of Boston's most popular carvers in the first half of the 18th century was Nathaniel Emmes. ... Typically, Emmes' skulls and graceful feathered wings are designed to fill the various sized tympanums arches. Often a set of crossed bones or a decorated border arch is used above the skull. ... Son Henry Emmes was one of the most accomplished gravestone artists in the area." (Laurel K. Gabel, Association for Gravestone Studies Newsletter, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 1986, p. 4).

FISHER/FARRINGTON SHOP. 1760-1790. Narragansett Basin, Rhode Island. The carving of this shop is similar to that of James Wilder II's work of the 1750s to 1760s, especially young, rounded faces. ("James Wilder of Lancaster, Stonecutter," Markers IV, p. 199, 201.)

ROBERT FOWLE. Boston carver, active in the 1765 period.

JOHN JUST GEYER: (born between 1758 and 1765; died after 1796), Boston. He carved in the style of his father, **HENRY CHRISTIAN Geyer**; both Geyers worked mainly in the Boston area. John Just's realistic skulls with misshapen eye sockets and the level eyed cherubs are usually easy to identify.

Form 801

FANNIN · LEHNER

PRESERVATION CONSULTANTS

AARON HASKINS. Bolton, Connecticut. "The majority of Haskins stones are close copies of the work of the Mannings [see below]." ("The Collins Family," Markers VIII, p. 140.)

DANIEL HASTINGS: Daniel Hastings b. 1749. Resident of Newton MA and brother-in-law of Ebenezer Howard. A prolific and popular carver in the area west of Boston. He was extremely skilled at portraiture.

THOMAS JOHNSON II (1718-1774). Middletown, Connecticut. The Johnson family owned a Portland sandstone quarry in Chatham, across the Connecticut River from Middletown, and produced large, imposing tablestones. THOMAS Johnson (1689/90-1761), Thomas Johnson II's father, furnished the stone for the Hancock house in Boston in 1737. The Johnson family was also notable for its gravestone carving, favoring high relief ornamentation, baroque scrolls and round-cheeked cherubs. Thomas II was generally known as "Ensign Thomas" or "Deacon Thomas." (Harriette Merrifield Forbes, Gravestones of Early New England, p. 11, 128; Gray Williams, Jr. in Markers IX, p. 85-85; Kevin M. Sweeney, Markers III, p. 1-47. "The Thomas Johnsons," Markers III, p. 59-89.)

NATHANIEL LAMSON (1693-1755); CALEB (1697-1760); CALEB (1760-c.1800); DAVID - was paid for stones in 1798; JOHN (1732-1776); JOSEPH (1658-1722); JOSEPH (1728-1789) and JOSEPH (c. 1760-1808). Caleb (1697-1767) and Nathaniel carved on a reddish slate with white or pale gray/green diagonal veins. This family of stonecutters lived in the Malden/Charlestown area of Massachusetts.

FREDRICK MANNING (1758-1810). Windham, Connecticut, son of the influential stonecutter, JOSIAH Manning (1725-1806). The Manning stonecutting family was well-known and had many imitators. Some of the Manning work is characterized by shallow carved angel-heads with downturned mouths. (Deborah Trask and Debra McNabb, Markers V, p. 153; "The Mannings," Markers VIII, p. 109-127.)

JOSEPH SIKES, JR. (1743-1801). The "Belchertown Master." A member of a family of stonecutters whose schist stones were "decorated with stylized spirit images or effigies, undulating vines, hearts and whorl rosettes ..." (Kevin M. Sweeney, Markers III, p. 33-37)

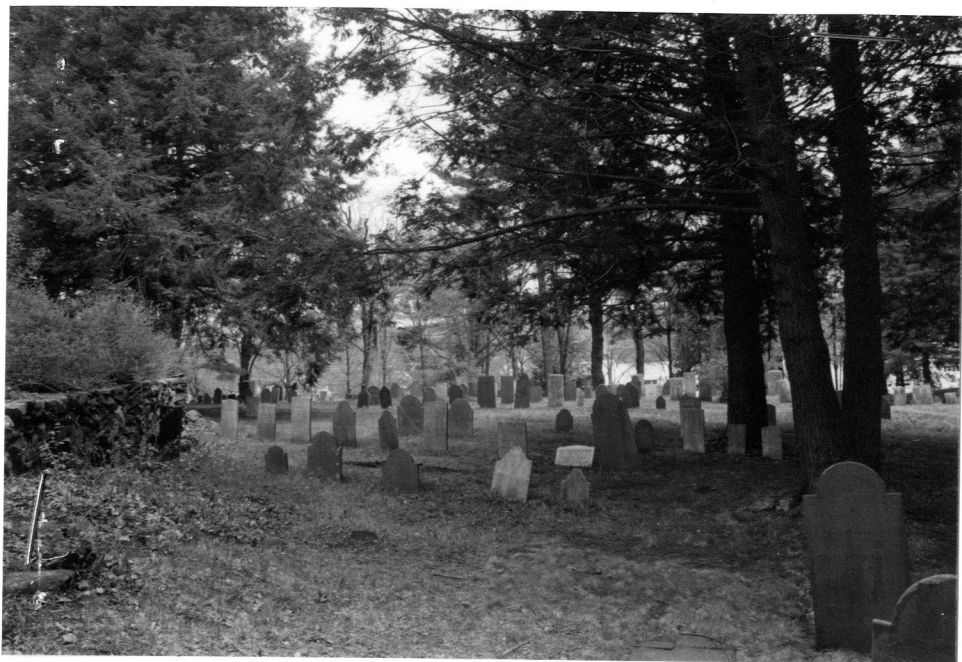
EZRA STEBBINS II (1760-1819) of the "Late Longmeadow School." He came from a family of stonecutters; his father was EZRA Stebbins I (1731-1796). The Longmeadow school, by the 1780s and 1790s, was noted for its portrait stones and crowned cherubs. (Kevin M. Sweeney, Markers III, p. 33-37).



Capt. Joseph Cheney (d. 10/3/1779)
May 1999.



Samuel Hamant (d. 4/1790).
May 1999



Overview, SW corner facing NE. May 1999.



Elizabeth Weld (d. 7/11/1763)



Gordis and Ursula May (d. 1840, 1839). May 1999.



Overview with Upham Memorial, facing NE.
May 1999.

Area A ~~Area A1-2~~ ~~NR~~ ~~801~~

1. Town Sturbridge, Massachusetts
 Location The Common Main Street, Sturbridge, Mass.
 Name Old Sturbridge Cemetery

Condition: Well kept up Neglected
 (if neglected, explain how)

nd?

NR 11/9/77
P. STUR SOUTH
665 SOUTH

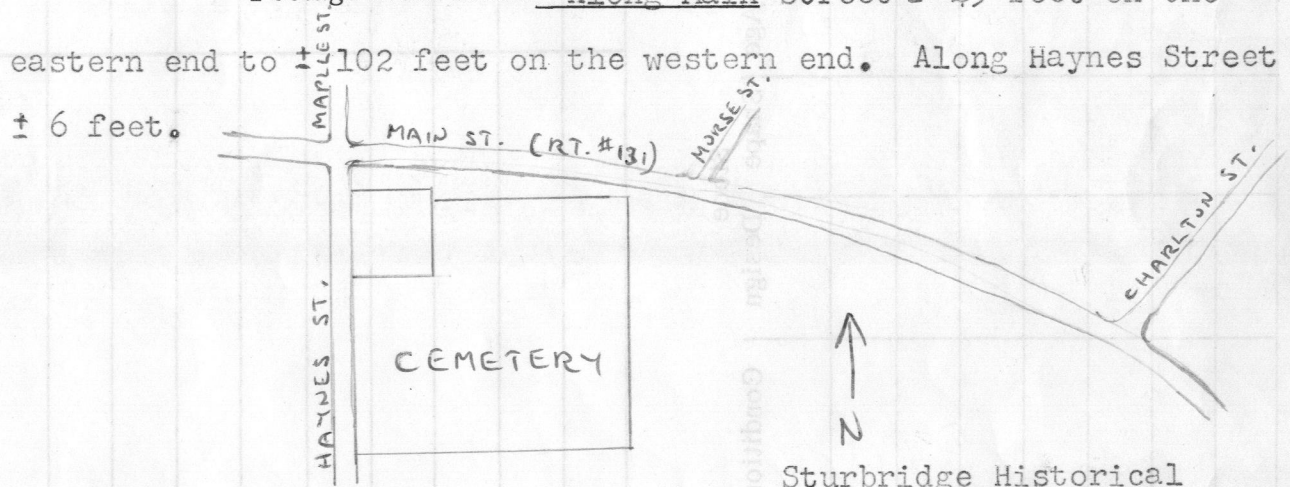
Approx. number gravestones 568
 Earliest death date (Edmund Livermore) June 30, 1750
 Most recent death date (Dolly Weld) September 21, 1887

ase see attached sheet



3. MONUMENTS-Overall condition: upright fallen (approx. no.) 25 inscription legibility Fair

4. MAP: Footage from street Along Main Street ± 45 feet on the eastern end to ± 102 feet on the western end. Along Haynes Street ± 6 feet.



Name of Recorder Wolfgang Lowy Organization Sturbridge Historical Commission Date 10/27/70

For MHC use: USGS Southbridge MA-COON 1952 Form # 801
(140)

In the Old Sturbridge Cemetery is the final resting place of the first three ministers of the town, who were the following: Caleb Rice, Joshua Payne, and Otis Lane. Also, two of the earliest settlers of prominence lie buried here -- James Deneson and Moses Marcy. In 1794, Revolutionary War veterans built wall around cemetery. The present wrought-iron gate was given to the cemetery by Mrs. Joseph Fiske in 1920. She was the daughter-in-law of Josiah Fiske, the founder of the textile mill in Fiskdale.

Wolfgang Lowy
27 Nov. 70

To be attached to form for Old Cemetery.

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Sturbridge Bicentennial Souvenir Program, June 18, 1938.

Area's Links With Past Buried Beneath Pines

By Reed Ide

STURBRIDGE — Set under the brow of the hill where today's Sturbridge Police station is located, is the Old Cemetery, one of Modern Sturbridge's major links with its past. There, beneath ancient pine trees rest the first people who settled Sturbridge, and many of its Revolutionary and Civil War casualties.

The Old Cemetery is located just east of the site of the first Congregational Church of Sturbridge. The church was organized in 1736, and a meeting-house built on the land in the same year. The meetinghouse and burying ground were located on a six-acre tract which was part of the Saltonstall grant, given by the heirs of Governor Gurdon Saltonstall—one of the early Massachusetts governors. In that original church, 14 males comprised the membership.

According to Joseph Clark's 1838 Historical Sketch of Sturbridge, at the May 12, 1794 town meeting, it was voted to build ground. "A committee was chosen to report in what manner it should be done. It was decided that it be done by free donation; that the commissioned officers of each company of militia in this town be a committee to inspect and see to the work; that they give notice to all persons within the limits of their respective companies to attend with teams and tools sufficient to wall said ground. The town adopted the report unanimously.

Finished The Work

A later report on the work states that on June 16 Captain Hooker with his group built a certain length and on the 17th Captain Gorey had charge and built his share, and on the 18th the third company came and probably finished the work.

The wall surrounding the cemetery was rebuilt following the Civil War by Gerry Shepard,

the last surviving Civil War Veteran in Sturbridge.

Today, persons can no longer be buried in the Old Cemetery. Trees and juniper shrubs have grown up around many of the gravestones, dislodging some, hiding others almost completely. Only two of the old stones have been replaced by modern glazed monuments. Much of the old slate stonework is still visible, and the inscriptions are readable. Many markers are simple fieldstones bearing no inscription at all. Buried in the cemetery are most of the first settlers and inhabitants of the town.

The first three ministers of the Congregational church are buried there. Experience Dennison, the first white child born in Sturbridge, is buried in the Old Cemetery. The graves of James Dennison, father of the Southbridge school system and one of the first Sturbridge settlers, and Moses Marcy, who called the first Sturbridge town meeting can also be found there.

A Reflection Of The Time

The epitaphs of those buried within the cemetery reflect the kinds of lives the early Sturbridge people led. Their humor, their sorrow, their fatalism are all reflected in their final markers. "Mr. Elijah Carpenter — died May 12, 1808 in his 65th year. In his life he was a patron of piety. He had long maintained a bright hope of a glorious resurrection. But his death was attended with alarming circumstances — he shot himself," reads one stone.

Another:

"Our children dear this place draw near

Your parents grave you see
Not long ago we were with you

And soon with us you'll be"
Grave of Timothy and Hannah Alkin — 1813.

Infant deaths were frequent. Small pox, stillbirth, or a variety of diseases often cut children off early in life. One marker attests to the sacrifice that some had to make in those early days: "Three children of Mr. Jephthah and Mrs. Hannah Plimpton died as follows—Francis H. died Nov. 2, 1826, age 10 months. Caroline S. died March 20, 1829, age 7 months. George A. died Jan. 7, 1832, age 7 months."

The Old Cemetery in Sturbridge is maintained today for its historical significance, old stones have been repaired, and the grounds are kept clear of rubbish and deadwood. It is here, perhaps more than in any other place in town, that the modern people of Sturbridge can catch a glimpse of the people that preceded them.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Town

STU. 801

Property Address

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s)	Form No.

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