

Town of Granville, Massachusetts
COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
Funding Request Questionnaire- 2020

Proposed Project: Northeast Cemetery Monument Restoration

EXCERPTS ONLY - NOT COMPLETE REQUEST



A Brief History of the Northeast Cemetery Granville, Massachusetts

Background:

In 1735 Granville's first settler, Samuel Bancroft, arrived from Springfield in what was then called Bedford. He and his wife settled on land in Northeast Granville that now rests under the waters of the Granville Reservoir. Samuel Bancroft served in the Revolutionary War as did many others from Granville's northeast district. His descendants are among those who established the Northeast Cemetery.

By the early 1800's Northeast Granville had become one of Granville's larger school districts, with a schoolhouse located on what is now watershed land. The community of Northeast Granville consisted primarily of farmers, along with a variety of businesses made up of coopers, cobblers, blacksmiths, tanneries, glove manufacturers, saw mills, grist mills and other ventures typical of the era. Northeast Granville's abundant water supply was the blessing that would eventually become the community's downfall.

Northeast Cemetery's Life and Death:

By 1830 enough people were dying in Northeast Granville to create the need for a local cemetery. On April 2, 1831 a group of area residents purchased land from Joel Root for \$5. The first burial was Hannah Chickley, wife of William Chickley. Her headstone reads, "This is the first burial in this yard."

Originally the Northeast Cemetery faced the "old" road to Westfield (Tice Hollow Road), which ran along the west border of the cemetery. The only remaining public portion of this road is now Bruce Road, the remainder being on closed watershed land. The road was rerouted to its present lower elevation to the east of the cemetery when the reservoir was built. As a result a visitor today would wonder why all the headstones seem to be facing the back of the cemetery.

Burials continued until "the bomb dropped" on November 24, 1894 when the Town of Westfield was granted the right to take land in Northeast Granville by power of eminent domain. Most burials after that were immediate family members joining loved ones already buried there. Records of the Silver Street Cemetery show at least one burial transferred from Northeast Cemetery to the new Silver Street cemetery in 1894. The last burial in Northeast Cemetery was Artemis Winchell in 1917, widow of Henry Winchell whose land was the first to be taken and after whom the original reservoir was named. There are 126 known graves in the Northeast Cemetery.

After generations of dreams and hard work families were forced from their farms and businesses ("driven from their houses" as described in the Water Authority's 1906 annual report), which were promptly demolished to discourage the locals from trying to move back in. By 1914 nearly 2000 acres had been taken from 30 property owners, displacing over 100 people, 200 head of stock, and closing about 15 miles of roads. The average price paid per acre was \$13.85 including all dwellings, barns and other structures. More takings would follow. By the 1950 3500 acres would be taken but for all practical purposes by 1914 Northeast Granville as a functioning community was over, with homes demolished and the school and cemetery closed.

The only thing families left behind that was not erased was the Northeast Cemetery and the bodies of loved ones. Some might view the cemetery as Northeast Granville's last defiant stand: "Over our dead bodies!" And so it was, but the final epitaph for these hard working Granville people might be, "We're still here, don't forget us."

Granville "Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2004"

The 2004 "Open Space and Recreation Plan" identified five Granville cemeteries as important historical town resources and noted the need to preserve these cultural sites. The current status of each is:

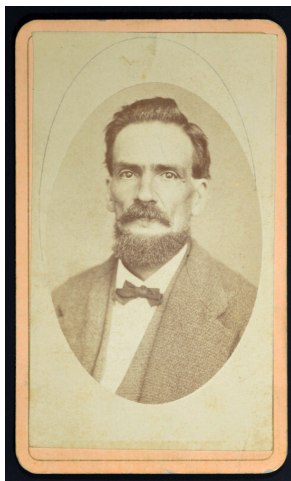
1. Main Road (Inactive, Town-owned): Restoration work has not been done but this cemetery is the subject of a 2020 CPA Funding Request.
2. Northeast (Inactive, Town-owned): Restoration work has not been done but this cemetery is the subject of this 2020 CPA Funding Request.
3. Silver Street (Active, Owned by Private Association): The cemetery association does an excellent job of maintaining this active cemetery.
4. West Granville (Active, Owned by Private Association): Very successful restoration work has been done thanks to recent CPA funding. The association provides a high level of attention to maintenance.
5. Woodlands (Active, Owned by Private Association): Very successful restoration work has been done thanks to recent CPA funding. The association provides a high level of attention to maintenance.

The following excerpt from the 2004 Plan is a good reminder of why preservation matters;

"Unrolling a 1914 map of the town, we stopped at every cellar hole and stone slab steps leading to imaginary front doorways. Trees grew like columns out of the parlors of the past. We brushed leaves from rusted farm equipment and horse gear to make out their functions. Old buggy wheels, leaning against trees, had rotted away leaving just the rims. But it was the names on the maps that got me. Here's Mary's house....here's Nellie's. Whole neighborhoods then. Only ghosts now.

Entire lives were spent carefully building the barn foundation walls that were later indiscriminately trashed. What would it be worth to save these treasures? ...This was not a place which evolved from cabin to shopping center. Like Anasazi ruins, it seemed to go backward in time."

(Granville citizen while researching the Open Space project, 2002)



Henry Winchell (1832-1907), buried in Northeast Cemetery, whose land was the first to be taken by eminent domain on April 1, 1898. The Winchell Reservoir was named after him. His wife Artemis was the last burial in Northeast Cemetery in 1917. Ruins of the Winchell place >



Northeast Cemetery Aerial View Relative to Reservoir, 1941



Photos copyright Robinson Photographic Laboratories, 1941

