

A History of Washington's Cemeteries

Taken from

History of

Washington

New Hampshire

1768 - 1886

“For twenty years after the settlement of Washington was commenced there was no place provided by the town for the burial of the dead. It is believed that burials were generally made on private grounds belonging to the homes of the deceased. There is said to be a small group of graves on the north western slope of Lovewell's Mountain, some forty rods south of the Wheeler place, so called, which was probably the common place of burial for that district, which was once one of the most thickly settled farming districts in town. In 1788, the town voted to buy one acre of ground for a burying place, and the same year accepted a piece of land belonging to Rev. George Leslie and Maj. Ephraim Davis. The selectmen were instructed to lay it out, take deeds and pay for it. This was the beginning of the old cemetery at the center of the town. In 1836 Hon. Joseph Healy deeded an additional piece of land to the town for an extension to this cemetery. In this cemetery lie the remains of many of the earliest settlers of Washington.

‘There, in their narrow cells forever laid,
the rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.’

In 1870, the town laid out the new cemetery at the center of the town, where most of the interments in that part of the town are now made. In 1842, the widow of Timothy Barney donated a site for the Christian meeting house and the adjoining church yard, which yard has since been used as a place of burial by the people living in that part of the town. The precise date of the laying out of the old church yard at East Washington is not known, but it was without doubt, not far from the beginning of the present century. The grounds were not enlarged until 1860, when the new portion, situated near the church, was purchased by the town. In 1883, the East Washington Cemetery Association was formed for the purpose of improving the cemetery and beautifying its grounds. Generous donations have been made to the association by its friends in and out of town, which have enabled it not only to greatly improve the appearance of the grounds, but to purchase a valuable addition on the north side of the grounds. George W. Carr has been president of the association since its organization. In 1817, it was voted not to procure a hearse for the use of the town, but in 1828 the town voted to procure one. The same year (1828) the matter of pasturing sheep in the burying ground was left to the discretion of the selectmen; whether it was done or not is not known. Evidently the object was to destroy the bushes which are so prone to overrun neglected grounds.

During the last century the public mind has greatly changed its view concerning the grave and its surroundings. The emblems of gloom have given place to those of a more cheering nature, and the last resting place among the dearest and pleasantest spots of earth.”

Taken from

Portrait of a Hill Town

A History of

Washington, N.H.

1876 – 1976

By Ronald & Grace Jager

“The Upkeep of Cemeteries In 1895 the town voted to purchase two new hearses for \$300 apiece. One of these, from East Washington, is still alive and well in 1976, but the other was destroyed in 1939 when sparks from Fleming’s sawmill ignited the Center village hearse house. By 1896 Washington had built a new hearse house in each village, and had erected near each a tomb ‘to keep dead bodies by use of ice.’

For nearly a century the Old Cemetery in Washington Center had been slowly eroding into the road. Without a wall to hold the cemetery in, there was no telling who or what might wash out on to the road after a heavy rain storm. ‘Alas, poor Yorick!’ So, with the prospect of private donations in view, the town decided to build a wall. In the summer of 1893 H. I. Hoyt worked for 17½ days drawing stone, earning a total of \$60. Then three stone masons from out of town came with their derrick, and together with some local help from Gardner Millen put up, in three weeks, a splendid wall, which still stands (for the most part). Three individuals donated the major portion of the cost of the project, which was \$261.79, and the town paid less than \$37 for its new wall. In 1899 the first fund for the care and upkeep of a cemetery plot was accepted by the town from the Lewis family. Thus, as the century drew to a close, the town seemed to have its arrangements for the next life at least as well under control as its arrangements for this one.”



In 1884 the East Washington Cemetery was enlarged again with the addition of forty-four lots to the north of the 1860 section.

Just twenty-four years later, in 1908, the town purchased more land to the east of the cemetery adding another eighty lots.

The Maynard Section was purchased in 1958, lying south of the 1908 section. At this time the lot size was reduced, no longer accommodating multiple graves but instead, a single grave each.

By the end of 1976 with only 12 unsold lots remaining in the East Washington Cemetery the Town was in urgent need of more land. Thus, in 1977 one and one half acres was purchased from Ludwig and Anna Paul.

Meanwhile the Washington Center Cemetery was also outgrowing its available land and in 1972 work was being started for the development of the New Section of the New Center Cemetery.

In 1993 the selectmen requested that the Cemetery Trustees investigate having the stone wall at the Old Center Cemetery rebuilt, as the highway department was afraid of the stones falling into the road. The rebuilding was completed in 1994.

In 2002 the Town discontinued the sale of cemetery lots and instead now sells the Right to Inter.

It is our hope that the Washington Cemeteries will continue to provide a sanctuary of peace, comfort and remembrance for those whose loved ones are buried within, while at the same time, preserving and maintaining an atmosphere of dignity at all times.