

WOBURN BURIAL GROUNDS

Ancient Public Burial-Grounds – In Woburn proper there are two ancient public burial-grounds. The first and oldest of these is on Park Street, Woburn Centre, and is probably coeval with the first settlement of the town, 1642. The second burial-ground is on Montvale Avenue, and like the other, is situated near the Common. It was first opened as a parish burial-ground in 1794, and was subsequently purchased by the town in 1824.

The First Burial-Ground. – The earliest mention of this burying-ground in the Town Records is the comparatively late date of 1662, and there are no stones now standing earlier than one double dated 1689-90. The number of epitaphs in 1866, the latest one being dated 1856, was 269, which is four less than were there in 1847. One was erected in 1872 to a person dying in 1792, and one was erected in 1875, to a hero of 1775. Adding these two to the four of 1847, the number is increased to 275. Of early references to interments in the yard may be cited the following from the first volume of the Town Records: The town debtor in 1678, to Gersham Flagg, "for Cutler's grave," 3s. 6d.; May 5, 1679, the selectmen appointed John Houghton, Senior, "to ring the bell, to dig graves, and to cleanse the meeting-house."

Two collections of the inscriptions have been made, one by Nathan Wyman, in 1847, and another by W.R. Cutter, in 1866. Mr. Wyman's list was published in the "N.E. Hist. Gen. Reg.," II., III., 1848-49, but for want of space all the material sent was not printed, and the literal transcript, which was expected, did not appear. The Cutter transcript is a literal one, with explanatory notes for each epitaph, and is in manuscript. The number of headstones now standing, of date previous to 1700, is 12 to adults, and 12 to young children. The age given of the oldest person of this number is 82; there are 4 of age from 72 to 79; 2 among the 60's; 1 among the 50's; 2 among the 40's; 1 among the 30's; and one only 19 years. The ages of the children are from a few hours, or 1 day, to 5 years, viz., 5 of age less than 7 days; 1 whose age was reckoned by weeks; 3 whose ages were reckoned by months; and 3 whose ages were reckoned by years. These stones are of the enduring nature of those of the older persons, all being imported apparently from the old country.

The ground has been subjected by action of the town to some encroachments of its original territory; and, owing to these impairments, some gravestones are known to have been relocated. It may be supposed, however, that these changes have been small, and that they have effected little change in the appearance of the yard. The principal entrance was formerly by a passageway under the rock beside the Central House, and another entrance, in the direction of Park Street, was cut off with bars being the way much used in former times leading to a spring, or watering place, near the junction of Park and Centre Streets. The encroachments, the past entrance near the Central House, and the way to the watering place appear on a plan belonging to the city, by C. Thompson, of date 1855.

The number of interments represented by headstones, during the period from 1700 to 1750 is 128. This number may well be used as an illustration of the corresponding growth of the town itself. Of this number there are in all 49 male persons, of ages from 17 to 94 years; 9 were over 70; 23, from 50 to 70; 12 under 40; while 5 were between 40 and 50 years. Of women there are 47, of ages from 20 to 98 years; 6 were over 70; 12 from 50 to 70; 20 under 40; and 9, from 40 to 50 years. The mortality of women under

40 appears large, nearly half the whole number. Of persons below the age of adults the number is 32 of ages from 2 days to 15 years; under 10 are 24; and 8 were over 10.

In connection with this period is an interesting discovery. The only table monument in the yard is not the monument of Elizabeth Cotton as might appear, but the monument of Nathaniel Saltonstall, Esq., who died in Woburn, June 23, 1739. It is a red sandstone slab, on which are indentations where a coat-of-arms and an inscription on tablets of lead or stone were admitted, but which, like the original base of brick, long ago disappeared. Four granite pillars now support it in a horizontal position, and on its top reclines the slate slab of Elizabeth Cotton (1742), a niece of Saltonstall. The executor's probate account of Saltonstall's estate, filed with his will and inventory, Middlesex County registry, of date June 25, 1739, presents amounts of considerable size on behalf of several persons; such as, Ebenezer Kendall, of Woburn, for digging a grave, and Isaac Snow, of Woburn, for coffin and plates, charges amounting to more than L10. Nathaniel Lamson, a stone-cutter of Charlestown, presents a charge of L26 for a tombstone. Thomas Moulin, an out-of-town party, charges for use of pall and portorage, and for making a brick grave, - bricks and lime and workmen, - a sum amounting to more than L10. The items of tombstone, brick grave, etc., were contracted in the latter part of July, 1739, the whole being completed on the 29th. The Boston Weekly Newsletter for June 28, 1739, under the heading of "Boston," has the following notice:

Last Saturday night, died very suddenly at Woburn, Nathaniel Saltonstall, Esq.; he was younger brother to the late Governor Saltonstall, of Connecticut. A gentleman well respected among us

The slate slab of Elizabeth Cotton, now evidently removed from its site, contains an epitaph unusually singular, of such phrases as she "died a virgin," and, "if a virgin marry she hath not sinned," etc. A search at the Middlesex registry fails to discover any papers of administration on her estate.

The headstones from 1750 to 1775, the remaining years of the provincial period, are proportionately numerous. The number erected to persons over 25 years of age is 60, - 30 males and 30 females. Of the males, 2 were over 90, - 1 in his ninety-sixth year; while 8 males and 9 females were over 70. The oldest female was 81; 10 females were under 50, and 11 from 50 to 70. Of persons under 25, the number was 24, including 4 married females; 15 were over 16; 1 was 6, and 8 were under 5 years. The age of the youngest was 4 days. The number was about equally divided as to sex. There is a noticeable decrease in the number of headstones to children at this time, and adulatory inscriptions are more common.

From 1775 to 1793 the stones are mostly those of aged persons; the number to children, from 1775 to 1787, being 6, of ages from 6 weeks to 3 years. The whole number to 1793 is only 36, or at most 38, counting two of recent erection. A new burial-ground was opened in 1794, and a small number, perhaps not over 3, were removed from this to that. The comparatively fewer stones after 1775 show that the Revolution bore hard upon the prosperity acquired by the people under the provincial system of government. The war began at their very doors, and little was left afterwards for luxuries of any kind.

On March 5, 1810, the town granted the request of the heirs of Col. Loammi Baldwin to build a tomb, the yard in which it was to be built being left discretionary with the Standing Committee. This yard was selected, and a granite Obelisk over the tomb contains a marble tablet to Hon. Loammi Baldwin, died 1807, aet. 63; "erected by his children."

Inscriptions still more recent are those of Wyman Richardson, Esq., 1841, and John Fowle, 2d, 1856; the latter on a marble monument, erected in memory of James Fowle, Esq., and his descendants, on a lot deeded to the town. Asabel Porter, killed at Lexington, April 19, 1775, was commemorated by a marble stone, erected April 21, 1875, by the local Grand Army Post.

In July and August, 1874, a series of articles by the present writer appeared in the Woburn Journal on the subject of this and other Woburn old cemeteries. These were intended to describe their appearance, and gave a general account of the gravestones and the persons interred beneath them. The subject was still further referred to in the Woburn Journal, May 1, 1875; and an article was printed on the subject of the Woburn Cemetery on Salem Street, *ibid.*, Jan. 9, 1875. From these articles and the lists of inscriptions, as well as the gravestones themselves, a good idea may be obtained of the value of these monuments as a record of the past. It had been the writer's intention to present a list of the names of those buried beneath these memorials, but his limits have already been exceeded.

The Second Burial Ground – This was originally established by the society of the First Parish in Woburn. The subject was agitated early in 1793, and at first Ensign Ichabod Parker, Mr. Daniel Reed, and Capt. Joseph Brown were appointed a committee to see about "a new burying place." The Standing Committee of the parish at this period appear to have charge of both burying-grounds, from allusions in the records to the old one. On April 14, 1794, the parish voted to purchase of Capt. Joseph Brown the land that had been Zachariah Brooks's, about one acre, for their purpose, for a sum a little less than L40. The three deacons, Samuel Thompson, Obadiah Kendall, and Josiah Richardson, with the Standing Committee, were to fix a fence about the enclosure, make a gate, and arrange the ground for interments. They were also to determine when the new burying place should be opened, and the old one shut up. Certain members of the Baptist Society in the limits of the parish soon desired a share in the benefits of burial in the "new burying-yard," by paying their "proportionable part"; and on April 13, 1795, the privilege was granted. Later in the same year, the Baptists, not owning any right, were allowed liberty of burial on the payment of half a dollar a grave. Later still, April 11, 1796, all Baptists were admitted joint proprietors, on payment of their proportional part of the expenses. In 1799, in respect to what the parish will do "respecting the burying-yard," it was decided that the Standing Committee shall "take care" of it, and "conduct that article" as they think best for the interest of the parish. After the separation of Burlington, in 1799, the town and the First Parish were practically one in the effect of their action in the matter of the burying-grounds. Thus the town in 1806, and following years, chose committees to take care of the meeting-house and burying-grounds. The parish was incorporated as the First Congregational Parish in 1816, and in 18223 the parish granted permission to Dr. Rufus Wyman to erect a tomb, under supervision of the Standing Committee. At the same time, in 1823, the parish took measures to sell their burying-ground to the town, and this was soon accomplished for \$162.50.

The earliest dated stones are removals from the older yard, or elsewhere, and many later ones have been removed to the Salem Street Cemetery, opened in 1845. Interments have rarely been made in recent years. Many useful characters, deserving of respectful remembrance, are interred here: Fathers of the Revolution; four victims of the fall of Clapp house-frame, July 14, 1807; school-masters, doctors, magistrates, the wife of a minister, and many others. There are verbatim lists of the inscriptions here as they were in 1847, and have been since. They were the joint work of Dr. Benjamin Cutter

and Nathan Wyman, continued and recopied by the present writer. The number of headstones is about 350; some containing inscriptions to at least two persons. Dr. Cutter's number of inscriptions was, in 1847, counting by individuals, 365. The one of earliest date was 1789. Of persons over 70 there were 78; 7, over 90 years. The number under 20 was 105. Of unknown age, 2. Of women, there are 121 over 20 years; the number under 40 and over 20, being 47, - a very slight decrease in the mortality of that class over the corresponding period of the previous century. The Richardson family in Dr. Cutter's list presents an interesting instance of longevity. The number of persons of that name represented by inscriptions was 50. Of these 5 were over 90; 2 were 96; over 70 and under 90 were 16 persons; under 20 were 4 only. Of the remaining 25 there were 12 between 40 and 70; and 13 between 20 and 40. Of the last number, 2, one aged 30 and the other 31, were killed outright by accidents connected with the fall or destruction of buildings. In B. Cutter's list are some twenty-four inscriptions that are not in N. Wyman's; and in the latter, to 1847, are some accessions not found in the former; but, otherwise, they correspond fairly well. Mr. Wyman continued his work after Dr. Cutter ended, and thus obtained additions. The whole number, by individuals, to 1870, is 388. Since 1845, the removals have been far greater than the accessions, and some monuments have perished, from the character of their materials, wood having in some instances been used. Since 1848, there is one stone to a person of 24, another to one of 48; others to persons of 71, 81, 88, 83, and 97 years: total, 7.

EPITAPHS – FIRST BURIAL GROUND

Capt. John Carter, an early inhabitant of Woburn, subscribed the “town orders,” 1640: styled ensign, 1653, and lieutenant, 1664; was captain in 1675, the time of Philip’s War; was selectman 1664, and 1672 to 1679; commissiainer “to end small causes,” 1664, 1674; and commissioner “of the rate” 1653, 1658, and 1668. Ensign, 1651; lieutenant, 1664; captain, 1672. Ordered that Lieut. John Carter be captain, 1672. (see Colony Records) His first wife Elizabeth, died 1691. He married, second, Elizabeth Groce, 1691. (Vide notice of his family, Sewall’s History, 578, and further of him, *ibid.*, 38,39, 79, 112).

**MEMENTO MORI
Here lyes ye body
of Cap’t. John
Carter aged about
76 years, deceased
ye 14 of
September 1692**

Elizabeth Carter, first wife of Capt. John Carter

**Here lyes ye body
of Elizabeth Carter,
wife of Cap’t. John
Carter, aged 78
years died ye 6 of
May 1691**

Lieut. John Carter, son of Capt. John Carter and Elizabeth, first wife, was born Feb. 6, 1652-53, married Ruth Burnham.

**Here lyes Buried
ye Body of Lieu’t.
John Carter Who
Dec’d April ye 8’th
Anno Dom’l 1727
Aged 75 years**

Ruth (Burnham) Carter, wife of Lieut. John Carter married Juen 20, 1678.

**Here Lyes ye Body
of Mr's Ruth Carter
wife to Lieu't. John
Carter, who Dec'd
Jan'ry 10'th 1724
in ye 55'th Year of
Her Age**

Deacon Josiah Wright, deacon of First Church, Woburn, 1736-1747, married Ruth Carter, Sept. 17, 1700; daughter of Lieut. John and Ruth (Burnham) Carter; born Oct. 18, 1681. She died Jan. 31, 1774, aged "92 years, or more." (Vide Sewall's Woburn, 589, 598)

**Here lyes Buried ye
Body of Deacon
Josiah Wright Who
Departed this life
Jan'ry 22'nd Anno
Dom'I 1747 in ye 73rd
Year of His Age**

Phebe Wright, daughter of Deacon Josiah and Ruth (Carter) Wright, born July 13, 1721.

**Phebe Wright
Daugh'tr of M'r
Josiah & M'rs Ruth
Wright Dec'd
Decem'br ye 7th 1724,
in Her 3'd Year**