

SHERBORN'S EIGHT CEMETERIES

Sherborn has eight "burying grounds" or cemeteries: [Brush Hill](#), [Central](#), [Farm](#), [New South](#), [Old South](#), [Pine Hill](#), [Plain](#) and [West](#).

In addition, there are two state-owned cemeteries in town, a reminder that MCI-Framingham is in that part of Sherborn transferred to Framingham in the late 1920s. These are the Clara Barton and a smaller unnamed cemetery just to the right of Brush Hill Cemetery, both on Perry Street. The Clara Barton holds the early remains of female prisoners who died while incarcerated and who were unclaimed. The smaller cemetery holds young children, mostly buried in the 1930s. We have been told that during this time, prisoners were allowed to keep their children with them until about the age of two. We believe this cemetery holds the remains of these children who died while living at the prison and were unclaimed.

OLD SOUTH CEMETERY (off Route 27, near Route 115. This is reached by turning into a private Driveway, 225 South Main St.. You will see the cemetery opening on your left): South Cemetery sits on a beautiful bluff overlooking the Charles River. It is the oldest burying ground west of the river and where Sherborn's first settlers are buried. Hopeskill Leland was thought to be the first person buried here, in 1655, but his gravestone, if there was one, is no longer extant. William Bigelow, a noted historian, wrote in his 1830 History of Sherburne, South Cemetery is "probably the oldest in town as the first settlers located themselves in its immediate vicinity. It lies unfenced in a pasture, is overrun with whortleberry, fern, and other bushes, and many of the gravestones are prostrated and exposed to the trampling of horses and cattle."

Restoration of South Cemetery was undertaken in 1915 by the Sherborn Historical Society. A large memorial boulder commemorating the early settlers of the town was placed facing the cemetery's walled entrance, with a bronze plaque inscribed, "The Most Ancient Burying Ground, on the west Bank of the Charles River, Established by the Settlement of Boggestow Farms before 1660. Here rest from their labors The founders of Sherborn, Holliston, Medway. Erected by the Historical Societies of the Three Towns, 1915."

Those who died in the epidemic of the 1750s known in Sherborn as the "Memorable Mortality," the "Great Sickness," and later in Holliston as the "Holliston Plague" are also buried here. John B. Brainard wrote in 1905, "Field enclosed is about an acre in extent. There are indications of a great many unmarked graves. There are 37 head stones standing, 10 of these are merely rough field stone without any attempt at inscription. Four appear to have some inscription but were illegible." In _____, a group of archeological students from Boston University performed a sonar scan of the ground and were clearly able to see the neatly-arranged rows of graves with pathways between.

We have been told early graves were not marked so the Native People would not know how many settlers were here or if there was an epidemic of some kind. With the exception of a marble marker and a granite marker, most of the gravestones are slate, displaying winged skulls. The Joseph Ware stone, 1754, is a fine example of the transition in carving from winged skull to winged face. Bullard, Brick, Daniels, Morse and Fairbanks are among the names at South Cemetery.

FARM CEMETERY (located on Farm Rd., near Forest St.): Founded in 1688 as a Morse family burial ground, Farm Cemetery is the second oldest cemetery in Sherborn, a reminder that the southeast part of town, near the Charles River, was the first area of English settlement. The earliest dated stone is from 1787.

Round-headed slate markers and beautiful pines adorn this small rectangular cemetery of about half an acre. Although early winged skulls and human heads can be found among the stones, the willow and urn design predominate.

Early family names which appear with greatest frequency among the sixty or so inscribed markers are those of the Bigelow, Clark, Morse, Mann, Lane, Russell and Saltonstall families. William Bigelow, an early 19th century historian, wrote, "A number of ancient graves are covered in their whole length with rough stones, which is said to distinguish those which contain the remains of persons who died of the small pox." And in 1905 John P. Brainard noted, "many [stones] were simple field stones, used as markers and without any inscription - much space in the center and right of the ground is without any headstones, though the contour of the surface would indicate many graves." In 1887, H.L. Morse, administrator of the Lemuel L. Morse estate, made a gift of Farm Cemetery to the town.

Recent burials have been members of the Saltonstall family, including Richard and Mary Saltonstall, who so generously donated the present library to the town. These and other recent family stones, together in a small fenced area to the left back of the cemetery, have been crafted in slate to reproduce the style of the last century. A new granite and chain fence was placed here about ten years ago.

CENTRAL CEMETERY (at the intersection of Routes 16 and 27): Central Cemetery, Sherborn's third oldest burial ground, is on land originally part of the First Parish [now West Suburban Unitarian Universalist] church common. Now surrounded on three sides by an old field-stone wall and on land then belonging to the Sanger family, this small triangular cemetery, contains about fifty stones, many broken and several weathered to the point where they can no longer be read. They are principally of slate, representing almost every motif popular between the 1680's and 1820's - late seventeenth century winged skull, eighteenth century winged human faces, and nineteenth century willow and urn. Several of the seventeenth and eighteenth century stones have delicately carved vertical borders depicting intertwined leaves and flowers. At first this burial ground was much larger, stretching southward. During the early nineteenth century, Captain Samuel Sanger took it for a family cemetery and maintained it.

The earliest extant inscription remembers Grace Bullen who died in 1686 and reads, "The first grain sown in this granary." Sherborn's first three ministers, Daniel Gookin [served 1685-1712], Daniel Baker 1712-1731], and Samuel Porter, [served 1734-1758], were buried here before being removed to the Sanger family lot at Pine Hill.

The last burial is that of Captain Samuel Sanger and his wife, a stone with a highly architectural design incised in fine thin lines on its surface with a triumphal arch flanked by doric columns and topped by a willow and urn; every brick in the arch is clearly defined. In 1883, C.H. Dowse, then chairman of the Cemetery Committee for Sherborn, copied the inscriptions still legible at this cemetery, and sent them to the New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston.

Several years ago, during a workshop on gravestone restoration and preservation, seventeen old, very large gravestones were unearthed from where they must have been buried about a century ago. They were leaning against one another like slices of bread. These were the original stones commemorating Sherborn's first three ministers and their wives and children. (The remains of the ministers, it is said, were removed to Pine Hill when it opened in the 1850s, and a single obelisk there names them. It is not known if the wives and/or children were also moved, but there is no mention of

them in Pine Hill records.)

"Memory," a statue by famous sculptor Cyrus Dallin, was erected here in 1918 in memory of Sherborn citizens who died in wars between 1686 and World War I. Names of those lost in later wars have since been added.

WEST CEMETERY (on Maple St. near Bear Hill Rd.): Maple Street was once the principal route west to Ashland from Sherborn, and West Cemetery was organized here in the 1790s. Running east-west on the north side of the road, it is surrounded on all sides by a low rubble stone wall. To the right of its entrance is a raised vault, faced with granite blocks, and bearing the inscription "Eliot Holbrook's tomb, 1810 A.D."

Most of West cemetery's 124 gravestones are slate, granite and limestone, with the willow and urn the most common motif. Several stones from the 1790's and 1800's are round headed with winged human faces, for example, the 1797 double-headed stone of William and Julia Tucker, who died at ages 32 and 29 respectively in 1797 and 1796.

The first burial here was that of Mrs. Hannah Sarah Twitchell on 29 September 1791 and the most recent date, 1941, is on John Leland's tomb. Family names include Twitchell, Stone, Cleale, Leland, Perry, and Whitney.

BRUSH HILL CEMETERY (Perry Street): Brush Hill, the largest of three cemeteries on Brush Hill Road, is a reminder that settlement had reached Sherborn's northwest corner by the late 18th century. Its large rectangular lot, surrounded by low fieldstone walls, contains approximately 30 stones still standing and many more in fragments on the ground. Most are of slate with winged human heads, and willow and urn motifs.

The cemetery, used from 1785 to the 1880s, was a gift to the town by Joseph Perry in 1785. The first burial here was that of Luther Perry, who died 22 February 1785, aged 21, son of Capt. Amos and Mrs. Patience Perry and a nephew of Joseph. This stone may be seen near the cemetery entrance. Green Lane, part of Hunting Lane, and Perry Street were once the direct route from Sherborn Center to Framingham. Use of this route was discontinued due to a "snow storm" lawsuit against the town by the Perry's, which the Perry's won. [This family lived to the south of Brush Hill cemetery at the intersection of Hunting and Green Lanes. This house is no longer extant.] The latest dated stone is that of Eveline Sanger, May 11, 1885, aged 83y.2m.20d. Names most common here are Cozzen, Sanger, Perry, Stratton, and Bullard.

PLAIN CEMETERY [on Route 27 near the Natick town line]: Situated on Edward's Plain, this cemetery was laid out in 1792 by a private group called the Friendly Society, composed of Andrew Newell and fifteen others, residents of the Plain and Sherborn Center. They banded together "for the express purpose of assisting each other" say the laws of this society "when in distress by the death of our friends." The Society received from Mr. Adam Leland, a piece of land for burial purposes, paying therefor 30 shillings. This ground, situated nearly opposite the 21 mile stone, was laid out in 20 equal lots. Lot #1 with an apple tree growing thereon was reserved for Mr. Adam Leland, who also had the sole privilege of feeding the premises with sheep only, while lot 2 was reserved from the minister Rev. Elijah Brown. The remaining lots were drawn by ballot, and "no

one shall presume to intrude on another's right, under penalty of being expelled from this Society." The earliest date is that of Polly Clark, died 17 December 1790, aged 13 months, daughter of William and Elizabeth Clark, and the first burial Rebecca Newell, died 30 June 1792, aged 25, daughter of Andrew and Eliza Newell. The most recent burial was in 1928.

In 1801 the cemetery was extended by 18 rods, and the whole enclosed in a stone wall 4½ feet high. A horse block was also put up opposite the burying ground. At present the western side, on North Main street, is bounded with a low granite wall and ornate ca. 1855 cast iron gates.

In 1802 rows of trees, ash and poplar alternate were set out - in 1820 the poplars were cut down, and ash trees substituted. Each member agreed to attend with their families, at the burial of members, or persons in members families "following next to the relations, in solemn order" by pairs. "No creatures of any kind except sheep of Mr. Adam L. only, are permitted to feed in the burial ground." "No bushes or stones shall ever disgrace the ground."

The Friendly Society disbanded in 1850 and Plain cemetery has, since 1883, been maintained by the town. There are approximately fourteen rows of stones flanking a central aisle which culminates at a raised granite-faced vault. The majority of stones are round headed and are slate, granite or limestone. Names frequently found are those of Dowse, Coolidge, Pratt, Morse, Perry, Grout, and Clark.

Particularly noteworthy is the Clark family memorial, a limestone plinth upon which rests a flaming urn. Most of the stones date from the first half of the 19th century, with the willow and urn the most popular motif.

THE FRIENDLY SOCIETY

written by Mrs. A. Leland, ca. 1930, for the Sherborn Historical Society

In 1792 Mr. Andrew Newell and fifteen others, residents of the Plains and middle town of Sherborn, formed an association, under the name of the Friendly Society "for the express purpose of assisting each other" say the laws of this society "when in distress by the death of our friends." The Society received from Mr. Adam Leland, a piece of land for burial purposes, paying therefor 30 shillings. This ground, situated nearly opposite the 21 mile stone, was laid out in 20 equal lots. Lot #1 with an apple tree growing thereon was reserved for Mr. Adam Leland, who also had the sole privilege of feeding the premises with sheep only, while lot 2 was reserved from the minister Rev. Elijah Brown. The remaining lots were drawn by ballot, and "no one shall presume to intrude on another's right, under penalty of being expelled from this Society."

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Andrew Newell was the first clerk of the friendly Society and Moses Babcock its first sexton. The duties of the sexton were, in some measure, those of the undertaker of the present day. "In general" say the By-laws, "the sexton is to be the Mourners Friend."

Each member agreed to attend with their families, at the burial of members, or persons in members families "following next to the relations, in solemn order" by pairs.

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"No bushes or stones shall ever disgrace the ground."

The subscribers "pledge to each other their sacred word and honor and bind their heirs to do everything contained in this solemn agreement - as we conceive it to be of a religious nature, decently to inhumate our deceased relations and friends." Transfer of lots, and parts thereof, were permitted and made through the years - a part of the ground was reserved for Non-Proprietors who agreed to abide by the rules of the Society.

In 1822 the offices of Clerk and Sexton were merged and held by Jeremiah Butler (as long as the records continue - 1850).

Up to 1850 about 130 names are recorded, many lived to old age, --97 being the most advanced. Mr. Adam Leland who gave the ground lived to be 82, his wife to 84.

The first interment was that of Rebecca Newell, 25 years, June 30, 1792. The clerk records that the day was "excessive hot."

The meetings of the Friendly [Society] appear to have been regularly continued until 1850.

The next entry is April 29, 1869 when the Proprietors of the Friendly society Cemetery, and others interested held a meeting at the Cemetery at 6 o'clock with Emlyn Sparhawk, Moderator; Joseph Dowse, Jr., Secretary; George B. Hooker, Sexton. It was voted to level the graves, trim the trees, and make such other improvements as would be thought advisable.

NEW SOUTH CEMETERY (South Main St. [Route 27] near the entrance to Cider Hill Rd.): Approx 200-250 stones, latest date is in 1920s. New South Cemetery, with approximately 200-250 stones, is located on a lovely terraced hillside between Cider Hill Rd. and Forest St. It is one of three Sherborn cemeteries founded in the 1790's, the others being Plain (North Main St.) and West (Maple St.). Its land, offered for a burying ground by Joseph Daniels, was accepted by the town in 1790. "The first person in this Burying Place" was Mrs. Hannah Ware, wife of John Ware, who died 2 March 1790, "in child bed with her eighth child, and is buried here with her infant in her arms."

It appears the cemetery was used mostly from 1790 to 1870, although a few dates can be found in the early 1900s, the latest being that of Elnathan Hammon 12 January 1904. With the opening of Pine Hill in 1852, several removals were made from New

South to the newer cemetery. Old families whose names appear throughout New South cemetery include Leland, Barber, Bullard, Breck, Goulding, Clark, and Holbrook.

This cemetery contains some of the loveliest monuments in Sherborn. While white limestone appears to be the most common material, there are several slate, granite and marble markers, several with the willow and urn motif.

An elegant neo-classical urn on a plinth, memorial to members of the _____ Leland family, can be seen on the second tier's southern end. Also of interest are several Egyptian Revival Obelisks Mid to late 19th century markers with carved flowers and Gothic lettering can be found throughout the cemetery.

PINE HILL CEMETERY [Cemetery Lane, next to fire station on Routes 16 and 27 in downtown Sherborn]: Pine Hill cemetery, with approximately ten rolling acres, is Sherborn's newest and only active cemetery. It was dedicated in 1852 and expanded in 1912 and 1925. Its winding roads, beautiful landscaping, and rugged terrain place it squarely with the rural or romantic cemetery tradition which began with the establishment of Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, in 1831. The landscaping at Pine Hill is credited to Sherborn's resident doctor, Oliver Everett, and to Captain Jacob Pratt.

The entrance to the cemetery is flanked by a set of cast iron gates, initially installed in the 1850's or 60's, and painstakingly restored by master craftsman Robert Wymss Buntin. For his work, Mr. Buntin was awarded a well-deserved Certificate of Merit from the Massachusetts Society of Preservation. The gates, which originally stood near the road at Washington Street, were moved back to the bottom of the entrance road in the 1950s [or 60s]. At the same time, the arch over the roadway was raised to accommodate modern height requirements of today's equipment.

At the center of the cemetery is a frame Eastlavian "summerhouse," built near 1879. This small square open structure features turned posts which support a steeply pitched hip roof, covered with wood shingles and topped with a cupola and round finial. The roof of the summerhouse was painstakingly restored in 1992 and the building painted in true Victorian colors. Additional repair and painting was done about 2011. It is interesting to note that while the opening at one end of the summerhouse is small and centered, that at the opposite side is significantly wider, in order to accommodate funeral wagons. Leading in both directions from the summerhouse is an allee of sugar maple trees, several over a hundred years old. Others were replaced through a federal re-leaf grant in 1993.

Markers at Pine Hill are of a variety of materials, including granite, marble, sandstone, and most commonly limestone. Many terminate in Gothicized points and display flowers carved in high relief. Egyptian obelisks, both unadorned and crowned by "flaming" urns, are scattered throughout. One of the most elaborate memorials is nestled in a grove near the cemetery's center: on the Sanger family lot is a tall Roman column which rests on a plinth. Winding around the column are carved laurel leaves and the shaft is crowned by a flaming urn.

In 1857 Colonel Sanger removed the remains of the town's first three ministers from Central Cemetery to Pine Hill, and placed an imposing monument on the lot. Soon after, the remains of the fourth minister, Samuel Locke [served 1759-1770], and his marble

headstone were moved to a spot nearby and a granite monument placed next to it by Harvard College, where he served as president from 1770-1773.

Upon application of the proprietors, Pine Hill and the other Sherborn cemeteries were accepted by the Town and in 1888 the Town assumed control of all cemeteries within its bounds.