

Burlington Historical Commission

A Walk in Burlington's Old Burying Ground

Many of Burlington's ancestors are buried in the Old Burying Ground, which was used from 1734 to 1892. After reading about Burlington history, many of the names carved on the headstones will become familiar to you.

When you enter through the gate, you are in the northeast corner of this 1.1 acre cemetery. The old entry was about half-way down the front wall; due to Bedford Street traffic, it had to be stoned in. When you walk along the east fence, you are on part of the 1810 addition. In 1818, John Wood sold the town land that included a half acre for burying ground expansion. The half acre included a 33-foot wide strip along the length of the east fence and a 85-foot strip along the rear-south fence. Benjamin Johnson gave the remainder of the cemetery to the town in 1767. The bronze plaque along the east fence (your right-hand side, B on the map) commemorates this gift.

A little further along is a large tree and the headstone of Gen. John Walker (1762-1814). The headstone with the Masonic symbol (no. 135 on the map) is now difficult to read. We know from the records that the original inscription read:

In Memory of / Gen. John Walker, / Who died / VIII June
MDCCCXIV [8 June 1814] / In the LIII [53] Year of His / Age.
In military life,
he gained honour and reputation.
as a civil magistrate,
he was a friend to his country,
and faithful to its trust.
In his domestic and social relations
those who knew him best will speak his praise.
Uniformly striving
to give practical efficacy to his religious faith
He became alike distinguished for his
Integrity and enterprize
He was esteemed and valued by all
All must feel his loss.

There are 159 headstones in this cemetery and most are paired with footstones. 102 headstones are made of slate stone and are dark gray, green, and purple in color. The others are made of a white stone material that does not weather well. The majority of the headstones are like Gen. John Walker's stone and are very difficult to read. A granite headstone marks Samuel and Mary Walker's grave (no. 142 on the map).

If you walk westward about two-thirds of the way across the cemetery, you will come to the headstone of Rev. John Marrett (1741-1813, no. 75 on the map). Here the inscription is very readable and you should learn something about Rev. Marrett, the third minister of the second precinct church.

Continue in the same westward line until you come to the last headstone before the west fence. Here you will find the headstone for Cuff Trot (ca. 1746-1813, no. 30 on the map), the African slave of Madam Abigail Jones (1722-1814), Rev. Thomas Jones (1720-1774) and the Marrett family. Cuff "guided Hancock and Adams through the woods to a place of safety"¹ and "waited upon Hancock and Adams and Dorothy Quincy, and helped to hide their coach in Path Woods"² during the April 19, 1775 Battle of Lexington and Concord. Cuff was "so honored in the parish that he was borne to his grave personally by the selectmen of the town."³

¹ Town Clerk's Vital Statistic Index and Cemetery Inscriptions, 1799-1863, recorded ca. 1860s, p. 161.

² Curtis, Martha E. Sewall. "The Story of Cuff and Venus." *Woburn News*, Oct. 1, 1892.

³ Curtis, Martha E. Sewall. "The Story of Cuff and Venus." *Woburn News*, Oct. 1, 1892.

Now turn north and a bit east. Walk up the hill a little way and you will come to the small, light gray headstone of George Reed Jr. (1749-1775, no. 96 on the map). Reed died in the Revolutionary War at the Battle of Bunker Hill. He was Burlington's only casualty who is buried in the Old Burying Ground.

Next continue walking up the hill. This is the oldest part of the cemetery, with headstones that date to the 1730s and 1740s. If you look carefully, you will find some stones marked with a double date such as 1736/7. This was practiced before 1752, when England and its colonies used the Julian calendar. New years day was March 25th on the Julian calendar, whereas most of the world had new years day on January 1. This old practice caused the months of January, February and most of March to fall in two different years in different parts of the world. The system of double-dating was an attempt to try and satisfy the two calendar systems, the use of the Julian and Gregorian (New Style) calendar. When you see a double date, use the later date to correct it in terms of our current calendar system, the Gregorian calendar.

If you found a small, purple slate headstone for Obadiah Johnson (no. 64 on the map), you have found the oldest headstone in the cemetery. Obadiah Johnson's grave is not the oldest gravesite in the Old Burying Ground. The first person buried in this cemetery was Rebekah Wilson, who died Oct. 31, 1734. Her gravesite is now unmarked and the location is unknown.

When you examine the inscriptions and carvings, notice the old way of spelling. For example, the letter "f" is frequently used where it seems that "s" belongs. Also, the word "ye" is used where "the" should be. These are very real examples of changes in tradition. What was customary in the old times is strange to us today. The strange carved symbols—for example, the skull with wings—is a tradition that reflects different attitudes toward death and the afterlife. We have some ideas what the symbols might mean, but it is not known for certain what they meant to people in the past.

Continue to walk to the top of the hill to the front-central portion of the cemetery. Here you will see the headstones of the first minister, Rev. Supply Clap (1710-1747, no. 29 on the map), the second minister, Rev. Thomas Jones (1720-1774, no. 70 on the map) and his wife, Madam Abigail Jones (1722-1814, no. 68 on the map). These headstones are examples of the finest carved gravestones in New England. These high-relief slate carvings were done with hand tools, which is all the stone carvers had to work with. Here you can witness the skill and craftsmanship of the stone carvers.

For more information on the history of the Old Burying Ground or for a transcription of the gravestone epitaphs, please see the Burlington Historical Commission and Burlington Municipal Archives *Guide to the Old Burial Ground* (1999).

Map of the Old Burial Ground

The following guide and map was reproduced from James Ashworth's invaluable *The Precinct Burying Ground (Ye Old Burying Ground)*, Burlington, Mass., July 25, 1980. For birth/death dates and a transcription of the gravestone epitaphs, see *A Guide to the Old Burial Ground*.

1.	Alley, Selina Wood	11C	57.	Jennison, Nahum	7B
2.	Beard, Jonas	7D	58.	Jennison, Nahum	7B
3.	Bell, Dorcas Trull	1A	59.	Johnson, Abigail Richardson	6C
4.	Bell, Jonathan	1A	60.	Johnson, Ebenezer	5F
5.	Bennett, James	5A	61.	Johnson, Elizabeth Baldwin	3D
6.	Bennett, Dorcas Nevers	5A	62.	Johnson, Joseph	4C
7.	Bennett, James	2B	63.	Johnson, Joseph	5C
8.	Bennett, Mary Walker	2B	64.	Johnson, Obadiah	5H
9.	Blanchard, Abigail	8G	65.	Johnson, Rebeckah	5F
10.	Blanchard, David	8G	66.	Johnson, Silas	6H
11.	Blanchard, David Jr.	9E	67.	Johnson, William	6C
12.	Blanchard, David	8E	68.	Jones, Abigail Wiswell	3G
13.	Blanchard, Elliot	9E	69.	Jones, Joshua	4D
14.	Blanchard, Eliot (Bridge?)	9E	70.	Jones, Thomas	2G
15.	Blanchard, Jesse	5E	71.	Kendall, Betsey	1D
16.	Blanchard, Sarah Grimes	5E	72.	Kendall, Sally	1D
17.	Blogget, Nathan	5F	73.	Kendall, William T.	6C
18.	Blogget, Nathan	4E	74.	Marion, Charles	10E
19.	Butters, Asenath Carter	8H	75.	Marrett, John	9G
20.	Butters, Joseph	Unknown	76.	Marrett, Martha Jones	4B
21.	Butters, Joseph	8H	77.	Marston, Charles Pratt	3F
22.	Butters, Samuel	12B	78.	McPherson, James C.	2B
23.	Caldwell, Czarina Converse	10E	79.	McPherson, Mary Bennett	2B
24.	Caldwell, Jacob	8G	80.	Miller, Emaline Butters	11D
25.	Carter, Abner	10E	81.	Morse, Redford	11E
26.	Carter, Asenath	7H	82.	Morse, Rhoda Farrington	10E
27.	Carter, Jane	10E	83.	Munro, Elizabeth Skelton	3B
28.	Carter, Jonas	8H	84.	Munro, Ishmael	3B
29.	Clap, Supply	2G	85.	Munro, Maria	10E
30.	Cuff Trot	9I	86.	Nevers, Harriet	9D
31.	Coolidge, Asa	Unknown	87.	Nevers, Samuel	9D
32.	Woodman, Susan C.	9C	88.	Nevers, Anna Wyman	9D
33.	Cummings, David	3C	89.	Peters, Hannah	3H
34.	Cummings, Ebenezer	3B	90.	Prescott, Martha Marion	5A
35.	Cummings, Ebenezer Jr.	9H	91.	Reed, Elizabeth Wellington	4K
36.	Cummings, Joanna Jones	4C	92.	Reed, Elizabeth	2H
37.	Cummings, Ruth Skelton	3B	93.	Reed, Samuel	3E
38.	Cutler, James	2A	94.	Reed, Eunice Stone	3E
39.	Cutler, Mary Dean	1A	95.	Reed, Francis	3H
40.	Cutler, John	2A	96.	Reed, George Jr.	7G
41.	Cutler, Nathaniel	3I	97.	Reed, James	4K
42.	Cutler, Rachel Poodney	1F	98.	Reed, John	5G
43.	Cutler, John	1F	99.	Reed, Judeth	5G
44.	Dean, Jesse	1C	100.	Reed, John	5G
45.	Dean, Mary Johnson	9D	101.	Reed, Kezia Wyman	5G
46.	Dean, Polly Bacon	1C	102.	Reed, Kezia	7G
47.	Dean, Sarah R.	10C	103.	Richardson, Betsey Jane Tay	7B
48.	Ditson, Sarah	6H	104.	Simonds, James	3H
49.	Ditson, Thomas	7H	105.	Simonds, Jonathan	9D
50.	Ditson, Thomas	6H	106.	Simonds, Lucy	8F
51.	Fales, Oliver J.	7C	107.	Simonds, Luther	4H
52.	Goodwin, Reuel	1A	108.	Simonds, Luther	9C
53.	Goodwin, Rhoda (Cutler?)	1A	109.	Simonds, Mary Fowle	4H
54.	Holt, Phebe	3I	110.	Simonds, Nathan Jr.	4I
55.	Jennison, George	9F	111.	Simonds, Phebe Cummings	9E
56.	Jennison, Lucretia Wyman	7B	112.	Skelton, Jonathan S.	11B

113.	Skelton, Melina	10E	154.	Wyman, Eunice	8F
114.	Skelton, Phebe Simonds	11B	155.	Wyman, Eunice	9C
115.	Skelton, Stephen	11B	156.	Wyman, Ezra	8F?
116.	Skelton, Thomas	10E		Note: question mark is on the original map.	
117.	Skelton, Thomas	10E	157.	Wyman, Ezra	8F
118.	Skelton, Thomas	9H	158.	Wyman, Martha	9F
119.	Stanton, Elizabeth Wilson	7G	159.	Wyman, Mary Pollard	3I
120.	Sweetser, Marcy	2I	160.	Wyman, Samuel	2H
121.	Trull, Adela Mahala	2B	161.	Wyman, William	6B
122.	Trull, Lydia	3B	162.	Wyman, Eunice Walker	6B
123.	Trull, Silas	1A	163.	See 153	
124.	Trull, Mary	1A	164.	Butters, Lydia	11C
125.	Trull, Solomon	2B	165.	See 151	
126.	Tufts, Peter	6I	166.	See 1	
127.	Twist, Lydia	1C	167.	Jennison, John Edwin	9C
128.	Underwood, Elizabeth	5H	168.	Lawrence, John	3H
129.	Walker, Edward	7D	169.	McDonald, Colin	12D
130.	Walker, Abigail Reed	7D	170.	Walker, Moses Billings	7D
131.	Walker, Mary Jones	7D	171.	Willson, Abigail	4I
132.	Walker, James	9C	172.	Willson, Samuel Jr.	4I
133.	Walker, Hannah	9C	173.	Willson, Samuel	3I
134.	Walker, Hannah	10F	174.	Winn, Jonathan	3H
135.	Walker, Gen. John	8C	175.	Wood, Lucy. See note C	11C
136.	Walker, John	7C	176.	See 55	
137.	Walker, Joshua	7D	177.	Wyman, Lucy. See note L	11B?
138.	Walker, Lucy	8C		Note: question mark is on the original map.	
139.	Walker, Lucy Johnson	8C	178.	Wood, Josiah	11C
140.	Walker, Mary Proctor	7D	179.	Wood, Silvanus	11C
141.	Walker, Mary	6B		Note: this quadrant is noted on the original map, but the grave is not marked on the map.	
142.	Walker, Samuel	7B	180.	Wilson, Rebeckah	Unknown; perhaps near 173
143.	Walker, Mary Reed	7B			
144.	Walker, Samuel	4F	181.	Winn, Timothy and Winn family	5B
145.	Wilson, Rebeckah	7G		Note: this quadrant is noted on the original map, but the grave is not marked on the map.	
146.	Wilson, Ruth	7G			
147.	Wood, Dorcas Smith	4E			
148.	Wood, Isiah	Unknown			
150.	Wood, Rebecca Carter	11C			
151.	Wyman, Abigail	2B			
152.	Wood, Sylvanus Jr.	11C			
153.	Butters, Lydia Carter	11D			

Notes and Symbols

- Tree trunk
- ◉ Treestump
- A. Footstone for 76
- B. 1730 burying ground plaque on granite stone
- C. Broken, unreadable stone
- D. Headstone broken
- E. Footstone for 129, 130 and 131
- F. Footstone for 2
- G. Rectangular stone low to ground
- H. Headstone broken
- J. Basestone for missing headstone
- K. Footstone for 51
- L. Footstone with "L. W."
- M. Headstone broken and unreadable, footstone has "S. W."
- N. Josiah Wood (d. Aug. 6, 1850, per Town Clerk record)
- P. Same as J
- R. Colin McDonald (d. Sept. 23, 1850, per Town Clerk record)
- S. Footstone with letters "E. W."
- T. Pointed stone with no markings
- U. Footstone flat on the ground

- V. Loose slate one foot square with rough letters "I W"
- W. Headstone broken
- X. Footstone broken off
- Y. Same as T
- Z. Unreadable; possibly 148
- AA. Garden areas
- BB. Footstone with letters "M. B. W."
- CC. Footstone with name "Francis Reed" 95
- DD. Exposed ledge rock
- EE. Path paved with granite stones about 10' x 7' in size

