

FORM E - BURIAL GROUND
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Massachusetts Archives Building
220 Morrissey Boulevard
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Assessor's Sheets USGS Quad Area Letter Form Number
225 63 801

Photographs

(3"x3" or 3-1/2x5" black and white only) Label photo on back with town and property address. Record film roll and negative numbers here on form. Staple photo to left side of form over this space. Attach additional photos to continuation sheets. See Continuation Sheets

Sketch Map

Draw or duplicate a map of the burial ground showing its location in relation to the nearest cross streets and/or major natural features. Show all buildings or major features within the burial ground, and between the burial ground and nearest intersection. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Indicate north See Continuation Sheets

Town Groton

Place

Address or Location Hollis Street and
Chicopee Row

Name Groton Cemetery

Ownership Public Private X

Approximate No. of Stones Unknown

Earliest Death Date 1847

Latest Death Date 2007

Landscape Architect

Condition Excellent

Acreage 21

Setting Rural

Recorded by Sanford Johnson

Organization Groton Hist. Comm.

Date (month/day/year) 5/07

Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form.

Visual/Design Assessment

Describe landscape features, gravestone materials, designs, motifs, and symbols that are either common or unusual. Note any known carvers.

Introduction

Groton Cemetery came into use in 1847 as the town's second place of burial after the Colonial Period Old Burial Ground located at Hollis and School Street (MHC #800). Located around a half mile north of Main Street, the Rural style cemetery was somewhat removed from the commercial center of Groton. The local popularity of the New Cemetery was such that nearly all burials in the town took place here rather than at the older burial ground which received very few new interments in the mid to late 19th century. Popularity was due to the Groton Cemetery's successful emulation of Rural or Garden style cemeteries in many other Massachusetts communities, Cambridge's Mount Auburn Cemetery in particular. It contains approximately 5,000 burials and was originally known by 16 sections on the top and southwestern slopes of the hill marking the center of the parcel. The cemetery is now expanded to include modern burials and land approximately three times its original area located on the northeast side of the central hill. Given its status as the town's larger and more fashionable resting place, it attracted the leading industrialists, politicians, ministers as well as shopkeepers and farmers. The variety of personal backgrounds is matched by the variety of grave marker sizes and types. Large granite obelisks are found adjacent to diminutive marble tablets. A variety of other types is scattered throughout the cemetery.

Victorian Period gravestones are mostly carved from granite, a regionally quarried material, although marble examples also exist in profusion. Standard forms such as tablets and chests are represented along with unusual examples such as a female figurative statue in marble and numerous obelisks from granite and marble. A single monumental bronze chest with associated foot markers has been identified. Plots from this period are frequently delineated with curbs and corner posts. In addition to occasionally ornate grave markers, the older (southwestern) sections of Groton Cemetery have winding paths and avenues to provide access to plots (originally named after different species of trees). Ground in this area has been graded and terraced to reflect gradual changes in elevation. An additional 37 acres of land was added c. 1939. The cemetery continues in use today.

Landscape

The early 19th century appearance of the Groton Cemetery was likely that of a farm field or forest given that, prior to its establishment, there was a residence located within or near its current bounds. Currently, the plots are accessed by the network of Avenues, Ways and Paths laid out in a combination of a relatively straight grid and organic curves that follow the slopes of the central high ground. The central section is higher than the surroundings and has a circular pattern to the avenues and to the orientation of the plots. A flag pole occupies the center of the Promenade as it is called on the 1847 plan. Ornamental trees planted on the grounds include maples, oaks, hemlocks and a variety of evergreens.

Buildings

The 19th century maintenance shed in the northern corner is a wood frame building of one story and clad in wood

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clapboard. The gabled roof form, 6/6 windows, gable returns and molded cornice suggests a construction date in the 19th century. The receiving tomb located inside the entrance is marled with the dates 1847 and 1894, signifying the year the cemetery was begun and the year the tomb was built. The cobblestone gable front facade is flanked by sloping curving wing walls that refer to form of the entrance gateway. Openings in the façade include the main entrance with its Romanesque arch and a niche on either side of the entrance with smaller arched tops. The building has a slate shingle roof.

Structures

Historic structures in the cemetery include the 1904 granite gateway at the main entrance on Chicopee Row. The quarry-faced ashlar structure rises approximately eight feet at its highest point and consists of two square piers flanked by sloping, curving wing walls culminating in two smaller piers. The entire gateway is capped in quarry faced capstone. The row of granite fence posts along the cemetery's western edge at Chicopee Row also appears to have been put in place in the late 19th century but has since lost all the rails.

Paths

The principal gateway on Chicopee Row occupies the more pointed southwest end of the triangular parcel. The gateway gives onto the short straight Main Avenue within the cemetery bounds heading past flat ground originally intended for a water feature and esplanade which were not built. Circulation among plots is guided in the original sections of the cemetery by a system of dirt Avenues (called on the 1847 landscape plan after tree species) approximately ten feet in width although the plan calls for a 25' avenue. More curvilinear Avenues occupy the higher elevations near the center of the parcel. Curving paths near the high center are flanked by a grid pattern of avenues connecting to the lower ground in the southwest and new acreage of the cemetery in the northeast. Avenues separate the 16 original sections. Sections are occupied by the burial plots which are divided by Paths designed to be five feet in width and Ways which were originally intended to be eight feet.

Plot Delineation

Plots in Groton Cemetery are delineated in some cases with granite curbstones. These are alternatively flush with the ground or elevated up to three feet above grade. In some cases, the curbstones are articulated, such as the H. A. Bancroft plot, which has stout bollards with octagonal carved tops. Other plots have curbs that are higher on one side than another in an effort to level the surface. At least two iron fences remain in existence including the Asa Stillman Lawrence plot which has a simple metal railing between granite fence posts cut to resemble obelisks. It is likely that there were at one time many more such plot defining fences but that they have been removed to ease the chore of mowing.

Markers

The Groton Cemetery reflects 19th and 20th century trends in gravestone development in its variety of marble and granite markers. Markers appear in the form of obelisks, chests, and tablets with biblical and classical symbolism.

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Tablets are by far the most common type and range from two to five feet in height. Most are granite but numerous marble and sandstone examples exist. A variety of arched, canted and flat tops articulate the forms.

Obelisks are carved mainly from granite although some marble examples are present. This type of marker was in frequent use from the mid 19th century forward and ranges from six to 15 feet tall. A prominent example, marking the burial site of the family of Daniel Needham, is carved of pink granite. Its polished facets are inscribed near the base with dates for Col. Needham, his wife and children. Numerous other obelisks and piers from the late 1800s have cap stones and smooth, polished granite faces. The marker of the Charles H. Waters family has a surmounting globe carved from granite while the Henry A. Bancroft marker has a stout pier supporting a marble angel. Obelisks are also present with carved urns and in one case a column designed to look broken on top.

Chest markers appear throughout the cemetery with dates from the mid 1800s to the present. These are larger than tablets and are most frequently cut from granite. The Sylvester Jacobs (1782-1864) chest marker, the cemetery's largest, is an unornamented rectangle with polished front and rear faces. Edges of the marker have a rough quarry-faced finish.

A single example of a zinc grave marker exists in the cemetery and commemorates the death of Civil War veteran J. Turner Sparrell (d. 1896 at 69 years). This unusual marker is probably the product of the Monumental Bronze Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut which operated from the 1870s until after WW I. The three-foot high imitation stone is made to resemble quarry-faced granite in the form of a low chest. This and the associated footstones are the only known zinc monument in the cemetery but they are commonly found in cemeteries across the nation.

Military markers in the Groton Cemetery are scattered throughout the cemetery. The earliest examples are for Civil War veterans and are generally low marble tablets with simple inscriptions that note military companies of the deceased either with or without dates. The Grand Army of the Republic acquired a plot marked at the corners by four flush mounted square stones. The plot contains five marble stones for Civil War veterans and appears to have been intended to accept many more judging by the alignment of the existing five along one edge. World War II veterans are frequently remembered by small flush mounted bronze and granite markers approximately one square foot in size. These often exist in addition to the larger marker for the individual and his family.

Slate markers appear on some plots. These are small in number and typically represent interments of people who had been buried at the Old Burying Ground and were later moved. The Lakin family of John (d. 1817), George (d. 1826) David (d. 1846) and Rebecca (d. 1826) are examples of people remembered by slate markers. The Whitman family of Nehemiah (d. 1835) and Sarah (d. 1827) may be unique in the Groton Cemetery for their footstones (small gravestone oriented opposite the larger headstones), a burial practice common until the Federal Period.

A single granite birdbath was put in place in the 1920s near the high ground and commemorates the lives of Harry E. and Frank Kemp and their families. Additional types of plot furniture include the stone steps with low bollards leading up the short slope to the plots of the Bigelow-Robbins family and to the Derby family plot. A single table marker exists in the cemetery and is located on the John Wright plot but the table itself is now illegible.

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Plantings

Ornamental plantings exist throughout the cemetery in the form of trees and shrubs. Evergreens, oaks, maples and other species line the avenues and paths and flank gravestones. Placement suggests an attempt at a rural setting with little evidence of formal or linear landscape design other than two rows of trees intended to form allees along the principal avenue northwest of the main entrance.

Existing Conditions

The Groton Cemetery has evolved into a modified triangular shaped parcel, with the older section at the southwestern point and more recent additions to the northeast, an area where burials continue to occur. Most stones remain in good to excellent condition, although many marble markers are difficult to read due to erosion. While very little other vandalism has taken place, damage has been sustained in many cases due to scraping by lawn-mowing equipment. However, the large number of remaining middle and late 19th century markers makes it possible to get a clear sense of historical burial and grave stone carving techniques in Groton.

Historical Narrative

Explain religious affiliations and major period of use. Discuss how this burial ground relates to the historical development of the community.

Introduction

The Groton Cemetery Association was formed by civic leaders but had among its early subscribers Groton residents of all types and social strata. These included leading industrialists such as Amos Lawrence as well as typical farmers and shopkeepers. According to Dr. Green's history of the town, consecration exercises took place in August, 1847. There does not appear to have been any predetermined religious affiliations or exclusions for the cemetery. The cemetery continues to be owned by the Groton Cemetery Association. The place of burial prior to the founding of the Groton Cemetery was the **Old Burying Ground (MHC #800)**, the town's only other resting place for the deceased. The Old Burying Ground was in use in the 17th century although no markers remain from that time due probably to the fact that they were either made of wood and deteriorated over time or were never used at all. It remained in use until well after establishment of the Groton Cemetery although at a drastically reduced frequency.

Rather than update the appearance of the Old Burying Ground with Rural or Garden style cemetery plantings, terraced earthen plots and water features as was done in neighboring towns, Groton residents determined to build a new place of burial with higher ground near the center. This would provide the geographic relief required for scenic landscape features that were necessary to emulate the fashionable Mount Auburn Cemetery founded in Cambridge in the 1830s. Most towns in the region and many more across the nation went to some effort to incorporate landscape design ideas from Mount Auburn. Groton was no exception as the unknown designers carefully located the plantings, burial plot boundaries, circulation networks and ornamental structures such as entrance gateways and tombs that characterized cemetery construction in the mid 19th century. The additional landscape features and more refined layout represented

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a departure from the appearance of the older burial grounds whose informal planning and natural landscapes were common in Europe since the medieval period.

1847-1890

Initial efforts to establish a second place of burial in Groton were underway by March of 1847 when 12 members formed the Groton Cemetery Association. Original members were John Boynton, Artemus Wood, Abner Mansur, Joshua Gilson, Elijah Whiton, Daniel Needham, Nathaniel Smith, J. S. Adams, George S. Boutwell, Charles Gerrish, Luther Potter and Thomas Hutchins. Most of the original members were civic leaders in business, law or politics. Their purpose stated in the first pages of the Records of the Groton Cemetery Association was “purchasing, laying out and ornamenting a site for a cemetery”. Early meetings of the Association were held in the law offices of attorney Jonathan Stow Adams, resident of **219 Main Street (MHC #364)**.

Subsequently, in May of 1847, the Association made its initial land purchase of 11 acres. They bought the land from Joshua Gilson, resident of **356 Main Street (MHC ###)** and one of the original association members. In June of 1847, the Association bought three square rods from Charles Walker to add to the 11 acre parcel. This is the Reverend Charles Walker who, according to Butler’s 1847 map of the town, lived near the current gateway to the cemetery.

Consecration Day ceremonies took place on August 24th, 1847 at 9am. The event included singing of hymns, prayer recital and a benediction by the Reverend Dudley Phelps. According to the printed broadside entitled “Order of Exercises at the Consecration of Groton Cemetery,” sale of lots was to take place immediately after the ceremonies. There were 12 buyers that day.

The Groton Cemetery Association reviewed and accepted the “Plan of Groton Cemetery” in September, 1847, although no landscape designer is mentioned in the records. The plan consists of a representation of the original 11 acre triangular parcel improved with Avenues, Paths, Ways, a circular Promenade at the center on the high ground, a grouping of water features at the southwestern corner and suggested designs for the entrance gateway, a temple to be erected on the high central portion, and the fence for the north and south boundary lines. Neither the gateway, water features, the temple nor the fence were built but the layout of the plots and Avenues appears to adhere to the plan. Plots are described on the plan as 16 ½ ft. square and cost between \$10.50 and \$13.00 according to GCA records. Segments of the circulation network called Paths were five feet wide, Ways were to be eight feet and Avenues to be 20-25’ wide. Avenues were to be “skirted with ornamental trees and shrubs, disposed in regular order.” Sections 1 and 2 at the southwestern tip were reserved for “public resort”, a concept of recreational cemetery use that originated in Europe and was imported here via Mount Auburn’s influence on smaller Rural or Garden style cemeteries. Approximately 160 subscribers’ names appear on the published copy of the cemetery plan. Names include leading citizens as well as farmers and shopkeepers. In the spring of 1848, Association members made themselves available at the cemetery for the purpose of receiving trees that residents or cemetery subscribers might wish to donate and have planted on the grounds.

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Groton residents interred in the cemetery include people from all sections of the town and from all social, religious and economic groups. The 1847 plan gives the names of proprietors in order of their respective plot purchases. The initial sale was to Samuel W. Rowe (1803-1884), resident of **280 Main Street (MHC #34)** and builder of the Groton Town Hall in 1859 (**MHC #3**). Second on the list was George S. Boutwell, the future Massachusetts governor (1851-53), treasury secretary to President U. S. Grant and purchaser of two plots. Mr. Boutwell lived at **172 Main Street (MHC #4)**. Subsequent proprietors include the inventor and scientific instrument maker Elijah Whiton of **163 Main Street (MHC #6)**; Dr. Joshua Green, resident of **154 Main Street (MHC #8)** and father of Groton historian and Civil War veteran Dr. Samuel A. Green; the farmer Noah Torrey who lived in the large farmhouse at **293 Chicopee Row (MHC #174)**; Robert Duren who occupied the rather modest farm at **25 Indian Hill Road (MHC #53)**; Caleb Butler, author of the 1847 town history, surveyor of the town in 1832, preceptor at Lawrence Academy and resident of **85 Main Street (MHC #17)**; Amos Lawrence, wealthy merchant and philanthropist who was born in Groton but is interred in Mount Auburn in Cambridge; the wealthy butcher John Graves who lived at **108 Pleasant Street (MHC #87)**, among others.

Groton residents who had previously been interred at the Old Burying Ground were in some cases moved here, probably by surviving family members who preferred the newer place of burial. People who were re-interred usually rest beneath slate markers of the type seen in the Old Burying Ground and appear to have been moved from there with the bodies. People whose deaths pre-date the establishment of the Groton Cemetery include Josiah Sartell, Esq (d. 1784, age 74), Mary Sartell (d. 1790, age 80), Nathaniel Sartell (d. 1741, age 60), William Farwell (d. 1819, age 81), and Walter Dickson (d. 1798, age 70). There may be as many as 50 burials of people originally interred at the Old Burying Ground.

1890-1957

In 1890, the GCA bought approximately 10 acres of land north of the original 11 acres. The additional grounds were sold to the association by Mr. Parkins and cost \$900. Shortly thereafter, in 1893, the association set 375' of picket fence on 38 stone posts which, according to GCA records, completed the fence on the back line of the new addition. This may refer in part to the fence posts that are still visible today along Chicopee Row but no longer have fencing in between.

Another change to the appearance of the cemetery occurred with the construction of the entrance gateway at the corner of Chicopee Row and Blossom Lane. The builder of the gateway was the quarry owner, Mr. Palmer of Graniteville in Westford, according to the April 30, 1904 Groton Landmark Newspaper. Additionally, the cobblestone tomb, located northeast of the main entry, was built by an unknown builder in 1894 according to the date carved over the front door. The tomb remained in use until around 1985 when the cemetery association acquired a heating device to expedite winter interments. Thirty-two acres of land were added to the northeastern end of the original parcel in 1939. It was donated by neighbors to the north named Everett and Samuel Williams. Few other alterations have been carried out and the cemetery retains much of its appearance from the late 19th century.

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Data Sheet

MHC	Map/Lot	Address	Style/Form	Outbuildings/Secondary Structures	Historic Name	Date	Uses: Present
484	225-63	Chicopee Row	Victorian Eclectic		Maintenance Shed	c. 1870	Storage
920	225-63	Chicopee Row	N/A		Entrance Gate	1904	Gateway
485	225-63	Chicopee Row	Victorian Eclectic		Musoleum	1894	Tomb

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BIBLIOGRAPHY *and/or* REFERENCES

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Gravestone Chronicles, pp. 287-355

Burleigh, L. R. Groton, Mass. 1886. Bird's Eye View. Troy, NY: Burleigh Lith. Establishment. 1886.

"Plan of Groton Cemetery". Boston: J. W. Chandler & Bros. Lithographers. 1847

X **Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Eligibility Criteria Statement form.***

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible

Eligible only in a historic district

Contributing to a potential historic district

Potential historic district **X**

Criteria: **X** A B **X** C D

Criteria considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of significance by: Sanford Johnson

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

The Groton Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the local level. The cemetery meets criterion A for its association with events that have made a contribution to broad patterns of local history. The Groton Cemetery has functioned as a place of burial to Groton's residents since the mid 19th century. Since that time, it has functioned as the town's principal place of burial and is the final resting place for many of the town's historically significant personages.

The Groton Cemetery is eligible for the National Register under criterion C for its distinctive design and physical characteristics that illustrate not only Early Industrial Period burial practices but also the design ideas associated with the Garden Cemetery movement. Many burials took place obelisks, columns and other ornamental stones bearing biblical symbolism as well as the secular. The circulation network consists of scenic paths and avenues through the landscape that reinforces the sense of a small-town Garden style cemetery.

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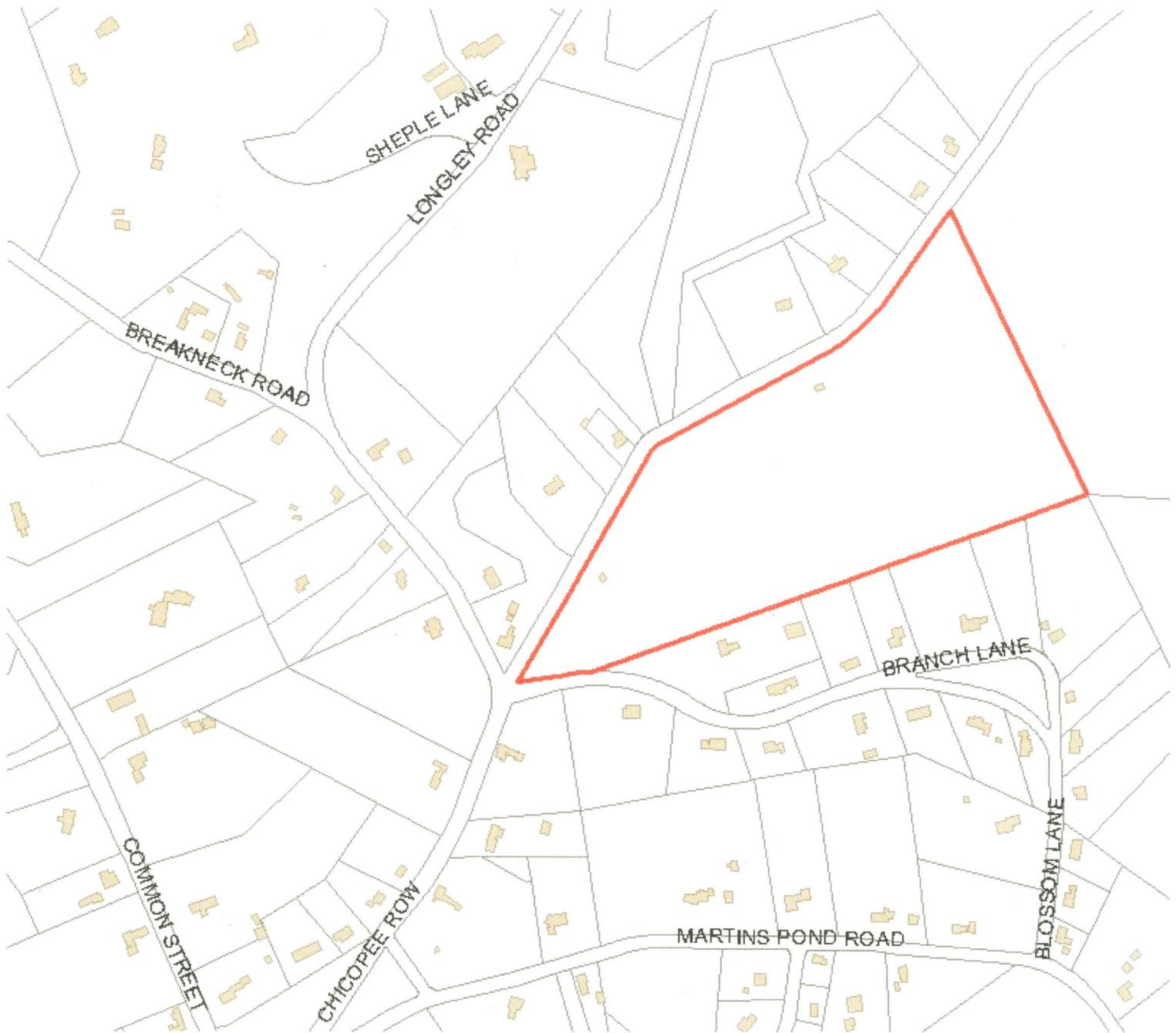
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Sketch Map

North toward top



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Photos



Main Entrance



Main Avenue, North View

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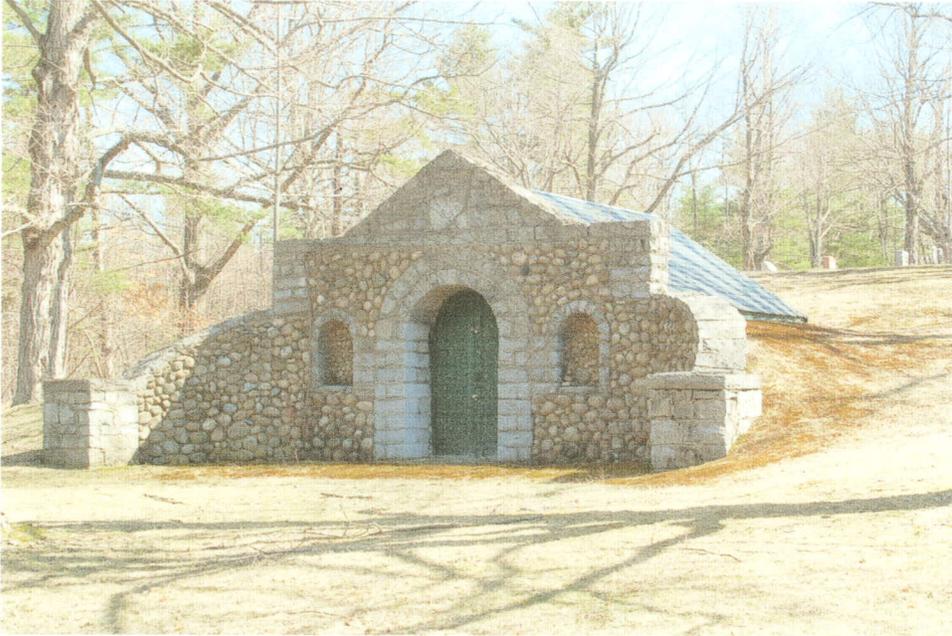
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1894 Mausoleum



Bancroft Marker

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Central Plot, Promenade, North View



Waters and Farnsworth Monuments

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Monumental Bronze Sparrell Monument



Maintenance Building

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The Grand Army of the Republic Plot



Lakin Family Stones moved from Old Burying Ground

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Military Marker for veteran Arthur Beal and Groton Historian Isabel Beal



Daniel Needham Marker