

HISTORIC BURYING GROUNDS INITIATIVE NEWSLETTER

Preserving Boston's 16 Historic Burying Grounds



BOSTON PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

MARTIN J. WALSH, MAYOR

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WALTER STREET BURYING GROUND AND THE GROWTH OF BOSTON

The history of the Walter Street Burying Ground (WSBG) is different than most of the other burying grounds in the Historic Burying Grounds Initiative, because it was originally associated with a church and not a municipality. The site is currently located in the part of Boston known as Roslindale. It was originally part of the geographically large town of Roxbury until 1851, then it was part of West Roxbury until 1874, and then it was annexed by Boston.

The first burying ground in Roxbury was Eliot Burying Ground, established around 1633 and located near the original town center, near the northern boundary with Boston. In

1706 a group of 45 residents of western Roxbury petitioned the General Court of the Province of Massachusetts Bay to establish a second church in Roxbury. The General Court did not respond to the petition. At some point, the residents took matters into their own hands and established a meeting house near the current site of the WSBG. In 1711 they submitted another petition to the town of Roxbury, begging forgiveness for establishing a church without permission and pleading their cause. The town leaders subsequently approved their petition. The church first officially met, with their own pastor, at the end of 1712. The church was built on land donated by Lieutenant Joseph Weld.



Headstones in Walter Street Burying Ground. The site still has a rural look.

The exact date of the establishment of the WSBG is unknown. In 1683 the town of Roxbury established a second burying ground, Westerly Burying Ground,

(continued on page 7)



Letter from the Director

I am very pleased the the Granary Wall, Fence, and Gate Restoration project is finished. The burying ground is located along a very busy street in downtown Boston where there is much traffic, both pedestrian and vehicular. Many, many pairs of eyes look upon this site on a daily basis. I hope that the restoration of the front of the site will be noticed and will bring some joy to these passers-by! One thing I have noticed is that once I get used to seeing the cleaned wall, I start to focus in on any small remaining stains or imperfections and wonder if we really did anything at all. But when I look at the before and after photos juxtaposed as they are on page 3 of the newsletter, I am completely amazed at the difference! This project was partially funded by two grants, one from the Freedom Trail Foundation for \$41,000 and one from the George B. Henderson Foundation for \$40,000. We are so thankful to those two organizations for donating to this project!!

We have accomplished a number of smaller projects this year also, including grave marker conservation and resetting at the Granary and Westerly Burying Grounds, tomb repair at Central Burying Ground, and minor wall repairs at the Granary, Copp's Hill, and Westerly Burying Grounds. Although these projects have a lower dollar amount, they are still very important. They keep small problems from turning into bigger problems! The next project on board is the repair and restoration of three above-ground tombs at Bennington Street Cemetery in East Boston. Construction should be starting in a couple of months.

The article on the Walter Street Burying Ground turned out to be a surprise for me. Before writing the article I thought I knew the history of the site pretty well, but it turned out that I knew less than I thought I did. But for me that is part of the allure of history. Events are frequently a little messier or less "black and white" than they are originally presented to us. For me this just makes things more human and easier to relate to--our ancestors were just like us except with different technologies.



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Historic Burying Grounds Initiative

Our mission is the comprehensive restoration, on-going conservation and heritage interpretation of Boston's historic burying grounds.

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FIELD NOTES: *RESTORATION OF THE GRANARY FENCE, WALL, AND ENTRANCE GATE*

We have finished the restoration of the cast-iron fence and the granite wall and entrance gate at the Granary Burying Ground. This structure originally dates from 1840. We hired the firm Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture, Inc., to start the design of the project in June 2014. Since the Granary Burying Ground falls within the His-

and approximately 620 pickets. Each picket is set into a hole in the granite wall and was originally attached with lead. The wall and gate are made of thick pieces of granite, sourced in the same quarry as the Bunker Hill Monument. The long granite slabs are set end to end, with the long axis of each slab resting on a rubble and mortar



Granary entrance gate before cleaning.



Granary entrance gate after cleaning.

toric Beacon Hill District, we were required to get approval from the Beacon Hill Architectural Commission. We went before the Commission in late July and were granted a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project.

The fence is made of cast iron and is approximately 320 feet long. There are two types of pickets, round and octagonal, and each type has a corresponding finial. The two picket types alternate. In between each fence section there is a larger fence post. There are 16 fence posts

“foundation” slightly above the level of the sidewalk. The fence attaches to two large granite piers at the edges of the site. An Egyptian Revival-style granite gate in the middle of the site bisects the fence and wall and allows entry into the burying ground.

In conjunction with the landscape architects we decided on the following scope of work: replacement of the missing fence items, removal of all paint and rust on the fence, lengthening of any rusted-out pickets, repainting

RESTORATION OF THE GRANARY FENCE, WALL, AND ENTRANCE GATE

of the fence with an appropriate paint system, resetting of the fence on the wall with the correct placement of finials and pickets, cleaning of the wall and gate, replacement of a missing chunk of granite in the wall, repairing



A detail of the fence before restoration.



A detail of the fence after restoration.

any cracks in the granite, and replacement of the mortar and rubble foundation.

The project was first advertised for bidding on February 2, 2015, and the bids were due on February 19, 2015. We structured the bid to include one add-alternate, the application of an anti-graffiti coating on the granite wall, which we could choose to accept or not accept. The construction estimate for the project, including the alternate, was \$300,000. The lowest bidder was Woven Steel, Inc., with a bid of \$265,000, including the alternate. Four companies bid on the project. The bids ranged from \$265,000 to \$388,295. Woven Steel is a company that specializes in the fabricating and restoration of metal items. The masonry work was done by a subcontractor. Due to conditions discovered during construction, a change order for \$18,585 was added to the contract.

The construction began in June 2015. The first step was to remove the cast-iron fence. Some of the pickets were



Some pickets were long enough to be reset into the wall and some needed to be lengthened.

so rusted at the bottom that they were no longer attached to the wall beneath them. The pickets that were still attached were cut through and the fence was lifted off in panels. Woven Steel core drilled the individual picket holes in the wall to remove the fence-picket stubs as well as any remnants of lead and grout that were anchoring the pickets to the wall. The fence was immediately removed to the metal studio. After being dismantled, the fence parts were sent to another facility to be sandblasted to remove all rust and paint. Once the fence parts were cleaned down to bare metal, Woven Steel was able to closely inspect the parts to determine their condition.

RESTORATION OF THE GRANARY FENCE, WALL, AND ENTRANCE GATE

Some problems we knew about before the paint removal and were able to include in the scope of work, such as a post that had an unmatching finial on top of it. Other problems could only be discovered after dismantlement and cleaning. For example the construction documents indicated that 60 replacement finials would need to be cast. However it was discovered that under the many layers of paint and rust 116 finials were not originals but rather earlier replacements which had been deformed by welding when they were attached to the picket. Since these finials were not originals, we decided to recast them too. Interestingly enough we discovered that there were a wide variety of construction details for the fence posts, with some posts being hollow, some solid, some in

voids would fill with water and ice, and cause further damage to the fence and wall. Although not part of the original historic design, a matching grout was used to fill the voids to insure the long-term safety of the structure.



The bottoms of these finials were deformed by welding.

two pieces, and some in three pieces. The most important discovery was that on eight of the posts, in the area where the fence rail ran through the post, the side walls of the post were not strong enough to resist the pressure from the fence rails and would eventually crack, as they had done before. Woven Steel designed a plan to strengthen the side walls of the posts to resist the pressure from the rails.

During the reinstallation of the fence, the pickets were set in lead, a traditional form of anchoring pickets. Molten lead was poured in the hole around the picket and then it was tamped down with special tools. One problem occurred while installing the fence posts. Most of the fence posts were installed at joints where the granite slabs abuted each other in the wall. Over the years the corners of the slabs had eroded and voids were visible beneath the newly installed posts. If not closed, these



Molten lead is being poured into the picket hole by the contractor.



Next the molten lead is tamped down with special tools.

In the meantime masonry work was taking place on site. The first item was the cleaning of the wall to remove years of staining from pollution, weather, and rust. The cleaning process proceeded in several stages. There were different types of stains on the wall, including rust, paint, and various types of atmospheric pollution. The wall and entrance were cleaned several times using specialty cleaners. Any run-off from the cleaning process had to be captured by a gutter, transferred to barrels, and removed to an appropriate disposal location.

RESTORATION OF THE GRANARY FENCE, WALL, AND ENTRANCE GATE

There were numerous cracks on the top of the granite wall, originating from the picket holes. Depending on the depth of the crack, two different types of epoxy, varying in viscosity, were used. The top of the epoxy was rubbed with matching granite dust to camouflage the repairs. It was noted in the plans that there were cracks in the end piers which anchored the fence rail. Upon closer inspection, the mason discovered that the end piers were cracked all the way through and would require additional repairs. The structural engineer on the project designed a repair using pins and epoxy.

We tried two different brands of anti-graffiti coating on test patches on the granite to see if they changed the ap-



Before restoration there were many cracks in the top of the granite wall. Every winter the freeze and thaw cycles makes the cracks larger.

pearance of the granite. After the application we noticed that the coating darkened the pale-gray granite considerably. Weighing this color change against the fact that no graffiti had occurred in at least two decades, we opted to not apply the coating on the rest of the wall and the anti-graffiti coating was removed from the test areas.

Before the project was undertaken the question of wall stability was studied. Although the wall was leaning, the structural engineer determined it was stable as it was and did not need to be reset. The wall “foundation” was a bed of mortar and rubble, a typical configuration for the time period. The mortar and rubble were removed and replaced by a structural repair mortar which would



The crack repairs on the top of the wall closely match the granite.

resist corrosion from sidewalk salt during the winter. Also weep holes were installed at the bottom of the wall,



A workman reinstalls the gate at the Granary after restoration work.

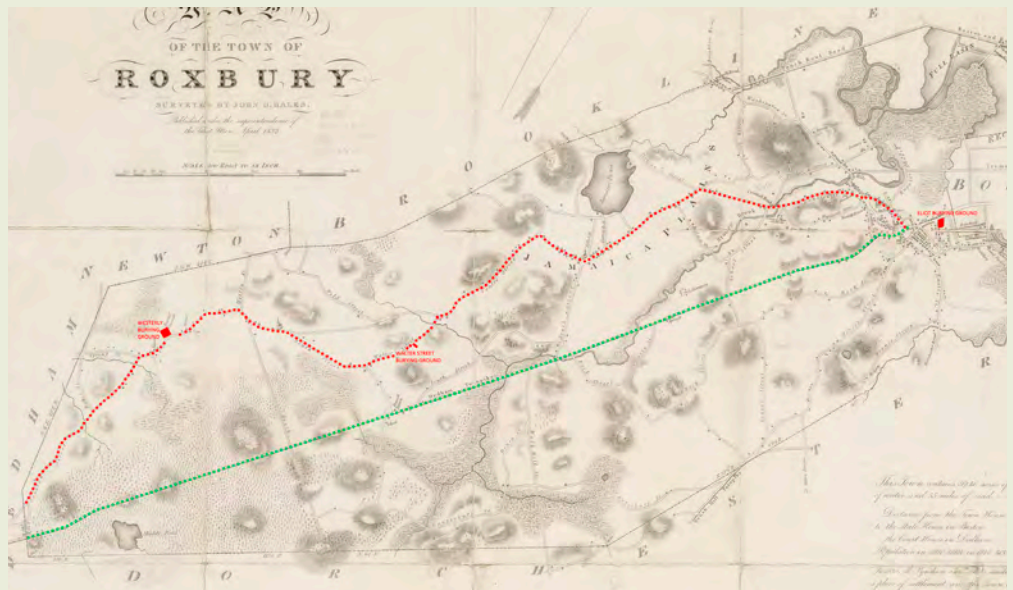
wherever the gap between the wall and the sidewalk was large enough to fit a 1-inch pipe. A screen was placed over the end of each pipe to allow water to come out but to keep any dirt or gravel behind the wall.

WALTER STREET BURYING GROUND... (continued from first page)

at the southwestern end of town because town residents complained that Eliot Burying Ground was too far away for them to use, and WSBG was not yet in existence. Dating the establishment of WSBG is difficult. At no point during the next century do the Roxbury town records mention the establishment of another burying ground. Also since I cannot find a detailed map of Roxbury from the early 1700s, I cannot glean any information through maps. The Suffolk County land records provide some interesting information but do not resolve the mystery. In 1733 Caleb Seaver and John Davis signed an agreement on behalf of the Second Church to purchase approximately one-half acre of land from Joseph Weld for use as a burial ground in the “Westerly Precinct of Roxbury,” provided the purchasers maintained a good fence or wall around the property. The plot of land was described as “lying near unto and behind the meeting house.” The same agreement was signed in presence of a witness in 1736, and then before a justice of the peace in 1739.

The earliest headstone that exists in the site is from 1723, so we know that the site was used for burials prior to the sale of land to the Second Church in the 1730s. It would also not be unusual to have earlier burials without a headstone.

At this moment, we can indulge in a little speculation about the date of establishment. Since much of the land around the burying ground was owned by Joseph Weld, father and then son, who both signed the petition requesting the establishment of a new parish in Roxbury, we can assume the Welds had a heightened interest in the new parish. Can their burial places shed some light on the establishment date?



This map from 1832 has the three Roxbury burying grounds in red. Boston is off the right side of the map. The dotted red line is the route people would have had to travel to reach Walter Street and Westerly Burying Grounds. The dotted green line is the Dedham Turnpike, which didn't open for traffic until 1806.

Lieutenant Joseph Weld, father, died in early 1711 before the Second C

hurch was officially established and was buried in Eliot Burying Ground, as were several of his family members who died earlier. Several years later, his 15-year-old nephew Samuel Weld was buried there also (Samuel's father was already buried in the site). The first Weld to be buried in WSBG was young Rebecca Weld, daughter of Ebenezer (son of Joseph) and Mary, in 1727. However it is curious that in 1721 Hannah Weld, the infant daughter of John (also son of Joseph), signatory to the Second Church petition, and Mehitabel, was buried in the more distant Westerly Burying Ground if the WSBG was in existence at that time. In fact Hannah Weld is the only Weld who was buried in Westerly Burying Ground. All the other Welds in Roxbury were buried in Eliot Burying Ground or in WSBG. It is also interesting that the first two burials at this site with headstones were Grace and Benjamin Child, the aunt and uncle of Hannah's mother, Mehitabel Weld. Although it is speculative, it lends credence to the date of the first burial in WSBG between Hannah's death in July 1721 and the April 1723 date on the first headstone at WSBG.

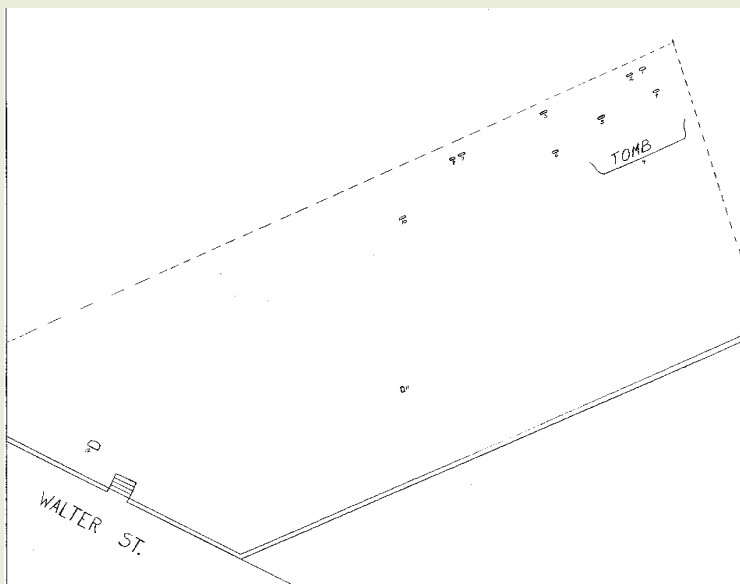
The primary period of usage for this site was from 1727-1781, with a few burials outside this period, including at least four during the 1800s. A likely reason for the discontinuation of burials was that in 1769 the church

WALTER STREET BURYING GROUND... (continued from first page)

moved about one mile away to the intersection of Centre, South, and Church streets. In 1832 the congregation split because of theological differences, with one group forming a new church farther out in West Roxbury. In 1782 the ownership of the burying ground becomes unclear. The deed records show that the Second Church of Roxbury sold the burying ground to private citizens. However the deeds in question mostly provide only a loose description of the property, indicating the owners of abutting parcels, but giving no measurements. For one particular parcel of land that was sold and resold several times, the southwestern edge of the property was always described as being “on the meeting house lot in part and partly on the burying ground. . .”

In April 1842 the town of Roxbury issued a report on the condition of the burying grounds in the town. The report identified a burying ground on “Washington Street in the western part of the town” as being in “not so good condition as it ought to be; a portion of the wall is in very bad condition and should be reset without delay. . .” Furthermore the report said “The Committee have not been able to obtain positive proof that the Ground is owned by the Town, but the information they have been able to obtain leaves very brief space for doubt; it is therefore recommended that the Town assume ownership thereof.” This sounds exactly like it could be WSBG with the exception that WSBG is not located on Washington Street. In fact there was not a burying ground on Washington Street at that time. (A small Catholic cemetery opened around 1850 on Hyde Park Avenue, near Washington Street.) All the other burying grounds in Roxbury in 1842 were correctly described in the report, leaving WSBG unmentioned and one of the sites not existing as described. Most likely,

a transcription error occurred and the burying ground described as being on Washington Street was indeed the WSBG.



This current map of Walter Street Burying Ground shows the eleven grave markers that remain in the site. There used to be 51 markers. At least 166 people are buried here.

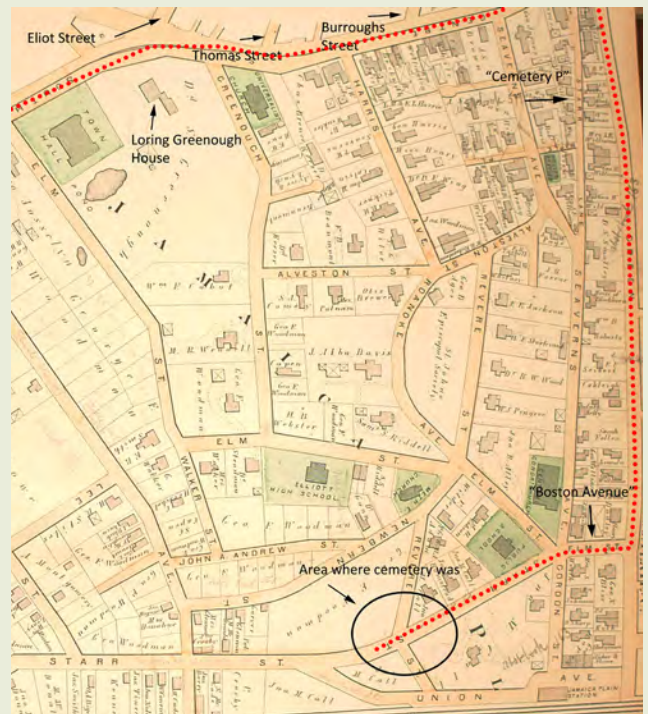
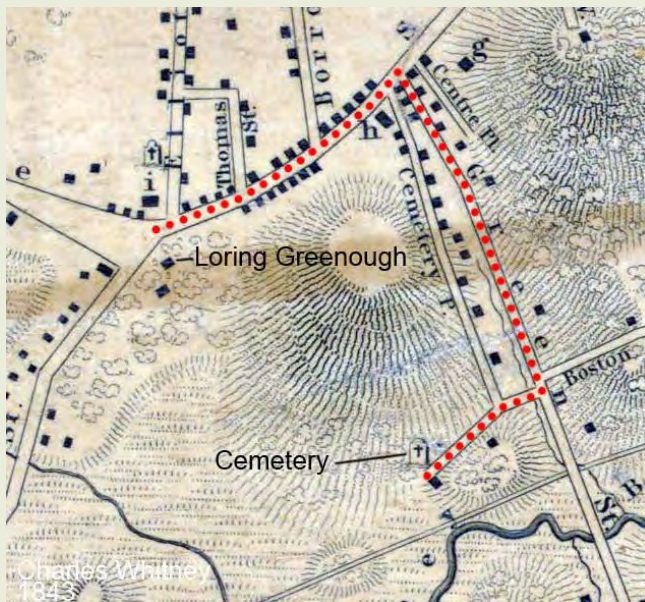
The headstones in WSBG indicate that it was mainly used by local families. Some of the primary last names we see are Baker, Chamberlain, Child, Davis, Mayo, and Weld. There is also a large mound tomb built into the side of a hill. The tomb has no markers or other identification on it, so it is mystery who is buried there. There are also three mounds indicated on a map of the site from 1895. There is no trace of these mounds now. Another disturbing mystery about the site is the disappearance of approximately 80 percent of the grave markers. In 1854 William Trask, a genealogist and history writer, made a list of the gravestones in WSBG; there were 51. In the site survey made in 1987, there were only 11 grave markers, in-

cluding one that was placed in 1903. In addition to wondering what happened to all the gravestones, we also wonder if this mass disappearance is specific to this site or if large numbers of grave markers disappeared from all the sites. We will use ground penetrating radar this year in WSBG to determine if some of the gravestones remain on site and have been covered up by vegetation.

We know of only four individual burials that occurred in the 19th century in WSBG. But in 1867 there was a group reburial of approximately 115 Revolutionary War soldiers who died in the military hospital established in the Loring-Greenough house in Jamaica Plain after the Battle of Bunker Hill. Commodore Joshua Loring was a Boston native who started out as a tanner's apprentice and rose to become Commodore of the Royal Navy. Loring distinguished himself during the French and Indian War when his troops captured both Quebec

WALTER STREET BURYING GROUND... (continued from first page)

City and Montreal. Because he remained a committed Tory he and his family left their Jamaica Plain house to seek safety in occupied Boston in 1774. They sailed to England at the same time as the British troops, leaving Boston during the evacuation of March 1776. His abandoned house was seized by the Provincial Congress in June 1775 and converted into an infirmary for Roxbury-based troops. The hospital was only used for a short period between the Battle of Bunker Hill in June 1775 and the evacuation of Boston in March 1776. It was staffed by Drs. Lemuel Hayward (buried in Central Burying Ground) and William Aspinwall. The bodies of the deceased soldiers were buried on the grounds of the estate. The large estate was about 60 acres. It was purchased by the Greenough family and eventually broken up by inheritance and sold for real-estate development throughout the 1800s. The bodies were most likely buried near the present-day intersection of Everett



The dotted red line on both these maps delineates the same geographic area, with the location of the hospital burying ground indicated. The above map is from 1843 and the right map is from 1874. Considerable development took place during this period.

and Bishop streets. In 1867 during construction in the area, the remains of these soldiers were unearthed. The following description of the discovery of the bones was printed in the *Official Reports of the Town of West Roxbury for the Year 1867-8*:

The Selectmen were informed during the past summer that the skeletons of some unknown dead bodies were being disinterred by some laborers engaged in digging away a sand-hill. . . .The human bones were left on the ground exposed to the wondering gaze of school children, and to the idle curiosity of many people who visited the spot, as skeleton after skeleton was brought to the surface by these laborers, much to the horror and annoyance of those citizens who resided near the locality. . . .We found the town must take charge of this burying ground, and we had the brow of this hill trenched over, and one hundred and fifteen skeletons were exhumed and reburied in the town burying ground on Walter Street, at an expense of about one hundred and thirty dollars.

According to an article that appeared in 1856 in the *New England Historic and Genealogical Record*, at some point before the discovery of the bodies at least one gravestone with the following inscription existed: "Here lies ye Body of serg't Dan'l Niles of Easton, who Died Novr, ye 2 nd A.D. 1775. Aged 41 years." The article

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also described a “number of rude stones, probably taken from walls or picked up in the fields” that were used as headstones and footstones.

There is a great dearth of knowledge regarding burials of African Americans in Boston in the 17th-19th centuries. Through varied sources we know of African American burials in Copp’s Hill, Granary, Dorchester North, and Phipps Street Burying Grounds. There is also anecdotal evidence of African American burials in WSBG through the reminiscences of Harriet Manning Whitcomb, a woman who resided 90 years in Jamaica Plain and who published the *Annals and Reminiscences of Jamaica Plain* in 1897. According to Whitcomb the last burial in WSBG was Simeon Giles who died in 1858 and was the son of Peter, a servant to Governor Samuel Adams, who was also buried in WSBG. In the 1850 federal census Simeon Giles was identified as a black farmer, living with his wife Hannah, three children, and a male laborer. His house is also shown on the 1852 Boston and Vicinity Map published by J.B. Shields. The house is not too far from WSBG, so it would make sense for the Gileses to be buried there.

Even after the reburial of the soldiers in 1867, history had another twist in store for WSBG. For approximately a decade, from the early 1890s to 1901, there was much talk of widening and relocating parts of Walter Street. This part of town, now called Roslindale, used to be very rural, made up of large estates and farms. Starting in the 1850s there had been a steady flow of former town dwellers out into the nascent “suburbs,” like West Roxbury. Various forms of public transportation had made it possible for those who lived in the outskirts of town to commute to the city center to do business. The area around WSBG saw increased development in the 1880s and 1890s. New streets were built to accommodate houses for the many new residents. For unknown reasons, perhaps due to residential development, the width of Walter Street was very uneven. Notably the old burial ground and the Harvard Arboretum (now called Arnold Arboretum) stuck out into the street approximately 25 feet, making the northern part of Walter Street significantly narrower than the southern part.



The plaque on this boulder in the front of Walter Street Burying Ground commemorates the reburial of the American Revolutionary soldiers at the site.

Both businesses and individual residents believed this narrowing of the street presented an impediment to the implementation of an efficient streetcar connection to Boston city center. Boston city officials discussed this matter in the early 1890s. They agreed they would like to widen the street and that land would need to be taken from one side of the road. They thought it would be cheaper to take land from the side of the road which had the city-owned burying ground on it than the other side which had lots owned by private individuals.

This process was complicated by a state law forbidding the taking of any land used as a burial ground for at least 100 years without special approval from the Massachusetts legislature. In fact that law was passed only a few years earlier in 1880 to thwart rumored attempts to develop the land of the Granary

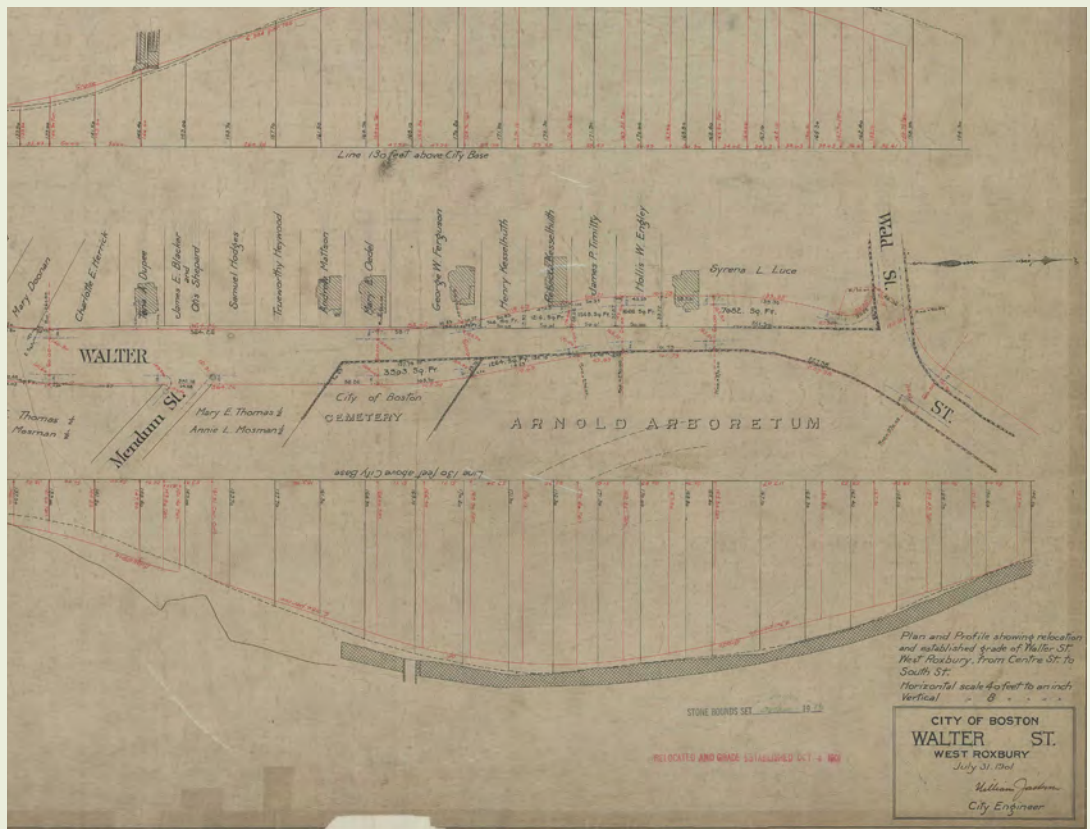
and King’s Chapel Burying Grounds in downtown Boston into an extension of City Hall and a court building. In January 1892 the Boston City Council approved an order requesting the mayor to petition the state legislature to allow the City to take a portion of WSBG for the widening of that street. One councilor testified that he had been informed by the Street Commissioners that “there have been no burials there for a great many years and that there are no graves in that portion which it is proposed by this order to take.” Some of the other council-

WALTER STREET BURYING GROUND... (continued from first page)

ors thought there should be more investigation into the matter. The Massachusetts State Legislature passed an act on May 11, 1892, authorizing the City of Boston to take a strip of land from the burying ground; relocate any bodies, should they be found; and compensate anyone affected by the taking.

In spite of the efforts of the city councilors and state legislators, nothing happened for another decade on Walter Street. One of the reasons for this delay may have been the creation of the Arnold Arboretum, which was adjacent to the WSBG. At this time the land abutting the WSBG, which was also part of the narrowed

section of the road and would need to be altered to accommodate a wider road, belonged to Harvard College. It had been donated to the College as part of the Bussey estate, with the provision that the land be used for “instruction in agriculture, horticulture, and related subjects.” A part of the estate which did not abut the WSBG became the Arnold Arboretum in 1872, with the abutting parcel being added in the spring of 1895. In the creation of the



These plans for the widening of Walter Street Burying Ground were approved in 1901. The center part of the plans shows the alterations on the existing road and properties.

Arnold Arboretum, Harvard College and the City of Boston reached an agreement whereby the parcels of land were first taken by the City of Boston from Harvard College and then leased back to the College for 1,000 years at the rate of \$1.00 per year. It was also specified in the legal instruments that no roadway could be laid on the grounds of the Arboretum without approval from both the Boston Parks Commissioners and Harvard College. This stipulation would have included the widening of Walter Street.

In 1896 the Roxbury Historical Society and the Sons of the American Revolution petitioned the state legislature to repeal the act they passed in 1892 authorizing land to be taken from the burying ground. They contested the project because it destroyed the graves of a number of soldiers from the Revolution. They also pointed out that no progress had occurred on the project since the empowering act was passed in 1892 and, contrary to testimony in the Boston City Council hearing in 1892, there was little traffic on the street. In October 1900 the Boston Elevated Railway Company submitted a petition requesting permission to lay tracks from the Soldiers Monument in Jamaica Plain, down Centre Street, along Walter Street, connecting with South Street, and through to Centre Street again in West Roxbury. Their request was predicated on the widening of Wal-

WALTER STREET BURYING GROUND... (continued from first page)

ter Street, as authorized in 1892. In February 1901 City Council made another request to the Board of Street Commissioners that Walter and Centre streets be widened. In June 1901 the state legislature passed an act amending the original act granting permission to take land from the burying ground for street widening. The new act authorized the taking only if Harvard College approved the plans for the street widening project. On



This 1925 map shows the various elevated railway lines operating throughout Boston. Note that there is no railway line running by Walter Street Burying Ground (in blue) on Walter Street.

August 1, 1901, the Board of Street Commissioners approved the taking and widening plan internally and opened the matter up to a public hearing. The hearing was held on August 15, 1901. Proponents of the project believed the street widening would lead to the establishment of a single 5-cent fare into Boston. According to Street Commission records, two people opposed the line of street relocation and 128 were in favor of the plan. Final approval was obtained from Harvard College that September and on October 4, 1901, the Street Commissioners officially approved plans for the widening and relocation of Walter Street.

The Boston Cemetery Department received a payment of \$250 in exchange for the taking of an approximately 3,900 square-foot parcel of burying ground land. Construction began in 1903. While excavating WSBG, 28 bodies were found. Since there were no headstones, it was impossible to identify the remains. These remains were most likely soldiers from the American Revolution who died at the field hospital in Jamaica Plain and were moved here in 1867. According to the 1904 Cemetery Department Annual Report "the remains found were carefully collected and deposited in another part of the ground." The exact spot where the 28 bodies were placed is not known. Farther back in the site is a three-room underground crypt. It is possible they were placed in here, but not sure. The boulder with a commemorative plaque for the Soldiers of the American Revolution which is at the front of the current configuration of the site was placed by the Sons of the American Revolution in 1903.

Since 1903 there have been no new disturbances or reburials, thankfully. It is interesting to note that the primary impetus behind the widening of Walter Street, the plan to build a street rail line from Jamaica Plain to Roslindale, came to naught. For whatever reason, this transit line was never built.

Looking through the various developments at WSBG from its establishment in ca 1723 to the last disturbance in 1901, it seems that most events were tied to the needs of the ever-expanding city. Primary among these was the desire to reduce the time and effort to get from one place to another. We can sincerely hope that any future development in the City of Boston never alters Walter Street Burying Ground again!

STORIES BEHIND THE STONES: TUDOR FAMILY

The burying grounds in Boston have their fair share of famous people, particularly from the Colonial and Revolutionary War periods. However, after several centuries those who were “merely” well known fade in the collective memory to become relatively unknown. Consider the Tudor family, John, William, and Frederic, who were buried in a family tomb in King’s Chapel Burying Ground in the 18th and 19th centuries. The arc of their lives spanned different historical periods, from English immigrants in a new colony to established colonists fighting for independence against a global



The tomb plaque for the Tudor Family tomb in King’s Chapel Burying Ground.

superpower to citizens of a newly formed country. These three men were active in three different sectors of society: local government, legal, and business. They were all well known in Boston during their lifetimes but now known only to students of history.

wheat from 1764 to 1773, and moderator at town meetings in 1780. He was also active in his church, serving as both a deacon and treasurer. His many real estate deals helped to enlarge his fortune. By the end of his life he had become a wealthy man.

John Tudor kept a diary over the period 1732-1793, commenting on local events. He wrote a detailed entry about the Boston Massacre. He was one of the justices of the peace responsible for issuing an arrest warrant for Captain Preston, the officer in charge of the troops who fired on the crowd. He also wrote interesting entries about well-known events such as the Boston Tea Party, the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the Siege of Boston, and the Evacuation of Boston.

One of John Tudor’s grandsons wrote this evocative description of him:

Thus the old man continued his mems [memoirs?] until he was upwards of 85 years and until he arrived at about one year and 5 months of his death. . . .He was a man of strong mind and healthful body and remarkable for his integrity. His education was that of a common

John Tudor was born in 1709 in England. He moved to Boston with his widowed mother when he was 6 years old, where his mother remarried. Not much is known about him until 1732 when he married Jane Varney. He became a baker in 1736. At some point he began participating in mercantile trade. Throughout his career he held various town offices: constable in 1738, fire warden in 1752, one of the overseers of the poor from 1751 to 1761, warden in 1762, justice of the peace starting in 1763, surveyor of



John Tudor: “Tall and erect with long curling perfectly white hair...” About 1750, attributed to Joseph Steward, Collection of MHS

STORIES BEHIND THE STONES: TUDOR FAMILY

APPOINTED/ELECTED MUNICIPAL POSITIONS IN COLONIAL BOSTON

Some of the titles of these positions that John Tudor held are familiar to us and some are now obscure. Here is a list of duties of some of the positions he held:

☞ **Justices of the peace** presided over the lowest court in the Province of Massachusetts Bay and were appointed by the governor. They heard criminal cases (drunkenness, rioting, and violations of the Sabbath) and civil cases under £40. This court sat in the justice's house where he kept the minutes and collected the fines.

☞ **Constables** were important law enforcement officers who were charged with many duties including collecting of taxes and fines; serving of warrants and processes; regulating of weights and measures, townships, the choice and duties of town officers, attendance of jurors, and keeping of town watches; and regulating and enforcing Sabbath observances, wolf bounties, drunkenness, profanity, breaches of license law, etc.

☞ **Town warden** was a position created by a provincial law passed in 1761 to more effectively regulate activity to ensure "the due observation of the Lord's Day." Wardens were charged to make sure that the following activities did not occur on Sundays: traveling, except in emergency situations; entertaining or drinking in taverns or inns; and loitering, recreating, and unnecessary walking anywhere outside.

☞ **The Overseers of the Poor** provided relief in the form of food, fuel, medicines, and sometimes money, to "deserving" persons, provided that they were settled in Boston. The Overseers also provided relief at the expense of towns where needy people resided until the town took charge of them and to non-state residents for short periods until they were removed to state almshouses.

school. . . Tall and erect with long curling perfectly white hair and when walking with a broad hat and long cane, he was calculated to inspire all the reverence which can attach to an old man, who bears about him in his air and manner, the evidence of a life well spent.

William, born in 1750, was one of six children of John and Jane Tudor. His two brothers died when he was six years old. After he graduated from Harvard, he worked in the law office of future president John Adams. Coincidentally he assisted Adams in his defense of the British soldiers charged with murder in the Boston Massacre. He set up his own office as a practicing attorney in 1772. However not much work as an attorney was available after the restrictions imposed on Boston in response to the Boston Tea Party took effect. Apparently William Tudor's economic situation was so dire that John Adams wrote a letter to John Tudor vouching for William's serious character and frugal lifestyle and asking his father to advance William some funds.

In April 1775, in response to the Battles of Lexington and Concord, British troops occupied Boston beginning the eleven-month Siege of Boston. Most of the Patriot residents of Boston fled to the countryside which was controlled by the Americans. Correspondingly the Tory proponents from the countryside moved into the town seeking the protection of the British troops. All entries and exits to Boston were firmly controlled by British troops.

At this time John Tudor, a supporter of the American cause, lived outside of Boston but William Tudor remained in town, perhaps because of his relationship with Delia Jarvis, who was part of a prominent Loyalist family. He escaped from Boston in mid-May across Boston Harbor, past the future site of Logan Airport to Point Shirley, at the very tip of what is now Winthrop, and joined the American forces in Cambridge under George Washington. Legend has it that William would swim back and forth to Boston to visit Delia with his clothes on his head.

STORIES BEHIND THE STONES: TUDOR FAMILY

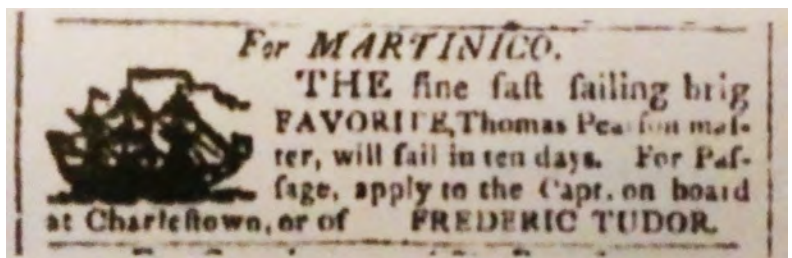


William Tudor. Image from *The Army Lawyer: A History of the Judge Advocate General's Corps, 1775-1975*, United States Army, 1975.

Tudor was appointed the first judge advocate of the American army by George Washington in July 1775. His salary was \$20 per month. After the British left Boston in 1776 he moved to New York with Washington's army. He had a rich correspondence with Delia during their courtship from 1773-1778. These love letters are part of the collection of the Tudor family papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society. William married Delia in early 1778 and retired from the army as a colonel soon after. He opened a successful law practice in Boston and his career blossomed. He was commissioned a magistrate in 1781, elected a representative in the legislature from 1791 to 1796 and a senator for Suffolk county from 1801 to 1803. He was one of the founding members of the Massachusetts Historical Society and the first meeting took place in his house in Boston.

When his father John Tudor died in 1796 he inherited an estate of \$40,000, which made him a wealthy man. William ceased practicing law and began to travel, spending much time in Europe. Unfortunately for his financial health, he invested heavily in land speculation in South Boston. Upon returning to the United States in 1798 after a year's visit to France, he discovered that his investments had failed and that he was nearly broke. He narrowly avoided debtors' prison through the assistance of his son Frederic. He was able to regain a professional position but never regained his former wealth. Through a personal connection, he was appointed Secretary of State of Massachusetts in 1809 and 1810 and was subsequently appointed Clerk of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in 1811 where he served until his death in 1819.

Frederic, born in 1783, was the youngest son of William Tudor. Unlike his other brothers, Frederic did not go on to university but instead was apprenticed to a commodity trader in Boston at the young age of 13. When he was 22, he came up with the idea of shipping ice to the Caribbean, a novel and risky endeavor. Ice harvesting was a practice familiar to New Englanders at the time. Ice was cut in chunks from ponds and lakes during winter and stored as long as possible in specially designed ice houses. This allowed them to use ice to cool drinks, make ice cream, and prolong the storage of fresh produce.



Ad for Frederic Tudor's first sailing to Martinique with a cargo of ice, appearing in the *Boston Gazette* on January 27, 1806.

In early 1806 he bought 130 tons of ice and tried to arrange for passage to Martinique. However his idea was considered infeasible (or crazy) and no one would agree to ship his cargo. Undaunted by this initial setback, he bought his own ship. Frederic's agents were supposed to prepare an icehouse in Martinique, where he shipped the first load of ice, but they did not and the ice melted quickly. Additionally the consumers in the tropical climate were unfamiliar with ice and did not know how to handle it to keep it from melting once they bought it. Frederic lost money on this

STORIES BEHIND THE STONES: TUDOR FAMILY

venture. The next year he shipped ice to Havana, but did not turn a profit either. The Embargo Act of 1807 and the War of 1812 sharply curtailed his new business. Although his 1810 shipment turned a profit, Frederic was faced with mounting debts. Additionally family financial difficulties put more pressure on him: father William lost his fortune in land speculation; his brother William was interested in literature and was not earning any money; and his sister Delia had been living in a luxurious fashion in Europe, which the family could no longer afford. In two instances in 1812 and 1813, Frederic was put into debtors' prison for nonpayment of debts.

In spite of constant pressures, whether financial, family, technological, or health, Frederic kept working to improve his ice-shipping business. He established monopolies in Cuba and Jamaica. He improved cold-preserving methods in both his ice-house construction and shipping procedures. He also began shipping ice to the American ports of Charleston, Savannah, and New Orleans. In 1825 one of his suppliers invented a new way of cutting ice that would greatly improve harvesting processes and shipboard storage. This new device allowed ice harvesters to cut the ice into uniform ice blocks which could be packed more tightly together, allowing more ice to be packed in the same area and reducing melting. Before, ice was harvested in irregularly shaped chunks by using hand tools. This development allowed Tudor to reach his dream of shipping ice to India in 1834. From that point on Tudor's ice business boomed and he became a millionaire, however it was not until January 1849 that he cleared himself of all debts. He died in 1864. Tudor's success helped to generate more trade in ice and other goods throughout New England



Photograph of Frederic Tudor, date unknown.

SITES INCLUDED IN THE HISTORIC BURYING GROUNDS INITIATIVE

Bennington Street Cemetery (1838)

Hawes Burying Ground (1816)

Bunker Hill Burying Ground (1816)

King's Chapel Burying Ground (1630)

Central Burying Ground (1754)

Market Street Burying Ground (1764)

Copp's Hill Burying Ground (1659)

Phipps Street Burying Ground (1630)

Dorchester North Burying Ground (1633)

South End Burying Ground (1810)

Dorchester South Burying Ground (1810)

Union Cemetery (1841)

Eliot Burying Ground (1630)

Walter Street Burying Ground (ca 1723)

Granary Burying Ground (1660)

Westerly Burying Ground (1683)