



# CITY OF CONCORD

## REPORT TO MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** David Gill , Parks & Recreation Director

**DATE:** January 23, 2017

**SUBJECT:** Concord Cemetery Operations

### **Background**

The Department would like to highlight the work of the cemetery division last year.

### **Discussion**

The Parks and Recreation Department maintains and operates approximately 140 acres that encompasses thirteen cemeteries in ten different locations.

The cemetery administration office and Perkins Chapel are located near the entrance to Blossom Hill Cemetery. The Chapel, of Gothic Revival design, was donated to the City by Miss Susan Perkins in 1904 and is listed, along with Blossom Hill and the Old North Cemetery, on the National Historic Register.

There are many prominent citizens and notable individuals interred in our cemeteries, from politicians (Franklin Pierce the 14<sup>th</sup> President of the United States), United States Senators, Congressman, Governors, Concord Mayors, to religious leaders, civic leaders, a Medal of Honor recipient and an Astronaut. There are also over 4,000 veterans interred in our cemeteries. A Concord Veterans group places an American flag on each grave prior to Memorial Day. Additional flags are kept in the cemetery office in the event a flag is lost, stolen or a veteran's grave was missed.

Several of our cemeteries are at capacity with no lots remain for sale (Horse Hill Cemetery, Stickney Hill Cemetery), others are near capacity (Concord Calvary, Millville Cemetery). The other cemeteries have enough capacity left, at the current purchase rate, to have lots available for another 30+ years.

The chart below illustrates the names of the cemeteries, where they are located (with some being internally separated), the year they were established, and the approximate size of the cemetery. The oldest being The Old North Cemetery which was established in 1730.

CONCORD CEMETERIES AND LOCATIONS

NAME	SIZE	LOCATION	ESTABLISHED	ESTIMATED INTERMENTS
Blossom Hill	67.0 acres	207 North State St.	1859	21,760
Maple Grove	12.2 acres	Sewalls Falls Rd.	1824	1840
Woodlawn	14.0	Village St., Penacook	1816	4450
Pine Grove	9.8 acres	Cemetery St.	1825	1440
Old Fort	6.0 acres	Shawmut St.	1775	247
Soucook	2.0 acres	Josiah Bartlett Rd.	1848	400
Millville	1.9 acres	Pleasant St.	1798	640
Old North	5.4 acres	North State St.	1730	2840
Horse Hill	0.5 acres	Horse Hill Rd., Penacook	1811	220
Stickney Hill	0.1 acres	Stickney Hill Rd	1833	34
Concord Calvary (Part of Blossom Hill)	15.7 acres	North State St.	1859	6000
Penacook Calvary (Part of Woodlawn)	4.2 acres	Village St., Penacook	1816	1040
Beth Jacob (Part of Blossom Hill)	0.4 acres	North State St.	1859	200

TOTAL ESTIMATED INTERMENTS ON RECORD – 41,111

**Administration and Staffing**

The cemetery administrator is responsible for the day to day operations of all the cemeteries. There are eight permanent full time staff, two of which are “shared” employees. The “shared” employees work for the cemetery for approximately 32 weeks and then are “shared” with the General Services Department for 20 weeks during the winter months.

During the winter months, an average of 50 interments takes place in the cemeteries. Our staff will plow the roads, clean the grave site area of snow, jack hammer through frost and prepare the grave site. Since we inter year round, cemetery roads are maintained by the cemetery staff during the winter. Besides their regular duties during the winter months, the cemetery staff is responsible for helping plow the City streets. All full time cemetery staff work from 3pm-11pm with the General Service Department during snow storms, then return to their cemetery work at 7am.

## Preservation Team

This year (FY17) the City Council funded two additional 17 week temporary positions which were dedicated to preserving monuments in the Old North Cemetery. The Old North is the oldest cemetery in the City, many of the monuments are over 200 years old. Cemetery employees, who are trained in monument preservation, trained the new temporary staff. To date they have preserved over 160 fallen or leaning slate monuments and 30 fallen, broken or leaning marble monuments. We look forward to welcoming them back next year so they may continue this worthy endeavor as funded.



## Hydro-Seeder

To better enable staff to perform their duties, a hydro-seeder was purchased last spring. The purchase of a hydro-seeder is another tool by which staff may seed a grave that is lacking a good turf stand through poor initial germination, from drought or animals digging for insects. The hydro-seeder has been used with great success, even during the current drought stricken season. The hydro mulch utilized kept the grass seed from blowing away. Other additives used in the hydro seeding process, fertilizer, and crabgrass preventative, kept weeds out of the newly established drought resistant/hardy blend. The Hydro seeder has also been used by Parks, Beaver Meadow Golf Course and Highway staff with great success this year.



## Maple Grove Road Improvement

As part of the FY2017 CIP all the paved roads in Maple Grove Cemetery in West Concord were renovated this year. The old roads were ground, graded and then black topped with two inches of base material and an inch of finish material. The sides of the roads were then shored up with a mixture of gravel and loam, then hydro-seeded by cemetery staff. The results and comments from the public have been very positive.

Cemetery staff also scraped and painted the storage shed located in Maple Grove Cemetery.



## Emergency Wall repairs at Blossom Hill.

Last summer we noticed several sections of the retaining wall defining one edge of the White tomb area began to fail. Working with City Administration this fall we took a proactive approach and completed emergency repairs that would prevent the wall from falling. The wall, which is over 270 feet long, was built in two sections. The first section built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was made up of dry laid random size and shape stone. The second section built in the early twentieth century of nearly square and rectangular wet laid blocks of stone. We will be working on creating a new CIP to repair the wall.



## Maintenance Facilities

As part of our annual facilities review, staff identified a safety issue with the overhead doors at the cemetery maintenance facility. For the past two budget years overhead doors have been replaced in one building. Another one of the cemetery storage building required repairs were completed this fall with the foundation replaced, a wall rebuilt and a new overhead door was installed to address the safety issue.

## **Partnerships**

The cemetery utilizes partnerships with volunteers and civic groups to accomplish additional projects that would be out of our staff's reach without additional assistance. The following is a list of our volunteer projects:

- Eagle Scout project that brought names to Blossom Hill and Concord Calvary Streets and partial signage
- Several volunteers assisted the cemetery administrator with research, and genealogy
- The Boutin-Rumford Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) has been preserving monuments in the Old Fort cemetery where Revolutionary War Soldiers are interred. They have held three work days so far this past year preserving sixteen monuments so far.
- Radar Imaging- The cemetery administrator along with cemetery staff assisted volunteer Steve Arcone with using Underground Radar Imaging in an attempt to locate precisely where infants were buried in Concord Calvary Cemetery
- Concord Veterans Group – This group is responsible for placing American flags on veterans graves prior to Memorial Day
- Franklin Pierce Brigade – This group holds an annual ceremony commemorating the birth of the President at his grave in the Old North Cemetery in November.
- Friends of Blossom Hill and Calvary Cemetery- Hold monthly interfaith prayer service on the second Friday of each month from 6pm-7pm in the Perkins Chapel

## **Programs**

The cemetery has a few one time or ongoing programs that should be noted:

- Adopt a Grave- Initiated in October of 2013 by cemetery administrator Jill McDaniel. This program allows the public to donate funds for the purchase of a flat marker for those interred in the Common Ground area that was not able to afford a marker. To date ninety one markers have been purchased and installed. There are still 515 graves that need adopting.
- Assisting the State of NH – For the past several months Jill McDaniel has been meeting with the State of NH to assist them in their efforts to modernize record keeping and operations at the State's cemetery located on Clinton Street.
- Concord Public Library – This past summer, the Concord Public Library had a lecture and book signing for the book "Etched in Stone" at the library. As part of the program an informational walk was held that night at the Old North Cemetery after the lecture. The leader of the walk was Jill McDaniel, cemetery administrator.