

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 11 1977
DATE ENTERED	MAR 8 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC ****** Old North Cemetery

AND/OR COMMON
Old North Cemetery

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Maplewood Avenue (Lot #2, Assessors' Plan #15) NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Portsmouth VICINITY OF First

STATE New Hampshire CODE 33 COUNTY Rockingham CODE 015

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Cemetery

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME City of Portsmouth

STREET & NUMBER
City Hall: 126 Daniel Street

CITY, TOWN Portsmouth VICINITY OF STATE New Hampshire 03801

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Rockingham County Registry of Deeds
Rockingham County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
Hampton Road

CITY, TOWN Exeter STATE New Hampshire 03833

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
NA

DATE
____FEDERAL ____STATE ____COUNTY ____LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Portsmouth North Cemetery was first used for burials as early as 1751, and in 1753 the town purchased the site from Col. John Hart.¹ The Portsmouth powder house stood nearby, on the shore of the North Mill Pond. The burying ground is an irregular plot of land of about 1.5 acres lying in the district known as the North End of the city. The cemetery is bounded on the east by Maplewood Avenue; on the south and southwest by land belonging to the Boston and Maine Railroad and now occupied by tracks and by a salt storage yard; on the northwest by a portion of the North Mill Pond; and on the north by Union Cemetery, which was laid out as a burying ground in 1844. A small lot in the southeast corner of the North Cemetery, measuring 32 by 39.4 feet, was until recently occupied by a late nineteenth century fire engine house. The boundary between the North Cemetery and the Boston and Maine Railroad property is now marked by a chain link fence, while the Maplewood Avenue border is protected by a stone and brick wall capped with concrete slabs. The boundary between the North Cemetery and Union Cemetery is defined by a row of sugar maples.

Because of industrial development on the adjoining Boston and Maine Railroad property and other nearby areas, the North Cemetery suffers from an unharmonious environment which detracts from the repose and beauty that once characterized the site. The original residential character of the neighborhood was destroyed in the early 1970s by an extensive urban renewal project in the North End. The area directly across Maplewood Avenue, formerly occupied by mid-nineteenth century homes, is now the site of the office and printing plant of the Portsmouth Herald, while the eighteenth century Deer Street residential area south of the cemetery is now a business district. Only Union Cemetery and the residential area north of Union Cemetery, on the border of the North Mill Pond, retain their nineteenth century character. The mill pond itself has been extensively filled during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the Boston and Main Railroad, and presently suffers from pollution and accumulated debris. Thus, the North Cemetery is almost the only intact remnant of the eighteenth century in an area of Portsmouth that has been extensively altered during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The site of the North Cemetery is gently rolling, and declines from its highest elevation near Maplewood Avenue to the borders of the tidal mill pond, which are at sea level. There are numerous hillocks and depressions, most of which are occupied by graves or tombs. The cemetery has large maples along its northern and eastern borders, and the undergrowth that formerly overran the site is presently controlled by frequent mowing. Stones are mostly upright slate slabs, and are generally arranged in discontinuous rows, though family plots and isolated graves are not uncommon. Several table tombs and burial vaults also occur.

The imagery employed on the gravestones of the North Cemetery spans the range of styles common from the mid-eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century. Most stones include visual symbols and epitaphs as well as vital data regarding the dead. Symbols include winged skulls (e.g., Col. John Hart, 1777), winged cherubs (e.g., Nathaniel Adams, Sr., 1768), portraits of the deceased (e.g., Mary Folsom, 1784), the rising sun (e.g., Priscilla Tuttell, 1806), flower or bud symbols (e.g., George Hart, 1807), Masonic symbols (e.g., Maj. David C. Foster, 1823), Catholic Symbols (e.g., Margaret Peduzzi, 1839), and many variations of the urn and willow motif--some of them cut by local gravestone makers.

Most epitaphs are of a religious nature, some probably derived from popular sources like the several psalm books of Isaac Watts and others apparently composed especially for the deceased. Some stones make reference to events of the day ("In Pease/Amidst ye Rage, of Noise & War/Here Rests, the Remains of Colo. John Hart Esqr. ...1777"), while others are

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Description, cont.

of a philosophical cast ("The man who consecrates his Hours/ By vigorous Efforts, and an honest Aim,/ At once he draws the Sting of Life & Death:/ He walks with Nature, & her Paths are Peace.").

Gravestone markers whose work is known to be represented in the North Cemetery include the Lamsons of Charlestown, the Parks of Groton, the Geyers of Boston, John Homer of Boston, Enoch Noyes of Newburyport, and two Portsmouth carvers, John Marble and Samuel Treat, who produced urn and willow designs. The North Cemetery likewise contains many stones by other makers, many of whom have not yet been identified by researchers.

Original Appearance: At the time that the North Cemetery was first laid out, the surrounding area of the North End of Portsmouth was largely open land. The North Mill Pond (then called Fresh or Islington Creek) was much larger in extent than it is today, and nearby tidal inlets were so extensive that the cemetery was located within sight of water on all sides except the south. The surrounding neighborhood was utilized for a combination of residential and light industrial purposes. Directly to the east of the burying ground, near the present Portsmouth Herald building, stood the 1740 mansion and extensive gardens of Nathaniel Meserve, afterwards owned by Col. George Boyd and George Raynes.² This property was partly enclosed by tidewater,³ and included the Meserve shipyard, where the 50-gun ship America was built in 1749 for the Royal Navy.⁴ North of the cemetery were the North Mills, erected at the outlet of the mill pond by Peter Livius in 1764.⁵ Directly adjacent to the North Cemetery on the south were the pre-Revolutionary ropewalks of Daniel Wentworth and John Underwood (originally the property of John Hart).⁶ Except for these craft activities, however, the area near the North Cemetery was devoted to residential use during most of the first century of the cemetery's existence; not until the advent of the railroad in 1840 was the southern shore of the mill pond filled and increasingly used for industrial and commercial purposes.⁷

At about the turn of the nineteenth century, the borders of the North Cemetery were ornamented with Lombardy poplars, which had become popular throughout New England.⁸ Some of these trees survived as late as 1900.⁹

¹ Joseph H. Foster, The Portsmouth Guide Book (Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1876), pp. 106-7.

² "The Southwest Prospect of the Seat of Colonel George Boyd," painting of circa 1774, Lamont Gallery, Phillips Exeter Academy.

³ J. G. Hales, Map of the Compact Part of the Town of Portsmouth in the State of New Hampshire, 1813.

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Description, cont.

4. Nathaniel Adams, Annals of Portsmouth (Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1825), p. 189.
- 5 Ibid., pp. 207-8.
- 6 Charles W. Brewster, Rambles About Portsmouth, First Series (Portsmouth, NH: Lewis W. Brewster, 1873), p. 170; Hales, map of 1813.
- 7 Henry F. Walling, Map of the City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire (Portsmouth, NH: Charles W. Brewster, 1850).
- 8 Brewster, op. cit., pp. 347-8.
- 9 Caleb S. Burney, Portsmouth...Historic and Picturesque (Portsmouth, NH, the author, 1902), p. 49 and photograph p. 48.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1751; 1753

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

NA

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Portsmouth North Cemetery is the largest eighteenth century coastal burying ground north of Newburyport. It is typical of most contemporary burying grounds in northern and eastern New England in containing more slate gravestones than marble or brown sandstone markers. These stones clearly show the influence of several Boston gravestone makers as well as that of such prolific carvers as Enoch Noyes of Newburyport, the Park family of Groton (Massachusetts), and several Portsmouth craftsmen of the early nineteenth century. Iconographically, the North Cemetery is important because it contains the work of many stonecutters, assembled together in a cosmopolitan mixture that reveals the far-flung contacts of the port of Portsmouth.

The North Cemetery is likewise significant as the place of interment of many persons of local, state, and national importance (see below). Thus, the site is important both as a collection of artifacts and as a memorial.

Art: The North Cemetery, while not the oldest burying ground in Portsmouth, is the largest of the town's eighteenth century cemeteries and contains the widest range of marker types. These stones are of critical importance in American art history, representing almost the only native efforts at sculpture before the nineteenth century and portraying a vast number of iconographic devices that are crucial to an understanding of American attitudes toward religion and death before the Victorian era. According to Allan I. Ludwig, "the stone imagery of New England reveals a psychology much more rich and complex than had formerly been imagined and in many ways in sharp contrast to what has been taught about the Puritan heritage."¹ Containing a wide variety of gravestones by many makers and from several periods (see DESCRIPTION, Item #7), the North Cemetery is important not only in revealing the attitudes of 18th century Portsmouth, but in presenting evidence of the changing attitudes and evolving symbolism of later decades. Moreover, the easily-perceived diversity of origin among the stones in the cemetery graphically reveals the wide-ranging commercial contacts of Portsmouth in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries--contacts which supplied stones from many New England centers and even from England.

Community Planning: Until the North Cemetery was purchased by the town in 1753, most Portsmouth burials had taken place in the Point of Graves, located on present-day Mechanic Street and granted to the town in 1671. This small graveyard was insufficient to meet the needs of the growing community; the extent of the town's requirement for new burial space is indicated by the fact that a private citizen, Capt. John Pickering, granted another cemetery to the town in 1754.² The North Cemetery proved to be the more favored of these two mid-century graveyards, and most burials from all parts of the town were made here and in the adjacent Union Cemetery until the private burying grounds collectively

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Adams, Nathaniel, Annals of Portsmouth. Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1825.

[anon.] "The Southwest Prospect of the Seat of Colonel George Boyd," c. 1774, painting in Lamont Gallery, Phillips Exeter Academy.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.5 +

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 9	3 5 6	4 6 0	4 7 7 0	7 6 5	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The North Cemetery, Portsmouth is a pentagonal site bounded on the northeast by Maplewood Avenue (Old US Route 4); from the southeast to the southwest by right-of-way of the Boston & Main Railroad; on the west by the North Mill Pond, and on the northwest by the Union Cemetery (which also fronts on Maplewood Avenue).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA			

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

The Honorable Norman E. D'Amours

ORGANIZATION

United States Congress

DATE

May 21, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

Portsmouth Federal Building

TELEPHONE

603-436-7720, x707

CITY OR TOWN

Portsmouth

STATE

New Hampshire 03801

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

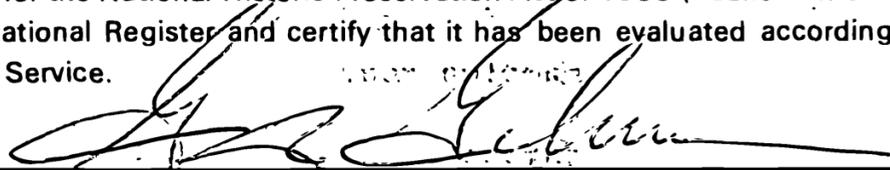
NATIONAL

STATE XX

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Commissioner, NH Dept. of Resources & Econ. Development DATE May 9, 1977
NH State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST



DATE

3-8-78

DATE

3-6-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Significance, cont.

known as the South Cemeteries were laid out after 1830.

Literature: The North Cemetery contains the grave of Jonathan Mitchell Sewall (1748-1808), a Portsmouth poet and writer whose works were once well known, and who composed many of the epitaphs seen on gravestones within this cemetery. Among Sewall's several publications was Miscellaneous Poems (Portsmouth: 1801).³

Military: Among the military figures buried in the North Cemetery is Capt. Thomas Thompson, who commanded the Continental ship Raleigh, which is the vessel depicted on New Hampshire's state seal and flag. Thompson was a noted shipbuilder and held many civic and Masonic offices. Thompson's quartermaster aboard the Raleigh, John Mendum, is also buried in the North Cemetery, as are a number of men who served on John Paul Jones' ship Ranger, sister ship to the Raleigh. Among the Ranger's crew are Jacob Walden, steward, and Samuel Holbrook and Nathaniel Kennard.⁴

Politics/Government: Several prominent political figures are also interred in the North Cemetery, including Brigadier General William Whipple, member of the Continental Congress and signer of the Declaration of Independence. John Langdon, five times Governor of New Hampshire, first president of the United States Senate and signer of the Constitution, is buried in a family vault near the south end of the graveyard.⁵

Science: Several physicians who gained national prominence are buried here. Dr. Hall Jackson was a noted surgeon in Washington's army, and was a leading experimenter in smallpox inoculation. He was one of the first American surgeons to perform the operation of couching (the removal of cataracts from the eye), and was especially skilled in amputations. Jackson introduced the foxglove (Digitalis) into America for medicinal purposes, and maintained a correspondence with leading English physicians.⁶ His father, Dr. Clement Jackson, is also buried in this cemetery, as is Dr. Ammi R. Cutter, a Revolutionary surgeon. Dr. Lyman Spalding, who practised in Portsmouth from 1799 to 1812, is buried in the North Cemetery. Spalding was famed for his studies of yellow fever, for his investigations in the field of vaccination, for his studies of hydrophobia, and most notably, for his compilation of the United States Pharmacopoeia, first published in 1820.⁷

¹ Allan I. Ludwig, Graven Images (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), p. 5.

² Joseph H. Foster, The Portsmouth Guide Book (Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1876), p. 15.

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Significance, cont.

³ Dumas Malone, ed., Dictionary of American Biography (24 vols.) (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1974), XVI, pp. 608-9.

⁴ Arthur H. Locke, Portsmouth and New Castle, New Hampshire, Cemetery Inscriptions... (Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1907), passim.

⁵ [Arthur I. Harriman,] Praises on Tombs in the Old North Burial Ground... (Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1932), passim.

⁶ Dictionary of American Biography, IX, p. 541.

⁷ Ibid., XVII, pp. 423-4.

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Foster, Joseph H., The Portsmouth Guide Book. Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1876.

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[Harriman, Arthur I.] Praises on Tombs in the Old North Burial Ground... Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1932.

Locke, Arthur H., Portsmouth and New Castle, New Hampshire, Cemetery Inscriptions... Portsmouth, NH: the author, 1907.

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Walling, Henry F., Map of the City of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Portsmouth, NH: Charles W. Brewster, 1850.