

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The North Burial Ground, founded in 1700, is the oldest common burial ground in Providence and the earliest extant example of Providence civic institutions. The cemetery has always operated under the auspices of local government, and reflects the growth and change in the social and humanitarian attitudes that are so completely interwoven with any civic history. Further, the cemetery contains many fine examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gravestones, including several by prominent Rhode Island stonecutters.

Unlike other colonists in New England, the founders of Providence insisted on a complete separation of church and state. While others in New England followed the English custom of locating their burial grounds adjacent to their churches, no church--and hence no churchyard--was constructed for the first sixty or so years after the settling of Providence. Consequently, burial plots were located on family house lots. All but one of these private cemeteries have since been de-activated as a result of development pressures on land in the compact settlement area. Only the Tillinghast lot near the intersection of Transit and Benefit Streets remains.

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, the First Baptist Society undertook the construction of the first meeting house in Providence at the present intersection of North Main and Smith Streets, but no land was set aside for burials.

In 1700, the town meeting saw fit to set aside a common ground for public use as a military training field and burial ground. The location of the common ground at the northernmost part of town, outside the compact section, indicates both increased development pressures on more centrally located land and the continuing separatist religious views of Providence citizens.

The original tract of land contained about forty-five acres, of which only ten were designated for burials. The land was considered generally unfit for any more productive use because of large sand deposits along the Moshassuck River at the tract's western border.

(See continuation Sheet #5)

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input checked="" 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 North Burial Ground, located in Providence just south of the Pawtucket City Line, is bounded on the southwest by Branch Avenue, on the northwest by Interstate Highway 95, on the north by Cemetery Street, and on the east by North Main Street. When the cemetery, the oldest common burial ground in Providence, was established in 1700, the area was beyond the compact settlement in Providence. Late nineteenth and twentieth-century urban growth have created commercial strips along heavily travelled North Main Street and Branch Avenue and lower middle class residential neighborhoods to the north and east of the cemetery, isolating it as one of the largest open spaces in Providence.

The cemetery has grown from the ten acres set aside in 1700 to 150 acres today, and includes over 100,000 graves. Additions to the cemetery were small and sporadic before the middle of the nineteenth century, when the grounds were vastly expanded to the north and replatted by the city in keeping with the precepts of the rural cemetery movement, which was then achieving prominence. By 1870, the cemetery had grown to its present size, although the development of the northern portion did not begin until late in the nineteenth century. In the 1960's a small portion of the northwest corner was removed from the cemetery to allow for the construction of Interstate Highway 95.

The topography varies in the cemetery. A rolling plateau extends north from the entrance at the junction of North Main Street and Branch Avenue. To the west, this plateau slopes gently down to the lowlands of the Moshassuck River, now covered by Interstate 95. A small pond, now empty, once stood in this dell. The land rises abruptly at the western edge of the grounds where banking for Interstate Highway 95 has been constructed. To the north, the plateau ends in a curvilinear hillside, which gives way to a low-lying plain in the north and northwest of the grounds. The flatness of this area is relieved by an esker and an adjacent man-made pond just north of the center of the grounds, and a short length of the Blackstone Canal (constructed in 1828 and already listed on the National Register) which crosses the northwest corner of the grounds.

The cemetery is surrounded by a simple, early twentieth-century wrought-iron picket fence. The main entrance is at the cemetery's southern end, at the junction of North Main Street and Branch Avenue. It is defined only by two simple wrought-iron gates that are part of the enclosing fence. Two auxiliary entrances on North Main Street are more elaborate. At the intersection of North Main Street and Rochambeau Avenue, stand large stone gateposts, built to enframe a main entrance in the late nineteenth century, which is now little used. In the north-east corner, at the junction of North Main and Cemetery Streets, a pedestrian gate with a large, curving, double staircase, constructed in the 1890's of stone left over from the construction of the present

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Rhode Island Statehouse, provides northern access. This entrance now goes unused and reflects the change in the cemetery's environs.

The cemetery can be divided into four distinct areas, each with its own visual impact. These areas differ topographically, historically, and visually, and reflect the long history and varied patronage of the North Burial Ground.

The southern plateau includes the site of the earliest burials. Its intimate scale is a result of the densely-platted circulation system, the closely serried graves, and the small headstones. The area is arranged in rectilinear fashion, with several major north-south axes and numerous secondary and tertiary paths. No apparent formal circulation system was used until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Atwater and Schubarth refurbished this section concurrent with the further plating to the north. The roadway surfaces are macadam, but many of the gravel and dirt paths, partly because of poor maintenance, are no longer readily discernible. While the major roads are adequate for automobile traffic, the narrow secondary and tertiary paths are suited only to pedestrian traffic.

The gravestones, in this section primarily face west, following an eighteenth century custom based on the belief that the sun will rise in the west on the Day of Judgment. The stones are small, and generally either of slate or New England marble. A moderate number from the eighteenth century survive; they exemplify many of the iconographic themes then common in funerary sculpture: the ascension of the soul to heaven (the Sarah Antram marker of 1732); the tempus fugit theme (the Mary Harris marker of 1744); the tree of life (the William Harris stone of 1725 and the Job Harris stone of 1729); the winged head (the Miriam Walton stone [eighteenth century]). These include a sampling of the work of the well-known John Stevens shop in Newport, active beginning in 1705. The Stevens shop today continues to produce handsome slate tombstones; and the fine calligraphy, for which the shop is famous, is still chiseled entirely by hand. While slate headstones comprise the majority of markers in this section, other modestly-scaled markers exist, chiefly raised table or ledger stones and small obelisks.

There are also a number of fine Federal stones in this section. While many of these markers are slate headstones similar in scale to the earlier eighteenth-century markers, they differ both stylistically and iconographically from colonial stones. Formally, the stones have a more

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linear calligraphic quality-characteristic also of Federal architecture, painting, and decorative arts - and rely less on more implicitly sculptural forms popular through most of the eighteenth century. Similarly, the iconography is less dependant on baroque-inspired imagery. Typical Federal markers include the Mary Thurber (Mrs. Edward) stone of 1825 (Tingley Shop), the many Sheldon family markers (1806 et seq., Tingley Shop), and the Luther family markers (1810 et seq., some by Tingley).

The central section of the cemetery directly north of the plateau includes the steep hillside on the plateau's northern side, the esker, and the man-made pond. The platting of this section was carried out by Atwater and Schubarth, a Providence surveying team, in the 1850's. and reflects the impact of the rural cemetery movement which began to enjoy great popularity in the 1830's or 1840's. Rural cemeteries sought to create a more pleasant environment for burials and to provide thereby a park for the living. To achieve this end, cemetery developers relied heavily on the picturesque landscape design theories of men like Andrew Jackson Downing. In the central section of the North Burial Ground, the scale established in the plateau area is continued, but the roads curve in a picturesque fashion to take advantage of the topography.

Unlike the markers on the plateau, those in the hillside section are oriented toward the curving roads, not along a cardinal axis, indicating a greater concern with aesthetic rather than eschatological concerns. There are a number of small headstones in this section, but many reflect the mid- and late nineteenth century predilection for more monumental, sculptural markers. These monuments, many of which allude to ancient burial practices, became popular concomitant with the rural cemetery movement. For example, massive obelisks mark the graves of Cyrus Butler and John Carter Brown. The largest of the private structures in the cemetery, the handsome brownstone Gothic Brown family chapel, is located at the crest of a hill to capitalize on this natural promontory. In spite of the increased size and opulence of the markers in this area, there is little of the lavishness that is typical of contemporary monuments in Swan Point, which was more thoroughly developed as a rural cemetery.

The area at the north end and the northwest corner of the burial ground contains twentieth-century interments. The curvilinear road pattern established by Atwater and Schubarth on the hillside was continued here, but at a larger scale. The roads are broader and more

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widely spaced, creating an effect more of open vistas than of smaller scale picturesqueness of the central hillside section.

The markers in this still-active section are generally slabs, though more massive than those used in the eighteenth century. The shift in scale toward larger markers on standard size lots, especially in areas of many burials, produces a density not found elsewhere in the cemetery. In contrast to these dense, privately-developed areas, the section where remains from the West Burial Ground were reinterred, at the far northern end of the grounds, has a single substantial marker for several hundred graves, and this section is more sweepingly open.

Along the western edge of the cemetery is the free burial ground, the potters' field. Roads in this area follow the same curvilinear scheme used in the northern section, but markers are small and low to the ground--or non-existent. These markers are obscured by the high, dense weeds which grow in this rather neglected area.

The western slope of the plateau, platted in the same curvilinear pattern used in the northern section, is given over to burial of war veterans. The markers are small, but, unlike the potters' field, this area is well maintained and provides a visual transition from the eighteenth-century area on the plateau to the pond, which is traversed by a consciously picturesque Victorian stone and brick triple-arched bridge with iron railings.

Native deciduous trees grow throughout the cemetery. Many of these are the result of extensive planting efforts which began in the nineteenth century. Little landscaping has been done since the 1930's, and the remaining trees are largely a product of natural selection. The landscaping by the cemetery has been augmented in the private lots by evergreen shrubs and small trees.

Several service structures stand in the North Burial Ground. Just north of the main entrance, a small stone vernacular Romanesque building constructed in 1883 serves as the cemetery office. Northeast of the office is the large greenhouse built in the 1930's. The most impressive service structure is the monumental stone receiving tomb built into the western slope of the southern plateau. Designed by the Providence architectural firm Martin and Hall, the Beaux-Arts tomb was finished in 1904. The portico is an arcade three bays wide and one bay deep defined by engaged columns; both the heavily-rusticated walls

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and the arcade carry a fully-articulated attic. West of the receiving tomb is the modern cinder-block maintenance building. Just to its west, overlooking Interstate Highway 95, is a modest five-bay, one-and-a-half story, flank-gable, clapboard Greek Revival house with a one-story ell at the rear. This building was acquired by the cemetery in the 1840's, and until recently it has been used as the superintendent's house.

The condition of the cemetery varies, the more modern areas being the better maintained. Maintenance is at best haphazard, and poor maintenance, damage by weathering, and vandalism have abetted the general deterioration of the cemetery. Plans by the Providence Park Commission to refurbish the North Burial Ground, however, promise to make the visual quality of the cemetery commensurate with its historical value.

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|---|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input 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 type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
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(See continuation Sheet #5)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Books

Bayles, Richard M. History of Providence County. New York: W. W. Preston, 1891. Volume 1, pp. 288-290.

Cady, John Hutchins. The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence. Providence: The Book Shop, 1957. pgs. 19, 59, 60, 148, 149, 160, 269. (See continuation Sheet #11)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 150 acres

UTM REFERENCES

E 19 299690 4635530

| | | | |
|---|------|-----------|-------------|
| A | 19 | 30,01,2,0 | 46,3,61,30 |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | 19 | 30,04,0,0 | 46,3,55,9,0 |

| | | | |
|---|------|-----------|-------------|
| B | 19 | 30,03,6,0 | 46,3,58,9,0 |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| D | 19 | 30,00,4,0 | 46,3,48,2,0 |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

see 1st paragraph for boundary description

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

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Wm. McKenzie Woodward

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

Feb. 1977

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

401-277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Frederick C. Williams

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE June 17, 1977

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF CONSERVATION AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DATE

9/13/77

9-2-77

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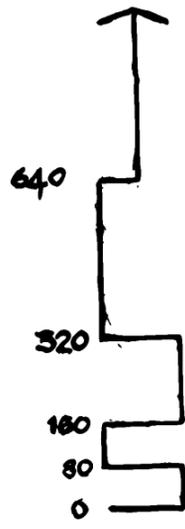
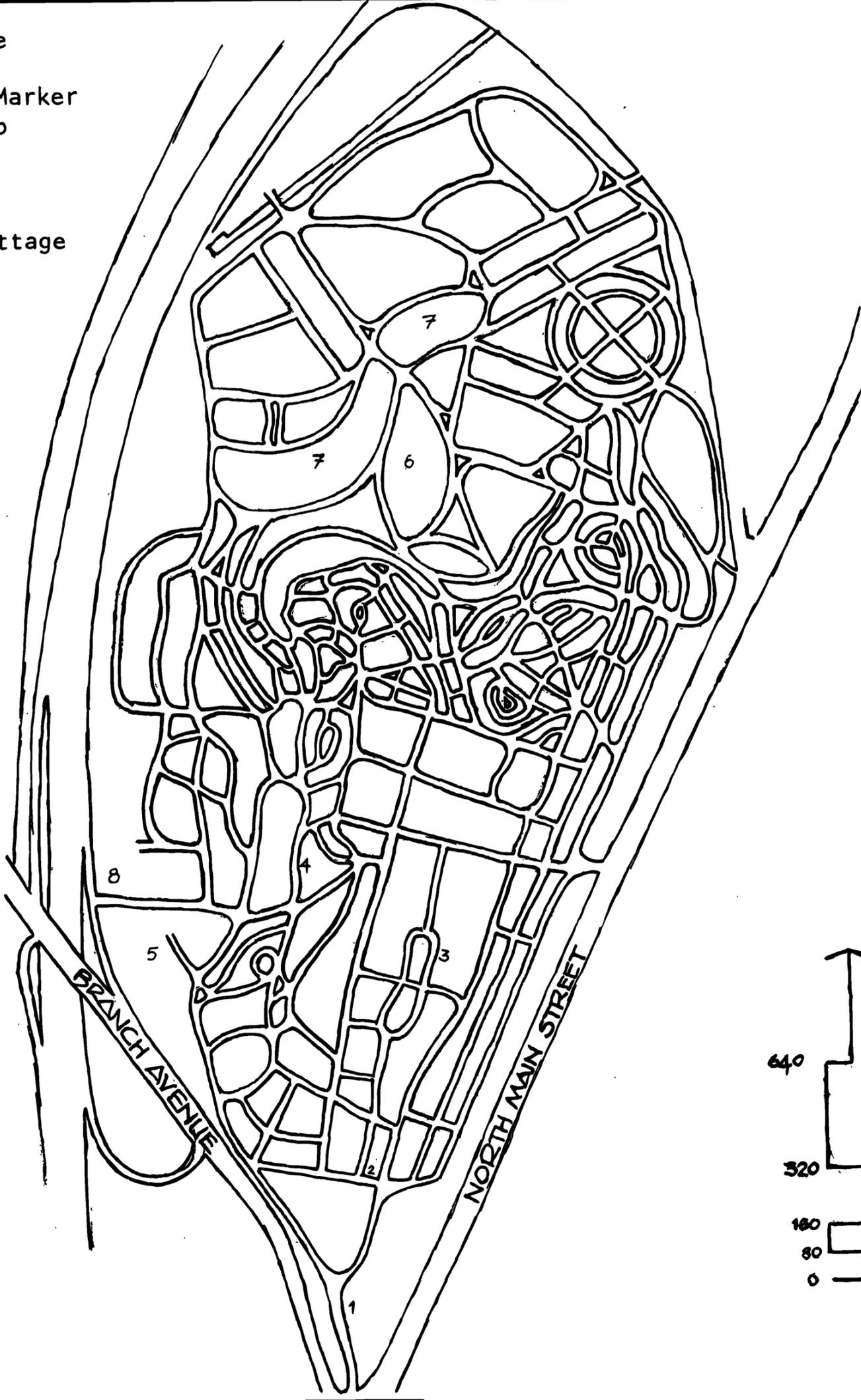
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- 1 Entrance Lodge
- 2 Elks Statue
- 3 Sarah Harris Marker
- 4 Receiving Tomb
- 5 Dried Pond
- 6 Pond
- 7 Eskers
- 8 Caretakers Cottage



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The setting aside of the common burying ground had little immediate effect, and many families continued to use their private lots. The first interment, that of a body of Samuel Whipple, did not take place until 1710/11, and he was probably buried here because he lived immediately adjacent to the grounds. By the 1720's however, the cemetery gained more general acceptance, and burials increased.

From its inception, the North Burial Ground has functioned as a common burying ground in the fullest sense of the word. The independence and egalitarianism that characterized the early settlement of Providence was reflected in the North Burial Ground, which has always been open to all. The oldest section of the cemetery demonstrates this egalitarian spirit in its racial and social integration: graves of early black servants are interpolated with those of white citizens, and laborers lie next to the wealthy proprietors of Providence. For example, the graves of the black Revolutionary War soldier Charles Haskell and his wife Lucy are adjacent to those of the prominent Brown and Angell families. Their handsome slate Federal stones were carved by the Tingley shop. Unlike the Common Burying-Ground in Newport, a separate section was not set aside for slaves.

As the population of Providence increased in the eighteenth century and settlement east of Town Street (now Main Street) became denser, the use of small family lots became less practicable. The very real need for the common burial ground was emphasized when the North Burial Ground became part of the Town of North Providence in the partition of 1765. Negotiations to return the North Burial Ground to Providence began almost immediately, and were concluded in 1767 when the cemetery once again became part of Providence.

Throughout the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century, few changes were made in the common ground other than small, occasional additions of land to the burial ground, such as the purchase of eight acres from Moses Brown in 1796.

By the time Providence was chartered as a city in 1832, the lack of any comprehensive planning for the North Burial Ground had become readily apparent in its ad hoc arrangement and maintenance. The first mayor of Providence, Samuel W. Bridgham, found the cemetery in a shabby state, and made it one of his goals to improve the general condition

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of the grounds. As early as 1834 he began to agitate for the platting and fencing-in of the cemetery.¹ The activity begun by Mayor Bridgham, who is buried in the cemetery, came to fruition under his successor, Thomas M. Burgess. Under his guidance, the governance of the cemetery was re-organized in 1848 under the direction of a three-member commission, chosen annually. About this time, detailed regulations concerning interments, death certificates, and the supervision of undertakers were promulgated.

Like most early American cemeteries, the North Burial Ground at its inception -- aside from its function as a training field for militia -- was simply a place to deposit the remains of the deceased. The concept of the well-landscaped burial park was irrelevant to eighteenth-century thought. The rural cemetery movement of the middle third of the nineteenth century, pioneered at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1831, had an almost immediate impact in Providence. Thomas C. Hartshorn, the founder of Swan Point Cemetery (now nominated to the National Register), called attention as early as 1840 to the desolate condition of local cemeteries. The North Burial Ground was prominent in his thoughts. Hartshorn's continuing zeal, which culminated in the creation of Swan Point in 1846, no doubt influenced Mayor Burgess and the City Council to take steps toward major improvements in the visual quality of the North Burial Ground. Upon the petition of Zachariah Allen and 256 other citizens, the City Council appointed a committee on 12th August 1844 "to devise and report some plan for improving the North Burial Ground...and for ensuring the preservation of the Monuments erected thereon."² A report of the committee, comprised of Messrs Patten, Stimson, Peck and Alderman Knowles, dated 8th December 1845, noted that progress was being made toward laying out "lanes and avenues for the Convenient use of the Ground."³ The committee "also placed a valuation upon the lots which are of various dimensions and shape" and contracted for the construction of a fence to enclose the grounds. The impact of the rural cemetery movement, which stressed spacious burial parks, was evident in the findings of the committee, which noted that

¹The Early Records of the Town of Providence, Printed under the Authority of the City Council of Providence (Providence: Snow and Farnum, 1904), V. 18, pp. 58-60.

²ibid, pp. 107-108.

³ibid, pp. 111-115.

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the lots in the oldest section of the cemetery are valued at the lowest rate of valuation, not because these locations are less esteemed but because the immethodical manner in which it has been used and its crowded state leave but little opportunity for selection or satisfactory arrangement.⁴

Following the recommendation of the committee, extensive work began on expanding and replatting the North Burial Ground. This work continued into the 1850's, and was carried out by the Providence surveying firm Atwater and Schubarth. This firm was at the same time involved in the design of Swan Point Cemetery, and the arrangement of the central section of the North Burial Ground reflects the same picturesque landscape concepts found at Swan Point.

Concurrent with the refurbishing of the North Burial Ground was its considerable expansion to the north. While expansion in this direction was the greatest, parcels of land on all sides of the early common ground were purchased from private landowners by the City in the middle years of the nineteenth century. In 1876, the City finally reached an agreement with the heirs of William Randall concerning the strip of land immediately abutting North Main Street on the east side of the cemetery. Long the site of the Randall family home, the area is known now as Randall Park and is restricted to use as a landscape buffer in which no burials are permitted.

The civic nature of the North Burial Ground took on an added dimension in the second half of the nineteenth century. Beginning as early as 1862, many group lots for civic organizations were established, including sections for the Masons, the Rhode Island Hospital, the Grand Army of the Republic, the Home for Aged Men, the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks, the Providence Police Association, the Providence Association of Firemen for Mutual Assistance, the Home for Aged Colored Women, and Spanish-American War Veterans. This trend has continued into this century with the setting aside of space for military veterans and the clustering of several ethnic groups--Armenians are most prominent--in the northern part of the grounds. The lots set off for these organizations have been marked with monumental sculpture that readily identifies the group, such as the large elk on the B.P.O.E. lot and the uniformed fireman on the Association of Firemen lot.

⁴ibid, p. 113.

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Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the long history and the civic importance of the North Burial Ground made it a desirable site for the re-interment of bodies transferred from other cemeteries as these sites were developed for other purposes. Remains formerly interred in private cemeteries on the original house lots were gradually moved to the North Burial Ground as demands for land on the East Side grew in the nineteenth century. A group of independent cemeteries collectively identified as the West Burial Ground--located in the vicinity of Point and Plain Streets today--was steadily de-activated in the 1840's. This process was completed in the 1890's with the transfer of several hundred unidentified bodies to the northernmost portion of the North Burial Ground. In 1891, the bodies in the Hopkins family plot--except for that of Admiral Esek Hopkins--at the intersection of Charles Street and Branch Avenue were removed to the North Burial Ground. The North Burial Ground became, as it were, the final resting place for the many small cemeteries located throughout Providence.

The turn of the twentieth century also marked a period of diligent caretaking and improvements of the North Burial Ground. The planting efforts of mid-century came to fruition, and the tree-lined avenues and rolling slopes were well-maintained. With the growth of the Mount Hope neighborhood to the east, direct access from that direction became desirable, and this was accomplished by the construction of the marble staircase at the intersection of Cemetery and North Main Streets. The physical care of the cemetery was augmented by the increased historical interest in the cemetery at its bicentennial in 1900: a great deal of research was collated at this time, including the two volumes of the Early Records of the Town of Providence, published in 1904, which were devoted entirely to the history of the North Burial Ground.

During the Great Depression of the 1930's the North Burial Ground became the focus of several Works Progress Administration projects. WPA workers were used to help maintain the cemetery grounds, and the current greenhouse was erected to facilitate landscaping efforts. Toward the end of the decade, however, rising costs of labor and the reduction of the workforce abetted the deterioration of the cemetery. Primarily to hinder the increasing decrepitude of the grounds, the administration of the cemetery was re-organized under the auspices of the Parks Commission in the early 1940's. In spite of the Commission's supervision, however, gradual deterioration continued, and vandalism increased.

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The renaissance of civic spirit in Providence in the 1970's has once again brought the North Burial Ground to the attention of the City, and proposals for refurbishing it are already in progress. To this end, the LAND/RISD North Burial Ground Study, published in September 1976, was dedicated. This document examines the history and physical character of the grounds today, and suggests actions to improve the physical quality of the cemetery. Plans for the cemetery include a series of walking tours to focus public attention on the cemetery, restoration and documentation of the many early markers on the grounds, and restoration of the park-like atmosphere that characterized the park in the later nineteenth century.

Not only is the North Burial Ground itself a chronicle of social and humanitarian attitudes, but it further contains the graves of a number of Rhode Islanders important to civic and social history. These include Ebenezer Knight Dexter, benefactor of the Dexter Asylum (1830, John Holden Greene, architect; now demolished) and the Dexter Parade Ground (now listed on the National Register); Nicholas Brown, a founder of Brown University; Cyrus Butler, benefactor of Butler Hospital and the Providence Arcade (both listed on the National Register); Francis Wayland, president of Brown University from 1827 to 1855; and Horace Mann, the prominent American educator. Military leaders buried in the cemetery include Captain Israel Angell, of Revolutionary War fame, and Charles Haskell, a black Revolutionary War soldier. Six Rhode Island Governors are buried at North Burial Ground: Stephen Hopkins (1755-1757), 1758-1762, 1763-1765, 1767-1768), Nicholas Cook (1775-1778), Arthur Fenner (1790-1805), James Fenner (1807-1811, 1824-1851), John Brown Francis (1833-1858), Charles Jackson (1845-1846), and Philip Allen (1851-1853). As well as Mayor Bridgham (1832-1840), two other mayors of Providence are interred in the North Burial Ground, Thomas Mackie Burgess (1841-1852), Bridgham's successor, and Edward Peck Knowles (1854-1855).

The North Burial Ground is further noteworthy for its numerous examples of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century gravestones. Within the oldest section of the grounds are slate markers produced by some of the best-known shops in Rhode Island.

While Providence seems not to have had a stonecarving shop until the early years of the nineteenth century, nearby towns had several active shops which provided Providence citizens with gravestones. Research has yet to shed light on the work of John Anthony Angell, a resident of

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Providence who was listed as a stonecutter at the time of his death in 1756. The Tingley shop was active in Attleboro throughout the eighteenth century before it moved to Providence in 1811. Newport, which had its own stonecutter as early as 1705, also produced stones in the North Burial Ground, including some handsome work by the John Stevens shop.

The gravestones in the North Burial Ground include many of the standard eighteenth-century types. For example, the metaphorical representation of the passage of time, the scythe and hourglass, which was quite popular in the eighteenth-century Rhode Island, is represented in the North Burial Ground by the Mary Harris marker of 1744; unlike other representations of this theme, however, the scythe only touches but does not split the hourglass. The Mary Harris stone and the nearby Sarah, William, and Job Harris stones are all the work of the Stevens shop in Newport, probably carved by John Stevens II. This latter group of stones is fascinating for the design virtuosity produced by the Stevens shop. On the Sarah Harris marker of 1723, the shield of the family coat of arms is carved at the top of the marker; on the William Harris stone (1725) and the Job Harris stone (1729), Stevens had liberated the three birds on the shield from their strictly vertical arrangement and placed them in a triangular arrangement on a fruited vine; the heraldic family symbol was thus transformed into an iconographic theme representative of a happier existence in the hereafter.⁵ The Chad Brown stone of 1792, which replaced an earlier stone, uses the sun as its main motif at the top; scholars are uncertain whether this use represents the sun as a soul-sun effigy or is more simply an emblem of the Resurrection.⁶ The Sarah Antram stone of 1732 shows a very sophisticated handling of the often used theme of a host of angels escorting the soul to heaven: its composition is heavily dependent on baroque assumption formulae, and the carving surpasses the generally flat treatment common on tombstones of this period, moving toward a more fully developed three dimensionality.

The long history of the North Burial Ground, the high quality of its eighteenth-century markers, and the intention of the City of Providence to commit funding for preservation of the oldest civic institution and one of the largest remaining open spaces in the City make its recognition by the National Register essential at this time.

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

⁶Harriette M. Forbes Gravestones of Early New England (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1927), p.

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