Historic Burying Grounds Initiative Newsletter

Preserving Boston's 16 Historic Burying Grounds

Boston Parks & Recreation Department

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor
Antonia M. Pollak, Commissioner

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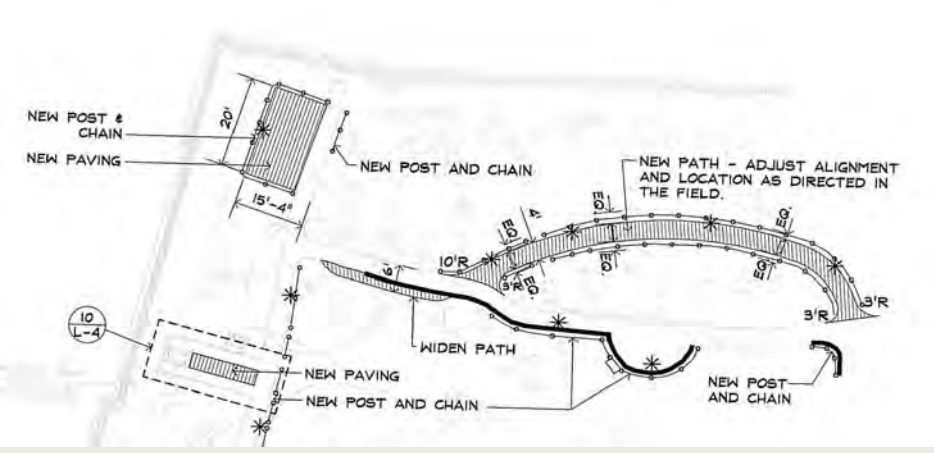
Completion of the Granary Burying Ground Landscape Rehabilitation

The landscape in the Granary Burying Ground had been struggling with wear and tear from heavy foot traffic. Issues such as frequent bare patches of lawn, muddy pathways, loose pavers and edging, erosion along pathways and on sloping areas and poor grass growth in certain sections became evident to everyone. Although the scope of work included only a few main items, all of the work had to be done by hand, and access to this urban site was extremely limited with no vehicular access, no water and no electricity. A grant from the Freedom Trail Foundation contributed much needed funding to this project, allowing the Parks Department to carry out a complete scope of work.



An excerpt from the construction documents showing the layout for the new path in the rear of the site, a new paving area, path widening and post and chain placement.

Construction in the Granary Burying Ground began in May 2011. The general contractor for this job was Sequoia Construction, Inc. Tree pruning was the first item to be addressed. We wanted to do tree pruning first since it is disruptive to the landscaping beneath the trees. Also if the trees have not leafed out it is easier to see the tree branches and it creates less debris on the

Letter from the Director

We have completed the landscaping rehabilitation project in the Granary Burying Ground! The project took longer than we initially believed it would, but the timing ended up working out perfectly for grass seeding. We were nervous about the outcome of the project. There are many things we can do to encourage grass growth but with no irrigation system, no staff located at the site and a steady stream of foot traffic there is always an uncertainty factor in operation. Other smaller projects have attempted to remedy the Granary's landscaping woes to no avail. At our first site meeting after the grass seeding was complete, the contractor, the landscape architect, two Freedom Trail Foundation members and I all issued a collective sigh of relief as we gazed upon the delicate green blades of freshly sprouting grass popping up all over the site! Torrential rains had not washed away all the new seed and a weather forecast for a week of warm weather further heartened us. Of course the goal is not just to have grass in the short term but to establish a healthy landscape for the future. But I am pleased that things have gotten off to a good start.

For the past couple years I have also been working on improving the burying ground maps with the goal of posting them on my webpage. Some maps are already posted and some are not up there yet. The three-part map set for Dorchester South Burying Ground is one of the more challenging maps: approximately one-half of the old map is illegible. With approximately 800 grave markers in the site, this takes a lot of on-site work before even sitting down at the computer. I was fortunate enough to have a seven-person volunteer team of history and cemetery buffs from Boston Private Bank and Trust Company who helped me with this project one steamy day in August. The thermometer surpassed 90 degrees that day but the volunteer team kept at it until the job was done. Their work made it possible for me to go directly to computer mapping, saving me days or even weeks of work. I am very grateful for their help!

Kelly

Kelly Thomas

BOSTON PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT
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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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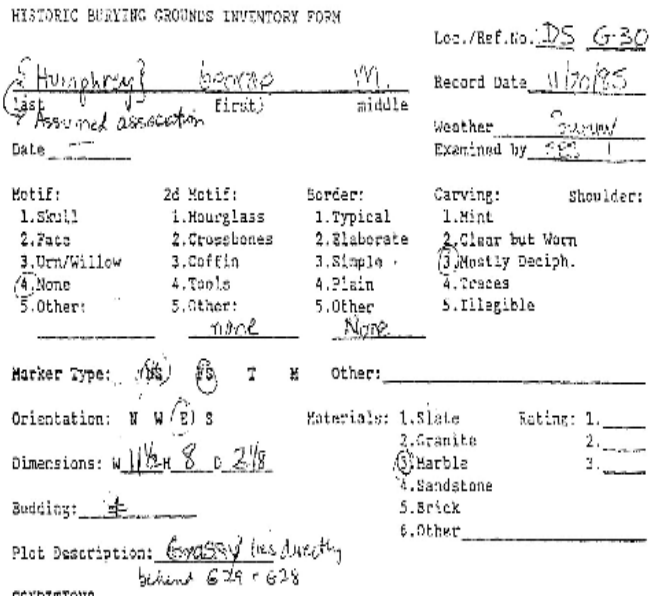
FIELD NOTES: MAPPING THE BURYING GROUNDS

When the Historic Burying Grounds Initiative was first established, one of the first work items undertaken was a survey of all 16 sites. In the fall of 1985, Dorchester North Burying Ground was the first site to be surveyed. A project manager from the Boston Parks Department and a small group of student volunteers from Boston University performed the survey. Using any available data, including a map from 1900, a survey of headstones from the 1600s and 1700s done by University of Massachusetts students and a



HISTORIC BURYING GROUNDS INVENTORY FORM

Loc./Ref.No. DS G-30

Humphrey (last) George (first) W. (middle)

Assumed association

Record Date 11/20/85

Weather Sunny

Date

Examined by

Motif:	2d Motif:	Border:	Carving:	Shoulder:
1.Skull	1.Hourglass	1.Typical	1.Mint	
2.Face	2.Crossbones	2.Elaborate	2.Clear but Worn	
3.Urn/Willow	3.Coffin	3.Simple	(3.)Mostly Deciph.	
(4.)None	4.Tools	4.Plain	4.Traces	
5.Other:	5.Other: none	5.Other None	5.Illegible	

Marker Type: (SS) FS T M Other:

Orientation: N W (E) S

Materials: 1.Slate 2.Granite (3.)Marble 4.Sandstone 5.Brick 6.Other

Rating: 1. 2. 3.

Dimensions: W 1 1/2 H 8 D 2 1/8

Budding: ±

Plot Description: Grassy lies directly behind 629 + 628

Part of a survey sheet for a headstone from Dorchester South Burying Ground.

grave marker survey from the late 19th century, the team put together a new map that identified grave markers by name, date of death and a unique location (or identification) number. They wrote the new location numbers over the old numbers and corrected the positions of existing headstones on the old map. A finished version of the map was transcribed in 1986.

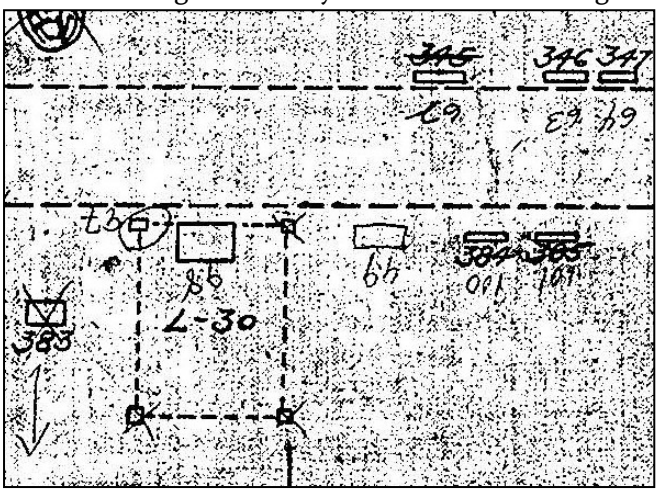
Eventually grave marker surveys were completed for all 16 of the burying grounds. Unfortunately not all of the maps were updated with the new location numbers. Making matters more complicated was the fact that we did not have a list of grave markers that corresponded to the old numbering system. The old maps were helpful only in the fact that the shape of the site was correct and we could see rectangles where headstones were. But without a number key we could not determine which specific headstone corresponded to which rectangle on the map.

In recent years we have been trying to organize and improve the information we have on each site with a special effort placed on making information more easily available to the public. The database containing the name, date of death and location number of the grave stones has been on the Parks Department's website for about ten years. Some of the maps have been available on-line for a couple of years, but some of the maps had (or have yet) to be updated before they could be effectively used. The difficulty of transcribing the non-updated maps varies along with the condition of each map.

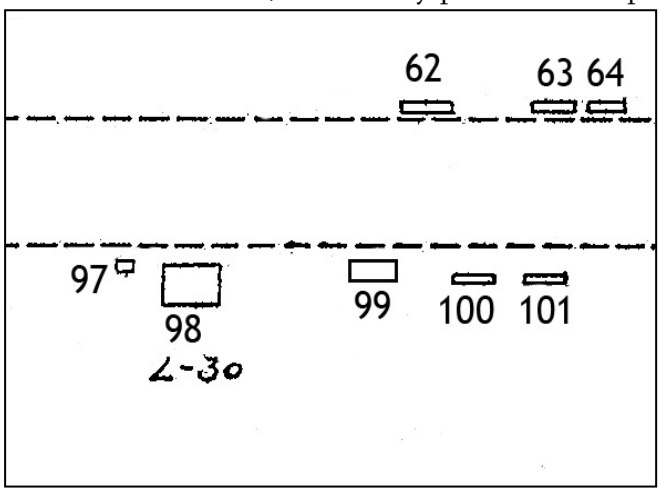
The map for King's Chapel Burying Ground was fully revised in 1985; it was just a little difficult to read the small hand lettering. I used Photoshop to erase and retype the numbers, making the map easier to read. In the case of Eliot Burying Ground I had to combine two maps: one that was incomplete with some of the grave stones missing but that had the correct layout of the site and was in electronic form; the other map was based on a 2002 survey, but was divided up into five separate pages and not easily converted to electronic form. The map for Bunker Hill Burying Ground is in two parts, each on a separate page. For this project I had a photocopy of the old 1900 map with the corrections from 1986 written in pencil over the old numbers. There were lots of dark splotches also on the old maps that had to be erased. I am currently finishing up the three-page map for Dorchester South Burying Ground. The most difficult map to redo will be Phipps

Street Burying Ground, since I have no updated maps to go from and the original 1900 map is only partially legible. All of the 1,549 grave markers will have to be individually located.

I took a scanned version of the 1900 map in all cases except for King's Chapel Burying Ground and created a file in Photoshop. I erased the dark, blotchy photocopy marks by painting over them with white. I also erased any of the old numbers, which no longer corresponded to any references as well as any plot fences, trees and other objects that I knew were no longer there. I drew in little rectangles for any new or relocated grave



Section of Bunker Hill Burying Ground map before editing.



Same section of Bunker Hill Burying Ground map after editing.

makers. I typed in the new numbers with the text tool. I tried to keep any beautiful old handwriting for things like the section names, compass points or map titles. I also kept old plot or tomb numbers (used for family burials in some sites), which seemed to originate from burials in the latter half of the 19th century, in case people had any deeds from this period which referenced those numbers.

Sometimes it is necessary to do field work to update the maps. There are several tools available to facilitate this work. The lists of legible grave markers from the 1980s are arranged in three ways: alphabetically by last name, chronologically by date of death, and spatially by location number. Each grave marker also has its own survey sheet with basic information about the deceased, a description of the actual stone and a transcription of the epitaph. Although there have been some new burials in some sites since 1900, most of the stones that were there then are still in the sites now in the same position. It is not necessary to rerecord all of the information contained on a grave marker, but rather to find the location number of each grave marker in the list of legible markers. Sometimes this is complicated by the fact that a headstone might be illegible, eroded, broken, fallen over or placed directly behind another stone, so it is only possible to see part of the inscription. Using this group of tools it is possible to locate many a semi-legible marker. For example, if one headstone is marble, 3 feet tall and illegible, but you can see that two letters in the last name look identical, you can look at the closest stone that is legible, find the location number for the neighboring stone using the alphabetical list, then switching to the location list you can see if any neighbors have two letters that are the same in their last name. Or you can look in the survey sheets (which are organized by location number) to see if any of the neighboring stones are made of marble and are 3 feet tall. So you can see, it is kind of fun, if you enjoy puzzles, but can take a long time.

GRANARY LANDSCAPE REHABILITATION (continued from front page)

ground. The goal in pruning the trees was to allow more light in to encourage grass to grow as well as to protect the health of the trees. Since no vehicles can come in the site, all of the work had to be accomplished by tree climbers. In order to protect the headstones, they put plywood boards over the gravestones beneath the trees, moving the boards as they changed position. It was very impressive to watch the tree climbers ascend the trees and do their work. The inevitable by-product of tree pruning is tree branches on the ground and we accumulated a large amount. It was decided that the best way to deal with this debris was to leave it in piles in the site until the pruning was completed and chip it on the Tremont Street sidewalk early one Saturday morning.

Two arborists prune trees in the Granary.

While the tree pruning was going on, the general contractor located the two "hidden" drains, each located beneath several inches of dirt. We were not certain if these drains were dry wells or if they were connected to something. Upon further inspection, a 6-inch clay pipe was found which connected the two drain structures and it appeared to function with no problem. A special camera was inserted into the drain closest to the edge of the site in an attempt to learn more about the drains. The camera footage revealed that the water drained freely through this pipe to the edge of the site, but then the line dropped vertically before reaching the edge of the abutting building. It is not known where that pipe goes, but the water does drain freely through it. In order to prevent dirt from covering up the drains in the future, a new frame and raised grate were mortared into place around both structures.

After the pruning work was completed, the work on the pathways could begin. First on the agenda was the layout of the pathways in order to adjust the plans to accommodate field conditions. With the paving areas for tour groups, the planned dimensions had to be slightly adjusted, keeping the same total area but avoiding obstacles such as grave markers and tree roots. The new path behind the Paul Revere monument, in the rear of the site, was laid out exactly. After the layouts were determined, initial excavation for the path work was started. All of the excavation work was done by hand.

In the rear of the site, it is known that there are many underground tombs, although the exact location of the tombs is not known. During the excavation for the new path, three underground tombs were encountered. A fourth was found in another area while installing the grade beam next to an existing path. I had expected that we would come across at least one tomb, but not this many. In the first three cases

the workmen came across the entrance to a tomb, which is a covered, underground stairway leading into a burial room. While digging the rear path, the workmen came across a small hole and were not sure what it was. Further investigation revealed that a piece of wood had been placed over the stairway a number of years ago and had eventually broken, leaving a gradually enlarging hole hidden beneath a few inches of dirt. A structural engineer inspected the tomb and determined that a small amount of the arch over the doorway to the burial room needed to be rebuilt. The mortar in that area was soft and crumbling, perhaps as a result of not being given enough time to cure when it was originally built. In the meantime a second tomb entrance was exposed. This time the stone slab entrance cover was intact, but a wide gap between the top of the stone slab and the vault entry wall was open and would allow soil into the tomb. The contractor used strips of expansion joint filler to close this gap and the area above the tomb entrance was backfilled. A few days later a third tomb was uncovered. In this case the sloped access way had been covered with stone slabs and the bottom slab had slipped, creating a hole above the tomb entrance stairs. All the original material was intact, so the bottom slab was put back in place and a concrete stopper was created at the base of the slab to prevent further slippage. The problem with the fourth tomb was a little different. The hole was at the end of the crypt above the tomb wall. A couple of bricks had fallen in the tomb and a few more were loose. A mason mortared any loose or fallen bricks back in place, and the grade beam was placed above the tomb.

Layout of the path behind the Paul Revere monument

The paving work in the site included a new path behind the Paul Revere monument, seven new standing areas for tour groups, widening of the two front pathways by 2 feet, reworking the pathway configuration near the John Hancock monument and creating a short path near the area where family members of Paul Revere are buried. Concrete pavers matching the existing pathways were used in all new paving areas. The pavers were placed upon 1 inch of compacted stone dust, 8 inches of compacted dense graded crushed stone and a layer of filter fabric, all laid upon the compacted subgrade. In areas where post-and-chain fencing was installed, a special design was used to avoid deeper excavation that might disturb human remains. A 9-inch-wide, 6-inch-deep concrete grade beam was set 3 3/8 inches below grade. Holes were core drilled in the center beam to receive the fence posts. In some cases grave markers were in the way of the grade beam. In these instances the grade beam was simply stopped and continued on the other side of the grave marker.

One of the greatest challenges of working in the Granary is the difficulty in accessing the site. There are two entrances to the site: the main gate on Tremont Street, which has four steps leading into the site, andthe side gate off Tremont Place, which has a level path through a 66-inch opening. Otherwise the site is completely surrounded by buildings, walls and fences. Only permit parking is allowed near the site.

GRANARY LANDSCAPE REHABILITATION (continued from previous page)

There is a busy, wide sidewalk in front of the site, but it is illegal to park there and any construction material that is offloaded must either be craned in the site or carried up the stairs through the gate. Our neighbors, Suffolk University, own the small alley near the side entrance of the Granary. They were kind enough to allow temporary access to our contractors. Pallets of pavers were unloaded in the evening in the alley and then the contractors pushed them into the site on carts early in the morning. The concrete used in the project was also delivered from the alley. A truck made the concrete there and the contractor carried small amounts into the site to appropriate locations. The gravel and stone dust was brought in on a conveyer system. The truck would load up with the required material from the quarry the night before and arrive early to park on the sidewalk in front on the site with a police detail. A conveyer belt with a reach of 60 feet delivered the aggregate materials over the fence into the site. A truck was also required for the hydro-seeding of the lawn. The hose was drawn in through the fence and could reach most but not all areas. The areas too far away were hand seeded.

A cut-out is made in the concrete grade beam to accommodate a headstone.

The steady flow of visitors and guided tours was another logistical challenge. An estimated one million people come through the site every year. Originally we had feared we would have to close the site during construction. We were concerned about the safety of visitors as well as facilitating the contractor's work. The contractor was able to coordinate work in specific areas of the burying ground, so we could close off only those parts and leave the rest of the site open as usual.

If any unforeseen circumstances are encountered it becomes necessary to do a change order to the original contract. The discovery of the four underground tombs is a perfect example of unforeseen circumstances. In this project there were other change orders too. It was noticed during the laying out of the paving improvements that at the junctures of some new and old paths, the grade of the existing paths would not meld with the grade of the new paths, creating the possibility of pooling water and mud deposits. This was exactly one of the conditions we were trying to eliminate! The pavers were removed from the existing walkways in the area around the intersection and then all the pavers were set (or reset) so the pathways blended together seamlessly. The landscape architect, the contractor and I met weekly over the course of the project. After observing how the crowds reacted to the changing layout, we realized there were more areas which required post-and-chain fencing in order to keep groups from congregating on the grass. We also saw the need for a small dead-end path in front of the graves of the family members of Paul Revere. A dirt path was already worn in the ground, passing in front of this area and across the site to the main pathway. We added paving in front of the Revere area and blocked off the rest of the dirt path, which was loamed and seeded later in the project.

The fabrication and installation of the aluminum post-and-chain fencing was done by a subcontractor. First the installers core-drilled holes into the grade beams. Then the posts were grouted into the holes

GRANARY LANDSCAPE REHABILITATION (continued from previous page)

without the finials. Installing the chain on the posts was challenging. Over 2,000 feet of chain was delivered to the site in 55-gallon drums. The drums were rolled into the site on planks laid from a truck bed, over the stairs and into the site. The chain was attached to each post and then locked into place with the finial. The posts were sometimes in close proximity to the grave markers. The chain was not supposed to touch any grave marker but sometimes it was unavoidable. In this situation the chain was cut so there was a gap between those two posts. The fence installers finished their work in the Granary by attaching the 34 "Keep on the Pathways" signs to selected posts.

A section of widened pathway with fence posts set in the exposed concrete grade beam.

The final step in the rehabilitation was the regrading and grass seeding of certain sections of the burying ground. The goal of the regrading was to alleviate problems caused by storm water erosion, facilitating drainage and avoiding puddling of water and muddy areas. Some areas were scarified and had top soil added and other areas had sedimentation removed. After the grade was corrected and topsoil was added, the soil was amended based on recommendations made by the University of Massachusetts Soil and Plant Nutrient Testing Lab based on soil samples from the site. Finally grass seed was planted using both hand seeding and hydro-seeding methods. After the initial growth of grass any areas that did not germinate were reseeded. In order to maintain the grass growth in the future, we will be initiating an annual site-specific turf maintenance program. After all this work, I am thrilled to tell you that the site looks beautiful, and I encourage everyone to come and view the improvements!

Sam Adams' grave before landscape rehabilitation.

Sam Adams' grave after landscape rehabilitation.

INTERVIEW

WITH **E.J. O'SULLIVAN**, PROJECT MANAGER, SEQUOIA CONSTRUCTION, INC.

EJ O'Sullivan is a project manager at Sequoia Construction, Inc., the general contractor for the Granary Burying Ground landscape rehabilitation project. His role in this project was significant. His responsibilities included: procuring the correct quantities of all materials needed and arranging the timing and logistics of their delivery; pulling all required permits with various agencies; developing the sequencing of work within the site; deciding how many workers were needed for each task and coordinating work with subcontractors in the site. I interfaced with him on an almost daily basis during the construction.

HBGI: What were some of the things you liked and disliked about the job?

EJ: It was quite difficult to work at this location because of all the visitors. We chose to start work at 6 am and this gave us approximately 3 hours of peace and quiet to get setup for the day. One of the things the crew liked was the fact that we were trying to preserve some of our national heritage. This project was different from most of the other cemeteries we have worked on because we did all the excavation by hand. This made the work quite labor intensive. Parking was also an issue at first but we are thankful to City Hall for allowing us to park close to the job site in such a busy parking and traffic area.

EJ O'Sullivan, Project Manager, Sequoia Construction, Inc. at the Granary.

HBGI: How many people were on your crew?

EJ: Most days the crew consisted of four to five people from Sequoia plus subcontractors. The digging crew had four people daily; when pouring concrete we usually brought another person along. The tree company had three guys on their crew. Two people climbed the trees by hand using ropes with another person on the ground cleaning up. The fence company usually had two or three people installing the post and chain.

HBGI: Were you nervous about working in a cemetery?

EJ: The simple answer is no, we work in cemeteries all the time. At Sequoia we have a saying: "we never fear the ones below ground, it's the ones up above you've got to watch for."

HBGI: Do you have any interesting stories about the job?

EJ: There are two things that stick out now that we are done with the project. First, the amount of people that kept coming up to our crew and asking if we were moving bodies or burying new ones. Obviously the answer to those questions was no. The other thing that amazed the crew was the amount of people that visited the site. We began construction in early spring and the amount of school tours that passed through

was incredible. We heard accents from all over the country and the world. One gentleman approached us and wanted to film each member of the crew saying "Get'er done." He said he was traveling around the US doing this.

HBGI: How did you get materials on and off site?

EJ: The main gate at the Granary is only six feet wide, so getting a truck into this location was not possible. It would not have been possible to complete this project without the help of Megan Collier and her team at Suffolk University. They allowed us to offload the brick in the alley and we used a brick cart to get them on-site. To get the gravel base and stone dust for the walks we used a company named L. Guirini. They have a conveyor tuck that would stop on Tremont Street and convey the materials over the fence and into the site. Once on site we used wheelbarrows to move the material to where it was needed. To pour concrete we used an on-site concrete mixing truck. The truck would set up in Suffolk's alley and from there we wheelbarrowed it throughout the site. No materials left the site. All the loam that we dug for the new walkways was spread on the lawn areas.

HBGI: Tell me what quantity of materials you used to complete the job?

EJ: To complete this project we used 27 pallets of paving bricks, 30 yards of concrete, 150 tons of gravel and 40 tons of stone dust. The fencing contractor installed 468 posts and 2200 linear feet of chain.

HBGI: Will you bring your family to visit the Granary when they visit from Ireland?

EJ: Because the Granary is such a famous Boston landmark most of my immediate family would have visited it previously. I'm sure I will bring them back to see it again.

SITES INCLUDED IN THE HISTORIC BURYING GROUNDS INITIATIVE

Bennington Street Cemetery (1838)

Bunker Hill Burying Ground (1816)

Central Burying Ground (1754)

Copp's Hill Burying Ground (1659)

Dorchester North Burying Ground (1633)

Dorchester South Burying Ground (1810)

Eliot Burying Ground (1630)

Granary Burying Ground (1660)

Hawes Burying Ground (1816)

King's Chapel Burying Ground (1630)

Market Street Burying Ground (1764)

Phipps Street Burying Ground (1630)

South End Burying Ground (1810)

Union Cemetery (1841)

Walter Street Burying Ground (1711)

Westerly Burying Ground (1683)

ABOUT THE SITES: Dorchester South Burying Ground (1814)

Established in 1633, Dorchester's Old North Burying Ground served as the community's primary burial place for 160 years. The need for a new burying ground was discussed in 1793, as the Old North Burying Ground was becoming crowded. Dorchester town records indicate that in 1794 a committee was appointed to look for a new burying place in the less densely settled southern part of town. However, no action was taken until 1814 when another committee was established and promptly bought two acres and nine rods of land from widow Ann Tolman for $211.16.

The site was situated on the Dorchester Turnpike (a toll road until 1854) with a narrow right of way connecting it to Washington Street. At that time Washington Street was considered the main access point even though the burying ground had to be reached by a long passageway. However in the 1890s that configuration changed and the gate on the Dorchester Avenue (renamed in 1870) became the principal entrance as it is today. Once the land was acquired, the selectmen authorized expenditures for building two gates and laying out the cemetery, but the initial improvements were fairly simple.

Dorchester town records indicate that the first burial was "Mrs. Lucinda Hawes, wife of Mr. EJ Hawes, who died May 18, and was buried May 20, 1814." There are a few earlier grave markers in the site but they may have been placed posthumously. Town records indicate that in 1824 Jacob Bacon was authorized to build three tombs and in 1825 Daniel Talbot was authorized to build an additional tomb. Town records contain no further mention of the burying ground for the next decade.

In 1835 the town decided that the burying ground needed more attention. By this time the carefully planned Mount Auburn Cemetery, laid out in 1831 as a designed landscape in sharp contrast with the earlier burying grounds like Dorchester North, would have been a strong influence. Two different committees were established to improve the site, focusing on the layout of site features and ornamental plantings. In the early 19th century Dorchester was largely agricultural and was known for its estates and horticultural innovations. Many of Dorchester's prominent horticulturists were founding members of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, which had established Mount Auburn. Based on its influence, the first committee decided to "lay out the South Burying Ground, in squares and lanes, in a handsome manner as will admit." A young surveyor, Edmund J. Baker, was assigned this task. He was the son of the head of the original committee to purchase the

land and was part of the Baker Chocolate family. By the following year the committee reported that "five substantial and ornamental tombs have been completed, that a good gravel road has been made round the burial ground for carriages and gravel walks at right angles and square appropriated for foot paths."

The chairman of the committee "for Ornamenting the Dorchester Lower Burying Ground" was Samuel Downer, a founding member of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and a prominent local businessman. His responsibilities included the planting of trees, shrubs and ornamental plants. By 1839 fifteen tombs had been constructed, eighty graves laid out and roughly 300 trees had been planted. Emphasis continued on the ornamental aspects of the burying ground for a number of years. In 1844 the town purchased about 1/16 acre at the southwest corner of the property, bringing the site up to its current size. Other improvements in the 1840s included building a wall around the site and re-gravelling the walkways.

At this point the burying ground was well established and generally required only routine maintenance. There was some discussion of expanding the burying ground in the future but it never happened. The establishment of Mount Hope Cemetery in nearby Mattapan in 1852 and Cedar Grove Cemetery a short distance to the south along the Neponset River in 1868 may have taken some pressure off the need to expand Dorchester South Burying Ground. In 1870 Dorchester was annexed to Boston and the city assumed responsibility for care of Dorchester South, an arrangement that continues to the present.

There have been some changes in the site during the 20th century. The 1904 map shows the shed in the southwest corner, as was typical of Boston cemeteries at that point. The 1933 atlas shows that circular road had been paved by that time. When the 1985 Historic Burying Grounds Initiative Master Plan was published, only the foundation and concrete floor of the shed remained. Also by that time the gravel walkways were covered with grass. In spite of these changes most things still remain the same. The many trees and ornamental shrubs still create a garden-like atmosphere, particularly in spring or summer when the plants are blooming. Repairs over the past couple decades have included rebuilding the front wall and entrance and resetting and repairing headstones.