



AESTHETICS AND GRAVESTONE ART

The “Old Section” in the southwest corner consists of 11 rows of gravestones, predominantly slate, most incorporating the willow and urn motif. Several well-known carvers are represented including the Hastings Shop (gravestones of Thomas and Lucy Marshall) and Samuel Kilburn (gravestone of Abraham Harrington). Elsewhere, markers are made from a variety of materials including slate, marble, sandstone/brownstone, and granite of different colorations, sometimes polished. Styles include monuments and obelisks. Granite curbing, popular in the Victorian period, is used to delineate many family plots. In contrast, Weston’s next cemetery, Linwood (1873), adopted the “landscape lawn” style, which eliminated curbing and is easier to maintain.

The following symbols can be found on gravestones at Central:

Wreaths: Eternal life, with no beginning and end.

Wheat sheaves, sickle, scythe: Death is linked symbolically with autumn and harvest. Wheat is reaped with a sickle or scythe.

Oak leaves, acorns: Long life, strength, prosperity.

Ivy: Hardy evergreen leaf denoting immortality or regeneration. Also symbol of friendship, fidelity, attachment, and undying love.

Rose: Beauty and triumphal love. Open rose signified death in the prime of life.

Lily: Innocence and purity.

Ferns: Humility and sincerity.

Chain with three links: Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

Hand pointing down: Hand of God descending from heavens; also mortality and sudden death.

Hand pointing up: Righteous reward of life after death.

Willow and Urn: Reflects the rise of neoclassicism. The willow was an ancient mourning symbol. Urns in Imperial Rome were used for the ashes of the dead.

WHO’S BURIED IN CENTRAL CEMETERY

George Warren Cutting, proprietor of G.W. Cutting & Sons general store.

Isaac Jones, prominent citizen and builder of the Golden Ball Tavern.

Ebenezer, Isaac, and Nathan Hobbs, of the family that ran Hobbs Tannery on North Avenue.

Jonas Hastings, builder of the “Hastings Homestead” on North Avenue.

John Flagg, builder of the Flagg Tavern, where George Washington spent the night.

Rev. Samuel Kendal, First Parish minister for 31 years.

Rev. Joseph Field, First Parish minister for half a century, the longest in church history.

At least 25 veterans of the Revolutionary War, along with many who served in the Civil War.

Members of Weston’s early families: *Viles, Merriam, Hews, Kingsbury, Seaverns, Fiske, Hagar, Warren, Cutter, Sibley, Stratton, Coburn, Hastings, Whitney, Conant, Harrington, Peirce, and Roberts.*



CENTRAL CEMETERY



Central Cemetery (1792) is Weston’s third oldest, after Farmers Burial Ground (1703) and South Burying Ground on South Avenue (1790). The three-acre site is about three times the size of Farmers and has a completely different atmosphere, reflecting 19th century social and aesthetic changes. At Farmers, headstones and small matching footstones are made of slate, lined up in rows, with the carved surface of the headstones facing west. There is little landscaping. At Central, markers vary in size, materials, and orientation and include handsome marble and granite monuments. Many family plots are defined by granite curbing. The cemetery is known for its rhododendrons, some brought from the South by Rev. Calvin Topliff, minister of First Baptist Church, who traveled there during the Civil War to bring back the body of 17-year-old Ralph Jones. The wrought iron Merriam Gate, added in 1937, provides a distinctive pedestrian entrance. Central Cemetery was restored in 2018-2021 using Community Preservation Act funds. Some 240 gravestones were conserved.

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For further information see Farmers’ Burial Ground, Central Cemetery Weston, Massachusetts, Gravestone/Monument Condition Assessment Report, May 2007. Prepared for the Town of Weston.

▼ In 1937 the town received a gift of \$5,000 from Miss Josephine Merriam of Minneapolis to build the wrought-metal and stone gateway, designed by Weston resident Harold B. Willis, Sr. of the firm Allen, Collens, and Willis



▼ Plan of Central Cemetery. Family plots were laid out around the "Old Section" (blank area, upper right)



▲ Monument to the Cutter brothers, killed in the Civil War



▲ Example of granite curbing



▼ This marble marker from 1874 is an example of the varied shapes and symbols popular in the late 19th century. Note the hopeful epitaph, "We Shall Meet Again."

▲ Cast zinc marker (1881), the only example at Central Cemetery.



CENTRAL CEMETERY: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Look for family plots with granite curbing. Do you see curbing in Farmers Burial Ground (1703)? What about at Linwood Cemetery (1873)?

How many varieties of stone are used for markers in Central Cemetery? Compare to Farmers Burial Ground.

What new types of gravestone styles are found here?

Look for the "Old Section," which contains the earliest markers, made of slate. What is the most popular design?

Find the earliest gravestone, for Hannah Smith (1792), in the southwest corner. Notice the large size and the cherub's head motif, one of the few examples at Central.

What does the more ornate character of Central, compared to Farmers, say about life in Weston in the 19th vs. the 18th century?

Find the six-chamber mound tomb, a major element in the landscape.

Find the one grave marker made of cast zinc. It has a bluish-gray tint and was probably made by the Monumental Bronze Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Find the monument to the Cutter brothers, Frederick and Edmund, who both died in the Civil War. Ralph Jones is buried nearby. He was only 17 when he was killed in the Civil War. Graves of Civil War veterans have star-shaped flag holders with the initials "G.A.R." (Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal organization)

Read some of the poems inscribed on the markers. How do they differ from epitaphs at Farmers Burial Ground?