

## **Westlawn Cemetery**

### **Description**

#### **Introduction**

While the name Westlawn Cemetery implies existence of characteristics of the Rural Cemetery movement inspired by construction of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, the landscape layout, appearance and gravestone art of the burial ground adhere more closely to design characteristics from the Colonial Period. Acquired from local farmers by the town as a burial ground in 1761, it was originally called the West Burying Ground. Many of those interred here are significant in the history of the Town of Westford. War veterans, mill owners and operatives, farmers and business people occupy the approximately 400 visible burials. Members of the Robinson, Prescott, Day, Fletcher and other families influenced the town's history and appearance and continue to do so by virtue of their artfully carved gravestones.

Markers are made primarily from slate although many granite, sandstone and marble examples are present. Colonial and Federal Period grave markers appear in the form of arched, shouldered-arched and flat-topped tablets, the largest of which belongs to Colonel John Robinson, leader of Westford minutemen at the Battle of Concord on April 19, 1775. While Colonel Robinson's slate marker has a refined urn and willow motif in its arched top, other slate markers have more primitive designs of death's heads, faces inside portals and winged skulls.

Monuments from the Victorian Period take the form of obelisks and chests as well as tablets. Slate continued to be used after the Federal Period although marble and granite became more common. The Carver family chest marker was carved in the late 19th century from brown granite and placed atop an earthen mound near the western corner of the cemetery. This is one of Westlawn's larger and more ornate markers and represents a departure from the simpler tablet form. It was probably during this time that residents placed granite curbs and low corner stones around the perimeters of some plots.

Grave markers are arranged in rows oriented east to west with inscriptions on older stones typically facing south. Three tombs are built in a row parallel to Concord Road, one of which has a retaining wall built of brick bearing inset slate tablets inscribed with names and dates of those interred. Other tombs are earthen mounds four feet in height with granite entry surrounds and iron doors.

#### **Landscape**

Land comprising the West Burying Ground belonged in the Colonial Period to Samuel Parker, a local farmer. The appearance at the time was likely that of a field of grass with a few small slate gravestones. The triangular, flat, grass-covered parcel is located in the pointed vertex of the junction of Concord and Country Roads.

Entrance to the cemetery is through openings in the fence along the Concord Road (south) side and at the eastern point of the triangle where Concord and Country Roads meet. The long southerly edge is broken at about the mid-point by a pair of low granite posts with mounts for iron hinges. Gates which hung from the posts are no longer extant. Additional entry is through a gap in the fence at the eastern end. Boundaries of the cemetery are lined on the south and half of the west edge with chain-link fence four feet in height. The northern boundary and half the west have a two-foot high fieldstone wall. A modern flagpole occupies a site just inside the east entry. Rows of pine trees form a line just inside the south and north walls.

Plot definition occurs in 17 instances with simple granite curbs located flush with the ground or as much as 18 inches in height. The Blood family plot has curbing laid at ground level. Many have corner piers that rise slightly above the level of the curbstones. The multigenerational Day family plot, with its varied slate, sandstone and granite markers, is enclosed with this type of border. The Wright family plot near the west end has four-foot high granite obelisks, unique in the cemetery, to mark its edges. Nearby, the Hildreth-Davis family burials have a granite step to access the slightly elevated plot. Curbs enclose square and rectangular parcels of from eight to twenty feet per side and are more common at the west end.

## Markers

Westlawn Cemetery reflects trends in gravestone development in its variety of slate, sandstone and granite markers. Slate is the oldest surviving material used for marking burials and is carved in arched, shouldered-arched and flat-topped tablets. Ranging in height from one foot to over five feet, this type of marker can demonstrate a relatively crude, hand cut appearance, a well-designed and possibly machine cut sharpness and several levels of workmanship in between. Quality of workmanship of the slate marker is sometimes obscured by the fact that the stone has deteriorated or been broken. Inscriptions also vary in quality and detail. The simplest have fine, narrow letters with little relief or depth. Some of this type are well organized and clearly laid out. Others are jumbled in the way words are divided among lines. Later slate stones from the 19th century are more likely to demonstrate clear, deep, stylized letters with a pronounced serif and well thought out organization relative to the shape of the stone.

Markers appear in a variety of shapes. Those from the earliest period are most commonly cut in a rectangular form with an arched top, representative of the figurative portal between life and death. The shape is also considered an abstraction of the human head and shoulders. This form of marking the passage from life is a Puritan concept brought from Boston and elsewhere during the region's period of first settlement. Eighteenth century stones are typically carved with one of a variety of motifs. The earliest marker in Westlawn, that of Bridget Read who died in 1760 at the age of 30, exhibits a death's head in a carved arched portal. Representative of the spirit of the deceased glancing back into the world of the living while simultaneously offering the living a preview of the afterlife, the portal is rich in Puritan symbolism and attitudes toward the transcendent nature of death. In addition to the portal and death's head are abstracted floral patterns at the edges of the marker and the legend "memento mori", an encouragement to the living to remember that death is imminent. Mrs. Rebecah Prescott, wife of Lieutenant Jonas Prescott, who died in 1795 at the age of 65 is remembered by a stone with floral trim and a death's head inscribed inside an oval.

The symbol of winged death, in the form of either a skull or abstracted human head flanked by a pair of feathered wings spread wide, occurs frequently on stones carved in the 18th century. This is another representation of the belief that the human spirit was released at the time of death for the flight heavenward. An example of this design motif is found on the stone of Elizabeth Marshall who died at the age of 36 in 1789. Her marker has the legend "memento mori" inscribed in a banner below the symbol of death.

Based on classical influences exerted by the spreading glow of the Enlightenment, new images for gravestone ornamentation rapidly made the older themes seem outdated. Urn and willow designs appear frequently on gravestones from the Federal through the Victorian Period. Both slate and marble markers exhibit this late 18th and early 19th century motif that is an icon of sorrow and grief. Change from the Puritan death's head to the classically inspired urn and willow marked a change in the way death was viewed by New England society. Previously, the event was considered a common reality whose dim portent reflected the stern view of life as a struggle for survival. The Post-Puritan view of death adopted a sentimental quality that spoke more of the emotional state of those left behind than of the journey of the deceased, causing the replacement of darkly spiritual carvings with abstract sorrowful imagery. The use of columns in gravestone design, frequently of the Doric order, is evidence of the pervasive influence of classical imagery popularized by the Enlightenment. Lieutenant Jonas Prescott's 1813 slate marker has an urn and willow design with Doric columns and floral patterns at the borders. The Jonas Hildreth slate marker from 1808 is edged with Doric columns topped with pineapples flanking a central panel with names and dates. The arched top bears the image of an abundant willow tree weeping over a classical urn.

Additional marker types in the form of obelisks, chests, intricately carved Gothic designs and tablets with biblical and classical symbolism appeared during the Victorian Period. Obelisks are carved mainly from gray granite with one example resting on a pink granite base. This type of marker is typically around six feet tall and was in frequent use from the mid 19th century forward. The earliest example, marking the 1829 burial site of John Blodgett, was carved of rough cut granite without ornament. Others are from the late 1800s and have capstones and smooth, polished granite faces. Lawrence, Leighton and Herrick family markers are of this type.

Chest markers in Westlawn are granite, some with a finely polished finish. The Carver Family monument from the 1890s is the largest and most ornate example with its half-round crested top, colonettes with carved floral ornament

at the corners and bold lettering at the base. The Day family plot has a granite chest marker for Isaac (1826-1898) and Lucy Day (1832-1927) with a scroll top, comparatively rough finish and little other ornament.

Gothic design motifs in the form of vegetation and architectural detail are applied to marble markers from the mid 19th century. Carrie Rathbone, (d. 1857, 26 years of age) is buried beneath a marble tablet with scrolled sides and top, ballflowers and acanthus leaves emanating from the volutes. The inscription is placed in a central raised panel. Isaac Day Jr., (d. 1856, 58 years of age) resides beneath a marble cruciform marker with brackets, floral trim, shouldered sides suggestive of an architectural gable and a finial in the form of a cross.

Victorian Period designs in addition to the Gothic include biblical and classical references. Stephen (d. 1842, 35 years of age) and Catherine Hutchins (d. 1880, 70 years of age) have matching stones carved with hands pointing heavenward. The pointed tablets are otherwise unadorned. A marble marker on the Hildreth-Davis plot has a segmental arched top and a bundle of wheat set in a recessed oval. Sheaves of wheat are symbolic of the full life lived by the person interred, a secular sentiment of the period. The Jeremiah Cogswell stone (d. 1820, 82 years of age) is marble carved with an urn draped with swag in the arched top. Abel Fletcher's (d. 1861, 72 years of age) marble marker has the image of two hands clasped in a handshake, framed in a recessed oval. This may be a reference to the person's trustworthy nature.

Three earthen tombs line the southern boundary of Westlawn Cemetery. The westernmost is the Levi Prescott Family Tomb. It is comprised primarily of an earthen mound five feet in height with an entry made of granite slabs and flanking walls of mortared granite fieldstone. Paired iron doors with circular ring pulls provide access to the interior. The inscription "Levi Prescott's Family Tomb 1839" marks the top granite slab. Nearby to the east is the Patten-Prescott Tomb consisting of a brick retaining wall with granite capstones and three slate tablets recessed in the wall. The westernmost tablet bears the names of James and Isaac Patten and the date 1812. Deacon Oliver Prescott who died in 1803 and Joseph Prescott who died in 1813 occupy the central part of the tomb. The eastern tablet commemorates Eben Prescott who died in 1811, Hannah and Franklin Prescott who both died in 1812. Family member Cora B. Conant was interred here in 1977. The Leighton family tomb is the easternmost. The earthen mound here is lower than the other tombs, around three feet. The granite retaining wall is approximately two feet high and six feet long with a sandstone tablet in the center. Inscriptions commemorate the lives of Sarah M. Leighton (1778-1873) and her two children Sarah A. (1818-1842) and Reuben (1821-1824).

Westlawn's most unusual marker has the shape of a stepping stone for mounting horses and carriages and may have actually served the purpose at the tavern in nearby Forge Village. Three steps rise along the northwestern edge of the Luther P. Prescott family marker which has a flat top three feet above grade. Seven Prescott family members, interred between 1885 and 1935, are commemorated by the rough-cut gray granite stone.

## **Military and Commemorative Markers**

At least two 20th century military stones exist in Westlawn. A small rectangular marble marker with segmental arched top marks the resting place of Steven Kostechko (1914-1955) who served the country in World War II. Carl F. Haussler (1892-1964) served during both World Wars and is remembered with a marble marker carved with a cross inscribed in a circle. The stone is flush with the ground.

Cast iron and stone markers placed posthumously commemorate military service of many residents of Westlawn. The Sons of the American Revolution were responsible in 1902 for placing nearly a dozen iron crosses on stakes at the graves of veterans of the American Revolution. The Maltese crosses are approximately eight inches across with a circular emblem in the center bearing the image of Daniel Chester French's statue in Concord entitled *The Minute Man*. Crosses placed by the Grand Army of the Republic commemorating service in the Civil War are five-pointed iron markers. The Colonel John Robinson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed in 1968 a stone marker with bronze plaque near the Concord Road gateposts recognizing the military leadership of Colonel Robinson and his interment in Westlawn.

## **Existing Conditions**

Repairs have been carried out in the cemetery on a regular basis since the 19th century, altering only slightly the appearance from its Colonial Period beginnings. Slate stones are particularly susceptible to cracking and toppling given the weak structural nature of the material. Several different methods have been used to stabilize markers. There are some which have been re-set in concrete footings poured at ground level. Others have been re-attached at severed points with metal braces and bolts or cemented or glued across fractures. Most stones remain in good to excellent condition. Some slate markers are difficult to read due to erosion. While very little vandalism appears to have taken place, damage has been sustained in many cases due to scraping by lawn-mowing equipment.

Aside from routine maintenance, repairs and some deterioration over time, few changes have occurred in Westlawn. While records do not indicate as much, it is possible that, since few remain, footstones were removed as part of past efforts to tidy the grounds. However, the large number of remaining 18th and 19th century markers make it possible to get a clear sense of historical burial and gravestone carving techniques in Westford.

## ***Statement of Significance***

### **Introduction**

Westford's West Burying Ground first came into use as a public burial ground in 1761 when the parcel was given for the purpose to the town. At least one burial, that of Bridget Reed in 1760, had taken place here prior to acquisition by the town. Approximately two dozen stones survive from mid 18th century. Burials at that time were conducted with a minimum of ceremony. Gravestone ornament was restrained and the surrounding landscape was allowed to appear as a grassy plot marked by slate headstones. Treatment of burial places remained austere until the mid-19th century when townspeople began efforts to improve the burial ground landscapes. This appears to have been motivated by the popularity of more exuberant funerary ornament as at Mount Auburn Cemetery founded in Cambridge in 1831, and by antiquarians' interest in recording and stewardship of historic artifacts.

While many cemeteries, including Fairview in Westford, show signs of imitation of Mount Auburn Cemetery in their complex plot plans, curving circulation paths and ornate entrance gates, West Burying Ground acquired only a picturesque new name, "Westlawn". It was not the subject of any structural improvements or pathways among burial plots. Slate markers from the 18th century remain largely unchanged, although they are surrounded by Victorian Period markers of granite and marble.

The most basic maintenance schedule has allowed the cemetery to retain much of its historic appearance by virtue of the densely grouped slate markers near the core, the small scale of markers and the simple landscape unencumbered by modern paths and furniture. Burials continued in Westlawn until 1999.

### **1760-1830**

West Burying Ground occupies land that had been in use since the early 18th century as farmland belonging to Deacon Joshua Fletcher (d. 1736), original member of Westford's First Parish Church in 1729 and one of the town's 89 original taxpayers. Mr. Fletcher also served as town clerk and selectman at the first town meeting. He resided ¼ mile east of the burial ground. Samuel Parker (b. 1717) married Sarah Fletcher (b. 1719), daughter of the deacon, and inherited his father in law's land. In 1761, Mr. Parker sold the parcel comprising West Burying Ground to Nathan Proctor who, according to town meeting records from May 15, 1761, donated the parcel to the town. Those at the meeting voted to accept one half acre of land for a "burying place", thereby creating the West Burying Ground, the town's second. The first, originally called the East Burying Ground, is now called Fairview and came into use around the turn of the 18th century. It is one mile east of Westford Center (Main Street near Tadmuck Road).

There was at least one person, Bridget Read, who was interred on the parcel prior to its acquisition by the town. Other burials whose markers do not survive may also have occurred before the official establishment of West Cemetery. Gravestones from the 1700s are typically located very close together. Family members tend to be adjacent to one another, frequently aligned in the order in which they died. No segregation based on ethnicity, occupation, military service or wealth is apparent. Most stones are around the same size, two to four feet high by

one to three feet wide. Maintenance of the burial ground during this period was the responsibility of a nearby resident. Duties consisted of mowing grass which was remunerated by the town on a yearly basis and digging graves for which the caretaker was paid piecemeal. Approximately 150 markers from the period exist in the cemetery.

Eighteenth century residents of Westford who are buried in West Burying Ground include industrialists, Revolutionary War veterans, local politicians and farmers. Around 1680, the blacksmith and Groton landholder named Jonas Prescott (b. 1648) built the first iron works in nearby Forge Village and began its 300-year history of industrial activity. Mr. Prescott lived with his wife Mary at the southwest corner of Pine and Town Farm Roads. He mined bog-ore in Groton to be smelted into iron at the mill site on Stony Brook. The iron was used for making candlesticks, farm tools and household items such as irons according to local historian Gordon Seavey's 1988 local news article on the influence of Stony Brook. Mr. Prescott might also have operated a grist mill at the outflow of Forge Pond at this time according to town histories of Westford and Chelmsford. He and his descendants who influenced the development of the town are interred at the West Burying Ground. These included the town clerk Jonas Prescott Jr. (ca. 1678-1750) and his wife Thankful Wheeler, Jonas Prescott III (b.1703) and his wife Esther Spalding (b. 1705) and Lieutenant Jonas Prescott (1727-1813) who served in the French and Indian War, the Massachusetts General Court from 1758-69 and is described as a "forgeman" in the genealogy in the Hodgman town history. The Prescotts made an immeasurable impact on the town by beginning its industrial activity and maintaining a family interest for several generations.

Westford's highest ranking Revolutionary War soldier, Colonel John Robinson (1735-1805), is buried under West Burying Ground's largest slate marker. Colonel Robinson led three companies of minutemen (approximately 160 men) from Westford Common to Concord's North Bridge on April 19, 1775. While some vagueness surrounds the particulars of the Westford men's involvement here, it seems clear that they took part in harassing the British troops on their retreat to Charlestown. Colonel Robinson was described as a tall man of great energy who, while fighting at Bunker Hill in July, 1775, was "exposed to instant death, yet doing his duty; now leaping upon the parapet, a target for the advancing foe, and now reconnoitering with the ill-fated McClary, the position of the enemy to find the best way of repelling his persistent attacks; showing himself everywhere the efficient and strong-hearted man." This was according to a 19th century recounting. Colonel Robinson also served as selectman from 1771-1773. He lived less than a mile from Westlawn on the road that now bears his name. Prior to its being renamed Westlawn, there was consideration in 1902 of giving the former West Burying Ground the name Colonel John Robinson Cemetery. During this period, an iron fence, donated by hearse driver and cemetery superintendent Albert Richardson in 1892, surrounded the Robinson family plot. This was a common form of delineation within burial grounds at the time and was probably not the only example. There are no longer any plot-defining fences in Westlawn.

Approximately 15 additional veterans of the Revolutionary War are interred in the West Burying Ground. This is also the final resting place of Lieutenant Timothy Fletcher (d. 1780) and Ensign Jacob Robinson (d. 1778 at age 68) veterans of the French and Indian Wars as well as Joseph Reed, Calvin Howard and Aaron Parker who all served in the War of 1812.

Two groups of grave markers have poignant ability to reveal potential hardships of 18th century existence. Adjacent to Colonel Robinson's gravestone and that of his wife Huldah, is a slate double marker for two young girls. These are Betty and Mehitabel Robinson, aged five and eight years. They share a stone due to the proximate dates of their deaths which came 11 days apart in the late summer of 1775. This was just weeks after Colonel Robinson's involvement in the Colonial defeat at the Battle of Bunker Hill in July. A similar tragedy befell the family of Silas and Hannah Read in 1777 when their children Silas, aged two years, Hannah, aged seven months and Betty, aged four years died between the 18th and 24th of September.

Networks of trade relations can be partially determined by examining the names and locations of gravestone carvers who sign their work. At least one marker exists in Westlawn that may have been carved by a member of the well-known Park family of Groton stone carvers. This is an 1820 marble marker signed by John Park. Since Mr. Park died in 1811, the stone may be post dated. At least one gravestone worked by the carver named L. Parker exists in Westlawn. Mr. Parker showed an understanding of classical design motifs in the form of Doric columns flanking the central inscription with pineapples and urn and willow above, all present on Jonas Hildreth's 1805 slate marker.

## 1830-1900

Changes in the appearance of the cemetery began to occur after 1830 when slate was less frequently used for gravestones. Marble and granite gradually replaced slate, probably for their improved resistance to delamination and exfoliation. In addition to their superior durability, these materials present a very distinctive appearance in comparison to slate. Previously unavailable colors, shapes, inscription types and increased scale were all possible with the new materials. Also, the art of the gravestone carver was advancing in the face of modern imagery drawn from Victorian period biblical and iconographic sources.

With the annual publication of town reports beginning in 1840, it is possible to understand how the town's burial grounds were operated and maintained. The types of tasks, volume of expenditures, and individuals undertaking the work at the town's burial grounds are described annually in a single line item. The most frequently listed chore was mowing grass for which a male, usually a neighbor, was paid between two and six dollars per year in this period. The farmer Isaac Day was paid for mowing and cutting brush at the West Burying Ground from around 1840 until 1850. His brother Amos Day, also a farmer, took over the job from 1854 until 1876. Periodically, these men were reported to have dug graves for paupers, for which the town paid them one to three dollars. Jonathan T. Colburn, relative by marriage to Amos Day, oversaw maintenance of the West Burying Ground from 1877 until 1905. While each burial ground had an individual to perform maintenance, the town had a single hearse driver for all burials. The hearse was kept at the East Burial Ground (now Fairview Cemetery).

Improvement projects occurred on several occasions in the West Burying Ground. The first to be recorded in the town reports appears in the 1858 volume which notes that the carpenter Ephraim A. Stevens, resident of Westford Center and later an architect responsible for designing the 1880 Parker Village Schoolhouse, was paid to build and hang a pair of entrance gates. Also contributing efforts to the project were the blacksmith Timothy P. Wright who supplied hooks, hinges and bolts for the gates and George Reed, the quarryman, who supplied granite posts. The posts with some parts of the hinges survive on the Concord Road side of the burial ground. In 1894 and 1895, a relatively large amount of labor was expended on the re-setting of gravestones. Reports appeared of leaning and broken markers which prompted efforts to tidy the burial grounds. While it is not specifically stated, it is possible that Colonial Period slate footstones, now quite rare in the cemetery, were removed as part of this work. The 1894 town report mentions that the "outer walls of a tomb in the West Cemetery have been relaid" but does not specify which of the three was repaired. The Patten-Prescott Tomb has a brick retaining wall with granite capstones and three slate tablets recessed in the wall. The unusual combination of materials suggest this as the subject of the repairs. In 1898, the stone wall along Concord Road, deemed unsightly and structurally untenable, was replaced with a fence (no longer extant) of turned chestnut posts and cylindrical iron rails. In 1899, shrubs and trees were set out as part of a landscape improvement plan.

The program of maintenance at the West Burying Ground did less to alter its appearance than did efforts to beautify Fairview (the former East Burial Ground on Main Street). A Committee on Burying Grounds which had been appointed in 1871 paid relatively little attention to the West Burying Ground and a great deal to Fairview. A survey and plan to improve Fairview in the style of a Garden Cemetery were drawn by the Westford civil engineer Edward Symmes. The chairman of the committee was the venerable lawyer and industrialist John William Pitt Abbot, resident of Westford Center, benefactor of the town, state senator, railroad president and future occupant of Fairview Cemetery. Under Mr. Abbot's leadership, appropriations were made by the town for construction of stone walls, a gateway, landscape improvements, curving avenues and acquisition of additional acreage. This greatly enhanced the look of the old East Burying Ground and shifted focus away from the simpler West Burying Ground, which received a total of six burials between 1894 and 1897 while Westlawn received 103. There are indeed few late 19th and early 20th century markers in Westlawn.

Interments at the West Burying Ground between 1830 and 1900 include descendants of earlier industrialists and farmers previously interred here. For example, Jonas Prescott's son Levi, (1771-1839) who, like his father, operated the forge on Stony Brook and lived at 25 Pine Street in Westford, is buried in the granite tomb marked "Levi Prescott's Family Tomb 1839".

Many generations of the Day family of farmers, with members living on Robinson, Graniteville, Flagg Road and others, occupy a large plot in the western end of the West Burying Ground. Burials include at least 19 family members and in-laws whose lives spanned the period 1797-1964.

Henry Herrick (1777-1869) and his wife Elizabeth (1789-1862) are buried beneath one of approximately six stout granite obelisks with capstones. Mr. Herrick was listed in the 1855 and 1865 census as a farmer although he probably had additional sources of income. He owned an ornate Federal style house in the village of Westford Center as well as other real estate a half mile from Westlawn on Robinson Road. Mr. Herrick was a civic-minded farmer, serving as overseer of the poor, tax collector, surveyor and road sign builder as well as town treasurer and selectman in 1843.

The Prescott family is interred under the marker with the appearance of a stepping stone or mounting block. The farmer Luther Prescott (1808-1904) was a representative to the Massachusetts General Court and station agent on the nearby Stony Brook Railroad. Mr. Prescott also ran the tavern in Forge Village that was the location of the mounting block until his death according to Gordon Seavey, a local newspaper columnist writing in August 1976. On the same plot are buried Mr. Prescott's wife Sarah (1832-1904), their children Olive (1841-1903) and Sherman (1839-1901) and their families.

Civil War veterans are buried on individual family plots scattered throughout Westlawn. Approximately nine Union soldiers are identified by GAR crosses. Among them is Stephen Howard (1822-1863) who served with Co. M, 3rd Regiment of the Massachusetts Cavalry. Warren E. Hutchins died at Duvall's Bluff Arkansas on November 29, 1864 while serving with the 7th Massachusetts Battery. The inscription reads "His country called. He answered with his life." His brother Corporal Edward Everett Hutchins was killed at the Battle of Resaca, Georgia on May 15, 1864. He was a member of Co. F, 33rd Massachusetts Volunteers.

Information about communities with which Westford residents maintained trade relationships can be learned from gravestones. Stone carvers signed their names at around ground level on some markers, occasionally including the name of their town. By far the most frequent community noted on signed markers is Lowell, city of origin for stones carved by O. Goodale, T. Warren, Andrews & Wheeler and D. Nichols. N. A. Spencer of Ayer is the only carver not to hail from that community. Newspapers from the end of the period support the assertion that, when traveling out of town for commercial purposes, residents of Westford went either to Lowell or Ayer, typically on the Stony Brook Railroad.

The concept of Perpetual Care came into use in 1893. For a deposit of \$50-100 to the perpetual care fund, Westford residents could provide themselves with a permanent program of plot maintenance. Also around this time, residents were requested to pay an amount of one to five dollars per year to pay for annual maintenance of their plots. Rising costs may have been due to increasing numbers of plot-defining features such as granite curbs and the several types of fence that must have been in use.

## **1900-1950**

Interments slowed during the period from 1900-1950. Popularity of the larger, more refined Rural style Fairview Cemetery imbued the smaller West Burying Ground with the more primitive character of a Colonial Period burial ground. No curving avenues or bold stone walls were built. A pair of inexpensive iron gates had been added in 1902, but do not survive. Cemetery superintendent Albert P. Richardson called for suggestions to rename the West Burying Ground something "more euphonious" in 1895. His own suggestion was to name it for Colonel John Robinson but nothing was done at that time. Cemetery commissioners again requested suggestions for renaming the burial ground in 1903 and put forth the name Westlawn as a candidate. There was only one respondent who apparently concurred, thus changing the name. Lack of interest on the subject is in marked contrast to the campaign to rename the former East Burial Ground. New walls, gates and avenues inspired avid voting, ultimately in favor of the name Fairview. Without the Rural style improvements, Westlawn received a new name but little of the enthusiasm for reserving plots.

Approximately ½ the perimeter of Westlawn is surrounded by a chain link fence. Town reports record that it was installed in 1946 at a cost of \$1117. Expenditures for maintenance nearly doubled after World War II, possibly due

to mechanization of maintenance procedures. Cemetery business was carried out from at least 1937 through 1949 by the committee members Sebastian Watson, Fred Blodget and Axel Lundberg.

World War I and World War II veterans are buried in Westlawn, two of which have military markers. Stephen Kostechko served in World War II and is buried near the western end under a marble tablet with a low arched top. The legend "Massachusetts Cpl 332 Services SQ AAF World War II" and dates Nov. 6, 1914 - Dec. 31, 1955 appear below a cross. Nearby is his family in one of only a few plots in Westlawn occupied by residents of non-English descent. Carl F. Haussler (Dec. 8, 1892-Nov. 3, 1964) resides under a marble marker whose top is flush with the ground. He served with the Rhode Island Signal Corps in both World War I and II.

The local Colonel John Robinson Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution installed a granite memorial marker near the Concord Road gates. The 1968 bronze plaque commemorates the interment of Colonel John Robinson and "other revolutionary heroes" in Westlawn.

## **Conclusion**

Colonial, Federal and Victorian period historical associations in Westlawn are largely intact despite interruptions by the small number of modern markers and by the chain link fence surrounding the yard. However, it continues to be possible, by observing the rows of arch-topped slate stones carved with cherubs, classical columns, urn and willow designs, and by recalling names so important to the development of the community, to get a strong sense of how Colonial Period residents of the Town of Westford viewed their burial places.

## **Geographical Data**

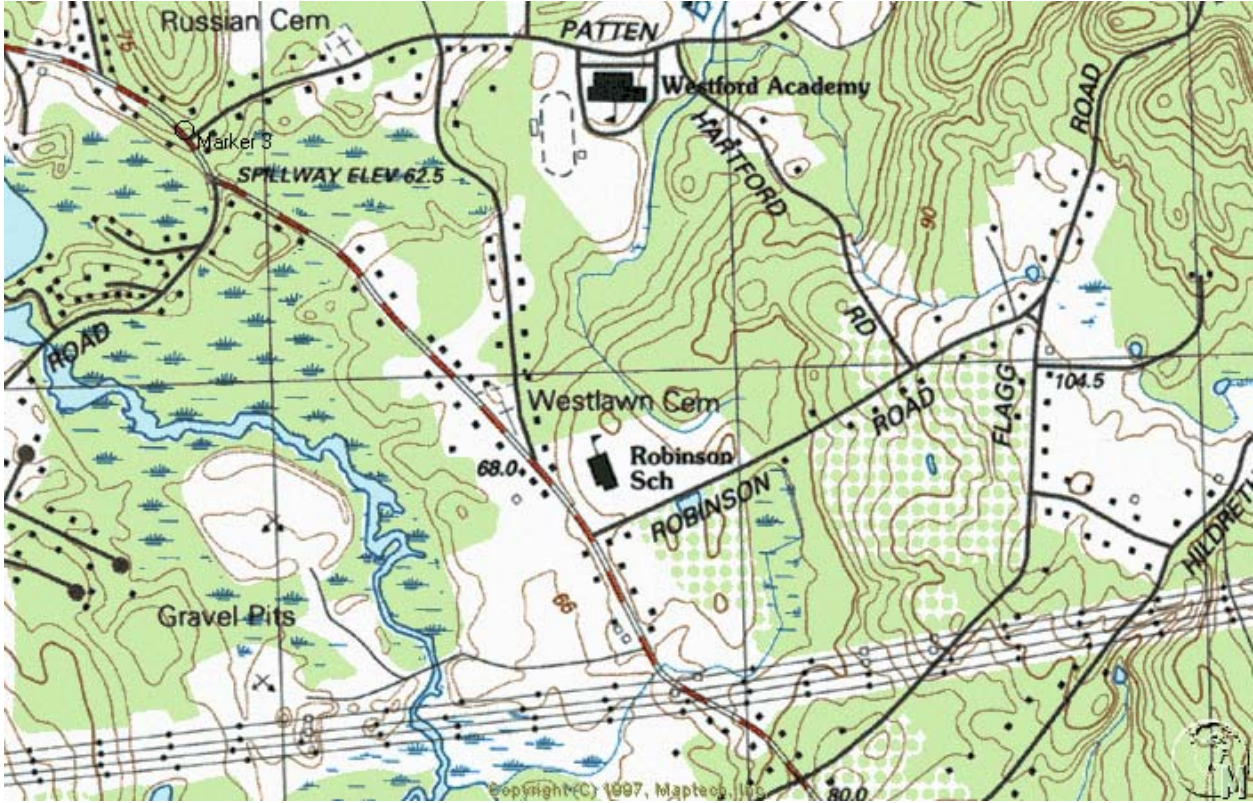
### **Verbal Boundary Description**

Westlawn Cemetery comprises all of the land within the triangular boundaries of the cemetery. It is bounded by Concord Road on the southwest and Country Road on the east. The cemetery encompasses 1.7 acres, described by the assessor's office as parcel 34 on map 20.

### **Boundary Justification**

Boundaries of the cemetery were determined by the Westford Historical Commission and by the consultant. Boundaries include all gravestones, burial-related buildings, structures, circulation paths and ornamental plantings. Chain link fence and stone walls mark edges of the cemetery.





SKETCH MAP

NORTH TOWARD TOP

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