

# FORM E – BURIAL GROUND

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

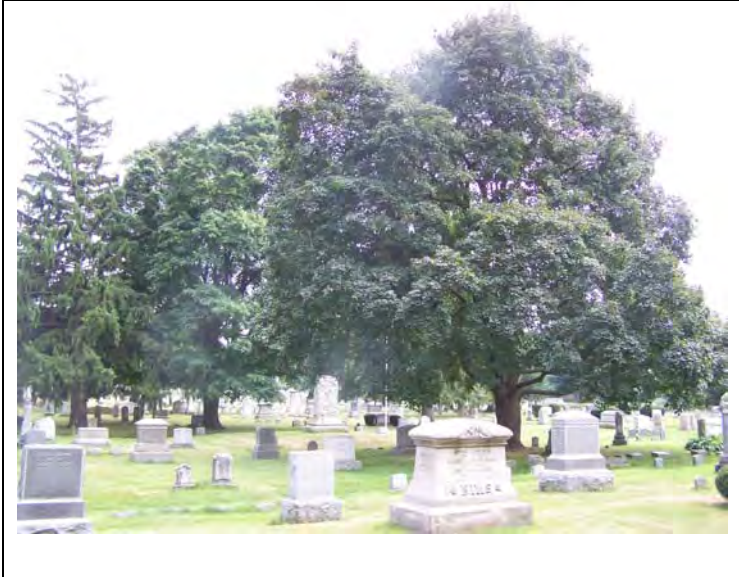
Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

25C-260-001	Easthampton		NTH.800
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**Town:** Northampton

**Place** (*neighborhood or village*): Northampton Center

## Photograph



**Address or Location:** Bridge Street

**Name:** Bridge Street Cemetery

**Ownership:**  Public  Private

**Approximate Number of Stones:** 3,000

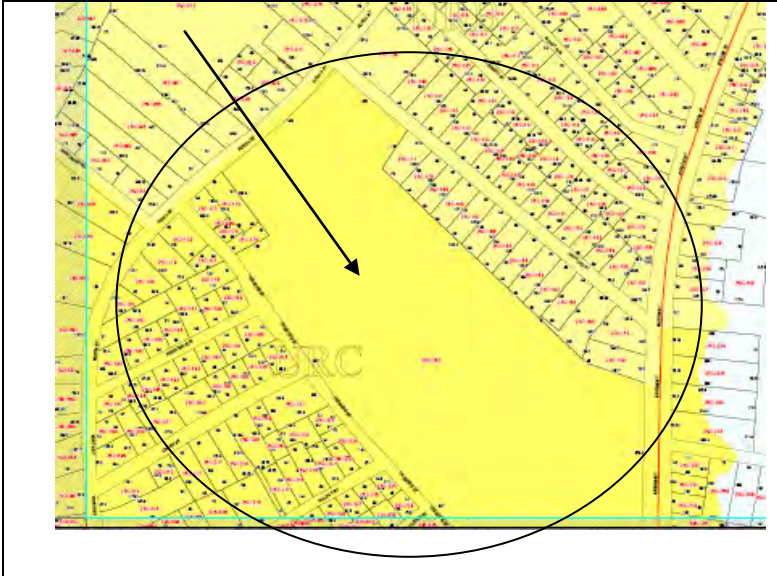
**Earliest Death Date:** 1683 or 1685

**Latest Death Date:** 2011

**Landscape Architect:**

**Condition:** good

## Topographic or Assessor's Map



**Acreage:** 19 acres

**Setting:** Bridge Street Cemetery is west of the Connecticut River and northeast of Northampton's commercial district. It is in a neighborhood of homes, a nearby elementary school and a fairgrounds.

**Recorded by:** Bonnie Parsons

**Organization:** PVPC

**Date** (*month / year*): April, 2011

# INVENTORY FORM E CONTINUATION SHEET

[NORTHAMPTON]

[BRIDGE STREET]

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

*Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.*

## VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT

*Describe landscape features, gravestone materials, designs, motifs, and symbols that are either common or unusual. Note any known carvers.*

In the northwest section of Northampton, the Bridge Street Cemetery is a 19-acre cemetery bounded by Bridge Street on the south and east, Parsons Street on the west, and by house lots on the north. It is roughly rectangular in shape. The cemetery is surrounded by a chain link fence and may be entered by the public at the north west corner, though there is a pair of stone entrance pylons about 7' high on the south side of the cemetery where formerly the main entrance existed.

While the land of the cemetery is generally level, there is a slight rise of no more than four feet in the south central area of the landscape and rows of east to west aisles that are about 8' wide are depressed about 2'. The land is neatly cropped and grass-covered. Randomly dispersed throughout the cemetery are mature trees among them Sugar Maple, Black Maple, Yellow Poplar, Spruce and Eastern White Pine. There are single examples of Cypress and Hawthorne as well. Separating some of the family plots and lining their borders on the northern end of the cemetery are individual and rows of evergreen hedges. About an acre at the north end of the cemetery is open and without monuments.

There is a one-story, aluminum-sided and garage-sized maintenance building on the west side of the cemetery, next to Parsons Street.

Circulation in the cemetery is accomplished by a grid of pathways. At the outer east and west sides of the cemetery are two asphalt paved ways, about 8' wide, that extend the length of the cemetery from north to south. Several other north-to-south ways complete the grid but are not paved. East to west ways are grass-covered and are about 15' apart, and 5' wide.

The majority of the markers face east. Granite and marble markers dominate within the cemetery but there are also plentiful numbers of brownstone, a very few slate markers, and two of zinc. Three large family tombs are, respectively, limestone, brownstone, and granite. The largest number of markers are slab in form with either tabernacle, straight, pointed or arched tops. Scores of markers are obelisks of various heights and dimensions; there is one Celtic cross and one columnar marker. There are about a half-dozen rough boulders and only slightly fewer in number than the slabs are the coffer-shaped, rectangular stones set on bases that are about three feet high. They have straight or segmentally arched tops. There is one table marker and there are several large-scale markers laid horizontally on the plot and embedded shallowly in the earth. There are no large-scale figural monuments in the cemetery. Some family plots are set off with granite curbing or corner posts, some with initials carved in their top surfaces. Metal fencing wrought, cast or post and chain are absent.

There are several family mausoleums of note. Among them is the Bates tomb. It is a building of Nova Scotia granite 35 feet high, and 20 feet by 20 feet in plan. Classical Revival in style, it is a Greek Cross in plan, each projecting pavilion composed of a pair of fluted pilasters supporting a pediment. The central core of the building is covered by a dome of stone and bronze. The south entry has solid bronze double leaf doors.

There is one public memorial in the cemetery: the GAR monument to the Civil War dead that was erected according to its inscription, "by Public Subscription, Dedicated May 30, 1908". This is a roughly carved granite stone about 10' high with smooth faces on north and south sides for inscriptions bordered by high relief sculptural ornament. Its four cornerstones are low posts topped with metal cannonballs.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Explain religious affiliations, major period of use, and evaluate historical association of this burial ground with the community.*

*Continuation sheet 1*

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## History of Cemetery Land

When the Northampton Proprietors laid out the Plantation of Northampton in 1654 they provided on Main Street for a meetinghouse lot that incorporated common land for a burial ground. The lot was known as Meetinghouse Hill. Between 1658 when residents voted to make a burial ground on Meetinghouse Hill and 1663, burials took place at this burial ground. But in 1661 a vote passed to "alter" the burial ground on Meetinghouse Hill and to create a new burial ground. By "altering", it seems, the town was voting to use land of the burial ground for other purposes and move the burials elsewhere. A committee in 1662 chose land east of Meetinghouse Hill. They settled on the furthest corner of the common land that had been set aside for the minister's ten acre tilling lot in 1654, and where there was already one burial – a Mr. Jeane – and that established the Bridge Street Cemetery. In 1680 the graves around the meetinghouse were moved to the new cemetery and within a few years, Cornet Joseph Parsons who lived nearby on Bridge Street and owned much of the land in this section of town donated a few additional acres to the town for the cemetery. What constitutes the original 17<sup>th</sup> century portion of the cemetery is located today in the south east section where plots are laid out irregularly, as was the practice at the time. In 1668 the town voted to fence the cemetery to set a firm boundary and avoid further encroachments by neighbors. Apparently the fencing was too flimsy to serve its purpose or was aesthetically unsuitable, and six years later people voted to fence the cemetery with a new stone wall, which they did. By 1802 even that fence was in need of improvement so a new and larger one was built in its place.

While the reburials and new burials were made in the southeast section, there were rudimentary paths among the plots, which was a common feature until after the Revolution when graves were laid out in orderly fashion, in rows, and circulation roads or pathways were added to the cemetery. So between about 1800 and 1880 as the burials increased and lots were sold, the northern half of the cemetery was laid out in its current grid of streets. They were named and some were named according to their extensions outside the cemetery, i.e. Walnut Avenue was an extension of Walnut Street and Cherry Avenue of Cherry Street. The first 19<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the cemetery took place in 1888 when the town bought about five acres of land from John S. Wright and at the same time laid out an orderly plan of lots.

The cemetery functioned with approximately 15 acres until 1894 when the cemetery commission noted that additional land was needed for the future and recommended that 4 ½ acres be bought from two local property owners L. R. Clark and Josiah Graves. The commission felt this purchase would last fifty years, but objections were mounted by several city officials who felt that the Bridge Street Cemetery enlarged would impede development in the neighborhood and that beginning a new cemetery further from the Center would be preferable. Nothing was done for four years, but in 1898 the cemetery commissioners again brought up the need for new land as only twenty plots were left. They conceded that nothing need be done that year, so nothing was done.

Between 1895 and 1900 M. Morton and Josiah Graves' land on the north side of the cemetery was developed as Elizabeth and Orchard Streets, so was no longer available to the cemetery. But the need for additional space grew, so in 1900 the cemetery commissioners bought a remaining strip of land on the west side of Orchard Street 40' wide and 800' long. According to the Hampshire Gazette the commission bought the land for \$4,435 foregoing public meetings in order to avoid the objections of people on Orchard Street whose back yards would now abut the new acquisition. The acquisition was not uncontested, but went forward. This addition to the cemetery was projected by the cemetery commissioners to last 30-40 years.

In 1911, however, the commissioners forged ahead with additional land acquisition, buying the last available section of land abutting the cemetery, which was two acres owned by Henry R. Hinckley on the northwest corner of the cemetery. There was considerable public opposition to this acquisition from Orchard Street residents, primarily, who felt the value of their property would decline. But commissioners countered with a plan to plant new trees along North Street and a line of shrubbery along the Orchard Street sidewalk, which would buffer the cemetery, and the property was added to the cemetery.

The chronological progression of markers from 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, their materials, forms, art, and iconography are as follows. When individual carvers have been identified, they will be noted.

## History of Cemetery Art through Markers and Architecture

### 17<sup>th</sup> Century.

Bridge Street Cemetery has at least three markers from the 17<sup>th</sup> century: the marker of Capt. Elisha Grey, d. 1685; that of Lieutenant John Lyman d. 1690, and the Elder John Strong, d. 1699. They have in common brownstone material, tabernacle

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shape and simple carving of names and dates of death. The lettering style is irregular and suggests a carver with rudimentary skills and tools, though the style has been interpreted as a Puritan avoidance of imagery. Known carver is the earliest in the Connecticut River valley, George Griswold (1633-1704). Griswold's stone of Jonathon Hunt of 1691 is in sandstone the preferred material.

## 18<sup>th</sup> Century

The simple style of the 17<sup>th</sup> century persisted into the 18<sup>th</sup>. Two exemplary markers of this early period are the Abraham Miller marker of 1727 and the John Parsons marker of 1728. Both are tabernacle shape, sandstone, and carved with the simple names and dates of death. Sarah Wright's marker of 1732-33 in the same style is known to have been carved by Joseph Nash (1664-1740) was from Hadley and who was prolific in production of these simple stones. Nash also carved the 1723/4 Abigail Phelps stone.

But not all 18<sup>th</sup> century stones were so simply limned. By the 1730s images appear on markers, all of which continue to be sandstone. The death's head or skull image - that when carved alone on a marker is a stark image - is the earliest of these images and in Northampton the carver Gideon Hale is known to have been one of the earliest carvers of the death's head as seen as his 1734 Samuel Wright marker where the death's head is accompanied by wings. Vines twine down each side of the Wright marker. Hale or one of his colleagues in Middletown Connecticut Thomas Johnson I, where their workshop was located is thought also to have carved the Aaron Mirick marker of 1734 a toothy skull head and angel wings. The Mr. John Hunt and Mrs. Esther Hunt marker is a table marker with an enormous brownstone slab about 4' x 8' x 3" thick that rests on four fluted pillars and is set off from other markers by four corner posts. Known as a table stone, these were popular with the wealthy of the area and were produced largely in Middletown, Connecticut. John Hunt's death date is 1735 and Esther's is 1787, and the table stones date between 1745 and the early 1770s when Middletown carvers were most active. The lettering on this marker is regular and stylized.

Double stones are rare, but an 18<sup>th</sup> century version is the brownstone double tabernacle marker of the Hunt Children killed by lightning in 1769 with two winged cherubs. Carver Joseph Williston of Springfield is associated with the 1762 stone of Mrs. Elizabeth Lyman and that of Joseph Lyman from 1763 with cherubs's heads roundly carved and given both detail and expression. In addition to the development of the winged cherub, and the regularization of lettering, markers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century introduced epitaphs that were generally carved on the lower section of the stone and were *memento mori* in content.

Seth Pomeroy's unique marker of 1777 takes the carving in a painterly direction with cherub-like Adam and Eve facing each other with Renaissance-derived heraldry and bird and floral forms filling the upper field of the marker. This stone has been traced to Northampton carver Nathaniel Phelps. Phelps was the son of a brick mason, a trade that he also carried on, and was trained in Middletown, Connecticut by that important stone carving workshop. He became the most prolific gravestone carver in Hampshire County and practiced during the 1740s through the 1780s, changing his style to meet his competition. His work is represented by at least 47 markers in the Bridge Street cemetery. The 1780 Jonathon Allen stone carved by Nathaniel Phelps has reclining cherubs at each side of an urn and holding trumpets, a pictorial motif that is quite rare. The 1797 marker of Elizabeth Hunt carved by Roger Booth was part of a trend towards naturalism that took place in the late 1770s and 1780s and practiced by Nathaniel Phelps. Booth's stone presents a half-length body, sometimes known as an anthropomorphized angel, with arms in lieu of the cherub and the carving further departs from the traditional pattern as the arms hold grape vines and clusters of grapes that twine around the figure.

But not all carvers were similarly inclined towards the pictorial, and two-decades later brownstone tabernacle marker of Ephraim Wright of 1794 retained the cherub motif and depicted a cherub head with rectangles for ears and topknot, and wings, in an interpretation that was geometric and abstract. During the 1790s in Northampton Neo-classical urns and willow motifs began to appear but at the same time Rufus Phelps, son of Nathaniel, was carving markers in Northampton such as that of Wright with a simple incised line and ornamented by wavy lines and arches cut into the stone. His 1802 stone of Ebenezer Wright is a solitary face. Phelps carried out this abstract carving while the Neo-classical movement was taking over.

## 19<sup>th</sup> Century

On individual stones, winged cherubs were gradually replaced in the early 1800s at the Bridge Street Cemetery by weeping willow and urn motifs that express the mourning that death brings to the living. Materials diversify with the replacement of sandstone by an increased number of markers in marble and granite. Zinc as a cheap and nearly indestructible material appeared as at the Vogel child's marker from 1877. Marker forms diversified, as well, with the introduction of obelisks, carved

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sepulchers modeled on reliquaries, and more unusual forms such as a Celtic cross or roughly hewn boulder. Representative of these is the Judge Forbes monument of 1882 erected for Judge Forbes, which is 25' high and composed of an inscribed slab mounted on a three-stage base carved with the name "Forbes". It was designed by John C. Ritter of New Haven, Connecticut. An elaborated obelisk is the granite and marble Holland family marker from the 1870s that is a banded marble shaft topped by a four-sided cap and resting on a plinth above a sloped granite base. It is set on a granite-curbed plot in which are small individual markers of the family members.

In 1875 the first monumental family mausoleum was added to the south side of the cemetery, the Bates family tomb that was designed by well-known architect Richard Upjohn in Classical Revival style and was large enough to accommodate three family members. Family plots are developed and with these the Bridge Street Cemetery is well-represented. Hundreds of family plots around obelisks or sepulchers surrounded by footstones or flat markers with individual names appear. The movement towards clustering family markers represented the wish to indicate that families will go to heaven together spending eternity and as each new member died, his or her name was either entered on the obelisk or on a low personal stone, or both. Representative of this family gathering is the Twiss monument from the 1880s, a reliquary shape with name in high relief and ornamented with floral designs at its corners. The center family stone is then surrounded by scroll-shaped individual markers with names and dates. Linear clusters of stones were also erected with larger markers – usually slabs for Mother and Father – adjacent to a line of similarly carved stones for siblings, wives and husbands. Families weren't always so providential as to have organized these arrangements, nor perhaps as congenial, so 19<sup>th</sup> century families were also clustered in an uncoordinated manner or dispersed throughout the cemetery. The markers of George Cable's family of identical design are set in a row with Mr. Cable's marker, those of two wives, a sister, and son in alignment, and at the very end of the line a first wife's unmatched marker. George Cable's own dates are carved on several of the markers. An early 20<sup>th</sup> century family marker is the Jones-Lawrence stone that has a three-sided face. It is three feet in height and is rusticated granite carved on its base with family surnames while individuals' names and dated are carved into the faces of the angled plaques. Without imagery or carved forms such as urns or consoles, the texture of the stone and the precision of the carving were intended to carry the theme of eternity.

The late 19<sup>th</sup> century also saw families retroactively commemorating their ancestors. One of the first to do so was Josiah Parsons Cooke who left money in his will to place a monument over the grave of his ancestor Major Aaron Cooke, one of the first settlers of Northampton. The result was a sarcophagus of granite 7' wide, 5'-10" high constructed by monument-maker C. W. Kinney in 1881. It contains the old stone from 1690.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Erecting monuments to ancestors continued in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1911 the Miller family held a reunion and dedicated their monument to William and Patience Miller who were among the Northampton settlers of 1654, and Patience Miller was the settlement's first physician. The monument uses rustication of the stone and lettering for its ornament conveying the inscription of the original burial stones rather than figurative or floral designs. Plans for family monuments grew larger as the century proceeded. A family chapel was proposed in 1924 and funded in the will of L. A. Clark. It was to hold from 80-100 people and was designed by Northampton architects Putnam and Stuart. It was not built, however, so size of family mausoleums was effectively capped.

From the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century markers for couples began to appear in number. Unlike the double tabernacle stones, these markers are double-sided with the family surname on one side and the two or more individuals on the verso. The markers of this century continue to be carved in marble and granite and they have a relatively uniform shape that is low, horizontal and wider at the base than the top. An example of this relatively modest form stone is that of L. Clark Seelye (1837-1924) who was the first president of Smith College. A 20<sup>th</sup> century marker that is more elaborate and idiosyncratic is that of Northampton philanthropist Thomas Munroe Shepherd (1856-1923), a marble sundial set on a column shaft that is centered on a marble base. Where there are no individual markers around the center monument, the practice of cremation rather than burial is reflected. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century stones in the cemetery are largely standard, and mass-produced.

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**National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form**

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible     Eligible only in an historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district     Potential historic district

Criteria:         A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations:     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Statement of Significance by Bonnie Parsons  
*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Bridge Street Cemetery would be eligible for the National Register as an individual listing as the City's oldest extant cemetery replete with the work of the Connecticut River valley carvers from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It contains the graves of Northampton's early residents, generations of families descended from the settlers. It would also contribute to a potential Pomeroy Terrace historic district that developed south and east of it from the second third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as Northampton's finest residential district. Original residents here were merchants, retired farmers, lawyers, and other professions. As the century progressed the adjacent streets were laid out for the growing middle class with railroad personnel joining clerks, teachers, and others.

Architecturally the potential historic district is significant for the fine examples of the 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles from the Greek and Gothic Revivals, Italianate, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival styles. The district includes significant examples of the work of Northampton architect William Fenno Pratt. This potential historic district has integrity of workmanship, feeling, setting, design and materials.