

TOWN OF DUXBURY  
CEMETERY DEPARTMENT

**A HISTORY OF OUR FOUR MUNICIPAL CEMETERIES & TOMBS**

**STANDISH BURIAL GROUNDS**

*(Located in South Duxbury on the corner of Pilgrim by Way and Chestnut Street)*

Standish Cemetery sits on 1.44 acres, the first burial ground in Duxbury and the second cemetery in Plymouth Colony. In 1892 this cemetery, near where the first and later the second Meeting House in Duxbury was located in 1632, received its name when, as a result of painstaking research, it was found to be the resting place of Capt. Myles Standish, whose headstone dates October 3, 1656. In it lie the men who bore arms with him, as well as Revolutionary heroes and veterans of the War of 1812.

In the early days of New England the dead were silently laid to rest without prayers of any kind. The first known funeral sermon in this country was delivered in Duxbury in 1697 when Pastor Ichabod Wiswall officiated at the burial in Standish Burial Grounds of Capt. Jonathan Alden, son of the famous John and Priscilla Alden who are also interred in this cemetery. The oldest memorial stone marks the grave of Capt. Jonathan Alden, his father John Alden was also the last survivor of the Mayflower passengers dying in 1687.

The oldest colonial burial ground in the U.S. was in St. Augustine, FL, where some of the Spanish conquistadores rest. However, this cemetery has been lost to history, as has the original Pilgrim cemetery on Plymouth's Cole Hill. There in, lay the honor bestowed by the American Cemetery Association in 1977 as naming Standish Burial Grounds the oldest maintained cemetery in the country. A bronze marker set in a natural granite stone is placed within the cemetery grounds as commemoration to this.

**DINGLEY CEMETERY**

*(Located in North Duxbury on West Street)*

**ASHDOD CEMETERY**

*(Located in West Duxbury on Keene Street)*

Dingley Cemetery is three quarter of an acre, Ashdod cemetery is 1 acre. These two cemeteries, Dingley and Ashdod, were located principally to accommodate early settlers in the days when roads were little better than cow paths, posing a problem for horse-drawn hearse and carriages to travel for burial to Mayflower Cemetery.

Dingley Cemetery was once a family plot, but several other families are now interred there. To the far right in the cemetery grounds is an assuming tomb, those who visit may not know it is there. There are no known records of who is interred within.

Ashdod Cemetery is attached to what is now the "Free Christian Church," whose building still stands adjacent to it on Keene Street.

## **SMITH TOMB**

*(Located on the corner of Tremont and Depot Street, across from Boomer Square)*

## **WESTON TOMB**

*(Located in West Duxbury on Lincoln Street)*

These tombs are prime examples of the tiny burial lots established by families during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Families would locate and build these tombs, usually near a hillside on the far corner of land in which they owned for the purpose of burying the dead.

The Smith and Weston Tombs have been very well preserved, partly because of family intervention and partly due to the proximity of these tombs both are visible from the roadway.

Duxbury, like all old New England Towns, had its share of private tombs and backyard graves, but most of the unregulated burial spots were so long neglected they are scarcely more than legend now.

## **MAYFLOWER CEMETERY**

*(Located on Tremont Street, Rte. 3A)*

The largest cemetery in Duxbury, Mayflower Cemetery has 37 developed acres and 35 acres awaiting future development. With its' massive oak trees Mayflower Cemetery is adjacent to the First Parish Church, Unitarian. The Church was built in 1840, the fourth meeting house and the second on this site. The ladies of the Parish formed the Ladies' Union Fair Association in which they would raise monies for the care and maintenance of the cemeteries, after the passing of its' last member the Ladies Union Fair Association Cemetery Fund was established

The first grave was that of Stephen Russell in 1787, so the cemetery was established as such at that time.

In 1894 Town Meeting voted to assume the obligation for maintaining the 4 cemeteries which now include both Smith and Weston tombs and to establish standards of beauty and decency. At this time the town elected a board of five trustees to be responsible for the care and maintenance of the cemeteries.

Welcoming you to Mayflower Cemetery at the main entrance are two Quincy granite posts on either side of the entrance, these beautiful columns and the spheres that rest atop the posts were a gift in 1927 from Mr. & Mrs. Ernest H. Bailey, both descendents of passengers on the Mayflower. In 1927 Lucy Hathaway gifted the granite posts and iron rail fences for the new part of the cemetery, which is to the left of the main entrance and opened for burial in 1932.

Mayflower Cemetery is a viable cemetery opened year round from dusk to dawn, a showcase of historical monuments and a resting place to Revolutionary and Civil War Veterans, including descendents of those early settlers who traveled on the Mayflower and to those who contributed such a vital part in establishing the Town of Duxbury.

## **DUXBURY CREMATORY**

*(Located on Tremont Street, Rte. 3A in Mayflower Cemetery)*

In 1978 the annual town meeting authorized the town to build and operate a crematory on the cemetery grounds, in 1980 that building was established with two cremation units and a small office area. In 1986 a second half was added on with an additional two cremation units. Duxbury Crematory is the only municipally owned crematory in the United States. What started as a few hundred cremations a year has now reached into the thousands.

Duxbury Crematory at Mayflower Cemetery has been a member of the Cremation Association of North America (CANA) since 2005. Families can be sure that we care for their loved ones with the highest ethical standards; we take the stance that those who lived were once loved and are treated with the highest regard and respect. Our licensed and trained staff can assist you with any questions you may have concerning cremation.