

## **History**

### **The Plainville Cemetery Association, Inc.**

From the first settlement of the town until 1856, the old burying ground on East Street was the only cemetery in Plainville. The first burial made there being the body of Stephen Hulbert Heart, a one-year old child of Noadiah and Lucy Heart, who died September 15, 1766, at which time the parents were residents of Southington.

The location on East Street, selected and set apart by the town of Farmington during the middle seventeen hundreds for a place of burial, had been objected to by the dwellers of what is now Plainville, for many years, due to the fact mainly, that the "water-table" at that location was so high that any grave dug there filled with water before a burial could take place. Consequently, long poles were provided with which coffins might be pushed to the usual six-foot depth and held there until earth and stones could be shoveled in sufficiently, to hold them in place until the burial could be completed.

In 1856, the cemetery on North Washington Street was opened and several bodies were transferred there from East Street. In that year, the care and custody of both cemeteries devolved upon the Board of Selectmen of Farmington, as agents of the town and so remained until Plainville became a town in its own right, in 1869.

That this arrangement was far from satisfactory to our townspeople seems evident from the fact that in July 1877, the Village Improvement Society, so-called, organized during the same year, appointed Dr. Simon Tomlinson, Erskin N. Andrews and Allison N. Clark, a committee to attend to "cleaning up the cemeteries". That work was completed and both grounds were put in fairly good order.

With the ending of this first campaign, nothing more was done until the town meeting of May 22, 1882, authorized the selectmen to give deeds to all lot holders, upon payment of \$2.00 each therefore. And further, that the proceeds so derived be devoted to cemetery improvement. At this same meeting, \$300.00 was appropriated for the purchase of land adjoining the "West Cemetery".

On June 18, 1883, \$350.00 was appropriated to provide water and a well was dug at the "West Cemetery" for that purpose. This well was sunk by Martin Blodget, who found it necessary to blast the major portion of the depth through red shale and sandstone. It was soon discarded and filled up a short time after its completion.

Early in 1888, the matter of additional improvements began to be discussed and on June 23, of that year, a few interested men met at Morgan Hall for the purpose of organizing a cemetery association. At this meeting, William Alderidge was chosen Chairman and a committee consisting of William L. Cowles, Daniel W. Fox, and Burritt Hills, named to confer with the Plainville Water Company, to ascertain upon what terms the company would agree to supply water to the West Cemetery; and Allison N. Clark and Robert C. Usher were requested to report upon the formation of an association.

Three days later, this committee reported: that the Water Company would agree to extend its main, upon guarantee of 6% on the investment required. It was also reported, that an association was desirable and that a constitution similar to that adopted by the West Cemetery Association of Bristol might well be used. The reports made at this second meeting were accepted whereupon, The Plainville Cemetery Association was organized with twenty-one members and the following officers were elected:

Burritt Hills, President  
Dr. Theodore G. Wright, Vice President  
Robert C. Usher, Secretary & Treasurer

The form of constitution referred to above, was adopted, with a few minor changes, and Allison N. Clark, Daniel W. Fox, Francis A. Tinker and Robert C. Usher were appointed to solicit members.

An Executive Committee of nine was proposed and the decision made, that any person agreeing to pay a fee of \$1.00 annually, would be eligible to membership in the association. The question of water supply was left in abeyance. On July 6, 1888, Burritt Hills declined to become President, and Robert A. Potter was chosen in his stead. The proposed Executive Committee was elected at this time and the President was authorized to arrange for a special town meeting, to the end that the care of both cemeteries should be vested in the newly formed association.

The proposed special town meeting was held, July 23, 1888, when it was voted: "That the care of the Cemeteries in the Town of Plainville be entrusted to the Plainville Cemetery Association for the term of five years". The Selectmen "Were empowered to convey by deeds, at prices fixed by the Association", all lots sold. Also, that all money thus be obtained, be used by the Association for the care of the cemeteries.

On July 27, 1888 Burritt Hills was chosen Superintendent.

On November 17, 1888, the prices of lots in West Cemetery were fixed as follows: \$10.00 for front lots, central lots \$8.00 and rear lots \$6.00. And By-laws for the regulations of the Cemeteries were adopted June 22, 1899.

The question of a water supply was finally settled during the 1900 by the incorporation of the Plainville Cemetery Water Company in June of that year. Of this corporation, Frank S. Neal was President, Francis A. Tinker, Treasurer and Schuyler P. Williams, Secretary and these three men, together with E.F. Murfee and Aquilla H. Condell constituted the Board of Directors.

Francis A. Tinker was made Assistant Superintendent of Cemeteries on April 25, 1893 with the actual work of caring for both came under his charge.

In the same year, the town voted that dating from October 9<sup>th</sup>, the control of the cemeteries should vest in the association, until such time as that order might be revoked.

While regular meetings of the association were held, from 1893 to 1909, the bulk of the work done during that time, and the management of its affairs were attended to by Mr. Tinker, with but little assistance or advice from other officers of the association.

On January 6, 1909, in order to put the association on a better basis, and enable it to hold and make use of trust funds, it was voted to incorporate as a corporation without capital stock. The articles of incorporation then adopted, were approved by the Secretary of State, February 16, 1909, at which time the association became The Plainville Cemetery Association, Inc. New By-Laws, Rules and Regulations were adopted, March 8, 1909 and the officers then elected were:

Aquilla H. Condell, President  
John E. Lamb, vice President  
Carl W. Jones, Secretary & Treasurer

It was then decided to secure from Mr. Tinker, a report of his work on behalf of the association since 1893, to secure also, all maps, records and cemetery data then in his possession, regarding which no one else had any accurate knowledge and to turn over to the association's treasurer, such cash as he then held, belonging to the association, including various bank books, wherein were shown money deposited by him from time to time, received from various persons in payment for the perpetual care of their lots. All this was accomplished by the end of March 1909 and Mr. Tinker retired from office.

At this time, Mr. Tinker was succeeded by George S. Babcock as Superintendent of the Cemeteries.

On March 15, 1909, the association voted to lease the pipeline owned by the Plainville Cemetery Water company but before this lease was completed, it was decided to own this property outright and on April 29, 1909, John H. Trumbull was appointed to buy as many shares of this company's stock as possible on behalf of the association, which transaction was completed during March, 1917.

July 30, 1909, the town appropriated not to exceed \$200.00 for the completion of a cement receiving vault at the West Cemetery, which construction was finished under the direction of Aquilla H. Condell and Frank S. Neal, acting for the association.

Since the Plainville Cemetery Association has been reorganized and incorporated, far greater interest has been manifested by the town's people than ever before. Stone roads have replaced the sand and stones of former years. Many trees have been planted, burial lots graded, old paths filled and leveled, and many trust funds established by various lot owners, and during 1916, the West Cemetery has been surveyed and lots designated by cement markers.

By 1924 the original West Cemetery had become wholly inadequate with the result that few unsold lots were available. Consequently, in 1925, sixteen acres of land adjoining at the east and south sides were bought, which, when fully developed, should provide space enough for possibly twenty years to come.

In 1925 the Plainville Trust company was elected to act as secretary and treasurer of the association, thus affording expert service in connection with association trust funds and its accounting in general.

During 1953, the association began the development of its land at the east end of the cemetery, by clearing a strip, one hundred feet deep and extending northerly, to Franklin Street, over private property, acquired recently by purchase. This extension to Franklin Street, when completed this coming spring, will enable cars entering from Unionville Avenue to pass out over this new north-south road, back to the avenue without causing congestion or having to turn around.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 1955, a new schedule of prices for burial lots was established, namely, \$100.00 per grave, a uniform charge, of which \$50.00 applies towards general maintenance and \$50.00 for perpetual care of each grave within the lot deeded to the purchaser.

At the East Street Cemetery much work has been done during the past few years. Unsightly bushes and briars were cleaned out, the turf plowed up, leveled and reseeded and a new fence around this property

is under considerations, and the ancient monuments were reset, and soldier's graves are now marked by suitable stones placed by the National Government, through the efforts made by Robert C. Usher and Henry A. Castle.

It is gratifying to know that the Neal Memorial Chapel at West Cemetery has been put in good conditions, both inside and out. This Chapel was built from plans drawn in 1916 and made possible by funds bequeathed by the late Frank S. Neal as a memorial to himself and family, a gift to the town of Plainville in 1922.

With the completion of the various projects now in progress, a renewed interest in Plainville's West Cemetery will no doubt result. As soon as possible, the association plans to have representatives on the ground to meet all who may be interested and to give such information as may be needful regarding the purchase of lots or in connections with this cemetery generally.

Exerts taken from:

The History of Plainville (1640 – 1918) by Henry A. Castle

Letters obtained from the Plainville Historical Society

Minutes from the Plainville Cemetery Association, Inc.