

Compliments of
THE SIMSBURY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION



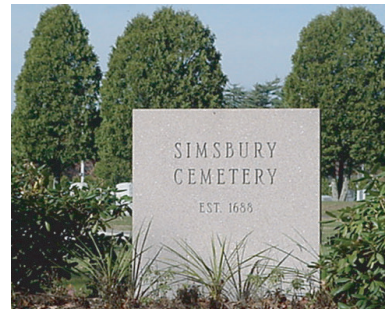
The Columbarium



The Eagle



Main Street Gate



Plank Hill Road

A part of Simsbury's history since 1688

For information,
please call 860-408-9077

A History of Simsbury Cemetery

It was colonial custom to bury the dead on land owned by the town, usually near the meeting house and, if possible, on the summit of a hill. If one looks at a topographical map of the cemetery area, one can see that the elevation on Hopmeadow Street at the main entrance gate is 183 feet above sea level. The west end is 265 feet above sea level. It is believed that the first burials were on the top of the hill. According to noted Simsbury historian Lucius I. Barber, the grave of Mercy Buel, the oldest in the cemetery, was thought to be originally located at the site now occupied by Jeffrey O. Phelps, on the hill in Section C.

Simsbury's first meeting house was in use from 1683 to 1739 and was located near Hopmeadow Street in the first rows of Section B. A monument with a large bronze plaque erected by the Abigail Phelps Chapter of the DAR during the celebration of Connecticut's tercentenary, 1635-1955, reads: "SITE OF THE FIRST MEETING HOUSE IN SIMSBURY 1683-1739. Built at a cost of £33 according to an indenture between THOMAS BARBER and THE TOWN. This site was chosen by lot at a solemn meeting of May 24th 1683 thus ending a controversy that had continued for a period of twelve years."

So, the meeting house was built in 1683. There is a town record of a vote in 1688 to remove the earliest burying ground lower down the hill, closer to the meeting house, and two acres were set aside for the purpose. Mercy Buel's grave was one that was moved (see photograph).

Until it was moved two blocks to the north, the second Hopmeadow School, built in 1799, stood near the street on the south side of Section A.

In the early days, very little care was given to the burying grounds. Grasses and bushes were allowed to grow wild. Then around 1852, a resident named Watson Wilcox circulated a "subscription paper." This was equivalent to today's term "signing a pledge card." \$2,500 was raised! That's an incredible sum for the 1850s. At this time the Simsbury Cemetery Association was formed and it was given complete control of the cemetery. The Association's first project was to build solid stone walls on the north and south sides and to install an iron fence along Hopmeadow Street (see photograph).



Shortly after the Civil War the Phelps family built the first mausoleum in the cemetery. It was enlarged around the turn of the century and in 1911 a trust was established for perpetual care of the mausoleum (see photograph).

In 1896, Lemuel S. Ellsworth, president of the Cemetery Association, initiated a landscaping project aimed at gradually beautifying the grounds and making it an attraction for the center of Simsbury. Amos R. Eno and Adelaide Wilcox gave large donations to help with the project.

Amos R. Eno gave the land for the upper part of the cemetery. He reserved the uppermost area for his family's five mausoleums (see photograph). Four of the mausoleums were built between 1900 and 1910. The fifth mausoleum was built in the 1960s for Hokan and Mary Steffanson. Mr. Steffanson, a survivor of the sinking of the Titanic, was married to Mr. Eno's granddaughter, Mary Pinchot Eno.

The next big improvement came in 1922. Lemuel Stoughton Ellsworth and his wife Ann Jane Toy Ellsworth commissioned the Memorial Gateway to beautify the main entrance. (The old fence was moved to the Bushy Hill Cemetery.) The main gate is framed by six red sandstone square pillars. The red sandstone was quarried in the Terry's Plain area of Simsbury by A. J. Ketchin and Sons. The bronze, granite and iron work was completed by companies in New York and Rhode Island. The Memorial Gateway was dedicated on June 27, 1923; neither Mr. or Mrs. Ellsworth lived to see its completion (see cover photograph). The inscriptions on the bronze tablets, one each on either side of the gate, are reproduced on the next page.

Over the years many distinguished citizens have been buried in the cemetery. The histories of Simsbury by Noah A. Phelps, Lucius I. Barber and John E. Ellsworth are excellent for learning more about these citizens. Of the many Revolutionary War soldiers, Noah Phelps is the most well-known (see photograph). History has it that Captain Phelps was sent to spy on Fort Ticonderoga in 1775 and, because of his efforts, the fort was captured by Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys. He later became a major general in the Connecticut militia.

Amos Richards Eno, mentioned earlier for his generous donations to the improvement of the cemetery, started a dry-goods business in Simsbury in the 1820s. His success led him to New York City where he eventually established a \$25 million fortune in real estate. He gave the town the Simsbury Free Library and bought a large farm and gave it to town for the Poor Farm. His son William Phelps Eno is known for developing traffic laws. His ideas included street signs, driving on the right side of the road and one-way streets. Antoinette Eno Wood, daughter of Amos R. and Lucy Jane Phelps Eno, gave the town the beautiful Eno Memorial Hall in memory of her parents.

In 1859 there was a huge explosion at the Toy Bickford Fuse Co., now Ensign Bickford Industries. The explosion killed eight young women and the company erected a monument in their memory.

The cemetery is also the final resting place for a Connecticut governor. George P. McLean, a native of Simsbury, was governor from 1901 to 1903 and a U. S. senator from 1911 to 1929. These graves can be located by using the map of the old section and referring to the key.

In 1929, foresightful planning led the Cemetery Association to purchase twenty-five acres just across the road from the northwest entrance on Plank Hill Road. This land was farmland for many years but, when there was little space remaining in the old section, the new section was opened for burials in 1947.

In 1994 the Association commissioned Jerry Hannebury, Inc., granitesmiths from Maine, to construct a public mausoleum. Officially it is a columbarium because it is designed with small vaults for urns of cremation, but it also has room for 32 full-sized burials. The total cost of building and landscaping was \$340,000. The mausoleum was dedicated on May 11, 1995 and it was named "Sycamore."

In 1997 another plaque was installed on an inside column of the Memorial Gateway. It reads: THE SYCAMORE TREES AND PLANTINGS IN FRONT OF THESE GATES ARE GIVEN IN MEMORY OF ANZIE O. GLOVER 1938 - 1997 SECRETARY OF THE SIMSBURY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION 1994 - 1997 AND A FRIEND FOREVER FROM THE MEMBERS, DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS OF THE SIMSBURY CEMETERY ASSOCIATION May 1997.

Today the work of the Cemetery Association continues under the presidency of Jackson Eno. In 1999 the Association purchased two houses along the north stone wall and facing Plank Hill Road. The houses were demolished; the lots cleaned up, graded and planted with grass. The stone wall built in the 1850s is being beautifully restored by Mr. Hannebury. The hemlocks that were planted along the fence in 1923 at the time of the dedication of the Memorial Gateway had grown to be giants, but unfortunately were infested with a parasite and had to be cut down in 1999. In their place are a row of pink dogwoods. Two weeping cherries were planted just inside the gate. An irrigation system was installed to keep the grass green in the front and along the central path.

Richard Curtiss is the current superintendent of the cemetery. He took the job in 1966 after the death of his father, the superintendent since 1958. He is a hearty, robust man who loves the outdoor work and who has no plans to retire. His wife Lorraine is part of his team, running the office and taking care of the records. They do an excellent job.

Over the last three years, I have spent countless hours in Simsbury Cemetery. I have found it a haven a beautiful, peaceful place where I can contemplate the past and dream about the future. I just wish I could have figured out who was smoking the cigar that I smelled so often when I was at work alone, recording stones.

Joyce A. Cahill
July 2001

Stone Wall



14

12

11

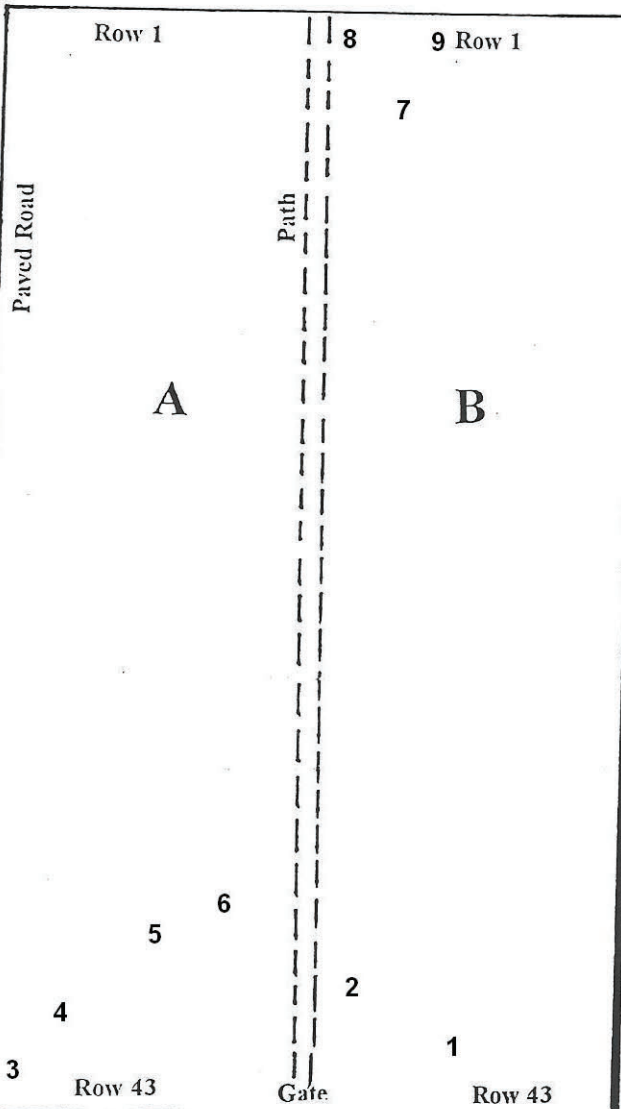
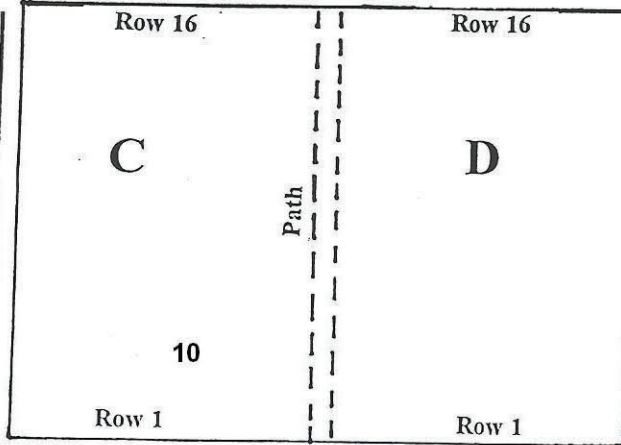
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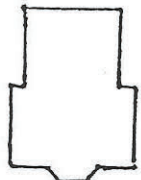
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Stone Wall



Phelps Section

Simsbury Free Library



Simsbury Genealogical and Historical Research Library

- Map Legend**
- 1- Site of First Meeting House
 - 2- Mercy Buel
 - 3- Second Hopmeadow School
 - 4- Revolutionary War Memorial
 - 5- Abigail Phelps Memorial
 - 6- Noah Phelps
 - 7- Elisha Phelps
 - 8- Toy Family
 - 9- Explosion Memorial
 - 10- Henry K. Pomroy
 - 11- Amos R. Eno
 - 12- Antoinette Eno Wood
 - 13- Steffanson
 - 14- William Phelps Eno
 - 15- George P. McLean

Stone Wall

Hopmeadow Street

Simsbury Cemetery Oldest Section

SIMSBURY CEMETERY 1688

Take a Walk with Us Through History.....

Lower Level

As you walk into the cemetery and look up the hill, you can see the economic changes in the history of Simsbury. The lower level contains many monuments from the 1600's and early 1700's. In early colonial days, the churchyard was the location of town cemeteries. The land you now stand on originally was owned by the First Meeting House.

Well before the advent of the railroads, the early colonist relied upon local materials to mark their sites. They would transport this red sandstone from local quarries in ox carts.

1



← Monument to mark the site of Simsbury's first meeting house.

Given 1935 by Abigail Phelps Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution

Grave of Mercy Buel – July 4, 1688. →

The Oldest monument in Simsbury Cemetery.

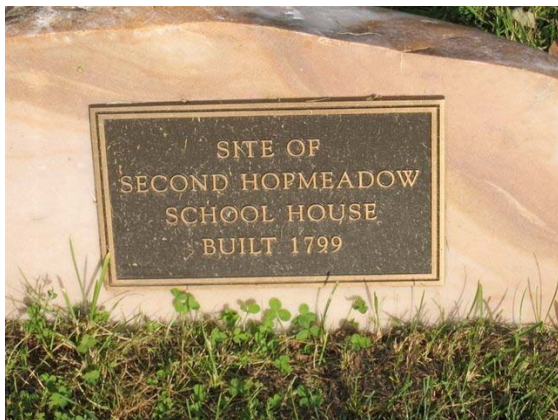
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← Monument placed in 2007 to replace wooden sign from 1935 – Marking the location of the Second Hopmeadow School Building.

Gift from Simsbury Cemetery Association.

3



Simsbury Cemetery Walking Tour Lower Level (Continue)

4



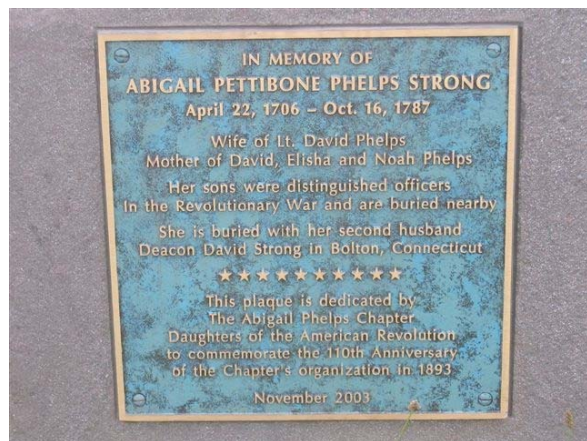
← Monument to the memory of Soldiers who lost their lives during the Revolutionary War. Dedicated November 11, 2005.

Gift of Ensign Bickford Foundation through efforts of Paul Dlubac.

Monument in honor of Abigail Phelps Strong for whom the Abigail Phelps Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution is → named.

Given by DAR – November, 2003

5



← Grave of Noah Phelps: Hero of the Battle for Fort Ticonderoga.

A leader within the Simsbury community, Phelps held a variety of important positions, including Surveyor of Lands (1772), Justice of the Peace for Hartford County (1782), Judge of Probate (1787), and Major-General of the Militia (1796-1799)

Note the Revolutionary War Marker

6



Simsbury Cemetery Walking Tour

Mid-Level

Before the Mid-level of the cemetery was established for burials, it served as a public cow pasture.

In the late 1700's and 1800's, grave markers become more elaborate. They include artwork and written sayings to represent the personality of the deceased. You will see more frequent use of imported marble, reflecting a time of economic prosperity for Simsbury.

7



← Grave of Elisha Phelps, son of Noah Phelps.

A graduate from Yale College and Litchfield Law School, Elisha began his practice in Simsbury in 1803. Subsequently, Phelps served as a member of, and Speaker of, the Connecticut House of Representatives and several terms in the US House.

His home, built in 1820, was renamed the Amos Eno House and still stands in Simsbury, and is on the National Register of Historic places (the Simsbury 1820 House).

The Toy Family Monument →

Joseph Toy, Founder of Ensign Bickford
(was Toy Bickford).

His son, Captain Joseph Toy, Jr. died in the Civil War and is also buried here. He died in Louisiana and his body was transported home in a barrel of Brandy.

8



9



← Monument marking the grave of eight young women who died in an explosion at the Toy Bickford Fuse Co. (Ensign Bickford) in 1859.

They are buried, together, near the Toy family plot.

Simsbury Cemetery Walking Tour (continued)

10



← Grave of a former President of the New York Stock Exchange Henry K. Pomroy. This stone is located within the Belden family plot.

Horace Belden was a distiller and benefactor of Simsbury.

Upper Level

The West End of the cemetery rises to 265 feet above sea level. Historically, the first burials were at the highest point in a cemetery.

Today, there are 5 private family Mausoleums built for members of the Amos Eno family. The Sycamore Mausoleum not pictured is a community mausoleum and the Phelps Family Mausoleum is at the mid level of the Cemetery.

Mausoleum of Amos Richards Eno, benefactor to the Town of Simsbury. →

When he died in 1898, Eno was the largest landowner in Manhattan.

11



← Mausoleum of Antoinette Eno Wood, daughter of Amos R. Eno and Lucy Phelps Eno.

12



Antoinette donated Eno Memorial Hall to Simsbury.

Simsbury Cemetery Walking Tour (continued)

13



← Mausoleum of Hokan B. Steffanson and Mary Pinchot Eno Steffanson (the granddaughter of Amos Eno).

Hokan was a survivor of the SS Titanic.

14

Mausoleum of William Phelps Eno (son. → Of Amos Eno).

Pioneer of highway traffic, William Eno established rules of the road, rotaries, and established Eno Transportation Foundation now in Washington D.C.

Visit the Simsbury Free Library to see his collections.



15



← Grave of Senator George Payne McLean.

Donated McLean Game Refuge and McLean Home. Often had his friend, President Calvin Coolidge, visited him for fishing trips in Simsbury. They stayed at his home, Holly Hill (now the Governors House).