

## Trustees of Town Cemeteries Meeting

September 25, 2017

The Trustees of the Town of Warner Cemeteries met on Sept. 25, 2017, at the Warner Town Hall. The following trustees were present: Penny Courser, Ken Cogswell, Gerald Courser, Don Wheeler, and Mary Cogswell. The meeting began in the Secretary's Office of the Selectmen's Office at 5:30 pm.

Rebecca Courser of the Warner Historical Society presented an overview of the Poverty Plains Cemetery, a cemetery that by oral history accounts contain the remains of Black members of Warner's early community. She stated that there is no documented knowledge of the names of people buried there. She discovered a reference from a Simonds Free High School pamphlet *The Simondonian* that noted that African Americans were buried there, but there was no mention of names. Therefore, our only source of reference is a vague oral history, passed down through the generations from people such as Orton Hill and Harold Dow. There are a number of protruding fieldstones or stones, but they have no names, and many of them are covered in moss, leaves, or excess ground cover.

Rebecca would like the Trustees to work with the Warner Historical Society and hire a person with ground penetrating radar that would determine if bones are there, how many, and their location, in order for the Trustees to delineate the parameters of the cemetery. She also thought that the Poor Farm Cemetery could be checked with the same radar as part of this project. The Poor Farm Cemetery contains the known remains of two Black members of Warner's early community. They are William Bradish (a veteran of the War of 1812) and Prince Hastings (a veteran of the American Revolution). This project would determine how many people are buried there as well, and allow us to establish boundary lines for the cemetery.

She also stated that Allan Brown has some stone posts that he would donate to the town for the use at the Poor Farm to mark the boundaries of the cemetery.

Rebecca would like to coordinate efforts between the Warner Historical Society and the Cemetery Trustees to fund the project and define the boundaries of both cemeteries. Trustee Ken Cogswell has offered to assist Rebecca. We need deed research to determine land owners of each cemetery, permission to access these cemeteries to use the radar equipment, permission to clear brush from the cemetery area, and permission to place granite posts and/or fences to mark the cemeteries. Rebecca will contact the radar operator and get an estimate for the cost of using the ground penetrating radar. After the estimate is received, we will discuss fund raising efforts (possibly a series of lectures about early Blacks in Warner) and/or the application for grant monies to fund the project. She also suggested that we contact the State Division of Historical Resources for an archeologist to examine the two cemeteries and ask what their fees are for this project.

The next order of business was a comment that Mr. Berry from Melvin Mills notified Gerald Courser that some stones were broken or lying flat in that cemetery, and should be repaired. The Trustees are aware of that situation, as well the same problems in other Warner cemeteries. The Warner Capital Improvement Program may be approached in 2019 for additional funds for tree removal – such as another \$2000.00 – and possibly \$5000.00 for headstone restoration.

The next item of discussion was the 2018 budget. The Trustees examined all invoices submitted by Lane Monroe and Gary Young, the maintenance staff for the town cemeteries. The Trustees confirmed that “all others” on the invoices referred to following cemeteries that are mowed and maintained at least once a month from May to October, with both a fall and spring clean-up: Old Waterloo, New Waterloo, Warner Village, Lower

Warner, Davisville, Schoodac, Coal Heart, Tory Hill, Melvin Mills, and Morse. Pine Grove Cemetery is done on the same regular basis, but is kept separate for funding purposes. And Gary Young maintains the Old Parade Ground Cemetery twice a year (spring and fall) for a total of \$950.00. The American Legion is responsible for maintaining the following town cemeteries once a year: Pumpkin Hill, Page, Sisco, Johnson, Gore, Seavey, Colby, Peaceful Retreat, and the Madame Caroline Gardner Bartlett gravesite. The American Legion receives \$900.00 (or more?) from the town of Warner cemetery budget.

After a general discussion, it was decided to maintain a budget request of \$27,700.00 for the year 2018. If monies are available after the fall clean up, it was agreed that the funds would be spent on tree removal, fence replacement, and headstone restoration. As was noted on a number of their invoices, Gary and Lane do some work without charge. Included is the example when they do not charge for maintenance of a small cemetery or large sections of a cemetery when a funeral is planned. The Trustees of the Town Cemeteries are very pleased with their work.

The meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary E. Cogswell

Trustee