

Needham Cemetery



Gravestone of Deacon Jonathan Fisher (1717-1788)
*Behold and see as you pass by, As you are now, so once was I;
As I am now, so you must be, Therefore prepare to follow me.*

From our point of view, the Cemetery is on a smallish side street, but in its day it was right in the center of town. We might like to keep the grim reminders of our fleeting mortality out of sight as much as possible, but in 1711 people knew that they were not here for long – they wanted to keep that fact in mind for their soul's sake, and they wanted to be remembered by their friends and families. The Cemetery was to be visited, not avoided.

The oldest part of the cemetery is the half-circle bounded by the driveway, laid out when the parish was established. The first recorded burial was of Edward Cook, who died in 1711 at the age of 72. Over time, the Cemetery spread over the top of the hill and down the slopes toward Jarvis Circle and Parish Road. In the 1840s, the Cemetery was looking dilapidated, so townsfolk pulled up all the gravestones, plowed the hill, and then laid the stones back out in tidy rows – more or less in the original order.

Highlights – The gravestones of Rev. Townsend and his wife, Mary, are near the exit gate. The McIntosh “cube,” which looks so modern, is more than a century old; it replaced an earlier monument. The oldest stones are near the pine tree at the top of the hill and include some stunning early skull & cross-bone motifs.