

Center Conway, NH

Historical

Easy

1:00

Compass

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Center Conway Cemetery Quest

To get there:

Follow the Kankamagus Highway to Route 16. Follow Rte. 16/113 into Conway Village. Continue straight through the lights at Rte. 153. From the second lights right after the Conway Library, stay straight on Rte. 113, heading east toward Fryeburg. At 2 mi, Rte. 302 joins Rte. 113 at a traffic light. Continue another 1.5 miles thru Center Conway Village to the cemetery (on your right opposite the Conway Rec Center). The student's original map and clues are available at the Quest's starting point, behind the cemetery mausoleum

1. MAUSOLEUM/CRYPT/TOMB

Historically, the word mausoleum was named after King Mausolus, a ruler of Asia Minor who died in 353 BC. This tomb, dated 1903, is presumed to have been moved circa 1933. We do not know where its original location in the cemetery was. It was probably originally used as a temporary resting place for those who died during the winter months and were awaiting a spring burial. It is now used to store lawn equipment

Face northwesterly and walk along the cemetery hedge and fencing until you reach the farthest corner. Turn southwesterly and head along the path in the woods and parallel to the cemetery fence. Walk until you reach the first opening in the wall. It is marked by two tall granite posts. Face east.

2. ORIGINAL FRONT OF THE CEMETERY

As you stand to the back corner of the cemetery in the wooded area to the west and look east into the cemetery, you are looking at the original front entrance. Notice the stones with inscriptions facing you now. These are the oldest gravestones in the cemetery. A granite wall runs along the western original front. There are three breaks in the wall. One entrance is flanked by taller granite posts. The other two entrances have iron gates. One appears to be in disrepair. Is this the original gate? Where was the original path/road leading into the cemetery?

Facing east, walk through the original front opening of the cemetery. Look to the south. There is a trio of headstones marking the burial places of the Lamsons.

3. LAMSON

The first stones seen when entering the cemetery from the original entrance are the Lamson family stones. Three of the white marble stones are standing and one has fallen. Lamson's name appears on the original deed of the cemetery land.

Head due east to Morton plot, 12 paces. Here lies the resting place of Little Ruth and Annie.

4. SLEEPING LAMBS

There are many meanings behind the carvings on tombstones. Ivy signifies friendship and immortality, trees stand for life, and the sleeping lambs mean innocence. The sleeping lambs on top of the double stone before you are the most common 19th century symbol for childhood death and tell us that the people buried here were very young when they died.

Head east on the road until you see Lydia Snow on your right. Turn and face north. Follow the road to the 9th pedestal monument on the left—Cotton, Henry B.

5. COTTON

This large granite monument has steps leading to it and indicates that its owner was probably quite well-to-do. This stone is not in the original section of the cemetery. Henry B. Cotton was the owner of Cotton's Mill which was located on the site between Pine Tree School and Conway Lake. The mill made pianoforte boxes. He is credited with helping to make Conway Centre prosperous.

Turn and head south, looking on your right for a stark white marble stone. It will be located behind the Mudgett plot.

6. STARK

General Samuel Stark was a veteran of the War of 1812. This stark white stone is not in the original section of the cemetery. In fact, all of the stones around this one are from a much later time which leads one to wonder if the body of General Stark could have been moved from another location. Several bodies were relocated to the Center Conway Cemetery when a road was built through what is now Meeting House Hill, site of the police station.

Retrace your steps to Lydia Snow. Continue southwesterly to Estella Isabel Seavey. Turn right and head northwesterly. Go two rows beyond a repaired stone, then turn and face the stones in the Eastman/Odell plot. To the left are two unmarked granite fieldstones.

7. ODELL

The Odell plot is large. All eight headstones with accompanying footstones are inscribed, except for one granite fieldstone. Joseph Odell, who was an original proprietor and Revolutionary War veteran is said to be buried in this cemetery in a grave with an unmarked granite stone. Could this be his? If so, he died in March of 1802 and this would make his stone older than Sarah Porter's.

Face southwesterly and look five stones to the right. There is a white marble headstone that has a footstone opposite it.

8. JUDGE JOEL EASTMAN

Joel Eastman's grave is located in the Odell plot because he was married to Joseph Odell's great granddaughter, Ruth Odell. Judge Joel Eastman is notable because he was one of the owners of the Eastman Toll Bridge, (built in 1846), which spanned the Saco River in Center Conway. The bridge was burned down by vandals in 1975.

Head northwesterly ten paces toward the plot of nine unmarked fieldstones. They are all made of granite and are different sizes.

9. UNMARKED STONES

In this section of the cemetery are 9 unmarked fieldstones of different sizes. Some of the stones are in a row and others are oddly spaced. Some local residents claim that these poor souls were some of the original settlers of Conway who were the victims of a Native American Indian attack. No record of an attack exists to date. It is believed Native Americans left Conway and headed for St. Francis in Canada sometime around 1725.

Keep heading northwesterly to the corner stone with a Revolutionary War marker. Marble stones mark the graves of Nathaniel and Sarah Porter. Sarah Porter's stone, now broken, is the oldest stone in the cemetery.

10. THE OLDEST MARKED STONE 1810

The gravestone of Sarah Porter, wife of the Reverend Nathaniel Porter, is the oldest marked stone in the cemetery. Rev. Nathaniel Porter was the first settled pastor of the first church in Conway. He served as a chaplain in the Massachusetts Continental Army during the Revolutionary War. He is one of the founders of Fryeburg Academy.

Head to the right of the Porter stones. Under these three slate stones lie the dearly departed Davis graves.

11. DAVIS FAMILY

This trio of slate stones represents some of the oldest in the cemetery as they are facing the original front and have some of the oldest dates of death. Note what good condition these slate stones are in, compared to some of their granite and marble contemporaries

Head southwesterly from the Davis plot, sixteen paces, along the granite wall. There are seven stones, all made of marble, not facing the woods.

12. SINCLAIR

This family plot contains seven marble stones and a Knights of Pythias marker. The Knights of Pythias is an international fraternity that promotes friendship among men and the relief of suffering. As local legend has it, one member of the Sinclair family was a stagecoach driver. The large white building on the northwestern corner of Mill Street was once a stagecoach stop and inn.

If you are looking southwesterly, you will see a trio of stones. Two are broken and one is a whole slate stone. Walk thirteen paces toward that stone.

13. FARRINGTON

Jeremiah Farrington's gravestone is the only slate stone standing in a group of three. He is one of the original proprietors buried in Center Conway Cemetery. The land was given to him by King George the 3rd under the condition that for every fifty acres in his share, each grantee was required to plant and cultivate five acres of land within the term of five years, give one ear of corn every ten years and provide masts for the King's ships.

Turn southeasterly, walk ten paces. Look for a slate stone with a GAR marker beside it. The headstone will have a weeping willow inscribed on it.

14. BURBANK

Captain William Burbank has a slate stone with a weeping willow etched on it. The weeping willow is the emblem for sorrow. Captain Burbank is not in the oldest section of the cemetery. He died in 1851, yet he has a GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) marker on his grave. This is interesting since the GAR is a Civil War veteran's organization formed *after* the Civil War of 1865. Burbank could not have been in the Civil War as his death predates it. Could he have been a veteran of the War of 1812?

Facing the Burbank stone, turn left and face northwesterly. Walk twelve paces to find where Howard's stones lie.

15. HOWARD FAMILY

Three members of the Howard family are buried here. Unmarked fieldstones mark their original resting places. A newer stone was erected in their memory. Each of the three was a veteran in a significant war. Samuel Howard was a Private in the New Hampshire Continental Line and he was present at the Boston Tea Party. He also was a pensioner who received a pension from his service in the war. Iron war markers also decorate these graves.

Head southeasterly to the back corner of the granite wall where there is a partly grassy section.

16. PAUPERS GRAVES

This area to the back southeast corner of the cemetery is completely unmarked. There is no way to know who or where the people in this section of the cemetery are buried. This part of the cemetery was for those who were too poor to afford a proper burial, or had no family to take care of the expenses.

From the Paupers section, head north toward the clump of white birch trees. Go just beyond it to a fallen and broken headstone.

17. STARK

The final resting place of Captain Jonathan Stark can be found near the only white birches in the cemetery. His stone has fallen and broken. He was born in 1761 and died in 1830, yet he has a World War Two Iron grave marker. Which war do you think he could have been a veteran of?

18. QUEST BOX

From Stark go southeasterly about seventy feet and look under the end of the granite wall. Congratulations on completing the Center Conway Cemetery Quest. Be sure to log your visit in our notebook and stamp your logbook if you have one.

This Quest was created by the 4th grade students of Pine Tree Elementary School, Center Conway, NH, January—May, 2006. Please respect their hard work by returning this cache and its contents just as you found them.