

A Brief Report on the Present Work and Future Concerns of the Concord Cemetery
Committee, Submitted by Paul Cooke, Chair

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To Gary Kleiman and Elise Woodward, Co-Chairs, CLRPC
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Principal vision for the Cemetery Committee

Concord's three cemeteries constitute a physical testimony of the history of the first English-speaking settlement above tidewater in New England, a place where a significant portion of America's great cultural, religious, political and literary heritage may be touched upon and remembered. Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, furthermore, was designed not only as a place to remember the past, but to be a setting for the refreshment and inspiration of the living. The Committee's task is to help protect and preserve all three of these sites which have been provided for the town—an inheritance of national importance—by those who came before us.

Recent major accomplishments

1) Major roadway, stone wall and drainage improvement project. This year—and for the past two years—the Concord Cemetery Committee has undertaken, with the invaluable work of the town's Public Works Department, a major roadway, stone wall and drainage improvement project for Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. This fall Phase One of the project, concentrating on the east side of the cemetery, will be entirely completed. Earlier this year (2017), funds were secured for Phase Two of this project which will concentrate on the west side of the cemetery. Engineering survey work for Phase Two was completed this summer and design work will be completed during the winter at which time advertisement for bids will go out. The execution of the improvements called for by Phase Two is anticipated to begin next spring, with completion looked for by the fall. This much-needed two-phase project will protect and preserve the cemetery for years to come as it continues to serve as a principal tourist destination and a favorite place of refreshment for many citizens of Concord. The Committee is proud to have been involved in this significant accomplishment.

2) Master Plan Update. The Committee, aware of the need to prioritize pressing issues before us, has undertaken this year to do a major review and update of the Cemetery's Master Plan. The existing plan had not been used for some time. A subcommittee constituted of Ms. Whitney Kocher and Ms. Andrea Solomon was commissioned to review the old Master Plan and present their findings to the full Committee, which has in turn begun a step-by step review of the subcommittee's findings in order to determine the top items in need of attention. They suggested, and the full committee agreed, that the Master Plan be reviewed yearly.

Pressing Issues

1) Additional Burial Space for Cremations. Mr. Daniel Rowley, Cemetery Superintendent, and Cemetery Supervisor Ms. Patricia Hopkins have also brought to the Committee's attention the growing need for more spaces for cremation burial. Close to 65% of all the funerals in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery are now interments of cremated remains. While we presently have sufficient accommodations for these interments, we will need to explore the feasibility of, and invest in, land to be used for this function in the future. The town presently has property in and near Sleepy Hollow that may be employed for this purpose, but plans will need to be made to involve these options. Discussions have also involved considerations of a columbarium and a scattering garden for ashes.

2.) Stone Wall Renovation. As the Committee addressed the need for the major roadway, stone wall and drainage improvement project, we became aware, thanks to the attentions of Mr. Rowley, that in future years we will need to secure funding for extensive stone wall work in Sleepy Hollow and Old Hill Cemetery.

3.) Restoration of the Melvin Memorial. The historic monument located in the heart of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and featuring the beautiful sculpture of Mourning Victory by Daniel Chester French, is overdue for significant preservation work. An Invitation for Bid document has been professionally created through the efforts of Mr. Rowley and advertisements for bids will go out this fall. Our hope is that a conservator will be selected in the Spring of 2018 and that the preservation project will be completed by the fall of next year.

4.) Ongoing restoration and preservation of gravestones in all three cemeteries, along with monitoring headstone standards. This past spring, Ms. Hopkins created a photographic record of 160 headstones in the cemeteries that are in need of repair and also created a priority list of 33 stones in greatest need of work. The current plan is to devote \$10,000 a year to the project of repairing headstones. The method of installing new monuments in the cemetery has also been reviewed to ensure use of a method that would allow stones to be moved later if needed.

5.) Considerations for providing additional mausoleums in Sleepy Hollow. There is presently only one mausoleum in the cemetery and there are little or no records detailing plans for additional mausoleums. However, a request two years ago to purchase a site adjacent the first mausoleum for a similar kind of burial arrangement has prompted a good deal of discussion among Committee members and prompted the Committee to revisit and begin to revise our Cemetery Master Plan—in part that we might evaluate this interesting request in the context of overall cemetery development.

Special Strengths

The Concord Cemetery Committee has been blessed to have the private organization, The Friends of Sleepy Hollow, a group of local citizens concerned to preserve and protect the

Cemetery, often come alongside us to share ideas, provide funds and lend encouragement to the work of preserving this important part of Concord's history. The Committee hopes that the ties between the Friends and the Cemetery Committee will continue to be strong—it's not every Committee in our town that has this additional element of support. Their extra eyes and ears and concerns provide the Committee with much appreciated assistance.

Opportunities

Concord's cemeteries are recognized by a great many citizens as a precious heritage that should be cared for lovingly and consistently. When appealing to Town Meeting for the needs of the cemetery this recognition, and the goodwill that accompanies it, makes the Committee's work exceedingly pleasant and agreeable. That connection to the town should be treated with respect and gratitude. Realizing how easy it is to get a majority of the town to appreciate the needs of the cemetery should make those who serve on the Committee want to be especially respectful of that good will. It presents a great opportunity, for whenever there is a need, the town seems most willing to help meet it.