



# Beyond the Wall

stories of triumph, tragedy and tenderness

## Cemeteries on the Windham Plain

*Death sweeps away both great and small~  
Its with'ring blast destroys us all,  
Just as the leaves in autumn fall,  
So mankind must ;  
Heroes, and kings, and statesmen, shall  
Return to dust.*

Robert Dinsmoor  
The “Rustic Bard”  
January, 1827



COPYRIGHT 2017. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.  
WENDI DEVLIN, CHAIRMAN AND THE  
WINDHAM NH CEMETERY TRUSTEES  
3 NORTH LOWELL ROAD  
WINDHAM, NH 03087

# INTRODUCTION

Though incorporated in 1742, Windham did not have its own cemetery until seven years later, after the death of eight-year-old David Gregg on March 6, 1749. Young David's parents buried their son in a small, wooded area and, shortly thereafter, the Town voted to set apart one acre (only half of which was actually laid out and walled in at the time) as a "*Burying place Where William Gregg hath Buried his son.*" Prior to this, and oftentimes even after, residents of Windham trekked 10 miles or so to the "Old Burying Ground" in Derry Upper Village which is, today, East Derry's Forest Hill Cemetery. Some likely made the equally long trip to the "Shipley" or "Old Hill" graveyard, both now in Londonderry.

Regardless of the distance, throughout the 18th century and into the 19th, these journeys were usually made on foot; the deceased being carried upon a bier by four friends or loved ones while additional pallbearers walked alongside, ready to step in when necessary. The coffin, of plain wood, would be draped in a mort cloth provided by the Town, the first of which was purchased in 1758 for \$150. Thus it went until 1827, when the Town finally purchased a hearse and built a house for it in the center of Town. The current hearse house, which now holds equipment but no hearse, was constructed in 1893.

With no sextons or undertakers available, it was the community who rallied around the family and took over the sad task of burials – from digging the grave, to conveying the body, to attending the service and, finally, completing the interment. Given that, for nearly 90 years, the Town had available just over a single acre of land for burials, it is highly likely that, as time went on, some unmarked lots were reused. Ghastly as that sounds, it was common practice during this era. Likely in part to avoid just that, those who could afford to erected stones of slate, sandstone, or schist; a good number of which remain legible today even after centuries of exposure to the elements.

Like most colonial era cemeteries, a common motif found on Windham's older stones is the winged death's head. Over time, as carvers softened the look of the symbol, it came to be known as the, much less ominous sounding, soul effigy. The former is believed to represent the physical death and regeneration of the soul while, the latter, the soul's flight to Heaven. Also frequently seen is the weeping willow; an ancient, and obvious, symbol of mourning.

But, why do the early stones face west, and the graves east? First, in actuality, most do not face true west or east, but more so in that general direction based upon the perception of the living conducting the burial. While often thought to be solely Christian-based, the laying out of the deceased in such a fashion actually harkens back much further to Pagan times. For the religious, the bodies were laid west to east so that, on the Day of Judgment, the resurrected dead would arise facing the dawn whereat Jesus would be returning. Pagans did so for the same reason, absent belief of the coming Judgement Day. To allow the gravestones to be read without the need to tread on the grave itself, the head and foot stones were then installed with the carved surfaces facing outward from the grave.



Sketch: Jessie Lie Farber

Today the Cemetery on the Plains, including the Old Plains, encompasses just over six acres and nearly 1,400 souls are interred here. Over the following pages, we'll take a closer look at not only the Cemeteries, but also some of the more interesting and prominent people who lie beyond their walls.

Wendi Devlin, Chair  
Barbara Coish  
Bruce Moeckel  
*Windham Cemetery Trustees*  
August, 2017

## 1

## GARAPHELIA SYLVA

In 1865, at age 31, Horace Berry came to Windham; taking up residence near the Windham Junction and quickly establishing a successful farm, and himself as an active and respected member of the community. Nearby to his farm was that of James Hughes, son of original settler John, where 21-year old Harriet “Hattie” Garaphelia Hughes also resided.

In 1867, Horace and Hattie were wed and twelve, long years later welcomed their only child, a son, Evarts. Tragically, Evarts would pass away of heart failure in 1897 at the age of 18. It appears to be around this time that Hattie’s sister, Margaret Smith – aged 57 and widowed since 1866 – took up residence with the grieving Berrys. In 1905, Hattie herself would pass away of a heart issue. Perhaps a broken one?

In 1906, Horace and Margaret were married and a few short years later, it would be she who set about creating a fitting memorial to her beloved sister. She purchased a small strip of land abutting Collins Brook and commissioned the split stonewall and iron gates which set it apart from the cemetery proper. The monument to Hattie rests firmly upon a large boulder brought to the site from the sisters’ childhood home and reads, “*The woodlands were gay and beautiful, for nature had clothed them in all her surpassing loveliness*”. When completed in 1913, the Sylva was landscaped with ornamental trees and shrubs, most of which are long, since gone.

In 1924, the year of Horace’s death, Margaret had erected a second memorial, the wall bordering Cobbetts Pond Road, on which is installed a bronze plaque reading: “*Love endures beyond the tomb, forgetting none whose trust is in the king of love, by whom death means not dust to dust.*” It can be viewed to the right of the Cobbett’s Pond Road entrance.

Margaret herself departed this world peacefully, in her sleep, in 1927. Although the Sylva was intended as memorial to her sister, it is also a testament to the warmth and character of the woman who brought it into being. Who “*during his long illness... tenderly and patiently cared for [Horace’s] every want*” and to whom “*no cause which she considered worthy ever appealed to her in vain.*”

Ground penetrating radar surveys show what appears to be evidence of several burials “beyond the pale”; that is outside the cemetery wall in the Sylva. Who might lie here - and why - is unknown. Like most old burying grounds, our records here will, sadly, never be 100% complete, as ancient files have been lost through the passage of time and countless hands.

## 2

## RECEIVING TOMB

A receiving tomb was not only a common, but also a vital structure in any 18th or 19th century cemetery, particularly in New England. Designed to hold the remains of several residents, such a tomb was necessary given the long, harsh winters that prevented proper burials until the spring thaw.

Despite the importance of having one, it took 130 years for the Town to commission construction of a tomb in Windham; relying instead, no doubt, primarily on Forest Hill for our entombment needs. Once decided, Deacon Rei Hills was charged with the task of overseeing its completion, and the final cost to do so in 1872 was \$537.93.

The structure itself is built, in part, of hammered granite, which is exactly what it sounds like. A heavy metal hammer having a grid of conical points, called a bush hammer, is used to repeatedly strike the granite to artificially create the appearance of naturally weathered stone. No doubt tedious and exhausting work for the mason!

It is a distinct possibility, but of course not a certainty, that the granite in question was quarried right here in Windham. In 1857, the construction of the Manchester/Lawrence railroad line resulted in the development of a quarry on the east side of Town on property that was, at the time, owned by none other than Rei Hills. Over the ensuing years, the property passed to several other owners, but the business of quarrying ultimately proved unprofitable and was ceased in the early 1860s.

Despite it being inactive at the time the tomb was built, the very existence of the quarry and Rei Hills’ connection to it cannot merely be a coincidence.

## 3

## THE DINSMORES

For 275 years, there has never *not* been a Dinsmoor/Dinsmore residing in Windham. Throughout the Plains – and the Hill – lie the progeny of original settler John, known as “Daddy Dinsmoor”, whose journey from Ireland to Nutfield was by way of Maine. There, while building himself a house, he was captured by local Native Americans but, wisely, managed to make himself useful to the Chief, and soon became a favorite of the latter. However, one day in the Chief’s absence, he was accused of colluding with the English and summarily found guilty, bound to a tree, and brush was piled about him in preparation for a fiery death. Fortunately, for John, the Chief’s arrival stayed the execution and John was ultimately cleared of the accusation.

In 1724, it came time for the tribe to move on, and John was dismissed by the Chief with instructions to walk on to Boston. Though dismayed by this, that walk ultimately led John to Nutfield, where he discovered old friends and neighbors from Ireland. From them, John received a donation of 60 acres of land and, from this generosity, sprang the Dinsmoors of Windham – and New England – whose numbers and stories are simply too vast to include in this humble telling.

In addition to a tradition of being active in civic affairs and local politics, the Dinsmore branches produced Governors (Samuel and Samuel, Jr.), poets (Robert, the Rustic Bard), and inventors (Charles, who helped develop the modern tractor). Here, at this stop, lies George, Sr., a direct descendent of the Rustic Bard, along with his wife Edith.

George, who at his death was believed to be the oldest native living in Windham, was a bit of a local legend in his time known for, among other things, a quick wit and a propensity for spinning tall tales. He was also one of the first to realize that people, while eager to enjoy Cobbetts Pond, were not necessarily keen on owning property there. A shrewd businessman, George set about constructing a grouping of four rental cottages, which stood until the 1980’s when they were razed and replaced. Realizing, as well, that his opportunities were not limited to wooden shelters, George also rented out areas for tenting on the shore of the Pond. There he and his wife, Edith (Johnson), could often be found entertaining their guests by displaying their unusual proficiency with rifles and six-shooters; skills they developed while residing in the wild west of Wyoming. In 1922, George built he and Edith a beautiful stone house overlooking the Pond, and his rental properties, which one can still see on Enterprise Drive.

Today, the Dinsmores remain active in preserving the history of our Town. George Jr. and his wife, Marion (Mackenzie), have devoted countless years to the preservation and restoration of the Searles facility while their son, Brad, has cultivated and shares through his writings a knowledge of Windham’s past that far exceeds most.

## 4

## THE COCHRANS

Part of that handful of original Nutfield settlers, it was John Cochran’s desire to become a resident of Windham, and he expressed as much by signing the townsmen’s petition to the Governor. His property was, however, specifically exempted within our incorporation charter along with several others; thus forcing him to call Londonderry home for a period of time.

Thankfully in 1777, he, John Jr., James, and Isaac, successfully petitioned the legislature to annex them, and their properties, to Windham. Thankfully, because John and his descendants went on to be vital and respected members of our community through both their bravery on the battlefield, as well as an unparalleled sense of service and responsibility to the public and the Town.

Over generations, Cochran served as Selectmen, Librarians, Constables, Treasurers, Moderators, and more. No better example of the Cochran dedication is there than John E., the great-great-grandson of immigrant John, who served as Town Clerk for **56 years** until his death in 1943, at which time his son, Olin, took over and served for 13 years.

**A.** While visiting this general area of the Plain, it is difficult to miss the **ANDERSON** monument. Carved in the “sarcophagus” style, it is impressive, indeed. Such monuments are, of course, modeled after those used by the ancient Egyptians, with the fundamental difference being that these modern structures do not actually hold the remains of the deceased. Rather, 19th and 20th century sarcophagi are generally carved of a solid piece of stone and placed over the owner’s grave.

## 5

## THE WEBBERS

One of the most inspiring women to ever call Windham home has to be much beloved and sorely missed Maria (Holmes) Webber, who arrived here in 1934 as the new bride of Merton Webber. Merton was a well-known and respected member of the community, serving several years as Town Moderator and 50 years as Treasurer of the Trust Funds. Merton’s family first came to Windham around the time of the Civil War.

Maria (pronounced *ma-RYE-ah*, not *ma-REE-ah* as one might think) was a teacher for over 33 years and is best remembered for her gregarious and adventurous nature. At 85, the year she took her first hot air balloon ride, she published a note in the paper, inviting all to stop by her home to celebrate her birthday. At 95, she took her first motorcycle ride, courtesy of Bill Brown! At 102, vibrant as ever, she hosted both her birthday and the unveiling of a stained glass window dedicated to her at the Searles School, where she taught for many years. Just before what would have been her 103rd birthday, a celebration of Maria’s life was held at her home with an open invitation to any and all who wished to attend. Just as she would have wanted.

Was there a secret to Maria’s longevity? Well, it’s said she began each day with coffee and crossword puzzles, and ended with a shot or two of Scotch and a phone call to her sister. And that she kicked off each weekend by hosting the most popular Friday night poker game in Town. Perhaps that, coupled with a life of joy and laughter in between, is really all it takes.

**B.** In 1861, **JOHN JOHNSON** enlisted in Company K of NH’s 4th Infantry Regiment. In February of 1864 he mustered in again, this time as a re-enlisted veteran for which he received a “bounty” of \$200 from the Town. By August of that year, he was in Virginia, where he was captured on the 16th at Deer Run. Likely wounded, John languished for months in a Florence, South Carolina prison until passing away on November 24.

## 6

## THE LOWS

Chief Willis Low’s career with the Windham Police Department spanned in excess of 35 years, the majority of which were served as Chief. It began with a young man – “Red” to those who knew him, thanks to his flaming hair and ruddy complexion – who first served as a Special Officer and was then appointed Superintendent and acting Chief in 1942. As no police station existed at that time, his appointment, effectively, turned his home into one.

Over those early years, most calls were answered by Willis’ mother, Ethel, who then relayed them out to the others. This changed, of course, with his marriage to Edith (Williamson) in 1949, when headquarters moved with them to their new home in the former Schoolhouse No. 3. There, Edith took over both the 24/7 dispatch and the secretarial duties of the Department.

Over the years, as the Town grew, the call volume increased and the crimes themselves worsened. Chief Low and the officers moved from rousting skinny dippers and raiding stills to juggling burglaries, car accidents and more. In 1947, Chief Low was even faced with the sad case of a tiny, newborn found strangled and left in the woods.

Eventually, as the 60s approached and the number of runaways skyrocketed, the need for staff increased such that Edith was appointed the first female officer in Windham. Mind you, that appointment did not, however, excuse her from her other, long-standing duties!

As they had worked together, so did they retire together, both leaving the Department in 1975. Throughout their years of service, Willis had always managed to faithfully tend his fields, while Edith had found herself to be an award-winning artist – activities each carried on into their golden years.

**C.** Born in Derry in 1839, **EDWIN STICKNEY** was the first to open a store at the Junction. He began operations in 1861 and, although he sold the store multiple times, he seemed unable to resist the charm of Windham. The last time he re-bought the store was in the fall of 1870, and here he stayed. The Stickney cellar hole, located behind the caboose on Depot Road, was designated an Historic District in 2008.

## 7

## GEORGE SEAVEY

Few newcomers to town realize that, historically, Windham was not simply a farming community. Rather ours was also a community of industry, primarily grist (grain) and other mills. One of the most prolific mill operators arrived in Windham in 1852 at age 13.

George Seavey came to Windham via Pelham along with his father Benjamin, who operated a sawmill near Bissell Camp, his mother and his five sisters. Upon reaching adulthood, George moved to the Junction area and followed his father's example by entering the mill business. In 1866, along with John Brown and Hemphill Clark, George brought the first ever steam sawmill to Town and by 1877, now the sole owner, he had rebuilt and expanded the mill; broadening his operations out into cider milling for which he ran weekly ads soliciting suitable apples. In 1904, the cider mill was destroyed by a fire that was blamed on the carelessness of transient lodgers.

There's no doubt of Seavey's success, and his desire to celebrate it was probably never more obvious than in 1886 when he had the, presumably modest, home he was living in with his wife, Mary (Ballou), physically moved to a different location in order to make room for a new "mansion". It was reported that the old house was moved "*with chimneys all standing, and the family occupying it during removal,*" and that "*Not a picture or looking glass were disturbed, -- Mrs. Seavey attending to her work as usual.*" It was also said that, when completed, the new home would "*be the finest residence in Town.*" Those curious as to whether that may have, indeed, been the case can judge for themselves, as the house still stands today; being none other than the Windham Junction restaurant and gift shop owned and operated by Kay and Jon Normington. Jon, in fact, bears an eerily striking resemblance to George Seavey. Perhaps fate intervened in that purchase!

After a long illness, George Seavey departed this world in 1910, leaving a legacy of progress in the community. Mary followed in 1929 after suffering a fall down the cellar stairs. As she lived alone, it was some time before she was discovered, and she passed just days after being found.

## 8

## FEGAN'S ELM KNOLL FARM

Like mills and stores, boarding houses were big business at one time in Windham. Summer visitors, laborers, actors, and others could be found enjoying quiet – or not so quiet – moments on sprawling properties around Town, of which Elm Knoll on Kendall Pond Road was just one.

John Fegan appears to have come to West Windham rather late in life, in 1877 at around 60 years old. For the next 30 years, until his death, he ran Elm Knoll Farm. He was remembered as a "*well-known and highly esteemed citizen*" and one who "*had always been a favorite with the summer boarders at his farm, with whom he liked to have a pleasant chat and crack a joke.*" Upon his passing in 1907, operation of Elm Knoll was taken over by John's daughter, Julia Leavitt, who had lived and worked with him for the 20 years preceding his death.

Julia was much beloved by guests to the Farm and, over the years, she hosted many reunions drawing back those visitors with the fondest of memories for weekends of music, dance, and reminiscing. In 1922, the Elm Knoll torch was passed again, this time to Perley Greeley, a frequent visitor, and his wife Bertha (Butterfield/Bills). The Greeleys continued boarding guests, until, on April 21, 1930, the farm and barn were completely consumed by fire.

## 9

## POTTER'S FIELD

Like most New England cemeteries, when the newer portion of the Plain was laid out in 1835, the Town set aside a potter's field; interment in which was available free of charge to those who could not afford to purchase a lot, transient residents, or unidentified individuals. The term "potter's field" is of Biblical origin and references a patch of ground from which clay was dug for pottery. Even after the area was acquired by Jerusalem's High Priests for use to bury strangers, the poor, or criminals, the designation of "potter's field" remained.

Records show that ten people rest in our little field; ranging from 4-year old Florence Turner who passed away in 1897 of diphtheria, to 70-year old Morris Kennedy who was found deceased by the side of the road out by Shadow Lake in 1889. The last burial here was that of Holly Fraize in 1989; whose presence is also the only one memorialized.

**D.** As they did in life, the **HUGHES** and **BERRY** families reside next to one another here on the Plain. The large, cottage-style Hughes monument incorporates much in the way of symbolism. The urn and drapery speak to family's mourning, while the abundance of roses – their unfailing love.

## 10

## REVEREND SAMUEL HARRIS

In 1798, a new meetinghouse (the present Town Hall) was raised near the center of Town to replace the original built in 1753 near the Cemetery on the Hill. October 9, 1805, when Rev. Samuel Harris was ordained, was a great day, as for the past few years the preaching had been done by stated supplies. Rev. Harris was the first ordained to preach in the new meetinghouse, and on the day of his ordination the green and the streets were black with moving throngs of people from this and surrounding towns. The militia of the Town were also there in force to do honor to the important occasion.

His ministry was successful in building the church, and Rev. Harris continued preaching there until December 1826 when his voice failed and he was dismissed by mutual consent. After his voice recovered, he resumed preaching in various places, but remained a resident here until his death on September 6, 1848.

Throughout his ministry, Rev. Harris was actively involved in other Town endeavors in addition to his pastoral duties. In 1806, he was a Trustee of the first public library in Windham, who were charged with selecting and purchasing the books therefor. Starting in 1809, he also served on the committee for inspecting schools, continuing to do so for various years until 1824.

In the spring of 1815, the "Windham Society for the Reformation of Morals" was founded, with Rev. Harris serving as acting President on the first Board of Officers. The Sabbath School was also formed during his ministry, in 1817.

In April 1834 the Anti-Slavery Society in Windham was formed, of which Rev. Harris was a member. The object of the society was "*to effect the abolition of slavery in the United States ... to improve condition of colored people ... and to obtain equal privileges with whites.*"

Because of his successful ministry and other services to the Town, Rev. Harris was respected and beloved by his people.

**E.** When the Civil War began in 1861, **MARY (CONVERSE) MARDEN** was a widow living in Windham. Rather than sit idly by as the conflict unfolded, she instead served as a hospital nurse, treating many a wounded and suffering soldier. According to an 1863 recollection by Captain Clough, (Co H 4 NH), Mary had been on the battlefield at Antietam and Gettysburg before being sent to the hospitals at Beaufort. After the war, Mary returned home, where she died at the age of 54.

**11****REVEREND CALVIN CUTLER**

On April 9, 1828, Calvin Cutler was installed as pastor of the Windham Presbyterian Church; serving until his death, while in office, in February of 1844. During his ministry, he was described as a preacher who gave his parishioners “*strong meat as well as milk for their spiritual nourishment*”. In 1833, after a dispute arose over the use of the ministerial fund and the meetinghouse, the church withdrew and, in 1834, constructed a new church just across the road. This new house of worship, under Rev. Cutler’s ministry, was dedicated on January 14, 1835 and is still used as the worship place of the Presbyterians today.

In 1832, Rev. Cutler established a valuable library in connection with the Sabbath School that was formed in 1817, with the first reading materials being in the form of tracts and pamphlets. Rev. Cutler served as one of the Superintendents of the Sabbath School from 1832 to the time of his death.

Rev. Cutler also served on the Superintending School Committee of the public schools during the years 1829-1831 and 1839-1843. It was this Committee that would examine all candidates for teachers and visit each of the public schools at least two times during the year.

Much like his fellow pastor, Samuel Harris, Rev. Cutler was among the most active leaders of the Anti-Slavery Society of Windham. The Society met frequently, which served to keep alive a strong public sentiment regarding this matter.

The inscription on his monument, a large obelisk paid for by his parishioners, reads, “*In testimony of the high regard in which his character was held by his church and the people of Windham where he labored as a Presbyterian minister for sixteen years. He was a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith.*”

**12****FESSENDEN AND HIS MILL**

Another mill key to the success and growth of Windham was purchased by the father of Stephen Fessenden sometime around 1833, with the latter moving to Windham shortly thereafter. At the time, the abandoned site on Golden Brook consisted of a sawmill and gristmill and, over time, Stephen added an additional mill to produce shingles and clapboard, as well as yet another building which was eventually used to manufacture twilled flannel.

He operated the mills until his death and, over those years, offered steady employment to around thirty residents. In addition to the mills themselves, the site also served for several years as one of the four post office locations in Town, with Stephen himself serving as postmaster from 1857 until his passing.

Morrison describes Fessenden as a bit of a contradiction; “*radical by nature, and [he was] brilliant in some points.*” His early years in Windham found him far too free with his money and, unsurprisingly, often sorely indebted to others; a detriment both professionally and personally. And, yet, he was also said to be a staunch supporter of the temperance movement and one who loathed tobacco.

Upon his death, Stephen was remembered by many who knew him as being an exceptionally pious man – one who strictly adhered to the Sabbath, rarely missed a service and even went so far as to “persuade” his workers to attend, as well. He was also an exceptionally generous man, which is perhaps why he allowed Robert B. Jackson to construct a dwelling on the mill property.

Sadly, Mr. Jackson’s home would be hit by a tornado in 1856 that, remarkably, is not reported as damaging the nearby mills. Despite the home and its contents being lifted, hurtled through the air, and utterly demolished into a pile of rubble said to be about 40’ wide by 80’ long, Mr. Jackson and his family were relatively uninjured.

Perhaps Mr. Fessenden's devotion to a higher being provided a bit of divine intervention in sparing his, and many others, livelihood from the raging funnel cloud's wrath. Along with, of course, the lives of the Jackson family.

Today, the last remnants of Fessenden's Mill can still be seen as one travels on Lowell Road. Just to the left, before Golden Brook Road, lies the dam and pond that helped fuel Fessenden's, and others', dreams.

**F.** In 1863, just two years after 30-year old **JOHN CALVIN HILLS** was mustered into Company H of the 7th Regiment of NH Volunteers, he was dead of "disease" at Morris Island, South Carolina. The history of the 7th Regiment tells that each company camped at the Island was to dig its own well. One company, in particular, was unhappy with their water, as they thought it tasted and smelled badly, so they decided to dig deeper. A mere foot or so more of sand removed out of the well bottom revealed the corpse of a man. It was said that nearly the whole company became sick the next day. We cannot help but ask, is it any wonder that men were dying of "disease" in such deplorable conditions as that?

## 13

## THE TITCOMBS

Edward Titcomb came to Windham in 1848, where he immediately undertook several different ventures from mattress making to saw- milling. His first mill, where he manufactured those cotton mattresses, burned completely in 1857; yet in staunch Windham fashion, he was undeterred by the loss and quickly rebuilt. As with Fessenden's mill, Titcomb's also housed a postal office, and Edward served as West Windham postmaster from 1866 to 1872. His wife, Sarah (Bradish) taught school for many years in Windham and surrounding towns.

In 1862 their first-born son, just six-years old, was gravely injured at the family's sawmill. After lingering for days, little Eddie passed away on March 24. The lily of the valley carved upon his small stone symbolizes not only his innocence as a child, but the renewal of his soul.

The most famous of Titcombs, and arguably the most well-known individual in the Plains, is daughter Mary Bradish Titcomb, one of the leading women painters to graduate the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Mary was a schoolteacher briefly in Windham; never marrying. Instead, she left town at the age of 28 in order to train in Massachusetts as an art instructor for that State's public schools. After completing her training, she went to work as the Director of Drawing for Brockton, MA, which first shed true light on her own artistic abilities. In 1902, Mary resigned and enrolled at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts; studying under two of the School's most celebrated impressionists, Benson and Tarbell.

A sign of the times, in 1905 Mary altered her artistic signature to the gender-neutral "M. Bradish Titcomb" to deter any preconceived notions or prejudice that exhibition judges or potential purchasers may have had. Mary exhibited regularly throughout her career, and it was because of just such an event at the Corcoran Gallery that she gained national acclaim. It was there, in 1915, that President Woodrow Wilson himself purchased Mary's *"Portrait of Geraldine J."* Although originals rarely become available, prints of Mary's art can still be purchased online at various art sites.

Visitors will notice Mary's grave is marked by not one, but two stones. The second, newer one, was placed many years ago by an elderly nephew of hers who, on his own, drove thousands of miles from Arizona to honor the memory of his aunt.

**G.** Four days before he died in 1903, **BENJAMIN SIMPSON** crafted a peculiar will which, in part, required that no more than \$8,000 of his nearly \$40,000 estate be spent to cover his burial lot with slabs of marble or granite. He even went so far as to give explicit instructions for their installation. But, why? Some fear of grave robbers? Just because he could? We'll never know!

**14**

## ROBERT BARTLEY

Robert Bartley arrived in Windham in 1837 and immediately entered the storekeeper trade; taking over the store located at the Centre. Like many notable residents, he also quickly became active in the community and its politics, serving over a number of varying years as a member of the School Committee, Treasurer, Clerk, and as one of the few Justices of the Peace in Windham. He also served 33 years as Postmaster of the office located within his store.

In 1852, Miss Harriet Dinsmoor desired to establish a public library, the second in Town, and Bartley's store was selected as the location. Dubbed the "Windham Social Library", it was located in a small room on the second floor of the store and housed around 100 books that were purchased by Rev. Loren Thayer with subscription funds of \$90. Robert acted as Librarian, but only for four short years as, in April of 1856, the most destructive fire the Town had seen to date occurred, fully consuming the store and Library, Robert's home, and the other buildings at the site. The structures were rebuilt, and Robert continued trade there until his death in 1867 at which time his son, Francis, took over.

In 1870, the store was the site of a particularly tragic accident. 72-year old Joseph Clyde – descendent of original settler Daniel and the *very last* of the Cloyd/Clyde family in Windham – was killed in front of the store when he was thrown from his wagon and struck his head upon the stone steps.

Francis kept the store for just a few years before selling it in 1872, after which it went through several owners and iterations, most notably its transformation into the popular "Nine Acres" boarding house owned by Anne Clark. Today, Bartley's buildings serve a larger purpose; the house is the Town's Administrative and Recreation offices and the barn the home of the Senior Center.

**H. CHILLA (WEBBER) WHEELER** was a lifelong resident of Windham and was just 19 when she married 32-year old Myron. Myron was very active in the community – serving as Moderator for 24 years, 18 as Selectman, and 27 as School Moderator. Chilla, herself, served 19 consecutive years as School District Clerk. Prior to her sister-in-law Maria's death, Chilla was one of our oldest Plains "resident", having passed at 101.

**I.** Just prior to **DELLA (GIBSON) KIMBALL**'s passing in 1952 she and her husband, Washington, celebrated their 71st(!) wedding anniversary. As if that weren't impressive enough, the couple *also* held the distinction of being the oldest residents of Windham – both being aged 97. One year after Della's death, Washington left this earthly plain to rejoin his bride.

**15**

## DEDICATED TO THE VETERANS

There are over 100 veterans here in the Plains cemeteries, some of whom lie here in this Section that was formally laid out and dedicated as part of the Town's 250th anniversary in 1992. No doubt the location was chosen, in part, due to its proximity to the flagpole where each year for the past several decades, members of our own Wilbur E. Tarbell American Legion Post 109 bring the community together annually on Memorial Day.

For those who are curious, the first wreath that is laid by a sitting Selectman and young boy or girl scout during the ceremony is placed on the grave of Richard Wilton. Corporal Wilton was a Marine in WWII, a member of the Fire Department, and the first burial in the newly dedicated Section.

**J.** WWII Army Veteran, **ERNIE ALIX**, was a devoted husband of 63-years, father of 13, and founder of the oldest, family owned and run garage in town; aptly named "Ernie's Garage". Since 1949, Ernie's has operated nonstop but for a brief time in 1974 when fire struck. Neighbors rallied immediately and, in almost no time at all, raised funds, manpower, and a new garage.

**16****THE BUTTERFIELDS**

William and Sophronia Butterfield came to Windham in 1882 with four children in tow. Of them, George would settle here, marrying Mary (Moriarty) and running a successful boarding house while raising five children; all of whom remained in Windham throughout their lives. George, Jr. served as Selectman and was one of the Town's first insurance *and* real estate brokers. Marion, who tragically passed in a house fire, retired as a schoolteacher. Merton served many years as the Town Road Agent. Arthur was a Police Captain and Firefighter.

Charles, the baby of the family, lies here with his wife, Mary (Boylan). In his youth, Charlie served as a Special Police Officer and volunteer Firefighter before assuming the role of Postmaster. He served the Town in the latter capacity for 32 years, while simultaneously running a general store and gas station, with Mary working by his side for much of that time.

Upon his retirement, Charlie moved on to Animal Control, a position he held for many years and a natural transition given his love of animals. A particular passion of Charlie's was breeding and training champion hunting dogs. He was also a highly respected, national judge of foxhounds and beagles, and bred and campaigned two international champions of his own.

**17****THE ZINS FAMILY**

German immigrant Peter Zins brought his wife and the six youngest of his 11 children to Windham in 1917 by way of Haverhill, MA. Theirs was a warm welcome – quite literally – as shortly after arriving, they received a burning cross in their field as a housewarming gift. Utterly resolute and fearless, the family quickly set about putting down firm, deep roots in Windham. Having purchased a sprawling, 100 acres of farmland, Peter and Jane (Melanson) began doing so by establishing a successful dairy and award-winning vegetable farm. Their children followed suit over the years, by becoming integral members of the community and a “first” family of sorts.

Gene, 14 years old when the family arrived, grew to be one of the Town's first Firefighters and first Police Officers. Sworn in as the latter at age 21, Gene served as Chief, then a rotating position, for eight years. A mason by trade, he led construction of the Town's first Fire Station in 1946, and began work on the first Police Station before passing away in September of 1961. At the time of his death, Gene held the dual ranks of Police Sergeant and Fire Lieutenant. So respected were Gene and his contributions, that they are commemorated by a plaque placed within the very stone he laid at the first Fire Station, the building that now houses the Community Development Department.

Other firsts included those of his younger sister, Maggie, who was one of the Town's first insurance agents, a founder of the Women's Fire Auxiliary, and one of only three woman trained in operating the fire apparatus. It was also a Zins wedding, that of Gene's daughter Elaine, that was the first Roman Catholic one held in the history of Windham. She followed that up with the first baptism about a year later!

The Zins wives were no exception when it came to a sense of community. James' wife, Eleanor (Lord), served the public for 23 years, first as Town Clerk then Tax Collector. Gene's wife, Iola (Bills), was a founder of the Breakfast Club and a 50-year member of the Grange.

Even today, descendants of Peter (or their wives) are active in both fire and public service in and around Windham. Not bad for a family who might have, instead, been run out of Town!

Wilbur E. Tarbell enlisted in the military in January of 1942 at the age of 22. After boot camp he joined the Submarine Service, where he was assigned to the USS Scorpion (SS-278) as Electrician's Mate First Class. On January 5, 1944, while in Chinese waters, the Scorpion requested a rendezvous with a nearby boat, the USS Herring, to offload an injured crew member. Rough seas prevented the exchange but, later that same evening, the Scorpion reported to the Herring, "*case under control*". She was never seen, or heard from, again.

When there was no contact from her by the expected date of February 24, she was ordered, by radio from Midway, to respond; which she did not. On March 6, 1944 the USS Scorpion, and all 77 souls onboard, were reported presumed lost. It was not until 1946 that Wilbur's name was removed from the "missing" list and he was declared deceased, formally widowing his bride, Doris (Plimpton), and earning him the distinction of being the only Windham casualty of WWII.

Wilbur was remembered after his loss as a "*natural leader among the young people*" with "*an engaging personality, a character without blemish*" and who "*left a name always to be honored.*" On Memorial Day 1947, the wrought iron "Wilbur E. Tarbell Memorial Archway" was formally dedicated. Given by his parents in memory of their son, the arch includes a plaque bearing Wilbur's name and specifics, along with the insignia of the Submarine Service shown to the right.



Such is the story of his passing; but what of his family and short life here in Windham?

The Tarbells - Maurice, Elva (Dimock), Wilbur, and Fielda - were frequent visitors before moving to Windham permanently in 1932. Maurice was a mason by trade, a skill he passed on to young Wilbur, and active in the community. He served as Selectman for many years, on several committees, and was a member of the State legislature for two terms. Maurice was also a veteran, having served in the Army during WWI. Gold Star Mother, Elva, was also an active community member.

Aside from the disappearance of Wilbur, the Tarbell family was no stranger to tragedy. In 1925, they suffered the loss of infant Miriam, younger sister to Wilbur. In 1948, another young life was lost when Fielda's 5-month old son, David Lee Dick, suffocated in his carriage. Both little ones also lie here, in the Plains.

*Excerpted with permission from "Ernest Harrington, DSC 2551, Windham Hero" written by Frank R. Johnson and published in the May 24, 2001 Windham Independent.*

[...] I knew Ernie after World War II when we were working together on my father's farm. At that time, Ernie was in his 60s, an easygoing and good-natured man. He had such a wonderful sense of humor. [...] Ernest Bottomley, who was also a World War I veteran, told me that Ernie Harrington had been decorated for heroism for his courage and bravery under fire. Ernie, however, couldn't be coaxed into talking about the war, never mind what he may have done to be decorated as a hero. [...] In answer to my many questions, he just said that anyone who goes to war is a hero, just being there and fighting side-by-side with your buddies, sometimes being wounded, sometimes dying. [...].

[...] from a local newspaper during the war, about 1919:

*"Corporal Ernest A. S. Harrington, Company F, 103rd Infantry, Canobie Lake, N.H., received the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in action near Bois de St. Remy, France, Sept. 12, 1918. While sniper fire was holding up the advance of a section of his platoon, Corp. Harrington rushed forward and without aid, forced an officer and six men to surrender at the point of his bayonet. He is the son of C. F. Harrington."*

The Distinguished Service Cross is a U.S. Army decoration awarded for extraordinary heroism during operations against an armed enemy. [...] (Ed. note – the DSC is second only to the Medal of Honor)

The 26th Division, US Army, is unique in that it was the first division fully organized under the American flag in that war. All the men of the 26th, the Yankee Division, were volunteers who made the first successful raid into enemy territory. There, in France in 1918, under desperate circumstances, these citizen soldiers gave their all, with an esprit second to no other division on the Western Front. [...]

**K.** Eagle Scout projects are an important and welcome service to the Cemeteries. Two of the largest in the Plains were completed by Life Scouts Ian Farmer and Carl DeFranco. Ian fully renovated the sorely neglected hearse house we spoke of in our introduction, while Carl undertook the task of preserving the Infant Section by constructing a much-needed retaining wall to prohibit further erosion of the knoll.

His efforts ensure that our “Babies Rest” in stable, safe ground.

## 20 THE BROWNS

Born in Ireland, John Brown and his wife, Mary, came to Windham in 1896. John worked for the railroad for many years before turning to farming later in life. Of the children raised in the Brown home, James is particularly notable to the Town’s history.

James was a charter member of the Police and Fire departments, as well as owner of a transportation and fuel oil company. In 1948, in keeping with a vote of Town Meeting to establish the position, James was elected as Fire Chief. With the title, came a host of other changes and challenges for the Department – and for the Chief and his wife, Hazel (Brown).

There being no dispatch center, fire calls were received at the Chief’s house and what followed was a systematic rallying of 30 volunteer Firefighters. While James headed full tilt to the station to sound the air whistle and ready the equipment, Hazel set in motion the series of phone calls to key numbers throughout the Town; contacting first whichever exchange – Derry, Nashua, or Salem – was closest to the fire. That responder, in turn, called in the Firefighter closest to the fire, and so on and so forth. Without Hazel’s contribution, the rapid response of the Department would surely have been hampered. In time, Hazel was also given control of the siren, as the air whistle was replaced by an electronic siren, which she could sound from home.

In 1961 James passed away, he being the last of that small band of esteemed men who brought the Fire Department into being. They say death comes in threes, and so it was, beginning suddenly in 1956 with Jesse Perry and ending with James, the sixth. The last time James left his home was to attend the dedication of the plaque to both he and Gene Zins as founders of the Department. He was determined to take part, despite being physically unable to get out of his car; such was the bond between the men in the Department.

The dedication of James and Hazel to the Fire service was carried down to their sons, Jim and Bill, who each served the community for over four decades, and to their grandson who currently serves on the Londonderry Fire Department.

Each year, Bill Brown presents the “Michael P. Brown Memorial Scholarship” to one male and one female, graduating senior who has demonstrated good sportsmanship, dedication, and team spirit as a student-athlete. The Scholarship, of \$1000 to each selected student, was established in memory of Bill’s son, a Pinkerton graduate and athlete who was tragically killed in a motorcycle accident in 1987.

It's hard for most to picture Windham as it was even 25 short years ago, much less 50. Today, we are a community peppered with plazas and storefronts of all sorts. In 1964, though, this was not the case. That was, until Paul Clancy constructed the Towne Plaza – known by most today as the dramatically expanded Howie's Plaza.

Clancy's project brought with it our first pharmacy, aptly named The Windham Pharmacy, and a true grocery store, The Little Dipper Super Market. It also included Tony's Barber Shop, owned by Tony D., and Morey's Coffee Shoppe & Bakery. In 1967, Clancy negotiated an \$18,000 contract with the Federal Government to construct what would, finally, be a central Post Office for the Town. The Office was installed in a small, newly constructed building that sat kitty corner to the remainder of the stores.

Over the years, much changed in the Plaza; the Post Office moved from that separate building to where the Lobster Tail now operates, the bakery was replaced in time by much-loved Kate's Place, where Cobbetts Pond Pizzeria is now, and Tony's little corner of the building seems to have been absorbed by the recent expansion. Speaking of Tony and his shop, it's interesting to note that for 25 years only he remained as an original tenant through the many owners and changes to the plaza, until retiring in 1989.

Although now much altered from his original vision, Clancy's Towne Plaza no doubt set a standard for a good portion of the commercial development that followed it over the years; that of aesthetically pleasing groupings of small, locally owned businesses.

As for Paul Clancy, himself, he was a father of eight, and a commercial pilot for 39 years; in fact, he was once the youngest jet-rated pilot at Northeast Airlines. He is also remembered by many as being the first in Town to own a helicopter, which he would often land at his home on Lowell Road, much to the chagrin of his neighbors.

In 1974, after selling the Plaza along with a successful oil company he had established on Lowell Road, the Clancys relocated to Florida. In 1999, Paul was killed when a replica World War II fighter plane that he was flying crashed.

**L** It's easy to miss the tiny wooden gate as you enter the Old Plains; tucked away amid the stone and shade as it is. In 1975, after being rebuilt by members of Pack 266, the gate was formally dedicated to the memory of Goldie Schieding, a devoted and beloved member of Cub Scout Pack 266.

Morrison tells us that the family of Captain Nathaniel and Agnes (Park) Hemphill was "*one of the most interesting, prolific, and remarkable ... in the history of the town*" and we would be hard pressed to disagree! Nathaniel was an influential member of Town; a Selectman for many years, Moderator, and a signer of the Association Test in 1776. He was also patriarch of what is still believed to be the largest family ever in Windham, he and Agnes having 18 children!

He was also a slaveholder, no doubt borne out of necessity given the sheer size of his family. Dinah was purchased by Nathaniel in Boston for \$40 and, over the years, she became much more than a servant to the family. Although she was likely freed when the State Constitution was adopted in 1784, Dinah stayed for several more years until one, fateful day when Agnes overlooked bringing her something from the local market. Despite Agnes quickly going back for whatever the item might have been, Dinah was so wounded by the slight that she left.

1796 brought the sudden death of Nathaniel, just days after the onset of “lung fever”. With Dinah gone Agnes, almost overnight, was left on her own with (at least) ten of the children. Undaunted, she quickly devised a way to manage the needs of her large brood. For the next 18 years she and her daughters, each one having their own spinning wheel, systematically labored to keep the family well afloat.

For three months at a time, the women prepared and spun flax into linen thread, which they then gathered into linen cloth, bleached, and readied for sale. Agnes would then depart at 2:00 AM, alone on horseback, for the markets in Salem, MA; one day there, one to both trade and buy items for the family, and one to return. Thus the Hemphill family, under Agnes’ immeasurable strength and wisdom, thrived and prospered; with each daughter being generously dowered when married.

Agnes herself worked nearly to the end under the care of her youngest, Naomi, who remained unmarried and by her mother’s side throughout. Agnes passed in 1839, at the age of 92, and Naomi just a few months later.

Benjamin Day, one of New England’s most prolific carvers, created Naomi’s stone which likely cost around \$25 (or \$630 today).

**M.** In 1812 an outbreak of Spotted Fever occurred in New England; killing most who contracted it within hours. At its peak in Windham 16 died, 13 of them children, in less than two weeks. It’s likely that Sally (10), John (12), and James (11) **MCLEARY** - who died on 3/26, 27 and 28 of that fateful year - were just three of those unlucky thirteen.

23

## DAVID GREGG

And so it is that we end where the history of the Plain cemeteries began, at the small grave of David Gregg; the son of William and Elisabeth (Kyle) and grandson and namesake of original settler, David, who arrived in Nutfield in 1721 with his family.

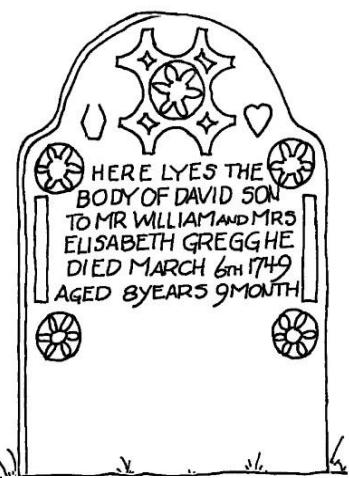
William, who resided in West Windham near Schoolhouse No. 5, was especially active in the Town politically, serving for many years as Moderator, many as Clerk, and many as Selectman. He was, in fact, a Selectman on the first Board in 1742. He was also known for his hunting prowess, having made great strides in reducing the number of bears, wolves, and catamounts in the wild that was then Windham; as well as for his piety and emotional nature. Elisabeth was described as exceptionally beautiful with a personality to match.

Young David was their first-born.

There is no record of how he died, or why he was laid to rest in this particular spot; about 4 miles as the crow flies from the Gregg homestead. Was it a hunting accident? An animal attack on this very spot? If either, why not carry him closer to home? Was William so overcome by emotion, perhaps, that he simply insisted on burying his son where he fell? We’ll likely never know, but the scene itself must have been a heartbreak one; laying a child to rest, alone, in the midst of the wilderness.

David’s small grave is marked by an equally small stone; a single slab of mica schist. The symbols upon it – unquestionably carved by John Wight, the “Hieroglyph Carver of Londonderry” – are basic in both their form and meaning. To the left of the center star, a coffin, symbolizing the child’s death. To the right, a heart, symbolizing the love for him of those left behind.

The star itself; an angel.



Sketch: Robert Thorndike

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** This brief look at the Cemeteries on the Plain and some of Windham's notable citizens who rest there would not have been possible without the assistance of the following individuals and resources:

**Frank and Mary Johnson**

**Carol Pynn      Elaine Keefe**

**Frank Farmer      Brad Dinsmore**

*"Ancestry Library Edition."* Ancestry Library Edition. Web. May 2017

Benes, Peter. *"John Wight: The Hieroglyph Carver of Londonderry."* Old-Time New England Vol. LXIV, No. 2. 1973.

*"Digital Archives of the Derry Public Library."* Digital Archives of the Derry Public Library. Accessed May 2017. [derry.advantage-preservation.com/](http://derry.advantage-preservation.com/)

*"Digital Archives of The Nesmith Library."* Digital Archives of The Nesmith Library. Accessed May 2017. [nesmith.advantage-preservation.com/](http://nesmith.advantage-preservation.com/)

Day, Marilyn. *"Benjamin Day, Stone Carver (1783 – 1855)"*. PDF. Pelham [NH] Historical Society, 2005.

Dinsmore, Bradford R. *"Windham"*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2003. Print.

Farber, Jessie Lie. *"Early American Gravestones – Introduction to the Farber Gravestone Collection."* PDF. American Antiquarian Society, 2003.

*"Historical Newspapers from 1700s-2000s."* Newspapers.com. Accessed May 2017. [www.newspapers.com/](http://www.newspapers.com/)

Hutchinson, John G. *"History of the Fourth Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteers."* John B. Clarke, 1913. Print.

Lawrence, Robert F. *"New Hampshire Churches."* Claremont, NH: Claremont Manufacturing, 1856. Print.

Little, Henry F. W. *"The Seventh Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion."* Bethesda, MD: U Publications of America. Print.

*"Mary Bradish Titcomb (1858-1927)." VoseGalleries.com. Accessed May 2017.* [www.vosegalleries.com/artists/mary-bradish-titcomb](http://www.vosegalleries.com/artists/mary-bradish-titcomb)

Morrison, Leonard A. *"The History of Windham In New Hampshire (Rockingham County) 1719-1883."* Boston, MA: Cupples, Upham & Co, 1883.

New Hampshire. Adjutant-General's Office. *"Report of the Adjutant General of the State of New Hampshire."* Concord, NH: A. Hadley, Print.

*"Rural Oasis: History of Windham, New Hampshire, 1883-1975."* Canaan, NH: Published for the Town of Windham, NH, by Phoenix Pub., 1975.

US Navy. *"Submarine War Reports."* Historic Naval Ships Association. Accessed May 2017. <http://www.hnsa.org/resources/manuals-documents/submarine-war-reports/>.

Willey, George Franklyn. *"Willey's Book of Nutfield [...]"* 1869 ed. Internet Archive. Accessed May 2017. [archive.org/details/willeysbookofnut00will](http://archive.org/details/willeysbookofnut00will)

