

Introduction

(4 July 2017)

One day prior to an early December 2016 snowfall, the last headstone in Canterbury's Maple Grove Cemetery had been read and its information recorded. It represented the culmination of a year-long project, undertaken by the town's cemetery trustees, sexton and historian, to insure that the military service of those interred within the town of Canterbury's 34 cemeteries is respectfully recognized by the placement of a U.S. flag. The project also identified the graves of six Revolutionary War veterans who were buried in cemeteries that were part of Canterbury's "North Fields". [The original grant of the town of Canterbury was an extensive area including what is now Loudon (set off in 1773) and Northfield (set off in 1780).]

The town of Canterbury's Military Veterans Project was able to identify **159** military veterans, though the research determining military service was limited primarily to local sources. In the recent past only **67** had been recognized. At the onset of the project it was apparent that three situations existed – 1) graves of confirmed veterans were decorated with a flag, 2) graves of confirmed veterans were NOT decorated with a flag and 3) graves of individuals whose military service could not be confirmed were decorated with a flag. The latter situation prompted the question "Why?" The research was originally limited to local sources, primarily James Lyford's History of Canterbury, NH 1727 – 1912 (Vol. I & II) and Lucy Cross' History of Northfield, NH 1780 – 1905 (Vol. I & II). Josiah B. Higgins' grave was decorated with a flag and a G.A.R (Grand Army of the Republic) stanchion but Lyford's two volume set has no record of Higgins' military service. The History of the Twelfth Regiment, NH Volunteers in the War of the Rebellion, however, did record his service during the Civil War. Later research has expanded to the internet through *Ancestry*, *Find A Grave* and *Family Search* sites. The project was further complicated because some people may decorate the graves with a U.S. flag, without consideration to military service. Flags and stanchions also seem to migrate about a cemetery.

Cemeteries are a lesson in our country's history. Current records indicate that Canterbury residents have served in the military units during many of our major conflicts – French & Indian War, American Revolutionary War, War of 1812, American Civil War, Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, Korean War, and the Vietnam Conflict. They have also served their country in those rare times of peace. Asa Foster (died 1861, age 96) enlisted in the Continental Army on July 4, 1780 at the age of 15. He was sent to West Point under the command of General Benedict Arnold and was one of his bodyguards before Arnold's defection to the British later that year. Sampson Battis, a slave living in Canterbury, was given his freedom and a hundred acre plot of land by his owner after serving faithfully in the Revolutionary War. A monument memorializes Deacon Ezekial Morrill's six sons who all served in the Revolutionary War. In 1862 Frank Pickard was mustered in at age, 14, not uncommon since at least 100,000 Union soldiers were under 15 years of age. Joseph Gerrish Ayers began his military service as a young Army officer in the Civil War and retired as a Rear Admiral in the U.S. Navy.

Some made the ultimate sacrifice. Though government issued headstones have been placed in our town's cemeteries, the bodies of some Civil War combatants may have been buried on the battlefield. Lieut. Thomas Moore, a 42 year old father of four, was killed at the Second Battle of Bull Run. Bernice Scales, a member of the elite 1st Regiment U.S. Sharpshooters, was wounded at Chancellorsville and later killed at The Wilderness. Lieut. Henry French was killed at Gettysburg, nine months after the birth of his only child and four months after the death of his wife. Brothers Thomas and Charles Brown died of disease while both serving during the Civil War are buried side by side.

Each year prior to Memorial Day, American Legion Post 31 in Penacook places flags on veterans' graves in Canterbury. The Cemetery Trustees and Cemetery Historian will insure that all of our military veterans are respectfully honored. This project is not complete as it is hoped that further

research will uncover the military record of those whose service has not yet been confirmed or identified. As current residents who are military veterans pass along, their names will be added to this list. ~JG

Update 1.0
(30 May 2021)

John Goegel, Sam Papps, Jan Cote *Cemetery Trustees*
Kent Ruesswick *Cemetery Sexton*
Mark Stevens *Cemetery Historian*

It has been five years since the Military Veterans' Project was initiated. The identified veterans interred in the town of Canterbury's cemeteries now number **174**, with research being responsible for identifying seven more veterans of the American Revolutionary War. One of these individuals is Peter Ayers who was present at the battles of Bunker Hill (1775), Saratoga (1777) and Yorktown (1781), In 1792 Peter joined the Shaker community at Canterbury and remained a faithful member until his death in 1857. ~JG

Update 2.0
(4 July 2026)

John Goegel, Sam Papps, Jan Cote *Cemetery Trustees*
Kent Ruesswick *Cemetery Sexton*
Mark Stevens *Cemetery Historian*

It has been ten years since the Military Veterans' Project was initiated and five years since the last update. The identified veterans interred or memorialized in the town of Canterbury and Northfield cemeteries or, in some cases, their final resting place in Canterbury or Northfield is unknown, now number **199**. There were five significant additions to this project. (1) In 2025 a headstone was placed in the northeast corner of the Center Cemetery memorializing George Shannon, Canterbury citizen and soldier, who was killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill on 17 June 1775. Shannon was one of an estimated 26 citizens of Canterbury who were part of that engagement. The stone also honors all those who fought for our independence, with the onset of our country's 250th birthday celebration. [The History of Canterbury states that Jacob Hancock, a resident of the North Fields, was also killed at Bunker Hill.] (2) There is speculation that Capt. Jeremiah Clough, Sr., one of the town of Canterbury's "founding fathers", may be interred in the Clough Cemetery with his son, Col. Jeremiah Clough, Jr., though no marker indicates such. (3) A list has been compiled of soldiers born in Canterbury or credited to the town who (i) were killed in action, (ii) died from wounds received, or (iii) died from disease during the war. Before embalming and metallic coffins were developed, these individuals were buried where they fell or years later reburied in a cemetery established to those fallen. (4) A list of those Revolutionary war or Pre-RW veterans who (i) may have died in Canterbury (or lived and later died in Northfield) (Ebenezer Chandler, Robert Forrest II, William Forrest II, John Forrest, Sr., John Forrest Jr. and John Sutton); (ii) are mentioned in Lyford's History of Canterbury as having died in Canterbury but their place of interment is unknown (William Foster, Captain James Shepard and Ichabod Whidden); or (iii) their place of interment speculated (Jeremiah Clough, Sr., James Tallent, Moses Cogswell, Stephen Sutton and Thomas Lyford). Their place of interment may be in Canterbury or Northfield (a part of Canterbury prior to 1780). (5) One Canterbury veteran of the Revolutionary War has been added to the list of those buried in Northfield – William Forrest IV. ~JG

Update 3.0
(*in progress* – as of 11 September 2026)

John Goegel, Sam Papps, Jan Cote *Cemetery Trustees*
Kent Ruesswick *Cemetery Sexton*
Mark Stevens *Cemetery Historian*

Two additional veterans interred in Canterbury cemeteries have been identified – Winthrop Young (Shell Meetinghouse Cemetery) and William Hazeltine (Center Cemetery).

Three Canterbury veterans of the Revolutionary War have been added to the list of those buried in Northfield – Shubael Dearborn, Sr. (Williams Cemetery), Shubael Dearborn, Jr. (Hodgdon Cemetery), and John Dearborn (Hodgdon Cemetery). Archelaus Moore, part of a founding family of Canterbury and a veteran of the King George's War, is interred in the Loudon Center Cemetery.

Two additional names were included on the list of those who left their home in Canterbury in service to their country.....**Never to Return**. Phineas Fletcher was part of Col. Joseph Cilley's Regiment in 1781 who "died on his return from the victory at Yorktown" and Lieut. Charles Emery who died on 1 August 1864 as a result of wounds sustained in the battle of Cold Harbor (VA).

The list of Canterbury citizens who fought during the French & Indian Wars and the Revolutionary War whose final resting place is in Canterbury (or what is now Northfield) but the exact location is not known now includes Captain James Shepard; Lieut. Jeremiah Hacket; the sons and grandsons of Ensign John Moor – William, William Jr. Samuel, Samuel Jr. and Elkins Moore; Richard and Benjamin Blanchard; Joshua Boynton; Captain Josiah Miles and Lieut. John Glines.....many of them members of the founding families of the town of Canterbury.

Reference material has expanded and that list has been included within the pages of this project.

The identified veterans interred or memorialized in the town of Canterbury, Loudon and Northfield cemeteries or, in some cases, their final resting place in Canterbury or Northfield is unknown, now number **215**.

~JG