

The Stones Speak: Bits and Pieces
Of Middleton's History –Focused on Its Cemeteries

By Rita M. Kelley

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Historical Preface

Our New England area was settled by Puritans, for the most part. These people had enough religious zeal to leave their motherland and their aim was to establish a kingdom of God here. As a result of the Reformation, they wished to cleanse their religion of any taint of idols or sentimentality. It is no exaggeration then to say that the early Puritans in New England lived to die. Their day to day existence here was only a step on the path to a greater joy in the life hereafter.

Death was not a feared thing for them. It was part of the natural cycle, and life was but a preparation for it. At first in the New World often the graves were not marked. This was an old custom to be done away with, as were any other outward religious symbols. In the old country the dead had often been buried in the churchyard adjacent to the church. They then became objects to reflect upon in conjunction with the worship service. In this age of common illiteracy, the dull mind gained something through symbolic imagery expressed on the stones. By reflecting on symbols we can be transported in a way that words cannot express.

After 1668, however, Puritans here all used gravestones. Previous to this they were afraid to have religious symbols in case they fell into idolatry. Their ancestors in England had destroyed all the Catholic images and shrines for this reason. However, eventually, life here with its' religious austerity had a need to express itself. It satisfied this need with gravestone art. Ministers frequently had the most elaborate symbols. Some believe it was an effort to show contrite man appealing to a beneficent and forgiving God.

Samuel Symonds Cemetery

This cemetery contains remains of those who lived beyond the Ipswich River in the 43 years before Middleton was established. Back in the early 1700's before Middleton became a town itself, the section now known as Peabody and Mill Streets and North Liberty Street were known as Rowley Village or Boxford. The Ipswich River separated Rowley from Topsfield. A cemetery was located off the side of a roadway going by Samuel Symonds house, later the site of Henry Sawyer's home. This burial ground became known as The Old Rowley Village Cemetery and was considered by some the first cemetery in Middleton.

John Willard, living in what was then Salem but now Middleton was a victim of the Witchcraft Delusion of 1692, and legend has it that his body lies in an unmarked grave in this cemetery.

In recent years most of this road has disappeared and the cemetery is included on land off Thomas Road which passes in front of the old Henry Sawyer house. Samuel Symonds mentioned here was active in the Church of Christ in Middleton and was on the restoration committee for the church in 1763. He had three wives and more than a dozen children. Attractive, well-inscribed stones remain for his wives and daughters, but all that we see for Samuel Symonds is a small stone, possibly a foot stone, with his name inscribed.

The cemetery grounds were kept up until the late 1850's when they fell into disrepair. Restored again in about 1927, they need some upkeep. Some stones are erect and quite legible, while

many are tilted or fallen. This cemetery is presently overgrown with tangled, thorny vines, and it is quite impassible at this writing, (1979).

In the past, many early stones were removed by descendants of early settlers. A passing note, although the stone for Joseph Symonds reads Lieut, he had been promoted to Captain for eight months. The stone was possibly erected by descendants who may have made an error in his rank.



Samuel Symonds Cemetery



Old Fuller Burying Ground

In this old Fuller Family Burying Ground are some of the oldest remains of our town history. The oldest marker here is for Mrs. Elizabeth Perkins, wife of John, died March 26, 1738. It is believed there are a number of unmarked graves in this cemetery.

The next oldest marked grave is that of Rev. Andrew Peters, (picture), who served as Middleton's first minister. He was a Harvard graduate and was ordained in Middleton in November of 1729. He served his congregation and family well. One interesting story of this muscular cleric is that he had a Negro servant who used to drive his master's cow to pond. The road went by old Timothy Fuller's house, now William and Sally George's home. Fuller was rather a lawless man and often loved to batter people, especially those whom he could intimidate. The Negro complained to his master and forthwith Mr. Peters undertook to drive the cows, and he found Fuller and he remonstrated with him but without satisfaction. The Mr. Peters took off his coat and laid it on a stump, saying "Lay there Divinity, while I whip this rascal." And he gave him a

sound thrashing. When Rev. Peters was dying in 1756, at the age of 55, Old Tim Fuller begged his forgiveness. We are indebted to Hurd's History of Essex County for this story. We may assume Old Tim Fuller was forgiven, since Rev. Andrew Peter's grave has a most prominent spot in the center of the Fuller Burying Ground.

The church organized in Middleton in 1729 had over fifty members, of whom more than seventeen percent bore the name Fuller, all of whom were in direct line from Thomas 1st.

Among the many Fuller relations buried here, none is more colorful than the aforesaid Timothy, who was born in 1702 and died in 1796. He was the fourth generation descendant of the original settler, Thomas. Tradition has it he was called "Old Tim"...once when at work, being thirsty, he called at a house for a drink. The woman, being alone, said, "You rock the cradle while I draw the cider". Upon her return with the cider he asked her to give him the child in the cradle. She promised to do so on the condition that he would wait until the child was 18 years old. He did this and at that time came and took her as his wife, making her the mistress of his 40 Negroes. These Negroes are believed to have been housed in what is now the George homestead. Fuller, himself, it is believed, lived on the opposite side of the cemetery in a gambrel-roofed house that burned down in 1905.

One last story of Old Tim: On the 19th of April 1775, Old Tim, now 73 years of age, was enraged by the reports from Lexington and Concord. He saddled his white mare and armed with a shotgun, headed for the scene of the action. He blazed away at the rear of the retreating British troops, withdrew a short distance, was furnished with another loaded gun and he fired again, producing a startling effect on the ranks in the British rear. They called him "Death on a White Horse". He was also in the fight at Bunker Hill.

His widow Sarah Smith lived to be 93 years and was buried here beside him in 1824.

Various other family names are represented here, including another Timothy Fuller and his wife Eunice, as well as members of the Wilkins and Kenney families.



Rev. Andrew Peters Headstone

The Tomb of the Family of Rev. Elias Smith

The tomb of the family of Rev. Elias Smith located in a neat walled enclosure with an iron gate is situated just south of the brook on Mount Vernon Street. The area contains only three slate markers. The largest marker is in excellent condition, is square, has a border carved around it and has very legible print and script. According to the inscription, eight bodies are buried in the tomb, and the other two small markers are head and foot stones for 4 year old Polly Adams, daughter of Rev. Solomon Adams, who is also buried in the Smith tomb.

Rev. Elias Smith was the second minister for the Middleton Congregational Church. He came to Middleton at 29 years of age, five years since he had graduated from Harvard College. He married and had nine children. The legend on the tomb shows an example of child mortality. He lost three young daughters within three months: ages five months, seven years and five years. The year was 1775. Later, his daughter Rebeccah died in 1790 at 28 years and daughter Katherine in 1793 at 31 years. Katherine was married to Joseph Peabody who had been raised in Middleton but left here at 19 and became a successful Salem merchant. Katherine died as a young wife and Joseph married her younger sister Elizabeth, who bore him seven children. The tombstone and burial place were prepared by Rev. Smith with the help of his son in law Joseph. Rev. Elias Smith's wife, Catherine Smith, survived many of her family and died at 79 years, in 1817. Her remains were interred in Salem for many years but were later removed to this tomb, which was then permanently sealed.

Rev. Smith is remembered as founding the first social library in Middleton in 1772, one of the earliest in the state, as well as in the entire country. During the revolution he was officially

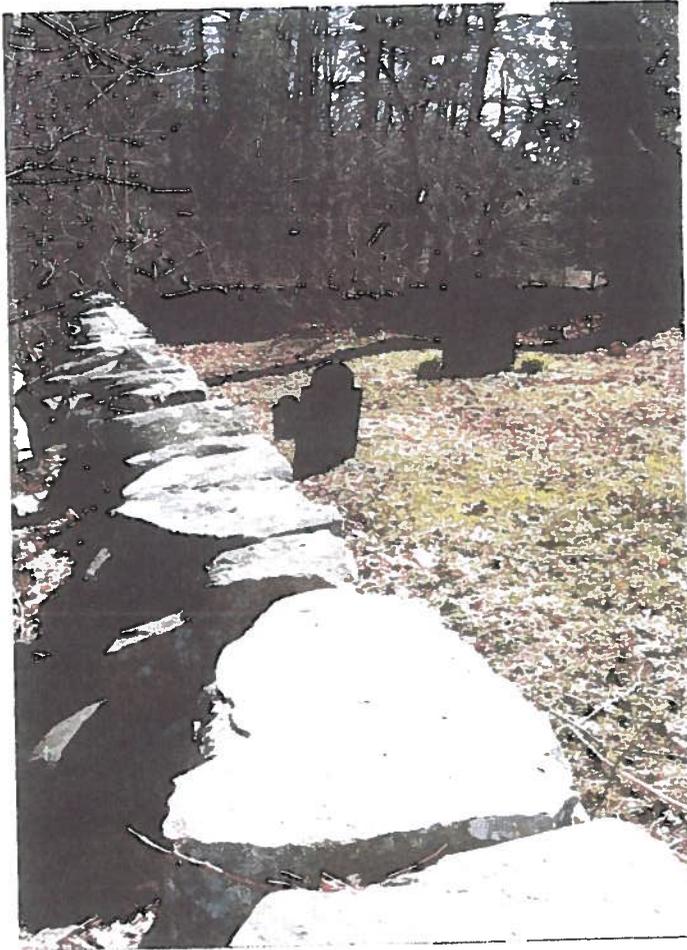
attached to the 19th Essex Regiment, and visited the men and preached to them at their Winter Hill encampment. Rev. Smith served Middleton until his death in 1791, and he was succeeded by Rev. Solomon Adams, whose body is also buried here in the tomb near his little daughter's grave. At the time of Rev. Adams death it was erroneously believed that the Church owned this tomb, so Adams and his daughter were buried here. Actually, the Smith Farm was sold to Rev. Adams with the proviso that his burial place be left to Rev. Smith's legal heirs.

Of possible interest, Rev. Smith actually died in 1792 not 1791, but the error is carved too deep in the stone to remove it.

Possibly, Elias Smith and his son-in-law Joseph Peabody planted the two trees that guard the rear of the plot. This would probably have been in the 1790's. Only one tree still stands guard today but being about two hundred years old, it's six foot girth is decaying from the inside while it's vigil keeping.

The verse on the Smith marker reads: "Death, where is thy sting? O Grave where is thy victory? But thanks be to God who giveth, is the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

This particular gravesite is under the protection of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities and is excellently kept up.



Rev. Elias Smith tomb

The Merriam Family Cemetery

The Merriam family cemetery is located on Rt.114 almost opposite the junction of Rt. 62. It lies between what was the old Centre School and the old Methodist Church, both buildings since converted: The church became a private dwelling and the school converted to town offices.

Of the bodies interred, Dr. Silas Merriam will be of interest historically. He was a physician from Concord and came to Middleton. He purchased the Wilkins grist mill in the center in 1770. He ran the grist mill and a store connected with it, where he sold groceries as well as grain. In 1804 he built a splendid large house on the corner of Main and Maple Streets, on the site of the present Esso Station. The house has long since been moved downhill on South Main Street opposite the Sunoco Station. It has lost its former grandeur and has been converted to an apartment house. Lura Watkins tells us "he served as a surgeon attached to the revolutionary forces. He served from June 1776 to September 1776 in Col. Edward Wigglesworth's regiment. He was later taken prisoner by the British but was released on February 24, 1778 in exchange for British prisoners. He then held the rank of surgeon's mate." Dr. Merriam's grave displays an American flag for his service to his country.

In 1772, as mentioned earlier, Rev. Elias Smith started a social library in Middleton, one of the first in the country. Dr. Merriam served with Rev. Smith and Archelaus Fuller as first library board. Dr. Merriam was devoted to the town and its people. He lived until January 25, 1812, when he was stricken suddenly while away to visit a patient. His wife Lydia died July 5, 1832, and she and their daughter Sarah lie in adjoining graves.

From the Martha Averill diaries in the Essex Institute in Salem we find an interesting item concerning the Merriam and Fuller families. “Daniel Fuller, Esquire, son of Archelaus Fuller, was engaged to the daughter of Dr. Silas and Lydia (Peabody) Merriam. Her name was Lydia as was her mother’s. She was born in 1776 and died October 1797 (at about 21 years of age). Her coffin was made October 1797 by her uncle Col. Benjamin Peabody. As was the custom, Mr. Fuller, her bereaved lover, was presented with a long pair of black silk stockings and a pair of black gloves at her death, so related Mrs. Sophronia Fuller, Daniel’s sister.”

To explain this incident we must remember that though burials themselves were simple, the funeral could be a costly affair. This was partly because a collation for all attending was expected at the home of the deceased after the funeral, and partly because of the custom begun in earliest colonial days of presenting rings and gloves to clergy and to all important relatives and friends who attended. Dozens of pairs of gloves were given away, the quality differing on how much was spent and the closeness of friendship or kin of the person to whom they were given. Engraved rings and locket of hair were commonly presented in great numbers. This practice became so economically oppressive, it was actually forbidden by Province Law in 1741 and 1788.

Another Merriam deserves mention... Francis Peabody Merriam, born in 1818, died in 1904. He initiated the changeover to factory methods in shoe production in the 1850’s. He built the large wooden structure formerly on the site of the Muzichuck Block, corner of Main and Lake Streets. During the next ten years, half a dozen shoe factories sprang up in Middleton.

It is quite apparent that only the first third of this cemetery is maintained. Mr. Gould advised that actually there are two cemeteries here: The Merriam’s and the Tyler’s. However, this has

not been officially verified, another source indicates it is an old Estey cemetery. Whichever, it has become a veritable dump. There are many recessed graves, broken stones, many fallen stones. Trash is left here, and the fencing is broken down. It is in miserable condition. Since it was private and no monies left for its care, it does not get Town maintenance.

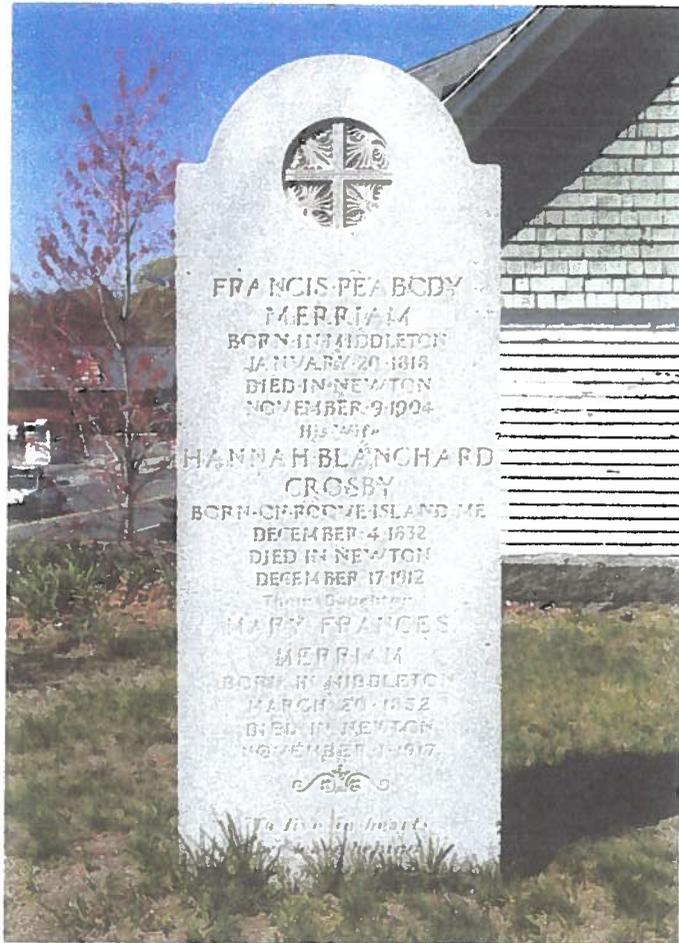
Other families are included in these cemeteries including John and Hannah Estey, who both died at 92 years of age, John in 1834 and Hannah in 1846. Their children's graves have a matching stone with weeping willows, and it contains bodies buried from 1834 through 1885. This John Estey buried here is the same young 21 year old who bought Bradford's Tavern in 1763 and successfully operated it as Estey's Tavern on the Square.

The Stone Family was buried here during the 1860's. Their gravestones had fallen down and are left that way since recent memories. Those of the Pope family are practically obliterated. However, in 1998, a small group of preservationists have raised three of the Stone family stones and are hoping to continue their good work.

Of interest, possibly, is a stone inscribed to Joseph Long, drowned in Middleton Pond 12-27-1845, at 30 years of age.



Merriam Family Cemetery



Francis Peabody Merriam stone



Graves of Dr. Silas Merriam and wife Lydia



Graves of John and Hannah Esty



Joseph Long's stone

A SECOND FULLER FAMILY BUYING GROUND

The next three photos show the cemetery behind the family home on South Main Street, formerly owned by Helen and Lillian Richardson, which is now owned by their niece, Mrs. Anne Daniels. This burying ground is barely visible from the street but lies between the street and the river at a distance from the old homestead. There is one large and erect tablet and several bits of natural stone. There are probably at least six graves enclosed within the rock walls. The cemetery is about 30 ft. square and is surrounded by natural pasture growth of barberry and cedar.

The large tablet reads: "This stone is consecrated to the memory of Mr. Jacob Fuller, died 11-20-1799, aged 52 years. Death is a debt to nature due I've paid the debt and so must you."

The stone has a twisted cable effect and had an urn inscribed. The urn is partially broken off.

The other grave with a fallen tablet is in memory of Dr. David Fuller, died 11-6-1821 at 64 years.

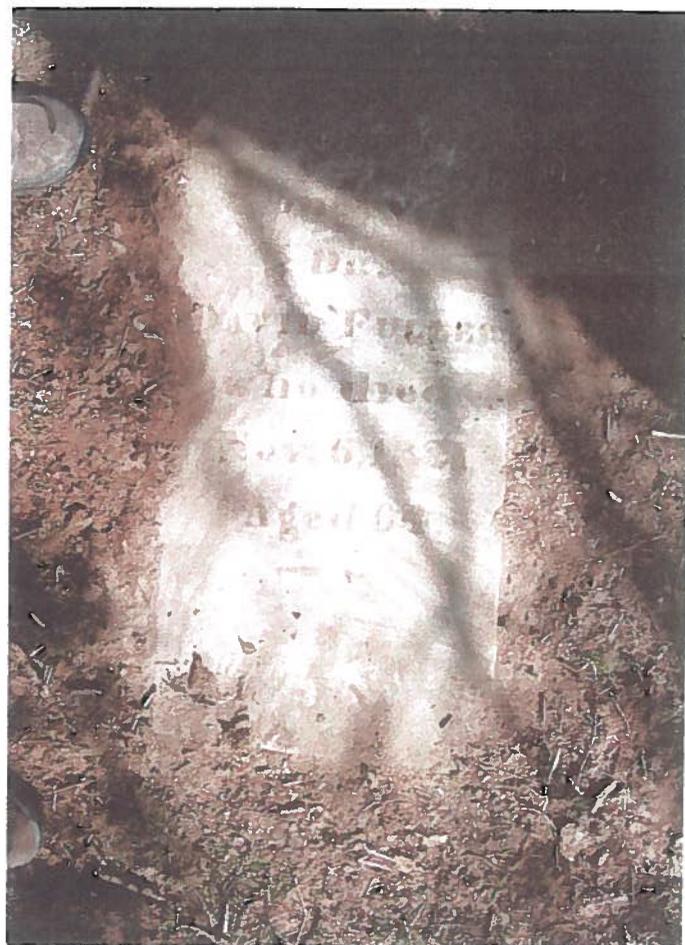
The first Thomas Fuller's son Jacob was a blacksmith also, like his dad. The present house was probably built by Jacob Fuller, Jr. He left ten children including David, the tenth child.

Eventually the land and house passed to David Fuller alone, about 1799. He was fifty years and unmarried. Three years later, in 1801, his brother Elisha Fuller left a large estate to their niece Abigail Fuller Kimble. A month later she gave birth to a child recorded in Middleton records as Abigail Fuller, daughter to Dr. David and Abigail. Mother and daughter lived with Dr. David until his death. He left his estate to Abigail's daughter who sold the home to Dr. Ezra Nichols.

Eventually, in 1855, the house and land came into the possession of R. P. Richardson, grandfather to Ben, Hazen, Helen and Lillian Richardson.



Jacob Fuller Cemetery



Dr. David Fuller stone

OAKDALE CEMETERY

Oakdale cemetery was set up in 1861 with land purchased from Daniel Richardson.

(Incidentally, this Daniel Richardson was the grandfather of the beloved school teacher Nellie Howe.) Some pasture land had already been sold off as grave sites, and we can find the graves of the Gidding and Israel Curtis families, the Berrys, Stiles and many others who died before 1860.

This picture shows the graves of the Joseph Fuller family and their descendants. In early days Joseph Fuller lived on Essex Street, and he built the house where the Tragert family now lives. Ephraim Fuller, son of Joseph Fuller 1st, on July 8, 1790, made a will giving his son Simeon all the lands, buildings, etc.... He also expressed the wish that "one quarter of an acre of ground where the burying place is shall never be sold and those that have buried their friends there may still have liberty to bury therein." This family lot was across the way somewhat south of the Joseph Fuller homestead. As happens from time to time, new road construction necessitated demolishing the family burial ground, and the remains were removed to Oakdale.

Oakdale Cemetery consists of about 37 acres, fifteen of which are grassed, rest woodland.

Oakdale is maintained by the town employees who also take care of the Flint Cemetery and the Merriam Plot.

In 1863 the town set aside an acre in the cemetery for the burial of soldiers. The granite receiving tomb still in use was built by the town in 1872 at a cost of \$286.16, and in the following year a new hearse house was erected at the entrance.

A highlight for Middleton occurs every Memorial Day. Observances take place at the Veteran's Memorial in the Square then our parade proceeds down Maple Street to the cemetery where veterans groups, elementary school children and high school bands all participate in paying respects to the deceased and dead from Middleton, especially the veterans.



Joseph Fuller Family and friends graves in Oakdale Cemetery

RICHARDSON FAMILY PLOT

Haswell Park in bygone days was a delightful summer tourist area. At the far end of Haswell Park, on the right-hand side, just before the Blais House, is a Richardson Family Plot. It is on the right, several hundred feet off the road, and is at this time terribly overgrown. The brush was cleared about 1970, but as pictures testify, it has reached great heights again. Actually, when the brush is cleared it will reveal about 35 graves with stones in remarkably good condition.

The stones date from the weeping willow marker dedicated to Jonathon Richardson in 1798 to Herbert Barker in 1935. Of only four stones overturned, ironically two are the last two erected. They are fashioned of pink granite and date from 1926 and 1935 for Ruth and Herbert Barker, who actually have no Richardson connections.

Oddly, there is no boundary wall around this secluded cemetery. With the brush cleared and a wall of some sort, this could be once again an attractive memorial to the Richardson family dead.

The second oldest stone here is for Polly Richardson buried here in 1801 at age 9. Her father John Richardson had a blacksmith shop in the southern part of town, at the corner of Rt. 114 and Haswell Park, established before 1810 and he worked there until he died in 1826.

Of the Richardson's buried here, we know Amos Richardson, born in 1784 buried here in 1876, was a coffin-maker. We have receipts for his work as follows: "Feb. 15, 1826-Mr. Roger Elliott. Debit to Amos Richardson to making a coffin, digging a grave and tending the funeral. Five dollars and fifty cents for Stephen Elliott. Deceased. May the 7, 1833-Mr. Roger Elliott. Debit

to Amos Richardson to making a coffin, digging a grave and tending the funeral. \$6.00. Rec'd pay. Amos Richardson." We note inflation was not as bad then. An increase of only 50 cents in seven years!

Typical of the verses popular in the early 1800's, Elijah Richardson's relatives selected this verse:

In hopes to sing without s song

The anthem ever new,

I gladly bid this dusty globe

And in vain delight, adieu!

Ben Richardson recalls being told that his grandfather's young brother was buried in Oakdale Cemetery over a century ago. Most Richardson burials since then have taken place at Oakdale, and the old plot is practically forgotten.

Recently, with a new housing complex abutting the cemetery the woods were cleared further and revealed quite a few more stones.



Richardson Family Cemetery in Haswell Park

THE FLINT BURYING GROUND

Heading north from south Middleton along route 62, the Flint Burying Ground presents a neat well-kept appearance. The walled area sits about three feet high from the roadway, is about 140 feet long, with a hearse entrance center front. All the graves are in the left half of the area, which runs about 44 ft deep. Tremendous sized evergreens at the rear overshadow the ground and always give a pleasant, secluded, quiet atmosphere. The Flint Family has served its country, as demonstrated by two American flags flying proudly in the cemetery.

This picture shows a particular section of the cemetery set apart by 4 granite pillars. This area contains the relics of Lieut. John Flint who served in the revolutionary War and who died 12-6-1802 at age 47. Also buried in this section is his wife Harriet, who died in 1816 at 63 years.

The second flag flies for Justin Flint who died in the Adams House Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland on October 29, 1861, at the age of 22 years. He was a member of company C, 17th Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteers, and died, apparently during the Civil War.

This was a family cemetery maintained by the Flint Family until the recent death of Mrs. Bertha Flint Woodward, who has left the cemetery in the care of the Town of Middleton.



Flint Burying Ground



Civil War Soldier
Justin Flint

THE INGALLS BURYING GROUND

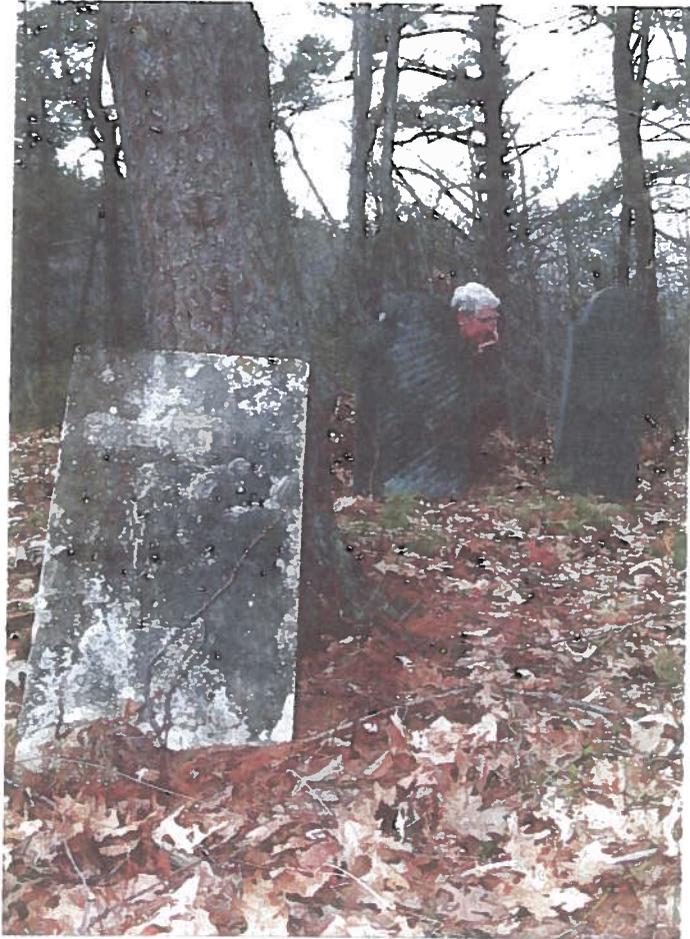
Several miles down Essex Street, opposite land owned by the Hayden Family and on land previously owned by Charles D. Langille, is a good-sized cemetery known as the Ingalls Burying Ground, that is by the handful of people that even know it exists. The cemetery is several hundred feet off the road, is on a high area that apparently had a pleasant stream or culvert running below. It was, no doubt, a cool sheltered sylvan spot in the early 1800's. Today, one must get permission from the homeowner on either side, walk back about 200 yards, cross a brook, and ascend the hillock, battling the buzzing insects and dense undergrowth.

Prominent among the graves are those of Theodore Ingalls, died in 1817 in his mid-fifties. It appears he had a wife Hannah, who died September 13/18(?), 1801 at 31 years. We note a grave of Mrs. Ruthe Ingalls, and seemingly she was a second wife. Theodore Ingalls was a well respected blacksmith and plied his trade from "a common blacksmith shop which stood at the north side of a long causeway". He had come from Andover in the 1700's, settled on what is now Essex Street and worked there until his death in 1817. His sons Moody and Enoch learned their father's trade. Enoch married, but died young at 24. His grave is here with a date of 12-27-1812. He left a widow Sally, but her grave is not here. Moody carried on the business until 1832 and left a "carefully written account book which gives a complete picture of blacksmithing in the early 1800's—what was made, what was repaired, and what was done on wagons and sleds." He owned a house on the corner of Maple and King Streets and he moved his shop across the street a little to the west. His grave is in Oakdale Cemetery.

Lura Walkins tells us that Theodore Ingalls the blacksmith also had a son Elias T. Ingalls. She says “the factory system of giving out materials to be made up at home or in the small shop began in Middleton in the 1830’s.” As nearly as she can determine, the first effort in this direction was made by Elias T. Ingalls...It was a short-lived venture, concluded before 1885. In 1837, after Ingalls had moved to Haverhill, the only factory of any kind in town was a paper mill...the changeover to factory methods began in the 1850’s when Francis P. Merriam, whose picture was shown earlier, put up the large wooden structure that still stands under later rebuilding at the corner of Main and Lake Streets.”

This Elias Ingalls, son of Theodore, also had a son, Senator John James Ingalls, of Kansas. This Senator Ingalls was a noted orator and was invited to be present at the dedication of the Flint Library in 1891. At that time he acquired an anvil used by his grandfather Theodore Ingalls, a smith of note, which he took back to his office in Kansas.

Beside the Ingalls clan, there is a handsome slate marker for Joseph Wright, died November 5, 1836, at 66 years. Four graves are for Joel Peabody and his children. There are about 12 graves visible, probably more originally, but time has rendered them less discernable. While the stones were in rather good shape with fair to good legibility, considering their age, the cemetery needs work. The stones have become scattered and broken. The Homeowner has been trying to reclaim the site and save it for posterity.



Ingalls Burying Ground
Off Essex Street



TUFTS CHILDREN GRAVES

Just before Creighton's Pond on Essex Street, about 2 miles up on the left from School Street, is a well-landscaped piece of property previously known as the James Storrow home. One enters by a long drive which opens left to reveal the rear of a large house typical of the 1700's, with a center chimney and with horse stables off to the right. To the left towards old hen houses, passing through bushes and bracken, bear a sharp left and ascend a small knoll. At one time this was surely a pleasant sheltered spot. Now it is covered with brambles, it is difficult to discern the two shattered grave markers. They are small, typical of children's markers, both are broken and lay on the ground. One appears to be for Alice L. two years of age. The other marker is illegible. While the area is not exactly abandoned, it is not disturbed either. So appeared the graves of two of the Tufts children. Today, twenty years later, no trace can be found.

For background on the property and its previous owners, this spot on Essex Street is part of a roadway known in olden days as the Andover Road. Capt. Timothy Perkins by 1730 had settled on a spot near the Andover line and had built a mill on a stream running into Boston Brook from the west. After passing through other hands, on November 11, 1856 Daniel Peabody sold the house and land on this spot to Gustavus and Nancy Tufts. They had twelve children. Mrs. Tufts had a fine musical voice and all the children learned to make music, playing a number of instruments or singing. Mrs. Tufts and her two brothers turned to spiritualism and were excommunicated from the Congregational Society.

Gustavus Tufts died on April 10, 1899 and his widow lived there till 1910, when she died. Two of their twelve children are buried on this property. One, a two-year old named Alice, died in 1851, may have been buried here after they acquired the property, other smaller marker is illegible.

When the first settler Timothy Perkins built the sawmill about 1730, it eventually fell into disuse in time. Gustavus Tufts later recreated a millpond. Creighton bought the land in 1924 and enlarged the pond as it is today. For many years the property belonged to James Storrow but in recent time belongs to the Marks family. The house itself probably dates back to 1715 and was built by Timothy Perkins, the carpenter.

An interesting aspect is that the house has for many years enjoyed a local legend of having “friendly spirits”. Reinforcing this legend, a recent out of town visitor of the Marks remarked that she had experienced an atmosphere of such “definite friendly spirits” in her room. Locals were not surprised to hear this, and the legend continues that on Saturday nights, the aroma of fresh baked beans is readily detected. Could this be due to Mrs. Tufts and her spiritualism???



Tufts Children Burial Site

Editor's Note:

Subsequent to Rita Kelley's research into the Tufts Family, it was determined that the remains of the two Tufts children had been reburied in Oakdale Cemetery with new headstones.

AMOS PEABODY TOMB AND GRAVES ON LOCUST STREET

Follow Locust Street up, until you reach the Middleton Entrance to Ferncroft Golf Course. Go to the right side of the parking lot, continue forward, cross Old Coppermine Road, bearing right up the street a few yards. Then clamber over an old stone wall through bushes and low woods ascending hill as you go. After five or ten minutes walking uphill, you will have a fine view over the golf course. Look about you on the ground for two fallen grave markers. The two shattered stones bear the surname Peabody, the rest is illegible except one appears to read Amos.

A lengthy search through dense bushes, and we found ourselves on a hillside with a straight drop down. Dropping straight down into the dense bushes I found myself looking into an old abandoned tomb. Anything in the tomb originally had been removed to Oakdale many decades ago, possibly about 1930. The brush was so dense it was not possible to get further away for a longer view.

Local history has all but forgotten this tomb and graves, and they might well have gone down to destruction in clearing for the golf course but someone managed to save them from the bulldozer.



Amos Peabody Grave site off Locust Street

PEABODY FAMILY CEMETERY ON EAST STREET

From Maple Street turn left onto East Street, follow along towards Topsfield. On the right is a gentle slope with a pond below, across the street diagonally, almost obscured, is the Peabody Family Burying Ground. A large marble slab on a cement base advises that this cemetery is under the care of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities since Feb. 3, 1932, through an endowment at the request of George Augustus Peabody, Esq., late of Danvers.

This family plot is laid out on a long strip about fifty feet wide and about 150 feet long. It is enclosed in stone walls and bordered by evergreens. About 50 feet beyond the slab is a gentle slope upward with graves of the Goulds and Fletchers, then to the right Colonel Benjamin Peabody and wife's graves occupy a prominent spot; fifty feet down slope on other side about twenty more graves are found in orderly fashion. These graves snuggle close to the far side and I have traversed area and no visible trace of road left now. Former resident of adjoining property mentioned years ago that he felt early road had gone through to Peabody Street. This would have passed on the other side of Forney home, followed alongside the Ipswich and come out on Peabody Street. His would have been in use prior to the construction of the East Street and would explain why earliest graves do not face East Street.

The Peabody family is very important in Middleton history; let us examine one facet of this interesting family. We start with Francis Peabody, a miller from Topsfield, and proceed through his son Isaac to Cornet (Lieut.) Francis Peabody. This Lieut. Francis Peabody lived in what we know today as the Forney home on East Street. He had 13 children and his oldest son Francis,

born 1715, was known as “Deacon Francis” to separate him from his dad. When young Deacon Francis married, he moved out and bought the neighboring house which had belonged to the Towne family. We have known it in recent years as the Illingsworth House on East Street, more recently owned by the North Shore Community Center of Lynn. Deacon Francis’ oldest son Benjamin was born in 1741 and he helped his grandfather run his farm. He served in the Revolutionary War, came back, married and eventually purchased his grandfather’s farm. That would be the Forney house again, where he fathered 12 children of his own. His sons all died young and his daughter Peggy Wilkins, a widow with four daughters and one son inherited Benjamin’s property. This Benjamin was brother to Joseph Peabody, the successful Salem ship owner. Benjamin’s life on the farm in Middleton was quite different than brother Josephs as a merchant prince. He could turn his hand to any trade from shoeing oxen, framing houses, etc. In a detailed daybook and business account, he left us a complete record of his doings from 1785 to 1810. He functioned as a carpenter, mason, blacksmith, shoemaker, veterinarian, and butcher, while acting as Town Clerk and Tax Collector, and as Selectman for many years, and still spending much time writing wills, appraising and selling estates, conducting vendues , and making frequent journeys to court at Andover, Ipswich or Cambridge on matters of legal business. He was sexton of the church, and made coffins for his neighbors and their children. He ran his farm and sold hay and wood, onions, apples, potatoes, rye and Indian meal, as well as geese, turkeys and veal. He rented his horses and oxen to others or did jobs of hauling boards, wood, hay and turf. His gravestone reads: Deacon Benjamin Peabody. He was an officer in the American Revolution. He was a deacon in the Church of Christ in Middleton 27 years. Of amiable temper, good sense, and unaffected piety adorned his character and made him

extensively useful and greatly beloved.” His wife died in 1821 and the Colonel passed away September 10, 1829, at the age of eighty-eight. Their graves are side by side.



Peabody Family Cemetery on East st.



CAPTAIN NATHANIEL PEABODY AND WIFE'S GRAVES

On lower Mill Street beyond the intersection of Peabody Street, about 100 yards down on the right-hand side we find the graves of Nathaniel Peabody and of Ruth "wife of Capt. Nathaniel Peabody." This Nathaniel was a seventh generation Peabody, a grandson of the first Nathaniel in town and a son of Joseph Peabody.

The first Nathaniel referred to here built two houses in this vicinity, the part of town early known as Rowley Village. One house at the junction of these streets was the original family farm. The other built in 1760 for his son Thomas has long been known as the Curtis farm. This Capt. Nathaniel, his grandson, raised twelve children on the old homestead. Interestingly enough, not one of these children stayed in Middleton, and only baby Ruth's ashes mingle, in an unmarked grave beside her parents, Nathaniel and Ruth.

The original house was in the Peabody Family many years. It eventually was bought by a group of General Electric executives called the Spark Plugs. After being partially burned in the 1950's, the house itself was dismantled and reconstructed in Carlisle, Mass., as an example of Colonial architecture, while the barn site was remodeled and became the studio home of the late Maria Pride. This home and studio on the corner of Mill and Peabody Streets are on the site of the original 18th century Nathaniel Peabody Home.

Typical of the undisciplined gravestone art of the early 1800's, the printed letters of "Mr. Nathaniel Peabody" were incorrectly spaced, and the final letters "dy" appear on the stone inserted above the rest of the name. This is not at all unusual.

Although his stone is marked “Mr”, his wife’s stone indicates his military rank of Captain. He succeeded Roger Flint as Captain in the Middleton Militia March 31, 1809. This unit was organized after the adoption of the Constitution in 1781 and thrived for fully half a century. There was no flag on his grave this Memorial Day.

While these two gravestones are erect and in very good condition, in summer they are barely visible to the casual observer. They were originally set in a walled enclosure about 15 feet from the roadside and about 100 yards down the road from the original homestead. The present landowners, the Ross Popes feel the stones are less likely to suffer from vandalism if they are unkempt and in an overgrown condition.



JOHN & MARY STILES' GRAVES

To the right-hand side of a wood road off Kenney Road is what is left of the graves of John Stiles and his wife Mary How. They were married January 12, 1768, five months later. This child John, Jr., grew up, married Rebecca Kenney on November 26, 1795 after their intent to marry had been recorded. Their first child arrived April 22, 1796, again five months after the wedding. The first child was followed by three more boys and five daughters. In Puritan days marriage was not a religious ceremony but a civil one. Since the church and government were so closely linked, the publishment of the banns might consist of the betrothed couple walking 'round the church three times to the accompaniment of a bell ringer, or they might have their intentions published or recorded.

Once the intent to wed was made known, marriage privileges were often given and taken. Some allowance must be made for the fact that ministers were sometimes quite distant and weddings might be delayed for numerous reasons as lack of a minister, or time to harvest the crops, etc. It was not uncommon for the first baby to arrive well short of the nine months, at least it was not any more unusual than it is today.

The first John R. Stiles died November 13, 1822 at 52 years, his wife Mary on June 11, 1820 at 57 years. Their graves were not disturbed for over a century. Sometime around the late 1950's an article appeared in a paper mentioned the graves and after that an attempt was made to dig up the bodies. The stones were knocked down and scattered ten to fifteen feet away. There is a depression in the ground over the grave and the broken stones are practically illegible. Twenty

years later the stones have disappeared and a large subdivision of expensive homes covers the area.



John and Mary Stiles graves

ROGER ELIOTT & FAMILY PLOT

On Lower Mill Street, on the curve of the road, in about fifteen feet, is a walled-in cemetery forty-five feet across the front and thirty-six feet deep. It is the Roger Elliott family plot. It is a peaceful, grassy plot, unmowed, with tumbling stone walls and contains about six graves.

According to Amos Richardson's coffin-making receipts, son Stephen was buried in 1826. Roger Elliott's wife Sarah died in May of 1833 at 65. Their daughter Lucy died in 1835. Son Sewall died at 40 years of age in 1846. Roger Elliott, father and founder, outlived them all and died November 10, 1848 at 83 years of age. There is also one illegible marker.

The late owners have tried to do no harm to the cemetery, but nature has not been kind. A large stone has been broken in two during recent storms and the area appears unkempt.

UNKOWN – POSSIBLY HUTCHINSON FAMILY BURIAL GROUND

On River Street, midway between Rt. 62 and Rt. 114 and about opposite present Town Dump is an abandoned burial ground. To gain access, one must enter Richardson's pasture, traverse a dirt road about 1/8 mile, bear left continuing another 1/8 mile or so. You will come out in an overgrown gravel pit. According to Ben Richardson this cemetery was here when he was five-to-ten years old, that would have been about the turn of the century. At that time there were at least ten or so graves on the top of this pleasant knoll, each with head and foot markers.

Some local old-time residents describe this place as an old Indian burial ground, or as a special place that always had an eerie or hallowed feel about it. Back about World War II, in the '40's, gravel was trucked out, the graveyard ignored or forgotten. After much gravel was



Elliott Family Plot



Burial site in Richardson's pasture off River Street

removed, attention was called to the cemetery but too late, only a few graves remained atop the knoll, the rest of the entire knoll having been carted off. Actually, now the top of the knoll measures only twenty-four steps along and six steps wide. Two depressions in the ground indicate possible gravesites. Only two fragments of what might have been original markers remain. Originally the grave had fieldstone head and foot markers.

Ben Richardson says his recollection of history of graveyard is that sometime in the 1800's the Hutchinson family lived on land adjacent to present Town Dump site. Some kind of epidemic, such as black diphtheria, occurred and the whole family died. To avoid contagion the remains were buried across the street in graves in this wooded area, away from passersby. He recalls no carved markers but fieldstone head and foot markers as was the frequent custom in earlier days.

At this time I have not been able to verify death records of large number of Hutchinson family members. However, if the cause of death was contagious, it might not have been reported. Further information is desirable and welcome.

A U.S. Dept. of the Interior Geological Survey Map indicated a cemetery off Gregory St., near, or on the grounds, of the Middleton Colony. Very few people hereabouts knew or ever heard of this cemetery. First the rumors were that it was a paupers grave. The Fischer family on Perkins road located the cemetery for me. It was surrounded by a stand of silage corn that Ben Richardson was growing, and it sits in the field about five hundred feet in.

Follow Gregory Street until the turn to the right for the Colony. Make the turn, stop, and then proceed on foot into the field about 500 feet behind the houses on Gregory Street. Here we find an old cemetery bounded by a rusted iron rail fence. Overgrown weeds and brush obscure

the markers. There are about four long rows of identical cement markers, identical that is, except for the metal plates numbering from one to ninety- three.

It appears to have been a long time since the cemetery was used.

Ernest Gould, former superintendent of Parks and Cemeteries felt this was more likely a cemetery for deceased mental patients, who were, likely as not, paupers as well.

A few years ago there was a change of routine for burial procedure, and now local funeral directors bid to the Sanatorium for this service. In Middleton, formerly, paupers were buried in Oakdale in a particular area designated as such. Under Mr. Gould's tenure this practice was abandoned and now a regular grave is used and is not identifiable as a pauper's grave. It receives the same maintenance as other graves.

A June 2, 1998 story in the Salem Evening News gives more background on these long-forgotten graves.

“The hospital dead, after being used as medical cadavers, were buried without headstones in two pauper cemeteries near the now-closed asylum. Above their graves, fellow patients placed numbered cement markers.

Those buried in the cemeteries- about 300 in all- often had no family. Some were laid to rest discreetly after being beaten or after fatal electric shock treatments, former hospital patients maintain.

Danvers State closed in 1992, and today the cemeteries are buried in grass and weeds. The last interment was 20 or 30 years ago, and since then all official records of who was buried under what marker have been lost.



Graves at Danvers State Hospital

A memorial and permanent maintenance plan are promised by the Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health.”

Before 1728 what is now Middleton was actually Boxford, Topsfield, Andover and Salem. Therefore, some who became Middletonites were previously recorded as living in one of these towns. Although town lines changed, neighbors didn't. Therefore I have included two cemeteries that are within a short distance of our border and a cemetery that wasn't...a cemetery.

Mrs. Watkins had told of several families settled in what was then Boxford land but which land later became known as North Liberty Street. Mrs. Watkins was unable to locate the cemetery. However Page Campbell did locate an interesting topographic feature in this area. Covering about one-fourth an acre are piles of fieldstone in what appears were once symmetrical lines. These stones in rectangular mounds about five feet long. Many years since, trees have taken root and emerged through the piles of stones, tossing the stones awry. With imagination it might very well be a cemetery so thought several interested people. Dick Trask, Danvers Archivist was called upon to give an opinion. He was much impressed with the potential of the house site as an archeological dig, but could give not definitive answer on the certainty of the area being a cemetery. On November 12, 1979 in the presence of Ben Richardson, owner of the property under title to Richardson Trust, excavation was made with negative results. Many stones and boulders to size of 75-lbs were removed from two sites with no indication that the soil had been removed for an earlier burial. So, we still have an open question as to where this early cemetery is located on North Liberty Street.

Part of the difficulty in identifying this cemetery is due to the fact that in early times common fieldstones were used to cover shallow graves to provide protection from predatory



Possible Cemetery off North Liberty Street

animals. Severe winter with contagious diseases wiping out whole families could cause hasty burials in shallow graves. Also, as Mrs. Watkins says, "It is clear that country people, so far from sources of supply, and with little cash to spend were obliged to forego the luxury of the carved gravestones."

The burial place referred to may now appear as a natural formation not easily distinguished by the average eye.

KILLAM FAMILY BURYING GROUND

This cemetery is included in this report as it is so close to the Middleton- Boxford line. Drive in past the Masconomet Regional Junior High School, Building and head for the Ipswich River behind the athletic fields. Follow the river to the right and just beyond the furthest ball field is a peaceful secluded cemetery plot hidden among the pines.

A low, white picket fence is at the entrance and fieldstone walls surround on all sides. The earliest pair of stones are the real old slate-type with weeping willows and are for Priscilla Killam who died April 20, 1807 at 61 years and John Killam, her husband, died October 11, 1818 at 89 years.

These stones are for Molly and Francis Curtis, and we see changes in style and design through the years.

The stones on right reflect the 1800's and as we move to the left, the stones are typical on the 1930's and '40's. The most recent grave is for Dana Franklin Killam, died 1959.

Here is a tiny grave marked for an infant child of Mr. Francis and Mrs. Molly Curtis, died November 24, 1807, aged twelve hours. The verse reads:



Killiam Family Burial Ground—1800's to 1940



Headstone of infant child of Francis and Molly Curtis--1807

Fresh in the morn, the summers rose

Hangs withering 'ere tis noon

We scarce enjoy the balmy gift

But mourn life's treasure gone.

This tiny gravestone, complete twenty years ago, now lies shattered in pieces. Fortunately we had recorded the sweet, sad memorial.

This cemetery includes only the Killam family of Boxford, which family, incidentally, is still active in public affairs in Boxford.

THE RUSSELL FAMILY CEMETERY

Following Thomas Road in about a mile past the old Henry Sawyer house, the road leads to the foot of Bald Hill. About an eighth of a mile over the boundary line of Boxford-Middleton, up on a hill to the right of the road is the Russell Family Cemetery. This place is off in the woods and seemingly has been undisturbed for over a hundred years.

Of the three markers, the further marker is for James and Rebecca who died in 1830 and 1844. Their son Peabody and his wife Dolley who both died in 1845-46 are remembered by the center marker. The nearest monument is for Perkins Russell who died in 1857. A rapid computation of birth dates revealed that both Peabody and Perkins were born in 1790 and the have the distinction of being the only adult twins noticed in this survey. Both the names Peabody and Perkins figure prominently in Middleton history and that is another reason they are included.



Russell Family Cemetery—Bald Hill

This cemetery is still in rather good shape today. Its remoteness in the woods, no doubt, is in its favor.

Two local good Samaritans, some years ago mended the one broken stone and its holding well.

This report has been an attempt to record existing burial plots in Middleton regardless of present state of upkeep, or lack of upkeep. With so many of these places off in the woods, or even those more accessible, it is obvious that in a few years most traces of many of these graves will have disappeared unless specific measures are taken for their preservation. The Hutchinson family cemetery on River Street, quite visible only a few years ago, was almost lost due to gravel removal operation. New road construction has caused loss of or removal of other old cemeteries, e.g. the Milton Berry cemetery on Forest Street. Families dying out, descendants moving away from town, no perpetual-care monies, increase in labor costs to maintain private cemeteries, all contribute to their neglect and, sometimes, abuse.

The longevity of the cemeteries included here will depend on concerned individuals or organizations who will group together to protect and preserve these stones that speak to us of our past.

At my first meeting here less than two years ago, Mrs. Masse suggested someone record information on Middleton's cemeteries. I volunteered to do so, little knowing the hundreds of hours it would consume. My camera and tape recorder broke down and I had to deal with more sophisticated replacements, unmechanical as I am.

However, it is hoped that this presentation will familiarize you with the names of some of the people who lived in Middleton in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. As their names become more important, e.g. this tin canteen will never be just “a canteen” to me, now that I know the owner was just a 22-year old lad who died in the Civil War and whose body has been buried hundred years Flint cemetery just down my street.

If Carol can get any interest in forming a group it should be done. Surrounding towns make us look pretty bad by comparison.

Photographed and compiled by Rita M. Kelly.....1979

Grateful thanks to Page Campbell and Ben Richardson. Credit to Mrs. Lura Woodside Watkins
– Middleton: A Cultural Heritage

1989 Material reviewed and photos updated with only slight additions or changes as warranted.

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