

OLD QUAKER CEMETERY
by **Keith Kaszubik**
Boston Town Historian
(last updated October 2, 2012)

The Old Quaker Cemetery (also known as the Old Cemetery, Old Pioneer Cemetery, and more recently as the Deanna Drive Cemetery) is located in the vicinity of Deanna Drive, west of Boston State Road, roughly halfway between the hamlets of North Boston and Patchin in the Town of Boston, Erie County, New York. This small cemetery probably dates to the early 19th century and is said to have been abandoned by the 1860s. This was perhaps also the site of the first Quaker Meeting House in town. Presently, there is no cemetery delineation as to its extent and no visible gravestones, but they were known to have existed as recently as the late 1930s. All that remains today is, what appears to be, barely discernible gravesite depressions. Information concerning the cemetery is very fragmentary and this report is admittedly rather incomplete.

The Quakers (Society of Friends) --who have been in Western New York since the late 18th century-- were among the earliest settlers in the Town of Boston, even before the township was officially formed from the Town of Eden on April 5, 1817. The appellation Quakers was given to them because; when they spoke at their early meetings, they were so emotionally moved that they shook. "The early Friends definitely asserted that those who did not know quaking and trembling were strangers to the experience of Moses, David and other saints."¹ They also renounced war.

Already in 1812 there was at least a rudimentary settlement ("improvement") in the vicinity of the cemetery, as is attested to in the book: *Legal Width of Roads Town of Boston Erie Co. N. Y. 1939*² (an excerpt from page 71, listed under Hamburg-Springville Road, is presented here verbatim):

Description as copied from Page 55, Book 1, Road Section, Road Records, Town of Eden, as follows:

Removal of part of a road runing up the Eighteen Mile Creek that is Beginning at the road at the corner of Pardon Pierces field on Lot 30, Town 8th Range 7th Thence S 33 E 33.50 Thence N 70 E 25 - Thence S. 62 E 49 - Thence S 33 E 59 - Thence S 15 E to the north east corner of William Pounds improvement at the bend in the road.

Whole distance two miles 16 chains and 5 links Width one chain

Eden May 2 1812

Gideon Dudley) Commissioners
Charles Johnson) of Highways

Cotton Fletcher
Surveyor

J March
Town Clerk

An 1836 atlas covering the Town of Boston indicates that William Pound owned property on Lot 14, which bordered the cemetery on the south. He had purchased two parcels by then, side by side (west and east), in 1815 and 1835, respectively. It's not clear as to which northeast corner is being referred to in the aforementioned excerpt (probably the earlier purchased west parcel). A man named Thomas Twining owned property on Lot 14 to Pound's immediate north (where the cemetery is located), which he had purchased in 1811.³

Boston's first town board meeting took place on April 7, 1818.⁴ The following repeatedly published paragraph --found in local history books and articles in slightly altered forms over the last 128 years-- has been associated with that first meeting, but the information has *not* been found in the extant minutes (perhaps it's actually in the older minutes for the Town of Eden).

"Also that the following Quakers should be taxed four dollars each, in lieu of military duty: Matthew Middleditch,⁵ John Kester,⁶ Stephen Kester,⁷ William Pound, David Laing, Thomas Twining, Jr.,⁸ Aaron Hampton⁹ and James Miller. There were one hundred and fifty-three taxable inhabitants in the town in 1818."¹⁰ These surnames figure prominently into the early history of the Town of Boston. A list of their contributions would be too voluminous to include here.

At the second town board meeting on April 30, 1818, the committee chosen to divide the town into road districts outlined district #3 as follows (the text is presented verbatim with any bracketed text and boldface type, here or further on in this report, having been added by the author).

"Beginning at the bridge [Hillcroft Drive] near L[evi] Rockwoods,^s [*sic*] & running from thence [north] to the [property] line between W^m Pound & Thomas Twining including the roads [note: plural] west to the center of the bridges [Patchin Road and another road that must have been nearer the cemetery] across the Caughquaga creek [the former Native American name for the Eighteen Mile Creek]."⁴

Was this northern boundary arbitrarily decided upon or did this location have some significance? Perhaps the genesis of a hamlet? The 1836 atlas indicates only one road, which traverses the valley from northwest to southeast in a way similar to the present Boston State Road, but with a very significant difference. To the north of the cemetery, on the west side of Thomas Twining's property, the road, while heading south, appears to cross over the Eighteen Mile Creek for a short span and then returns to the east side; its continuation south being much closer to the cemetery as compared to the present (relatively distant) location of Boston State Road. It crosses over the west parcel of William Pound's property (to the west of the northeast corner).³

Also, the 1855 Erie County Atlas, the next year available which includes the Town of Boston, indicates a house (or building) of Orrin Lockwood's in a position that appears to be just south and slightly east of the cemetery (*i.e.*, on the same road).¹¹

If the road was in fact farther to the west as indicated, then this may explain how the cemetery was established where it is (*i.e.*, it's unlikely the road was brought to it, but rather it began near a road).

Local oral history survives (perhaps legendary tales) attesting to the road (or *a* road) being farther west of where it is today.¹²

Additional clues are found in the following three paragraphs extracted from a letter dated May 9, 1966. It was written by Collins Town Historian Levinus K. Painter (1889-1983) and sent to Boston Town Historian Charles Bradley (1883-1977).¹³

Thanks so much for the Boston Town History [*A Brief History of the Town of Boston*], It is set up in an attractive manner and contains a lot of very useful information.

We could have given you a more complete story of the North Boston Friends Meeting. It was set up as East Eden [this should be interpreted as the east part of the township (Boston)] "allowed" meeting March 20, 1812. The first meeting house (log, I assume) was built in 1817 at a cost of \$344. The name was changed to Boston Preparative Meeting 11-29-1820, to conform to the new Town organization [in 1817].

The [North Boston] frame meeting house was erected, as you indicate, in 1840. It was sold to G.K. Farnsworth in 1900. Presumably [*sic*] this frame structure was erected on the site of the old log meeting house. **The burial ground was abandoned about a century ago [circa the 1860s] and no traces of it remains. I cannot be sure of the exact location. Emma Landon who died only four years ago [circa 1962] remembered the cemetery and I was under the impression that it was close to the meeting house, perhaps behind it.**

The first Quaker Meeting House (built in 1817) was probably located close to the (churchyard) cemetery since the latter was, to quote the above letter, "close to the meeting house, perhaps behind it" (there isn't any cemetery in North Boston proper). To reiterate my previously stated deductive reasoning; it's unlikely the road was brought to it, but rather it began near a road.

An excellent synopsis of early Quaker religious activity in town, which presents a reason for their later migration to our area, is found in the following paragraph extracted from former Boston Town Historian Sherrie Pluta's book (where it has an accompanying picture):

"The Quakers who came to this area at the beginning of the 19th century began holding their meetings in East Hamburg (now Orchard Park). In 1828, the group had differences that caused a split; the two factions became known as the Hicksites and the Orthodox Quakers. The orthodox group built a log meeting house in North Boston and replaced it in 1840 with this frame building that still stands today as a private residence."¹⁴

The services at the (second) Quaker Meeting House in North Boston, built in 1840, were usually attended by only 20 people (in 1855¹⁵) and that number was still the same twenty years later.¹⁶ Membership gradually decreased and the property was sold in 1900.

The "Friends Meeting House" in North Boston is indicated on the Erie County atlases (those

which include the Town of Boston) published in 1855,¹¹ 1866 and 1880.¹⁷ The cemetery is never indicated although the others in town usually are (excepting 1855). The fact that it isn't may be a consequence of its discontinuance and (newly found) remoteness, when the road was moved eastward or altogether eliminated.

Although the cemetery is certainly one of the oldest in town, maybe even dating to a time before the township itself was formed, the earliest concrete historical reference to it so far identified is only from the year 1898 (which is like yesterday historically speaking). It was discovered in an Abstract of Title (from 2010), graciously supplied by Attorney Sean Hopkins via local developer Mr. Dana Darling. It should be noted, however, that modern abstracts are not as comprehensive as they once were and, unfortunately, the first year listed for that specific parcel *is* 1898.

The first notation is dated October 9, 1898 (recorded Oct. 12th) and includes the following verbatim text: "**Conveys Parcel "B" and more. Excepting and reserving therefrom on the south thereof a piece of land sufficiently large to enclose all the graves occupied by the graveyard, being ¼ acre.**"¹⁸ It appears that the cemetery is being referred to as if it were already closed and/or full to capacity, which is harmonious with previously mentioned information. Subsequent deeds refer back to this same exception without any name for the cemetery ever being noted.

In the Town of Boston assessment records from 1917 is listed a property tax exemption (the first year they are recorded) for an "**Old Cemetery**" with a description of "**N W 14 ¼ Acre**" with a valuation at \$25. The "N W" apparently means "northwest," but this interpretation doesn't always agree with parcel locations. The number "14" indicates the lot, which directly corresponds with the cemetery in question. The property is subsequently referred to as the "Old Cemetery" until 1931, after which it was dropped from the list.¹⁹ Parcel "B" and more had been purchased by Stephen Wroblewski, and his wife Norma, on October 9, 1930.²⁰

As recently as the late 1930s or early 1940s there were still gravestones at the cemetery according to one reliable source, who shall remain nameless, but those stones were removed by a family in the vicinity, who shall also remain nameless.²¹ (It's not my intention to start a controversy, but to objectively present the history from whatever source available). Naturally, any old wooden markers would have long since rotted away.

The story of a local farmer accidentally unearthing mortal remains, while working the land near the cemetery, appears to be without basis due to the prohibitive features of the terrain.²²

Obviously, it can be assumed that Quakers are buried at the cemetery; perhaps others according to an October 2011 e-mail received by the Boston Historical Society, Inc. from Gretchen Klotten Minney of Broomfield, Colorado. (Her great-great-grandfather, Samuel Fuller, owned property north of Deanna Drive¹¹). A few sentences of which are pertinent: "When I visited Paul Schunk [Sr.] in August [...]. However he did tell me that he and his siblings had walked the property of what is said to be a puritan burial ground (Deanna Drive area) looking for graves. He said there is nothing there but that it has been designated as a sacred place. He said that someone in the

family had mentioned that Puritans (Quakers) buried Christian Indians in the Friends Cemetary [*sic*]."23

In 1967 the Starlite Gardens Subdivision (aka Star Light Gardens Subdivision) plans were drawn up for the property around Deanna Drive (in the 1980s it was rendered null and void and cancelled²⁴). The subdivision map shows a lot including the cemetery, which is listed as an exception, but with perceptible incongruent dimensions.²⁵

Physically located on a proposed lot west of the cemetery are the remnants of a house foundation, which had been built in anticipation of the subdivision.²⁶ It is of no great antiquity and therefore of no consequence to this report. It is mentioned here only to explain its presence.

In 1983 the cemetery reappears in the assessment records as the "**Old Quaker Cemetery**" c/o Clayton Schunk (1921-1995²⁷),¹⁹ who had purchased Parcel "B" and more in 1970.²⁸ The dimensions provided list a (paper road) frontage of 240.30 feet, with a depth of 131.00 feet, covering an area of .72 acres (note the increase in size).¹⁹

On Friday, March 9, 2012 Town Historian Keith Kaszubik and Highway Superintendent Robert Telaak --taking full advantage of the first days after the snow had completely melted and the vegetation was still matted down-- canvassed the area (with permission) where the cemetery is located looking for evidence of its existence. That search, and another with a detailed map the next morning by Keith, led to a (now) wooded area barely discernible as burial grounds if it were not for, what appears to be, a few scattered gravesite depressions.

At the June 20, 2012 Boston Town Board meeting they voted to approve Local Law No. 5 of the year 2012 to rezone 21.63 acres to the west of Boston State Road, south of Deanna Drive, held by the Boston Valley Holding Company, from R-A (Residential-Agricultural District) to R-3 (Two or more Family Residence District) subject to the following conditions (only #6 included here is pertinent): The area labeled as "Exception Parcel" on the plans submitted by the Applicant consisting of a possible Quaker cemetery shall be left undisturbed on a permanent basis.⁴

Keith Kaszubik, Town Historian commented that there is definitely a cemetery in the area of the Proposed Brookfield Residential Project and historical records show that as long ago as 1917 there was a property tax exemption for it.⁴

Supervisor Ballowe noted that the builders will contact Mr. Kaszubik so that fencing or some sort of barrier can be installed to help preserve the area.⁴

As to the final disposition of the cemetery; I present information extracted from a letter dated June 16, 2010 from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) sent to Mr. Dana Darling.²⁹ Their office offered the following:

Avoidance Plan for the Protection of Archeological Sites

Short Term Site Avoidance/Protection

- The site boundary (including buffer) will be clearly delineated on the final construction plans and identified as a "Sensitive Area/No Access".
- The site will be protected with temporary fencing during all construction activities and signage stating "Sensitive Area/No Access".
- Landscaping at the site will be limited to clearing the current tree cover and cultivating the area so that a vegetative cover can be established.

Long Term Site Avoidance/Protection

- An archeology covenant will be transferred with each property containing the avoided/protected site.
- State and federal regulations that include restrictions associated with this project will include provisions for site avoidance/protection.
- Unauthorized activities within the site boundaries will require notification to the OPRHP at (518) 237-8643, ext. 3280.

As town historian it is my recommendation to the town board that a permanent four to six feet high chain-link fence, with a gate capable of being locked, be erected about the perimeter of the cemetery. Also, that the cemetery should be properly labeled with a modest sign as the "Old Quaker Cemetery." The purchase of a historical marker by the Boston Historical Society, Inc. should be indefinitely postponed pending further information, when and if it becomes available.

Further information could likely be obtained with the (costly) purchase of a more comprehensive Abstract of Title for the property, going back to the very beginning. An extensive search of Boston's town board minutes (and also the Town of Eden's) may reveal additional clues.

Minutes from the Quaker Meetings in Orchard Park also may reveal additional clues concerning the cemetery. Undoubtedly, they would include information on the Quakers that migrated to Boston. For detailed genealogical research on these families; there are innumerable sources of information available, but that would place us beyond the limit and scope of this report.

This report would not have been possible without the help of Miss Mary Blum, Mr. Dana Darling, Assessment Clerk Suzanna Fitzner, Councilman Jeffrey Genzel, Attorney Sean Hopkins, Mr. Daniel Kaszubowski, Sr., Mr. Herbert Klein, Deputy Town Clerk Elizabeth Martin, Assessor Jeneen McSkimming, Town Clerk Jennifer Mulé, Historical Society President Katharine Praczkajło, Mr. Karl Simmeth, Jr. and Highway Superintendent Robert Telaak.

ENDNOTES

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Chicago-London-Toronto, 1945, v. 9, p. 850.

² This book is located at the Boston Highway Superintendent's office. It was a Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) project during the Great Depression.

³ Paragraph information, including dates of land purchase where applicable, from 1836 atlas on display at the Boston Historical Society Museum. Mistakes have been found on this map.

⁴ Boston Town Board meeting minutes available online at www.townofboston.com.

⁵ Boston's first three commissioners of highways (who served simultaneously) were Asa Cary, Benjamin Kester and Matthew Middleditch. The Boston Town Board meeting minutes of November 10, 1832 refer to "the late Matthew Middleditch Deceased." He is listed on the 1836 atlas as the owner (purchaser) of several properties on the east side of town.

⁶ There are gravestones for John Kester, who died September 16, 1849 (the year is unclear), and his wife Deborah, at the Friends Cemetery in Orchard Park. His age is given as 55 years, 1 month, 15 days (born circa 1794). This Quaker couple came to Erie County in 1813, and their son Benjamin was born in the Town of Boston on November 1, 1817 (*See* Smith, H. Perry. *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County*, Syracuse, New York, 1884, v. 2, p. 356). There are Kester descendents of Quakers still residing in the Town of Boston today.

⁷ This is probably the same Stephen Kester who settled in East Hamburg (now Orchard Park) in 1810 (White, Truman C. *Our County and its People A Descriptive Work on Erie County New York*, 1898, p. 177).

⁸ In 1837 Thomas Twining, Jr.'s dwelling place was on the south line of Lot 30 in North Boston (*Legal Width of Roads Town of Boston Erie Co. N. Y. 1939*, pp. 114-115). This is probably the same Thomas Twining that served as Boston Town Supervisor from 1835-1837.

⁹ The 1840 Federal Census for the Town of Boston lists Aaron Hampton as a Head of Family. Although not the same person; there is a gravestone for an Aaron Hampton (1826-1884), along with quite a few other Hamptons, at the Friends Cemetery in Orchard Park. On the west side of the Town of Boston is located Hampton Brook.

¹⁰ Smith, H. Perry. *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County*, Syracuse, New York, 1884, v. 1, p. 595. (Philip Guedalla [1889-1944] wrote, "History repeats itself; historians repeat each other").

¹¹ 1855 Erie County Atlas including the Town of Boston.

¹² Telephone interview with Mr. Daniel J. Kaszubowski, Sr. of Hamburg, New York in September 2012.

¹³ The original letter is on file at the Boston Historical Society Museum.

¹⁴ Pluta, Sherrie L. *Images of America Boston New York*, Arcadia Publishing, 2008, p. 20.

¹⁵ 1855 New York State Census. Family History Library microfilm #0825680.

¹⁶ 1875 New York State Census. Family History Library microfilm #0825690. Statistics from the 1865 census would have been included in this report, but for some unknown reason they were not recorded for the meeting house in that particular enumeration.

¹⁷ 1866 and 1880 Erie County Atlases including the Town of Boston.

¹⁸ Liber 870 of Deeds, p. 477.

¹⁹ Microfilmed assessment records at the town clerk's office covering the years 1872 to 1994 (so far).

²⁰ Liber 2146 of Deeds, p. 153.

²¹ The name of the informant is not mentioned in this report.

²² The name of this informant is also not mentioned in this report.

²³ E-mail is on file in the Town of Boston 2011 scrapbook of history compiled by the town historian.

²⁴ Telephone interview with Mr. Herbert Klein of North Boston, New York in September 2012.

²⁵ The subdivision map dated April 10, 1967 is on file in the assessor's office at the town hall.

²⁶ Interview with Mr. Karl Simmeth, Jr. of Boston, New York in September 2012.

²⁷ *United States Social Security Death Index* online.

²⁸ Liber 7710 of Deeds, p. 515.

²⁹ Mr. Dana Darling provided me with a photocopy of this letter.

THE END