

# FORM E- BURIAL GROUND

Assessor's number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

Reading

804

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town North Reading

Place *(neighborhood or village)*

Address or Location Park Street

Name Park Street Cemetery

Ownership  Public  Private

Approximate Number of Stones 160+

Earliest Death Date c. 1730s

Latest Death Date c. 1970s (1972?)

Landscape Architect

Condition Good

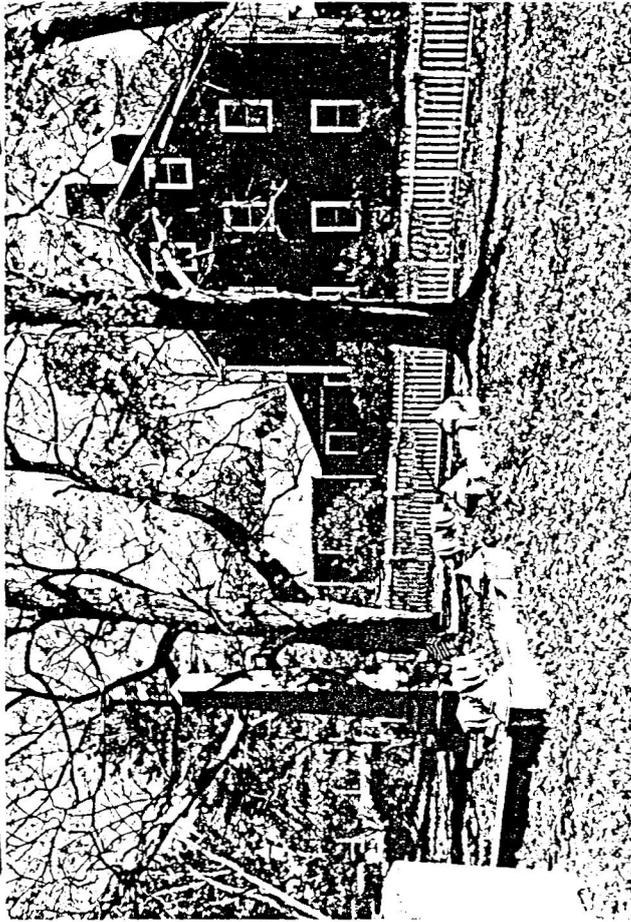
Acreage 36,900 square feet

Setting Rural - bounded by Park Street, 207 Park Street on one side, and suburban development on other sides.

Recorded by Elise Madeleine Ciregna

Organization North Reading Historical Comm

Date *(month/year)* April 2002



any. Indicate north.

*Follow Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey Manual instructions for completing this form*

## BURIAL GROUND FORM

### VISUAL/DESIGNASSESSMENT *see continuation sheet*

*Describe landscape features, gravestone materials, designs, motifs, and symbols that are either common or unusual. Note any known carvers.*

This cemetery appears to have been used from the eighteenth century well into the twentieth century. Located on a low-rise hill built on top of a stone wall, the cemetery overlooks Park Street and the Ipswich River. Two massive granite posts that now hold a wooden gate appear to date from the early nineteenth century; a smaller granite post next to these still contains iron hardware, and may have been used as a hitching post. A door set into the stone wall just under the Park Street Cemetery sign may lead to a burial vault. One side of the cemetery is bounded by a picket fence, the remaining boundaries consist of woods. On the east side of the burial ground is a Georgian residence which served as the town's Poor House from 1805 until c. 1925.

In general, gravestones are set out in regimental rows. The bulk of the gravestones are from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and are representative of typical styles and motifs: the Colonial-era "portal" shaped slate stones, with motifs derived from Puritan beliefs: the winged skull's head, the winged cherub head, and hourglasses. Early to mid-nineteenth slate gravestones often feature the classically-inspired urn-and-willow motif. Many of these gravestones are carved of slate, some are of marble, and some are granite. A number of eighteenth and nineteenth century gravesites are marked with bronze medallions or stars, indicating the deceased was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, or of the War of 1812.

### HISTORICAL NARRATIVE *see continuation sheet*

*Explain religious affiliations, major period of use, and evaluate historical association of this burial ground with the community.*

Park Street Cemetery, east of Central Street was early the family burial ground of Francis Nourse. Nourse was born in Salem on February 3, 1661. When he was 30 years old, his mother, Rebecca Nourse, was executed in the Salem witchcraft trials. Francis married Miss Sarah Tarbell in 1685 and moved to the North Parish of Reading where he purchased and built property. The earliest recorded burial in the present Park Street Cemetery was that of Jonathan Nourse in 1749 (son or grandson of Francis?).

According to Edward J. Leary's North Reading: Excerpts at Random, the "Burying Ground" that became Park Street Cemetery was laid out in 1741 by the Selectmen of Reading. (page 17) Stones from as early as the 1730s bear this date out, suggesting that either the land was already being used as a burial ground by 1741, or that family remains were moved here from elsewhere as soon as the burial ground was laid out. Leary also mentions two private cemeteries that were moved to the Park Street Cemetery; one from the Samuel Flint House on Park Street West, and one from Haverhill Street, "near or opposite Elm Street." This is information that should be further researched to verify the original locations of these smaller, presumably family cemeteries, to tie them to their former locations and to document the residents whose remains were moved.

The Sawyer family who lived on Park Street opposite Chestnut Street were very early inhabitants of the Parish and they shared the plot of the Nourse family. Here is buried the Reverend Amos Sawyer, notable pastor of the church in Danvers who died in 1769. Other early interments in the cemetery include members of the Flint, Damon, and Eaton families who also resided in the vicinity. William Sheldon (died 1754, married Mary Robert October 15, 1714), the progenitor of the Sheldon family in North Reading, was also buried at Park Street Cemetery.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES *see continuation sheet*

Maps: 1795, 1831, 1857; Middlesex County Atlases: 1875, 1889, 1906  
Leary, Edward J. North Reading, Excerpts at Random, Flint Memorial Library, North Reading  
Ledger, (gray spine and cover), Cemetery Department, North Reading Town Hall  
Ledger, (red spine, black cover), Cemetery Department, North Reading Town Hall  
Miscellaneous Cemetery Department records, North Reading Town Hall

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

## VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT (con't)

Many of the early and later nineteenth century stones are made of marble. These stones exhibit the range of Victorian motifs, from architecturally-inspired Gothic Revival forms to floral and fern motifs. A number of the stones are broken; some of the slate stones are badly eroded. Remaining granite posts at several lots suggest these previously had a fence, or a chain, surrounding the lot. Twentieth-century gravestones, mostly of granite, are in overall very good condition

One particularly imposing lot is that of Charles F. Flint (1808-1868). His lot features high granite curbing with decorative granite posts at each corner, and several steps. A large, approx. 10-foot obelisk stands in the middle of the lot, with the names of all of the family members in the lot: himself, his wife Harriet N. (1815-1896), his father Peter Flint (1775-1842) and mother May B. Flint (1777-1867). Four small marble markers, two and two, confirm the arrangements, one set marked "H.N.F." and "My Husband C.F.F."; the other set is marked "Father P.F." and "Mother M.B.F."

Although not an exhaustive survey, a number of carver names were noted:

On an 1814 slate stone, "Exec<sup>d</sup> by North Stone Groton."

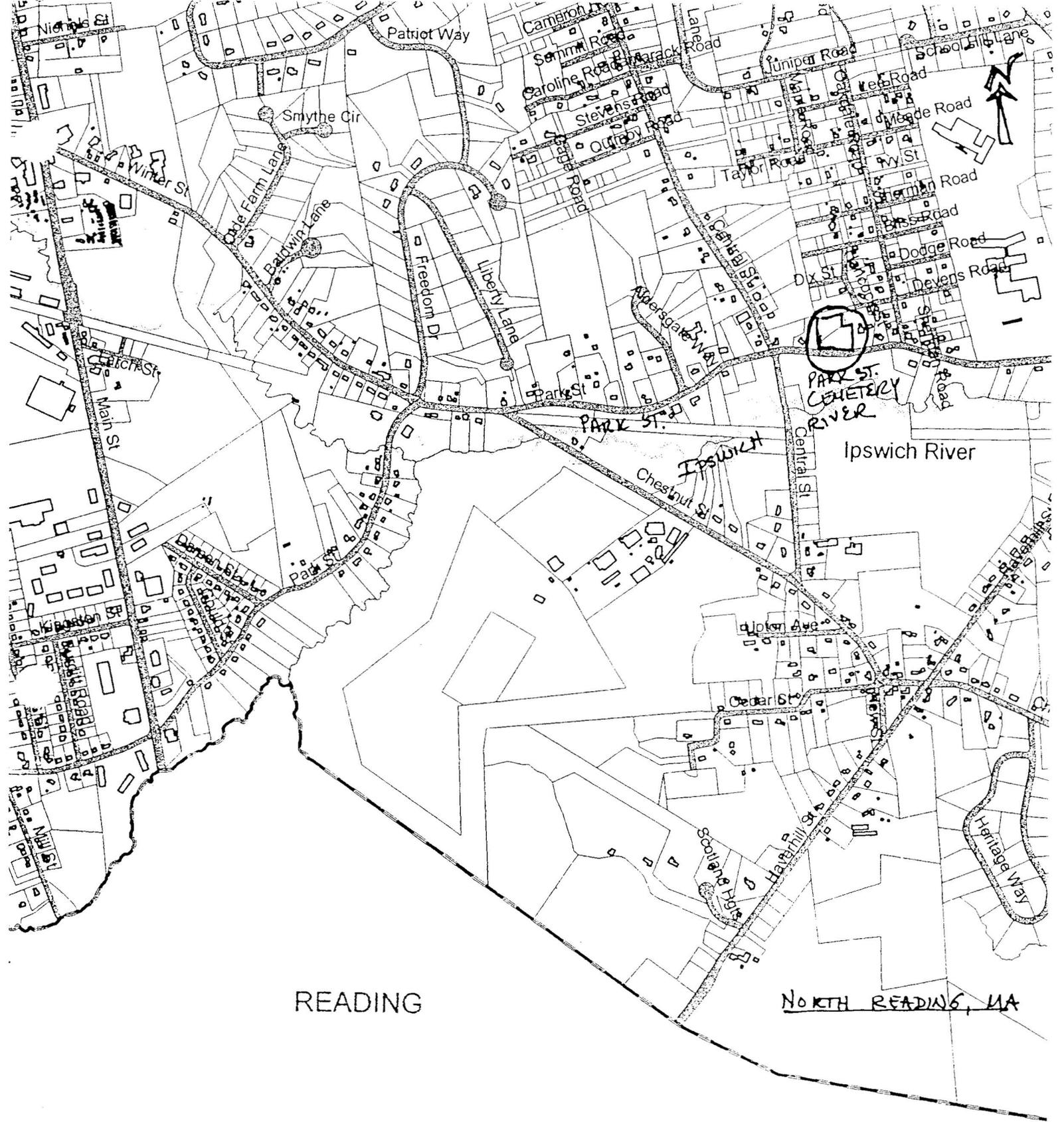
On an 1838 slate stone and a c. 1830s marble stone, "E. Day, Lowell."

On an 1872 slate stone, "Moran & Dutton, Lowell."

It should also be noted that the date of death does not necessarily reflect the date of the carving of the stone, as these were sometimes erected months or even years after the actual event. The occurrence of many of the same carver names at other cemeteries suggests that North Reading had no resident carver, or at least no successful stoncutting shop, and that stones were routinely ordered from some of the larger stonecutting shops in other towns, including Lowell.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (con't)

In other respects this cemetery is typical of small country cemeteries used over a period of two hundred years. Motifs and mediums appear to have changed here more or less in step with along with contemporary cemetery practices. As in most cemeteries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, childrens' and infants' graves represent a significant number of the burials. For a more complete historical narrative, see Form E for Harmony Vale Cemetery, which covers many of the points that also apply to the Park Street Cemetery.



READING

NORTH READING, MA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Community  
North Reading

Property Address  
Park Street Cemetery  
211 PARK STREET

Area(s)

Form No.

## National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible       Eligible only in a historic district  
 Contributing to a potential historic district       Potential historic district

Criteria:  A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations:  A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Statement of Significance by Edward W. Gordon    Preservation Consultant

Consultant

*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here*

Set out as early as the 1730s, Park Street Cemetery is a well preserved example of a Colonial era New England burial ground. Its elevated site overlooking the Ipswich River was evidently chosen with great care and an eye for picturesque rural beauty that is evident to this day. The town's oldest place of internment, this burial ground possesses an unusually fine collection of slate, limestone, granite and marble markers, including an early nineteenth century Egyptian Revival obelisk memorial at the northwest corner of this burial ground. This burial ground is the last resting place of Flints, Nurses, Buxtons and other old local families.

