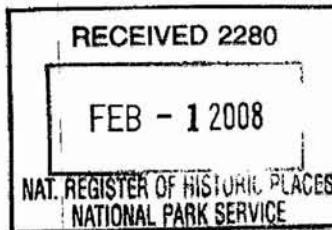


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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Pine Grove Cemetery  
other names/site number First Meetinghouse Burying Ground

2. Location

street & number Tremaine Street and Main Street not for publication  
city or town Leominster vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state Massachusetts code MA county Worcester code 027 zip code 01453

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon January 25, 2008  
Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon Date  
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Love Edson H. Beall 3-12-08  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Pine Grove Cemetery  
Name of Property

Worcester, MA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		building
1		sites
		structures
15	2	objects
16	2	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY: cemetery

RELIGION: church

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY: cemetery

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation \_\_\_\_\_

walls granite blocks, fieldstone, chain-link

roof \_\_\_\_\_

other slate, marble, granite, brownstone  
bronze

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Pine Grove Cemetery

Name of Property

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Worcester, MA

County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Art

Community Planning and development

Landscape Architecture

Social History

**Period of Significance**

1742-1958

**Significant Dates**

1776, 1820s - expansion

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Public Library, Historical Commission

Pine Grove Cemetery  
Name of Property

Worcester, MA  
County, State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** approx. 3 acres

**UTM References See continuation sheet.**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19	273660	4712280
Zone	Easting	Northing
2. 19	273780	4712200
Zone	Easting	Northing

3. 19	273660	4712140
Zone	Easting	Northing
4.		
Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kathleen Glastetter, Leominster Historical Commission with Philip Bergen and Betsy Friedberg, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date January 2008

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

**Additional Documentation**

**Submit the following items with the completed form:**

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Leominster

street & number 357 Main Street telephone 978-534-7583

city or town Leominster state MA zip code 01453

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Pine Grove Cemetery  
Leominster (Worcester), MA

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### Narrative Description

Located in the city of Leominster, Massachusetts, Pine Grove Cemetery is a vernacular landscape that has evolved organically over the past 260 years. Originally referred to as the "burying yard," it was established in 1742 adjacent to the east end of Leominster's first meetinghouse. Following the removal of the meetinghouse and two subsequent expansions, the Cemetery reached its present size of three acres. Today it contains important elements from the 1700s, 1800s, and 1900s, including gravestones from all three centuries, surrounding stone walls, wrought-iron entry gates, four granite tombs, a large number of mature trees, and several flowering trees and shrubs. Since its closure to burials in 1937, the city has had little money to spend on the upkeep of the Cemetery, but fortunately it still retains a high degree of historical integrity.

### Context

Pine Grove Cemetery lies approximately a half-mile north of the city center. It is bordered to the north by Tremaine Street, a quiet dead-end street, and to the northwest by the busy intersection of Route 12 (Main Street), Route 13 (Mill Street), the main roads north to Fitchburg and Lunenburg, and Tremaine Street. To the west it is bordered by Route 12, which is lined with commercial establishments. Beyond Route 12 lies a residential neighborhood. To the south of the Cemetery is the Training Field (presently known as Carter Park), land that was donated to Leominster in 1754 on the condition that it remain open space for the training of militia. To the east of Pine Grove Cemetery are steep wooded slopes that have never been developed.

### Entrances and Circulation

There are three entrances to Pine Grove Cemetery, along the northern, western, and southern borders. The northern and southern entrances both accommodate vehicles, though neither is currently accessible to the public. The northern, or Tremaine Street entrance consists of a padlocked wrought-iron gate, which is in need of repair. Some of its upright members are slightly bent; it is somewhat rusted, and the two halves of the gate no longer meet to close properly. (PHOTO #7) The southern, or Carter Park entrance also features a handsome wrought-iron gate. (PHOTO #2) One of its vertical members is bent and it has been welded to metal railroad ties sunk into the ground behind the gate to prevent access to the grounds at this point. The third Cemetery entrance is located along the western edge. This pedestrian-only entry consists of a flight of stone steps built into the retaining wall that edges the Cemetery on this side. (PHOTO #3)

The Cemetery contains two dirt and grass roads wide enough to accommodate a small vehicle. The curving eastern road connects the northern and southern entries, and appears to have had a stone surface at some point in the past because traces of cobbles and stones are still visible today.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Pine Grove Cemetery  
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(PHOTO #7) It is rutted and eroded in places, appearing to be more heavily worn than the western road. The western road emanates from the southern entry and runs parallel to the western edge of the Cemetery approximately 25 feet from the edge. Unlike the more organic eastern road, the western road is straight and is in perfect alignment with the cemetery's western edge and the graves around it, suggesting that this part of the Cemetery was originally surveyed. It does not appear to have had a stone surface treatment, and today is primarily grass. As it heads north and approaches the western entry, the western road ends abruptly and circulation becomes unclear. Since it is the only flat area within the Cemetery that did not already contain headstones by the year 1886, it may have been the location of a hearse house that stood on the grounds during the 1800s and was removed at that time.

### *Topography*

The majority of land within the Cemetery consists of relatively flat planes and gentle slopes. (PHOTOS # 9-10) The only areas that exhibit steep slopes are along the Cemetery's northern edge near the Tremaine Street entrance. The Cemetery road that begins at this entrance appears to have been cut into the earth to accommodate the grade change between the Cemetery's northern edge and Tremaine Street, a difference of approximately 15 feet at its highest.

### *Constructed Elements (walls, stairs, tombs)*

The Cemetery is entirely surrounded by walls that vary in materials and function. A chain-link fence lines the eastern edge of the Cemetery; just beyond this fence are steep wooded slopes. Added during the 1930s to prevent cut-through use of the Cemetery, the fence is rusted but still functional with the exception of the southern corner where it can be crawled under for unseen access. A 19<sup>th</sup> century dry-laid stone wall lines the Cemetery's northern edge. (PHOTO #7) Constructed of granite blocks, this wall ranges from two to three and a half feet in height, and functions as a retaining wall. In some places the blocks have shifted and should be reset. The Cemetery's western and southern edges feature a mortared fieldstone wall with pitched cement cap. (PHOTOS # 2, 11) Originally constructed during the 1800s and rebuilt and extended during a 1930s WPA project, this wall is one of the most attractive features within Pine Grove Cemetery. Overall it is in good condition, although a few stones have come loose at the southwestern corner and should be remortared. Along the southern and southwestern edges, the wall is entirely freestanding, reaching a height of about three and a half feet. As the wall heads north, however, it begins to retain earth, such that at the northwest corner of the Cemetery it is entirely earth retaining. At its tallest, it reaches a height of approximately five feet. From within the cemetery the relationship between the wall and the earth is constantly changing, creating a dynamic edge.

The flight of steps marking the western entry is built into the wall, as are the four granite tombs dating from the 1830s and 1840s. (PHOTO #4) Of the four tombs, only one retains a marble door

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Pine Grove Cemetery  
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with metal hinges and handle. Carved on the door is the date 1841. The openings of the other three have been sealed with mortared bricks, a safety precaution to keep people from entering the tombs and becoming injured. No carvings survive for these three tombs indicating for whom they were constructed. The interior condition of the tombs is unknown, but the external mortared granite blocks are in good condition.

A contemporary metal sign, facing Main Street, provides a brief history of the Cemetery. (PHOTO # 1) It is supported by painted wooded posts. A small flagpole is located near the western stone wall. Both of these objects are noncontributing due to their age.

### Gravestones

Because Pine Grove Cemetery was an active place of burial for nearly two centuries, it contains a variety of gravestone styles. Of the approximately 800 stones in the Cemetery today, the majority are 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century slates and marbles; fewer than 20 burials occurred at Pine Grove during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More than three-quarters (635) of the stones are slate, 19% (154) are marble, and the remainder are granite and brownstone. There is also a 1930s panel of thirteen bronze headstones set flush in a bed of poured concrete. (PHOTO #5) These were laid in honor of thirteen Leominster veterans whose stones had been lost. While the overwhelming majority of stones are upright, there are two horizontal table stone markers within the Cemetery, one of which is in good condition, while the other rests upon a reconstructed base of concrete blocks. Several obelisks date to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A few are relatively simple in design (PHOTO #6) and rest on granite bases, while others, such as the Carter family obelisk (PHOTO #12), are more elaborate.

Regarding carving motifs, the slate stones feature the death's head, the winged angel, or the willow and urn motif. Some of the slates contain decorative side carvings featuring flower, vegetal, or scroll patterns. Most of the marble stones do not contain decorative carvings; those that do typically display a flower motif.

Pine Grove's earliest date of death is 1742, which was the year in which the Cemetery was established. A stone commemorates James Gardner, an infant who died in that year on the day he was born. There are at least nine stones that date from the 1750s and 1760s, including one for Leominster's first settler, Gershom Houghton (d. 1757). All of these stones would have been located within the original burial yard, because the first expansion of Pine Grove did not occur until the 1770s. All of these stones are located within the northeastern corner of Pine Grove, suggesting that this is the oldest part of the Cemetery. This section features man-made design elements characteristic of Colonial-era burial grounds. All of the gravestones are oriented in an east/west manner, are not organized into family plots, and are arranged somewhat haphazardly relative to later cemetery forms. The stones are of slate, and typically feature symbols like the death's head. There is little landscaping beyond what was present upon the site initially.

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Pine Grove Cemetery  
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The portions of the Cemetery developed during the 1800s typify design practices during this era. Most of the stones are made of marble, and are carved with benign imagery like the willow and the urn. Ornamental flowering trees and shrubs are plentiful in this part of the Cemetery, a defining feature of 1800s rural garden cemeteries.

There are eleven family plots within the Cemetery demarcated with coping or fencing. Eight feature granite coping, and three feature fencing of vertical granite posts connected with horizontal metal tie bars. All of the granite coping survives intact and unbroken, although in some instances the individual blocks are out of alignment, have sunk into the earth, or are covered with lichen. One of the three plots demarcated with fencing is in poor condition, missing all of its metal tie bars (although the granite uprights still remain). The second plot exhibits some bent and missing metal bars, possibly the result of vandalism. The third plot is in good condition with the exception that the metal tie bars are rusted. (PHOTO #8)

### *Vegetation*

Pine Grove Cemetery contains close to 130 mature trees, including nearly 100 conifers such as red pine, and approximately 30 deciduous trees including oaks and maples. Many of these mature trees are probably 100 years old because the last record of tree planting documented in the Municipal Annual Reports dates from 1899. The trees create a heavy shade over parts of the grounds, particularly along a diagonal swath running from the northwestern to the southeastern corners of the Cemetery. (PHOTOS # 9, 10) Most are in fair to good condition.

Three large trees stand just outside the Cemetery walls. Near the Cemetery's western entrance, to the left of the stone steps, stands a magnificent black oak with a diameter of 13 feet at its base. Approximately 100 feet from the black oak stands a shagbark hickory with a base diameter of 10½ feet. The third tree, a sugar maple with a base diameter of ten feet, stands to the right of the southern, or Carter Park, entry.

There are also several flowering trees and shrubs within the Cemetery. Planted during the later 1800s and early 1900s, these include forsythia, spirea, and lilacs near the southern and western entrances, and mountain laurel and forsythia along the northern edges. There are also a handful of flowering trees and shrubs like hydrangea interspersed among the gravestones throughout the Cemetery. Some of these shrubs were recently pruned, and are in good condition. Others do not receive enough sunlight because of the dense tree canopy overhead, and exhibit stunted forms.

### **Archaeological Description**

While no ancient Native American sites are located on the cemetery property, sites may exist. One site is known in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Pine Grove Cemetery  
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property represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native sites. The cemetery is located on an excessively drained, level to moderately sloping stream terrace and glacial outwash plain, in close proximity to wetlands. Monoosnoc Brook is located less than 1,000 feet south of the cemetery. The entire town of Leominster lies within the Nashua/Merrimack River drainage. Given the above information, the small size of the cemetery (approximately 3 acres), the presence of more than 800 graves, the meetinghouse site, hearse house site, tombs, and sites of other potential structures, a low to moderate potential exists for locating significant ancient Native American resources. Grave excavations and construction of the structures identified above would have had an adverse effect on the integrity of any ancient resources located in the cemetery.

A high potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources within and around the boundaries of the cemetery. Structural evidence may exist from the town's first meetinghouse (1742) located in the northeastern part of the existing cemetery. The cemetery was originally established within the east end of the town's first meetinghouse site. Since the older gravestones are concentrated in the northeast corner of the cemetery, the 1742 meetinghouse would be located immediately west of that area. Among the more than 800 gravestones identified in the cemetery, only 20 burials occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The remainder of the graves originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The cemetery closed to burials in 1937. Structural evidence may also survive from a hearse house (early 19<sup>th</sup> century) and potential outbuildings. Occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells), especially trash deposits, may also exist within the boundaries of the cemetery.

Unmarked graves represent another potential archaeological resource within the Pine Grove Cemetery. Unknown persons, paupers, and other indigents were often buried in unmarked graves in specified areas or around the periphery of cemeteries. Since the boundaries of the cemetery were enlarged twice, and since the first walls delineating the boundary were not built until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, unmarked graves may exist anywhere within the present boundaries of the cemetery and around its periphery. Unmarked graves may also exist from graves within the cemetery whose gravestones were either lost or were manufactured from materials that have since deteriorated. The potential of unmarked graves is further indicated by the presence of a panel of 13 bronze headstones set in concrete that was laid in honor of 13 Leominster veterans whose gravestones were lost.

(end)

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Pine Grove Cemetery  
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### Statement of Significance

#### *Introduction*

Pine Grove Cemetery, the oldest remaining link to Leominster's early history, was established in 1742. It possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The majority of Pine Grove's headstones date from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and most of the features that existed on the grounds were in place during this period, the circulation system had been established, and the Cemetery had reached its current three-acre size.

With a period of significance extending from 1742 to 1957, the usual 50-year cut-off date for properties that retain their continuing function and use, Pine Grove Cemetery retains its integrity and meets National Register Criteria A and C, and Criteria Consideration D (for a cemetery), at the local level. Criterion A: Pine Grove is Leominster's oldest municipal burying ground, established just two years after the town incorporated. Therefore it is the final resting place for the men and women who settled the town, including multiple members of the first families, as well as the first and second ministers. It contains gravesites for nearly 100 Revolutionary War veterans, including approximately 40 soldiers who marched from Leominster to Lexington on April 19, 1775. Pine Grove also contains the graves of several citizens who contributed to the development of the town's plastics industry during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, an industry that historically has defined this community and one that remains vital to the economy and identity of Leominster today.

Criterion C: The oldest parts of the cemetery are characteristic of a Colonial-era burial ground in terms of gravestone materials (slate) and carving motifs (death's head). The east/west orientation of the graves and headstones, a somewhat arbitrary layout relative to later cemetery forms, the lack of organization into family plots, and the absence of decorative landscaping are also characteristic of Colonial-era burial grounds. The 1820s expansion is typical of 19<sup>th</sup> century cemetery design in that it contains tombs, and has been carefully surveyed and subdivided into family plots, many of which are demarcated by granite coping and fencing. Many of the headstones in the 1820s expansion are marble, and there are a number of decorative flowering trees and shrubs in this area characteristic of cemetery landscaping practices during this time period. The 1930s panel of bronze headstones set flush with the ground is characteristic of 20<sup>th</sup> century burial practices.

#### *Brief History of Leominster*

Leominster was established on lands purchased from the Nashaway Native American tribe in 1701 by the Town of Lancaster. Settlers of this parcel never felt a true kinship with Lancaster, due to an excessive distance from the town center, which resulted in a movement for division. On July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1740, the Town of Leominster incorporated from these lands.

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Pine Grove Cemetery  
Leominster (Worcester), MA

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In the years following, Leominster's residents engaged in agriculture and home-based cottage industries. Leominster farms produced a diversity of crops, ranging from grains to vegetables to apples. The cottage industries included grist- and sawmills, typical of this period. Beginning in the 1760s however, the entrepreneur Obediah Hills began to fabricate hair combs from softened animal horns and tortoise shells in his kitchen. Neighbors observed his success with this unusual enterprise, and soon started their own comb-making businesses. By the 1850s the town produced 2/3 of combs manufactured in the United States, and was frequently referred to as the "Comb City." Locals continued to advance this nascent technology, which over many years of evolution led to the creation of early 20<sup>th</sup> century plastics like Viscoloid and Celluloid. To this day the production of plastics remains an important part of the local economy. Leominster proudly lays claim to this heritage in identifying itself as the "Pioneer Plastics City."

Beginning in the late 1800s the booming comb and plastics industry resulted in enormous population growth, which led Leominster to incorporate as a city in 1915. The thousands of immigrants who found employment here not only contributed to the city's size, but also to its diversity. Waves of Irish, French-Canadian, and Italian immigrants created several distinctly ethnic neighborhoods, for example Lincoln Terrace and French Hill, contributing another layer of richness to the community.

### *History of Pine Grove Cemetery*

Established in 1742 within the yard of the first meetinghouse, Pine Grove Cemetery is the oldest remaining link to Leominster's earliest history. The Town was founded in 1740 and its citizens immediately voted to construct a meetinghouse, which was located in the northern portion of what today is Pine Grove Cemetery. By 1741 the frame had been erected, and in the following winter services had begun to be conducted there. In 1742, citizens voted to establish the "burying yard" within the east yard of the meetinghouse, which was the origin of Pine Grove Cemetery, although town annual meeting reports indicate that this name was not used until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, Pine Grove is associated with both the municipal and religious history of the town. Since it was Leominster's only municipal burial ground until 1840, it contains the gravesites of most of the community's early founders. The plan of the first meetinghouse still exists today in the records of the Unitarian Universalist Church, which is the current parish associated with the original meetinghouse. Six of the original sixteen male heads of families listed on this plan are buried at Pine Grove, along with members of their immediate families and several descendants. These include: Jonathan, Nathaniel, and Oliver Carter; David and Thomas Wilder; and Gershom Houghton. In addition to membership in the first church in Leominster, the Houghtons were the first European settlers to construct a house in town. Several other members of prominent early Leominster families are also buried here, including members of the Boutell, Buss, Gates, Hale, and Johnson families. Leominster's first minister, John Rogers, and second minister, Francis Gardner, are also buried at Pine Grove Cemetery.

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Pine Grove Cemetery  
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In 1774, citizens voted to construct a second, larger, meetinghouse approximately one-half mile southwest of the first. The 1741 meetinghouse was dismantled and sold at public auction the following year, and the center of the town shifted from the area around Pine Grove Cemetery to the area around the second meetinghouse, where it has remained since. Despite the shift, Pine Grove remained Leominster's principal municipal burying ground, and continued to be the final resting place for most of the earliest citizens. Because the first meetinghouse was dismantled so early in town history, very little is known about the structure itself.

Carter Park borders Pine Grove Cemetery to the south. Originally donated to Leominster as a military training field in 1754, it was the gift of Oliver Carter. The park's military emphasis lasted for more than a century, as citizens used the field to prepare for conflicts beginning with the French and Indian War and continuing through the Civil War. The role of the park changed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century towards passive recreation. Pine Grove Cemetery reflects this nearby participation in that it contains the gravesites of 106 local Revolutionary War veterans, including more than forty minutemen who left Carter Park on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 1775, bound for Lexington. Veterans of the War of 1812 and the Civil War are also buried at Pine Grove.

Because the cemetery was originally established within the meetinghouse yard, its limited size quickly became a problem. At a 1776 town meeting, citizens requested the purchase of more land to expand, while a second and final expansion occurred during the early 1820s. Shortly after this purchase the Town commissioned a survey, the first known mention of a delineation of the cemetery. Since there is no further recorded expansion of Pine Grove Cemetery, it likely attained its present size of three acres by this time.

In addition to Pine Grove's gravestones, annual reports indicate that only three other kinds of structures ever existed on the property. These included enclosing fencing and walls, granite tombs for both temporary winter interment and private burial, and a hearse house. The earliest reference to an enclosure around the cemetery dates from 1784, when the town meeting voted to construct a fence. It is likely this fence was built of wood, because there are numerous later references describing an extant stone wall built in the 1800s.

A town tomb was constructed in 1836 for the interment of the dead during winter months when burials were precluded by frozen ground. Three other similar tombs were later constructed for private burials. All four tombs were built into the earth, and because of this had access doors less than three feet high. Unfortunately, the tombs proved to be problematic for various reasons. The roofs leaked, the town tomb was too small to accommodate all of the bodies awaiting spring burial, and the small entry doors made movement of bodies in and out of the tomb difficult. Because of these problems, the Cemetery Commission requested the construction of a new tomb that would be entirely above ground and larger, a request that was carried out years later upon the

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Pine Grove Cemetery  
Leominster (Worcester), MA

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grounds of Evergreen Cemetery. In subsequent years, all bodies were removed from the tombs and returned to the earth, so the tombs are empty today.

The third structure was the hearse house, used for the storage of the town-owned hearse. It is unknown exactly when this was built, or what it looked like, but it is referred to as early as 1836 in a letter in the Leominster Historical Society collection. Annual town reports indicate that it was dismantled and sold in 1886.

The period ranging from its establishment in 1742 until 1840 marks Pine Grove Cemetery's period of greatest development and use. All of the structures that ever existed on the property were built during this period, its current size of three acres had been reached, and it was experiencing its greatest demand for burials.

By the late 1830s the town again needed to purchase more land for cemetery development, but Pine Grove's limits had been reached. Therefore in 1840 Leominster purchased another parcel of land approximately one-quarter mile north, and established Evergreen Cemetery. It was laid out in the rural garden style, popularized locally with Cambridge's Mount Auburn Cemetery. As a result, burials at Pine Grove began to decline steadily by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

Despite this decline, a number of entrepreneurs associated with the 19<sup>th</sup> century comb-making and early plastics industry are buried at Pine Grove. These include Charles and Thomas Hills, who had followed in Obediah Hills' footsteps and established a comb-making shop in Leominster, where they operated a successful manufacturing operation for many years, even hiring a local scientist to invent the first screw press. The brothers successfully patented this item, which became an important tool in the advancement of the industry. James H. Carter and James Burdett are also buried at Pine Grove Cemetery. Like the Hills brothers, these men were pioneers in the field of comb manufacturing, establishing and operating successful businesses for several years. Carter also served as the Chair of the local Board of Selectmen, a member of the Board of Assessors, and as Director of Leominster's First National Bank. The groundbreaking work of these four men laid the foundation for the future development of Leominster's plastics industry.

Another prominent 19<sup>th</sup> century citizen buried at Pine Grove is Deacon David Wilder (d. 1866) who represented Leominster as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate, and served state-wide as Treasurer and Highway Commissioner. Wilder's local accomplishments included serving as Deacon of the town's oldest church, Masonic membership, and author of an 1853 history of Leominster. Multiple contemporary sources describe him as one of the most influential and talented citizens of this period.

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Although Pine Grove Cemetery remained an active burial ground until 1937, it received less than twenty interments during the 20<sup>th</sup> century before closing because of a budget cut to the Cemetery Department. Appropriately the final burial that year was that of Emma Moore, the town historian. While the cemetery numbers were declining, Pine Grove remained well tended by the community through the 1930s. Several revitalization projects were funded by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), including mapping the cemetery (the only surviving historical map), resetting and cleaning gravestones, and rebuilding and extending the stone walls surrounding the property. These surrounding stone walls are one of the Cemetery's most attractive elements.

Leominster has continued to experience population growth throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially following the 1980s construction of Interstate Highway 190, which intersects MA Route 2 near the city. In addition to this favorable transportation location, Leominster lies along the outer fringes of both Boston and Worcester's metro region. Linked to Boston by automobile and commuter rail, the city offers a lower cost of living than Boston's western suburbs. Together these factors have placed enormous growth pressures upon the City. Today, Leominster is a vibrant community of 40,000 people striving to maintain a careful balance between residential and economic growth, and preservation of its buildings, landscapes, and neighborhoods that reflect its rich history.

As the birthplace of both American folk hero Johnny Appleseed and the still-vital plastics industry, Leominster possesses a rich and varied history. Full of colorful characters and interesting events, it is a history that the City wishes to preserve. At the same time it is striving to balance the potentially contradictory impulses of preservation and growth. Ensuring the preservation of Pine Grove Cemetery, one of the few tangible links to Leominster's earliest history, has become a priority to this community.

### Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of ancient Native American settlement in Leominster are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Ancient sites in this area may contribute important information related to the role and importance of upland/interior sites within local/regional Native American subsistence and settlement systems. Ancient sites in the cemetery may contribute information that indicates the variability and importance of sites within the Nashua River drainage, and the relationship of those sites to sites within the larger Merrimack River system. Native sites in this area could be part of a larger, possibly seasonal, settlement network based along the Nashua River, its tributaries, the Merrimack River, or part of a specialized adaptation to local environments in the Central Massachusetts uplands and Worcester Plateau locale. Many subsistence and settlement theories indicate prehistoric socio/political/economic boundaries are based within riverine basins. Prehistoric sites in the district may enable a test of various theories

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relating to riverine adaptations and the importance of ranked streams within the same overall drainage.

Historic archaeological resources described above may contribute important information related to the evolution of the cemetery, burial patterns, important municipal structures, and the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of many of the town's inhabitants from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Additional historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing may locate post holes from fence posts, as well as buried segments of stone walls that together can help accurately reconstruct the boundaries of the cemetery through time. Unmarked graves can also help reconstruct cemetery boundaries and the internal configuration of graves within those boundaries. The identification of unmarked graves may also contribute information that indicates how the community treated its less fortunate inhabitants in death, including unknown persons, paupers, and other indigents.

Structural evidence from buildings originally located in the cemetery may contribute important architectural details related to some of the town's earliest municipal structures. Structural evidence and artifacts associated with Leominster's first meetinghouse may contribute important evidence related to construction details, materials, architectural characteristics, and facilities present at the town's first municipal building. Because the first meetinghouse was removed early in the town's history, little is known about the structure itself. A plan for the first meetinghouse still exists with the records of the Unitarian Universalist Church; however, many details about the structure are absent on those plans. Similar evidence may also survive from the hearse house that also existed on the property but whose exact location is unknown. Structural evidence may also survive from outbuildings located on the property. Archaeological evidence from outbuildings may contribute important information related to their location, maintenance, and mortuary activities conducted in the cemetery. Detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features, especially trash pits/areas, may contribute information related to cemetery maintenance and memorial offerings.

Detailed analysis of the burial context associated with individual and groups of graves may contribute important information associated with the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of individuals and groups within the community, and the health and pathologies of that population. Gravestone inscriptions, artifacts, and the general health associated with the deceased may contribute important information related to the cultural characteristics, social, and economic status of individuals and ethnic/social groups. Osteological study of skeletal remains may contribute evidence on the general health of individuals and groups and pathologies that affected the community.

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### 10. Geographical Data

#### Verbal Boundary Description

Pine Grove Cemetery is indicated by marked assessor's map #25, section 1, included with this nomination.

#### Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all those areas historically identified with Pine Grove Cemetery, including additions dating from 1776 and the 1820s.

(end)

#### Photographs

Date: September 25, 2007

Photographer: Philip Bergen, MHC

1. Marker with historic information, view to E
2. South entrance gate and fieldstone wall, view to NE
3. Tombs in western wall, view to NE
4. Entrance steps, western wall, view to E
5. Bronze headstones, view to S
6. John Collins obelisk, view to SE
7. Tremaine St entrance gate, view to S
8. Richarddson family plot, view to N
9. general panorama, view to SW
10. general panorama, view to NW
11. Southern boundary, Cater park in background, view to S
12. Carter family obelisk, view to N
13. Chase table marker, view to E

**DATA SHEET**  
**PINE GROVE CEMETERY, LEOMINSTER (WORCESTER), MA**

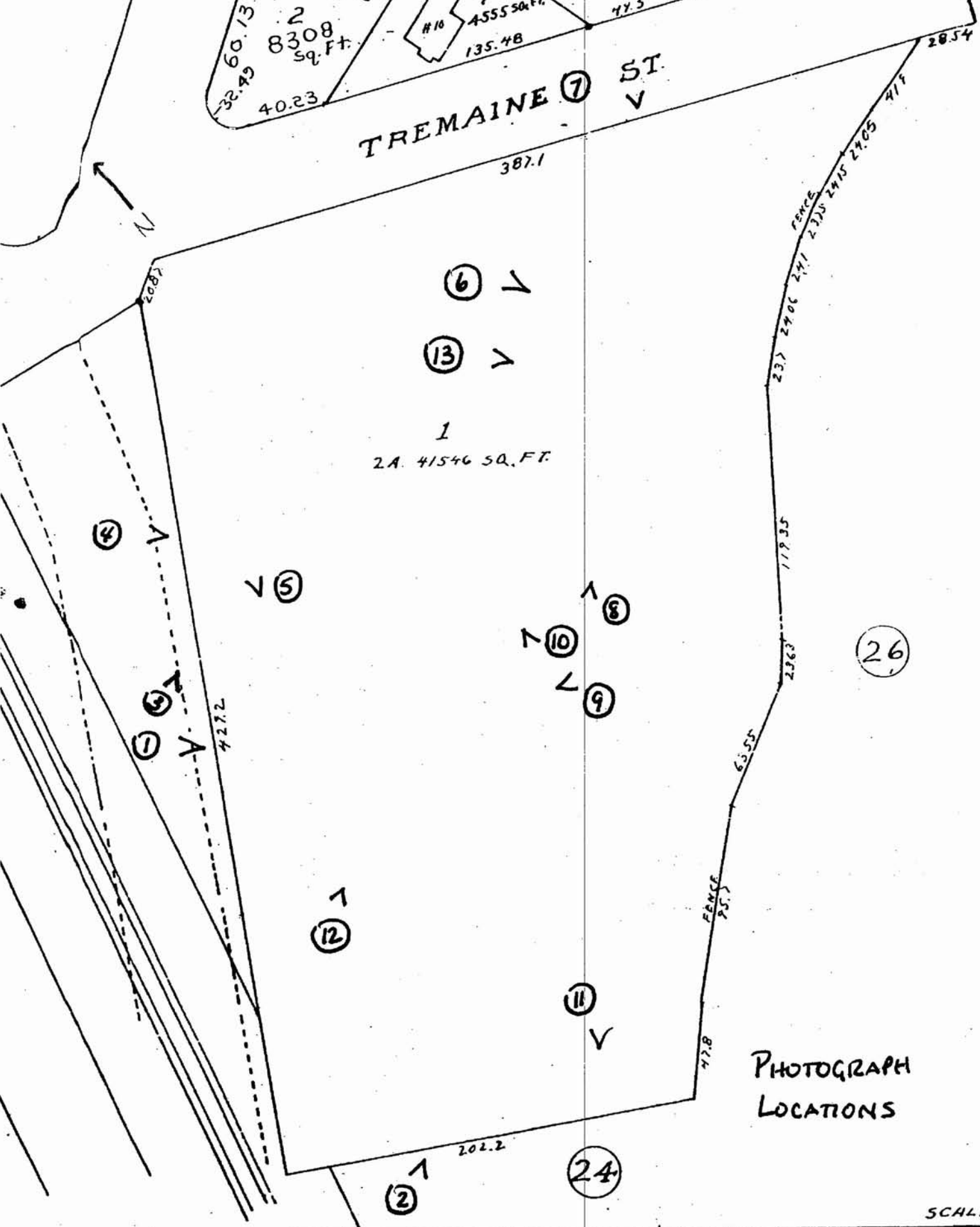
PHOTO	ELEMENT	DATE	MATERIAL	TYPE/STATUS
	Pine Grove Cemetery	1742, 1776, 1820s		SI/C
	Chain-link fence, east boundary	1930s	metal	O/C
2,11	Fieldstone wall, south, west boundaries	19 <sup>th</sup> c., 1930s	fieldstone	O/C
2	Entrance gate, south boundary	early 20 <sup>th</sup> c.	wrought-iron	O/C
7	Dry-laid stone wall, north boundary	19 <sup>th</sup> c.	granite	O/C
7	Entrance gate, north boundary	early 20 <sup>th</sup> c.	wrought-iron	O/C
4	Steps, western entry wall	19 <sup>th</sup> c.	granite	O/C
3	Tombs	ca. 1841	marble, brick	(4) O/C
1	Historic marker	ca. 2000	metal, wood	O/NC
	Flagpole	late 20 <sup>th</sup> c.	metal	O/NC
5	Flush headstones	1930s	bronze, concrete	O/C
13	Table stone markers	1806, 1810	slate	(2) O/C
	James Gardner tombstone	1742	slate	O/C
	Gershom Houghton tombstone	1754	slate	O/C
8	Richardson family plot	early-mid 19 <sup>th</sup> c.	slate, granite, metal	O/C
6	John Collins obelisk	1836	marble	O/C

Individual markers and tombs listed are representative of elements found in the cemetery. Approximately 800 markers currently exist.

TOTALS	Contributing	Noncontributing
Sites	1	
Objects	17	2
	18	2

32.60.13  
 2  
 8308  
 sq. Ft.  
 40.23  
 #10  
 4555 SQ. FT.  
 135.48  
 47.5  
 28.54

TREMAINE ⑦ ST  
 V



PHOTOGRAPH  
 LOCATIONS

SCALE



## Pine Grove Cemetery

Established in 1742, Pine Grove Cemetery is the oldest of four cemeteries in the City of Leominster. It falls into the category of a town/city cemetery, established as a municipal burial ground next to Leominster's first meetinghouse, which at the time was center of town. Therefore this cemetery occupied a fairly central and important space within the community. Since it was closed to burial in 1937, Pine Grove Cemetery lost its primary function, that of a place of active burial

Pine Grove Cemetery is unique in that it has one of the heaviest concentration of Revolutionary War Veterans buried on its grounds. There are 94 known burials from the Revolutionary War, 4 from the Civil War and 30 from the War of 1812. It sits next to Carter Park, a military training ground for soldiers starting with the Indian Wars including those up to 1812.









ALFRED HAY  
MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR  
JAN 1775 - OCT 1783

JOHN B. BARNES  
MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

EDWARD GALE  
MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

ASA JOHNSON  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR  
FEE 16 1775

ABIGAIL HOUGHON  
MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR  
JAN 1775

MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

MASSACHUSETTS  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

JOSEPH JUNIOR WHITE  
MASSACHUSETTS  
WOOD'S REGT MASS MIL  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR  
NOVEMBER 1783

OLIVER CARTER  
MASSACHUSETTS  
WORCESTER CITY REGT  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR

SAMUEL HALE  
MASSACHUSETTS  
T A GRANSTON'S CO  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR  
JUNE 13 1834

















