

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY

1634. Ipswich, named for the merchants of Ipswich, England, was incorporated and the first meeting house was built. (350th) Note: this meeting house was re-built several times – 1646?, 1702 (on the North Green), 1749 (also on the North Green)
- “Our fathers ‘selected a goodly spot, the old ground at the foot of the sunny-hill slope on High Street and the year, 1634, saw a very sorrowful company gathered about a new grave somewhere there, for Martha, the young wife of John Winthrop, Jr., lived but a year after the settlement was begun, ~ the very first, perhaps, to be laid to rest there.” (Waters, pp. 13-14)
- “The burying place” was agreed upon as the westward limit of the settlement. (Waters, 374) (It is likely that this site consisted of approximately 1 acre although record of its precise size has not been found.)
1635. High Street was laid out, and a foot-bridge spanning the river was constructed. Houses were built within one-half mile of the meeting house. (350th) Town records indicated that land was set aside for the purposes of burying the dead. (Felt, 194)
1641. A map of *Ipswich Village in 1641* showed the cemetery abutted on the west by George Smith and the east by John Cross.
1700. Ipswich’s population totaled approximately 1,800. (350th)
1707. The town bought another (3/8 acre) ¼ and 1/8 acre to enlarge the burying place from Mr. Shoreborne Wilson on June 26th for 30 pounds. (Waters, 374 and Bush, 2)
1764. The Choate Bridge was constructed across the Ipswich River, and is the oldest extant stone-arch bridge in English-speaking America. (350th) In the 1760s, the leading Ipswich industries were fishing, trading, cabinet and hat-making, lace-making, farming and distilling. (350th)
1773. The First and South Churches jointly purchased [land for] a burial ground in the south part of town.
1790. The Federal census recorded the population as 4,562. (350th)
1793. Hamilton (known up until then as the “Hamlet”) separated from Ipswich. (350th)
1795. Three acres of land, located to the west and north sides of the burying ground, were purchased on January 25th from Jeremiah Day for 70

pounds. (Bush, 2) The burying ground remained this size (approximately 4 3/8 acres) until the late 19th century.

The paved “central” pathway leading through the burying ground stood at the western edge in 1795. Tradition holds that underneath this walkway is a common grave, used for the first cold winters. “In the fall while the soil was still soft enough to dig, a large grave was dug with the capacity to hold the remains of all those who pass away during the winter months when the ground was too hard to dig. In a shed to the east the soil from the grave was stored with the means to warm it up enough to cover the dead. Gravestones were later erected in the location where the body should have been buried by was not. The deceased remained in the mass grave unmoved. (Bush, 2)

Beginning this year, the town voted to allow calves and sheep to be pastured in the burying ground, and rights were awarded to the highest bidder. This continued until 1840. “Voted that the herbage of the Burying Ground be now let to the highest bidder and that no stock be pastured in said ground but calves and sheep, and it was struck off to Capt. Eben Lord for 38/.” (Waters, Vol, II, 444)

Town Meeting then appointed a committee to see that the burying ground was fenced. (Waters, Vol II, p. 444)

1800. The Federal census recorded the population as 3,305. (350th)
1802. The first tomb was constructed for Daniel Noyes.
1803. Both the Ipswich Turnpike (Route 1A) and Newburyport Turnpike (Route 1) are incorporated. (350th)
- 1810 The Treadwell tomb was constructed. The population reached 3,369. (350th)
1819. Essex (known up until then as “Chebacco”) separates from Ipswich. (350th)
1820. The population was 2,250. (350th)
1832. A *Plan of Ipswich Village* was prepared (Philander Andersen), and the “North Burial Ground” appeared near the western edge of the village, abutted by a Mr. Gould on the west and Paul Caldwell on the east.
1833. The Unitarian Church was built on South Main Street. By 1843, the town had voted to purchase the church for use as a town hall. (350th)
1836. The Haskell tomb was constructed. The Baker tomb was constructed and would hold 15 interments.

1839. An appeal was made, to the local paper, that better care be taken of the burying ground. “Hardly a tree or shrub has been planted since my boyhood. Sheep bleat mournfully among the tombs and the hoofs of cattle tramp down the graves. The monuments have been wantonly broken down and scattered into fragments. (Waters, Vol II, 593-594)
1846. Boxford is formed from a section of the western part of town, (350th)
1848. The Brown/Worcester tomb was constructed.
1856. Walling’s map of Ipswich showed the “North Cemetery” abutted on the west by Mr. T. Gould (and a Union Store) and on the east by W. W. Rust (with a shop).
1859. The Parish transferred the cemetery to the town (May 2), and the transfer included the old burial ground as well as the terraces. The terraces were named after Presidents of the United States (omitting Democratic presidents, as the dead would not have approved) but the naming tradition has been lost. (MM, 6-7)
- “Until the year 1859, the various burying grounds were owned by the several Parishes, and their condition was often one of deplorable neglect. In that year, the town took over ownership, the Parishes relinquishing their claims, and proceeded at once to improve the grounds, rebuild walls and repair fences. The iron fence at the Ancient High Street yard was erected in 1861. (Waters, Vol. II, 759)
1860. Expenses were recorded in the TAR for labor on the burying ground, including “iron fence.” (TAR, 4-5) Ipswich’s population is 3,300. (350th)
1869. Expenses were recorded for “painting fence.” (TAR, 6)
- 1870/75. Ipswich’s population is 3,674. (350th)
1872. The TAR included expenses for “clearing tomb.” (11) Beers’ *Atlas of Essex County*, published in this year, showed the cemetery abutted on the west by Mr. A. Lord, and the east by Mr. Ross and Mr. Rust.
1873. The TAR included expenses for labor on steps, planting of maple trees, and work on the bier. (7)
1874. The TAR included expenses for planting maple trees and work on the fence. (11)
1875. The TAR included expenses for labor on the tomb and steps. (7)
1876. The TAR included money spent on lumber for the fence. (6)

1878. The TAR included money spent on posts/lumber for steps. (8)
1879. The TAR included money spent on lumber for the steps and for painting the fence. (5)
1880. Article 14 of the Town Meeting warrant read, “to see what action the town will take in regard to building a receiving tomb in the High Street Burying Yard.” (26) Ipswich’s population was 3,699. (350th)
1881. The TAR noted that cash had been received for “grass” at the North Cemetery. (22)
1884. The TAR noted that significant expenses were incurred for the “new cemetery.” Note: this is likely Highland Cemetery. (6) Walker’s Essex County Atlas, published in this year, showed the cemetery abutted as it was in 1872.
1887. The TAR listed an expenditure for bricks for repairing the tomb. (6)
1888. The TAR listed expenditures for repairing the tomb, and repairing and repainting fences and posts. (6-7)
1889. The George Haskell tomb was constructed.
1891. The TAR listed a purchase of land for “a way” to Highland Cemetery. It also included a \$15 expenditure for a plan for the cemetery at Highland Avenue.
1893. The TAR included an expenditure for “rebuilding old tomb.” (8) The Norris bird’s eye view of Ipswich, published in this year, shows the burying ground complete with the terraces and granite steps.
1894. The TAR listed additional expenditures for “repairs to tombs.” (11)
1898. The TAR indicated that the cemetery “pasture” was being rented, and that the town received \$12 in rent. (44) This rental continued for several years.
1900. Ipswich’s population is 4,658. (350th) Around this time, immigrants from France, Greece and Poland settled in Ipswich and constructed their own houses of worship. A Jewish synagogue is also constructed.
- The Report of the Cemetery Committee (in the TAR) for this year noted, “we have expended for granite steps, painting fence upper end of cemetery. Negatives were made of the oldest stones for preservation and general care of grounds, \$409.91.

1902. Beginning in this year, the TAR began listing an annual appropriation for care of the cemeteries. In 1902, this amount was \$1200. It grew yearly (through 1915).
1910. Beginning in this year, the TAR recorded balances in the Cemetery Trust Funds (for all cemeteries, combined).
1919. The perpetual care fund balance totaled \$19,350.00. In this year, the TAR referred to a “cemetery department” for the first time (67). The Town Meeting warrant included an article, “to see if the town will set apart a plot of land in Highland Cemetery for the burial of soldiers, marines, and sailors of the U.S. Army and Navy. (224)
1924. The TAR reported that “the new road to ‘Town Hill’ and the cemetery has been partially completed, and although there has been some comment upon the grade, it was the only possible method unless a very exorbitant expenditure of money was made. (95) The trust funds totaled \$28,197.16.
1932. In the TAR, the “Unemployment Committee” reported that expenditures were made for labor on Highland Cemetery. (142)
1933. The TAR included a “Report of the Cemetery Commissioners.” “In the Old North Cemetery, the decaying dead wood has been removed and the trees trimmed, which has added not a little to the tidy appearance of the place. The tool houses require shingling and the broken headstones and tombs in Old North Cemetery should be repaired. In many places, the grass needs re-seeding. (91-92)
1934. The TAR reported that the C.W.A. and E.R.A. paid \$3012.50 for work in the cemeteries, matched by \$860.21 from the town. (67) The Report of the Cemetery Commissioners stated that the town and E.R.A. administrator cooperated in an effort to “straighten and cement” the old stones, and repair others. The old tombs were repaired and put in first class sanitary condition. On one of the terraces, because of erosion, it was deemed necessary to build a wall. The trees throughout were trimmed and thinned. They also noted that “a section of fence in the Old North Cemetery needs repairing and the tool house requires re-shingling. (192)

A 1972 article in Ipswich Today quoted Johnson and Ladd from Memento Mori, “[d]uring the summer of 1934, as a project to supply work for the horde of local unemployed, an ambitious project was started to “restore” the Old North Burial Yard. The work was begun and some 300 ancient stones were uprooted from the dust which they marked and hallowed, sorted according to size, and replaced in straight rows, orderly to be sure, neat without a doubt, but quite at odds with all historical and sentimental precedent.”

“When we learned of this project, eminently worthy in intent through disastrous in its results, we...protested against this unusual procedure. The result was that the stones were replaced on the graves where they had been first erected. In this work the local administrators of the project gave the most whole-hearted co-operation, received suggestions in the most kindly spirit, and on the whole, despite the unfortunate beginnings, the work was reorganized, the stones handles under our supervision, weak ones repaired, cement foundations placed under those where it was deemed necessary and prudent, several ancient tombs in danger of collapse rebuilt and permanently sealed, as task which, in the ordinary course of town expenditures, could never have been provided for by funds received from ordinary taxation.”

“Had it not been that we had completed our preliminary work, viz, charting and copying every stone, the project would have resulted in disaster for it would have been impossible to replace the stones on the graves to which, in the course of nature, they belonged.” (Momento Mori, 4-5)

1936. The TAR included the report of the tree warden, “an elm, beside the old cemetery on High Street, had died during the summer from natural causes; the town removed it.” (200)
1938. As part of the WPA report, the TAR mentioned that “at present survey is being made of all town-owned cemeteries, and maps provided.” (107)
1939. A zoning by-law was proposed for Ipswich. The cemetery survey project was completed by the W.P.A. (TAR, 66-67)
1940. The TAR included the first report of the “Superintendent of Cemeteries.” The report noted that the wooden fence in the Old North Cemetery was beyond repair and in need of replacing. (75)
1941. The TAR listed expenses incurred for all cemeteries that included road re-surfacing with bituminous products. (54)
1942. Road resurfacing continued.
1943. The TAR listed \$54,438.92 as the trust fund balance. (97)
1944. The TAR noted that the Town had purchased equipment so that winter burials would be possible. (249)
1945. The TAR included a report of the Cemetery Commissioners that stated, “the terraces at Highland Cemetery are being badly ‘inroaded’ and we hope to plant at least one of them with Hall’s Honeysuckle, to

try to stop it if we can.¹ If successful, this should save considerable money in the near future.

1947. The TAR reported that the Henry Augustine Cowles Cemetery opened in June. It also noted that “the terraces in the Old North Cemetery are in need of attention. In 1946, honeysuckle was planted to hold the soil, and to improve appearance. We hope to plant more this year.” (186)
1948. In the TAR, the Cemetery Commissioners reported that they had planted tulip bulbs in the cemeteries. (212) The Commissioners enacted a new regulation requiring that all graves be lined in a material to prevent sinking or caving. (213)
1950. The TAR reported that a pressure tank was installed in the Old North Cemetery with a booster pump, and this was tested in the latter part of October with good results. It also noted that new galvanized pipes had been laid in the “Old Highland.” “There is a two-inch pipe used as a main that runs through the center of the hill, and several one-inch pipes branching off to various sections of the hill. Several new stand pipes have been installed.” (150) Note: *This feature still exist but it is no longer in use.*
- The TAR also reported on misuse of the cemetery: “[t]he department has been and is now receiving complaints about children playing in the cemeteries. This usually happens when men have left for the day and on Sundays. They not only play on the stones, leave faucets open, but pull up and destroy markers. One very old marker was found not long ago in a back yard in the center of town...” (152)
1951. According to the TAR, cemetery trust funds totaled \$73,001.16.
1952. The TAR reported that a new grave section was laid out in Highland Cemetery on the west side of the hill. (13)
1953. Tarring of cemetery roadways continued.
1954. The TAR reported that six large trees in Old North were uprooted (Hurricane Carol had struck on August 31st). “All through our cemeteries trees were broken and limbs hanging. Several monuments were tipped over. (31) The cemetery trust fund balance reached \$81,000.
1955. The TAR noted that an old wooden fence at Old North was replaced by a chain link fence at a cost of \$230. (26)

¹ Hall’s Honeysuckle is the common name for *Lonicera japonica*.

1957. The TAR reported that two of the old brick crypts in the Old North were rebuilt. (24)
1958. The cemetery trust fund balance reached \$95,182.28.
1959. The TAR reported that the lawns at Old North were fertilized and limed. (26)
1960. The TAR noted that two tons of hot-top were applied to the center walk in Old North, and three tons of limestone were spread on the terraces. (12)
1961. The cemetery trust fund balance reached \$107,068.24.
1966. The TAR reported that “all cemetery records have been microfilmed to protect the (cemetery) department of loss by fire, nuclear war damage, deterioration and vandalism. They are covered by a blanket insurance that will pay up to ten thousand dollars towards the cost of replacing the original records if destroyed. The work of microfilming was completed by the New England Archives Center. (33)
1969. The TAR reported that the iron fence at Old North was painted, a job begun in 1968, at the instigation of the 17th century committee. The Cemetery Department did the painting. (54)
1970. A turf building program was instituted throughout the cemeteries.
1972. In an article published in Ipswich Today, the cemetery superintendent, Walter H. Hulbert, claimed that over the past five years, 50 to 75 stones had been lost beyond recognition. Old North had suffered the most vandalism. The stone of Elizabeth G. Lord (d. 1830) had been chipped gradually over the years.
1975. The TAR reported that the town was continuing the microfilm records to protect against loss.
- 1976-1977. The TAR reported that the town was raising settled graves in the older cemeteries. (42)
1979. The TAR noted that “the retaining wall along the top terrace was rebuilt to protect the road bed that runs parallel to it.” (44)
1980. High Street was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Old North Burying Ground was included in the district nomination.
1981. The cemeteries, parks and buildings departments were combined and a new board was created to oversee parks and cemeteries. The cemetery trust funds reached \$160,000.

1996. The cemetery trust funds balance equaled \$257,089.65 (116)
2000. Ipswich's population reached 13,602. (350th)
2014. The town applied for and was awarded an Essex National Heritage Area grant to assess and make conservation treatment recommendations for some of Old North's older gravestones. Fannin-Lehner Preservation Consultants completed the work.
- The town applied for and was awarded a Massachusetts Historic Preservation Projects Fund grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to prepare a preservation plan for Old North Cemetery.