

WEST NEWBURY HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Historic Sites Survey Table of Contents
Poorhouse Lane

Street Address	Page ##	Individual or Group Form	WN Historical Commission Comments
Poorhouse Ln	1-6	Individual	Almshouse Cemetery— Historic Minute is here.

FORM E – BURIAL GROUND

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

1

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

0140000000590

Newburyport

WNB.804

Town: West Newbury

Place (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



Photo 1. View from northwest corner (entrance in foreground), looking southeast.

Address or Location: Poor House Lane

Name: Almshouse Cemetery

Ownership: ☒ Public ☐ Private

Approximate Number of Stones: None

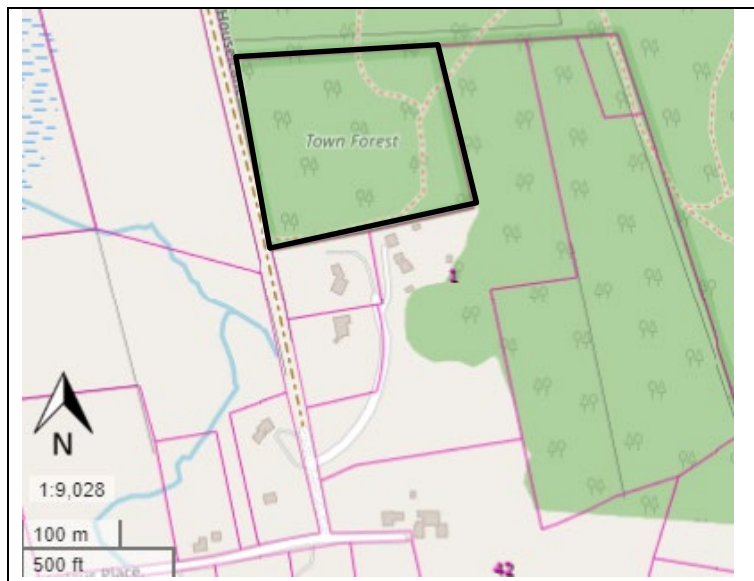
Earliest Death Date: ca. 1837

Latest Death Date: early 20th C

Landscape Architect: None

Condition: Good

Locus Map



Acreage: 9.0 acres

Setting: Isolated location in a heavily wooded area, now conservation land. An abandoned road to the west of the cemetery site (Poor House Lane) is now a walking trail. It originally connected Archelaus Place with Mill Pond.

Recorded by: Stacy Spies and Wendy Frontiero

Organization: West Newbury Historical Commission

Date: June 2023

INVENTORY FORM E CONTINUATION SHEET

WEST NEWBURY

ALMSHOUSE CEMETERY

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area(s) Form No.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

WNB.804

☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.**Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.***VISUAL/DESIGN ASSESSMENT***Describe landscape features, gravestone materials, designs, motifs, and symbols that are either common. Note any known carvers.*

Almshouse Cemetery is located on the east side of Poor House Lane, now a trail at the northwest edge of the Town-owned Mill Pond and Pipestave Hill Recreation Area. The land slopes up to the east, and the burial ground is bordered by a thick forest. Square in shape, the cemetery site is enclosed by low, dry-laid fieldstone walls measuring approximately 65 feet long on each side and roughly 24 inches high.

There are no gravestones or other discernible markers within the perimeter walls. (It is not presently known whether burial sites here were ever marked.) Nearly a dozen trees, ranging in age from young to mostly mature, are irregularly positioned within the walls of the burial ground. Fallen leaves and a minimal amount of volunteer undergrowth cover the ground surface of the site. Entrance to the burial ground is made at an opening in the wall at the northwest corner. A modern (2021) historic marker and a mature Norway spruce are also located at this corner of the site.

The cemetery was cleared of brush and fallen trees in 2021 and has been well maintained since then. Portions of the fieldstone walls have come loose, but the walls appear generally stable.

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

An almshouse, also known as a poor house, was constructed in West Newbury in 1837 at the end of Archelaus Place (See 42 Archelaus Place, WNB.374). In that year, the town purchased the Stephen and Mary Adams house and 52 acres of land¹ and advertised for an Almshouse Master (a resident caretaker) for the property and "inmates," as the residents were then called. Almshouses were created for people unable to support themselves for a variety of reasons: sickness, disability, mental illness, old age, or minors that had been orphaned. Indigent travelers were also lodged and fed at the almshouse.² In 1837, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed an act that required each municipality to set aside a sum of money to provide for the poor. The act also required that each town's Overseer of the Poor report on the number of "persons relieved or supported as paupers" each year. The 1839 Massachusetts report noted that West Newbury supported 29 persons in the previous year, with an average of 12 persons in residence.³ In 1887, a new almshouse was constructed at 42 Archelaus Place (WNB.374). The 1887-1888 town report noted that the West Newbury almshouse had supported 15 inmates the prior year, with an average of 11.5 persons. "In 1911...the average number of inmates present over the year had dwindled to 1.25, and the Town had begun a decades-long debate about what to do with the Almshouse complex.⁴ By 1925, the town no longer paid the Almshouse Master a salary, but charged him rent to live there. The Master would be paid for any inmates that did need food and lodging at the farm. Around that same time, the town began advertising the property for sale.

At the 1881 town meeting, it was voted that a 5-foot high wall be constructed around the cemetery.⁵

¹ Essex County Registry of Deeds Book 303, p. 26.

² Town of West Newbury, *Annual Statement of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Town of West Newbury...* March 1887 to ...March 1888. Newburyport: Caleb B. Huse, Printer, 1888.

³ Secretary of the Commonwealth, "Abstract of the Returns of the Overseers of the Poor in Massachusetts, for 1839..."

⁴ Grammar, Elisa. https://www.wnewbury.org/sites/g/files/vyhli1436/f/uploads/almshouse_story.pdf.

⁵ "West Newbury," *Newburyport Daily News*, 23 March 1881, p. 1.

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As almshouse burials were typically unmarked, as with "pauper's graves" elsewhere, a full accounting of the burials is unlikely. Ground penetrating radar scan in 2022 identified at least twelve gravesites.⁶ West Newbury residents M. Dorothy Cavanaugh and Elisa Grammer reviewed town records identifying ten people buried here.

- Sarah Chase, widow of Nathan, died at Almshouse in 1850, age 98.
- William Burrill, widower of Sarah, died at Almshouse in 1855, age approximately 92. Sarah Burrill also died at the Almshouse in 1847.
- Hannah England, widow, died at Almshouse in 1857, age 82.
- Gilman Tewksbury, died at Almshouse, age 44. Brother of Thomas and Elizabeth (below).
- Anna Woodman, unmarried, died at Almshouse in 1859, age 75.
- Thomas Tewksbury, died at Almshouse in 1859, age 68. Brother of Gilman and Elizabeth.
- Elizabeth M. Tewksbury, unmarried, died at Almshouse in 1866, age 44. Sister of Thomas and Gilman (above.)
- Adolphus Sabine Noyes, died at Almshouse in 1866, age 26.
- Stephen Ordway, died at Almshouse in 1873, age 78. His mother, Rebekah Chase Ordway, died at the Almshouse in 1849, as did his grand-daughter Adeline Ordway, age 4 1/2 months.
- Daniel W. Bailey, unmarried, died at Almshouse in 1879, age 84.

They also identified 23 additional inmates who died at the Almshouse with no other recorded burial place.

- Abigail Bailey, unmarried, died 1837, age 80-90.
- George B. Rogers, died 1837, age 2. Lived at Almshouse with parents.
- Lydia Brewster, unmarried, died 1839, age 64.
- Thomas Emery, died 1840, age 51.
- Moses Clark, died 1841, age 66.
- Prudence Bailey, unmarried, died 1841, age 93.
- Adeline Ordway, died 1841, age 4 1/2 months.
- Robert Rollins, died 1845, age 47.
- William Preble, died 1846, age 32.
- Aron Sargent, died 1846, age 45.
- Sarah Burrill, married, died 1847, age 75.
- Rebekah Chase Ordway, widow, died 1849, age 86.
- Susan Rogers Gould, widow, died 1857, age 92. Mother of William Gould and grandmother of Susan Gould (below).
- Hannah A. Ordway, unmarried, died 1868, age 88.
- John Moulton, died 1863, age 77.
- William Gould, married, died 1865, age 63.
- Susan Gould, unmarried, died 1868, age 42.
- James Burrill, died 1868, age 81.
- Moses Bowley, died 1869, age 70.
- Joseph K. Moores, died 1869, age 66.
- Helen (or Ellen) Balford, unmarried, died 1870, age 60. Born in New Jersey, she was a woman of color who had once been enslaved.
- Abigail Follansbee, unmarried, died 1872, age 78.

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⁶ Report by Topographix LLC of Hudson, N.H. provided to West Newbury Historical Commission.

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West Newbury Tax Assessor records.



Photo 2. North section of burial ground, looking east from entrance (northwest corner).



Photo 3. View from northeast corner, looking west.



Photo 4. View from northeast corner, looking southwest.



Photo 5. View from southeast corner, looking northwest.

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Photo 6. Southwest corner of burial ground, looking south.



Photo 7. Detail of south wall.

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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 ☐ DCriteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☒ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ GStatement of Significance by Stacy E. Spies*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Almshouse Cemetery is significant for its association with the West Newbury Almshouse, established in 1837, and local efforts to provide for the indigent. The cemetery is recommended for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the local level. The property meets Criteria Consideration D because of its association with the history of West Newbury. The period of significance is circa 1837 through the early 20th century. The Almshouse Cemetery retains integrity of location, design, feeling, materials, setting, association, and workmanship.