

# Alder Brook Cemetery History

## *formerly East Burial Ground*



Alder Brook Cemetery, formerly called the East Burial Ground, is located on Boston Street (formerly called East Lane), Guilford, Connecticut. The Cemetery, .8 mile east of the Guilford Green, is bounded by a stream, barely visible, called East Creek or Alder Brook, which once marked the limits of the borough.

Burials in Guilford, Connecticut (founded in 1639), originally took place on the Town Green (or “Public Square”), where nearly 1500 interments occurred. These interments, unfenced and scattered throughout, were trampled upon by both men and cattle, causing much damage to the monuments. As a solution, two new cemeteries, one on the east side and one on the west side of the town, to accommodate new burials, were created.

On July 31, 1818, Thomas Burgis sold, for \$330, 191 rods, with the condition that the land was “laid out, and forever to remain as and for a graveyard.” The deed also stipulated the names of those who were granted burial plots, most of whom descended from the town founding families.

In 1824, it was voted that the gravestones on The Green be removed; some were taken by families, some used as doorsteps or hearthstones, some sold, and many dispersed to the two new cemeteries. Some of the old sandstone markers that were moved to Alder Brook Cemetery are embedded into the north wall. Others are scattered throughout the cemetery, mostly in the older section on the northwest side.

One gravestone that was moved from the Guilford Green was that of Ebenezer Hart. Hart, age 23, was mortally wounded June 18, 1781, while defending Leete’s Island against Tory refugees.



# Order of the Opening Service

AT THE

EAST BURIAL GROUND,

IN GUILFORD,

SEPTEMBER 30TH, 1865.

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1. PRAYER by Rev. L. T. BENNETT.
2. READING OF HOLY SCRIPTURE, by Rev. Geo. I. WOOD.—Genesis, 23d ch.; 1st Corinthians, 15th ch., at 51st verse.
3. SINGING. (Tune, St. Thomas.)

O, where shall rest be found,  
Rest for the weary soul;  
'Twere vain the ocean's depths to sound,  
Or pierce to either pole.

The world can never give  
The bliss for which we sigh;  
'Tis not the whole of life to live,  
Nor all of death to die.

Beyond this vale of tears  
There is a life above,  
Unmeasured by the flight of years,  
And all that life is love.

There is a death whose pang  
Outlasts the fleeting breath;  
O, what eternal horrors hang  
Around the second death.

Lord God of truth and grace,  
Teach us that death to shun,  
Lest we be driven from thy face,  
For evermore undone.

4. ADDRESS, by Rev. THOMAS RUGGLES PYNCHON, D.D.

5. SINGING. (Tune, Frederick.)

I would not live alway: I ask not to stay  
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way;  
The few lurid mornings that dawn on us here  
Are enough for life's woes, full enough for its cheer.

I would not live alway; no, welcome the tomb!  
Since Jesus hath lain there, I dread not its gloom;  
There, sweet be my rest, till he bid me arise,  
To hail him in triumph descending the skies.

Who, who would live alway, away from his God,  
Away from yon heaven, that blissful abode,  
Where the rivers of pleasure flow o'er the bright plains,  
And the noontide of glory eternally reigns;

Where the saints of all ages in harmony meet,  
Their Saviour and brethren, transported to greet;  
While the anthems of rapture unceasingly roll,  
And the smile of the Lord is the feast of the soul.

6. ADDRESSES, by Rev. DAVID ROOT and others.

7. SINGING. (Tune, Old Hundred.)

From all that dwell below the skies  
Let the Creator's power arise;  
Jehovah's glorious name be sung  
Through every land, by every tongue.

Eternal are thy mercies, Lord,  
And truth eternal is thy Word;  
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore,  
Till suns shall rise and set no more.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,  
Praise him, all creatures here below;  
Praise him above, angelic host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

8. PRAYER AND BENEDICTION, by Rev. HENRY ROBINSON.

On September 25, 1866, the cemetery was renamed The Alder Brook Cemetery. Stock, valued at \$15 per share (equal to a one square rod plot) was issued.

Four days later, The Alder Brook Cemetery Association enlarged the cemetery with the purchase of seven abutting acres from Abner Hinkley for \$5,000.

On April 21, 1897, the cemetery was again enlarged when Edward P. Dickie, Edwin A. Leete, Julius E. Norton, Robert H. Norton, George E. Meigs, Frank P. Knowles, J. Harrison Monroe, Eugene D. Fisk, John A. Phelps, George N. Bradley, Dorcas Bradley, Washington E. Griswold, Edward Elliot, George S. Davis and Henry S. Wedmore purchased six acres of land from Stephen Robinson and deeded it to Alder Brook Cemetery. The intention of these gentlemen was not for speculative purposes but to provide burial plots to be sold at a very low price to those who could not afford an expensive plot; the proceeds were to be used for improvements.

Alder Brook Cemetery now encompasses 20.54 acres. The tombstones are laid out mostly in rows in the square, rectangular, and two circular sections. Most of the stones are low and modest, with some larger monument types, some Celtic crosses and many obelisks. These stones have some common motifs including many winged cherubs, some winged death heads or skulls, and a couple of urns on some of the oldest stones. Throughout the nineteenth century, the motifs changed to a willow and urn or they were just plain. There are also several stones with the Freemason symbol on them.

A section on the west side, almost halfway back when entering through the west side driveway, is reserved for cremation burials and marked with a stone that reads, "Alder Brook Cremation Section." Other sections in the cemetery were reserved for the burials of paupers and transients. John Edwards, a former cemetery sexton, and his wife purchased several plots in the southeast corner of the cemetery for use as a Children's Memorial Plot.



The maintenance building, located in the southwest section, has two six-over-six hung sash windows with a door in the middle. The doorway has a decorative iron grate in front of it and a tall arched window on the north side.

A cannon stands on the Grand Army of the Republic lot and was dedicated on Memorial Day 1902 "To the memory of those who fought for the preservation of the Union 1861-1865." The letters G A R are carved into the granite base.



In the southeast section, there once was a small fishpond. The current landscape has scattered shrubs located within the cemetery and trees lining the east, south, and west perimeters. The topography is fairly flat and one can see across the whole cemetery from any spot. The dirt roads that run through the cemetery are laid out in somewhat of a grid fashion with two long entrance/exits roads connecting with Boston Street on the north side. A stone wall lines the north perimeter with Boston Street.

Compiled by Tracy Tomaselli, 2016