

# The Old Burying Ground on Academy Road, North Andover

By KATE HASTINGS STEVENS

THE old burying grounds on Academy Road, Andover, Massachusetts, are the earliest evidence of civic life in the town.<sup>1</sup> The exact time of actual settlement is not known, but probably some time in 1642 the Reverend John Woodbridge and his companions came from Newbury. Why they decided to make the hill and land about Academy Road the center of the plantation it would be interesting to know—probably they chose it because it was neither very high nor very low land, with a fair-sized stream of water running through it. Records of the General Court at Boston show that the land for the plantation was bought from Cutshamache Sagamore of Massachusetts for six pounds and a coat.

The first care of the settlers was to establish a church, which they organized on 24 October 1645. The first meeting-house in old Andover probably stood within the limits of the old burying ground. Those of us familiar with the place think it must have stood where there is a slight hollow near the oldest graves. This building was used until a new one was built about 1669, probably just across from the old burying ground, where the triangle is, on Academy Road. It had a bell and two galleries, one above the other, and stood until 1711, when a third meetinghouse was built. At a gathering

<sup>1</sup> Andover originally comprised the present towns of North Andover, the original North Parish, and Andover, the South and West Parishes. The North Parish was the first to be settled, and the South Parish was only set apart in 1709, and the West Parish in 1826.

of the free holders in 1708 it had been voted "that the new meeting-house be set up at the apel tree in Joseph Parker Senior, his land, where the bulk of timber lyeth for said meeting-house." This third building stood facing the present common, a few rods south of the present building. The old pulpit and bell were moved into it, and it was used until 1835, when the present church was constructed. It is interesting to note that in 1825 the training field (north of Dr. Kittredge's) containing about five acres, was exchanged for four acres in front of the meetinghouse, which were opened for a common.

The old burying ground (to adopt the term used by the first settlers, instead of "church yard," in use in England), with which my paper is chiefly concerned, was therefore a part of the first civic center in old Andover, and occupied, in those days, the open ground immediately about the first meetinghouse. There are now only two stones remaining bearing dates prior to 1700: that of John Stevens, who died 11 April 1662, and that of Timothy Swan, who died on 16 February 1692 in the thirtieth year of his age, supposed to have been brought to his grave by the malice and wickedness of witchcraft.

Three pastors of the old North Church, Thomas Barnard, John Barnard, and William Symmes, are buried there. The grave of Francis Dane, the second minister, whose pastorate was from 1649 to 1697 and who died while in office, is probably here, though unmarked. Here lie, unmarked also, Joseph Abbot, who

on 18 April 1676 fell defending his brother and himself from the savages; and Penelope Johnson, nineteen years of age, who was killed on 5 March 1698, when thirty or forty Indians surprised the town, burnt two houses and two barns with cattle in them, and set another dwelling and the meetinghouse on fire. The graves of two colonels in Revolutionary service are here, James Frye and Samuel Johnson; and the graves of Dr. John Kittredge, Dr. Ward Noyes, and others who served in the French and Indian War. There is also the tomb of the Hon. Samuel Phillips, father of the founder of Phillips Academy; and in a corner a stone to the memory of Primus, the faithful servant of Joseph Stephens. The inscription of James Sparhawk of Walpole, New Hampshire, "late student in physic," who died at the early age of twenty-one, probably refers to a student of Dr. Kittredge.<sup>2</sup> There is a stone to the memory of the wife of one of the Boston Tea Party, and the quaintest inscription is that of James Bridges, who died 17 July 1747, "being melted to death by extreme heat."

Some of the stones are of slate not found in New England, probably imported from Old England. Many are beautifully carved with emblems of the time—cherubs, weeping willows, skulls and crossbones. There are many amusing poems. Several persons died of a consumption, and there are inscriptions to relicts, consorts, and wives.

Could anything be more historically significant than the proof from these stones that old Andover was concerned with all going on in the world? Ministers, army officers, victims of witchcraft and

<sup>2</sup> The hook on which Dr. Kittredge hung the skeleton from which he taught his pupils is still to be seen in an upper room in the nearby Kittredge house [built in 1784].

of Indian cruelty, medical students, statesmen, slaves, and the ordinary men of affairs are here.<sup>3</sup>

In 1830 it was voted "that the burying ground be fed with no other creatures than sheep," and also voted "that the parish committee agree with a sexton and dispose of the apples and feed in the burying ground." It was open to the street until some time in the sixties, when the Misses Mary and Sarah Kittredge raised money to build the face wall which encloses it.

I have spoken so far only of the old burying ground. In 1817 it was voted by the parish "to purchase an acre and a quarter of land from Jonathan Stevens for a new burying ground." This land, also on Academy Road, was behind the land on which Franklin Academy (erected in 1799) stood. I have heard my aunts say that John Frye, a picturesque old grave digger, as a special treat used to open the coffin and show the corpse to the Franklin Academy scholars when a funeral occurred during school time.

There are soldiers of the Civil War and men of importance in the civic and business life of the town buried in this new burying ground; the memorial to James, the year-old son of Miss Sarah Turner, is an unusual example of honest shouldering of responsibility.

There is a very fine example of an old iron fence enclosing one of the lots, a wonderful lamb reposing under a weep-

<sup>3</sup> The Misses Kittredge with Messrs. Isaac Osgood and Frank Appleton copied the inscriptions in the old burying ground in October 1869. The results of their labors—a typewritten manuscript entitled *Inscriptions on Tomb-Stones in the Old Burying Ground at North Andover, Mass.*—are deposited in the North Andover Historical Society, the Boston Athenæum and the New England Historic Genealogical Society.



OLD BURYING GROUND, ACADEMY ROAD,  
NORTH ANDOVER, MASSACHUSETTS

ing willow, cast in sections making up the fence. It should be carefully preserved. A good example of the chain and tassel enclosure has been broken and has disappeared.

In the negro quarter of the burying ground are buried Cato, the colored man who played the bass viol for years at the old North Church, and his relatives.

In 1878 Jeremy Peters of Cincinnati, who was born and brought up in Andover, left \$500.00 for the care of the old burying grounds. This sum, partly through the accumulation of interest, had increased by 1 May 1916 to \$921.76. An appeal was then made for money for the fund and the sum of \$638.00 was added to it making on 3 April 1919 a total of \$1,624.22.

Among my earliest recollections is that of hearing my aunts and the Kittredges plan to get the graveyards mowed, and to pay for the job. Mowing once a year by scythe was considered sufficient, with an occasional pulling of ivy. At my aunt's death I inherited her interest, and man-

aged matters much in the same way until twenty-five years ago a descendant of the Honorable Samuel Phillips, wading through the long grass to see his ancestor's tomb, remarked that "the place was worthy of better care." Since then the ivy has been cleared from the *old* burying ground, and it has been brought into such good condition that it can be mowed when necessary in one day by a lawn mower. In time the new burying ground on Academy Road will be put in equally good condition. Both are beautiful spots, with fine old trees, ferns, and flowers about the quaint gravestones.

Many burying grounds in old towns are neglected and forlorn. Should such neglect be allowed, when the history of the town is recorded on its gravestones? Men and women like Anne Bradstreet lie in unmarked graves in these historic spots. The graves represent those who have suffered and endured and, we hope, enjoyed to make towns like North Andover possible.