

GRAVEYARDS/ CEMETERIES??

What's the difference? Depends on who you ask. Dictionary says a graveyard is a cemetery and a cemetery is a burial place. "Wikipedia says "graveyards are usually rural and affiliated with a church ". NH Old Graveyard Association (yes, there IS such an organization) says " ". We have three "historical graveyards", one town-owned active graveyard and one privately owned one. The historical graveyards are under the control of a trustee, currently the Town Manager. Burials here are restricted to family-owned lots and must be approved for use.

So, what do we have in Merrimack? There are a few family burials on private land, but as early as 1734 settlers in the town of Naticook, which included the present Litchfield and part of the present Merrimack, built a meetinghouse and burial ground near east side of the Merrimack River. As the river changed its course in the early 1800's, they found it necessary to MOVE their meetinghouse further from the river. Presently the old meetinghouse is the Litchfield Historical Society, and the present graveyard is behind the Presbyterian church adjacent to the meetinghouse. Since graves were being washed down the river as the river changed its course in 1835, many were moved to the new burial ground and others were re-interred in two new graveyards in the northern and southern sections of the town by their families. However, some of those families lived on the western side of the Merrimack River, and may have been moved here. There were no record kept of this.

In the meanwhile, in 1746, Merrymac was granted a charter for its own town. The residents still crossed the river on the ferry to attend to religious services and other business on the eastern side in Litchfield. By 1771, a new meetinghouse was being constructed at the geographic center of the town, which ran from Penny Chuck Brook in the south to the Souhegan River in the north. A graveyard was built behind the meetinghouse, and the first gravestone located there is dated November 8, 1771 for Hughe McInnis [Check on 1746 Aaron Gage](#) A photo of the meetinghouse is found at the Merrimack Historical Society, and shows the graveyard behind it. The "meetinghouse road" ran behind the building and graveyard down the hill crossing the Souhegan River diagonally to meet Turkey Hill Road.

The first minister of this meetinghouse was Jacob Burnap, who was buried in this graveyard when he died in 1821 along with one of his wives and two daughters. Other members of his family are buried in Last Rest Cemetery. He was widowed twice and remarried. Other common names are Longa, Spaulding, Barron, Fields and Chamberlain. There is a memorial outside the graveyard to Reuben Cummings, a youth, who was the only Merrimack Resident to die in the Revolutionary War. He is buried at Fort Ticonderoga, NH. There are well over 200 gravestones in this graveyard, and they are currently being cleaned and repaired by volunteers under the guidance of Richard Maloon, from the NH Old Graveyard Association, who is a resident of Merrimack. This graveyard is considered "historic" and is restricted for active use. There was a [carriage house](#) near the Meetinghouse where the horse-drawn carriage was stored. It was demolished in the 1990's.

Near the ferry (now known as Thornton's Ferry) another graveyard was built on the western side of the river, which still stands as a historical one. The land for this was donated by Edward Lutwyche, the King's representative, who lived in the area and owned a great deal of land. The first gravestone recorded in this graveyard is dated 1771 for Elizabeth Hills. Of note here is found the Matthew Thornton family. Thornton moved to Merrimack in 177?? after signing the Declaration of Independence, while living in Londonderry. He acquired Lutwyche's land, farm, home and ferry after the War of

Independence. Amid the Thornton burials is Sarah Lutwyche, mother of Edward, who was left behind when her son left America. William Boynt

A second ferry was built in the Northern part of Merrimack, but it was headquartered on the eastern side of the river, owned by Mrs. ?? Reed, who received a grant after she was widowed. A busy village grew around this ferry, and it had its own historical graveyard, near Bedford Rd. The earliest grave located in this small graveyard is dated 1813 for William Boynton.

In the southeastern part of town, on Naticook Road, is found Reeds Graveyard (no relation to Mrs. Reed of Reeds Ferry). There was large settlement known as the Village of South Merrimack in this area. This graveyard is owned by the Town of Merrimack, and is still active for burials. It was deeded to the town in 1825, although the oldest gravestone is dates 1822.. One of the well-known residents buried here is Abbie Griffin, whose family operated stores on both sides of the river in Litchfield and Merrimack. Other common names are McClure, Spaulding, Hills and Follandbee.

The largest cemetery is Last Rest Cemetery on Baboosic Lake Road adjacent to the First Church, where many early residents are buried, including McGaw (they donated the land for the church and graveyard), the Gages, Walter Kittredge, (well-known minstrel during the Civil War), many members of the Thornton families and Nathaniel Barker, who was awarded the Medal of Honor during the Civil War.. The earliest gravestone is **dated ?????**, belonging to ????? There are several memorials located near the flagpole in this Cemetery. Another large memorial is found in front of the church, recognizing those who died in the Civil War and several other wars since that time. There was a **carriage house** located near the entrance behind the church and in **1872??** a tomb was built to store bodies during the winter until the ground thawed. The cemetery is owned by the Last Rest Cemetery Board of Trustees and is currently expanding