

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Old Plainfield CemeteryOther names/site number: Old Plainfield Burying Ground, Burying Hill

Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)**2. Location**Street & number: Cemetery RoadCity or town: Plainfield State: Connecticut County: WindhamNot For Publication: ☐Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:**Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:**Date**

Title :**State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ☐ entered in the National Register
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☒
Public – State ☐
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☐
District ☐
Site ☒
Structure ☐
Object ☐

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/Cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/Cemetery

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Fieldstone, slate, schist, sandstone, marble, granite

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Old Plainfield Cemetery, also known as Old Plainfield Burying Ground, was established in 1711 and is the oldest cemetery in the town of Plainfield, Connecticut. The cemetery is in the southeast-central part of town, on the south side of Cemetery Road. It is owned by the Town of Plainfield but is no longer in active use. A local volunteer organization known as the Plainfield Grave Guardians Association has undertaken recent maintenance of the cemetery grounds and grave markers. The cemetery contains approximately 370 stones and approximately 400 burials, primarily from before 1850. The earliest extant and legible marked burial is dated 1721, and the last interment was in 1925. The stones in the cemetery reflect the continuum of headstone iconography popular from the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, including the death's head, winged death's head, soul effigy, cherub, and urn and willow motifs. The Old Plainfield Cemetery is the burial place of many of the town's earliest settlers and contains the graves of more than 20 Revolutionary War soldiers as well as veterans of other wars. The cemetery contains three contributing resources (the cemetery site and two groups of grave markers, each counted as one collective object) and three non-contributing resources (two structures and one group of grave markers counted as a single collective object) built or installed after the period of significance, which ends in 1850.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Old Plainfield Cemetery is in the southeast-central portion of the town of Plainfield in Windham County, Connecticut (Figure 1). It occupies a 2.74-acre parcel on the south side of Cemetery Road, about 0.5 miles west of Plainfield Village and the Plainfield National Register Historic District (listed 1991). Dense coniferous trees separate the parcel from a private residential property on the west and

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

undeveloped wetlands around Horse Brook on the south. The cemetery has open views to the parcel on the east that contains the privately owned Plainfield Cemetery, a mid-nineteenth-century lawn-type cemetery with terraced square plots and rectilinear drives. The north side of Cemetery Road opposite both cemeteries is dense forested and undeveloped wetland.

Cemetery Site

The **Old Plainfield Cemetery (1711, contributing site, Photos 1–3)** is an approximately rectangular, 2.74-acre site that measures about 600 feet long, 240 feet wide on the east side, and 160 feet wide on the west side (Figures 2 and 3). The site occupies the crest of a low, undulating hill about 10–20 ft above Cemetery Road and slopes southward and eastward with a steep slope at the northeast corner. The cemetery consists of maintained lawn with no formal landscaping or interior circulation arrangement. Shallow road traces in the central portion of the site may indicate a historic circulation system. Markers are generally concentrated in the central and eastern parts of the cemetery and arranged in informal north-south rows separated by varying distances. The central part has groupings of mature pitch pine and deciduous trees and a pronounced hollow (depression) with almost no gravestones in it. The sloping eastern part has a high density of gravestones, while the flatter western part contains the fewest. The northeast corner of the cemetery has a grouping of pine trees and no burials.

The **Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall (18th–20th c., historic associated feature,¹ Photos 3–9)** encloses the cemetery along the parcel boundary and retains the hill on the eastern side. Constructed of dry-laid fieldstones with large, flat capstones, the wall is about 2–4 feet tall along Cemetery Road, about 2 feet tall along the west and south sides of the parcel, and 3–5 feet tall on the east side. Recent restoration projects have repaired sections of the stone wall along the north side. The wall along the south and west sides lacks continuous capstones and has been rebuilt in places with discarded footstones and monument plinths, noticeably consisting of red sandstone, marble, and slate.

The main entrance to the cemetery is at a wide opening at the midpoint of the north wall near the top of the hill flanked by stone gate posts constructed in 1914. The gate posts (see Photos 6 and 7) are approximately 3 ft square and 6 ft tall and constructed of mortared fieldstone with deeply raked joints. A brass tablet is set into the north face of the west gate post and embossed with a dedication.² Iron tie bars embedded in the posts, round-headed pins, and vertical iron bars remain from the original double-leaf wrought-iron entrance gate, which is not extant. Weighted gate stops set in the ground inside the wall held the gate open. **Wood Steps (late 20th c., non-contributing structure, Photo 10)** built into the slope lead up the steep embankment from Cemetery Road to the entrance. The steps have wood plank treads and handrails and fragmented concrete pads at the top and bottom. The stone wall has two other openings: a vehicular entrance along the north side, about 150 ft from the northwest corner, and a small opening at the south end of the east side with five poured **Concrete Steps (mid-20th c., non-contributing structure, Photos 9 & 11).**

The only other landscape features within the cemetery are enclosures for two family plots: the Dean plot and the Fry plot. The **Dean Plot Enclosure (19th c., historic associated feature, Photo 12)** surrounds a

¹ “Historic associated feature” is a term used to enumerate and describe small-scale component features of a landscape that are not individually countable according to National Register guidelines.

² The tablet dedication reads: IN MEMORY OF THE REVOLUTIONARY SOLDIERS WHO ENLISTED FROM THE TOWN OF PLAINFIELD 1775-1783 ERECTED BY THE DEBORAH AVERY PUTNAM CHAPTER DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION 1914.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

small square area containing two marked burials in the eastern part of the cemetery, southeast of the central hollow. It consists of four square granite posts (one of which is broken) and round iron bar rails drilled into the posts approximately 2 feet above the ground. The **Fry Plot Enclosure (19th c., historic associated feature, Photo 13)** surrounds a large square area containing 14 marked burials in the western part of the cemetery, near the vehicular entrance from Cemetery Road. The enclosure consists of square granite posts and two sets of metal pipe rails, some of which are missing or have been replaced.

Grave Markers

The date of the earliest interment in the Old Plainfield Cemetery is unknown, but the burial ground was in use by 1711 (see Criterion A – Exploration/Settlement). Inventories compiled by the Plainfield Grave Guardians Association document approximately 370 gravestones and approximately 400 burials in the cemetery. The cemetery likely contains unmarked burials from at least 1711 to 1721, the date of the earliest extant marked stone, and possibly earlier. A small number of stones mark multiple burials, but most mark individual graves. Later markers are frequently interspersed among earlier ones. Markers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are fieldstone, slate, schist, red sandstone, or marble. A notable number of eighteenth-century markers are a distinctive light-colored crystalline granite historically associated with the Killingly Egg Carver and Oneco White-Stone Carver (see Criterion C – Art). The markers are generally intact, but several have fallen or are leaning and some are broken or missing. Some carvings are difficult to read due to biological growth (such as lichen) or erosion. A number of markers have been recently reset and cleaned. The markers are divided into three groups, with each group counted as one object for the purposes of this nomination.

Early Fieldstone Markers

Approximately 20 crudely carved **Fieldstone Markers (1721–1741, contributing object, Photos 14 & 15)** for burials from the first half of the eighteenth century are clustered in the cemetery's northeast quadrant at the crest of the hill immediately southeast of the entrance gate posts. These markers, some of which may be footstones, consist of small stone tablets (less than 2 ft above ground), unshaped or crudely rounded and inscribed with only names and death dates. Some, such as the 1724 stone for John Hall (see Photo 14), include the deceased's full name. However, most bear only their initials or their first name and last initial, as seen on Jacob S.'s 1725 marker (see Photo 15).

Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century Carved Markers

The collection of about 320 **Early 18th to Mid-19th-Century Carved Markers (1721–1850, contributing object, Photos 16–49)** is the largest group of stones in the cemetery. Representative examples of the various funerary art motifs and marker types in this group are described below, listed in the data sheet, and mapped on Figure 2.

Death's Head Motif

Few stones in the Old Plainfield Cemetery bear the death's head motif, consisting of an incised skull flanked by wings. The earliest example is the marker for Mary Stearns (1731, Photo 16), a round-arched, iron-tinted schist tablet with rounded shoulders and flanking vine borders. The death's head has finely feathered wings, almond-shaped incised eyes, and a distinctive triangular nose. The inscription reads, "Here lies Interd y Body of Mrs. Mary Stearns..." above her age and death date.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Soul Effigy Motif

The most common motif that appears on individual stones in the cemetery is a soul effigy, which followed death's heads in the evolution of gravestone iconography (see Criterion C – Art). The soul effigy motif consists of a humanoid head with or without wings; the winged version is also known as a cherub. Examples of the wingless version of this motif include the earliest extant inscribed gravestone in the Old Plainfield Cemetery, the marker for Mehetible Blunt (1721)³ in the cemetery's northeast quadrant. The round-arched schist tablet has crudely carved shoulders with rosettes and a geometric border. The tympanum contains a round face with restrained features surrounded by spiral and whorl motifs typical of its carver, John Hartshorne. The inscription reads: "Here lies ye body of Mrs. Mehetible formor [*sic*] wife of Mr. Ambros Blunt died Sept ye 3 1721 aged 36 years."

Later examples of the wingless soul effigy motif are the markers for John How (1783, Photo 31) and Ebenezer Knight (1799, Photo 41), both carved by Elijah Sikes in the late eighteenth century. The markers are iron-tinted schist tablets with narrow rounded tympanums and shoulders. The How stone is embellished with grapevines and fruit around a solemn face with almond eyes, down-turned mouth, and sleek hair. The face has a slender neck that connects to the inscription panel, which begins "In Memory of..." and concludes with a poetic epitaph: "Death is a debt to nature due, Which I have paid, and so must you." The Knight stone is less refined and has a similar face but without hair and with a simpler half-circle motif in the borders. The inscription begins "In Memory of..." followed by the deceased's parents, death date, and age.

The crudely cut, rounded stone for Nathaniel and Anna Stearns (1793, Photo 39) is an example of a family marker with more than one soul effigy to depict each of the people buried, in this case a husband and wife. The lightly incised carvings depict two wingless oval-headed faces with almond eyes, elongated rounded noses, and solemn mouths framed by hair above arching shoulders. The unknown carver also added a heart motif below an inset circle that likely symbolizes the ascent of the soul from the corporeal body. The tympanum and borders have carved vine motifs.

The wings on cherub motifs vary widely across the Northeast, from crude triangles to intricately carved feathers, and often fill the stone's tympanum. Most of the cherubs that appear in the Old Plainfield Cemetery are richly carved and incorporate incised floral borders, as seen on the markers for Benajah Dean (1746, Photo 18), Sarah Dean (1746, Photo 19), Priscilla Denison (1751, Photo 20), and John Fellows (1754, Photo 20). The pointed schist tablet for Benajah Dean, possibly the work of the carver known as False J. Huntington, has an oval-faced cherub with triangular-shaped wings that fill the tympanum and depict individual feathers. The lightly incised borders have a tulip and flower vine motif flanking the inscription that begins "Here Lies ye Body of Benajah..." The Sarah Dean stone is a rounded schist tablet carved by Benjamin Collins with a round-faced cherub, arching wings with rounded feather tips, and lightly incised geometric and floral borders. The detailed borders have eight-pointed rosettes enclosed in circles, tulips, and a pair of half-circles above the inscription with geometric designs in bas relief. The nearly identical designs carved by the John Stevens shop on the Denison and Fellow stones consist of a round-headed face with a long nose, squinting eyes, and steeply arching feathered wings that cover the chest of the cherub in the rounded tympanum and a distinctive floral motif in the borders. The floral motif has alternating three-lobed leaves that curve in and out as they ascend to the shoulders. Both stones begin with "In Memory of..." followed by the deceased's name, parentage, death date, and age.

³ Vital records use the alternative spelling "Mehitable" for her first name. The stone has settled and tilted forward so that it is less than 2 feet above the ground and very difficult to photograph.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Benjamin Collins' stone for Joseph Laurence (1756, Photo 24) replicates the geometric and floral motifs used in Sarah Dean's stone but does not have a soul effigy or cherub. Instead, the pointed tympanum of the Laurence stone contains a pair of 12-petal flowers, spade-shaped leaves, and a half-circle sun.

Several mid-eighteenth-century, cherub-type motifs carved on white crystalline granite markers are the work of an unidentified carver known as the Killingly Egg Carver or the Oneco White-Stone Carver. The stone's characteristics result in clear, channelized carvings and inscriptions. The markers for Deacon Philip Spaulding (1752, Photos 21 & 22) and Dr. Thomas Stevens (1755, Photo 23) are pointed tablets with winged cherubs, a tulip-and-vine border, and a two-lobed division between the tympanum and the inscriptions. The cherubs' wings point outward, extend to cover the chest, and contain carvings indicative of feather veins and barbs. Each oval-shaped face is carved in a light bas relief with round eyes, a long nose, a faintly smiling mouth, and a connected brow. The tulips in the border have three petals and short stems attached to the weaving vine. Spaulding's stone also has arrow motifs and a matching pointed footstone with a crude face and bowing arrows. Stevens' stone has stemmed flowers instead of arrows. The slightly darker stone for Samuel Shepard (1757, Photo 25) has a face similar to that on the Spaulding and Stevens markers. The stone is rectangular with a central round tympanum and a border around the central motif and inscription. Incised swirls and half-circles surround the face and appear in the side and bottom borders. The top border is inscribed with the words "Time cuts down All Both Gret & Smal" in a font similar to that of the central inscription, which reads "In Memory of Samuel Sheppard Who died by a Sudden Clap of thunder on th 7 of June AD 1757 & in th 18 year of his Age." Clear similarities in the fonts used on all three stones, except a few deviations in the "S" form, suggest that they are the work of the same carver or shop.

More than 20 late eighteenth-century stones with cherub-type motifs in the Old Plainfield Cemetery are attributed to the Mannings based on their characteristics. These include the markers for James Dean (1778, Photo 29), Mercy Spalding (1784, Photo 32), Israel Fuller (1787, Photo 33), Olive Hall (1790, Photo 34), Anna Morgan (1791, Photo 35), Ebenezer Gallup (1791, Photo 36), and Abigail Gallup (1797, Photo 36). The Mannings' cherubs typically have an elongated face with large round eyes, a short nose, a pursed mouth, a deeply furrowed brow, and upstanding hair, often embellished with individual locks or curling strands framing the face. The distinctive wings are upward-arching and heavily incised, like the rest of the tablet, in granular gray schist. The motifs used by the Mannings in the surrounding tympanum, shoulders, and borders vary widely depending on the specific carver and possibly the purchaser's request. Inscriptions tend to appear in a bold upright, often capitalized text and begin with "In Memory of..." The Spalding and Fuller stones with rounded tympanums and shoulders represent a typical Manning design. They have half-circles in bas relief above the cherub, furling clouds flanking the wings, and a floral motif in the borders similar to the pattern used about 30 years earlier by the John Stevens shop on the Priscilla Denison and John Fellow stones described above. The slightly later Hall, Morgan, and Gallup stones have similar designs with minor discrepancies such as narrower noses, lowercase text, and less refined clouds that could indicate they were carved by a different person at the Mannings' shop. The marker for James Dean is one of the earliest Manning stones in the Old Plainfield Cemetery. In addition to the typical cherubs, it has motifs observed less frequently in their work. Carved in a heavy bas relief outlined by a bold border, the complex-shaped tympanum has a central cherub surmounted by a crown and a pair of swirls and flanked by ears of wheat. The borders contain grapevines and fruit. The inscription begins "In Memory of Mr James Dean who was Kill'd by a fall from a hors..." A rectangular incised panel overlaying the word "James" indicates that a correction was made after the original inscription.

Highly detailed cherubs with carved wing plumage, curling hair, squinting almond eyes, and soft facial features appear on the slate stones carved by Jonathan Roberts, which include those for Samuel Hall

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

(1770, Photo 27), Elizabeth Hall (1776, Photo 27), and Margret Miller (1778, Photo 28). The Halls' stones have rounded tympanums with half-circle reliefs and shoulders with identical floral motifs in the borders. The cherubs on the two stones differ slightly: Samuel's has a crown and more youthful facial features, while Elizabeth's has an elongated face. The inscriptions are stylized with capitalized text for the names. The rectangular Miller stone has matching cherubs in the corners looking toward a half-circle frame around a large abstract motif that consists of a triangular object with a flat apex above narrow curving inclusions. The motif may represent an empty candleholder or stand meant to symbolize death and time. The stone's borders consist of architectural Corinthian columns with acanthus leaves on the capitals and flower rosettes winding around the shafts.

Urn and Willow Motif

Nineteenth-century iconography found on headstones in the Old Plainfield Cemetery includes the urn and willow, which typically consists of an arching willow tree or branch and a funerary urn. The slate stone for Nanny Shepard (1817, Photo 46) depicts a large urn and a simplified willow tree in bas relief within a rounded tympanum. The stone's rounded shoulders contain half-circle rosettes, and the inscription spans the entire width of the stone. In some cases, the willow is omitted or substituted with a bowing palm frond. The slate stones for Mary S. Branch (1801, Photo 42) and Delight Spalding (1805, Photo 43) have urn motifs without willows or with fronds instead. The fan-shaped Branch stone is lightly incised with a central urn, vine borders, and the words "MEMENTO MORTEM" (Latin for "Remember Death"). The Spalding stone has palm fronds framing an urn in bas relief on the tympanum, which has three rounded lobes, and rectangular shoulders with swirl motifs.

Other Iconography

Several markers erected in the 1790s depict a stack of three blocks that likely represents a pulpit, altar, or platform. The Mannings' stone for Isaac Morgan (1796, Photo 35) deviates from their typical cherub motif with a stack of blocks under an arching palm frond in bas relief within a circular border. The stone has secondary motifs typically found on Manning stones such as furling clouds, floral borders, and banded borders. Four years before Morgan's stone, carver Stephen Spaulding produced the slate stone for William Phillip (1792, Photo 38), which depicts a similar stack of blocks enclosed by an oval egg-and-chain border and flanked by architectural pillars with finials. The inscription begins "THIS STONE IS ERECTED IN MEMORY OF..." and uses various text cases.

Some iconography appears on only one or a few mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth-century stones in the cemetery. For example, the marker for Christopher Dean (1740, Photo 17) is a pointed and tapered stone tablet with incised rays radiating from the center line of the tympanum and an inscription carved in a clear but embellished type by Obadiah Wheeler. The dark slate stone for Ziporeh Shepard (1766, Photo 26) has a double-lobed tympanum with a fleur-de-lis in the upper lobe and an abstract motif of a candleholder or stand identical to that on Margret Miller's stone in the lower lobe. The stone also has floral borders, rounded shoulders, and a triangular finial with a small fleur-de-lis. The light-colored, round-arch stone for Deacon Samuel Knight (1780, Photo 30) is almost 6 feet tall and has an eight-pointed navigational compass in bas relief in a frame surrounded by four-leaf clovers. Swirl motifs fill the rounded shoulders above the inscription, which names Knight; his wife, Rachel; and their daughter Hannah.

The Eunice and Lois Backus Marker (1792, Photo 37) is the only horizontal marker in the Old Plainfield Cemetery. It is a tablestone consisting of a large rectangular tablet with an ogee chamfer set on chiseled

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

granite piers at each corner. The tablestone has been leveled with broken pieces of slate and fieldstones where the piers have sunk on the northeast side.

Marble Markers

A small number of markers in the cemetery are composed of marble. Marble was used for gravestones beginning in the late eighteenth century but did not gain widespread popularity until the second half of the nineteenth century, when burials at the Old Plainfield Cemetery declined. The marble markers in the cemetery range in style and are typically simple rectangular tablets with and without rounded tympanums.

One of the earliest marble stones is that for Dr. Elisha and Sarah Perkins/Mary and Miles Merwin (1795, Photo 40), which identifies six members of the Perkins-Merwin family, including several victims of yellow fever. The rough marble stone has a rounded tympanum and shoulders and does not contain any iconography. The stone for Capt. William Dixon (1809, Photo 44) is a round-arched marble stone with rounded shoulders and an arching willow motif in a stippled bas relief. A similarly shaped marble footstone also marks the grave. A square-and-compass motif under the willow branches on Dixon's stone indicates his affiliation with Freemasonry.⁴ The stone for Thomas Butler (1822, Photo 47) exhibits popular iconography of the early nineteenth century, including a central funerary urn. His tall marble stone also has a fleur-de-lis on the finial and acanthus leaves at its base. The carver included sunflowers on the rounded shoulders and used different text cases to emphasize certain words in the central inscription.

Plain marble stones without motifs are most commonly grouped in family plots, often marking the graves of children. The William S., Benjamin G., and George Fry (1831, Photo 48) stones are identical arched rectangular tablets in the Fry plot that are distinguished from one another only by the capitalized text of the children's names. The arched gray marble stone for Louisa A. Bennett (1845, Photo 49) is similar in that the carving design is limited to the case and size of the inscription text.

Later Carved Markers

Approximately 50 stones in the cemetery are **Mid-19th to Early 20th-Century Markers (1850–1925, non-contributing object, Photos 50–52)** that exhibit the later Victorian and Modern Plain gravestone style, most frequently carved in marble and granite. The marker for Dwight Carlton Tracy (1925, Photo 52), the last marked burial in the cemetery, is a typical example of these stones. It is an arched marble tablet with a capitalized inscription and a concrete footing inside the Fry Plot Enclosure.

This group also includes the standard headstones issued by the War Department from the late nineteenth century through the present day to distinguish veterans of military service. The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains the graves of dozens of veterans of American military conflicts from the French and Indian War (1754–1763) through the American Civil War (1861–1865), generally dispersed throughout the cemetery or grouped with family members. A concentration of graves for Civil War veterans at the western end of the cemetery likely corresponds to the available space at the time and not a designated section. One of two stones marking the 1809 grave of the Revolutionary War veteran Abraham Shepard (Photo 50) is an example of the type introduced by the War Department in the 1920s. The round-arched marble marker is carved with the veteran's service, name, regiment, and death date. These stones either replaced earlier,

⁴ Others interred in the Old Plainfield Cemetery may have been Freemasons, but William Dixon's marker is the only one with this symbol.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

likely deteriorated, military-issued stones⁵ or, as in the case of Shepard's, were placed at the foot of the grave next to non-military stones installed by the deceased's family. The stones originally issued for Civil War veterans' graves were marble tablets with an incised shield and embossed lettering, like the 1878 marker for Chauncey C. Lamphere (Photo 51). Lamphere's grave also has a twentieth-century military-issued headstone. The Plainfield Grave Guardians Association recently cleaned and reset the military-issued stones in the cemetery.

Statement of Integrity

The Old Plainfield Cemetery has integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association as an early eighteenth- through early twentieth-century, rural town cemetery. The cemetery is in its original location on the south side of a major east-west route through Plainfield. The extent of the area that contains burials is within the limits established in the eighteenth century, which conform closely to the current parcel boundary. The site retains its naturally sloping topography surrounded by marshy forests. The vernacular design elements consisting of the perimeter stone wall, entrance gate posts, and informal linear arrangement of burials are intact. Some sections of the stone wall need repair, and the early twentieth-century iron entrance gates are missing. The original variety of gravestone materials (fieldstone, slate, schist, sandstone, marble, and granite) exists, with very few modern in-kind replacements, and the stones generally remain in their original locations. About 50 stones appear to be missing based on comparisons of current and earlier inventories, and others need to be cleaned or reset. Scattered clusters of tree growth since the early twentieth century have somewhat altered the site's broad, open character. However, the cemetery retains the overall feeling of a tranquil rural graveyard on the outskirts of town and clearly conveys its associations with the colonial settlement of Plainfield and the town's eighteenth- and nineteenth-century inhabitants.

⁵ The markers first issued by the War Department at the close of the Civil War for soldiers who had served in the French and Indian War and the American Revolution (1775–1783) were low, round-arched, marble slab markers with an incised shield and the deceased's name and military branch inscribed in the shield.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

**Old Plainfield Cemetery
Data Sheet**

Map No. ⁶	Resource Name	Date	Material/Form	Design	Carver ⁷	Resource Type	C/NC ⁸	Photo No(s).
	Old Plainfield Cemetery	1711	N/A	N/A	N/A	Site	C	1–3
	Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall	18 th –20 th c.		N/A	N/A	Feature	C	3–9
	Dean Plot Enclosure	19 th c.	Square granite posts, iron pipe rail	N/A	N/A	Feature	C	12
	Fry Plot Enclosure	By 1925	Square granite posts, iron pipe rails	N/A	N/A	Feature	C	13
	Wood Steps	late 20 th c.	Wood	N/A	N/A	Structure	NC	10
	Concrete Steps	mid-20 th c.	Concrete	N/A	N/A	Structure	NC	9 & 11
	Fieldstone Markers (approx. 20)	1721–1741	Rough rounded fieldstone tablets	None	Unknown	Object	C	14 & 15
	Early 18 th - to Mid-19th-Century Carved Markers (approx. 320)	1721–1850	Various	Various	Various	Object	C	16–49
1	Mehtible Blunt	1721	Round-arch schist tablet	Face, spirals, rosette, geometric borders	John Hartshorne			None
2	Mary Stearns Marker	1731	Iron-tinted round-arch schist tablet	Winged death's head, vine borders	Unknown			16
3	Christopher Dean Marker	1740	Pointed and tapered gray stone tablet		Obadiah Wheeler			17

⁶ Indicated on Figure 2

⁷ Identified through characteristic comparisons and scholarly research, unless otherwise noted

⁸ Contributing (C) or Non-contributing (NC) to the National Register

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Map No. ⁶	Resource Name	Date	Material/Form	Design	Carver ⁷	Resource Type	C/NC ⁸	Photo No(s).
4	Benajah Dean Marker	1746	Pointed gray stone tablet	Winged soul effigy, floral vine borders	False John Huntington (possibly)			18
5	Sarah Dean Marker	1746	Rounded gray stone tablet	Winged soul effigy, sun rosettes, abstract vine borders	Benjamin Collins			19
6	Priscilla Denison Marker	1751	Round-arch schist tablet	Winged soul effigy, vine border	John Stevens Shop			20
7	Deacon Philip Spaulding Marker	1752	Pointed light stone tablet; matching footstone	Winged soul effigy, arrow motifs, floral vine border	Oneco White-Stone Carver			21 & 22
8	John Fellows Marker	1754	Round-arch schist tablet	Winged soul effigy, vine borders	John Stevens Shop			20
9	Dr. Thomas Stevens Marker	1755	Pointed light stone tablet	Winged soul effigy, flower motifs, floral vine borders	Oneco White-Stone Carver			23
10	Joseph Laurence Marker	1756	Pointed dark stone tablet	12-petal flowers, sun motifs, floral vine borders	Benjamin Collins			24
11	Samuel Shepard Marker	1757	Round-arch light stone tablet	Soul effigy, abstract vine borders, "Time cuts down All Both Gret & Smal."	Killingly Egg Carver or Oneco White-Stone Carver			25
12	Ziporeh Shepard Marker	1766	Multi-tiered, pointed-arch dark stone tablet	Fleur-de-lis, floral vine borders	Jonathan Roberts (possibly)			26
13	Samuel Hall Marker	1770	Round-arch slate tablet	Winged soul effigy with crown, cloud motif, vine borders	Jonathan Roberts			27

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

Map No. ⁶	Resource Name	Date	Material/Form	Design	Carver ⁷	Resource Type	C/NC ⁸	Photo No(s).
14	Elizabeth Hall Marker	1776	Round-arch slate tablet	Winged soul effigy with crown, cloud motif, vine borders	Jonathan Roberts			27
15	Margret Miller Marker	1778	Square slate tablet	Two winged soul effigies, architectural motifs	Jonathan Roberts (possibly)			28
16	James Dean Marker (Dean Plot)	1778	Elaborately shaped schist tablet	Winged soul effigy with furled clouds, crown, wheat, grape vine borders	Rockwell Manning			29
17	Deacon Samuel Knight Marker	1780	Round-arch light stone tablet	Compass, sun rosette, and clover motifs	Unknown			30
18	John How Marker	1783	Iron-tinted schist tablet	Soul effigy, grapevine border	Elijah Sikes			31
19	Mercy Spalding Marker	1784	Round-arch gray stone tablet	Winged soul effigy, furled clouds, floral vine borders	Manning Shop			32
20	Israel Fuller Marker	1787	Round-arch schist tablet	Winged soul effigy, furled clouds, vine border	Rockwell Manning			33
21	Olive Hall Marker	1790	Round-arch schist tablet	Winged soul effigy, furled clouds, floral vine borders	Rockwell Manning			34
22	Anna Morgan Marker	1791	Round-arch schist tablet	Winged soul effigy, furled clouds, floral vine borders	Manning Shop			35
23	Ebenezer Gallup Marker	1791	Round-arch schist tablet	Winged soul effigy, furled clouds, floral vine borders	Rockwell Manning			36

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Map No. ⁶	Resource Name	Date	Material/Form	Design	Carver ⁷	Resource Type	C/NC ⁸	Photo No(s).
24	Eunice and Lois Backus Marker	1792	Rectangular light stone tablestone raised on piers		Unknown			37
25	William Phillip Marker	1792	Elaborately shaped round-arch slate tablet	Stacked blocks, wreath, and architectural motifs	Stephen Spaulding (signed)			38
26	Nathaniel and Anna Stearns Marker	1793	Rough round stone tablet	Paired soul effigies, heart motif, vine borders	Unknown			39
27	Dr. Elisha and Sarah Perkins/Mary and Miles Merwin Marker	1795	Round-arch marble tablet		Unknown			40
28	Isaac Morgan Marker	1796	Elaborately shaped schist tablet	Arching branch, stacked blocks, furled clouds motifs, floral vine borders	Manning Shop			35
29	Abigail Gallup Marker	1797	Round-arch schist tablet	Winged soul effigy, furled clouds, floral vine borders	Rockwell Manning			36
30	Ebenezer Knight Marker	1799	Iron-tinted round-arch schist tablet	Soul effigy, hourglass, arched borders	Elijah Sikes			41
31	Mary S. Branch Marker	1801	Fan-shaped slate tablet	Urn motif, abstract vine borders, "memento mortem"	Jotham Warren			42
32	Delight Spalding Marker	1805	Elaborately shaped round-arch slate tablet	Urn motif, arching branches, vine borders	Unknown			43

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

Map No. ⁶	Resource Name	Date	Material/Form	Design	Carver ⁷	Resource Type	C/NC ⁸	Photo No(s).
33	Capt. William Dixon Marker	1809	Round-arch marble tablet; matching footstone	Willow, square and compass motifs	Unknown			44
34	John Earnest Miller Marker	1816	Rectangular red brownstone with copper coping		Unknown			45
35	Nanny Shepard Marker	1817	Elaborately shaped round-arch gray stone tablet	Willow, urn motifs, slate	Unknown			46
36	Thomas Butler Marker	1822	Elaborately shaped round-arch marble tablet	Sunflower, urn motifs	Unknown			47
37	William S., Benjamin G., and George Fry Markers (Fry Plot)	1831	Rounded marble tablets (3)		Unknown			48
38	Louisa A. Bennett Marker	1838	Rounded gray marble stone tablet		Unknown			49
	Mid-19 th to Early 20 th -century Markers (approx. 50)	1851–1925	Various	Various	Unknown	Object	NC	50–52
39	Abraham Shepard Marker	20 th c.	Rounded marble tablet	Federal military-issued	Unknown			50
40	Chauncey C. Lamphere	1878	Rounded marble tablet with shield	Federal military-issued	Unknown			51
41	Dwight Carlton Tracy Marker (Fry Plot)	1925	Rounded marble tablet, reset in concrete		Unknown			52

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☒ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Exploration/Settlement

Art (Funerary)

Period of Significance

1711–1850

Significant Dates

1711: Designation of Old Plainfield Cemetery in town meeting

1721: Oldest extant marked gravestone in Old Plainfield Cemetery

1850: Old Plainfield Cemetery falls out of use

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Collins, Benjamin (1691–1759/1760)

Manning, Josiah, Rockwell, and Frederick (Mannings)

Roberts, Jonathan

Sikes, Elijah

Stevens, John Shop

Warren, Jotham (1759–1852)

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Old Plainfield Cemetery is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Settlement for its association with the early history and EuroAmerican occupation of Plainfield (incorporated in 1699) and under Criterion C in the area of Art for its notable collection of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gravestones representing the work of at least 12 regionally prolific eighteenth-century carvers. In use by the residents of Plainfield by at least 1711, the cemetery is the town's earliest public burial ground and contains the graves of many early settlers, ministers, and war veterans. It served as the primary final resting place for Plainfield families through the mid-nineteenth century. The period of significance for the Old Plainfield Cemetery begins with its designation as a town-owned burial ground in 1711 and ends in 1850, when most burials in the town shifted to other public or private cemeteries. The Old Plainfield Cemetery meets Criteria Consideration D as it derives its primary significance from its associations with the settlement of Plainfield and the iconography found on its gravestones.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

CRITERION A – EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

The Old Plainfield Cemetery is significant under Criterion A in the area of Settlement as the primary town-owned burial ground in Plainfield from the colonial period through the mid-nineteenth century. EuroAmerican settlement in the area that is now Plainfield began in earnest ca. 1690, after colonial leaders from Massachusetts and Connecticut both claimed to have obtained titles to land along the Quinebaug River from the Nipmuc inhabitants. About 30 families total from both colonies settled east and west of the river by May 1699, when a majority of the residents successfully petitioned the Connecticut General Court for town privileges.⁹ A committee of residents established the town boundaries, organized a local government, and selected a site for the first meetinghouse on Black Hill (about 2 miles northwest of the Old Plainfield Cemetery). In October 1703, the General Court approved the creation of the separate town of Canterbury on the west side of the river, although negotiations about the border between the two towns continued for several years. Between 1704 and 1707, Plainfield residents formally divided the town into regular allotments for each family, reserved land for a "General Field" along the river, and laid out roads.¹⁰

The early residents of Plainfield appear to have set aside at least part of the area that is now the Old Plainfield Cemetery for burials at the same time that they organized the other land in the town. Gravestones dated as early as 1704 were present in the cemetery in the early twentieth century but have

⁹ The town initially incorporated as Quinebaug, but the Governor of Connecticut renamed it Plainfield in 1700.

¹⁰ Ellen D. Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, 2 vols. (Charles Hamilton, 1874), 110–111.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

since disappeared.¹¹ The earliest mention of the site in Plainfield's available records is in the minutes from a town meeting on March 15, 1711, when residents voted "That the place which have been for several years past, Improved by the inhabitants for a place for burying of their Dead, that it shall abide and remaine for the aforesaid use."¹² The voters appointed a committee of three men (William Marsh Sr., Joseph Parkhurst, and John Crary) to determine how much land should be set aside for the burial ground and how it would be accessed. However, the town did not formally establish the cemetery boundary until 1757, when surveyor Robert Dixon assisted John Crary, Benjamin Wheeler, and Ezekiel Pierce in laying out the boundary lines and "a convenient road thereto." The cemetery defined at that time encompassed the current Old Plainfield Cemetery (referred to as "the Burying Hill") and 2 acres on the north side of present-day Cemetery Road (Figure 4).¹³ No physical evidence of burials has been identified in the marshy northern section, which is now privately owned.¹⁴

The oldest extant marked stone in the Old Plainfield Cemetery is that for Mehetible Blunt (ca. 1685–1721). Most of the graves from before 1735 have Fieldstone Markers crudely carved with only initials and dates, and many of the inscriptions have weathered away. These and other eighteenth-century gravestones in the cemetery represent a cross-section of the people who lived and worked in or near the village that developed around a new, more centrally located, meetinghouse built by 1720 on the ridge along Norwich Road, less than half a mile east of the cemetery. The meetinghouse also served as the town's Congregational Church, and the regional probate court met in the houses of several judges in the village.¹⁵ When the boundaries were first marked in 1757, the cemetery contained at least 50 burials based on the dates inscribed on the stones. The burials included town founders John Hall (ca. 1683–1724) and John Fellows (1668–1748) and Congregationalist deacons Samuel Stearns (1666–1727), Philip Spaulding (ca. 1700–1752), and Joseph Warren (1701–1757).¹⁶

The Old Plainfield Cemetery remained the town's primary burial ground into the nineteenth century and, as such, contains the graves of many early settlers and their descendants. By 1800, gravestones in the cemetery marked about 120 more burials. These include those of early settlers like John Crary (1685–1759), a local probate judge and member of the 1711 and 1757 cemetery committees, and his wife, Prudence (1687–1754); Nathaniel Stearns (1700–1793), who is buried near his parents, Samuel and Mary

¹¹ Daughters of the American Revolution, *Gravestone Inscriptions: Old Settlers Cemetery, Plainfield, Connecticut* (Florida DAR Genealogical Records Committee Report, 1994, typescript of inscriptions copied from handwritten list prepared by Sarah Dorrance in 1910 from an earlier list copied from the stones by William Kinne between 1893 and 1897); Sarah Frances Dorrance and Miss Annie Louise Tillinghast, *Old Burying Ground Hill Inscriptions, Plainfield, CT* (Plainfield Historical Society, Plainfield, CT, original transcription 1920, charted and reorganized by Marian Dodge Mathewson for Deborah Avery Putnam Chapter D. A. R. 1975); Charles R. Hale, "Old Plainfield Cemetery," Charles R. Hale Collection of Connecticut Cemetery Inscriptions, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT, 1932–1935, <https://www.ctgenweb.org/county/cowindham/records/cemetery/plainfield/plfoldplainfieldcem.htm>.

¹² Plainfield, Connecticut, Town Records, 1711, photocopy on file, Plainfield Grave Guardians Association. The meeting minutes also note that the committee should designate a "place for the Indians to bury their dead," which likely indicates that the colonists had appropriated land used by the Nipmuc for burials and at least nominally sought to provide them with an alternative site. The presence of an Indigenous burial ground in Plainfield has not been identified, although local lore refers to possible burial sites along the Quinebaug River.

¹³ William Kinne, "Burying Hill, Plainfield, Conn.," *Plainfield Journal*, October 1894, transcription on file, Plainfield Grave Guardians Association.

¹⁴ Jason Bowns, Survey and Planning Grant Application for Old Plainfield Cemetery, January 9, 2024, 3.

¹⁵ Bruce Clouette and Matthew Roth, "Plainfield Street Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1991, NRIS 91000350.

¹⁶ Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, 143.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Stearns; and several members of the Dean family. James Dean Jr. (1698–1778) and his wife, Mary (1723–1793), are set apart inside the Dean Plot Enclosure, while James' aunt Sarah Dean (1676–1746) and Sarah's young son Benajah Dean (1738–1746) and grandson Christopher Dean (1737–1740) are buried elsewhere in the cemetery.

Late eighteenth-century burials in the Old Plainfield Cemetery also include two prominent individuals in the town's religious history, Alexander Miller (1711–1798)¹⁷ and Reverend John Fuller (1723–1777). Miller, a Scottish immigrant and Presbyterian (Separatist) minister from neighboring Voluntown, Connecticut, led Plainfield's large Separatist community in the 1760s. At that time, more than two-thirds of Plainfield residents belonged to the Separatist congregation that had formed in 1746 with strong opposition to the use of public taxes for religious activities. The Separatists resolved their growing disputes with the members of the town's established (Congregational) church in 1769, when both groups approved the selection of John Fuller to serve as pastor of a united Congregational Church. Fuller held the position until his death in 1777 while serving as a chaplain in the Continental Army.¹⁸

Other notable Revolutionary War veterans buried in the Old Plainfield Cemetery in the late eighteenth century include Jonathan Parkhurst (1725–1787), whose grandfather Joseph was on the 1711 cemetery committee, and Dr. Elisha Perkins (1741–1799), who served in the French and Indian War in 1759 and was a surgeon for the Continental Army during the Battle of Bunker Hill.¹⁹ A single stone marks the graves of Perkins, his wife Sarah (1744–1795), their daughter Mary (1765–1793), and Mary's husband Miles Merwin (1760–1793). The road past the cemetery played a significant role during the war as part of the route traveled by French troops under Rochambeau in June 1781, when they marched across Connecticut to join the Continental Army camped along the Hudson River in New York. The men stayed overnight in the fields opposite the cemetery. George Washington had followed this route earlier in 1781 when he rode with a small group of soldiers from New York to meet the French army in Newport, Rhode Island, and the French troops passed the cemetery again on their return from Yorktown, Virginia, in 1782.²⁰

In the early to mid-nineteenth century, Plainfield expanded with new population centers such as Unionville (present-day Moosup), Central Village, Packerville, and Wauregan Village developing around textile mills throughout the town. Residents established additional cemeteries near the villages, some owned by the town or private cemetery associations and others affiliated with new Baptist, Quaker, and Methodist churches. The Old Plainfield Cemetery remained in active use, however, with about 150 marked burials from 1800 to 1850. In 1831, William C. Fry (1801–1884) and his wife, Mary W. Cross Fry (1803–1879), tragically buried three young sons in the cemetery (George, 1830–1831; Benjamin G., 1828–1831; and William S., 1826–1831), near the grave of William's father, John Fry (1750–1828). The family may have erected the Fry Plot Enclosure at that time or when William's mother, Deborah Congdon Fry (1761–1845), was buried next to her husband in 1845. Very few non-white individuals appear to be

¹⁷ Miller's wife Esther (1717–1787), daughters Esther (1754–1771) and Margaret Miller (1756–1778), and son Charles (1762–1800), a captain in the Revolutionary War, are also buried in the Old Plainfield Cemetery.

¹⁸ The death date of 1787 inscribed on Fuller's marker does not correspond to the documentary record and may be a mistake made when the local chapter of the DAR installed the military-issued marker at his grave in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.

¹⁹ Perkins obtained a patent for the invention of pain-relief instruments in the 1790s and died of yellow fever while attending the sick in New York City in 1799. Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, 325.

²⁰ Mary Harper and Bruce Clouette, "March Route of Rochambeau's Army: Plainfield Pike," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2003, NRIS 03000312.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

buried in the Old Plainfield Cemetery. One marker identifies the grave of Nanny Shepard (ca. 1766–1817), a free woman of color, but little is known about her.²¹

Nineteenth-century burials continued to include primarily descendants of the town's early settlers and local civic and religious leaders, many of whom had also served in the Revolutionary War. Notable veterans in the cemetery include Lott Morgan (1762–1834), Squire Cady (1754–1841), Deacon Jeremiah Leffingwell (1737–1814), Captain William Dixon (1748–1809), and Abraham Shepard (1739–1809). Morgan enlisted in the Continental Army at the age of 16 and served as captain of a cavalry company during the war. In 1818, he belonged to a town committee assigned to build a bridge across the Quinebaug River.²² Cady, who is buried near his wife, Thankful (1756–1799), and their son William (1811–1814), served as town clerk for several years. Leffingwell was deacon of the First Congregational Church in Plainfield from 1805 to 1814, and Dixon was a justice of the peace and town selectman. Shepard, a sergeant in Captain Bacon's company, survived 18 months as a prisoner of war at Fort Washington in November 1776.

Interestingly, the Old Plainfield Cemetery also has the grave of one veteran who fought on the side of the British in the Revolutionary War, John Earnest Miller (ca. 1736–1816). Miller was a Hessian soldier in the British Army under General John Burgoyne, whose troops surrendered as prisoners of war after their defeat at the Battles of Saratoga, and apparently remained in the United States after the war.²³ The rectangular brownstone marker capped in copper flashing has an inscription that includes the text "he was a native of Germany & belonged to the troops under Gen. J. Burguoyne, [sic] but he chose their home for the residue of his days, & after a long course of kind & faithfull [sic] services."

Likely prompted by a limited availability of space for new burials in the Old Plainfield Cemetery, a group of Plainfield residents (primarily affiliated with the town's First Congregational Church) organized the Plainfield Cemetery Association in the 1840s to acquire a site for a new burial ground.²⁴ The development of the privately owned and maintained New Plainfield Cemetery on the property immediately east of the older cemetery was accompanied by a decline in burials at the Old Plainfield Cemetery, which has only about 45 grave markers identifying burials from the second half of the nineteenth century and only four markers for twentieth-century burials.

²¹ The only other identified non-white individuals with gravestones in the cemetery are William Brown (ca. 1846–1864), a Black man born to emancipated slaves who enlisted as a private in Company H of the African American 29th Connecticut Regiment and died before the end of the Civil War; William's brother Charles F. Brown (1849–1863); and mixed-race brothers Charles D. Freeman (1848–1892) and Horace B. Freeman (ca. 1845–1897), who also served in the 29th Connecticut Regiment during the Civil War and occupied Richmond, Virginia, after the city surrendered in April 1865.

²² Larned, *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, 428.

²³ The family of Anthony Bradford (1749–1819) of Plainfield installed the marker for Miller. Historical records do not reveal any obvious connections between Miller and Bradford, who served in the Continental Army in the Revolutionary War and was held as prisoner by British forces after the Battle of Long Island in August 1776. He is buried in the privately owned Plainfield Cemetery immediately east of the Old Plainfield Cemetery. Connecticut General Assembly, *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the I.–War of the Revolution, II.–War of 1812, III.–Mexican War* (Hartford, CT: 1889), 19, 86, 101; Findagrave.com, "Anthony Bradford," Find A Grave Memorial ID 24280285 (<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24280285/anthony-bradford>, accessed September 2025).

²⁴ The newer cemetery contains some late eighteenth-century stones, which may indicate that the site was used as a private family burial ground before the Plainfield Cemetery Association acquired it.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

Post-Period of Significance Development

Burials in the Old Plainfield Cemetery from after 1850 include several Civil War veterans and individuals interred near previously deceased family members, such as members of the Fry/Tracy family buried inside the Fry Plot Enclosure. The last known burial in the cemetery is that of William and Mary Fry's grandson Dwight Carlton Tracy (1864–1925).

Local individuals took a renewed interest in the Old Plainfield Cemetery in the 1890s. Beginning in 1893, William Kinne (1819–1898) researched the history of the burial ground, recorded the gravestones and their inscriptions, and attempted to map the boundaries as they had been defined in 1757. By that time, the Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall enclosed the burial ground's current extent.²⁵ Kinne wrote in an 1894 article in the local newspaper, "Our Board of Selectmen is entitled to much credit for the care they take of the old ground. It has been kept free from weeds and bushes, being carefully mowed every year. Leaning stones have been set upright and fallen stones raised and reset."²⁶ Maintenance had lapsed twenty years later, however, when members of the local Deborah Avery Putnam Chapter of the DAR submitted a petition to the town selectmen to address neglected conditions at the cemetery. In response, the town repaired the stone wall, cut down dead trees, cleared weeds and brush from the site, and straightened or reset gravestones. At the same time, the DAR chapter raised almost \$180 to improve the entrance to the cemetery by installing the extant stone gate posts and tablet, which were unveiled on Memorial Day in 1914. The gate posts originally held "substantial but plain, iron gates" that were stolen in the 1970s (Figure 5).²⁷

Like many inactive historic cemeteries, the condition of the Old Plainfield Cemetery deteriorated in the latter half of the twentieth century. In 1984, gravestone scholar James A. Slater described the site as "overgrown, neglected, and ... grossly vandalized."²⁸ Preservation concerns included fallen, leaning, and broken stones; biological growth; tree growth too close to stones; and damage to the stone boundary wall. In 2020, local individuals organized the Plainfield Grave Guardians Association to address these concerns and to educate the public about the historic site. Recent preservation work done by volunteers has consisted of cleaning, resetting, and repairing stones. They have also made in-kind replacements of marble stones for veterans. In 2022, the Grave Guardians Association produced an updated inventory of the cemetery's stones. The cemetery remains under the ownership of the town of Plainfield and is overall in good condition with regular mowing done to keep it free of overgrown vegetation.

²⁵ The wall may have been built in conjunction with the establishment of the New Plainfield Cemetery in the mid-nineteenth century, but no documentation of its construction has been found.

²⁶ Kinne "Burying Hill, Plainfield, Conn."

²⁷ *Norwich Bulletin*, "Plainfield; D.A.R. to Place Gates at Old Cemetery—Mission Band Members invited to Birthday Tea," February 10, 1914, 8; *Hartford Courant*, "Central Village," May 26, 1914, 16; National Board of Management, N. S. D. A. R., *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Continental Congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution*, Washington, DC, April 20–25, 1914, 600.

²⁸ James A. Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them* (Archon Books, 1987), 234.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

CRITERION C – ART (FUNERARY)

The Old Plainfield Cemetery is significant under Criterion C in the area of Art as a well-preserved rural New England town burial ground that contains examples of gravestone styles and iconography from the early eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries notable for the range of carvers and regional carving traditions. The cemetery's collection of carved markers includes over 150 gravestones from the eighteenth century, making it the town's largest collection of colonial-period markers. Most of these grave markers have soul effigy or cherub motifs, which were popular during that period and often used by the cemetery's most prolific carver, the Mannings. Additionally, the cemetery is significant for its collection of gravestones attributed to locally prominent stone carvers, including the unidentified carver known as the Oneco White-Stone Carver.

The cemetery's diverse composition of funerary art is a result of Plainfield's geographic location along the Quinebaug River and eighteenth-century thoroughfares that allowed access to regional gravestone carvers, the exchange of cultural ideas, and the distribution of skills. In eastern Connecticut, Colonial-era carving traditions prevailed through the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century. The gravestones reflect the convergence of several regionally distinct colonial-era carving traditions and native materials: red and brown sandstones of the Connecticut River Valley; gray granite-schist stones of eastern Connecticut; slates of Boston, Massachusetts; and slates of Newport, Rhode Island. The variety of motifs on the stones demonstrate changing beliefs surrounding death from the colonial period through the mid-nineteenth century.

Gravestone Design and Iconography

Gravestone iconography in the New England region followed a progression that responded to changing views of death and the memorialization of the deceased. Beginning with the death's head (also known as the winged skull), iconography evolved into cherubs or soul effigies, often depicted as winged faces, and later into urn and willow motifs. Seventeenth-century markers in New England were likely wood posts or fieldstone boulders sometimes crudely carved with a name or initials. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the region had developed its own culture of stone carving. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, eastern Connecticut's gravestones were most commonly slate or schist and, like the rest of the region, had rounded tympanums and shoulders. Burials were typically marked with a west-facing headstone and a small east-facing footstone carved with the deceased's initials. While headstones and footstones were the most popular types of eighteenth-century grave markers, other types included slabstones, tombs, and tablestones. Slabstones consist of a large carved tablet placed flush against the earth over a grave. Tombs have similar tablets placed on a cut-stone or brick-lined base. Tablestones are tablets raised above the ground on four, six, or eight stone legs, like a table, instead of on a walled base.²⁹ The Old Plainfield Cemetery has one eighteenth-century marker that diverges from the headstone/footstone typology: the Eunice and Lois Backus (1792, Photo 37) tablestone is a rectangular marble slab supported by four cut-granite legs.

The death's head motif appeared on New England's gravestones by the end of the seventeenth century. The motif was rooted in the preferences of Congregational Puritans and their distaste for religious symbols on meetinghouses and in cemeteries. Represented as a clean skull, it symbolized an abstract

²⁹ Allan I. Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650–1815* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999), 232–233; Theodore Chase and Laurel K. Gabel, *Gravestone Chronicles* (New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1990), 5.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

reality of death that colonists in New England viewed as both gruesome and blissful. Death's heads evoked death and resurrection without religious overtones. The motif was used with and without wings possibly meant to portray the angel of death or the spirit leaving the body. The First Great Awakening (1730–1755) caused the death's head to fall out of popularity by the mid-eighteenth century. However, in some areas of New England, stone carvers continued to produce the motif through the end of the eighteenth century.³⁰

Epitaphs included with the death's head motif often stressed the brevity of life by using harsh, definitive language such as "Here lies...", "Here lies the body...", or "Here lies buried..." that explicitly acknowledged the departure of the soul from the corporeal body. After the Great Awakening, as seen in later death's head examples, gravestone inscriptions used more empathetic tones suggesting their commemorative purpose. Markers from the second half of the eighteenth century increasingly used epitaphs such as "In memory of..."³¹

In the Old Plainfield Cemetery, the popularity of the cherub motif by the mid-eighteenth century stifled the use of the death's head. One of the cemetery's few markers with the death's head motif is for Mary Stearns (1731, Photo 16). The marker has a richly carved grinning death's head with an inscription that reads "Here lies Interd y Body of Mrs Mary Stearns." Its carver is not known but used an iron-tinted schist similar to the stones used by carvers in the Quinebaug River area, such as Elijah Sikes (see Gravestone Carvers below).

Winged cherubs emerged as the most popular gravestone art following the Great Awakening. Associated with a devotion to religious practice, this motif encouraged an individual's personal connection to their god. The cherubs, also referred to as angels or soul effigies, are typically depicted with a human face flanked by wings. They represented both a vision of heaven and the spirit of a mortal released from their worldly existence. Carvers rarely portrayed cherubs with any likeness to the deceased. Cherubs or soul effigies were commonly used on gravestones through the 1820s and are well-represented in the Old Plainfield Cemetery, which has examples from the 1740s (Benajah Dean [1746, Photo 18]) through about 1800 (Ebenezer Knight [1799, Photo 41]).³²

Cherubs without wings appear on several markers in the Old Plainfield Cemetery. These renditions appear more human and occasionally have a likeness to the individual they memorialize, which may correspond to the general shift toward more commemorative epitaphs such as "departed this life." The shared marker for Nathaniel and Anna Stearns (1793, Photo 39) has two faces flanking a central heart. In New England funerary art, the heart's symbolism evolved through the eighteenth century. Initially, it represented a traditionally European concept of the Holy Trinity and the soul's love for God. It later came to symbolize glorification and the triumphant soul.³³

Other motifs with religious overtones also appeared on eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century gravestones. Grapevines, which represent the church and its members as well as the body and blood of

³⁰ James A. Hijiya, "American Gravestones and Attitudes toward Death: A Brief History," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 127, no. 5 (October 14, 1983), 343–345; Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 67.

³¹ Hijiya, "American Gravestones and Attitudes toward Death," 341–343.

³² Hijiya, "American Gravestones and Attitudes toward Death," 341, 348–349.

³³ Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 69.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Christ, were very common.³⁴ They appear in the borders of several eighteenth-century markers in the Old Plainfield Cemetery including those for James Dean (1778, Photo 29) and John How (1783, Photo 31). The rising sun, a symbol of resurrection, was first depicted as a raised torch and evolved into an abstract motif symbolizing the ascent of the soul and the break of day. Occasionally, the rising sun was adapted as a “sunburst” surrounding a soul effigy.³⁵ Upward-pointing rays, possibly intended to depict a rising sun, appear on the marker for Christopher Dean (1740, Photo 17), carved by Obadiah Wheeler.

A shift in iconography accompanied the transition from locational to commemorative epitaphs in the late eighteenth century, when the urn and willow replaced cherubs and soul effigies as the dominant motif in New England. However, the soul effigy and urn and willow motifs appeared contemporaneously around the turn of the nineteenth century. The urn and willow motif originated in Europe from a renewed interest in classical studies and architecture disseminated in the United States through pattern books and literature. The weeping willow, an ancient symbol of mourning, was often composed as shading or encircling an urn holding the ashes of the deceased. Willow motifs on New England gravestones preceded American importation of willow trees (*Salix babylnoica*) from China and actually depict Europe’s weeping willow shrub. Occasionally, these motifs included human figures to represent living mourners.³⁶ Versions of the urn and willow motif are observed less in the Old Plainfield Cemetery than in other cemeteries in the region but are found on many of the cemetery’s early nineteenth-century markers, including those for Mary S. Branch (1801, Photo 42), Delight Spalding (1805, Photo 43), Thomas Butler (1822, Photo 47), and Nanny Shepard (1817, Photo 46). Jotham Warren’s design for Mary S. Branch’s stone omits the willow and shows a large urn framed in the phrase “MEMENTO MORTEM.” Similarly, Thomas Butler’s stone has a large urn with acanthus leaves and intricately carved sunflowers on the shoulders but no willow. Willows are represented as high-relief arching branches or fronds on Delight Spalding’s stone. Nanny Shepard’s marker has a simplified but clear interpretation of an urn and willow carved on a dark slate stone. Most of the markers with urn and willow iconography have epitaphs that begin “In memory of” or “To the memory of,” but Thomas Butler’s is embellished with “This stone is erected to the affectionate memory of.”

Unique motifs found in the Old Plainfield Cemetery likely had particular meaning in, implications for, or associations with the deceased’s life. The fleur-de-lis centered on the pointed slate stone for Ziporeh Shepard (1766, Photo 26), possibly carved by Jonathan Roberts, can represent the Holy Trinity in Christianity by its three petals. It is also a French national symbol that may be used to indicate heritage. An eight-pointed compass surrounded by four-leaf clovers on the stone for Deacon Samuel Knight (1780, Photo 30) may symbolize the deceased being led by faith. The marker for Ebenezer Knight (1799, Photo 41), carved by Elijah Sikes, contains an hourglass motif above a wingless soul effigy to demonstrate the finite nature of life. In its earliest uses, an hourglass was typically part of a larger motif, often with an allegorical figure of Death such as a skeleton, scythe, or imp. By the end of the eighteenth century, hourglass motifs appeared less frequently with symbols of Death and instead with cherubs or in winged variations to represent the flight of time.³⁷

³⁴ Harriette Merrifield Forbes, *Gravestones of Early New England and the Men Who Made Them, 1653–1800* (Barre Granite Association, 1989), 120–121.

³⁵ Forbes, *Gravestones of Early New England*, 122–123; Diana Hume George and Malcolm A. Nelson, *Epitaph and Icon: A Field Guide to the Old Burying Grounds of Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket* (Parnassus Imprints, 1983), 14.

³⁶ Hijiya, “American Gravestones and Attitudes toward Death,” 341, 351–352; George and Nelson, *Epitaph and Icon*, 14–15.

³⁷ Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 88–89, 100; Forbes, *Gravestones of Early New England*, 114.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Occasionally, carvers chose iconography related to the deceased's profession or affiliations. The stalks of wheat on the marker carved by the Mannings' shop for James Dean (1778, Photo 29) are not typical of the shop and may indicate Dean's profession as a farmer³⁸ or the "sheaf of grain" used in biblical narratives to symbolize harvest and divine blessing. The marble marker for William Dixon (1809, Photo 44) has a willow with intricate leaves weeping over a square and compass that indicate Dixon's affiliation with Freemasonry. The square and compass symbolize the ethical and moral ideals that form the building blocks of the Freemason fraternity and traditions.

An unusual symbol that appears on several late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century markers in the Old Plainfield Cemetery is a stack of three graduated blocks, often in relief. Although architectural in appearance, the blocks are more likely an interpretation of a pulpit, a plinth, or a tomb supporting an urn or casket. This motif is combined with a weeping willow frond on the Isaac Morgan (1796, Photo 35) marker carved by the Mannings' shop. On the marker for William Phillip (1792, Photo 38), the blocks are enclosed by an oval vine and bead border flanked by architectural columns with finials. Both stones display the sentimental, neoclassical imagery associated with the urn and willow motif.

Nineteenth-century epitaphs on the markers in the Old Plainfield Cemetery reflect the evolution of ideologies about death. The marker for John Earnest Miller (1816, Photo 45), possibly erected years after his death, has no illustrative motifs but a long inscription that provides details about Miller's personal life and accomplishments (for example, he was a native of Germany, served under General Burgoyne, and was kind and faithful). Epitaphs also incorporated differing text styles and sizes as part of the overall artistic composition, as seen on the stone for Louisa A. Bennett (1838, Photo 49).³⁹

Gravestone Carvers

The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains markers attributed to or signed by well-known gravestone carvers or shops working predominantly in eastern Connecticut, including Benjamin Collins, Jonathan Roberts, the Mannings, Jotham Warren, Elijah Sikes, and the John Stevens Shop. Additionally, several gravestones represent the style and workmanship of unidentified carvers of local importance and continued study, including the Killingly Egg Carver, Oneco White-Stone Carver, and False J. Huntington.

Benjamin Collins (1691–1759/1760)

The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains at least three stones attributed to Benjamin Collins, who was born in Columbia, Connecticut, and worked as a cabinet maker and gravestone carver. Collins' work is visually similar to that of carver Obadiah Wheeler of Lebanon, Connecticut, known for his highly detailed faces and border designs, but generally has a shallower relief and is stylistically distinguishable. Collins typically carved cherubs that have a central face with a bulbous nose, projecting wings with rounded feathers, rosettes, and a horizontal panel below the face containing a heart or floral motif. His work is concentrated in towns surrounding Columbia and Lebanon. The ornament in his work evolved from rigidly geometric to organic, and his floral motifs eventually used classical shapes and designs

³⁸ Dean's last will and testament, executed in 1779, recorded his estate as consisting of a "Farm and Building where Dean formally lived, containing one Hundred one acres" and a herd of cows. Ancestry.com, "James Dean, 1779," *Connecticut, U.S., Wills and Probate Records, 1609-1999* [database online] (Probate Files Collection, Connecticut State Library).

³⁹ Hijiya, "American Gravestones and Attitudes toward Death," 354–356.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

popularized in mid-eighteenth-century prints, stamps, and woodwork. An example of Collins' highly detailed work is the marker for Sarah Dean (1746, Photo 19), which has a floral border and a typical winged face. The same tulip vine border is used on the stone for Joseph Laurence (1756, Photo 24) with a pair of heart-petaled rosettes instead of a face. Stones attributed to Collins range from 1726 until his death in 1759. Later stones exhibiting his distinct style are likely those of his son, Zerubbabel Collins, who was an active stone carver in Connecticut from ca. 1759 to 1778 but resided in Vermont by ca. 1780.⁴⁰

Jonathan Roberts

Historical information on the carver identified as Jonathan or John Roberts is lacking, making it difficult to discern where he lived, worked, and to what extent. Stones signed or attributed to him date to the 1770s and are concentrated in Putnam and Plainfield, which has six in the Old Plainfield Cemetery. Frequently using a soft, blue-colored slate, Roberts' work closely resembles that of the Rhode Island carver Gabriel Allen (1749–1824), leading some historians to classify him as an imitator. Roberts carved elegant, detailed winged soul effigies with quite expressive designs in the faces and in the hands that he sometimes included. The marker for Samuel Hall (1770, Photo 27) has a typical Roberts winged soul effigy with a crown and floral-patterned borders. The marker for Samuel's wife, Elizabeth Hall (1776, Photo 27), has additional curls in the face's hair, no crown, and the same floral pattern adapted to narrower borders. The marker for Margret Miller (1778, Photo 28) is unattributed, but its paired winged effigies and inscriptions share many similarities with Roberts' work. This marker has finely carved architectural borders consisting of Corinthian capitals and large acanthus rosettes appearing to encircle the columns.⁴¹

The Mannings

The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains 33 stones attributed to the Mannings, referring to the work of gravestone carver Josiah Manning (1725–1806) and his sons Rockwell (1760–1806) and Frederick (1758–1810). Josiah Manning began carving soul effigy motifs on gravestones at a time when the death's head motif was the most popular and remained dedicated to this style throughout his career. The Mannings established a striking, definable style of carving that heavily influenced funerary art in eastern Connecticut through its frequent imitation or direct copy. Josiah was born in Hopkinton, Massachusetts, and lived most of his life in Windham, Connecticut, but may have traveled to Vermont based on the distribution of his and his sons' stones. Their body of work exhibits striking variations due to the honing of skill and adaptation over the course of their long and prolific careers.

The predominant Manning style seen on the stones for Mercy Spalding (1784, Photo 32), Israel Fuller (1787, Photo 33), and Olive Hall (1790, Photo 34) has a distinctive central frowning face with upswept hair and side curls, solid wings that curve strongly upward, and an elaborate scroll design below the wings. By the 1790s, the Manning stones were highly prescriptive and had sharply incised carving, seen on the almost identical markers for Ebenezer Gallup (1791, Photo 36) and Abigail Gallup (1797, Photo 36) and the stone for Anna Morgan. The marker for Anna's father, Isaac Morgan (1796, Photo 35), is an exceedingly rare example of the Mannings' work that strays from their typical designs. It depicts a circular motif containing an arched palm frond over an altar framed by the characteristic scroll design and floral borders.

⁴⁰ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 9; Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 382; Forbes, *Gravestones of Early New England*, 105.

⁴¹ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 97.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

The most elaborate of the Mannings' work is generally attributed to Rockwell Manning, who often shaped and finished the stones' margins. The marker for James Dean (1778, Photo 29) may be an early example of Rockwell's specialization. It features a finished margin, grapevine border panels, and the typical Manning face but flanked in this case by stalks of wheat, a swirl motif, and a large crown above the face's upstretched hair. This stone exhibits a curious correction to the inscription, indicated by a rectangular void with a deeper-carved "James." Manning stones are found throughout eastern Connecticut and into southern Massachusetts west of the Connecticut River.⁴²

Jotham Warren (1759–1852)

The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains over 30 stones attributed to Jotham Warren. Warren was born in Plainfield and worked as a gravestone carver from the late eighteenth century until about 1820, after which no stones have been attributed to him. He lived in Plainfield until about 1801–1806, when he and his family relocated to Lisbon, Connecticut. In addition to stone carving, Warren may have engaged in milling; he owned a sawmill in 1813 and possibly earlier in Plainfield. He served three tours of duty in the Revolutionary War as a fifer and four tours as a drummer and later identified his occupation as "musician" on a pension application. Warren's distinct carving style, often featuring faces with spectacle-like eyes and upswept hair on dark slate stones, appears to have been influenced by carvers in Plymouth County, Massachusetts, and in Providence and Newport, Rhode Island. His early work also incorporated doll-like trumpeting angels, often positioned on either side of the primary motif, reflecting his interest in music. Like many carvers of the time, Warren adapted his designs to popular motifs, specifically the urn and willow, which characterized his later work. Warren began producing stones with urns but no willow trees between 1798 and 1800, and for some time he carved both cherub and urn motifs. The marker for Mary S. Branch (1801, Photo 42) has an urn surmounted in the tympanum by the inscription "memento mortem" and flanked by characteristic vine borders. The urn exhibits a typical later Warren design, with ogee-shaped handles at the urn's widest girth and a pointed finial.⁴³

Elijah Sikes

The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains 28 markers attributed to Elijah Sikes, who appears to have been active in western Massachusetts and northeastern Connecticut from the 1770s through the 1790s. The highest concentrations of works attributed to Sikes in Connecticut are found along the Quinebaug River in West Thompson, Putnam, Pomfret, Brooklyn, and Plainfield, which may indicate that he moved throughout his career or that multiple individuals were involved.⁴⁴ In Allan Ludwig's *Graven Images*, markers bearing the Sikes' name are attributed to a family of carvers active primarily in Massachusetts' Hampshire and Hampton counties from the 1770s through the 1820s. Many of Sikes' markers used stone with a high iron content that resulted in a reddish, rust-colored patina. The markers' faces have a classical, elliptical shape with tapered frowning chins, scroll-like headdresses, and almond eyes with defined brows and eyelids. Naturalistic foliate and abstract geometric forms appear throughout Sikes' work. He most commonly carved ivy foliage with pronounced veins and vines in the borders and sometimes continued

⁴² Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 18–22; Forbes, *Gravestones of Early New England*, 105–107.

⁴³ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 98–100; James A. Slater, "Jotham Warren, The Plainfield Trumpeter," *Markers: The Annual Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* 13 (1996), 1–4, 28–30.

⁴⁴ An uninvestigated explanation may be the use of the Quinebaug River for the transportation of finished stones.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

the pattern onto the stones' shoulders and crest, as seen in the marker for John How (1783, Photo 31). How's stone includes an inscription below his death date that reads, "Death is a debt to nature due Which I have paid and so must you." Variations of this poetic epitaph were used throughout the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with religious scripture, hymns, and poetry.⁴⁵

John Stevens Shop

The Old Plainfield Cemetery has five markers attributed to the John Stevens shop of Newport, Rhode Island, which produced multiple generations of talented stone carvers during the eighteenth century whose work extended to coastal and southeastern Connecticut. Stones attributed to the Stevens shop were carved by a Stevens—John I (1646–1736), John II (1702–1778), John III (b. 1753), or William (1710–1794)—or one of the many carvers employed by them. The earliest gravestones produced by the Stevens shop were slate and featured a square- or round-jawed skull or oval-faced cherub. This image evolved into a bald-headed face with upward-arching wings and elaborate border patterns. The work of John III diverged from the early designs and exhibited lifelike portraiture. The Stevens shop's gravestones entered Connecticut's cemeteries in the 1750s and, in the following decades, influenced the work of local carvers. The Old Plainfield Cemetery is at the edge of the shop's geographic range, and the markers in the cemetery that are attributed to the Stevens shop likely represent the work of John II and William. The nearly identical stones for siblings Priscilla Denison (1751, Photo 20) and John Fellow (1754, Photo 20) have round-headed faces with squinting eyes, elongated noses, and small solemn mouths. The design and inscriptions are relatively simple for the John Stevens shop, indicating that they may have been carved by an imitator or for a small price.⁴⁶

Killingly Egg Carver and Oneco White-Stone Carver

The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains nearly a dozen eighteenth-century markers carved of the hard white stone used almost exclusively by the unidentified carvers known as the Killingly Egg Carver and the Oneco White-Stone Carver. The Killingly Egg Carver produced a collection of distinctive stones in the mid-eighteenth century in eastern Connecticut, most concentrated in the town of Killingly. The stones have a simple elliptical or egg-shaped face without wings or decoration. Local historians, including James A. Slater, suggest that the carver's limited distribution of work may indicate that he was a local craftsman. Other historians believe the stones may be the work of carver Joseph Adams, whose family relocated to Rockingham, Vermont, in 1785.⁴⁷

The Oneco White-Stone Carver used a hard white crystalline stone similar to that of the Killingly Egg Carver during an overlapping period from the mid-eighteenth century through about 1770. This unidentified carver produced a collection of markers distributed primarily in Sterling and Plainfield with a distinguishable style of sharply incised elliptical cherub. The Oneco carver's face has a slight relief with round eyes, a subtle smile, and a prominent nose and is most often flanked by wings with feather-like striations and gathered tips. The carver favored a tulip border and triangular footstones with a cross or six-rayed rosette.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 89–90; Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 412, 416.

⁴⁶ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 107–109; Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 330.

⁴⁷ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 92.

⁴⁸ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 93.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

The stones for Deacon Philip Spalding (1752, Photos 21 & 22) and Dr. Thomas Stevens (1755, Photo 23) are almost identical, triangular-headed markers with tulip borders and winged cherubs characteristic of the Oneco carver. The Spalding marker contains arrow motifs and has a matching footstone with a crudely carved face flanked by bowing fronds. The Stevens marker is strikingly similar but instead of arrows has the bowing fronds found on Spalding's footstone. The stone for Samuel Shepard (1757, Photo 25) resembles those of Spalding and Stevens, particularly in the inscription text, but is more characteristic of the Killingly Egg Carver. The central face is not winged and has a more bulbous nose and solemn expression. It is surrounded by a tight border that encircles the inscription on the round-headed stone. The border contains a repetitive vine pattern of alternating spirals and the epitaph "Time cuts down All Both Gret & Smal."

False J. Huntington

Cemeteries in Canterbury, Plainfield, and Sterling contain a collection of mid-eighteenth-century markers carved by an unidentified craftsman who appears to have been influenced by the work of Benjamin Collins and, as his moniker suggests, John Huntington. These markers are often a fine granite-like stone, either triangular or three-lobed, bearing an elongated soul effigy face with slanted eyes, a long nose, and a clearly frowning mouth. The face has downward-angled wings and a lunette enclosed in a heavy frame. Borders on these stones are most frequently elaborate variations of the tulip designs, with similarities to the work of the Oneco White-Stone Carver. The Old Plainfield Cemetery contains 15 markers identified as the work of this unidentified carver. The triangular stone for Benajah Dean (1746, Photo 18) is a good example, displaying a typical winged face and detailed floral border.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Slater, *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut*, 94–95.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- Bowns, Jason. Survey and Planning Grant Application for Old Plainfield Cemetery. January 9, 2024.
- Chase, Theodore, and Laurel K. Gabel. *Gravestone Chronicles*. New England Historic Genealogical Society, 1990.
- Clouette, Bruce, and Matthew Roth. "Plainfield Street Historic District." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. 1991. NRIS 91000350.
- Connecticut General Assembly. *Record of Service of Connecticut Men in the I.—War of the Revolution, II.—War of 1812, III.—Mexican War*. Hartford, CT: 1889.
- Daughters of the American Revolution. *Gravestone Inscriptions: Old Settlers Cemetery, Plainfield, Connecticut*. Florida DAR Genealogical Records Committee Report, 1994.
- Dorrance, Sarah Frances, and Miss Annie Louise Tillinghast. *Old Burying Ground Hill Inscriptions, Plainfield, CT*. Deborah Avery Putnam Chapter D. A. R. 1975. On file, Plainfield Historical Society, Plainfield, CT.
- Findagrave.com. "Anthony Bradford," Find A Grave Memorial ID 24280285.
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/24280285/anthony-bradford>, accessed September 2025.
- Forbes, Harriette Merrifield. *Gravestones of Early New England and the Men Who Made Them, 1653–1800*. Barre Granite Association, 1989.
- George, Diana Hume, and Malcolm A. Nelson. *Epitaph and Icon: A Field Guide to the Old Burying Grounds of Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and Nantucket*. Parnassus Imprints, 1983.
- Hale, Charles R. "Old Plainfield Cemetery." Charles R. Hale Collection of Connecticut Cemetery Inscriptions, Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT. 1932–1935.
- Harper, Mary, and Bruce Clouette. "March Route of Rochambeau's Army: Plainfield Pike." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. 2003. NRIS 03000312.
- Hartford Courant*. "Central Village." May 26, 1914, 16.
- Hijiya, James A. "American Gravestones and Attitudes toward Death: A Brief History." *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 127, no. 5 (October 14, 1983): 339–363.
- Kinne, William. "Burying Hill, Plainfield, Conn." *Plainfield Journal*, October 1894. Transcription on file, Plainfield Grave Guardians Association.
- Larned, Ellen D. *History of Windham County, Connecticut*, 2 vols. Charles Hamilton, 1874.
- Ludwig, Allan I. *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650–1815*. Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1999.
- National Board of Management, N. S. D. A. R. *Proceedings of the Twenty-Third Continental Congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution*. Washington, DC, April 20–25, 1914.
- Norwich Bulletin*. "Plainfield; D.A.R. to Place Gates at Old Cemetery—Mission Band Members invited to Birthday Tea." February 10, 1914, 8.
- Plainfield, Connecticut, Town Records, 1711. Photocopy on file, Plainfield Grave Guardians Association.
- Slater, James A. *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them*. Archon Books, 1987.
- _____. "Jotham Warren, The Plainfield Trumpeter." *Markers: The Annual Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* 13, 1996.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: Plainfield Grave Guardians Association, Town of Plainfield
(Connecticut)

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.74 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 41.687142

Longitude: -71.923552

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The National Register boundary of the Old Plainfield Cemetery corresponds to the 2.74-acre, town-owned property bounded on the east, south, and west by the outer edges of the stone perimeter wall

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

and on the north by the south edge of Cemetery Road. The boundary conforms to Plainfield Assessor Lot 8/48.⁵⁰

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary encompasses the historic extent of the town-owned burial ground known to be in use by 1711 and enclosed by the stone perimeter wall by the end of the nineteenth century.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Laura Kline, Sr. Architectural Historian; and Jill Miller, Landscape Historian

organization: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL)

street & number: 26 Main Street

city or town: Pawtucket state: Rhode Island zip code: 02860

e-mail: lkline@palinc.com

telephone: (401) 728-8780

date: November 2025

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

⁵⁰ The parcel is incorrectly mapped in the Plainfield Assessor's online GIS database, but the information on the property card in the Assessor's office is correct.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Old Plainfield Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Plainfield

County: Windham

State: Connecticut

Photographer: Laura Kline (The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.)

Date Photographed: June 4, 2025

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 55. Old Plainfield Cemetery, view east along southern boundary.
- 2 of 55. Old Plainfield Cemetery, view east near hollow.
- 3 of 55. Old Plainfield Cemetery and Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall, view east along north boundary.
- 4 of 55. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall, view northwest toward north boundary.
- 5 of 55. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall, view southeast toward south boundary.
- 6 of 55. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall and eastern gate post, view east.
- 7 of 55. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall and western gate post with tablet, view west along Cemetery Road.
- 8 of 55. Stone Retaining Wall along eastern boundary, view southwest from Cemetery Road.
- 9 of 55. Stone Retaining Wall and Concrete Steps, view northwest.
- 10 of 55. Wood Steps, view north.
- 11 of 55. Concrete Steps, view west.
- 12 of 55. Dean Plot Enclosure, view northwest.
- 13 of 55. Fry Plot Enclosure, view northeast.
- 14 of 55. Fieldstone Markers: John Hall Marker (1724).
- 15 of 55. Fieldstone Markers: Jacob S. [Spalding] Marker (1725).
- 16 of 55. Mary Stearns Marker (1731).
- 17 of 55. Christopher Dean Marker (1740).
- 18 of 55. Benajah Dean Marker (1746).
- 19 of 55. Sarah Dean Marker (1746).
- 20 of 55. Priscilla Denison Marker (1751, right) and John Fellows Marker (1754, left).
- 21 of 55. Deacon Philip Spaulding Marker (1752).
- 22 of 55. Deacon Philip Spaulding Marker (1752), detail of footstone.
- 23 of 55. Dr. Thomas Stevens Marker (1755).
- 24 of 55. Joseph Laurence Marker (1756).
- 25 of 55. Samuel Shepard Marker (1757).
- 26 of 55. Ziporeh Shepard Marker (1766).

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut

County and State

- 27 of 55. Samuel Hall Marker (1770, left) and Elizabeth Hall Marker (1776, right).
- 28 of 55. Margret Miller Marker (1778).
- 29 of 55. James Dean Marker (1778).
- 30 of 55. Deacon Samuel Knight Marker (1780).
- 31 of 55. John How Marker (1783).
- 32 of 55. Mercy Spalding Marker (1784).
- 33 of 55. Israel Fuller Marker (1787), detail of headstone (fallen).
- 34 of 55. Olive Hall Marker (1790).
- 35 of 55. Anna Morgan Marker (1791, left) and Isaac Morgan Marker (1796, right).
- 36 of 55. Ebenezer Gallup Marker (1791, right) and Abigail Gallup Marker (1797, left).
- 37 of 55. Eunice and Lois Backus Monument (1792), detail of tablestone.
- 38 of 55. William Phillip Marker (1792).
- 39 of 55. Nathaniel and Anna Stearns Marker (1793).
- 40 of 55. Dr. Elisha and Sarah Perkins/Mary and Miles Merwin Marker (1795), headstone and twentieth-century military-issued stone.
- 41 of 55. Ebenezer Knight Marker (1799).
- 42 of 55. Mary S. Branch Marker (1801).
- 43 of 55. Delight Spalding Marker (1805).
- 44 of 55. Capt. William Dixon Marker (1809) and footstone.
- 45 of 55. John Earnest Miller Marker (1816).
- 46 of 55. Nanny Shepard Marker (1817).
- 47 of 55. Thomas Butler Marker (1822).
- 48 of 55. William S., Benjamin G., and George Fry Markers (1831) within Fry Plot Enclosure.
- 49 of 55. Louisa A. Bennett Marker (1838) and footstone.
- 50 of 55. Abraham Shepard (1809), twentieth-century military-issued marker.
- 51 of 55. Chauncey C. Lamphere (1878), headstone and twentieth-century military-issued marker.
- 52 of 55. Dwight Carlton Tracy Marker (1925) within Fry Plot Enclosure.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

Figures

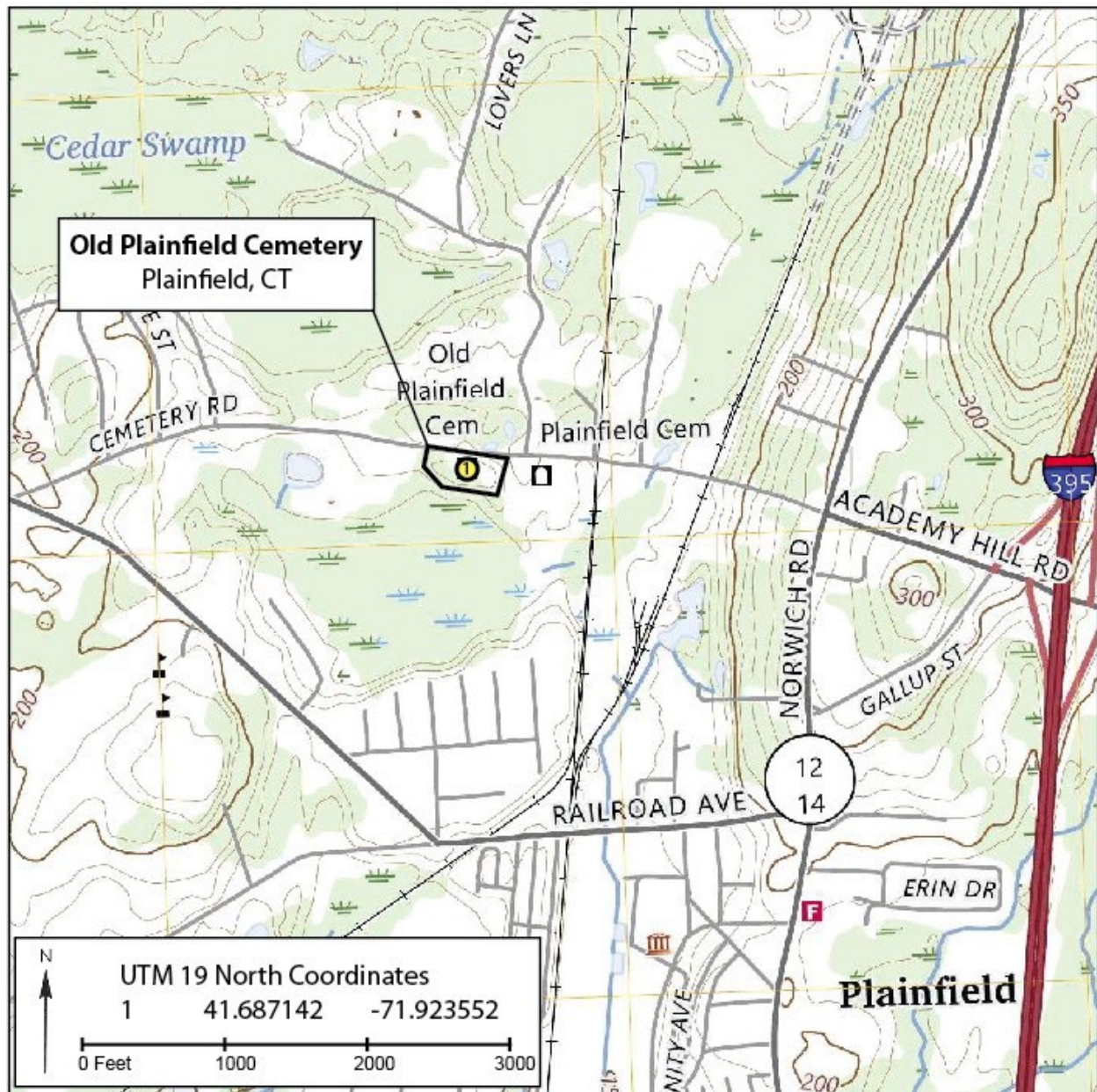


Figure 1. Old Plainfield Cemetery Coordinate Map.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

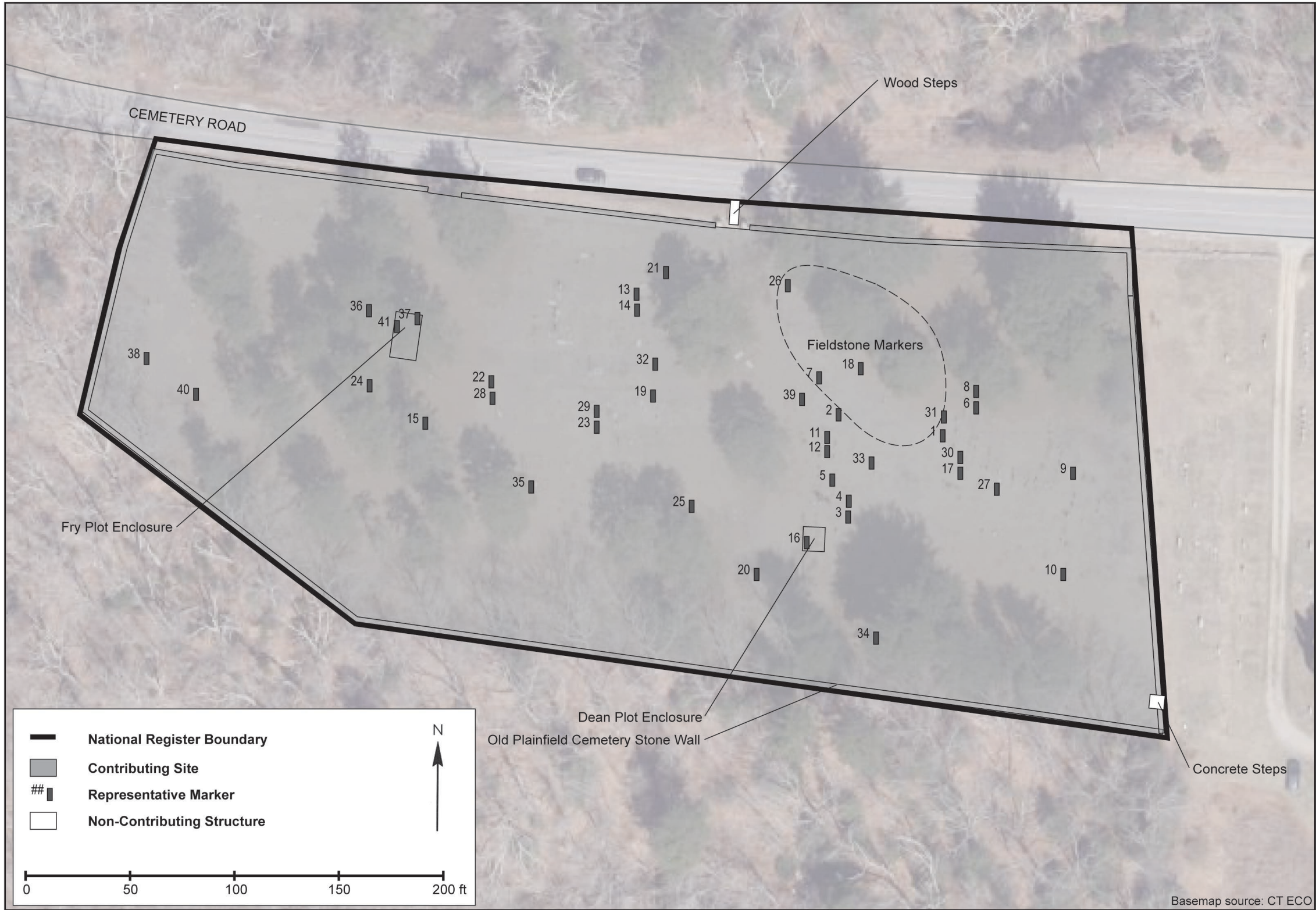


Figure 2. Old Plainfield Cemetery Resource Map.

Old Plainfield Cemetery

Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

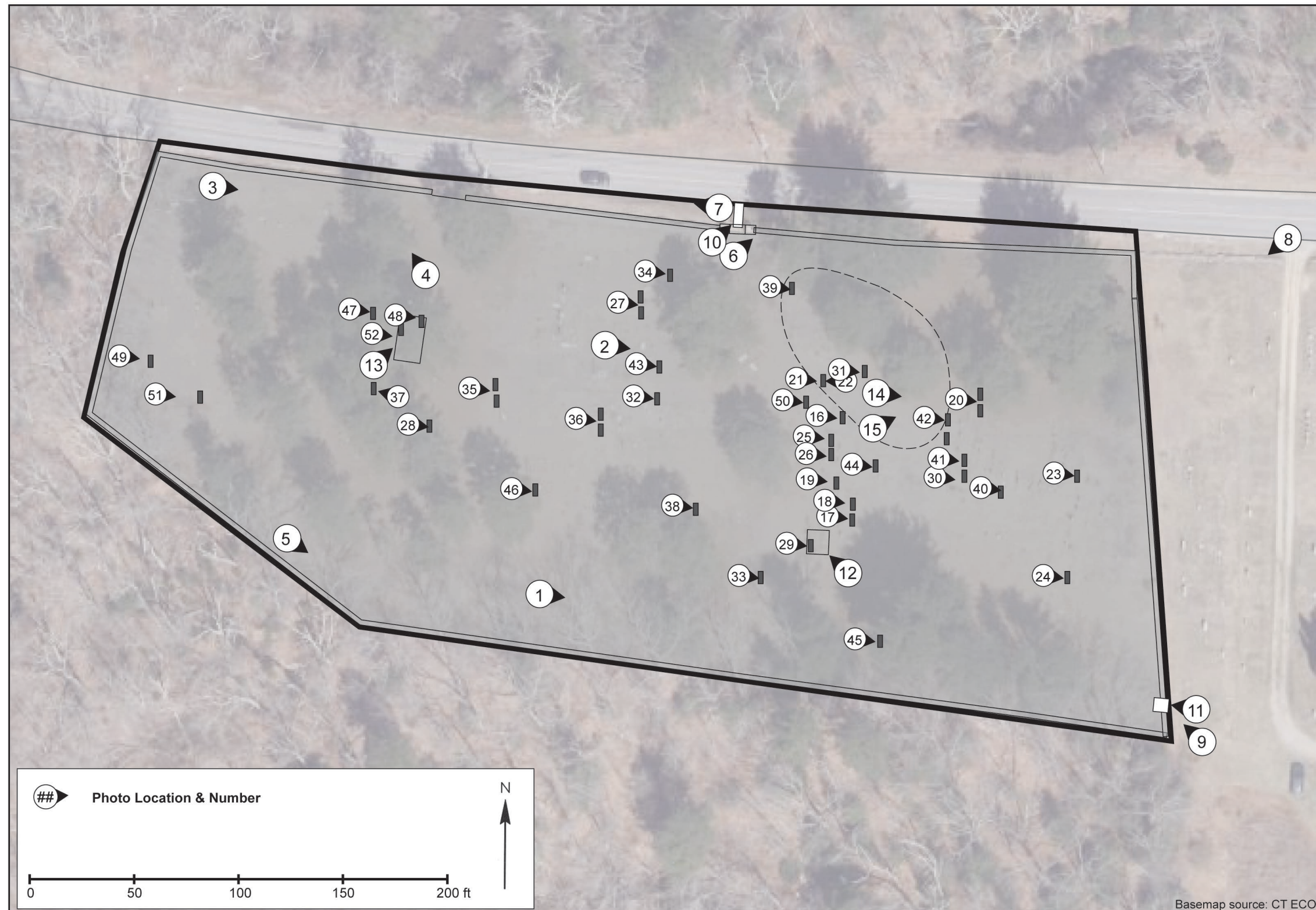
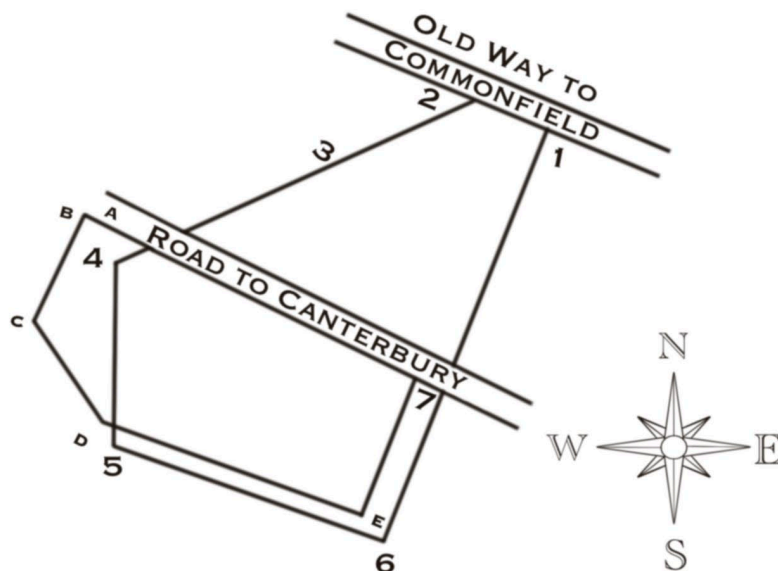


Figure 3. Old Plainfield Cemetery Photo Key.

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State

OLD BURYING HILL IN PLAINFIELD, CONNECTICUT



IN ABOVE DIAGRAM, NO.S 1,2,3,4,5,6,7 REPRESENT SURVEYOR DIXON'S LAYOUT OF 1757. A,B,C,D SHOW LINES OF PRESENT BURYING GROUND.

AMALGAMATION STUDIOS ©2022

Figure 4. Diagram showing Dixon's layout of Old Plainfield Cemetery in 1757 (Points 1–6) and the boundary of the existing cemetery (Points A–D) (On file, Plainfield Grave Guardians Association, Plainfield, CT).

Old Plainfield Cemetery
Name of Property

Windham, Connecticut
County and State



Figure 5. Photograph of the entrance gate and gate posts installed by the DAR in 1914 (On file, Plainfield Grave Guardians Association, Plainfield, CT).

Plainfield Cemetery, National Register Nomination Photographs



Photo 1. Old Plainfield Cemetery, view east along southern boundary.



Photo 2. Old Plainfield Cemetery, view east near hollow.



Photo 3. Old Plainfield Cemetery and Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall, view east along north boundary.



Photo 4. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall, view northwest toward north boundary.



Photo 5. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall, view southeast toward south boundary.



Photo 6. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall and eastern gate post, view east.



Photo 7. Old Plainfield Cemetery Stone Wall and western gate post with tablet, view west along Cemetery Road.



Photo 8. Stone Retaining Wall along eastern boundary, view southwest from Cemetery Road.



Photo 9. Stone Retaining Wall and Concrete Steps, view northwest.



Photo 10. Wood Steps, view north.



Photo 11. Concrete Steps, view west.



Photo 12. Dean Plot Enclosure, view northwest.



Photo 13. Fry Plot Enclosure, view northeast.



Photo 14. Fieldstone Markers: John Hall Marker (1724).



Photo 15. Fieldstone Markers: Jacob S. [Spalding] Marker (1725).



Photo 16. Mary Stearns Marker (1731).



Photo 17. Christopher Dean Marker (1740).



Photo 18. Benajah Dean Marker (1746).



Photo 19. Sarah Dean Marker (1746).



Photo 20. Priscilla Denison Marker (1751, right) and John Fellows Marker (1754, left).



Photo 21. Deacon Philip Spaulding Marker (1752).



Photo 22. Deacon Philip Spaulding Marker (1752), detail of footstone.



Photo 23. Dr. Thomas Stevens Marker (1755).



Photo 24. Joseph Laurence Marker (1756).



Photo 25. Samuel Shepard Marker (1757).



Photo 26. Ziporeh Shepard Marker (1766).



Photo 27. Samuel Hall Marker (1770, left) and Elizabeth Hall Marker (1776, right).



Photo 28. Margret Miller Marker (1778).



Photo 29. James Dean Marker (1778).



Photo 30. Deacon Samuel Knight Marker (1780).



Photo 31. John How Marker (1783)e.



Photo 32. Mercy Spalding Marker (1784).



Photo 33. Israel Fuller Marker (1787), detail of headstone (fallen).



Photo 34. Olive Hall Marker (1790).



Photo 35. Anna Morgan Marker (1791, left) and Isaac Morgan Marker (1796, right).



Photo 36. Ebenezer Gallup Marker (1791, right) and Abigail Gallup Marker (1797, left).



Photo 37. Eunice and Lois Backus Monument (1792), detail of tablestone.



Photo 38. William Phillip Marker (1792).



Photo 39. Nathaniel and Anna Stearns Marker (1793).



Photo 40. Dr. Elisha and Sarah Perkins/Mary and Miles Merwin Marker (1795), headstone and twentieth-century military-issued stone.



Photo 41. Ebenezer Knight Marker (1799).



Photo 42. Mary S. Branch Marker (1801).



Photo 43. Delight Spalding Marker (1805).



Photo 44. Capt. William Dixon Marker (1809) and footstone.



Photo 45. John Earnest Miller Marker (1816).



Photo 46. Nanny Shepard Marker (1817).



Photo 47. Thomas Butler Marker (1822).



Photo 48. William S., Benjamin G., and George Fry Markers (1831) within Fry Plot Enclosure.



Photo 49. Louisa A. Bennett Marker (1838) and footstone.



Photo 50. Abraham Shepard (1809), twentieth-century military-issued marker.

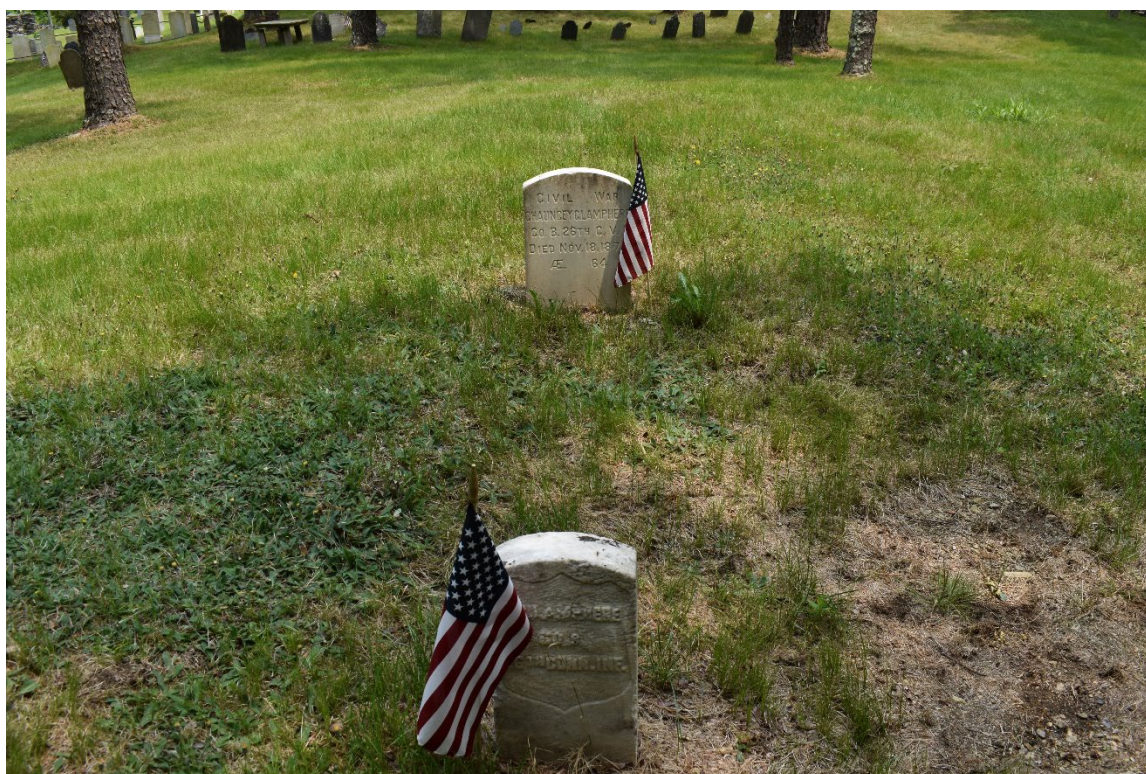


Photo 51. Chauncey C. Lamphere (1878), headstone and twentieth-century military-issued marker.



Photo 52. Dwight Carlton Tracy Marker (1925) within Fry Plot Enclosure.