

THE PELHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY

and

KAREN GENOTER

**Director of Computer Services
for
The Pelham Historical Society**

Are pleased to present to you in CD-ROM format materials from the William Thomas Hayes Historical Collection. The Hayes Historical Collection is an eclectic collection of historical materials assembled over a lifetime by Mr. Hayes.

Attorney Hayes is a life long resident of the Town of Pelham. He was educated in the Pelham School system and graduated from Kimball Union Academy, Dartmouth College and the University of Virginia School of Law.

He co-authored “Reflections, A Pictorial History of Pelham” and has served the Pelham Historical Society as President and a Member of the Board of Directors for a number of years.

These materials made their way into the Hayes Collection because they all shed, in one way or another, information on the long and varied History of Pelham, New Hampshire.

The publication of the Hayes Collection materials in CD-ROM format is an ongoing project of the Pelham Historical Society. All proceeds from the sale of Hayes Collection CD-ROMs are used to support the Pelham Historical Society building, museum, library and programs.

Please visit the Pelham Historical Society online bookstore to learn what other materials are available for your reading and research pleasure.

VOLUME 3

Gravestone Inscriptions

Up to 1906

The Town of Pelham was first settled in 1720-21. During that time frame the western one third of present day Pelham was included in the Town of Dunstable, Massachusetts, which had been incorporated in 1673 by the Great and General Court of Colonial Massachusetts. The eastern two thirds of Pelham during that time frame were part of Dracut, Massachusetts, which had been incorporated by Colonial Massachusetts in 1701.

In 1731-2, all of Old Dunstable, Massachusetts located east of the Merrimack River, including the western one third of Pelham, was separated from Old Dunstable and became a part of the newly incorporated Town of Nottingham, Massachusetts. The eastern two thirds continued to be a part of Dracut, Massachusetts. In 1741, by Royal Decree of the King of England, all of present day Pelham was determined to be in the British Colony of New Hampshire, not Massachusetts. From the date of that decree until July 5, 1746, the western one third of present day Pelham was governed as part of Nottingham District, New Hampshire. The Nottingham District included all of Nottingham, Massachusetts declared to be in New Hampshire by the King's decree. The District, although not technically a town, was governed by a Board of Selectmen and a slate of other Town Officers until July 5, 1746.

From the 1741 royal decree date until July 5, 1746, the eastern two thirds of present day Pelham were governed as part of the combined Dracut/Methuen District of Colonial New Hampshire. This combined District was made up of the portions of Dracut and Methuen, Massachusetts found to be in New Hampshire by the King's decree. Although technically not an incorporated town, it was governed by a Board of Selectmen and a slate of other Town Officers until July 5, 1746.

On July 5, 1746, an eastern portion of the Nottingham District (the present day western one third of Pelham) and the Dracut portion of the Dracut/Methuen District were combined to create the newly incorporated Town of Pelham, New Hampshire. It was named Pelham by Royal Governor Benning Wentworth in honor of Henry Pelham, who was, on that date, the Prime Minister of England.

The vital records for the western one third of present day Pelham from 1721 until the 1731-2 incorporation date of Nottingham, Massachusetts, were recorded, if at all, with the town officials of Old Dunstable, Massachusetts. From 1731-2 until July 5, 1746, vital events were recorded, if at all, with the Town of Nottingham, Massachusetts. Genealogists should be aware that better records of Nottingham, Massachusetts vital events were kept by the Reverend Nathaniel Merrill than the Town of Nottingham, Massachusetts. The Vital Records of Hudson, New Hampshire (formerly a part of Old Dunstable, Massachusetts, Nottingham, Massachusetts, and Nottingham District, New Hampshire and Nottingham West, New Hampshire), from 1734 until 1985 were assembled by Gerald Q. Nash et al and published by Heritage Books, Inc in 1997. This book incorporates the Reverend Nathaniel Merrill records. Early vital records of Dunstable, Massachusetts to the year 1850 were gathered and published under the auspices of the New England Historic Genealogy Society and are generally available in both paper and magnetic formats. This publication includes Pelham vitals for the western one third of Pelham for the period 1722 to the incorporation of Nottingham, Massachusetts 1731-2.

The vital records for the eastern two thirds of present day Pelham from 1720 until the 1741 Royal Decree date were maintained by the Town of Dracut, Massachusetts. From 1741 until July 5, 1746, the records for that part of Pelham were recorded by the officials of the Dracut/Methuen District. The vital records of Dracut and Methuen, Massachusetts to the year 1850 have been published under the auspices of the New England Historic Genealogy Society. They are generally available in both paper and magnetic formats. The Dracut publication includes Pelham vitals for the eastern two thirds of Pelham from 1720 to 1741.

Many of the vital records of the Dracut/Methuen District (1741-1746) were assembled and published by Edgar Gilbert in his "History of Salem New Hampshire" in 1907. A 1993 facsimile reprint is available in paperback from Heritage Books. Most of Salem, New Hampshire was once a part of Methuen, Massachusetts. Methuen, until its 1726 incorporation date, was originally a part of Haverhill, Massachusetts.

As news traveled slowly during this time period, some Town Clerks recorded vital events after they lost jurisdiction to do so. In other instances Town Clerks played catch up by

recording vital events that occurred before they obtained jurisdiction over the area in question. Genealogists and historians: Do not treat any of the above dates as absolutes.

From July 5, 1746 forward the responsibility for maintaining vital records of Pelham residents fell to the officials of the Town of Pelham. The primary sources of vital information for the Town of Pelham, from July 5, 1746 forward, are the following:

1. Town Clerk Records recorded alphabetically by family unit from 1743 until 1865.
2. The Pelham Town Reports from 1888 until the present.
3. Pelham Congregational Church Records from 1751 until 1885.
4. Pelham Gravestones until the year 1906.
5. Gumpas Cemetery Gravestones with Epitaphs to August 1876 (No index)

All of the above sources are contained in the Hayes Historical Collection and are published in CD-ROM format by the Pelham Historical Society.

IN THIS VOLUME of the William Thomas Hayes Historical Collection, the Pelham Historical Society offers scanned copies of hand written gravestone inscriptions to the year 1906.

During the first 75 years of Pelham's existence, residents were usually buried "on the farm". Often the graves were unmarked or temporarily marked with wooden crosses. All evidence of most of the early "on the farm burial" places has disappeared.

Two of the Family Burial grounds were more formal than the rest. One was the Sherburne Burial Ground established in 1798 when James Sherburne, who migrated to Pelham from Portsmouth New Hampshire with his family in the winter of 1751, was buried between the Farmhouse and Sherburne Road. By 1876 fifteen members of his family had been buried in the front yard.

Early in 1898, at the insistence of his wife, Jennie Kathleen Marshall, Gardner Willie Sherburne sought approval to move his ancestors from the private Sherburne Cemetery to the recently established (1893) Gibson Addition of the Pelham Center Cemetery.

Permission was granted in a written document signed on August 1, 1898 by Pelham Town Clerk Daniel P. Atwood. A photocopy of that document can be found on page 244 of "Reflections, a Pictorial History of Pelham". The Sherburne gravestones were moved with the remains and can be seen today in sharp contrast to the later stones that surround the Sherburne gravesite at the Gibson Addition. It was the practice in the early 1800s to use thin slate gravestones. Thick granite gravestones were the standard when the Sherburne ancestors moved to the Gibson and thick granite stones surround the Sherburne gravesite.

The only family cemetery that survives today is the Coburn-Lyon Cemetery on Pulpit Rock Road in Pelham. It received its formal documentation in 1875 when Bradley F. Lyon and George D. Coburn recorded a deed which read in part "Therefore in consideration of the

love and affection we bear to our kindred we hereby donate, give, grant, convey and confirm to the lineal descendents of said William R. Lyon and Gilbert Coburn through all succeeding generations forever, an equal right and privilege with ourselves in said lot for all entombment or burial uses and for no other use or purposes whatsoever except to ornament and improve the same in a manner suitable for such use.”

The Town of Pelham currently maintains five cemeteries, including the private Coburn-Lyon. A non Pelham Polish Catholic Church and a non Pelham Jewish Synagogue maintain cemeteries behind the Coburn Lyon Cemetery on Pulpit Rock Road. No evidence has been found that either cemetery was ever been used by a Pelham resident.

The five cemeteries maintained by the Town of Pelham in which Pelham residents have been routinely interred are:

1. The Atwood Cemetery on Atwood Road. Pelham Tax Map Parcel 22-8-28
2. The Pelham Center Cemetery (including the Gibson, Hayes and Currier additions) with entrances on Old Bridge Street North and Marsh Road. Pelham Tax Map Parcel 29-7-126)
3. The Coburn-Lyon Cemetery of Pulpit Rock Road. Pelham Tax Map Parcel 41-6-144.
4. The Gumpas Cemetery on Mammoth Road. - Pelham Tax Map Parcel 28-2-35.
5. The North Pelham Cemetery north of Keyes Hill Road. Pelham Tax map Parcel 2-5-150.

In August of 1905, P. Parker Hildreth, assisted by Silas R Coburn, hand copied the gravestone information from the Atwood Cemetery. He labeled his 46- page effort “Pelham Centre (N.H.) Graveyard Records.” These pages are in fact a record of the Atwood Cemetery, not the Pelham Center cemetery. The Atwood Cemetery gravestone records appear first in this volume.

In 1906, Pelham native Silas R. Coburn transcribed all of the remaining Pelham Gravestones. In 1905 and 1906 Silas Coburn was the Town Clerk of Dracut. In 1913, he and George A. Gordon published a comprehensive genealogy of the Coburn Family, that included many Pelham descendents. In 1922 Silas R. Coburn published a comprehensive history of the Town of Dracut. Coburn’s history of Dracut contains much information about Pelham, since the eastern two thirds of present day Pelham were once a part of Dracut, Massachusetts. Edward Coburn (1) , Silas’s immigrant ancestor, was the first permanent settler of Dracut, having arrived in the 1660s.

In almost every instance, the gravestone information generated by Hildreth and Coburn is recorded in the order in which the gravestones stones were found, making it easy for genealogists and historians to physically locate particular gravestones.

Location of particular Hildreth-Coburn gravestone information is also facilitated by a complete handwritten index of all of the names found on the stones.

In 1976 members of the Pelham Historical Society, assisted by High School students, copied and typed up all of the gravestone information from the Gumpas Cemetery. This work is particularly interesting because it contains all of the epitaphs. This work is also included in this volume. While there is no index associated with this work, the gravestones are list in sequentially as they were found on the ground. Therefore, the 1906 Silas Coburn index will work for most of the gravestones recorded in 1976.

In 2005 Melinde Lutz Sanborn, F.A.S.G, caused the Hildreth-Colburn hand written gravestone inscriptions to be printed in a serialized format in several volumes of *The New Hampshire Genealogical Record*.

Karen Genoter, Director of Computer Services for the Pelham Historical Society created a single computer generated index of the gravestone inscriptions published in the *The New Hampshire Genealogical Record*.

The serialized inscriptions and the computer-generated index are included as an additional file in this CD.