

## Lower Mystic Cemetery, Part 2: Early History

We continue the story of the Lower Mystic Cemetery (the LMC) with some of its early history.

First of all: Why the name Lower Mystic?

The original center of Mystic was located at the top of the Mystic River and was known as “Head of the River” or “Mystic”. Down the river the west bank was called Portersville which was changed to Mystic River in 1851. The east bank was Mystic Bridge. Then in 1890 the Post Office changed the name of Mystic to Old Mystic and the village downriver became Mystic. Since the LMC was incorporated in 1949 it seems possible that Lower was used to differentiate this cemetery outside the western outskirts of Mystic River from any that existed up the river in “Mystic”.

Secondly: What was new about the LMC?

The LMC was a community place of burial rather than a church graveyard or a family burial ground. It is formally laid out in rectangular lots with a lovely fitted granite wall along the main road, some decorative iron fences and a well in the center. It is not the Rural Cemetery design of the Elm Grove Cemetery which was established a few years later in 1853. The Rural Cemetery Movement began in 1831 with Mount Auburn, Boston; Laurel Hill, Philadelphia (1836); Greenwood, N.Y. (1838); Lowell, Mass. (1841); and so on. For more on this subject Google ‘american rural cemetery movement’.

On September 3, 1849 a group of local townspeople incorporated the Lower Mystic Cemetery Association in the Town of Groton to create and manage a cemetery. The list of the original Subscribers from a document dated September 3, 1849 is: Simeon B. Ashbey, Ransford Ashbey, George W. Ashby, Silas Beebe, Wm W, Bentley, Horatio N. Fish, Grover G. King, Henry Latham, Henry O. Manwarring, Henry K. Manwarring, George Moon, Issac Randall, Mrs. P. Randall, Elisha Rathbun, Peter G. Rowland, Asa P. Sawyer, Wm. P. Smith, Jeremiah Wilbur, and Charles S. Williams.

The Association elected officers, approved By-Laws, and purchased 1.9 acres of land on the north side of Route 1 on the road to Fort Hill. We have a copy of By-Laws adopted July 15, 1893; they are available online at [www.mystichistory.org/LMC](http://www.mystichistory.org/LMC). The price of a lot 18 feet square was \$25 and the price to insure perpetual care of one lot was \$50. (Income from this money is now in CDs in the Groton Savings Bank and the interest is still used to pay for mowing and maintenance of the grounds.) Unfortunately the book of original deeds has been misplaced but we do have a Form of Deed for Perpetual Care of Lot in Lower Mystic Cemetery signed by my Great-grandmother Mrs. Louis P. (Emily Fenner Maxson) Allyn dated November 7, 1941 as proprietor of lots 82 & 83.

Evidently the LMC was well received over the years; a later map of all the plots with family names written shows no unsold lots. In a latter article I will talk about the inventory of the names found on monuments and headstones and where the graves are located. Perhaps some of your ancestors are buried there; I hope to find out from you.