

NANTUCKET CEMETERY COMMISSION
Posted Meeting of February 8, 2023, at 3:00 pm
DPW Conference Room, 188 Madaket Road with Zoom Connectivity

FINAL AND APPROVED MINUTES

Attendance: Commissioners: Frances Karttunen, Scott McIver, Allen Reinhard (Chair), and Lee Saperstein; Charlie Polachi and TaKyra Renner (DPW).

Absent: Barbara White.

1. Call to Order.

Allen Reinhard called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm. He reminded participants that the session was being recorded

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MtmSZz_iiSg&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhccE5JdN4GOG9egy_cX11t8&index=31). A roll-call of attendees showed that a quorum existed.

2. Public and Commissioner Comments.

With no members of the public present, there were no public comments. Allen Reinhard, Chair, welcomed TaKyra Netter in her new role as DPW Office Administrator and supporting staff member for the Cemetery Commission. He also mentioned that he had received an e-mail from Robert Stubblefield of the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition (Bethesda, Maryland, <https://bethesdaafricancemeterycoalition.net/>) inviting us to participate in a Descendants Conference to be held virtually on Tuesday, February 25, 2023. Frances Karttunen said that it sounded interesting and she would see if she can attend. Lee Saperstein mentioned that we had received an e-mail from Ken Beaugrand, Real Estate Specialist, to say, “I have spoken to the individuals trying to work out a solution to the encroachment [at Polpis Cemetery] but no clear solution yet. I am monitoring.” Several commissioners commented that a solution is overdue.

3. Approval of Minutes from December 14, 2022.

For the minutes of December 14, 2022, Frances Karttunen moved their adoption, Scott McIver seconded, and an unanimous roll-call vote approved them.

4. Approval of Lot Sales Since Last Meeting.

There were no lots sold in the previous month. Allen Reinhard reported that he had several enquiries but no one had pursued them to the point of meeting at the cemetery.

5. Supplies Needed for Additional Polpis Lots: Toe and Corner Markers.

Charlie Polachi projected a sketch map of Polpis Cemetery, showing the extended rows and new lots to be laid out as had been discussed at an earlier meeting of the Commission. He said that he was using this to help him create a purchase order for corner and toe makers, each to be

individually marked with its specific location. He and Allen Reinhard had looked at the projected lay out and concluded that there is a need for 151 toe and 175 corner markers. These would be stainless steel disks with a central pin and individually marked. Although stainless steel will be more visible compared to other materials such as aluminum, it can be found readily with a metal detector. He showed four different formats for marking the disks with lot numbers and suggested that example 1, with all letters able to be read from one direction, was preferred. Based on information received from the potential purveyor, he estimated that the total cost would be around \$2700.00. His visuals are attached to these minutes. There was some discussion as to whether both corner and toe markers would be needed. The consensus was yes. Lee Saperstein said that it seemed as if the Commission was nearing a conclusion so he moved that the Commission authorize Charlie Polachi to create a purchase order for the corner and toe markers. The motion presumes that Charlie Polachi will review carefully numbers and prices and will proceed if they match the estimate given above. Scott McIver seconded and the Commission approved the motion unanimously. [Action: Charlie Polachi to order corner and toe markers.]

6. Monument Restoration Project.

At Allen Reinhard's invitation, Charlie Polachi reported that restoration work will be on hold until there is a budget for the Commission, which requires an approval at Annual Town Meeting, ATM (Saturday, May 6, 2023). There is a sizable amount of money potentially available in the Lot-Sales account but that may not be spent until there is an approved expenditure budget. The Community Preservation Committee, CPC, grant has been expended and needs to be renewed. Applications are due in September; Charlie Polachi will ask the CPC if there is a desired format or even forms to be used. He will base both the budget request and the CPC grant application on estimates given earlier for restoration work at the four remaining cemeteries: Historic Coloured, Newtown, Old North, and Quaker.

7. Commission Finances and Accounts Update.

The discussion held during the previous agenda item for Monument Restoration also gave information on finances and accounts. Lee Saperstein said, for the record, that Nantucket's Finance Director, Brian Turbitt, had addressed the Commission on two earlier occasions. The record of those presentations can be found in the minutes of October 14, 2014, and April 11, 2018. Additionally, an e-mail from Charlie Polachi to Brian Turbitt on December 1, 2022, listed the account numbers that have Cemetery Commission connections: "The accounts we are inquiring about are as follows: 20832/92201; 20832/99253; 216000/36036; 216429/49402; 530000/36023; 530000/36025; 530000/36026."

8. Old, New, Other Business and Final Comments.

As a piece of new business, Frances Karttunen told of a meeting that she attended, hosted by the Nantucket Historical Association, that was examining ways to highlight Nantucket's Black peoples' history in its walking tours. Nantucket's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director, Kimal McCarthy, was there as were representatives of the Museum of African American History. She said that she and Barbara White had been asked frequently enough to provide tours of the Historic Coloured Cemetery that they had created a script for their tour of it (attached).

After she said that it should go into the Commission's web site the Commissioners discussed how it might be presented in the web site so that it could be accessed easily by a smart 'phone reading of a QR (Quick Response) code. She will explore this with the Town's Communication Manager.

Frances Karttunen said, also, that she was pleased to note progress on two of the items in the projects list: ordering of markers and a new fence at New North Cemetery. The list is emended to show this progress.

Charlie Polachi reported that the Town now had a contractual relationship with a surveyor and that should help the Commission to locate and record cemetery boundaries.

9. Adjournment.

Adjournment came at 3:52 pm by acclamation.

Next regular meeting: Wednesday, March 8, 2023, at 3:00 pm, unless rescheduled, in the DPW conference room at 188 Madaket Road. For those who wish to attend virtually, a Zoom link will also be sent to Commissioners.

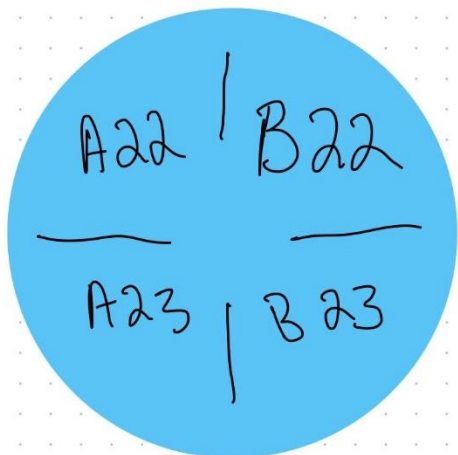
Respectfully submitted: _____; Date: _____
Lee W. Saperstein, Secretary

Nantucket Cemetery Projects List.

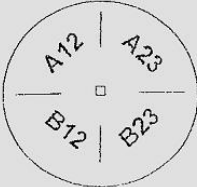
- Cemetery monument condition survey (completed); awarding of four more contracts for monument conservation.
- Split rail fence at Polpis Cemetery: installed in existing cemetery; needed in newly acquired land.
- Survey to lay out additional lots at Polpis.
- Toe and lot corner markers for new Polpis lots when laid out (purchase order in progress).
- Consolidation of lots at Newtown Cemetery with recordable ground survey.
- Fencing at the Historic Coloured Cemetery: sections installed, needed against Vesper Lane.
- Fencing and brush removal at New (fencing installed) and Old North Cemeteries.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
16										
17										
18										
19										
20										
21										
22										
23										
24										
25										
26										
27										
28										
29										

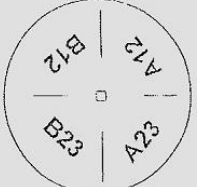
Base \$ 5.39
• 18 / Mark = \$ 8.27 EA.
175 @ \$ 8.27 = \$ 1447.25



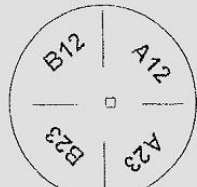
See below for some examples of how we can mark your lot markers.



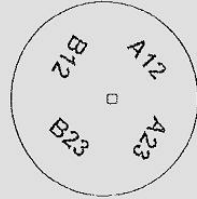
Example 1: All letters/numbers facing same direction. With crossbars to divide sections.



Example 2: All letters/numbers facing inward. With crossbars to divide sections.



Example 3: All letters/numbers facing outward. With crossbars to divide sections.



Example 4: Any lot marker can be done with or without crossbars.

Estimation by Charlie Polachi of Number of corner and toe markers needed for the new lots at Polpis Cemetery.

Row	Lot numbers needed:					Number of Toe markers
A	A-2	A-24				23
B	B-2	B-25				24
C	C-2	C-8	C-21	C-27		14
D	D-2	D-8	D-21	D-28		15
E	E-2	E-8	E-21	E-29		16
F	F-2	F-8	F-21	F-29		16
G	G-2	G-8	G-21	G-29		16

Total toe markers needed for this section 124

Comer markers needed this section 131

We can add 27 additional lots by extending rows H, I and J by adding lots 21 to 29 to each row.

If we decide to extend Rows H, I & J, we will need additional Toe & Comer markers to create 27 possible future Lots by extending row H, I and J, by adding Lots 21 through 29

H	H-21	H-29	9
I	I-21	I-29	9
J	J-21	J-29	9

Total Toe markers this section: 27

Comer Markers this section 44

Total Toe markers

151

Total Comer markers 175

WALKING TOUR OF THE HISTORIC COLOURED CEMETERY: A Script Created by Frances Karttunen and Barbara White.

1. *Text of informational plaque placed in June 2007:*

Historic Cemetery

The earliest known burial was in 1798.

In 1805 the Nantucket Proprietors “voted that the Black People may fence one acre of land where their Burying Place is.”

In 1807 this place was described as “the Burying Ground that belongs to the Black People or People of Color.”

Among those who have found their last rest here are members of the Boston, Pompey, Ross, Porte, Grant, Wheeler, and Carter families; the families of churchmen Arthur Cooper, James Crawford, and John W. Robinson; and four Civil War veterans.

Marker placed in 2007 by families and friends with the support of the Nantucket Historical Association.

According to Emil Guba in 1965 there was a stone that recorded a death in 1798. It has since gone missing.

The cemetery was being called by many different names—the Colored Cemetery, the African-American Cemetery, and Mill Hill Cemetery, among them.

The Town of Nantucket wanted to establish an official name. Former Selectman Augusto C. Ramos and then-present Selectman Frank Spriggs polled people most directly concerned, and the consensus was that “one should not prettify history.” In burial records this is the Colored Cemetery, and to change its name might confuse future research. Members of the Carter family, who have a burial plot here were, however, uncomfortable with the name. They were more comfortable with the expanded name with older spelling: The Historic Coloured Cemetery

2. *Begin with a visit to the three churchmen we know are buried here.*

a. In the northwest corner: The **Rev. John W. Robinson**, 1840. Robinsons do not appear in the 1830 or 1840 Nantucket censuses, but in a court case in 1836 John Robinson gave a deposition in a court inquiry into the shipping of his son John Robinson Jr. aboard the ship *Three Brothers*. John Jr. was underage when Arthur Cooper, acting as agent for the owners of the whaler, signed him on without John Sr.’s permission. Members of the Rev. Robinson’s family were buried here later: his wife Cecilia Robinson, who died in 1860; his Pennsylvania-born daughter Julia, who married Cape Verdean whaler Joseph Lewis Sr. and died in 1892; and his Massachusetts-born granddaughter

Emma Lewis who died in 1917. Julia and Joseph, and their five Massachusetts-born children all appear in the 1850 census for Nantucket. Today there are no grave markers here for four of their children: Alexander, Celia, John, and Joseph Jr. Joseph Jr. went whaling as a young man and was one of the custodians of the Old Mill after it became the property of the Nantucket Historical Association. He and his sister Emma lived together until Emma's death on Nantucket. Then Joseph Jr. lived alone in their home on West York Street until his death in 1925.

b. **Arthur Cooper** flanked by his wives Mary and Lucy. The story of Arthur and Mary Cooper and their family being saved from an agent sent to return Arthur Cooper to slavery in Virginia is well-known. The family was hidden in the home of Oliver and Hannah (Macy) Gardner, Anna Gardner's parents. Mary Cooper may have been a "free Black," and at least some of their five children may not have been born into slavery. Mary died in 1826, and the following year Arthur married Lucinda Gordon, who had been born in Africa and taken into slavery in childhood and put to work digging ditches on a South Carolina rice plantation. She had been branded on the forehead. A fugitive from slavery, she reached Nantucket through Newport, RI. Arthur Cooper was one of the organizers of the A.M.E. Zion church on Nantucket. Despite the fact that he is often referred to as a clergyman, he does not appear to have been a minister of the church, although he was an elder. His grave marker does not contain the title "Rev." as do those of John Robinson and James Crawford. He died in 1853. Lucy was said to be a centenarian when she died in 1866. According to Mary Starbuck in her book *My House and I*, white children living on Pleasant Street organized a drive to help pay for Lucy's grave marker and learned first-hand about racism when some of their requests for contributions were rebuffed.

c. The **Reverend James Crawford**, his mother, at least two of his three wives, his daughter, and his third wife's son by a previous marriage. James Crawford was born into slavery in Virginia and escaped by going to sea. He began a life of freedom in Providence, RI, and became a licensed Methodist minister. On a visit to Nantucket in 1848 he was invited to become pastor of the local African Baptist Church and did so, serving for over 40 years. He was the son of the master of the plantation on which he was born and Mary, one of the plantation's enslaved women. Mary was herself the child of her white master and one of his slaves. James Crawford was fair with light brown hair and blue eyes. He could easily pass for white, which he did in order to rescue his sister-in-law and her daughter from slavery by posing as a white plantation owner himself, buying them from their owner, and transporting them north. When his mother Mary slid into dementia, his old owner called upon him to come get his mother and take her away. Crawford's household in Nantucket included himself, his wife Ann, their daughter Juliana, his mother Mary, and his sister-in-law Diana and her daughter Cornelia. When Ann died, he married Diana, and after Diana died, he married a third time. His third and last wife was Rebecca Elaw Pierce, daughter of the African-American woman Methodist preacher Zilpha Elaw. I am sure Rebecca is buried here too, probably next to her son Thomas Pierce, but there is no headstone now.

3. *Sea captains' families*

a, The Bostons are buried together. They were descendants of Boston and Maria, slaves of William Swain in the mid 1700s. Their children (Tobias, Essex, Seneca, Patience, Prince, Silas (or Cyrus), George, and Peter) were born into slavery and scheduled for manumission as each reached the age of 28. Prince Boston is famous for the 1772 landmark court case upholding the right of the captain of a whaling ship on which Prince Boston served to pay Prince's share to him and not to the Swain family. Prince's brother Silas/Cyrus continued in slavery for another two years, and Quaker Benjamin Coffin did not finally free his three slaves (Rose and her sons Bristol and Benjamin) until 1775.

Absalom Boston was Seneca Boston's son. There is no stone for him or for his third wife Hannah (Cook) Boston, but there is one for his infant son, Absalom Jr., who died in 1836. His previous two wives, Polly (Mary) and Phebe G., do have headstones. His daughter Phebe Anne Boston, on whose behalf Absalom brought suit against the town to force integration of the schools in 1847, died in 1849, too soon to benefit from the integration. Her stone is here.

Absalom Boston's widowed sister-in-law Mary Boston married **Michael Douglass** (perhaps DeLuze), a "Cape Verde Portuguese Negro." Her stone is here, but there isn't one for him.

b. **Captain Edward Pompey** was master of the brig *Rising States* on a whaling voyage out of New Bedford in 1836-37. Retiring early from the sea and becoming a storekeeper, he was Nantucket's subscription agent for William Lloyd Garrison's *The Liberator*. When he died, his estate contained a large number of abolitionist books and books on history, literature, biography, health, bookkeeping etc. They may have been inventory from his store, but they also may have been the books that were available at the free anti-slavery reading room that was established by New Guinea residents in the early 1840s.

4. *Another Cape Verdean*

Peter Antone from St. Anthony, CV. This stone is broken off and in great need of restoration.

5. *An interracial family*

John Barber, who died in 1853, had an Ireland-born wife, Elizabeth Ann, and many children, including triplets Shadrach, Mechach, and Abegnago. Their daughter Sarah Ann is buried here. The triplets, who died in infancy must be buried here too. After John's death Elizabeth Ann and the surviving children left the island.

6. *A bicultural family.*

Mary N. Whippey, daughter of William and Maria Whippey, died in 1838 at the age of 2 months. William Whippey, born in New Zealand in 1801, was probably the son of a Nantucket whaling Whippey and a Maori woman. He came to Nantucket and married Maria Ross, older sister of

Eunice Ross. The couple operated the Canacka Boarding House in New Guinea. The boarding house sign is in the collection of the Nantucket Historical Association. After William Whippey died of tuberculosis in 1847, Maria continued to take in boarders for a while. After losing her two small sons, one to whooping cough and William Jr. to TB, she left the island and remarried. By 1870 she had been widowed again and had returned to the island, where she was employed as a stewardess on one of the steamboats. In 1900, at age 86, she was living with her niece Mary Miller on York Street. Her surname at the time of her death was Nye, and we don't (yet) know where she was buried.

7. More Ross sisters

Eunice and Sarah Ross were sisters of Maria (Ross) Whippey. In all there were five Ross siblings, of whom Eunice was the youngest and Sarah the next youngest. Their father James Ross reported to the census that he had been born in Africa. Eunice and Sarah died a year and a half apart and were buried side by side with twin headstones. Eunice is famous for her role in the integration of the Nantucket public schools. She was a student of Anna Gardner at the African School. When the Nantucket public school system opened a high school in 1838, Anna Gardner attended herself while teaching at the African School. She prepared Eunice for the entrance exam, which Eunice took and passed in 1840. Eunice was barred from attending, however, solely on racial grounds. This initiated a long school boycott and rancorous public debate that finally led to the integration of the public schools in 1846-47. In 1845 Eunice wrote an eloquent petition to the Massachusetts legislature explaining that she had been “found amply qualified for admission...and was refused admission...on account of her colour.” When the battle was finally won, she was 24 years old, and there is no record that she availed herself of the right she had earned. At least two other African-Nantucketer girls did enter NHS, however. One was Annie Nahar and the other was Susan Kelley, who later married Civil War veteran Sampson Pompey. Louis Philippe Newell, who is buried with the Porte family, also attended NHS, where he studied Greek before leaving school and working as a printer. Eunice Ross lived out her life in seclusion, unmarried and unemployed. Her sister Sarah worked to the end of her life as a domestic servant for the household of Benjamin Coffin. I imagine their life together rather like that of Emily and Lavinia Dickinson.

8. Two Civil War veterans.

Eighteen or nineteen African-Nantucketers served in the Civil War, sixteen in the Union Navy and two or three in the Union Army. All survived the war (although a possible Native Hawaiian recruit to the Union forces may have died in the closing years of the war) so their names do not appear on the monument on upper Main Street (which is a monument to the war dead). At least four veterans are buried here.

a. **Sampson Pompey.** The large Pompey family were the descendants of “Old Pompey” and “Pompey Nailor” (two different men, who died within a few years of each other). Ebenezer Gardner manumitted Pompey in 1750. John Pompey, who died in 1824 and is buried near Mary Douglass, owned a dance hall. We have already visited the grave of Captain Edward Pompey. Sampson Dyer Pompey was of the next generation. Sampson Pompey, son of Edward's brother

Stephen Pompey and his wife Trillania (Trelonia, Treloni) Dyer Pompey, served in the U.S. Navy during the Civil War. Stephen Pompey was a mariner, and Trillania was an activist who presided over a Health Society for New Guinea that held social events twice a month. After his naval service, Sampson returned to Nantucket, married Susan Kelley, and became an active member of the Grand Army of the Republic. He bought and sold land in this area and was a contributor of news from the New Guinea community to the *Inquirer and Mirror*. He owned the house at 3 Atlantic Avenue that is often mistakenly said to have been Absalom Boston's house. (There is no evidence that it was. Absalom Boston owned a dwelling house on the south side of York Street and a great deal of property on both sides of the street between Pleasant and Orange Streets.) The group of people Sampson Pompey's father bought 3 Atlantic Avenue from did not include Absalom Boston.)

b. **Hiram Reed** is another Civil War veteran buried here. He was born into slavery in Missouri and was emancipated by the Union Army. Then he was sent to Nantucket. As soon as he got here, he enlisted in the Union Army and went back to fight. He was present at the fall of the Confederacy in Richmond. Then he returned to Nantucket, married, and lived to the age of 81, dying in 1911. Like Sampson Pompey, he was active in the Grand Army of the Republic.

Both Sampson Pompey and Hiram Reed appear in uniform in a number of GAR group photos. Their graves receive flags on Memorial Day.

9. Entrepreneurs

a. **The Portes.** In the immediate vicinity of Hiram Reed's grave there are many members of the Porte family. William Porte was born in Calcutta, India, and came to Nantucket as a mariner. He married Christina Pompey, and they raised their family in the house at 5 Atlantic Avenue. Their son William Jr. died of tuberculosis, and they lost other children as well, but their surviving children were all active in business. Daughters Ellen and Emma were "tailoresses." Their sister Ida was a chiropodist. Their granddaughter Christine worked as a bookkeeper, and their grandson Lincoln worked in the US Postal Service and was a member of many Nantucket men's organizations.

b. **The Carters.** Mabel and John Carter of Philadelphia built the house called Windsor Cottage on Mill Hill. Like Lincoln Porte, John Carter worked for the US Postal Service, and his wife, like the Porte sisters, was a talented seamstress. Their daughters Florence and Isabel operated the Florabel Carter Box Lunch business from 1949 to 1957 (first from Windsor Cottage, and then from a location downtown). Isabel Carter Stewart has been a trustee of the NHA. Her son Carter Stewart is currently a trustee.

c. **Charles S. Grant**, who died in 1948, was the son of Charles and Rachel (Seco) Grant. His mother and maternal grandmother were African Americans or Native Americans from Maine. His maternal grandfather was from Vermont. His father was Jamaican. Rachel and her son Charles appear in the 1910 census living together on Coon Street (named for a multigenerational family including several whaling captains with the surname Coon and not a racial slur. Nonetheless, the

street name was recently changed to Independent Way.). Charles Grant was a fisherman and scalloper and served the Town of Nantucket as shellfish warden from 1937 to 1946.

There are many people who found their last resting place here whose graves are not marked today. Perhaps their grave markers were perishable (made of wood). Some grave markers have fallen and been grown over with vegetation. Some have undoubtedly been carried off. The one bearing the date of 1798 was last seen here in the 1960s.

Among the people we who know to have lived and died in Nantucket and who probably were interred here were at least seven Pacific Islanders. There were also New Guinea residents whose names and lives are unfamiliar to us—nearly but not quite entirely lost. Here, at least, are the names of some of them: Lipy Dingle, Lucinda DeBlush, Pascal DeGross, Eliza Toto, and Rata Porridge. Venus Peters. Letitia Summons and Lavinia Pompey. Cuffy and Roxana Fortune. Cesar Godfrey and Chloe Gordon. Esther Pompey, killed by lightning in 1788. Susan Simons “found dead on the common sand near Beacon Light, south of the Creeks” in 1836. Daniel and Anstriss Gardner whose sea-going sons Joseph and Oliver died mysteriously in New Orleans in 1837. **Most notable in its absence is any memorial to Jeffrey Summons**, who probably had been enslaved by the Cary family on Main Street, became a prosperous resident of New Guinea, and eventually provided the land for the African Meeting House with the proviso that a “school be kept in it forever.” May they all rest undisturbed in this venerable ground.