

Historic Manchester Cemeteries

The first burials in this early settlement called “Five Miles” were in the Ancient Burial Ground in Hartford and then in the Center Cemetery in East Hartford, referred to as the “first cemetery east of the great river.” The East Hartford Center Cemetery was laid out in 1710. If you go there for a visit, you will see many of the same first-family names as in our Manchester cemeteries.



Note: Hartford originally went east all the way to Bolton. East Hartford became its own town in 1783 and Manchester in 1823.

Manchester’s Oldest cemetery is on Spencer Street, 274 Spencer Street (once known as Hop Brook area), and now called West Cemetery. The oldest stone dates to about 1740. Families who had adjoining properties in 1778 and 1789 enlarged this cemetery through the years. The oldest section contained at one time many unmarked graves, which now reside under the nearby road. Some of those family surnames from the colonial times that you will find here and East Cemetery (and Center Cemetery in East Hartford) are: Bidwell, Buckland, Bunce, Hills, Jones, Keeney, Marsh, Olcott, Pitkin, Risley, Spencer, and Woodbridge.

East Cemetery on Middle Turnpike is our second oldest, 220 East Center Street, A walking tour guide can be purchased from the Manchester Historical Society. Although there are no early records, we know that the land was set aside for burials about 1750. Some of the first-family surnames, in addition to the above listed: Brown, Cheney, Cook, Lyman, Griswold, Pitkin, and Woodbridge. (In East Hartford you’ll find Governor Pitkin first Governor of the Connecticut Colony.) Adjacent to the East Cemetery is the 2.03-acre privately owned Cheney Cemetery, 238 East Center Street, where over 200 members of the Cheney family are buried.

Buckland Cemetery or Northwest Cemetery in what is now the Burr Corner’s part of Manchester, 1210 Tolland Turnpike, sits on the hill overlooking what is now shopping centers, but at one time was a private family cemetery owned by the Buckland family, who all resided on farms around the immediate area and near the quarry. The town came into possession of the cemetery to use for the public in 1811. The oldest section here of course contains the Buckland family graves at the top of the hill, the oldest being 1777. Two of the best colonial carvers were right here in Manchester: William and Peter Buckland have been responsible for hundreds of works of art in this part of Connecticut.

As early as 1757 the Buckland area of Manchester was known as the as the “Jambstone Plain.” The Buckland family owned a great section of the land in this area as well as the red-sandstone quarry. Deeds show that many other masons and stone workers were involved in joint partnerships with Peter Buckland at various times. The name “Jambstone” comes from the large flat stones that were used for doorsteps and fire walls in many of the great buildings of that time. Later, two sons of the third generation took up carving gravestones from this quarry. These gravestones can be found in Manchester, East Hartford, Glastonbury, and the surrounding counties. Some can be found as far away as New Hartford. Aaron Buckland and five of his brothers were all involved in responding to the Lexington Alarm. Aaron who ran most of the early business and farm in this area, was granted a pension of 1,000 acres for his Revolutionary War service. In 1780 his woolen mill supplied blankets for our servicemen in the War of 1812. In 1788 he built a brick house which became the Buckland Tavern and entertained General Lafayette and his men when he returned in 1824. For more about the area history see Gladys Adams’s “Buckland” book for sale at the Manchester Historical Society and online: <http://www.manchesterhistory.org/reprints/GladysAdams1910-2001.pdf>

Connecticut Gravestone Network, CGN studies the craft of the old carvers who made these gravestones from the 1700s. A collection of CGN books is available at the Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street. CGN advocates preservation of our Connecticut gravestones and graveyards. We also request that teachers **not** take students out into these old cemeteries to do rubbings (which can damage the stones), but encourages them to use these valuable outdoor classrooms in other resourceful ways – through “discovery” - and there is much to be discovered in our old historic “Outdoor Museums.”