

October 2022



Donations may be sent to:

**Friends of Middleborough
Cemeteries, Inc
P O Box 172
Middleborough, MA 02346**

NEWSLETTER

Note: Your Donations are 100% tax deductible

If you are picking up our Newsletters at one of the several locations in Middleborough and Lakeville, please consider signing up for an electronic version to help us defray the cost of printing. Send an email to: clerk@friendsofmiddleboroughcemeteries.org with the word "Newsletter"

www.FriendsofMiddleboroughCemeteries.org www.FACEBOOK.COM/THEFoMC

If you get a chance, drive by the Tack Factory Cemetery on Taunton Street and see the difference your donations make. Our Preservation Team worked diligently in the summer of 2021 documenting and cleaning the stones in this cemetery. We also had several trees removed that were deemed threatening to the gravestones. A railing has also been installed by the stairs to make it safer and easier to get in and out of the cemetery. Your contributions are needed to continue our work in other cemeteries in Middleborough as well.

WHO WE ARE

The Friends of Middleborough Cemeteries Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization operated solely by Volunteers. No one is paid therefore we depend on donations to support the organization. You can donate by sending a check to Friends of Middleborough Cemeteries Inc, P.O. Box 172, Middleborough, MA 02346 or via PayPal.

Please feel free to forward this Newsletter to anyone you know who might be interested. We are always looking for new friends and volunteers. There are many opportunities available.

WHAT WE DO

The purposes of the corporation are as follows:

1. To preserve, maintain and restore the cemeteries located in Middleborough, Massachusetts including the graves, burial grounds, and burial plots,
2. To promote and improve awareness of the history and care of Middleborough cemeteries
3. To preserve and promote the memory of those persons interred within Middleborough, Massachusetts.

If anyone is interested in checking us out, we have monthly volunteer meetings (currently held on ZOOM) on the third Thursday at 7:00 PM. Please send an email to clerk@friendsofmiddleboroughcemeteries.org if you would like to join us at the meetings and you will be sent a ZOOM invitation usually two days before the meeting.

SAVE THE DATE!!

March 25, 2023

Once again, we will be hosting

a night of 1950's music with

Joe Brown as Elvis Presley

More details in our next newsletter

Is Your Ancestor's Headstone Unreadable ? ? ?

Does it need Cleaning by a Professional ? ? ?

Look No Further !!

Friends of Middleborough Cemeteries Inc can help !

Many of the graveyards and cemeteries in Middleboro have historic headstones of ancestors of present-day citizens in them. Unfortunately, many of these historic stones are made unreadable and discolored by lichens, fungi, and other growths that cover the images on the headstones, causes damage to the stones and make it impossible to see the names and dates on the stones.



The Friends of Middleborough Cemeteries members have been cleaning and straightening the headstones in our historic cemeteries for years, using techniques that do no damage to the stones or to the environment.



As a fund raiser for the Friends of Middleborough Cemeteries, we will clean and straighten up your families' gravestones, making them readable and much more attractive.

CONTACT: The FOMC at clerk@friendsofmiddleboroughcemeteries.org for more information

This Month's Newsletter is Dedicated to John Morton, the First Middleborough Carver

The Stories in The Stones

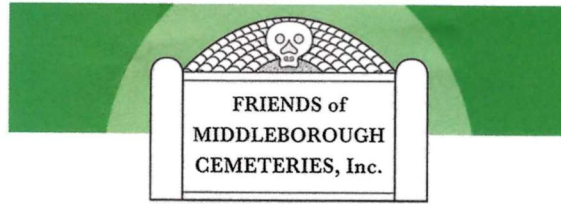
By Jeff Stevens for Friends of Middleborough Cemeteries



The land of Middleborough was bought from the Wampanoags as part of Twenty-Six Man's Purchase, and one of the purchasers was John Morton who arrived in America in 1623 on the *Anne*. In 1670, he was one of only six "freemen" in the town. His son, John, was born in Plymouth in 1650 and is credited with founding the first free school in the Americas in Plymouth in 1671. Only families with resources could send their children

to school in early colonial times because it cost money to attend in those days. By providing "free" education to Plymouth children, John Morton is considered the first "public school teacher" in not just Plymouth, or the Massachusetts Bay Colony, or even the British colonies of the new world. John Morton is credited with being the first "public school teacher" in the new world. Young John Morton later moved from Plymouth to Middleborough where he lived and farmed his father's land, along with his second wife, Mary Ring, and their six children. He died in 1718 and is buried in the Church at the Green Cemetery. He is clearly an early settler of our community and one of our nation's earliest educators. He also happens to be the ninth great grand uncle of Jeff Stevens.

While John is deserving of our notice as an early colonist, his gravestone is another part of our early Middleboro history. The earliest gravestones in town go back to about 1690 and were very primitive field stones with a name and date cut into them. By the 1710's, Middleboro was being served by its first local gravestone carver. We do not know his name, and he has left us with only about fifty stones made of our local soft slate. We now call him the "First Middleborough Carver" and his work is easy to identify. He was a man with limited carving ability and his lettering and images are extremely simple. His work is all straight lines and compass curves. The Morton stone is a perfect example of his work. The "soul effigy" on the top of the stone is made with compass scrapings to form the simple image of a skull with eyes and a circle mouth. He was unable to cut a curve without a compass. To tell us that Morton was sixty-seven years old when he died was a real problem. The number 6 is made with several compass scratches that almost form an 8. The lettering is all in capitals to avoid the curves of lower-case letters. Still, the stone is a notable example of early gravestone art with a simple elegance and artistic balance that continued in Middleboro stones for the next hundred years.



FriendsofMiddleboroughCemeteries.org
www.Facebook.com/TheFoMC



WE NEED YOU!



WHO WE ARE:

The FoMC is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Our purpose is to preserve, restore, and maintain the burial sites in Middleborough, Massachusetts. We aim to promote a greater awareness of the history and care of our local cemeteries, and preserve the memory of those interred within.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP:

JOIN the group by attending meetings.

VOLUNTEER to help clear an overgrown cemetery or maintain a cleared burial ground.

USE your technology skills to help document cemetery data or update our website.

PHOTOGRAPH gravestones to create a lasting visual documentation for our database.

LEARN how to properly clean and care for our gravestones.

HELP with outreach and fundraising through writing news releases or by organizing events.

MAKE a tax-deductible monetary donation.

WHO WE NEED:

ANYONE! We're looking for those *who would like to help us preserve our historic gravestones* before it's too late and they become unreadable! Graveyards are essentially outdoor museums, and must be managed as such.

We're looking for those *who like to do yardwork, wield a shovel, and get dirty!*

We're looking for those *who would like to honor our ancestors by doing research and preserving records.*

We're looking for those *who would like to get experience being on a board of directors.*

We're looking for younger folks *who would like to do community service.* It looks great on your resume!

IN OTHER WORDS—WE NEED YOU!