

Conant Cemetery Walking Tour

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HONORABLE JOHN CONANT (1790-1877) Conant Cemetery...Conant High School...all who live in Jaffrey know the name Conant. But who was he? John Conant came to Jaffrey in 1816. He was a successful farmer and maintained a lifelong interest in scientific agriculture. He became a prominent citizen and earned the title 'Honorable.' He served as selectman, town moderator, and was a member of the New Hampshire legislature. In 1860 Conant deeded eight acres for a cemetery and funds for its upkeep. His philanthropy was far ranging: In 1870 he donated \$7,000 to fund the 'Conant Free High School.' He gave \$70,000 towards a State School of Agriculture and \$6,000 towards the founding of the State Insane Asylum. Each town in Cheshire County received \$1,000 for scholarships to the University of New Hampshire. And two local churches benefited from his generosity. Upon his death in 1877 his estate totaled \$200,000, an impressive amount at the time. His house still stands on Turnpike Road near the Post Office. He is buried in Lot 1. 🌿

2 SUSAN BETHIAH CLAY (1826-1893) Born on the family farm which is where Woodbound Inn is now located, Susan Clay and her brother subsequently moved to Stratton Road in Jaffrey to be closer to their church. She was careful and frugal and left money to erect a public library in Jaffrey. She died in 1893. In 1896 the Clay Library Building was dedicated. She is buried in Lot 12. 🌿

3 ALONZO BASCOM (1812-1872) The handsome Jaffrey Mills at the corner of Main and North Streets and an impressive house on Peterborough Street are part of the legacy of Alonzo Bascom. Born in Hinsdale in 1812 and married in Palmer, Massachusetts, in 1837, Bascom did not come to Jaffrey until 1844. With a Palmer partner, he purchased the land which constitutes much of today's downtown. It included the water power rights and textile mills which Bascom replaced and enlarged, providing jobs and taxes. He was appointed East Jaffrey's first postmaster. He died in 1872 before his new mill was in full operation. He is buried in Lot 16. 🌿

4 ALICE PETTEE ADAMS (1866-1937) Born and schooled in Jaffrey, Alice Adams became the principal of Conant High School in 1888. But she decided to give one-tenth of her life to the mission field and sailed for Japan in 1891. She did amazing social work there in the slums of Okayama, working with schools, homes, families and medical facilities and her ten-year commitment grew to 45 years. She died in Newton, Massachusetts, but is buried in Conant Cemetery in Lot 311. 🌿

5 JULE CLINTON DURANT (1856-1924) In a house facing the bandstand on Jaffrey's downtown common Jule Clinton Durant was born in 1856. His education was limited, but his desire to learn and grow compelled him to venture into a broader world. Jule became a traveling salesman for patent medicines, eventually traveling worldwide and experiencing great success. He died overseas in 1924, but Masonic brothers saw to it that his remains made it back to Jaffrey. His lifelong earnings were given to Jaffrey's schools and library. He was a major donor to the fund which started what today is Humiston Field. The Durant Trust Fund is in 2016 valued at over one million dollars, making Durant Jaffrey's greatest benefactor. He is buried in Lot 313. 🌿

6 ALBERT ANNETT (1861-1936) The ANNETT family name is thought to be the only family by that name in all of New England! Albert was born in Jaffrey, was a very good student at Conant High School and graduated from the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts. But the family couldn't afford college for him so he stayed and worked at his father's wooden box and lumber company in Squantum for the rest of his life, becoming President in 1903. His life-long love of the forests and mountains of New Hampshire led him to donate 1,092 acres of land in Squantum to the state, known to thousands, now, as the Annett State Forest. Later on, when he became Vice-President for Cheshire County of the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, he was able to secure a large acreage of Mt. Monadnock for Jaffrey, as well as laying out the 20 mile Wapack Trail from Watatic Mountain in Ashburnham, Massachusetts, to the top of Pack Monadnock in Peterborough. That trail is one of the most popular recreational trails in New England. Because of his love and knowledge of the history of New Hampshire, he became very well known in the state as an historian and assisted Alice Lehtinen in writing Vol. I of *The History of Jaffrey*. Albert Annett was a greatly admired citizen of the town because he was so willing to share his knowledge with everyone, albeit in a quiet, wise way. He is buried in Lot 329. 🌿

7 FREDERICK C. SWEENEY, MD (1872-1949) Dr. Sweeney came to Jaffrey in 1897 and practiced his profession for 52 years at his 47 Main Street residence. He was a Captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps during WWI and kept a diary of his time in the late summer of 1918 on board a troop ship which was plagued with an influenza epidemic en route. When the famous author, Willa Cather, was staying at the Shattuck Inn, as she did for several autumns to write in quiet and peace, she became ill with influenza and Dr. Sweeney attended her and they became friends. During that time, she borrowed Dr. Sweeney's diary to help her with a chapter of the book she was working on at the time: *One of Ours*. And so it was that 'one of Jaffrey's' entered into the life of 'one of hers.' Dr. Sweeney became one of the best known physicians in the Monadnock area and so it was that when he died, quite suddenly on the street in Jaffrey early on a summer's evening in 1949, all the places of business in Jaffrey closed in his honor during his funeral at the United Church. Dr. and Mrs. Sweeney are buried in Lot 333. 🌿

8 FRANKLIN G. HUMISTON, MD (1855-1912) Everyone in Jaffrey knows of Humiston Field, the location of our ball fields and playground. Just who was Franklin Humiston? For more than 25 years he devoted his life and work to the citizens of Jaffrey as a physician and gave service to more than 1,000 births under his care. In his honor a memorial gateway was erected at the entrance to the public

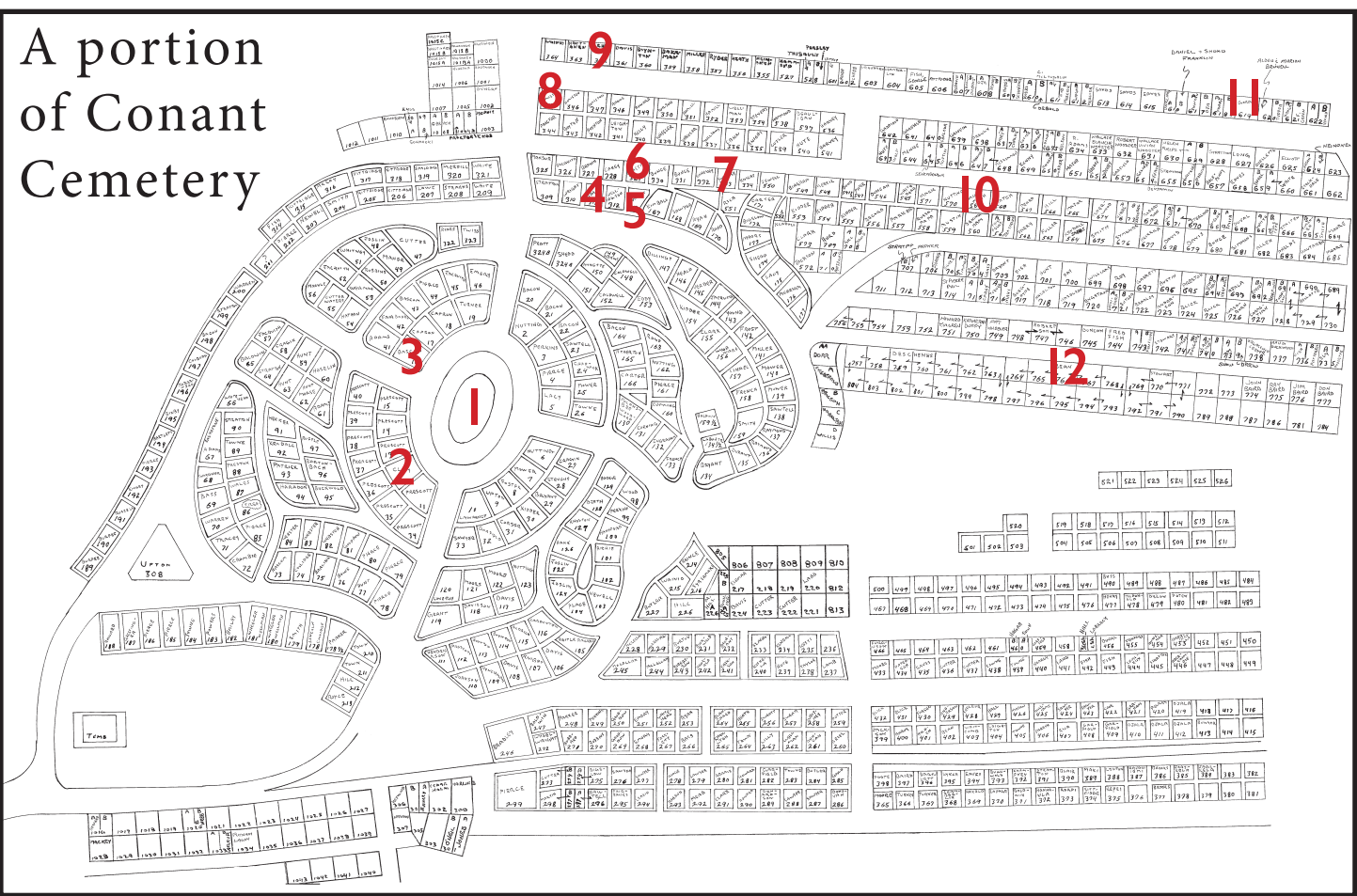
playground and was dedicated to Franklin, physician and friend to the people. The place so honored bears forever the name Humiston Field. He died in 1912 and is buried in Lot 345. 🌳

9 ALICE E. E. LEHTINEN (1901-1988) Alice Lehtinen was co-author with Albert Annett of the first two volumes of *The History of Jaffrey*, and later compiled the third volume. She worked as a journalist and correspondent for several newspapers, was the first woman selectman in town—she served as chairman for a time—and was a teacher in the Jaffrey schools and a member of the School Board. She lived on the family farm (on what is now named Lehtinen Road) and maintained a strong interest in agriculture as well as Jaffrey history. She died 1988 and is buried in Lot 362. 🌳

10 GRACE COLBY (1884-1978) Grace Colby came to Jaffrey in 1944, after serving in the Army Nurse Corps during WWII and as a Red Cross nurse in Concord, New Hampshire. She came to be the registered nurse for the Jaffrey School District and is well-remembered as a tall, lanky woman with spectacles. She was the first female member of the John Humiston Post 11, American Legion in Jaffrey, and was an active member of the Rebekah Lodge and The United Church of Jaffrey. In 1968 she went to live (again, as the first female veteran to do so) in The Soldiers’ Home in Tilton, New Hampshire, but ended up in the Odd Fellows’ Home in Concord until her death. She is buried in Lot 569. 🌳

11 ANNE BRADLEY GORDON (1908-1978) Anne Gordon was one of Jaffrey’s most prominent citizens, born of two very prominent Jaffrey families and one who spent most of her life in her hometown. She was an officer in nearly every local, county, state and national organization in whose causes she deeply believed. She was a trained in occupational therapy but her life became a very busy one of serving others on all political and social levels, all while raising four children, even as her husband served in the U.S. Navy during WWII. She was a formidable (and generous-hearted) personality who took all of her responsibilities seriously, including as Moderator of the United Church. She did her homework, was always on time, never missed a meeting, and definitely put Jaffrey on the map for New Englanders. She is buried in Lot 619. 🌳

12 DAVID DELCIE BEAN (1883-1964) In June of 1938, D. D. Bean & Sons began making their first paper matchbooks in an old textile mill in Jaffrey and 78 years and billions of matchbooks later, the company is still operating in that same old mill and still using some of that original equipment. ‘D. D.’ (Sr.) as he became known, began his business life making, from the vast supply of white pine in the area, ‘match blocks’ which eventually led him (and his close friend, Merrill Symonds) to get into the making of wooden matches. In 1923 he built a new factory in Jaffrey and formed the New Hampshire Match Company just as signs of the Depression were beginning to show. The ‘infamous’ Swedish financier, Ivar Kreuger, through his International Match Company, basically forced ‘D. D.’ to sell his company in 1928 and monopolized the making of wooden matches throughout the world. But he, and his two sons, Vernon and D. D., Jr. (known as Jack), started a new business to make paper matches, this time with advertising on the covers and very soon, with some financial help from a special government program designed to help start-up businesses during the Depression, they had factories in North Carolina, California, Canada and Jamaica and produced paper matches for the world. To this day, the company is still producing more than a million matchbooks a day in Jaffrey and is still owned and managed by third generation members of the Bean family. Indeed, D. D. Bean & Sons has survived the Bic lighter competition to be the largest and most efficient producer of book matches in the world. He is buried in Lot 402. 🌳



About Conant Cemetery

PROVISIONS for the mortuary needs of the town had never been adequate or well considered, and in 1859 it was already apparent that more room was needed for even the immediate future. Nine years before that John Conant had retired from his farm near the Mountain to end his days in comfort in a new house in the village, now owned by James H. Fitzgerald, and perhaps because the village cemetery was in view from his door he was made aware of the coming need. In his recently acquired lands there was a sandy table-land alongside a hardwood grove and at a convenient distance from the village that seemed to him well suited to the needs of the town. His thought quickly found results in action. He gave to a newly-formed association, called the Conant Cemetery Association, this tract of land for a cemetery. The Conant Cemetery Association was organized in the summer of 1859 by John Conant, John A. Prescott, Andrews Emery, Orford Capron, Samuel Ryan, J. E. B. Jewett, James L. Bolster, David A. Wood, Orlando Cragin, and their associates. On Sunday afternoon, June 17, 1860, the new cemetery was dedicated, and burials that year were those of Andrews Emery, Thomas Chadwick, and a child of Granville Shedd.

John Conant fenced the new cemetery with a substantial picket fence supported by stone posts, and so well was the work done that after seventy years it shows no sign of weakening or decay. After a few years a border of pines was set out around the outer boundaries of the cemetery, and along the entrance aisle from the street they have formed an almost completely arched avenue, sombre and still but beautiful and in keeping with the spirit of the place. It is a well-kept cemetery and a credit to the association and the town, but like its predecessors it has kept pace with the growth of the town and recently more room has been made available for burial lots. 🌳

—*The History of Jaffrey*, vol. I, pp. 713-14

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