

# Frequently Asked Questions about Charter Street Cemetery

*Help us preserve our burial grounds*

## CHARTER STREET CEMETERY ESTABLISHED 1637

*This burial ground is a place of  
honor and history  
Gravestones and tombs are fragile*

*Be respectful  
Do not lean, stand or push on  
gravestones and tombs  
No stone rubbings  
No scavenger hunts  
Stay on the paths  
Remove masks  
Candles and open flames are not  
allowed  
Dogs are not allowed*

*Please report suspicious behavior*

### **Why is the cemetery closed?**

In anticipation of upcoming landscape restoration work and to protect the burial ground's fragile headstones, the City has closed the historic Charter Street Cemetery to public visitation from September 28, 2019 through November 3, 2019. The second phase of restoration work in the cemetery is scheduled to begin in Spring 2020 and will include pathway stabilization, fence restoration and perimeter lighting. More information and images can be found online at [preservingsalem.com/charter-street-burial-ground](http://preservingsalem.com/charter-street-burial-ground)

### **Is it real?**

Yes! Charter Street Cemetery dates back to 1637. The oldest known gravestone dates to 1673.

### **What's the oldest stone?**

The Cromwell stone marks the earliest known burial at the cemetery. Doraty Cromall died in 1673. It is a very simply designed stone and can be found near her husband Philip's (1693) stone.<sup>1</sup>

### **What happened to the stones between 1637 and 1673?**

The earliest New England grave markers were made of wood. Following English custom, graves were marked with what were called "coffin rails."<sup>2</sup> These wooden markers would have deteriorated over time.

### **What are the stones made of?**

A lot of the stones are slate. There are also sandstone markers (kind of a reddish-brown color), schist (similar to slate but more granular), and

there are a few marble markers (those are white and newer).

### **Gravestone Rubbing**

Gravestone rubbing is not permitted in any of Salem's historic cemeteries.

### **Which graves are related to the Salem Witch Trials?**

**Mary Corey**, d. 1684, was the first wife of Giles Corey, who was accused in the Witchcraft Hysteria, and who was pressed to death for not entering a plea.

**John Hathorne**, d. 1717, was one of the judges of the witchcraft trials and an ancestor of Nathaniel Hawthorne.

### **Are the witches buried here?**

The innocent people who were accused and executed during the Witchcraft hysteria did not receive Christian burials. Their bodies were cast into a pit or shallow grave by the gallows. Family histories say that some people came back under dark of night to claim their relatives' bodies and give them unmarked graves at their homes.

### **What walking tours visit the cemetery?**

Bewitched After Dark

Hocus Pocus Tours

Salem Day Tour / Salem Night Tour

Salem Heritage Tours

Sinister Stories

Essex Heritage / Myths & Misconceptions

NowAge Travel

Salem Food Tours' Coffee Walks

Salem Historical Tours

Spellbound Tours

<sup>1</sup> [Our Silent Neighbors](#), Betty J. Bouchard, 2000. Page 22

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Page 6

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## Where can I learn more?

For more information on the gravestones of Charter Street Cemetery, see "*Our Silent Neighbors*" by Betty J. Bouchard, available at the Trolley Depot on Essex Street or "*Visual Cemetery Guide to the Charter Street Cemetery*" by John Robert Cole. Links to both books are on [preservingsalem.com/charter-street-cemetery-images](http://preservingsalem.com/charter-street-cemetery-images)

For information on the Charter Street Preservation Project including images and related links, visit [preservingsalem.com/charter-street-burial-ground](http://preservingsalem.com/charter-street-burial-ground)

## What are the houses?



**The Grimshawe or Peabody House** sits at 53 Charter Street. Centuries ago this house was a grand display of Federal style architecture and a meeting place for great literary thinkers. In 1835 Dr. Nathaniel Peabody, a dentist, purchased the home and it was in the home that Peabody's youngest daughter Sophia met Nathaniel Hawthorne, whom she would later wed. Sophia's sisters, Elizabeth and Mary Peabody, would open the first kindergarten in America. The two actively advocated education reform.

The Grimshawe House over went many renovations and additions during the 20th century and today greatly differs in appearance from the time of the Peabody's residence. The original portico is now housed on the back exterior of Plummer Hall at the Peabody Essex Museum, at 132 Essex Street.



**Samuel Pickman House**, ca. 1665, is a Post-Medieval or First Period building, "discovered" beneath a much-later mansard roof. It stands on its original site and exhibits the characteristics associated with this style. The house was restored by Historic Salem in 1969 and purchased by the Peabody Essex Museum in 1983. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Summer School Building** on Charter Street was built in 1876 to house a biology summer school associated with the Peabody Museum (today the PEM).

## What is the Memorial?



The Salem Witch Trials Memorial was dedicated in 1992 by Nobel Laureate Eli Wiesel. It is a somber place for reflection on the events of the Salem Witch Trials that led to the execution of 20 innocent people. The victims' names and execution dates are carved into the cantilevered stone benches and the victims' protests of innocence inscribed on the threshold. The Memorial is positioned behind the cemetery, symbolizing the community turning its back on the victims of the Witch Trials.

Behavior in both the Cemetery and the Memorial should be somber and respectful.

You are invited to visit [Salem.org](http://Salem.org) for additional information on visiting Salem and [HauntedHappenings.org](http://HauntedHappenings.org) for information on visiting Salem in October.