

Current view into cemetery from Somerville Avenue, the American Elm is thought to be a centennial tree



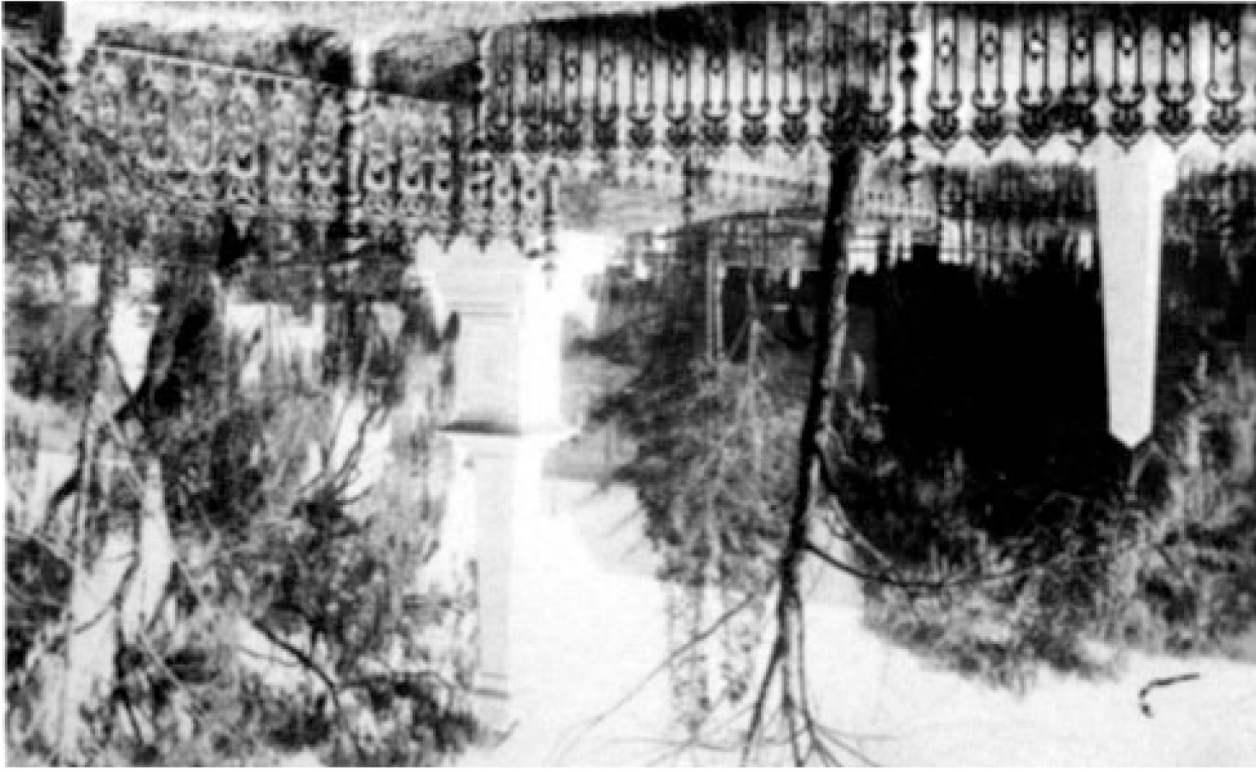
As the only pre-20th century burial ground in the City, Milk Row Cemetery contains a significant Civil War Soldiers Monument as well as tombs and graves of prominent citizens of Somerville. The site on Somerville Avenue was founded in 1804 when Samuel Tufts sold some of his farmland for one dollar to "Timothy Tufts, Esq., Nathaniel Hawkins, Esq., Samuel Kent, Samuel Shed, and John Stone, yeomen, all of said Charlestown, and their associates . . . on the express condition that the same be improved for no other purpose than for a burying place."

HISTORIC OVERVIEW

The street name "Milk Row," now Somerville Avenue, was likely derived from the dairy businesses of the area and the use of the route for transport of dairy products. On nearby Spring Hill were located many dairy farm sites of early Charlestown residents. Milk Row was thought to be the route taken by dealers coming from Menotomy [Arlington], Newtowne [Cambridge] and Charlestown to the wharfs in what is now Union Square. It was also the route of the British retreat in April 1775.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Civil War Soldiers Monument and the once extensive iron family plot fencing, c1875 (Beyond the Neck)



While this historic gem includes a collection of 155 grave markers, many with beautiful engravings, it is apparent that some have been lost. The cemetery was designated as a Local Historic District and listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 1988. Additional burials have not been allowed in the cemetery since it has been listed.

1893 entrance gate and fence at Somerville Avenue, one of the oldest surviving wrought iron fences in the City



In 1892, the Somerville Improvement Society successfully petitioned the City to take control of the cemetery. At that time, the City undertook many improvements, including a new iron fence along Somerville Avenue. The graves were unmarked. In the mid 1800s, the town buried all its paupers there, resulting in an estimated 1,800 persons thought to be "buried in that little lot of land." In 1892, it was reported that in the rear of the cemetery most of the graves were unmarked.

Though it was originally intended as a private burial ground, friends and neighbors were often buried there with permission from the owners. Historic documents refer to the burial lots being about 16 feet square, which is the size of the Civil War Soldiers Monument plot.

Somerville is fortunate that its oldest cemetery still exists intact. Due to the unique historic significance of Milk Row Cemetery, visitors should be aware of several issues:

- Free public tours are periodically scheduled. Enjoy Somerville's heritage!
- Gravestone rubbings are not permitted, because they can damage the stones, which are truly irreplaceable historic artifacts.
- Please do not sit or lean on tombs or gravestones, since they could injure you, or shift, fall over or break.
- No dog-walking, skate-boarding, roller blading, picnicking or other potentially damaging activities within the cemetery are allowed. The consumption of alcoholic beverages is not permitted.

Please report any mischevious behavior, vandalism or other relevant issues to the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission.

THE FUTURE

With a preservation plan in place, it is hoped that conservation and other improvement activities will soon follow. A Friends of the Cemetery Group is forming and seeking participants. Please call the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (617-625-6600x2500) for more information. Contributions to aid this important historic undertaking can be made to the Milk Row Cemetery Fund at the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission.

Joseph A Curtatone, Mayor



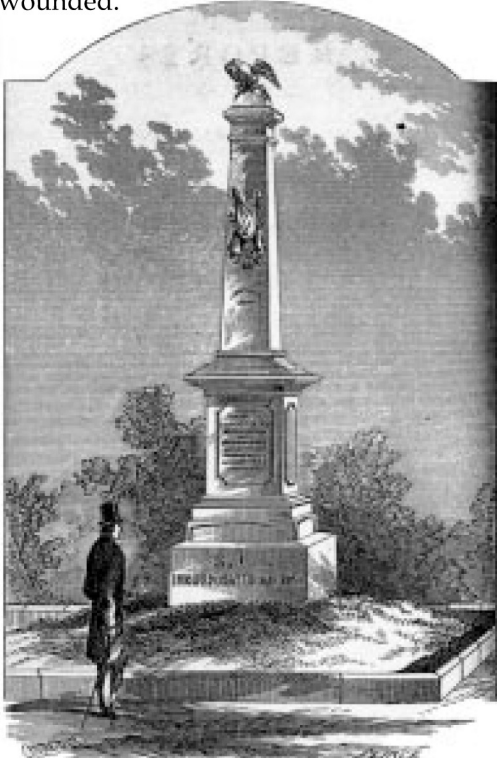
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CIVIL WAR SOLDIERS MONUMENT

Milk Row Cemetery was the only burial ground in the community at the time of the Civil War. Erected in the summer of 1863 with the contributions of citizens, this tall marble memorial is thought to be the first soldiers monument in the country to honor those who died in the Civil War. Enoch Robinson, locksmith and builder of the Round House on Atherton Street, donated the plot for the monument. Overall, 1,135 men from Somerville fought in the war effort. They participated in battles like Bull Run, Wilderness, Spottsylvania and Appomattox to name a few. The names of 68 Somerville men who were killed in battle or died from wounds or sickness during their service are inscribed on the four faces of the marble shaft. Another 250 were wounded.



Civil War Soldiers Monument
(1864 Town of Somerville Annual Report)



A BRIEF GUIDE TO MILK ROW CEMETERY
SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

ESTABLISHED 1804

with

a brief historic overview of the cemetery and the Civil War Soldiers Monument,

brief descriptions of some of the significant people buried in the cemetery,

some gravestone facts

and

guidelines for use