

THE MACK CEMETERY, MIDDLEFIELD, MASS.
1775-1846

The first graveyard in Middlefield, commonly known as the Mack Cemetery, comprises a quarter of an acre of land lying northeast of the Parsonage Lot of the Congregational Society, about a quarter of a mile south of the Center. When the town was incorporated, March 12, 1783, there was no public burying ground in the community. It happened that Josiah Leonard, one of the earliest settlers, then owned the Parsonage Lot. His first child, Mary Ann, born in Springfield, failed to survive her first winter in this mountain climate, and her parents had laid her away in a corner of the lot back of their house early in the summer of 1775. When, however, in the spring of 1783, the new town of Middlefield, being less than three months old, was called upon to bury one of its leading citizens, Ensign Elisha Mack, whose name had led all the rest on its recent petition for incorporation, there was still no established place of interment. Evidently David Mack arranged with Leonard to permit a family burial lot to be located near the grave of Mary Ann.

When the next annual town-meeting was held, March 1, 1784, at the tavern of Enos Blossom, it was voted,

"That the town will purchase one quarter of an acre of land of Josiah Leonard for a burying yard. . . Voted that the town will allow one pound, 4 shillings, for one quarter of an acre of land for a burying yard. Voted that the town will give Mr. Josiah Leonard ten shillings for fencing the burying yard. Voted that if any person shall clear the logs out of the burying yard, it shall be deducted out of his highway work. Voted that Samuel Judd and Joseph Blush be grave diggers for the year ensuing."

The second of these grave diggers evidently was Joseph Blush, Jr., who with Mr. Leonard had been assigned to these positions in 1783. Thus it came about that Baby Leonard and Mr. Mack had their graves included in the town's first graveyard. For nine years this was the only cemetery in town, but in 1793 Middlefield secured a larger plot now part of the main Cemetery on Windsor Street near the McElwain Farm.

So far as has been discovered no fewer than thirty-five persons have found a final resting place in the Mack Cemetery. This number includes seven prominent citizens and the wives of six of them. Besides these, sixteen, nearly half the entire number, were young children, nearly all of whom failed to live more than two years. The seven prominent citizens buried here were the following.

Ensign Elisha Mack met a sudden and untimely end in the prime of life in 1783 when he was gored to death by an ox. The Macks had become so prominent in Becket Township before the area including their farms was included in Middlefield, that Elisha Mack was elected to represent that town's "Northeast Corner" on its board of Selectmen while his son, David Mack, was chosen a Surveyor of Highways in that same year, 1780. No sooner had Middlefield been incorporated than it chose Elisha Mack one of a Committee to Procure Preaching. He was also a member of the committee to find the center of the township, for the purpose of locating there the site for the Meeting-house.

Evidently Mr. Mack was considered a man of good judgement, and when he died the citizens called a town-meeting four days later to fill the vacancies caused by his death. Had he lived to use his influence in public affairs it might not have required seven years for the people to agree upon a site for the Meeting-house.

Perhaps it is bad luck to be elected sexton. At any rate, it was a curious and tragic fact that the next two deaths requiring graves in the Mack Cemetery occurred in the families of Judd and Blush, the newly appointed grave-diggers. First Samuel Judd, himself, who lived just east of the Parsonage Lot died in the fall of 1785, at the early age of thirty-one, leaving his wife with several small children. Then, nearly three years later, the father of the other grave-digger, Blush, was the fourth to be buried there.

Joseph Blush was the leading citizen at the Center, where about 1783 he had built the large house which his son, Oliver Blush, opened as a tavern a few years later, and which still stands as the dwelling of Miss Kate W. Smith. It was in this house that town-meetings were held during the year of 1785. Mr. Blush was quite as prominent as Mr. Elisha Mack, for he served with Mack on the first committee appointed to find the center of the town. Besides this he served for three years on the Committee to Procure Preaching. His widow, Elizabeth (Skinner) Blush, married Joseph Russ, but surviving him was at her death in 1822 laid to rest beside her first husband in the Mack Cemetery.

The next prominent citizen to be buried in this yard was Malachi Loveland, who for some years had operated the sawmill on Factory Brook built by John Ford. Mr. Ford himself was one of the first to die in the new Middlefield settlement, being killed by a falling tree in December, 1782, leaving his wife with four small children. Where Ford is buried has not been discovered. Mr. Loveland, who had seen service in the Revolutionary War, was another prominent citizen, who sometimes acted as Moderator at town-meetings, was Selectman four years, and represented Middlefield at a convention at Hatfield at the time of Shays's Rebellion, 1786.

It was five years later, 1804, that Thomas Blossom, who lived at Blossom Corner, was buried in the Mack Cemetery. He had been the town's first pound-keeper, and served on its School Committee. His wife, Mercy (Sears) Blossom was buried beside him eight years later.

By this time the first cemetery was being considered the proper burial place for some of the families which had members buried there. So in 1815, when Lucy Blush, daughter of Joseph Blush, died, she was interred in the Mack Cemetery. She was the wife of John Smith from East Haddam, who lived near Blush Hollow, and who in 1827 was buried by her side. This John Smith was the grandfather of Lucy Smith who married Oliver Church who lived in the Big House. Smith had been a soldier in the Revolutionary War with a long and varied service record. A grandson of these Smiths, who died in infancy, also is buried in the family lot.

Since this cemetery had both Blush and Mack family lots it was only natural that Sarah Mack, daughter of Elisha Mack and wife of Oliver Blush, the tavern-keeper, should find burial there in 1818.

Her husband was the popular innholder at the Center for nearly forty years, and as it happened was the last person to be buried in the Mack Cemetery, 1846.

The main Mack family lot in this Cemetery, which, in marked contrast with the remainder of this yard, has been maintained in a good state of preservation by a fund raised by the Macks and their descendants, contains besides the graves of Elisha Mack and his wife, Mary (Ellis) Mack Selden, those of Deacon David Mack and his wife, Mary (Talcott) Mack. Deacon Mack was the most prominent man in town in his day, being besides a soldier in the Revolution, Captain of Militia, and Selectman two years, the town's fourth Representative to the General Court at Boston.

Since the Mack Lot was in this cemetery it was natural that other Macks should be buried there. Mary Mack, daughter of David, who married her neighbor across the highway, Ebenezer Emmons, the blacksmith, was buried here in 1822, beside her small son, Justin, who had died in 1806. Sally Mack, daughter of Elisha Mack Jr., who had married Russell Little, a grandson of Joseph Blush, buried no fewer than four children and one grandchild in this graveyard, while her sister, Charlotte Mack, who married Amos Cone, laid away two of her children there.

Two other families, unrelated to the foregoing, are represented. An early settler, Parker Fellows, buried three of his children here, and finally his wife, Dorcas Meacham, who died in 1813. Probably the man who buried the greatest number of members of his family in the Mack Cemetery was Samuel H. Little. Two infants by his first wife died in 1801 and 1802, and this wife, Rebecca, he buried in 1813. Two children by his second wife died in 1824 and 1826, and this wife, Submit Little, he left here in 1828, before he moved to Peru not long afterward.

If there are those in Middlefield who wish to mark and decorate the graves of Revolutionary Soldiers, let them not overlook those of Malachi Loveland and John Smith. Some day, let us hope, the Selectmen and the citizens of Middlefield, will recondition the residue of the Mack Cemetery, set erect the markers which have fallen, and thus honor the memories of these worthy pioneers who helped to establish this town. Then the community may take pride in its First Burying Ground, when it has ceased to be a disgrace and a reproach.

Lakewood, Ohio
November 30, 1941

Edward Church Smith

References:

- Records of Town Meetings. Middlefield, Mass.
- Vital Records of Middlefield, Mass. to 1850. 1907.
- The Mack Genealogy. Sophia S. Martin. 1904.
Vol. II, pages 1648-1651.
- The History of Middlefield, Mass. Smith. 1924.

(add an appreciation of the reclamation of this cemetery; work of W.S. Pease, Kate W. Smith, Oscar Cook.

MACK CEMETERY, MIDDLEFIELD, MASS.
BURIALS, 1775-1846

NAME		DATE OF DEATH	AGE
Mary Ann Leonard	Daughter of Josiah and Elizabeth Leonard	July 9, 1775	2 yrs.
Elisha Mack	Father of Dea. David Mack	May 24, 1783	55 "
Samuel Judd	Town grave-digger	Sept. 22, 1785	31 "
Joseph Blush	Father of Oliver Blush	May 8, 1788	58 "
Parker Fellows, Jr.	Son of Parker and Dorcas Fellows	Mar. 8, 1797	1 "
Malachi Loveland	Father of Pain Loveland	Oct. 13, 1799	63 "
Hulda Little	Dau. Samuel H. and Rebecca Little	Oct. 28, 1801	2 days
Baby Little	Child of Samuel H. and Rebecca Little	Dec. 14, 1802	1 day.
Baby Fellows	Child of Parker and Dorcas Fellows	May 1803	5 weeks
Thomas Blossom	Lived at Blossom Corner	Nov. 25, 1804	51 yrs.
Justin Emmons	Son of Ebenezer and Mary Emmons	Mar. 11, 1806	3 "
Alice Fellows	Dau. Parker and Dorcas Fellows	July 7, 1807	1 "
Betsy Little	Dau. Russell and Sally Little	Jan. 19, 1810	3 "
Mercy Blossom	Wife of Thomas Blossom	Apr. 7, 1813	57 "
Rebecca Little	Wife of Samuel H. Little	June 30, 1813	36 "
Dorcas Fellows	Wife of Parker Fellows	Nov. 22, 1813	41 "
Baby Little	Son of Russell and Sally Little	July 17, 1814	5 days
Lucy Smith	Wife of John Smith	Dec. 28, 1815	44 yrs.
Sarah Blush	Wife of Oliver Blush	July 10, 1818	51 "
Mary Selden	Wife of Elisha Mack and Ebenezer Selden	June 23, 1819	86 "
Oliver U. Smith	Son of John and Wealthy Smith	Sept. 4, 1821	2 "
Elizabeth Blush	Wife of Joseph Blush and Joseph Russ	July 3, 1822	89 "
Mary Emmons	Wife of Ebenezer Emmons	Sept. 14, 1822	48 "
Laura Cone	Da u. Amos and Charlotte Cone	Feb. 6, 1823	5 mos.
Baby Little	Child of Russell and Sally Little	Feb. 22, 1823	10 weeks
Achsah White Little	Dau. Samuel H. and Submit Little	June 18, 1824	7 yrs.
Mary Ann Little	" " " "	Feb. 15, 1826	5 mos.
Amos Cone Jr.	Son of Amos and Charlotte Cone	Sept. 13 1826	2 yrs.
John Smith	Lived near Blush Hollow	Feb. 18, 1827	69 "
Mary Mack	Wife of Dea. David Mack	July 11, 1827	70 "
Sally Spencer	Wife of Oliver Spencer	Dec. 9, 1826	22 "
Sally Spencer	Dau. Oliver and Sally Spencer	Nov. 10, 1827	1 "
Submit Little	Wife of Samuel H. Little	Jan. 8, 1828	42 "
David Mack	Husband of Mary Mack	Mar. 24, 1845	94 "
Oliver Blush	Tavernkeeper at Center	July 18, 1846	82 "

Stone found

2 Daniel Chapman Jr. son Daniel Chapman Sr Dec. 17, 1794 19 "