



Wilson Cemetery
Graniteville Road
Websterville, Vermont

Located in Barre Town, Wilson Cemetery occupies many acres of ground at the four – way intersection of Graniteville Road, Websterville Road, and Sterling Hill Road, occupying the northeast corner between the first two listed roads. The cemetery, over 200 years old, shows its age as well as its current and more modern layout style across the grounds. Stately old maple trees decorate the site, new hedges and ornamental bushes outline some of the newest areas of the cemetery. The crew keeps the grounds neat and orderly and the cemetery wears a different face for each season.

The section labels used in the data spreadsheet and the schematics included on the Barre Town webpage represent the most recent section designations used in current cemetery operations. The records from the earlier eras of the nineteen hundreds had different designations, this fact shown in the older deed books. At some point during a more recent consolidation of cemetery records, the current designations came into use. The card file contains almost no lot cards for the oldest sections, only those areas in use at the time of the card file creation. Several methods have been used and several sources consulted in order to present the most accurate picture of who makes up this cemetery and where they can be found.

Unfortunately, none of the really old records concerning the Wilson Cemetery can be found in Barre Town, or Barre City, either. Without really knowing how old this cemetery might be, the use of photographic evidence in Wilson Cemetery uncovered the following stone:

A slate marker can be found proclaiming, "In Memory of Almerena, dau^r of Adalphus & Sally Thuston died Dec^r 18 1798 AE. 8m."



Despite the spelling errors, this might be the oldest standing stone in this cemetery.

[When the data from the other two town cemeteries is published, the oldest standing stones in those cemeteries will be flagged as well.]



Wilson has a wide variety of grave stones scattered throughout the cemetery. In the old section, the rows don't necessarily follow the edges of the modern driveways. Among the sections, visitors can find old style New England slates, some remarkably readable, others, decayed beyond recognition. On one of the more unusual slates, a proofreader's mark can be found where a letter had been left out but etched in above the name. At the other end of the spectrum, granite monuments mark graves throughout the cemetery, some old and hard to read, others

with the modern etching techniques of placing photos on the stone. Our local craftsmen personalized headstones for many of the families interred here. Marble monuments can be found, too, and as with the other stones, some readable and some decayed.

Wilson is an expanding cemetery, still in use, with the potential for growth well into the future. The very oldest sections are not used in current cemetery operations, nor are lots sold in the older areas. Old Yard (OY) 3 and OY4 hold some of Barre Town's - then Wildersburg - earliest residents. Several Revolutionary War and War of 1812 veterans have been laid to rest in these sections. By strolling through the existing monuments, evidence can be found linking many of the early families together through marriage. Some of these families can be found at rest next to each other.

The old sections holds some of Barre's earliest citizens. Colonel Benjamin Walker not only fought in the Revolution, he served as the first Justice of the Peace and also in the

state general assembly. Major Nathan Harrington became the first town representative as well as serving in other town offices. Warren Ellis, a saddler, became a judge, town clerk, and representative. He had a reputation as a great musician and music teacher. Deacon Jonas Nichols, among the first to settle Barre, lived to age 96. Captain Joseph Watson, a business man, offered the town tanning and shoemaking services.

An enduring Barre legend tells of a fist fight in which the original name of the town, Wildersburgh, changed to Barre. The fight took place in a barn owned by Calvin Smith on the 3rd of September, 1793. In the epic battle, Captain Joseph Thompson of Holden, Massachusetts took on Jonathan Sherman of Barre, Massachusetts. Although Thompson gained an early advantage, Sherman ultimately won the fight and the right to name to town Barre.

Visitors to Wilson Cemetery, Old Yard 3, will find a marker for Sherman. According to his information, he died in 1846 at age 83 making him about 30 years old at the time of the fight. With a paved driveway to separate them, over in Old Yard 4, Captain Thompson can be found. According to the stone, he spelled his name Thomson. Unfortunately, the date on his marble marker has become very weathered over time, but he passed away in 1826 at age 65, he would have been 32 years old in 1793.

Elsewhere in Old Yard 4, Calvin Smith's son Calvin and his family can be found. Just as an aside, this Calvin married Betsey Thompson, perhaps a close relative of the Captain?

Contrary to the legend of the fistfight to name, official records show an offer made such that the citizen who contributed the most towards building a meeting house would be afforded the honor of renaming Wildersburgh. Ezekiel D. Wheeler donated 62 pounds to the cause and so selected the name Barre. Town officials petitioned the Vermont legislature to change the name and they approved. According to the Vermont Watchman and State Gazette, a Montpelier, Vermont newspaper of the day, Wheeler became despondent in his financial life, committed suicide, and is at rest in Old Yard 4.

To further muddy the waters as to the origin of Wildersburgh to Barre, apparently in 1805, residents of the town destroyed the note for the £62 pledged by Wheeler as the note went uncollected and may never have been an actual business deal.

Early in Barre's granite industry history, some of the stones used to re-build the state house in Montpelier after fire destroyed it came from a quarry owned by Ira P. Harrington, his family has several lots in OY3.

The East section can be found east of OY5. At one time, this section served as the easterly boundary of the cemetery and had several welfare burials recorded. According to the card file, the area also served the needs of families burying infants and very young children. Most of these graves have not been marked and the section has wide open spaces undoubtedly occupied by the graves of these people. The lack of information and evidence renders this, and other such areas, unusable for burial plots.

Several cards referenced the fence that used to be along the east edge. This fence has been removed and Wilson's new section built out easterly to the new property line.

The alpha sections, A, B, C, D, E, F, and G, migrated westerly from the old yards. Section F can also be found in the cards as the Main section. (One of the old maps showed the area south of Section A, towards the Websterville Road, as a pauper's row.) Burials are still performed in some of these alpha sections, Section G being the most active. Wilson's vault, storage for caskets of those who passed during the winter months, sits at the west end of Sections B and C. Many cemeteries, including those in Barre Town, do not perform burials in the winter months when the frost is in the ground, the vault providing a safe and dry repository for those awaiting interment.

The northern section continues to grow as well. In addition to the large number of family plots, the section also hosts several mausoleums. The section has grown to the north and to the west about as far as possible but still has growth potential to the east.

The new section has been laid out by a professional surveyor. The new areas provide a more modern setting for families. The symmetrical layouts within the section feature hedges to separate lots and trees to provide summer shade. The commissioners have added an area for columbaria used to store the ashes of those departed, see the separate article on this area. Even with the more modern feel, the section overlooks the old New England style gravesites of those who came to Wildersburg and built it into Barre.