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Town of Acton

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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North Acton's Forest Cemetery Designated a National Historic Place



Ben Haley, Preservation Planner/National Register Assistant with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, was a featured speaker at a ceremony held Thursday, Oct. 17, marking Acton's Forest Cemetery as an official entry on the National Register of Historic Places. (Photo courtesy Town of Acton)

ACTON -- Town Manager John S. Mangiaratti is pleased to announce that Forest Cemetery in North Acton is now included on the National Register of Historic Places, following a special ceremony to mark the designation on Thursday, Oct. 17.

"This is a tremendous honor for the cemetery, and for the town," Mangiaratti said. "This type of recognition doesn't happen without the hard work of many local groups and individuals, including members of our Board of Selectmen, Community Preservation Committee and Natural Resources team."

The National Register of Historic Places is the country's official list of historic places worthy of preservation.

Funding for the National Register application was provided through the Community Preservation Act and the application was completed by The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.

Forest Cemetery is the oldest cemetery in Acton. Established in 1750, it contains 96 gravestones, including at least seven Revolutionary War and two Civil War soldiers' graves.

Acton citizens were interred at the cemetery between 1758 and 1948.

Last Thursday's ceremony was attended by town staff and members of the Board of Selectmen, Historical Commission, Cemetery Commission and Historical Society. Other members of the public attended as well.

Forest Cemetery is now the ninth Acton entry on the National Register, joining such sites as Exchange Hall, the John Robbins House and Jones Tavern. Prior to Forest Cemetery, the most recent addition was the Acton High School building, which was listed on Nov. 22, 2011.

Ben Haley, Preservation Planner/National Register Assistant with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, was a featured speaker at the ceremony.

"Acton has been active in working to preserve and document historic resources in town," Haley said. "The town has shown it is a good steward of historic resources, most recently with the nomination of this wonderful cemetery."

Haley went on to give a history of the site, saying it likely originated as a burial ground for the Heald family. The oldest extant marked grave, he said, belongs to Mary Heald, from 1758, and that there are probably earlier unmarked burials from her family and others.

"Cemeteries are fascinating pieces of social history, and examples like this one with a range of burials over some 200 years provide insight into both the different motifs popular on gravestones over time as well as the evolution of beliefs surrounding death,"

Haley said.

Also speaking at the event was Acton native, State Sen. Jamie Eldridge.

The nomination is now online on both the Massachusetts Historical Commission's database, [MACRIS](#), and on the [National Archives](#) website.

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Acton native State Sen. Jamie Eldridge speaks at a ceremony at Forest Cemetery Thursday, Oct. 17, marking the cemetery as a National Historic Place. (Photo courtesy Town of Acton)

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