



City of Manchester Archives
One City Hall Plaza
Manchester, NH 03101
603.624.6455 - mintranuovo@manchesternh.gov
www.manchesternh.gov/archives

Collection Summary

Repository: Manchester City Archives. Office of the City Clerk. City of Manchester, NH.

Creator: Cemetery Department. City of Manchester, NH.

Title: Cemetery Administrative Records

Collection Number: 0409.006

Accession Number: 2017.007

Dates: 1906-1973

Volume: 4 linear feet

Languages: Collection materials are in English.

Related Collections: Cemetery Trustees Records, 1856-2001 (0409.004)

Access: Access to collection is open to the public. Please contact the archives for an appointment to view materials. Cite the collection number, box and folder numbers when making an appointment.

Materials may be accessible online; please reference the digital note below.

Digital Note: Materials are not accessible online at this time.

Conservation Notes: Not applicable.

Finding Aid Prepared by: Nicole Epperson, 2017.

Table of Contents

- I. Historical Note ... Page 2
- II. Collection Description ... Page 3
- III. Series Descriptions and Item Notes ... Page 4 - 10

Historical Note

On March 10, 1841, the Town of Manchester accepted a deed from the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company for a lot of land to act as a burial ground. This lot was to be known as *Valley Cemetery*, or *The Valley*. At the same meeting, the town voted to create a committee that would oversee the newly acquired cemetery. This committee was known by several interchangeable titles, such as the *Committee on the Cemetery*, the *Committee on the Valley*, the *Committee on the Valley Cemetery*, the *Committee on Cemeteries*, *Trustees of Cemeteries* and ultimately the *Board of Cemetery Trustees*. The Cemetery Department was founded in 1858.

While these committees and sub-committees oversaw the governance of Manchester's cemeteries, the administrative duties of managing the cemeteries were the responsibility of the Superintendent. In the 19th Century, the superintendent position was not a centralized one that oversaw all city cemeteries; instead, multiple superintendents were appointed by the separate cemeteries' respective boards of trustees. It wasn't until the early 20th Century (circa 1920) that the superintendents were consolidated and one position was created to oversee all administrative management of Manchester's cemeteries.

In 1993, the management of the city's cemeteries was transferred from the Board of Cemetery Trustees to the Department of Parks and Recreation; the Cemetery Department was also absorbed into the Department of Parks and Recreation.¹ Furthermore, in 2010, the duties of the Board of Cemetery Trustees were henceforth performed by the Parks, Recreation, and Cemetery Division Commission, which is under the auspices of the Department of Public Works.

¹ Ordinance, Feb. 17, 1993. Ordinances of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. Collection 0100.004, accession 2007.24. Volume G: Ordinances, 1981-1994. Manchester City Archives. Office of the City Clerk. City of Manchester, NH.

Collection Description

The collection consists entirely of paper documents which were created or received by the Cemetery Department during the course of official city business. It is organized into four record series, which are arranged in the original order they were in when received from the Cemetery Department:

1. Correspondence, 1906-1973
2. Bank Statements, 1961-1970
3. Agreements, 1966
4. Annual Report, 1966

The majority of the collection consists of the Correspondence record series, which offers the best overall documentation of the business transactions of the Cemetery Department. Specifically, most correspondence was created or received by the Superintendent of the Cemeteries, which was J.H. Erskine. Erskine was initially the Superintendent of Pine Grove Cemetery (where he also lived for at least part of, if not all of, his career) from the early 20th Century until he was promoted to Superintendent of Cemeteries, which oversaw all of Manchester's burial grounds. He held this position until his death in February 1944. His son, Guy H., was unanimously appointed to the position by the Board of Cemetery Trustees following his father's death. Item notes are available in the series description section of this finding aid for descriptions of unique documents that can be found within the Correspondence record series.

The collection offers a unique insight into the administrative duties of the Cemetery Department in the City of Manchester during a portion of the 20th Century, especially those of the Superintendent. For additional information as to how Manchester's cemeteries were managed, see the Board of Cemetery Trustees Records (0409.004), specifically the Rules, Regulations, and By-Laws record series.

Series Descriptions and Item Notes

Series 1: Correspondence, 1906-1973

This record series contains mainly correspondence from the Cemetery Department (1906-1973), with additional subseries of letters to and from the Trustees of the Cemetery (1920's-1948), the Trustees of the Trust Fund of the Cemetery (1931-1966) and the Amoskeag Savings Bank (1966-1970). Records contain a mix of hand written and typed correspondence. Some records may include attachments that are not correspondence, including meeting minutes. Although records are organized by sub-series based on entity, some folders may contain letters to or from other sub-series entities. For example, a folder listed as Cemetery Department Correspondence may include correspondence to or from the Trustees of the Cemetery. Due to the intricate and complex relationships between the cemetery related boards, committees, entities, etc. during this time period, these records were retained in their original order. Some folders include alphabetical spacers (A, B, C, etc.) that mirror the original organization of the records, which were housed in letter file boxes that provided A-Z tabs.

Departmental correspondence includes letters to and from Superintendent of Cemeteries J. H. Erskine, who was the Superintendent of Pine Grove Cemetery and later the Superintendent of Cemeteries during the early 20th Century until his death in 1944. Letters document various topics, both personal and business related, such as perpetual care of plots, transfer of deeds to plots, and interdepartmental correspondence regarding the cemetery budget. Letters to Mr. Erskine are primarily from businesses relating to the care and upkeep of the cemeteries, and personal letters from families of the deceased interred the City cemeteries.

Correspondence to and from the Trustees of the Cemetery, the Trustees of the Cemetery Trust Fund, and the Amoskeag Savings Bank are almost all of a professional and financial nature.

The following item notes are listed in chronological order:

Item Note: *Plot map Hunt family Lot No. 3030-3031, Sept 12, 1907. Box 1, Folder 1.*

A card printed with map of the Hunt family plot, listing those interred and vacant lots.

Item Note: *Letter from J. H. Erskine to George H. Libby. December 17, 1908. Box 2, Folder 2, Spacer KL.*

Mr. Erskine responds to Principal Libby's letter regarding his son Leroy's failing grades in German. He impresses that his son works hard and thanks Libby for his concern.

Item Note: *Marriage Announcement, July 24, 1909. Box 1, Folder 4, Spacer W.*

Harrison L. Lyford and Czrina C. Wells. Married, Saturday, July twenty four, nineteen hundred and nine, Cabot, Vermont.

Item Note: *Postcard from Mary. C Gould to Mr. J. H. Erskine, April 30, 1910. Box 1, Folder 2, Spacer GH.*

Regarding the upkeep of the Merriam Lot, and getting in touch with Mrs. Merriam. Attached to the front of the postcard is a one cent Benjamin Franklin postage stamp in good condition.

Item Note: *Letter from Boston and Maine Railroad to J. H. Erskine, May 11, 1911. Box 1, Folder 2, Spacer B.*

Railroad Superintendent writes to Mr. Erskine responding to a letter written on the eighth of May concerning damage to the cemetery after a fire.

Item Note: *Letter from S.F Clafin to J. H. Erskine, November 20, 1911. Box 1 Folder 2, Spacer C.*
Letter contains a black and white photograph of Mr. S. F Clafin printed in the top left hand corner. In the letter Mr. Clafin requests information regarding the perpetual care of his lot.

Item note: *Letter from Bay View Farm to Mr. J. H. Erskine, March 14, 1912. Box 1, Folder 3, Spacer PQ.*

In this letter E.S. Pike details the types of hens he has for sale, their weight, coloring, price, etc. Attached are some feather samples.

Item Note: *Letter from the Roosevelt Republican League of New Hampshire to the Town Committee, April 12, 1912. Box 1, Folder 2, Spacer C.*

The Chairman of the league is concerned that there is no provision for the working men to vote should the ballots close before the end of their working day. He urges the town committee to keep the polls open until 8pm.

Item Note: *Letter from The American Seeding Machine Company to Mr. J. H. Erskine, January 11, 1915. Box 2, Folder 1, Spacer A.*

Letter advocates the use of the company's Fertilizer and Lime Sower for laying dust paths in the cemetery. Attached is an advertising pamphlet containing illustrations and descriptions.

Item Note: *Legal Opinion Document, May 1, 1937. Box 4, Folder 2.*

Legal Opinion of Ropes, Gray, Boyden and Perkins covering \$80,000. City of Manchester, N.H. Municipal Improvement 3%.

Item Note: *Resolution, February 2, 1944. Box 4, Folder 4.*

Resolution issued by the Trustees of Cemeteries and the Clerk of the Trustees of Cemeteries, F.D. McLaughlin, regarding the death of Superintendent John H. Erskine.

Item Note: *Letter from Leon H. Rice to Armand E. Tetu, June 21, 1945. Box 4, Folder 4.*

Letter contains attachments one of which is a set of blueprints attached to the front. These blueprints detail plans from the Boston and Maine Railroad which would move through cemetery land.

Item Note: *Letter from Nathaniel Doan to James P. Bourne, January 14, 1946. Box 4, Folder 5.*

Letter contains attachments one of which, a letter from the Board of Welfare Assistance, contains the official seal of the town of Winchester Massachusetts.

Item Note: *Questionnaires, February 9, 1948. Box 4, Folder 5.*

Questionnaires regarding the discontinuing of Sunday and holiday burials with hand written comments. The response is mostly in favor of stopping them.

Item Note: *Booklet Constitution of the Grand Lodge, July 23, 1949. Box 1, Folder 1.*

Small bound booklet containing the constitution of the Grand Lodge of the American Order of Sons of Saint George.

Item Note: *Letter from H.M Stephenson to James P. Bourne, May 31, 1951. Box3, Folder 5.*
Letter contains attachments which include a page of the Manchester Union Leader dated Saturday May 5, 1951.

Item Note: *Letter from Peter McKelvie to Mr. Erskine, circa 1953. Box 3, Folder 5.*
Letter contains attachments which include meeting minutes from a Trustees Meeting on May 29, 1953. The Treasurer made a request for the simplification of the book keeping process, the motion was deferred.

Item Note: *Copy of a letter from James P. Bourne to the Trustees of the Cemetary Trust Funds, Nov 17, 1954. Box 3 Folder 5.*

Letter contains attachments including public official bond surety papers from the American fidelity Company. These papers were used when appointing someone to a public office position. Those appointed in these papers are: Josaphat T. Benoit, J. Fred French, Norwin S. Bean, and Ralph A. McIninch.

Item Note: *Meeting Minuets, Trustees of the Cemetery Trust Funds, December 5, 1957. Box 3, Folder 5.*

Meeting minuets include the amount of interest received for the year and the appointment of J. Fred French to Clerk of the Cemetery Trust Funds. There are several attachments to this letter including receipts and bank statements.

Item Note: *Letter from Winthrop Wadleigh to the City of Manchester, October 25, 1958. Box 3, Folder 5.*

Letter notifying the city of Manchester that they are legatee in the will of Fred M. Caswell. Attached is a copy of Mr. Caswell's last will and testament.

Item Note: *List of Full Paid Cemetery Lots, circa 1959. Box 1, Folder 1.*

This list is attached to lists of receipts from the sale of single graves.

Item Note: *Letter to the Amoskeag Savings Bank from James P. Bourne, February 10, 1959. Box 3, Folder 5.*

Contains attachments which include the meeting minuets from the meeting of Trustees of the Trust Fund meeting held September 17, 1942 and April 16, 1943.

Item Note: *Surety Papers of Josephat T. Benoit, et. al., February 10, 1960. Box 3, Folder 6.*

Surety papers of a loan taken out against those elected to public office. Those appointed to the Trustees of the Cemetery Funds include: Josephat T. Benoit, J. Fred French, Ralph A. McIninch. Those appointed to Trustees of the Trust Funds included: Josephat T. Benoit, Charles S. Nims and Harry. C. Jones.

Item Note: *Meeting Minuets, Trustees of Cemetery Funds, October 27, 1960. Box 3, Folder 6.*

The meeting minuets include a motion of the treasures to withdraw from savings funds. There was also discussion of changing some government bonds for V.A loans.

Item Note: *Letter from Guy H. Erskine to James P. Bourne, January 5, 1962. Box 2, Folder 6.*

Thank you note to the Board of Cemetery Trustees thanking them for their generous gift. The note is tucked inside of a color printed thank you card.

Item Note: *Plans for Land circa 1963. Box 2, Folder 6.*

List of plans for the land requested by the city's Parks and Playground Department. Attached is a blueprint.

Item Note: *Letter from James P. Bourne, Clerk of the Trustees of Cemeteries, to the Finance Committee of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, June 3, 1965. Box 3, Folder 6.*

Regarding the approval of Superintendent Leon. H. Webster's annual salary of \$7,800.

Item Note: *Letter from George H. Thompson to James P. Bourne, October 13, 1965. Box 3, Folder 6.*

Contains attachments one of which is a copy of the last will and testament of Charles Walter McCoy.

Item Note: *Will and Testament of Mabel F. Robinson, December 27, 1965. Box 3, Folder 6.*

Mrs. Robinson listed the Trustees of the Pine Grove Cemetery as beneficiaries for the perpetual care of her lot.

Item Note: *Pamphlet, November 10, 1966. Box 3, Folder 6.*

Titled "List of Legal Investments for Savings Banks and Savings Departments of trust Companies." No. 35, November 10, 1966.

Item Note: *Letter from James P. Bourne to Mr. Orville Johnson, June 12, 1967. Box 3, Folder 1.*

This letter has attachments one of which is the last will and testament of Elizabeth Sarah Lord.

Item Note: *State of NH Banking Department Pamphlet, September 30, 1967. Box 4, Folder 6.*

Supplemental pamphlet titled: "Supplement No.11 to Legal List No. 35." Put out by the state of NH Banking Department.

Series 2: Bank Statements 1961-1970

This series consists of bank statements for the Manchester City Trust Funds, both in the Manchester Savings bank and in the Amoskeag Savings Bank. Statements primarily contain withdrawal information. There are also statement summaries about investments from the Amoskeag Trust Company.

Series 3: Agreements 1966

This series contains one agreement between the City of Manchester and the Amoskeag Trust Company of Manchester on June 30th, 1966. It states that the trust company will act as custodian of the Trustees of Cemetery Funds.

Series 4: Annual Report 1966

A copy of the Amoskeag Trust Company, Agent for Trustees of Cemetery Funds City of Manchester, NH 1966 Annual Report.