

From Farm Graveyard to Central Cemetery

The old farmstead was often the very center of life for many Rye farmers. What more did farm families need? From cradle to grave Rye farmers plowed a long furrow of deep culture in our town and no where can that be better seen than the 59 old farm graveyards that still adorn our town. The simple granite, slate or sugar marble markers and the occasional inscription offer compelling testimony to the agricultural heritage of our town that today is all but lost. The names on these graves were the food growers of our town and region. The graveyards that often had granite posts and iron rails and even wrought iron gates, now are lucky to have their stone markers still standing and are often overgrown with brush.

Rye needs an "Adopt a graveyard" program. (see hand out on tasks beside guest sign in table) Some farm families moved west and by the 1890's the town's population had diversified and the need for a central cemetery had come. Six acres were purchased from John Locke's adjacent farm and the cemetery was approved by town meeting in 1892. Of the original 309 lots on the six acres, 200 had been used for new burials and re-burials from the old graveyards by 1901. The times, they were a changin'.