



The Westerly Burying Ground in West Roxbury predates the United States.

PHOTO BY ARIANE KOMYATI

# Westerly Burying Grounds updated

Ariane Komyati  
Staff Reporter

The year was 1683. This was 53 years after the City of Boston was founded, 48 years after Boston Latin School was established, and nearly a century before the United States declared its independence.

That year, Westerly Burying Ground was designated as West Roxbury's local burying ground.

Nearly 350 years later, this historical plot of land rests peacefully between an apartment building and Trader Joe's, enclosed by a stone wall with iron and vinyl fencing. Westerly Burying Ground received a Community Preservation Act (CPA) grant in 2022.

"In December 2022, we were awarded \$200,000 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, which significantly expanded the work we could undertake," a spokesperson from the Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD) stated. The project began with design work in May 2022. Construction began in May 2024 when funding and approvals were finalized. Phase 1, which included wall, tomb, and fence repairs along with grading, was completed earlier this year. Phase two, gravestone conservation, is currently underway and 75 percent complete.

Work at the burying ground included repairs to sections of the stone perimeter wall, replacing a rusted chain-link fence with a new black vinyl fence, and restoring the ornamental front gate. In addition, cast-iron plot fences were repainted, and tomb doors and

roofs were repaired. Crews also re-graded areas around the tombs and fencing. There are many difficulties when restoring an old site like Westerly Burying Ground.

"Because there are no historic site drawings, plans, or records, we often had to uncover conditions as work progressed. For example, large sections of mortar in the perimeter wall needed full replacement rather than partial," explained the BPRD staff. Marble headstones also present challenges because they are less durable than slate headstones. Many of them are fragile, broken into pieces, or have worn off inscriptions. Unlike the landscaped, park-like cemeteries that emerged in the 1800s, colonial-era graveyards were simple and unplanned. Graves and tombs are set irregularly without formal pathways.


New trees were planted at the site, along with updated signage. The signs highlight the history of the Westerly Burying Grounds, notable individuals/families buried there, and the symbolism carved into the gravestones. The signs were designed by Viamonte design, while the research and writing was done by Nancy Kelleher.

"Unlike Boston's downtown burying grounds, Westerly doesn't have as many nationally known figures, so its history is less well known. The new signage shares the stories of Revolutionary War veterans, early settlers, and West Roxbury families whose names still live on in local streets and parks—connecting visitors to the community's history in a more meaningful way," the spokesperson explained.

Westerly Burying Ground is the final resting place of many prominent West Roxbury families from the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s. Some of the surnames may be familiar to community members — Draper, Billings, Weld, and more.

"There are 14 Draper family members, nine Lyons family members (Bellevue Street was first named Lyons Lane), nine Whittings, multiple Billings, and many others buried at Westerly Burying Ground," explained Sandi Serkess, the director of the West Roxbury Historical Society (WRHS). "The most interesting little white headstone reads 'Our Little Minnie.' She is (assumed to be) Judson Chapin's daughter, Mary Chapin. Mary was born in 1855 and died when she was nine months old."

**Westerly Burying Grounds**  
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City of Boston  
Planning  
Department

## Virtual Public Meeting

**OCT**

**20**

6:00 PM  
-  
7:30 PM


**4259 - 4267**

**WASHINGTON STREET**

Register: [bosplans.org/4259Washington-1020](https://bosplans.org/4259Washington-1020)

Toll Free: (833) 568 - 8864

Meeting ID: 160 888 5502



**PROJECT PROPONENT:** B'nai B'rith Housing

B'nai B'rith Housing (BBH), a regional nonprofit housing developer, proposes a new mixed-use, affordable senior housing development at 4259-4267 Washington Street in the Roslindale neighborhood of Boston. The project will create 41 units for seniors and older adults (age 55+), all of which will be affordable to households earning at or below 60% of Area Median Income (AMI). All units will contain one bedroom and one bathroom. The building will include a resident multi-purpose room, a fitness center, bike storage, management offices, shared laundry, a roof deck, and BBH's resident service coordination. The ground floor will feature approximately 4,250 square feet of commercial space, which BBH intends to lease to the Thrift Shop of Boston, contingent upon the receipt of necessary funding from the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The site plan will include an outdoor courtyard space and improvements to the public realm along Washington Street.

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Email: [camille.plattdecosta@boston.gov](mailto:camille.plattdecosta@boston.gov)

Website: [bosplans.org/4259-4267washington-st](https://bosplans.org/4259-4267washington-st)

Close of Public Comment Period:  
**10/29/2025**


BostonPlans.org | @BostonPlans
Teresa Polhemus, Executive Director/Secretary


*Join us for:*

## Blessing of the Animals

**Sunday, October 5**  
**10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist**  
**11:00 a.m. Animal blessings with refreshments**

*Rain or shine*  
*All are welcome!*





# EMMANUEL

## EPISCOPAL CHURCH

21 Stratford St, West Roxbury, MA 02132

[linktr.ee/emmanuelwr](https://linktr.ee/emmanuelwr)

# Westerly Burying Grounds *continued from page 2*

A plaque inside of the Billings/Dana crypt lists over 20 names.

The first person to be entombed at Westerly was Marriam Draper in 1694, born in Yorkshire, England. Mary Draper (1713-1810), the widow of Marriam's grandson, aided Continental soldiers in the Revolutionary War by making clothes and bullets, while also feeding troops at her farm. She is honored and remembered for her service with a plaque and a fountain in the garden of the WR Library (the memorial used to be located on Centre St.) The Draper Pool and Draper Playground are also named after Mary.

Eight Revolutionary War veterans, 15 Civil War veterans, and one WWI veteran are laid to rest at the burying ground. Sgt. James Herring is one of those Revolutionary War heroes. He served in the Roxbury Militia, which answered the Lexington Alarm ("The Regulars are coming!") and fought near Lexington during the British retreat. He was interred at Westerly when he died in 1798.

Three centuries of New England grave art are displayed at Westerly Burying Ground. The new signage at Westerly provides the history behind the symbols. "The earliest motifs

show the influence of a group known as the Boston Carvers. The death's head symbol, a stylized skull often depicted with wings and/or crossed bones, is among the earliest images found on Westerly Burying Ground markers. The graves of Marriam (d. 1694) and James Draper (d. 1697) bear this blank-eyed image," the signage reads. By the late 1700s, grave art began using neoclassical imagery.

Americans began to take interest in classical democracy and culture in the 19th century. Because of this influence, obelisks, Roman columns, and pediments were widely used in cemeteries. Carved pieces of wheat appear on multiple headstones, which symbolize longevity and growth. One of the most memorable grave markers at Westerly stands at the Wiggin plot. A sculpted lamb lay on a tall stone, symbolizing innocence. Several young members of the Wiggin family died from scarlet fever and diphtheria in the mid-1800s.

From the 1600s until the mid-1800s, WR was part of the Town of Roxbury. Roxbury's first burial ground was Eliot Burying Ground (near present-day Nubian Square), which was a long horseback ride for the early inhabitants of WR. In

1683, town selectmen voted to establish a closer burial site — Westerly Burying Ground. West Roxbury separated from Roxbury in 1851 and was annexed to the City of Boston 23 years later.

In the 1840s, residents petitioned to enlarge and enclose the burying ground. Around this time, it became known as 'Westerly' due to its location at the westerly end of Roxbury. Sometimes, fences were added to plot boundaries, but only one metal fence remains inside the grounds today. The other metal fencing was removed during WWII to provide materials for ships, airplanes and weapons.

On Google Reviews, one person rated Westerly Burying Ground four stars, stating: "Worth visiting to view the old headstones, quite a few of which pre-date the revolutionary war. I took off one star because a spirit followed me home and terrorized my roommate and me for a couple of days."

The burying ground remained well-utilized into the late 1800s. The last burial took place in 1962. Westerly Burying Ground was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. To learn more about Boston's historic burying grounds, visit <https://tinyurl.com/47nzmvs>

## Legals

### COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS SUFFOLK PROBATE COURT

Suffolk, ss.

Docket No. SU25E0142PP

To: Jung Ao Yuen of Allston in the County of Suffolk and to all other persons interested.

A petition has been presented to said Court by Jeanie Yuen, Personal Representative of the Estate of Philip Sui Yen of Brighton, in the County of Suffolk representing that he/she holds as tenants in common an undivided part or share of certain land lying in Allston in said County of Suffolk and briefly described as follows:

**PROPERTY ADDRESS:** 8 Guilford Street, Allston, Suffolk County, MA 02135  
A certain parcel of land with the buildings thereon on the northerly side of Guilford Street in that part of Boston called Allston and being shown as Lot #10 on a plan made by W. A. Mason & Son, Surveyors, and dated April 6, 1885, recorded with Suffolk Deeds, Book 1682, Page 530, and further described and bounded as follows:

SOUTHERLY by said Guilford Street, as shown on said plan, forty-four and 90/100 (44.90) feet;  
WESTERLY by Lots 11, 12 and 13 as shown on said plan, one hundred five and 56/100 (105.56) feet;  
NORTHERLY by Lot #16 on said plan, sixteen and 33/100 (16.33) feet;  
NORTHEASTERLY by Lot #17 on said plan, twenty-eight and 72/100 (28.72) feet;  
EASTERLY by Lot #9 on said plan, eighty-five and 80/100 (85.80) feet.

Containing 4156.8 square feet, according to said plan.

For title, see Deed from Philip Sui Yuen to Philip Sui Yuen and Jung Ao Yuen, dated June 2, 2009, and recorded with the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds at Book 45041, Page 54; and Deed from Kai H. Yuen to Philip Sui Yuen and Jung Ao Yuen, dated June 19, 2009, and recorded with said Deeds at Book 45130, Page 89.

Setting forth that he/she desires that all of said land may be sold at private sale or its prevailing market value and praying that partition may be made of all the land aforesaid according to law, and to that end that a commissioner be appointed to make such partition and be ordered to make sale and conveyance of all, or any part of said land which the Court finds cannot be advantageously divided either at private sale or public auction, and be ordered to distribute the net proceeds thereof.

If you desire to object thereto you or your attorney should file a written appearance in said Court at Boston before ten o'clock in the forenoon on the 7th day of October, 2025, the return day of this citation.

**Witness, Janine D. Rivers, Esquire,**  
First Justice of said Court  
this 25th day of August, 2025.  
Stephanie L. Everett, Esq. Register of Probate

*Boston Bulletin:*  
9/18/2025, 9/25/2025, 10/02/2025



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### WEST ROXBURY

"Spectacular and Spacious" describes this grand Victorian offers 4 floors of living! On the 1st floor: a welcoming sitting room, living room, formal dining room eat-in kitchen, stunning and comfortable family room and a lavatory! The second floor: 4 large bedrooms, 2 full baths and a very convenient laundry! The 3rd floor boasts a master suite with a full bath and 2 additional bedrooms! The basement is a direct walkout to the gardens and offers 3 more large rooms; flexible for many uses! Hardwood flooring and 9 foot ceilings! The owners particularly enjoys the outdoor spaces: relaxing on the covered wrap-around front porch, barbecues while watching the Sox on the rear deck and basking on the garden patio! A short walk brings you to dining, shops, and Commuter Rail! This home offers you all of these benefits while pleasantly rooted in the desirable Highland Area! **\$1,679,000**



**SteveDoug Team**  
617-212-9598

# LAER Realty Partners

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