

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

365

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Dorchester South Burying Ground

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 2095 Dorchester Avenue

City or town: Boston (Dorchester) State: MA County: Suffolk

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

<u>Brona Simon</u>	<u>May 12, 2014</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Brona Simon, SHPO</u>	Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

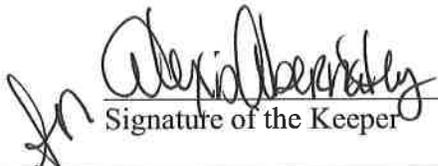
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

6/27/14  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>-</u>	sites
<u>19</u>	<u>-</u>	structures
<u>10</u>	<u>-</u>	objects
<u>30</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register None

**6. Function or Use**  
**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Funerary: Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Funerary: Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:     N/A    

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## Summary Paragraph

Dorchester South Burying Ground is a two-acre, city-owned cemetery established in 1814 to relieve overcrowding in Dorchester North Burying Ground (1633, NR). Dorchester South, which is managed as one of Boston's historic burying grounds, reflects an important transition from the city's early Colonial burial grounds to the larger, rural cemeteries located in outlying parts of the city. The burying ground is closely linked with the history of the Dorchester neighborhood, and contains the graves of roughly 1,800 Dorchester residents. It retains strong historical associations and distinctive landscape features dating from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. There are approximately 800 headstones and family monuments at Dorchester South.

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## Narrative Description

### Setting

Dorchester, one of Boston's oldest neighborhoods, is in the southeastern part of the city. Dorchester South Burying Ground is located on Dorchester Avenue in the Lower Mills section of Dorchester, a modest working-class area that was the center of early industrial activity along the Neponset River and has traditionally included many immigrants. Dorchester Avenue, a major north/south route through the neighborhood, runs along the eastern edge of the burial ground (map 1). It is a busy two-lane road with a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. Across Dorchester Avenue from the burying ground is the Caritas Carney Hospital. There has been a medical facility on this site since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the present hospital dates to 1953. Dorchester Park (NR), a 28.45-acre park built as part of Boston's late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, Olmsted-designed park system, is located to the east and south of the hospital. Housing in the vicinity includes a variety of late 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century residences, primarily one and two-family frame dwellings and triple-deckers.

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## General Description

The two-acre burying ground is a trapezoidal parcel with the long sides on the north and south, and the short sides on the east and west. It is bounded by Dorchester Avenue on the east and by parking lots and rear yards of late 19<sup>th</sup> century two and three story houses on the south. O'Connell Road, a narrow residential street with small-scale houses, runs along the western edge of the burying ground. At the northwest corner is a right-of-way that extends west to Washington Avenue. This right-of-way was once the main entrance to the burying ground, but it is no longer used and is not included in the nomination. Along the northern edge of the burying ground are deep rear yards of properties fronting on Gallivan Boulevard, many with extensive tree cover. At the northeast corner is a mid 20<sup>th</sup>-century brick apartment building that fronts on Dorchester Avenue.

Unlike Boston's earlier burying grounds, which were arranged in a haphazard manner, Dorchester South shows clear evidence of design in its spatial organization, circulation system, and plantings. It is also larger than many of the earlier Boston burying grounds.

The 1944 map of the cemetery (map 2) delineates the spatial organization of the burying ground, with a single loop road and a pattern of individual graves and family lots neatly arranged in double rows that run north-south, with a slightly different pattern around the perimeter.<sup>1</sup> Many of the family lots were fenced in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but only one burial lot still has fence posts, and there is no lot fencing remaining. Low, granite corner posts delineating the boundaries of the lots can be found throughout the cemetery.

The older graves, which are mostly located in the middle of the burying ground, are typically in individual plots, of which there are roughly 300. Most of these have one headstone per plot, sometimes representing multiple burials. The 1944 map also shows 191 family lots, which are laid out in a regular pattern but vary in size. Many along the western and northern edge of the burial ground are slightly larger and are irregular in shape. Some of the original lots appear to have been subdivided.

The main circulation system is the **cemetery loop road** (photo 1) that begins at the main entrance and runs around the inside of the cemetery a short distance from the outer edge.<sup>2</sup> It is generally about eight feet wide with bituminous pavement. A paved gutter runs adjacent to the road for most of its length. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the burial ground was more actively used, there were also gravel pedestrian paths running north-south, but these have now disappeared.

Topography is another important characteristic of the site, which has a substantial cross slope with the northern edge about ten feet higher than the southern edge. This is most evident along the Dorchester Avenue frontage, where there is a stepped wall and fence. There is also evidence of grading throughout the cemetery, typically placing the roadway at a lower elevation than the adjacent burial areas. In some cases, terracing around individual lots may originally have been reinforced by granite curbing, which is found in many 19<sup>th</sup>-century cemeteries. There is no extant curbing today, but remnants of the terracing remain. There are a few granite steps leading up to lots, particularly those on the northern edge of the burial ground.

Vegetation is also an important feature of the burying ground, with a mix of mature deciduous and evergreen trees that contribute to its character as a designed landscape. The vegetation that exists today

<sup>1</sup> The content of the 1944 map is very similar to the 1900 map. The later map is used here because it is graphically clearer.

<sup>2</sup> Features shown in bold type are listed on the data sheet.

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all dates to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but preserves the general character of a heavily planted rural cemetery. There is little documentation of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century plantings, and it is likely that none of them survive. The 1900 map shows far fewer trees than exist today.

The central part of the burying ground is fairly open, with most of the trees around the perimeter. Tree species include: apple, arborvitae, ash, cherry, dogwood, linden, maple, and oak. There are also several varieties of ornamental shrubs, including a large hydrangea and viburnums, as well as vines along the southern edge. There is turf throughout the burying ground, with small areas of invasive vegetation around the perimeter.

### Structures

The burying ground is enclosed on all four sides by the **perimeter wall and fence** (photos 2, 3), which vary in response to the adjacent topography. On the east, facing Dorchester Avenue, is a 20<sup>th</sup>-century, mortared fieldstone retaining wall with a concrete cap that rises from south to north, stepping up at each pier to follow the slope of the ground. The wall varies in height from non-existent at the southern end to ten feet at the northern end. It is surmounted by a mid to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century, six-foot steel picket fence with brick piers.

On the south side, the elevation of the burying ground is a few feet above the adjacent residential properties. There is a low, fieldstone retaining wall with concrete cap surmounted by a steel picket fence with brick piers, similar to the Dorchester Avenue fence. The south wall is level, rather than stepping like the Dorchester Avenue wall.

On the west side, the grade of the burying ground is roughly the same as the adjacent properties. The steel picket fence with brick piers on a low, stone retaining wall continues around the western edge of the cemetery. On the north side, the grade of the adjacent properties is four to six feet higher than the grade of the burial ground. There is a dry-laid fieldstone retaining wall built into the hillside, which is surmounted by four-foot chain-link fencing. This northern section of stone retaining wall probably dates to the 19th century, and may be part of the original ca. 1839 wall. The chain-link fencing dates to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The main entrance was originally in the northwest corner of the cemetery, and extended west to Washington Street via a narrow right-of-way north of O'Connell Road (map 3), as Dorchester Avenue did not exist until the 1850s. The location of the cemetery gates in the southeast corner of the cemetery probably dates to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dorchester Avenue was laid out in 1854). The present gates (photo 3), which date to the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, include a double-leaf vehicular gate and an adjacent pedestrian gate. There is also a similar gate at the northwest corner of the burying ground that is seldom used. Like many of Boston's historic burying grounds, Dorchester South is kept locked for security but is opened upon request.

There are no buildings in the cemetery, but there is a concrete **tool shed foundation** (roughly twelve by twenty feet) in the southwest corner of the burying ground that probably dates to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building appears on both the 1900 map and the 1944 map.

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## Tombs

Tombs are another distinctive feature of Dorchester South. The **north tombs** (photo 4), which date to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, are located along the northern edge of the burying ground. The 1944 map shows eight tombs along the northern edge, but only four are visible today. They are built into the side of the hill and have earthen tops and sides with varied fronts. The two at the western edge of the row are similar in construction, with brick structures rising above the ground. The entrances to both of these tombs have been sealed with concrete.

The other two tombs along the northern edge of the burying ground appear to date to slightly later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They are of similar construction, with granite-block faces, and heavy metal doors surmounted by pedimented, granite lintels. One of these is inscribed with the name "Cox." Adjacent to the Cox tomb is what appears to be an upended marble headstone with granite base. This may at one time have stood above a tomb, a distinctive custom at Dorchester South that is also found in the tombs in the southern part of the cemetery. There is some settling around most of the tombs.

The **south tombs** (photo 5) consist of a row of twelve tombs in the southern part of the cemetery. These are later than the tombs in the northern part of the cemetery (several have dates of 1837 to 1852 inscribed in them) and appear as a connected wall of tombs rather than as separate structures. Most have vertical granite faces, ranging from three feet to four feet tall, and heavy metal doors. Some have rectilinear granite lintels, while others have pedimented lintels and other subtle variations that have personalized the tombs over the years.

An unusual feature of the south tombs is the presence of marble headstones on top of three of them. Most distinctive is the Bennette tomb (photo 6) at the western edge of the group, which has a granite face and metal door similar to the other tombs but has marble-block side panels, which are inscribed with the names of family members buried there. It is surmounted by a marble slab with inset panel inscribed with the names of Sarah (d. 1876) and Edwin Bennette (d. 1885). There are also additional marble panels identifying other family members buried in the tomb. Several other south tombs, including that of D. Brewer (d. 1843), also have marble headstones on top of the tomb faces, which appear to be earlier headstones that were relocated to the tops of the tombs.

## Monuments

Like most burial grounds established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dorchester South has a number of family monuments. Some of these honor a particular family member, while others represent the family as a whole. Monuments comprise roughly five percent of the burial markers at Dorchester South. Most are marble obelisks and pillars that range in height from four feet tall to roughly twelve feet tall. There are also granite monuments and a few brownstone monuments, primarily in the southwest corner of the cemetery. Three of the most prominent monuments are discussed here.

One of the most distinctive monuments at Dorchester South is the **Rev. William A. Peabody** (d. 1850) **monument** (photo 7), an eight-foot-tall fluted brownstone column on pedestal and base surmounted by a brownstone urn. It honors a professor of Latin at Amherst College who died at the age of 34. The inscription reads in part, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Adjacent to the William Peabody monument are small brownstone headstones that honor Margaret Russell Peabody (d. 1893) and Mary Codman Peabody (d. 1918).

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The tallest monument at Dorchester South is the **Thomas Riverside** (d. 1876, photo 5) monument, a roughly twelve-foot-tall marble obelisk and pedestal on granite base that is prominently sited behind the south tombs. The Baker monument, located in the southwest corner of the burial ground, honors Edmund Baker (d. 1846), proprietor of the Baker chocolate factory, as well as subsequent family members. It is a horizontal, polished, grey granite slab on granite base, a style that became popular in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Two of the earliest death dates at Dorchester South were Sarah Baker (d. 1802) and Elizabeth Baker (d. 1805), both of whom were initially buried elsewhere and later reinterred in the family lot at Dorchester South.

### Headstones

The headstones at Dorchester South represent a wide range of styles and materials, and date from 1802 to 1989. The burial ground was established in 1814, but there are at least six reinterments that are earlier, including members of the Baker, Haynes, and Bussey families. These were most likely relocated here so family members could be buried together in perpetuity. The two most recent burials occurred in 1989.

#### *Slate headstones*

Slate headstones represent about 20 percent of the total burial markers at Dorchester South. They are generally clustered in the north central part of the burying ground. The slates follow patterns popular in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but are generally modest. The most typical forms are vertical upright rectangles and rounded tympanums on shouldered main blocks, which range in size from tiny headstones for children to about four feet tall. There are also some slate footstones, which have been relocated immediately behind the headstones to reduce the potential for mower damage. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, gravestone carving was usually done by a shop of carvers rather than an individual. Many of the stones show similar form and motifs in the depiction of key features, such as the willow-and-urn design found on many of the slate headstones.

The first burial after the cemetery was established was that of **Mrs. Lucinda Hawes** (d. 1814, photo 8). Her slate headstone features a rounded tympanum on shouldered main block. It is carved in a delicate and distinctive style, with diamond-shaped architectural motifs at the top of the main block and columns at the sides. In the tympanum is a raised willow and urn on a stippled background.

The slate headstone of **Edward H. Lathrop** (d. 1834) is slightly simpler in style than that of Lucinda Hawes. It has a rounded tympanum on a narrow-shouldered main block. The distinctive carving of the willow is similar to many others at Dorchester South, and the decorative borders are less ornate. The poignant inscription records that Lathrop was the "Intended husband of Miss Nancy Leonard." Very similar, but simpler still, is the **Abigail Merryfield** (d. 1840) headstone, which appears to have been carved by the same studio as the Lathrop headstone.

#### *Marble and Other Late 19<sup>th</sup> - and 20<sup>th</sup> -Century Headstones*

By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, marble was the preferred material for headstones because it was softer and easier to work with. There are a large number of marble headstones in various sizes and shapes at Dorchester South, about 65 percent of the total (photo 9). These primarily include simple marble slabs, some with pedimented tops, as well as several dozen small obelisks and pillars that mimic the larger monuments.

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The design of the early marble headstones was much like the slate headstones of the period, but because the stone was softer, they could be carved into more elaborate forms. Over time, marble headstones were increasingly made in standard patterns and components. Willows and urns remained popular on late 19<sup>th</sup>-century marbles, but there was also more sentimental and symbolic imagery. The marbles at Dorchester South are in good condition relative to some of Boston's other historic burying grounds, but many show evidence of sugaring and erosion.

Near the entrance to the burial ground is the small marble headstone of **Lewis Frey** (d. 1857). Above the inscription is an inset circular area with a carved hand holding a book and pointing upward, a fairly typical late 19<sup>th</sup>-century motif. The headstone of **Mary Martin** (d. 1862, photo 10) is similar, but has a gothic arch at the top and a scroll in the inset panel at the top of the headstone. The marble inscription is faded but still legible.

A more ornate marble headstone is that of **Sergeant Elijah F. Adams** (d. 1863, photo 10), who fought in the Civil War. He was wounded at Mine Run and died at Alexandria, Virginia, at age 27. His marble headstone on granite base has a rounded top with protective overhang. At the top of the stone is an inset circle with a wreath and crossed swords. The inscription at the bottom reads: "*So he died, thus early reaching the soldiers rest, passing from the din of Earth to the peace of Eternity.*"

By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, polished granite became the preferred material for gravestones and family monuments because of its greater durability. One exception was the **Martha Willard Sawyer** (d. 1894, photo 12) headstone, which is made of tan, unpolished granite and has a rough-cut base overlaid with an integral stone scroll.

Burials at Dorchester South continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century at a much slower rate, typically only for family members of those already interred at the cemetery, which was largely full by 1900. By this time, Boston's new, larger rural cemeteries in outlying parts of the city had become the most popular choice for burials. Some of these were city-owned, while others, including Cedar Grove, which is only a few blocks to the east of Dorchester South, are private.

Like all of Boston's older city-owned cemeteries, Dorchester South has undergone some periods when funds were scarce, but the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century efforts of the Historic Burying Grounds initiative to restore headstones and monuments and to maintain the landscape are very much in evidence today.

### Archaeological Description

The Dorchester South Burying Ground has one inventoried Native American archaeological site (19-SU-108) located within its boundaries, and there are seven other Native American archaeological sites located in the general area (within one mile). There are no documented historical archaeological sites within the property; however, this property is a documented burying ground. The nominated property is located on the southeastern slope of the hill upon which the neighborhood of Ashmont is located. Soils are sloped southeast, and the surrounding area is heavily developed by residential structures, with a large hospital complex located immediately to the southeast of the property. The nearest source of fresh water may now be obscured by development in this densely settled area; however, the Neponset River is located approximately 2,500 feet due south of the property.

The Native American archaeological site within the burying ground (19-SU-108) consists of a single fragmentary steatite bowl fragment, likely associated with the Late Archaic period (approximately 5,000-

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3,500 years BP [before present]. The seven other Native American sites located within one mile of the property (19-NF-138, 19-NF-18, 19-SU-35, 19-SU-27, 19-SU-28, 19-SU-91, and 19-SU-92) consist primarily of undatable find spots along the Neponset River. Site 19-SU-92, an undatable collector's find spot, is located directly across the street from the parcel on the Carney Hospital property. Given the above information, a high potential exists for locating additional ancient Native American cultural resources on the property.

A high potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources at the Dorchester South Burying Ground. The property appears to have been part of a larger pasture area prior to its transformation into a burying place in 1814. Therefore, there is low potential for historic archaeological resources dating between 1630 and 1814 within the property. By 1877, there were still no buildings located within adjacent lots surrounding the burying ground, further emphasizing the previously rural nature of this location. Currently, there are approximately 800 stone markers documented within the burying ground, though approximately 1,800 residents of Dorchester are believed to be buried there. This discrepancy indicates that there are numerous unmarked burials within the burying ground. These unmarked burials would be protected under the Massachusetts Unmarked Burial law (M.G.L. Chapter 7: Section 38A). Additionally, Native American human remains, if present, would require additional review under the Massachusetts Unmarked Burial Law. Each burial should be considered a potentially significant historic archaeological deposit.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art  
Community Planning and Development  
Landscape Architecture  
Social History  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1814 - 1964  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1814 - Cemetery established  
1830s - Cemetery redesigned  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Edmund J. Baker, surveyor  
Samuel Downer, horticulturist

**Period of Significance**

The period of significance for this nomination extends from 1814, when Dorchester South Burying Ground was established, to 1964, the 50-year cut-off.

**Criteria Considerations**

Criteria consideration D applies to Dorchester South because it is a cemetery. However, it derives primary significance from its age, its strong association with the Dorchester community, and its distinctive design features as an early example of the transition from a Colonial burial ground to a rural cemetery.

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### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Dorchester South Burying Ground, located in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C, with significance at the local level. The site possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The burial ground was established in 1814, with only a few lots laid out to meet immediate need. In 1835 Edmund James Baker, a local surveyor, laid out the rest of it. Around the same time, Samuel Downer and other members of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society added ornamental plantings to embellish the cemetery. Dorchester South is the burial place of many generations of Boston residents, including two owners of the Baker Chocolate Company, one of Dorchester's most illustrious businesses. The collection of tombs, monuments, headstones, and footstones exhibits a wide range of funerary styles and motifs.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

#### Criterion A: Broad Patterns of History

Dorchester South Burying Ground meets Criterion A due to its strong association with the history of the community. It is a well-preserved cemetery, established in 1814, that has been active for 200 years. The roughly 800 headstones, footstones, family monuments, and tombs at Dorchester South document the social history of the community from 1814 to the present, and contain information that is not readily available elsewhere. Most of the people buried at Dorchester South are Protestants of European ancestry. Christian symbolism is evident on many of the headstones.

One of the most poignant stories at Dorchester South is that of infant mortality. Often there were multiple deaths of children from a single family. Children were typically memorialized with small headstones, many with sentimental imagery and language, such as the two small headstones that honor three children of Moses and Marietta Gleason all of whom died at an early age. Many of those who lived past infancy went on to live long lives, such as Abigail Merryfield, who died in 1840 at the age of 90.

Veterans are well represented at Dorchester South, especially veterans of the Civil War. Some are commemorated by military-issue marble headstones, while others have more personal marble headstones erected by family members. Civil War veterans honored at Dorchester South include: Corporal John Ford, who died at Bull Run in 1861; Sergeant Elijah F Adams, who died in Alexandria, Virginia, in 1863 at age 27; and Joel E. Bird, Co. H, 39<sup>th</sup> Regiment, who was born in Dorchester in 1844 and died at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Hospital in Culpepper County, Virginia, in 1863.

One of Dorchester's most prominent industries has been the Baker Chocolate Company, established in 1780 and still in business (although no longer in Dorchester). Two of the company's owners, as well as many other Baker family members, are buried at Dorchester South. Edmund Baker (d. 1846) was owner from 1804 to 1823, and Henry Lillie Pierce (d. 1896) was owner from 1854 to 1895, a period of rapid growth for the company. Both are interred in the Baker family lot in the southwest part of the burying ground. Pierce also briefly served in 1873 as Mayor of Boston, and as a member of the United States House of Representatives from 1873 to 1877.

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### Criterion C: Art and Design

Dorchester South Burying Ground meets Criterion C as a well-preserved, 19<sup>th</sup>-century municipal cemetery that illustrates evolving New England burial styles. It was founded in 1814 as a traditional New England burial ground, with little thought given to its spatial organization or appearance. In the 1830s, the grounds of Dorchester South were laid out by Edmund J. Baker, a young surveyor, whose father had chaired the initial committee to purchase the land for the cemetery.

The improvements to Dorchester South made by Edmund J. Baker in the 1830s include the pattern of roads and lots that still establish the overall character and rectilinear spatial organization of the cemetery. It is in a transitional style between the older New England burial grounds, with their haphazard layouts, and the curvilinear style of the rural cemetery movement established at Mount Auburn Cemetery (NHL) in 1831. Other city-owned Boston burying grounds that reflect this early 19<sup>th</sup>-century transitional style are: Bunker Hill Cemetery in Charlestown (1807); Hawes Union in South Boston (1816); and Bennington Street Cemetery in East Boston (1837, NR).

In addition to the new layout at Dorchester South in the 1830s, members of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, led by Samuel Downer, a prominent Dorchester businessman and horticulturalist, undertook embellishment of Dorchester South through ornamental plantings. This was a new idea about burial grounds that the Horticultural Society had established at Mount Auburn Cemetery. The new plant materials at Dorchester South consisted of trees, shrubs, and ornamental plantings, some of which were donated by local residents. Dorchester town reports indicate that by 1839, 300 trees had been planted. Beautification efforts at Dorchester South continued through the 1840s. After that there is relatively little mention of improvements to Dorchester South, as a new generation of Boston cemeteries was being created on the outskirts of the city.

Dorchester South's roughly 800 burial markers are a rich collection of outdoor art that exhibits a wide range of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century funerary styles and motifs. The headstones and family monuments are predominantly marble, with a smaller number in slate, brownstone, and granite. They reflect the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century classical imagery of willow and urn, as well as the sentimentality of the Victorian era in their expression of natural and classical forms, choice of marble as a primary material, and flowery epitaphs. The later family lots, with their more uniform granite monuments, reflect changing technology and a more impersonal aesthetic associated with the machine age.

### Context: Boston's Historic Burying Grounds

Boston has eighteen municipally owned historic burying grounds that were established between 1630 and 1893. Seven of these date to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, three to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and eight to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The historic significance of these burying grounds has been widely recognized and well documented through Boston's Historic Burying Grounds Initiative, begun in the 1980s. Dorchester South, established in 1814 and redesigned in 1835, represents an important transition between the city's older, urban burying grounds and the later rural cemeteries.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there was major concern about the older burying grounds, which were barren, poorly maintained places. The problem was threefold. First, they were seriously overcrowded in a rapidly expanding city with no further space available for burial within the city limits. The second factor was a public health issue. At the time, Boston residents were largely dependent upon private wells, and the burial grounds were believed to be contaminating the water supply. The third factor was changing

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Once the land was acquired, rudimentary improvements were made, including construction of two gates and laying out the burial ground “in a regular order for depositing the dead.” The first burial was Lucinda Hawes, who died in May 1814. In 1824, the town authorized Jacob Bacon to build three tombs. Town records contain no further mention of the burying ground for the next decade.

### *Improvements, 1830 - 1870*

In 1831, the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, which included many of Dorchester’s prominent citizens, founded Mount Auburn Cemetery (NHL) in nearby Cambridge. Mount Auburn is considered the first rural, or garden, cemetery in the United States, designed to provide a permanent resting place for the dead and solace to the living. Burials typically occur in family lots where family members can be buried together in perpetuity, as opposed to the older burial grounds, where burials were located chronologically and were often moved to provide space for new burials. One of the well-known horticulturists involved in this movement was Samuel Downer, the prominent Dorchester businessman who was also a founding member of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society

In 1835, town officials decided that Dorchester South should be made more attractive. A committee was appointed to lay out the South burying ground in squares and lanes “in a handsome manner as it will wish and also to lay out lots for the use of the inhabitants to build tombs and report their findings to the town on March or April meeting.”<sup>4</sup> The committee consisted of Edmund J. Baker, surveyor; Edward H. R. Ruggles, cabinetmaker; Darius Brewer, druggist; Colonel Nathaniel Ford; and Dr. John Spooner.

Edmund J. Baker (the son of Baker Chocolate Company owner Edmund Baker, who chaired the original committee) was assigned the task of laying out the cemetery. A fundamental difference in Baker’s new layout from the earlier layout was that it was a planned cemetery, with an overall spatial organization of rectilinear family lots which were typically fifteen feet square. A second distinction was the inclusion of well-drained roads and pathways, to make access more pleasant for visitors.

In 1837 the town appointed Samuel Downer to chair a committee “for Ornamenting the Dorchester Lower Burying Ground.” The responsibilities of the committee included planting of trees, shrubs, and ornamental plants. As funds were limited, the committee solicited donations of plant material from local residents.

By 1839, fifteen tombs had been constructed, 80 graves laid out, and roughly 300 trees had been planted. In 1844 Darius Brewer, one of the committee members charged with beautifying the cemetery, was hired to build a wall around the burying ground. Also in the 1840s, the walkways were regraded, another reflection of the pride that the community took in its new burying place.

Improvements at Dorchester South continued through the 1840s under the watchful eye of the cemetery committee. The perimeter wall was rebuilt, tombs were added, roads and paths were graded, and plantings were ongoing, largely with donated plant material. Exact species are not documented, but there are references to numerous hedge plants, which may have been planted around the perimeter, as well as mature shade trees and fir trees. In 1844 a small, wedge-shaped piece of land was purchased as an addition to the burial ground at its southwestern corner, bringing it to its current size of two acres. By the late 1840s the burying ground was well established and required only routine maintenance.

<sup>4</sup> *Dorchester Town Records*, 11-9-1835.

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There was some discussion of expanding Dorchester South in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the creation of Forest Hills Cemetery (1848, NR) and Mount Hope Cemetery (1852, NR) nearby eliminated the need. Establishment of Cedar Grove Cemetery, a short distance to the south along the Neponset River in 1868, further relieved pressure on Dorchester South.

### ***Dorchester Annexed to Boston, 1870-present***

In 1870, when Dorchester was annexed to Boston, it was still a rural community of 12,000 residents. Dorchester Avenue, which had been laid out as a public road in 1854, soon became the primary access point for the cemetery. The arrival of the railroad the same year brought increasing residential and commercial development that transformed the previously agricultural area into a streetcar suburb. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Dorchester attracted working-class families, mainly of English, Irish, and other European descent. The predominantly Catholic area was delineated by parishes. The 1884 Atlas of Boston (map 3) shows the rectangular shape of the burying ground, as well as a narrow right-of-way extending west to Washington Street. By 1904 the right-of-way still existed, but was no longer shown as part of the burying ground.

In 1870 the city assumed responsibility for care of all municipal cemeteries, including Dorchester South. Initially, cemeteries were under the Board of Health because of serious problems associated with the city's oldest burying grounds. In 1897, responsibility for all Boston cemeteries was transferred to the newly established Boston Cemetery Department, which began a systematic upgrade of the city's older burial grounds. The new caretakers commented that records were very poor, and that the roads were not properly constructed, requiring grading and resurfacing.

Annual reports from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century also provide a window into cemetery operations. The cemetery was open to visitors during the day and received a small amount of money from the sale of cemetery lots. By 1905 there was a tool shed in the southern part of the cemetery, the foundation of which still remains. Through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, burials at Dorchester South continued at a slower rate than they had in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mostly occurring in existing family lots, and only modest improvements were made to the cemetery. The most recent burials occurred in 1989.

By the 1980s, most of the city's older burial grounds were in disrepair, so the City of Boston created the Historic Burial Grounds Initiative to document existing conditions in each of the 21 oldest burial grounds. This led to a large effort to restore the older burial grounds, beginning with the downtown ones, followed by those in outlying parts of the city. In the late 1990s, a Master Plan report was prepared for Dorchester South, followed by restoration of the headstones and improvements to the perimeter fence.

### **Archaeological Significance**

The Dorchester South Burying Ground was created in what was once a rural area of the town of Dorchester. Today, the area is surrounded entirely by residential, commercial, and medical development. The currently known and potential archaeological resources, as described, may contribute important social, cultural, and religious information related to the use of the property by Native Americans and the use of the property as a burying ground, with burials of approximately 1,800 individuals. Stratified deposits and buried features in the areas not disturbed by burial shafts, or the documented grading and landscaping associated with burying ground improvements and maintenance, may provide additional

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information about the Late Archaic (5,000-3,500 BP) use of the property, and possibly additional occupations before and after this period.

Throughout the burying ground there is great possibility to identify unmarked burial shafts, tombs, and other burial-related subsurface features that have since lost any above-ground markers. Additionally, the modification of the burying ground in the 1830s, and subsequent re-alignment and organization of burial locations and layout of roads, may have resulted in the 1811-1830 burials no longer being documented within the system of roads and plots currently recorded for the burying ground. Archaeological investigation could potentially locate and demarcate these first burials, likely in the center of the cemetery as described previously, and could potentially identify unmarked graves based on forensic characteristics and burial goods. As a documented cemetery with a known Native American occupation within its boundaries, the entire Dorchester South Burying Ground has high potential for significant archaeological deposits.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

Boston Parks and Recreation Department. Files of the Historic Burying Grounds Initiative, including historic maps, gravestone inventory records, Park Commission records, and City Council records.

Boston Parks and Recreation Department. *Historic Burying Grounds Initiative 3-Volume Master Plan*. Boston 1987.

Clapp, Ebenezer Jr. *History of the Town of Dorchester*. Dorchester, MA: Dorchester Antiquarian and Historical Society, 1859. (Available on Google books.)

Orcutt, William Dana. *Good Old Dorchester: A Narrative History of the Town 1630 - 1893*. Cambridge: Published by the author, John Wilson & Son, University Press, 1893. (Available on Google books.)

Simmons, Scott E. "The Dorchester South Burying Ground and the Rural Cemetery Movement." Unpublished manuscript in the files of Boston Parks and Recreation Department, 1986.

Thornton, Tamara Plakins. *Cultivating Gentlemen, The Meaning of Country Life among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.

Walker-Kluesing Design Group. *Historic Burying Grounds Master Plan*. Boston: Parks and Recreation Department, August 1998.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: Boston Parks and Recreation Department

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): BOS.831

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Two acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 42.278591 | Longitude: -71.067086 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |

Or

### UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 19 | Easting: 329554 | Northing: 4682777 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Dorchester South Burying Ground consists of a single two-acre parcel located at 2095 Dorchester Avenue, Boston. The parcel number is: 1704193000. The parcel is bounded by Dorchester Avenue on the east and O'Connell Road on the west. Gallivan Boulevard lies one block to the north, and Valley Road lies one block to the south.

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nomination encompasses the entire area that comprises Dorchester South Burial Ground, approximately two acres. It does not include the former right-of-way that extends west of the cemetery to Washington Street.

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**9. Form Prepared By**

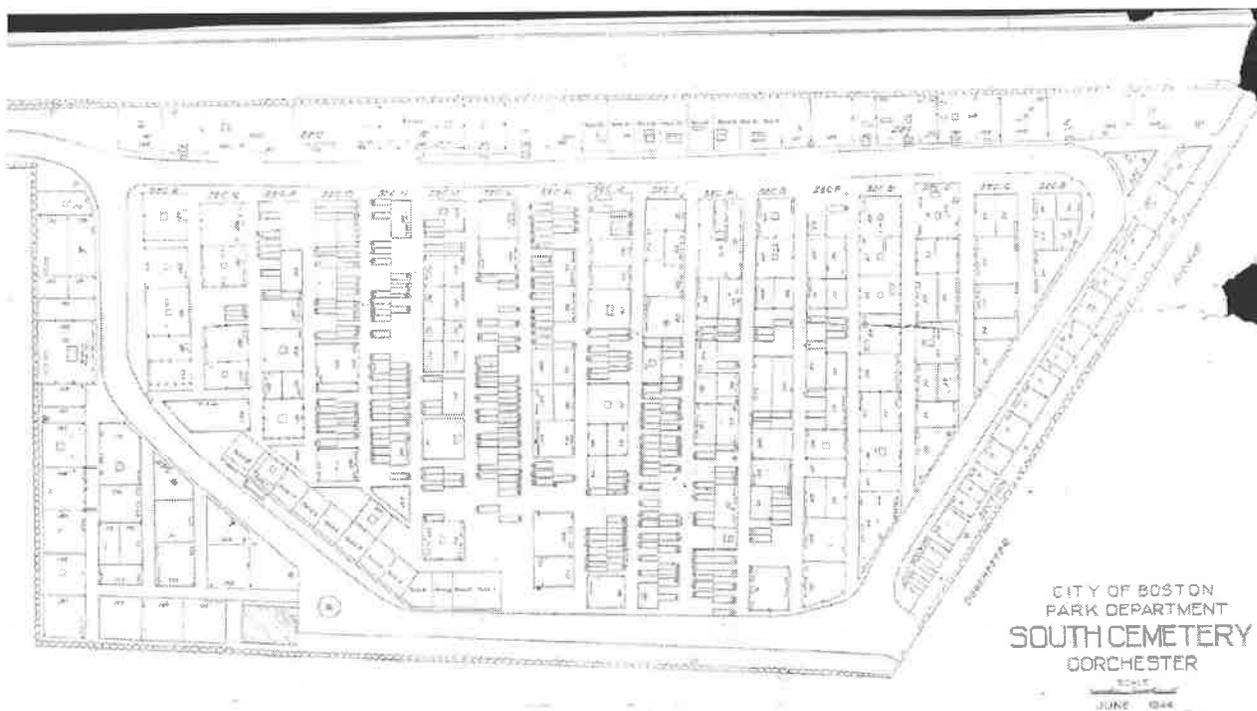
name/title: Shary Berg, preservation consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, MHC NR Director  
organization: Massachusetts Historical Commission  
street & number: 220 Morrissey Boulevard  
city or town: Boston state: MA zip code: 02125-3314  
e-mail betsy.friedberg@state.ma.us  
telephone: 617-727-8470  
date: May, 2014

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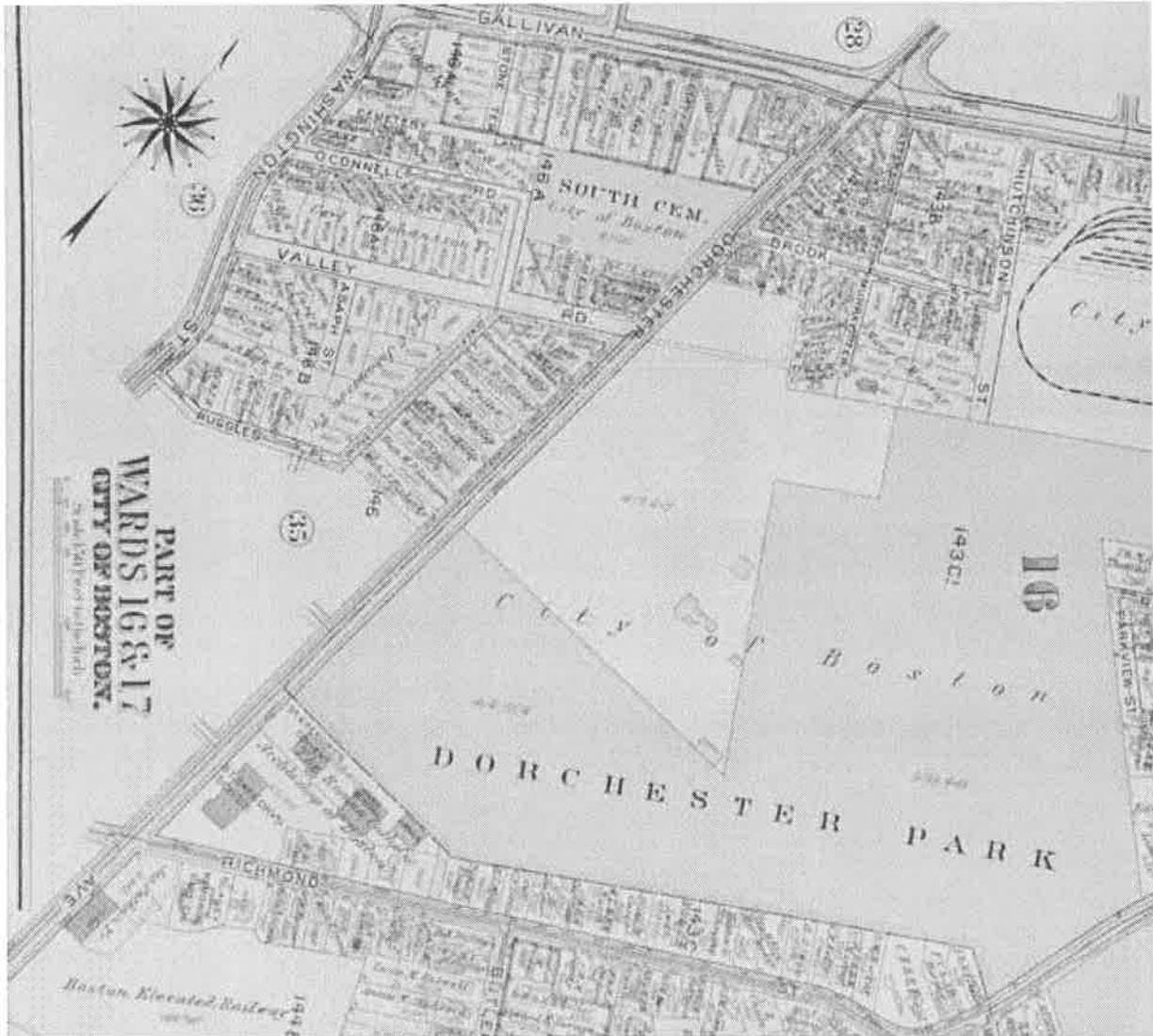
Map 1 – Location map for Dorchester South Burying Ground. Large building at lower right is Caritas Carney Hospital. (City of Boston GIS)



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Map 2 – 1944 map of Dorchester South Burying Ground showing layout of roads and burial lots. Dorchester Avenue runs along the right side of the map. (Boston Parks and Recreation)



Map 3 – Dorchester South Burying Ground (labeled South Cemetery) is in the upper center. This map detail shows the neighborhood in 1933, including Dorchester Avenue, Gallivan Boulevard, Dorchester Park (NR) and Carney Hospital, which is to the north of Dorchester Park. (Bromley Atlas of Boston)

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Photo 1 – Cemetery road and older monuments, view to southwest.



Photo 2 – Front wall of cemetery, view to the north with Dorchester Avenue on right.

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Photo 3 – View from Dorchester Avenue west to main gate with cemetery beyond.



Photo 4 – View of north tombs looking east along northern edge of cemetery.

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Photo 5 – View of south tombs looking west along southern part of cemetery road. The tall granite obelisk in the background is the Riverside monument.



Photo 6 – View of Bennette tomb looking north. Marble headstones are attached to the front of the granite tomb.

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Photo 7 – Rev. William F. Peabody monument at right with fluted column topped by an urn.

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Photo 8 – Slate headstone of Lucinda Hawes (d. 1814), the first burial at Dorchester South, view to the west.

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Photo 9 – Cluster of mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century headstones showing range of styles and materials, view to southwest.

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Photo 10 – Mary Martin (d. 1862) marble headstone with scroll, view to northeast.

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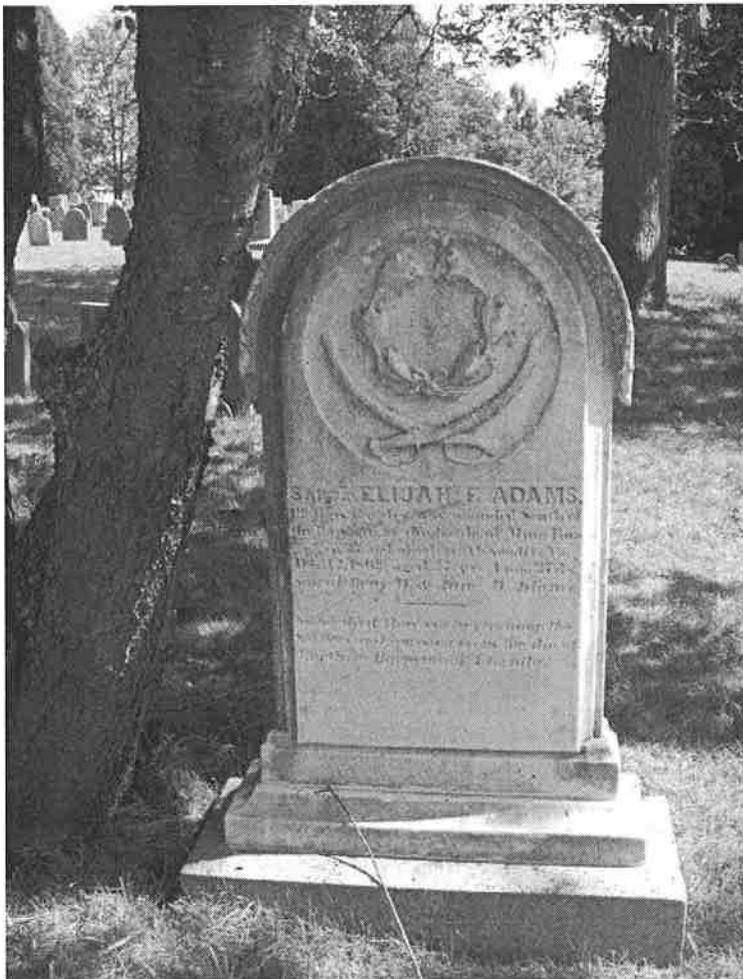


Photo 11 – Sergeant Elijah F. Adams (d. 1863) headstone, commemorating Civil War soldier who died in Alexandria, Virginia.

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Photo 12 – The brown granite headstone of Martha Willard Sawyer (d.1894) (center of photo) is one of the few distinctive monuments from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. View to the southwest.

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Photo	Name / Description	Date	Type	Status
9	Dorchester South Burying Ground	1814	Site	C
1	Cemetery Loop Road - bituminous, typically 8' wide	1830s	Structure	C
2, 3	Perimeter Wall & Fence - stone wall with fence on top	19 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Structure	C
	Tool Shed Foundation - sw corner of burying ground	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Structure	C
4	North Tombs - Individual tombs built into hillside	Early 19 <sup>th</sup> cent.	Structure	C (4)
5, 6	South Tombs - Row of attached tombs	1830s-40s	Structure	C (12)
7	Rev. William A. Peabody Monument - brownstone column (DS/R8) <sup>5</sup>	1850	Object	C
	Thomas Riverside Monument - marble obelisk (DS/N124)	1876	Object	C
	Edmund Baker Monument - granite monument (DS/T61)	1846	Object	C
8	Lucinda Hawes Headstone - slate headstone (DS/L19)	1814	Object	C
	Edward H. Lathrop Headstone - slate headstone (DS/J52)	1834	Object	C
	Abigail Merryfield Headstone - slate headstone (DS/I13)	1840	Object	C
	Lewis Frey Headstone - marble headstone (DS/A5)	1857	Object	C
10	Mary Martin Headstone - marble headstone (DS/E33)	1862	Object	C
11	Elijah F. Adams Headstone - marble headstone for Civil War veteran (DS/O29)	1863	Object	C
12	Martha Willard Sawyer Headstone - granite headstone (DS/D13)	1894	Object	C

Resource Count	Contrib	Non-Contrib
Buildings	-	-
Sites	1	-
Structures	19	-
Objects	10	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>

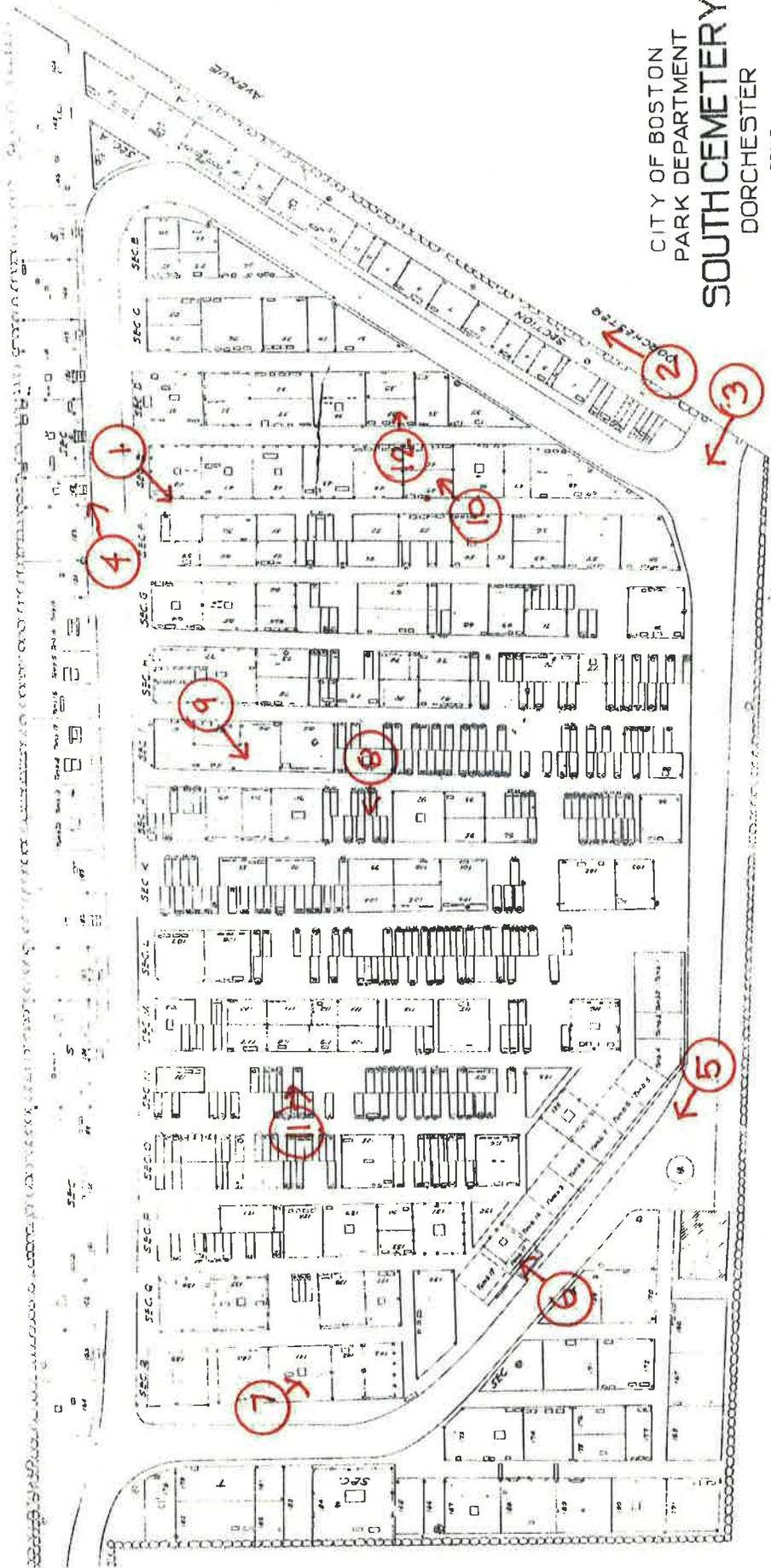
<sup>5</sup> This is the location code keyed to the 1944 map of the burying ground. DS means Dorchester South; the letter and number indicate the section and location of the headstone.

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**Photographs**

<i>Photo #</i>	<i>Location/Description</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Photo by</i>
1	Cemetery road and older monuments, view to southwest	5/2012	Shary Page Berg
2	Front wall of cemetery, view north with Dorchester Avenue on the right	6/2012	Shary Page Berg
3	View from Dorchester Avenue west to main gate with the cemetery beyond	6/2012	Shary Page Berg
4	View of north tombs looking east along northern edge of cemetery	5/2012	Shary Page Berg
5	View of south tombs looking west along southern part of cemetery.	5/2012	Shary Page Berg
6	View of Bennette tomb, view to the north	5/2012	Shary Page Berg
7	Rev. William F. Peabody monument at right with fluted column topped by an urn, view to southeast	6/2012	Shary Page Berg
8	Slate headstone of Lucinda Hawes (d. 1814), the first burial at Dorchester South, view to the west	5/2012	Shary Page Berg
9	Cluster of mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century headstones with a range of styles and materials. View to the southwest	6/2012	Shary Page Berg
10	Mary Martin (d.1862) marble headstone with scroll, view to the northeast	6/2012	Shary Page Berg
11	Sgt. Elijah F. Adams (d. 1863) headstone commemorating Civil War soldier who died in Alexandria, Virginia.	6/2012	Shary Page Berg
12	Brown granite headstone of Martha Willard Sawyer (d. 1894) at center of photo is one of the few distinctive monuments from the late 19 <sup>th</sup> century. View to the southwest.	5/2012	Shary Page Berg



CITY OF BOSTON  
 PARK DEPARTMENT  
**SOUTH CEMETERY**  
 DORCHESTER

SCALE  
 JUNE 1944

*Revised 5-9-2014  
 Photograph Locations*



Aerial Photo



New Property Search



**Address DORCHESTER AV**

Parcel ID: 1704193000  
Owner: CITY OF BOSTON  
Property Type: 0902  
Land Use: Exempt

**Structure**  
Lot Size: 87120 sq ft  
**Living Area**  
Style  
Stories  
Bedrooms

**Valuation**  
Land: \$189,900.00  
Building: \$0.00  
Total: \$189,900.00  
Tax: \$0.00

Residential Exemption No:









Dorchester South Burying Ground

Established in 1713 in Dorchester, Massachusetts, this is the oldest cemetery in the city. It is the final resting place for many of the city's early settlers and is a significant historical site. The cemetery is located on the corner of South Street and Dorchester Avenue. It is a beautiful and well-maintained site, and is a popular destination for those interested in the city's history.





D. BREWER. 1845

J. PIERCE. 1852

BENNETT

MOTHER  
SARAH A. BENNETT  
Died Dec. 21, 1852.  
Aged 41 Yrs. 1 Mo. 10 Ds.

FATHER  
EDWIN J. BENNETT  
Died Oct. 21, 1852.  
Aged 25 Yrs. 2 Mos. 17 Ds.

In memory of the  
deceased, we have  
erected this monument.

IRBY  
Daughter of EDWIN  
SARAH A. BENNETT  
Died Dec. 21, 1852.  
Aged 11 Yrs.

HOWARD S. DAVENPORT.  
Died Nov. 7, 1879.  
Aged 21 Yrs. 23 Ds.

E. BENNETTE DAVENPORT  
Died Nov. 10, 1881.  
Aged 22 Yrs. 5 Mos. 22 Ds.

HOWARD S. DAVENPORT.  
Died Nov. 7, 1879.  
Aged 21 Yrs. 23 Ds.

E. BENNETTE DAVENPORT  
Died Nov. 10, 1881.  
Aged 22 Yrs. 5 Mos. 22 Ds.

In Memoriam  
MARY GODMAN  
PEABODY  
Born Oct. 18, 1847  
Died Aug. 13, 1913  
UNTO GOD'S WILL SHE BROUGHT  
DEVOUT RESPECT, PROFOUND  
SIMPLICITY OF INTELLECT AND  
SUPREME PATIENCE.

R.P.  
MAY 18 1847  
AUG 13 1913

Absent from the World  
REV. W. A. PEABODY  
Professor of Latin  
in Amherst College  
Died Feb. 25, 1850  
Aged 34 years  
PEABODY



In Memory of

M<sup>RS</sup> LUCINDA

HAWES,

who died *May 18, 1814*

*Æt. 30.*



To the memory of  
MARY.

Wife of  
William Martin  
died April 1862  
aged 70 yrs.

WILLIAM MARTIN  
died Apr 18 1861  
aged 27 yrs.



SARGEANT ELIJAH F. ADAMS.

1<sup>st</sup> Mass. Cavalry was wounded South of  
the Rappahannock at the battle of Mine Run  
Oct. 27 and died at Alexandria Va.  
Dec. 12, 1863, aged 27 yrs. 1 mo. 27 d.  
Son of Benj. H. & Anne B. Adams.

So he died, thus early reaching the  
solitary rest, passing from the din of  
earth to the peace of Eternity.



MARTH A  
WILLARD SAWYER  
APRIL 10, 1841,  
MARCH 22, 1884.  
FAITHFUL TO THE END.

MABLE

S. F. S.

WILLARD  
SAWYER