

# The Oak Grove Cemetery of Falmouth: People That Made America Great From the Revolution to Today

by Nathan S. Ellis

*Nathan S. Ellis has compiled an extensive list of people buried in Oak Grove Cemetery. He is grateful for all the help he received, and he promises further research in the old records. Doug Amon, Superintendent of the cemetery, has offered to show the grave sites to interested visitors.*

The people buried in Oak Grove Cemetery lived in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. The story of the cemetery itself begins in 1849, as described by a 19th century reporter:

*Oak Grove cemetery is situated north of the village and is becoming a chosen spot for the departed. A meeting of those interested was held December 12, 1849, at the town hall, when Erasmus Gould, William Nye, Jr., Thomas L. Swift, Silas Jones and Rufus Swift were appointed to choose a site and obtain subscribers to purchase lots. January 2, 1850, the report was made that a wood lot of over five acres had been purchased, adjoining the home of Ephraim Sanford and twenty-four subscribers procured. The officers elected for one year, at this meeting, were: Oliver C. Swift, president; Aaron Cornish, vice-president; S. C. Dillingham, secretary; Samuel P. Bourne, treasurer, and E. Gould, William Nye, Jr. and C. L. Swift, trustees. A constitution and by-laws were adopted. In 1851 O. C. Swift was re-elected president and held the office for many years, as did S. P. Bourne that of secretary and treasurer. The trustees had the management until March 27, 1877, after which the annual meetings were held and officers elected; Silas Jones, president, and George E. Clarke, secretary and treasurer. These efficient officers have been re-elected*

*until the present, with William Jones vice-president. The present trustees are: William H. Hewins, Moses R. Fish and Charles H. Gifford. At the February meeting of 1886, George E. Clarke, Silas Jones and Solomon D. Robinson were appointed a committee to purchase additional land, and by their action the area has been doubled by tracts purchased.*

The men and women of Falmouth who now occupy the hallowed grounds of the Oak Grove Cemetery represent a cross section of people who built and defended this great nation in which we are so fortunate to live. This writing is an attempt to give tribute to those people to whom we owe so much. A study of the cemetery records shows an amazing number of these movers and shakers. I have attempted to list a number of these people in the categories to which they belong. The military people listed include participants in every war this country has fought, except the Mexican War. I found one who served in the American Revolution and one from the Spanish American War. The history of those men and women who went to sea in ships of sail is also well represented. These documents show a remarkable number of whaling captains and other hardy people who gained their livelihoods at sea. Additional persons of merit are also listed who contributed greatly to our society and our town. Our research of the old records continues to reveal new persons of historical merit. New entries will be added as they are discovered.

No historical record of those resting in the Oak Grove Cemetery in Falmouth could proceed with-



Katharine Lee Bates  
1859 - 1929  
I will sing unto the Lord a new song.  
Daughters of  
Rev. William and Cornelia E. Bates

out first mentioning Katharine Lee Bates who was the author of "America The Beautiful." This tribute to our great country was written in 1893 by Miss Bates who was then Professor of English Literature at Wellesley College. Miss Bates was born in Falmouth on August 12, 1859, the daughter of a Congregational pastor. She spent her entire life as an educator, writer, and author. She died on March 28, 1929, at age 69. Her self-chosen epitaph reads: "I will sing unto the Lord a new song."

The following is a list of people who served in the Revolution, War of 1812, and the Civil War, and also the early sea captains, giving their ages at death. Some of the earliest people died before 1850 when the cemetery began operations. These people were buried in other places (farms, etc.) and later transferred to Oak Grove. This writing concentrates primarily on the years before 1900 in order to emphasize the part Falmouth played in the early development of our country. Burials of those who served in World War I and later are listed only as total numbers here.

Complete lists of these patriots including the branch of service in which they served are available.

### The American Revolution

A number of men from Falmouth either enlisted or were drafted to fight in the American Revolution. Some of these men fought in Washington's Continental Army and others served in the local militia. One soldier, Jonathan Green, served in Washington's Continental Army during 1777-1778. In June of 1783, he enlisted in the Falmouth Militia under Major Joseph Dimmick. The town had ordered the raising of this company of minutemen in 1775 and at the same time had appointed Joseph Dimmick to be their major. Jonathan Green died at age 89 on November 8, 1848.

During the Revolutionary War, and later in the War of 1812, the British would raid the coast of Cape Cod for provisions to support their ships operating in Massachusetts waters and to support their local bases on Nantucket, the Vineyard, and Tarpaulin Cove on the Elizabeth Islands. Falmouth was the only place on Cape Cod where a battle of the Revolutionary War was fought. On Saturday, April 3, 1779, ten British privateers (two schooners and eight sloops) anchored in a line off the foot of Shore Street and fired double headed shot and grapeshot into the town. Militia under Major Joseph Dimmick waited in trenches on the beach daring the British to land, but they did not. The damage was slight.

### The War of 1812

In 1814 (January 27-28) Lt. Colonel Nye's regiment of militia took up positions on the Falmouth shorefront to prevent the British military from coming ashore again to raid provisions from the local farms. Lt. Colonel Nye was replaced in the action by Captain Weston Jenkins who took charge and

positioned his militia and cannon on the beach to oppose the British landing from the *H.M.S. Nimrod* (a regular British brig of war) in Vineyard Sound. The British captain sent a demand to the colonials to surrender their cannon and to lay down their arms. Captain Weston Jenkins replied, "If you want these cannon, come and get them." The colonials did not allow the British to land and *Nimrod* left the area after an afternoon of shelling the town with her cannon. Falmouth was a target for British guns twice in 35 years.

A number of the veterans of the War of 1812 are buried in the Oak Grove Cemetery:

Captain Weston Jenkins died February 15, 1854, at age 86.

Lieutenant Thomas Lawrence died May 20, 1856, at age 77.

Sergeant Nathaniel Shiverick died May 22, 1839, at age 66.

Private Barah Bourne died September 2, 1833, at age 42.

Private Nathaniel Davis died February 6, 1878, at age 87.

Private Shadrack Lawrence died January 1, 1830, at age 35.

Private John Hatch died December 9, 1864, at age 87.

Private John Dimmock died December 28, 1872, at age 78.

Private Ephraim Parker died in 1845 at age 77.

Private Zimri Tobey died December 1, 1824, at age 57.

Captain Weston Jenkins and 32 volunteers were involved in a second incident with the British. They cut out a British privateer *Retaliation* that

was lying at anchor in Tarpaulin Cove on the Elizabeth Islands where the British were maintaining a base of operations during the War of 1812. This action resulted in the rescue of two American prisoners, the arrest of *Retaliation's* twelve-man crew, and the capture of five cannon and the ship's cargo.

### The Civil War

The B.F. Jones Post No. 206, Grand Army of the Republic, was formed in 1891 in Falmouth. The post erected a monument in the Oak Grove Cemetery in memory of our soldiers and our sailors who served between 1861 and 1865. The post was named for Benjamin Franklin Jones, one of Falmouth's whaling captains, who served in the Navy during the Civil War.

A number of men who served in the Civil War are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery:

Captain Benjamin Franklin Jones, Navy, died in 1879 at age 53. He bought the Katharine Lee Bates house at 16 Main Street and passed it on to his son.

Private Henry O. Davis, Army, died in 1918 at age 83.

Private Silas G. Baker, Army, died in 1906 at age 72.

Private Andrew W. Davis, Army, died in 1934 at age 93.

Seaman Charles E. Davis, Navy, died in 1893 at age 86.

Private James M. Davis, Army, died in 1875 at age 34.

Private William E. Davis, Army, died in 1883 at age 72.

Private Ebenezer Jones, Army, died in 1882 at age 65.

Private William M. Hubbard, Army, died in 1923 at age 87.

Seaman Sanford A. Herendeen, Navy, died in 1895 at age 88.

Private Bartlett Holmes, Army, died in 1897 at age 87.

Private Abraham Hall Ryan, Army, died in 1903 at age 66.

Private William F. Jenkins, Army, died in 1914 at age 74.

Seaman Edwin F. Lawrence, Navy, died in 1914 at age 70.

Private Benjamin McLane, Army, died in 1899 at age 82.

Private James N. Parker, Army, died in 1915 at age 73.

Seaman John Perkins Jr., Navy, died in 1896 at age 74.

Captain Oliver Callot, Navy, died in 1866 at age 46.

Seaman Henry T. Robinson, Navy, died in 1893 at age 76.

Captain Andrew F. Shiverick, Army, died in 1863 at age 21.

Private Joseph H. Swift, Army, died in 1867 at age 29.

Corporal George Washington Swift, Army, died in 1908 at the age of 64.

Private Elijah Swift, Army, died in 1906 at age 75.

Master James B. Wood, Navy, died in 1900 at age 62.

George W. Swift was a prisoner of war in the Confederate military prison in Salisbury, North Carolina, in 1864-65. Frederick T. Turkington recounted his story, "Experiences of a Falmouth Boy in a Rebel Prison," in the Winter 1991 issue of *Spritsail*, Vol. 5 #1.

James B. Wood was enlisted in the Union Navy as Master of the steamer *Maratanza*. His steamer was engaged in blockade services during the Civil

War and assisted in the capture of the Confederate steamer *Tenser* off North Carolina in 1864.

He commanded a landing party of marines and sailors during the storming and capture of Fort Fisher in 1865. In the same year he was also involved in the capture of Fort Anderson, Fort Strong, and the city of Wilmington.

After his discharge in 1866, he was engaged in the merchant marine service until 1872. Julia Wood, his widow, willed their house to the Falmouth Historical Society as a prime example of Federal architecture.



Gravestones of Julia Wood and James B. Wood. Photo by E. Graham Ward.



## The Spanish American War

Private Frank S. Shiverick, Army, died in 1962 at age 86.

## Falmouth Whaling Captains

Falmouth Captain Nehemiah Baker's first command was *General Pike* from New Bedford, Massachusetts. He commanded four additional voyages from New Bedford on *Nimrod*, *William Gifford*, *Rainbow*, and *Mary and Susan*. His last voyage was in 1881. He died in 1911 at age 88.

Captain Silas Jones of Falmouth went on his first whaling voyage in 1830 at age 16 aboard *Awashonks*. On October 4, 1835, when 21 years old, he saved *Awashonks* and her crew when the captain, Prince Coffin of Nantucket, was killed in a native attack in the Marshall Islands. In 1840, he sailed as captain on *Hobomok*. At 26, he was the youngest whaling captain at sea. In 1864 as captain of *Commodore Morris* he was chased by the Confederate ship *Alabama*, necessitating a detour of five hundred miles to avoid capture, thus extending the length of the voyage to a period of five years. Silas Jones was also a charter member of the Oak Grove Cemetery Association, served his community as president of the Falmouth National Bank, and about 1850 served on the committee to move the First Congregational Church from its site on the Village Green to its present location. He died in 1896, at age 81.

Captain Edward P. Shiverick went to sea as a seaman when he was 14 years old. He served at sea for 40 years during which time he commanded as captain the whaling ships *Montezuma* of Wareham, and *Cornelia*, *Seine*, and *John Winthrop* of New Bedford. He died in 1884 at age 54.



Capt. Obed Pierce  
1827 - 1907

Howard L. Pierce  
1865 - 1950

Eliza S. Lawrence  
wife of  
Obed Pierce  
1826 - 1914

Ina T. Cahoon  
wife of  
Howard L. Pierce  
1872 - 1916

Captain Obediah Pierce commanded the New Bedford whaling ships *Elizabeth*, *Emerald*, *Stafford* and *Catalpa*. When aboard *Emerald* in 1859, the crew had a nine hour battle with a whale during which the ship lost three boats and a lot of gear. The whale was also lost, sinking in 250 feet of water. Captain Pierce died in 1907 at age 80.

Captain Samuel F. Davis commanded two New Bedford whalers. He sailed *George and Susan* on one voyage and *Desdemona* on three voyages. His

wife Salome accompanied him on at least one voyage. He died at age 85.

Captain Warren N. Bourne commanded five New Bedford whaling voyages between 1833 and 1846 aboard *Phocian*, *Stephania*, and *Rosco*. He died in 1885 at age 81.

Captain John C. Hamblin commanded four voyages from New Bedford between 1857 and 1871 on the whale ships *Congress*, *Roman*, and *Islander*. In 1871 he sailed the Indian Ocean accompanied by his wife and their two youngest children on the ship *Islander*. They sailed the Indian Ocean for over a year. On August 30, 1872, a son was born on board the ship *Anchor* between Africa and Madagascar. Captain John C. Hamblin died in 1874 at the age of 45.

Captain Samuel Lawrence commanded the whale ship *Addison* out of New Bedford. In 1855, his wife Mary and their young daughter Minnie accompanied him on a voyage across the Pacific Ocean. During their four year voyage they met 142 other whalers. They picnicked on the coast of Baja and young Minnie played with Eskimo children on the Bering Sea. He died in 1892 at the age of 74.



Headstones of Capt. Samuel Lawrence's family:

Minnie C.	Mary	Capt. Samuel
1851 - 1923	1827 - 1906	1818 - 1892

Photo by E. Graham Ward.

Captain Henry C. Bunker of Falmouth commanded the whale ship *Uncas* owned by Elijah Swift between November 27, 1828, and July 15, 1831, sailing the Pacific Ocean. He brought back 3,468 barrels of sperm oil worth \$88,000. He died in 1879 at age 82.



Capt. Samuel Lawrence gravestone. Photo by E. Graham Ward.

Captain Caleb O. Hamblin of West Falmouth commanded the whalers *Eliza*, *Adams*, and *Robert Edwards*. His wife sometimes accompanied him on his voyages. Three of their children were born during voyages. One child was born in Australia, another in New Zealand and the third was born at sea. The latter's birth certificate lists a latitude and longitude as the place of birth. He died in 1907 at the age of 72.

Captain John C. Lincoln of Falmouth commanded the whaler *William Penn* which was built in 1832 at Hog Island (now Chapoquoit) in West Falmouth. On a Pacific voyage in 1836, they brought back 1200 barrels of sperm oil. In a battle with natives two boat crews were captured and First Mate Eldridge was killed. Captain Lincoln died in 1882 at the age of 82.

Mariners listed include some of the more important captains who are now buried in Oak Grove Cemetery:

Captain Moses Fish (ships *Bart*, *Gosnold*, and *Osmanli*) died in 1902 at age 82.

Captain Silas G. Baker (ship *Andrews*) died in 1906 at age 72.

Captain Joseph Dimmick (ship *Tropic Bird*) died in 1879 at age 75.

Captain Charles H. Gifford (ship *Minerva*) died in 1928 at age 73.

Captain Lewis N. Herendeen (ship *Gratitude*) died in 1896 at age 68.

Captain Benjamin Franklin Jones (ship *Milton*) died in 1879 at age 53.

Captain John R. Lawrence (ship *Draco*) died in 1896 at age 76.

Captain Thomas J. McLane (ship *Wanderer*) died in 1906 at age 55.

Captain John G. Nye (ship *Europa*) died in 1894 at age 81.

Captain Asa S. Tobey (ship *Rosco*) died in 1868 at age 56.

Captain Thomas H. Lawrence (ship *Addison*) died in 1896 at age 75.

Private Zimri Tobey, after the War of 1812, became Captain Zimri Tobey and was involved in shipping rice from Georgetown County in North Carolina. Rice was moved in coastal schooners to northern markets. Captain Tobey skippered a number of these schooners during the cooler months of the year. He would return to Falmouth due to the threat of malaria in the summer.

### Captains of Ships of Sail Other Than Whalers

During the years prior to the development of the railroad, most commerce between the early colonies and foreign countries was carried on by ships of sail. These coastal and ocean going ships carried lumber, stone, cordwood, coal, rice, cotton, food products, and everything else needed by the early settlers. These ships also formed the backbone of the early fishing fleets.

### World War I, World War II, The Korean War, and The Viet Nam War

Listings of the veterans of the wars after 1900 indicate that a very large number of these men and women who gave their service to our country are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery. A complete listing of these people is available to anyone who wishes to review our records.

Approximately 103 men and women who served in World War I are buried in Oak Grove. Some of these veterans served also in World War II. As of

July 2010, we have identified 116 men and women who served in World War II and are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery. Some of these veterans also served in later wars.

To date, ten men and women who served in the Korean War are buried in Oak Grove Cemetery. Eight veterans of the Vietnam War are buried there.

### Non-Military Persons of Note

The most notable is Katharine Lee Bates. Following is a partial list of others that played an important part in Falmouth's history:

Colonel Edward Thompson was a noted expert on Mayan culture in the Yucatan area of Mexico. He wrote a number of books on his exploration and study of Mayan ruins. The archeological treasures he retrieved from Mayan ruins and Chichen-Itza's sacred well are in the Peabody Museum at Harvard and the Field Museum in Chicago. He published a book on Mayan culture in 1932, *People of the Serpent*. He died in 1935 at the age



Edward H. Thompson family tombstone. Photo by E. Graham Ward.



Aaron Cornish M.D. Photo by E. Graham Ward.

of 75. His epitaph reads, "Soul Unafraid."

Dr. Aaron Cornish was the first Falmouth medical doctor to have received his training from medical school. He served Falmouth from 1820 to 1864 as a Doctor of Medicine. He was also very active in Falmouth's Marine Lodge serving as Master of one of the oldest lodges of Free and Accepted Masons in Massachusetts. He died in 1864 at the age of 70.

Ephraim F. Lincoln was a recognized artist and teacher who was well known for his marine paintings, including many paintings of ships of sail. His paintings of full rigged clipper ships are outstanding down to the smallest detail. Two of his best known paintings are the battle between *Constitution* and *Guerrier* and the view of a full rigged clipper ship passing the old Nantucket Shoals lightship on a stormy day. E. F. Lincoln's painting of the British ship *Nimrod* hung in Falmouth's Lawrence School for a number of years. It is now displayed at the Falmouth Historical Society. He died in 1934 at the age of 70.

Sylvia Donaldson was the first woman elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives seven years after women gained the right to vote



in 1919. She was born in Falmouth on July 12, 1849, and graduated from Falmouth's Lawrence Academy in 1865. She attended Boston University and served a number of years as an educator in Brockton, Massachusetts. She was elected to represent Brockton in the Massachusetts House in 1923 and served briefly as the first Madam Speaker of the House of Representatives in 1926. She is buried in her family plot with her father Dr. Hugh Donaldson. She died in 1937 at the age of 87.

Elijah Swift and his son Oliver C. Swift started the Bar Neck Wharf Company in 1827 in Woods Hole to build whalers and other ships of sail. The family constructed the whaling ships *Commodore Morris*, *Hobomok*, *Uncas*, and *Awashonks*. *Awashonks* was completed in 1830. The ships sailed out of New Bedford and Nantucket bringing back valuable cargos of whale oil.

The Swifts also built merchant ships for the coastal trade. Elijah Swift was the contractor for the original Marine Lodge of Masons in Falmouth in the same location as it is today. Elijah's home was located where the Falmouth Library is today and his workshop was east of his house. During the War of 1812, H.M.S. *Nimrod*, when bombarding Falmouth, put a 32 pound shot through his workshop and another went through the dining room of his house. To avoid the British, he built the 60 ton sailing vessel *Status Ante Bellum* away from the shore in his yard. When it was completed, he used 50 oxen to haul it down Shore Street to the Old Stone Dock where he launched it. Then he loaded it with salt and sailed past the British blockade to sell his cargo in South Carolina. On returning from North Carolina, laden with a new cargo, he was captured by the British. He escaped in the night by a ruse and was able to return to Falmouth safely with his ship and cargo.

Elijah Swift also had a thriving live oak business supplying oak for ship building to United States Navy Yards. He would take as many as 500 men south to Florida and the Carolinas in the winter to harvest oak and return in the spring to Falmouth. He also operated the largest of the salt works in Falmouth, helped to establish the Falmouth National Bank, and planted the original elms on the Village Green. Elijah Swift died at the age of 75 in 1852. Oliver Swift died at the age of 77 in 1874.

William C. Davis built the first large furniture store on the corner of Main Street and Shore Street in 1889. It still stands today. This large wood structure has served as a furniture store continuously since it was built. It has also served as an undertakers parlor during part of its long history. William Davis died at 78 in 1932.

Reverend Henry Herbert Smythe became the rector of St. Barnabas Episcopal Church when it was consecrated in 1890 and served for the next 32 years. He was very active in local affairs and was one of the original founders of the Falmouth Historical Society. His research into the records of the Old Town Cemetery off Mill road is the best available record of those old town people who are buried there because the original records of this cemetery have been lost. He died in 1930 at the age of 76.

Seba A. Holton was the principal of the old Lawrence Academy from 1881 to 1891. His house was next door to the Captain Obediah Pierce house on Shore Street. He was elected to the Massachusetts State Legislature in 1896 and again in 1898. He also served as the town meeting Moderator from 1899 to 1927. He was instrumental in the development of a public water supply in Falmouth, serving on the Falmouth Water Board from 1906 until his death. He died in 1927 at the age of 80.

## Sources:

Oak Grove Cemetery records and gravestones

Mary Sicchio "Archivist" Falmouth Historical Society

The Society Archives contain an amazing amount of data on Falmouth's history which is available through their very cooperative and able Archivist without whose help this work would not have been started. Some of the information provided to me and William Swift who researched "Falmouth Whaling Captains" and "Captains of Ships of Sail" included the following:

"Men who enlisted in the Continental Army from Falmouth"

"The Falmouth Militia 1774-1783"

"Captain Weston Jenkins Company 1815" (Col. Nye's Regiment)

"Civil War soldiers residing in Falmouth at time of enlistment"

"Militia of Massachusetts Divisional orders #37"

"Greasy Luck" tales of Falmouth's Whaling industry.

*Spritsail* old issues

*Falmouth Enterprise* past issues

Early records of Oak Grove burials.

Writings of Historian David K. Nightingale

## Other sources:

"Records of Graves in Falmouth Massachusetts-veterans of the Civil War" by George Stratton

"Cape Cod Yesteryears" by Gustavus Swift Paine

Donna Walcovy "Conservator" on Civil War Veterans.

"Falmouth Carpenter Made Life Dodging Obstacles" by Steve Clark

"Cape Cod, Its People and Their History" Cambridge Riverside Press.

Falmouth Bulletin – Civil War veterans

"The Book of Falmouth" Mary Lou Smith

Cape Cod Library – Descendents of John Jenkins

Brockton Public Library on M. Sylvia Donaldson

Yarmouth Register 4/12/1864 article by William Dimmock

"1686 – 1886 Falmouth's Two Hundredth Anniversary" published in 1887

Falmouth Veterans office records

Nathan S. Ellis III, a third generation Nathan Ellis, (known as "Pete" growing up) was born in Falmouth on June 28, 1926, went to Falmouth schools through the tenth grade, graduated from Manlius Military School in upper New York in 1945, received a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering from Brown University in 1950, served in the United States Marine Corp in 1945 until after the war ended and served in the Massachusetts National Guard from 1948 to 1951.

Nate served as an elected County Commissioner for Barnstable County from 1985 – 1989 and as an elected Falmouth Selectman from 1990 to 1994.

Nate worked as a Civil Engineer for the State of Massachusetts Department of Public Works from 1950 - 1956, as Commissioner of Public Works for the City of New Bedford 1956 – 1960, as Water Superintendent for the City of New Bedford 1961 – 1963, as Director of Public Works for the Town of Falmouth 1963 – 1983, As Water Utility Manager for the Mashpee Water District 1988 – 1992 and as a Disaster Assistant Engineer for the Federal Emergency Management Agency from 1992 – 1998.

He is a registered Professional Engineer and a grade 4 Water Operator in Massachusetts.