

Sunapee's Historic Buildings & Places – by Barbara B. Chalmers
Colby Cemetery
268 Stagecoach Road



Year Built:
c1790

Use:
Private Burial Ground
Public Burial Ground

2020 photo from the gateway of Colby Cemetery from the Sunapee Historical Society Collection

Property History: This Sunapee burial ground is located in Lot 6 of the 5th Range of 75-acre lots granted in 1768 by England's King George to Saville proprietor Samuel Cooke. He sold his grant to proprietor John Wendell, a Portsmouth real estate attorney, who actively worked to settle the township. In 1775 John Wendell sold 110-acres for 30 pounds to Joshua Gage (1747-1811) of Dunbarton. One month after purchasing his land, Joshua enlisted as a corporal with Col. John Stark's Regiment and fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Joshua returned to his family and worked to establish his farm. In Saville, he was a signatory to the 1776 Association Test which identified resident men in support of an independent government for the colonies. Joshua by a joiner by trade, and built a small dwelling house that was later replaced by the stately Federal-style house, known in modern times as Dexter's Inn. Joshua's farm yard and barns were on the east side of Stagecoach Road. Behind and to the south of his house, Joshua established a family burial ground where at least eight Gage family members are interred. At the 1798 town meeting, a committee was established to recommend sites for two town burial grounds, one north of the Sugar River, and one south of the river. At the 1800 town meeting, an 82-ft by 132-ft plot at Joshua Gage's family burial site was selected for the south town burial ground. The following year, the town voted funds to have a four-foot-high stone wall built to keep stray farm animals out and paid James Young 3-shillings and 11-pence per rod (16.5-ft) to build the wall.

The earliest grave with a marker is from 1806 for six-day-old Alvan Pike, the only child of Hepsibah and Thomas Pike who farmed on Bradford Road. Next in 1810 was the burial of Joshua Gage's



sister, Deborah Gage Perkins, who lived with her husband Ichabod on the neighboring farm to the west. Joshua Gage died at home in 1811 and was interred here, followed the next year by his wife Jenni. At left is their marker in at 1971 photo showing open fields and a view to Lake Sunapee. In 1844 the former Gage homestead was purchased by John Colby and stayed in the family as a farm and summer inn for 70 years until 1914, and is why this is called Colby Cemetery, although there are no Colby family members buried here. From 1930 to 1948 the land around the Colby Cemetery was the Samuel and Mary Crowther estate, next to become Dexter's Inn, a four-season resort founded by Dexter and Genelle Richards. There are 58 known graves

at Colby Cemetery, although 17 graves have no markers. Since 1999, four cremains interments have occurred including those of former Dexter's Inn owners Genelle Richards and Shirley and Frank H. Simpson.