

Sunapee's Historic Buildings & Places – by Barbara B. Chalmers
Cooper Cemetery
Near 324 Stagecoach Road



2022 photo from Sunapee Historical Society Collection

Year Built:
c1808

Use:
Private Burying Ground
Public Burying Ground

Property History: This half-acre Sunapee burying ground is located in the northwest corner of Lot 6 in the 4th Range of 75-acre lots granted in 1768 by England's King George to Saville proprietor Robert Calder. No information could be discovered about Calder except that he sold his grant to proprietor John Wendell, a Portsmouth real estate attorney, who actively worked to settled the township. In 1778 John Wendell sold Lot 6 for 45 pounds to Daniel Woodward of Smithfield, Rhode Island. Daniel, his wife, and 3 young children were included in the 1800 Wendell census, then were gone from records. Part of Daniel's land was sold to his brother Elijah, and in 1791 Elijah sold 25-acres in Lot 6 for 95 pounds to Cornelius Young (1759-1808), one of the eight Young family siblings who settled in the township following service in the Revolutionary War.

Cornelius Young's gravestone of 1808 is the earliest known grave in Cooper Cemetery. This burial ground is an irregular shape that includes a small hill and is surrounded by stone walls and a bank wall at its southern edge. It is located directly west of the late-1700s house once owned by Cornelius. In 1813 his widow Sarah Young sold their land, then known as the Elijah Lot, to Smith Angell, excepting the land of the burial ground. By the 1830s, Dorothy "Polly" B. Young, Cornelius Young's niece, owned three-acres with the small dwelling house at 324 Stagecoach Road. Polly was a spinster, an unmarried woman in her 40s. In 1848 the house was purchased by Sarah and John Cooper. John was a shoemaker from the Lower Village and a town sexton, who managed burials. Sarah had grown up on her parents' farm at the top of Youngs Hill, known in modern times as Dexter's Inn. Sarah and John sold the small house by the burial ground to their son John Martin "Mart" Cooper. Mart and his wife Meroa lived here for more than 50-years, until 1912, and is why this cemetery is known as Cooper Cemetery, although there are no Cooper family members buried here. Mart was a long-time Sunapee selectman, state representative, and school board member. At Cooper Cemetery, there are many burials associated with the Young family, and other nearby farm families such as Blaisdell, Currier, Gardner, and Knowlton. In 1915 the Bradford chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) paid to replace two old gravestones here, those of Esek Young and Christopher Gardner, both veterans of the Revolutionary War. At left is John Pike Knowlton's 1910 gravestone, the largest monument in any Sunapee cemetery. This cemetery was neglected and in the process of being reclaimed by the forest by the 1980s. Fortunately, it was brought back to its present tidy state with its grounds covered in lush green moss. The most recent burial occurred in 1925 for John's nephew, Charles Alanson Knowlton.

