



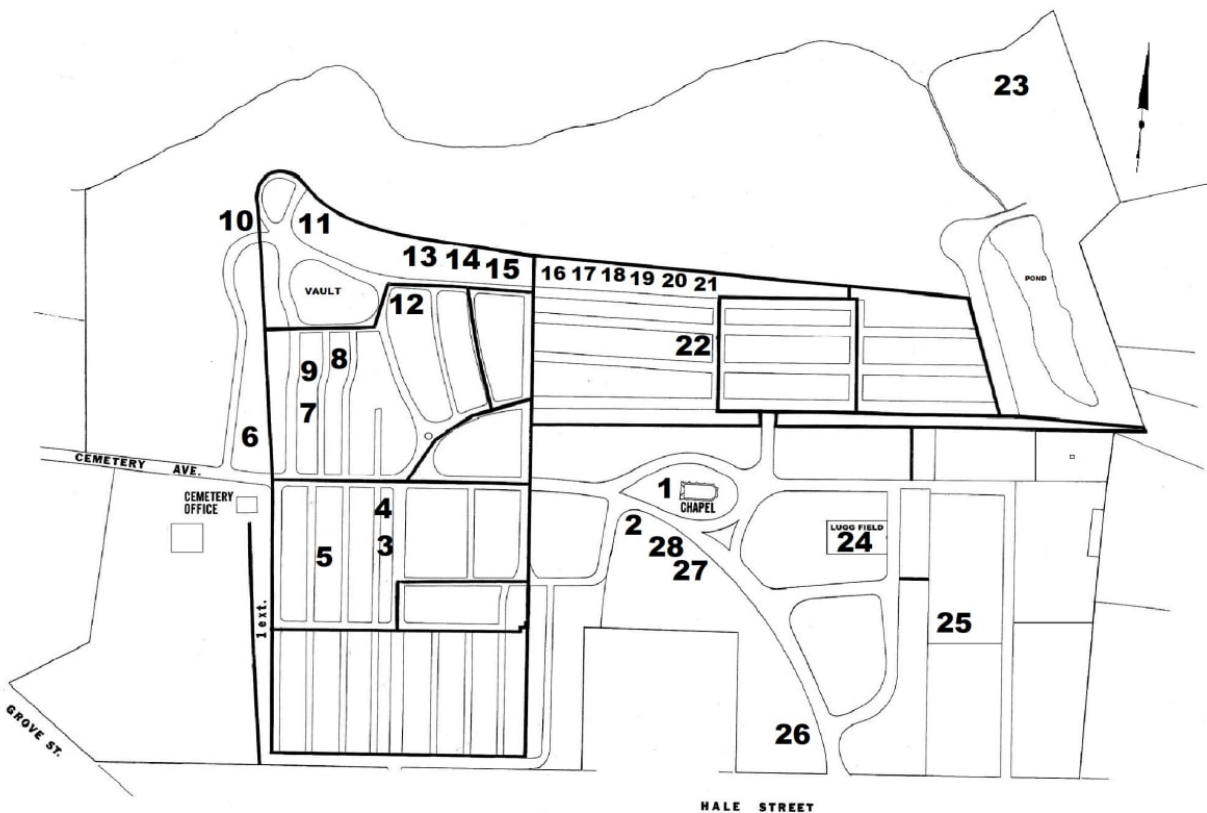
Town of Vernon

Cemetery Department and Cemetery Commission

Walking Tour of Historic Grove Hill Cemetery

The Vernon Cemetery Commission has created a walking tour of Vernon's historic Grove Hill Cemetery.

Grove Hill Cemetery in Rockville opened in 1847. The residents of the expanding mill village of Rockville wanted a cemetery closer to them than the existing ones in Vernon. Initially 7.5 acres were purchased from David Hale. In the 1860s, 9.5 acres overlooking the Hockanum River were acquired. In the 20th century a chapel was constructed and two veterans' fields were opened. Today, Grove Hill Cemetery occupies more than 31 acres of land. With its appearance and layout, Grove Hill exemplifies the Victorian ideal of a rural cemetery designed to evoke feelings of consolation and remembrance.



1. **Lucina Chapel:** A bequest from the estate of E. Stephens Henry (1836-1921), the chapel was given in honor of his wife, Lucina Henry (1832-1930). Made from local stone the chapel was designed in a Medieval French style and was completed in 1923. Below the bell tower on the front of the building, the carved faces represent three major religions: Martin Luther for Protestantism, St. Peter for Catholicism, and King David for Judaism.

2. **Bond & Phelps Mausoleums:** Lizzie Sykes Bond (1865-1954) and Elsie Sykes Phelps (1870-1965) were daughters of prominent mill owner George Sykes. Lizzie married Charles E. Bond (1865-1912). Elsie married Charles Phelps (1852-1940), a lawyer who became the first Attorney General of CT and later the Secretary of State. A mausoleum is a free-standing building with the entombment space inside.

3. **Charles Ethan Porter (1849-1923):** After graduating in 1865 from high school in Rockville, Porter attended art school and then opened a studio in New York City. In the 1880's he went to Paris to study art in the early days of the Impressionist movement. He carried with him a letter of introduction from writer Samuel Clemens. As an African American, Porter encountered many obstacles as he made his living as an artist. After his studio in Hartford closed, he returned to Rockville where he gave art lessons and sold his work to local residents.

4. **Henry Vanness (1841-1926):** A brother-in-law to Charles Porter, Vanness and his family lived next door to the Porter home on Spruce St. Vanness started working as a freight handler for the Hartford, Providence & Fishkill Railroad on the Rockville line before moving up to baggage master. In 1880 he was promoted to passenger conductor until his retirement in 1907. At that time Vanness was the only African American passenger conductor at that railroad.

5. **Benjamin Hirst (1828-1909)** A soldier in the 14th Connecticut Volunteers, Hirst and his brother John saw action in several significant battles of the Civil War. At Gettysburg the 14th joined other units in repelling the famous charge by General Pickett's Confederate soldiers. After the war Hirst returned to live out his life in Rockville. In 1998 his letters home were annotated and published in *The Boys from Rockville*.

6. **Lottie R. Fisk (1876-1957):** The Lottie Fisk Memorial Building in Henry Park was built in her memory from money that came from the estate of her husband, Judge John Fisk. Opened in 1959, the building houses the Vernon Parks & Recreation Department.

7. **Dwight Loomis (1821-1903):** A graduate of the law school at Yale University in 1847, Loomis started his practice in Rockville. He was elected to the State House of Representatives (1851) and the State Senate (1857) before being elected to U.S. Congress (1859). He served as judge of the Superior Court of the State (1864) and then became an Associate Justice of the State Supreme Court (1875).

8. **Thomas Burpee** (1830-1864): A worker at a mill in Rockville, Burpee joined the 22nd CT Volunteer Infantry and rose to the rank of Colonel before dying in the Battle of Cold Harbor, Virginia in 1864. The local Grand Army of the Republic veterans' post was named in his honor in 1896. The New England Civil War Museum in Vernon's Town Hall has a collection of items from the War belonging to Burpee.

9. **Charles E Dart** (1830-1864): Another member of the 14th CT Volunteers, Dart was serving as the color bearer for the regiment when he was mortally wounded at the Battle of Fredricksburg. His restored sandstone marker displays a furled flag and sword.

10. **Harry** (1913-1965) & **Elizabeth Lugg** (1911-2009): Harry was a lieutenant commander in the U.S. Navy in World War II. He also served in the CT House of Representatives. Before being appointed as judge to the Court of Common Pleas in 1961, Lugg was a Town Councilman and also a prosecutor in the Rockville City Court. Elizabeth also served in the CT House of Representatives. She later served on the board of the Rockville Library and on the Grove Hill Cemetery Committee.

11. **E. Stevens Henry** (1836-1921) & **Lucina Henry** (1832-1930): A prominent local businessman, civic leader and CT Representative to Congress. Mr. Henry left money to build the Lucina Chapel and gave the City of Rockville the land that later became Henry Park. A cemetery employee recalled that when Henry's 46 foot monument was installed in 1909 all the horses in town were needed to move the obelisk to its place. The monument was installed in 1923.

12. **Cyrus White** (1814-1891): An entrepreneur, White founded the White Corbin Company which later became the U.S. Envelope Company. White's factory was located in the Florence Mill on West Main St. White opened an opera house on the corner of Brooklyn and Market St. The White monument is constructed of cast zinc.

13. **William Cogswell** (1803-1886): Born in Tolland, Cogswell came to Rockville in 1823 when the Rock Mill, the first mill along the Hockanum River, was being constructed. He built other early mills, constructed several homes in Rockville and had a wood shop on Prospect St where he made coffins. In 1871 he published a memoir of his experiences in Rockville as it changed from a small mill village to a textile city.

14. **Thomas Rockwell M.D.** (1854-1934) A doctor in Rockville from the 1880's to the 1930's, Rockwell followed the common practice of seeing patients in a wing of his house in a specially designed office. Rockwell's home/office was on Park St. next to Talcott Park. During the 1918 influenza pandemic Rockwell cared for patients in tents set up in the park and in his backyard.

15. **Samuel Fitch** (1822-1896) The first Mayor of the newly formed City of Rockville in 1890, Fitch was a mill owner who built a business block along Union St. When the wooden structure burned in 1888, Fitch rebuilt the block from stone, it is still standing today across from Rockville Hospital.

16. **Alvah Belding** (1838-1925) One of the Belding Brothers whose company made silk thread, Belding's mill was located at the corner of Grove and Main St until 1927. Belding's impressive mansion "Castle Sunset" can be seen on Talcott and Davis Avenues.
17. **Henry Adams** (1837-1906) As the owner of the Adams Warp Mill which was the closest mill to the dam on Shenipsit Lake, Adams decided each morning when and how much water to release from the lake into the Hockanum River. The water flowed through Rockville to power all the mills along the river. The stately Adams mansion on Davis Ave was surrounded by extensive gardens and even a tennis court.
18. **George Sykes** (1839-1903) Arriving in Rockville at the age of 23, Sykes came from a textile background. As the new manager and later owner of the Hockanum Mill Company, he brought innovative ideas for equipment and procedures. He left money to establish vocational training programs for high school students. The Sykes Fund continues to purchase career-based technology for Vernon school students.
19. **Crosley Fitton** (1840-1891) A leading supporter of the Rockville Fire Department, woolen manufacturer Fitton was honored when the fire company at Prospect St station was named for him.
20. **Alden Skinner, M.D.** (1799-1863) Before any doctors resided in Rockville, people traveled to Vernon Center to see Dr. Skinner. His home and office still stand at the corner of Hartford Tnpk and Dart Rd. During the Civil War, Dr. Skinner became the first surgeon of the 25th Connecticut Volunteers. The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War honored Skinner by naming their camp after him.
21. **George Thayer** (1853-1928) An avid bicyclist in the early years of the sport, Thayer went on a 7-month trip from Connecticut to California and back in 1886. He rode most of the 11,000 mile trip by bicycle. He sent back weekly newspaper columns. His father was the owner of the Windemere Mill in Ellington.
22. **Gustave Hoffman** (1869-1945) A local artist who took lessons from Charles Ethan Porter, Hoffman gained renown for his art, especially his skill in creating subtly tinted etchings.
23. **George Maxwell** (1817-1891): When Maxwell came to Rockville in 1847, he opened a general store on the same land where his mansion (now Rockville Hospital) would someday stand. Maxwell became president of the Hockanum Mills Company in 1869. A strong supporter of public libraries, he left money in his will which was put toward the construction in 1904 of the Rockville Public Library.
24. **Harry H. Lugg Veterans' Field:** To accommodate requests for more space for veteran burials, additional land was prepared. The field with its memorial walkway was named in honor of Harry Lugg, Connecticut Judicial Court judge, World War II Naval Commander and Commander of Vernon's American Legion Post. Memorial bricks are

available for purchase at the cemetery office. Veterans who are Vernon residents or who enlisted as Vernon residents are eligible for burial in Veterans' Field.

25. **Francis M. Brigham** (1924-1943) One of the first soldiers from the area to die in action during World War II, Brigham was killed in a plane crash in the South Pacific.

26. **Russell Hartmann** (1917-2012) A motivated businessman who is remembered for the quality of his supermarket in Rockville. The Hartmann Family Foundation has supported local business endeavors and charitable organizations including the construction of the Hartmann Pavilion at Henry Park.

27. **Stanley Dobosz Veterans' Field:** In 1920 the local chapter of the American Legion, an organization for World War I veterans, named their post after Stanley Dobosz, the first soldier from town who died in the war. In 1965 this section of Grove Hill was set aside for anyone who had served in the military.

28. **Otto** (1924-1984) **and Marie Schtatz** (1920-1986) Refugees from Communist Romania, Otto and Marie Schtatz and their family came to Vernon in the early 1950s. Sponsored by Vernon Congregational Church and assisted with finding jobs, the Schtatzs worked hard to successfully assimilate into the community.

The tour concludes by the **Lucina Chapel**. Visitors have traveled approximately .8 miles and covered over 170 years of history. The stories shared in the brochure are but a small sampling of the many lives represented by the stones found in Grove Hill Cemetery. This brochure was created in collaboration with the Vernon Historical Society.