

“Was She Really Buried In Our Backyard?”

By Cope Makechnie
and Heather Makechnie
For the Beacon

In 2002, Howard Wilson was excavating beside the home of Pat and Paul Goneau on Main Street in preparation for building a patio. He found part of an old gravestone with the engraving, “wife of Weymouth, Nov. 24, 1819 [to] June 13, 1890.”

The Goneaus had an old photograph of their farmhouse. On the back someone had handwritten, “built by Dr. Weymouth.” Since there seemed to be a Weymouth connection with their home, Pat placed the gravestone beneath a tree, very near where it was dug up. Says Pat, “We always wondered who this woman was, and was she really buried in our backyard?” A history mystery!

The *Beacon’s* “history detectives” went to work to find out. With the help of Cope Makechnie, a history sleuth from the AE/MS fourth grade, several fact-finding junkets were organized.

A visit to the Goneaus provided Cope with an opportunity to obtain a photograph of the headstone.

We went to the New Hampshire State Archives genealogy section to find whether there is a death certificate of a Weymouth woman on June 13, 1890. Cope was excited to find that there is, indeed!

Louisa Y. Weymouth died in Andover on June 13, 1890 of Bright’s disease at the age of 70 years, six months, and 19 days. She was born in Gilmanton, the daughter of Bailey and Polly Randlett Young. She is listed as married and a housekeeper. The death certificate is signed by attending physician H. A. Weymouth.

A trip to the Andover Town Hall gratified us with a burial record of Louisa Weymouth in the Weymouth plot of the “New Andover Centre Cemetery” (which has subsequently been called the Proctor Cemetery).

At Proctor Cemetery, Cope found the Weymouth family monument with Louisa’s burial spot clearly demarcated. We took a photo of Louisa’s marker plaque, which she shares with her husband, Dr. H. A. Weymouth.

Next we went to the Franklin Public



This is the broken gravestone, discovered in a backyard on Main Street, that launched a far-reaching hunt for history. Staff photo: Heather Makechnie

Library and looked at microfilm of the old *Journal-Transcript* for June 1890 and found a long obituary for Louisa Weymouth in the East Andover “gossip” column. Cope loves the poem written for the occasion. One stanza goes like this:

*Such beautiful, beautiful hands!
Though the heart was weary and sore,
Those patient hands kept toiling on,
That the children might be glad.
I almost weep, as looking back
To childhood’s distant day,
I think how these hands rested not
When mine were at their play.*

Research online netted the Federal Census reports for Andover for 1860, 1870, and 1880. (The 1890 Federal Census records are not available because they were tragically burned in a fire in Washington DC.) We find consistent mention of Dr. Henry A. Weymouth, his wife Louisa, and their children, as well as Henry’s parents Daniel and Honor Weymouth, who lived with them in their home on Chase Hill Road, just above the Grange Hall, in East Andover. (This home and all outbuildings burned to the ground in 1896.)

In 1910, John Robie Eastman published in his *History of Andover, New*

Hampshire that Henry A. Weymouth was descended from Robert Weymouth, an Englishman who settled Kittery, Maine in 1652. The line of Weymouth males, from Robert to Henry, runs: Robert, Edward, Timothy, Shadrach, George, Daniel, Henry.

Henry Augustus Weymouth was born in Gilmanton on October 14, 1820. Henry moved to Andover in 1843 to take up his practice as a doctor. His father and mother followed him here in 1847.

He married Louisa Young of Gilmanton on January 1, 1844, the year after he moved to Andover. He must have known her for a while before he left Gilmanton. Cope found their marriage record at the State Archives.

At the Merrimack County Register of Deeds in Concord it was a simple process to follow the ownership-title of the Goneau property on Main Street. Some readers may remember when it was known as The Maples.

However, in the long chain of title that goes all the way back to John Proctor, there is no record of Dr. H. A. Weymouth ever having owned the property. Perhaps he rented at one point, to be nearer Andover Center than he was

when living at the top of Chase Hill. Perhaps after his house burned in East Andover. However, we have not as yet found record that Dr. Weymouth lived on Main Street in Andover Center.

So why was Louisa’s gravestone found on the Goneau’s property?

For added perspective we spoke with Pat Cutter, president of the Andover Historical Society as well as a trustee of the Andover Cemetery Committee. Pat indicates that this situation has come up before in Andover. Families began burying their dead, perhaps on their own property, perhaps in a neighborhood plot. But over time, the town established formal cemeteries, and residents bought family plots. Then often-times their dead were exhumed and re-buried in the new consolidated plot with a fancy new family monument.

Now, folks, we all know that carving a piece of granite is not the easiest task, and when it no longer serves its purpose as a grave marker, well, by golly it surely makes a great doorstep if it gets turned upside-down so the words don’t show. So there have been cases in town when a house got remodeled, only to have the writing underneath the doorstep come to light again.

We know that at least three of the Weymouth family members would have had to be re-buried, because the Andover Centre Cemetery did not exist when Henry’s baby brother and his parents died. Henry’s baby brother was actually first buried in Gilmanton.

In Louisa’s case, however, we are instructed by the account of her burial given in the “gossip” column in the *Journal-Transcript*: “The interment was at Andover Centre in a lot which was designed for the entire family.”

Perhaps Louisa’s original stone marker was of no further use after the wonderful new zinc family monument was later placed on the Weymouth plot. In any case, it is true that the extended Weymouth family is now buried all together in one place, while the rescued former marker for Louisa makes an interesting conversation piece for the Goneaus.

If you have other stories about grave markers you may have found around town, please share them with the Beacon.



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