Archaeology in Civil Engineering – Civil War Comes to the Spaulding

The Legro Family Burial Ground at the Exit 15 Interchange
Rochester, New Hampshire
Presented by

- Kathleen Wheeler
- Independent Archaeological Consulting
- Portsmouth, NH
In the beginning...
Local historian’s plan of burial ground

Credit: Richard D. Longo
LEGRO FAMILY CEMETERY

Cemetery #123 Tax Map # 221 Lot # State Property

Compiled, researched & drawn by Richard D. Longo
Assisted by Michelle Smith & William Smith

G.P.S. coordinates:
Upper left corner: elevation: 255.5
N 43°19'08.6"
W 70°59'34.4"

Lower left corner: 241.6
43°19'07.4"
W 70°59'34.4"

Upper right corner: 246.1
43°19'07.0"
W 70°59'33.9"

Lower right corner: 241.6
43°19'07.7"
W 70°59'36.6"
One wrinkle before we headed out into the field….

- Civil War was time of innovation driven by war needs (health, sanitation, returning bodies home)
- One such innovation was the development of embalming fluids (Konefes and McGee 2001)
- A common ingredient in these embalming fluids was ARSENIC
- Can be ingested through hand contact with dust or objects that later have contact with the mouth (e.g., soda can or cigarette)
- We needed to test for presence of arsenic
1<sup>st</sup> objective

- Find all graves and map them
- Done by skimming off topsoil
- Expose rectangular outline of graveshafts
DECEASED
Jan. 1, 1863,
Ae. 35 yrs.
5 mos. & 11 days

Dear Husband, we hope to meet you
when a few brief years are
in that bright celestial city.
I hope that the hand shall come in
my
Died
Jan. 1, 1863.
Æt. 35 yrs.
5 mos. of 11 days.

Dear Husband, we hope to meet thee
When a few brief years are here
Is that bright celestial sky
Where do the loved one dwell no more.
2nd Objective

- Recover individual burials
- Uncover coffin lid
- Remove wooden coffin cover
- Expose and record burials
- Remove burials and all coffin hardware
Viewing plates & hinges
Some burial details: a spacer
For Grave 1
Details: handle and lead screws
Surprises...effects of nature
2nd row

Posthole

GR 1 – Elmira Leighton, d. 1854 @ 2 yrs
GR 2 – James Leighton, d. 1845 @ 21 dys
GR 3 – Benjamin Leighton, d. 1843 @ 26 dys
GR 4 – Mary Ellen Leighton, d. 1842 @ 3 mos
GR 5 – *not known; coffin length suggests infant
GR 10 – *Maria Jane Legro, d. 1832 @ 3 mos.
GR 6 – E. Albert Legro, d. 1859 @ 1 yr
GR 8 – Mary E. Legro, d. 1871 @ 41 yrs
GR 9 – Elihu Legro, d. 1863 @ 35 yrs
GR 7 – *not known; no evidence of human remains
GR 11 – double burial, believed to be stacked: Joanna Legro, d. 1848 @ 54 yrs
               David Legro, d. 1852 @ 61 yrs

Fence line?

Notation: Names w/ * means no bone was recovered from burials.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Birth date</th>
<th>Date of death</th>
<th>Age at death</th>
<th>Epitaph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEGRO</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rev. Elihu H. Legro</td>
<td></td>
<td>July 21, 1827</td>
<td>January 1, 1863</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Dear husband we hope to meet thee, when a few brief years are o'er;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>In that bright celestial City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Where death's hand shall come no more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary E. Legro</td>
<td>wife of Elihu Legro</td>
<td>February 9, 1830</td>
<td>December 27, 1871</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Farewell dear mother, thy sufferings are over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Albert Legro</td>
<td>son of Elihu and Mary E. Legro</td>
<td>October 14, 1858</td>
<td>November 29, 1859</td>
<td>13 months</td>
<td>Rest little son, forever rest, though parents weep below. Safe in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bosom of thy God, No sorrow shall you know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Legro</td>
<td></td>
<td>February 10, 1791</td>
<td>July 10, 1852</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joanna (Hayes) Legro</td>
<td>wife of David</td>
<td>Dec 26 1793</td>
<td>Sept 12 1848</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Not husband, friends nor children dear, Nor earth's full charms could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>hold her here. Her Saviour call'd she meekly said I'm ready Lord, and to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>him fled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Jane Legro</td>
<td>daughter of David and Joanna Legro</td>
<td>July 31, 1832</td>
<td>November 13, 1832</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEIGHTON</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ellen Leighton</td>
<td>daughter of Joseph J and Elmira Leighton</td>
<td>May 5, 1842</td>
<td>August 15, 1842</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benjamin F. Leighton</td>
<td>son of Joseph J and Elmira Leighton</td>
<td>June 25, 1843</td>
<td>July 21, 1843</td>
<td>26 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmira E. Leighton</td>
<td>daughter of Joseph J and Elmira Leighton</td>
<td>February 9, 1852</td>
<td>April 9, 1854</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Little Sissie our heart dwells forever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James F. Leighton</td>
<td>son of Joseph J and Elmira Leighton</td>
<td>July 28, 1845</td>
<td>October 18, 1845</td>
<td>21 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

- Started with expectation of one row of eight burials
- Discovered one extra child not accounted for in recent historic records
- Also found that burial ground consisted of two rows, encompassing three generations
Reburial Process –
custom-made coffins
Affixing commemorative plaque to coffin
First of the coffins made...
Detail of coffins and plaques

Unknown child
date of death unknown
age: unknown

Maria Jane Legro
died November 13, 1832
age: 3 months, 13 days
Group Reburial April 2010
Elihu Legro

- Reburial was May 8, 2010
- following his service in Civil War, reburied with military honors
- Died New Year’s Day 1863, sent back to Rochester and buried with his son and parents
- His wife Mary followed eight years later
Acknowledgements

- New Hampshire Department of Transportation
- Severino Construction
- City of Rochester
- Dan Meehan