

Kinsman Presbyterian Cemetery

Out of all the cemeteries in Trumbull County, one in particular seems like a relic from New England itself: the Kinsman Presbyterian Cemetery, or Old Presbyterian Cemetery. A sizable tract of land at the corner of State and Church Streets, lanky trees frame the outskirts of the grounds along the road. Inside the cemetery itself, headstones, obelisks, and cast iron fences all rise against a beautiful Greek Revival church; giving the appearance of a colonial churchyard. One of the oldest cemeteries in Trumbull County, the Kinsman Presbyterian Cemetery got its start in April, 1804 when John Kinsman, the township's namesake selected this spot as the resting place for John Tidd. 32 years old at the time of his death, Tidd had been a bachelor from Easton, Northampton County, Pennsylvania who became sick with fever and died—becoming the first death in the township. Although he was buried in an unmarked grave, the cemetery began to fill up with headstones fast as more and more settlers from the East arrived, and the trials of pioneer life often proved fatal.

*Following a summer storm,
dark clouds peel away over the
Kinsman Presbyterian Cemetery
illuminating both graves and church.*

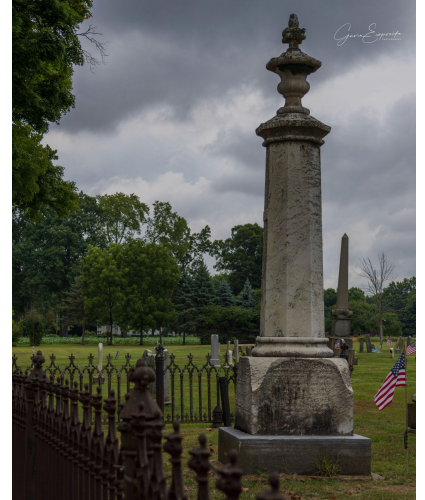


In 1833, the cemetery gained its most notable feature when directly to the east, the Congregational-Presbyterian Church was built by master builder Willis Smith. A talented carpenter, Smith had been asked in 1818 by the Kinsman family to come to Ohio from Lisbon, Connecticut to build houses in the area. Proving to be an exemplary architect in doing so, he was chosen to build the community a church upon land donated by John Kinsman Jr. Completed in August, 1833 after two years of work, the new church was built in the Greek Revival style with Gothic influences, costing the community \$4,000 to build. John Kinsman's widow, Rebecca personally gave one fourth of the sum to finance the construction of the church, and in 1850, donated a bell for the belfry. It was around this time that the Presbyterian Cemetery's position as the village burial ground was usurped in favor of the "New" Kinsman Cemetery, established in 1858 by the Kinsman Cemetery Association. Suited on four acres of land on the eastern side of the church, this new cemetery was radically different, as instead of being located on a flat piece of land like the "old" one, it featured rollicking hills, landscaped driveways, and a garden like atmosphere—all hallmarks of a Victorian style "rural" cemetery. While burials of both township residents and faithful adherents of the Congregational-Presbyterian church occurred in both churchyards simultaneously throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, by 1920, burials in the "Old" Presbyterian Cemetery had reduced to a trickle, and in 1965, ceased altogether. In order to easily find the graves featured in this presentation, markers are listed in order of appearance as one walks through the cemetery, starting at the southwest corner of the yard, as well as photographs for easy identification.

An example of how architecture from New England was transplanted to the Western Reserve, Connecticut born architect Willis Smith was likely influenced by New England architect Asher Benjamin's "The American Builder's Companion," a popular guide among rural builders in the early 1800s, as the facade of the Kinsman Presbyterian church mirrors Benjamin's Old West Church in Boston, built in 1807; this time done in wood instead of brick, with additional Greek and Gothic details.

John Kinsman: The Origin Of A Township Name

From a family almost as old as New England herself, with his great great great great grandfather, Robert Kinsman arriving at Ipswich, Massachusetts from Wiltshire, England in 1634, John Kinsman was born on May 7th, 1753 as the first of four children to Jeremiah and Sarah (Thomas) Kinsman of Lisbon, New London County, Connecticut. When independence was declared in 1776, John, then 23, enlisted into the service as an ensign in Col. Huntington's Regiment of the 17th Connecticut Continental serving under Gen. Washington. A participant in the Battle of Long Island on August 27th, 1776, which resulted in British encirclement and substantial casualties and captures for Continental forces, he was among the prisoners of war taken by Hessian forces and imprisoned aboard the ship "HMS Jersey" along the northwest shore of Brooklyn. Almost dying from the squalid conditions, he, along with two other prisoners, were luckily paroled, and released from the prison ship. Confined to a room in New York City, John learned the trade of hatmaking, and upon his release in a prisoner exchange, took his newfound skill back to Connecticut and established a hattery in his hometown. Now a successful businessman ready to start a family, in 1792, he married Rebecca Perkins, a fellow native of Lisbon whose brother Simon was a land agent for the Connecticut Land Company.



Enclosed by a stylish but rusted Gothic fence, the Kinsman monument towers over the Presbyterian Churchyard, ensuring prominence in the community, even in death.



Elected as a Representative to the Connecticut State Legislature in 1797, and then subsequently re-elected for the next two years, it was during his second term in 1798 that Kinsman bought an interest in the Land Company and drew from a lottery Town Seven, Range One in the northeastern corner of what is now Trumbull County. It wouldn't be until 1799 that Kinsman would purchase his holdings, or even personally inspect them for that matter. That year, after paying \$12,903.23 for 16,664 acres of land, John Kinsman left Connecticut along with his brother in law Simon Perkins for the wilderness of the Western Reserve to inspect what was now named Kinsman Township. Traveling on horseback across the Allegheny Mountains to Pittsburgh, the men proceeded to Youngstown, where they were met by another surveyor, Alfred Wolcott who rode with

the men through the woods some 25 miles to the center of the township. Although a dense wilderness, the men were met by a clearing upon the Pymatuning where a surveyors cabin was built. By the new millennium, the township had been surveyed into one mile squares, and at the formation of Trumbull County on July 10th, 1800, was appointed as a justice of peace by territorial governor Arthur St. Clair. In spite of his new position, Kinsman soon returned to Connecticut. Returning in 1804 with his wife and five children, John was met by a stark change from what he had left, the community that he forged now had 30 some families living in it plus the lifeblood of any pioneer settlement: a church, lead by Congregational-Presbyterian missionary, Joseph Badger. After making Ohio his home, John frequently made trips back east to procure supplies for the burgeoning community of Kinsman and to encourage settlement, as well as contribute to its development by deeding land for a cemetery and academy. Also an active participant in Trumbull County's growth, in 1812, upon the formation of the Western Reserve Bank by Simon Perkins, he was among one of the nine men who incorporated it. On August 19th, 1813, after a full, industrious life, John Kinsman died in the township that carried his name at the age of 60 years. Interred at the family plot located along the southwest corner of the cemetery grounds, he rests beneath a marble obelisk set atop a square base surrounded by a Victorian Gothic wrought iron fence alongside his wife, Rebecca and their children John, Thomas, Olive, Jonana, and Sarah; all of whom he preceded in death.

Lydia and Nabby: The Two Wives of Jehiel Meachem

During the 19th century with mortality rates as high as they were, it wasn't uncommon for marriages to be cut in half by the specter of death. resulting in one of the surviving parties to remarry and carry on with life. Often, when the succeeding partner died and a gravestone was made for them, it wasn't unheard of to include the preceding partner's name on it as a tribute also. However, what if one partner isn't buried beneath the same stone, but elsewhere? Such is the case of early settler Jehiel Meachem and his two wives, Lydia and Nabby, both of whom share a marker in the Kinsman Presbyterian Cemetery. Entering this world on August 31st, 1763 as the first of three children born to Capt. Joel Meachem and Priscilla Simmons of Enfield, Hartford County, Connecticut, Jehiel Meachem's lot in life was a blacksmith, operating out of a shop in nearby East Hartland. A trade that ultimately called the Meachem family westward to Ohio, in 1805 Jehiel was asked by Calvin Cone, a former native of Hartland, to come to Gustavus Township with the promise of 50 acres of land in exchange for serving as the village blacksmith. That winter, Jehiel packed his wife, Lydia Seymour, whom he married in 1788, five children, and some other relatives into a set of ox drawn covered sleds and departed Connecticut for the Western Reserve. Reaching the Finger Lakes region of New York by the New Year, perhaps due to the thrifty practice of sleeping and eating in their wagons, in late February, 1806, tragedy struck while stopped at Canandaigua, as when getting off the sled, Lydia tripped and fell; severely injuring herself.

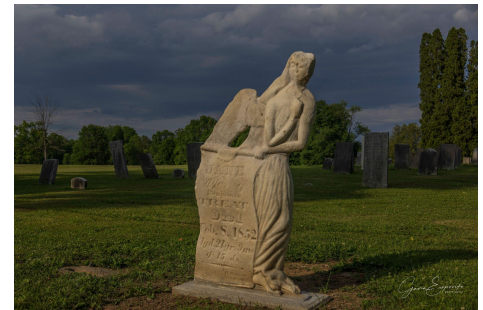
The weatherworn marker which commemorates the lives of both Jehiel Meachem's wives, reading as follows: "In Memory of / Lydia / Who died at Canandaigua / New York Feb. 23rd 1805 / Emigrating from Con. to Ohio / Aged 33 years / Also of Nabby / Who died Sept 27th AD 1823 / Aged 27 years / Both wives of Jehiel Meachem"

After ordering the rest of the party to go ahead, including the older Meachem children, Jehiel remained back in New York with his injured wife and two youngest children, Patty and Horathio. Unfortunately, their mothers' condition never improved, and on February 23rd, she passed away from her injuries. Laid to rest in an unmarked grave at Canandaigua's Pioneer Cemetery alongside the Buffalo-Cleveland road (State Route 20), the funeral delayed the trip somewhat, however Jehiel soon proceeded onto Ohio with little Patty in his arms and Horathio behind him on the horse. Soon after many miles and hardships, the trio arrived to Gustavus at Mr. Cone's house just as springtime blossomed into view. Taking up residence across the road from Mr. Cone's farm, Jehiel soon became known as "Squire Meachem" following his arrival in Gustavus. In 1807, he would marry a second time to Lucy Abigail Hutchins, affectionately known as "Nabby," having with her two children; Lucia, born in 1808, and Edmund, 1811. Sadly, just as his first wife did in 1806, Nabby too would pass away in 1828, leaving Jehiel a widower. Resting beneath a brownstone marker outfitted with a single weeping willow, Nabby's headstone wasn't only erected in memory of her, but Lydia also, whose remains rest back in New York state—a touching tribute to the two wives of Jehiel Meachem.

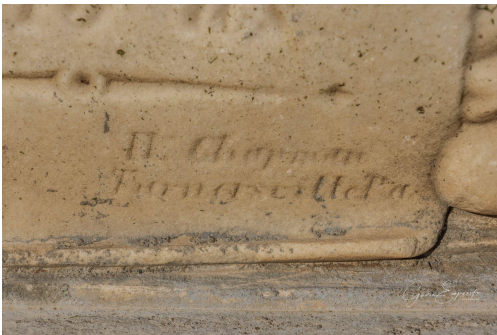


A Kind Angel: The Unique Headstone Of Jane Treat

For young lovers Jane Scott and Benjamin Treat, July 4th, 1850 wasn't just a day filled with patriotic fervor, but wedding bells also. After courting for months on end, the couple were finally united in matrimony at Kinsman's grand Congregational–Presbyterian Church, ensuring years of a happy marriage. The daughter of Pennsylvanian emigrants who came to Ohio in 1804, Jane Scott was born in Kinsman in 1829, and at the time of her marriage, 21 years old. Her groom to be, Benjamin Franklin Treat, was only 17, and had come to Ohio from Bethel, Ontario County, New York; born there in 1833. While a New Yorker by birth, Benjamin had family ties to the area, as his father's brother, Roland, was one of the first settlers of nearby Colebrook in Ashtabula County, relocating there from New York in 1830. Shortly after marriage, in the August of 1850, the newlyweds made their home with Jane's parents, William and Mary. Here, Benjamin helped with the family farm, and a year later, at the age of 18, opened a dentistry practice in his uncle's town of Colebrook on the square. Undoubtedly, these were happy times for the young couple, however they would be short lived, as on February 8th, 1852, not even two whole years into their marriage, Jane passed away at the age of 23. Buried in the Presbyterian Cemetery, her grave wasn't topped by a regular headstone, but by the statue of an angel, delicately carved from marble. Appearing to rest her weight upon an unfurled scroll which bears an inscription for young Jane, the angel points heavenwards with an expression of hope upon her face. Below, her dress, although made from stone, drapes and creases around her form as if made from actual fabric—obviously the work of a talented stonecutter. It is not known if Benjamin ever recovered from Jane's death, however after her passing, he moved to Colebrook, and on April 2nd, 1856, married a second time to Azubah Ann Congdon. Relocating to Pontatic, Michigan in 1859, he resumed his dentistry practice there, but upon the outbreak of the Civil War, enlisted into the 1st Michigan Cavalry, mustering out as a second lieutenant in April, 1865. Remarrying a third time in 1875 to Arathusa Brown, 20 years his senior, it was around this time that Benjamin became interested in photography and moved to Coopersville, Michigan where he opened a studio, producing "photographs in fine style" according to the *1882 History of Ottawa County* all while continuing to practice dentistry. Passing away in 1899 at the age of 65, he is buried at the Coopersville–Piketon Cemetery in Michigan next to his third wife while back in Kinsman, his first wife, Jane sleeps in the Presbyterian Churchyard; her grave guarded by a kind, marble angel.



Once unrecognizable, aside from the unfurled scroll which bears her date of death and age, the angel that tops Jane Treat's grave has been restored to its former glory by a local Kinsman resident.



Though faint, a carvers signature reading "Wm Chapman, Turnersville, Pa" is present at the very bottom of the angel's scroll. A look at the 1856 Crawford County, Pennsylvania map shows there being a "William Chapman & Durham Dealers in Foreign and American Marble" located in Turnersville—this is likely the shop where the stone came from.

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