

# Marianne Chapman

Friends of Grand Trunk Cemetery



## Recognition

The Grand Trunk Cemetery in Portland's East Deering Neighborhood is the final resting place of those who settled on farms along Back Cove in the 1730s and 1740s. A survey conducted by the Works Progress Administration in 1936 counted 197 marked graves. Over the years, vandalism, weather, and lack of maintenance devastated the cemetery until only eight monuments, mostly broken and covered with spray paint, were all that remained of the cemetery's original stone markers.

In 2010, a Girl Scout Gold Award project undertaken by Samantha Allhouse and Kayla Theriault set out to recover the dignity of the ancient burial site through a clean-up effort and research project. As their troop leader, Marianne created an online community known as the Friends of Grand Trunk Cemetery, coordinated the installation of a kiosk with a map of the cemetery, and helped to mark each known gravesite. After Samantha and Kayla moved onto college, research revealed eight veterans were buried in the cemetery, and Marianne led the Friends to successfully acquire replacement gravestones from the Veterans Administration. New memorials now honor a Revolutionary War veteran, five veterans of the War of 1812, and additional veterans interred in the Grand Trunk Cemetery.

In 2013, Marianne started a blog "Remnant: Grand Trunk Cemetery Reclamation Project" chronicling the work of the many Friends who have contributed to the cemetery project and to pass along their discoveries to interested readers and advocates of preserving community history. She organizes yearly fall cleanups and spring plantings to beautify the cemetery. Today the cemetery has a lovely perennial garden, walking trails, and benches so visitors may enjoy the tranquility of the historic burial ground.

Under Marianne's leadership the Girl Scouts recently donated funds to the City of Portland for a directional sign to the cemetery to be placed on Presumpscot Street. The fundraising and advocacy continues with plans to install an interactive sign within the cemetery, to replace the existing chain link fencing with a historically appropriate fence, and to remove invasive plants. Through her work with the Friends of Grand Trunk Cemetery, Marianne Chapman's vigilance, passion, and leadership is inspiring future generations to appreciate and protect this important historic place and to honor the story of Portland's early settlers.