

The Old White Church and North Park Street Cemetery

A White Creek Landmark in the Village of Cambridge



Old White Church Cemetery, Cambridge, New York. Photograph by Mira Earls, August 10, 2021.

A source-based history of the 1832 White Church, the public burying ground, the 1976 Bicentennial marker dedication, and the continuing research into the cemetery's ownership and municipal responsibility.

Publication readiness

Draft for Town Historian review

Revised edition

Includes the July 1976 *Washington County Post* clipping

Research status

Deed-chain inquiry remains open

Drafting support: Cambridge Civic AI Suite - White Creek, NY Historian. Reviewed and approved by Village officials before publication.

Introduction

The small cemetery on North Park Street in the Village of Cambridge carries several names in local usage. Washington County assessment records call it North Park Street Cemetery. A commemorative marker calls it Old White Church Cemetery. Both names point toward a layered local history involving an early Presbyterian congregation, an 1832 meetinghouse known as the "White Church," a public burying ground, a 1976 Bicentennial marker dedication, and a present-day deed-chain inquiry.

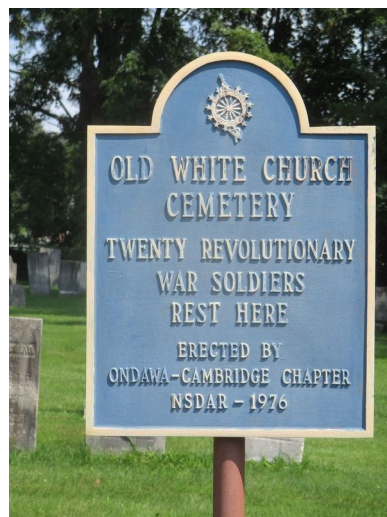
The site lies within the incorporated Village of Cambridge and, for town and assessment purposes, within the Town of White Creek. Its history therefore belongs to both the village community and the wider history of White Creek.

A Congregation Rooted in the Cambridge Valley

The religious community associated with the Old White Church traces its organized history to August 1793. Allen Corey and William L. Stone agree on the month and year but differ on the exact day. Corey gives August 7, while Stone gives August 17. Until the original incorporation record is examined directly, the most defensible formulation is that the congregation was organized in August 1793.

Corey identifies the incorporated religious society as the First United Presbyterian Congregation of Cambridge. He records the Rev. Gershom Williams as the first pastor and explains that after the township division of 1816, the congregation's house of worship stood within the portion incorporated as White Creek.

The congregation drew members from several surrounding towns. Its history is therefore both local and regional, reflecting social and religious networks that crossed municipal boundaries.



The surviving DAR marker. Photograph by Mira Earls, August 10, 2021.

The Building Known as the White Church

Corey reported that the earlier meetinghouse was taken down in 1832 and another church was erected on the same site. Stone's later county history independently confirms construction of a second church building in 1832. Corey, writing less than twenty years later, reported that the building had a bell, town clock, and organ and was often distinguished by the name "White Church."

A later generation replaced the 1832 building. Stone records that a third church edifice was erected in 1872. The surviving cemetery name nevertheless preserves the memory of the 1832 White Church.

The Cemetery Was Not Simply Church Property

"The Burying Ground was given as a public Burying Ground, and does not belong to the Congregation."

Allen Corey, *Gazetteer of the County of Washington, N.Y.*, 1849-1850

Corey's statement is important because it distinguishes the burial ground from the congregation's property. It does not identify the original donor, the grantee, the legal terms of the gift, or the later chain of title. For that reason, the statement is important historical evidence, but it is not a substitute for deed research.

The distinction helps explain why the cemetery should be understood as more than an appendage to a single church. Its gravestones, church records, municipal records, newspaper accounts, and family collections can be read together to recover the broader community that used and remembered the site.

A Bicentennial Moment: The 1976 DAR Marker Dedication

14—Horicon Newspapers, Thursday, July 15, 1976



CAMBRIDGE — Dedication of a DAR Bronze Marker by Ondawa-Cambridge Chapter at Old White Church Cemetery was a July 4th highlight. Pictured l. to r. are Historian Kenneth Gottry Sr., Rev. Robert Purrington, Regent Mianda Spurr, Allison and Donald Schneider, Chaplain Abba Anton, Evelyn Weldon, American Flag chairman.

Washington County Post (Horicon Newspapers), Thursday, July 15, 1976, p. 14. Clipping supplied by Ken Gottry.

A contemporary *Washington County Post* clipping substantially improves the documentary record for the marker itself. Dated Thursday, July 15, 1976, it reports that the Ondawa-Cambridge Chapter dedicated a DAR bronze marker at Old White Church Cemetery as a July 4 Bicentennial highlight.

The caption identifies, from left to right, Historian Kenneth Gottry Sr., Rev. Robert Purrington, Regent Mianda Spurr, Allison and Donald Schneider, Chaplain Abba Anton, and Evelyn Weldon, American Flag chairman.

The clipping was supplied in 2026 by Ken Gottry, who identified Kenneth Gottry Sr. as his father and stated that his father gave the dedication speech.

What the 1976 Source Adds

The clipping moves the marker story beyond a later marker database entry and provides a contemporary record of the ceremony. It verifies the date and public nature of the dedication and identifies named participants.

Evidence distinction: The July 1976 clipping verifies the marker dedication. The inscription's count of twenty Revolutionary War soldiers remains a commemorative claim until the underlying burials are independently reconstructed.

A Fifty-Year Family Connection

The source creates a direct human connection between the 1976 Bicentennial event and the 2026 inquiry. Kenneth Gottry Sr. appears in the contemporary newspaper record as the historian participating in the dedication.

Fifty years later, his son, Ken Gottry, raised the practical question that prompted the present ownership and maintenance research and then supplied the clipping documenting his father's participation.

That connection does not resolve title. It does, however, show how local history survives through official records, newspaper reporting, commemorative markers, family collections, and community memory.



Decorative fenced monument enclosure. Photograph by Mira Earls, August 10, 2021.

North Park Street Cemetery in Today's Municipal Records

Washington County's 2026 assessment roll identifies North Park Street Cemetery as Tax Map Parcel 256.17-1-26, property class 695, Cemetery. The parcel carries exemption code 13660. New York State defines that code as "Village-owned cemetery" for assessment purposes.

At the same time, local operational history reports that the Town of White Creek has historically arranged or contracted for maintenance. An assessment classification and a maintenance practice answer different questions. Neither should be treated as conclusive proof of recorded legal title.

Current research status: The Village requested the deed chain from the Washington County Clerk and Archives. Until the recorded conveyances are examined, the present title question remains open.

Why the Cemetery Matters to White Creek History

The cemetery occupies an unusual place at the intersection of religion, municipal geography, burial practice, family history, and community memory. Its church connection reaches back to a congregation organized in the 1790s. The meetinghouse that gave the cemetery its enduring name was erected in 1832 and was already called the White Church within a generation.

Corey's nineteenth-century account distinguishes the burying ground from the congregation's property, while the 1976 clipping documents a later generation publicly commemorating the people believed to rest there. The modern title inquiry adds another layer. It demonstrates why local historical research works best when administrative records, archival sources, newspaper accounts, physical markers, and community collections are examined together.

1793 Congregation organized in August.	1832 Second meetinghouse erected; known as the White Church.	1849-50 Corey describes a public burying ground separate from congregation property.	1976 DAR marker dedicated July 4 during the Bicentennial.	2026 Deed-chain inquiry opened after a Historical Society question.
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Research Gaps and Uncertainties

Exact 1793 organization date	Corey and Stone disagree on the day. The original incorporation record should be checked directly.
Original cemetery conveyance	Corey's statement that the burying ground was given for public use is significant, but the underlying deed has not yet been located.
Present legal title	The assessment roll applies the village-owned cemetery code, but the deed-chain review remains pending.
Twenty Revolutionary War soldiers	The marker and its 1976 dedication are documented. The burial count has not yet been independently reconstructed veteran by veteran.

Claim-to-Source Table

Major claims are listed below with the evidence status used in this article.

Major factual claim	Evidence status	Supporting source	Qualification
Congregation organized in August 1793.	Corroborated	Corey; Stone	Exact day conflicts.
Second meetinghouse erected in 1832 and known as the White Church.	Corroborated	Corey; Stone	Corey's near-contemporary account is strongest for the nickname.
Corey described the burying ground as public and not belonging to the congregation.	Supported with qualification	Corey	Underlying deed still not located.
DAR bronze marker was dedicated at Old White Church Cemetery on July 4, 1976.	Verified	Washington County Post, July 15, 1976, p. 14	Contemporary newspaper record.
Kenneth Gottry Sr. participated and was identified as Historian.	Verified	Washington County Post, July 15, 1976, p. 14	Contemporary caption.
Marker commemorates twenty Revolutionary War soldiers.	Verified as commemorative claim	Marker inscription; 1976 clipping	Burial count not independently reconstructed.
Parcel 256.17-1-26 is coded 13660 for assessment purposes.	Verified	Washington County assessment roll; NYS exemption manual	Not a title opinion.

Sources and Notes

Washington County Post (Horicon Newspapers). Thursday, July 15, 1976, p. 14. Contemporary clipping documenting the July 4 dedication of the DAR bronze marker at Old White Church Cemetery. Clipping supplied by Ken Gottry in 2026.

Allen Corey. *Gazetteer of the County of Washington, N.Y.*, Schuylerville, N.Y., 1849-1850. White Creek / First Presbyterian Church of Cambridge account. Relevant passages were examined in an online transcription. The original facsimile should be checked before page-perfect quotation in a formal archival publication.

William L. Stone. *Washington County, New York: Its History to the Close of the Nineteenth Century.* New York History Co., 1901, Cambridge section, p. 455.

New York Genealogical & Biographical Society. Washington County Religious Records, First United Presbyterian Congregation in Cambridge, including the Royden Woodward Vosburgh transcriptions.

Washington County, New York. 2026 Tentative Assessment Roll, Town of White Creek, parcel 256.17-1-26, North Park Street Cemetery.

New York State Department of Taxation and Finance. Exemption Administration Manual, RPTL Section 446. Code 13660 is listed as "Village-owned cemetery."

Village of Cambridge Records Center and Archive. Local collections include deeds, maps, photographs, municipal records, genealogical material, and cemetery research resources.

Photo and clipping credits. Mira Earls, August 10, 2021, via Historical Marker Database materials supplied for this project. 1976 *Washington County Post* clipping supplied by Ken Gottry.

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