

South Dennis Congregational Church Cemetery - 1795 Main Street, South Dennis

In 1795 local residents voted to establish the South Parish Meeting House on land originally owned by John Nickerson, grandson of one of the first settlers, along with an adjacent burying ground. Nearby land granted by Bathsheba Baker in 1846 became known as the South Congregational Burying Ground. Cemetery care was taken over by the South Dennis Cemetery association in 1882 when these two cemeteries were combined as one. Following several other expansions the South Dennis Congregational Church Cemetery was deeded to the town and is still an active cemetery located in the South Dennis Historic District. A rough hewn boulder monument, lying outside the current cemetery boundary, marks an additional land gift of Richard S. Hall and Alfred C. Kelley in 1979.

The earliest marked grave is that of Mr. Isaiah Baker (d. 25 Sep 1795, in his 57th year) and the landscape suggests that there are many unmarked graves. Reverend John Sanford (1788-1866), first permanent pastor of the South Parish Meeting House lies here. His headstone bears this respectful epitaph:
n God denied him health for many years, but his trust was unshaken, and his end was peace. He sleeps, by his own request, among the people whom he never ceased to love."

The church, also called "The Sea Captains' Church", honors the many mariners, both interred and lost at sea, who made South Dennis a prosperous maritime center. Among these are: Capt. Samuel Chase (1760-1845) who served in the Massachusetts Militia, and the Continental Line at Valley Forge, fathering his last child at the age of 81; Capt. James Nickerson (1744-1815), a Revolutionary soldier, sea captain, and owner of a local grist mill; brothers Capt. Jonathan Nickerson Jr., Master (1807-1847) and John S. Nickerson, First Officer (1819-1847), both lost in the wreck of the schooner Sarah Adams along the coast of Ireland.

A simple marble stone inscribed "Chinese Woman Brought from Hong Cong by Capt. Alpheus Baker Jr. Died aged 31 years 5 April 1872" marks the grave of a woman known "Amah." She was picked up in Shanghai by Capt. Alpheus to be a nanny to his children, one of whom was born at sea.

The family plot of the brothers Obed Baxter Sr. (1797-1862) and Joseph Baxter (1834-1916) is enclosed by an elaborate cast-iron fence, whose gates appear to be pictured in the iron works catalog of Wood & Perot, Philadelphia. Plans for its repair are currently being designed by the Cemetery Advisory Committee.

In 2007 with the assistance of the Community Preservation Committee and the Town of Dennis the main entrance gate was stabilized and painted along with conservation of eighteen burial markers.



South Dennis Congregational Church Cemetery Obed Baxter Fence ca.1862