

The Concord Prison Cemetery

Since 1878 a special cemetery has been tucked into the woods near the Concord Prison. Route 2 East drivers can see it, peeking out of the woods, just before the rotary. While many of us have noticed the striking white cross on the hillside, many more local residents will inevitably discover this hidden gem. This is because the MCI-Concord's prisoners' cemetery is soon to abut the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. Phase 2B of the BFRT is now fully under construction. It is just beyond the prison cemetery where the new section of the trail crosses over Rte 2 to finally connect to the rail trail in Acton.

Serving time in prison is difficult. Dying in prison is sad. Having no friends or family claim one's body after death in prison is even sadder. This small cemetery contains the bodies of 121 men who served time in the Massachusetts Correctional system, most of them in what is now MCI-Concord. The prison also contains the remains of inmates who died in the Charlestown Jail and the Rutland Prison Camp and Hospital. The cemetery is currently on State Land controlled by the Department of Corrections, so it is officially off limits to the public. Access via the rail trail however, presents a valuable opportunity to introduce the public to some aspects of prison life, in times past and up until the current day.

Currently, a small dirt trail leads rail trail visitors fifty feet or so off the BFRT trail to the burial ground. We propose to build a paved walkway from the trail to the cemetery site and allow public access. An informational kiosk would be erected close to the trail explaining the site including the many granite headstones. The gravestones note only the inmate registration number, not the name of the individual buried there, presumably to protect the reputations of surviving family members. This in itself presents a poignant commentary. Other historical information about the Concord prison today and in yesteryear, will hopefully stimulate community awareness regarding this prison, inmates and staff living and working in our local communities.

Attached are photos of the site.



Cross at the Prison Cemetery



Prisoner headstone



View of MCI-Concord from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail