

An Old Delhi Yarn
by Marianne Greenfield

I took a short leave of absence from Delhi history due to a tick bite infection. I encourage everyone who spends time in cemeteries, or anywhere outdoors, to take precautions. Use insect and tick repellent and wear appropriate clothes and shoes. It was not fun.

I've been thinking about the Old Delhi Burying Ground and the Delhi residents buried there. I'm already looking forward to working in Old Delhi again this spring. I haven't found, and don't know if one exists, a list of names of the people who were buried there. I have a list of the names on the gravestones I've discovered, so far. I'm researching all the names by combining the names on the dcnyhistory.org website and the 1981 CETA project with the names on gravestones I've found that aren't on either list. I don't expect to find info on the children buried there. The statistics on infant and childhood mortality in the 1800's are staggering. Nearly every family lost at least one child and some lost all. Diphtheria was the leading cause of death, especially among children, also measles, scarlet fever and tuberculosis. Thankfully, we have protections in place now.

While researching Old Delhi I've encountered a misunderstanding among several people that all the people buried in Old Delhi were disinterred and reinterred in Woodland Cemetery. There were several important people removed to Woodland Cemetery, the operative word being 'important'. One of Delhi's founders was William Youmans, Esq., 1820-1896, whose home, the former Penfield estate, is adjacent to Old Delhi, and who gave a strip of land to be used for entrance and exit to the burying ground. There were at least 3 large monuments for Delhi elite at the juncture of the northwest and southwest sections. Those were the burials and monuments for Erastus Root, Osman Steele, Brig Gen Henry

Leavenworth, his wife, Electa Knapp Leavenworth, and their infant. At least 3 Revolutionary War Veteran's - Jonathan Finney, Nathaniel Steele and George Fisher, also a founder of Delhi - were removed to Woodland Cemetery. George Fisher originally had a Coffin Man gravestone but when his remains were reinterred in Woodland Cemetery his grave marker was replaced, as I discussed in a previous article. I also plan to upload my photos to Find A Grave.

Mr. Youmans decided he wasn't happy with the volume of traffic to and from the burying ground so he mounted a 20+ year campaign of litigation with the Village of Delhi for the removal of all burials to Woodland Cemetery. The expense would have to be assumed by the Village and the Village fathers wisely chose not to approve it. Several other families decided to remove their loved one's remains but I don't have much info on them at this time. I'll include the list of names on the gravestones I've found in future Old Delhi Yarns.

I will be writing about other aspects of Delhi history in other old yarns, so don't worry, not every yarn will be gravestones and cemeteries. I want to search for info on who Delhi streets and roads are named for and I'll try to find info on old houses in Delhi but that's all for now. Please email any suggestions you have for future stories and feel free to let me know if I got something wrong. My email address is on the Village of Delhi webpage.

I'd like to leave you with one of my favorite winter poems, by Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". I don't know why but it reminds me of Delhi.

Whose woods these are I think I know,
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.