North Street Reservoir (1887-1893)

On August 6, 1893, the reservoir, which stood on the corner of North and Walnut Streets, burst to devastating effect. Four people were killed: Mrs. Dennis Conley (Ann), her two daughters, and the adopted son of her neighbors. Her son, John, his wife, and his horse survived. The reservoir was rebuilt with granite walls, and stood until 1971. The site is now the location of Island View Apartments.

Spirits Alive at Eastern Cemetery

Spirits Alive at Eastern Cemetery is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the protection and preservation of Portland's historic Eastern Cemetery through a range of activities including regular and special summer guided tours, this annual Walk Among the Shadows event and a Winter Lecture Series. Proceeds earned from these events fund stone conservation activities necessary to preserving the antique stones.

We are volunteers and welcome new volunteers of all ages. Thank you for helping us and the City of Portland keep the gates to our cemetery open so that everyone can benefit from this spectacular piece of history.

This Is a Sacred Place

Thank you for supporting Eastern Cemetery by attending our event. Although we are providing entertainment this evening, it is our goal that everyone remembers this is a sacred burial ground. Please maintain a respectful demeanor, stay on Funeral Lane, follow your specter, and refrain from touching stones or markers. Funeral Lane is uneven and dimly lit, so please watch your step.

Members of the Research and Education Committee

Jeanne Bull, Penelope Hamblin, Brian Kazcor, Susan Martin, Maddy McCoy, Bunny Siegel and Pete Weigel

Specters and Box Office

Volunteer coordinator: Sara Astley
Janet Alexander, Rick Ashton, Diane Brakeley, Bob Bull, Patti Chase, Emily Elmer, James Fereira, Kendra Gaarder, Dawn Gay, Faye Gmeiner, Penelope Hamblin, Stephen Harding, Jeff Lyons, Parks McKinney, Tom O'Connor, Sandy Pablo, Anne Payson, Bill Puza, Peg Puza, Eleanor Roberts, Bunny Siegel, Dave Smith, John Voyer, Dee Dee Wacksman, Sierra Walker, Alessa Wylie, Steve Wylie

Special Thanks

Our thanks to Paul Ledman for his research on the reservoir break

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2026



Burial Ground Blues

Misfortunes, Mayhem & Other Grave Matters

Written & Directed by Lynne Cullen

Spirits outside the gates

Alice Greele ..... Kathleen Carr Bailey

Billy Hans ..... Peter Weigel

Spirits within the gates

Sylvanus Davis ..... Harlan Baker

Hannah Swarton ..... Molly Donlan

John Neal ..... Herb Adams

Benjamin Tukey ..... Daniel Gay

Mary Martin ..... Lauren Gamble

John Sydney Thrasher ..... Seth Berner

John Conley ..... Adam Ferguson

Mrs. Dennis Conley ..... Brenda Tubby

Peg, a horse ..... Jason Iannone

The Facts behind the fiction . . .

Jedidiah Preble (1707-1784, Evergreen Cemetery)

Brigadier General Preble was born in in York, Maine. He fought in 3 wars for Great Britain, and for the Colonies in the Revolutionary War. During "Thompson's War," he tried to get cooler heads to prevail. In October 1775, Preble was a member of the committee that persuaded Captain Mowatt to give citizens more time to evacuate.

Syvanus Davis (1635- 1703) Hull, MA

Born in Maine, Davis was energetic, ambitious, a shrewd businessman, and a courageous commander. After his return from captivity following the destruction of Fort Loyal, he wrote an account of the massacre. He was a Falmouth shopkeeper, sometime soldier, and barber surgeon.

Hannah Swarton (1651- 1708) Beverly, MA

Maiden name Hibbert. She was captured by the Native allies of the French after the fall of Fort Loyal, and held prisoner for 5½ years. She lost her husband and three of her four children. After she was freed, Hannah shared her story with Cotton Mather, the famous writer and minister. He used her experiences to teach moral lessons.

Benjamin Tukey (1749- 1777) Eastern Cemetery

Tukey was a militiaman during the War of Independence. He enlisted immediately after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, and was part of General Washington's Siege of Boston in 1775. The regiment returned to Falmouth (Portland) early in 1776 to defend the town. He continued as an artilleryman in Falmouth until his untimely death. His widow remarried three years later.

John Neal (1793–1876) (Western Cemetery)

American writer, critic, editor, lecturer, and activist. Neal delivered speeches and wrote essays, novels, poems, and short stories. He advanced American art, advocated for early feminist causes and the end of slavery, and helped establish the gymnastics movement in the US.

Mary Martin (1624- 1646) Boston, MA

Hanged in Boston in 1647 for infanticide. Mary was raised in genteel society in Plymouth, England. Her father, Francis Martin, was the least successful of the Martin clan. When his wife died, his health suffered, and he moved to Casco Bay in 1640 with Mary and her sister. When he sailed to England, leaving his daughters in the care of a respected family, she was seduced by her employer.

John Sydney Thrasher (1817-1879) Galveston, TX

A member of a prominent Portland family who operated several businesses in Maine and in Cuba. In Havana, he was editor of El Faro, an anti Spanish rule newspaper. In 1850 John was implicated in a failed insurrection and arrested. Back in New Orleans, his newspaper agitated for Cuban annexation by the US. A Confederate sympathiser, he spent the rest of his life in Georgia, and Galveston Texas. Married Rebecca, a widow.

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