

## OPEN FORUM

And the Award for Education in Preservation Goes to...

By Sara Leavitt Goldberg, Archivist/Curator at Historic Newton

Historic Newton began its annual Preservation Awards ceremony in 2008, with the bulk of the awards going to builders, architects, or homeowners who were recognized for their vision in preserving older homes, public buildings, or private landscapes. The category for Community Education was added in 2012 and has since been awarded to two individuals, one a videographer and the other a local author. This year, the award went to the Plant A Smile 4-H Club, a group of young women ranging in age from ten to thirteen whose club itself is barely two years old. They won the award for their efforts in making information about the Civil War, found in several local “hidden collections,” available as a self-guided walking tour of Newton Cemetery.

Newton Cemetery, a still active, private non-profit, non-sectarian cemetery, was founded in 1855 and designed in the rural garden style made popular by Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge. In 1864, while the Civil War raged on, the citizens of Newton saw fit to raise a monument to honor the soldier-citizens they had already lost. The monument was the second monument in the state to be erected for that purpose, and, as such, is eligible for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. The monument is comprised of two parts: an obelisk that stands at the top of a sloped lot, and an entablature that is set into the embankment at the bottom of the lot. The entablature has three marble panels in it, two of which have been engraved with the names of soldiers who died in battle or of their wounds.

Fast forward to the twenty-first century: The Plant A Smile 4-H Club applied for and received an Esri educational grant for the use of ArcGIS mapping software. Their goal was to locate the graves of the soldiers listed on the entablature and to create a smartphone tour of those graves. After learning the longitude and latitude song (“Longitude and Latitude are easy if you have the right attitude . . .”) and



Plant A Smile 4-H Club members with their Historic Newton Preservation Awards. Photo by Robin Z. Boger, courtesy of Historic Newton.

buying a GPS device, they went on a field trip to Harvard University’s Arnold Arboretum. The arboretum had been using the same ArcGIS software to map their collection of trees and was able to provide training on the software.

Back in Newton, they began their search for information to populate the software database. The club used historic cemetery records and a printed map to locate and chart several graves. Once they became familiar with that process, they visited and did research in the Newtoniana Collection at the Newton Free Library with Newton City archivist Nancy Kougeas, who helped them to access veterans’ records at Newton City Hall, and in the archives



Plant A Smile and Historic Newton Archivist/Curator Sara Leavitt Goldberg at the Jackson Homestead. Photo by Plant A Smile 4-H Club.



A screenshot of the Newton Cemetery Civil War Monument Map created online by the Plant A Smile 4-H Club. Visit the map at: <<http://tinyurl.com/qcb2yr7>>.

at Historic Newton's Jackson Homestead, where they received a lesson in using primary source materials. The Homestead also provided the club with access to documents, correspondence, and historic images pertaining to the cemetery, the monument, the soldiers, and their families. From their research they will be able to add to the database images such as death certificates, letters written to and from the soldiers, and photographs of the soldiers. A Quick Response (QR) code on a printed map (available in the cemetery office) will allow anyone with a mobile device to access all this information.

Through their efforts, the members of the Plant A Smile 4-H Club have contributed to the preservation of the memory of Newton's participation in the War of the Rebellion using a combination of nineteenth-century historic resources and twenty-first century technology. They have now made

available information that Civil War buffs, Newton history enthusiasts, and the general public can access with just a few taps on their mobile devices. The visitor experience at the cemetery has been enhanced with an educational component that brings an awareness of the historic landscape and brings to life the stories behind the stones set in that landscape.

**Plant A Smile 4-H Club members:** Elena Morris-Kelley, Anika Morris-Kelley, Jen Buras, Sophia Jaunaskas, Rachel Bindman, Daisy Proskauer, Caty Hamel Sellman, and Katharine Axon.

**Mentors:** Michael and Mary Ann Buras

**For more information:**

- Plant A Smile 4H Club: <[plantasmile4h.blogspot.com](http://plantasmile4h.blogspot.com)>
- Historic Newton: <[www.historicnewton.org](http://www.historicnewton.org)>
- Newton Cemetery: <[www.newcemcorp.org](http://www.newcemcorp.org)>
- Esri/ArcGIS: <[www.esri.com](http://www.esri.com)>
- Arnold Arboretum: <[arboretum.harvard.edu](http://arboretum.harvard.edu)>
- Newton Free Library: <[www.newtonfreelibrary.net](http://www.newtonfreelibrary.net)> ■



At Newton Cemetery, charting coordinates with GPS. Photo by Plant A Smile 4-H Club.



At Newton Cemetery, using monuments to gather data. Photo by Plant A Smile 4-H Club.