



Town of New Castle
450 W. Main Street
PO Box 90
New Castle, CO 81647

**Planning & Code Administration
Department**
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Staff Report
New Castle Town Council
Consideration of a Historical Designation for Highland Cemetery at 1009
Clubhouse Dr., New Castle, CO 81647.

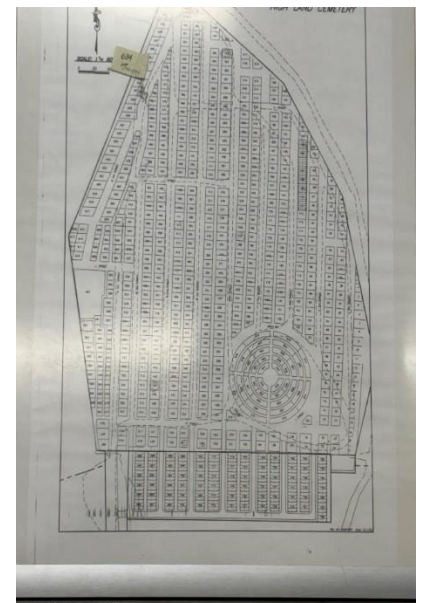
Report Date: 08/01/2025

Project Information

Property Owner/Applicant:	Town of New Castle, Historic Preservation Commission
Owner's Mailing Address	450 W. Main St. P.O. Box 90, New Castle, Co 81647
Property Address:	1009 Clubhouse Dr. New Castle, CO 81647
Current Use:	Cemetery
Municipal Code Reference:	Chapter 15.44 (Articles 1-5)
Size of Lot:	10.512 Acres
Street Frontage:	Clubhouse Dr.
Existing Zoning:	Cemetery
Surrounding Zoning:	R/L, Open Space/Public

I The Application

The Town of New Castle Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) requests approval of a historical landmark designation for Highland Cemetery located at 1009 Clubhouse Dr. The purpose of landmark designations are to enhance the town's local historic resources by protecting and preserving the town's architectural, historic, and cultural heritage as embodied at these sites. Landmark designations may also serve to provide added property value and/or potential tax credits for the property owner. Therefore, on July 21, 2025, the HPC adopted an order to schedule a public hearing for August 19, 2025, pursuant to section 15.44.180 of the municipal code (MC) to consider the current request. The applicant HPC, the public and staff have been invited to attend the hearing in order to express their opinions on the proposed designation. The Council shall act officially on the application within twenty-five (25) working days after the close of the hearing.



Map of Highland Cemetery

II History and Visual Features

Highland Cemetery sits at the end of Clubhouse Drive overlooking the Town of New Castle with one of the best views of the Grand Hogback and surrounding area. It is 10.51 acres bordered by Lakota Links Golf Course, Club House Drive and undeveloped Lakota Golf Properties. The town of New Castle began burying townspeople in Highland Cemetery in 1889, the same year the town was incorporated.

The cemetery was private property in 1896, and was owned by Mrs. Teresa Schuessler. Mrs. Schuessler wanted to run the cemetery and be compensated by the town, but settled with the town purchasing the cemetery on June 13, 1897 for \$200. Interestingly, Mrs. Teresa Schuessler was the mother-in-law of infamous New Castle mine owner, PC Coryell. The earliest burial of record was in 1889. Among the earliest burials were Civil War Veterans who settled in New Castle after the Civil War to work in the coal mines. The Cemetery on the hogback ridge is laid out in formal blocks with ten north/south roads and four east/west roads. Many Veterans are buried in Old Soldier's Circle that features a red concrete 5-point star and the insignias of the five branches of the military. There is a United States Flag in the center of the star. The town's traditions honor Veterans and their families on Memorial Day. There are wives and children of veterans who can be found here.



Old Soldier's Circle

Historical features of the cemetery include:

- Iron sign built by Barney Fuienwider who owned the town's steel and blacksmith shop.
- Rustic landscaping of native plants and natural features.
- Potter's field where dozens of casualties are interred from the Vulcan Coal Mine explosions.
- Gravel walkways with street signs.
- Grave enclosures and monuments represented overtime and a variety of historical styles.
- Monuments and large family lots made from granite, marble, wood, metal, and concrete.
- Multiple statues and monuments for children long since forgotten.
- Historical grave markers placed by Woodsman of the World fraternal organization.



Original Cemetery Sign

A second sign was added to Highland cemetery at the new entrance when the Lakota Ranch development began. Newer features of the cemetery include,

- A new sign added at the new entrance by the caretaker's shed.
- Caretaker's shed
- Informational Kiosk

The current caretaker, Mike Miller, is the formal caretaker in Highland Cemetery's existence. Mike has created grave markers for those who could not afford them. Mr. Miller has maintained the integrity of the cemetery, and coordinates surveys and openings of the plots for burials. Prior to Mr. Miller, Council members were responsible for the upkeep of the Cemetery site. The landscape is maintained twice a year by the town's Parks department, before the annual Memorial Day flag ceremony in the Cemetery. Families are permitted to decorate the graves as they like, but are asked not to light candles, or plant vegetation that may not survive in the arid climate.



Newer Highland Cemetery Sign

III Historic Significance

- Highland Cemetery was founded in 1888.
- The first person interred in Highland Cemetery was John Battista Garbolino. John was an Italian immigrant who worked in the coal mines near New Castle.
- Among the people resting at Highland Cemetery are pioneers of New Castle and the surrounding areas.
- Highland Cemetery holds remains of many people who helped shape New Castle and the surrounding ranches.
- Highland cemetery keeps 177 miners from the Coryell, Vulcan, Keystone, B&M and Consolidated Mines who were killed in three separate explosions. They represent an important part of the early development and growth of New Castle.
- Civil War Veterans and families.
- Highland Cemetery is the resting place for immigrant families who immigrated here to find opportunities and land.
- Highland Cemetery is a resting place for many people who died before their times from Typhoid Fever, Spanish Flu and Tuberculosis.



First Recorded Burial

IV Historical People in Highland Cemetery

James Nesbit Adams: Served in the Civil War and his name appears as J.N. Adams on the Pennsylvania State Monument in Gettysburg. James moved to New Castle after the war for health reasons but only lived here for 4 years before his death. He is buried in the Old Soldiers Circle along with his daughter Hattie.

Jasper Ward was the first settler in New Castle in 1883 after leaving Carbonate on the Flat Tops because of the harsh winters. Jasper and Ute Chief Colorow visited frequently. The Colorow trail is named after him.

Merrit Vandeventer was the first Mayor and Postmaster of New Castle.

Ellen Ganley was the first bride married in New Castle. She was also a midwife in the town.

Josephine Rolletto was an Italian immigrant Can-Can dancer who grew flowers on New Castle's main Street.

Bert Gregori was an Italian immigrant who served on town council and owned several businesses and a restaurant. Mr. Gregori a representative for other immigrants and held events where families could celebrate their Italian heritage. Mr. Gregori began a successful restaurant in New Castle and eventually moved to Glenwood Springs. That restaurant still exists today.

Paul Morley was young child who went missing during hunting and camping trip with his family in Rio Blanco County. Paul wandered away from camp and was believed to be taken by Native Americans. The fate of this lost boy was a mystery until forty-seven years later when a child's shoe was found four miles down the river with skeletal remains of a child's foot. Based on the style of shoe, the child was identified as Paul Morely. Paul's family had written to the town with an account of the memory forty-seven years later.

William Griffith and John Rennix: Billy Griffith was a former Town Marshal, a popular baseball player and a saloon owner who was convicted in court of assault, unfairly he believed. On November 10, he accosted Frank Sample on Main Street, one of the people who had testified against him. Town Marshal, John Rennix, stepped in and Griffith shot the marshal in the stomach. Rennix was able to get off a couple of shots before collapsing, and he managed to wound Griffith. Griffith ran up to the second floor of the Trimble Building. William Davis and Town Councilor Hugh Miller had rushed to Marshall Rennix to try to help him. Griffith started firing from a second-floor window, and hit Davis in the head, killing him. A posse of forty men arrived from Glenwood Springs and fired into the building. No one, however, dared to enter the building until Griffith's girlfriend, Lelia McMichael, volunteered to look in. Lelia discovered that Griffith had turned his gun on himself and shot himself in the head. Marshal Rennix died the next day at the sanitarium in Glenwood Springs. Griffith, Rennix and Davis are all buried in Highland Cemetery. John Rennix was laid to rest next to his wife, Lieuvernina, who died 9 years before.

Katherine Senor was a beloved English teacher at New Castle School Rifle High School and Riverside Middle School. Kathryn Senor Elementary School is named after her. She is resting in Highland Cemetery.

Several generations of families are in Highland Cemetery and have living descendants living and thriving in New Castle to this day. There are so many family names to mention.



Jasper Ward

V Criteria for Designation

Highland Cemetery has long been *identified* as a historic property in New Castle. According to MC 15.44.160 a property may be identified as a historic property if it possesses (or potentially possesses) any of the following qualities or characteristics:

- A. Has existed for at least fifty (50) years prior to the date of identification;
- B. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of the town's history;
- C. Is associated with the lives of persons significant in the town's past;
- D. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, is the work of a master builder, or possesses high artistic value;
- E. It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history;
- F. It exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the town;
- G. Has relationship to other distinctive areas that are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on a historic, cultural, or architectural motif;
- H. Unique location or singular physical characteristic representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the town.

Highland Cemetery meets the approval criteria, now Council will consider whether to elevate this recognition to *designation* status. Pursuant to MC Section 15.44.050, a site, landmark, or district may be designated for preservation if it meets one or more of the following criteria.

- A. **Historical Importance.** The site, landmark or district has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the town, state or nation; is the site of a historic event with an effect upon society; is identified with a person or group of persons who had some influence on society; or exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historic heritage of the community.
- B. **Architectural Importance.** The site, landmark or district portrays the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural scale; embodies those distinguishing characteristics of an architectural-type specimen; is the work of an architect or master builder whose individual work has influenced the development of the town or contains elements of architectural design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation.
- C. **Geographic Importance.** The site, landmark or district, because of being part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area (i.e., river crossings), should be developed or preserved according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif or due to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or town.
- D. **Inclusion in National Register of Historic Places.** Inclusion of any property within the town in the National Register of Historic Places as provided in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 shall be construed as local historic site designation, and subject to the same protections as any local historic site.

VI Staff Comment

From the discussion above, there is strong evidence that Highland Cemetery has been a vital aspect

of New Castle's heritage. **Historically**, Highland Cemetery is the final resting place for people who shaped New Castle. Highland Cemetery continues to inter family and friends from multiple generations. The artistry of the gravestones reflects the passage of time, showcasing styles from the early pioneer and Victorian eras to the present day. Highland Cemetery's gravestones are rich in symbolism. They include marble carvings of lambs which often mark the graves of children, representing innocence and sacrifice. Tree stump tombstones symbolize lives cut too short and are often significant to Woodsmen of the World. Several headstones also feature the I.O.O.F. emblem, representing the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, which connect to historic buildings on Main St.

This general significance aside, the Council must still consider whether the request for designation conforms to the approval criteria.

Another important consideration if approved, specifically for an owner of a landmark designation, is HPC's ongoing level of involvement with the cemetery. Once a property is designated, the HPC will review all future changes to the exterior for conformance to the historical design standards of the C-1 zone district per MU 17.40. Town code requires that:

Any person desiring to remove, demolish or change the exterior appearance or the exterior architectural features of improvements on real property designated as a historic site, landmark or district or desiring to change the land surface of any such real property, shall submit to the historic preservation commission an application for approval and a specific statement of the work proposed, together with such details as the commission may require. (15.44.300(B))

Town Council should be settled on the HPC's role with the historical landmark moving forward.

VII Staff Recommendation:

The staff recommends the following conditions be considered by the Commission in their deliberations to approve the application.

1. Pursuant to 15.44.360, nothing shall be construed to prohibit the accomplishment of any work on any historic site, landmark or district which will neither change the exterior appearance (including color and materials) nor the exterior architectural features of improvements or structures, nor the character or appearance of the land itself and which is considered necessary as a part of normal maintenance and repair.
2. In the event that commissioners or staff observe unapproved modifications, the applicant or owner may be summoned before the HPC in a public meeting to show cause why the landmark designation should not be revoked, suspended, or additional conditions imposed. Such show-cause meeting shall be open to the public and the Applicant or owner may present testimony or offer other evidence on its behalf.
3. The applicant shall comply with all applicable building, residential, electrical and municipal code requirements including all sign code regulations.
4. All representations of the applicant in written and verbal presentations submitted to the Town or made at public meetings before the Historic Preservation Commission shall be considered part of the building permit application and binding on the applicant.

Staff agree that Highland Cemetery has met approval Criteria A because it was founded in 1888. Staff believe that approval criteria B and C have been met because many of the town's historical people are interred there. Approval criteria D is met with the artistic and cultural value through the memorial markers placed there. Highland Cemetery exemplifies the historic significance of the town as well as having a singular characteristic representing an established and physical feature of the community.

Historical landmark designation may bring visitors to Highland Cemetery that may not have stopped otherwise. It is a landing spot for people seeking historical information as well as the location of family members in Highland Cemetery. Highland Cemetery may bring tourists specifically interested in historic cemeteries, if designated.

Photos from Highland Cemetery



Paul Morley's Grave, his shoe and foot were found 47 years after he went missing.



Child's Grave 1913



Grave Marker Made by Mike Miller



Teacher Whom KSE is Named After



Woodsmen of the World Tombstone



Caretaker's Shed



Graves of Billy Griffith and Marshal John Rennix, Participants in a Shootout that Left 3 Dead