



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

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

Report Date: 7/02/2025

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

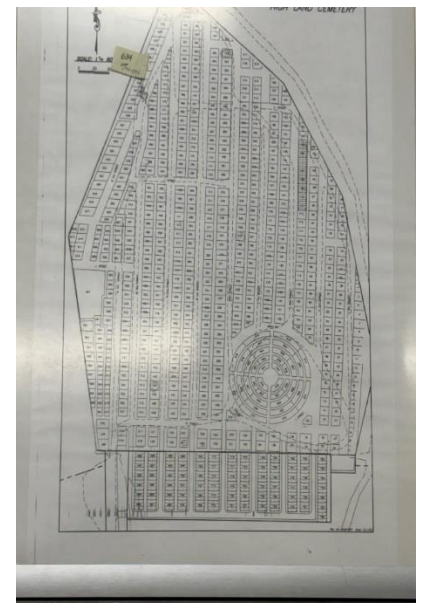
Street Frontage: Clubhouse Dr.

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 Commission 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, staff, and the Council have been invited to attend the hearing in order to express their opinions on the proposed designation. The Commission 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 areas. 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 what is now known as Highland Cemetery in 1888, the same year the town was incorporated.

The cemetery was on private property in 1896, it was owned by Mrs. Teresa Schuessler. She wanted run the cemetery and be compensated by the town, or allow New Castle to buy the 10 acres where the cemetery is now for \$1000. Heated negotiations went on all year including attorneys for both sides, settling with the town purchasing the cemetery 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 in the cemetery 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. Its location along the hogback ridge is laid out in formal blocks with 10 north-south roads and 4 east-west roads. Highland Cemetery's Old Soldier's Circle has a red concrete 5-point star with the insignias of the 5 branches of the military and a United States Flag in the center. The town has historically held a flag raising for the Veterans on Memorial Day to recognize the service of those interred there. The non-military buried in the Old Solders Circle includes spouses and children of Veterans.



Old Soldier's Circle

Original features of the cemetery include:

- A metal sign that was built by Barney Fuienwider who owned the town's steel and blacksmith shop.
- Rustic landscaping includes native plants and natural features.
- Old Soldier's Circle is a Concrete 5-point star with the American flag honoring our veterans.
- 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 over time 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 for the new cemetery entrance when the Lakota 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 is Mike Miller who is the only caretaker in Highland Cemetery's existence. Mike has created grave markers for those who couldn't afford them. (pg. 8)

The caretaker maintains integrity of the cemetery and coordinates surveys and openings of the plots. 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. The families 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 has existed for longer than 50 years.
- 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 those interred are pioneers of New Castle and the surrounding area.
- Town politicians, business owners and other leaders are interred at Highland Cemetery.
- 177 miners from the five operational mines in the late 1800's, the Coryell, Vulcan, Keystone, B&M and Consolidated Mines. Miners are buried in the cemetery. They represent an important part of the early development and growth of New Castle.
- Civil War Veterans and families.



First Recorded Burial

IV Historical People in Highland Cemetery

James Nesbit Adams 1834-1904: 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 later in life 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: 1883 Jasper Ward, who had been operating a freight business with his brothers in Leadville, brought his wife Annie and daughter Netti to Carbondale, the original Garfield County seat on the Flat Tops. Carbonate was abandoned when the Flat Tops winters became unendurable, and the Wards made their way to the Colorado River Valley. Ward claimed a homestead site at the confluence of Elk Creek and the Colorado River, becoming the first white settler to build a home in New Castle in 1883.



Jasper Ward

Merrit Vandeventer 1864-1919 was the first Mayor and Postmaster of New Castle.

Ellen Ganley 1865-1968: was the first bride married in New Castle. She was also a midwife in the town.

Josephine Rolletto 1870-1956: was an Italian Can-Can dancer who grew flowers on New Castle's main Street.

Bert Gregori 1872-1945: was an Italian immigrant who served on town council and owned several businesses. Bert was assaulted by another council member, John Fuchs, after a meeting. Bert was a voice for other immigrants and began a successful restaurant in New Castle that became a thriving business in Glenwood Springs.

Paul Morley 1888 – 1892: Paul went on a 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. Forty-seven years later a child's shoe with a foot washed up. Based on the style of shoe, the child was identified as Paul Morely. Paul's family had written the town with an account of the memory. (grave marker pg 7)

William Griffith and Paul Rennix 1910: 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 in the stomach. Rennix was able to get off a couple 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. Griffith started firing from a second-floor window, and hit Davis in the head, killing him. A posse of nearly 40 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. Lelia discovered that Griffith had turned his gun on himself and shot himself in the head. 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 and, Lieuvernina, who died 9 years before.

Katherine Senor 1914-1993: a beloved English teacher at New Castle School Rifle High School and Riverside Middle School. Kathryn Senor Elementary School is named after her.



Woodsmen of the World: The "Woodsmen of the World" were a fraternal, "not for profit" society founded in 1890. Their history includes community outreach and philanthropic efforts to communities that in turn provided its members with financial security. The burial sites are distinctive with cut-off stump stone headstones or monolith headstones that each member received as a member of the Woodsmen society. **///**

Approval Criteria

Highland Cemetery has long been *identified* as an 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.

Tonight, however, the HPC 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.

IV Staff Comment

From the discussion above, there is strong evidence that Highland Cemetery has been a vital aspect of New Castle's heritage. **Historically**, the cemetery inters all of those lost in the Vulcan Mine, local politicians and educators. There have been numerous flag ceremonies on Memorial Days through the years honoring our veterans. V Veterans' Circle is the final resting place for service members from the Civil War, both World Wars, the Vietnam War, and more recent conflicts. The artistry of the gravestones reflects the passage of time, showcasing styles from the Pioneer and Victorian eras to the present day. Highland Cemetery is rich in symbolism: lambs often mark the graves of children,

representing innocence and sacrifice; tree stumps symbolize lives cut short. Many headstones also feature the I.O.O.F. emblem, representing the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, which connects to a historic landmark on West Main Street.

This general significance aside, the Council must still consider whether or not the request for designation conforms to the approval criteria. This may not be a clear-cut decision. In the case of Highland Cemetery, the grounds have experienced obvious alterations with various structures added or eliminated over time. If the Council feels the changes have undermine historical relevance, this may be grounds for denial. Conversely the HPC may conclude that these later embellishments in fact contribute to the cemetery's historical significance and should be enshrined as they now appear.

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))

Therefore, before making the leap into historical preservation, an owner should be settled on the HPC's role with the building moving forward.

V Staff Recommendation:

The staff recommends the following conditions be considered by the Commission in their deliberations for approving the application.

1. Pursuant to Exhibit B of resolution HPC 2025-2, the landmark designation shall apply only to the property's exterior structure and architecture including, but not limited to, adjoining components such as stairs, signs, lights and paint. Any items added to the *property* unrelated the building's exterior façade will not be subject to the HPC's review.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. The applicant shall comply with all applicable building, residential, electrical and municipal code requirements including all sign code regulations.
5. 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.

It is staff's recommendation that Highland Cemetery be designated as a historical landmark because it meets many of the Approval Criteria and needs to meet one to be designated. Approval Criteria A, it has existed for more than 50 years. 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. It exemplifies the historic significance of the town as well as having a singular characteristic representing an established and physical feature of the community and town.

Staff also feel that a historical designation may open the cemetery and town up for grants to improve record keeping and maintaining historical grave markers. Historical landmark designation may bring visitors to Highland Cemetery seeking historical information as well as the location of family members in Highland Cemetery. Grant money may help pay for Digital cemeteries that allow visitors to add photographs and memories about the people already interred in Highland Cemetery.



Paul Morely's Grave



Children's Monuments.



Concrete Cross Grave marker made by caretaker, Mike Miller.



Kathryn Senor, KSE's Namesake



General Description and Characteristics representing and established and familiar visual feature within the town.



Artistic Stone Grave Marker



Care Taker's Shed



Grave Markers of John Rennix and William Griffith