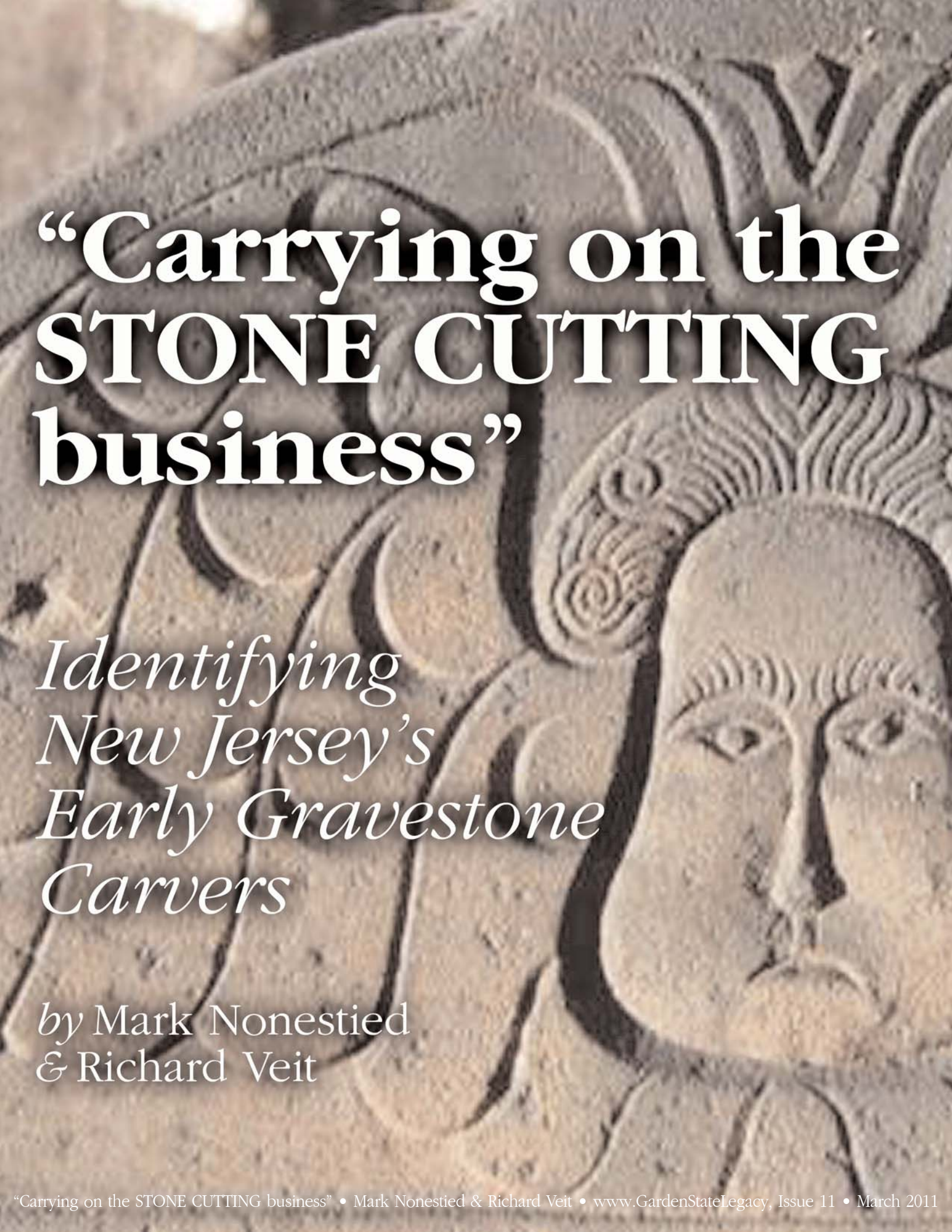


"Carrying on the STONE CUTTING business"

Identifying New Jersey's Early Gravestone Carvers

by Mark Nonestied & Richard Veit

In 1797, Aaron Ross, a Middlesex County stone cutter, paid for a broadside advertising to the public, that he had "taken a shop in New—Brunswick, Burnet–Street, near the sign of the Leopard." Ross operated a stone cutting business "where all orders for grave, hearth, building stone &c &c" would be attended to with punctuality and neatness *(Ross Broadside 1797)*.

Ross's shop was not far from "the sign of the Leopard"–a reference to a local tavern. Although the building is long gone, one can imagine it filled with stone carving tools and blank slabs of locally quarried New Jersey sandstone awaiting his mallet and chisel.

The advertisement for Ross's shop is an important historic document, providing historians with information about the varied work of early stone carvers. Stone cutters often produced a variety of products including hearth stones, building stones, curbing, mile post markers and gravestones *(Ross Broadside 1797; Frazee 1835)*. Of all the stone products Aaron Ross supplied to his customers, his greatest legacy would be the countless gravemarkers he produced, which can still be seen in cemeteries throughout New Jersey. These gravestones not only served to mark the burial spots of loved ones, but their designs and ornamentation speak volumes as to the stone cutting traditions of early New Jersey.

Gravestone Carver Research

Cemeteries and the gravemarkers within them provide insight into many aspects of our culture, including genealogy, art history, death and mourning customs, social history, and technological advances–just to name a few. Some of the earliest cemetery research was conducted by genealogists in the nineteenth century who transcribed markers for their familial value. Transcription lists are important resources for modern researchers, especially when recorded stones have deteriorated or disappeared from the landscape altogether. A good example of this is Newark's first Presbyterian Burial Ground. Although the burial ground was closed in the nineteenth century and its markers removed to a sealed vault in Fairmont Cemetery, the markers themselves were transcribed and rough sketches prepared during a rare instance when the vault was open. The transcriptions and illustrations provide an intriguing glimpse of one of New Jersey's earliest burial grounds to interested researchers.

In addition to their genealogical value, historians also recognize gravemarkers as a window into understanding the stone cutters and the designs and styles they employed. The pioneering work of Harriet Forbes brought to light this valuable perspective. In the early 1900s she traveled throughout the New England states photographing gravemarkers and making connections between the different styles and the carvers behind them *(Veit and Nonestied 2008)*. Her work shed light on the artisans that created the various forms of memorial art and her research culminated in the 1927 publication of *Gravestones of Early New England and the Men who Made Them*.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Alan Ludwig, Peter Benes, James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen researched carvers and their changing styles. Their books and publications added important information to the field of gravestone studies *(Ludwig 1966; Benes 1977; Deetz and Dethlefsen 1966, 1967)*.

In 1977, the Association for Gravestone Studies was founded with a mission to further an appreciation of the cultural significance of gravestones and burial grounds. The organization has grown immensely since then and today continues to actively promote the study and preservation of gravestones through annual conferences that include tours, workshops and presentations of scholarly papers. In addition, published articles and papers appear in the AGS newsletter and the group's annual journal *Markers*.

New Jersey Gravestone Studies

While the earliest studies of gravestone carvers took place in the New England States, New Jersey was not far behind. In 1972, Emily Wasserman produced one of the earliest studies on the subject in her book *Gravestone Designs: Rubbings and Photographs from Early New York and New Jersey*. Wasserman identified New Jersey gravestone carvers, the periods of their work and examples of their styles *(Wasserman 1972)*.

Richard F. Welch expanded upon Wasserman's study and in 1983 published *Memento Mori: Gravestones of Early Long Island, 1680-1810*. While Welch's work focused on Long Island, his book included discussion of New Jersey carved markers that were shipped there. Welch continued his research and in 1987 published a paper titled *New York and New Jersey Gravestone Carving Tradition* *(Welch 1983, 1987)*.

A number of noteworthy theses and dissertations have also added to our understanding of New Jersey's carving heritage. In 1979, Paul McLeod prepared a detailed study of Monmouth County's eighteenth and nineteenth century gravestones. Elizabeth Crowell examined gravemarkers in Cape May County, focusing not on the sandstone carving traditions of central and northern New Jersey as her predecessors did, but instead analyzing the influence of marble gravemarkers produced in colonial Philadelphia and their impact on the New Jersey cemetery landscape *(Crowell 1983; Veit & Nonestied 10:2008)*. Crowell's work began to shed even more light on New Jersey's diverse carving history.

In his thesis, Richard Veit methodically examined the gravestone carving heritage of Middlesex County; more recently, in 2004, John Zielenski focused on two eighteenth century carvers from Newark, Uzal Ward and William Grant, and their influence on the cemetery landscape *(Veit 1991; Zielenski 2004)*.

Janice Kohl Sarapin's book *Old Burial Grounds of New Jersey* was published by Rutgers University Press in 1994. In it, Sarapin provided readers with information on gravestone carvers and important New Jersey cemeteries in which their work can be found *(Sarapin 1994)*.

Richard Veit and Mark Nonestied continued to build upon previous research in *New Jersey Cemeteries and Tombstones: History in the Landscape,* Rutgers University Press, 2008. The book was the culmination of over ten years of research on documenting changing styles and gravestone carvers. The authors conducted archival research and visited over 900 New Jersey cemeteries examining gravestones and recording the names of carvers who signed their work.

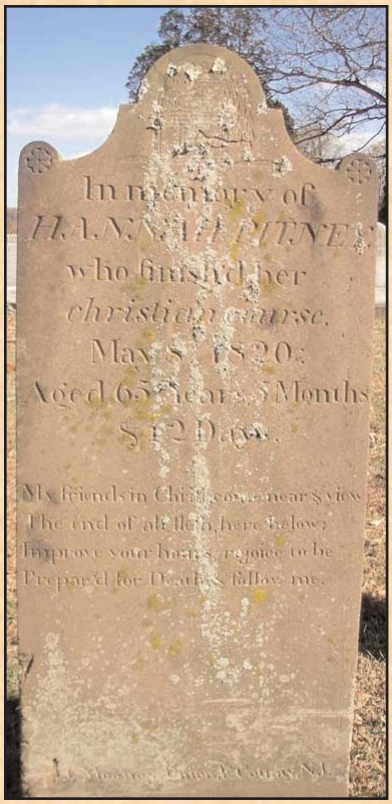
While much research has been accomplished, there is still much work to be done. It is our hope to provide an introduction to New Jersey's unique place in the stone carving heritage of the United States. We also hope to provide basic information on how to recognize the various carving styles of those that took mallet and chisel in hand and shaped the cemetery landscape.

This article examines gravestone carvers that operated in the colonial and early Federal period of New Jersey. During this time the most common gravestone style was the tablet marker–a single slab of stone in which a portion was buried below ground for stability. These tablets, or headstones, were commonly paired with footstones. Wealthier individuals also employed large flat slabs or tombstones, which are sometimes raised on legs as table tombs, or on boxes as box tombs.

1: The marker for Hannah Pitney (d. 1820) in the Hilltop Cemetery, Mendham illustrates a typical tablet marker that was popular in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The marker is signed on the lower portion by gravestone carver J. [John] C. Mooney, Union, E. [Essex] County, NJ.

Tablet markers were finished smooth on one side for the inscription and decoration. Gravestones carvers would create a two dimensional carving that varied in depth depending on their skill. Some, like John Frazee of the central part of the state, created their designs with light carvings; while others, like Schenk of Newark, created deeply carved work as exhibited in the Josiah William Stone (d. 1828) at the Orange Presbyterian Cemetery *(Nonestied 2007, Wasserman 1972)*.

As the nineteenth century progressed, larger monuments with and three-dimensional sculptures, carved in the round, started to take shape. This time period is characterized by a shift from markers to monuments and the works from this period will be discussed in an upcoming article *(Veit and Nonestied 2008:112)*.



1.

New Jersey Schools of Carving

New Jersey's diverse history is reflected in its burial grounds. Not only do the stones speak to the cultural and ethnic background of the individuals, but the carvers who created the markers also operated within cultural norms. The authors have identified four distinct carving traditions in New Jersey. They include a sandstone carving tradition, German carving tradition, Dutch carving tradition and a Philadelphia tradition *(Veit and Nonestied 2008:38)*.

The Sandstone Tradition

The sandstone carving belt of New Jersey is perhaps the state's greatest contribution to the earliest forms of memorial art in America. Stretching from Bergen County in the northeast and southward through the central part of the state, the markers created in this region from the close of the seventeenth century until the earliest decades of the nineteenth century, left the New Jersey cemetery landscape with wonderful examples of a local folk art.

Sandstone, a sedimentary rock, was first quarried in Newark and Belleville with later stone quarries operating in other locations throughout central New Jersey. The accessibility of this material and a large nearby customer base permitted the stonecutters to flourish. The earliest concentration of carvers was located in Newark and Elizabeth; later, other carvers operated in Scotch Plains, Woodbridge and New Brunswick *(Veit and Nonestied 2008)*.

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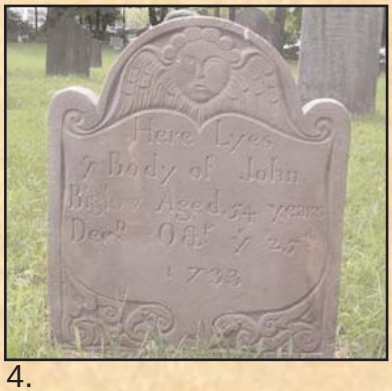

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2: Cemeteries located in this region of New Jersey contain the largest concentration of colonial and early nineteenth century sandstone gravemarkers. The historic Rahway Cemetery in Union County, photographed above, contains several hundred examples.

3: The Agibail Tuttle (d. 1738/9) marker in the Whippany Cemetery on Route 10 in Whippany is an early sandstone gravemarker carved by an individual whose name has yet to be identified. Nicknamed the work of the "Common Jersey Carver," this stone cutter most likely operated in Newark or Elizabeth and produced hundreds of markers that can be seen throughout cemeteries in the New York Metropolitan area *(Veit and Nonestied 2008)*. The carver utilized both the winged death head style, illustrated above, and the soul effigy style illustrated below.

4: The John Biglow (d. 1733) marker located in the Whippany Cemetery in Whippany is another example of the Common Jersey Carver.

5: The Sarah Woodruff marker in the burying ground of Elizabeth's First Presbyterian Church displays a variety of Puritan motifs. The skull and crossed bones stand for mortality, the

hourglass for life's brevity, the birds may be either mourning doves or peacocks–the later standing for eternity. Flames are shown below the image, a particularly stark reminder of the fate of sinners.

6: Ebenezer Price of Elizabeth was New Jersey's most prolific eighteenth century stone carver. The marker for Anna Crane (d. 1759) in the Westfield Presbyterian Cemetery exemplifies Price's artistic skills.

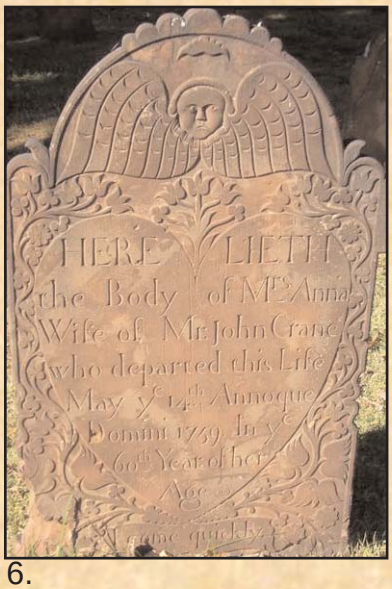
7: The John Davis (d. 1760) marker, also located in the Westfield Presbyterian Cemetery, was carved by Ebenezer Price of Elizabeth. Note the practice carving in the bottom left corner of the photograph showing the vowels, A, E, I, O, U and Y.

The Dutch Carving Tradition

The Dutch settled in New Jersey during the late seventeenth century with large concentrations in the northeast corner of the state. Their impact can still be seen today in Dutch styles houses that dot the landscape in Bergen County. The cemetery landscape is also filled with markers that reflect this cultural pattern. While New Jersey had clear Dutch strongholds, it should also be noted that the Dutch settled in many parts of the state and this carving tradition can be found in other areas as well–but in fewer numbers. Some notable examples include the Catherine Crookshank marker in Middletown, Monmouth County, carved by Johannis Zuricher and several Dutch language markers in Somerset and Middlesex Counties *(Veit and Nonestied 2008)*.

Dutch carvers created inscriptions in both Dutch and English, although some attempts at the English language, as the photographs will illustrate, were not well executed. Those markers, none-the-less, speak of a society that crossed cultural boundaries.

8: The marker for Margrieta Demarest (d. 1802) was carved in Dutch by an anonymous gravestone carver most likely located in Bergen County



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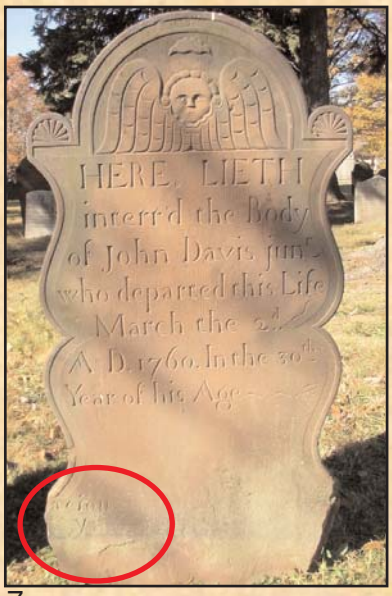

7.

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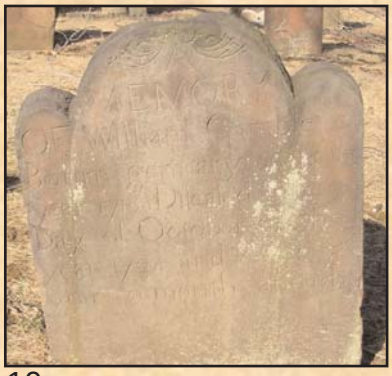
9: The marker for Jacobus Demarst (d. 1794) is another example of a Dutch language marker located in Bergen County. The stone exhibits similar styling to the Margrieta Demarest stone and was most likely created by the same carver.

10: The marker for William Camble (d. 1794) was most likely carved by the same carver who created the two Demarest stones. The Camble (Cambel) surname points to an English background as opposed to the Demarest Dutch surnames. The marker's inscription is in English but exhibits multiple misspellings. The misspellings could be a result of the Cambel family's poor instructions to the gravestone carver, the language barrier of the Dutch carver or both.

11: This Dutch language marker is a fine example of John Zuricher's carver. Translated into English it reads, "Here lies buried the body of Johannes Loots who was born the 25th of February in the year 1700 and died the 6th of January 1764." Zuricher was carving in New York City when he made this marker.

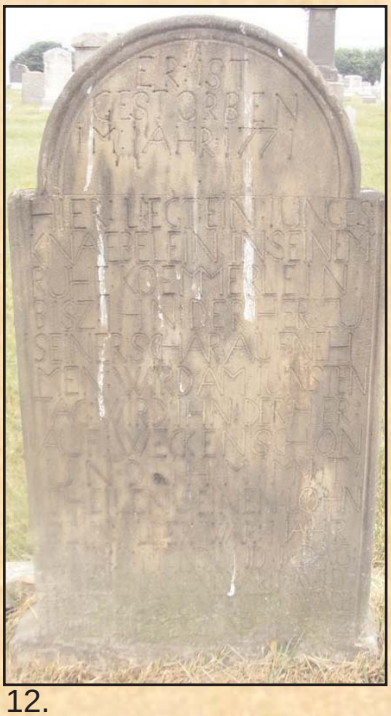
9.


10.

11.

German Carving Tradition

The northwestern section of New Jersey has a distinct tradition that reflects the cultural groups who settled in that region. Germans mainly from Pennsylvania began to settle the region in the early eighteenth century. The markers are often decorated with images of stars, suns, moons tuplips and hearts *(Veit and Nonestied 2008:65)*. They also display elaborate calligraphy or Fraktur. The decorative motifs seen on early German-language markers derive from earlier European traditions. Perhaps the most frequently seen is the flower. Flowers, particularly lilies and roses, symbolized the brevity of man's life and drew directly from Biblical passages such as Peter 1:23—35, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the world of the Lord endureth forever" *(Hardy 2003:54)*. Hearts are also common motifs, and they symbolized the emotional side of religion. Mortality images and cherubs are also found. Many markers bear Biblical texts, generally near the bottom of the marker. These sometimes represent the text read at a funeral. In northwestern, New Jersey markers carved by John Solomon Teetzel, who was active from 1789—1800 and an anonymous carver who simply signed his work with the letter D are found. Other markers were produced by currently unidentified carvers or Pennsylvania artisans.



12.

13.

14.

Moravians produced their own distinctive markers. They are small tablets bearing minimal information about the deceased. The Moravians felt that all individuals were equal in the eyes of god, thus elaborate gravemqarkers were unnecessary. Good examples are found in the Moravian cemetery in Hope, New Jersey and in the Swayze family burial ground in Warren County.

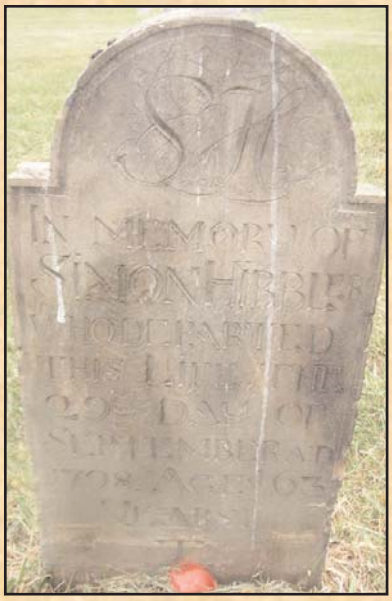
12: A German language marker from Saint James (Straw Church) Lutheran Burial Ground in Warren County. Translated into English it reads:

> He died in the year 1771.
> Here rests in peace a young baby boy
> Until on the judgment day God calls him to awake in glory,
> Join his assembly and happily receive his reward.
> His age was 1 year, 11 months, and 1 day.
> His name was David Metz
> His parents were [...]

13: This marker was carved by an anonymous artisan known active in Northampton County, Pennsylvania in the late 18th century. The reverse of the marker is decorated with an elaborate floral scene, while the obverse, seen below bears the inscription.

14: This is the obverse of the marker shown above. Translated it reads, "Here rests in God, Peter Heintz, who was born in 1718 in the Earldom of Hagenburg in Germany. He died on February 21st, 1777. His age was..."

15: The grave marker of Simon Hibbler, who died in 1798, shows the beautiful lettering characteristic of John Solomon Teetzel's work. Note the T at the base of the stone, Teetzel's signature. The marker is in the Saint James (Straw Church) Lutheran Burial Ground in Warren County.


15.

The Philadelphia Style

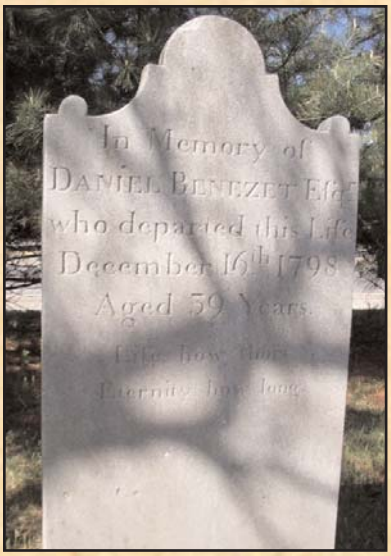
The gravemarkers found in southern New Jersey cemeteries are a contrast to their neighbors in the north, not only in style, but material as well. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, cemeteries in this region were flooded with gravemarkers carved in Philadelphia. With a close proximity to quarries as well as a large customer base, Philadelphia became a center of stone cutting activity. In 1785, there were ten "stonecutters" operating there *(Philadelphia Directory 1785)*. By 1791, thirteen are listed in the city directory with one carver, Andrew Bower, operating out of two locations in the city.

Philadelphia style markers are often void of decoration, a characteristic that archaeologist Elizabeth Crowell in her work on Cape May County Cemeteries attributed to the Quaker influence of colonial Philadelphia. *(Crowell 1981, 1983)*.

16.

16: The William Christie (d. 1796) marker, located in the Cranbury Presbyterian Cemetery, represents a Philadelphia style gravestone. The gravemarker has only lettering with no added decoration. Note the inscription that Christie died "by falling from the Stage-coach near Cranberrey."

The stone that was utilized for Philadelphia style markers ranged from white to a striated blue/gray marble and was quarried in Montgomery and Chester Counties in Pennsylvania. *(Crowell 1981.23; Veit and Nonestied 2008:71)*. The material was grainy and eroded extensively over time, as seen in the above image. Historically, the stone would have had a smooth polished surface with crisp clear lettering, as was observed in the 1990s during the discovery of several late eighteenth century Philadelphia style gravemarkers underneath the floor boards of the First Presbyterian Church in Trenton. The markers had been covered during an expansion of the church in the nineteenth century and were protected from the elements. After their discovery, the authors had an opportunity to record them and noted their lack of wear.



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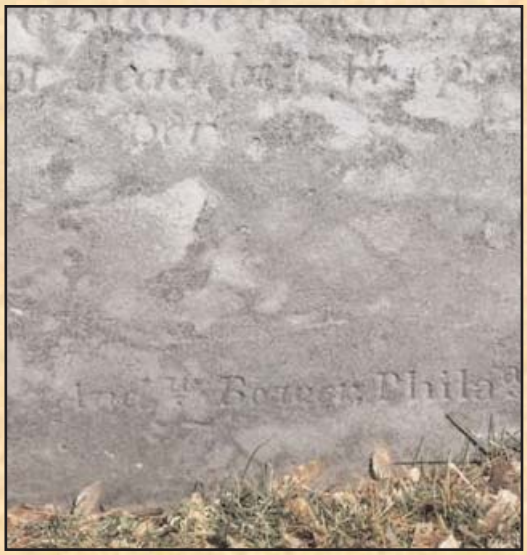
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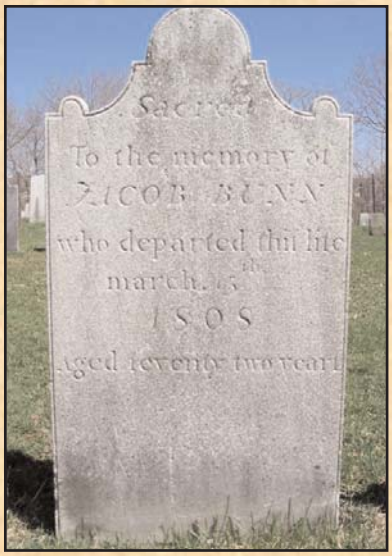


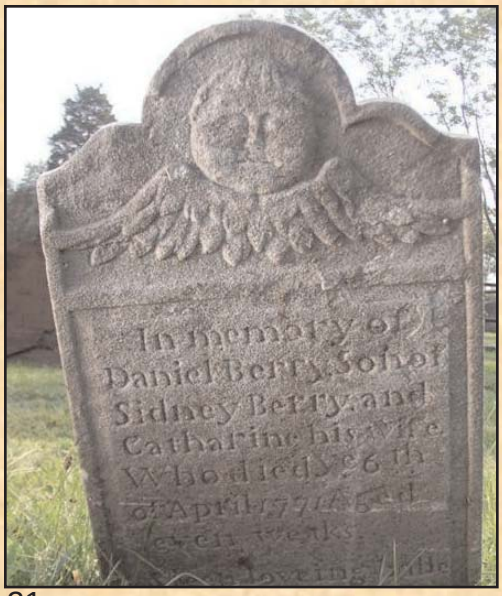
19.

17: The image at right of the Daniel Benezet (d. 1798) marker shows a typical Philadelphia style gravemarker of the late eighteenth century. This style would be popular into the early decades of the nineteenth century. Southern New Jersey cemeteries are filled with countless examples of this style.

18: Many Philadelphia style markers are unsigned, but a handful of carver's signatures have been documented by the authors that give testament to their source. The above image shows the signature for Andrew Bower of Philadelphia. In 1785 the shop of, "Captain Andrew Bower" was located on Race Street between 3rd and 4th *(Philadelphia Directory 1785)*. Another early nineteenth century Philadelphia carver, F. Fritz, has also been documented through signed examples. James Traquair, whose shop was located on High Street near 10th also has works in New Jersey. No known signed examples have been found; however, payments to Traquair for gravestones have been located in probate records at the New Jersey Division of Archives and Records Management. David Hunt, another Philadelphia stonecarver, shipped stones to Cape May and shows up in family papers from the late eighteenth century *(Dickinson 1965:99)*.

19: There are slight variations within the Philadelphia style, as seen in the Jacob Bunn (d.1808) marker. This marker displays an incised border that appears on examples in the late eighteenth century and is used during the early decades of the nineteenth century.

20.



21.

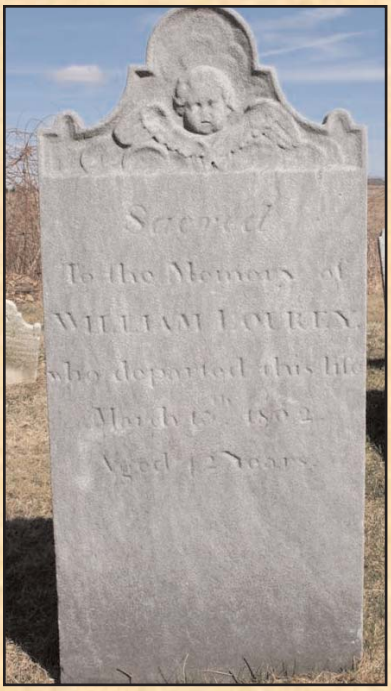
22.

20: Another variation with an incised border can be seen in the Isaac Ambrose (d. 1822) marker. The marker has a script style "IN" and rosettes carved on the shoulders. The wear pattern typical of the Philadelphia style marker is also evident. The lower portion of the stone, sheltered from the weather, still retains traces of a smooth surface, while the upper portion of the marker has lost its polish and has worn to a grainy finish.

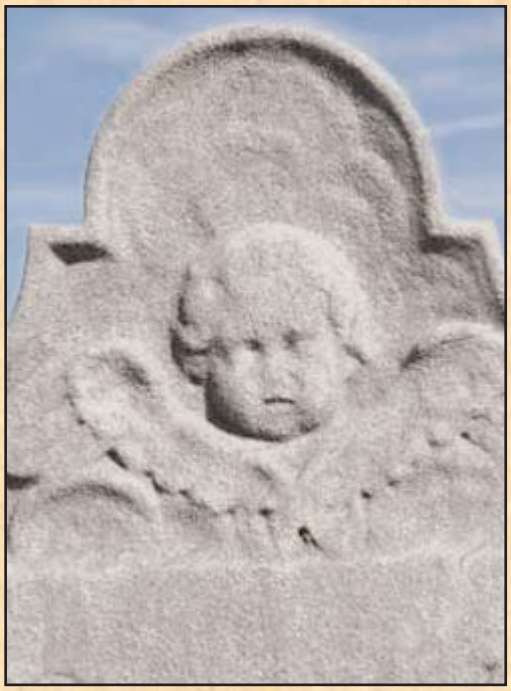
South and west Jersey cemeteries are an untapped resource for locating Philadelphia style markers that display unique designs. On occasion one can find simple Quaker influenced styles with attempts at New England iconography. The soul effigy, a winged cherub like motif, was common on New England stones of the eighteenth century and examples can be found that were produced in Philadelphia.

21: The Daniel Berry (d. 1771) marker in the Lamington Presbyterian Cemetery shows one such example. While the stone material and even the shape of the marker follow the characteristics of countless other Philadelphia style stones, the carving of the crude soul effigy makes the stone unique.

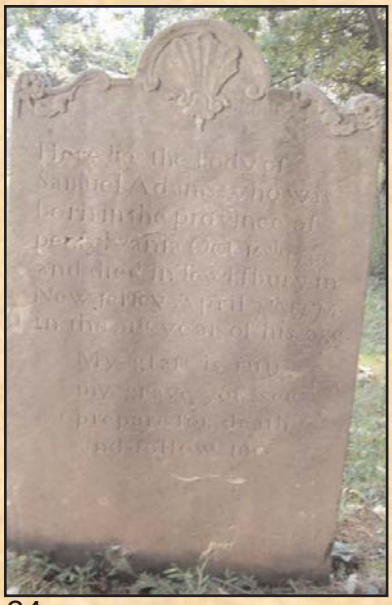
22: The Samuel Lowrey (d. 1796) marker illustrates another interpretation of the Philadelphia style soul effigy motif.



23a.



23b.



24a.

24b.

23a: The William Lourey (d. 1802) marker is yet another example of a Philadelphia style stone that was carved with decorative features. The winged cherub is unusual and illustrates the evolution of the Philadelphia style by the early nineteenth century.

23b. Detail of the William Lourey (d. 1802) marker.

24a. The Samuel Adams (d. 1774) marker exemplifies yet another design type found on Philadelphia markers. In her research, Elizabeth Crowell noted markers with "heart shaped tops or a central elevated arc, flanked by two wings" common in the 1770s *(Veit and Nonestied 2008:72)*. Some carvers embellished those tops with a baroque styling of shells, flowers and scrolls.

24b. Detail of the Samuel Adams marker showing floral designs at the shoulders and a shell design in the center.

25: Another exception to the generally plain Philadelphia style is a grouping of gravemarkers carved on blue-green soapstone. The Jonathan Davis (d. 1753) marker with its whimsical soul effigy is a wonderful example of this style. Other notable examples of soapstone gravemarkers can be found in Saint Mary's Churchyard in Burlington and both Christ Church and Old Swedes Church in Philadelphia. The authors have catalogued other examples in burial ground in Southern New Jersey and the Philadelphia region as well.

Soapstone markers, along with other unusual Philadelphia style gravestones illustrated above, are rare, and we are interested in documenting other examples.

25.

Identifying Gravestone Carvers

Identifying gravestone carvers provides an opportunity to learn about the people who created the earliest forms of memorial art found in New Jersey. Once a particular stone has been attributed to a gravestone carver, either through its signature or through historic documents, other markers that exhibit a similar styling can also be attributed to that carver. By cataloguing similar styles of gravestones, a database can be compiled of the carvers' work, the geographic region in which they worked in, which carvers may have influenced their style, how their style may have influenced others, and how the style changes over time.

Gravestone carvers used common motifs that were popular throughout the colonies. Historians have identified three main styles of the colonial and early federal period. They include the winged death head, popular from the early to mid eighteenth century, the soul effigy, popular from the mid to the late eighteenth century; and the urn and willow tree in the early nineteenth century *(Deetz and Dethlesfsen 1966, 1967; Deetz 1977)*.

Carvers created their own variation or interpretation of these designs, ultimately producing unique regionalisms that can be found in communities throughout the eastern seaboard. The following illustrations exemplify the work of four different New Jersey carvers of the eighteenth century and their carving style using the soul effigy. You will note that each example is in essence the same design, but because of the nature of carving stones by hand with mallet and chisel the differences between each carver and their skill level becomes evident.

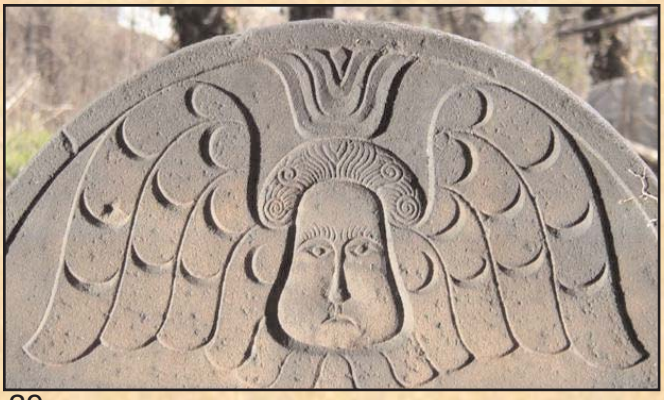
26.

27.

26: The marker shown above is a good example of the work of the Common Jersey Carver or Common Jersey Soul Carver, active between c. 1720 and 1760 in northern New Jersey. Note the eyes which glance sideways as though anticipating the grim reaper's approach. Although a talented and prolific carver, this individual did not sign his works and remains anonymous.

27: The above photograph illustrates a typical soul effigy carved by Ebenezer Price of Elizabeth. Note the prominent chin and a tightly wound wig. The gravestone is located in Evergreen Cemetery, Morristown. Also note the crossed swords over the cherubs head and on either side of his wings, commemorating the deceased's military service.

28.



29.

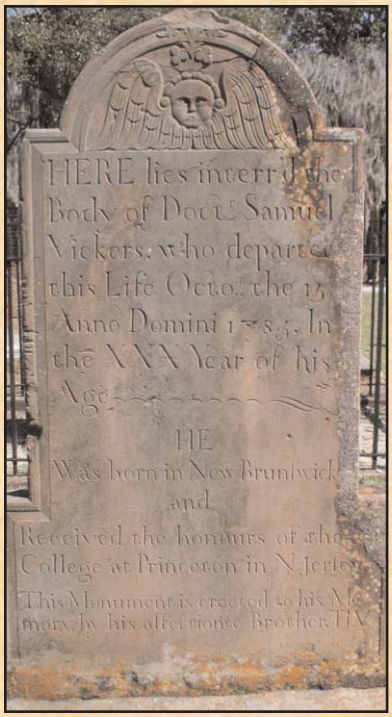
28: The above photograph illustrates a soul effigy carved by J. Tucker. Tucker was active in the 1780s and may have operated in Westfield. He appears to have been influenced by Ebenezer Price in nearby Elizabeth. Tucker's soul effigies, while similar to Price, were not as refined. The difference in skill level between Price and Tucker can be seen in Tucker's less skillful handling of the wings.

29: This photograph depicts a soul effigy carved by Newark gravestone carver Uzal Ward. Note the different handling of the face with its pear shape as opposed to those of Tucker and Price. John Zielenski in his master thesis *Shaping a Soul of Stone: The Soul Effigy Gravestones of Uzal Ward, William Grant, and the Anonymous Pear Head Carvers of Eighteenth-Century, New Jersey* examined the work of Uzal Ward and William Grant. His extensive research into Newark's colonial gravestone carvers has added important information on the styles that were created in one of New Jersey's most important centers of stone carving activity.

Exploring old burial grounds in search of the works of a particular carver can lead one to well kept churchyards as well as overgrown family cemeteries tucked away on isolated farms. With hundreds, if not thousands, of cemeteries in New Jersey, creating a catalog of a carvers' work can be a daunting, but rewarding task.

The geographic region in which carvers operated can be large. Researchers have documented New Jersey carved gravestones not only in the neighboring states, but in the Carolinas, Georgia and even the Caribbean *(Combs 1986; Little 1998)*.

30: The gravemarker for Doctor Samuel Vickers (d. 1785) in the Old Colonial Park Burial Ground in Savannah, Georgia, was carved by Ebenezer, Price of Elizabeth New Jersey. Note the New Jersey reference in the inscription.



30.

Look for Signatures

Perhaps the easiest way to know who carved a particular gravemarker is to look at the stone for the carver's signature. While this may seem straightforward, carver signatures were often placed near ground level and over time can be obscured.

31: The elaborate signature for "Aron Ross" is carved within a rope border and located at the base of the marker. The signature also notes the Rahway location of Ross's workshop.

31.

32: The Nixon Marker (c. 1870) is located in Evergreen Cemetery, Camden. The stone was signed by George Mott whose shop was located in Camden on Federal Street at the corner of Front (Boyd 1860).

32.

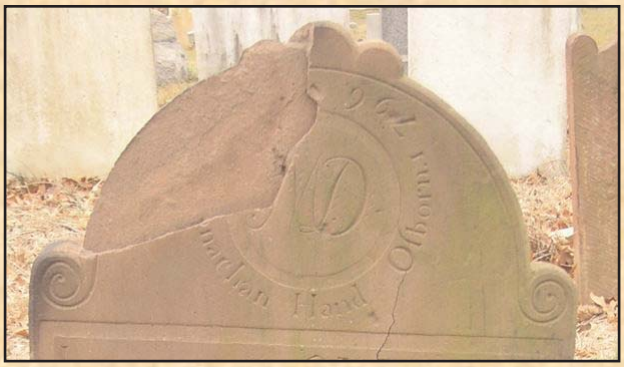
33: The signature for a carver can also consist of initials. The cryptic lettering "J.C.M. C.F." was found to be the mark of John C. Mooney of Connecticut Farms, an early nineteenth century gravestone carver.

33.

34: The initials "E P" stand for New Jersey's most prolific eighteenth century gravestone carver Ebenezer Price of Elizabeth. Price sometimes utilized a number of different motifs alongside his signature including a heart and a pointed hand.

34.

35.



36.

35: Jonathan Hand Osborn of S.P (Scotch Plains) was certainly not modest about signing his work. Signing a marker in such a prominent location is unusual and was not often done.

36: The above photograph is of a marker at St. James Episcopal Churchyard in Edison. Jonathan Hand Osborn's signature is carved at the top; Osborn added the year he carved the stone, 1796.

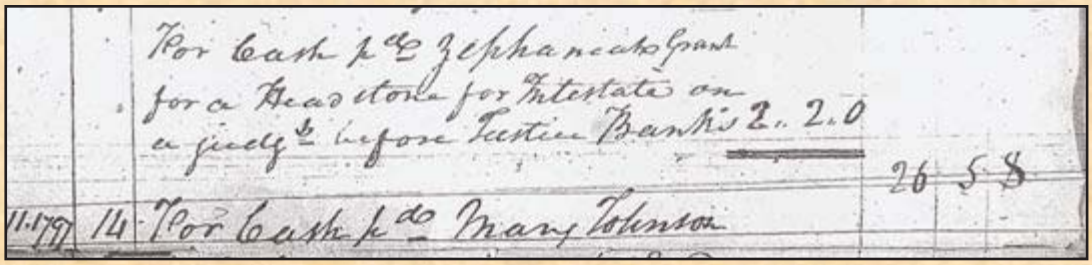
For those that research cemeteries, signed gravemarkers are important to identify and record. Some gravestone carvers, like the Sillcocks family of New Brunswick, were quite prolific in signing stones as compared to their contemporaries. The authors have catalogued 75 signed gravestones produced from the 1810s until the 1870s by this stone cutting family.

While gravestones with carver's signatures can be found in many cemeteries, the majority was unsigned and New Jersey cemeteries are filled with the works produced by artisans whose names have been lost through time.

Historic Records

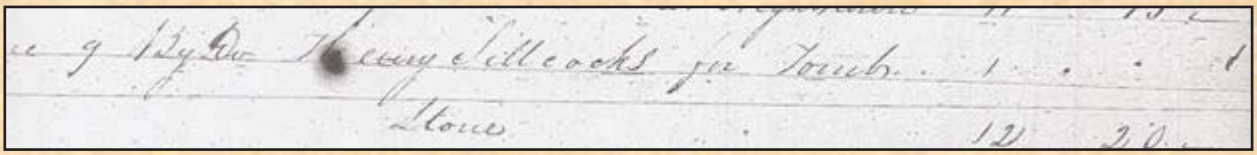
Historic records are another research tool used in identifying gravestone carvers. The most common record types that capture this information are estate and probate records. The New Jersey Division of Archives and Records Management in Trenton houses the largest holding of these records. Organized by county, some of the files have accounting pages for expenses that were paid to settle the estate of the deceased. Payments to gravestone carvers are sometimes among them. The records can either be meticulously searched for gravestone payments or the names of the deceased can be checked against an index to see what records may survive.

When *New Jersey Cemeteries and Tombstones: History in the Landscape* was published in 2008 the authors had found nearly ninety payments for gravestones from 1778 to 1876 made in several New Jersey counties. Since then, additional research has uncovered a total of 133 payments, with the earliest dated 1764.



37.

37: This illustration notes a 1797 payment to Zephaniah Grant for a headstone. The payment is from the estate of Thomas Boose. Boose died without a will and the disposition of the estate wound up in the courts before Justice Banks. Banks granted a payment to Zephaniah Grant of Newark for 2 pounds and 2 shillings for a "headstone." "For cash pd Zephaniah Grant for a Headstone for Intestate on a judgt before Justice Banks 2.2.0." *(Essex County Unrecorded Estate Papers, Reel 2—20)*



38.

38: The estate of East Windsor resident Asher Applegate paid tombstone carver Henry Sillcocks twenty dollars on June 9, 1835, for his gravemarker: "June 9 By Do [Cash Paid] Henry Sillcocks for Tomb Stone 20_" *(Middlesex County Unrecorded Estate Papers, Reel 1 Folder 914647)*

39.

39: With a growing list of payments, for gravestones the authors took to the field to see if any survive today. Several were found including the Peter Tembly (d. 1797) marker. According to records the estate paid four pounds to gravestone carver Jonathan H. Osborn *(Essex County Unrecorded Estate Papers, Reel 2—20 Folder 176)*. Located in the historic Rahway Cemetery the stone is unsigned, but is stylistically similar to other Osborn stones.

By examining records for payments to carvers and matching them to surviving stones, an unsigned gravemarker can then be attributed to a carver.

40: This gravemarker for William Oliver (d. 1807) in the historic Rahway Cemetery in Union County was also carved by Zephaniah Grant of Newark. The estate paid him twelve dollars for the stone *(Essex County Unrecorded Estate Papers, Reel 2—25 Folder 827)*. This particular style of marker is prevalent throughout central New Jersey; however, none of them were signed by Grant. By utilizing estate and probate records, an otherwise anonymous carver has been given a name.

40.

41: The gravestone depicted above for Samuel Morris (d. 1810) located in the Old Colonial Park Burial Ground in Savannah, Georgia, is stylistically similar to markers carved by Zephaniah Grant of Newark. Also note the Newark, New Jersey reference inscribed on the stone.

41.

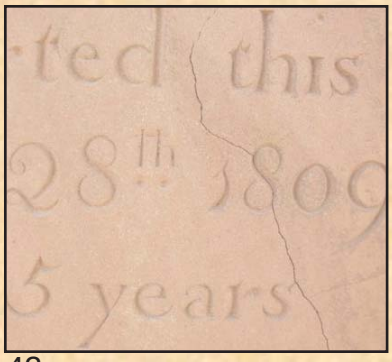
Perhaps the biggest contribution of estate and probate records is that they can provide a cross check to other methods of attributing gravestones to a carver, especially if records match stones that have a signature. They are important in providing a layered approach to research.

The value for this layered approach becomes apparent when examining the work of the Sillcocks family of New Brunswick. The authors have uncovered 34 payments for markers that date between 1805 and 1861. When these payments are coupled with the 75 signed gravestones that were noted earlier, clear attributions can be made in regards to these carvers.

Identifying Markers by Style

If no documents or signatures are present, the work of a carver can still be determined by linking together stones of the same style. Since gravemarkers were handmade, the work of each carver has its own unique look and can be identified and tracked by researchers. The next three photographs show in detail the stylistic differences between three different carvers.

42: The photograph of a marker carved by "I.G. Sillcocks" of central New Jersey shows his distinct style of carving numbers. Note the unique shape of the number "2" and the curvature of the "1" in the year 1809.



42.

43: Note the unique carving of the numbers in the above gravemarker by Uzal Ward of Newark.

44: John Frazee had a distinct carving style that can be seen in the handling of the letter "S." Frazee often employed a looped serif for a capital S (Nonestied 1997). The above image shows four different markers with that styling.

43.

Conclusion

The ideal attribution comes from the integration of all the various methods. By linking together signatures with historic documents and similar styles the work of a carver can be identified.

The study of gravemarkers is a growing field, and an important aspect of that study is understanding the artisans who produced the markers. New Jersey tombstone carvers created some of the earliest forms of American memorial art and their works, which fill the cemetery landscape, are worthy of study. Early New Jersey's stone carvers drew from existing European antecedents but developed their own folk traditions. Thanks to New Jersey's location as a physical crossroads between New York and Philadelphia and its history of settlement by diverse ethnic groups it was home to several distinct stoneworking traditions. The craftsmen whose artisanship produced these early gravemarkers created some of New Jersey's first public art. Today, several centuries later they remind us of the lives and beliefs of these early settlers. By studying these early carvers and identifying their works we can learn more about artisanship, religion, ethnicity, commerce and art production in early New Jersey. We hope this article serves as an inspiration to other researchers to explore the diverse carving traditions found in New Jersey's early burial grounds.

44.

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