

England's Colonial burial grounds are special places of intrigue and mystery. Here lie the now silent remains of America's early Colonial inhabitants. By studying the old headstones you will discover vivid stories of the past. The inscriptions speak of family histories, religious philosophy and long forgotten traditions. These stone markers also represent early American sculpture. The stone markers and their arrangement within the burial ground reflect the attitudes and philosophies of the Puritan people who made them several hundred years ago. Colonial burial grounds truly are outdoor museums.

In Europe, the custom of churchyard burials was practiced by followers of Judeo-Christian tradition. Interments often occurred near or within the cathedral walls for those of the highest social rank. The Puritans, who came to New England in the early 1600s, had rejected this practice along with other perceived papist customs, as heretical and idolatrous. As a result, many New England towns set aside land, away from the Meeting House, to be used as community burial grounds. The area chosen for burials was usually hilly and not considered suitable for farming. The Norwichtown burial ground, with the Meeting House located up on the hill, serves as a fine example of this Colonial tradition. Familiar Christian symbols, such as the cross or images of the Holy family, were also rejected by the early Puritans in favor of more secular figures, such as winged skulls and cherubs which appear in their tombstone art.

In the early 1600s, life in Colonial New England was difficult. People struggled for basic food and shelter. The benefits of hygiene and the link between microbes and disease was not understood. Death was common. It occurred often and suddenly. The earliest gravesites had low wooden markers, following an English tradition referred to as post and rail. Two wooden posts were placed at the head and foot of the grave site to which a wide board or rail was fastened. The board spanned the length of the grave and provided an area for inscriptions. Unfortunately, none of these early New England markers have survived. By the middle 1600s stone monuments came into use to mark grave sites. One of the oldest dated New England stone marker was discovered in Warwick, Rhode Island. It is a crude fieldstone with the carved inscription "HERE LIETH THE BODY OF SARAH TEEFT 1642".

Throughout the remainder of the Colonial period (from 1620 to about 1800) hand-carved stone markers were used to memorialize individuals. They carved according to their own ability and individual skill, often copying figures or designs from printed material or from other carvers. Tombstones were purchased in pairs and placed at the head

(headstone) and feet (footstone) of the deceased. Inscriptions were carved into the back of the headstone so they might be easily viewed. The footstone received less attention, left blank or carved with an individual's initials. Because of their belief that with death came judgment, Colonial burial grounds tend to be oriented in an east-west configuration. Bodies were buried with their feet to the east, so that as the day of judgment dawned, they might all sit up and face the rising sun.

The brevity of life and the certainty of death, and with it judgment, were major philosophical themes for the early Puritans. This outlook was impressed on them by their daily struggle for survival. These ideas were part of a pessimistic view of life in this world and uncertainty about continuance in the next. Skulls with crossed bones, winged hour glasses, along with other death and burial symbols such as coffins and shovels, were popular images for tombstones. Even for the illiterate, these images were powerful symbols which reinforced the religious philosophy of the day.

By the mid-1700s life in Colonial America had stabilized. Farms produced abundant crops and trade flourished. From this, a more confident attitude about the future emerged. Tombstones from this period displayed images of winged cherubs, symbolizing the ascending spirit of the deceased, and reflected an optimistic view about the afterlife. Gone are the grinning skulls and other ghoulish reminders of death and decay. Inscriptions which previously began, "Here Lyes the Body of.....", now began, "In Memory of.....".

The Colonial period came to a close around 1800. At this time, society's attitude again shifted toward an appreciation for the classical style. This trend continued throughout the century. It was expressed in many areas of American life including architecture, literature and in tombstone art. Grecian urns and lamps of knowledge reflected a national interest in recent archaeological discoveries in Greece, and a romantic attitude toward the relationship of God in nature. The reality of death was blunted. Bending weeping willows symbolized mourning and loss. Previous terms such as graveyard or burial ground were replaced by the term 'cemetery', a Greek word meaning sleeping place. Funeral customs, which had previously been conducted in the home, were now handled by an undertaker. This new and growing business had adopted the term 'parlor' after the name for the room most often used in the home for such occasions. The stigma of death was further removed from the home by removing this room the 'living room'. The disassociation of life and death continues to this day.

To find out more about cemetery practices, contact the Connecticut Gravestone Network, 135 Wells St., Manchester, CT 06040, or Association for Gravestone Studies, 278 Main Street, Suite 207, Greenfield, MA 01301, or through the books listed on the back of this brochure.

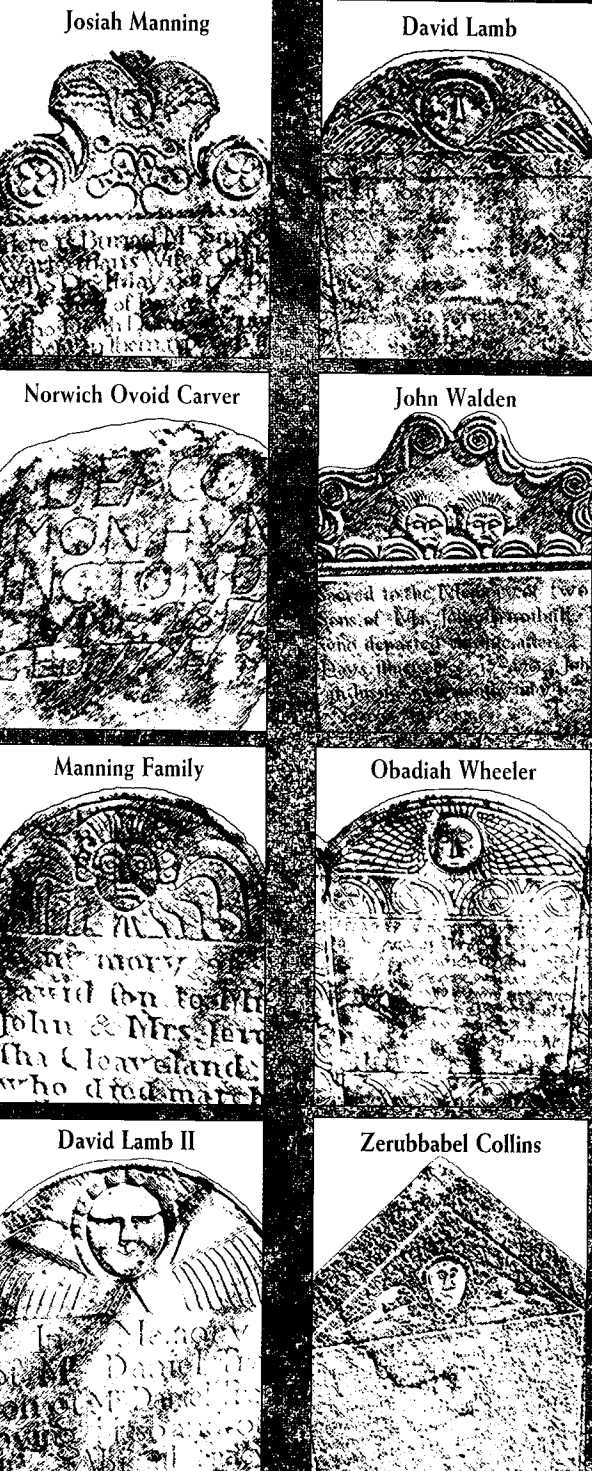
OLD BURYING GROUND AT NORWICH TOWN

Old Norwichtown Burying Ground reveals Norwich's rich Colonial history. Gravestones bear the familiar names of many of Norwich's earliest residents. It was established on January 4, 1700, to satisfy the needs of a rapidly growing community. Lieutenant Samuel Huntington conveyed to the town of Norwich in consideration of £90, his home lot, a portion of which was to be set aside for community burials. This land was originally part of the home lot of Reverend James Fitch, the first minister of Norwich. As the population of Norwich grew, additional parcels of land were added to provide more ground for interments. The original grounds can be divided into two general areas. The original Colonial section, containing primarily headstones from the 1700s, is located immediately through the gates at the end of Cemetery Lane. The area opened through the gates off East Town St. was used mostly during the 1800s. The two sections are connected by a small bridge which crosses a seasonal brook. Over the years there have been several thousands burials, but today only about thirteen hundred tombstones remain to mark these final resting places. This brochure focuses on the oldest section of the cemetery.

Post-dated and buried in the rear of their home lot located on March of 1661 in Norwich, Mary Andrews, the wife of Thomas West Town St. In December of that year, the Town purchased this land to be used as a community burial ground. This was the first burial ground in Norwich and is the final resting place for many of the men and women who founded the Town and other early settlers. Prior to 1693, additional land was added from the adjoining home lot of John Gager. In 1871, a monument to the original founders was erected at this site and is inscribed with the names of the original Founders of Norwich. This sacred ground can be visited today. It is located at the end of Lee St. and access is by right of way. * Unfortunately any early Colonial burial markers have long since weathered away and no sign remains to mark the resting places of the earliest inhabitants of Norwich.

* Park at the low end of the street. The home and lot at the top of Lee St. are private. Please be respectful of the nearby grounds. Follow the pathway and enter the burial grounds through the gate.

Carvers of the Norwichtown Cemetery



ADDITIONAL READING MATERIALS AVAILABLE ABOUT GRAVEYARDS

Peter Benes • *The Masks of Orthodoxy*

T. Chase & L.K. Gable • *Gravestone Chronicles I & II*

James Deetz • *In Small Things Forgotten, The Chronology of Early American Life*

Harriette Merrifield Forbes • *Gravestones of Early New England and the Men Who Made Them, 1653-1800*

Allen Ludwig • *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and Its Symbols 1650-1815*

James A. Slater • *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and The Men who Made Them*

This brochure focuses on the oldest section of the Norwichtown Cemetery. It was researched and written by local historian David Oat. Editing by Meg Malmberg. Production of the Norwich Tourism Office (69 Main Street, Norwich, CT 06360 • (860) 886-4683). © 1997

Burial Ground



1. MEMORIAL TO LAFAYETTE'S FRENCH SOLDIERS

In Memory of
Twenty French Soldiers
who, serving under
LAFAYETTE,
Died While at Camp at
Norwich Town 1778

Upon entering the Norwich town burial grounds, through the gates at the end of Cemetery Lane, you will pass a memorial dedicated in 1901 by the Faith Trumbull Chapter of the D.A.R. to the French soldiers who died in Norwich in 1778. At that time General Lafayette was moving his troops south from Providence and halted in Norwich for several days due to an illness within his troops. The sick soldiers were quartered in the court houses, while the remainder camped on the Town Green. Eventually, twenty soldiers died and were buried on either side of Cemetery Lane. The exact location is unknown. Behind this monument (1B) is another marker dedicated to these soldiers by the 'Societe National Souverain Francais' from France.

2. BENJAMIN BUTLER

Alias, poor human nature
In Memory of
BENJAMIN BUTLER
who died of a Phthisis
pneumonia June 17 th AD
1787 in the 43 year
of his age.

This white marble headstone indicates that Benjamin Butler died from a mysterious disease. It was carved by Rockwell Manning. Toward the end of the 1700s white marble could be shipped from the famous Vermont quarries. In the later part of his career, Rockwell frequently used this marble to carve his headstones. White marble gained popularity as a material for gravestones, and was used almost exclusively for the elaborate neoclassical memorials that can be found in nineteenth century cemeteries.

3. HANNAH ARNOLD

In Memory of
HANNAH
the well beloved wife of
Capt. BENNEDICT ARNOLD
and Daughter of
Mr. John and Elizabeth Watermen,
Who died Aug. 15, 1758,
aetatis saae 52.

Here is the headstone for Hannah, the mother of the infamous traitor, Benedict Arnold who fought with the British and supervised the burning of New London. His father was also Benedict Arnold. To the right you will see the markers for Elizabeth, Mary, and Absalom (two daughters and a son who died at an early age). These headstones were all carved in Newport, Rhode Island, by John Stevens II, and shipped to Norwich. The gray-green color is typical of local Rhode Island slate used by this carver. It is extremely hard and holds up to the weather. There are several stones from the Stevens Shop here in Norwichtown which is a testament to the prominent role Norwich played in maritime trade during the 1700s.

4. DEACON SIMON HUNTINGTON

DEACON SI
MON HUNT
INGTON DY
ED JUN
29, 1707
AGED 21
YEARS

Deacon Simon Huntington was one of the original founders of Norwich. He is considered to be the first person interred in the Old Norwichtown Burial Grounds. His mother, Margaret Baret, was born in Norwich, England. Nearby (to the right) is a similar headstone for Simon Huntington. He was Deacon Simon Huntington's grandson. He was bitten on the foot by a rattlesnake while moving a nearby field and died shortly afterwards. Rattlesnakes were so numerous in Colonial Norwich that a bounty was placed on them. Note the curious spelling on these markers. Spelling was not standardized until Noah Webster published his dictionary in 1783. Prior to that time phonetic spelling was common. Both headstones were fashioned from local stone which was crudely cut into an oval shape with a flattened surface on one side. The carver, whose name remains unknown, is referred to as the **Norwich Ovoid Carver** in reference to the oval shape of his finished tombstones. He represents one of the earlier stone carvers in southeastern Connecticut. His large deep cut lettering can still be read even after several hundred years exposure to New England's weather. Since he was a local carver, many examples of his work are here in Norwichtown.

Please be respectful. Watch where you are walking and be mindful of both head and footstones. These headstones are fragile and irreplaceable.

6. JOSHUA HUNTINGTON

HERE
IS INTERRED
the Body of Capt. Joshua
Huntington Esq. who Departed
this Life on the 26 day of
August 1745 in the 47 th year
of his age and very justly
Lamented by the Surviving

7. BOSTON TROWTROW

In Memory of
Boston Trowtrow
Governor of ye Affri
can This he Died
May 28 1772
At 66.

An area for the interment of Norwich's black residents was set aside at the rear of the burying grounds. Several headstones remain for the Africans who were buried here. Carved cemetery stones were expensive and few poor people could afford them. While many slaves attended Christian Church services, there is little evidence in Norwich of the philosophy of African slaves regarding the afterlife. The headstones were a tradition of the dominant white culture. It is not known whether the stones were accepted by Africans as a means to memorialize their dead. More likely, the slave owners provided headstones for servants who had lived with their families for many years. Leb Quy, a native of Africa, served for three years in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. His burial site is unknown. The headstone for Boston Trowtrow was carved by a member of the Manning family.

8. CHRISTOPHER HUNTINGTON

HERE LIES INTERD YE REMAINS
OF DEACON CHRISTOPHER HUNTING
TON OF NORWICH, BORN NOV.
BER YE 1, 1660. YE FIRST BORN
OF MALES IN YE TOWN, HE SERVED
NEAR 40 YEARS IN YE OFFICE
OF A DEACON. DIED APRIL YE
24, 1735 IN YE 75 YR OF HIS AGE.
MEMENTO MORI

Christopher was the first male born in Norwich, although not the first born (Sam and Jane Hyde had a daughter, August of the same year). Christopher's oldest daughter, Ruth, was the mother of Dr. Eleazer Wheeler, the founder of the first Indian school in Lebanon. This school moved to New Hampshire and was renamed Dartmouth College where he served as president. Christopher's headstone was carved by the Lebanon carver, **Obadiah Wheeler**. Wheeler was a talented carver and there are many examples of his work at Norwichtown. His winged cherubs are similar to those of Benjamin Collins. However, if you focus on the nose you will see that it is narrow, unlike the Collins stones. See if you can identify other Wheeler/Collins stones in Norwichtown.

9. CAPT. OBADIAH SMITH

HER LYES YE BODY
OF CAPT. OBADIAH
SMITH WHO DIED
MAY YE 11 th 1727 &
IN YE 50th YEAR
OF HIS AGE
NOW BETWEEN
THESE CARVE STONS
RICH TRESUER LIES
DEER SMITH HIS BONES

Captain Smith was the first constable in Norwich. His headstone was carved by **John Hartshorne** who lived in the West Farms area of Norwich. Hartshorne moved here in 1722 from Rowley, MA, to live with his daughter following the death of his third wife. In 1702, he lost a wife, son and three grandsons during an Indian raid in Haverhill, MA. At 70 years of age, he was the last surviving veteran of King Philip's War. Hartshorne had been carving tombstones for many years and brought with him a skill and carving tradition. Although crude, his headstones represent the earliest examples of carved headstones in eastern CT. In the area of Capt. Smith's stone you will find many other examples of John Hartshorne's headstones. In time, other carvers began copying this basic design then embellished it with their own headstones. The Africans in Norwich held mock elections each year for their own leadership. This was a festive occasion which had no legal standing. Samuel Huntington's own slave, Sam Huntington, was elected governor for many years; more years than Huntington served as governor of Connecticut.

10. THEOPHILUS AND ELIZABETH RODGERS

Here lyeth ye Remains of
Doctor Theophilus Rodgers
and of Mrs. Elizabeth his Wife
Daughter of Mr. William Hide.
The Doct. died on ye 29th of
September 1753 in ye 54th year
of his age. And his Wife on ye
24th off November 1753 in ye
54th Year of her age also.
Both Continued to ye same Year
of Life. Both died on ye same
day of ye Week, and both
deposited in this Grave.

11. REV. BENJAMIN LORD D. D.

(1692 - 1784)
Think, Christians, think
You stand on vast eternity's dread brink
Faith and Repentance, Piety and Prayer
Despise this world, the next be all your care,
Thus while my Tomb the solemn silence breaks,
And to the eye, this cold dumb marble speaks.
Tho' dead I preach, it e'en with ill success,
Living I strove th' immortal souls to save,
Your precious, your immortal souls to save,
Hear me at least, O ear me from my Grave.

Dr. Rodgers was a very prominent physician in Norwich during the Revolutionary period, he owned one of six Chases or Cigs (a type of carriage) in Norwich. His headstone was carved by John Stevens II of Newport, Rhode Island. The two winged cherubs represent the soul figures of the doctor (right) and his wife (left). Following Colonial tradition, the wife was buried next to the husbands left side with both their feet toward the east. This was done so as the sun rose on Judgment Day they could both sit up and face Christ in the same order. The stone is still unknown. Because of its durability, these headstones appear fresh today despite over a hundred years of New England weathering.

Mr. John Trumbull Departed this life
aug 14, 1802,
age 50 Years. He was born in
Cambridge, Mass. from whence he
early removed to the town in which
he was the first publisher of a
Newspaper. He was a member of
Somerset Lodge and was the
first interred with Masonic honors in this yard.
In 1773 John Trumbull, along with the Robertson brothers, Alexander and James, formed the first newspaper in Norwich called the *Norwich Packet*. The subscription price was six shillings and eight pence per year. The presses were located in a shop near the courthouse on the Town Green. During the War of Independence support for the Patriots ran high in Norwich. The Robertsons, who remained loyal to the Crown, found it increasingly difficult to conduct their business in town. They left for New York in 1776 turning over sole ownership of the newspaper to John Trumbull.

12. HEZEKIAH HUNTINGTON ESQ.

To the Memory of Honobi
HEZEKIAH HUNTINGG-
TON Esq. who died at New
London in ye session of ye court
Feby 10 th 1773 Ereit 76. Deacon
of ye first Church in Norwich,
one of ye Council of ye Colony,
Judge of Probate, his Piety &
Affability, Prayers & Example,
Wisdom & Experience endeared
him to his Friends, to ye Church
& ye State.

Hezekiah Huntington's marker speaks for the well respected man, who dedicated his life to public service and his church. This well preserved headstone was carved by Josiah Manning (1725-1806), who was born in Hopkinton, MA and moved to Franklin, CT in 1748. Town records show at age 23, he was paid 8 shillings to dig the grave for Samuel Edgerton. He carved headstones for many years. Later he was joined in the business by two of his sons. His "pop eyed" cherub became very popular and can be found in most of the burial grounds in eastern CT and bordering towns. There are over two hundred at Norwichtown. In the 1770s he began working with a tan colored stone. The location of the quarry is still unknown. Because of its durability, these headstones appear fresh today despite over a hundred years of New England weathering.

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14. JOHN AND TIMOTHY TRUMBELL

Sacred to the memory of two
sons of Mr. John Trumbell.
Departed this life after four
days illness. Dec 17, 1794, John
in his 15 & Timothy in the 11 year
of his age.

Left of the John Trumbell stone is the marker for two of his children. Both died on the same day. Before the development of modern medical advances children often died before maturity. This headstone (along with their father's) was carved by **John Walden** (signed) of Scotland, CT. Walden carved his figures in a similar manner to those from the Manning family and is referred to as a Manning imitator. Notice the quality of the carved figures and lettering in the well preserved children's stone.

