

**The Cemeteries of
Hebron, Connecticut:
Their Historic Monuments, Stone
Carvers and Care**



William Rollo, 1732 (Old Hebron Cemetery)

**A Workshop by Ruth Shapleigh-Brown
Director, Connecticut Gravestone Network
October 27, 2013**

**Program Co-Sponsored by
The Hebron Historic Properties Commission
&
The Hebron Historical Society**

Introduction

The Town of Hebron has eleven historic cemeteries within its borders. The Old Hebron Cemetery dates back to the 1730's, with the Anglican Cemetery on Godfrey Hill and Gilead Cemetery close behind; 1740's and 1750's, respectively. Two of the cemeteries, Rollo and Stark, have but one grave apiece, but the largest, St. Peters, has over 1,300 interments with at least 450 of them from the 19th century.

The 18th century gravestones were carved by hand. Hebron has a variety of these old stone carvers' work represented. Some stones were simple, others more elaborate, but all interesting. Much information can be gleaned from the monuments to our long deceased forebears. Enjoy the creative spellings, the script with abbreviations, and the epitaphs. You can learn a lot about the lives lived by our early colonists.

Ruth Shapleigh-Brown, Director of the Connecticut Gravestone Network, has provided much information about our early stone carvers, as well as how to identify each. Almost more important than the background on the stone carvers are her directions on how to properly clean the stones without damaging them. She also gives hints for easier reading and photographing of nearly illegible stones. Her key thought, however, is to PLEASE RESPECT our cemeteries and gravestones!

Feel free to visit our cemeteries, study and photograph our stones, and ponder the lives of the individuals memorialized on these stones.

Much appreciation is extended to The Hebron Historical Society and The Hebron Historic Properties Commission for co-sponsoring this program.

FIND-A-GRAVE

Find A Grave contains information for over 400,000 cemeteries in over 200 different countries. Find A Grave has at least a partial listing of graves for over 250,000 of these cemeteries.

International Cemetery Search

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cs&CRid=103539&>

Connecticut, Tolland County

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=csr&CScty=310>

Hebron Cemeteries

Agudas Achim of Hebron

See: **Hebron-Columbia Cemetery [Hillel Burial Society]**

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2260560&CScty=310&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2260560&CScty=310&)

Old Hebron/Andover Rd./Wall St. [404 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=103195&CScty=310&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=103195&CScty=310&)

Burrows Hill

(GPS: Lat: 41.63360, Long: -72.38920)

[139 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=103243&CScty=310&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=103243&CScty=310&)

Church of England/Godfrey Hill/Route 85

[74 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2137549&CScty=310&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2137549&CScty=310&)

Sumner/Gay City State Park (North St., Rt. 85)

[5 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=103353&CScty=310&CSsr=21&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=103353&CScty=310&CSsr=21&)

Gilead

(GPS: Lat: 41.67810, Long: -72.41080)

[988 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=103357&CScty=310&CSsr=21&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=103357&CScty=310&CSsr=21&)

Gilead Congregational Church Garden of Remembrance

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2475070&CScty=310&CSsr=21&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2475070&CScty=310&CSsr=21&)

Gott

(Niles Rd., opposite Jones Cemetery)

[35 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2234469&CScty=310&CSsr=41&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2234469&CScty=310&CSsr=41&)

Jones (Niles Rd., GPS: Lat: 41.61360, Long: -72.35220) [10 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2232932&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=41&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2232932&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=41&)

Jones Street (GPS Lat: 41.60440, Long: -72.39080) [198 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=103423&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=41&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=103423&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=41&)

New Hebron/Wall St (GPS: Lat: 41.66859, Long: -72.36072) [220 ints.]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2260554&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=61&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2260554&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=61&)

Saint Peters (Rear of Church, 30 Church St.) [1,315 interments]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=103688&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=101&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=103688&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=101&)

Rollo/Salmon River State Forest [1 interment]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2170088&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=101&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2170088&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=101&)

Stark (Near Burroughs Hill Cemetery) [1 interment]

<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?>

[page=cr&CRid=2333930&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=121&](http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=2333930&CSentry=4&CSst=8&CSnty=310&CSsr=121&)

STONE CARVERS

Amasa Loomis (c.1773-1840)

Amasa Loomis was a third-generation Coventry, Connecticut, stonecarver, the grandson of Jonathan Loomis. Instead of following the family tradition in style, he adopted the then dominant Manning style in most particulars. His signed stones have round rather than ovoid faces and frequently floral border panels consisting of a narrow vine with three-lobed clovers alternating on either side. One of his finest stones is that for Mary Wheeler (1792) in Old Andover Cemetery, fortunately signed.



Mary Wheeler, 1792, Old Andover Cemetery

In addition to the floral designed stones, there are many stones in the same burying grounds with an undulating snake-like border that have almost identical cherubim to the clover-bordered stones and appear to have been carved by the same hand. Some of his larger stones have a cherub with an elongate slender neck designed somewhat in the fashion of some stones by Rockwell Manning. Despite good craftsmanship, Amasa Loomis, for the most part, showed little originality. He, like John Walden, was one of the last granite carvers in the old tradition and many of his stones were carved after 1800. He is buried in the South Street graveyard, Coventry, beneath an

undistinguished white marble slab. Signed stones are the Daniel Field stone (1795 Old Vernon) and the backdated double stone in Lebanon (1742, 1787) for Esther and Mary, two of the wives of Israel Loomis (the brother of Jonathan the carver). Amasa was also paid for the Mary Pierce (1809) stone at Bolton (Quarryville). In the Coventry South Street burying ground can also be seen a number of his urn and willow stones produced as he conformed to the changing style.

From: Slater, James A. *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them. Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences, vol. 21.* Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1987. *Homer Babbidge Library call number f/Q/11/C85/v.21

<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/about/exhibits/gravestones/amasa.htm>

=====

Benjamin Collins (1691-1759)

A contemporary of Obadiah Wheeler who lived in Columbia, Connecticut, Benjamin Collins was a cabinet maker as well as a gravestone craftsman. Collins's stones at first glance frequently closely resemble Wheeler stones in that both made frequent use of the large six-rayed rosette, a face with projecting wings, and a central heart in a horizontal row below the face. However, close examination of Collins's stones will allow easy recognition. His central face always has a bulbous rather than a long, slender, aristocratic nose, and his wings frequently end in rounded or trianguloid tips rather than the sharp, arrow-pointed tips so characteristic of Wheeler stones. Many resemble the headdress of an Indian chief. Collins frequently used a blue schist; in contrast to both Wheeler and Hartshorne he signed a number on his stones. His cabinet-making background obviously influenced his gravestone carving, as he tended to use a delicate, lacy, often leaf-like motif in his border panels and his lettering is very shallow. This latter, unfortunately, makes those stones that have been somewhat eroded difficult, if not impossible, to read. Signed stones by Benjamin Collins may be found in Pachaug, Danielson, Columbia, Hebron, Tolland, Scotland, Plainfield, Norwichtown, Coventry, Lebanon, and Franklin. To see his work at its best go to Columbia where he is buried. (His own stone was made by his son Zerubbabel).



Aaron Horsford, 1746, Old Hebron



Martha Wilcox, 1744, Old Hebron

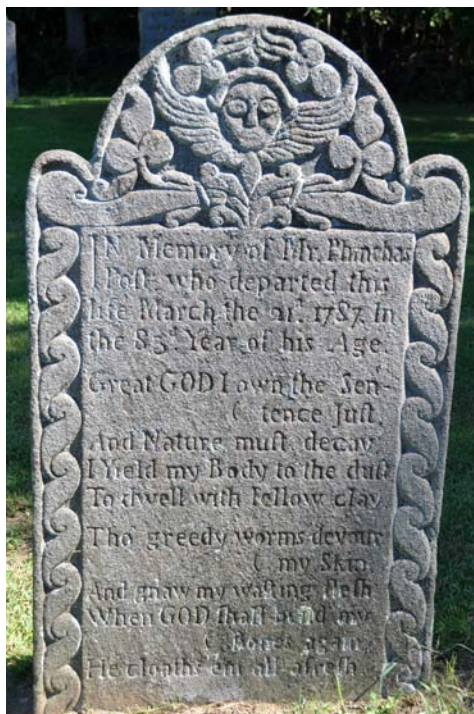
From: Slater, James A. *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them. Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences, vol. 21.* Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1987. *Homer Babbidge Library call number f/Q/11/C85/v.21

<http://www.ctgravestones.com/gallery/collins.htm>

=====

Zerubbabel Collins

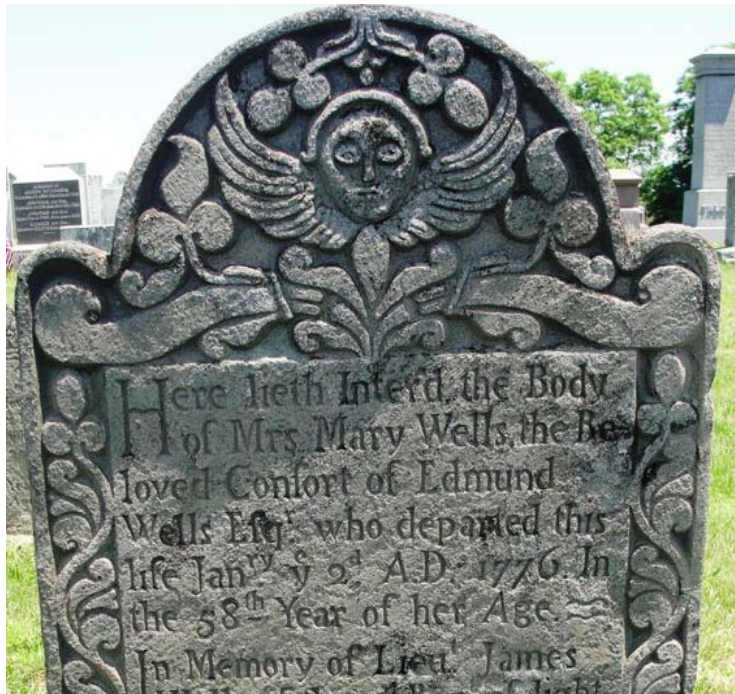
Zerubbabel Collins (1733-1797) Zerubbabel was the talented son of Benjamin Collins and, as noted above, carved his father's gravestone. Dr. Caulfield, the leading student of Connecticut gravestones, commented that Benjamin and his wife Elizabeth afflicted their son with the name Zerubbabel after a minor "begat" but the boy quickly overcame his handicap. Zerubbabel Collins's stones in eastern Connecticut are of two types: His early stones resemble those of his father Benjamin rather closely. Careful study is needed to distinguish some of the latter work of Benjamin and the earliest work of Zerubbabel. Generally these early stones have the bulbous nose, but down swept, much smaller wings than those found on stones carved by Benjamin Collins. Zerubbabel also frequently used a peculiar cap-like design on the top of the head of the cherub. His most characteristic work, which developed a few years after his father died, consists of a large, prominent jawed, deeply incised face with small wings arising from the face and below this an elaborate curving and twisting scroll like floral design. Zerubbabel Collins moved to Vermont in 1778 and began to carve in white marble. Many of his beautiful stones may be seen there, especially in the graveyards in Shaftsbury and Bennington. However, there are two of these marble stones in Columbia – one apparently is an advertisement for the price is prominently displayed. There are granite stones of a similar type in Glastonbury, Pomfret, Hebron (Gilead), E. Hartford, Andover and the Brooklyn Episcopal cemetery with dates later than 1778. That for Ebenezer Williams (1780) is by Aaron Haskins (probate record) who evidently carved all of these imitation stones.



Phinehas Post, 1787, Hebron



Lieut. John Mack, 1778, (Gilead Cemetery)



Mary Wells (Mrs. Edmund), 1776, Lieut. James Wells, 1781 (Gilead Cemetery)

From: Slater, James A. *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them. Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences*, vol. 21. Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1987. *Homer Babbidge Library call number f/Q/11/C85/v.21

<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/about/exhibits/gravestones/zerubb.htm>

=====

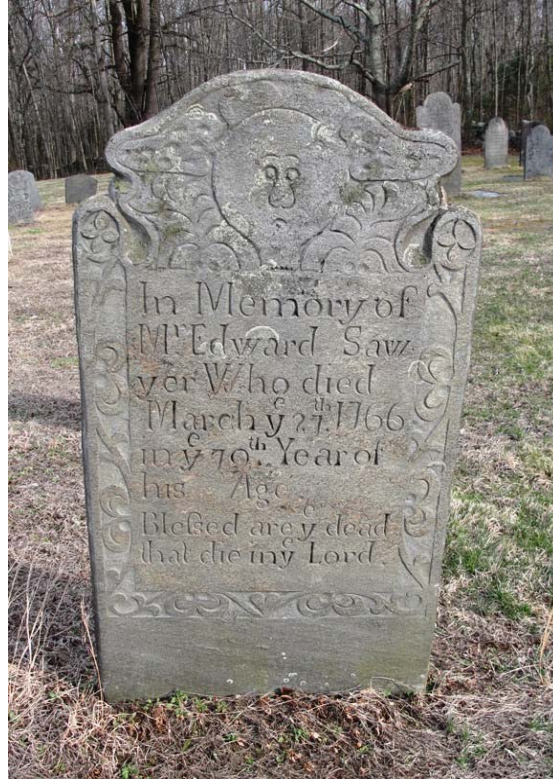
Gershom Bartlett (1723-1798)

The gravestone carvings of Gershom Bartlett are among the most bizarre and strikingly original of any produced during the eighteenth century. His stones are easily recognized by the bulbous noses, turned down mouths, row of vestigial teeth at the bottom of the face, raised eyebrows, usually a four-lobed crown, three curved wings of curls beside the face, or sometimes large puffy mushroom-like protuberances from the sides of the head. The finials are most frequently pinwheels or four-leafed clovers, and the border panels are in the form of double anchors. Frequently a small heart is present near the bottom of the stone. Bartlett is often called the "hook-and-eye man." Bartlett footstones usually have three or four diamonds cut into the stone surface. He most often worked in granite, although a few of his early stones are in red sandstone. Examples of these may be seen in the Edwards burying ground (S. Windsor) and in Ellington, Somers and Enfield. In the Oneco and Plainfield yards are several Bartlett stones carved on a white stone common in the area. He was a native of Bolton, Connecticut, the son of Samuel and Sarah Bartlett who came from Northampton, Massachusetts. During one period of his early carving career, he apparently lived in Windsor and possibly also in East Windsor. Bartlett stones are found throughout eastern Connecticut but are most common west of

Mansfield and become very scarce in the northeast and in coastal communities. They continue until 1772 when Bartlett moved to Pompanoosuc, Vermont, where he continued to carve (but on slate) until late in the eighteenth century. He was a Revolutionary War soldier and is buried in the Pompanoosuc burying ground. There are no known signed Connecticut stones. Probate records exist for Isaac Bigelow (1751) and Abner Kellogg (1755) of Colchester and Abraham Pease (1750) of Enfield.



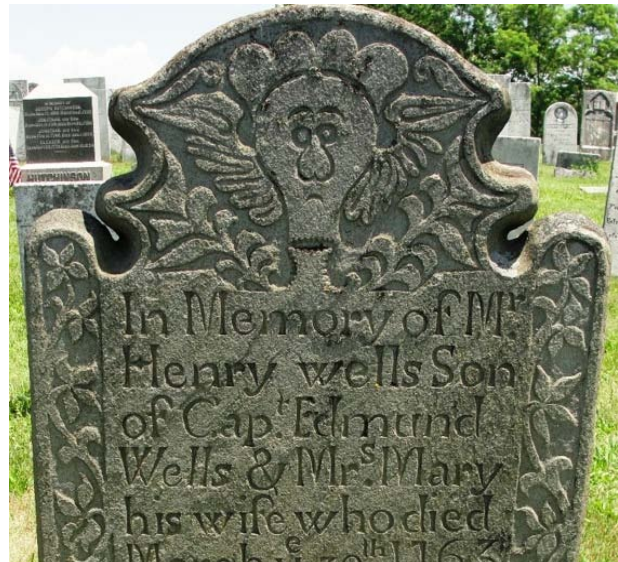
Carver: Gershom Bartlett



Edward Sawyer, 1766, Old Hebron



Joseph Peters, 1761, Anglican Cem.



Henry Wells, 1763, Gilead Cem.

From: Slater, James A. *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them. Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences, vol. 21.* Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1987. *Homer Babbidge Library call number f/Q/11/C85/v.21

<http://www.ctgravestones.com/gallery/barlett2.htm>

=====

Julius Collins (1728-1758)

Julius Collins is another gravestone-carver son of Benjamin Collins. He is something of an enigma. After a short career he died at Stillwater, New York, while serving in the army. There is a signed stone by Julius Collins for Richard Curtice (1739) in the Hebron Episcopal burying ground, which if not backdated, was carved when he was 11 years old. More characteristic is the signed stone, now unfortunately broken, for Robert White, Jr., (1746) in the Old Stafford graveyard. Both of these stones resemble the work of his father Benjamin in many respects, but they also include elements of the late style of Obadiah Wheeler in the contour of the layered upswept wings and the less bulbous nose. In addition there is a small group of stones in Coventry, Andover, and Hampton that resemble two unsigned stones, placed near the Robert White, Jr., stone in Stafford. These stones were probably all produced by Julius Collins although there is no direct evidence. The stones in Hampton are of particular interest in being relatively far removed from the others and in likely being the prototypes from which the carver of the bizarre Hampton stones known as those of the "Hampton Indian" took his designs. It is quite surprising that no stones of this type occur in Columbia burial ground where the work of Benjamin and Zerubbabel is abundant.



Richard Curtice, 1739, Anglican Cemetery



From: Slater, James A. *The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them. Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts & Sciences, vol. 21.* Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1987. *Homer Babbidge Library call number f/Q/11/C85/v.21

<http://www.lib.uconn.edu/about/exhibits/gravestones/julius.htm>

=====

Obadiah Wheeler (1673-c.1749)

The finest craftsman of the early inland rural carvers of eastern Connecticut lived in Lebanon. His early stones somewhat resemble those of John Hartshorne. They have a series of elaborate curls beside the face rather than wings and usually some form of diamond or triangle border design. Later Wheeler stones have several different styles of wings which are sometimes very elaborate. Wheeler faces are characterized by slender, aristocratic noses, almond eyes, and a small smiling or frowning mouth. In later stones the eyes are closed or squinting.

Some of his most elaborate stones have faces in strong relief; finials are usually six- or eight-rayed rosettes. There is usually a horizontal row of designs below the face and above the legend consisting of a central heart or triangle and lateral stemmed rosettes and circles. Wheeler footstones are very distinctive, many of them large ellipses and others great circles with large six-rayed rosettes within. His work is most abundant and varied in Lebanon and Norwichtown, but there are beautiful stones in Windham, Mansfield as well as a few in Union, Putnam and Mystic Whitehall burying ground. Wheeler is often considered the greatest of all eastern Connecticut carvers.



William Rollo, 1732, Old Hebron Cem



Johnathan Sawyer, 1737, Old Hebron Cemetery

<http://www.ctgravestones.com/gallery/wheeler.htm>

CLEANING OLD GRAVESTONES

<http://www.ctgravestones.com/Conservation/cleaning.htm>

Remember, with all due respect to our monument dealers, many do not understand the concerns we have about OLD stones. They are mostly familiar with the dense granites that have been used for the past century. The techniques they use for modern stone is not safe for these fragile 200 yr.+ old markers. Each stone needs it's own diagnosis; what is good in one situation is not necessarily good for all.

Connecticut Gravestone Network recommends that you use the following low tech method and consult with us or professionals before using other methods. For marble, limestone and sandstone, use water and soft bristle brushes, natural or nylon. Granted it doesn't sound like a miracle cleaner and it doesn't happen quickly but with some patience and time this will clean most environmental soiling and lichens from stones. Keep the stone wet at all times; really wet. Where a garden hose is not available, be sure to bring plenty of jugs of water and keep dowsing the stone as you work and, most importantly, flush the stone well when done. Scrub the stone from the bottom up to avoid streaking and further staining. Household ammonia can be used if one can stand the aroma, but again be sure you flush the stone completely, more than one or two times, when you are done. Use a mix as you would for household cleaning, about 1 cup to a gallon of water. Don't buy ammonia with anything extra in it, such as scents and suds. Wearing proper eye protection is also a must.

If lichen is a problem, you can soak it down with water and scrape with a wooden or plastic scraper. Tongue blades or craft sticks and inexpensive plastic putty scrapers from home stores work well. Remember, no metal. There are also poulticing techniques that can be used to soften lichen. Many lichens will, once removed, leave a scarring effect on the stone because the waste product they give off is an acid that works with the stone's own salts and chemistry to erode it or bleach out some of its mineral component.



water & soft brush



--after--



--before—

Reading an Inscription with mirrors...

Connecticut Gravestone Network recommends that you learn to use a mirror (see below) to light a stone that is in the shade or is difficult to read. Reflecting the sun with a mirror can create shadows in the lettering to add contrast. In general, highlighting the lettering with chalk (which is an abrasive), or any other method, is not recommended. Do NOT use shaving cream because adding chemicals to the stone can have other deteriorating effects. Chalk has dyes in it, shaving cream at best has oils, flour equals yeast which is a medium for lichen growth. Waiting for the rain to wash off anything that you put on it is not a responsible action. The stone should NOT be damaged by your use of it. A mirror is always safe and helps to produce a great photograph. Remember -- If you're new at reading old gravestones from the Colonial period, dictionaries were not available and very few folks were good readers, if they knew how at all. They're not errors!



without mirror



with mirror

Information taken from CT Gravestone Network website:

<http://www.ctgravestones.com/Conservation/inscriptions.htm>

GRAVESTONE DETECTIVE

<http://www.ctgravestones.com/gallery/detective.htm>

Imagine this. You are given the inscription from a single colonial era stone in the woods near Route 66 in East Hampton, Connecticut. It includes the name, dates of birth and death, cause of death (smallpox) and the number of his survivors (a wife and five children). The challenge is to find who the deceased was, where his immediate family was buried, and where his living descendants now live.

This research was necessitated by pending development that may require relocating the grave. If that is to be done it is preferable that it be moved to the family cemetery in Hebron. In order to receive permission for the move from the Probate Court (see Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 19a-315b, Protection of grave markers) it is necessary to notify a qualified lineal descendant.

The inscription reads, in part:

***“In Memory of Mr. Joseph Peters
Born Augt 27th 1726 He died of ye
Small Pox Janr 27th 1761 to ye Great
Grief of his Relict Five Children
& Acquaintance...”***



The search started in the Hale Collection at the State Library in Hartford. In East Hampton there was only one burial with that surname, but the marker was undated. The Joseph Peters stone was not recorded. In nearby Marlborough there were none with that surname but two towns away in Hebron there were several. With the listing for the Church of England burial ground on Route 85 in hand the graves of Joseph's parents and two of his children were quickly found. Three of the four

markers had been carved by Gershom Bartlett so we quickly concluded that the stone in question was also carved by him. When we had an opportunity to view the marker later in the month we were able to confirm our hypothesis. The stone is broken near ground level, 45 inches high, 34 inches wide and 3 inches thick. The footstone is broken in half and has been removed from the ground.

With some information on the family available we next visited the East Hampton Town Hall and the local library. The town hall records yielded only the marriage of his youngest daughter, Phebe, to George Gates. The library provided a record, in Beers History of Middlesex County, (1884) with the epitaph from the stone and a statement that it was broken prior to 1884. We can't blame its present state on recent vandalism!

It was time to get on the computer and search for the family tree. Queries on the Internet and in the New England Genealogical Register from January 1880 led us to two lineal descendants who agreed to disseminate the information to their siblings. One even sent a photograph of a recent family reunion with thirty-eight family members. We knew that a son, Joseph, had predeceased his father. A second son was also given that name and lived to adulthood, dying in New York State. One by one we were able to account for all six children: Joseph (1748-1751), Samuel (1750-1841), Deborah (1753-1767), Joseph (1756-1797), Susannah (born about 1758 and married to Hopkins West) and Phebe (1760-1795). Unfortunately, we have not yet found a trace of the relict, Deborah.

The Peters genealogy for New England tells us that deceased had contracted smallpox in the course of his duties as a physician. We also learned that his younger brother, Samuel, was an Episcopal minister who fled to England after being threatened to be "tarred and feathered" for his loyalist persuasion in 1774. While he remained in exile he authored a book, General History of Connecticut. He was also elected Episcopal Bishop of Vermont but was never consecrated. In 1976 he was the subject of a Bicentennial publication, Connecticut's Loyalist Gadfly: the Reverend Samuel Andrew Peters. The nephew of the Joseph and Samuel Peters, John Samuel Peters, was Governor of Connecticut, 1831-33.

Another interesting fact we have found is that the father of Joseph, John Peters, donated the land for the family cemetery in Hebron to the Church of England. Among the other members of the family interred there are the three wives of the Rev. Samuel Peters who died before he was exiled to England in 1774.

Lineal descendants of Joseph Peters have spread from Connecticut to New York, to Ontario, Canada and California and probably many places in between. With the use of the research tools available now it is fairly easy to trace a member of a prominent Connecticut family utilizing cemetery inscriptions, genealogical sources and the Internet.

John Spaulding

24 January 2002

Lasting Reminders Of Smallpox

December 31, 2002
By PETER MARTEKA

The Hartford Courant

A few months ago, a local doctor who had died of smallpox was buried in a little cemetery off the beaten path.

Man dies of smallpox and is buried in local cemetery should have been national news. Satellite trucks should have lined Route 85 in Hebron where the burial took place.

But a few details may help put things in perspective. The doctor, Joseph Peters, died in 1761 and was buried in East Hampton where he remained until 1980. At that time, his grave was discovered in the middle of the woods by a local real estate agent who was surveying the property.

Recently, the property's new owners decided it was time to give Peters a proper burial. After the remains were positively identified by State Archaeologist Nicholas Bellantoni, Peters was exhumed and reburied in Hebron's Godfrey Hill Cemetery on Oct. 19, almost 241 years after he died. His new grave is just a few feet from those of Peters' firstborn son and daughter. His parents are also buried in the cemetery off Route 85.

Unfortunately, smallpox is back in the headlines with President Bush recently inoculated against the disease and the talk of terrorists using bioweapons. With all the news reports, I decided to visit the grave that recalls a time when smallpox was a common threat to every man, woman and child.

The new grave -- the first at the cemetery in more than 158 years -- is located next to a stone wall at the back of the cemetery. The headstone reads: "In memory of Mr. Joseph Peters, born Augt 27th 1726, He died of ye Small Pox Janr 27th 1761 to ye Great Greef of his relict five children and acquaintance."

After first being discovered in China in 1122 -- and then known as "variola" -- the virus caused an epidemic in England in 1666. The virus, transported to the New World by explorers and conquistadors, also helped to decimate the Native American population, which had no natural defenses against the disease.

The first major outbreaks in this area occurred in 1777 and again in 1781. The virus was passed through the air or from contact with contaminated

clothing and blankets or from the victim.

The cemetery is only a mile or so from the lone grave of the town's more famous smallpox victim. John Nolton Rollo, a Revolutionary War soldier who died from smallpox after returning home is buried on a pathway within the Salmon River State Forest. The path -- named "dead soldier's road" -- is at the junction of Blackman and Slocum roads.

According to local legend, Rollo was on furlough in the winter of 1777. During the long trip home, Rollo contracted smallpox. Some local historians say Rollo was buried where he fell. Some say he died shortly after his return home. The grave, surrounded by a stone wall, reads: "Here lies John Nolton Rollo who died of smallpox on March 20 in the year 1777." [He was Corp. John Knowlton Rollo of Gilead, and served for 21 days at the time of "The Lexington Alarm" in April 1775 -- M.A.Foote]



John N. Rollo, 1777, Rollo Cemetery

Photo by David Morrison

Pest houses were built in the late-1700s and 1800s as "hospitals" for men, women and children suffering from smallpox. The "treatment" in those days was to isolate smallpox victims in small shacks. If they survived the two weeks it took for the virus to run its course, they were cured. If not ...

The houses were built in sparsely settled areas far from town centers. The

foundations of pest houses can be found in the forested floor of the Meshomasic State Forest in Portland near the Glastonbury line. One foundation can be seen off Mumford Road near the entrance to the old Portland reservoir.

“They were visited three days later by the minister who probably blessed them from a distance,” William Van Beynum wrote about a visit to a pest house in a 1781 newspaper article.

“Because to have entered the house and then return to town would have spread the disease among those who had not had it,” he wrote. “Three days later a woman went out to check on how the group was coming along, and returned reporting that they had `pleanty of it.”

Glastonbury physician Dr. Asaph Coleman built a small hospital and pest house along Coleman Road in the late 1700s to combat smallpox.

“He persuaded the town fathers to let him try inoculation,” wrote Marjorie Grant McNulty in her book “Glastonbury From Settlement to Suburb.”
“The town had a hard time making a decision. ... He must have had some success with inoculation, for the town never withdrew its permission.”

On May 8, 1980, the World Health Assembly declared the world free of smallpox. For now, the lonely gravestones and lost foundations remain the only physical reminders of the smallpox scourge.

Pre-1937 Index for Hebron, CT Cemeteries

Charles R. Hale Collection of Connecticut Cemetery Inscriptions contains vital information from headstone inscriptions in over 2,000 **Connecticut cemeteries** that were recorded in a W.P.A. project directed by Charles R. Hale ca. 1932-5.

<http://www.hale-collection.com/>

Tolland County {<http://www.hale-collection.com/tolland.htm>}

806 Hebron, Tolland County, Connecticut Cemetery Records

806-1 [Old Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-1-old-cemetery-records.htm>

806-2 [Gilead Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-2-gilead-cemetery.htm>

806-3 [Church of England Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-3-church-of-england-cemetery.htm>

806-4 [Jones Street Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-4-jones-street-cemetery.htm>

806-5 [Burroughs Hill Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-5-burroughs-hill-cemetery.htm>

806-6 [Gott Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-6-gott-cemetery-hebron-ct.htm>

806-7 [Sumner Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

[Previously submitted, but not yet listed—See names on next page]

806-8 [Jones Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-8-jones-cemetery-hebron-ct.htm>

806-9 [St. Peter's Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

<http://www.hale-collection.com/806-9-st-peters-cemetery.pdf>

806-10 [Stark Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

[Previously submitted, but not yet listed—See names on next page]

806-11 [Rollo Cemetery - Hebron, CT](#)

[Previously submitted, but not yet listed—See names on next page]

Hale Collection Listings for Sumner, Stark & Rollo Cemeteries

806-7 **Sumner Cemetery Records - Hebron, CT**

Gay, Charles M., son of Charles & Polly, died May 1, 1818, age 2 mos.

Hamlen, Lovisa, died Oct. 20, 1832, age 64 yrs.

Sumner, Henry P., died Jan. 18, 1838, age 64 yrs.

Sumner, Matilda, daughter of Henry & Polly S., died Apr. 19, 1808, age 7 yrs.

Whaley, Samuel L., son of Samuel & Sally, died Sept. 15, 1838, age 3 yrs., 2 mos.

806-10 **Stark Cemetery - Hebron, CT**

Stark, Bulah, wife of Captain Benjamin, died Sept. 18, 1813, age 24 yrs., 10 mos.

806-11 **Rollo Cemetery Records - Hebron, CT**

Rollo, John Nolton, died Mar 20, 1777, age 25 yrs. (Rev. War Flag) died of Small Pox {should be "Knowlton"}

=====

Additional Town of Hebron Cemetery Resources

Compiled by

Mary Ann Foote

