

# American Ancestors

Summer 2022 vol. 23, no. 2 \$6.95



In Memory of the  
Rev<sup>d</sup> JOHN WOODBRIDGE  
late Minister of the Gospel  
of Christ in this Town  
Who was born at S. Dec.  
25<sup>th</sup>, 1702, & died  
in the 87.  
(He was Son of y  
Rev<sup>d</sup> JOHN WOODBRIDGE

**GRAVESTONES  
& GENEALOGY**





# TRACING AMERICAN ANCESTORS *on the Move*

August 3, 10, 17, and 24 • 6–7:30 p.m. (ET)

Presented by Hallie Borstel, Lindsay Fulton, Ann G. Lawthers, and Melanie McComb

Your ancestors moved near and far seeking economic opportunities, religious freedom, and proximity to—or distance from—family. This online conference will explain the context and motivations behind American migrations from the 17th to 20th centuries, offer strategies for discovering ancestral origins and later movements, and provide tools to help you track your ancestors on the move.

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LEARNING CENTER



*Left:* Untitled photo by John Vachon, possibly in Virginia in 1937. Library of Congress.  
*Right:* Emigrant party on the road to California, 1850. Library of Congress.





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Above: Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge and Watertown, Massachusetts. Courtesy of Mount Auburn Cemetery. On the cover: Gravestone of Rev. John Woodbridge (1702-1783), his first wife, Tryphena (Ruggles), and his second wife, Martha (Clark). Evergreen Cemetery, South Hadley, Massachusetts. Photograph by Harriette Merrifield Forbes, New England Gravestones, 1635-1800, Mss 936, R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, NEHGS.



Brenton Simons

# A Message from the President and CEO

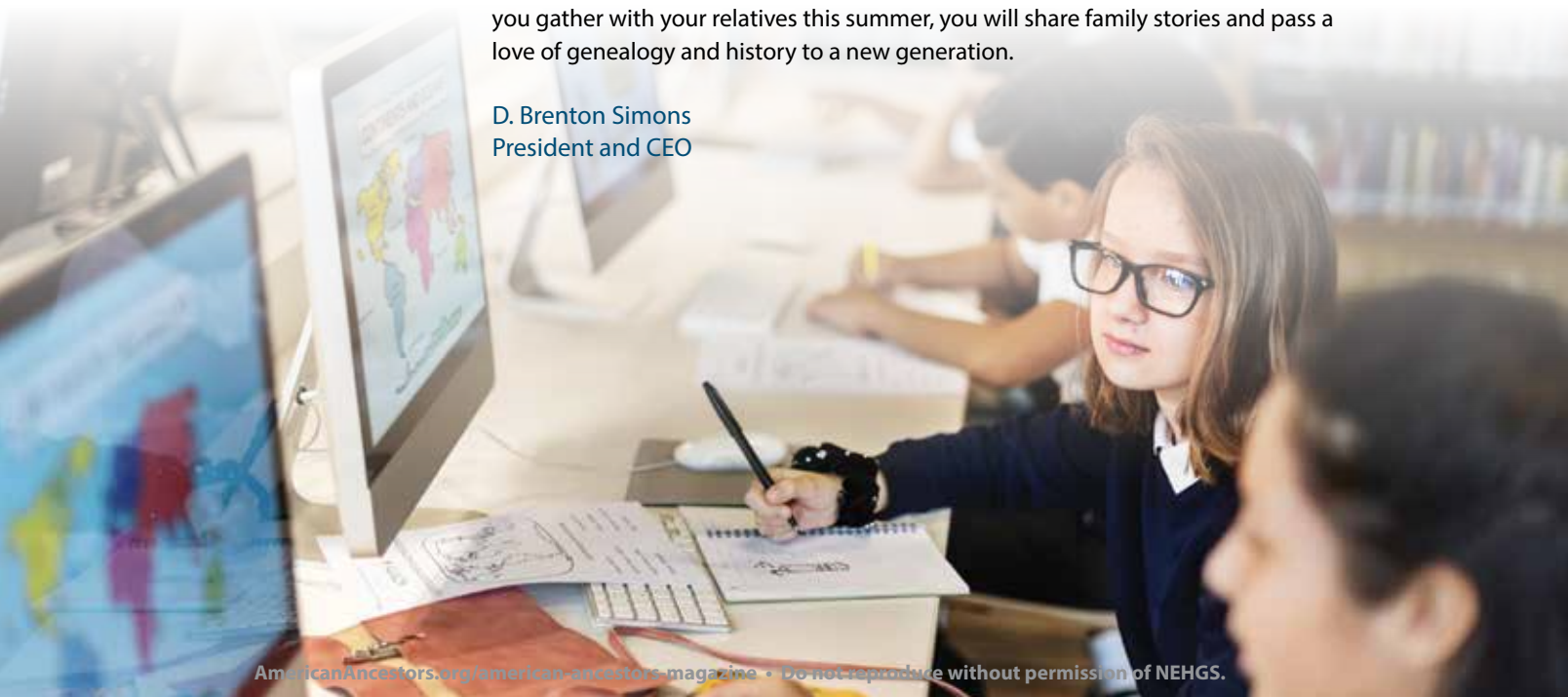
**Greetings!** In recent months, our work at American Ancestors has brought us a sense of hope, purpose, and fulfillment. At all hours of the day, our members are constantly making discoveries, exploring genealogy and history, and connecting with others on AmericanAncestors.org. The dynamic activity of our staff and members reaffirms our goal to inspire and educate the next generation of family historians.

Inspiration is at the core of our personal interactions with members like you, and it will be a hallmark of our new Discovery and Learning Centers as our campus expands in the next two years. In our renovated headquarters we will feature several multigenerational activity areas, with touch screens that will allow families and children to learn more about themselves, family history, and how tools such as DNA can be used to explore family origins. And, right now, we are launching the next phase in our groundbreaking youth education program.

Over the past two years, American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society has been developing a national family history curriculum for grades 4 through 6. We solicited input from teachers, parents, and genealogists, and then piloted the program at schools across the country. The resulting curriculum introduces students of all backgrounds to the benefits of family history through a series of flexible lesson plans that incorporate authentic genealogical methodologies and inclusive teaching strategies. Students will learn critical research skills while uncovering their personal connections to history and the shared human experience. This foundational curriculum will be available for adoption by schools in the fall of 2022, with more materials and teacher training opportunities offered in the near future.

Our education programs help people of all ages explore their stories and identities. As we embrace our theme of “American Stories, American Lives,” we feel it is vital to ensure that younger generations have access to resources that will enable them to discover their family histories. Thank you to our generous donors who help make these education programs available to so many children and patrons. I hope that as you gather with your relatives this summer, you will share family stories and pass a love of genealogy and history to a new generation.

D. Brenton Simons  
President and CEO





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## From our readers

**We want to hear from you!**

Email [magazine@nehgs.org](mailto:magazine@nehgs.org) or address letters to American Ancestors magazine, 99–101 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116. *Letters will be edited for clarity and length. We regret that we cannot reply to every letter.*

How delighted I was to read “Becker, Eckert, and Jacobi Family Correspondence” by Melanie McComb in the winter issue [AMERICAN ANCESTORS 2021 4:52–55]. Marguerite Marshall was my third grade teacher at Jonathan Maynard Elementary School in Framingham, Massachusetts. In addition to also teaching my younger brother and sister, she taught my soon-to-be-100-year-old mother in 4th grade at Framingham’s Lincoln Elementary School. I sent holiday greetings and notes to Miss Marshall until her death. I am grateful that IAFA (Independent Association of Framingham State Alumni) directed their members to your article and that as an NEHGS member I had AMERICAN ANCESTORS in my home. Thank you for choosing to write about my teacher—the article was such a treat.

Martha Purington Seymour, Overland Park, Kansas

I just finished reading “Exploring Boston’s Oldest Buildings” by Jean Powers [AMERICAN ANCESTORS 2021 4:16–17]. I was very surprised to learn about the 1728 Andrew Cunningham House on your Boston walking tour. I’ve done extensive research on my Cunningham ancestors, but this is the first I’ve heard of the house. I have walked by it many times, in fact, without knowing its history. We have many Andrew Cunninghams in the family, including an immigrant born in Scotland in 1654 and buried in Boston’s Granary Burying Ground, a member of the Ancient & Honorable Artillery Company born in 1692, a Boston ship owner, and a Patriot born in 1760 who was recognized by the Sons of the American Revolution. I fly to Boston almost every summer and plan to visit the Andrew Cunningham House on my next trip.

George Lipphardt, Marana, Arizona

**NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:** In “Legacy List with Matt Paxton,” [AMERICAN ANCESTORS 2021 3:44–47], we asked readers about their most treasured possessions. Karen Kerman, of Long Beach, California, wrote, “My most cherished family items are letters and journals. I appreciate the insight into the everyday lives of my relatives. My grandmother’s aunts wrote when they were teenagers working in the cotton mills at Manchester, New Hampshire; my Great-Grandpa Enoch dispensed fatherly advice to my grandmother Alice in 1902; and cousins reported on political and economic news from pre-World War II Germany. A pair of 14-inch-tall bisque statues of a young man and woman is also precious to me. I am the fourth generation to own them. When I was growing up, the statues were always on the piano, and I have photographs of them in my grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ homes.” To share your list, email [magazine@nehgs.org](mailto:magazine@nehgs.org).



# CONNECT WITH US ONLINE!

### Vita Brevis

Our Vita Brevis blog provides thought-provoking explorations of genealogical topics, and offers readers the opportunity to engage with scholars and professionals who share their unique perspectives and insights. Visit [Vita-Brevis.org](http://Vita-Brevis.org).

### Weekly Genealogist

Subscribe to our Weekly Genealogist newsletter for information on new NEHGS databases, online content, events, and offers. Each issue includes a survey, reader responses, a spotlight on resources, current news, and more. Visit [AmericanAncestors.org/twg](http://AmericanAncestors.org/twg).

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Keep up-to-date on our latest news and connect with more than 48,000 fellow family history enthusiasts in our online community at [facebook.com/nehgs](https://facebook.com/nehgs).

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### Instagram

For visual updates on our Fine Art Collection treasures, events and tours, library recommendations, and more, follow [american\\_ancestors](https://american_ancestors).

## In this issue

On a lovely fall day last October, our staff members enjoyed a personal tour of Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Our guide was Meg Winslow, Curator of Historical Collections & Archives at this remarkable historic site. After the outing, I asked Ms. Winslow to write an article that would recreate the Mount Auburn experience for readers.

Soon after, John G. S. Hanson sent me his book, *Reading the Gravestones of Old New England*. I was intrigued by his focus on the meanings behind early New England epitaphs and thought his work could offer fresh insights for genealogists. Mr. Hanson agreed to supply an article, and planning began for this gravestone- and cemetery-themed issue.

We begin with the features by John Hanson and Meg Winslow, then Chief Genealogist David Allen Lambert offers historical background and search recommendations in “The Final Honor: United States Military Gravestones.” Philip O’Brien writes about several generations of the “Fighting Armstrongs” who were laid to rest in Boston’s Granary Burying Ground. Manager of Research and Library Services Sarah Dery describes how Vermont resident Caitlin Abrams has become an Instagram and TikTok sensation with her videos on gravestone cleaning techniques. And Curator of Special Collections Curt DiCamillo shares details about two Shakespeare gravestone rubbings donated to our collection in 1874.

This issue allowed me to reacquaint myself with one of my favorite NEHGS collections, New England Gravestones, 1635–1800, which is featured in Senior Archivist Judy Lucey’s manuscript column. The collection consists of more than 1,000 black and white photos of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gravestones.

As I studied the evocative gravestone images, I kept referring to the *Great Migration* books by Robert Charles Anderson for details about these early New Englanders. I was particularly struck by the lifespan of one individual, whose grave is at Plymouth’s Burial Hill. The epitaph reads, “Here lyes ye body of Mr. Thomas Clark aged 98 years departed this life March ye 24th 1697.” I was thrilled to discover that this Thomas Clark, born about 1599, immigrated to Plymouth in 1623 on the *Anne*. His gravestone, still standing today, provides a tangible and immediate link to a Great Migration immigrant.

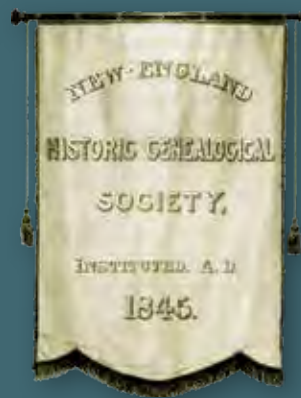
Although gravestones are undoubtedly valuable sources of data, it is the unique insight and sense of connection some markers can provide that makes them truly compelling and a source of enduring fascination.

Two final features complete this issue. We are pleased to present Cornelia H. Dayton’s research on a significant New England couple, eighteenth-century poet Phillis Wheatley and her husband, John Peters. And in the wake of the release of the 1950 census, Christopher C. Child provides details on the U.S. Presidents—past, present, and future—enumerated that year.

As always, we look forward to your feedback.



Lynn Betlock  
Managing Editor  
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To advance the study of family history in America and beyond, we educate, inspire, and connect people through our scholarship, collections, and expertise.

## American Ancestors

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## DAPHNE GEANACOPOULOS

“I have a special passion for uncovering the lives of women lost in history.”

As a historian, author, and journalist, I am constantly drawn to biography as a means to understand the past and better appreciate the present. I have a special passion for uncovering the lives of women lost in history. So much of our early learning of history is focused on great or infamous men who left behind vast collections of original and secondary documents detailing their lives and accomplishments. Writing about the women who played important roles in history presents a special challenge, one that fascinates me and propels my interest in biography.

Prior to the nineteenth century, women generally lacked the right or opportunity to own property, participate in public life, engage in business, obtain an education, or even become literate. Most women left little or no written record of sometimes towering achievements. Yet, by using important repositories of genealogical and contextual material, such as those preserved by American Ancestors, we can bring them to life in ways that better illuminate historical events and what those events tell us about life today.

I began my journey into women's history from an unexpected place. While writing an article in 2002 for the *New York Times* about the Whydah Pirate Museum in Provincetown, Massachusetts, I discovered that many pirates had wives and girlfriends, and some even occupied respected roles in society, leading lives quite different from those of their literary and cinematic counterparts.

In 2014, I submitted a doctoral dissertation that led me to write my first book, *The Pirate Next Door: The Untold Story of Eighteenth Century Pirates' Wives, Families and Communities*. The book takes pirate mythology and turns it on its head by exploring the human side of pirates, in particular the wives and fiancés of four well known pirate captains from New England and New York: Samuel Bellamy, Samuel Burgess, William Kidd, and Paulsgrave Williams. I was particularly intrigued by the life of Captain Kidd, and even more so by that of his wife, Sarah Kidd. This work planted the seed for my next book, *The Pirate's Wife: The Remarkable True Story of Sarah Kidd*, to be published by Hanover Square Press in November 2022.

In researching Sarah Kidd's life, and those of pirates and their women partners over the past fifteen years, I have relied upon innumerable sources, including records at the National Archives UK, the Library of Congress, and American Ancestors. I've transcribed and utilized hundreds of contemporary letters and other documents that reveal the lives and loves of these historical figures in new ways, or in some cases, for the first time. I'm sure genealogists can relate to my feeling that the process of discovering these sources is as exciting as completing a manuscript. ♦

Dr. Daphne Palmer Geanakopulos is the author of *The Pirate Next Door: The Untold Story of Eighteenth Century Pirates' Wives, Families and Communities* and *The Pirate's Wife: The Remarkable True Story of Sarah Kidd*. She has published over forty articles in newspapers and magazines. A former congressional aide, she holds a Doctor of Liberal Studies degree and a Master of Liberal Studies degree from Georgetown University. She also holds a master's degree in Business Administration from the George Washington University. She joined NEHGS in 2019 and became a NEHGS Councilor in 2020.





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All free online programs—including webinars, American Inspiration author events, and more—are available on our website. To view these archived videos, log into your account on AmericanAncestors.org, hover your cursor over “Events” on our homepage menu, and select “View past events and videos.” From that page you can view all videos or filter by subject.

If you registered for an online course or online conference broadcast in September 2021 or later, the recorded sessions, as well as the course materials, can be accessed under your “My Account” page on the website. To access them, log into your account, click “My Account” in the upper right-hand corner, and select “Digital Content” from the left-hand menu. Please note that if you attended an online course or conference broadcast prior to September 2021, the recorded sessions are not available.

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On the AmericanAncestors.org homepage, click the “Log In” button in the top-right corner. Use the email address associated with your American Ancestors account. (If you need to change the email address for your account, contact the Member Services team at [membership@nehgs.org](mailto:membership@nehgs.org) or 1-888-296-3447, option 1.)

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# News



## Our Fall Family History Benefit Dinner with Pulitzer Prize–winning author Rick Atkinson

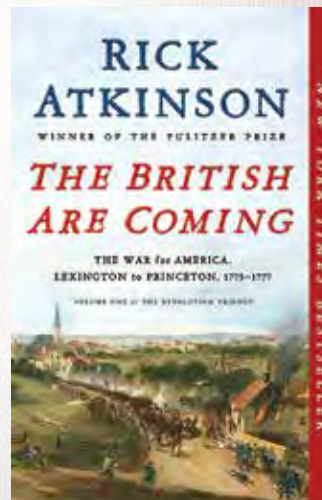
Save the date! Our Fall Family History Benefit Dinner will honor Pulitzer Prize–winning author and historian Rick Atkinson. Join us at the Chilton Club in Boston on October 27, 2022, as we present Atkinson with a Lifetime Achievement Award for his contribution to the field of American history. Following a reception and dinner, Atkinson will be in conversation about his latest work, *The British Are Coming: The War for America, Lexington to Princeton, 1775–1777*, described by the *Wall Street Journal* as “chock full of momentous events and larger-than-life characters.” This *New York Times* best-selling work has received such honors as the George Washington Prize and Daughters of the American Revolution Excel-

*Join us!*  
October 27, 2022

lence in American History Book Award. *The British Are Coming* is the first volume of Atkinson’s intended *Revolution Trilogy*, a history of the American rebellion through 1783.

A former reporter, foreign correspondent, senior editor of the *Washington Post*, and General Omar N. Bradley Chair of Strategic Leadership at the U.S. Army War College, Atkinson has received numerous awards, including the 1982 Pulitzer Prize for national reporting, the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for public service, and the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for history. His *Liberation Trilogy*, a narrative history of the liberation of Europe in World War II, has been called “a triumph of narrative history, elegantly written . . . and rooted in the sight and sounds of battle” by the *New York Times*.

For more information, contact Courtney Reardon at 617-226-1215 or [Courtney.Reardon@nehgs.org](mailto:Courtney.Reardon@nehgs.org).



“Plate II. A View of the Town of Concord,” engraved by Amos Doolittle, 1775. New York Public Library Digital Collections.  
Rick Atkinson photo by Elliott O’Donovan.

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**D. BRENTON SIMONS** is President & CEO of American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society.



**RYAN J. WOODS** is Executive Vice President & COO of American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society.





## American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society to host the 36th International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences

In September 2024, the International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences (ICGHS) will take place in the United States for the first time in its 93-year history. This biennial conference brings together scholars, historians, genealogists, antiquarians, students, and enthusiasts from around the world to discuss the meaning, practice, and artistry of heraldry and what it reveals about individuals and their family origins.

The conference will feature an international cast of lecturers covering a diverse range of topics on the theme “Origins, Journeys, Destinations.”

## “A nationally significant leader”: D. Brenton Simons receives Bradford Award

On December 21, 2021, at its 202nd Forefathers Celebration, The Pilgrim Society and Pilgrim Hall Museum, in Plymouth, Mass., bestowed its prestigious Bradford Award on American Ancestors/NEHGS President and CEO D. Brenton Simons. The award was presented by Executive Director Dr. Donna Curtin.

Fellow 2021 Bradford Award recipients included NEHGS Honorary Trustee Bruce Bartlett; past Council member and former Plymouth 400 Executive Director Michelle Pecoraro; the late Barry Young of Pilgrim Hall Museum; and, with a New Horizons Award, Aquinnah tribal historian Linda Coombs. Previous Bradford Award recipients include author David McCullough, Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer, and Harvard professor and *Finding Your Roots* host Henry Louis Gates, Jr. At the event, Simons was introduced by *Mayflower* genealogical scholar Caleb Johnson and author Sue Allan.



The Bradford Award given to D. Brenton Simons.

Named for Governor William Bradford (from whom Simons descends in three lineages), the award was given for Simons’s work in the United States, United Kingdom, and elsewhere. In honoring Simons, the Pilgrim Society stated:

“[Brenton Simons] is a nationally significant leader in fostering scholarship and engagement in American history and genealogy, especially the study of historic New England. As Vice Chair of the 400th Anniversary State Commission appointed by Gov. Charlie Baker, Simons helped oversee the quadricentennial commemoration of Plymouth Colony during a global crisis. In extraordinary circumstances, he produced a host of crafted historical and genealogical programs, including an online gala with former UK Prime Minister John Major, publications and searchable content through American Ancestors, and inspired the Plymouth 400 multi-cultural Remembrance Ceremony held live in Plymouth in July 2021.”



## Our Family History Benefit Gala: “A Boston Homecoming” honoring Governor Charles D. Baker

On, April 21, 2022, more than 100 guests attended our Annual Family History Benefit Gala at the Four Seasons hotel in Boston. The event, honoring Charles D. Baker, 72nd Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, was our first in-person Annual Gala in two years.

Governor Baker was presented with the NEHGS Lifetime Achievement Award for Distinguished Public Service by American Ancestors/NEHGS President and CEO D. Brenton Simons. “We are delighted to honor Governor Baker with this award for his lifetime achievements and his dedication to the people of Massachusetts,” said Simons. “He has accomplished much during his term, and we are proud to present to him the history of his ancestors, which is a uniquely American story of perseverance, hard work, and civic duty.” Governor Baker received a hand-bound genealogy compiled by Christopher C. Child, senior genealogist of the Newbury Street Press and editor of *Mayflower Descendant*, and Sharon Buzzell Inglis, publishing director. The genealogy revealed an ancestral tradition of interest in family history, including a paternal grandmother, Eleanor Johnson Little, who was elected a member of New England Historic Genealogical Society on February 5, 1957, and ancestor Mary (Morey) Turell, born 1739, whose 1821 family recollections were published in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* in 1860.





Four notable contributors to the fields of history and genealogy were honored at the gala with the prestigious NEHGS Preservation and History Award: Linda Coombs, author and historian of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and former program director of the Aquinnah Cultural Center; Thomas Bailey Hagen, Chairman and former CEO of Erie Insurance Group and current Vice Chair of our Board of Trustees; Peter Lynch, American investor, mutual fund manager, and philanthropist; and Paula Peters, journalist, educator, and activist for the Wampanoag tribe.

*Facing page, top to bottom:* Board Chair David M. Trebing, President and CEO D. Brenton Simons, Governor Charles D. Baker, and Board Vice Chair Thomas Bailey Hagen; Yula Serizier, Councilor Brent J. Andersen, and Councilor Ryan D. Taliaferro; Councilor Prudence S. Crozier, William Crozier, and Wendy Kistler. *This page, clockwise from top left:* Councilor Elizabeth B. Vitton and Caleb Pifer; Paula Peters, Michele Pecoraro, and Linda Coombs; Brenton Simons and Governor Baker; Pamela Yomoah; Councilor Christine Bosworth and Elizabeth Parker Powell. ©2022 Gulnara Niaz Photographer & Visual Artist.

## Thank you to our event's sponsors

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# the ANTIQUARTO

*Conversations with D. Brenton Simons,  
President and CEO of American Ancestors*



Our hit series, *The Antiquarto*, features dynamic interviews conducted by our President and CEO Brenton Simons with expert guests on topics relating to history, genealogy, collecting, and the arts.

## **EPISODE 9: Conversation with Donna Curtin, Executive Director, Pilgrim Hall Museum**

Brenton Simons interviews Donna Curtin, Executive Director of Pilgrim Hall Museum, about her ongoing work to present the enduring story of the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag.



Watch previous conversations with Julian Radcliffe, British businessman and founder and chairman of the Art Loss Register; Charles Courtenay, 19th Earl of Devon; Emma Manners, Duchess of Rutland; and American Ancestors/NEHGS staff members, including Curator of Special Collections Curt DiCamillo.

View episodes of *The Antiquarto* at [AmericanAncestors.org/watch](https://AmericanAncestors.org/watch), or on our YouTube channel, [youtube.com/user/AmericanAncestors](https://youtube.com/user/AmericanAncestors).

**Watch for more episodes of *The Antiquarto* in the coming months!**

## **Jewish Heritage Center names 2022 research fellow**

The Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center (JHC) at NEHGS is pleased to announce the appointment of the 2022 Genevieve Geller Wyner Research Fellow. Dr. Jessica Cooperman, Associate Professor of Religion Studies and Director of Jewish Studies at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, was selected by the Fellowship



Committee to conduct research in the JHC's collections in summer 2022. Dr. Cooperman's research focuses on 20th-century American Jewish history. Her current research explores projects that promoted Jewish-Christian dialogue and understanding after World War II, and she is particularly interested in how Passover celebrations and *haggadot* (the Jewish text used during Passover Seders) have defined new relationships between Judaism and Christianity in post-war America. Professor Cooperman plans to use several JHC collections for her research project, "Why is this Night Different? A History of Passover in America." Following her work at the JHC, she will present a lecture on the topic in the fall.

The Fellowship Committee also selected Dr. Dahlia Wassner, Director of the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute's Project on Latin American Jewish and Gender Studies at Brandeis University, to receive an Honorable Mention for her research topic "American Zionists in Cuba: Understanding Transnational Diaspora Identities."





## Richard Cellini joins our staff

We are pleased to announce that Richard Cellini has joined our staff as the founding director of the 10 Million Names Project.

A leading scholar and researcher on the legacy of

slavery, Richard's work as founder of the Georgetown Memory Project—the effort to identify the enslaved people sold by Georgetown University and Maryland Jesuits and relocated to southern Louisiana in 1838—has earned wide acclaim. Visit [gu272.AmericanAncestors.org](http://gu272.AmericanAncestors.org) to learn more about this ongoing project.

A longtime American Ancestors/NEHGS friend and collaborator, Richard also served as a member of our Council. He is presently a Faculty Fellow in the Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History at Harvard University, researching the institutional, legal, economic, and commercial arrangements that enabled Jesuit slave-holding in America through much of the 19th century.



## Explore ninety new members-only databases at AmericanAncestors.org

Through our new *AM Explorer* database, American Ancestors/NEHGS members can now access millions of pages of primary source collections, spanning the 15th to the 21st centuries, covering topics such as *Colonial America*; *American Indian Histories and Cultures*; *Central Asia, Persia, and Afghanistan, 1834–1922*; and *African American Communities*. To access these and other members-only databases, visit [AmericanAncestors.org/search/external-databases](http://AmericanAncestors.org/search/external-databases).



## Employees of the year

Every year, American Ancestors/NEHGS honors staff excellence in three categories at our annual meeting. This year's recipients were (from left to right): Hallie Borstel (best contribution to the field of genealogy), Michael Forbes (beyond the call of duty), and Kathleen Mackenzie (outstanding service to members).



Maureen Dearborn presents Robert Charles Anderson with the Historic Research and Preservation Award.

## Robert Charles Anderson honored by National Society Daughters of Colonial Wars

Robert Charles Anderson, FASG, was chosen as the recipient of the 2020 Historic Research and Preservation Award by the Historic Research and Preservation Committee of the National Society Daughters of Colonial Wars. The award was announced by Gail A. Thomas, State President of the Daughters of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Inc. and presented to Anderson in 2022 by Maureen Dearborn, registrar for the Massachusetts Court of the Daughters of Colonial Wars. Anderson is a fellow and former president of the American Society of Genealogists, a contributing editor of *The American Genealogist*, and an editorial consultant to the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*. As founder and Director of the Great Migration Study Project at American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society, he is author of an extensive body of work covering approximately 20,000 men, women, and children who settled in New England between 1620 and 1640.

# Volunteers@NEHGS

## Our volunteers rise to the challenge

During fiscal year 2021, 16,972 volunteer hours were generously donated, the equivalent of eight full-time staff. Our more than 290 volunteers assisted with patron research, worked on database projects, processed new periodicals and manuscripts, edited publications, repaired books, and created content for education programs. Our volunteer Board of Trustees and Councilors, who normally gather in Boston, adapted to the special challenges imposed by the pandemic by meeting via regular telephone calls and videoconferences. We were fortunate that most of our volunteers could pivot to working from home and continue to contribute, despite the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.



## Thank you, database volunteers!

Databases that would not exist without volunteer efforts during fiscal year 2021:

- *Boscawen, NH: Records of the First Congregational Church, 1790–1970*
- *Massachusetts: Catholic Cemetery Association Records, 1833–1940*
- *Boston, MA: Provident Institution for Savings, 1817–1882*
- *LeRoy Family in America, 1753–2003*
- *Worcester, MA: Scots-Irish Settlers, 1700–1850*
- *Salem, MA: United States 1810 Census*
- *Portsmouth, NH School Records*
- *The Narragansett Historical Register*
- *Vital Records from the NEHGS Register*
- *Society of Colonial Wars in Massachusetts Membership Applications, 1560–1970*
- 13 database upgrades
- 7 genealogical journal volumes
- Massachusetts probate file papers

## Recognizing our long-term volunteers

Since its founding in 1845, American Ancestors/New England Historic Genealogical Society has relied on the vital contributions of volunteers. We are grateful to all those who have donated their time and talents to us. Here we recognize our longest-serving volunteers, four of whom have been continually volunteering for more than a quarter century. We also remember and honor the work of Helen Schatvet Ullmann, a dedicated volunteer of more than 28 years, who passed away in October 2021. [Her obituary was in the winter 2021 issue of this magazine.]

Bertram Lippincott III, 34  
Maureen Dearborn, 32  
Kathryn Smith Black, 30  
Sheila Thoman, 26  
Gary Boyd Roberts, 23  
Linda Rupnow McGuire, 20  
Eldon Gay, 19  
Elizabeth Handler, 19  
Robert Rainville, 19  
Henry B. Hoff, 18  
Scott C. Steward, 18  
Helen Herzer, 17  
Jane Papa, 17  
Karen Ristic, 17  
Ray Ristic, 17  
Sam Sturgis, 17  
Nathaniel Lane Taylor, 17  
Francis Danico, 16

Ray Luddy, 16  
Liz Odell, 16  
David Anderson, 15  
Patricia Dalpiaz, 15  
Nancy Johnson, 15  
Bruce McKeeman, 15  
Sandra Murphy Mauer, 14  
Sue Richart, 14  
Marie Wells, 14  
Loretta Brown-Aldrich, 13  
Jan Lundquist, 13  
Kathleen Oberley, 13  
Alyssa True, 12  
Arlys LaFehr, 11  
Mary Alice Yost, 11  
Elizabeth Goeke, 10  
Barbara Macken, 10

Above: Volunteer Doreen MacDonald pricing books for a used book sale.



# American Inspiration: Conversations with literary luminaries

Hosted by Director of Literary Programs Margaret M. Talcott, our American Inspiration speaker series presents engaging discussions on newly published histories, biographies, and memoirs from renowned authors.

## Upcoming lectures & events

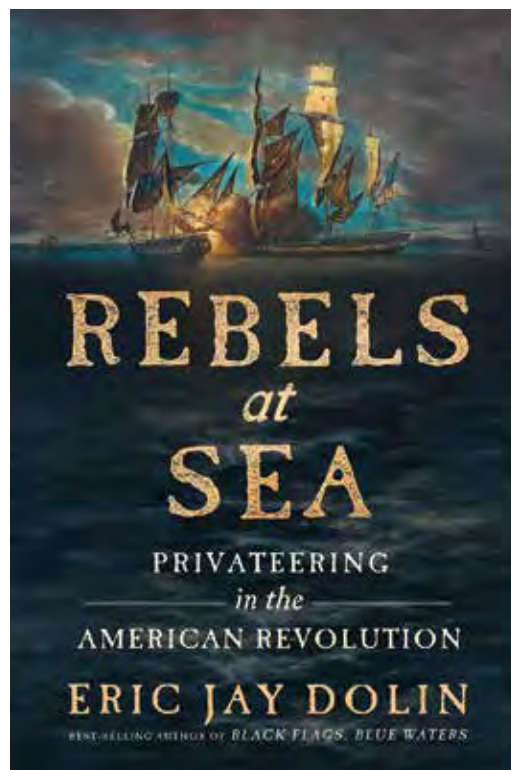
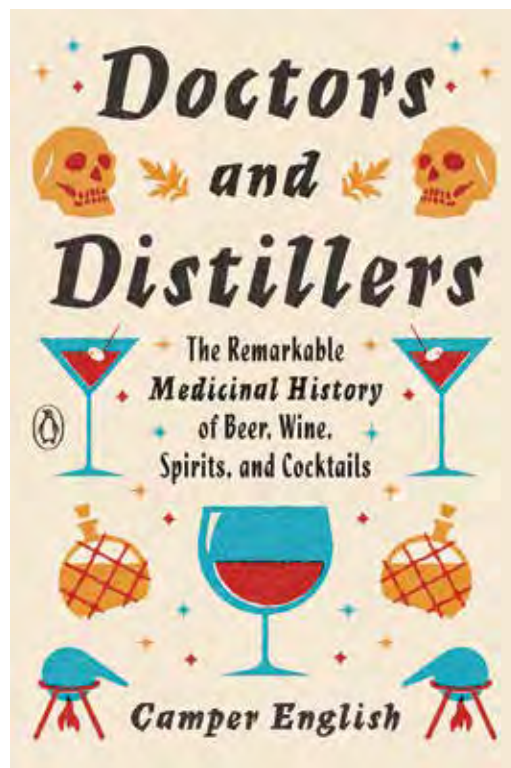
In August we will feature a special ticketed virtual book event on *Doctors and Distillers: The Remarkable Medicinal History of Beer, Wine, Spirits, and Cocktails* by Camper English. From the publisher: “Modern cocktails like the Old-Fashioned, Gimlet, and Gin and Tonic were born as delicious remedies for diseases and discomforts. In *Doctors and Distillers*, cocktails and spirits expert Camper English reveals how and why the contents of our medicine and liquor cabinets were, until surprisingly recently, one and the same.”

Later that month, Dan Bouk will discuss *Democracy's Data: The Hidden Stories in the U.S. Census and How to Read Them*—an essential event for anyone working with census records and especially relevant with the recent release of the 1950 census.

Mark Clague joins us in September to discuss *O Say Can You Hear? A Cultural Biography of “The Star-Spangled Banner”* with moderator Kristina R. Gaddy, author of *Well of Souls: Uncovering the Banjo's Hidden History*.

Seafaring aficionados and fans of historical narrative will enjoy our ticketed event on “Writing History” with Eric Jay Dolin, author of *Rebels at Sea: Privateering in the American Revolution*, and moderator William F. Fowler, Professor of History at Northeastern University.

A knowledge of historic clothing trends and their significance can help researchers better understand ancestors, identify time periods and locations in photographs and art, and determine social class. We return to this popular topic in late September with a lecture on the “History of Clothing: Style and Substance” featuring Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, author of *Skirts: Fashioning Modern Femininity in the Twentieth Century*, and Sofi Thanhauser, author of *Worn: A People's History of Clothing*. The moderator is Petra Slinkard, a director and curator at Peabody Essex Museum.



## Catch up with American Inspiration!

Visit [AmericanAncestors.org/inspire](https://AmericanAncestors.org/inspire) to learn about upcoming events or view past programs. Recent highlights include:

- Best-selling author Ann Leary's conversation with Alex Green of Harvard's Kennedy School about the forced institutionalization of women in the last century, as portrayed in Leary's novel *The Foundling*
- Pulitzer Prize-winning Harvard historian Annette Gordon-Reed's discussion of *On Juneteenth* with moderator Lisa Baldez, Professor of Government, Dartmouth College
- “Women in the Gilded Age: Two Authors' Insights,” with authors Laura Thompson and Betsy Prioleau and moderator Esther Crain, creator of the *Ephemeral New York* blog

Our literary programs are often presented in partnership with other anchor cultural organizations, including the Boston Public Library, GBH Forum Network, the Museum of African American History, and the State Library of Massachusetts.

# NEW Databases on AmericanAncestors.org

## Court, land, and probate records

### Suffolk County, MA: Probate File Papers

This database now includes case numbers 35452–43717 for the years 1848 to 1861 (partial)—and a total of 198,000 new file papers. The probate cases include wills, guardianships, administrations, and various other types of probate records. This database is available thanks to our partnership with the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Archives.

## Genealogies, biographies, heraldry, and local histories

### Early New England Families, 1641–1700—2 new sketches

This study project, researched by Alicia Crane Williams, focuses on early immigrants to New England, using Torrey's *New England Marriages* as a guide. The most recent sketches are John Fuller (m. 1645) and George Parkhurst (m. 1611).

### MacRaes to America, 1755–1930

This database presents Cornelia Wendell Bush's ebook, *MacRaes to America!! A Brief History of the Clan MacRae, With Records of MacRae, Ray, MacRath, McGrath & Related Families*, which traces this surname through United States censuses. This database covers more than 9,000 individuals who were enumerated between 1755 and 1930.

## Vital records

### Massachusetts: (Image Only) Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Records, 1789–1920—20 new parishes

Guest members can view Archdiocese of Boston sacramental records for free in our browsable collection. The 89 new volumes include records from Boston, Cambridge, Foxborough, Holbrook, Lawrence, Lowell, Marlborough, Maynard, Quincy, Winchester, and Woburn. We've also updated 12 volumes

from these parishes already posted on our site, adding post-1900 records.

### Massachusetts: Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston Records, 1789–1920—29 new parishes

American Ancestors and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston are collaborating on an online database of millions of sacramental records from more than 100 parishes across eastern Massachusetts. The 121 new volumes include records from Arlington, Boston, Everett, Lawrence, Lowell, Malden, Medford, Methuen, Middleborough, Needham, Norwood, Quincy, Salem, Shirley, and Woburn.

### Massachusetts: Vital Records, 1620–1850—35 new volumes

We've added vital records from 35 towns in western Massachusetts to this database. The records, from the Corbin Manuscript Collection, are from Bernardston, Cheshire, Chicopee, Easthampton, Enfield, Granby, Hampden, Hancock, Hatfield, Hawley, Holland, Holyoke, Lanesborough, Leverett, Leyden, Ludlow, Monterey, New Marlborough, Northfield, Paxton, Pittsfield, Prescott, Rowe, Russell, Shutesbury, South Deerfield, South Hadley, Sunderland, Wales, Ware, Warwick, Wendell, Westhampton, Whatley, and Williamsburg. This update includes more than 449,800 names.

## Journals

### American Ancestors Magazine—1 new volume

This update for Volume 22 (2021) contains over 2,300 searchable names. The indexing includes full names, publication year, and article titles and authors. Published by NEHGS since 2010, *American Ancestors* contains a wealth of information for family historians.

### The American Genealogist—1 new volume

Volume 88 (2016) adds more than 6,500 searchable names to this database. Founded in 1922 by Donald Lines

Jacobus, *The American Genealogist* represents an essential body of scholarly research from across the United States, especially for New England.

### The Essex Genealogist—1 new volume

Volume 36 (2016), with more than 1,400 searchable names, has been added. This quarterly journal devoted to genealogical research in Essex County, Massachusetts, has been published by the Essex Society of Genealogists since 1981.

### Maine Genealogist—1 new volume

This update adds Volume 38 (2016) and over 4,100 searchable names. Published since 1977, the *Maine Genealogist* is the quarterly journal of the Maine Genealogical Society.

### Mayflower Descendant—1 new volume

Volume 69 (2021), with more than 3,200 searchable names, has been added. This journal began publication in 1899 and is an essential source of information on many families in southeastern Massachusetts, Cape Cod, and elsewhere.

### New England Historical and Genealogical Register—1 new volume

We have added Volume 175 (2021), with over 8,000 searchable names. Published quarterly since 1847, the *Register* is the flagship journal of American genealogy and the oldest in the field.

### Rhode Island Roots—1 new volume

Volume 42 (2016), with 270 pages and over 2,800 searchable names, has been added. The journal has been published by the Rhode Island Genealogical Society since 1975.

### Vermont Genealogy—1 new volume

This update adds Volume 20 (2015), with more than 3,900 new records. The Genealogical Society of Vermont began publishing the journal in 1996.





## BRICK WALLS submitted by our members

**We want to hear from you!** Send a brief narrative (200 words or less) about your “brick wall” to [magazine@nehgs.org](mailto:magazine@nehgs.org) or to AMERICAN ANCESTORS magazine, 99–101 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02116. Please include your member number. We regret that we cannot reply to every submission. Brick walls will be edited for clarity and length.

I am looking for the parents of **Betsey Hutchinson Sikes/Sykes**, wife of Levi Sikes/Sykes. Her Hartland, Windsor County, Vermont, death record shows she died July 8, 1863, age 49. Her parents are listed as “S. & L. Hutchinson.” Other sources indicate “S.” is Samuel, but three men named Samuel Hutchinson lived in Windsor County at the time. One Samuel Hutchinson married Love Rogers on October 9, 1808, at Hartland, but I have not been able to determine whether this Samuel and Love were Betsey’s parents.

Matt Cross, Houston, Texas  
[mbcrossem@gmail.com](mailto:mbcrossem@gmail.com)

I have been researching my Smith family for over 40 years, but long ago hit a brick wall with **John Smith**, of unknown origin, who was born about 1658. He married Mary Ellenwood by 1686 and was the father of nine children. He appears to have served in King Philip’s War with Ralph Ellenwood (likely his brother-in-law) and is mentioned in records in Beverly, Massachusetts, and Casco Bay, Maine. He died May 16, 1727, in Middleborough, Plymouth County, Mass. (Many online lineages confuse my John Smith with a different John Smith, son of John and Susanna [Hinckley] Smith, who married Mehitabel [\_\_\_\_] and died March 1738 in Barnstable County, Mass.)

Norma Jean Stevens, Haines City, Florida  
[njs3940@aol.com](mailto:njs3940@aol.com)

According to the 1850 census, my ancestor **William C. Babcock** was born in Connecticut in 1796. In 1820, he married Mary Mumford in Muskingum, Perry County, Ohio. William lived in Hendricks County, Indiana, in the 1830s and 1840s. He died in Kosciusko County, Ind., in 1867. He is not listed in the well-documented Connecticut Babcock genealogy. He might descend from the Milton, Massachusetts, Babcocks. The name Henry appears frequently in his descendants; a grandson is Henry Salisbury Babcock. Perhaps the Babcock and Salisbury families intersected in Milton or Dorchester, Mass.

Don Glossinger, Michigan City, Indiana  
[dgglossinger@hotmail.com](mailto:dgglossinger@hotmail.com)

My great-grandfather, **Thomas Norris**, was born about 1842 in Framingham, Massachusetts, apparently the oldest of four children of Michael and Catherine (Crowley) Norris. Many records (marriage, death, and census) list Michael and Catherine as Thomas’s parents but, although birth records exist for siblings William (1844), Michael Jr. (1847), and MaryAnn (1849), I’ve not found a birth or baptismal record for Thomas. Michael and Catherine, who were both born in Ireland, were married in Framingham in 1837. Michael died in an almshouse in Roxbury, Mass., on August 26, 1848. In 1850, Catherine was head of her household, which included the four children. This record is the earliest I have found for Thomas. Was Thomas indeed the child of Michael and Catherine, or was he in their household for another reason?

Karen Norris Kalec, Wells, Maine  
[karenkalec@gmail.com](mailto:karenkalec@gmail.com)

*The Encyclopedia of Connecticut Biography* (Boston, 1917), Vol. 5, p.60, contains an intriguing mention of the immigrant ancestor of the Peeso/Pease family: “**Jean (John) Picot** was a descendant of an ancient and honorable French family. He was taken from the coast of France when five years of age and brought to Canada by sailors. He made his way into the interior and lived among the Indians, and engaged in campaigns with the French and Indians; finally settled at Brookfield, Massachusetts. There he married and reared several children. The name appears in the early records of Massachusetts as Peeso, and this was modified by many of the descendants to Pease, under which name they are still known. Many retained the form Peeso.” Of the reported several children of Jean (John) Picot, only one is known: son John Peeso, who was probably born in the late 1730s, possibly in Brookfield, and who married Hannah Ranger on April 2, 1756, and Sarah Stratton on October 6, 1763, both at Brookfield. I have not been able to confirm any part of Jean (John) Picot’s story.

John W. Coffey, Raleigh, North Carolina  
[artsar@bellsouth.net](mailto:artsar@bellsouth.net)

# NEHGS welcomes new Officers, Trustees, and Councilors

The following trustees and councilors were elected at our annual meeting on April 23, 2022. The support of these individuals is invaluable to NEHGS, and we are grateful for their leadership.

## New Officers



### **New Secretary**

**Nancy Maulsby** of Greenwich, Connecticut, is former vice president of corporate communications and protocol at Chase Manhattan Bank and co-founder of Development Unlimited, Inc. She has served on several boards, including the

Historical Society of the Town of Greenwich, Buckley School, Grosvenor Neighborhood House, Metropolitan Opera Guild, and Hartwick College. Nancy is the immediate past chairman of the NEHGS Board of Trustees. She joined NEHGS in 2002 and became a Life Member in 2009. She is a member of the Founders' Society for Lifetime Giving and the Cornerstone Society for Giving.



### **New Corresponding Secretary**

**Mark Kimball Nichols** of Cummaquid, Massachusetts, is managing director and principal of Global Capital Advisors, LLC. He was previously managing director at Banc of America Securities. Mark is a proprietor and life member of the Boston

Athenæum and a council member at Mount Auburn Cemetery. He serves on the board of advisors of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He has a BA from Dickinson College and an MA and MALD from the Fletcher School. Mark joined NEHGS in 2008 and served on our Council. He is a member of our Investment Committee, a Life Member, and a member of the Charles Ewer Society for Lifetime Giving

## New Trustees



**Robb Alely Allan** of Palm Beach, Florida, and New York, New York, is president of Gulfstream Group, Inc. He is a former employee of the LandSat satellite program at NASA's Goddard Institute of Space Studies, and was a science, business, and technology reporter for

*Newsweek*. He is a former executive vice president for a real estate holding and development company with commercial and residential properties throughout the New York metropolitan area, and the founder of a technology consulting firm specializing in database systems. He joined NEHGS in 2015 and is a member of the Charles Ewer Society of Lifetime Giving.



### **Jonathan Buck "Dutch" Treat**

of Belmont, Massachusetts, is vice president of Eaton Vance Investment Counsel. He was vice president of Scudder Private Investment Counsel and senior vice president at David L. Babson & Co. He is president of Trustees of Donations to

the Protestant Episcopal Church, and treasurer and chair of the finance committee for the Middlesex School Board of Trustees. Since joining NEHGS in 2008 he has served on the Investment, Finance, Future Expansion, and Executive Committees and as chair of the Nominating Committee. He is a Life Benefactor and a member of the Charles Ewer Society of Lifetime Giving.





**Susan E. Carlson** of Seattle, Washington, is a retired executive vice president and co-founder of Eagle Home Mortgage, LLC. She had leadership roles at First Interstate Bank of Washington and Seattle First National Bank and was co-owner of Best Western Rocky Mountain Lodge

in Whitefish, Montana. She is a graduate of the University of Washington and of the Pacific Coast Banking School. She is a member of lineage organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution and Society of Mayflower Descendants. Susan joined NEHGS in 2010. She is a Supporter Member and a member of the Charles Ewer Society of Lifetime Giving.



**Andrew P. Langlois** of Weston, Connecticut, is former president of Mormac Marine Group and chief financial officer of four affiliated companies. He held management positions with General Dynamics Corporation. Andrew is a Life member of Massachusetts Society of

Mayflower Descendants and a member of the New Hampshire

Historical Society, Maine Historical Society, New Hampshire Society of Genealogists, and Society of Genealogists (London). He is a published genealogist. Andrew joined NEHGS in 1979. He is a past Councilor and also served as NEHGS Treasurer and as a member of the Executive, Audit, and Investment Committees. He is a member of the Cornerstone Society for Giving and the Charles Ewer Society for Lifetime Giving.



**Brenda M. Williams** of Siasconset, Massachusetts, is a former registered nurse in Cardiac Intensive Care at Massachusetts General Hospital and Greenwich Hospital in Connecticut, as well as in Surgical Intensive Care at Norwalk Hospital. Her volunteer experience includes

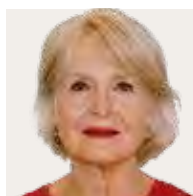
Boston's Symphony Hall, Boston's First Night Celebration, and the Nantucket Cottage Hospital Thrift Shop. Her memberships include the Roger Williams (Rhode Island) Family Association, Nantucket Historical Association, Society of Mayflower Descendants, Daughters of the American Revolution, and others. She joined NEHGS in 2010. Brenda is a Life Member and a member of the Charles Ewer Society of Lifetime Giving.

## New Councilors



**Brent J. Andersen** of Boston, Massachusetts, is the Founder and President of Pilgrim Bay Insurance Agency. He served in executive roles in the commercial insurance and construction industry. Brent is a member of the Massachusetts State Finance & Governance Board, a

corporator for Cornerstone Bank, former chairman of Quinsigamond Community College, and former Treasurer of the Massachusetts Republican Party. He is President of the Sons of the Revolution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and a member of the Council of the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Brent joined NEHGS in 2009.



**Christine Bosworth** of Boston, Massachusetts, is an author, diplomatic partner, and associate of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government for Korean affairs. Her late husband, Stephen Bosworth, was U.S. ambassador

to Tunisia, the Philippines, and South Korea. Christine is the editor of *Dinner with Ambassadors*. She is a member of the Boston Committee on Foreign Relations and the Union Club of Boston. She has a BA and an MFA from Sarah Lawrence College. Christine joined NEHGS in 2004.



**Joan M. Berndt**, of Boston, Massachusetts, worked in finance and treasury for Merck & Co., Inc. before moving to Massachusetts in 1994. She was active in various local nonprofits, including the boards of the Beacon Hill Civic Association and Historic New England and the

Boston Public Library's Literary Lights Gala Committee. Joan is a member of the Union Club of Boston House Committee and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston's Swan Society Steering Committee. She has language and business degrees from Seton Hall University. Joan joined NEHGS in 2010 and is a Life Member.



**Prudence S. Crozier** of Wellesley and Nantucket, Massachusetts, holds a PhD in economics from Harvard, which has credentialed her to teach, engage in econometric forecasting, and confront the challenges of combining career and family. Her board service includes

Wellesley College, Newton Wellesley Hospital, Massachusetts Health and Educational Facilities Authority, Boston Public Library Foundation, Nantucket Historical Association, and Episcopal Church Foundation. She is an honorary lifetime Advisor of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Prudence is researching her Eaton family history. She joined NEHGS in 2003 and is a Life Member and a member of the Charles Ewer Society for Lifetime Giving.



**Dr. Jennifer London** of McLean, Virginia, is an executive with a diversified background consulting in strategic planning, business development, executive hiring, marketing, and community relations. She held roles with Deloitte and Touche, LLP, and PricewaterhouseCoopers. She was president of Burkhart Enterprises, LLC. Jennifer is active in several nonprofits, including the U.S. Navy Museum, George Mason University Foundation, White House Historical Association, Junior Achievement, and National Kidney Foundation. Jennifer is the co-author with her late husband J. Philip (Jack) London, of several books, including *Our Good Name* and *Character, the Ultimate Success Factor*.



**Rebecca Morgan Rogers** of Charlottesville, Virginia, worked at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York International Finance Department and was an MAI appraiser and consultant with Fannie Mae, Cushman & Wakefield, Equitable Real Estate, and Fleet Bank. She is a member of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution (Honorary State Regent of Virginia), and the current Colonial Registrar of National Society of Colonial Dames in America in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Rebecca earned an AB from Mount Holyoke College and an MBA from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University. She joined NEHGS in 2020.



**Amy Whorf McGuiggan** of Hingham, Massachusetts, is a genealogical author and a columnist for the *Provincetown Independent*. She is an author of numerous books, including *Finding Emma: My Search for the Family My Grandfather Never Knew* and *My Provincetown: Memories of a Cape Cod Childhood*. She curated, researched, and wrote the exhibition *Forgotten Port: Provincetown's Whaling Heritage*. Amy is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Mayflower Society, Wing Family Association, Rich Family Association, and Jamestowne Society. She has a BA from Boston College and MS from Boston University. Amy joined NEHGS in 2011 and is a Life Member.

to the Episcopal Church. Ryan is a member of the Somerset Club, St. Botolph Club, Harvard Musical Association, Order of St John, Society of Colonial Wars, Sons of the Revolution, and Harvard Club. He received a BA, two MAs, and a PhD in physics and economics from Harvard, and an MBA from the University of Chicago. Ryan joined NEHGS in 2021 and is a Life Member.



**Ryan D. Taliaferro** of Cambridge, Massachusetts, is senior vice president and director of equity strategies at Acadian Asset Management. He is on the advisory board of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard and the investment committee of the Trustees of Donations

to the Episcopal Church. Ryan is a member of the Somerset Club, St. Botolph Club, Harvard Musical Association, Order of St John, Society of Colonial Wars, Sons of the Revolution, and Harvard Club. He received a BA, two MAs, and a PhD in physics and economics from Harvard, and an MBA from the University of Chicago. Ryan joined NEHGS in 2021 and is a Life Member.



**Elizabeth McCaslin Passela** of Houston, Texas, is a former banking and investment executive with leadership roles at BankBoston, Boston, and Bank of America, National Association, Frankfurt, Germany. As an artist, she is represented by the Copley Society in Boston and the Jack Meier Gallery in Houston. A member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Lady Washington Chapter, Houston, Texas, her genealogical interests include Pennsylvania and Southeastern U.S. eighteenth- and nineteenth-century social history, Native American Studies, and DNA as a genealogical tool. She joined NEHGS in 2004. Elizabeth is a Life Member and a member of the Charles Ewer Society for Lifetime Giving.

**Brian D. White** of Chicago, Illinois, is a real estate broker and executive at Baird & Warner Gold Coast. He is a member of the New Hampshire Society of the Cincinnati and former governor of the Society of Colonial Wars. Brian held board roles with the Royal Oak Foundation, Irish Georgian Society, English-Speaking Union of Chicago, and Illinois Society of Mayflower Descendants. He was co-chair of the Duke of Edinburgh International Award USA Gala in Chicago, which featured HRH The Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex. He received a BA from Rollins College. Brian joined NEHGS in 2018.



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Brenda M. Williams photo by Cary Hazlegrove. Joan M. Berndt and Prudence S. Crozier photos by Pierce Harman. Dr. Jennifer London photo by James P. Goodridge. Ryan D. Taliaferro photo by JennyNoursePhotography.



# News from Publications

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## NEW FROM BILL GRIFFETH!

### Strangers No More: A Memoir – Sequel to *The Stranger in My Genes*

By Bill Griffitheth, 6 x 9 hcvr, 183 pages, illustrated

In his 2016 best seller, *The Stranger in My Genes: A Memoir*, Bill Griffitheth told of learning that the father who raised him was not, in fact, his biological father. In this sequel, Bill continues his journey to learn about his newly discovered biological family and shares some of the dramatic stories strangers and friends have told him about their own shocking DNA discoveries. In the process, Bill stumbles on some closely guarded family secrets. Warning: It's another page-turner that may keep you up all night!

#### ALSO BY BILL GRIFFETH

- *The Stranger in My Genes: A Memoir*
- *By Faith Alone: My Family's Epic History, 2nd edition*

#### Praise for *Strangers No More*

"In *Strangers No More*, Bill Griffitheth offers a moving portrait of coming to terms with the past after the discovery of a profound family secret. The journalist and genealogist blends dogged research with empathy to unravel his family's complexities, reconstruct his own origin story, and connect with newfound kin. With home DNA testing bringing revelations to so many Americans, Griffitheth's fascinating memoir offers a clear-sighted and compassionate roadmap for us all."

—Libby Copeland, author of *The Lost Family: How DNA Testing Is Upending Who We Are*

"With sensitivity and grace, Bill Griffitheth tells the story of the family—his own—he only recently discovered. Like untold numbers of Americans, he learned through a casual DNA test that his biological father was not the man who raised him. In this tender, witty, and deft volume, Griffitheth explores his 'biological' and 'biographical' families and their histories. *Strangers No More* is a book not only for those who learn unanticipated facts from their DNA searches. It is a book for us all."

—Gabrielle Glaser, author of *American Baby: A Mother, a Child, and the Shadow History of Adoption*

"This book offers hope to the millions of people who experience a Not Parent Expected discovery. Validating and healing, Bill's insightful books are trailblazers teaching others how to embrace DNA surprises in their families with compassion and kindness."

—Catherine St Clair, Founder of NPE Friends Fellowship and the world's largest NPE Facebook community, DNA NPE Friends. To learn more, visit [www.NPEFellowship.org](http://www.NPEFellowship.org)

Top: Bill Griffitheth appeared on NBC's *Today* show in September 2016.

Bottom: Bill posing at FamilyTreeDNA headquarters with the "DNA Analyzer" that changed his life.



## Great Migration Study Project News

New research to uncover the details of immigrants who came to New England between 1636 and 1638 has been under way for several years. We will publish a first volume by Ian Watson in early 2023 that will contain sketches for surnames that begin with A to Be for these years. As planned, research will continue for the foreseeable future to cover immigrants who arrived through the year 1640.



## Announcing 2022/2023 Online Learning Opportunities

Our commitment to bringing you quality genealogical, historical, and cultural online programming continues. From free online lectures to multi-day online seminars, we have something for everyone. Mark your calendars and get ready to expand your family history horizons. Registration for our online programs typically opens one month prior to the broadcast. Learn more at [AmericanAncestors.org/events](https://AmericanAncestors.org/events).

### AUGUST 2022

- Starting 8/3 ... **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Researching Ancestors on the Move, 5 weeks, \$
- 8/11 ... **ONLINE LECTURE:** Stories from the Archives: Family Registers, FREE
- 8/19 ... **WEBINAR:** Around the World in 20 Objects, FREE
- 8/22 ... **AMERICAN INSPIRATION VIRTUAL AUTHOR EVENT:** Camper English with *Doctors and Distillers: The Remarkable Medicinal History of Beer, Wine, Spirits, and Cocktails*, \$
- 8/25 ... **WEBINAR:** Reading Gravestones from Old New England, FREE
- 8/30 ... **AMERICAN INSPIRATION VIRTUAL AUTHOR EVENT:** David Bouk with *Democracy's Data: The Hidden Stories in the U.S. Census and How to Read Them*, FREE

### SEPTEMBER 2022

- Starting 9/7 ... **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Getting Organized, 3 weeks, \$
- 9/12 ... **AMERICAN INSPIRATION VIRTUAL AUTHOR EVENT:** Mark Clague with *O Say Can You Hear?: A Cultural Biography of "The Star-Spangled Banner"*, FREE
- 9/20 ... **AMERICAN INSPIRATION VIRTUAL AUTHOR EVENT:** Writing History with Eric J. Dolin: *Rebels at Sea: Privateering in the American Revolution*, \$
- 9/22 ... **ONLINE LECTURE:** What's New at American Ancestors, FREE

- Starting 9/28 ... **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Navigating Our Nation's Federal Records, 5 weeks, \$
- 9/29 ... **AMERICAN INSPIRATION VIRTUAL AUTHOR EVENT:** Authors Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell and Sofi Thanhauser on "History of Clothing: Style and Substance," FREE

### OCTOBER 2022

- 10/6 ... **ONLINE LECTURE:** Using Cemetery Transcripts Online, FREE
- 10/20 ... **ONLINE LECTURE:** Tracing Your Descent from a "Witch," FREE
- 10/21 ... **WEBINAR:** Magnificence, Marriage, & Murder: The Story of Scotland's Brodick Castle, FREE

### NOVEMBER 2022

- Starting 11/2 ... **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Finding Origins: Cluster Research in Practice, 3 weeks, \$
- 11/3 ... **ONLINE LECTURE:** Migrations from New England To and Thru New York, FREE
- Starting 11/8 ... **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Online Seminar: An Explosion of Beauty: The Art, Architecture, and Collections of British Country Houses, Part I, 3 weeks, \$
- 11/17 ... **ONLINE LECTURE:** Getting Started in DNA, FREE
- Starting 11/30 ... **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Researching New York City: Four Centuries of History and Genealogy, 4 weeks, \$

\$ indicates a paid program



## DECEMBER 2022

- 12/1 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** What's New at American Ancestors, FREE
- 12/8 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Stories from the Archives: Family Recipes, FREE

## JANUARY 2023

- Starting 1/4 . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** DNA in Practice, 4 weeks, \$
- 1/12–1/14 . . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Genealogical Skills Bootcamp, \$  
*see description on page 24*
- 1/13 . . . . . **WEBINAR:** William Waldorf Astor: American Tycoon to English Lord, FREE
- 1/19 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Basics of Jewish Genealogy, FREE
- 1/21 . . . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Virtual Preservation Roadshow, \$
- 1/26 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Deciphering Old Handwriting, FREE

## FEBRUARY 2023

- Starting 2/1 . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Virginia Research: Four Centuries of History and Genealogy, 4 weeks, \$
- Starting 2/7 . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** An Explosion of Beauty: The Art, Architecture, and Collections of British Country Houses, Part II, 3 weeks, \$
- 2/9 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** DNA Consultations at American Ancestors, FREE
- 2/16 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Using the Great Migration Databases on AmericanAncestors.org, FREE
- 2/23–2/25 . . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Winter Virtual Stay-at-Home, \$  
*see description on page 24*

## MARCH 2023

- Starting 3/1 . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** The Basics of Early New England Research, 5 weeks, \$
- 3/23 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** What's New at American Ancestors, FREE

## APRIL 2023

- Starting 4/5 . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Navigating Passenger Lists: Arrivals to the United States, 4 weeks, \$
- 4/6 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Pennsylvania Genealogy: Go-To Published Resources, FREE
- 4/14 . . . . . **WEBINAR:** Neoclassical Berlin, FREE
- 4/20 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Searching Journals on AmericanAncestors.org, FREE

## MAY 2023

- Starting 5/10 . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Pennsylvania Research: Four Centuries of History and Genealogy, 4 weeks, \$
- 5/11 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Huguenot Family History Resources, FREE
- 5/25 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Getting Started in Lithuanian Family History Research, FREE

## JUNE 2023

- 6/8 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** What's New at American Ancestors, FREE
- 6/8–6/10 . . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Spring Virtual Stay-at-Home, \$  
*see description on page 24*
- 6/14 . . . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Researching Impoverished Ancestors, 3 weeks, \$
- 6/15 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Understanding Calendar Systems in Family History Research, FREE

## JULY 2023

- 7/6 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Researching Black Patriots and Loyalists During the American Revolution, FREE
- 7/7 . . . . . **WEBINAR:** Stories from English Country Houses, FREE
- Starting 7/12 . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Quaker Research, 3 weeks, \$
- 7/20 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Getting Started in Ohio Research, FREE

## AUGUST 2023

- Starting 8/2 . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Researching Atlantic Canada, 5 weeks, \$
- 8/3–8/5 . . . . . **ONLINE SEMINAR:** Genealogical Skills Bootcamp, \$  
*see description on page 24*
- 8/10 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Stories from the Archives: Scrapbooks, FREE
- 8/24 . . . . . **ONLINE LECTURE:** Applying to Revolutionary War Lineage Societies, FREE

*\*Schedule is subject to change.*

### Archived webinars, subject guides, downloads, and more

Missed a past webinar? Want to learn more about a particular subject at your own pace? Looking for easy-to-use templates to help keep your research organized? Discover the hundreds of resources waiting for you at AmericanAncestors.org. All of these resources are free and available to the public. You will need to log in with your member or guest account to access the content.

- Watch instructional videos and archived webinars at our video library:  
[AmericanAncestors.org/video-library](https://AmericanAncestors.org/video-library)
- Read research guides on a variety of topics:  
[AmericanAncestors.org/tools/research-guides](https://AmericanAncestors.org/tools/research-guides)
- Download charts, family group sheets, and other organizing templates:  
[AmericanAncestors.org/tools/research-templates](https://AmericanAncestors.org/tools/research-templates)



### Join us on a genealogical day trip!

Explore a New England repository with experts from American Ancestors! Visits include pre-program online resources, a tour and orientation to the library or archives, a lecture from an attending genealogist, and a one-on-one genealogical consultation. Upcoming day trips include:

- Connecticut State Library, Hartford, CT
- Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA
- Boston City Archives, Boston MA
- American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA (pictured above)
- Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, RI

*\*Schedule is subject to change.*

### VIRTUAL Genealogical Skills Bootcamp

Winter: January 12–14, 2023

Summer: August 3–5, 2023

Cost: \$375 each program; Members save 10%

Take your research skills to the next level! With the sheer number of online resources at your fingertips, you might be tempted to dive into your family history research without any formal genealogical training. This intensive three-day online program will set you on the right path to getting the most out of your family history research and teach you how to tackle genealogical problems like a pro. Topics include strategies for analyzing records, online research, breaking down genealogical brick walls, and more.

This program includes:

- 12 lectures and access to recordings
- Lecture handouts and materials
- Demo and activity sessions with our experts and other participants

### VIRTUAL Stay-at-Homes

Winter: February 23–25, 2023

Spring: June 8–10, 2023

Cost: \$375 each program; Members save 10%

Make real headway in your family history research! During this three-day online experience, you will learn about essential resources and new research strategies through staff lectures, real-time demonstrations, one-on-one consultations, and other activities. Whether you are an advanced researcher or a beginner, this virtual program will give you the necessary skills and knowledge to continue your family history research from home.

This program includes:

- 6 lectures and access to recordings
- Lecture handouts and materials
- 2 one-on-one consultations
- Demo and activity sessions with our experts and other participants



## Genealogical Travel is Back! Upcoming Research Tours & Programs\*

Not all records and family history resources are online! It's time to explore the archives, libraries, and other repositories essential to the success of your family history project. American Ancestors offers a wide variety of guided research tours and extended programs for family historians at all skill levels. Benefit from special orientations and tutorials, one-on-one consultations, informative lectures, cultural excursions, and more. Register at [AmericanAncestors.org/events](https://AmericanAncestors.org/events).

### Fall Research Getaway, Boston, MA

October 13–15, 2022

Escape to Boston for three days of research, one-on-one consultations, orientations, and social events while exploring the rich offerings at the American Ancestors Research Center and benefitting from the knowledge and assistance of expert genealogists.

**Members:** \$450. **Non-Members:** \$600

### Salt Lake City Research Tour, Salt Lake City, UT

November 6–13, 2022

Navigate the resources of the world's largest genealogy library with the help of experts from American Ancestors. Since we have more than 40 years of experience leading researchers of all levels to Salt Lake City, you will benefit from our special orientations and tutorials, one-on-one consultations, informative lectures, and more.

**Members:** \$1,575 single; \$1,375/each double; \$1,825 double with non-researching guest; \$750 commuter. **Non-Members:** Add \$150 to the above prices.

### Washington, D.C., Research Tour

March 26–April 2, 2023

Discover the wealth of family history resources in the nation's capital. Delve into military records, immigration files, newspapers, compiled family papers, and more at the National Archives and Records Administration, Library of Congress, and Daughters of the American Revolution Library.

**Members:** \$3,500 single; \$2,995/each double; \$3,750 double with non-researching guest; \$1,750 commuter. **Non-Members:** Add \$150 to the above prices.

### Upstate New York Research Tour, Albany, NY

May 17–20, 2023

Explore the New York State Library and the New York State Archives with experts from American Ancestors by your side. This popular tour includes individual consultations, lectures from experts, and group meals.

**Members:** \$1,750 single; \$1,500/each double; \$1,995 double with guest; \$950 commuter. **Non-Members:** Add \$150 to the above prices.

### Scottish Research Tour, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

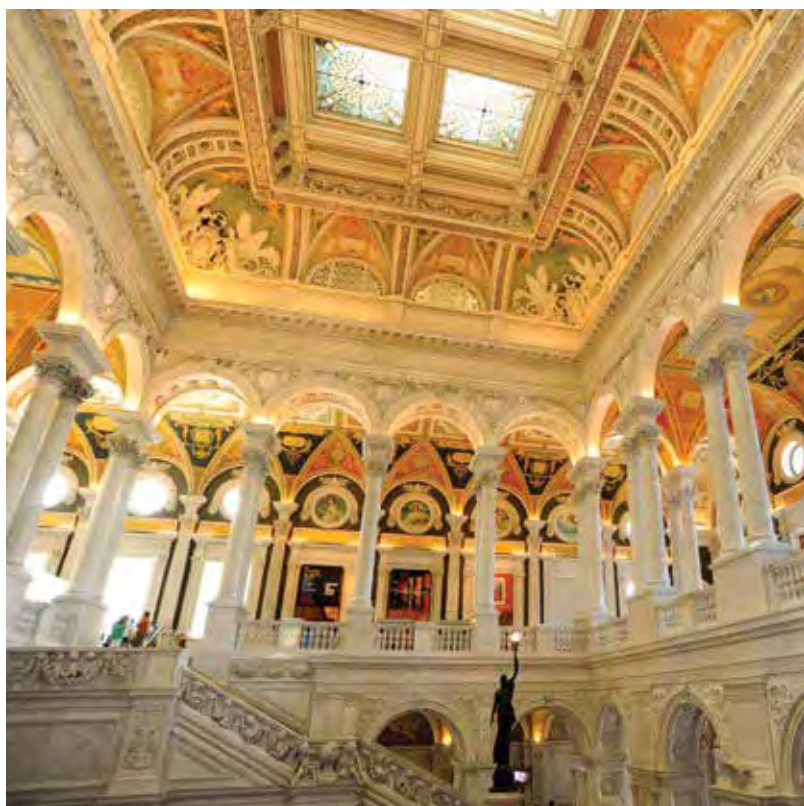
June 18–25, 2023

Have you dreamed of visiting Edinburgh to research your Scottish ancestors? Let American Ancestors be your guide! Receive research assistance and support as you comb through 500 years of Scottish history at the National Archives of Scotland and ScotlandsPeople Centre.

Tour includes:

- Research at National Archives of Scotland and ScotlandsPeople Centre
- One-on-one consultations with our genealogists
- Lectures from our genealogists and local experts
- Seven-night stay in the heart of Edinburgh

**Member registration:** \$3,650 single; \$2,950/each double; \$3,900 double with non-researching guest; \$1,995 commuter. **Non-members:** Add \$150 to the above prices.



Library of Congress Main Hall. ©2010 Rena Schild/Shutterstock.

\*Schedule is subject to change.



# Research with our experts in Salt Lake City

November 6–13, 2022

Navigate the resources of the world's largest genealogy library with help from American Ancestors. Our experts have more than 40 years' experience guiding researchers of all levels through the vast resources of the Family History Library. Benefit from our special orientations and tutorials, one-on-one consultations, informative lectures, and more!

"This was a really great introduction to the Family History Library for me. I had been afraid to tackle it on my own, but with the help of NEHGS I had a very productive week."

—Salt Lake City Research Tour participant

## Program includes:

- Seven-night hotel stay at the Salt Lake Plaza Hotel at Temple Square
- Tour and orientation to collections at the Family History Library
- Daily lectures
- Consultations with expert genealogists
- Group meals
- Pre-program preparatory webinar and resources

Visit [AmericanAncestors.org/events/salt-lake-city-research-tour](https://AmericanAncestors.org/events/salt-lake-city-research-tour) to learn more.

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## staff profile

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### MEET DUSTIN AXE

#### Youth Genealogy Curriculum Coordinator

I am a licensed social studies teacher with eighteen years of experience as an educator. I originally planned to be a classroom teacher, but I stumbled into a career in museum education, and I have never looked back.

I worked at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago for twelve years. I researched, developed, and taught hands-on science labs, including a weekly program entitled *Live from the Heart*. This initiative gave high school students the opportunity to watch live open-heart surgery through video-conferencing equipment. I facilitated questions and answers between students and the medical team during the surgeries, which included valve replacements, bypasses, and transplants. This unique program taught thousands of students about the severity of heart disease and introduced them to careers in medicine.

My experience as a museum educator has carried over nicely to my work here. I am the first Youth Genealogy Curriculum Coordinator in the institution's history. I was hired in December 2019 to develop lesson plans and field trips to introduce students to family history.

I have spent the last two years researching and developing a national curriculum for students in grades 4 to 6. The curriculum is designed to make genealogy accessible to students with any background and family configuration. We believe all students should be given an equal opportunity to discover genealogy. Our curriculum will provide teachers with inclusive teaching strategies and address common student misconceptions about genealogy and

history. We intend to publish the curriculum in time for the 2022–23 school year.

One of the most enjoyable parts of my job is collaborating with our staff to ensure each lesson incorporates methodologies used by professional genealogists. Our curriculum is intended to bridge the gap between professional and amateur genealogists in an age-appropriate way that motivates students of all backgrounds to conduct their own research. The program will align with classroom standards, so teachers can seamlessly add genealogy to their existing curriculums.

My experience working with a wide range of professionals, including civil engineers and NASA scientists, gives me a unique perspective for making genealogy accessible for all students. Any topic can be made accessible and fun with the right strategies and materials. Under-resourced schools in particular need support with topics that can be challenging in the classroom.

Both science and genealogy can be used to teach students critical thinking skills, such as making observations and inferences, evaluating relevant information, and finding evidence to support a claim. Each discipline has formal rules and norms that can be replicated by students in any classroom, such as collecting data and verifying sources.

I am honored to have the opportunity to create lessons that will inspire the next generation of family historians to explore their roots. I am eager to release our curriculum soon! ♦



# Reading the Epitaphs of Old New England Gravestones

Virtually all genealogists have an appreciation for old graveyards. Inscriptions on gravestones often reveal birth and death dates, family relationships, and other details. My own studies focus on the epitaphs inscribed on early New England gravestones—poetic messages expressing contemporary attitudes towards life, death, and eternity. Too often dismissed as sentimental doggerel, these verses offer a window into the devotional reading and religious spirit of the time. Every single epitaph was chosen for a reason of utmost importance—to memorialize the death of a loved one—so selecting these verses was a profound and personal decision. Knowing the literary context can increase our understanding of these historic epitaphs and perhaps shed light on the lives of the deceased and their family members.

Consider the epitaph a bereaved husband chose for his wife and infant child in Old Settlers Burial Ground in Lancaster, Massachusetts:

Here lies interred  
the Body of Mrs.  
LUCY FAIRBANK,  
ye wife of Deacn.  
CYRUS FAIRBANK  
who died Sept. ye 16<sup>th</sup>.  
1776, Aged 36  
Years & 8 Days.

Likewise Ephraim, Son of the  
Deceas'd, still born, Sept. ye 1<sup>st</sup>, 1776  
*The Small and Great are here.*

The text is from the Bible, Job 3, a harrowing passage in which Job curses the day he was born: “Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? . . . Or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. . . **The small and great are there.** . . . Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?”

Unsurprisingly, the Bible is a common source of epitaphs on these gravestones. Given a lifetime of church attendance, short passages from scripture were familiar to the deceased, their survivors, and the community. These verses were comfortably orthodox and near to hand: a pulpit Bible could be found in every meeting house, and most homes contained a family Bible. As a result, extracts from Psalms, Job, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, or the Gospels can be found in almost all of these graveyards.



**John Hanson**, a Massachusetts native, is the author of *Reading the Gravestones of Old New England* (McFarland, 2021), the source for portions of this article. He has published and spoken extensively on his research. Hanson lives in Cambridge and the Berkshires.



Given the circumstances of Lucy Fairbanks's death, this epitaph seems deeply personal. The memorial is a play on words: Job refers to Death leveling the mighty (or great) and the ordinary (or small), but here the phrase also links the small (infant) and the large (mother), buried together. This epitaph, which invokes Job wishing he had been stillborn himself, is placed on the grave of a stillborn child and a mother who must have suffered terribly for two weeks before her own death.

Two gravestones at the Old South Cemetery in Montague, Massachusetts, tell the sad stories of three children of Reverend Judah and Mary Nash. The first is a lovely double-headed stone for two brothers who died "at ye birth" two years apart. Note that neither brother is named:

*In Memory of 2 Sons  
of y<sup>e</sup> Rev<sup>d</sup> Judah & Mrs.  
Mary Nash who died at  
y<sup>e</sup> Birth the one on y<sup>e</sup>  
Right hand Sept<sup>r</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> 1764,  
on y<sup>e</sup> left Decr. 17<sup>th</sup>, 1766  
**Our birth is nothing  
but our Death begun.***

The simple two-line epitaph is from one of the greatest works of the Graveyard Poets. These late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century writers composed contemplative, introspective, elegiac poems to illustrate religious lessons in an accessible way. Their themes were the inevitability of death, the uncertainty of its timing, its leveling effect on all rank and privilege, the consequent vanity of our mortal ambitions and pursuits, and the supreme importance of living virtuously to secure eternal happiness. Immensely popular in their time, the Graveyard Poets have largely faded into obscurity, although readers may recall Thomas Gray's 1751 "Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard" ("The paths of glory lead but to the grave").

The epitaph of the Nash boys is taken from Edward Young's "The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality" (1742). Both Young and "Night Thoughts" are largely forgotten today, but once were immensely popular; passages from "Night Thoughts" appear on gravestones throughout New England. Here is the epitaph taken from "Night the Fifth":

While man is growing life is in decrease:  
And cradles rock us nearer to the tomb.

**Our birth is nothing but our death begun.**

Young's imagery is frighteningly effective. His message was an essential lesson for Calvinist readers: the death of an infant reminds the reader that life is fleeting. Reverend Nash did not shirk this sentiment in the case of his own

stillborn sons. The choice of a passage from Young instead of a Bible verse for the gravestone of a minister's children indicates that Young's works were an acceptable form of religious instruction.

A decade later, however, the Nashes selected a passage from Job for yet another young son:

*In Memory of  
M<sup>r</sup>. Zenas Son  
of the Rev<sup>d</sup> Judah  
& M<sup>rs</sup> Mary  
Nash who died  
July 29<sup>th</sup> 1777 in  
y<sup>e</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Year of  
his Age.  
**Thou Destroyest  
the hope of Man.***

The verse is from Job 14, an intense contemplation of the finality of death. Verse 1 famously states "Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble," while Verse 10 observes that in comparison with a cut tree that might yet grow back, "man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?" The full text of Verse 19 reads: "The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man." This excerpt from Job was a very doleful verse for a minister to choose for the grave of his son. I might have expected instead a warning about the risk of death at any time, or gratitude that his child was spared the sorrows of the mortal world.



*Opposite page:* Old Center Cemetery, Monterey, Mass. *Right:* Gravestone of Zenas Nash, Montague, Mass. Courtesy of American Antiquarian Society. (All other article photos by the author.)

The two gravestones represent two similar, yet very distinct, expressions of parental mourning from two quite different literary sources, a decade apart. One would like to know more about Judah and Mary Nash.

Of course, in these old graveyards multiple family members are often buried near each another. These epitaphs can provide a fascinating window into the texts early New Englanders read and incorporated into their spiritual lives. Consider, for example, the choices made for three members of the Porter family buried in Old Hadley Cemetery in Hadley, Massachusetts:

Gloria in Excelsis Deo  
SACRED to the Memory  
of Mrs. SARAH PORTER  
the Amiable & Vertuous  
Consort of Col<sup>o</sup> Elisha  
Porter & only Daughter  
of the Rev<sup>d</sup>. David Jewett  
of New London. Lovely  
in Life & Lamented at  
Death. She Died April  
5<sup>th</sup> A.D. 1775 in y<sup>e</sup> 34<sup>th</sup>  
Year of her Age.  
*Heaven gives us Friends  
to Bless the present scene  
Resumes them to prepare us  
for the next*

Sarah Porter's stone provides genealogical information, including her father's name and town, and an epitaph taken from Edward Young's "Night the Ninth." The quotation appears again, in slightly altered form, on the stone of a woman who is likely a relative:

This monument is erected  
In Memory of  
M<sup>rs</sup> LOIS PORTER  
Consort of  
Doct<sup>r</sup> WILLIAM PORTER  
who died Dec<sup>r</sup>. 14<sup>th</sup> 1792  
Aged 28 years.  
*Heaven gives us Friends  
to Bless the present scene  
And takes them to prepare us  
for the next*

This text was popular locally and chosen several other times in the region, including twice right across the Connecticut River in Northampton's Bridge Street Cemetery.

Yet another Porter is buried nearby:

This monument is erected  
in memory of the Hon.  
Eleazer Porter, Esq. who for

many years served the County of Hampshire in the important Offices of Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and Judge of Probate, the duties of which he performed with the strictest fidelity.  
He died May 27 1797. AE. 69

*This modest stone, what few vain marbles can  
May truly say, here lies an honest man:  
Calmly he looked on either life and here  
Saw nothing to regret or there to fear.  
From nature's temprate feast rose satisfyd  
Thanked Heaven that he'd liv'd and that he died.*

Eleazer Porter's epitaph is an almost word-for-word transcription of select lines from Alexander Pope's "On Mr. Elijah Fenton at Easthamstead, Berks, 1729":

This gravestone is a fine memorial—Eleazer Porter was clearly a man of standing who merited a costly monument and an expansive epitaph. In the last line Pope beautifully articulates the perspective that death is a condition the just should welcome. Pope (1688–1744) was a Catholic poet and satirist best known today for *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Dunciad*, and his translations of Homer. It is noteworthy that this secular work by a Catholic writer was chosen for



Gravestone of Lois Porter, Hadley, Mass.



the gravestone of a son-in-law of the renowned Puritan minister Jonathan Edwards.

Genealogical research could surely add further context. A history of the Porter families of Hadley would deepen our appreciation of these choices of memorial verse and probate records might reveal whether these households owned the books quoted on their stones.

Now consider the Brewsters buried in Becket Center Cemetery in Becket, Massachusetts. A melancholy family history is recorded on adjacent stones: four children of the town doctor and the doctor himself have distinctive epitaphs. The first is a double-headed stone of a brother and sister:

In memory of  
Oliver, who died May 6<sup>th</sup>  
1784, aged 1 year 23 days  
and of Rubie who died  
Oct 19<sup>th</sup> 1784, aged 29 days  
Son & dau<sup>r</sup> of Doct. Oliver  
& Mrs. Jerusha Brewster  
*Sickly pleasures all adieu  
Pleasure which we never knew  
Happy happy from the womb  
While we hasten to the tomb.*

The source is an anonymous poem titled “Epitaph on an Infant.” As the above Young and Pope verses suggest, I have found more than a century’s worth of English and American poetry chosen for these memorials, from heroic to lyric to Augustan to Romantic to satiric. Some are the work of enduringly famous writers, while others are by poets long since faded into oblivion. Many of the epitaphs also appear in contemporary anthologies of “exemplary” prose and poetry like *Elegant Extracts*, edited by Vicesimus Knox (1791), or Lindley Murray’s *The English Reader* (1799).

Little Oliver and Rubie’s epitaph appeared in Murray’s *English Reader*, and it was also transcribed in a commonplace book I found at the Boston Athenæum that belonged to Dr. Eliot, a late eighteenth-century physician. Neither Murray nor Eliot identify any source for it; evidently the text was available (and read) across Massachusetts in the late 1700s. The full poem is a dramatic dialogue between a dead infant and an anonymous narrator. The babe bemoans its early demise, before the possibility of any pleasure in life.

The narrator in turn assures the infant that it is better to die at birth than live in this vain and sordid world. The narrator’s perspective prevails, and the baby goes back to rest, innocent and happy:

**Sickly pleasures, all adieu!  
Pleasures which I never knew:  
I’ll enjoy my early rest,**



Of my innocence possesd:  
**Happy, happy, from the womb,  
That I hasten'd to the tomb.**

Next is a short and sober epitaph on the grave of Oliver and Rubie’s older sister, Flavia, who died when she was a young child, just a year after Rubie:

In Memory of  
Flavia Daut<sup>r</sup> of Doct<sup>r</sup>  
Oliver & Mrs Jerusha  
Brewster who died  
April 4<sup>th</sup> 1795 aged  
3 years 8 months &  
4 days  
*No parents healing art  
thy Life could save  
when Death thy body  
call'd into the grave*

I have not found this verse elsewhere; it may be a bespoke work—an original composition unique to one individual’s grave and the work of a single writer, usually (though not always) anonymous. Here, the “parent’s healing art” could and probably did refer to Flavia’s father, Dr. Oliver Brewster.

A fourth child, a second Oliver, died in infancy seven years later:

In memory of  
Oliver Ellsworth  
son of Doct<sup>r</sup> Oliver

& M<sup>rs</sup> Jerusha Brewster  
 who Died Nov. 2 1802  
 aged 8 weeks, & 5 days  
*From light so gross to God he rose,  
 His dust here sleeps in calm repose.*

The first line is striking. Even the very light of this mortal, fallen world is bulky and dense compared to the spiritual and ethereal light of God. The juxtaposition of rising up to light in the first line and sleeping in dusty repose in the second is effective. Here again we see the hand of a skilled but unidentified local writer.

Finally, we come to the epitaph of the father, Dr. Oliver Brewster, who died in 1812 and was honored with a fine eulogistic text that lists his many virtues, and then a short verse:

*Farewell ye Friends whose tender care  
 Has long engaged my love;  
 Your fond embrace I now exchange  
 For better friends above.*

These noble sentiments seem written expressly for this village doctor. In fact, the text was taken from a hymn included in an 1806 compilation published in London by John Dobell (1757–1840), *A New Selection of Seven Hundred Evangelical Hymns for Private, Family, and Public Worship (Many Original) from More than Two Hundred of the Best Authors in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America*. Many of the verses in Dobell's volume were anonymous, and I cannot identify the original author of this particular hymn. The verse lives on today as a bluegrass song known as "Long Time Traveller":



I'm a long time travelling here below,  
 I'm a long time a-travelling away from home,  
 I'm a long time travelling here below  
 To lay this body down.

**Farewell, my friends, whose tender care  
 Has long engaged my love;  
 Your fond embrace I now exchange  
 For better friends above.**

Many old New England epitaphs contain the rich language of eighteenth-century hymns and Psalms. Like Scripture, these verses would have been familiar to the deceased, their bereaved families, the stone carver, and the minister. These hymns were not just sung in church; they were read, memorized, and recited as devotional literature in the home.

Jerusha Brewster survived her husband and lived to be 82, dying in 1841. Her gravestone, in Lenox, Massachusetts, has no epitaph. Despite losing four children at early ages, Jerusha had seven other children who survived and lived long lives. A history of the Brewster family would likely deepen our appreciation for their gravestone epitaphs—and vice versa.

During my research I noticed that an epitaph with a marvelously evocative vision of Resurrection Day was chosen at least twice, a hundred miles and twenty-five years apart. In 1784, the text was used for the gravestone of Reverend John Keep, who was buried at Plain Cemetery in Sheffield, Massachusetts:

*When Suns and Planets from their orbs be hurl'd  
 And livid flames involve this smoking world;  
 The Trump of God announce the Savior nigh  
 And shining hosts of angels crowd the sky  
 Then from this tomb thy dust shall they convey  
 To happier regions of eternal day.*

This is stirring stuff—can't you see the planets hurled out of their orbits and red flames consuming the Earth, hear the trumpet, and feel the jostling of the shining angels?

The identical verse appears on the gravestone of Captain Elkanah Ashley in 1803 in East Poultney, Vermont. How did this rousing text make its way from the southern Berkshires to central Vermont? Many Ashley graves can be found in Sheffield. Although Elkanah himself was born in Rochester, Massachusetts—in Plymouth County—a family connection might have brought the verse to Vermont. I cannot find a source for the text—it may be original, although it sounds more polished than typical original verse. The text may someday turn up in a book of poetry or hymnody.

Finally, consider this bespoke epitaph on a stone in Granville Center Cemetery, in Granville, Massachusetts, that offers several hints into the life of the deceased:

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Gravestone of Oliver Ellsworth Brewster, Becket, Mass.



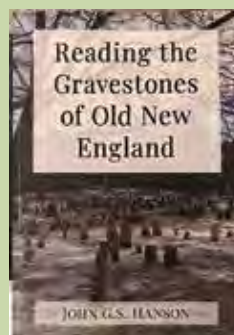


Above: Gravestone of Zorvian Gillet, Granville, Mass.  
Above right: The Tyringham, Mass., cemetery.



## Reading the Gravestones of Old New England

by John G. S. Hanson



In this volume, the author seeks to reveal the meaning behind a great range of poetic messages featured in epitaphs etched into old New England gravestones, each a profound expression of emotion, culture, religion, and literature.

This 254-page book, published by McFarland in 2021, can be purchased from Amazon and many other retailers.

In memory of  
M<sup>rs</sup>. Zorvian, daughter  
of M<sup>r</sup>. Thomas  
and M<sup>rs</sup> Elizabeth  
Gillet, who died  
April 19<sup>th</sup>, AD 1783  
Aged 36 years.

*In life tho void of natural sight  
She vewd religion with delight  
Now she in realms of bliss we trust  
Enjoys the blessings of the just.*

This gravestone is a monument to a blind daughter—a spinster apparently, since there is no indication of married name nor spouse—buried by her parents at age 36. We can imagine hers was a hard life and such a daughter might have been a burden to her mother and father. Yet, with a little empathy, this handsomely carved stone allows us to see that Zorvian was beloved by her obviously grieving parents, enough to merit a bespoke poem that celebrates her piety and wishes her the blissful blessings of the just for eternity.

Clearly, genealogical information can add a layer of context to further our appreciation of these early epitaphs, just as knowing about the origin of gravestone verses can lead to a deeper understanding of our ancestors. By going beyond the standard information usually extracted from a gravestone and researching the meaning behind the verses, genealogists have a great deal to gain. ♦



# MOUNT AUBURN CEMETERY

Designed to Commemorate the Dead  
& Inspire the Living



**Meg L. Winslow** is Curator of Historical Collections & Archives at Mount Auburn Cemetery. She is responsible for the cemetery's permanent collections: archives, a library, photographs, works of art, and significant monuments. She is co-author with Melissa Banta of *The Art of Commemoration and America's First Rural Cemetery: Mount Auburn's Significant Monument Collection*.

Many people assume that Mount Auburn Cemetery, a beautiful green space in the Boston area, is part of the Emerald Necklace and that it was designed by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903). Olmsted, however, was only 9 years old when Mount Auburn was founded in 1831. That year, a group of Boston horticulturalists and civic leaders designed a new kind of burial ground. While colonial-era burying grounds had provided functional places to bury the dead, Mount Auburn would introduce a model that prioritized aesthetics.

Located just four miles outside of the city, the picturesque site was intended to provide Boston with a practical solution to its burial needs in a natural landscape designed to commemorate the dead and console the living. Founded by members of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, this new burial ground was named Mount Auburn Cemetery. The area had been known by Harvard students and locals as “Sweet Auburn,” after a fictitious town in Oliver Goldsmith’s 1770 poem, “The Deserted Village.” Ralph Waldo Emerson walked here, a young Emily Dickinson visited in 1846 and wrote about it to a friend, and Robert Frost read Virgil here when he was at Harvard. Located in Cambridge and Watertown, today Mount Auburn is a national historic landmark and beloved community resource. It is also an innovative American landscape, the first design of its kind in the country.

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, as Boston’s population began a dramatic increase, overcrowded graveyards offered limited space for new burials. Congested city conditions also created concerns about contaminated air and water, as well as contagious diseases such as whooping cough, cholera, and yellow fever. In 1823, Dr. John Gorham Coffin published an article that argued against urban burials owing to a theory that unhealthy vapors (miasma) caused disease. Coffin recommended a model based on the burial ground in New Haven, Connecticut. Organized by U.S. Senator James Hillhouse in 1796 after two severe yellow fever epidemics, Grove Street Cemetery, as it is known today, replaced New Haven’s crowded burying ground as the “first chartered burial ground to be arranged in family lots.”<sup>1</sup>

The poor condition of Boston’s burying grounds, which were being vandalized and abandoned, also caught the attention of Mayor Josiah Quincy, who created a commission in 1822 to consider prohibiting burials within the city of Boston. The previous year, diplomat William Tudor, co-founder of the Boston Athenæum and the *North American Review*, had proposed a new kind of burying ground:

A reform of our cemeteries would be honorable to public feeling. An ample piece of ground selected in the vicinity of large towns . . . should be devoted to this purpose. It would be easy, without great expense, to give the walls and entrance an appropriate appearance. The yew, the willow, and other funeral trees, would form suitable ornaments within. A sufficient



space might be allowed to different families to decorate as they choose, and where their remains would repose for ages untouched. . . . Such a cemetery would be an interesting spot to visit.<sup>2</sup>

An author and editor, William Tudor was no doubt familiar with William Wordsworth's poems and prose on pastoral cemeteries from readings at the Anthology Club, one of Boston's literary societies. A young physician, Dr. Jacob Bigelow, was also an Anthology Club member. The son of a minister, Bigelow was raised on a farm in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and already well regarded for his work in medicine and botany. In November 1825, Bigelow invited several of Boston's leading citizens to his home. This small group of lawyers, merchants, bankers, and entrepreneurs agreed with Bigelow's plan for a new suburban cemetery to be "composed of family burial lots, separated and interspersed with trees, shrubs, and flowers, in a wood or landscape garden."<sup>3</sup>

Various Bostonians, including Bigelow, continued to write and speak publicly in favor of the idea, but plans for a new cemetery did not coalesce until the formation of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Established in 1829 to promote the art and science of horticulture, the society's members included gentlemen farmers and cultivators, merchants, and Harvard intellectuals with a populist mission.

The society's founder and first president, General Henry A. S. Dearborn, was a statesman, author, and son of a Revolutionary War hero. An enthusiastic horticulturalist, he grew flowers and pears and helped to test seedlings from Belgium and France. Dearborn believed that horticulture was one of the fine arts, and that practicing horticulture could improve the character of Boston citizens and the

potential of the young nation. He wrote "we must develop resources in our own country. The indigenous forest trees, ornamental shrubs, flowers, fruits, and edible vegetables of North America are remarkable for their variety, size, splendor and value."<sup>4</sup>

The activities of the horticultural society involved growing and introducing new species and varieties of foreign and local trees, plants, vegetables, and fruits, but the group lacked the resources and land to construct an experimental garden. To advance their mission, Dearborn brought notable botanists to the society, including Bigelow, who had contributed to the national study of botany with his books *American Medical Botany* (1817) and *Florula Bostoniensis* (1824), a groundbreaking guide to the plants of New England.

When Bigelow joined the horticultural society, he served as Corresponding Secretary and worked with Dearborn on the Library Committee, purchasing horticulture books from around the world. Bigelow approached Dearborn with his long-standing plan for a cemetery in a rural setting. They discussed joining their two separate projects into one: Bigelow would seek the backing of the industrious and popular horticultural society to support his vision for a suburban cemetery, and General Dearborn would procure funding from the sale of cemetery lots to create his vision for an experimental garden. This plan was an inspired and practical solution.

Speaking to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society at their annual meeting in the fall of 1830, Zebedee Cook Jr., the society's vice-president, proposed: "the establishment of a public cemetery similar in design to that of Père La Chaise in the environs of Paris to be located in the suburbs

of this metropolis." As to the design, "I would render such scenes more alluring, more familiar and imposing, by the aid of rural embellishments. The skill and taste of the architect should be exerted in the construction of the requisite departments and avenues; and appropriate trees and plants should decorate its borders;—the weeping willow waving its graceful drapery over the monumental marble."<sup>5</sup>

Learning of the new venture, Boston architect and art collector George Watson Brimmer offered his Watertown property at cost to the



Opposite page: View courtesy Mount Auburn Cemetery. Left: View of Forest Pond, circa 1830s, attributed to Thomas Chambers, courtesy Mount Auburn Cemetery.

Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1831. Brimmer's offer was fortuitous, as finding land near Boston that was both affordable and appropriate for a "garden of experiment and ornamental cemetery" was challenging. Overlooking the Charles River, the site, located in Cambridge and Watertown, was a beautiful 72-acre tract of land that once belonged to the Stone family of Watertown. Brimmer had purchased the area for a country retreat, to preserve the trees and blossoming orchards, and save the land from being subdivided or developed for factories that were cropping up along the Charles River. Brimmer had already unintentionally set Mount Auburn's design in motion by laying out broad carriage avenues and planting ornamental trees and evergreens.

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society formed a Garden and Cemetery Committee to oversee the project, along with a sub-committee of three men responsible for the design—Dearborn, Bigelow, and Brimmer. Dearborn became a leading force in planning, publicizing, and gaining support for the project. He published frequent reports on the cemetery's progress in newspapers such as the *New England Farmer* and *Boston Courier*. Public descriptions lauded the natural beauty and features of the landscape, with its varied topography, network of ponds and wetlands, and rural character. A mature forest of native pines, oaks, and beeches amid the surrounding farmland gave the landscape a distinctly romantic air, critical to the design intent of the founders. Orator and statesman Edward Everett eloquently described the site:

The spot, which has been selected for this establishment, has not been chosen without great deliberation. . . . It stands near a fine sweep in Charles River. It presents every variety of surface, rising in one part into a beautiful elevation, level in others, with intermediate depressions, and a considerable part of the whole covered with the natural growth of wood. In fact, the place has long been noted for its rural beauty, its romantic seclusion, and its fine prospect; and it is confidently believed, that there is not another to be named, possessing the same union of advantages.<sup>6</sup>

With the help of Alexander Wadsworth, a young engineer and surveyor, Dearborn laid out Mount Auburn's roads and paths in a plan similar to that of Père La Chaise, which was founded in Paris by Napoleon in 1804. The picturesque design of Père La Chaise provided Dearborn with an example of formal and informal design elements, a blueprint for broad carriage avenues interspersed with pedestrian walking paths, and carefully constructed views of three-dimensional marble monuments. Familiar with English country estates and eighteenth-century ideals of a domesticated and pastoral landscape, Dearborn wrote in 1842 that he used:

. . . the method pursued in England, in laying out the extensive ornamental plantations of forest trees, shrubs and flowers. The

## The rural cemetery movement in the United States

As Mount Auburn gained national and international attention, cities across the country established their own rural cemeteries. "From its founding, Mount Auburn's example served as a catalyst for the 'rural' cemetery movement that swept the nation as leaders in city after city, large and small, created similar picturesque cemeteries. By the 1850s these multifunctional landscapes served as urban cultural amenities, providing open green spaces for tranquil, edifying recreation and for display of fine commemorative sculpture and architecture." (Blanche Linden, *Silent City on a Hill*, p. 12). The rural cemetery movement helped persuade cities and towns to create public gardens and parks, such as Central Park in New York City.

### Rural cemeteries—the first ten years

1831	Mount Auburn	Cambridge/Watertown, Mass.
1834	Mount Hope	Bangor, Maine
1836	Laurel Hill	Philadelphia, Pa.
1836	Mount Pleasant	Taunton, Mass.
1837	New Bedford Rural	New Bedford, Mass.
1838	Green Mount	Baltimore, Md.
1838	Green-Wood	Brooklyn, N.Y.
1838	Mount Hope	Rochester, N.Y.
1838	Worcester Rural	Worcester, Mass.
1839	Glendale	Akron, Ohio
1839	Harmony Grove	Salem, Mass.
1840	Rose Hill	Macon, Ga.
1840	Valley	Manchester, N.H.
1840	Woodlands	Philadelphia, Pa.
1841	Albany Rural	Albany, N.Y.
1841	Lowell	Lowell, Mass.
1841	Woodland	Dayton, Ohio

chief object was to follow the natural features of the land in the . . . avenues and paths, and to run them as nearly level as possible by winding gradually and gracefully through the vales and obliquely over the hills, without any unnecessary . . . sinuosities, and to accomplish this, elliptical curves were invariably used . . . instead of these stiff circular lines which are incomparable with elegance of form and a pleasing effect. This was a discovery of the Greeks.<sup>7</sup>

To create a sense of spaciousness within the landscape, Dearborn designed set-backs of six feet between lots and pathways planted with shrubs and perennial flowers. The genius of Dearborn's initial design is what makes Mount Auburn so beautiful today. Jacob Bigelow named the roads



and paths, embellished the picturesque landscape with structures, and continued to expand the landscape during his long presidency at Mount Auburn, from 1845 to 1872.

Several generations have added discernible layers to the landscape since Dearborn and Bigelow's contributions, resulting in a complex tapestry that reveals the ideals and values of nearly two centuries. Today, Mount Auburn Cemetery continues its multifaceted role as an active cemetery and crematory, a renowned botanical garden and arboretum, a wildlife habitat and birding site, an outdoor museum that offers a variety of educational programs, and a community resource and urban refuge. The cemetery welcomes more than 250,000 visitors annually. While it continues to evolve, the original design of Mount Auburn is largely intact, and its historical integrity and origins are evident to visitors.

The first rural cemetery in the nation, Mount Auburn's popularity led to the creation of our country's parks and suburbs. By placing the grave in the garden, Mount Auburn's founders changed American burial practices forever. With more than 100,000 lives remembered here, Mount Auburn is a sacred site that holds the range of emotions surrounding death, grief, mourning, healing, and renewal. Sustaining the character, beauty, and power of this beloved landscape remains Mount Auburn's central purpose. As stated in its mission, the cemetery continues to inspire all who visit, comfort the bereaved, and commemorate the dead in a landscape of exceptional beauty. ♦

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> John Gorham Coffin, *Remarks on the Dangers and Duties of Sepulture* (Boston, 1823), 61, 64–65, 72. Signed "A fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society," the article was previously attributed to Dr. Jacob Bigelow.
- <sup>2</sup> William Tudor, "On Certain Funeral Ceremonies," in *Letters on the Eastern States* (New York: Kirk and Mercein, 1820), 13–17.
- <sup>3</sup> Jacob Bigelow, *A History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn* (1860; repr., Cambridge, Mass.: Applewood Books, 1988), 2.
- <sup>4</sup> Henry A. S. Dearborn, *Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Address Delivered at the First Anniversary*, September 19, 1829.
- <sup>5</sup> Zebedee Cook, Jr., *Massachusetts Horticultural Society, Address in Commemoration of its Second Annual Festival*, Transactions of the Society, 1829, 27–28.
- <sup>6</sup> Edward Everett, "Address Published in the Boston Papers, 1831," in Jacob Bigelow, *History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn* (Boston and Cambridge: James Munroe and Company, 1860), 137–38.
- <sup>7</sup> Manuscript letter from H. A. S. Dearborn, January 18, 1842, included in "Constitution, Reports, Addresses, and Other Publications in Relation to the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and the Cemetery at Mount Auburn from 1829 to 1837." *Massachusetts Horticultural Society*.



## Research at Mount Auburn

Looking for the grave of one of the more than 100,000 individuals buried at Mount Auburn Cemetery? Visit [mountauburn.org](http://mountauburn.org) to search for details. From the main menu, select Explore. From the drop-down menu, click Burial Search to begin. Once you have confirmed that an individual is buried at Mount Auburn, you may request additional information on the website or by emailing [research@mountauburn.org](mailto:research@mountauburn.org)

### Mount Auburn's Historical Collections & Archives

Mount Auburn Cemetery's Historical Collections & Archives holds more than 3,500 linear feet of materials. The collection contains business and legal documents, such as deeds, lot correspondence, invoices, death certificates, lot work order cards, entrance tickets, trustee records and meeting minutes, annual reports, interment records, superintendent reports and correspondence books, operations and engineering records, horticultural records, and financial records. The holdings also include general correspondence, manuscripts, news clippings, ephemera, and maps. Subject strengths include cremation and rural cemetery practices. Mount Auburn's comprehensive institutional records are the only known collection of its kind in the nation. Access is by appointment. For further information, please contact Meg L. Winslow at [mwinslow@mountauburn.org](mailto:mwinslow@mountauburn.org)

Browse Mount Auburn's online collections database at [mountauburn.pastperfectonline.com](http://mountauburn.pastperfectonline.com). Mount Auburn Cemetery is on Instagram, as is the Historical Collections & Archives. Follow [@mtauburnhistoricalcollections](https://www.instagram.com/mtauburnhistoricalcollections) to learn more about the cemetery's history and archival collections.



# THE FINAL HONOR

## UNITED STATES MILITARY GRAVESTONES

Most American cemeteries include a veterans' section. These lots typically feature standard white marble grave-stones, with metal or plastic flag markers designating a branch of service, war, or military campaign for each veteran. Some variations can be found, including granite gravestones of the same style and marble, granite, or bronze flat foot markers. The United States government provides these grave markers at no cost for any honorably discharged veteran, a tradition that began about a decade after the end of the Civil War.

As early as the Revolutionary War, military post quartermasters were charged with keeping records of burials and providing wooden headboards for deceased veterans. This practice of supplying a simple headboard continued through the Civil War era. The name of the deceased and the state, company, and regiment number—or naval vessel—was painted on the headboard, along with a number referencing the burial location.

Soldiers from earlier wars had gravestones, of course, but these were not issued by a government agency. Families often included the former rank and the name of the conflict even decades after a soldier's service.

Research to verify veteran status may be necessary. In some cemeteries I have seen flags placed at the gravestones of *potential* war veterans—simply men of the right age to have served in a conflict. My ancestor, Pattee Gale, buried at Crawford Cemetery in Alexandria, New Hampshire, had the rank of major inscribed on his tombstone—but he never fought in a war. The designation was based on his service in the town militia. That misleading gravestone

inscription led to the installation of a graveside Civil War military flag marker—even though he didn't serve in the war and would have been in his mid-sixties at the end of the conflict.

Not all of the Civil War dead were identifiable and many wooden headboards in military lots are marked as unknown. Some soldiers could be identified simply as Union or Confederate based on their uniforms, buttons, or insignia. Of the 300,000 remains found at Civil War battlefields and reinterred, only 58% were estimated to have been identified. Information about the Union dead buried in each national cemetery was reported by various quartermasters and published by the office of the Quartermaster General between 1865 and 1871 as a twenty-seven volume set, *Roll of Honor: Names of Soldiers who Died in Defense of the American Union*.

The wooden headboards that were initially installed began to deteriorate after a few years. As the cost of regularly replacing individual markers in national cemeteries became increasingly expensive, an alternative solution was sought. On March 3, 1873, the U.S. Congress passed an appropriation of a million dollars to replace the wooden headboards with more permanent marble or granite markers.

At first marble was used more frequently than granite. Inscriptions often included only an initial for the veteran's first name, his (or later her) surname, and name of the



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associated unit or vessel. Beginning in the first quarter of the twentieth century, flat markers of granite, bronze, or marble were used in some veterans and public cemeteries. Information on veterans' markers varied but, unlike before, often included birth and death dates. To learn what appears on a relative's military marker, search the "headstone" databases (see box) or contact the cemetery department or veterans' agent in the town or city of burial.

I placed my first military gravestone orders from the Veterans Administration more than twenty years ago. In one case I wanted to honor my ancestor's brother, Charles Henry Gale (1843–1924), a corporal with Co. C., 12th New Hampshire Infantry, during the Civil War. He was buried at the Woodside Cemetery in Cohasset, Massachusetts, but the only marker on the lot was for his brother's family. I was a Civil War reenactor for the 12th Massachusetts Infantry at the time and felt a close connection to this ancestral uncle.

I was also responsible for re-marking faded Civil War gravestones in my hometown of Stoughton, Massachusetts. Thomas F. Bancroft (1821–1903), a veteran of Native American (Punkapoag) and African American heritage, was buried in Stoughton's Maple Grove Cemetery. Bancroft served with the African American unit of the 5th Massachusetts Cavalry. As the tribal historian for the Massachusetts Punkapoag, I was especially pleased to see a new gravestone for him.

Nearly 150 years after its original appropriation, the U.S. Veterans Administration continues to assist with marking or re-marking graves of American veterans from the Revolutionary War to the present. For assistance with ordering (or replacing) a gravestone for an honorably discharged U.S. veteran, contact the veterans' agent in the town or city of burial. More details on obtaining military gravestones from the Veterans Administration can be found at [va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions](https://va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions). ♦

### Resources for researching military gravestones and burial locations

#### U.S., Civil War Roll of Honor, 1861–1865

[Ancestry.com/search/collections/61388](https://ancestry.com/search/collections/61388)

#### Roll of Honor: Names of Soldiers Who Died in Defense of the American Union

[FamilySearch.org/search/catalog/200058?availability=Family%20History%20Library](https://familysearch.org/search/catalog/200058?availability=Family%20History%20Library)

The two collections listed above are taken from *Roll of Honor: Names of Soldiers Who Died in Defense of the American Union*, published by the Quartermaster General's Office, 1865–1871. The searchable Ancestry version includes volumes 8 to 27; the browsable FamilySearch version has volumes 1 to 27.

#### United States, Burial Registers for Military Posts, Camps, and Stations, 1768–1921

[FamilySearch.org/search/collection/2250027](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/2250027)

#### United States Records of Headstones of Deceased Union Veterans, 1879–1903

[FamilySearch.org/search/collection/1913388](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1913388)

#### United States Headstone Applications for U.S. Military Veterans, 1925–1949

[FamilySearch.org/search/collection/1916249](https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1916249)

#### American Battle Monuments Commission database

[abmc.gov/database-search](https://abmc.gov/database-search)

The American Battle Monuments Commission, an agency of the executive branch of the federal government established by Congress in 1923, provides a free searchable database of World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans buried in overseas military cemeteries.

#### Interment.net

[interment.net/us/nat/veterans.htm](https://interment.net/us/nat/veterans.htm)

A searchable database of U.S. veterans cemeteries

#### FindAGrave.com and BillionGraves.com

Millions of gravestones—including markers from various military cemeteries in both the United States and abroad—can be searched by name on [FindAGrave.com](https://findagrave.com) and [BillionGraves.com](https://billiongraves.com).



Opposite page: Memorial Day 2018, Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia. Photo by SavidgeMichael, Wikimedia Commons.  
Above: Fort Amanda Cemetery, Auglaize Co., Ohio. Photo by Nyttend, Wikimedia Commons.



# The "Fighting Armstrongs"

## of Boston's Granary Burying Ground

The weathered tombs and headstones of Boston's historic Granary Burying Ground attract over one million visitors each year, most drawn to the gravesites of prominent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Bostonians. Not far from the final resting places of the famous and near famous is a simple interpretive marker for "The Fighting Armstrongs."

The marker recounts the exploits of Colonel John Armstrong and his sons, John and Samuel, during the Revolutionary War. The three men marched into armed conflict together in 1776. Colonel Armstrong, age 55, lost his life during the disastrous defeat of colonial forces at the Battle of Long Island. His sons, who also served in the New York campaign, were both wounded.

The marker directs visitors to Tomb 192. Although over 40 people are buried in the tomb, only about a dozen are descendants of Col. John Armstrong. An attached granite tablet honors Col. Armstrong; his wife, Christian; and their children. The tablet, now missing, had been in the vacant niche on the left side of the tomb's above-ground structure.



**Philip O'Brien** of Princeton, Massachusetts, is a descendant of Colonel John Armstrong and his son, Captain John Armstrong. He is a fifth-generation grandnephew of Lieut. Samuel Armstrong and serves in his place in the Massachusetts Chapter of the Society of the Cincinnati.

The epitaph on Tomb 192 especially honors Col. Armstrong and his grandson George Washington Armstrong. According to a 1902 City of Boston cemetery's history, "The following inscription tells a long story of heroism and needs no comment."

Tomb 192

In Memory of

COLONEL JOHN ARMSTRONG,

The Patriot-Hero, and his wife

MRS. Christian Bass Armstrong,

and their six children [five surviving],

He and his two sons John & Samuel

marched to Long Island, N.Y. and were

there engaged in various battles with

the British Army, August 27, 1776.

Capt. John Armstrong was Father of  
Governor Samuel Terell [sic] Armstrong,

The Col. was killed on the battle field,

Maj. Samuel Armstrong had a providential escape from the enemy's bullets while retreating. He was wounded, but continuing in the army until the Peace of 1783.

He served as Adjutant and Paymaster in the Eighth Regt. Mass. Inf'y. also as Aid-de-Camp to Gen. Jackson. He was an original member of the society of Cincinnati. He married Nancy, only daughter of Maj. Josiah Allen,



who served under Col. Ethan Allen, at the conquest of Ticonderoga and Crown Point,  
 GEORGE WASHINGTON ARMSTRONG,  
 Was born Feb. 22, 1792, He held a commission in the war of 1812, as 1st. Lieut. in 10th Regt. U. S. Inf. signed by James Madison Presd't U. S. and John Armstrong, Sec. of U. S. War Dept.<sup>2</sup>  
 He served in the Boston Light Inf. Co. (Tigers) Also as Ass's, Engineer on Fort Strong, and in Forts Warren & Independence [*sic*] and the Water Battery, He was Sec. of the War Office for fitting out Privateers and Letters of Marque.  
 He was a Franklin Medal Scholar in the class with the Hon. Edward Everett, in 1803,–4,  
 By him this memorial was inscribed in 1866.<sup>3</sup>

### Colonel John Armstrong

John Armstrong was born in Portland, Maine, March 9, 1719/20, the son of James and Mary (\_\_\_\_) Armstrong.<sup>4</sup> A few years before his birth, the family had fled religious prosecution in Northern Ireland. Devout Presbyterians, the Armstrongs and 120 other families departed Belfast aboard five vessels bound for Boston in 1717–18.<sup>5</sup> A cooper by trade, John married Christian Bass, daughter of Samuel and Christian (Turell) Bass, on January 4, 1747, in Boston.<sup>6</sup> They had five surviving children: John, Samuel, Rebecca, Anne/Nancy, and Ebenezer.<sup>7</sup>

According to a handwritten family record, Col. John Armstrong served in the 11th Continental Regiment under Captain Daniel Hitchcock from 1775–76. A 1776 military record noted that a Lt. John Armstrong was “in command and taking care of the sick at Orangetown,” at a field hospital on the Hudson River.<sup>8</sup> Another record, dated August 19, 1776, reported that Capt. Daniel Hitchcock promoted Armstrong to the rank of second lieutenant,<sup>9</sup> just days before the John Armstrong memorialized at the Granary was killed in battle. However, conclusive evidence that these two John Armstrongs were the same man has not been found. An extensive search of military records has also not identified when and where the Granary John Armstrong was promoted to colonel.

Despite the gravestone inscription, official documents show no indication that Col. Armstrong, or his wife Christian (who died in 1805 at age 82), were buried in Tomb 192 or at any other Boston cemetery. One likely scenario is that, like many others who died in combat during the Revolutionary War, Col. Armstrong was buried on or near the battlefield.

### Captain John Armstrong

In 1775 John Armstrong (1748–1794), the oldest son, had risen to the rank of sergeant in Col. Asa Whitcomb's company, serving for eight months at Prospect Hill. John was

commissioned an ensign on January 21, 1776, in Jeremiah Olney's company in the 11th Continental Regiment. He served until June 23.<sup>10</sup>

In 1779, John married Elizabeth Williams, great-great-great-granddaughter of Roger Williams—the freeman who arrived in Dorchester aboard the *Mary and John* in 1630, not the minister and founder of Rhode Island. John and Elizabeth first resided at the Dorchester homestead owned by the Williams family since 1694, then moved to Boston, where John died November 9, 1794, age 46.

According to his son, Samuel Turell Armstrong, John was “in his person tall and slender, his health was feeble for several years before his death owing it was that by exposure in part at least while in the army.” John “was entombed in Granary Burial ground on [the] Sunday following” his death<sup>11</sup>—although no official City of Boston record indicates he was buried in the family tomb and despite a granite headstone in Dorchester's North Cemetery for John and Elizabeth (Williams) and four of their children. The bottom of the marker notes the memorial was “raised as a token of remembrance by an affectionate son”—certainly Samuel T. Armstrong, his only surviving male child.

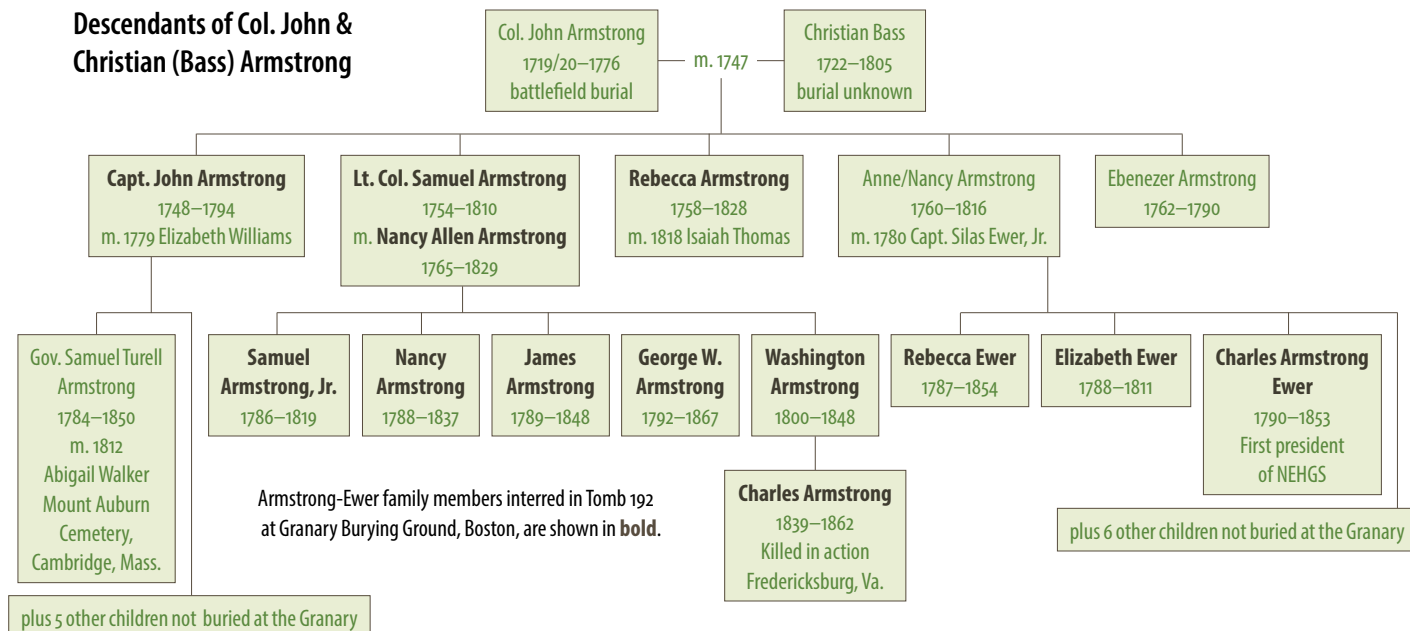
Orphaned at 13, Samuel T. Armstrong became a Boston-based printer and book publisher. He entered politics as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He served as Lieutenant Governor under Governors Levi Lincoln and John Davis. Upon Davis's election to the U.S. Senate, Samuel was appointed governor in 1835. He served just under eleven months and became mayor of Boston in 1836. In 1839 he was elected to the Massachusetts Senate.<sup>12</sup> When Samuel died in 1850, he was not laid to rest in Tomb 192, but was buried in Cambridge's Mount Auburn Cemetery alongside his wife, Abigail (Walker) Armstrong.

Samuel T. Armstrong accepted membership in the New England Historic Genealogical Society on April 17, 1845, becoming one of its first members.<sup>13</sup> The affiliation was likely encouraged by his cousin Charles Armstrong Ewer (1790–1853), who was elected the first president of NEHGS in 1845. Ewer was the son of Capt. Silas Ewer and Anne/Nancy Armstrong, who was a daughter of Col. John and Christian Armstrong.<sup>14</sup> Charles Ewer never married but maintained close family relationships with his brother and two sisters. In addition to a successful career in publishing, Ewer had a role in several public works ventures in Boston, including the 1840s South Cove landfill project, which created the land for present-day Chinatown. Charles Ewer died in 1853 and was interred in Tomb 192. In 1945, to mark its centennial year, a grateful NEHGS installed a new tombstone over his grave to honor his role in founding the organization.

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*Opposite page:* Tomb 192 and the Charles Ewer memorial, Granary Burying Ground, Boston. Photo by Philip O'Brien.

## Descendants of Col. John & Christian (Bass) Armstrong



### Lieutenant Samuel Armstrong

Like his brother John, Samuel Armstrong (1754-1810) served in Jeremiah Olney's company, in the 11th Continental Regiment, as a sergeant, from April 24 until November 18, 1776.<sup>15</sup> He then served with the 8th Regiment of Massachusetts Infantry Continentals commanded by Col. Michael Jackson and Lieut. Colonel John Brooks. He became an ensign on January 1, 1777, a second lieutenant on October 7, 1777, regimental adjutant on June 1, 1778, and paymaster on April 27, 1780.<sup>16</sup>

Samuel recorded his experiences in his 80-page Revolutionary War diary, which is digitized and available in the American Ancestors Digital Library & Archives.<sup>17</sup> The diary began July 17, 1777, and concluded June 19, 1778. Samuel wrote about a variety of topics, including moving supplies from Boston to New York; the fierce Battle of Saratoga; the surrender of General Burgoyne; and the tiresome march to Philadelphia and ensuing struggle to defeat Gen. Sir William Howe's troops. The journal concludes with Samuel's observations of life in Gen. Washington's six-month encampment at Valley Forge during the harsh winter of 1777-78. An entry near the end of the diary recounts an invitation to dine with Gen. Washington and other officers, an event that certainly warranted the simple exclamation mark Samuel used to emphasize the honor.

Samuel Armstrong was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati, the nation's oldest patriotic organization, founded in 1783 by officers of the Continental Army who served together in the American Revolution.



Samuel's deep respect for his commander-in-chief is evident from the names given to two of his seven children. George Washington Armstrong, born in 1792, had a distinguished military career. He held a commission in the War of 1812, as first lieutenant in the 10th Regiment of the U.S. Infantry, and later served as the military engineer for Fort Warren on Georges Island and Fort Strong on Long Island, both in Boston Harbor. George Washington Armstrong installed Tomb 192's now-missing tablet in 1866. Another son, born in 1800, was simply Washington Armstrong. According to city records, both namesakes are interred in the family tomb, along with their brother Samuel, Jr., who fought in the Battle of Tippecanoe in 1811 and served as a lieutenant in the War of 1812.

When Samuel died in 1810, he was laid to rest in Tomb 192.<sup>18</sup> His wife, Nancy Allen, daughter of Major Josiah Allen, who served alongside Ethan Allen at Fort Ticonderoga in 1775, was buried with him in 1829.

### Other Armstrong children

Rebecca, born in 1758, was the third child of Col. John Armstrong and Christian Bass. She was the third wife of the well-known Patriot and printer Isaiah Thomas, founder of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester. The marriage lasted only two years before the couple separated. Rebecca was interred in Tomb 192 in 1828.<sup>19</sup> The remaining Armstrong children, Anne/Nancy and Ebenezer, were not buried at the Granary.



Opposite page: Samuel Turell Armstrong. Courtesy of Philip O'Brien. Right: Charles Ewer inscription, Granary Burying Ground. Boston Landmarks Commission image collection, collection 5210.004, Boston City Archives.



On December 13, 1862, Charles R. Armstrong, age 23, was killed fighting for the Union Army at the Battle of Fredericksburg.<sup>20</sup> He was a member of Company D, 13th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers. His body was returned to Boston a month later and placed in the family tomb next to his father, Washington.<sup>21</sup> The last Armstrong internment in Tomb 192 occurred March 26, 1867, when George Washington Armstrong, who had funded the family memorial tablet the previous year, took his place among the other “Fighting Armstrongs.”<sup>22</sup> ♦

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Boston (Mass.) Cemetery Department, *Historical Sketch and Matters Appertaining to the Granary Burial-Ground* (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1902), 30. Available at Archive.org.
- <sup>2</sup> This John Armstrong was not related to the Armstrongs buried at Tomb 192 at the Granary Burying Ground.
- <sup>3</sup> *Historical Sketch and Matters Appertaining to the Granary Burial-Ground* [note 1], 30.
- <sup>4</sup> John Armstrong birth recorded as March 9, 1719, Falmouth, Maine, “Maine Vital Records, 1670-1921,” Delayed returns for vital records, 1670-1891, FamilySearch, Familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q57-8979-KKC2.
- <sup>5</sup> “John Armstrong was one of the original members of the First Church, Portland, Me., which was gathered March 8th, 1726-7. The Rev. Thomas Smith, the first pastor, says in his journal that John Armstrong, with John Barbour, Robert Means, and others, who were original members, were some of the Irish emigrants who arrived in 1718, and passed the winter in Portland in very distressed circumstances, so as to be assisted by the government. The colony subsequently established itself in Londonderry [N. H.].” William Willis’ *Journals of Smith and Deane* (1849), 60, quoted in “Hon. Samuel Turell Armstrong,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 44 (1890), 140. AmericanAncestors.org.
- <sup>6</sup> *Boston, MA: Marriages, 1700-1809*. AmericanAncestors.org. (First published as *Report of the Record Commissioners of the City of Boston, Containing the Boston Marriages from 1700 to 1751* [Vol. 28], Boston, Municipal Printing office, 1898. *Records Relating to the Early History of Boston, Containing Boston Marriages from 1752 to 1809* [vol. 30], 1903.
- <sup>7</sup> “Hon. Samuel Turell Armstrong” [note 4], 140. This *Register* article mistakenly identified Anne/Nancy as “Mary,” an error repeated in other sources. Birth and death years for the five surviving Armstrong children given on the chart on page 42 are in *U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988*. Ancestry.com. (Original data: Town and City Clerks of Massachusetts. *Massachusetts Vital and Town Records*. Provo, Utah: Holbrook Research Institute.)
- <sup>8</sup> *Revolutionary War Rolls 1775-1776*, Fold3.com/image/18394776, citing NARA microfilm M246, folder 87, p. 17. Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Services, 1980.
- <sup>9</sup> *Revolutionary War Rolls 1775-1783*, FamilySearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QL6Y-N3W7, citing NARA microfilm M246, Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Services, 1980.



- <sup>10</sup> Turell-Armstrong Family Papers, 1750-1848, Collection Ms S-846, Massachusetts Historical Society.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> See “Samuel Turell Armstrong,” at the National Governors Association website; nga.org/governor/samuel-turell-armstrong.
- <sup>13</sup> *NEHGS Membership Applications, 1845-1900*. AmericanAncestors.org.
- <sup>14</sup> Birth and death dates for the Silas and Anne/Nancy (Armstrong) Ewer family are in the Charles Ewer papers, Mss 81, folders 1 and 13, R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, NEHGS. Ewer’s ancestry is traced in Gary Boyd Roberts, “Eight NEHGS ‘Flowers of New England,’” *NEHGS NEXUS* 11 (1994):202-03, 205, AmericanAncestors.org.
- <sup>15</sup> Turell-Armstrong Family Papers [note 7].
- <sup>16</sup> *Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War* (Boston: 1896), 295.
- <sup>17</sup> Lt. Samuel Armstrong Diary, Mss C 1058, R. Stanton Avery Special Collections, NEHGS, online at DigitalCollections.AmericanAncestors.org. For a transcribed version, see Joseph Lee Boyle, “From Saratoga to Valley Forge: The Diary of Lt. Samuel Armstrong,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 71 (1997): 237-70.
- <sup>18</sup> *Boston, MA: Old Cemeteries of Boston, 1649-1920*. AmericanAncestors.org. (*Inscriptions and Records of the Old Cemeteries of Boston*, Robert J. Dunkle and Ann S. Lainhart, Boston, Mass.: NEHGS, 2000.)
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Accounts of Charles Armstrong’s service and death are given in “The Battle of Fredericksburg; Dec. 11th-15th, 1862, Part 2; More Stories,” at 13thmass.org/1862/battle\_fred\_2.html.
- <sup>21</sup> *U.S., Town and Vital Records, 1620-1988*. Ancestry.com [note 7], Interments by Undertakers of Boston, no. 1, Charles Armstrong.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid., Deaths in Boston, 1867, no. 86, George W. Armstrong.



# CLEANING GRAVES

## *for a Worldwide Audience*

For many generations my family members were buried in Notre Dame Cemetery in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. By using the records at this private cemetery, I located burial plots there for all my great-great-grandparents. My most notable family monument is the “Hebert ball,” which marks the resting place of twenty-one Hebert ancestors and relatives. Having so many ancestors buried at Notre Dame has made it especially meaningful for me. When a stone from 1918 had fallen over and needed repair, a group of relatives banded together to fix it. My desire to honor family members who have passed often leads me back to the cemetery.

People are drawn to cemeteries for different reasons. Some visit for spiritual or religious purposes, while others seek connections with deceased family members, perhaps even leaving flowers or tiny mementos. Many visitors are interested in history and genealogy; for example, after tracing descent from a *Mayflower* Pilgrim, a visit to the oldest burial ground in Massachusetts—Cole’s Hill Burying Ground on Carver Street in Plymouth, founded circa 1620—might be in order. Others may walk cemetery paths simply to relish the solitude and quiet that seems to be lacking in a noisy world.

Caitlin Abrams of West Rupert, Vermont, has another reason to visit cemeteries. Her hobby is grave cleaning—a pastime that is growing like wildfire. Over the last year,

*Over the last year,  
Caitlin has cleaned  
hundreds of gravestones  
dating from the eighteenth  
to the twentieth centuries  
in upstate New York and  
rural Vermont.*

Caitlin has cleaned hundreds of gravestones from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries in upstate New York and rural Vermont. Her work has become tremendously popular on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok; she has more than 36,100 followers on Instagram and over 2.3 million on TikTok.

Caitlin’s three-minute videos deliver genealogical research and cleaning techniques and demonstrate a little bit of elbow grease.

Caitlin narrates each video and shares the story of the individual(s) buried in the cemetery plot. Viewers learn about birth, marriage, and death dates, along with snippets on family history. Caitlin spends about thirty minutes cleaning each gravestone, although the time varies somewhat depending on the condition and size of the monument. However, you won’t see the full effects of the cleaning during the video, since the D2 solution brightens the marble gradually. The final result might only be visible after several months, depending on the initial condition of the stone.

From her many trips to cemeteries, Caitlin is familiar with the harm that uninformed grave cleaners have



**Sarah J. Dery** is Manager of Research and Library Services at American Ancestors/NEHGS.



Left: Caitlin Abrams cleans a gravestone with D2, a non-toxic biocide. Elodie Reed/Vermont Public Radio.

inflicted on stones. “I can see the effects, especially when people used acid or bleach. It’s noticeable and you can see the damage.” In 2021, the town of Davidsonville, Maryland, experienced this defacement when a group of unknown volunteers attempted to clean stones as part of the Billion Graves project. The offenders “wiped over the inscribed names and dates with an unknown chemical that left bright white strips, described as “zebra” stripes.” (See the sidebar below for tips on how to clean graves safely and effectively.)

Graves in New England are exposed to harsh winter weather, which is why Caitlin has undertaken extensive research on the best times to prepare, clean, and spray the stones. Sandstone, slate, and marble gravestones gradually deteriorate and should be cleaned every seven to ten years to prevent further damage. Unfortunately, cemeteries often cannot afford this type of maintenance. Caitlin began her volunteer work several years ago by taking photos for FindAGrave.com. Caitlin photographed gravestones in nearby cemeteries, helping relatives who could not travel to the area themselves. She then uploaded her gravestone photos to Find A Grave’s website, helping to expand this virtual cemetery database.

“Each individual and story stays with me,” says Caitlin, a mom of two, during our interview in late March. “I remember them all.” Like most family historians, Caitlin is not a full-time genealogist. Her background includes higher education, software training, and change management. More recently, she switched careers and now helps to create instruction guides for cyber security management systems. She sees parallels between that work and her gravestone education, especially when she teaches young people through her videos. Caitlin does Q&A sessions with her followers frequently and shares her cleaning process from start to finish, along with the genealogical resources she uses every day.

Caitlin spends most of her spring, summer, and fall cleaning graves in local cemeteries. In the winter, she concentrates more on individual stories through her two special series, *Death Lettering* and *Old Time True Crime*. These specialized projects allow Caitlin to practice her elegant calligraphy and search newspapers for engaging stories to share with her growing audience, without cleaning stones during the harsh Vermont winters.

Caitlin became interested in her family history as a child listening to her grandparents’ stories. “Every family has the one kid who cares about it all and that was definitely me.” Her grandfather was the family historian but with the online resources available to her, Caitlin extended her ancestry even further, to early settlers of Washington

## Grave cleaning recommendations from Caitlin Abrams

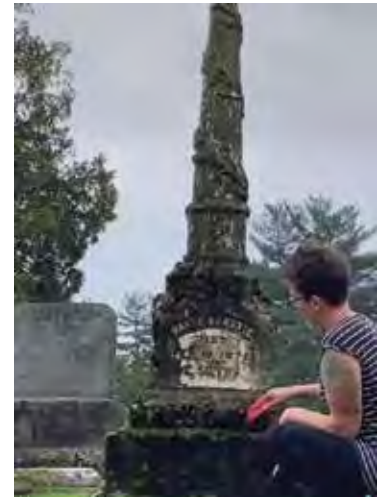
### Top 5 tips

1. **DO YOUR RESEARCH.** Connect with your local historical societies and cemetery preservation organizations. They are treasure troves of information!
2. **GET PERMISSION.** Always speak with someone connected with cemetery management and get permission before you clean. Be ready to talk about the materials you will use, so people know you aren’t going to damage any gravestones.
3. **THOROUGHLY EXAMINE A GRAVE BEFORE YOU CLEAN IT.** Check for cracks, delaminating in the marble, and other areas where the stone may be weakened. Be very gentle with these graves!
4. **DO NO HARM.** In all preservation work, the goal is to protect without causing any additional damage. For gravestones, no metal tools, pressure washers, bleach, or acid-based products should ever be used.
5. **HAVE PATIENCE.** The D2 solution used for grave cleaning is unique because the results take time to appear—often months or sometimes years! Check the grave site frequently to see if it has brightened and spray more D2, if needed. Don’t scrub a stone twice!

### Top 5 tools

1. **D2 BIOLOGICAL SOLUTION** (<http://d2bio.com>): This mild cleaning solution has been tested extensively by preservation and government entities for safety and effectiveness. Although it is a bit pricey, it is the gold standard!
2. **PLASTIC SCRAPERS:** These are often found at hardware stores. By using plastic (never metal), you won’t degrade the stone.
3. **A VARIETY OF BRUSHES:** Use natural fiber (like Tampico) or soft acrylic fiber brushes in a variety of sizes, as each grave will have different needs.
4. **SPRAYERS:** Never use a pressure washer on old graves! Instead, use a simple hand-pump garden sprayer, available at hardware stores. Buy two—one for D2 solution and one for water.
5. **LOTS AND LOTS OF H<sub>2</sub>O:** Some cemeteries have running water, but many do not. Bring a few extra gallons with you in case more is needed during your visit.

Caitlin Abrams  
cleaning  
gravestones,  
as shown on  
her Instagram  
account.



County, Maine, and Ireland on her father's side and Scotland on her mother's. Today, Caitlin focuses on researching the lives of long forgotten strangers.

My first question to Caitlin was, "How do you choose the gravestone?" She replied that "certain stones kind of call to me. It's not paranormal or anything! But I am drawn to children, being a mother myself, and young women. Particularly because marginalized groups have had to carve out a secret space to be remembered forever."

Walking through historic cemeteries prompts you to pay attention to all the features of gravestones, including the shapes, epitaphs, and engraved symbols. Gravestones vary depending on geographic region, landscape, religious influences, and the style of the stone carver.

In addition to supplying genealogical data, cemetery records can add context by revealing how a family's plot was managed, maintained, or even sold. At Notre Dame Cemetery in Pawtucket, my Seguin great-great-grandparents share a gravestone with the Olivier family—but no one knew why. After speaking with the cemetery staff, we learned that the economical Sequins and Oliviers split the cost of the gravestone and purchased back-to-back plots. In another case, my great-great-great-grandmother, Philomene Desmarais, was buried in a Notre Dame plot with an unknown family. I learned later that her husband could not maintain the rent for the plot and sold it to

help pay his debts. The stories I've learned from gravestone records have enhanced my knowledge of my distant ancestors.

In addition to reporting on the results of vital record and census research for the individual(s) buried in a plot, Caitlin explains each cause of death in detail. "I like to learn how someone died," she says. Childbed fever, dysentery, cholera, and consumption (tuberculosis) caused the deaths of many people who died during the nineteenth century. Since families are usually buried together in a plot, Caitlin can often get a full picture of their overall health history.

Not only does Caitlin teach the millions who watch her videos online—her most popular video, on Silas J. Reed, was viewed by 34.5 million people—but she also partnered with a school in New Hampshire for an outreach program. Middle school students visited a local cemetery and each one chose a gravestone. Back in the classroom, they used online resources to research the selected individuals. Students were eager to look for vital records and research historic events that occurred in each person's year of death. The teacher exclaimed, "I've never seen them more excited about a field trip!"

Caitlin and I both hope that the popularity of grave cleaning online will lead more young people to an interest in genealogy. The intersection of social media and family history offers great possibilities for recruiting future genealogical researchers, avid storytellers, and cemetery enthusiasts! ♦

## Grave-cleaning on social media

Caitlin Abrams

**TikTok** @manicpixiemom

**Instagram** @stonedinnewengland

Ladytaphos

**TikTok + Instagram** @ladytaphos

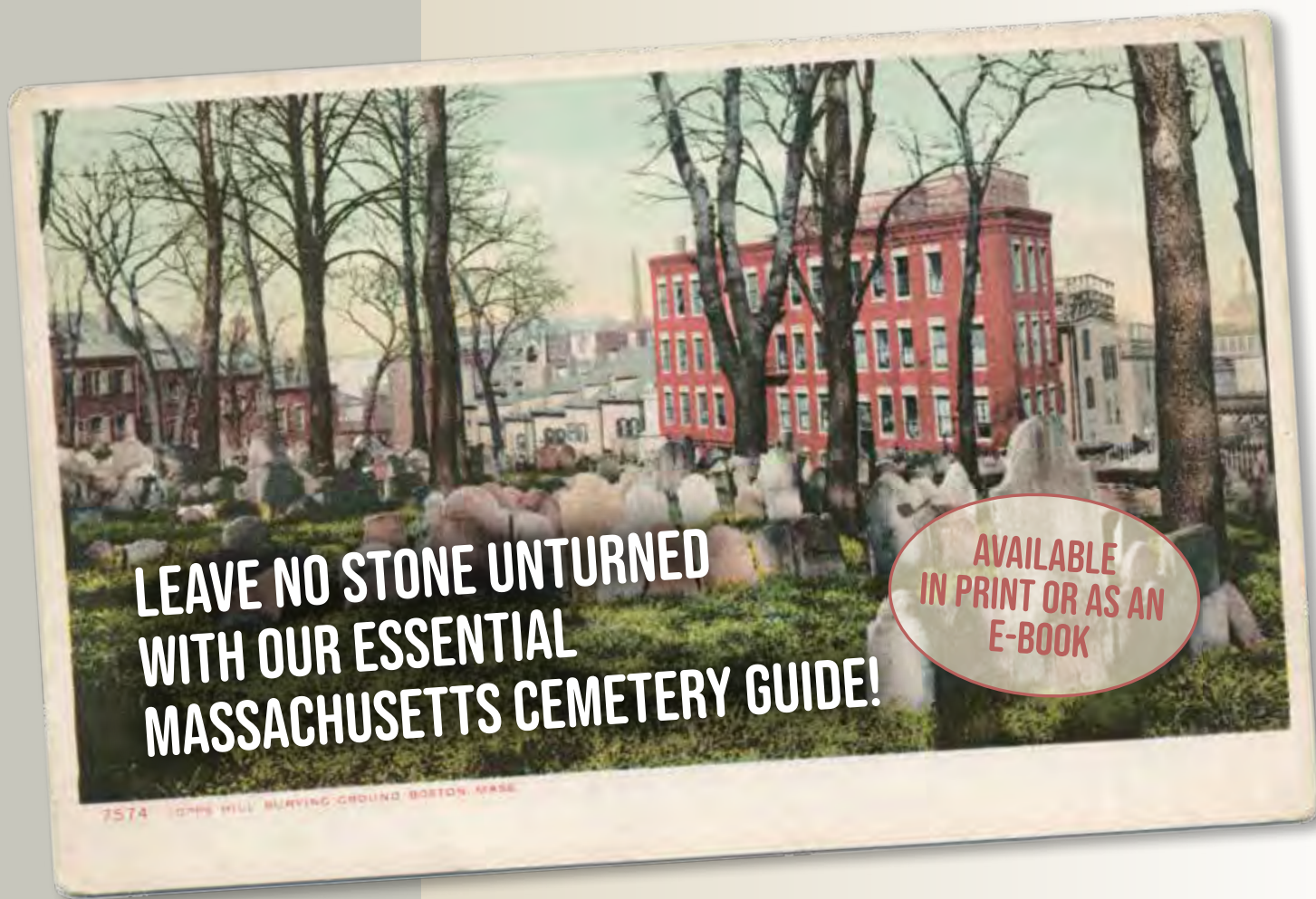
Millennialstonecleaner

**TikTok + Instagram** @millennialstonecleaner

## NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Lilly Price, "Mysterious Davidsonville grave cleaner discovered as BillionGraves.com amateur genealogist," *Capital Gazette*, April 17, 2021, [capitalgazette.com/news/ac-cn-davidsonville-grave-identified-20210417-fzc2w6mso5hbfmbh2e37xyjvpy-story.html](https://capitalgazette.com/news/ac-cn-davidsonville-grave-identified-20210417-fzc2w6mso5hbfmbh2e37xyjvpy-story.html).





### READERS ARE SAYING . . .

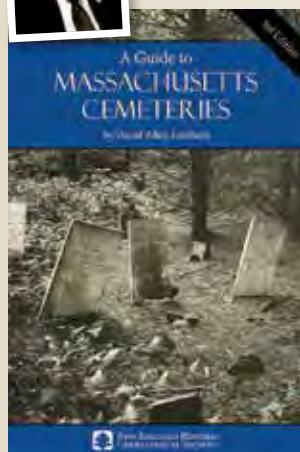
"Growing up near the border of Massachusetts, I have been to some of the graveyards mentioned in the book. Having information such as this when I was traipsing through an old graveyard would have made it a lot easier for me. . . . A very well-done guide with an abundance of information."

"Many times I use this book when I am on the hunt at local cemeteries. It is an excellent reference book for anyone who photographs or researches Massachusetts cemeteries."

## A GUIDE TO MASSACHUSETTS CEMETERIES, 3RD EDITION



By David Allen Lambert, Chief Genealogist at American Ancestors/NEHGS  
6 x 9 paperback, e-book, 352 pages, illustrated



This valuable town-by-town guide provides entries for all known burial grounds in Massachusetts with the year of consecration or oldest known burial, year of town incorporation, location and contact information for the cemetery, and a comprehensive index.

*"If you have ancestors from Massachusetts, this is certainly a guide you will want in your genealogy reference arsenal. . . . This town-by-town guide is the most comprehensive publication you'll find covering cemeteries in the state of Massachusetts."*

—Federation of Genealogical Societies  
FORUM magazine (Summer 2019)



VISIT [SHOP.AMERICANANCESTORS.ORG](http://SHOP.AMERICANANCESTORS.ORG) TO ORDER

Above: "Copp's Hill Burying Ground, Boston, Mass.," 1903–1904. New York Public Library Digital Collections.



# Finding U.S. Presidents in the *1950 Census*

As I have frequently written on U.S. presidents, I decided to check which American presidents I could find in the recently-released 1950 census. The National Archives has a neat page showing all the enumerations of American presidents through the 1940 census,<sup>1</sup> and will likely update it with information from the 1950 census at some point. With the release of the 1950 census, every American president “should” be on a publicly released census, except for Barack Obama (born 1961), who was living in Indonesia in 1970; he will likely not appear in a U.S. census until 1980, after he had returned to Hawaii.

Here’s a snapshot of American Presidents in 1950:

31st President Herbert Hoover, the only former president then living, was enumerated as a 75-year-old widower, occupation “speaker and government employee.” He lived in New York City, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.<sup>2</sup>

34th President Dwight D. Eisenhower, age 59, was listed as “President [of Columbia] University.” He was living with his wife, Mamie, also in New York City.<sup>3</sup>

35th President John F. Kennedy, age 33, a congressman, was living with his sister Eunice in Washington, D.C.<sup>4</sup>

36th President Lyndon Johnson, age 42, a senator, was living with his wife, Claudia T. [“Lady Bird”], and two daughters, Lynda B. and Lucy B., in Washington, D.C.<sup>5</sup> However, the family is crossed out and a note reads, “occupied by non residents”; members of Congress were apparently intended to be enumerated in their home districts.

37th President Richard Nixon, age 37, a congressman, was living with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Patricia [“Tricia”] and Julie, in Whittier, California.<sup>6</sup>

38th President Gerald Ford can be seen in an initial enumeration in Washington, D.C.<sup>7</sup> A representative of the State of Michigan, age 36, he is listed with his wife, Elizabeth, and son, Michael. However, the three names are crossed out and an explanatory note reads: “As this is the family of a U.S. Congressman it was transferred to 1CR’s for enumeration in his home district.” I assume enumeration would have occurred in his home city of Grand Rapids, Michigan, although I was unsuccessful in locating the Ford family there.

39th President Jimmy Carter, age 25, was serving in the armed forces and living with his wife, Rosalynn, and son John William [“Jack”] in Honolulu, Hawaii.<sup>8</sup>



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40th President Ronald Reagan, age 39, was divorced and living alone in Los Angeles, California. His occupation was "actor" in "motion picture studio."<sup>9</sup>

41st President George H. W. Bush, age 25, a salesman in oil field equipment, was in Compton, California.<sup>10</sup> I could not locate his wife, Barbara; his son, the future 43rd President George W. Bush; or daughter Pauline Robinson "Robin" Bush. The family moved to Midland, Texas, that year.

42nd President Bill Clinton, age 3, was enumerated under his birth name of "Jefferson W. Blythe." He was living with his maternal grandparents in Hope, Arkansas.<sup>11</sup>

44th President Donald Trump, age 4, was living with his parents and four siblings in Queens, New York.<sup>12</sup>

45th President Joe Biden, age 7, was living with his parents and two siblings in Scranton, Pennsylvania.<sup>13</sup>

Who is left? Sitting president Harry S. Truman!

Since at least 1820, all sitting presidents were enumerated in Washington, D.C., except for William McKinley, who was enumerated in 1900 at his home in Canton, Ohio. The 1790 Virginia census was lost, but President George Washington was probably enumerated there in his home state, rather than at the temporary capitals in New York or Pennsylvania. In 1800, President John Adams was counted in Quincy, Massachusetts, a town created from Braintree, his birthplace. James Madison was probably the first sitting president enumerated in Washington, D.C., but the original 1810 census records for the District of Columbia were lost.

Although a photograph shows the Truman family answering 1950 census questions, staff at the Harry S.

Truman Library and Museum identified this picture as one taken during a family vacation in Key West. The census enumerator in this photograph, Mrs. Eileen M. Nolte, the wife of a Navy warrant officer aboard the U.S.S. *Gilmore*, was counted in Key West (with herself as the enumerator). My colleague Danielle Cournoyer browsed the enumeration district containing the White House (1-251) and found Harry and Bess Truman's daughter, Margaret, on the last page. Margaret Truman was listed at the White House as one of the "persons not assigned to dwelling units," but her name was crossed out.<sup>14</sup>

The White House was being renovated in 1950, so the Truman family lived in Blair House that year. My colleague Lindsay Fulton browsed the enumeration district for Blair House and found an explanatory note stating that "all census representation about Blair House was being taken care of at Key West."<sup>15</sup> However, my colleagues and I have so far been unable to find the Truman family in Key West or even at their home in Independence, Missouri. Staff at the Truman Library and the Harry S Truman National Historic Site, and countless other researchers have also been unsuccessful. Where's Harry?! ♦

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See [archives.gov/research/census/presidents](https://archives.gov/research/census/presidents).
- <sup>2</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=New%20York&ed=31-3&state=NY](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=New%20York&ed=31-3&state=NY) (p. 19).
- <sup>3</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=New%20York&ed=31-1051&state=NY](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=New%20York&ed=31-1051&state=NY) (p. 6).
- <sup>4</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?ed=1-562&page=1&state=DC](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?ed=1-562&page=1&state=DC) (p. 15).
- <sup>5</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-583&state=DC](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-583&state=DC) (p. 9).
- <sup>6</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Los%20Angeles&ed=19-1961&state=CA](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Los%20Angeles&ed=19-1961&state=CA) (p. 5).
- <sup>7</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-503&state=DC](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-503&state=DC) 9 (p. 6).
- <sup>8</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Honolulu%2C%20Honolulu&ed=2-275&state=HI](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Honolulu%2C%20Honolulu&ed=2-275&state=HI) (p. 9).
- <sup>9</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Los%20Angeles&ed=66-675A&state=CA](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Los%20Angeles&ed=66-675A&state=CA) (p. 8).
- <sup>10</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Los%20Angeles&ed=19-306&state=CA](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Los%20Angeles&ed=19-306&state=CA) (p. 39).
- <sup>11</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Hempstead&ed=29-13&state=AR](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Hempstead&ed=29-13&state=AR) (p. 39).
- <sup>12</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Queens&ed=41-1457&state=NY](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Queens&ed=41-1457&state=NY) (p. 9).
- <sup>13</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Scranton%2C%20Lackawanna&ed=79-239&state=PA](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Scranton%2C%20Lackawanna&ed=79-239&state=PA) (p. 7).
- <sup>14</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-251&state=DC](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-251&state=DC) (p. 7).
- <sup>15</sup> [1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-249&state=DC](https://1950census.archives.gov/search/?county=Washington&ed=1-249&state=DC) (p. 3).

I thank Stephen Morse, Margaret L. Paxton, and Steve Barnhoorn for providing links to the census listings of Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon.



*Opposite page: (left to right): Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Richard Nixon, November 4, 1991. George H. W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum. Below: Census enumerator interviews the First Family at the Little White House, Key West, April 1, 1950. Paul Begley, photographer, U.S. Navy. Harry S. Truman Library.*

# NEW FINDINGS ABOUT Phillis Wheatley Peters AND HER HUSBAND John Peters

Biographers of the African-born poet Phillis Wheatley have lamented the three “missing” years of her adult life. In late 1778 under the auspices of Boston’s Second Congregational Church, she married a free Black man named John Peters. Slightly over a year later, the couple left Boston for three years. Their destination has recently come to light through a serendipitous discovery in Essex County, Massachusetts, court records.

In this article I tell the story of how I unexpectedly came upon a single legal case initiated by John Peters in 1779. That find led me to a cluster of cases—probate, civil, and criminal—encompassing a total of about 120 documents. For convenience, I call these legal papers the Middleton dossier after the town in Essex County where John and Phillis lived from 1780 to 1783. Using this dossier, I address why they moved to Middleton and what derailed their future there.

## Significance

As the first person of African descent to publish a book of poetry in English, Phillis Wheatley is considered the fore-mother of African American literature. Born somewhere in west Africa, she was snatched from her parents’ arms and funneled into the transatlantic slave trade. Arriving in

Boston in 1761 at about age seven, she was renamed by her purchasers, John and Susanna Wheatley, for the *Phillis*, the slave ship on which she endured such violent dislocation. Over the next dozen years, she

lived as both an enslaved youth and a precocious scholar.

She had almost no legal rights or powers of self-determination even as she learned to read texts in English and Latin alongside the Wheatley children and discovered in herself a talent at composing and performing elegiac poetry.

In 1773, when their son Nathaniel traveled to London, the Wheatleys also funded a voyage for Phillis. The trip offered the hope of easing her asthmatic condition and allowed her to finalize details with a London publisher to bring out her book of poetry. Staying in London and being fêted by prominent intellectuals, evangelicals, and statesmen gave Phillis leverage to insist that John Wheatley release her from enslavement on her return to Boston. When the deed of manumission was executed, Phillis Wheatley confirmed to a correspondent that “the Instrument is drawn, so as to secure me and my property” and that a copy had been sent to Israel Maudit, Esq., of London for safekeeping. Yet, like so many traces of Black people’s lives in this period, neither the original nor the copy have surfaced.’

Many Black Americans have grown up knowing the outlines of Phillis Wheatley’s life. Black women at the turn of the twentieth century named settlement houses and philan-



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For a fuller interpretation of the findings discussed here, see her article, “Lost Years Recovered: John Peters and Phillis Wheatley Peters in Middleton,” *The New England Quarterly* 94: 3 (2021): 309–351. An accompanying website, *The Wheatley Peters Project*, will launch in mid-2022.



Previous page: Phillis Wheatley, engraved by Scipio Moorhead, from the frontispiece of her 1773 book, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, Library of Congress, loc.gov/item/2002712199. Male silhouette by C. Oakley.

thropic clubs after her. Today, elementary schools are named in her honor. Boston's Women's Memorial in Boston features her alongside Abigail Adams and Lucy Stone.

John Peters is fascinating in his own right. Court and town records from the Boston area show that he was a frequent litigator, self-taught in courtroom conventions. He pursued many vocations—shopkeeper, itinerant trader, lawyer, physician, and pintlesmith (maker and mender of bolts). When he died in 1801 in Charlestown, just across the water from Boston, he owned the accouterments of education and gentility: a sorrel horse, a sulky, sleighs, leather-bottomed chairs, thirteen books and a Bible, a silver watch, silver spoons, and a silver mounted clothes horse.<sup>2</sup>

These new findings challenge us to set aside the negative portrait of John Peters put forward by Margaretta Odell in 1834. A relative of Susanna Wheatley, Odell repeated what Wheatley family members must have told themselves about the poet's life and death, namely that they had been the best caretakers of "meek and unassuming" Phillis. Odell depicted John Peters in a very harsh light. Her account, although riddled with inaccuracies, has shaped biographical treatments ever since, partly because people thirsted for *any* material purporting to illuminate Phillis Wheatley's life.

Of their courtship, Odell wrote: "In an evil hour he [John Peters] was accepted. . . . [He] failed [in business] soon after their marriage; and he is said to have been both too proud and too indolent to apply himself to any occupation below his fancied dignity. Hence his unfortunate wife suffered much from this ill-omened union."<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, scholars including Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Wheatley's modern biographer, Vincent Carretta, have pushed back against Odell's unsubstantiated and racist depictions. Poet and scholar Honorée Fanonne Jeffers has offered an eloquent and persuasive plea that we take seriously the likelihood that John and Phillis Peters were a loving and mutually supportive pair.<sup>4</sup>

The more we learn about John Peters, the clearer it becomes that he insisted on being treated with dignity and recognized for his skills, and that he aspired from an early age to genteel status. This information helps explain both why some wary white observers painted him as an unduly assertive Black man and why Phillis Wheatley probably found him an appealing kindred spirit.

## The archival find

How did I find documents that shed light on the missing set of years in Phillis Wheatley Peters's married life? I am not a scholar of early American literature and poetry, let alone a specialist on Wheatley. I was researching how New

Englanders responded to mental health challenges at the Massachusetts State Archives, reading a thick folio volume containing minutes of the Supreme Court of Probate. That court consisted of the Governor and his Councillors, who, several times a year, adjudged appeals from rulings by probate judges across Massachusetts. My interest was in contested wills, specifically testamentary capacity cases. In such cases, neighbors offered testimony about whether a testator was "of sound mind" when executing his or her will, as the law required.

One case involved the will signed by Lt. John Wilkins of Middleton the day before he died in 1778. Initially, Probate Judge Benjamin Greenleaf ruled the will invalid. Two legatees, John Peters and Dinah Cubber, appealed that ruling in late 1779. Neither appellant was described as Black; court clerks by this time had ceased racially tagging African and African-descended or indigenous litigants.

Reading the file papers, including depositions,<sup>5</sup> confirmed my hunch that the appellants were of African descent and that this John Peters was probably the husband of Phillis Wheatley. As an early New England social historian and a college professor who teaches about Wheatley, I was familiar with the general outlines of her life; I knew the name of her husband; and I knew that his life prior to their marriage was a mystery. Perhaps, I thought to myself with growing excitement, this single probate case could lead us to new information about the couple.

I started on a prolonged paper chase to identify all legal cases that involved John Peters or the Wilkins estate and then find the file papers associated with each case at both the inferior and superior court levels. (Some of these documents are digitized; lower court file papers are not.) A second phase entailed reading through a few decades' worth of Middleton tax and town records so that I could profile the litigants, witnesses, neighbors, and petition-signers named in the documents. Even then I still faced the daunting task of transforming the many scraps of paper and tidbits of information into a coherent, interpretive narrative. The overlapping litigation set up complicated timelines; the cast of characters was large.

Phillis Wheatley Peters is never mentioned by name in the documents, although she is twice referred to as the wife of John Peters. This lack of identification is one reason why the couple's Essex County sojourn went undetected for so long, despite the fact that the probate appeal and additional litigation are in the public record.

## John Peters's youth

We learn in the legal papers that as a child John Peters was enslaved by Lt. John Wilkins and his wife Naomi on their Middleton farm. The boy was baptized in 1751 by the pastor of the town's Congregational church, Rev. Andrew Peters (1701–1756). John Peters's three brothers—Frank, Snow, and Charles—grew up enslaved in nearby Middleton

households, became free, and remained in the area. All three used the surname Francis. I have found no documentation of their parents.<sup>6</sup>

One complication is that “John Peters” used at least two other names. He was baptized with the given name Peter and, according to his brother Snow, “for several ~~Many~~ years went by the name Peter Francis.” In the mid-1770s, at about age thirty, he sometimes called himself Peter Frizer.<sup>7</sup> Aliases were a common tool used by people of color who wished to avoid recapture or reinvent themselves.

We do not yet know when or how John Peters’s enslavement ended. According to Dinah Cubber, who had also been enslaved by the Wilkinses, John Wilkins sold Peter because as a youth he provoked Wilkins by challenging him physically and verbally.<sup>8</sup> Evidence has not surfaced about where John Peters’s new enslaver lived.

### Peters and his former enslavers

By March 1776 Peters was a free man and small shopkeeper living in Boston. About this time, Peters began regularly visiting his former enslavers, the Wilkinses. Having no sons or sons-in-laws, they became convinced that Peters was the most reliable person to help them manage their estate. The women of the household, Naomi Wilkins and Dinah Cubber, washed Peters’s linen shirts and kept his horses, while he, still based in Boston, purchased provisions and spirits for the Wilkins household and undertook various errands.

Shortly after John Wilkins died, his widow Naomi gave Peters a power of attorney to manage the farm and pay creditors. Initially, Peters hired a succession of young men from neighboring towns to live at the Wilkins homestead

and handle day-to-day affairs, with Peters visiting once a month. Even though Peters was the widow’s authorized agent, two Middleton selectmen warned him “that it was not healthy for him to come there any more.”<sup>9</sup>

By early 1780, Naomi Wilkins entered “a weak disconsolate State” triggered by the death of her only living child, an adult, disabled namesake daughter. She invited John Peters to move “his family” into her homestead. He agreed to do so only after negotiations that resulted in a highly unusual agreement. First, Naomi Wilkins deeded Peters the 110-acre homestead. Second, on the same day, he signed a conditional deed re-conveying the farm to her *if* he did not fulfill his promise to support her until her death. This support included providing “her with everything necessary to a comfortable . . . Maintenance both in Diet & Apparel” and “Physicians medicines [and] delicacies” when she was in poor health.<sup>10</sup>

### The harrowing Middleton years

John and Phillis Peters must have started their life in Middleton with high hopes that John’s yeoman status and ownership of the farm he had worked as a youth would secure their livelihood. John insisted that his wife be spared from most housewifery tasks so that she could lead a writer’s life and advance their plans for publishing a second volume of her work. Phillis also gained a welcome health benefit: country air was believed to alleviate respiratory problems.

Naomi Wilkins’s statement that she invited Peters to move in with “his family” suggests that the Peterses may have arrived with their first-born infant. Formal documentation of any children of the couple is absent from Massachusetts

birth, baptism, and burial records. But papers in the Middleton dossier provide clues. In the summer of 1780 young Nancy Barker from the neighboring town of Reading was hired for a month as Phillis Peters’s nurse. This arrangement strongly suggests that Phillis had endured a difficult birth with complications for both mother and child, if the child survived. Live-in nurses tended to stay a week or two for a mother’s lying-in period if the birth went well.<sup>11</sup>

Tensions arose in the blended household containing Naomi Wilkins, Dinah Cubber, and the Peters family. When John Peters claimed what he



Middleton is marked on this detail of *A Map of the Most Inhabited Part of New England . . .* by Thos. Jefferys, 1755. Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/74692155](https://loc.gov/item/74692155).





Detail of *A View of the Town of Boston the Capital of New England*, engraved by James Trenchard, 1787. Library of Congress, [loc.gov/item/2004671515](https://loc.gov/item/2004671515).

perceived as his rightful role as head of household, Wilkins and Cubber complained that he forced them to be the “the only Cooks” (sparing his wife). He rearranged objects both inside and outside the house and allegedly forbade certain acquaintances of the widow from visiting. Most galling to Dinah Cubber was that she was not “allowed to come to Table with him & his wife”—only Naomi Wilkins was.<sup>12</sup>

Race and class thus interacted in surprising ways in the household. John Peters evidently believed that his wife’s literary talent and worldliness elevated her above Wilkins and Cubber, whose literacy was limited. He thought Phillis should be received in society as a gentlewoman and that his neighbors should remember she had been celebrated in local newspapers since 1770 as “the extraordinary Poetical Genius.”<sup>13</sup> Visitors to the house must have been startled by the upending of racial hierarchies.

On August 16, 1780, five months after the Peterses had relocated, the Peters-Wilkins relationship ruptured and Wilkins and Cubber decided to move out and rent a nearby house. From then on, Naomi Wilkins refused to allow Peters to fulfill his pledge to provide for her. She thus laid the groundwork for a successful ejection suit. The suit wound its way through the court system, eventually leading to the removal of the Peters family from the homestead in September 1783.

Both sides launched suits and countersuits. Naomi Wilkins and her allies hired men, including Peters’s brother Snow Francis, to remove the important autumn yield of apples and corn from the homestead land. Their oxen and cart trampled the hay in Peters’s “Close.” John Peters sued for trespass. Meanwhile, he and Naomi Wilkins sued each other for charges incurred in previous years when their living arrangements and economic lives were intertwined.

Peters was in a peculiar legal bind. He owned the land but none of the movable property, such as livestock, farming implements, and furniture. When John Wilkins’s will was validated, Naomi’s brother had been appointed executor; he had legal power over the movables. To remedy

this, Peters initiated a second probate appeal, asking to be appointed estate administrator. In a rare move, more than half of Middleton’s heads of household joined a successful petition campaign to block Peters’s effort. Without presenting any evidence, they accused Peters of embezzling the estate. The Rev. Elias Smith, Middleton’s Congregational pastor, was the petition’s first signer.<sup>14</sup>

In the mist of this turmoil, Phillis and John Peters had a child who survived. In July 1782 John brought a criminal complaint against Dinah Cubber for “Assaulting” his infant child and “attempting to distroy the Life of said child.” Whether this “assault” was an outright murder attempt or an altercation in which an infant or toddler was dropped or shaken is impossible to know. No trial ensued because Peters did not pursue the charges.<sup>15</sup> The child, unnamed in the records, may have died in Middleton or perhaps Boston.

## Aftermaths

John and Phillis Peters returned to Boston in autumn 1783. Like many town residents, they were renters who moved frequently. By July 1784 they lived in the North End, where they kept a shop. During this year, due to debts accumulated in Middleton, John was in debtor’s prison for short spells. By early December, Phillis’s health had deteriorated; she died in their lodgings in the West End. Given jail-keeping practices of the period, John Peters was probably granted “liberty of the yard” so he could walk in her funeral procession. No burial record or gravestone survives for Phillis.<sup>16</sup>

It would be exciting if these newly discovered connections to Essex County helped us recover what Wheatley scholars have longed to find: the manuscript copy of her second volume of writings. By early 1791 John Peters

apparently regained the manuscript (after having lent it to an acquaintance) and agreed to its publication if enough advance subscribers could be drummed up. Like many print-by-subscription schemes, this one never came to fruition. Might Peters eventually have sold the manuscript book to a member of the wealthy Pickman family of Salem? We know that by the 1820s Dudley Leavitt Pickman owned several books that Phillis Wheatley had acquired in London.<sup>17</sup>

John and Phillis Peters faced undue harassment in the relatively poor interior town of Middleton in the very years in which slavery ended in Massachusetts. In the 1770s, scores of Black residents had negotiated their way out of slavery. Fewer and fewer whites dared to claim enslaved property in their wills and probate inventories. Many people saw the declaration of the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 that

“all men are born free and equal, and have certain natural, essential, and unalienable rights” as slavery’s death knell.

Let me end with two challenges to researchers. First, what other instances can be found of Black landowners meeting resistance in New England towns in the 1780s? In contrast, how many propertied Black families prospered in the rural Northeast without being pressured to depart?<sup>18</sup> And second, with this additional knowledge about poet Phillis Wheatley Peters’s life, we should scour all surviving late eighteenth-century New England account books, diaries, and family letters looking for documentation of John and Phillis Peters and John’s Francis relatives. The recuperation of the large Middleton dossier complements the exciting efforts by many local researchers to facilitate on-going discoveries about Black people and communities in the region.<sup>19</sup> ♦

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Wheatley could have stayed in England as a free person, given the then-recent *Somerset* ruling. In the letter, she deflected agency from herself to her allies: “my Master, has at the desire of my friends in England given me my freedom.” (October 13, 1773, Massachusetts Historical Society, Collections Online [masshist.org/database/771]). See the discussion of the London trip in Vincent Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley: Biography of a Genius in Bondage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 109–138. An updated second edition of Carretta’s biography is forthcoming.

<sup>2</sup> *Middlesex County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1648–1871*, AmericanAncestors.org. 1801, case 17255.

<sup>3</sup> Margaretta Matilda Odell, *Memoir and Poems of Phillis Wheatley, A Native African and a Slave* (Boston: George W. Light, 1834), 20.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Trials of Phillis Wheatley: America’s First Black Poet and Her Encounters with the Founding Fathers* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003); Carretta, *Phillis Wheatley* [note 1]; Honorée Fanonne Jeffers, “Looking for Miss Phillis,” in *The Age of Phillis* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2020), 167–89.

<sup>5</sup> Suffolk File 129933 [hereafter SF], in *Suffolk County (Mass.) court files, 1629–1797*, FamilySearch.org.

<sup>6</sup> Deposition of Snow Francis, Dec. 21, 1780, SF 129933, at folio 37 [Ibid.]; *Vital Records of Middleton, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849* (Topsfield, Mass.: Topsfield Historical Society, 1904), 66. Lura Woodside Watkins mistakenly conflates Charles and Snow, in *Middleton, Massachusetts: A Cultural History* (Salem, Mass.: Essex Institute, 1970), 149.

<sup>7</sup> In his will, John Wilkins named as a legatee “Peter Frizer which ware formerly [my] servant”; *Essex County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1638–1881*, AmericanAncestors.org. 1779, case 29905 (at image 39). I have not found “Peter Francis” mentioned in any documents.

<sup>8</sup> Deposition of Dinah Cubber, Nov. 22, 1780, SF 129933, at folio 37, in *Suffolk County (Mass.) court files, 1629–1797*, FamilySearch.org.

<sup>9</sup> Deposition of Lebbeus Rude of Western, Dec. 25, 1780, SF 129933, at folio 39 in *Suffolk County (Mass.) court files, 1629–1797*, FamilySearch.org.

<sup>10</sup> Deposition of Naomi Wilkins, Nov. 22, 1780, SF 129933, at folio 4, in *Suffolk County (Mass.) court files, 1629–1797*, FamilySearch.org; Deeds, 1639–1866 (Essex County, Massachusetts), 138:50, 77, FamilySearch.org.

<sup>11</sup> Account, with items dated from 1779 to [August 16], 1780, Naomi Wilkins v. John Peters, Plea of Case, Essex Country Court of Common Pleas Files (April 1783 term), Judicial Archives, Massachusetts State

Archives, Boston. On lying-in nurses, see Ross W. Beales, Jr., “Nurses and Weaning in an Eighteenth-Century New England Household,” in *Families and Children*, The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings, ed. Peter Benes (Boston: Boston University, 1987): 51–53, 62.

<sup>12</sup> Depositions of Dinah Cubber and Naomi Wilkins [notes 8 and 10].

<sup>13</sup> *Essex Gazette* (Salem), Oct. 16, 1770, 47; Sep. 21, 1773, 30 (quotation). Naomi Wilkins and Dinah Cubber both marked documents with an X.

<sup>14</sup> All file papers relating to both probate appeals, including two petitions opposing Peters, are in SF 129933 [note 5]. Researchers should also consult the two probate files for John Wilkins: the first is an intestate administration (because his will was initially invalidated); the second is for the administration with the will annexed: Essex County Probate Files 29906 and 29905, at *Essex County, MA: Probate File Papers, 1638–1881*, AmericanAncestors.org.

<sup>15</sup> *Court records, 1692–1796*, Essex County General Sessions of the Peace, Record Book for 1776–1792, 93, FamilySearch.org; and Recognition, June 18, 1782, Essex Co. Gen. Sess. Peace Files (July 1782 term), Judicial Archives, Massachusetts State Archives.

<sup>16</sup> John Peters’s petition for a retail license, dated July 28, 1784, SF 95576. For her death and funeral, see *Independent Chronicle* (Boston), Dec. 9, 1784, 4. No evidence of Odell’s claim that Phillis Peters was buried with an infant has been found.

<sup>17</sup> Ebenezer Turrell Andrews to Isaiah Thomas, Isaiah Thomas Papers, Box 1, folder 16, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass. A notice soliciting subscribers appeared in *Massachusetts Spy*, July 7, 1791, 3; a shorter version appeared in newspapers in New York, Philadelphia, and Alexandria, Va. On Pickman family donations of these books to Harvard University’s Houghton Library, see Joseph Rezek, “Transatlantic Traffic: Phillis Wheatley and Her Books,” in *The Unfinished Book*, ed. Alexandra Gillespie and Deidre Lynch (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 296 n18.

<sup>18</sup> For a harassment episode that occurred in 1782–85 in Guilford, Vermont, see Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, *Mr. and Mrs. Prince: How an Extraordinary Eighteenth-Century Family Moved out of Slavery and into Legend* (New York: Amistad, 2008), esp. 145–61.

<sup>19</sup> See the 173-page document, *African Americans in Essex County, Massachusetts: An Annotated Guide* (2020), freely available at nps.gov; this was a 2-year effort led by co-primary investigators Kabria Baumgartner and Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello.



## Manuscripts @ NEHGS



Judith Lucey is Senior Archivist at American Ancestors/NEHGS.

## Photographing New England's Gravestones: The Work of Harriette Merrifield Forbes

The name Harriette Merrifield Forbes is well known to enthusiasts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New England gravestone art. Forbes was a pioneer in the field. Her influential book, *Early New England Gravestones and the Men Who Made Them*, published in 1927, examined the artistic, symbolic, and historical significance of these gravestones and has served as a basis for the region's gravestone art researchers since its publication. The Association of Gravestone Studies (AGS) established the Forbes Award in her memory "to honor an individual, institution, or organization in recognition of exceptional service to the field." The award, presented annually, is the highest distinction bestowed by AGS.

Harriette Merrifield (1856–1951) was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, to William Trowbridge Merrifield and Maria Caroline Brigham. In 1884, Harriette married William Trowbridge Forbes (1850–1931), a judge in Worcester County and a member of NEHGS, elected in 1909. The couple had six children, with five living to adulthood, including daughter Esther Forbes (1891–1967), Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* (1942). Harriette was elected a member of NEHGS in 1910, became a Life Member in 1919, and served on the NEHGS Council from 1928 to 1930.

Long interested in preserving history and concerned about the poor and deteriorating condition of many old cemetery markers, Harriette began to photograph gravestones in the early 1900s. She visited many old burial grounds in cities and towns across New England, with her glass plate negative camera and tripod in tow.

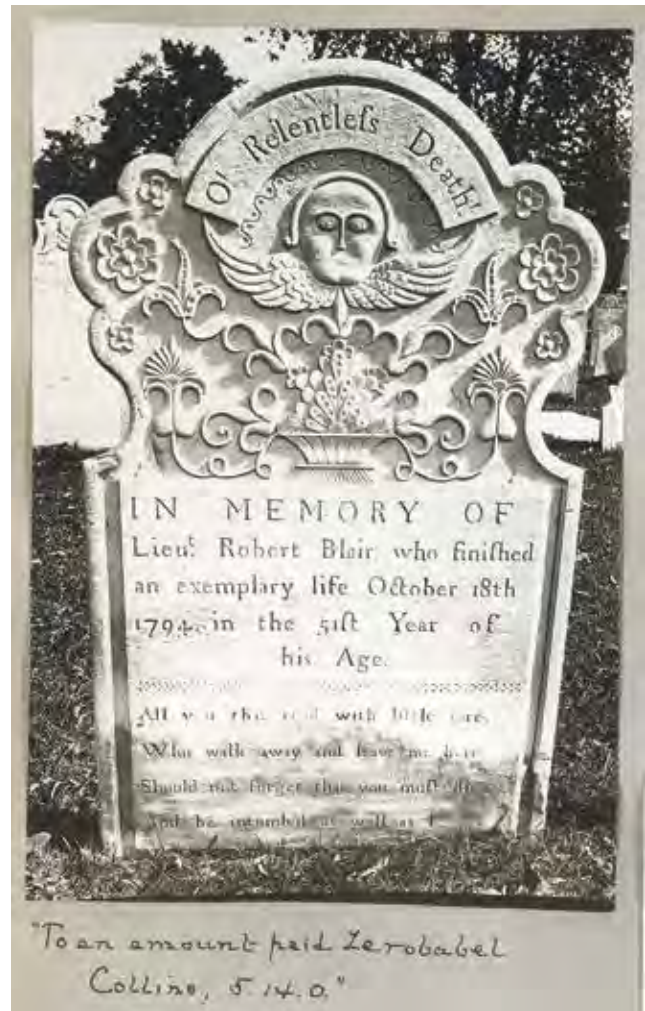
Harriette Forbes's photograph collection, *New England Gravestones, 1635–1800*, Mss 936, consists of over a thousand mounted black and white photographs documenting the carvings on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century gravestones in cemeteries in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York (Long Island), Rhode Island, and Vermont. The photographs are organized alphabetically by place name; some are accompanied by Forbes's annotations, which include information on stonecutters, original purchases, and stone composition. Forbes donated this collection to NEHGS in 1931.<sup>1</sup>

As part of her attempt to identify the gravestone carvers, Forbes examined each photograph carefully, and studied the features on

Burial Hill, Plymouth, Massachusetts.







each stone, trying to distinguish individual styles. On rare occasions, stonecutters signed gravestones. To further her research, Forbes reviewed the deceased's probate records and other sources, looking for gravestone payments and other clues that might reveal a stonecutter's name. She also consulted contemporary diaries, specifically those of Samuel Sewall (1652–1730) of Boston and Joshua Hempstead (1678–1758) of New London, Connecticut.<sup>2</sup> Sewall frequently wrote about the funerals he attended, while Hempstead himself was a gravestone carver, among other occupations. Each man wrote daily, leaving detailed accounts of life in early New England.

Underneath the image of the gravestone of Joseph Lamson, Forbes wrote "The Stone Cutter." Joseph Lamson (1658–1722), also a surveyor, was born in Ipswich, Massa-



Opposite page, clockwise from upper left:

Joseph Lamson gravestone, Phipps Street Burial Ground, Charlestown, Mass.; Lieut. Robert Blair gravestone, Bennington Center Cemetery, Bennington, Vt.; gravestones for Rev. Samuel Hall and Mrs. Ann Hall, Hillside Cemetery, Cheshire, Conn.; and Florio Hercules gravestone, Antientist Burial Ground, New London, Conn.

Right: Detail of Grindall Rawson gravestone, Old Town Cemetery, Mendon, Mass.



chusetts, eventually removed to Malden, and later settled in Charlestown, where he is buried in the Phipps Street Burial Ground. Joseph Lamson was the first of four generations of stonecutters. Lamson and William Mumford, another stonecutter of the period, are believed to have been apprenticed to an anonymous artisan called simply “The Stone Cutter at Boston.” Forbes noted that the work of this man, which “bears the stamp of individuality,” can be found on seventeenth-century gravestones in old burial grounds in Boston and surrounding towns. This unknown stonecutter may have been the first one in America to use carvings on headstones as well as popularize the use of the death head in the top rounded section of the gravestone known as the tympanum.<sup>3</sup>

Although Lamson used several elements introduced by his mentor, he also developed his own unique style. Many scholars of gravestone art consider Lamson’s work to show greater artistic skill. He frequently used a border of fruit and gourds on three or four sides of an inscription and often carved male winged imps performing tasks such as carrying a coffin. Lamson’s gravestones stand in old burial grounds in Boston and beyond, including towns north of the city (such as Chelmsford and North Andover), on Cape Cod, and in Connecticut.<sup>4</sup>

One of the more noteworthy gravestones pictured in the collection is that of Florio Hercules, located in the Ye Antientest Burial Ground in New London, Connecticut. The stone is significant not for the stonecutter’s artistry but because the inscription has historical implications for early African American history in New England. The inscription reads, “Here lies Florio Hercules, wife of Hercules, Governour of the Negroes.” Florio died at age 60 in 1749 and her headstone is considered one of the earliest pieces of documentation for Connecticut’s Black governors.

These Black men, sometimes called kings or governors, were elected by Black residents of a region or town. The men enforced the law within their perceived jurisdictions and acted as mediators between Black and White communities. The practice appears to have begun in Lynn and Salem, Massachusetts, and became popular in Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. Today, much of the inscription for Florio Hercules that Forbes captured with her camera has crumbled away; only a plaque on the ground bears the full inscription.

Harriette Merrifield Forbes hoped modern viewers looking at these early gravestones would be able to adopt the perspective of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New Englanders. She did not want her contemporaries to pronounce an “epitaph or ornamentation ‘quaint’ or amusing.” Instead, she hoped viewers would ponder the warnings carved into the stones and be “comforted by their consolations.” Forbes believed these gravestones had two purposes—“to point a moral as well as adorn a grave. They honored the dead and they taught the living.” In her own work, Harriette Forbes accomplished those same two goals—and continues to do so long after her own death. ♦

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The American Antiquarian Society (AAS) in Worcester, Massachusetts, holds a large number of gravestone photographs and glass plate negatives by Harriette Merrifield Forbes that are part of the Farber Gravestone Collection. Glass plate negatives for the NEHGS *New England Gravestones, 1635–1800* collection are held at AAS. An additional Forbes collection, “Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Structures in Massachusetts taken 1887–1945,” is also at AAS.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Joshua Hempstead, see Tucker, Ralph L., “The Joshua Hempstead Diary,” *Markers XII* (1995), 118–143.

<sup>3</sup> David Diaz, “New England Graves: The Stone Cutter,” *An Armchair Academic Blog*, October 21, 2015, [anarmchairacademic.wordpress.com/2015/10/21/new-england-graves-the-stone-cutter](http://anarmchairacademic.wordpress.com/2015/10/21/new-england-graves-the-stone-cutter); and David Diaz, “New England Graves: Phipps Street Burying Ground,” *An Armchair Academic Blog*, April 23, 2019, [anarmchairacademic.wordpress.com/2019/04/23/new-england-graves-hipps-street-burying-ground](http://anarmchairacademic.wordpress.com/2019/04/23/new-england-graves-hipps-street-burying-ground).

<sup>4</sup> For more information on Joseph Lamson, see Ralph L. Tucker, “The Lamson Family Gravestone Carvers of Charlestown and Malden, Massachusetts,” *Markers X* (1993), 151–218.



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## Shakespeare in Boston

These circa 1865 paper and charcoal rubbings show the gravestones of the English playwright, poet, and actor William Shakespeare and his wife, Anne Hathaway. The two stone slab gravestones are located in the Collegiate Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, the Anglican parish church in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, approximately 100 miles northwest of London. More commonly known as the Church of the Holy Trinity, this medieval church is the town's oldest building and one of England's most visited churches. More than 200,000 tourists come each year to see the church where Shakespeare was baptized on April 26, 1564; married in November 1582; and buried on April 25, 1616, two days after his death at age 52. The famous author received the honor of being buried in the fifteenth-century chancel because he was a lay rector in the church.

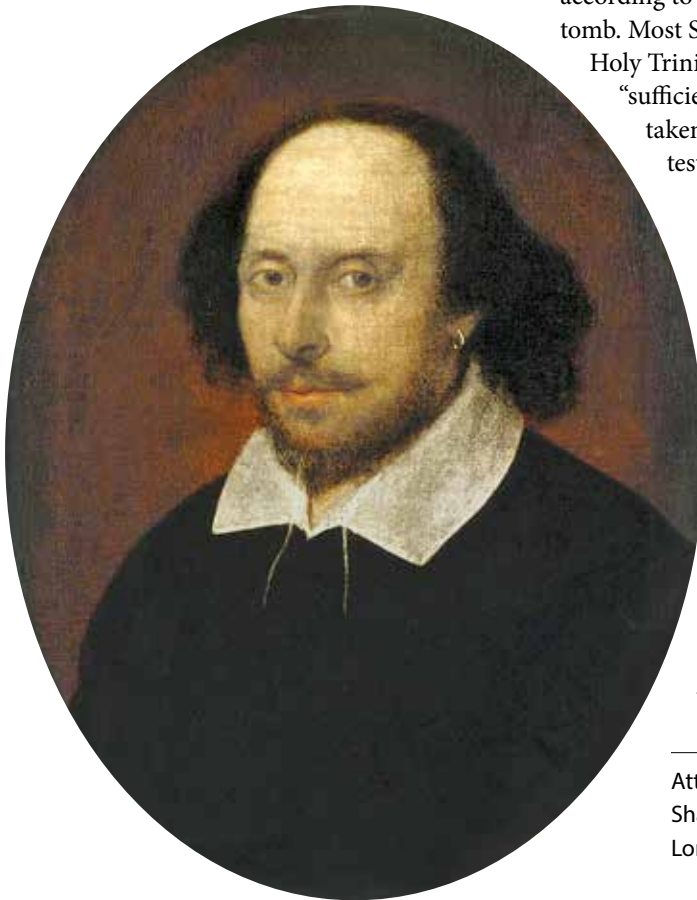
Shakespeare's gravestone reads "GOOD FRIEND FOR JESUS SAKE FORBEARE, TO DIGG THE DUST ENCLOSED HEARE. BLESE BE YE MAN THAT SPARES THES STONES, AND CURST BE HE THAT MOVES MY BONES." The warning is believed to have been written by Shakespeare himself, leading to theories that suggest the "curse" is meant to prevent the removal of the body to Westminster Abbey, or its exhumation for examination.

In 2016, a project led by Staffordshire University archaeologist Kevin Colls used ground-penetrating radar to explore the Bard's grave. The results found "an odd disturbance at the head end," according to Colls, who said that possibly no skull remains in the tomb. Most Shakespeare scholars remain skeptical of the findings.

Holy Trinity's vicar, Patrick Taylor, said he was not convinced that "sufficient evidence [exists] to conclude that his skull has been taken," and that the grave would not be disturbed for further testing.

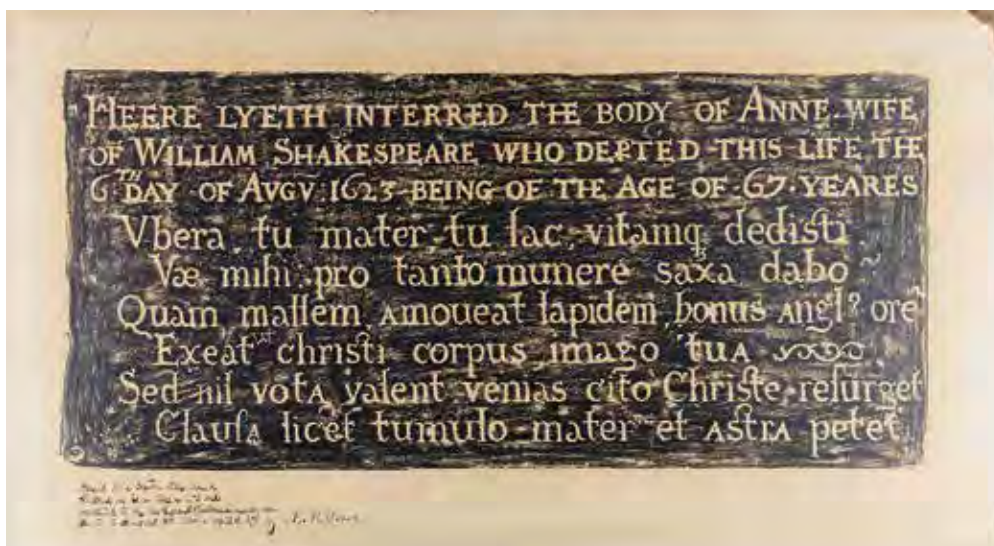
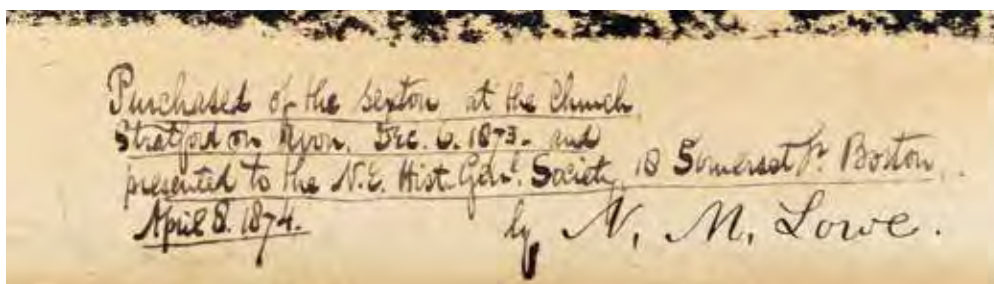
Anne's less cryptic inscription reads "HERE LYETH THE BODY OF ANNE WIFE OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE THE 6th DAY OF AUGUST 1623 BEING OF THE AGE OF 67 YEARS." The Latin that follows translates as "Breasts, O mother, milk and life thou didst give. Woe is me—for how great a boon shall I give stones? How much rather would I pray that the good angel should move the stone so that, like Christ's body, thine image might come forth! But my prayers are unavailing. Come quickly, Christ, that my mother, though shut within this tomb may rise again and reach the stars."

Generally considered the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist, Shakespeare's surviving works, including collaborations, consist of approximately 39 plays, 154 sonnets, two



Attributed to John Taylor, the 1610 Chandos Portrait of William Shakespeare is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, London. This image is in the public domain.





Top to bottom: ca. 1865 rubbing of William Shakespeare's gravestone; the inscription on the Shakespeare rubbing; and the ca. 1865 rubbing of Anne Hathaway's grave.

long narrative poems, as well as other works of uncertain authorship. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright.

Proof of the ongoing attractiveness of Shakespeare is the popularity of *Upstart Crow*, the BBC TV series that began in 2016. This *Blackadder*-style sitcom, featuring a title derived from the term of derision bestowed upon the Bard by his archrival, Robert Greene, shows how Shakespeare's family, friends, and historical circumstances influenced his famous plays.

Stone rubbing is the practice of creating an image of the surface features of stone (or metal) on paper. By rubbing hard rendering materials over paper, pigment is deposited over protrusions; depressions remain unpigmented since the paper moves away from the rendering material. Common rendering materials include charcoal, wax, or graphite. For a

genealogist, a gravestone rubbing may become a permanent record of death when a gravestone is rapidly deteriorating. However, because of the possible damage to the original tombstone, rubbings are seldom allowed today.

According to inscriptions at the bottom of each one, these grave rubbings were purchased from the church sexton on December 6, 1873. N. M. [Nathaniel Murphy] Lowe, a Boston manufacturer of scientific instruments, donated them to NEHGS on April 8, 1874. The July 1874 *Register* noted that during a report on NEHGS library donations at a May 6 meeting, "Special mention was made of rubbings of two inscriptions, viz.: the famous one over the remains of Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, and another to the memory of his wife, received from N.M. Lowe." ♦

## focus on New York



Henry B. Hoff, CG, FASG,  
is editor of the *Register*.

## Seen Elsewhere: New York–Related Articles in 2020–2021 Issues of Some Non-New York Journals

This annual feature began in the first issue of the *NYG&B Newsletter* (Spring 1990) to highlight New York genealogical and historical articles possibly unknown to readers. Each installment covers two years, so late-published journals may be included; the list below covers 2020–2021 and is continued from *AMERICAN ANCESTORS* 22 (2021) 2:57. The next “Seen Elsewhere” will cover 2021–2022. Photocopies of articles for personal research can be obtained (for a fee) from the American Ancestors/NEHGS Research Center ([AmericanAncestors.org/Services/photocopies](https://AmericanAncestors.org/Services/photocopies)).

**NOTES:** If no city or county is mentioned in the title of the article or afterwards, the article relates to various counties, usually upstate. For long articles, only the pages concerned with New York are cited. Serialized articles are not usually mentioned the following year, even when subsequent installments are New York-related.

### *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, vol. 175

- Cynthia Lynn Coy, “The David Coy Family of Oneida County, New York, Does Not Include Deborah, Wife of Ephraim Davis,” pp. 57–58 (Winter 2021)
- Capers W. McDonald, “Theophilus<sup>5</sup> Lockwood of Connecticut and New York State, Son of Theophilus and Hannah (Close) Lockwood of Cos Cob, Greenwich, Connecticut,” pp. 59–67 (Winter 2021)

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“No. 1. the residence of Jacob Leisler on ‘the Strand’  
(now Whitehall Street, N.Y.),” 1800s.  
New York Public Library Digital Collections.



### *American Ancestors*, vols. 21–22

- Henry B. Hoff, “Nationalities Noted in the 1697 Census of Albany,” 21:4:52–53 (Winter 2021)
- Violet Snow, “A Clubwoman’s Letters: Middle-Class Feminism in the Early 1900s,” 22:1:41–45 (Spring 2021)
- Henry B. Hoff, “Seen Elsewhere: New York-Related Articles in 2019–2020 Issues of Some Non-New York Journals,” 22:2:56–57 (Summer 2021)
- Zachary Garceau, “A Change in Plan Overturns a Murray Brick Wall,” 22:3:52–54 (Fall 2021)
- Henry B. Hoff, “New York Census of Slaves in 1755,” 22:3:58–59 (Fall 2021)





*The American Genealogist*, vol. 91

- Leslie Mahler and Robert Battle, "Three Great Migration Gentlewomen: Sisters Margaret (Gentleman) Ibrook, Susan (Gentleman) (Hunter) Hollingsworth, and Joan (Gentleman) (Herrington) Youngs of Southwold, Suffolk, and Massachusetts," 4:250–260 (July/December 2020)

"View of New York from the south: Governor's Island at right," ca. 1885-90. New York Public Library Digital Collections.

*National Genealogical Society Quarterly*, vol. 106

- Mary G. Burdick, "A Father for Joel Wooley of Ohio, New York, and New Jersey," pp. 175–188 (September 2021)
- Shirley Langdon Wilcox, "John Porter Langdon: One of Four Brothers to Settle in California," pp. 217–236 (September 2021)

*The Genealogical Magazine of New Jersey*, vols. 95–96

- Karen Hand Wolzanski, "Four Peter Bogarts of Bergen County, N.J.," 95:3:151–159 (September 2020)
- William B. Saxbe, Jr., "Benjamin Vanator of New Jersey, Virginia, and Pennsylvania," 96:2:69–81 (May 2021); 96:3:131–150 (September 2021)

*The Huguenot Society of South Carolina Transactions*, vol. 123

- John E. La Tourette, "Jean Latourrette and Pastor Pierre Peiret, Founders of the Eglise Française du Saint Esprit," pp. 87–137 (2021)

*Avotaynu*, vol. 37

- Andrew Alpern, "A Venerable Resource: New York Genealogical and Biographical Society," 2:16–17 (Summer 2021)

*Dorot: The Journal of the Jewish Genealogical Society*, vol. 43

- Steve Stein, "Cemetery Research in the New York Area Using JGS's Burial Association Data," 1:4–14 (Fall 2021)

*The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series, vol. 78

- Timo McGregor, "Neighorly Rendition: Interpolity Law, Mobility, and the Boundaries of Political Community in Anglo-Dutch America, 1624–64," 3:393–426 (July 2021)

*The American Historical Review*, vol. 126

- Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, "Cuban Racial Politics in Nineteenth-Century New York: A Critical Digital Approach," 1:109–239 (March 2021)

*The Journal of American History*, vol. 108

- Christopher Clements, "'There isn't no trouble at all if the state law would keep out': Indigenous People and New York's Carceral State," 2:296–319 (September 2021)



## OBITUARY

### Richard H. Benson, 1938–2021

Richard H. “Dick” Benson of Naples, Florida, died on September 1, 2021, aged 83. He was born April 24, 1938,

in Kenosha, Wisconsin, the son of Harold M. and Dorothy M. (Cox) Benson.

Dick’s family moved to Flint, Michigan, when he was young. He attended Flint Central High School, where he became an accomplished musician, performing in a five-piece dance band.

Dick attended the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where he majored in music his first two years. He graduated with a BBA in business administration in 1960 and earned an MBA in 1961.

Dick’s first date with his future wife, Susan Eda “Sue” Reed, was on Sue’s 18th birthday. They were both students at the University of Michigan. They were married August 14, 1965, at First Presbyterian Church in Flint. Dick and Sue were married for 56 years.

Dick joined Arthur Andersen & Co.’s Detroit office in 1961. He rose to partner in 1972 and his family moved to Lake Forest, Illinois, for his job at the company’s Chicago headquarters. During his tenure at Arthur Andersen Dick assumed the role of managing partner in Athens, Greece; Toledo, Ohio; Barcelona, Spain; and White Bear Lake (St. Paul), Minnesota. After his retirement in 1994, he and Sue settled in Naples, Florida, making annual summer visits to their home in Spain.

Dick served on various boards, including the Birmingham Board of Education, New York-based AESEC U.S., and the Toledo Symphony.

His enduring interest in genealogy led Dick to join NEHGS in 1974. He later served as a trustee, treasurer, and councilor. He became a Life Member in 2003 and was named an honorary trustee in 2015.

Dick was well-known to our staff as an accomplished researcher and writer. He authored seven books, six published by our Newbury Street Press: *The Nash Family of Weymouth, Massachusetts* (1998); *The Barent Jacobsen Cool Family* (2001); *The Benson Family of Colonial Massachusetts* (2003); *The Read Family of Salem, Massachusetts* (2005), which won the 2006 Donald Lines Jacobus Award; *The Arnolds of Smithfield, Rhode Island* (2009); and *The Nicholas Wade Family* (2012).

Dick is survived by his daughter, Kristi, and two grandsons.



## OBITUARY

### Francis de Marneffe, 1924–2022

Francis de Marneffe of Westwood, Massachusetts, died on April 15, 2022, aged 97. He was born May 7, 1924,

in Brussels, Belgium, to Armand and Esther Magdalene (Loveday) de Marneffe.

In 1940, five days after Nazi Germany invaded Belgium, 16-year-old Francis left his home in Brussels and bicycled across France for 35 days, catching the last boat out of Bordeaux before the French surrender. After his arrival in England, he finished school and joined the Belgian Army. He transferred to the Royal Air Force in 1943 and became a fighter pilot.

After the war, he attended Westminster Medical School at the University of London, graduating in 1950. His internship at Muhlenberg Hospital was followed by residencies at Kauaikeolani Children’s Hospital, Massachusetts General Hospital, and McLean Hospital, where he started as a second-year resident in 1953. At age 38 he became General Director of McLean Hospital, a position he held from 1962 to 1987.

Francis joined NEHGS in 2007. He served as an NEHGS Councilor and was a member of the Benjamin Franklin Society. In 2008, he donated the Francis de Marneffe Family Collection (Mss 1044) to NEHGS. The collection includes correspondence, photographs, diaries, a scrapbook, and genealogical material that documents Francis de Marneffe’s childhood, education, military service, athletic activities, early professional career, family, and retirement. The collection meant a great deal to Francis, and he continued to contribute to it through 2021, working closely with Special Collections staff and making frequent visits to view the materials.

Francis produced three autobiographies: *Last Boat from Bordeaux: War Memoirs of Francis De Marneffe*, *McLean Hospital: A Personal Memoir*, and *Summing Up: A Long Life of Adventure* (Coolidge Hill Press, 2001, 2010, and 2021). Our staff remembers Francis as a dedicated family historian and a riveting storyteller who spoke eloquently about his escape from Belgium.

In 2018, Francis was awarded the French Legion of Honor medal.

Francis was predeceased by his wife, the late Barbara (Rowe) de Marneffe. He is survived by his son Peter de Marneffe, daughters Daphne de Marneffe and Colette de Marneffe, and eight grandchildren.



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**Abbey-Ashman** *Abbey-Ashman, Two Colonial and Pioneering Families of North America, Volume One: The American Colonists*, Margaret Abbey Ashman Shannon (the author, 2021). Hardcover \$54.95, softcover \$27.95. 306 pp., illustrations. This volume traces the author's Abbe/Abbey ancestors from their beginnings in England to the American Revolution. Available from Amazon.com.

**Frery** *The Descendants of John Frery (c.1610–1695)*, E. C. Curtis (Cedar Falls, Iowa: Galactic Press, 2022). Hardcover, \$150. 1397 pp. + xii, index of people, index of places, color photos. Frery settled in Dedham, Mass., around 1638. This three-volume genealogy traces his descendants for ten generations. Available from E. C. Curtis, 145 Summit Drive, Cedar Falls, IA 50613.

**Foote** *The Descendants of Pasco Foote Sr. (c.1595–1670)*, E. C. Curtis (Cedar Falls, Iowa: Galactic Press, 2022). Softcover, \$24. 108 pp. + x, index of people, index of places. Pasco Foote settled in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1636. Eleven generations are traced in this genealogy. Available from E. C. Curtis, 145 Summit Drive, Cedar Falls, IA 50613.

**Hitchcock/Hickok** *Abby, Laurilla, and Mary Ann, The Heritage and Legacy of the Daughters of Two Hannah Hickoks, 1635–1906*, Louise Elizabeth Smith

(the author: 2022). Softcover, \$65. 356 pp., full color, images, endnotes, index. This account features nearly 300 years of Hickok family history and highlights Abby and Julia Smith, who advocated for women's voting rights in Glastonbury, Connecticut, in the 1870s. Available from HalfwayBrook.com; austinsmithbooks@gmail.com.

## Other books

**New Bedford, Mass.** *Frozen in Time, An Early Carte de Visite Album from New Bedford, Massachusetts*, 2nd ed., Susan Snow Lukesh (Trenton, Georgia: the author, 2021). Softcover \$17.95; Kindle \$3.99. 167 pp., index, illustrations, appendices, bibliography. The author presents biographical sketches and photographs of New Bedford family members and friends who appeared in Abby Taber Hunt's nineteenth-century carte de visite album. Available from Amazon.com; susanslukeshllc.com.

**Women's Travel** *Agatha! Agatha Snow Abroad: A Sketch Book from her 1912 European Tour*, Susan Snow Lukesh (Trenton, Georgia: the author, 2020). Softcover \$16.99; Kindle \$5.99. 115 pp., illustrations, bibliography, itinerary. This book is an annotated version of a sketchbook kept by Agatha Snow, the author's great-aunt, during her 1912 tour of Europe. Available from Amazon.com. Visit susanslukeshllc.com.

## The NEHGS cartoon



"I hope I don't get 'courthouse fire' again this time!"

Submitted by Ann Marvin. Drawing by Jean Powers.

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The Guildhall and Westgate Towers seen from the Stour River, Canterbury. ©Boris Stroujko/Shutterstock.





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