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Hier Leydt Begraven: A Primer on Dutch Colonial Gravestones

Brandon Richards

Although colonial Dutch gravestones appear in the archaeological record decades later than English gravestones, evidence suggests that New Netherland colonists and their descendants knew of and used grave markers prior to the 1664 conquest by the English. Various factors, such as development pressures, neglect, misidentification, and the likelihood that many were made of wood, have all contributed to the loss of the earliest markers. The oldest surviving colonial Dutch gravestones date between 1690 and 1720, with the most common types being the trapezoidal, tablet, and plank- and post-like forms. It is highly likely that these types are a legacy of New Netherland period wood and stone grave marker styles.

Carvers such as John Zuricher helped to bring the artisanal sandstone markers of the New York and New Jersey carving tradition to the Dutch. The tradition was known for its carved iconography; most common early on were death's heads, a mortality symbol that had long been known to the Dutch. The winged cherub superseded the death's head by the 1750s, which coincided with a period of increased gravestone production and the diffusion of the carving tradition. Marker inscriptions provide additional insight into colonial Dutch identity and culture during the mid- to late 1700s. For example, the practice of married women retaining their maiden names continued in some areas, but is not uniformly distributed throughout the region.

Bien que durant la période coloniale les pierres tombales néerlandaises apparaissent des décennies après celles des Anglais dans les données archéologiques, il semble que les colons de la Nouvelle-Néerlande et leurs descendants connaissaient et utilisaient des marqueurs funéraires avant l'arrivée des Anglais en 1664. Les pressions liées au développement urbain, la négligence, les erreurs d'identification, et la probabilité qu'ils étaient en bois, ont contribué à la détérioration des premiers marqueurs funéraires. Les plus anciennes pierres tombales néerlandaises de la période coloniale sont datées des années 1690 à 1720. Les types les plus communs sont de formes trapézoïdale, en tablette, en planche, et en poteau. Il est très probable que ces types découlent des styles de marqueurs funéraires en bois et en pierre de l'époque de la Nouvelle-Néerlande.

Des sculpteurs tels que John Zuricher ont aidé à apporter la tradition artisanale de sculpture de monuments en grès de New York et du New Jersey aux Néerlandais. La tradition a été connue pour son iconographie sculptée; la plus courante initialement était la tête de mort, un symbole de la mortalité qui a longtemps été connue par les Néerlandais. La tête de mort a été remplacée par le chérubin ailé à partir des années 1750, ce qui a coïncidé avec une période de croissance dans la production de pierres tombales et de la diffusion de la tradition de la sculpture. Les inscriptions sur les pierres tombales de la tradition de la sculpture fournissent des informations supplémentaires sur l'identité et la culture coloniale néerlandaise du milieu à la fin des années 1700. La pratique par laquelle les femmes mariées conservent leurs noms de jeune fille n'est pas aussi uniformément répartie géographiquement.

Introduction

Early modern gravestones began to appear in Britain and mainland Europe by the 16th and 17th centuries (Mytum 2000: 3, 7; Nijssen and Nyssen 2011: 4). These commemorative traditions were brought to America during the colonial period, when some of the oldest extant grave markers were produced by and for the English colonists of New England. There has been a great deal of research into New England's colonial carvers and their craft, particularly in regard to developments in funerary iconography. In contrast, proportionally less work has focused on the gravestones

erected by and for the Dutch colonists of New York and New Jersey, despite their contemporaneous arrival in America.

The relative abundance of surviving English colonial gravestones in New England has facilitated their analysis. It was there that James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen first collected data and helped lay the foundations of American gravestone studies. Through research pieces, such as "Some Social Aspects of New England Colonial Mortuary Art" (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1966) and "Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow" (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1967), Deetz and Dethlefsen were able to validate the principle of seriation and

demonstrate how gravestones could be used as tools to trace culture change.

Colonial Dutch grave marker studies have primarily centered on the New York and New Jersey carving tradition, which dates from the late 1600s to the late 1700s. The areas of geographical focus have been chiefly the lower Hudson River valley, New York City area, and New Jersey. Sherene Baugher and Fredrick Winter (1983) touched upon both the Dutch and the carving tradition in examining motif preferences in three ethnically diverse, early New York City burial grounds. Richard Welch (1987) took a more in-depth look into the history, motifs, and carvers of the lower Hudson and western Long Island, discussing Dutch and English styles and preferences in the process. Expanding on this, and focusing on New Jersey, there is the work of Richard Veit and Mark Nonestied (2008) and Richard Veit (2009).

Although limited, there has been some research that includes information on the Dutch marker styles that predate the New York and New Jersey carving tradition. Specific to Long Island, Gaynell Stone (1978, 1987, 1991, 2009) conducted some of the most comprehensive studies of early markers in the region while highlighting the ideological and ethnic differences in area gravestone choices from 1670 to 1800. With a focus on the colonial Dutch non-artisanal markers, the author examined the earliest styles and traditions of the upper Middle Atlantic states (Richards 2007).

For the purposes of this article, 308 colonial Dutch gravestones dating from 1690 (the earliest Dutch marker identified in the survey area) to 1783 (the close of the colonial period) were recorded and statistically analyzed. Details, such as marker style and inscription format, were examined, as was the inscribed information concerning the deceased. The markers contain data from 38 historically Dutch communities stretching from the Mohawk River valley, in upstate New York, down to central New Jersey (FIG. 1). The burial grounds were chosen based on background research, such as gravestone-transcription review, to determine their ability to yield colonial-period Dutch gravestones. Those markers that were recorded and analyzed do not represent 100% of the colonial Dutch markers in each of the selected burial grounds, but include all that

were located during site surveys and a review of Internet-based photographic databases, such as Find a Grave (<http://www.findagrave.com>).

As archaeologist Edwin Dethlefsen noted: “[T]he graveyard is a microcosmic material history of the systematic evolution of the living community” (Dethlefsen 1981: 137). The aim of this article is to consolidate previous research and to provide an overview of the evolution of Dutch gravestone styles throughout the colonial period. In the process, the article will introduce new data on Dutch burial grounds from the Albany and Schenectady areas, the mid- and upper Hudson River valley, and outlying Dutch-settled areas along the upper Delaware River that will expand the understanding of early Dutch markers in these areas. Moreover, an examination of styles, motifs, and inscriptions will further the understanding of Dutch identity and commemoration practices, adding to the overall knowledge of this segment of the colonial population.

Historical Background

In 1609, Henry Hudson carried out the first major European exploration of the Hudson River valley. On behalf of the Dutch East India Company, he travelled as far north as present-day Albany, where a short-lived fur-trading outpost was established in 1614. The Dutch named the territory New Netherland and returned to resume the fur trade, founding Fort Orange in 1624. The following year, New Amsterdam was founded farther south, on the island of Manhattan near the mouth of the river (Middleton 2002: 103, 104). Around the same time, the Dutch were also active in the fur trade along the Connecticut River. In 1633, they established Huis de Goede Hoop (House of Good Hope) near present-day Hartford, Connecticut (Wilcoxon 1987: 43). Small and oftentimes temporary Dutch settlements were also established along the lower Delaware River and Delaware Bay (Monroe 2004: 71–77).

Because of Dutch prosperity at home, in the East Indies, and in the Caribbean colonies, New Netherland’s population was slow to grow and only drew approximately 300 colonists in the first several years. Many of these early settlers were Walloons, refugees from what is now southern Belgium. In an attempt to populate the colony further, large tracts of

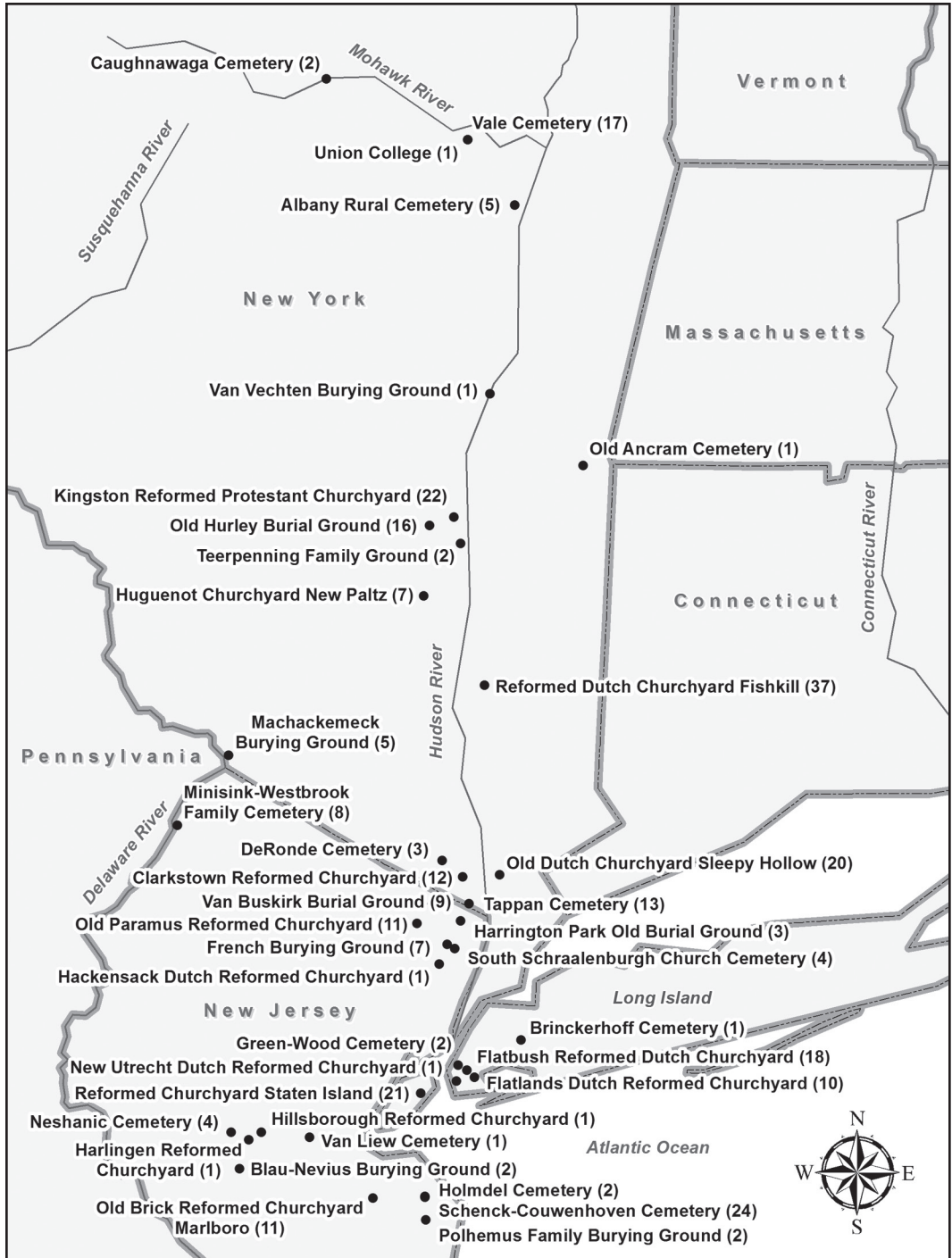


Figure 1. Map of surveyed gravestone locations and the number of markers recorded from each site. (Map by Brandon Richards, 2014.)

land and manorial rights were offered to individuals who could secure the passage of a minimum number of tenants. Under this and later schemes, many French Huguenots and Germans also arrived (Middleton 2002: 104, 105). The Dutch absorbed these groups early on, in addition to the many Scandinavians, Scots, and English who made their way to New Netherland (MacCracken 1956: 94; Blackburn and Piwonka 1988: 36; Shorto 2003: 39; Jacobs 2009a: 57; Shattuck 2009: xi). By 1647, the area numbered between 1,000 and 3,000 colonial inhabitants (Pearson 1872: 11).

Under Dutch rule, most of New Netherland's growth and expansion occurred during the 1650s, due to trade liberalization and relaxed control of the colony (Howard 1991: 205; Jacobs 2009b: 32, 33). The village of Beverwyck was established close to Fort Orange in 1652. New farming settlements sprang up on western Long Island and in the Hudson Valley, such as Flatbush (1651) and Esopus (1653). In addition, there was the annexation in 1655 of the New Sweden Colony to the south. The Dutch Reformed Church's presence also expanded (Wright 1962: 86). Until the 1650s, the only congregations in New Netherland with full-time clergy and permanent homes were the Dutch Reformed Church in New Amsterdam, established in 1633, and in Fort Orange, established in 1643 (Flint 1896: 95).

During the mid-17th century, the English began to view the geographic positioning of New Netherland as an impediment. Pressure in Connecticut led to the Dutch withdrawal from the Connecticut River valley by 1654 (Wilcoxon 1987: 43). The English, who had much larger and faster growing settlements in New England and along Chesapeake Bay, eventually captured New Netherland in 1664 (Middleton 2002: 115, 116). At the time, New Netherland had a population of approximately 10,000 colonists (Pearson 1872: 11).

English policy toward the Dutch allowed for the continuation of their language and culture (Dorn 2007: 38). Integration in government did not begin until 1677, with the admission of several leading merchants to New York's governing council. Over the next couple of decades, Dutch integration still did not extend beyond a few wealthy families. Fort Orange (renamed Albany) and Esopus (renamed Kingston) were almost exclusively

Dutch, as were the five Kings County settlements on western Long Island. The place where the Dutch and English came together most extensively was New Amsterdam (renamed New York City). However, even there assimilation was limited (Middleton 2002: 119–122, 162; Jacobs 2009a: 60–62).

During the colonial period, one of the strongest connections to Dutch cultural identity was the Dutch Reformed Church (Scheltema and Westerhuijs 2011: 82). Kammen (1996: 232–237) writes that, between 1730 and 1755, a phenomenon of acculturation took place in New York Dutch churches as a result of changing demographics, pluralism, and weakened ties with the Reformed Church in Amsterdam. English services were eventually adopted, the first of which was conducted in 1764.

Historically, language plays a major role in cultural identity (Fong and Chuang 2004: 5, 6). Throughout the Hudson Valley, Manhattan, western Long Island, and northeastern New Jersey, the Dutch language held on as the use of English increased. By the 1760s, Dutch was superseded by English in the number of speakers in the region. At the time of the American Revolution, it is estimated that a third of New York's population could speak Dutch. The language would remain the prevailing tongue in many of the rural communities well into the 19th century (Wright 1962: 49; Cohen 1992: 150–153; Willemys 2013: 205, 206).

Earliest Burials

Many of the earliest Dutch burial grounds, which were established in New York's oldest settlements, succumbed to development pressures during the 19th century. In most cases, to accommodate urban growth, graves were removed to large park-like cemeteries (Collier 1914: 347; Inskeep 2000: xii; Shaver 2003: 6). The graves at Albany's first Dutch church, for example, were removed during the mid-1800s and taken to Albany Rural Cemetery (Friends of Albany Rural Cemetery 2009: 1–7). Unfortunately, gravestones did not always make the journey. The markers of one of New York's earliest burial grounds, the Old Dutch Churchyard of New York City, were destroyed when the property was sold to real-estate developers (Welch 1987: 33).

Presently, Dutch Reformed churchyards are some of the better maintained of the surviving

colonial-era burial grounds. However, those in the region dating to the period of Dutch dominion are limited in number. Under the Dutch, churches were rare. There were only two in the entire province of New Netherland prior to 1654 (Flint 1896: 95). It was not until the final decade of Dutch rule that permanent church structures and their associated burial grounds were established on a broader scale.

Over time, growing congregations led to the enlarging of church structures, sometimes over adjacent gravesites. This occurred at Flatbush, Hackensack, Kingston, and elsewhere, resulting in an absence of standing markers identifying the earliest churchyard burials—those clustered nearest the church (Vanderbilt 1882: 159; Sarapin 2002: 71). Additionally, intramural burial (burial inside or underneath the church) was popular in the Netherlands and colonial America among those who could afford it (Vanderbilt 1882: 158). Burial vaults are known to have been placed under the Dutch Reformed churches at Albany, Kingston, Sleepy Hollow, and other sites. This practice also helps to explain the absence of early markers in the current landscape.

In Europe, many churches contain grave slabs, which were large, flat pieces of stone placed on the ground to cover interments. As space was limited, similar markers were also placed outdoors. Grave slabs are found in the Netherlands, as well as the former New Netherland. However, surviving colonial Dutch grave slabs are rare; the earliest observed in the course of this research is the Peter Winne slab in the Albany Rural Cemetery, which dates to 1759. Despite being situated on well-maintained grounds, grass and soil have partially obscured these slabs (FIG. 2). Any surviving grave slabs from the Dutch dominion are likely hidden from sight. On Long Island, Stone (1991: 17) found that the Dutch were twice as likely as the English to be interred in family burying grounds. Unfortunately, neglect is another factor contributing heavily to the loss of the earliest gravestones. Over time, many of the stones of the old private and family grounds have fallen apart, been discarded, or become buried. In 1924, Lila James Roney described early Ulster County, New York, family plots as “fast disappearing, due to farms passing into alien hands” (Roney 1924: i). She also added:

The resting place of the earliest settlers ... is completely overgrown with large trees and dense underbrush. Many of the stones have fallen to the ground, and are almost buried from sight. The inscriptions on many of the old field stones have been worn away by the storms of years and the names lost to posterity. (Roney 1924: i)

The vast majority of public grounds have not fared well either. Writing during the 1880s on the colonial town of Bushwick in Brooklyn, Henry Stiles commented that the ancient graveyard of this settlement was unused and neglected for many years before the remaining stones were deposited in a vault under the Bushwick Reformed Dutch Church (Stiles 1884: 15).

In addition to neglect and development pressures, weather has had an adverse effect on early gravestones in the region as well. With each passing year, more and more are being lost to the elements. Most of New York and New Jersey’s 18th-century grave monuments were made of sandstone, which is less durable than the slates of New England. In the winter, precipitation often destroys porous and

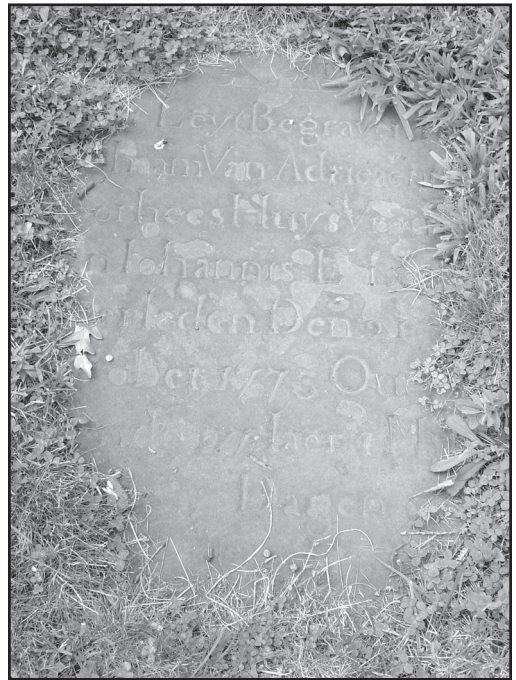


Figure 2. Grave slab of Adriaentje Vorhees in the Flatbush Reformed Dutch churchyard. This marker, which dates to 1773, has partially sunk into the ground. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

cracked sandstone markers. When water seeps in and freezes, it expands. The result is that gravestones eventually crumble and fall apart. Also to be factored in is the quality of sandstone, which varied depending on its source. Thus, some memorials appear to have been recently erected, while others have eroded and exfoliated (Farber 2003: 14).

Markers in the Written Record

Many researchers have held that, other than the possible uninscribed fieldstone, the early Dutch did not use grave markers until they were introduced by the English (Welch 1987: 1; Merwick 1990: 193). These claims seem to center on the fact that surviving Dutch gravestones from the New Netherland period have never been definitively identified. Furthermore, the earliest surviving Dutch markers standing in Dutch burial grounds today date to decades later than the earliest English markers.

Historical accounts promoted the view of a later introduction as well. For example, in 1884 one historian stated that, for burials, the early Dutch commonly used private and family grounds without monuments (Stiles 1884: 49). Another history, published in 1900, commented that “[t]here were no tombstones erected in those days. It is most rare to find anywhere a Dutch tombstone older than 1725, and there are probably none as early as 1700” (Honeyman 1900: 135).

Documentary evidence suggests, however, that Dutch marker traditions were present in the region before English-inspired gravestones were adopted, and markers were used by the colonial Dutch earlier than the archaeological record indicates. For example, *The Old Merchants of New York City* by Walter Barrett (1885: 292) and *Walks in Our Churchyard: Old New York, Trinity Parish* by John Flavel Mines (1896: 103) make reference to a marker erected, with an inscription date of 1639, in the Dutch graveyard that became Trinity churchyard. There is also record of a gravestone dated 1655 that once stood in the Bushwick Village Cemetery in Kings County. Apparently, the gravestone was one of less than a dozen that were still standing in 1879 when removals to a vault beneath the Bushwick Reformed Dutch Church were made (Inskeep 2000: 30).

Morris’s Memorial History of Staten Island New York by Ira K. Morris makes reference to

an old brown gravestone that once stood at the Waldensian Church in Stony Brook. It was inscribed: Atil..nette Colon/ .. er 21/ 1678/ AE 64. The marker was said to have been taken in the late 1800s by a relic hunter (Morris 1898: 50).

The earliest actual Dutch-language grave marker recovered in the former New Netherland is dated 8 May 1690 and is probably from the Schenectady Dutch Reformed churchyard (FIG. 3). It is currently housed in Union College Special Collections. Incidentally, the 14 × 7 × 4 in. marker was found and removed from a cellar wall during the late 1800s (Pearson 1883: 372).

On 29 October 1945, the *Knickerbocker News* reported that a gravestone dating to 1690 was identified during an Albany Rural Cemetery reconstruction project. The article does not mention whether it was a Dutch-language marker. Recent attempts by area historian Paula Lemire to locate the gravestone have been unsuccessful.

Another early marker of note, partially inscribed in Dutch, was that of John Abeel, dated 1711. In 1836, the gravestone of the merchant and former mayor of Albany was discovered by workers making improvements near the site of Albany’s Second (Middle) Dutch Church (Lee 1910: 1411). Providing further support for the discovery of buried gravestones, Joel Munsell wrote the following concerning early Dutch burial practices in Albany:

The burial ground for a great number of years was the site of the Middle Dutch Church, where the bodies lie three tiers deep. The dead were removed from under the church in State Street to this ground, after it had been selected for a place of burial. When the church was built, the gravestones were laid down upon the graves, and covered over to a depth of three feet, and the records show that it was customary, when the ground was wholly occupied, to add a layer of earth upon the surface, and commence burying over the top of the last tier of coffins. When the basement of the house on the north-east corner of it was excavated, the boxes were discovered in which the bodies were buried one above another. These relics have been frequently disturbed by improvements constantly going on. After the lot was abandoned as a place of burial, the new church yard was located south of the Capitol Park in the vicinity of State Street. The graves were many feet above the surface of the lots, as they now are, vast excavations having been made in that part of the city. (Munsell 1869: 130)

This description suggests that another explanation for the lack of early markers is that the earliest markers, along with the earliest burials, are possibly buried beneath subsequent interments.

Styles of the Earliest Extant Markers

The underrepresentation of early Dutch grave markers in the archaeological record could also be due to misidentification. Stone (1991: 17) noted that the Dutch on Long Island

were 50% more likely to use fieldstone markers than the non-Quaker English. In addition to fieldstone-marker misidentification, the casual observer could mistake some other types of early gravestones, if encountered out of context, for an old tree stump or piece of timber (FIG. 4). Throughout the former New Netherland, fieldstone and homemade non-artisanal markers still stand in many of the burial grounds established by Dutch colonists. Although Dutch churchyards and burial grounds dating prior to 1664 have survived, the oldest extant markers at these sites date back only to the first few decades of the 1700s. During the course of this study, the largest concentrations of colonial-era, non-artisanal markers were observed in Ulster County, New York (32 of 47 recorded stones); Bergen County, New Jersey (29 of 35 recorded stones); and in the upper Delaware River valley (13 of 13 recorded stones). There are four general types of non-artisanal gravestones that appear earliest in the archaeological record of the colonial Dutch. These are the trapezoidal, tablet, and plank-like and post-like markers.

The rough-hewn, trapezoidal marker style (FIG. 5) was recorded only in Bergen County. There, nine of these marker types were observed, accounting for 10% of all non-artisanal forms observed in this study. However, only one was recorded with a pre-1740 date, the 1713 stone in Figure 5. Not all trapezoidal markers were hewn with a flat top. Some featured a more pointed top instead.

Also popular among the non-artisanal gravestones was the tablet marker. This form was observed throughout the Hudson Valley down into New Jersey and accounts for 14% of the 28 pre-1740, non-artisanal stones examined in the study. The earliest non-artisanal tablet observed is the 1721 Catlina Bogert marker in the Albany Rural Cemetery. Another early tablet gravestone is the 1725 Jan Meebie marker in the Vale Cemetery in Schenectady (FIG. 6).

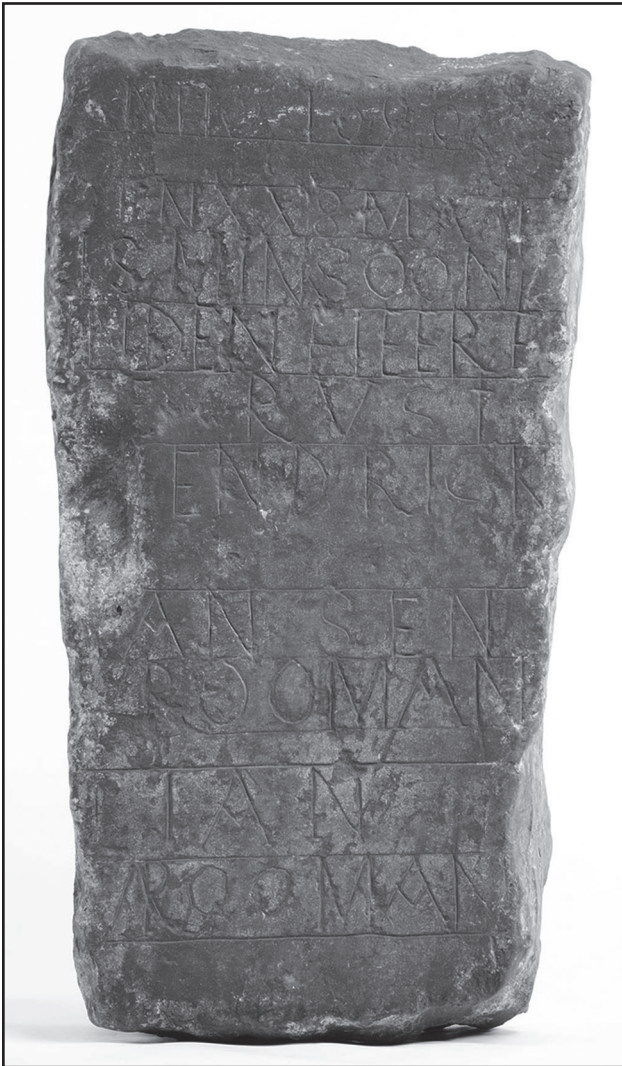


Figure 3. The earliest known existing colonial Dutch gravestone, which dates to 1690. (Photo courtesy of Schaffer Library Special Collections, Union College, Schenectady, NY.)



Figure 4. Markers, such as this one dating to 1722 and standing in the Kingston Reformed Protestant churchyard, run the risk of misidentification if found outside the context of a burial ground. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

The most common and widely observed non-artisanal gravestone forms are the plank- and post-like markers, each resembling small wooden planks or posts (FIGS. 7 and 8). Of the 90 colonial-era, non-artisanal markers recorded, 51% are plank or post markers, with planks nearly twice as popular as posts. As far as pre-1740 non-artisanal stones are concerned, 79% of the 28 recorded are of this type.

In addition to resembling wooden planks and posts, the plank- and post-like markers were carved with either a rounded or slanted top, a feature also present on many tablet stones. As with trapezoidal and tablet markers, local flagstone or schist was often utilized as the carving medium. Citing Belonje (1948), Nijssen and Nyssen (2011: 1) wrote that the

tablet and “pole” headstone forms were popular in the northwest of the Netherlands during preindustrial times. The pole form is synonymous with the post form discussed in this study.

Fieldstone and wood markers have long been considered to be among the earliest burial markers used in colonial America (Farber 2003: 14). Coincidentally, the plank- and post-like markers resemble cuts of wood. The possibility exists that these gravestones were created in the same wood tradition as more permanent markers and are representative of a phase in development between earlier wood markers and the later English-inspired headstones. Additional support for the wood-to-stone claim comes from documentary evidence revealing that wood markers were erected in Albany at the Knickerbocker Burying Grounds. In 1880, A. J. Weise wrote: “The durability of wood is practically exhibited by the excellent preservation of a pitch pine head board standing in this graveyard” (Weise 1880: 65). Wood was also more commonly used to mark gravesites in the Netherlands, as stone was scarce and expensive (Leon Bok

2005, pers. comm.; Nijssen and Nyssen 2011: 21). There, such grave markers were erected well into the 20th century. It is important to note that any wood markers erected during the New Netherland period would not have survived to the present due to the organic nature of the material, unless preserved under unique conditions.

The plank- and post-like gravestones were not always crudely cut and some may have been produced by professional stone carvers who included gravestone production among their varied services. Under Dutch rule, the number of carvers skilled in the gravestone arts would likely have been small. There were no craft guilds in the colony as there were in the Netherlands, where the quality and quantity



Figure 5. Rough-hewn, trapezoidal marker ca. 1713 standing in the Hackensack Dutch Reformed churchyard. Note what appears to be an arrow through the initials IIB. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

of artisans were well regulated (Jacobs 2009b: 130). Essentially anyone in the colony with the means, access to stone, and a market, regardless of appropriate training, could become a gravestone carver. This being the case, a strong tradition of artistic gravestone carving would have had a difficult time developing and flourishing in New Netherland.

Iconography and Inscriptions of the Earliest Traditions

The presence of iconography on non-artisanal, colonial Dutch gravestones is rare. There are only three examples with any sort of engraved symbol out of the 90 non-artisanal stones observed in the study. These include the 1713 trapezoidal marker from the Hackensack Dutch Reformed churchyard (FIG. 5), the 1737 HKS post marker (FIG. 8) from the Kingston Reformed Protestant churchyard, and the 1780 Angenietie Banta tablet marker, which features a squiggly line at the top, in the South

Schraalenburgh Church Cemetery. The lack of iconography may be a reflection of the carving medium and skillset of the local carvers at the time. Engraved symbols and motifs, in addition to heraldic insignias, were not uncommon on professionally carved markers in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe before and during the colonial era.

Inscriptions on many of the earliest surviving Dutch grave markers in New York and New Jersey are minimal. The information concerning the deceased was often limited to initials and a year of death. In a small community, providing basic details was likely enough to identify individuals and their burial locations. The inscriptions could have served as a guide to locate the site should family members wish to be buried nearby. Evidence that family members were at times buried in the same plot comes from the presence of multiple commemorations on single monuments. For example, the 1757 John Van Voorhis/Barbara Van Dyck marker



Figure 6. Tablet marker ca. 1725 standing in the Vale Cemetery. It was relocated from an old Dutch Reformed churchyard in Schenectady. (Photo by Kim Mabee, 2008.)

in the Fishkill Dutch Reformed churchyard is a single sandstone monument that identifies his year of death as 1757 and hers as 1743. There were nine other professionally carved, multiple-commemoration stones observed in the study.

Full-text inscriptions were rarely carved on non-artisanal, colonial Dutch markers. Ten of these markers were observed, which account for approximately 11% of the non-artisanal stones recorded. The lack of inscriptions on these stones may be due to a lack of space on the marker face or difficulty in carving on the type of stone. Acronyms and initials, however, were more frequently found on the non-artisanal stones. In the Huguenot churchyard at New Paltz, the fifth line on the 1747 Margaret Van Bommel marker (FIG. 9): *IDHOS*, is a Dutch acronym for *In den Heere ontslapen*, or “sleeping in the Lord.” Several non-artisanal

markers in the Van Buskirk burial ground in Bergen County dating to the 1770s and 1780s feature the same acronym. The phrase also was observed in the gravestone transcriptions of 17th- and 18th-century Dutch markers found in the Netherlands, as well as the Dutch colonies of Malacca (in present-day Malaysia) and Madras (in present-day India) (Bland 1905; Cotton 1905). On the island of St. Eustatius in the Caribbean, colonial Dutch markers dating to the early 1700s have been observed with the phrase as well (Stelten 2011: 44–47).

The Van Bommel marker also highlights the use of maiden names by married women, as was customary among the early Dutch colonists. Moreover, as with the Vrooman stone, the importance of family to identity is reflected by reference to a male head of household. The initials *HDI* inscribed on the Van Bommel stone are those of Hendricus DeIoo, her husband. In both cases, the possibility also exists that the head of household was the one who carved the marker.

In addition to Dutch and English language inscriptions, Latin occasionally appears. *Anno*, or “in the year,” was inscribed with a date of death on 31% of the non-artisanal markers observed. On pre-1740 markers, it was observed on 25% of the stones. Also appearing on some of the non-artisanal stones is *obit*, or “died.” Five stones dating from 1705 to 1737 were carved with this inscription. The use of Latin on memorials was not uncommon in Europe, particularly among the clergy and gentry (Jupp and Gittings 2000: 196). Further research is needed to determine if the Dutch used Latin to reflect social status.

The use of a non-artisanal gravestone did not necessarily indicate that the individual came from a lower social class. The 1710 *ADW* marker (FIG. 10) in the Kingston Reformed Protestant Church’s collection was erected for 53-year-old Captain Andries DeWitt, the oldest son of a well-to-do colonist (Walsh 1902: 4–5, 7). Hendrick Jansen Vrooman, named in the 1690 stone in Figure 3, was the child of Jan

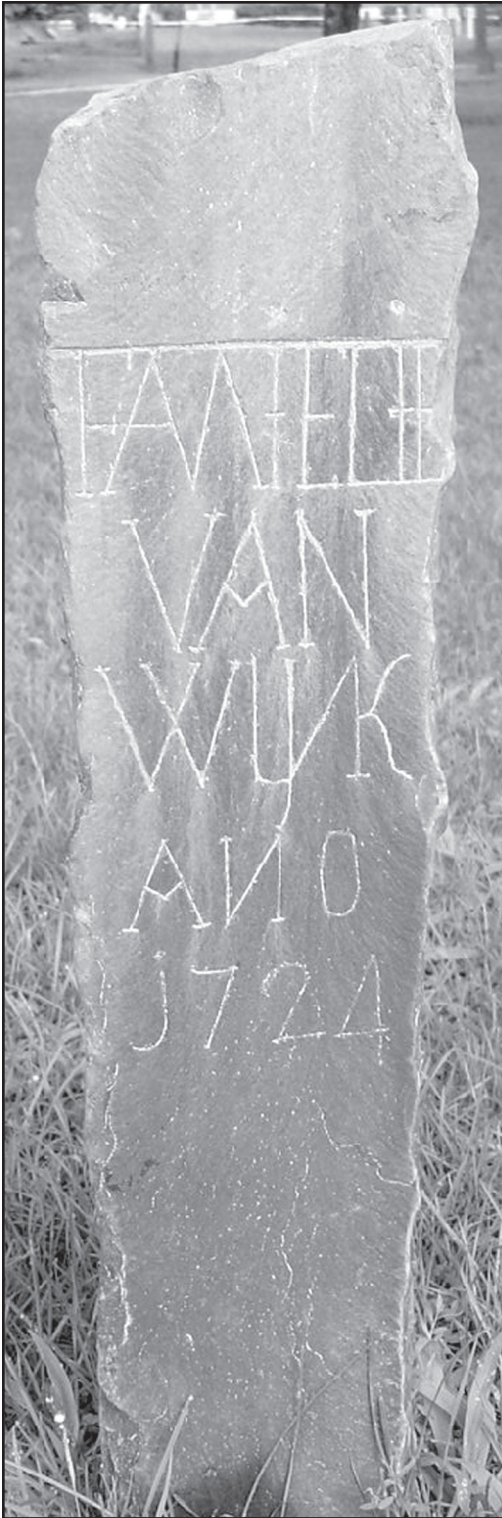


Figure 8. Post-like marker ca. 1737 standing in the Kingston Reformed Protestant churchyard. Note the small diamonds separating the initials *HKS*. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

Figure 7. Plank-like marker ca. 1724 standing in the Kingston Reformed Protestant churchyard. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

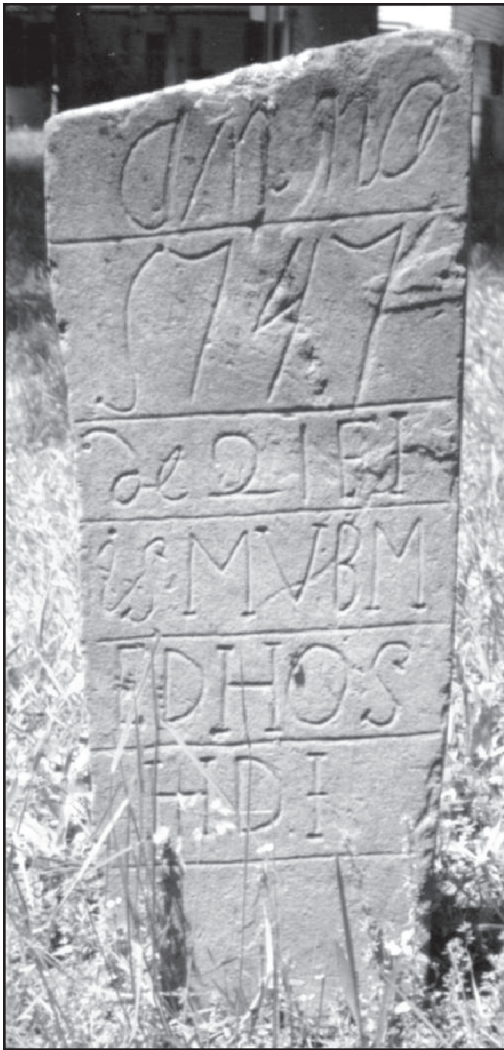


Figure 9. Margaret Van Bommel's plank-like marker ca. 1747 standing in the Huguenot churchyard at New Paltz. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

Vrooman, a major landowner in the Schenectady area (Pearson 1883: 216–217).

The New York and New Jersey Carving Tradition

Beginning around the 1680s, a new gravestone tradition was emerging in northeast New Jersey (Welch 1987: 4, 5; Veit and Nonestied 2008: 28, 29; Veit 2009: 119). Carved from sandstone quarried near Newark, markers were fashioned in a style similar to the tripartite slate tablet monuments found in

New England. This included the carving of funerary iconography, full-text inscriptions, and poetic verses. Sandstone, which consists of sand fused together by silica or iron oxide, was easier to carve than slate or other local stone, and soon became the preferred carving medium in the New York/New Jersey region. It is from the iron oxide found in the sandstone that these professionally carved markers receive their distinctive reddish-brown coloring (Gage and Gage 2005: 73).

Death's Heads

The New York and New Jersey carving tradition first made its way to the colonial English communities and, although there were early inroads, it was not until the 1740s and 1750s that the Dutch began to use this type of professionally carved gravestone more widely. In this study, non-artisanal markers account for 85% of the 33 pre-1740 stones recorded and just 26% of the 76 markers dating from 1740 to 1759. This coincides with a period of increased production and diffusion among area artisanal stonecutters. At the time that the New Jersey carving school was established, the skull or "death's head" mortality symbol was the most frequently carved iconographic feature (Welch 1987: 5).

Compared to colonial English burial grounds, death's heads appear less frequently in colonial Dutch burial grounds, with the exception of those of Monmouth County, New Jersey. Of the 41 death's heads recorded in this study, 61% were located in Monmouth County burial grounds. Heinrich (2011: 34) writes that death's head mortality symbols were the single most popular icon in the county from the early 1700s into the 1780s, and he attributes this longevity to the slow penetration of the latest fashions into this largely agrarian area.

Because death's heads are rare on colonial Dutch grave markers, one might conclude that the Dutch had an aversion to mortality symbols. Stone (1991: 7) claimed that ideology and ethnicity explained the paucity of death's heads found on Dutch markers. It is more likely that the late, widespread adoption of the carving tradition caused them to be far less common. The 1728 Elyse Wenne stone in the Albany Rural Cemetery is an example of a pre-1740 death's head, Dutch-language marker (FIG. 11). Incidentally, this marker was relocated from an older demolished burial ground in

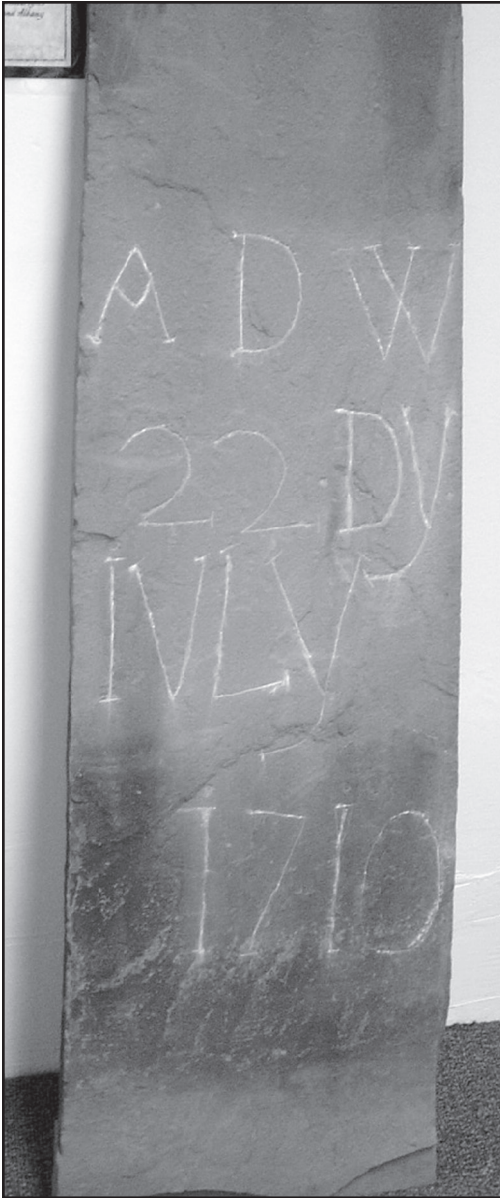


Figure 10. Plank-like marker ca. 1710 in the collection of the Kingston Reformed Protestant Church. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

Albany. The loss of burial grounds (and markers) here and in other early major population centers could be another important reason for the near absence of the death's head in the pre-1740, colonial Dutch archaeological record.

The death's head mortality symbol has long been known by the Dutch. It was a typical sign

for *memento mori*, or "remember you must die." From the 14th to the 18th centuries, *memento mori* mottoes were found widely throughout Europe on many objects in the context of daily life (Tarlow 1999: 88). Prior to the Counter Reformation, death was rarely represented in European funerary sculpture. In the second half of the 16th century, the skull, sometimes winged, began to be carved on European tombs (Hall 1979: 97). In the Low Countries, death's heads were carved on gravestones into the 18th century.

In Europe, religious symbology was widespread, and such iconography frequently appeared in print. From the 16th to 18th centuries, approximately 2,500 collections of images with explanatory text, or "emblem books," were published. The majority originated in the Netherlands (Van Straten 1994: 45–61). The funerary iconography of colonial America derives from symbols found in emblem books, as well as other sources, such as broadsides, woodcuts, engravings, and primers (Ludwig 1966: 277–283; Roark 2003: 61).

Historically, there was not a strong tradition of illustration in England. English printers often imported the woodcuts that they used from the Low Countries (Watt 1991: 154). Moreover, Dutch emblem books contributed greatly to the development of the emblem genre in England (Daly 1997: 1). Reese (1990) writes that prior to 1740 there were 38 master printers in the American colonies. Nearly half this group had been trained in Europe, one being a Dutch printer. Dutch language works were sold and published in New York City, where approximately 100 different editions of books, pamphlets, and almanacs were printed between 1693 and 1794. The majority of the publications dealt with religious matters (Goodfriend 1994: 189). Therefore, it seems probable that the colonial Dutch would have been familiar with death's heads and other related iconography, and were not introduced to the symbols by the English.

Winged Cherubs and Plain Markers

During the 1750s, a major shift from the death's head to the winged cherub took place in the New York/New Jersey region and became the focus of the emerging New York carving school (Welch 1987: 11–13). The traditional view of the winged cherub is that it is associated

with the ascent of the soul into heaven following death (Deetz and Dethlefsen 1967; Aries 1981; Sarapin 2002: 30; Roark 2003: 65–67). However, Heinrich (2011) challenges the view that the winged cherub has strictly religious connotations. He argues that the icon is related to the classical cherub associated with the rococo design movement of the time. Moreover, Heinrich provides evidence suggesting that the rise and decline of the winged cherub, as depicted on grave markers, is more closely linked to economics and fashion.

Initially, New Jersey-based carvers dominated the regional market. After 1760, New York carvers began controlling the Manhattan, western Long Island, and Hudson Valley market (Welch 1987: 27). One of New York's most popular carvers was John Zuricher, who was active from the 1740s into the 1770s (Baugher and Veit 2013: 229–231).

He was popular as far north as Schenectady, where Wells (2000: 21) reported there are at least 11 of his surviving stones, dating between 1748 and 1769. According to Welch (1987: 31–33), Zuricher produced 18% of the extant, Dutch-language markers in the lower Hudson Valley dating to between 1740 and 1775. It is noteworthy that Zuricher was also the single most popular carver in several Dutch Reformed burial grounds in the region in which many of the colonial Dutch gravestones are inscribed in English.

The Revolutionary War caused production to slow and ultimately cease for many carvers, including Zuricher (Welch 1987: 44–46). As the colonial period drew to a close, the New York and New Jersey gravestone carving tradition was waning as well. By the turn of the century, there was a regional transition toward erecting markers that lacked traditional iconography on their tympanums (Welch 1987: 48; Richards 2005: 32). Some of these markers were completely plain and devoid of iconography, while others began featuring script-style monograms or a large, pronounced "IN" on the tympanum to begin the formulaic introduction "In memory of." During the Federal period, the carving of monograms and the inclusion of decorative features, such as vines, was more popular in New Jersey than in New York (Welch 1987: 84).

The earliest plain sandstone artisanal marker observed during the study is the 1748 Albert Cowenhoven stone identified in the Schenk-Couwenhoven Cemetery in Monmouth County. Just under 15% of the 76 recorded stones dated from 1740 to 1759 are plain



Figure 11. Dutch gravestone of the New York and New Jersey carving tradition featuring the death's head mortality symbol. This marker, which dates to 1728, was relocated to the Albany Rural Cemetery from an old Dutch Reformed churchyard in downtown Albany. (Photo by Paula Lemire, 2012.)

markers. They were fourth in popularity behind mortality symbol-engraved markers (29%), and winged cherub-engraved and non-artisanal markers (each 26%). On stones dating from 1760 to 1783, the unadorned style is still just under 15% of the 199 markers observed. Plain stones surpass mortality symbols in popularity (FIG. 12), but remained a distant third behind winged cherub-engraved markers (53%) and non-artisanal markers (21%).

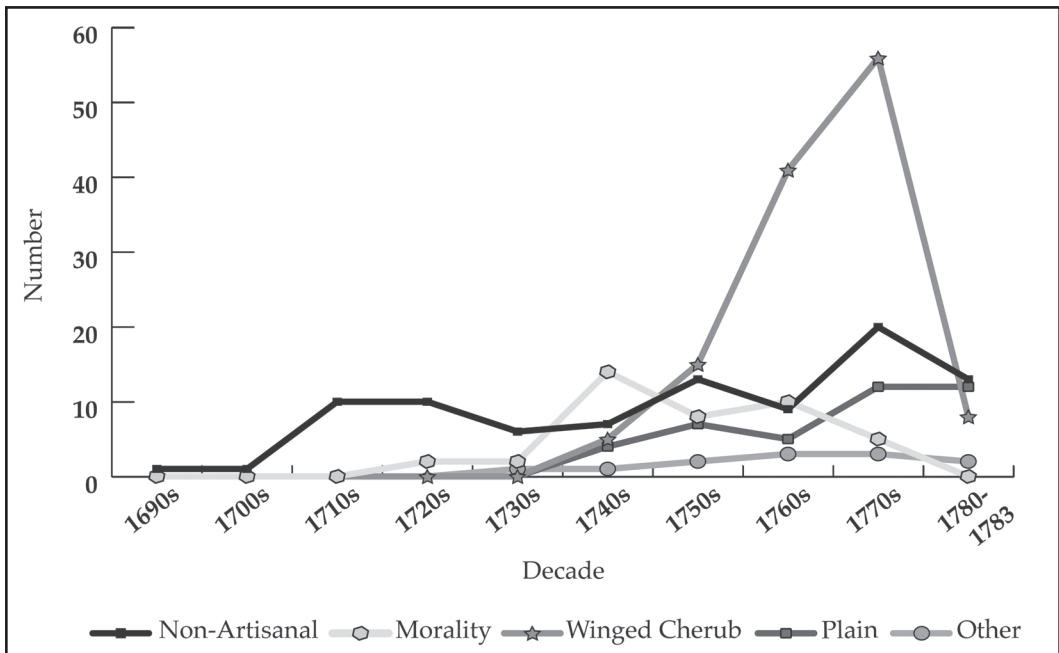
Post-independence, ethno-religious preferences are not as pronounced. In another example from Sleepy Hollow, gravestones carved by Solomon Brewer were popular in the late 1780s and 1790s. Originally from New England, Brewer was a former Massachusetts carver and Revolutionary War veteran. During the mid-1780s, he resettled in New York near Tarrytown, where he resumed his trade (Friends of the Old Dutch Burying Ground 1992: 32–33). Brewer’s work included the carving of soul effigies and unadorned markers. He also was responsible for inscribing Dutch-language gravestones, which was not common for a carver from New England. It is possible that as ethno-religious preferences diminished, the workshop’s proximity to clientele became more important

to customers. Furthermore, politics may have helped carvers gain access to markets that, for cultural reasons, otherwise may have been closed. In the case of Brewer, he fought for American independence, the side favored by the vast majority of Tarrytown-area Dutch (Historical Research Society of the Tappan Zee 1926: 9).

Inscriptions

Dutch language inscriptions were found on 112 gravestones (74 artisanal and 38 non-artisanal), or 43% of 259 gravestones recorded for which a language could be determined. Markers with historical connections to Dutch Reformed churchyards account for the vast majority of the Dutch-language gravestones. In the more culturally isolated settlements, the Dutch language was used on memorials through the colonial period. At Flatbush and Flatlands in Brooklyn, Dutch-language inscriptions were found on 96% of the 28 colonial-era markers in the two Reformed churchyards. Similarly, in Bergen County Dutch was used as the language of commemoration on 92% of the 24 recorded stones for which a language could be determined. In Monmouth County, in contrast, 100% of the recorded stones are inscribed in English.

Figure 12. Colonial Dutch grave marker styles recorded in study. (Graph by Kristin Hatch, 2014.)



There were also notable trends in language preference over time. For example, 47% of the pre-1770 stones recorded in the Albany/Schenectady area are inscribed in English. After 1770, 100% are inscribed in English. In the Fishkill Reformed Dutch churchyard, a larger percentage change was observed. English is inscribed on 29% of the pre-1770 stones, and 87% of those dating from 1770 to 1783.

As with the non-artisanal stones, Latin words and phrases were inscribed on professionally carved Dutch markers as well. *Anno* was the most frequent, appearing on 14% of the 218 recorded artisanal stones. *Obit* was much rarer, appearing on just two markers dating to the 1760s observed in the Vale Cemetery in Schenectady. Another Latin phrase, *memento mori*, appeared on the 1782 Maria Wendell marker, also in the Vale Cemetery.

The formulaic introductions: "Here lies the body" and "Here lies interred," were commonly inscribed on artisanal markers of the New York and New Jersey carving tradition (Sarapin 2002: 36; Richards 2005: 42). Dutch-language equivalents: *Hier leydt het lichaam* and *Hier leydt begraven*, both with spelling variations, were also inscribed on colonial Dutch gravestones. The latter also appears on memorials in the Netherlands from the 16th through the 18th centuries (Van Someren 1904: 93–100; Noordegraaf and Rogge 2005: 146–154). During the 1770s, a new formulaic introduction, "In memory of," began to emerge.

Following the formulaic introduction, inscriptions commonly identify the individual, then provide a date and age of death. The ages are often presented in years, months, and days, as observed on 64% of the recorded stones. At the bottom of the gravestone a Bible or other poetic verse sometimes appears (FIG. 13). This was not very common, however, as verses appeared on just under 14% of the 218 stones observed in the study. Although epitaphs and gravestone poetry first appear in the region on English gravestones, they are part of a centuries-old European tradition also known in the Netherlands (Marten Mulder 2012, pers. comm.). The John Abeel stone (dated 1711) uncovered in Albany during the 1830s included a Dutch verse and is the earliest identified example of a verse on a colonial Dutch marker. Gravestone poetry possibly existed even earlier on intramural markers, as is found in the Netherlands.

Gravestones of the New York and New Jersey carving tradition were erected in the colonial Dutch communities regardless of gender, with 53% of the recorded memorials produced for males and 47% for females. Monuments were also erected irrespective of age. Children as young as a few months received memorials, despite a high rate of infant mortality. Three examples include the 1760 Joshua Mercereau stone in the Dutch Reformed churchyard on Staten Island, the 1767 Wilhelmus Schenck stone in the Flatlands Dutch Reformed churchyard, and the 1773 Mary Schenck stone in the Schenk-Couwenhoven Cemetery in Holmdel, New Jersey.

Family was the foundation of colonial society, as well as the basis upon which government, the church, and the community operated (Middleton 2002: 225). This structure is reflected in the identification of the deceased through reference to familial ties. As with the English, Dutch children were frequently referred to as the sons or daughters of their parents, while married and widowed Dutch women were nearly always identified as wives of their husbands. In this study, the "son of" reference was observed on 71% of the memorials erected for males under 25 years of age. As for the memorials erected for females, a reference as "daughter of" or "wife of" a male head of household was inscribed on 87% of the stones.

In Dutch burial grounds, maiden names were, at times, provided for married and widowed women (FIG. 14), a naming convention that continued to be used widely into the early years of American independence. The maintenance of this practice further shows that, after more than a century—several generations—living under English rule, English customs had still not yet penetrated all aspects of Dutch identity and culture. The presence of natal names on gravestones in most early Reformed churchyards on Long Island has been previously pointed out by Stone (2009: 152, 153). As revealed in this study, the continued use of maiden names on gravestones was more of a localized phenomenon. In all, 44% of the 68 stones recorded on which females are identified as "wife of," have reference to a maiden name. Indeed, this practice is strongly represented on Long Island in the Dutch Reformed churchyards at Flatbush and Flatlands (100%). However, the percentages were much lower in the Reformed churchyards of Fishkill (55%) and



Figure 13. Dutch gravestone of the New York and New Jersey carving tradition carved by John Zuricher and featuring a winged soul effigy, as well as a poetic verse. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

Sleepy Hollow (50%), in New Jersey (27%) and Albany/Schenectady area (25%) burial grounds, and across the Hudson River in the Reformed churchyard on Staten Island (14%).

Conclusion

In summary, evidence suggests that New Netherland colonists and their descendants knew of and used grave markers prior to the 1664 arrival of the English. Gravestones were

erected in the Netherlands from a comparatively early date and, for practical purposes, were likely utilized by colonists as well. Factors such as development pressures, neglect, misidentification, and the likelihood that many markers were made of wood, however, have all contributed to their absence from the archaeological record. As a result, the final resting places of many of America's earliest colonists remain unknown.

The oldest surviving colonial Dutch markers date to the last decade of the 17th century and first few decades of the 18th century. Although there is some variation among the carved stone forms, the most common types include the trapezoidal, tablet, and plank- and post-like markers. With the exception of the tablet, these

burial-marker forms are distinct from local English colonial gravestones of the time. It is highly likely that these forms are a legacy of New Netherland era wood and stone grave marker styles. An additional characteristic of the early non-artisanal gravestones are the brief inscriptions, which often consist of no more than a death date and initials. Dutch-language, full-text inscriptions and acronyms, although less frequent, were at times engraved. Carved iconography, however, is extremely



Figure 14. Marker carved by John Zuricher for Cathelyna Adriejaanse, wife of Theodorus Van Wyck. This marker, which stands in the Reformed Dutch churchyard of Fishkill, provides an example of maiden-name retention and reference to a spouse. (Photo by Brandon Richards, 2004.)

rare and may be a reflection of the carving media and the carver's abilities.

Beginning in the late 1600s, the New York and New Jersey carving tradition was born. The tradition began with New Jersey-based Anglo carvers utilizing local sandstone deposits to create grave monuments similar to those erected in New England. After initial adoption by the colonial English, the regional marketplace expanded both geographically

and culturally within a few decades to include the colonial Dutch in larger numbers. Carvers such as John Zuricher helped to bring the tradition to the Dutch, as there was an apparent ethno-religious preference when choosing a gravestone carver.

The tradition's carved iconography is one of the more pronounced gravestone features. Most common early on were death's heads, a mortality symbol that had long been known

by the Dutch. The late adoption of the tradition and the loss of burial grounds in some of the earliest major Dutch settlements, however, have resulted in this symbol being found in much smaller numbers than the total of non-artisanal markers. The death's head was superseded by the winged cherub by the 1750s, which coincided with a period of increased gravestone production and the diffusion of the carving tradition. The winged cherub dominated area burial grounds into the period of American independence.

Inscriptions of the New York and New Jersey carving tradition provide additional insight into colonial Dutch identity and culture during the mid- to late 1700s. The importance of family is reflected by way of reference to familial relationships of the deceased. In addition, married women continued the Dutch practice of retaining their maiden names, but not uniformly throughout the region. And as a strong indicator of cultural maintenance, the Dutch language is found on many stones, including the majority of markers in some communities just outside of Manhattan, through the close of the colonial period.

In a way, the evolution of colonial Dutch gravestones mirrors that of colonial Dutch society and culture during the same time period. The earliest extant markers reflect distinct traditions whose origins likely predate English contact. Acculturation and assimilation is evident over the next century, as features began to merge with those common among the colonial English. Although there was a persistent transitional delay between English and Dutch adoption of a particular style or practice, the move toward a single common fashion is representative of something else at work. Despite cultural background differences, both groups were in the process of becoming "American."

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Over the past decade, Brandon Richards has led and been involved in numerous archaeological investigations throughout the country. During the last several years, his archaeological work has focused on cultural resource assessments and mitigation as they relate to energy-project development. His research interests and specialties include remote sensing and geoarchaeology. He has conducted extensive research and published articles on burial and commemoration practices as well. Mr. Richards holds an M.A. in archaeology and heritage from the University of Leicester, and a B.A. in geography from California State University, Northridge. He is also on the Register of Professional Archaeologists.

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