

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Stonington Cemetery  
Other names/site number: Phelps family burying ground; Evergreen Cemetery  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: southeast corner of North Main Street and Route 1  
City or town: Stonington State: CT County: New London  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A      \_\_\_ B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____  <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>5</u>	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>10</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Funerary: cemetery  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Funerary: cemetery  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century: Gothic Revival

Late-19<sup>th</sup> century: Neoclassical Revival

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: \_\_\_granite, marble, sandstone, slate, granite-schist, cast iron

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Stonington Cemetery is an approximately nineteen-acre nonsectarian burial ground located at the corner of U.S. Route 1 (Stonington Westerly Road) and North Main Street in Stonington, Connecticut, approximately 600 feet from Quannaduck Cove, which forms the northern end of Stonington Harbor. The cemetery is situated approximately one mile north of Stonington Borough. The cemetery grounds, which encompass an array of burial patterns and funerary monuments, are unified within an irregular gridded plan, and are enhanced by landscaping, both formal and naturalistic, that includes mature shade trees. Stonington Cemetery's physical landscape reflects changing burial practices and funerary customs across its more than two hundred and fifty-year history. Those changes are represented in three important ways. First, the multi-sectional cemetery exemplifies evolving approaches to the management of burial space within Stonington, since the site developed from a colonial family burial ground in the 1750s into New London County's earliest incorporated public cemetery in 1849, which still is in operation today. Second, a variety of period-specific interment patterns and landscape features, including individual graves dispersed throughout the cemetery, gridded family plots, and spacious burial rows, reflect changing approaches to cemetery design, and are representative respectively of colonial burial ground design, mid-nineteenth-century town-cemetery design, and

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late-nineteenth century lawn-plan design. Third, markers, monuments, and mausoleums in Stonington Cemetery reflect historical trends in the design and production of American funerary art ranging in style from simple engraved tablets, to elegant Victorian sculpture and Neoclassical sepulchral architecture.

Stonington Cemetery was expanded at multiple points during its history, and each expansion illustrates contemporaneous practices in management, design, and burial markers and memorials. The original cemetery consisted of a one-acre family burial ground during the mid-eighteenth century. It was expanded to include nearly six acres following the cemetery's 1849 incorporation, and was expanded again to include twenty-three acres after 1888. Today, the nineteen-acre nominated Stonington Cemetery property retains its integrity of location, design, materials, association, setting, and feeling. The cemetery features approximately 2,500 markers. Red and brown sandstones, granite-schist, slate, marble, and granite all were used in burial markers throughout the cemetery. Approximately fifty-seven makers were erected between 1754 and 1800 during the Early American Period of funerary design; approximately 435 nineteenth-century markers pre-date the incorporated cemetery and belong to the Early Republic and Early-Victorian period of memorial art (1800-1849); approximately 1,385 monuments were designed and erected during the Late-Victorian Period of funerary art (1850-1920); and approximately 500 monuments were erected from 1920 to the present day.<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, markers are grouped within their stylistic periods in funerary design. Each grouping is counted as one contributing object. Furthermore, the site of Stonington Cemetery is counted as one contributing element. As a collection, the markers installed after 1920 represent one non-contributing object. In addition to the markers, five built resources including three mausoleums, one receiving vault, and one caretaker's building contribute to the significance of the site.

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## **Narrative Description**

### Setting and Cemetery Grounds Design

Stonington Cemetery, alternatively referred to as Evergreen Cemetery, and originally known as the Phelps Burying Ground, is located at the corner of U.S. Route 1 and North Main Street in Stonington, Connecticut. The boundaries of the nominated property (referred to as "Stonington Cemetery" hereafter) exhibit a generally rectangular shape. The cemetery stretches east from North Main Street along the southern edge of U.S. Route 1 (Stonington-Westerly Road) for approximately one-quarter mile. The property spans approximately one-tenth mile, north-to-south. The cemetery is located approximately one mile north of Stonington Borough, the village within the town of Stonington that the burial space primarily has served throughout its history. The general setting of the cemetery is rural. Its grounds are bounded by a combination of stone walls and iron fences with steel gates along the front (west); stone walls with intermittent gaps along the north and south sides; and woods in the rear (east). A private residential complex is located to the south. Neighboring residential properties are recessed from North Main Street,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Hale Collection*, Stonington Borough Cemetery, #15. Volume #47, 72-154.

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and hedges and mature trees screen the properties from vehicular traffic. Forest abuts the northern and southern boundaries of the cemetery; forest to the north buffers views of U.S. Route 1. The nominated property is part of a larger land tract owned by the Stonington Cemetery Association, the legal boundaries of which extend east towards Cemetery Road and U.S. Route 1A (Elm Street) for approximately one-tenth mile. Wooded land east of the cemetery's Niles Avenue is excluded from the nominated property, because that area has not been planned for use as burial space. Parcels owned by the Stonington Cemetery Association north of U.S. Route 1 and west of North Main Street similarly are excluded.

Stonington Cemetery's grounds follow an irregular, rectilinear grid, within which monuments, landscape elements, and sepulchral architecture punctuate grassy interment areas. A vehicular circulation network of paved, gravel, and dirt avenues define those rectangular parcels, which vary in size throughout the cemetery. Center Avenue and Williams Avenue together function as the central, east-west arterial through the cemetery, extending from the gated entrance on North Main Street to the cemetery's eastern boundary at Niles Avenue. North Avenue, South Avenue, and Phelps Avenue provide secondary east-west access along the northern and southern exterior walls. A series of fifteen avenues running north-to-south, from West Avenue in the west to Niles Avenue in the east, divide the grounds into interment areas and parcels of open land between sixty and 250 feet wide.

Since its first use as a family burying ground during the mid-eighteenth century, Stonington Cemetery underwent a series of expansions that historically were tied to the design of the grounds (Map 1). The Phelps Burying Ground, the oldest section of the cemetery, is the one-acre lot roughly located between East and Pendleton avenues, and south of Williams Avenue. The Phelps Burying Ground is located at the eastern terminus of Center Avenue, approximately 250 feet from the cemetery's North Main Street entrance. Until the mid-nineteenth century, that single-acre tract was the only active burial space within Stonington Cemetery's contemporary boundaries. In 1849, the Stonington Cemetery Association was chartered with the expressed purpose of establishing a public burial ground adjacent to the Phelps Burial Ground. That year, the association first procured from Martha Ellen Edwards of the Phelps family and her husband Eugene Edwards three acres of land located north and west of the Phelps Burial Ground. Those three acres apparently ended along the second east-west walking path north of Williams Avenue. For the first fifteen years of the public burial ground's operation, the new interment space west of East Avenue was symmetrical across Center Avenue. A secondary rectangular burial parcel included in the three-acre tract was located to its east, north of the Phelps Burial Ground and across Williams Avenue.

In 1865, the Stonington Cemetery Association again expanded the cemetery northwards by purchasing a second property from Martha Ellen Edwards and her husband Eugene Edwards. The new two-acre parcel extended from the northern edge of the 1849 cemetery grounds to the southern border of U.S. Route 1. The property was laid out in burial plots with the same formal plan as those on either side of Center and Williams avenues. Twenty-four years later, in 1888, the cemetery was expanded again following the purchase of sixteen acres east of the cemetery's

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original rear wall at the eastern boundary of the Phelps Burying Ground. That land was laid out into burial lots over the succeeding decades.

As a result of its periodic expansions, Stonington Cemetery has three distinct sections within its grounds: the Phelps Burial Ground (the oldest element of the cemetery), the cemetery's western section laid out between 1849 and 1865, and the post-1888 section to its east extending to Niles Avenue. The physical landscape in each section reflects contemporaneous practices in design, management, and burial markers.

The Phelps Burial Ground was Stonington Cemetery's earliest burial space, and its design and markers reflect early American burial practices. It is the only section of the contemporary cemetery where interments occurred during the eighteenth century. The earliest memorial in the Phelps Burial Ground, and therefore in the entire Stonington Cemetery, dates from 1754. That burial, and those that followed in the subsequent decades, were grouped in an irregular arrangement just north and west of the rectangular one-acre lot's center. Over time, the Phelps Burial Ground filled with graves, and as the turn of the nineteenth century approached, these individual interments took on a rectilinear plan. Spacing between rows of graves, however, remained minimal, and monuments or markers occasionally interrupted linear walkways. Today, the Phelps Burial Ground has its highest density of burials towards its northeastern quadrant (Photo 1). There are some family burial plots along the eastern edge, two of which have delineating granite curbing. Some mature trees stand towards the center of the parcel. Although the Phelps Burial Ground is the original burial space within the cemetery, it assumed a secondary position within the landscape following the mid-nineteenth century establishment of public burial grounds to its immediate north and west.

The section of Stonington Cemetery planned between 1849 and 1865, which is located between the front (western) wall at North Main Street and East Avenue, is the cemetery's principal landscape. It is the first setting experienced by visitors entering the cemetery from North Main Street, and that landscape's strong visual character influences the feeling of the grounds in their entirety. The approximately three and one-half acre section is characterized by a grid plan and features primarily nineteenth-century monuments (Photo 2). The arrangement of burial plots is evocative of the 1796 design of The New Haven Burying Ground (Grove Street Cemetery), a National Historic Landmark. Rectangular family plots between East and West avenues are situated within larger rectangular groupings, each approximately thirty-five feet by seventy-five feet in dimension. These larger groupings contain between one and eight family plots separated by a series of grassy paths (Photo 3). The paths that run north to south are approximately six feet wide, while the east-west paths are nine feet wide. Granite curbs generally delineate family plots, and therefore their larger rectangular groups, visually unifying this portion of the cemetery (Photo 4).

Within the same mid-nineteenth-century section of the grounds, a single line of smaller burial plots is found along the length of the western (front) wall of the cemetery (Photo 5). An area of smaller plots, some with granite curbing, also is located east of East Avenue in a secondary interment area north of the Phelps Burial Ground. A line of single graves and a

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pottery field, where Stonington's indigent were buried, are found at the rear of this section, just north of Williams Avenue and west of Pendleton Avenue (Photo 6). Few memorials are located within the pottery field; however, an African American burial section along the western edge of Pendleton Avenue features a number of markers (Photo 7 and Photo 8). Those burial tracts were situated along Stonington Cemetery's far eastern edge of the original cemetery, adjacent to a bounding wall that was removed around 1888 when the cemetery was expanded eastward. The original rear wall of the cemetery was located just west of the line of single graves closest to Pendleton Avenue.

The third section of the cemetery, laid-out as part of the 1888 expansion of the cemetery grounds, is located east of Pendleton Avenue. It was filled during the late-nineteenth century and through the twentieth century. That section features regular and uniform family plots, organized within roughly rectangular-shaped parcels defined by a gravel circulation network (Photo 9). In general, the landscape east of Pendleton Avenue features gently sloping terrain that lends a natural character to the site. Stone curbing is absent in this part of the cemetery. Rather, the gravel circulation networks define the parcels. Irregular topography interrupts a strict parcel plan between Pendleton and Amy avenues on both sides of Williams Avenue, and again south of Williams Avenue between Palmer and York avenues. However, these relatively unfilled areas create a rural feeling in the eastern portion of the cemetery (Photo 10). A ditch that drains from a pond south of the cemetery walls bisects a portion of the eastern cemetery diagonally between Pendleton and May avenues, and likely has prevented burials in its vicinity. A pond within the cemetery grounds is located along Hyde Avenue, roughly between Amy Avenue to the west and Waldron Avenue to the east. This pond appears to be a natural landscape feature. It is surrounded by natural plantings, and one curved drive around the pond is marked by older sugar maples. A parcel of burial plots, defined as single graves in a 1927 map, is situated immediately below the pond. South of Williams Avenue between Palmer and York avenues, natural rock formations prevent burials, and the area instead is defined by stands of mature trees. North of Williams Avenue, there are ten uninterrupted parcels, each approximately 250 feet by fifty feet, that contain two rows of family plots per section. South of Williams Avenue, four clearly defined parcels of the same size are coupled with burial plots on those larger parcels with prohibitive topography. The circulation network in the eastern part of cemetery is wider and more generous than the walking paths of the earlier, western section of the cemetery.

### Landscape Features and Materials

Character-defining landscape features found in Stonington Cemetery include the boundary walls, fences, curbing, roads, paths, and trees. The western edge of the cemetery features a dressed-granite retaining wall with a recently restored mid-nineteenth century cast-iron fence on top (Photo 11 and Photo 12). The wall curves into a semi-circular entry, which is at the approximate midpoint on North Main Street, where steel gates are hinge-mounted to the flanking cut-granite piers. The piers are carved with the names of the 1849 incorporators, and they are matched by piers at the wall-end corners (Photo 13). Atwood Brayton, a prominent local builder and stone carver, was contracted to design and build the stone walls. Tall, tightly fitted and mortared fieldstone walls built around 1851 delineate the northern and southern boundaries of



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the cemetery from the approximate western boundary of the cemetery, and west of the west side of Pendleton Avenue. During the 1880s, a rear fieldstone wall depicted on an 1881 map was disassembled to accommodate expansion and additional burials (Figure 1). The stones then were reused to extend portions of the north and south walls east of Pendleton Avenue (Photo 14 and Photo 15). The extended portions of the northern and southern cemetery walls were not carefully fitted and mortared like the walls east of Pendleton Avenue; instead, they were laid as typically New England fieldstone walls. Occasional gaps in the walls display the woodland beyond the cemetery grounds. Apparent remnants of the former rear wall found in the grass indicate where the original boundary wall once ran.

A seventeen-foot-wide planting zone runs behind the granite retaining wall along North Main Street. The 1881 cemetery map depicts tree symbols suggesting that the area between the wall and the graves beyond was planted in evergreens. While only some of the original cedar evergreen trees remain, the landscape design intent is clear. As depicted on the drawing, trees lined either side of the relatively wide Center and East avenues, the primary circulation routes. Trees also were depicted along the northern and western boundaries of the Phelps Burial Ground. Elements of the nineteenth-century plant materials are present in approximately half a dozen mature, massive linden trees (American basswood, *Tilia americana*) on the east side of West Avenue. The spatial experience of moving “processionally” through the arrival gates along the central axis is strong.

A few large older trees throughout the landscape include white and red oaks, red and sugar maples, a tulip tree, lindens, several old yews, white cedars, and a magnolia (*M. soulangeana*). Some of the avenues on the north half of the grounds have rows of sugar maples characteristic of iconic New England landscapes. The low areas near the pond in the eastern portion of the cemetery have natural, attractive, large trees that may survive from native woods. Some areas in the eastern sections of the cemetery beyond Pendleton Avenue are picturesque, exhibiting a moss, lichen, lawn, and low flowers, asters on shallow soils, rock outcroppings, and masses of grass. Some open areas are present throughout, likely because excavation for burials is impractical within existing rock. According to the recorded minutes of the Stonington Cemetery Association, a number of trees, as well as other landscaping and architectural features, were damaged or destroyed during the 1938 hurricane, and led to a landscape and architectural rehabilitation program afterwards.

Stone curbing commonly delineates family burial tracts in the western section of the cemetery laid out between 1849 and 1865 (as typical for that period), but also can be found in the Phelps Burial Ground. Almost all of the curbs in the cemetery are made of Westerly granite, likely quarried from nearby Westerly, Rhode Island; and Stonington Ridge and Waterford in Connecticut. Their material has been used throughout the Northeast for monuments and architectural work. Visual observation suggests that some curbs west of Pendleton Avenue once held cast-iron fences and gates. However, most of the ironwork has been removed, likely during World Wars I or II when it was a common practice to recycle ornamental iron work for the war efforts.

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## Burial Markers

Stonington Cemetery exhibits a wide range and variety of grave markers in terms of design, arrangement, and material, reflecting specific periods of funerary design and burial customs. Markers include simple tablets, tablets adorned with funerary motifs, markers incorporating architectural flourishes, and elaborate sculptural memorials. The cemetery's collection of burial markers fall within four distinct periods of funerary design: the Early American Period (1750-1800); the Early Republic and the Early-Victorian Period (1800-1850); the Late-Victorian Period (1850-1920); and the Modern Period (1920-present). Those periods represent common eras in monument design observed in Connecticut and New England, generally. Stonington Cemetery, however, is most notable for its extensive collection of Late-Victorian burial markers found in the western portion of the cemetery. Importantly, memorials from each period are clustered geographically, as a result of Stonington Cemetery's history of expansions. Monument form, style, and material therefore provide a visual guide to the cemetery's historical development. Early American grave markers are found in Phelps Burial Ground alongside a majority of the cemetery's monuments from the Early Republic and Early Victorian Periods. The 1849-1865 western section contains Stonington Cemetery's foremost collection of Late-Victorian funerary art. The eastern, post-1888 grounds contain both Late-Victorian and Modern burial markers. Common memorial materials, including sandstone, granite-schist, slate, white marble, and granite, also reflect contemporary trends, and are distributed within the grounds commensurate to historical expansions.

### *1750-1800: Early American Memorial Art*

Eighteenth-century grave markers in the Phelps Burial Ground typically are simple or decorated headstone tablets inscribed with a name, date of death, and occasionally an epitaph. They are either single-arched, or tripartite in shape. Tripartite headstones have a central rounded tympanum and two rounded shoulders, which create a portal-shaped silhouette. Headstones typically are coupled with a smaller footstone, demarcating the full burial plot. Eighteenth-century headstones are oriented along an east-west axis, with their inscriptions facing west. Most markers of this period are carved in slate, granite-schist, or sandstone. Markers carved towards the turn of the century, however, frequently are of white marble. Stones erected around the mid-eighteenth century feature a winged-head or cherub motif in their tympanum, and occasionally include additional border-panel or finial ornaments (Photo 16 and Photo 17). Winged-head motifs, also called "soul effigies," were symbolic of Puritan beliefs regarding death and the afterlife. The Nathan Chesebro (1769) stone is an example of a granite-schist winged-head marker found in the Phelps Burial Ground (Photo 18). Some markers dating towards the end of the eighteenth century feature romantic, Neoclassical urn and willow tree motifs, representing changes in taste and attitudes towards death during this period. Those tablets, usually made of sandstone, often have elaborated tripartite silhouettes.

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*1800-1850: Funerary Art of the Early Republic and the Early-Victorian Period*

Markers dating from 1800 to 1850 exhibit elements of the Neoclassical architectural style, and reflect romantic themes. Tablets with Neoclassical elements, and monuments inspired by Greek Revival and Egyptian Revival-styles primarily are found in the Phelps Burial Ground, but also are located in the western section of the cemetery. Early Victorian (approximately 1832-1850) burial markers may also include Gothic Revival-style architectural elements. White marble and granite were the most common material used for grave markers during this period. However, early nineteenth-century tablets may also have been made from sandstone. Tablets with urn-and-willow motifs, simple rectangular silhouettes, or pediment tympana reminiscent of Classical architecture all were common during the early nineteenth century. White marble urn-and-willow stones are some of the most readily recognizable stones from this period in the Phelps Burial Ground (Photo 19). One example of an elaborate Neoclassical tablet with an urn motif and floral ornamentation is the Captain Lodowick Niles (1813) stone found in the Phelps Burial Ground (Photo 20). The turn of the century also saw the rise of the obelisk and the Neoclassical box tomb. The Charles W. Dension (1817) obelisk also located in the Phelps Burial Ground is representative of Egyptian Revival-style monuments from the first half of the nineteenth century (Photo 21). Neoclassical box tombs in Stonington Cemetery have fluted piers that support engraved horizontal tablets.

*1850-1920: Late-Victorian Funerary Art*

Stonington Cemetery contains an extensive collection of Late-Victorian burial markers, including 1,385 monuments. They are concentrated west of East Avenue, but can be found throughout the cemetery grounds. Funerary art dating from the Late-Victorian period deals with sentimental themes typically distinct from early-nineteenth-century Neoclassical monuments in their subject matter. While Neoclassical memorial art during the Early Republic and Early-Victorian periods drew on classical archeology and antiquarian themes, artists of Late-Victorian period employed modern symbols of death, memory, and mourning. Late-Victorian monuments often incorporated Gothic-Revival architectural elements, or incorporated both Romantic and Neoclassical forms into sculptural monuments with sentimental imagery. Those monuments typically were made of white marble or granite. Column-type markers are one representative example of Late-Victorian design that blended Neoclassic forms with sentimental symbols. Two column-type markers found in the western section of the cemetery include a column wrapped in laurels and a broken column draped in cloth (Photo 22). Another representative Late-Victorian monument is the Hyde Family Monument, an ornate pedestal topped with an urn, draped with cloth, and decorated with oak leaves, and acorns. The inscription on the pedestal reads, "William W. Son of William & Hepzebeth P. HYDE; Born November 17, 1836, Died July 27, 1856" (Photo 23). Common Late-Victorian symbols also include seagoing imagery, such as anchors or ships.

Late-Victorian funerary art often contained sculpted figures, commonly depicting female mourners or angels. The Williams Family monument is a statuary monument in the western cemetery in the form of an angel. A monumental plinth supports an angel holding a trumpet and

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looking upwards towards heaven. The plinth is decorated with a relief of an angel, symbolic of judgment day and the Call to the Resurrection of Christ, carrying two infants; it also is decorated with a floral festoon and inverted torch, a symbol of resurrection. The tomb serves as a monument to multiple family members: Charles P. Williams, his daughter Georgia Williams Warren, and her husband George Henry Warren (Photo 24). Other examples of figurative sculpture from the Late-Victorian period are found in the western cemetery, including various representations of mourning women. At least two markers there include a pedestal, atop of which is a mourning woman dressed in classical drapery with her right elbow resting upon either a tree stump or a fluted column and her head upon her hand. In both instances, the figure's arm lies across her body and holds a bouquet of flowers. A third memorial from 1855, which commemorates "Ann, Widow of Gen. William Williams," depicts a female mourner sitting atop a Neoclassical altar (Photos 25).

#### *1920-Present: Modern Burial Markers*

Memorials in Stonington Cemetery dating from 1920 to the present are non-contributing elements, because they lie outside of the period of significance. Those headstones and monuments from the mid- and late- twentieth century typically are composed of highly-polished granite, either resting on a granite base or directly on the ground. Inscriptions usually read the name of the deceased along with birth and death dates. Later twentieth-century monuments, typically are uniform in shape and design, reflecting standardization that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. Name and death date frequently are the only ornamentation on these marker. Personalized imagery also can be found engraved on some twentieth-century memorials, and many stones are highly polished. An example of this type of non-contributing gravestone is the Dresback headstone. The stone is inscribed "Dresback, Together Again, Sherry L. Apr. 6, 1937-Jan. 14, 2015, David S. Apr. 3 1943-." The stone has etchings of hands holding a heart at center with two vases of flowers below flanking an illustration of a two-story white house (Photo 26).

#### *Burial-Marker Arrangement*

Stonington Cemetery contains a range of burial marker arrangements, which often vary from plot to plot. However, characteristic patterns within the historical sections of the cemeteries are apparent. In the Phelps Burial Ground, headstones typically have an irregular arrangement and an east-west orientation. In the western cemetery, laid out between 1849-1865, monuments typically are arranged in a grid within individual burial plots. A second type of family-plot arrangement common to the western cemetery features a large central monument with secondary monuments marking individual graves. One family plot in Stonington Cemetery has a notable arrangement of markers, which appears to have been derived from that central-monument type. The Denison family plot, located in the extreme northwest corner of the cemetery at the corner of North and West avenues, maintains an unusual concentric pattern of tablets around one central cenotaph monument. Similar to the noteworthy "Sedgwick Pie" in the Stockbridge (Massachusetts) Cemetery, this distinctive orientation of graves represents a rare plot type (Photo

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27). Monuments in the eastern cemetery have a linear alignment along burial rows, and tend to be spaced further apart than in the western cemetery.

### Mausoleums and Support Buildings

The five built resources at Stonington Cemetery include three mausoleums, one receiving vault, and one caretaker's building. Two of the three mausoleums and the receiving vault are one-story Gothic Revival-style buildings clad in limestone. The remaining mausoleum is a one-story Classical Revival-style building clad in granite. In addition to the mausoleum, one support building is located in the cemetery; the caretaker's building and attached shed are a one-story vernacular building clad in wooden lap siding, and wooden shingles, respectively.

#### *Albert Gallatin Palmer Mausoleum*

The Albert Gallatin Palmer Mausoleum is located along the intersection of North Avenue and West Avenue in the northwestern corner of the cemetery (Photo 28). The mausoleum, which was erected ca. 1890, is a one-story, five-bay, Gothic Revival-style building completed in undressed ashlar stone terminating in a slate-shingle, front-gable roof with metal coping on the roof ridge. A stone cornice punctuates the roofline and a chamfered stone string course provides ornamentation. The mausoleum faces east and occupies a rectangular footprint. Its east elevation contains one-story, undressed ashlar masonry buttresses extending diagonally from the wall junctions with dressed, tiered, stone amortizements at the north and south ends. The two bays immediately interior to the buttresses contain dressed stone lancet arch-shaped panels. The sills of the panels rest on the string course. The central bay contains a lancet arch composed of dressed stone voussoirs with stone beading on the interior edge of the arch. The interior of the arch contains a single-leaf lancet-shaped metal door with a wrought iron gate. The gate is composed of eleven vertical rods topped with finials and three cross-bars; it contains a circular and patinated bronze monogram reading "AGP." Immediately above the keystone of the stone lancet arch is a rectangular bas-relief stone reading "A. G. Palmer, D.D." The gable end contains a one-light, fixed-sash, trefoil-shaped window framed with dressed stone. There is a small, circular opening above the window, in the apex of the gable end.

The east end of the front-gable roof contains a dressed-stone flourished cross with a nimbus at its apex. The south and north elevations are blind and contain a shallow sarcophagus projection. The projection terminates in a two-tiered, stone amortizement. The west elevation contains one-story diagonal buttresses with dressed stone amortizements at the north and south ends. The gable end contains a round, dressed stone window filled with plywood. Above the window, in the apex of the gable end, is a small, circular weep hole.

#### *Billings Family Mausoleum*

The Billings Family Mausoleum, which was erected ca. 1896 to commemorate the death of Coddington Billings Jr., is located on the eastern side of West Avenue, north of Center Avenue. It is a one-story, west-facing, Gothic Revival-style, cruciform building executed in

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undressed ashlar stone with iron-clad coping. The four, one-story wings of the cruciform building terminate in front-gable, slate-clad roofs. The crossing terminates in a two-story tower with a six-sided, slate-clad rood spire. The roofline contains a stone and iron-clad cornice and a stone, quatrefoil-pattern parapet. The building's windows are undressed stone, lancet-shaped units with a dressed intrados. The building is surrounded by a poured-concrete curb with poured-concrete chamfered piers placed regularly throughout the curbing. The mausoleum is accessible via three poured-concrete steps leading to the west (front) elevation. Buttresses generally define wall intersections (Photo 29).

The elevation of the west wing contains one bay; a window is filled with plywood. The west elevation of the west wing also contains one bay. The north and south ends of the elevation contain diagonal, undressed ashlar stone masonry buttresses. The buttresses terminate with undressed, square, stone spires terminating in pyramidal, iron-clad pinnacles with iron finials. The bay between the buttresses contains an undressed-stone, lancet arch window with two, dressed-stone interior arches. The three-arch construction contains a plywood tympanum and a double-leaf panel door with a metal, single-leaf entrance gate. The apex of the front-gable roof contains an iron cross with a nimbus on the west end. The south elevation of the west wing contains one bay; the window is filled with plywood. The roofline contains a stone and iron-clad cornice above which is a stone, quatrefoil-pattern parapet.

The north, east, and south wings are identical. Each of the three non-entrance wings contains a single window on each elevation. The windows in the side elevations of the wings are covered with plywood. The windows in the central elevation are stained glass. The glass was designed by the New York City-based J. & R. Lamb Studios. Established in 1857, Lamb Studios were national experts in the design of stained glass, and particularly in the field of religious iconography. The glass in the Billings mausoleum features geometric shapes and floral motifs. The crossing contains a tower, the first level of which is covered by the building's four exterior wings. The second level contains hexagonal, undressed, ashlar stone masonry piers at each of its four corners. The piers terminate in iron-clad hexagonal hipped capitals. The west pier's capital contains an iron finial. All four second-level elevations of the crossing tower contain a central window filled with plywood with the sill resting on a quatrefoil-pattern frieze. Above the window is a faux-gable end with an iron cross with nimbus at the apex of the roofline. The hexagonal spire of the tower is topped with an iron-clad cross with nimbus.

### *Phelps Family Mausoleum*

The 1909 Phelps Family Mausoleum, located on Williams Avenue between Hancox and Palmer avenues, is a north facing, one-story, three-bay, prostyle temple-front, Classical Revival-style building clad in dressed granite ashlar masonry. The building occupies a rectangular footprint, rests on a dressed-stone foundation, and terminates in a front-gable roof. Each corner contains shallow Doric order pilasters (Photo 30). The north elevation contains a shallow prostyle portico supported by a set of two dressed granite, Doric order columns at the east and west ends. The gable end contains a Doric order entablature including an architrave, frieze with triglyphs and metopes, and a raking cornice. The pediment contains a small, single-light, fixed-

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sash, circular window. At the center of the frieze, between metopes, is a bas relief reading "ERSKINE M. PHELPS." The central bay contains a single-leaf stone door with a wrought-iron, filigree, single-leaf gate. The door is framed in dressed stone with a beaded exterior edge. The east, west, and south elevations are blind.

### *Receiving Vault*

The ca.1881 Receiving Vault is a one-story, one-bay, Gothic Revival-style building clad in undressed ashlar stone with an undressed stone stringcourse on all four elevations. The building occupies a rectangular footprint, faces west, and terminates in a slate-shingle, front-gable roof. It is located in the southwest section of the cemetery, adjacent to South Avenue (Photo 31). The west elevation contains a central lancet arch with dressed stone voisoirs. The arch contains a lancet arch shaped inscribed granite panel. The gable end contains a dressed stone, lancet arch-shaped stained-glass window. Above the window, in the apex of the gable end, is a circular opening. The apex of the front-gable roof contains a stone cross. The north and south elevations are blind and contain three undressed ashlar stone masonry buttresses topped with dressed, tiered amortizements.

### *Caretaker's Building and Shed*

The caretaker's building is a one-story, one-bay, wood-frame building clad in wooden lap siding and terminating in an asphalt shingle, front-gable roof with overhanging eaves and with an interior brick chimney on the east end. A shed is located immediately north of the Caretaker's Building. The shed is a one-story, one-bay, wood-frame building clad in wooden shingles and terminating in an asphalt shingle, front-gable roof with overhanging eaves. The buildings occupy rectangular footprints and face west, and are located along Pendleton Avenue between Williams and North avenues (Photo 32).

The west elevation of the caretaker's building contains a double-leaf, wooden vertical board door on the north end and a single-leaf, wooden vertical board door on the south end. The gable end contains a vent. The apex of the gable and the north and south ends of the roof line have small verge board detailing. The south elevation is blind, but previously contained two windows, which have been boarded over with plywood. The east elevation is blind, but previously contained a window on the south end that is now boarded over with plywood. A circular hole is located directly underneath the sill of the window.

The caretaker's shed is a one-story, one-bay building clad in wood shingles and terminating in an asphalt shingle, front-gable roof. The north and east elevations of the shed are blind. The west elevation of the shed contains a double-leaf, wooden vertical-board door with wood shingle in the gable end. The caretaker building is attached to the shed by a wooden vertical board, two-leaf door linking the west elevations of both buildings. The east elevations are connected by an untreated wooden vertical-board wall. A shed roof sloping down from the caretaker's building to the shed encloses the formerly open space between the two buildings.

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A review of archival maps suggests that the caretaker building was moved between 1881 and 1927. A building identified as a “hearse house” appears on the 1881 map in the general vicinity of the intersection of Pendleton and Williams avenues, on the west side of Pendleton Avenue; however, a building is depicted on the east side of Pendleton Avenue, north of Williams Avenue on the later 1927 map. In addition, archival research and visual observation suggest the caretaker building and shed formerly were free-standing buildings. Two distinct buildings are depicted on the 1927 map. Based on visual observation, it is believed that the original structures prior to their potential relocations, were built ca. 1890.

Integrity

Stonington Cemetery retains its overall integrity of location, design, setting, material, workmanship, feeling, and association. The property conveys the evolution of an eighteenth-century family burial ground into a community cemetery and successfully illustrates three types of cemetery design: family burial ground, formal town cemetery, and landscape-lawn cemetery. Resources in the historic district including grave markers, buildings, and landscape features retain their original construction materials and design, and thus reflect their periods of construction. The cemetery retains sufficient numbers of plantings and landscape elements to convey nineteenth-century landscape improvements. Such improvements include the construction of a masonry boundary wall, the linden trees along West Avenue, and the curb-delineated raised plots. Removal and replacement of character-defining features, such as monuments and buildings, has not occurred. Development along the periphery of the cemetery has not occurred, enabling the grounds to retain the integrity of their rural setting.

The following table presents resource name, resource type, construction date, and contributing and non-contributing status. Construction dates are based visual observation and data obtained from the Stonington Cemetery Association. The attached map depicts contributing and non-contributing resources and cemetery expansion over time.

**TABLE 1: CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES – STONINGTON**

<b>Description</b>	<b>Construction Date</b>	<b>Resource Type</b>	<b>Contributing/Non-Contributing</b>
Collective group of Early American-period memorials (approx. 57 markers)	1754-1799	object	contributing
Collective group of memorials from the Early Republic and Early Victorian period, pre-incorporation (approx. 435 markers)	1800-1849	object	contributing
Landscape design and features, including but not	1849-1920	site	contributing



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<b>Description</b>	<b>Construction Date</b>	<b>Resource Type</b>	<b>Contributing/Non-Contributing</b>
limited to curbing, plantings, roads, stone walls and cast iron fencing			
Collective group of Late Victorian-period memorials, post-incorporation (approx. 1,385 markers)	1850-1920	object	contributing
Receiving vault	Ca. 1881	Building	contributing
Caretaker's building	Ca. 1890	Building	contributing
Palmer family mausoleum	Ca. 1890	Building	contributing
Billings family mausoleum	Ca. 1896	Building	contributing
Collective group of 20 <sup>th</sup> -century memorials within period of significance (approx. 500 markers)	1900-1920	object	contributing
Phelps family mausoleum	1909	Building	contributing
Collective group of post-1920 memorials	Post 1920	object	non-contributing

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History – burial customs and town development

Art – funerary art

Landscape Architecture – cemetery design

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1754-1920

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1849: Cemetery incorporated

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Brayton, Atwood (stonemason)

Steven Family Carvers

Manning Family Carvers

Kimball, Chester (stone carver)

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Stonington Cemetery is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for its association with social history, and specifically for its association with evolving funerary and burial customs in the Town of Stonington, and within Stonington Borough, in particular (Criterion A). The cemetery is the only existing example in Stonington of a burial space that represents three distinct phases of cemetery design. It also represents two significant organizational paradigms, since the cemetery originated as colonial family burial ground, and later became New London County's first incorporated public cemetery. Additionally, the cemetery's burials represent a cross-section of Stonington Borough's inhabitants, ranging from those who were influential in the establishment and subsequent development of the Borough as well as ordinary citizens, racial minorities, and the economically disadvantaged. The cemetery also represents changing theories and practices in the funerary arts, including memorial art and architecture, as well as in landscape architecture and cemetery design; its collection of markers and cemetery design styles are exemplary of significant historical trends (Criterion C).

As a nonsectarian burial ground Stonington Cemetery meets the requirements for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria Consideration D for its local level of significance derived from its historical association with the development of Stonington Borough from 1754 into the twentieth century; for the distinctive design features embodied in its plan, monuments, buildings, and landscape features; and for its graves of persons of transcendent importance. The cemetery retains its integrity through the period of significance, which extends from 1754 to 1920, representing the period from the erection of the cemetery's first monument to the date that the design of the cemetery grounds was finalized, according to a 1920 survey. From 1920 to the present, the only notable changes to the cemetery's design include a small section of additional burial plots along the north wall in 1981. The 1920 culmination date also corresponds to the end of the Late-Victorian period in funerary design, which is the era of memorial art best represented on the cemetery grounds. Within the period of significance, the cemetery successfully illustrates the prevailing themes and concepts that governed burial practice, cemetery design and management, landscape architecture, and funerary art, across nearly two centuries, while communicating the history of Stonington Borough through monuments of its historical residents.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Criterion A: Social History**

According to Charles R. Hale's 1933 cemetery survey, the Town of Stonington contains sixty-seven cemeteries and burial grounds. The majority are small family burying sites from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The Denison Burial Ground, the Miner Burial Ground, and the Chesebrough Burial Ground are examples of this type. However, several large burial spaces, in addition to Stonington Cemetery, also are located in the town: the Wequetequock Burial Ground (ca. 1650); the Hilliard Cemetery (first burial ca. 1740, incorporated 1864); the Robinson Burial Ground (ca. 1785); Elm Grove Cemetery (incorporated 1853); St. Mary's Cemetery (ca. 1850s); Old St. Michael's Cemetery (established 1859); and New St. Michael's Cemetery (consecrated 1896). These larger sites are church graveyards, town cemeteries, community burial grounds, and rural cemeteries; each has a distinct historical association with the Town of Stonington. For example, Wequetequock Burial Ground is Stonington's founders' cemetery, where pioneering residents William Chesebrough, Thomas Miner, Thomas Stanton and Walter Palmer were buried during the seventeenth century; St. Mary's Cemetery is the graveyard of Stonington's first Catholic church, established in 1850 following a mid-century surge of Catholic immigrants; and Elm Grove is Stonington's rural cemetery, which features the signature Elm tree-shaped circulation pattern of landscape architect and Rural cemetery designer N.B. Schubarth.<sup>2</sup>

Stonington Cemetery, however, has a set of historical characteristics that distinguishes it from all other local cemeteries. Namely, the cemetery represents changing local approaches to managing and administrating burials, design of those burial spaces, and memorialization. The cemetery is uniquely represents a historical arc of American burial practices from the mid-eighteenth century to the twentieth century, and modes of administrating interments, within a single property. Unlike other local cemeteries, Stonington Cemetery represents a colonial family burial ground and an incorporated town cemetery within one site. Moreover, the cemetery represents a cross section of Stonington Borough's population within the period of significance, including people influential in the town's growth and economic prosperity who are memorialized in the cemetery.

#### Burial Practices and the Management of Death: The Evolution of Stonington Cemetery

The history of the establishment of the cemetery began during the late eighteenth century. On May 7, 1787, William Chesebrough, descendant of the original founder of Stonington, conveyed a farm, including an already established family burying ground, to Charles Phelps, a prominent local doctor. That same day, Phelps conveyed the acre containing the burial ground

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<sup>2</sup> Marilyn J. Comrie, "Elm Grove Cemetery Association History," last modified April 15, 1981, [www.elmgrovecemetery.org/history.pdf](http://www.elmgrovecemetery.org/history.pdf).

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back to Chesebrough for continued use as his family burying ground. In 1792, Chesebrough reconveyed the burying ground land to Phelps, at which point the acre became known as the “Phelps Burying Ground.” It and the farm eventually were ceded to Charles Phelps’ heirs. In 1817, the property was sold at public auction – “except one acre of land reserved where the burying ground is, which is to be enclosed, with privilege to pass and repass to and from the same.”<sup>3</sup> In 1823, the farm was sold back into the Phelps family. By that time, non-Phelps family members from the Stonington community were buried in the designated burial ground upon request, the family apparently never having refused anyone’s appeal for burial.<sup>4</sup>

In 1849, the Stonington Cemetery Association was chartered by those who had friends and relatives buried in the Phelps burying ground (though no Phelps family members were part of the association). By 1850, the burial ground was at capacity, containing more than 500 graves in its single acre, only a portion of which belonged to Phelps relatives. In that year, the association petitioned for enlargement of the cemetery, an act that eventually led to a legal dispute between the association and Phelps family descendants. The association ultimately was granted its request on grounds that the cemetery by then was considered a public burying ground and “propriety, public convenience and necessity required that said cemetery should be enlarged.”<sup>5</sup> The association paid damages to the Edwards family in the amount of \$600.00 to expand upon their private property. Following an 1865 purchase of Edwards family property to the north of the public cemetery, the burial space grew to encompass more than five acres.<sup>6</sup>

Stonington Cemetery was the first incorporated cemetery both in the Town of Stonington and in New London County more generally. The Stonington Cemetery Association received its official incorporation certificate in August of 1849, before New London County’s other early cemetery associations like the Lower Mystic Cemetery Association of Groton, the Poquetannock Cemetery Association of Preston, and the New London Cemetery Association.<sup>7</sup> Stonington Cemetery, therefore, was one of the earliest examples of modern cemetery organization within eastern Connecticut. The organizational paradigm of the incorporated cemetery first began in Connecticut in 1796 with the incorporation of the New Haven Burying Ground. It spread throughout the state subsequent to an 1841 act of the state legislature that facilitated burial ground incorporation.<sup>8</sup> The incorporated-cemetery model was a distinct shift in the ways burial spaces were managed prior to the turn of the century. Incorporated cemeteries reflected political and economic structures of the nineteenth century that contrasted with approaches to the management of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century burial grounds. While families and congregations typically managed earlier burial spaces, incorporated cemeteries functioned as

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas M. Day, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Errors of the State of Connecticut*: Edwards and wife against Stonington Cemetery Association, Volume XX (New York: Banks & Brother, Law Publisher, 1874), 467.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 467.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, 471.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 471.

<sup>7</sup> Frances Burke Redrick, Secretary. *A General Index to the Private Laws and Special Acts of the State of Connecticut: 1789-1943*. The Connecticut General Assembly, Special Act 541, 1945.

<sup>8</sup> *Private and Special Laws of the State of Connecticut: Volume IV* (New Haven: Charles C. Chatfield & Co., 1871).

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regulator and administrator of burial space and burial practice in the nineteenth century. They also represented a commercialization of death; in incorporated cemeteries, families or individuals purchased lots (at varying prices based on the desirability of location) for future generations.

An 1881 map depicts the western cemetery divided into burial plots for purchase (Figure 1).<sup>9</sup> The geometric design provided for efficient and orderly development. It was devised around family plots, which reassured community members that they would be surrounded by their loved ones in death. The move from scattered burial arrangements in the Phelps Burial Ground to family plots reflected changing social attitudes - during this period, family lineage took precedence even in death. Families often chose to purchase multiple adjacent lots as family plots within Stonington Cemetery. Perpetual care, meaning the management and manicuring of lots in perpetuity, was offered as a supplementary option in plot purchase.

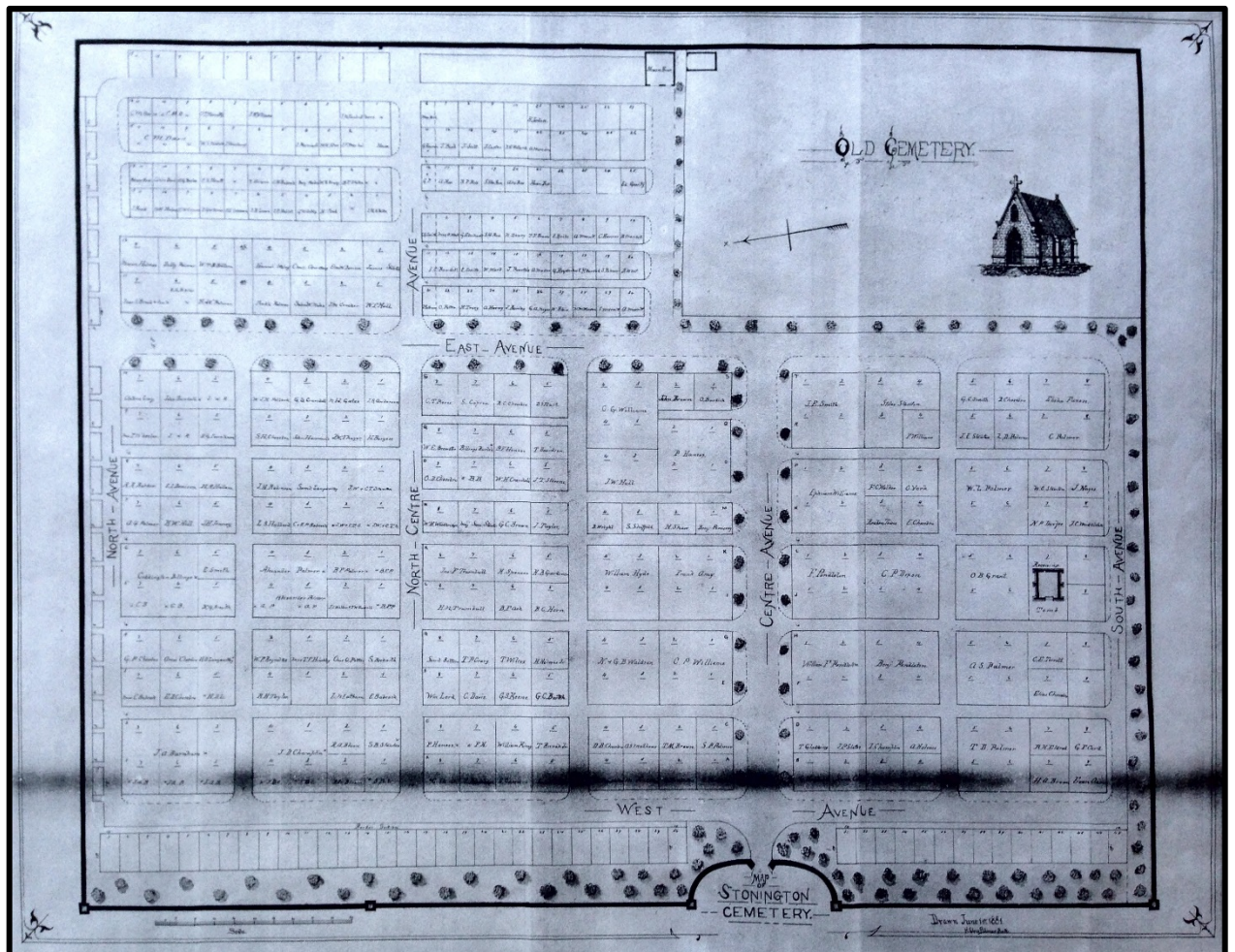


Figure 1. "Map of Stonington Cemetery, burial plots and environs," 1881.

<sup>9</sup> H. Clay Palmer, *Map of Stonington*, 1881.

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The enlarged grounds of the 1849-1865 cemetery quickly were filled with architecturally sophisticated and elaborately ornamented family monuments and associated headstones, necessitating another expansion towards the east following purchase of sixteen acres in 1888. This expansion took place during a period of changing taste in cemetery design. Importantly, however, that design included a greater number of smaller burial plots, suggestive of a move away from multi-generational family burial, and towards smaller family burial tracts. That changing burial practice likely was tied to changing social customs, including the declining importance of family lineages and the rise of the nuclear family unit during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1920, the cemetery's design was solidified, except for one relatively minor addition to the grounds northern edge during the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> A 1949 tracing of a 1927 map depicts the cemetery largely as it exists today (Figure 2).<sup>11</sup>

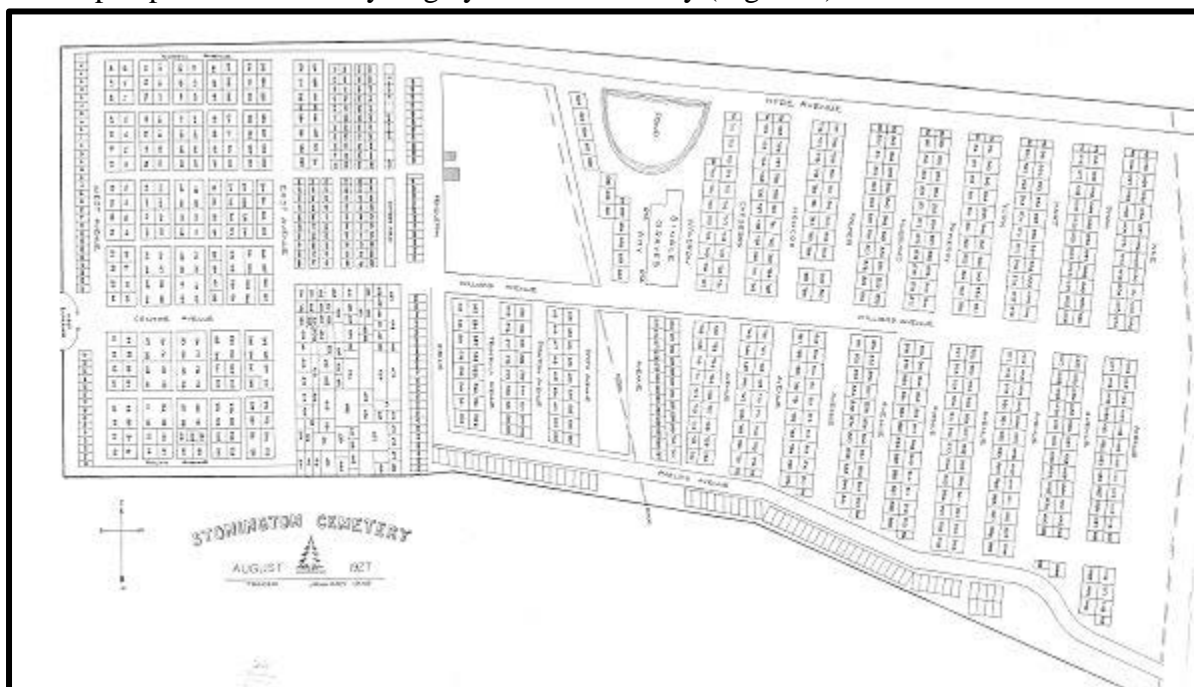


Figure 2. Stonington Cemetery, ca. 1927 (Source: Stonington Cemetery Association).

Stonington's development from a colonial family burial ground to New London County's first incorporated cemetery represents historically significant changes in local ways of managing death, consistent with historical developments occurring both regionally and nationally during the same period. The site is a rare example of an incorporated town cemetery designed around an existing family burial ground. Within Stonington Cemetery, the burial practices associated with

<sup>10</sup> Map, "Stonington Cemetery Association, Proposed Lots North Of Hyde Avenue," Drawn by David Knox, 1982, Stonington Historical Society Collection.

<sup>11</sup> Stonington Cemetery Association, "Stonington Cemetery," accessed March 2017, <http://nebula.wsimg.com/2a1aa610d03bd147f978dc4c011c102d?AccessKeyId=120CE0CBBAF272B0E223&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>.



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both organizational paradigms are apparent within each landscape: Phelps Burial Ground's scattered internment indicate a lack of formal planning, while the post-1849 and post-1888 grounds reflect a structured, geometric plan. Similarly, organizational structures employed in each burial space reflect burial customs as they relate to periods in social history: the Phelps Burial Ground's earliest internments suggest a community-centric burial landscape, where family members were often interred at a distance from one-another; the 1849-1854 cemetery grounds are structured around large family plots, where multiple generations were buried together, reflecting mid-century values about family lineage; and the post-1888 grounds include burial rows, and larger areas for single graves, reflecting the rise of the nuclear family and the individual interment in burial custom.

Collectively, the sixty-seven cemeteries in Stonington represent a broad range of designs and reflect continuously changing burial practices. Individually, many of those cemeteries or burying grounds typify customary approaches to American mortuary design from the periods during which they were established. However, Stonington Cemetery distinctively represents the spectrum of design approaches and burial practices spanning three centuries on a single property. Three paradigmatic cemetery designs – a colonial burial ground, a nineteenth-century formal garden cemetery, and a modern park-lawn cemetery – exist within the boundaries of Stonington Cemetery, and are evaluated later in the document. Each constituent section reflects the considerations of layout, landscaping, memorials, and circulation appropriate to its period of origin. Stonington Cemetery is the only burial space in Stonington where such a broad range of historical approaches to cemetery design and markers, each with aesthetic unity and historical integrity, exists today.

### The Cemetery as a Reflection of the Town's Social, Economic, and Historical Development

As an example of a burial place spanning three centuries, the cemetery's burials represent a snapshot of Stonington's citizenry, and in particular the community in Stonington Borough, since the mid-eighteenth century. From approximately 1750 to 1849, the Phelps Family Burial Ground was the burial site for many Stonington families. Following the 1849 cemetery incorporation, a town-cemetery design was implemented to serve "inhabitants of the town of Stonington;"<sup>12</sup> but the community that the cemetery served was primarily based in and around the Borough of Stonington, as evidenced by the location of the Stonington Cemetery Association's regular meetings, and the make-up of the cemetery's interred.<sup>13</sup> Borough and town leaders and politicians, businessmen, and the average citizen all were buried in the cemetery. In addition, the cemetery was the final resting place for the Borough's African American and indigent populations. However, death was not exempted from social and economic segregation. Elite and influential families occupied prime burial locations towards the front (west) of the cemetery grounds, while the poor and racial minorities were relegated to less desirable plots

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas M. Day, *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Errors of the State of Connecticut*: Edwards and wife against Stonington Cemetery Association, Volume XX (New York: Banks & Brother, Law Publisher, 1874).

<sup>13</sup> Stonington Cemetery Association, Minutes of the Stonington Cemetery Association, "Stonington Cemetery Book of Records," 1849-1985, Stonington Historical Society Collection.

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towards the rear of the 1849 cemetery grounds. Families with financial means installed elaborate markers and refined sculptures or constructed architecturally sophisticated mausoleums. African American burials are marked with simple, raised granite stones that indicated membership to a Stonington Borough Baptist congregation, while those of the less fortunate, i.e., “paupers,” are unmarked. Moreover, memorials of certain individuals not only represented their economic or social status but also their professional interests. Those professions, described in sculpture, inscription, and symbolic motifs, reflect moments in Stonington Borough’s historical development.

In the era of early settlement the current site of the cemetery was part of founding resident William Chesebrough’s property. As the town, and specifically the Borough of Stonington developed and formalized during the nineteenth century, so did the burial ground, which was transferred from the Chesebrough family to the Phelps family. Many family names found in the Phelps Burial Ground, including Chesebrough and Phelps, are engrained in Stonington’s historical memory, and are associated with historical markers and monuments throughout the town. However, their memorials especially are indicative of social and economic success, especially in the later sections of the cemetery, both in form and in quantity. A memorial lineage often represents status across generations, and is significant to understanding local social history. Descendants of early town founders frequently became social and economic leaders; their family plots and monuments are located in desirable sections of the cemetery and their memorials (particularly during the Late-Victorian period) often are ornate in relation to other memorials of the same era within the cemetery. Other members of Stonington’s social and economic elite, including politicians and businessmen, are similarly memorialized in the cemetery, including in Phelps Burial Ground.

The Denison family serves as a striking example of a founding family whose local social and economic significance is expressed through memorialization in Stonington Cemetery; the Denison plot is located at the corner of North and West avenues. The descendants of early Stonington settler Captain George Denison were notable locally across generations; however, two of them were largely responsible for an important shift in the town’s historical development. During the mid-eighteenth century, Edward and John Denison, son and grandson of the Westerly shipbuilder George Denison, built both the first residence and the first wharf at “Long Point,” which is today called Stonington Borough, catalyzing local settlement and maritime-economic growth. Edward and John Denison relocated to Stonington Borough from Westerly, Rhode Island, to conduct their West India trade business.<sup>14</sup> The Denison family plot, distinguished by the burials arranged in a concentric layout by generation like in Stockbridge, Massachusetts’ famous Sedgwick Pie, features thirty-three simple white marble monuments with marble bases arranged in three concentric semi-circles surrounding a central Neoclassical granite monument.<sup>15</sup> Although the exact date of the Denison plots first burial is unknown, it likely was filled soon after the 1865 cemetery expansion. Although the individual monuments are simple, the burial

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<sup>14</sup> Grace Dennison Wheeler, *The Homes of Our Ancestors, in Stonington, Connecticut* (Salem: Newcomb & Gauss Printers, 1903), 152.

<sup>15</sup> John Sedgwick, *In My Blood: Six Generations of Madness and Desire in an American Family* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), 13.

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pattern, the plot size, its location within the cemetery and its central monument's appearance all demonstrate the Denison family's elite historical position.

Following in the establishment of the Densions' Stonington Borough enterprise, sealing and whaling became lucrative enhancing Stonington's position as an important seaport for ship merchants and trading well into the late nineteenth century. The town was linked intrinsically to the sea, and the cemetery (both the Phelps Burial Ground and the western section) contains many burials of those whose livelihoods depended on it: sea captains, ship builders, sailors, and others. Their stories are reflected in the omnipresent imagery of ships, including symbolic anchors from the Victorian era, and epitaphs relating adventures or fated demises at sea. One notable grave entombs Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer, a prosperous sea captain and a sixth generation descendant of one of Stonington's earliest settlers, Walter Palmer. His memorial is representative of Stonington's seafaring heritage. Captain Palmer (August 8, 1799 - June 21, 1877) was the first American to view Antarctica in November 1820 onboard the sloop *Hero*. He is credited with having discovered those portions of the Antarctic continent now known as Palmer Land and the Palmer Peninsula.

As Stonington Borough and the town of Stonington's population grew due to the success of the maritime industries, the local economic base expanded during the mid-nineteenth century. Manufacturing coupled with well-established maritime industry resulted in increased prosperity. The incorporation of the new Stonington Cemetery in 1849 and the ornamental design of its grounds reflected that prosperity. During the mid-nineteenth century, newly designed cemeteries were considered symbols of modernism and of community status, because of Victorian-era sentiments and new movements in American cemetery design. The Stonington Cemetery Association was incorporated to accommodate additional burials during a period of growth, but their new ornamented cemetery also signaled the increased importance of Stonington Borough within the town of Stonington. The design of the new grounds around the Phelps Burial Ground, which took on a geometric plan structured with family plots, accommodated not only the town's political, social, and economic elite but also facilitated the burial of laborers, including African Americans, and indigent persons.

Ornate headstones were absent in the African American portion of the grounds. Rather, simple, rectangular granite markers were placed directly on the ground to define graves. African American markers were approximately eight inches in height and engraved with "Third Baptist Church Fund." Additional inscriptions "Church Member," "Perpetual Care," and family names were included on several of the markers. The Third Baptist Church to which those stones refer was formed in 1846 to accommodate Stonington's growing African American population.<sup>16</sup> The African American plots were organized by the Third Baptist Church, and represent the only plots in the cemetery owned by a religious entity. A possible reason for this unique arrangement was due to the fact that African Americans, historically, had less access to capital than their white

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<sup>16</sup> John V. Hinshaw, "Third Stonington: The Afro-American Baptist Church on Water Street," *Historical Footnotes: Bulletin of the Stonington Historical Society* (May 1992).

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counterparts. The church appears to have taken on financial responsibility for the future care and maintenance of the markers as service to its congregants.

Stonington Cemetery Association's decision to include Protestant African American burials where other cemeteries may have chosen exclusion may have been a response to the numbers of African Americans in Stonington during the mid-nineteenth century. According to federal census data for Connecticut, the African American population in Stonington in 1860 totaled 305 out of a population of 5,522.<sup>17</sup> Stonington's African American population was second to Norwich (n = 326) in New London County.<sup>18</sup> Even though the town's African American population had decreased to 183 by 1890, it remained third in the county after Norwich (n = 488) and New London (n = 339), among towns with populations over 2,500.<sup>19</sup> Stonington Cemetery's inclusion of an African American section mimicked the design of larger turn-of-the-century urban cemeteries, like New Haven Burying Ground.

The area reserved for indigent burials was located directly to the east of the African American section and along the rear wall of the 1849-1865 cemetery grounds. This space was reserved for individuals who did not have the means to pay for a plot or for a monument. Burial during this era often was an unaffordable practice to the poor. The potter's field is devoid of any markers. This is likely a result of the high cost of grave markers: burials without markers likely signify economic expediency.

Stonington Cemetery also contains a number of notable interred individuals. Major George Washington Whistler, the engineer who designed and built the Providence and Stonington Railroad, engineered the St. Petersburg-Moscow Railroad, and was the father of painter James McNeill Whistler, is buried in the cemetery. Major Whistler died in 1849. John E. Atwood and his son Eugene who were important Stonington manufacturers are interred at the Neoclassical Atwood colonnade in the eastern cemetery. The Atwoods moved their Atwood Machine Company plant to Stonington in 1876. Other notable individuals buried at the cemetery within the period of significance include the author James Mason Brown, the poet Henry Chapin, and the painter Griffith Bailey Coale.<sup>20</sup> The cemetery includes a "poets corner" in the eastern cemetery where over fourteen "people of letters" are interred.

Around the time of the 1888 expansion, burial practice changed again. In accordance with landscape-lawn plan design practices, the eastern portion of the cemetery includes more modest markers across sweeping expanses of grassy lawn. Generally, the ornate markers that characterized the mid-century Victorian Era are absent. Late-Victorian monuments from around the turn of the century and the first two decades of the twentieth century utilized similar

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States Census, 1860: Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1864), 40.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Robert P. Porter, *Report on the Population of the United States at the Eleventh Census: 1890* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895), 452-453.

<sup>20</sup> Taliaferro Boatwright. "Stonington Cemetery," *Historical Footnotes: Bulletin of the Stonington Historical Society* (May 1988).

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monumental forms and decorations, but often with more modesty. Consequently, social, racial, and economic status, as expressed through funerary art, is less visible. This is especially the case in the cemetery's non-contributing monuments, which were erected in the wake of the Late Victorian style after 1920. Ultimately, Stonington Cemetery clearly reflects a broad spectrum of internment and memorial practices that reflect the unique composition of Stonington Borough, its economic history, and patterns of changing attitudes towards death, memorialization of the dead, and in relating to the history of cemetery design and layout.

### **Criterion C: Landscape Architecture and Cemetery Design**

Stonington Cemetery is significant under Criterion C for its collection of cemetery designs, which represent three distinct and sequential moments in the history of mortuary-landscape design from about 1750 to 1920. The grounds consist of three essential historical components: an early American family burial ground; a mid-nineteenth-century town cemetery with a family-plot plan; and a late-nineteenth-century landscaped cemetery. Stonington Cemetery is a rare example of a large cemetery planned by adding multiple parcels to a one-acre family burial ground over time. Periodic expansions reflect popular movements in design; however, the size, shape, and natural character of those parcels influenced the cemetery plan.

#### 1700-1849: The Phelps Burial Ground and Early American Family Burial Ground Design

The Phelps Burial Ground, and especially its northern and central sections, embodies the distinct approach to mortuary design employed in Early American family burial grounds. Early American graveyards and colonial family burial grounds, in particular, typically reflected traditional English approaches to two essential aspects of mortuary landscape design: the location of the burial grounds and the arrangement of their graves. Burial grounds were community spaces, since the dead customarily were interred together. But the dead comprised a community of their own. Like their European ancestors, many early Americans believed that graveyards straddled the world of the living and the world of the dead. There, the buried ascended to heaven or sunk to hell. Thus, graveyards were viewed as otherworldly spaces and had special standing within the community landscape.<sup>21</sup> Their spatial location often was an expression of trepidation or an attempt to manage the supernatural; however, other concerns, including the availability of appropriate soil-types, also influenced the location of chosen burial spaces. Some communities attempted to influence a graveyard spiritually by locating it adjacent to a house of worship. In New England, Puritan settlers who largely rejected superstition and Catholic traditions implemented a variation on the traditional European design found in other Christian communities. For the Puritans, burying grounds were simple spaces of private death, where an individual made peace with God alone. As a result, Puritan burial grounds frequently were located at the edge of town where the land was used for agriculture or animal husbandry. Family burial grounds, which were established separately from community graveyards on private land because of settlement patterns or due to religious or social sectarianism, similarly were

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<sup>21</sup> John R. Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 220.

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located at a relative distance from the family's primary residence. Elevated and open land often was chosen for burial sites to prevent flooding for ease of interment.

Despite their different sizes, family burial grounds and early American community graveyards were arranged in a similar fashion. One of the most distinctive features of these burial spaces was the common orientation of graves along an east-west axis. This practice had pagan roots, but was perpetuated by Christians who believed that the Second Coming would align with the rising sun. In New England, this practice was often implemented as the soil or burial grounds allowed. Burials inconsistent with a standard arrangement pattern may have indicated exceptional status: criminals, suicides, the excommunicated, and un-baptized children occasionally were rotated against the common axis, or moved outside of the burial ground all together.<sup>22</sup> Unlike their nineteenth- and twentieth-century scions, early American burial grounds in New England and beyond were filled without planning for long-term familial or generational adjacency. Although spouses and their unmarried children commonly were buried together, relatives often were located at a distance simply because of incongruous interment chronology, or soil conditions. This was the case even in family burial grounds. This design practice highlights an important historical distinction between older American burial grounds and modern cemeteries.

Landscaping was uncommon in the earliest American burial grounds, but in some cases traditional European symbolic plantings (i.e. yew trees) occurred. Although family burial grounds were tended to, many Puritan graveyards were left to overgrow with foliage, providing the community with a reminder of the natural process of death and the unknown beyond.<sup>23</sup> Although some early-American town or community graveyards erected stone walls around their burial spaces, the practice was not a characteristic of the period. The delineation of individual or family plots in eighteenth-century community graveyards was rare. Similarly, walls within and around family burial grounds were uncommon during this period. By the nineteenth century, however, landscaping became more frequent, catalyzed by planting initiatives in Cambridge, Massachusetts and New Haven, Connecticut.<sup>24</sup> The New Haven Burying Ground (Grove Street Cemetery; 1796) was an early example of a cemetery with plantings in character with its formal grid plan. By the 1830s, newer cemeteries such as Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1831) were being laid out with curving roads following the contours of the land; natural features such as ponds and rock ledges; and picturesque groupings of plants, as well as specimen trees, including evergreens, which symbolized eternal life. These new rural cemeteries proliferated widely. Nearby Connecticut examples included Elm Grove Cemetery in Mystic (1854), designed by N. B. Schubarth of New York, and River Bend Cemetery in Pawcatuck (1849). So successful were the rural cemeteries that some older cemeteries such as Grove Street followed their lead by adding denser, naturalistic plantings to the extent that their grid plans allowed.<sup>25</sup> Changing social

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 223-227.

<sup>24</sup> Rudy J. Favretti, "The Ornamentation of New England Towns: 1750-1850," *The Journal of Garden History* 2 (1982), 343.337.

<sup>25</sup> Timothy Dwight, *Travels in New England and New York*, (1969) 137; *Report of the Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Condition of the New Haven Burying Ground, and to Propose a Plan for Its Improvement* (1839).

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attitudes, including attitudes towards death, led to the rise of family-plot designs and burial lot delineation around the same time.

The location of the Phelps Burial Ground in Stonington Cemetery with regards to its historical setting and the arrangement of its graves are characteristic of early American family burial grounds. The land first was used as a burial site by the Chesebrough family during the mid-eighteenth century and later used as a semi-private burying ground under the ownership of the Phelps family. The Chesebrough burials were located on the Chesebrough family farm at a distance from any family residence. The earliest extant marker is the Thomas Chesebrough (1754) stone located in the center of the lot. Why this precise location on the Chesebrough farm originally was chosen for Thomas' burial is unclear; however, the land's relative elevation and its seclusion are consistent with early American approaches to family burying ground design. The Phelps family acquired the land in 1787 and similarly used the site as a family burial ground. Members of the Phelps family resided at a relative distance from the family burial ground across U.S. Route 1 in a house built by Charles Phelps in 1765.<sup>26</sup> The Thomas Chesebrough burial was oriented along an east-west axis, with the length of the interment towards the east. Within the subsequent decades, more burials were conducted near that Chesebrough stone. Some family members with close dates of death, like David Chesebrough (1763) and his father Jeremiah Chesebrough (1763), were interred adjacently. However, most interments had a scattered arrangement, although they maintained the east-west orientation. Later burials of Phelps family members followed a similar orientation. A combination of cardinal uniformity and irregular grave distribution is a significant design feature of the Phelps Burial Ground in its central and northern sections.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, new interments at the Phelps Burial Ground conformed to new notions of cemetery design. Some open spaces between existing colonial graves were filled rectilinearly, and in larger vacant sections whole extended families were buried in line (Photo 1); this was the case for the Hyde family graves along the eastern edge of the Burial Ground. Many nineteenth-century interments there also broke the east-west alignment. A number of stone curbs and fences later were introduced to the grounds during the nineteenth century, likely after the cemetery's incorporation. Stone curbing was erected that defined certain family plots within the burial ground. In addition, an attempt was made to define visually the family lots within larger areas of Phelps Burial Ground with chain fencing and pyramidal stone posts. Artifacts of that awkward effort to apportion irregular interments can still be seen today. Those features, like the nineteenth-century rectilinear burials, can be read as modern design tools employed to modernize an antiquated burying ground. Despite their intended effect, nineteenth-century encroachments have done little to counteract the colonial feeling of the Phelps Burial Ground, especially in its oldest portions.

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<sup>26</sup> Grace Denison Wheeler, *The Homes of our Ancestors in Stonington, Conn.* (1903) 157.

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### 1849-1865: The Western Cemetery and Mid-Nineteenth-Century Town-Cemetery Design

Stonington Cemetery's western grounds represent a unique approach to mid-nineteenth-century town-cemetery design. At the height of the Rural Cemetery Movement, the founders of Stonington Cemetery planned a new cemetery that was more characteristic of turn-of-the-century design than the preeminent design-style of the time, which was typified by picturesque scenery, curvilinear circulation patterns, and expansive cemetery grounds. The 1849 Stonington Cemetery and the grounds of its 1865 expansion both followed a geometric, family-plot plan similar to the design of the 1796 New Haven Burying Ground, and consisted of only five acres. Moreover, the cemetery was atypical of mid-century design because it was planned around an existing one-acre family burial ground. Nevertheless, aspects of the town-cemetery plan, including its rural location, reflect mid-century sentiments regarding the role of cemeteries in communities and Romantic attitudes towards death and burial space.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century early-American approaches to the design of burial grounds were supplanted by new burial practices. As cities and towns became more urbanized, orderly burial became a requisite. By the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, municipalities, addressing increased populations and the threat of epidemics, began constructing dedicated burial grounds separated from the urban center and away from religious institutions; those burial spaces, however, remained in geographic proximity to the town's population for convenience. The overcrowding of interments in town greens and church graveyards had led to growing health concerns about urban burials. In response to these concerns, efforts to beautify existing burial grounds, and to design beautiful new burial grounds became commonplace, representing a concomitant change in attitudes regarding how the dead should be memorialized. The earliest example of a planned urban cemetery in the United States that was operated by an incorporated body was the New Haven Burying Ground. That burial space utilized a grid-plan and a family-plot structure, which allowed families to acquire lots for the interment of future generations.<sup>27</sup> Ornamental plantings at Grove Street Cemetery punctuated long rectangular tracts that were divided by wide walking paths. New cemeteries in the Grove Street-style appeared on the edges of American cities and towns during the first decades of the nineteenth century. However, changing attitudes towards death and ideas about urban burial practices led to the Rural Cemetery Movement, also known as the "garden cemetery movement" during the 1830s-1850s. That trend promoted large and picturesque cemeteries that were removed entirely from urban areas. The movement was inspired by Père Lachaise in Paris, established in 1804, and was realized in America at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1831.

The Rural Cemetery Movement swept the United States following the establishment of Mount Auburn Cemetery, as well as Laurel Hill in Philadelphia in 1836, and Greenmount Cemetery in Baltimore in 1838. Following the lead of larger urban areas, many small cities and

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<sup>27</sup> Bruce Clouette. "Grove Street Cemetery." National Historic Landmark Inventory, Nomination Form. Public Archaeology Survey Team, Inc. September 22, 1999.



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towns began to establish rural cemeteries around mid-century. In Connecticut, Bridgeport's Mountain Grove Cemetery was established in 1849, and New London's Cedar Grove Cemetery was established in 1850. Rural cemetery designs typically encompassed large areas and incorporated curvilinear walking and carriage paths. Monuments were scattered throughout the cemetery grounds and typically placed in complement with the landscape for the creation of picturesque vistas. Rural cemeteries were reflections of Victorian-period sentiments about death, and many rural cemeteries were given names that recalled Romantic landscapes, or referred to landscape features with symbolic meaning: Cedar Hill, Oak Hill, Rose Hill, Harmony Grove, Mountain Grove, Wildwood, Evergreen, and Swan Point were all typical names of American rural cemeteries established around mid-century. Their grounds were intended to provide a picturesque landscape for both the deceased and for the living. They became popular "pleasure grounds" for city-dwellers who sought naturalistic refuge from the hustle and bustle of the city.<sup>28</sup> They also functioned as museums of monumental art. Given their various roles, rural cemeteries acquired the status of important cultural institutions within their communities.<sup>29</sup> Municipal leaders and local residents often viewed rural cemeteries, or the establishment of one, to be a symbol of status, prosperity, modernism, and taste.

The founders of Stonington Cemetery undoubtedly were aware of the Rural Cemetery Movement and the elements of rural cemetery design when they incorporated the cemetery in 1849. However, the cemetery that they planned was characteristically unlike rural cemeteries. The new cemetery contained only about three acres of ground for new burials, and was designed around an existing one-acre burial ground. That design was based on a geometric grid of burial plots, and apparently did not incorporate natural features for picturesque effects. The plan emanated from a central avenue running east-west through the middle of the parcel originating at the western entrance; where that avenue abutted the existing Phelps burial ground to the east, a second perpendicular avenue divided the grounds into front (west) and rear (east) sections. The front portion of the cemetery was divided into a rectilinear grid of equally sized burial spaces; each tract was comprised of gridded family plots and separated by walkways (Photo 2, Photo 3, and Photo 4). Those rectangular tracts were symmetrical across Center Avenue, and defined by granite curbing. In the rear section of the cemetery north of the Phelps Burial Ground, rows of family burial tracts were laid out to the west, and an African American section and a potter's field were located along the western edge. Historical maps and current conditions indicate that lines of ornamental plantings (including evergreen trees) existed from this period along the front wall of the cemetery, and along Center and East avenues. In 1865, the Stonington Cemetery Association acquired two more acres of land to the north of the 1849 grounds, and the existing grid plan was extended to north.

The 1849-1865 design of the grounds around the Phelps Burial Ground was representative of earlier geometric and ornamented town-cemetery designs, like that of New

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<sup>28</sup> Blanche Linden-Ward, "Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds: Tourist and Leisure Uses of Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemeteries," in *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture*, edited by Richard Meyer, (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1992), 293-328.

<sup>29</sup> French, Stanley. "The Cemetery As Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery Movement.'" *American Quarterly* 26:1 (1974): 37-59.

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Haven Burial Ground. That design, which has been called a "formal garden design" (distinct from "garden cemetery" design during the rural cemetery period), was characterized by its family plot organization and often axially aligned ornamental plantings.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Grove Street Cemetery, plantings included straight lines of poplar trees and scattered weeping willows that punctuated the landscape. Stonington Cemetery also reflected the design of the 1796 New Haven cemetery in its inclusion of a potter's field, and a distinct section for the town's African American interred. While Stonington Cemetery's western section is characteristic of earlier town-cemetery designs, it does reflect some aspects of prevailing mid-century thought: most notably, the cemetery has a rural location. The cemetery landscape also appears to have been associated by the public with Romantic design and with rural cemeteries, since the cemetery informally acquired the name Evergreen Cemetery soon after its incorporation; that name, which was common for American rural cemeteries, referred to the lines of evergreen trees planted along the cemetery's front wall, which were symbolic of eternal life. Moreover, the historical record (including the minutes of the Stonington Cemetery Association), indicate that the cemetery was available for used by the public as a leisure park, and was frequented by visitors, as was the fashion during the Rural Cemetery Movement.<sup>31</sup>

Five years following the establishment of Stonington Cemetery, the town of Stonington acquired a larger rural cemetery: Elm Grove Cemetery was dedicated in 1854, and was a model example of rural cemetery design. That large cemetery was planned by the citizens of Mystic to serve their community, and the residents of the town, generally.<sup>32</sup> The development of that nearby burial space highlights the essential character of Stonington Cemetery. Stonington Cemetery appears to have been designed as a town cemetery to serve the families and towns people of Stonington Borough, specifically. Its size was not conducive for large numbers of burials, and its family-plot structure (as well as its distinct sections for the town's African American and indigent) represent an attempt to provide for the fundamental components of that community. Because it was built in 1849, however, the cemetery likely served as a symbol of the town's mid-century prosperity, and its attractive landscape was utilized as a public park for residents of the Borough, as rural cemeteries were elsewhere in the country. Stonington Cemetery's western section, therefore, represents a hybrid approach to cemetery design, which layers a Romantic sensibility over a rational, Neoclassical grid plan.

#### 1888-1920: Landscape-Lawn Design in Stonington Cemetery's Eastern Section

The plan of the cemetery grounds east of Pendleton Avenue, which was laid out as part of the 1888 expansion, is characteristic of the late-nineteenth century landscape-lawn style of cemetery design. The landscape-lawn plan, also known simply as "the lawn plan," was a style pioneered by landscape designer and cemetery superintendent Adolf Strauch during the second half of the nineteenth century. That design was Strauch's critical response to typical rural

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<sup>30</sup> Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity* (1991), 4.

<sup>31</sup> Stonington Cemetery Association, Minutes of the Stonington Cemetery Association, "Stonington Cemetery Book of Records," 1849-1985, Stonington Historical Society Collection.

<sup>32</sup> Marilyn J. Comrie. "Elm Grove Cemetery Association History." Last modified April 15, 1981. [www.elmgrovecemetery.org/history.pdf](http://www.elmgrovecemetery.org/history.pdf).

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cemetery-designs found throughout the United States by mid-century. By the 1950s, many critics of the Rural Cemetery Movement argued that those burial spaces were becoming crowded and cluttered. Clutter was seen to be in conflict with one of the rural cemetery's fundamental purposes: serving as a naturalistic escape from crowded cities.<sup>33</sup> In 1855, Strauch designed a section of Cincinnati's Spring Grove cemetery that embodied his ideas for a new type of modern cemetery. Strauch's landscape-lawn plan formalized burial patterns, which were scattered in rural cemetery designs, and incorporated large grassy burial areas. He placed restrictions on marker size and thinned trees and shrubs. The resulting "open" cemetery plan was pastoral instead of picturesque.<sup>34</sup> Landscape-lawn cemeteries in the style of Spring Grove became popular in the decades following its design.

Landscape architect Jacob Weidenmann, a friend of Adolf Strauch and a proponent of the open lawn plan, designed Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1866. There, Weidenmann incorporated sweeping grassy areas and stipulated that family burial plots include a single major monument with low individual markers. Fences and curbing were prohibited, which created uninterrupted views within the funerary landscape.<sup>35</sup> Weidenmann later defined the essential elements of the lawn plan in his 1888 treatise *Modern Cemeteries: An Essay Upon the Improvements and Proper Management of Rural Cemeteries*.<sup>36</sup> By the first decades of the twentieth century, the lawn plan was the preeminent design for new American cemeteries; many saw its plan as harmoniously mirroring the design of emerging middle-class suburbs. The rise of the lawn plan also represented a "retreat from sentimentality" in American attitudes towards death.<sup>37</sup> That retreat was complete around 1920, as reflected in the coterminous decline of Victorian funerary markers.

Adolf Strauch's 1855 design at Spring Grove and Weidenmann's 1866 design at Cedar Hill epitomized the landscape-lawn style. The central features of those landscape were large and open, grassy burial areas. However, Strauch and Weidenmann importantly retained many natural elements that contributed to the pastoral setting. Water features, sloping terrain, and wooded areas were all incorporated into the lawn plan. However, those features typically surrounded open burial areas. In particular, heavily-wooded areas defined the edges of grassy expanses, and any grouped trees within the burial areas were thinned. The external boundaries of the cemetery were not defined by formal rows of plantings or high walls; instead the landscape was intended to blend with its surrounding environment. Open areas within the grounds were planned systematically for burials. Strauch frequently structured those spaces by using burial rows, separated by walking paths. Space was left between individual graves so as not to create clutter. This system maximized the amount of potential interments without detriment to the pastoral setting. Systemization also made maintenance of grassy areas easier; importantly, the rise of

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<sup>33</sup> Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity* (1991), 97.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> David F. Ransom, "Cedar Hill Cemetery, Hartford Connecticut." National Register of Historic Places nomination form. July 1996.

<sup>36</sup> Jacob Weidenmann, *Modern Cemeteries: An Essay on the Improvement and Proper Management of Rural Cemeteries* (Chicago: The Monumental News, 1888).

<sup>37</sup> Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity* (1991), 99.

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lawn-plan cemetery coincided with the advent of rotary blade lawn mowers. Strauch also forbade the erection of exceptionally tall monuments, and advocated the use of uniform monuments. His strict management of burial markers and of plantings at Spring Grove served as a model for many new cemeteries and cemetery managers around the turn of the century.<sup>38</sup> However, it was often the case that cemeteries more readily adopted landscape-lawn design than the strict regulations that Strauch also promoted.

The plan of Stonington Cemetery's eastern section, laid out between 1888 and 1920, is characteristic of landscape-lawn cemetery design. The expansion occurred during the peak popularity of the lawn-plan model, and unlike with the western cemetery grounds of 1849 and 1865, the Stonington Cemetery Association's 1888 land-acquisition was conducive to the incorporation of most aspects of that popular design. Approximately thirteen acres of the acquired property was laid out into grassy burial spaces as its primary landscape feature. Importantly, those burial spaces were designed to accommodate long rows of single and family burial plots. Although the eastern cemetery maintained the rectilinear structure of the cemetery as a whole, the western cemetery's grid was abandoned in the new design in favor of a Strauchian design - no granite curbing was incorporated into an overall plan and wide circulation paths replaced axial walkways.

In the southern and western sections of the post-1888 cemetery, natural features are incorporated into the cemetery, as was typical of lawn-plan designs (Photo 10). A grassy area of graves planned in rows is situated just south of the pond between Amy and Waldon avenues. Landscape-lawn cemeteries, including Strauch's Spring Grove, commonly incorporated water features to create scenic views. The large tract south of Williams Avenue between Palmer and York avenues also maintains much of its natural character; grassy open areas, a thin group of trees, and rocky ground all contribute to pastoral character of the eastern grounds. On the western side of the post-1888 cemetery - between Amy and Pendleton avenues north of Williams Avenue and between Amy and Trumbull avenues to the south - wooded area and sloping terrain also contribute to the natural character of the site, and serve as a boundary between the western and eastern cemetery. At the eastern edge of the post-1888 cemetery, the grounds transition into wooded land beyond Niles Avenue. The eastern section of the cemetery maintains its original plan to this day. A map of Stonington Cemetery indicates that the general lawn plan and its burial plots were laid out by 1920.<sup>39</sup> That map also indicates that the only change that has been made to that plan is the addition of a line of burial plots along the north cemetery wall.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> George B. Tobey, "Adolph Strauch, Father of the Lawn Plan," *Landscape Planning Quarterly* 2:4 (1976): 283-294.

<sup>39</sup> Map, "Stonington Cemetery, Drawn April 1920," Traced by Nicholas Horochivsky, 1959, Stonington Historical Society Collection.

<sup>40</sup> Map, "Stonington Cemetery Association, Proposed Lots North Of Hyde Avenue," Drawn by David Knox, 1982, Stonington Historical Society Collection.

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### **Criterion C: Funerary Art**

Stonington Cemetery is significant under Criterion C for its collection of memorial art, which embodies the distinctive character of three periods of American funerary design: the Early American Period (1750-1800), the Early Republic and Early-Victorian Period (1800-1850), and the Late-Victorian Period (1850-1920).

#### 1750-1800: Early American Memorial Art

Approximately fifty-seven burial markers in the Phelps Burial Ground dating from 1754 (the date of the cemetery's earliest marker) to 1800 illustrate the forms, decorative styles, and materials employed by colonial and early American funerary artists. The central and northern portions of the burial ground contain the oldest funerary markers in the cemetery, which are both tablets and table-tombs. Tablet-type memorials there are comprised of either a single headstone or a paired headstone and footstone. They have single-arched or tripartite shapes, and are inscribed with names, dates of death, and occasionally epitaphs. Table-tomb monuments consist of a rectangular stone slab set into the ground or raised on stone piers. Craftsmen and stone-carving shops typically cut both types of monuments from locally sourced materials. Slate tablets carved in Newport, Rhode Island, sandstone tablets from the Connecticut River Valley, and granite-schist tablets from eastern Connecticut are all found in the burial ground. Although the monuments are decorated variably, many gravestones commonly feature winged-head decorative motifs characteristic of Early American funerary design. That motif, like the tripartite shape of many Early American headstones, has symbolic meaning associated with Puritan religious beliefs. In three cases, groups of gravestones are attributable to notable Early American funerary artists and stone-carving shops that applied distinct approaches to winged-head monuments. Markers made by the John Stevens shop of Newport, Rhode Island, the Manning family of Eastern Connecticut, and Chester Kimball of the Connecticut River Valley individually are representative of their producers' prominent bodies of work and of regional styles.

The shape of Early American-period gravestones and the design of their central decorative motifs are representative of funerary customs and prominent attitudes towards death. Most eighteenth-century headstones, including those in the Phelps Burial Ground, are either single-arched or tripartite, with a central, rounded tympanum and two rounded shoulders. Those portal- or doorway-shaped designs are symbolic of Puritan beliefs regarding the passage of the soul from our world into the afterlife.<sup>41</sup> In the Phelps Burial Ground, as in other Connecticut burial grounds dating from the mid-eighteenth century, most gravestones feature a central winged-head motif. That motif, also called a "soul-effigy," is an eighteenth-century Puritan derivative of allegorical funerary imagery common in England and the American colonies.<sup>42</sup> The

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<sup>41</sup> Harriette Merrifield Forbes, *Gravestones of Early New England (And the Men Who Made Them)* (Boston: Center for Thanatology Research, 1927).

<sup>42</sup> Allan I. Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and Its Symbols* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1966).

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winged-head evolved from winged-skull motifs, or “winged heads of death,” that were employed by colonial memorial artists as a "memento-mori," or a reminder of mortality. Examples of those earlier designs can be found in Stonington's Wequetequock Burial Ground. Winged-head motifs differed from winged-skulls and other allegories of death because they referred to the soul in mediate form as it moved between the temporal world and the infinite realm of God. Soul-effigy symbols became the dominant funerary motif in Connecticut and other New England colonies during the eighteenth century. The evolution of the winged-head motif has been studied at length by gravestone scholars, and those studies make clear that soul-effigy tablets often are both representative of Early American funerary art, generally, and illustrative of regional variations on its design, particularly.<sup>43</sup>

In the Phelps Burial Ground, soul-effigy headstones represent three regional styles and three prominent memorial producers. Members of the John Stevens family of Newport, Rhode Island, carved the oldest markers in Stonington Cemetery, dating from 1754 to 1786. The John Stevens shop is considered the most significant of the Rhode Island funerary art producers, and its recognizable slate tablets are characterized by detailed decoration, including elaborate winged-head motifs. John Stevens I (1646-1746) and his sons, John Stevens II (1702-1998) and William Stevens, worked at the family shop alongside John Stevens III (1753-?). The Boston School of gravestone carving, which employed slate tablets, ornate designs, and allegorical images of death, influenced Stevens family designs. However, John Stevens I adopted soul-effigy symbolism by 1710, and his shop developed their own regionally distinct style.<sup>44</sup>

It is likely that the second generation of Stevens carvers made the Thomas Chesebrough (1754) stone, the Edward Hancox (1755) stone, the Nathaniel Thompson (1760) stone, the Ann Hancox (1760) stone, the Asa Weldon (1761) stone, the David Chesebrough (1763) stone, and the Jeremiah Chesebrough (1763) stone, all located in the central section of the Phelps Burial Ground. Those markers are made of blue-black or grey-green slate, and feature variations on two winged-head designs. Both designs have round faces, almond shaped eyes, and feathered wings, as well as decorated border panels with vertically-coiling vine designs (Photo 16). The Robert Potter (1786) stone is unique within the cemetery, and was carved by John Stevens III, who is thought to have been one of the most talented New England engravers.<sup>45</sup> That 1786 stone features a detailed winged head with life-like hair, lips, and facial expression. It is a strong example of John Steven's artwork, although it does not appear to be signed (Photo 17). A nearly identical stone, however, exists in Rhode Island (the Isaac Church (1789) stone) that bears John Steven III's signature and confirms the Potter stone's identification.<sup>46</sup>

The Manning family carved the majority of the eighteenth-century winged-head-motif headstones in the Phelps Burial Ground. Josiah Manning (1725-1806) and his sons Rockwell (1760-1806) and Frederick (1758-1810) were eastern Connecticut's preeminent stone carvers for

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<sup>43</sup> *Markers: The Annual Journal of Gravestone Studies*, 1-31 (1980-2014).

<sup>44</sup> Vincent F. Luci, *Mallet & Chisel: Gravestone Carvers of Newport Rhode Island in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2000).

<sup>45</sup> Ludwig, *Graven Images*, 325.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 327.

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nearly half a century, and their funerary style was imitated across the state.<sup>47</sup> The typical Manning design included a winged face with a frowning expression, crown-like upswept hair with side curls, and enlarged eyes, brow and lips. Most Manning stones were carved of granite-schist, quarried near their Scotland and Norwich, Connecticut, carving shops. The Nathan Chesebro (1769) stone is a well-preserved example of the Mannings' typical soul-effigy design. That stone has an irregularly shaped tympanum that contains a soul-effigy with pronounced facial features and wings. Above the motif is a scroll design, and half-circle floral patterns (Photo 18). Other less ornate Manning stones in the burial ground, like the Mercy Ellis (1790) stone, feature a similar central motif with cloud-like half-circles in the upper tympanum. The William and Patty Gardner (1793) stone is an uncommon double-memorial example of a children's-stone design. That stone has two tympanums and three shoulders on a single piece of granite-schist – a symbolic unity of two stones in memory of siblings that died one year apart.

Two sandstone winged-head markers carved by Chester Kimball (1763-1824) are located along the eastern edge of the Phelps Burial Ground. Chester Kimball was a prolific engraver in southeastern Connecticut around the turn of the nineteenth century, and a member of a well-known carving family that included his father Richard and his brother Lebbeus Kimball. The Kimball family used sandstone quarried from Middletown, Connecticut, as was the practice of many carvers in the Connecticut River Valley and in southern Connecticut during the eighteenth century. Chester Kimball primarily worked in New London, but also had branch shops in Stonington, Norwich, and North Stonington.<sup>48</sup> Kimball carved the Charles Phelps Jr. (1791) stone and the Patty Allyn (1794) stone in the Phelps Burial Ground. Those sandstone markers include a prominent soul-effigy relief in a tympanum punctuated by three six-pointed florets; the broad wings are a recognizable characteristic of his work.<sup>49</sup> The shape of the stones, which is more like Neoclassical markers of the nineteenth century than Manning family or Stevens shop markers, is indicative of stylistic changes occurring during this late moment in the Early American period. It is likely that Chester Kimball carved the Neoclassical Anna Chesebrough (1805) stone as well as other gravestones in the Phelps Burial Ground dating from the Early Republic and the Early Victorian Period. The Anna Chesebrough stone features an urn-and-willow motif, but also includes two six-point rosettes, border framing and typography all similar to the Phelps and Allyn stones carved by Kimball a decade earlier.

### 1800-1850: Funerary Art of the Early Republic and the Early-Victorian Period

Over 400 funerary monuments dating from 1800 to 1850 in Stonington Cemetery reflect the rise of Neoclassicism and Romanticism during the Early Republic and the Early-Victorian Period. Monuments in the western and southern portions of the Phelps Burial Ground in particular reflect a turn-of-the-century shift away from Puritan iconography and towards Romantic conceptions of death and the afterlife. Tablet headstones there are engraved with

<sup>47</sup> James Alexander Slater, *The Colonial Burial Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men who Made Them* (Torrington: Connecticut Academy of the Arts, 1987).

<sup>48</sup> Ernest Caulfield, "The Papers of Dr. Ernest J. Caulfield on Connecticut Carvers and their Work," *Markers: The Annual Journal of Gravestone Studies* 8 (1991): 201.

<sup>49</sup> Slater, *The Colonial Burial Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men who Made Them*, 1987.

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Romantic and Neoclassical imagery and primarily are cut of white marble; they stand in contrast to neighboring slate, granite-schist, and sandstone headstones from the eighteenth century. Egyptian Revival-style obelisks and Neoclassical table-tombs also reflect the design trend of incorporating architectural elements into funerary designs. Moreover, standardized tablet designs reveal changing production techniques during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Some of the earliest nineteenth-century memorials in Stonington Cemetery are sandstone or white-marble tablets with engraved urns and willows in their tympanum. Social and cultural shifts coterminous with the rise of Romantic aesthetics, led to the weakened status of the winged-head symbol in the funerary arts around the end of the eighteenth century. Americans turned away from religious symbolism that they viewed as naïve or antiquated in favor of Romantic musings on memory and mourning. While some soul-effigy motifs visually evolved into baroque cherubs, as was the case in the carvings of John Stevens III, Neoclassical motifs largely replaced winged heads by 1800. Urn-and-willow motifs are the earliest common expression of Neoclassicism in funerary art in America. Those symbols were imported from Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century as Romanticism was popularized in continental arts and sentimentality became a prevalent cultural attitude. During the period of secularization following the mid-century Great Awakening, Americans accepted European romanticism in the funerary arts, since a cultural repositioning already was underway: New Englanders increasingly rejected visions of death as an inevitable journey towards heaven or hell, and instead associated death with sleep and the afterlife and with Arcadian landscapes. The willow and the classical urn, therefore, symbolized the natural melancholic and memory historicized.

A line of white-marble urn-and-willow headstones in the western section of the Phelps Burial Ground exemplifies this representative style: there, individual tablets commemorate William Hyde (1808), Rhonda Hyde (1822), Henry Hyde (1826), Benjamin P. Hyde (1828), and Gurdon Hyde (1831). Both the gravestones' central motifs and their embellished tripartite shapes are typical of early-nineteenth-century design; their silhouettes reflect Neoclassical influence on tablet shape (Photo 19). Moreover, the similarity of their designs suggests that the stones were mass-produced, like many monuments of the period. In the case of the William Hyde (1808) stone and the Harriet C. Hyde (1822) stone, their tympanum images and silhouettes are identical; however, their inscriptive text is recognizably different. Many large carving shops of the early-nineteenth century (and some the largest shops of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) would produce standardized "stock" markers that were inscribed upon order. It is likely that the Hyde stones were produced in that manner. Other characteristic urn-and-willow-type stones in the Phelps Burial Ground include the Anna Chesebrough (1805) stone and the Fanny Stanton (1822) stone. The Capt. Lodowick Niles (1813) stone is an elaborate white-marble tablet that features a central urn motif, but does not include a willow-tree (Photo 20).

In the decades leading up to the cemetery's 1849 incorporation, popular interest in Classical design led to the incorporation of Neoclassical forms in funerary memorials. Tablets of the period were decorated not only with urns, but also with images of columns and other architectural elements from antiquity. While some funerary artists elaborated Early-American-period tablet-shapes into new Neoclassical silhouettes, others eliminated rounded-tympanum



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arches altogether in favor of simple rectangular tablets, or tablets with pediment-like shoulders. Perhaps the most recognizable development of the period, however, was the adoption of the Egyptian Revival-style obelisk by memorial artists. Obelisks are an Egyptian symbol for eternal life adopted by nineteenth-century Christians as a symbol of rebirth and a connection between earth and heaven. The use of obelisks can be linked to the Egyptian Revivalism brought about by Napoleon's Egyptian campaigns at the conclusion of the eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup> The Phelps Burial Ground contains many obelisk monuments from the first half of the nineteenth century. One such monument commemorates members of the Denison family, including Charles W. Denison (1817) and Capt. Amos Denison (1816). That white-marble obelisk is located in the western section of the Phelps Burial Ground (Photo 21).

Other funerary artworks in Stonington Cemetery representative of the period include Neoclassical box-tombs. Early-nineteenth-century box-tombs differed from their eighteenth-century predecessors primarily in the design of their plinths or piers. While eighteenth-century box-tomb piers typically were simple and square in shape, early-nineteenth-century table-tombs had piers with Neoclassical designs inspired by the Classical orders. Neoclassical altars and sarcophagi also were common funerary designs towards the mid-century. Some funerary artists of the Early Victorian period (approx. 1830-1850) incorporated Gothic Revival-style elements into memorials. Romantic, Gothic Revival-style designs and sentimental themes came to dominate the production of monuments through the rest of the Victorian era.

#### 1850-1920: Late-Victorian Funerary Art

More than 1,500 memorials - the majority of the cemetery's funerary artworks - are representative of Late-Victorian funerary design, which commonly employed sentimental imagery and often incorporated elaborate sculptural forms influenced by Neoclassicism and the Gothic Revival-style between 1850 and 1920. The Late-Victorian period of funerary design began around the time of the cemetery's incorporation, and continued until the design of the eastern cemetery grounds were finalized in 1920. As a result, the 1849-1865 cemetery grounds and the post-1888 eastern cemetery contain primarily Late-Victorian monuments. In particular, the cemetery grounds west of East Avenue contain a significant collection of elaborate sculpture monuments reflecting Victorian sentimental themes. Tablets with Gothic Revival-style architectural elements also are common to the western cemetery. Monuments in the eastern cemetery represent turn-of-the-century and early-twentieth-century designs in the Late-Victorian style, which incorporate blended Neoclassical and Romantic forms and symbolic ornamentation, but often were less elaborate than mid-century memorials.

Many of Stonington Cemetery's most notable Late-Victorian monuments are sculptural and are made of either white-marble or granite. American academic sculpture and memorial art became intertwined during the first half of the nineteenth century, and by mid-century funerary artists frequently incorporated elaborate sculptural and representational forms. The Rural

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<sup>50</sup> Richard G. Carrott, *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meanings* (Berkeley, California: University of Los Angeles Press, 1978).

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Cemetery Movement catalyzed the development of an American school of sculpture in the 1830s, when the founders and lot owners of rural cemeteries like Mount Auburn transformed sepulchral landscapes into "museums in gardens" through patronage of the arts.<sup>51</sup> Nineteenth-century city-dwellers who found naturalistic retreat and refuge in rural cemeteries also developed a taste for memorial sculpture there.<sup>52</sup> As the Rural Cemetery Movement reached its mid-century zenith, funerary sculpture became a common feature of both established town cemeteries and new rural cemeteries. Late-Victorian funerary sculpture reflected sentimental themes in their design and subject matter. Female mourners and angelic-figures were two of the most common sculptural subjects of the period. Funerary artists also sculpted Neoclassical architectural forms that primarily had been carved in relief on headstones during the first half of the nineteenth century. Sculpted column-monuments, decorated urns, and box-tombs draped in cloth, were Late-Victorian takes on earlier Neoclassical designs.

Late-Victorian funerary artists often incorporated a range of sentimental symbols into memorials, including flowers, ivy, wreaths, picture frames, instruments, animals, nautical imagery, furniture, and rustic logs.<sup>53</sup> Commonly, symbols were used in combination. Their addition to sculptural monuments, headstones, and memorials of the early Neoclassical style (ex. obelisks) reflects a period-specific taste for elaborate design; however, symbols also represent a shift towards individualism in memorialization. Symbols and symbol combinations often were employed in order to convey meaning specific to an interred individual, as well as to recall notions of grief or spiritual beliefs. For example, lambs adorned the burial markers of interred children; anchors and ship's wheels commemorated individuals who worked at sea; different flowers on gravestones had distinct emblematic meaning with regards to the Victorian Language of Flowers.<sup>54</sup>

Many of Stonington Cemetery's monuments from this period are sculptural memorials adorned with Victorian symbols. Perhaps the most striking memorial in the cemetery, the white-marble Williams Family monument located along Center Avenue, is an example of an elaborate Late-Victorian design featuring both figurative sculpture and a collection of Victorian funerary symbols carved in relief. The Williams monument consists of a monumental plinth that supports a sculpted representation of the angel Gabriel holding a trumpet (Photo 24). The plinth is decorated with reliefs of an angel carrying two infants, a floral festoon, a floral wreath, and inverted torches. Floral wreaths often represented honor, and eternal love, while inverted torches symbolized resurrection; an inverted torch customarily would be extinguished, but remains lit as a symbol of eternal life. The Williams memorial serves as a monument to multiple family members including Charles P. Williams, his daughter Georgia Williams Warren, and her husband George Henry Warren. The same plot contains an additional white-marble monument,

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<sup>51</sup> Elise Madeleine Ciregna, "Museum in the Garden: Mount Auburn Cemetery and American Sculpture, 1840-1860." *Markers: The Annual Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* 21 (2004): 100-147.

<sup>52</sup> Stanley French, "The Cemetery As Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery Movement,'" *American Quarterly* 26:1 (1974): 37-59.

<sup>53</sup> Edmund V. Gillon Jr., *Victorian Cemetery Art* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1972).

<sup>54</sup> Frederick Shoberl, *The Language of Flowers; with Illustrative Poetry* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Lea & Blanchard, 1839).

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which is believed to commemorate one of Charles P. William's sons who died at an early age; that monument depicts a female mourner leaning on a tree-stump, a symbol of premature death.

The western cemetery grounds contain several Late-Victorian memorials that depict female mourners. Those sculpted figures often are paired with a Neoclassical architectural elements. In more than one case, monuments include a female figure in mourning attire resting against a Neoclassical column. The 1855 Ann Williams memorial depicts a female mourner sitting atop a Neoclassical altar (Photo 25). Other Late-Victorian monuments in the cemetery feature Neoclassical architectural forms that are embellished with sentimental symbols. Sculpted columns wrapped in ivy or cloth, sarcophagi draped in cloth, and obelisks adorned with wreaths all can be found within the cemetery west of East Avenue (Photo 22). The 1856 memorial to William W. Hyde is in the form of an ornate pedestal topped with a decorated Neoclassical urn. The urn and the rear of the pedestal are draped in cloth. That monument, which is signed along its base, was made at the New York shop of the monumental sculptor Robert Eberhard Launitz, a prolific producer of sepulchral monuments in the early Neoclassical and Late-Victorian styles.

Late-Victorian-period funerary design also was characterized by its incorporation of Gothic Revival-style architectural elements. Funerary artists frequently employed pointed arches, drip molding, and other typical Gothic Revival-style forms in headstones and on other monument types. In Stonington Cemetery, many headstones from the mid- and late-nineteenth century have pointed-arched shapes. Gothic Revival-style headstones with rounded-arch shapes are adorned with drip molding. The Late-Victorian period also saw the incorporation of Gothic-Revival style elements into Early-Victorian monument-types; obelisks with drip molding are one example of blended Romantic and Neoclassical styles found in the cemetery.

Mausoleums became common for family burials during this period and often were built by wealthy families. The mausoleums found in Stonington Cemetery are Gothic Revival or Neoclassical in style. Unlike grave markers, mausoleums had little engraved symbolism or statuary. Instead, the buildings relied upon high-style architecture in order to communicate characteristics of the deceased. The Billings Family Mausoleum is an example of a Gothic Revival mausoleum (Photo 29). The Phelps Family Mausoleum is an example of a Neoclassical mausoleum (Photo 30).

Towards the end of the Late-Victorian period in 1920, monuments typically were characterized by a blending of Neoclassical forms and Romantic ornaments; however, decoration was applied more modestly. A renewed interest in Classicism and simplicity in design was occurring at the turn of the twentieth century. By 1920, the decorative and sentimental Late-Victorian style declined. Beginning around 1920, and through the rest of the twentieth century, funerary designs turned towards simplicity and uniformity, influenced by increased mass production and decline of Victorian preoccupations with death. The block monument was popularized during this period. Most non-contributing headstones in Stonington Cemetery dating from 1920 to the present are composed of highly-polished granite, either resting on a granite base or directly on the ground. Inscriptions usually read the name of the deceased and their birth and death dates, without further decoration. Late-twentieth century and twenty-first century block

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headstones, which make up a small number of Stonington Cemetery's collection of funerary art, include personalized imagery. An example of this type of gravestone is the Dresback (2015) memorial (Photo 26). These types of stones are non-contributing elements because the cemetery's collection of modern (post-1920) funerary artworks is limited in size and because they are representative of an ongoing period in funerary design.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

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**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 18.8 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                        |                       |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.350397 | Longitude: -71.903306 |
| 2. Latitude: 41.350270 | Longitude: -71.898175 |
| 3. Latitude: 41.348259 | Longitude: -71.898365 |
| 4. Latitude: 41.348875 | Longitude: -71.903241 |

**Or**



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**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting:  | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property parcel runs approximately 550 feet from the corner of Main Street and U.S. Route 1 south down Main Street. It stretches east along U.S. Route 1 approximately half a mile. The cemetery's eastern boundary is defined by Niles Avenue. The grounds are demarcated by a combination of stone and cast iron walls and cast iron gates along the western boundary; stone walls with intermittent gaps and woods along the northern and southern boundaries; and woods along the eastern boundaries. These described boundaries are shown on the accompanying site plan.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries encompass the property as depicted on the 1927 cemetery map. The boundaries extend from Main Street to the west to Niles Avenue to the east to include all burial markers and funerary art dating to the period of significance from the 1750s to 1920. These boundaries successfully capture the broad spectrum of cemetery design and evolving burial customs from the period of significance. The Stonington Cemetery Association also owns property on the north side of U.S. Route 1; that parcel is not part of the nominated property. Wooded property east of Niles Avenue is excluded from the boundary.

Stonington Cemetery  
Name of Property

New London County, CT  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Scott Goodwin, B.A., Courtney Williams, M.A., Kirsten Peeler, M.S., and Molly Soffiatti, M.A., with Channing Harris, PLA, ASLA, Landscape Architect

organization: R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc.

street & number: 241 E. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 100

city or town: Frederick state: Maryland zip code: 21701

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

telephone: 800-340-2724

date: December 2017

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Stonington Cemetery  
Name of Property

New London County, CT  
County and State

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Stonington Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Stonington, CT

County: New London

State: Connecticut

Photographer: Channing Harris, Michael Shoriak, Scott Goodwin

Date Photographed: October - November, 2016 and March 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 32: (M. Shoriak) 18<sup>th</sup>- and early-19<sup>th</sup>-century headstones in Phelps Burial Ground, camera facing southeast.

Photo 2 of 32: (C. Harris) 19<sup>th</sup>-century burial plots in western cemetery, camera facing southeast.

Photo 3 of 32: (C. Harris) Grassy walking-path in western cemetery between burial plots, camera facing east.

Photo 4 of 32: (C. Harris) Granite-curb delineated burial plots in western cemetery, camera facing northeast.

Photo 5 of 32: (C. Harris) Single row of 19<sup>th</sup>-century family monuments and single graves along western cemetery wall, camera facing northwest.

Photo 6 of 32: (M. Shoriak) Potter's field, camera facing southwest.

Photo 7 of 32 (S. Goodwin) African-American burial ground, camera facing southeast.

Photo 8 of 32 (S. Goodwin) African-American marker, camera facing southeast.

Photo 9 of 32: (C. Harris) Paved and gravel avenues delineating burial areas in the eastern cemetery, camera facing northeast.

Photo 10 of 32: (C. Harris) 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>-century monuments, sloping terrain, and natural features in eastern cemetery, camera facing southwest

Photo 11 of 32: (C. Harris) Front gate, granite post, and cast-iron fence, camera facing east.

Photo 12 of 32: (C. Harris) Front wall and cast-iron fence, camera facing northeast.

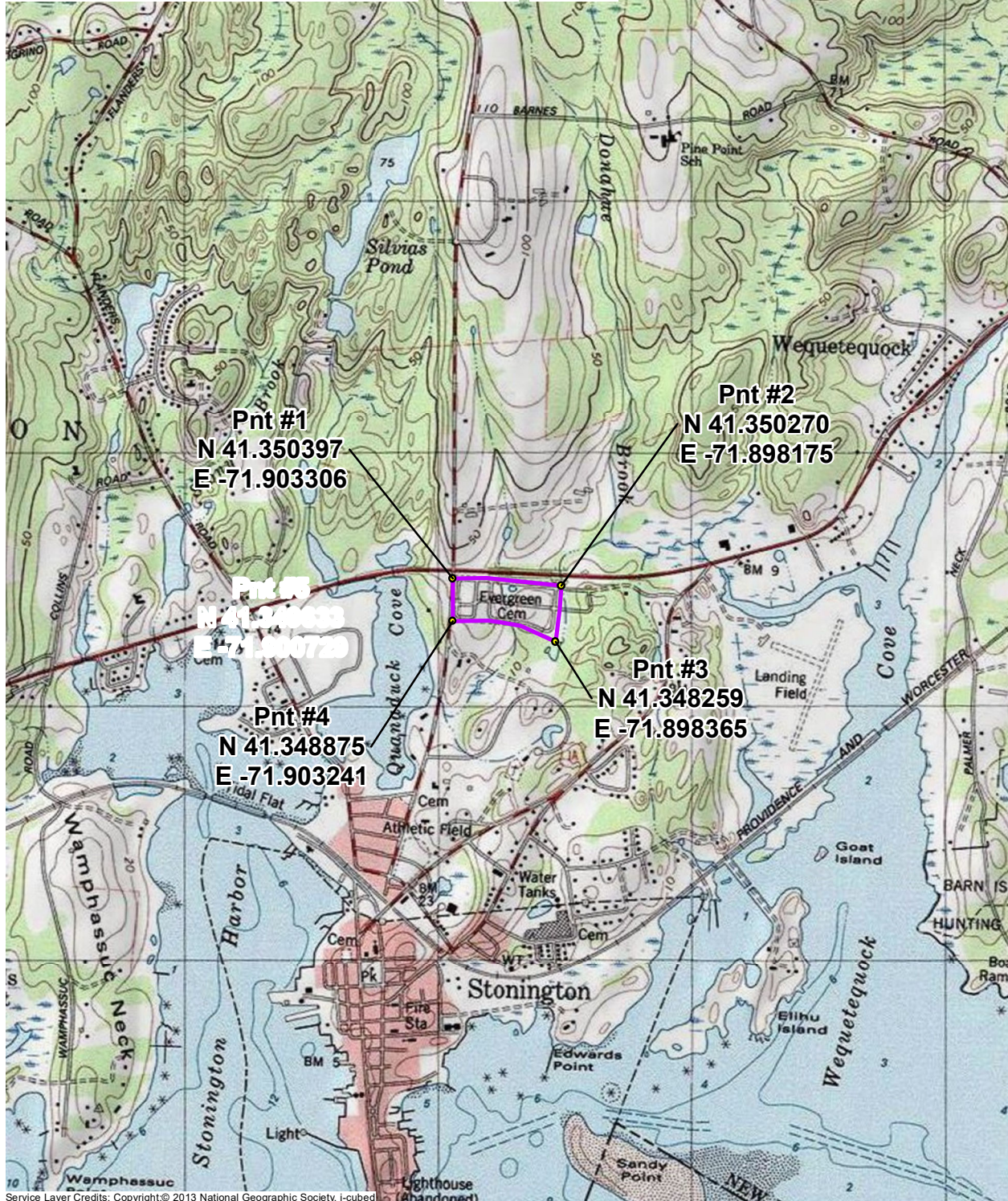
Stonington Cemetery  
Name of Property

New London County, CT  
County and State

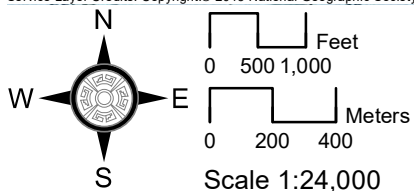
- Photo 13 of 32: (C. Harris) Corner granite post, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 14 of 32: (C. Harris) Stone wall inconsistency indicating post-1880 expansion, camera facing north.
- Photo 15 of 32: (C. Harris) Rear stone wall remnants from 1849 plan, and stone wall inconsistency indicating post-1888 expansion, camera facing south.
- Photo 16 of 32: (S. Goodwin) Ann Hancox (1760) stone, slate with winged-head motif carved by Stevens family, camera facing east.
- Photo 17 of 32: (S. Goodwin) Robert Potter (1786) stone, slate with winged-head motif carved by John Stevens III, camera facing east.
- Photo 18 of 32: (S. Goodwin) Nathan Chesebro (1769) stone, granite-schist with winged-head motif carved by Manning Family, camera facing east.
- Photo 19 of 32 (S. Goodwin) Early-19<sup>th</sup>-century marble urn-and-willow motif gravestones, Phelps Burial Ground, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 20 of 32 (S. Goodwin) Capt. Lodowick Niles (1813) stone, marble with urn motif, camera facing east.
- Photo 21 of 32 (S. Goodwin) Charles W. Denison (1817) marble obelisk, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 22 of 32: (C. Harris) Late-Victorian-era monuments in western cemetery, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 23 of 32: (M. Shoriak) Hyde family monument, camera facing west.
- Photo 24 of 32: (C. Harris) Charles P. Willams Family memorial, camera facing northwest.
- Photo 25 of 32: (C. Harris) Ann Williams (1855) memorial, camera facing south.
- Photo 26 of 32: (M. Shoriak) Desback (2015) memorial, camera facing south.
- Photo 27 of 32 (C. Harris) Denison family plot in the western cemetery, camera facing southwest.
- Photo 28 of 32: (C. Harris) Albert Gallatin Palmer mausoleum, camera facing west.
- Photo 29 of 32: (C. Harris) Billings family mausoleum, camera facing northeast.
- Photo 30 of 32 (C. Harris) Phelps family mausoleum, camera facing south.
- Photo 31 of 32: (C. Harris) Receiving vault, camera facing southeast.
- Photo 32 of 32: (C. Harris) Caretaker's building, shed, camera facing southeast.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



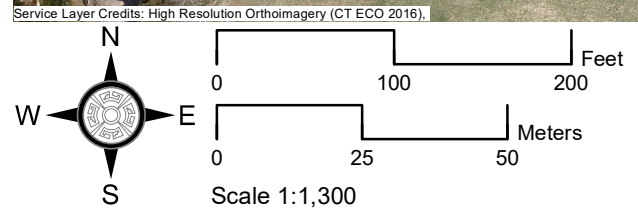
Service Layer Credits: Copyright © 2013 National Geographic Society, I-cubed



- Coordinate Point
- National Register Boundary

Stonington Evergreen Cemetery  
 North Main Street, Stonington  
 New London County, CT

USGS 7.5 Minute  
 Quadrangle Map  
 Figure 1



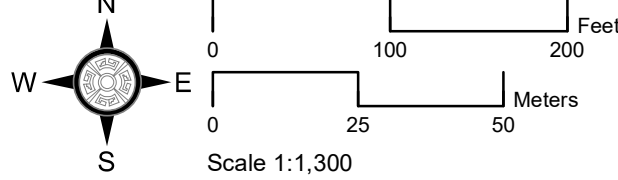
- - - - Original Rear Wall, Removed ca. 1888
- 1864-1888 Cemetery Boundary
- ca. 1754 Phelps Burial Ground
- ca. 1849 Stonington Cemetery at time of Incorporation
- ca. 1864 (approx.) Expansion
- ca. 1888 Expansion



Stonington Evergreen Cemetery  
 North Main Street, Stonington  
 New London County, CT

Historic Boundary  
 Map  
 Figure 2



Service Layer Credits: High Resolution Orthoimagery (CT ECO 2016).



 National Register Boundary       Denotes Resource Photograph Direction and Number

Stonington Evergreen Cemetery  
North Main Street, Stonington  
New London County, CT

Resource Photograph Key

Figure 3