



GRAVESTONE ART

Until 1750, an estimated 90% of New England gravestones displayed winged skulls, emphasizing the mortality of man. The motif was gradually replaced by winged cherubs, symbolizing the flight of the soul and a more optimistic view of the hereafter. At the end of the 18th century, the cherub image gave way to the willow and urn, derived from classical antiquity, emphasizing mourning and the sadness of those left behind. The willow and urn motif was often accompanied by a change in the shape of the gravestones.

Farmers' Burial Ground is known for its slate markers, including an unusual number of large and double examples. Some represent the work of the following recognized carvers:

James Foster II of Dorchester (gravestone of Benoni Gearfield)

Daniel Hastings, resident of Newton, popular and prolific carver in the area west of Boston (gravestones of Ensign Joseph Livermore and Mrs. Mary Warren)

Hastings Shop (gravestone of Nathan Fisk)

Ebenezer Howard, resident of Newton and later Marlborough, brother-in-law of Daniel Hastings (gravestone of Ebenezer Hobbs)

Joseph Lamson, member of a family of carvers living in the Malden area (gravestone of Mrs. Sarah Warren)

Jonathan Worster (Worcester), lived in Harvard MA (gravestone of Mrs. Hannah Williams)

WHO'S BURIED IN FARMERS' BURIAL GROUND?

Samuel Phillips Savage, Weston's most prominent patriot, moderated the meeting that preceded the Boston Tea Party and presided over the Massachusetts Board of War.

Rev. William Williams, second minister at First Parish Church, served from 1709 to 1750.

Rev. Samuel Woodward, third minister at First Parish Church, served from 1751 until his death in 1782.

Josiah Smith, prominent citizen, built the tavern that bears his name.

Nathan Fisk bought his 220-acre farm on North Avenue for 10 pounds in 1673. It passed undivided from father to son for six generations and is now the Kings Grant neighborhood. Later members of the family spelled the name "Fiske."

Revolutionary War soldiers. Their graves are often distinguished by a metal marker issued by the Sons of the American Revolution

Town leaders and members of Weston's earliest families, including *Lamson, Upham, Warren, Hobbs, Harrington, and Coburn*.



▼ Sons of the American Revolution (S.A.R.) marker for Revolutionary War soldiers

▲ Gravestone of Samuel Woodward, third minister of First Parish Church

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For further information see *Farmers' Burial Ground, Central Cemetery Weston, Massachusetts, Gravestone/Monument Condition Assessment Report, May 2007. Prepared for the Town of Weston.*

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FARMERS' BURIAL GROUND



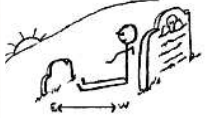
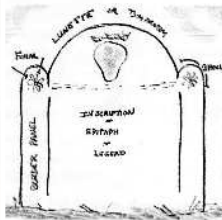
Farmers' Burial Ground (1703) is Weston's oldest cemetery. The first recorded burial in the sparsely settled "Farmers' Precinct" of Watertown was Ensign John Warren, who died in 1703, ten years before the Town of Weston was incorporated. Approximately 180 early settlers are buried here, although not all have gravestones. Many are important to the history of the town.

A 2007 report noted the handsome slate markers, some carved by noted artisans, and also observed that "The Town of Weston has done an outstanding job of keeping the footstones." These smaller stones often are removed to make mowing easier. Farmers' Burial Ground was restored in 2016-17 with funds from the Community Preservation Act. Work included conservation of some 146 headstones and footstones that were tilting, broken, fallen, or delaminated.

▼ Benoni Gearfield d. 1725
Carver: James Foster II



▼ Parts of 18th century gravestone



▲ In 18th century burial grounds, bodies were positioned so that on the Judgment Day, the corpse could sit up and face the rising sun. Headstones were placed facing west and footstones facing east, so that there was no need to stand over the body to read the markers.

▲ Mary Warren and child d. 1782
Carver: Daniel Hastings



▲ Nathan Fiske d. 1769
Carver: Daniel Hastings shop



▼ Hanna Williams d. 1745
Carver: Jonathan Worster
Motifs: coils, spirals, geometric rosettes and pinwheels spin around the primitive mask-like central carving

▲ Ens. John Warren d. 1703
First Recorded Burial in Weston.
Boston Carver



FARMERS' BURIAL GROUND: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Find examples of the winged skull, winged cherub's head, and willow and urn motifs.

Notice how the epitaphs change over time, from "Here lies the Body" or "Memento Mori" ("remember you will die") to variations of "In Memory."

Many 18th century gravestones have the same shape and are divided into sections. The curved top is called the tympanum or lunette.

Gravestones are positioned facing west. Bodies were laid with the head to the west so that on the Day of Judgment, the resurrected dead would sit up to face the rising sun.

Notice the footstones, which are often marked with the initials or name of the deceased. They are placed with the carved surfaces facing east, away from the grave.

Find the gravestones by known carvers.

Find examples of double tombstones.

Look for the gravestone of Samuel Phillips Savage, Weston's most important Revolutionary War patriot.

Look for the gravestone of one of the early First Parish Church ministers, Samuel Woodward, whose long epitaph testifies to the respect and affection of his congregation.

Find the only two marble markers in Farmers', among members of the Upham family. Silas Upham, who died in 1871, was the last person to be buried at Farmers'.

Along the south side under the hemlocks, find the gravestones of people who died from smallpox.