



Buttonwoods
MUSEUM

Connect with History Together

Here Lies Haverhill: A Pentucket Burial Ground Activity Packet

Before we begin, please remember . . .

- In Massachusetts, doing rubbings of gravestones is now **ILLEGAL**.
- A graveyard is a memorial to the past, please treat it as such.
- Watch your step! This is an old graveyard; many stones have fallen or are loose, and the ground is uneven.
- Have a great time! Graveyards full of old stones are beautiful and interesting. This packet will help you put on your historian goggles to learn about the past.

Introduction

The Pentucket Burial Ground (Cemetery) on Water Street in Haverhill is one of the oldest cemeteries in the city. The town voted in 1660 to reserve land behind the First Meeting House as “burying ground.” In 1703, the burial ground was fenced in per the request of the Saltonstall family, whose land surrounded it; however, the boundaries of the cemetery continued to change to accommodate a growing town, and in 1817, the final purchase of land extended the cemetery to its present limits. In 1845, Linwood Cemetery was established north of the Pentucket Cemetery. Today, Linwood Cemetery maintains its grounds for the citizens of Haverhill.

Prior to carved stones, gravesites were likely indicated by wooden markers or fieldstones. On the engraved stones that remain there today, you will find names like White, Ayer, Dustin, Saltonstall, Brickett, Rolfe, Ward and Shaw. Epitaphs, names vital dates (birth, marriage, and death dates), and borders and icons on the stones record the lives and deaths of these early Haverhill residents. Stone carvers and cutters created gravestones that reflected beliefs of the period in text and image.

Walk to the Pentucket Burial Ground (< ¼ mile)

From the Buttonwoods Museum parking lot, take a left onto John Ward Avenue and follow the road down to Water Street. Turn right at Water Street and follow the sidewalk. The entrance to the Burial Ground will be on your right. If you reach Mill Street, you have gone too far.

First Activity: Scavenger Hunt

Many Americans today only enter cemeteries to visit the graves of loved ones, so visiting one just to look around may feel strange to you. To help you start to feel more comfortable, and to begin to take in what you’re seeing, turn to the next page for a scavenger hunt!

Prowling Pentucket!

A First Period (1620-1720) Scavenger Hunt

1. Where was the first meeting house in Haverhill built?

Hint: you are close to this marker if you are standing at the stone entrance to the burial ground.

2. Find a gravestone with both a headstone and a footstone. Write the person's name and dates:

Hint: Footstones are often the same shape as the headstone but much smaller and do not have much engraving on them. What words they have are usually facing the opposite direction of the writing on the headstone.

3. Find a monument to John Ward and Nathaniel Saltonstall. What feature surrounds their monument?

Hint: This monument is near the front entrance, on your right side.

4. Find a gravestone of a Dustin (or Duston). Record the person's name:

Hint: The Dustin/Duston family is buried in several spots in the middle of the burial ground.

5. Find a gravestone that has an epitaph that you like. Record it in the space below:

Hint: An epitaph is a descriptive statement about the person buried at the gravestone.

Second Activity: History Detectives

For historians, tombstones can be looked at as a primary source, offering insight into the events and beliefs of the past. By reading their inscriptions, we can get an understanding of what events shaped life in Haverhill and in the world beyond.

1. Look for evidence of events:

As you read the epitaphs in this cemetery, note what people have died from. Events like floods, fires, and French-Indian Raids caused the deaths of many of Haverhill's early citizens. Record at least 3 tombstones and what the people died from below.

Name: Date: Age: Cause of Death:

2. Look for evidence of epidemics:

Haverhill suffered a massive outbreak of Throat Distemper (diphtheria) from 1735-1737. Try to find 2 tombstones during this time period.

Name: Date: Age: Decoration at Top:

3. Look for evidence of beliefs about death:

Early settlers of Haverhill had very different beliefs about what happened to your soul when you died. These beliefs were reflected in how they decorated their tombstones. Find *at least* 3 tombstones with each decoration and record the date the person died. This will help you to track how these beliefs changed over time.

Death's Head: Cherub: Willow & Urn:
(winged skull) (angel)

Do your results show a general pattern for when each motif was being used most?

Third Activity: Gravestone Art

Collecting vital statistics and causes of death is a relatively straightforward process for the historian, but examining gravestone art leaves more room for interpretation. Using a technique called *Visual Thinking Strategies*, you and your group will come to a deeper understanding of gravestone art.

1. Look closely at one gravestone you found decorated with a Death's Head motif and silently consider the following questions:
 - What's going on in the image?
 - What evidence can you find to support that?
 - What else do you see?

2. Next, talk about the motif with the rest of your group.
 - Did you see the same thing?
 - If not, does the available evidence support both of your conclusions?
 - Discuss other possible interpretations.

3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with the Cherub motif.

4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 with the Willow & Urn motif.

5. What conclusions can you make about each of the gravestone motifs?

Wrapping Up

Now that you have drawn your own conclusions about the meanings of different gravestone motifs, here are some ideas that historians have proposed:

The Death's Head: Puritans rejected many Christian practices of Europe as “papist” (i.e. Catholic) including much of traditional Christian iconography; as a result, they had to find different symbols to decorate their headstones with. The winged skull served as a more secular (non-religious) representation of the flight of the soul from mortal man.

The Cherub: Very similar to a death's head but with a more defined face, the cherub perhaps represented a softening of the stark Puritan view towards death, where salvation was uncertain, towards a point of view that was more hopeful.

The Willow & Urn: Georgian and Victorian mourning culture sentimentalized death and embraced neoclassical iconography, so the willow represented nature's lament (grief) at death and the urn evoked antiquity (ancient Greece and Rome).

What ideas did your group come up with? Share them with us! #HereLiesHaverhill

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