

Burying Ground Preservation Group, Inc.

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VAN SCOY BURYING GROUND, EAST HAMPTON, NY:

CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT & CONSERVATION TREATMENT REPORT

The Van Scoy Burying Ground, which is located near Northwest Road within a Town of East Hampton Preserve, is a significant historic and cultural resource. Its proximity to the Abandoned Settlement Trail (East Hampton Trails Preservation Society) enables access by hikers and other visitors to the park. The burying ground is surrounded by a white board fence which differentiates it from the heavily wooded landscape surrounding it. Historically, the Van Scoy Burying Ground served members of the Van Scoy and collateral families who resided in this remote section of the town from the late 18th until the late 19th century. The primary traces of this community today are the archaeological remains of several houses, a well, a schoolhouse, and the burying ground. Preservation of the site is therefore important in the context of East Hampton Town's history. Furthermore, the names, dates of death, interrelationships among the deceased, and other genealogical data preserved on the monuments are irreplaceable records that require preservation and treatment.

The project of surveying, recording, assessing conditions and undertaking conservation treatment and repairs was undertaken in the spring and summer of 2019, culminating in work sessions in which the monuments were cleaned, straightened and restored. Eight individual headstones, nine footstones and a large cast zinc ("white bronze") family monument were restored.

Four of the monuments required special techniques of conservation treatment; the remaining, all of which were tilted, soiled and discolored with bio-growth, required straightening and cleaning with a gentle detergent and the application of an anti-microbial agent. Restoration of the Van Scoy Burying Ground is now complete and the genealogical records that survive on the monuments have been uploaded to a searchable online database (www.billiongraves.com).

The four monuments that called for special treatment – Rhoda P. Van Scoy, Edwards family, Isaac Van Scoy and Mercy Van Scoy – exhibited conditions that represent the range of conservation issues encountered in a late Colonial era burying ground. The following synopsis is a description of the conditions and repairs undertaken to preserve these monuments.

Rhoda P. Van Scoy

A tall, marble tablet that was dislocated from its brownstone base and reset into the ground. Lacking adequate support due to its size and weight, the leaning tablet was vulnerable to falling and breaking. Soiling and bio-growth impaired legibility.

Treatment included cleaning the tablet with water and detergent and treating with an antimicrobial agent; excavating a hole deep enough to reset the base below grade; hoisting the headstone

with a heavy duty tripod to facilitate repositioning and leveling; lowering and fastening the tablet to the base; and backfilling and cleaning.

Edwards family

This two-sided monument, cast in zinc, bears the records of five Edwards family members. Marketed as “white bronze” beginning in the 1870s, this novel material lost popularity in the 1920s and is consequently unusual today, especially in small family burying grounds. Although durable, the hollow zinc monument had tilted, prompting a previous repair – poured concrete – to prevent further movement. The concrete adhered to the metal, however, and because of its weight and hardness actually threatened to crack the monument.

Treatment required exposing, cutting and chiseling the concrete, leaving the original surface of the metal revealed and undamaged. The monument was then reset on a level base of small stones and sand.

Isaac Van Scoy

In addition to being broken into four pieces, the Isaac Van Scoy tablet was a focus of the project because of Van Scoy’s distinction as a patriot in the American Revolution. He and Isaac Van Scoy, Jr., both signed the Association in East Hampton on May 5, 1775, signifying they were capable of bearing arms (*The Refugees of 1776 from Long Island to Connecticut*, Mather, 1913, p. 1062). The headstone fragments had been reset in the ground and exhibited varying degrees of soiling, bio-growth and stone loss.

Treatment included removing the stone pieces from the ground, reassembling and cleaning, prior to resetting and reattaching with structural pins and adhesives. The cracks were filled and one large area of stone loss infilled with white mortar. Due to the surface discoloration of the marble, which will gradually whiten over time, the fills were chosen to match the original stone color. Repairs that remain visible become part of the story and history of a monument over time.

Mercy Van Scoy

The wife of Isaac Van Scoy, Mercy’s headstone takes its place next to Isaac; unlike his marble headstone, however, Mercy’s was carved in brownstone and suffered from delamination, a typical form of deterioration for this layered, sedimentary rock. The freeze-thaw action of water penetrating the stone’s inscription can produce internal voids and visible surface cracks, as in this case. Fortunately, actual stone loss was minimal.

Treatment involved careful removal of lichens and biogrowth which were pronounced on this stone. Drilling and injecting liquid grout to fill the hollow void behind the inscription was then done, followed by cosmetic fills at each of the drill marks. While the outer layer of brownstone still projects beyond the original surface of the stone, it is now stable and protected against freeze-thaw cycles.



Rhoda B. Van Scoy

Tablet dislocated from brownstone base (left); hoisting marble tablet after resetting base below grade (right).



Edwards Monument

Exposed concrete repairs at base (left); sawing concrete from base of monument before resetting (right).



Isaac Van Scoy

Reassembled pieces before repairs (left); pieces pinned, reattached with structural adhesive and braced (right).



Mercy Van Scoy

Brownstone tablet encrusted with lichen before cleaning (left); repair in progress with liquid grout injected (right).