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## Sacred Landscapes: Material Evidence of Ideological and Ethnic Choice in Long Island, New York, Gravestones, 1680–1800

### ABSTRACT

Long Island grave markers from the 17th and 18th centuries are examined and analyzed. Due to its strategic location, between the English culture sphere of New England and the “Dutch” culture sphere of New Amsterdam/New York, Long Island is an excellent laboratory for studying cultural recombination in various forms of material culture. Long Island has no quarryable stone, so all colonial gravestones, except fieldstone markers, were imported from New England, New Jersey, or New York City. This study found a different pattern of motifs for Long Island compared to New England, but memorialization by status was more like that of New England than Virginia. Ideological, social, and ethnic boundaries are demonstrated. Location or proximity to a culture sphere also played a role in choice of grave marker, as did customary trade networks. More than 4,300 stones were photographed and statistically analyzed; the data are of use to scholars in many fields.

### Introduction

Long Island is one of the earliest settlement centers of northeastern North America and one of the least studied scientifically. It is geographically located between the New England and Mid-Atlantic culture hearths. Politically, it was originally part of New Netherland, which was the most ethnically diverse early settlement in the New World. Long Island occupies a strategic area at the confluence of numerous waterways—the Hudson River of New York, the Connecticut and other rivers of Connecticut, the eastern rivers of New Jersey—and it is just above the Mid-Atlantic waterways, all prime trade routes (Figure 1). As a morainal deposit, Long Island contained no quarryable stone; as such, it is a transition zone, a laboratory of cultural recombination whose gravestones were imported from numerous sources in New England and several areas of New Netherland/New York.

Because of its location on the Atlantic coastal plain, its siting that fostered trade networks throughout the region, its position between competing polities and culture spheres, and its polyethnic social composition, Long Island contains the largest number of different types of gravestones—materials, designs, sources—in the Northeast, if not the country. For this study, 164 cemeteries were located, and data from more than 4,300 stones were recorded and analyzed. This fortuitous circumstance provides a sizable material culture database to examine for colonial ethnic, ideological, and cultural choices.

### Historical Background

Long Island is one of the earliest colonized areas of the Northeast, shortly after the early “Dutch” colonists (actually Flemish Walloons) settled in Manhattan in the early 1600s. The west end Brooklyn/Kings County colonists, primarily from the Lowlands of Europe, were there in the 1620s and spilled eastward into Queens County by the 1640s. The east end (Suffolk County) was settled by the English coming from New England in 1640 and later; there was an interface of these varying cultural forces in mid-Long Island (eastern Queens, now Nassau County, and western Suffolk). Long Island’s settlement history stems from the political and social complexion of the founding colonists—their ethnicity or national origin, religious beliefs or ideology, and time of settlement, which was often related to the political arena in Europe. The gravestone record of this settlement history will be discussed below.

Politically, Long Island was a major geographical portion of early New Netherland, which stretched north from the Delaware River, through New Jersey, up both sides of the Hudson River to Fort Orange (now Albany), and west along the Mohawk River (Figure 1). Eastern Long Island was peopled by the third wave of Puritan emigration to America and was the outpost of Puritan and Pilgrim territorial ambitions. New Netherland was polycultural from the beginning, with 18 languages spoken in New Amsterdam (Jameson 1909:259), making

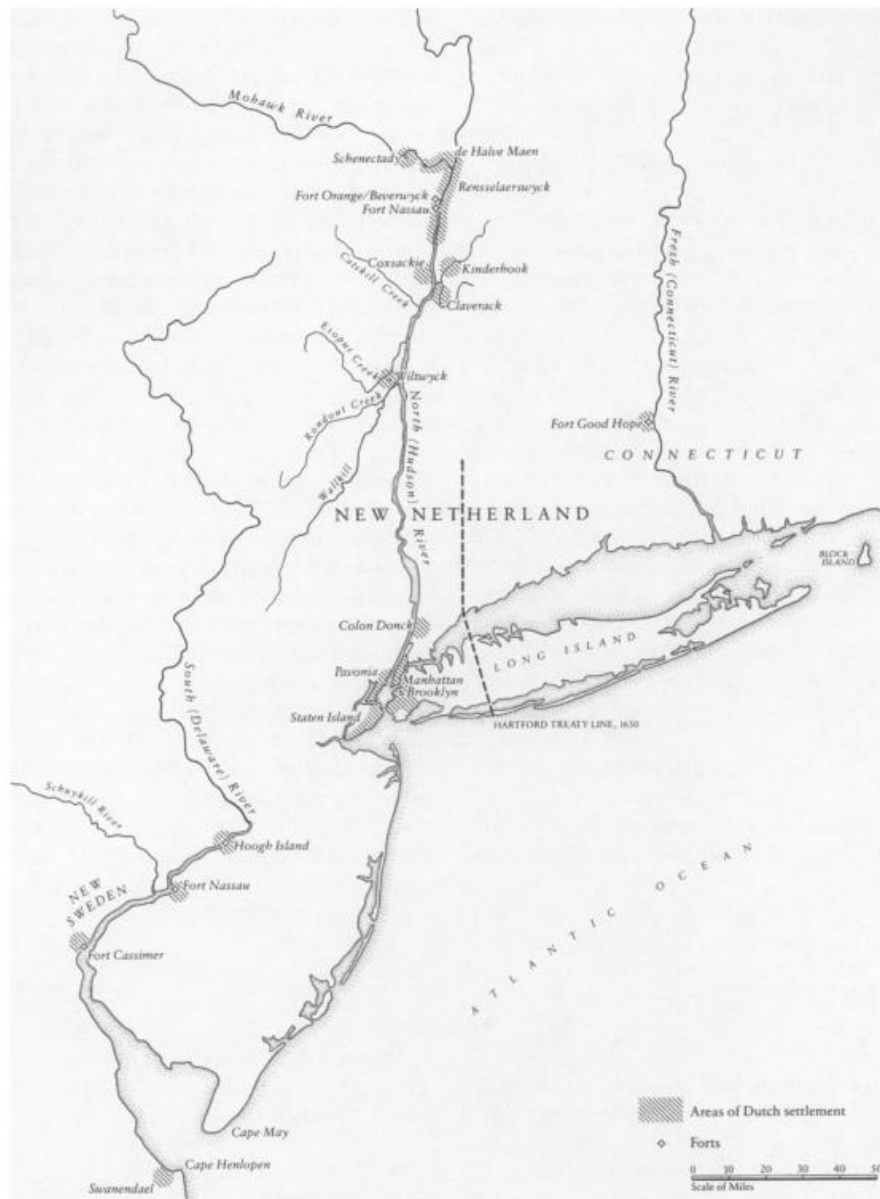


FIGURE 1. New Netherland. (from Blackburn and Piwonka 1988.)

it the earliest, most ethnically diverse colony. After the English takeover in 1664, brief Dutch rule in 1673, then final English control in 1674 through English/Dutch negotiation in Europe, all non-English were subsumed under the category “Dutch.” That included

Flemish, Belgian Walloons, French Huguenots, Scandinavians, Irish, Scots (who inscribed on stones their natal land so as not to be confused with the English), Germans, as well as those from various Lowland provinces, later known as Holland. There were some Turks and Polish

(who left no material record), Italians (who did), Jews (only in Manhattan), and enslaved Africans, freedmen, and Native Americans, for whom an extremely sparse mortuary record exists.

### The Study Area

Long Island, 120 mi. long by about 20 mi. wide, occupies a strategic spot at the confluence of the Hudson and other rivers between New England and the Mid-Atlantic. This location facilitated easy access to prime trade routes and, thus, cultural influences. The island became a repository for various forms of material culture, such as architecture, gravestones, place names, and surnames. With no quarryable stone, all colonial gravestones, except those of local fieldstone, were imported from stone cutters in Boston and Plymouth, Massachusetts; Newport, Rhode Island; New Haven, the river towns, and eastern Connecticut in the English sphere of cultural influence. From the "Dutch" sphere, stones were obtained from Newark and Elizabeth, New Jersey and New Amsterdam/New York City, whose stone came from the New Jersey quarries (Figure 2).

### Material Culture Research

A material culture artifact, which is original and little modified, composes a sizable universe

and is easily quantified for systematic analysis. It has the potential to amplify the documentary record (indeed, gravestones *are* original documents) and provide further insights into a region or a society. As such, cemeteries are museums without walls, harboring a collection of artifacts that are related by their social matrix. Edwin Dethlefsen (1981:137) noted, "the graveyard is a microcosmic material history of the systemic evolution of the living community." He demonstrates this with several Florida cemeteries of varying configurations that are related to their origin and evolution (Dethlefsen and Jensen 1977). Thus, in a family cemetery the gravestones yield the evolution of the family on a micro scale; on the macro scale, the totality of cemeteries reveals regional patterns of human choice affected by social, economic, political, and cultural factors—as on Long Island.

Mortuary material evidence will also be affected by spatial and temporal constraints; all variables change through time. On Long Island, both of these factors affect the cemetery and gravestone record, which also co-varies with the composition of the social group creating it. A study of all cemeteries in an area can indicate patterns that may not be revealed in the study of a few cemeteries or in the documentary record. On this regional scale, culture hearths or spheres of influence may be delineated,

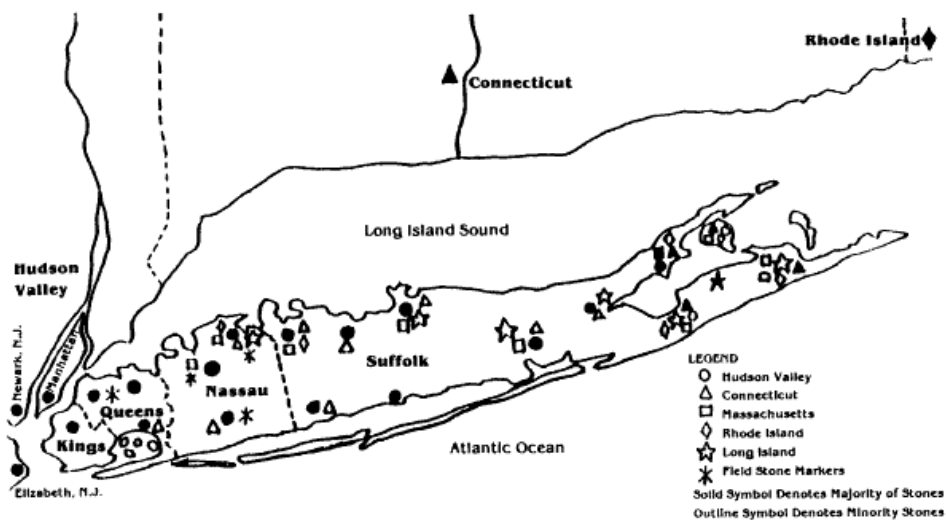


FIGURE 2. Sources of gravestones on Long Island. (from Stone 1991.)

perhaps more finely than by the usual artifact used for this—architecture. An example of this is the evidence of German ethnicity found on gravestones, but not in architecture, in highland North Carolina, the study area of Ruth Little-Stokes (1984).

Analyzing an area's cemeteries and stones will also show the distribution of ethnically and ideologically bounded groups on the landscape, a record that is usually invisible today. For example, historian Patricia Bonomi's map (1971:21) of 17th-century settlement flow in New York shows most cultural influence to the island from New England but truncates the Dutch influence to a small part of Kings County (Figure 3). This division does not reveal the complexity shown by the gravestone evidence. (See author's dissertation (Stone 1987) for the detailed distribution pattern through gravestones of ethnic peoples and ideological groups on Long Island.)

Within an area that appears homogeneous, such as all British-settled New England, antecedent

regionality, rather than ethnicity, will surface if looked for. Historians David G. Allen (1981) and Peter Benes (1977) provide the documentary and genealogical evidence of New England's varied regional composition, Benes using the Kentish mortuary designs transplanted to their new Plymouth home. Archaeologists Peter S. Allen (1968) and Anne Yentsch (1981) demonstrate the regionality evidence illustrated by gravestones and fence types as related to surnames on Cape Cod, showing the transplantation of English regional subsistence practices to New England settlement siting.

Two contemporaneous cemeteries in an area can graphically illustrate a social or ideological schism, while two others may exist because of temporal or spatial factors. Leslie Abernathy's (1981) analysis of settling a river system at Rehoboth, Massachusetts, reveals an ideological, and thus social, schism in the cemeteries. Elizabeth Crowell (1981) found that Quaker ideology in Philadelphia allowed the popular culture marker to be used, but it was plain, without a design. The author (Stone 1987:265,310–321) also found this choice for some Long Island Quakers. Her research indicates Long Island cemeteries whose establishment was determined by temporal and spatial factors as well. Either of these occurrences can provide insight into local social dynamics for which the documentary record may be silent. The popular culture stone is defined as the basic types produced in large numbers by the sometimes-multigenerational stone-cutting workshops. Markers were often carved by formula and sometimes stockpiled, with only the inscription carved to order.

Mortuary evidence also illustrates the differing attitudes among regions (and within them) toward wealth, status, power, and occupation. Norman Mackie (1987), upon examining Virginia gravestones, found status distinctly related to gravestone types, such as box or table tombs for the wealthy, the upright marker for the middle class, and none for the classes below. Historian Kevin Sweeney (1985) describes the wealthiest citizens of the western Massachusetts river towns as memorialized by the ordinary regional upright marker. The author (Stone 1987) found an even less status-conscious situation on Long Island, where even the wealthiest original proprietors of manors had cedar posts or simple upright markers. At times memorialization was

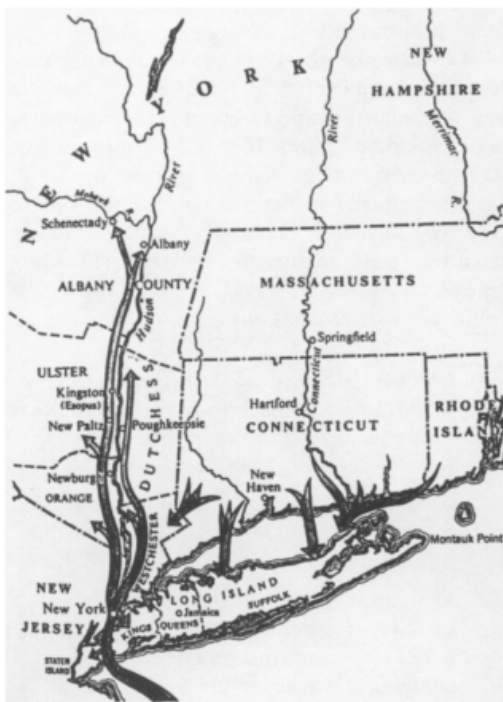


FIGURE 3. Settlement flow in 17th-century New York. (from Bonomi 1971.)

carried out much later, if at all—sometimes on a monumental scale by descendants, a form of ancestor worship?

Cemeteries and gravestones reveal choice that is culturally, ideologically, and geographically shaped. When all stones are systematically recorded and statistically analyzed—the home-carved “folk” fieldstones as well as the popular culture workshop-produced stones—patterns of differing ethnic and ideological choice may be revealed.

These patterns vary through time both nationally and regionally. (See many issues of the Association for Gravestone Study’s journal, *Markers* [1994–2007], for varied national gravestone choices.) While James Deetz’s pioneering quantitative gravestone analysis (much of it distilled in *In Small Things Forgotten*, 1977) described one pattern of design motifs for one portion of New England, the regional studies of Dethlefsen and Jensen (1977) in Florida; Crowell in Philadelphia (1981) and in Cape May, New Jersey (1983); Mackie (1987) in Virginia; Sweeney (1985) in Western Massachusetts; Frederick Gorman and Michael DiBlasi (1976) in South Carolina; Little-Stokes (1984) in highland North Carolina; Sophia Hinshalwood (1981) in the Mid-Hudson Valley; Richard Veit (2000, and this volume) in Middlesex County, New Jersey; the author (Stone 1978, 1987, 1990, 1991) in Long Island; Sherene Baugher and Frederick Winter (1983) in New York City; and many others describe the regional variations of gravestone choice and use.

Gorman and DiBlasi’s study of two Charleston, South Carolina, cemeteries was the first to include the ethnic gravestone choices in the southeast and northeast. This study is the second to do so, on a larger scale in one region. Other studies of ethnicity reflected in gravestones are Eva Eckert’s (1998, 2002) analyses of Moravian acculturation in Texas and ethnic maintenance through the Czech language; Roberta Halporn’s (1997a, 1997b) history of American Jewish cemeteries; Thomas Graves’s (1998) introduction to Pennsylvania German gravestones; and Gary Collison’s (1999) German American gravestones of trans-Susquehanna, Pennsylvania. These studies are all primarily descriptive studies rather than statistical analytical studies.

Those who followed Deetz and Dethlefsen’s normative statistical approach are Darrel Norris’s

(1988) analysis of Ontario, Canada, gravestones for ethnicity and status as well as other variables; Crowell and Mackie’s (1990) study of burial patterns and social status in Tidewater, Virginia, stones; Tadashi Nakagawa’s (1994) meta analysis of a sampling of all of Louisiana’s cemeteries for regional and ideological variables; Gregory Jeane’s (1987) study of “sacred artifacts” in upland south folk cemeteries; and Gary Foster and Richard Hummel’s examination (1995) of one cemetery for sociological data. Others have recorded specific aspects of cemeteries and stones, such as Marcy Frampton’s (1995) study of North Louisiana grave houses; Richard Welch’s (1987) identification of Hudson Valley carvers; Robin Nigh’s (1997) search for meaning in motifs in North Florida African American cemeteries; and Scott Baird’s (1996) structural linguistic analysis of a cemetery “community” in Texas. These are a scant number of examples of the hundreds of gravestone studies that have been done, both internationally and nationally, and that have enhanced the growing interest in the database of systematic material culture analysis for comparative study in historical archaeology, American studies, cultural geography, history, and other fields.

An early theorist in analyzing material culture, Jules Prown (1982) reviewed the multiple and interrelated elements one must elicit from a material culture object. Material culture research is instructive in this regard; it is a rigorous task. Further cautions on carrying out material culture research, including gravestone, have been outlined by Thomas Schlereth (1985:107–114). Systematic, statistical gravestone research appears to fulfill his requirements of

1. adequate survival of data (stones survive in far larger number than houses or other forms of material culture, thus providing a more normative database);
2. adequate techniques of analysis (provided by complete recording and statistical handling);
3. avoidance of the exaggeration of human efficacy (systematic gravestone studies avoid the usual art history approach of studying the elite or the unusual);
4. avoiding the scholarly tendency toward progressive determinism in American history

- (the ubiquity of surviving gravestones when studied normatively can eliminate that bias, although the poor and social subgroups are generally underrepresented in all historical materials); and
5. avoiding the proclivity toward synchronic method (complete recording of an area with stones from a wide time span will provide as much of a diachronic method as possible and thus allow more broadly based interpretation).

Archaeologists who analyze gravestone material culture usually use the approaches outlined above, Deetz and Dethlefsen (1966, 1967; also Dethlefsen and Deetz 1966) being the first to do so. They postulated the three major colonial stone motifs—death's head, cherub, urn and willow—as correlating to changes in Puritan theology and the rise of other religions, a structuralist ideological perspective. Veit (this volume) provides a useful overview of the conflicting theoretical approaches to gravestone choice and change by historians such as David Hall (1977) who denies any connection between style of gravestone and Puritanism, while Cary Carson (1994) sees cultural change fueled by a consumer revolution. As Veit notes, other archaeologists and historians see the cultural shifts as reflecting the growth of mercantile capitalism (Leone 1982), with many theories falling between these poles.

### The Long Island Study

Geographically delimited, Long Island offers a naturally circumscribed area in which the universe of stones may be studied holistically, as opposed to study areas based on later geo-political boundaries, which may or may not reflect past settlement. The current four counties—Kings, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk—were delineated in 1683 by New York's English Governor Andros as Kings, Queens, and Suffolk. Nassau split off from eastern Queens in 1898; for this study, Nassau is noted separately but considered as eastern Queens in the data.

Each of the counties contained townships; each township had a nuclear settlement from which subsequent villages hived off. This settlement pattern produced the chronological dimension of design choice in the cemeteries.

Previously, the author (Stone 1987:310–321) revealed the hierarchy of settlement of each town; this chronological factor is also reflected in gravestone choice. Since the island is a morainal deposit of field boulders from New England, this lack of quarryable stone precipitated the procurement of all stones (in rounded numbers) from Massachusetts at 12% (Figure 4), from Rhode Island at 8% (Figure 5), from Connecticut at 20% (Figure 6), from New Jersey at 27% (Figure 7), and from New Amsterdam/New York City at 2% (Figure 8; also, the category labeled “unknown” is listed at 2%. The stones made from local boulders were usually picked for a gravestone-like shape and lettered with initials and death date; a few were carved to resemble the popular stones (Figure 9b). Some Quakers used popular stones but left the tympanum undecorated, relating to their belief in simplicity (Figure 9a).

The 164 located cemeteries holding 17th- to early-19th-century slate, sandstone, schist, and early marble stones were photographed and



FIGURE 4. Rhode Island grave marker carved by John Stevens II for John Sands (d. 1712), Sands Cemetery, Sands Point, Nassau County. (Photo by author, 1987.)

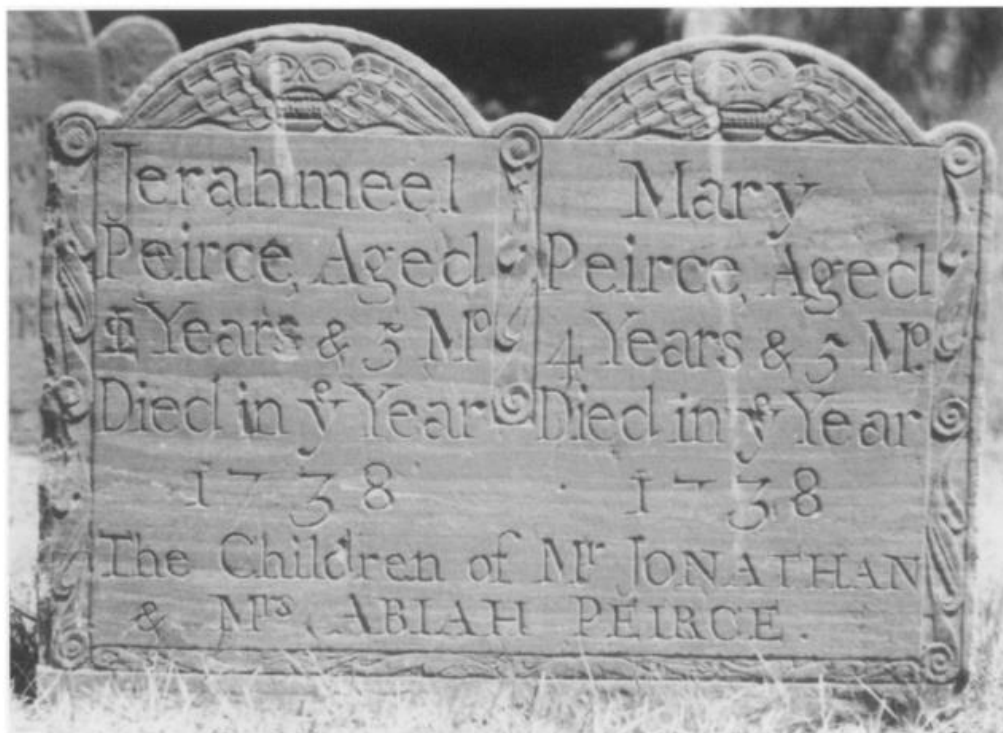


FIGURE 5. Lamson workshop Boston grave marker for Jerahmeel and Mary Peirce (d. 1738), North End Cemetery, Southampton, Suffolk County. (Photo by author, 1987.)

analyzed for 44 variables. They encompassed nine denominations, nondenominational cemeteries, and "unknown." Most of the ideologies continue from their colonial beginnings: the Puritan (Congregational or Presbyterian since 1717) with 62% of the gravestone population; the Anglicans at 6%; Quakers at roughly 3% (greatly underrepresented, as they did not believe in memorialization); and Methodists (including Baptists and Anabaptists) at 2.5%. "Unknown" accounts for about 7%, and "nondenominational" accounts for almost 10% of the stones. Only the early Anabaptist, Lutheran, and Baptist churches no longer exist; while some former Dutch-Reformed congregations (12% of the stones) are now represented only by their cemeteries.

Not only is the ideology of Long Island settlers expressed in the material record but also their ethnicity, which creates cultural boundaries. The gravestone surnames show that of the purportedly "English" towns, half of Newtown and Hempstead villages (partitioned into North Hemp-

stead after the end of the Revolutionary War) were "Dutch," including about one-third of North Hempstead, one-quarter of Oyster Bay Town, and one-fifth of Jamaica; of course, the five towns of Kings County were solidly "Dutch."

#### Research Methods

More than 4,300 gravestones in the 164 cemeteries located were photographed and computer coded for 44 variables on optical scan forms. (See Stone 1987:267–302 for the codebook, gravestone and cemetery recording forms, and recording procedures.) The systematic photography of all possible traditional slate, sandstone, schist, and early marble stones (even stumps, which could later be identified from recorded cemetery inscriptions) in a cemetery and landscape views from the four sides of a cemetery (useful in case future restoration is needed) were done. Today, recording can be completed using many facets of GIS, GPS, video, etc., techniques



FIGURE 6. Connecticut grave marker carved by Thomas Johnson III for Hannah Peirson (d. 1777), Sagaponack Cemetery, Sagaponack, Suffolk County. (Photo by author, 1987.)

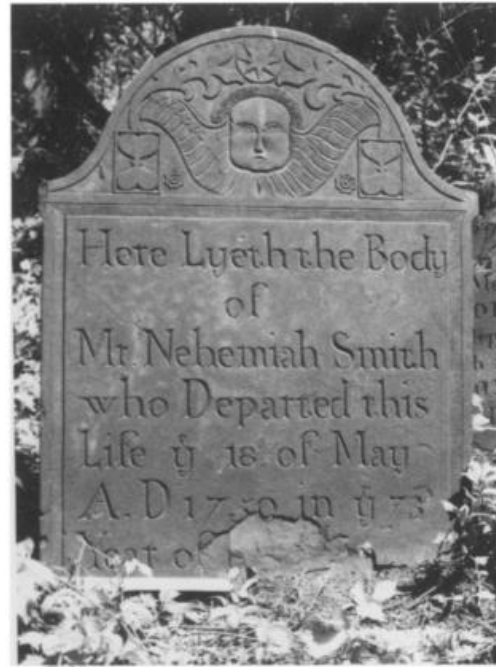


FIGURE 7. Grave marker carved by Uzal Ward of Newark, New Jersey for Nehemiah Smith (d. 1750), Prospect Presbyterian Cemetery, Jamaica, Queens County. (Photo by author, 1987.)

(Foster and Hummel 2000:111–123). The codebook for the variables discerned as recording progressed was amplified from that of Deetz and Dethlefsen to deal with the greater number of variables: ethnicity, ideology, cemetery hierarchy, epitaphs, siting, etc. The universe of stones was not sampled but recorded as completely as possible. This was necessary to retrieve the data of the more difficult-to-locate small Quaker and Dutch family cemeteries. Sampling would largely have missed this aspect of the region. A universal, open-ended coding system was devised to allow the inclusion of whatever was found. Data were entered into the university mainframe computer, using SAS, and runs were made for the variables of space (location by county, town, and cemetery), chronology (decade, quarter-century, half-century, and century), design, ethnic group, religion, etc. Some results were so diffuse at the finest levels of analysis (decade, for example), it was necessary

to cluster them into quarter-century or higher periods to make sense of the data. Of the more than 4,300 stones, no date could be ascertained for 6%, and 3% were after 1820. The largest number of deaths recorded on stones was in the 1800 decade, followed by the 1790, 1810, 1780, 1750, and 1770 decades. The further rise in gravestone population after 1810 was largely recorded on marble stones (not part of this study), which are mostly illegible today.

#### **Ethnicity and Race in the Long Island Gravestone Record**

Some groups are poorly represented in the gravestone record. Enslaved Africans were quite numerous in colonial New Netherland; for example, the early east end Southampton Town population was around 20% enslaved people. None of the colonial African mortuary record has survived on west end Long Island, but





FIGURE 8. Grave marker carved by John Zuricher of New York City for Sara Martenese (d. 1763), Flatbush Dutch Reformed Cemetery, Flatbush, Kings County. (Photo by author, 1987.)

there are a few stones in several east end cemeteries and some wooden crosses in mid-Long Island outside family grounds, usually in estate cemeteries. The only community cemetery with wood markers for Africans is one in Oyster Bay Town (Nassau County), which contained many Quakers and free thinkers having close trading ties with nonconformist Newport, Rhode Island. The exceptionally tolerant atmosphere there and enslaved African carvers working for the John Stevens shop may account for the notable body of slate gravestones for Africans in Newport's main burying ground.

Also, the Native Americans of colonial Long Island, many of them servants and some slaves, have no carved markers of stone, although there is a wood post in one cemetery said to mark Native graves and some cobble mounds in others said to be Native/African burials within settler cemeteries. There are a small number of 19th-century marble markers (outside the scope

of this study) memorializing African American and Montaukett Civil War soldiers in East Hampton's North End Cemetery and in the AME Zion churchyard in Sag Harbor, as well as in the Shinnecock and Poosapatuck Reservation burying grounds.

#### Ethnic and Ideological Choices in Gravestones

There are somewhat better records for other groups. The "Dutch" represent about 15% of the extant gravestone record of 1680 to about 1800; yet, according to census records, in 1698 about one-half of the New Netherland population was Dutch (Cohen 1981:13). As late as the 1790 first census of the United States (five generations after the influx of the English), the Dutch represented 16% of the New York population, 2% nationally, and were five times as numerous as the Scots (Rossiter 1909). These figures appear conservative, as David Fischer (1989:817) notes higher figures. These "Dutch" ethnic groups are represented in the Long Island gravestone record roughly as 0.5% Flemish-Belgian, 10.1% Hollanders, 1.7% German, 2.7% French, 0.9% Scandinavian, and 0.9% Scots and Irish (Figure 10).

The Dutch and the English Quakers are also underrepresented in the gravestone record, for several reasons. The earliest "Dutch" entrepreneurs established waterside plantations, and their fieldstone and carved markers did not survive the urbanization of the sites. This destruction was repeated later for the homesteads of Kings and Queens counties. As the extant gravestone record shows, the "Dutch" were twice as likely to use fieldstone memorials as the English, except for the Quakers, who were about 50% more likely to use fieldstone markers than their fellow English. Most of these boulder markers were carved with initials and death date. Many were purposely chosen for a pointed or gravestone-like shape (Figure 9b). Some had simple designs carved on them, but many are illegible now. Since the Dutch and Quakers were solid farmers and craftsmen, this evidently was not a choice dictated by economic necessity. Early Quaker settlers present another problem in assessing memorialization. The Society of Friends' Meetings on Long Island became distressed about the increasing



a

use of commercial grave markers by their members, so the Westbury Meeting in 1776 ordered that all carved markers be removed from their meetinghouse grounds. In keeping with their philosophy of simplicity and equality, meetinghouse grounds that contain many burials from the 1600s on are mostly unmarked and thus invisible today. Because of this, the Quakers are greatly underrepresented in the gravestone record.

Since markers frequently mirror cultural choices, ideological beliefs are reflected in the larger number of fieldstone markers and plain (no design) stones in this Dutch and Quaker-influenced the mid-Long Island hinterland Oyster Bay and Hempstead towns. Fieldstone markers account for about 6% of all Long Island stones; their currently visible use peaked between 1750 and 1775, but about a 20% use continued through the early 1800s. Another expression of ideology by the Quakers or nonconformist families was an adaptation of the traditional gravestone; the usual tripartite colonial shape was used, but the tympanum was left blank (Figure 9a).



b

FIGURE 9 (a) Quaker grave marker for Hannah Seaman (d. 1759), Townsend Cemetery, Jericho, Nassau County; (b) fieldstone marker for Joseph Worden, MacCoun Cemetery, Oyster Bay, Nassau County. (Photo by author, 1987.)

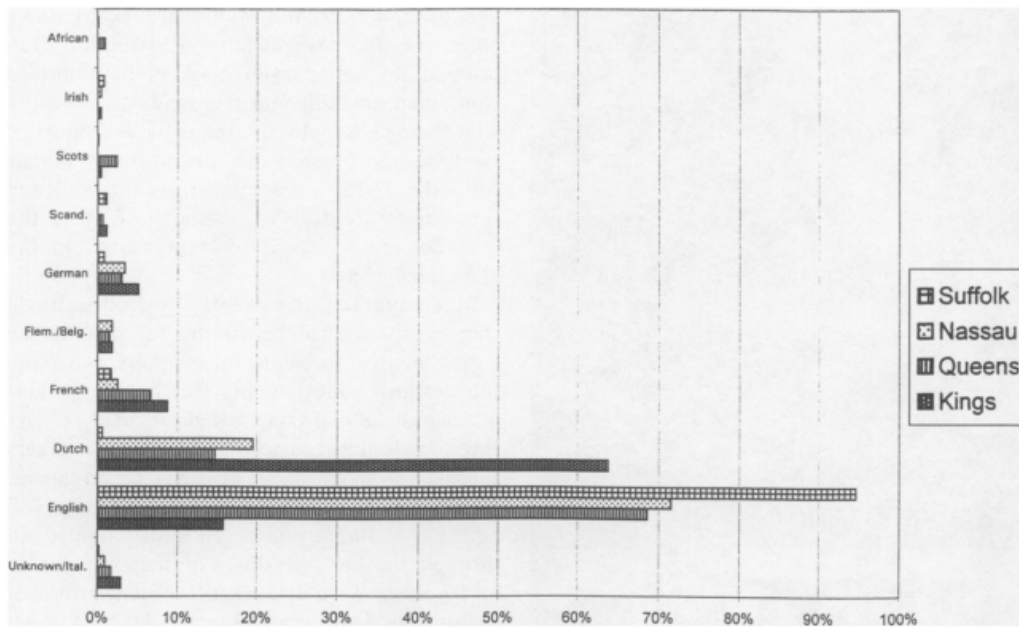


FIGURE 10. Ethnicity of gravestones by county. (Graph by author.)

The importance of this Quaker population has been overlooked in traditional American history. The American tradition of religious pluralism and freedom of belief stems from the Flushing Remonstrance and other precedents established by these freethinking individuals in Queens County. Governor Peter Stuyvesant of New Amsterdam imprisoned John Bowne, an English nonconformist and later Quaker of Flushing, for refusing to pay taxes for the established (Dutch Reformed) church. He demanded a hearing before the Dutch West India Company and pleaded his case in Amsterdam. The company subsequently ordered Stuyvesant to free Bowne and to allow freedom of conscience in the colony, which became the basis of the American separation of church and state, along with the general Dutch practice of toleration of belief.

These gravestones also demonstrate the persistence of the Dutch language in an English polity. The stones were analyzed for ethnic group by the surname on the stone, by inscribed biographical information, by the language used, and the burial location. Inscriptions in Dutch on stones in the Kings County Dutch Reformed churchyards comprise 2% of the total stones of the island but comprise 90% of the Kings County

subset (Figure 8). The use of this language was maintained for 200 years after takeover by the English; Dutch was used on stones until 1817, in church even later, and at table (by the Roosevelts, for example) until the late-19th century (Hammond 1990, pers. comm.). This is the most clear-cut ethnic distinction in Long Island cemeteries. Another strong ethnic division is shown in the orientation of headstone inscriptions (Figure 11). The Dutch and English both sprang from a common Calvinist heritage, yet 54% of the earliest Dutch stone inscriptions face east (91% in Dutch Reformed churchyards), while 87% of English inscriptions face west. Is this an ethnic boundary, a cultural practice? Is it a superstition of "do not step on the grave" (not likely when reading the west-facing stones)? With the passage of time and as the descendants of the early Dutch colonists moved east to the mid-Island area, their headstones conformed to the English practice, leading to a 37% east-facing use overall.

Besides surname and language, ethnicity is also expressed in the gravestone inscription format. Dutch women in most early Dutch Reformed burying grounds were denoted by their natal name first (not losing their lineage)

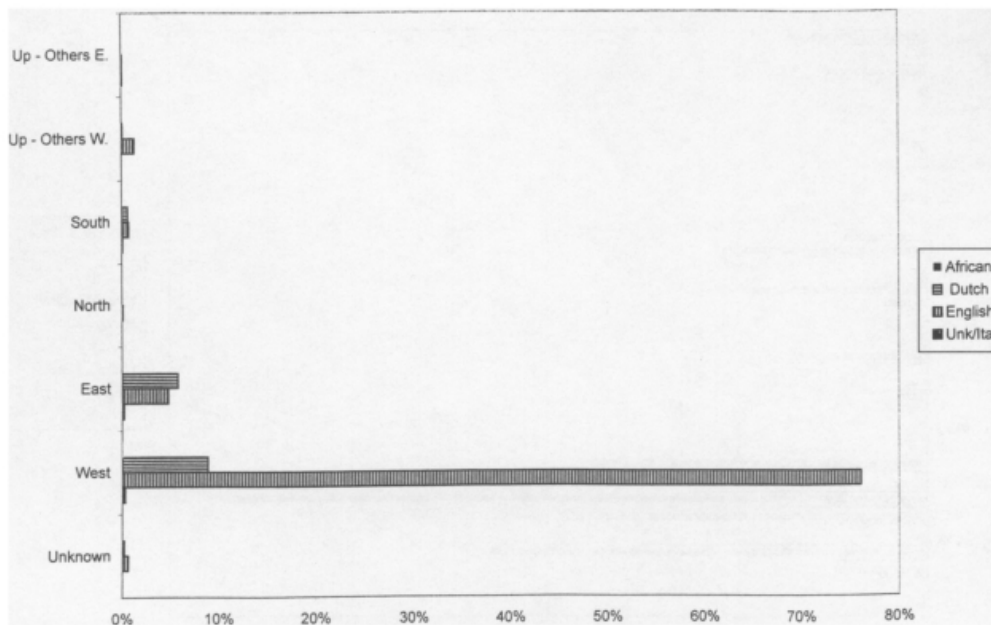


FIGURE 11. Orientation of gravestones by ethnic group. (Graph by author.)

and then by the name of their husband; English women almost never were. Only English women of status were further identified, for example, as “Hannah, wife of Herrick Rogers and daughter of Capt. David and Mrs. Mary Rose.” This identification was evident in only a minuscule fraction of the English female population; overwhelmingly, English women were anonymous wives. From accounts of the time, Dutch women apparently also had more freedom to engage in business, be executrices of wills, and be educated (Quaker women also) than Puritan women, which may relate to this form of gravestone identity.

In the choice of design motif on stones, ethnic or ideological differences were also displayed (Figures 12, 13). Puritan and Dutch Reformed choices differed strongly. Only 12% of all Long Island stones have a death’s head; of these, less than 1% occurred in the Dutch-influenced west end, whereas 89% are in the Puritan churchyards that later became Congregational or Presbyterian. There was never similarity in design choice between the two culture area groups, except to a limited extent in the 1750–1775 period. There was also variation in gravestone design choice through time. (Stone

1987 contains the overall Long Island record by decade.) The graph (Figure 14) shows that Long Island had plain stones contemporaneously with death’s heads, differing from Deetz and Dethlefsen’s New England pattern.

The secularization of motif (through consumer revolution? more ideological choice?), which Veit (this volume) finds for central New Jersey, also occurred on Long Island. There appears to be more choice of motifs, however: no design (10.1% English to 03.2% Dutch); floral and vegetal designs (1.0% English to 0.01% Dutch); decorative “In ...” (20.4% English to 6.5% Dutch); and lettering (3.7% English to 3.0% Dutch); as well as urn and willow stones (subsumed under the category “Other,” 2.1% English to 0.3% Dutch). The late-18th century, which accounts for 25% of all stones by time, is represented by many plain stones, which were 40% of the total.

#### Carvers and Availability of Stones

Instructive here is the record of the Hill family of carvers who left Connecticut in 1783 and moved to Sag Harbor, Long Island, when they deduced they could secure the east

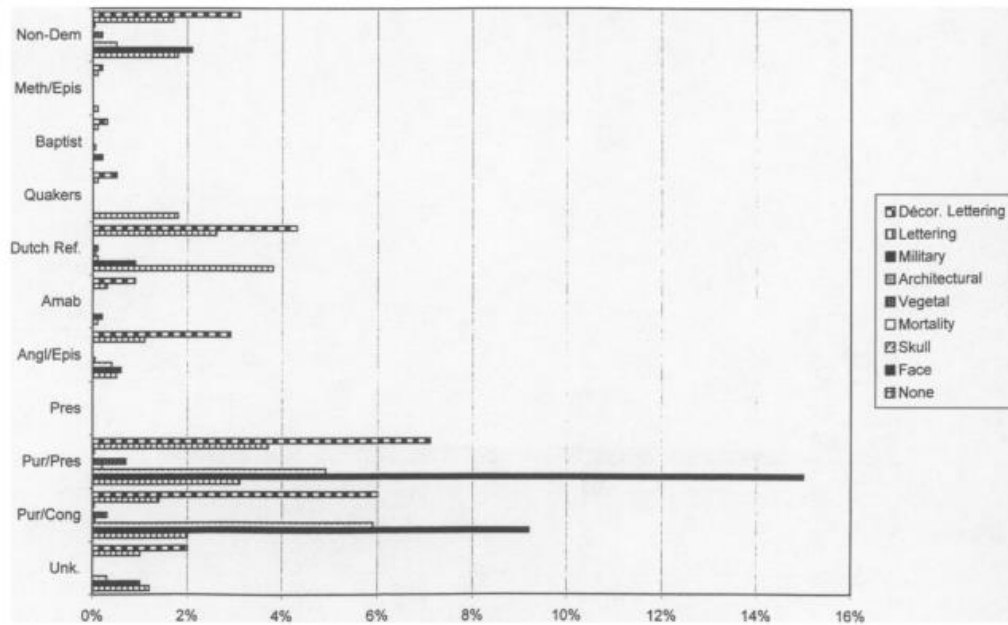


FIGURE 12. Gravestone design choice by religion. (Graph by author.)

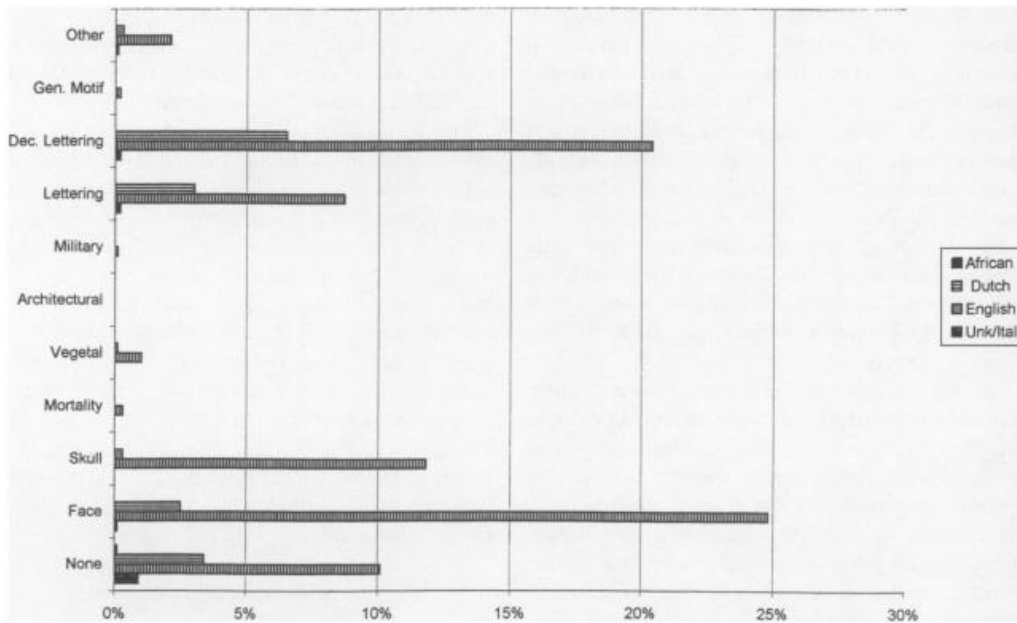


FIGURE 13. Gravestone design choice by ethnic group. (Graph by author.)

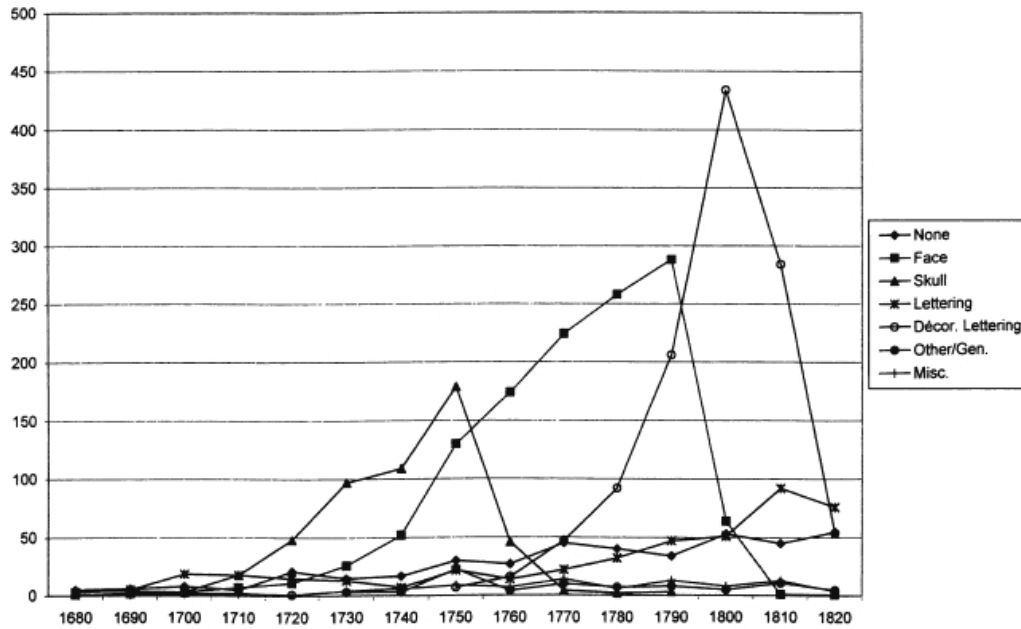


FIGURE 14. Long Island gravestone designs by decade. (Graph by author.)

end business from the New England carvers. While in Connecticut, they mostly carved for Long Islanders the “cookie cutter” (they all looked the same) cherub (face with wings) style (Figure 15). While on Long Island they carved almost every type of motif (consumer demand?): the cherub, plain, ornate “In ...” (as “in memory of ...”), floral, and urn and willow in various combinations. They continued most of these except the cherub into the early-19th century.

#### Gravestone Choice Variables

It appears that location as well as ethnicity had some effect in Long Island gravestone choice. Overall, 57% of east end Suffolk County stones came from nearby New England. The proportion changed through time, however: 70% in the late 1600s, averages of 85% in the early 1700s, 64% in the third quarter (Revolutionary War disruption?), 34% at the end of the 18th century, and only 3% in the early 1800s. This drop was influenced by an increase in stones from the New York City stone-cutting center as it came to dominate trade and by the establishment of the Hill family workshop in Sag Harbor



FIGURE 15. The Hill family carvers produced the marker for Hannah Platt (d. 1811). It is the most numerous design they produced. Manhasset Episcopal Cemetery, Manhasset, Nassau County. (Photo by author, 1987.)

in 1783, which took over the former share of the New England carvers.

Proximity, or shipping distance, also appears to be a factor: 94% of Kings County stones and 89% of those in Queens came from the New Netherland stone-cutting centers in New Jersey and New York City, regardless of the ethnicity or ideology of the deceased. Mid-Long Island (Nassau County) inhabitants imported more than 50% of their stones from the closer New Netherland/New York carvers, with the balance being locally crafted fieldstones and examples from New England. This area was a hotbed of religious dissension from Puritan orthodoxy, harboring Quakers, the radical Quaker offshoot Gortonists, Baptists, Methodists, and others. This dissent is reflected in the larger number of plain stones (50%) and home-carved boulders (6% of all stones) used there.

### Conclusions

In the 164 cemeteries studied, the cultural choice of gravestones appears to be affected by proximity, but ethnic and ideological differences between the two culture area groups are clearly expressed through variations in language used on the stone, expressions of gender, orientation of headstones, use of fieldstones as markers, and choice of design motifs. The small English Quaker subgroup gives evidence of its ideological tenacity through the differential use of gravestones (or lack of them), a higher usage of fieldstone markers (also the Dutch), and the later choice of stones with no design.

The Long Island gravestone record relates to Deetz's tripartite New England model but varies in that the oldest stones are not death's heads but are plain stones, followed by death's heads, then "cherubs" (faces in many styles, with and without wings), then contemporaneously a few urn and willow stones with a much larger number of plain stones (44%) or with an ornate "In ..." motif. Besides varying chronologically, the choice and use of stones on Long Island also varied by cultural sphere (ethnic group?) and ideology. This normative database provides previously unknown information for scholars in many fields.

These data refine Bonomi's (1971:22) statement, based on 1698 population records, that there were no "Dutch" in Suffolk County;

Huguenot refugees were assigned to each county after the Edict of Nantes in 1683. There were a number of "Dutch" in many of the towns of the county almost from the beginning—Schellingens and Lopers in East Hampton; Pelletreau and others in Southampton; Genin, L'Hommedieu, and others in Southold; many others in Huntington, Smithtown, and Islip towns—still reflected in building practices, surnames, and gravestones. This information also provides a finer grained picture of the settlement influences and ethnic composition of Long Island than is depicted in the maps of Bonomi (Figure 2) and Donald Meinig (1975:133).

This gravestone material record provides further support for Allen Noble's (1984) designation of New Netherland as the Hudson Valley culture hearth and exemplifies the multicultural nature of the Dutch hearth, more closely aligned to the mid-Atlantic culture area than that of New England. A culture hearth is a seedbed in which a culture displays most strongly its essential features that remain primary, whatever the subsequent development (Zelinsky 1973:89). Geographer Meinig (1986:124) believes that a distinctly new American people were formed largely of the "Dutch" and English, laced with many other ethnic elements (recorded in this study) and self-consciously different from New England. Current scholars (Goodfriend 1991, and others) believe that the English were engulfed in a "Dutch" world for generations before they became the most populous; because of this and the Dutch cultural tenacity, American society became more like the "Dutch" than the English.

The "Dutch" subgroup, eventually submerged by 200 years of pervasive English culture, demonstrates in this material record the strength of ethnic inheritance. People died and were memorialized as they lived, bounded by their cultural roots. English rule began only 30 years after "Dutch" settlement on Long Island, so the majority of the later "Dutch" gravestones represent, more than the founding settlers, the succeeding generations who were becoming the new Americans, making the evidence of these continuing early ethnic and ideological boundaries all the more remarkable. Gravestones are an enduring and traditional part of a people's culture, and the cemetery is a nodal point of the social landscape. Both represent choices illustrating their beliefs; their presence provides a fuller

record of an area's history. On Long Island, that record was shaped by the 10 ethnic groups and 9 (plus "unknown") religious denominations functioning within a unique situation of competing culture spheres and multiple sources of grave markers. On the national scale, the Dutch presence, as shown here, has contributed to U.S. English vocabulary (almost all ship terms, "Yankee," and more are Dutch), enriched our cuisine (doughnuts, crullers, cookies, pancakes, salads, "kol sla" [cole slaw], and more). They also introduced the idea of caucus and political representation, and, with the Quakers, enabled the concept of freedom of belief—the underpinnings of American society.

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