

## **Material Evidence of Ideological and Ethnic Choice in Long Island Gravestones, 1670-1800**

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### *Introduction*

Many geographers have been concerned with the concept of culture and its imprint on the landscape, and there are varying definitions of what areas constitute the North American culture hearths. Few scholars have perceived New Netherland as one of these hearths, and Long Island, strategically located between New England and the Mid-Atlantic states and contiguous to the nuclear New Amsterdam settlement, has not been recognized as an important part of the "Dutch" culture area.

Until recently there has been limited attention to and few systematic studies of the persisting Dutch influence in the area, especially through the material culture record of decorative arts, architecture, gravestones, and settlement patterns. This paper will review current scholarship, and focus on the record of ethnic choice in the gravestones of Long Island. I wish to acknowledge the talented assistance of William Persons of the SUNY-Stony Brook Computer Center with the computer analysis of the gravestone database. About 4,500 Colonial gravestones in all the locatable cemeteries (164) of the Island were photographed and computer coded for 44 variables to retrieve the cultural and social information inherent in their use. Since gravestones symbolize a conservative rite of passage—death—they reveal prior ethnic and ideological patterns which may not exist today and choices not revealed in the historical record.

### *New Netherland as Culture Hearth*

Culturally, Long Island was a hinterland of both the New England and Mid-Atlantic culture hearths, and an integral part of New Netherland politically. That colony, with "Dutch" surnames, language use, place names, architecture, and settlement patterns still evident—despite English seizure in 1664—should be considered a culture hearth itself. The concept of the coherent entity of Hudson Valley materials was noted by Alice P. Kenney, who reviewed 100 years of specialized study in the area, to find that some elements had been studied separately, but that it deserved to be considered

systematically as a whole.

Cultural geographer Donald W. Meinig (1975:52) defines the culture hearth "as an area wherein new basic cultural systems and configurations are developed and nurtured before spreading vigorously outward to alter the character of much larger areas." He further feels that a distinctly new American people were formed largely of the Dutch and English, laced with many other ethnic elements, and self-consciously different from the character of adjacent New England (1986:124). Wilbur Zelinsky (p. 89) finds the colonial culture hearth a seedbed in which a culture displays most strongly its essential features, which remain primary whatever the subsequent development. His defined culture hearths are New England, the Midland, and Chesapeake Bay, with New Netherland included in the Midland hearth.

Although New Netherland was geographically limited compared to other culture hearths, nuclear New Amsterdam hived off settlements north to the upper Hudson River, east to Long Island, west along the Mohawk, and south to the Delaware River, and was a vital pervasive force in the colony (see Fig. 1). While geographer Peter Wacker (1975:vii) does not perceive New Jersey as New Netherland, but rather as a borderland between the Massachusetts Bay and Pennsylvania hearths he recognizes, his statistics of ethnic and ideological origin of settlers (162, 164) indicate New Jersey mirrors the multi-culturalism found by Rink (p. 165) for the upper Hudson Valley, by Hinshalwood for the mid-Hudson area, and by the author (1987) for Long Island. Further, Wacker's analysis of house and barn types (1974), as well as that of Embury (1977) and others indicates a Dutch imprint on that form of material culture.

John Stilgoe (p. 152) sees only New England, the Tidewater, and the Piedmont as cultural landscapes, and mentions New Netherland solely in terms of the Dutch barn. David H. Fischer's (p. 816) lengthy examination of America's four major British culture areas—Massachusetts, Virginia, the Delaware, the Backcountry—devotes one page to New Netherland as the "largest of these other cultures."

Henry Glassie's (pp. 145-150) study of the material folk culture of the eastern United States defines source areas as southeast New England, southeastern Pennsylvania, the Chesapeake Bay area, and the North Carolina-Georgia coast. He does not recognize New Netherland as a folk culture area, though he acknowledges "an early Continental infusion," which results in 3 pages focusing on the Dutch barn and *kas* clothes cabinet. While he discusses the ubiquitous 19th century neo-classical American gravestone and the design motif evolution of New England stones, he does not include this type of folk material culture for the other source areas, precluding further such comparison between regions.

The only scholar who treats New Netherland as a culture hearth is geographer Allen Noble, who analyzes the St. Lawrence Valley, New England, Hudson Valley, Delaware Valley, and Chesapeake Bay culture areas (see Fig. 1 for the New Netherland hearth). While most

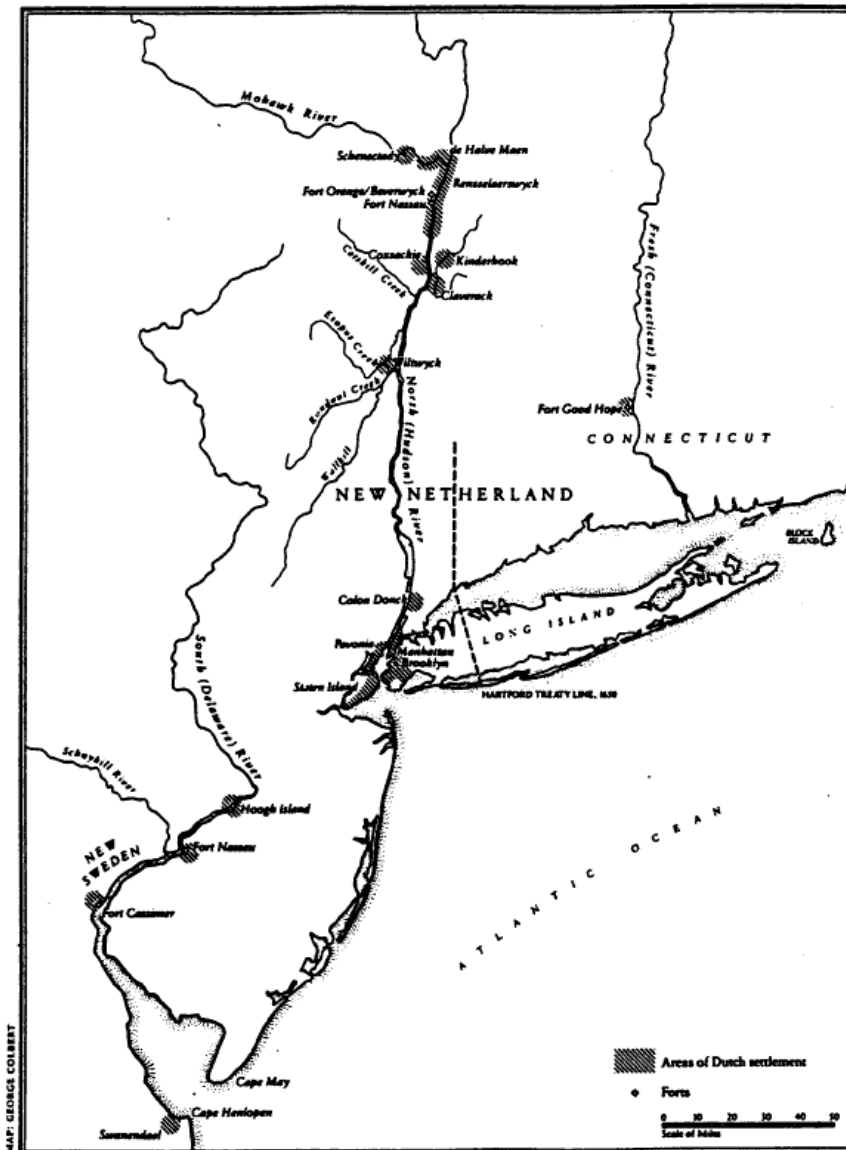


Fig. 1 New Netherland - Blackburn and Piwonka, 1988, p. 34.

of these geographers utilize regional material culture—primarily architecture, sometimes place names—to delineate areas, none have used gravestones as a form of material culture which provides fine grained data on ethnic and ideological origins and affiliations. Zelinsky (p. 101) is the only geographer to note the nodal position of churches and cemeteries on the settlement landscape and remark about the scandalous neglect of this unique database with its potential for cultural information. Even further social data is available from quantified, systematic analysis of the gravestones harbored in the cemeteries.

The proposed New Netherland culture hearth contains these characteristics: early settlements replicating the culture dispersing from a nuclear core; a highly multi-cultural population; material culture which reflects this heterogeneity unto today. “Dutch” lifeways in New Netherland were composed of the varied traditions of the settlers’ natal provinces adapted to the resources of the new environment, thus creating a distinctive New Netherland culture. The recent monumental book, *Remembrance of Patria: Dutch Arts and Culture in Colonial America, 1609-1776* (Blackburn and Piwonka) richly illustrates this thesis, though emphasizing the upper Hudson Valley portion of New Netherland. Noble (p. 27) describes more extensively the architectural evidence of the lower Hudson Valley and Long Island, and Dean Failey presents the wealth of Dutch furniture on the Island; Sophia Hinshalwood focuses on selected cultural aspects of the mid-Hudson Valley, and Dutch New Jersey is analyzed by geographer Peter Wacker and folklorist David Cohen.

Cohen’s (p. 51) analysis of the “Dutchness” of New Netherland indicates that the proportion of foreign (non-Dutch) settlers was as much as 50% of the colony’s population. The earliest settlers were Belgian Walloons, and from the beginning French Huguenots, Flemings, Germans, Scandinavians, Scots, Protestant Irish, a sprinkling of Turks, Italians, Polish, Jews, and later, enslaved Africans composed 17th century New Netherland. After the English seizure of New Netherland in 1664, all who were not English-speakers were perceived as “Dutch.” Though Pennsylvania is popularly thought to be the most heterogeneous Colonial colony and Wacker (1975:xvi) believes New Jersey was, New Netherland was the earliest, most culturally diverse colony. As late as the first United States census in 1790, the Dutch were recorded as 2% of the population, third behind the Scots and Germans (Rossiter, p. 116). When examined by state breakdown, the Dutch were 16% of New York’s population, five times as numerous as the second place Scots; they were a fraction of 1% in every other state listed.

The material culture evidence of gravestones and architecture on Long Island indicates that “Dutch” cultural choices, building prac-

tices, and surnames survived throughout the later engulfment by a largely English population. The use of the Dutch language continued on gravestones until 1813, in church services into the second quarter of the 19th century, and in the home even later— among the Roosevelts, for example, through the 1850s— and as an integral part of the American language today, such as the word “Yankee” (Harmond). Dutch customs, from Sinter Klaas (the original Santa Claus), to New Year’s Day Open House, to egg rolling at Easter, are still part of American holiday tradition. Figure 2 illustrates currently known “Dutch” influence on the Island.

Unfortunately, this evidence for a New Netherland culture hearth largely has not been used by scholars. The fact that many colonial Dutch records have not been translated until recently has been an obstacle to documentary research, and the almost complete destruction of Dutch architecture by the expansion of the New York megalopolis has been a detriment to material culture analysis. Happily, some of this extensive record has survived pictorially (see Bailey, Dilliard, Eberlein, *Historic America Buildings Survey*, Reynolds, and photograph collections at the New York Public Library, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn Historical Society, Queensborough Public Library for evidence).

Most studies of New Netherland have been by historians; among such studies are those of Bachman, Condon, Norton, Rink, and Smith. Generally, they are economic analyses and do not deal with the concept of the culture hearth or data from material culture, although there was some description of ethnicity by Patricia Bonomi (p. 22) and more recently by Oliver Rink.

A body of material which includes some material culture and archaeological perspectives has been building through the annual Rensselaerwijck Seminars of the past 14 years (see Zeller). Most recently, the persistence of Dutch language and Irving’s literary depictions of the Dutch have been described by Gehring and Funk, while Fabend has followed one Dutch family through colonization and “Americanization.” Two historians, Narrett and Goodfriend, are pinpointing the striking differences between Dutch and English marriage and inheritance practices (Narrett), and the systematic anti-Dutch bias of the political historians who write history, as well as the inadequacy of the ‘Anglicization’ model of historians who describe Dutch ‘assimilation’ (Goodfriend).

Only one scholar, David Cohen (1991), uses material culture evidence to further define the Dutch culture area. He analyzes and defines the Colonial Dutch-American house style, often called Georgian by architectural historians, and its distribution. Cohen sees it as a ‘dialect’ of the English-influenced American structure, viewed as ‘language.’ Most of these current writers see New Netherland as a

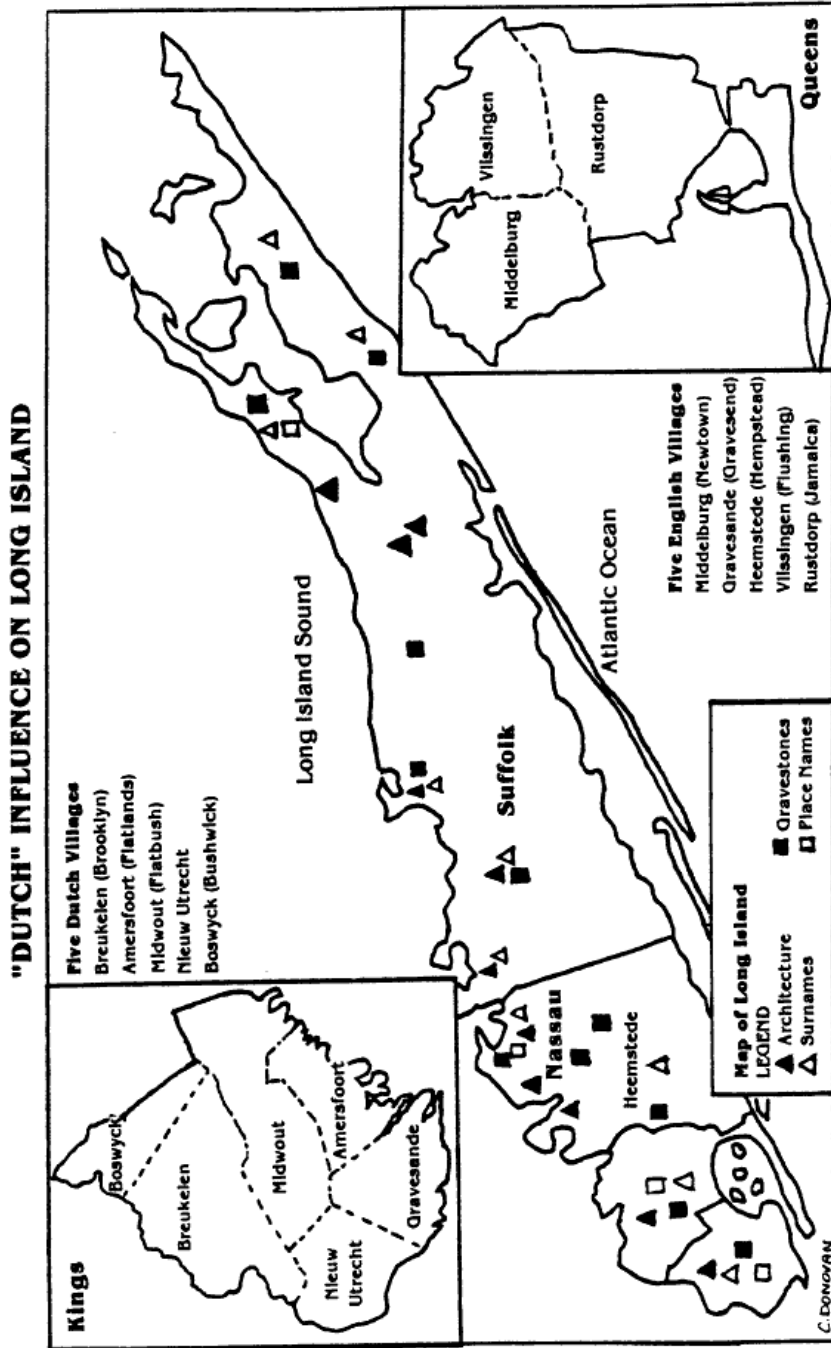


Fig 2

vigorous regional culture and the Dutch a majority into which the earliest English of New Netherland were absorbed, producing in the process a new culture.

### *The Utility of Gravestone Studies*

Gravestone study has been part of human historical inquiry since the first antiquarians recorded Egyptian pyramids, Etruscan tumuli, English barrows, Roman stelae, and other memorials. The first Northern European immigrants who came to North America brought their traditional mortuary practice of stone box or table tombs for the elite, and wooden grave markers for the "middling sort," though this varied by area (see Mackey, Sweeney, etc. below). Generally, the poorest were not memorialized except by a wood post or field stone, though sometimes a town government ordered a simple carved marker for their charges.

Therefore, the upright stone marker was the normative memorialization for the bulk of the new Americans, with shape, material and motifs changing through time. The geological base of an area usually determined the type of stone used, although with improved rail transport marble overtook all regional stone usage by the mid 19th century. The early tripartite or round top shape, traditional slate, schist, or sandstone material, and hand carving gave way to more complex shapes, the use of marble, and machine carving early in the 19th century—a powerful material culture transformation indicating pervasive change in American technology, beliefs, and cultural influences: for example, the florescence of neo-classical design in gravestones and other forms of material culture stemming from the discovery of Pompeii.

Choice of design motif was often related to ideology, with the early death's head mortality symbol (with or without wings and other symbols) more prevalent in Puritan New England than in poly-ideological New Netherland; the plain stone with no design was usually the earliest there, unless it was imported from Boston. In the early mid-1700s the face with wings, often called a cherub, cherubim, angel, etc., and perceived as a symbol of immortality, began to replace the death's head; the rate of acceptance varied by area. The author's research has shown that ideology and ethnicity also influenced the choice of designs; in New Netherland, for example, there were few death's heads, and plain stones and those with initials for the design were chosen more frequently by the Quakers and the "Dutch."

Only with the advent of the statistical gravestone studies of Deetz and Dethlefsen in the 1960s did the data from stones become diachronic and nomothetic—allowing the power of generalization.

The author's procedures were based on theirs and amplified to deal with this region; however, 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 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 materials were discovered; the stones were photographed and coded for over 40 variables. This was entered into the university mainframe computer through SAS, and runs were made for the variables of space—location by county, town and cemetery; chronology—decade, quarter-century, half-century; by design, ethnic group, religion, etc. Some results were so diffuse at the finest levels of analysis (decade for example), that it was necessary to cluster into quarter-century or higher periods to make sense of the data. See Stone (1987) for further details of the recording system.

Thus a material culture artifact which is original and little modified, composes a sizable universe, and is easily quantified for systematic analysis, 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 related by their social matrix. Archaeologist Edwin Dethlefsen noted, "the graveyard is a microcosmic material history of the systemic evolution of the living community" (p. 137), and demonstrates this in Dethlefsen and Jensen (p. 32-38), where several Florida cemeteries of varying configuration are related to their origin and evolution. Thus, in the family cemetery the gravestone artifacts 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.

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 which 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, perhaps more finely than by the usual cultural artifact used for this—architecture.

Scholars have utilized gravestone analysis in various ways to elicit an area's Colonial-era human behavior. An example of this is the evidence of German ethnicity found on gravestones, but not in architecture, in Ruth Little-Stokes' highland North Carolina study area. Also, geographer Donald Meinig's (1975:133) map of cultural influences on New York State in the Colonial period (the type of data



it is based on is not stated) indicates influence from Connecticut for most of Long Island, with only the small western tip (Brooklyn) influenced by the Dutch. This surface depiction does not reveal the more complex record shown by the gravestone evidence.

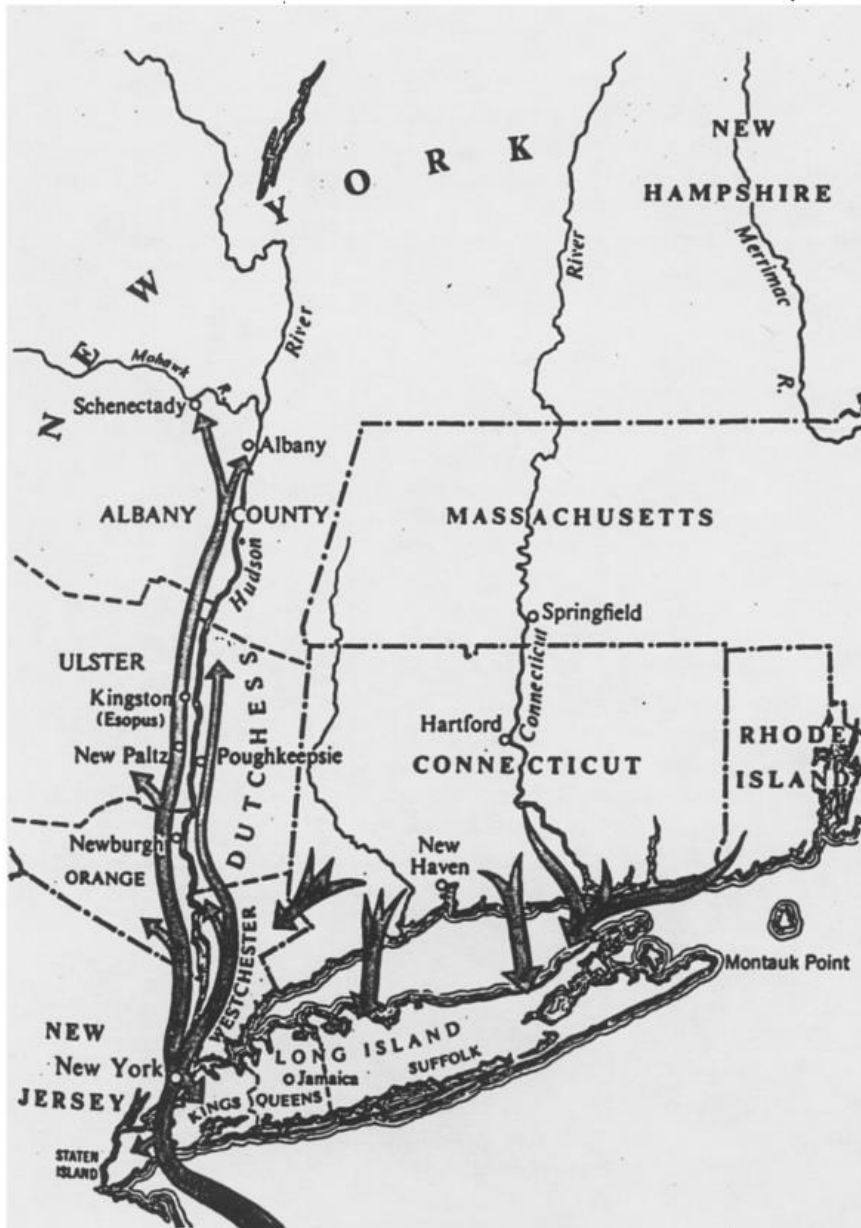
Analyzing an area's cemeteries and stones will also show the distribution of ethnically and ideologically-bounded groups on the landscape, a record which today is often invisible. For example, Bonomi's map (Fig. 3) of 17th century settlement flow in New York contains more ethnic, and thus cultural, diversity than does Meinig's, but truncates the Dutch influence to a small part of Kings County, as does Fig. 1, and over-simplifies the New England-Long Island interface. See Stone (1987) for the distribution pattern through gravestones of ethnic peoples and ideological groups on Long Island.

Within an area which appears homogeneous, such as all-British settled New England, antecedent regionality, rather than ethnicity, will surface if looked for. Historians David G. Allen and Peter Benes provide the documentary and genealogical evidence of New England's varied cultural makeup, and illustrate the Kentish mortuary designs transplanted to their new Plymouth home. Anthropologists Peter S. Allen and Anne Yentsch demonstrate the regionality evidence shown by gravestones and fence types as related to surnames on Cape Cod, and show 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. Abernathy's analysis of settling a river system at Rehoboth, Massachusetts reveals an ideological, and thus social, schism, while Stone's research (1987:310-321) indicates Long Island cemeteries whose establishment was determined by temporal and spatial factors. Either of these occurrences can provide insight into local social dynamics for which the documentary record may be silent.

Mortuary memorial evidence also illustrates the differing attitudes between regions (and within them) toward wealth, status, power, and occupation. Archaeologist Elizabeth Crowell found that Quaker ideology in Pennsylvania allowed the popular culture style of marker to be used, but plain, without a design. Stone (1987) also found this choice for Long Island Quakers. The popular culture stone is defined as the basic types produced in large numbers by the usually multi-generational larger 18th century stone-cutting workshops. They were often carved by formula, and sometimes stock-piled, with only the inscription carved to order.

Archaeologist Norman V. Mackie, upon examining Virginia gravestones, found status distinctly related to gravestone types: such as



**Fig. 3** Settlement Flow - 17th Century New York. Bonomi, 1971, p. 21

box or table tombs for the wealthy, the upright marker for the middle class, and none for the classes below. However, historian Kevin Sweeney describes even the wealthiest citizens of the Western Massachusetts river towns as memorialized by the ordinary regional upright marker. Stone (1987) found an even less status-conscious situation for Long Island, where the wealthiest original proprietors of manors and private islands had cedar posts or simple upright markers or none at all; memorialization occurred 50 years after death or was carried out on a monumental scale by late 19th century descendants.

Obviously, the cemetery-museum gravestone artifacts reveal choice which is socially, ideologically, and geographically shaped. When all stones are systematically recorded and studied—the home-carved “folk” fieldstones as well as the popular culture workshop-produced stones—patterns of differing ethnic and ideological choice are revealed. These patterns also vary through time both nationally and regionally. While James Deetz’s pioneering quantitative gravestone analysis (much of it distilled in *In Small Things Forgotten*) described one pattern for one portion of New England, the regional studies of Dethlefsen and Jensen (1977), Crowell, Mackie, Gorman and DiBlasi, Sweeney, Stone and others describe the regional variations of national gravestone choice and use.

Jules Prown’s insightful review of the multiple and inter-related elements one must elicit from a material culture object is instructive in this regard; it is a rigorous task. Further cautions on carrying out material culture research, if the field is to grow in respect, have been outlined by Thomas Schlereth. It is the author’s opinion that systematic gravestone studies fulfill his requirements of 1) adequate survival of data (stones survive in far larger number than houses or other forms of material culture, and thus provide a more normative database), and 2) adequate techniques of analysis (complete recording and statistical handling provide that). His cautions against the 3) exaggeration of human efficacy (systematic gravestone studies avoid the usual art history approach of studying the elite or the unusual), 4) 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 sub-groups are generally under-represented in all historical materials), and 5) proclivity toward synchronic method (complete recording of an area and statistical analysis will provide the diachronic record, and thus allow broad-based interpretation) are met by this type of inquiry.

*Geographic Setting of the Study Area*

Long Island is a geographically-delimited culture area bounded by water, 120 miles long by about 20 miles wide, hugging the Southern New England coast. It is shaped somewhat like a fish, with the mouth nibbling Manhattan and the lower Hudson River and the flukes pointing into the Atlantic (see Fig. 1). The 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 north of the Mid-Atlantic complex of waterways. Thus the area had easy water access through these prime trade routes to multiple ports and cultural influences.

This Island is a morainal deposit, therefore it contains the field boulders of New England carried here by the last glacier, but no quarryable stone, which greatly affected gravestone procurement practices. Because of its location on the Atlantic coastal plain with no native stone, its island situation fostering trade networks throughout the region, its location between the New England and New Netherland culture spheres, and its poly-ethnic social composition, it contains the largest number of different types of gravestones—materials, designs, sources—in the country.

The only local-origin stones were those made of field boulders for markers produced at home, and all others were imported from the coastal stone-cutting workshops of New England or the New Netherland carving centers of New York City and New Jersey (see Figs. 4 and 5 for typical New Netherland-origin stones). Gravestones on the East end of the Island (Suffolk County) were brought here by ship from the Boston area and Plymouth, Massachusetts, and from Newport, Rhode Island. Some came from the River towns of Connecticut—Hartford, Middletown, Windsor—some from coastal ports such as New Haven, and others came from eastern Connecticut. These stones are found throughout Long Island, most heavily in the east end.

Late in the 18th century the Hill family of carvers moved from Connecticut to Sag Harbor, Long Island; their production increased the number of "local" stones appreciably for the mostly east end market they secured from the New England carvers. West end to mid-Long Island inhabitants (Kings and western Queens Counties) ordered almost all of their gravestones from Newark and Elizabeth, New Jersey carvers, as well as those in New York City, also supplied by the New Jersey quarries. Eastern Queens (now Nassau County) inhabitants of mid-Long Island imported 87% of their stones from the New Netherland carvers, with the balance from New England and locally crafted. New England accounted for 42% of the total Long



John Zuricher  
William Wells, d. 1696 (backdated  
from 1760s)  
Southold Presbyterian Cemetery  
(Suffolk).



Robert Hartley  
Steve Schenek, d. 1767  
Flatlands Dutch Reformed  
Cemetery (Kings).



William Grant  
Jonathon Cook, d. 1734  
Quogue Village Cemetery (Suffolk).

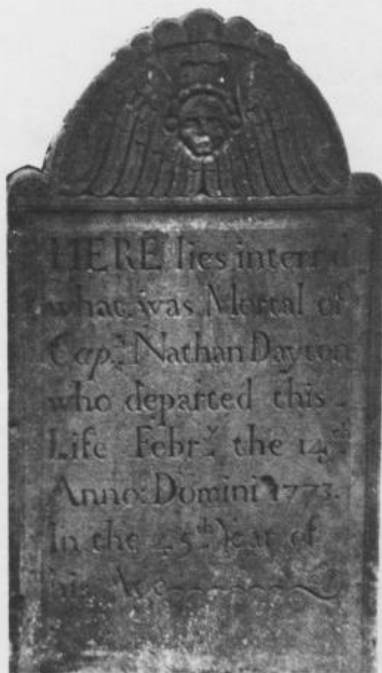
Fig. 4 New Netherland Culture Area Gravestones, New York City Carvers.



Thomas Brown, New York City  
Elizabeth Wright, d. 1755  
Wright Cemetery, Oyster Bay  
(Nassau)



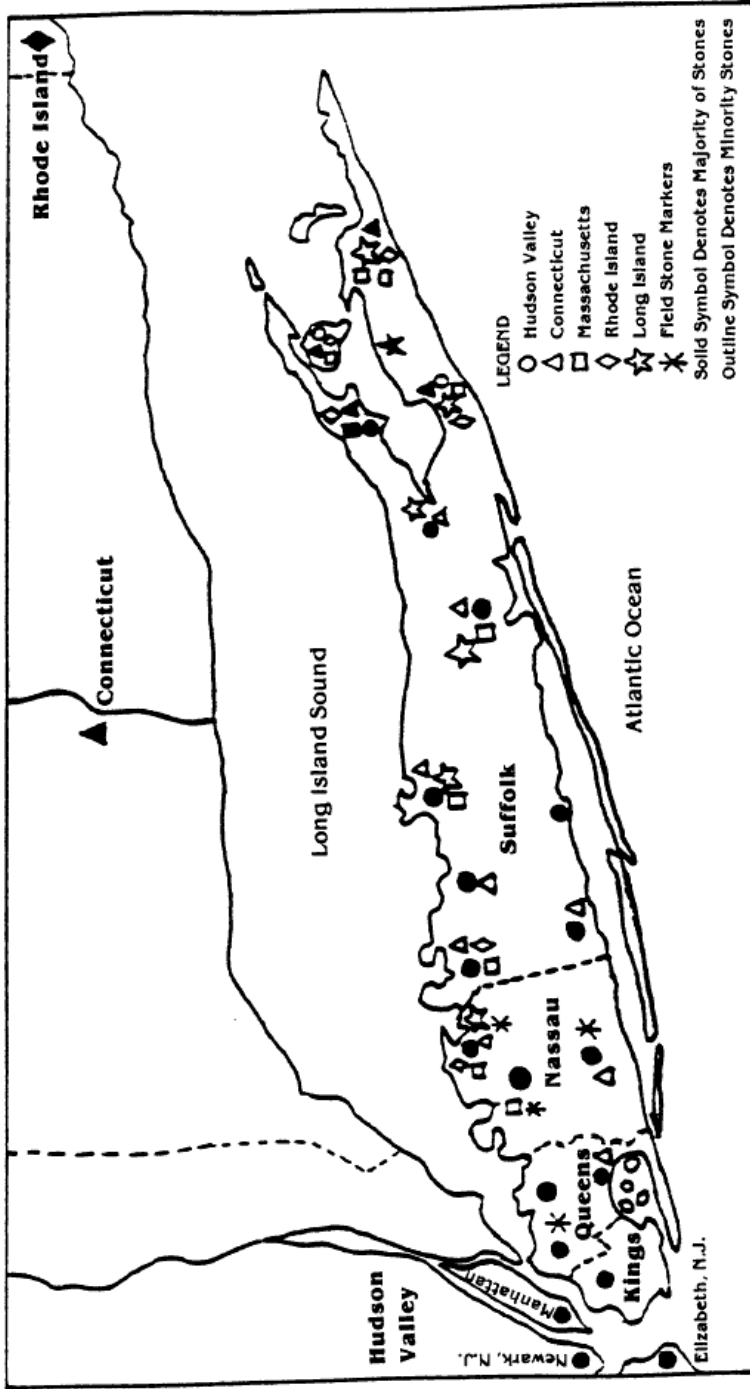
Uzal Ward, Newark, NJ  
Mary Betts, d. 1759  
Grace Episcopal Cemetery,  
Jamaica (Queens).



Ebenezer Price, Elizabethtown, NJ  
Capt. Nathan Dayton, d. 1773  
East Hampton North End Cemetery  
(Suffolk)

**Fig. 5** New Netherland Culture Area Gravestones, New Jersey-New York Carvers.

**SOURCES OF GRAVESTONES ON LONG ISLAND**



**Fig 6**

Island stones through time, with 11% of those from Boston, 23% from Connecticut, and 8% from Newport, Rhode Island. Of course, the proportions of these sources varied by decade because of trade relations, ideology, the Revolutionary War, and other factors. Figure 6 illustrates the general sources of the imported Long Island stones.

#### *Historical Background*

Long Island is one of the earliest settled areas of the northeast. The east end was peopled from 1640 on by the third wave of Puritan emigration on the northeast coast, and was the outpost of Puritan and Pilgrim territorial ambitions. The earliest "Dutch" landfall in this region, Manhattan Island in 1604, is contiguous to the West end of the Island. Stemming from this, the "Dutch" colonists, actually Flemish Walloons, settled New Amsterdam (Manhattan) in the 1620s, as well as Fort Orange (Albany) and other spots along the Hudson River. Then Kings and Queens Counties were colonized in the 1630-40s, placing West end Long Island in the Dutch sphere of influence.

Politically, Long Island was a major geographic portion of early Colonial New Netherland, and was peopled by the varied ethnic groups who came to New Amsterdam from throughout the world, primarily the lowlands of Europe. There was an interface of these varying cultural modes in mid-Long Island (Eastern Queens, now Nassau County, and Western Suffolk). Thus Long Island's settlement history stems from the political and social complexion of the founding settlers— their ethnicity or national origin, religious beliefs or ideology, and point in time of settlement, which was often related to the political arena in Europe. The gravestone evidence for this will be discussed below.

#### *Cultural Composition*

New Netherland was poly-cultural from the beginning, with 18 languages spoken in New Amsterdam almost from its founding (Jameson:259). After the English take-over in 1664, brief Dutch rule in 1673, then final English control in 1674, all non-English were subsumed under the category "Dutch." That category actually included Flemish, Belgian Walloons, French Huguenots, Germans, and Scandinavians, as well as those from the various Low Country provinces later known as Holland. Brooklyn (Kings County) contained at least some Turks, Blacks, and Italians from its beginnings and later came to include numerous enslaved Africans and some freedmen (Miller); Queens County provided country homes for some of Manhattan's Jewish residents (Seyfried).



These early Turks, Africans, and Jews left no material evidence documented as yet on Long Island, but the other groups have done so in architecture, place names, surnames in the population and on gravestones, as well as through customs and traditions.

Not only is the ethnicity of Long Island settlers expressed in the material and documentary record, but also the ideology which often cross-cuts ethnic or cultural boundaries. The gravestone surnames show that half of purportedly "English" Newtown and Hempstead Towns were "Dutch," about a third of North Hempstead was of Dutch origin, a quarter of Oyster Bay Town was Dutch, and a fifth of Jamaica was; of course, the five Towns of Kings County were solidly "Dutch."

The most obvious social boundary is the current existence of multiple denominations, reflected in their churches and cemeteries which dot the landscape. The bulk of the churches continue from their Colonial beginnings: the Puritans (now Congregational and Presbyterian) with 63% of the gravestone population; the Anglicans at 6%; Quakers with 2%; and Methodists (including Anabaptists and Baptists also) at 3.5%. Only the early Anabaptist, Lutheran and Baptist structures no longer stand, while some former Dutch Reformed congregations (10% of the gravestones) are represented now only by their cemeteries.

By type of burying ground, church cemeteries account for 53% of this gravestone database, the family or neighborhood burying grounds contain 25%, the village denominational graveyards have 20% of the extant stones, and the non-denominational cemeteries hold 3%. Cemeteries exist where they are due to cultural influence, social organization, and the geographic setting. The earliest Dutch were buried at their water-side plantations, which have not survived; the early stones extant today are largely in Dutch Reformed churchyards. Overall, the Dutch were twice as likely as the English to be in family burying grounds. The English mostly settled in corporate village groups, thus their earliest stones are in churchyard cemeteries, where they are buried more than 50% of the time. They are seldom found in village non-denominational cemeteries and about 25% of the time rest in village denominational grounds.

#### *The Gravestone Evidence*

Some groups are poorly represented in the gravestone record. Enslaved Africans were quite numerous in Colonial New Netherland, but none of their Colonial mortuary record has survived on west end Long Island; there are a few stones in the east end and dozens of wooden crosses in mid-Long Island, usually in estate cemeteries. The only community cemetery with wood markers for Africans is one

in Oyster Bay Town, which was inhabited by many Quakers and free thinkers having close trading ties with nonconformist Newport, Rhode Island. The exceptionally egalitarian atmosphere there and enslaved African carvers working for the John Stevens Shop may account for the substantial body of African gravestones in Newport's main burying ground.

Also, the Native Americans of Colonial Long Island, many of them indentured servants and some slaves, have no carved markers of traditional stone, although there are a few 19th century marble markers, a wood post said to mark Native graves, and some cobble mounds said to be Native burials within settler family cemeteries. Thus these groups are under-represented in the grave marker as well as the documentary record; in fact, any findings of ethnicity noted in this report are lower than the actual record due to the wholesale destruction through urban expansion of the numerous early family cemeteries in Kings and Queens Counties.

For other groups there are somewhat better records. The "Dutch" represent 15% of the extant gravestone record of 1670 to about 1800 on Long Island; yet, according to census records, in 1698 only about half of the New Netherland population was English. As late as the 1790 first census of the United States (after the influx of the English), the Dutch numbered 57,000, or about 2% of the national population. 89.4% of all Dutch lived in New York State, and composed about 16% of the New York population. New York contained 18.1% of all French settlers (about equal with Virginia and Pennsylvania), or .75% of the national population. German immigrants were .7% of the New Yorkers and about 6% of the national picture (Rossiter, p. 117). These figures appear conservative, as Fischer (p. 817), citing Purvis and Wacker, et. al, notes higher figures—around 100,000 for the Dutch population, for example. These ethnic groups are represented in the Long Island gravestone record as .5% Flemish-Belgian, 10.1% Hollanders, 1.7% German, 2.7% French, .9% Scandinavian, and .9% Scots and Irish.

The "Dutch" and the English Quakers are also under-represented in the gravestone record for several reasons. The earliest Dutch entrepreneurs established water-side plantations and their field stone markers did not survive the urbanization of the sites. This destruction was repeated later for the inland Kings and Queens County homesteads. As the extant gravestone record shows, the Dutch were also twice as likely to use fieldstone memorials, which have not survived as well, as the English, except for the Quakers. They were about 50% more likely to use fieldstone markers than their fellow English. Most of these boulder markers were originally carved with initials and death date and were chosen to have a pointed top or other gravestone-like shape; some were shaped deliberately or had

designs carved on them, but most are illegible now. Since the Dutch and Quakers were solid farmers and craftsman, 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 at the increased usage of commercial grave markers by their members, so the Westburg Meeting in 1776 ordered that all carved markers be removed from their meeting house grounds. In keeping with their philosophy of simplicity and equality, meeting house grounds which contain burials from the 1600s are mostly unmarked and thus invisible today. Because of this, the Quakers are greatly under-represented in the gravestone record. The Town of Flushing was home to many early Friends and other dissenters. Oyster Bay Town also had many non-conformists and a multiplicity of religious groups, possibly due to its merchants' extensive trade (and kinship) ties with non-conformist Rhode Island.

Since markers frequently reflect basic human ideas, these ideological roots are reflected in the larger number of field stone markers and "plain" (no design) stones in this Dutch and Quaker-influenced mid-Long Island hinterland—Oyster Bay and Hempstead Towns. Fieldstone markers account for about 7% of all stones; their use peaked between 1750-1775, but about a 20% usage continued to the early 1800s. Another expression of ideology by Friends or non-conformist families was an adaptation of the traditional gravestone; the usual Colonial shape was used, but the tympanum was left blank.

The American tradition of religious pluralism and freedom of belief stems from the Flushing Remonstrance and other precedents established by these free-thinking individuals in Queens County. John Bowne, an English non-conformist, and later Quaker, of Flushing, was imprisoned by Peter Stuyvesant, governor of New Amsterdam, 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 Holland. The Company subsequently ordered Stuyvesant to allow freedom of conscience, which became the basis of the American separation of church and state.

Gravestones demonstrate the persistence of the Dutch language. Within the cemetery boundaries, ethnic groups were identified by surname on the stone, inscribed biographical information, and by the language used. Inscriptions in Dutch on stones in the Kings County Dutch Reformed church yards comprise 2% of the total stones of the Island. The use of this language was maintained for 200 years after defeat by the English, as noted earlier. This is the most clear-cut ethnic distinction in Long Island cemeteries.

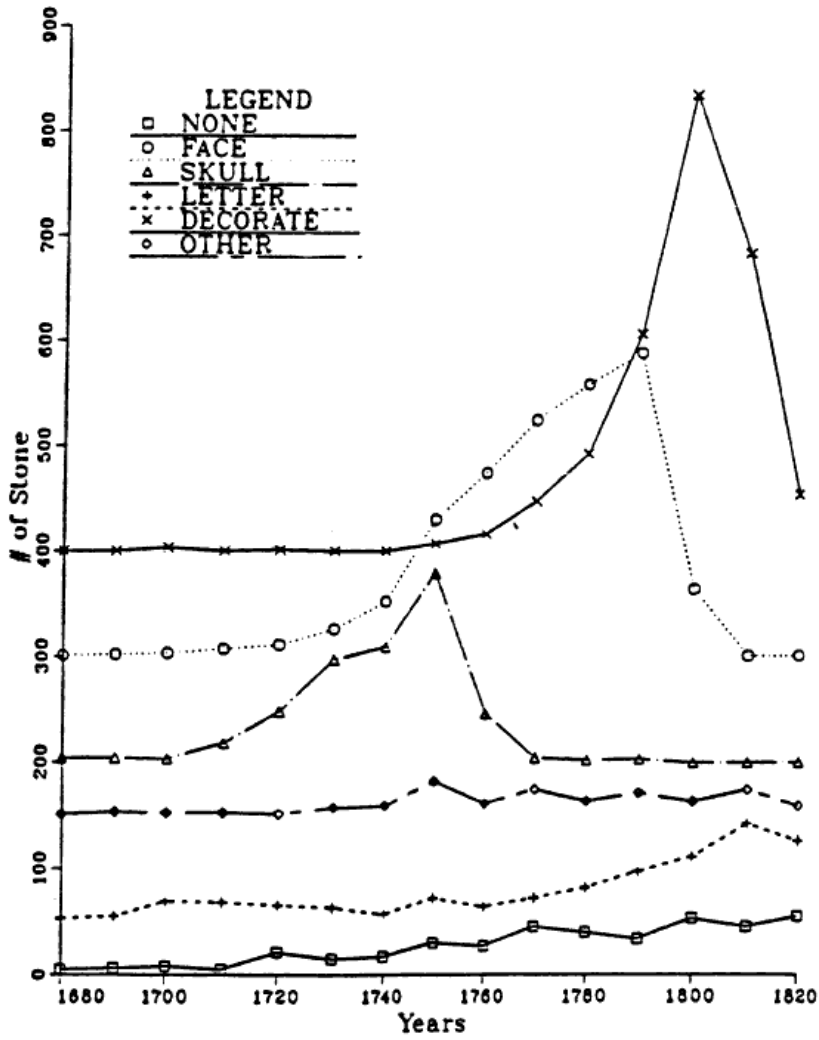


Fig. 7 Long Island Gravestone Designs by Decade



*D.A., d. 1735.*  
Landing Cemetery,  
Glen Cove (Nassau).



Thomas Brown, New York City  
*Hannah Seaman, d. 1772*  
Townsend Cemetery, Jericho  
(Nassau).

**Fig. 8** Long Island Fieldstone and Quaker Stone.

Another strong ethnic division is shown in the orientation of the headstone inscriptions. The Dutch and English both sprang from a common Calvinist heritage, yet 91% of the earliest Dutch stone inscriptions face east, while 85% of the English inscriptions face west. With the passage of time and as the descendants of the early Dutch settlers moved east to the mid-Long Island area, their headstones began to conform to the English practice.

Besides surname and language, ethnicity is expressed in the gravestone inscription format. Dutch women in most early Dutch

Reformed burying grounds were denoted by their natal name first, and then that of their husband; English women never were. Even English women of status were further identified only as daughters—for example, as “Hannah, wife of Herrick Rogers and daughter of Capt. David and Mrs. Mary Rose.” This practice was evident in only a miniscule fraction of the female population; overwhelmingly, English women were anonymous wives.

In the choice of the design motif on stones, ethnic and/or ideological differences were also displayed (see Fig. 7). Only 12% of all Long Island stones have a death’s head; of these, only 1% occurred in the Dutch-influenced west end, whereas 89% of them are in the Puritan-influenced east end in churchyards which later became Congregational or Presbyterian. In fact, there was never similarity in design choice between the two culture area groups except to a limited extent in the 1750-1774 period. There was also variation in choice and use of gravestone designs through time; see Stone (1987) for the overall Long Island record by decade.

It appears location as well as ethnicity has some effect in Long Island gravestone choice. Overall, 60% of Suffolk County stones came from nearby New England. However, the proportion changed through time, from 76% in the late 1600s, to 86% in the early 1700s, to 64% in the third quarter, to 46% at the end of the 18th century, and to 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 with the establishment of the Hill family workshop in Sag Harbor in 1783, which took over the former share of the New England carvers.

All of the workshop-produced, popular culture gravestones in Kings County and 98.6% 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. Eastern Queens (now Nassau County) inhabitants of mid-Long Island chose 87% of their stones from New York-New Jersey—reflecting a sizable Dutch ethnicity as well as propinquity—and the balance from New England.

### *Conclusions*

The findings support Zelinsky’s (p. 13) “Doctrine of First Effective Settlement,” that the characteristics of the first group to effect a viable society are of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of the area. The gravestone data provide further support for Noble’s (p. 27) designation and the overdue recognition of New Netherland as the Hudson Valley culture hearth. Further, the original multicultural nature of this Dutch Colonial hearth, reflected

in the various forms of material culture discussed here, is more closely aligned to the Mid-Atlantic culture area than to that of New England.

These data refine Bonomi's (p. 22) use of 1698 population records stating that there were no "Dutch" in Suffolk County. There was a sprinkling of "Dutch" in most of the towns of the county from the beginning, still reflected in building practices, surnames, and gravestones (see Fig. 2). 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 (p. 21), Meinig (1975: 133), and Blackburn (p. 35).

The Dutch sub-group, eventually submerged by 200 years of pervasive English culture, demonstrates in this material culture record the strength of regional 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 Dutch gravestones represent, more than the founding settlers, the succeeding generations who were becoming the new Americans. Because of this, the evidence of continuing early ethnic and ideological boundaries is all the more remarkable.

In the 164 cemeteries studied, the cultural choice of gravestones outlined above appears to be somewhat controlled by proximity, or the friction effect of distance, but ethnic and ideological differences between the two culture area groups are clearly expressed through variations in language used on gravestones, expressions of gender, the orientation of headstones, the use of fieldstones as markers, and the choice of design motifs. The small English Quaker sub-group gives evidence of its ideological tenacity through a differential use of gravestones, or the lack of them in the Colonial period, a higher usage of home-made fieldstone markers, and the later choice of traditional stones with no design.

The gravestone is a form of material culture which has survived in far larger number than structures or most other objects; it has also been less modified and is more reliably fixed in time and space, which makes these markers useful for research and analysis. They are primary documents which frequently are the only early public death records or the only physical evidence of early trade routes, and are thus important adjuncts to the written record.

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 human beliefs, and their presence provides a fuller record of an area's history. On Long Island that record was shaped by the nine ethnic groups and ten religious denominations functioning within a unique situation of competing culture spheres and multiple sources of grave markers.

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