

# “Remember Me...” But “Be Mindfull of Death”: The Artistic, Social, and Personal Choice Expressions Observed on the Gravemarkers of Eighteenth Century Monmouth County, New Jersey.

Adam R. Heinrich<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The eighteenth century gravemarkers in Monmouth County illustrate the county as an agricultural periphery of the greater New England trade network. The iconography is dominated by mortality images throughout the century which is in contrast to neighboring study areas where mortality imagery is out of fashion by the middle of the century. The gravemarkers also show how the county was connected to the wider colonial markets where stones were purchased from a wide suite of available carvers, along with a probable local carver working on blanks imported from northern New Jersey. In the end, the choice of gravemarker icon and carver is best connected to family choices within broader social fashion or religious ideology.

## Introduction

Gravemarkers and the burial grounds in which they are found have become recognized as having historic significance and they have become popular topics for study. Within the historical cultures, a gravemarker serves partly a function of commemoration as well as signifiers of status. To researchers, these markers serve as primary records relating to the deceased individual's life as well as, in a broader sense, to the society in which the individual lived and ultimately died. The eighteenth century gravemarkers of Monmouth County, New Jersey, can provide unique insights into the formative years of the colony. While Monmouth County fits within and shares many similarities with the colonial New England gravestone carving tradition, it also exhibits substantial differences. Here, the choice of gravestone iconography in Monmouth County was related to personal preferences within the broader trends previously identified in New England.

Gravestone studies can easily branch into many disciplines such as historical archaeology, art history, and even genealogy when one is more focused on the individual family. The scientific archaeological study of colonial gravestones was put into motion by the influential investigation by James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen<sup>2,3</sup> of the Massachusetts area. Their findings showed a temporally linear trend of iconographic designs used in the local carving tradition; beginning with stark mortality symbols such as death's heads, with more hopeful cherubs in the early eighteenth century, and then developing the more secular, neoclassical urn and willow tree designs at the end of the

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Heinrich, Department of History and Anthropology, Monmouth University

<sup>2</sup> Edwin Dethlefsen and James Deetz, Death's Heads, Cherubs, and Willow Trees: Experimental Archaeology in Colonial Cemeteries, *American Antiquity* 31(4) (1966), 502-510.

<sup>3</sup> James Deetz and Edwin Dethlefsen, Death's Head, Cherub, Urn and Willow, *Natural History* 76(3) (1967), 29-37.



eighteenth century. The authors connected these chronological iconographic changes to religious developments with first the Great Awakening in the early eighteenth century and then the increasing numbers of Protestant denominations promoting the self and de-emphasizing heavenly insecurities<sup>4,5</sup>. More recently, the study of these early gravestones has moved through New Hampshire<sup>6</sup>, Rhode Island<sup>7,8</sup>, Connecticut<sup>9</sup>, New York<sup>10,11,12,13</sup>, New Jersey<sup>14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22</sup>, and as far south as South Carolina and Georgia<sup>23,24</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966), 508.

<sup>5</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1967), 404-406.

<sup>6</sup> Lynne Rainville, Hanover Deathscapes: Mortuary Variability in New Hampshire, 1770-1920, *Ethnohistory* 46(3) (1999), 541-597.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent Luti, *Mallet and Chisel: Gravestone Carvers of Newport, Rhode Island, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Boston: New England Historic Genealogical Society, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> David Mayer Gradwohl, *Like Tablets of the Law Thrown Down: The Colonial Jewish Burying Ground in Newport, Rhode Island* (Ames Iowa: Sigler Printing, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> James Slater, *Memoirs of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences Volume XXI: The Colonial Burying Grounds of Eastern Connecticut and the Men Who Made Them* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1987).

<sup>10</sup> Sherene Baugher and Frederick Winter, Early American Gravestones: Archaeological Perspectives on Three Cemeteries of Old New York, *Archaeology* 36(5) (1983), 46-53.

<sup>11</sup> Gaynell Levine, Colonial Long Island Grave Stones: Trade Network Indicators, 1670-1799, In *Puritan Gravestone Art II: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife: Annual Proceedings 1978*, Edited by Peter Benes (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1978), 46-57.

<sup>12</sup> Gaynell Stone, Material Evidence of Ideological and Ethnic Choice in Long Island Gravestones, 1670-1800, *Material Culture* 23(3) (1991), 1-29.

<sup>13</sup> Gaynell Stone, Sacred Landscapes: Material Evidence of Ideological and Ethnic Choice in Long Island, New York, Gravestones, 1680-1800, *Historical Archaeology* 43(1) (2009), 142-159.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Joseph McLeod, A Study of Gravestones of Monmouth County New Jersey 1716-1835: Reflections of a Lifestyle (Independent research, The College of William and Mary, 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Richard Veit, Middlesex County New Jersey Gravestones 1687- 1799, Shadows of a Changing Culture (MA Diss. The College of William and Mary, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> Richard Veit, Grave Insights into Middlesex County's Colonial Culture, *New Jersey History* 114(3-4) (1996), 74-94.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Veit, John Solomon Teetzel and the Anglo-German Gravestone Carving Tradition of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Northwestern New Jersey, *Markers XVII: The Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* (2000), 125-160.

<sup>18</sup> Richard Welch, The New York and New Jersey Gravestone Carving Tradition, *Markers IV: The Journal of the Association for Gravestone Studies* (1987), 1-54.

<sup>19</sup> John Zielenski, Shaping a Soul of Stone: The Soul Effigy Gravestones of Uzal Ward, William Grant, and the Anonymous Pear Head Carvers of Eighteenth-Century New Jersey - A Stylistic Study and Comprehensive Survey (MA Diss. Montclair State University, 2004).

<sup>20</sup> Richard Veit and Mark Nonestied, *New Jersey Cemeteries and Tombstones: History in the Landscape* (New Jersey: Rivergate Books, 2008).

<sup>21</sup> Richard Veit, "Resolved to Strike out a New Path": Consumerism and Iconographic Change in New Jersey Gravestones, 1680-1820, *Historical Archaeology* 43(1) (2009), 115-141.

<sup>22</sup> Adam Heinrich, "Remember Me..." but "Be Mindfull of Death": The Art of Commemoration in Eighteenth Century Monmouth County, New Jersey," The Society for Historical Archaeology, 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Providence, Rhode Island, January 14-19, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Frederick Gorman and Michael DiBlasi, Nonchronological Sources of Variation in the Seriation of Gravestone Motifs in the Northeast and Southeast Colonies. In *Puritan Gravestone Art: The Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife Annual Proceedings 1976*, Edited by Peter Benes (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 1977), 79-87.

<sup>24</sup> Frederick Gorman and Michael DiBlasi, Gravestone Iconography and Mortuary Ideology, *Ethnohistory* 28(1) (1981), 79-98.

Richard Veit's important work in New Jersey often focused on Middlesex County, Monmouth County's temporal twin and geographic neighbor. Though a few iconographically endowed grave markers have been exported as far south as Georgia and the Caribbean, Monmouth County is the most southern reach where the New England carving tradition can be found on a large scale<sup>25</sup>.

## Historical Setting

By the 1660s, the English had their sights set on the Dutch colonial holdings, and under the leadership of Sir George Carteret and Lord John Berkeley, with one of Middletown's founders, Captain John Bowne Senior, Dutch lands in New Jersey became English<sup>26,27,28</sup>. In order to attract new settlers, the Proprietors of New Jersey issued a charter known as the 1665 *Concessions and Agreements* that allowed the rent of land while guaranteeing religious freedoms<sup>29,30,31</sup>. By 1666, two years after the land came under English control, groups of settlers migrated to Monmouth County in order to establish small towns and included the Baptists (originally known as Puritans and Congregationalists) in Middletown and the Quakers in Shrewsbury<sup>32,33,34,35</sup>. The greatest proportion of settlers in Monmouth County came from English, Scottish, and Dutch (lumped with the Flemish and German) backgrounds, and they came in search of economic prosperity and religious freedom as many had done previously in New England<sup>36,37</sup>. Settlement was quick with many of the early religious congregations being established by the end of the seventeenth century<sup>38</sup>. Because of the increasing New Jersey population, Monmouth County was organized as a governing entity on March 1, 1683 along with Middlesex, Essex, and Bergen Counties<sup>39</sup>. The resulting settlements in Monmouth County became firmly rooted to the land producing a mixed agricultural economy of milled grains and meat for local and export consumption, which is in contrast to the cash-crop dominance in the southern

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<sup>25</sup> Veit (2000), 126.

<sup>26</sup> William Horner, *This Old Monmouth of Ours* (New Jersey: Polyanthos Books, 1974), 47.

<sup>27</sup> Richard McCormick, *New Jersey from Colony to State* (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc, 1964), 17.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Wacker, *Land and People: A Cultural Geography of Preindustrial New Jersey: Origins and Settlement Pattern* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1975a), 223.

<sup>29</sup> McCormick (1964), 24-25.

<sup>30</sup> Veit (1991), 7.

<sup>31</sup> Wacker (1975a), 283-287.

<sup>32</sup> Norman Maring, *Baptists in New Jersey: A Study in Transition* (Valley Forge: The Judson Press, 1964), 12-14.

<sup>33</sup> McCormick (1964), 23.

<sup>34</sup> John Snyder, *The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries 1606-1968* (Trenton: Bureau of Geology and Topography, 1964), 8.

<sup>35</sup> Wacker (1975a), 125, 186.

<sup>36</sup> McCormick (1964), 23, 80-82, 92.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Wacker *The Cultural Geography of Eighteenth Century New Jersey* (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975b), 6-8.

<sup>38</sup> Patricia Bonomi, *Under the Cope of Heaven: Religion, Society, and Politics in Colonial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 35.

<sup>39</sup> Lee Smeal and Ronald van Jackson, editors. *Index to Wills 1689- 1890: The Testators* (Utah: Accelerated Indexing Systems, Inc, 1979), no page numbers.

colonies<sup>40,41</sup>. The high proportion of grave markers found on ancient family farms attests to the scattered, agrarian nature of the early Monmouth County settlers.

## Methods

This examination uses archaeological and art historical techniques to explore how the grave markers in Monmouth County reflect society and history in the eighteenth century. Every legible eighteenth century (1700-1799) stone marker that could be found was catalogued, producing a total sample of 433 markers (see appendix 1). Eighteenth century gravestones were discovered in both family burial grounds and churchyards of the religious denominations present in early Monmouth County and they include Anglican, Baptist, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, and Quaker. In total, 34 burial grounds were recorded including places where stones were removed to in order to protect them from vandalism or development (i.e. St. Peters in Freehold, Fairview Cemetery in Middletown, and Old First Methodist in West Long Branch) (Figure 1). It is likely that many stones have been lost through time from various destructive processes like that demonstrated at the Topanemus Burial Ground in Marlboro, where only 39 of 74 originally recorded eighteenth century stone markers remain identifiable (count includes the stones removed to St. Peter's Church in Freehold)<sup>42</sup>. Many eighteenth century burial grounds have gone "extinct" or have been relocated to allow for development<sup>43</sup>. Most recently in 2010, the Hendrickson family burial ground in Holmdel was bulldozed with the loss of at least six colonial period markers<sup>44</sup>. The deathscape of the eighteenth century in Monmouth County has additionally been modified over the past centuries since a number of smaller family plots had been relocated to nearby, larger burial grounds, and this could confuse any religious attributions of these families (relocated stones were counted with the current burial ground)<sup>45</sup>. Not all examples are illustrated since fuller discussions of various carvers' works are presented in the literature cited throughout.

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<sup>40</sup> McCormick (1964), 87-89.

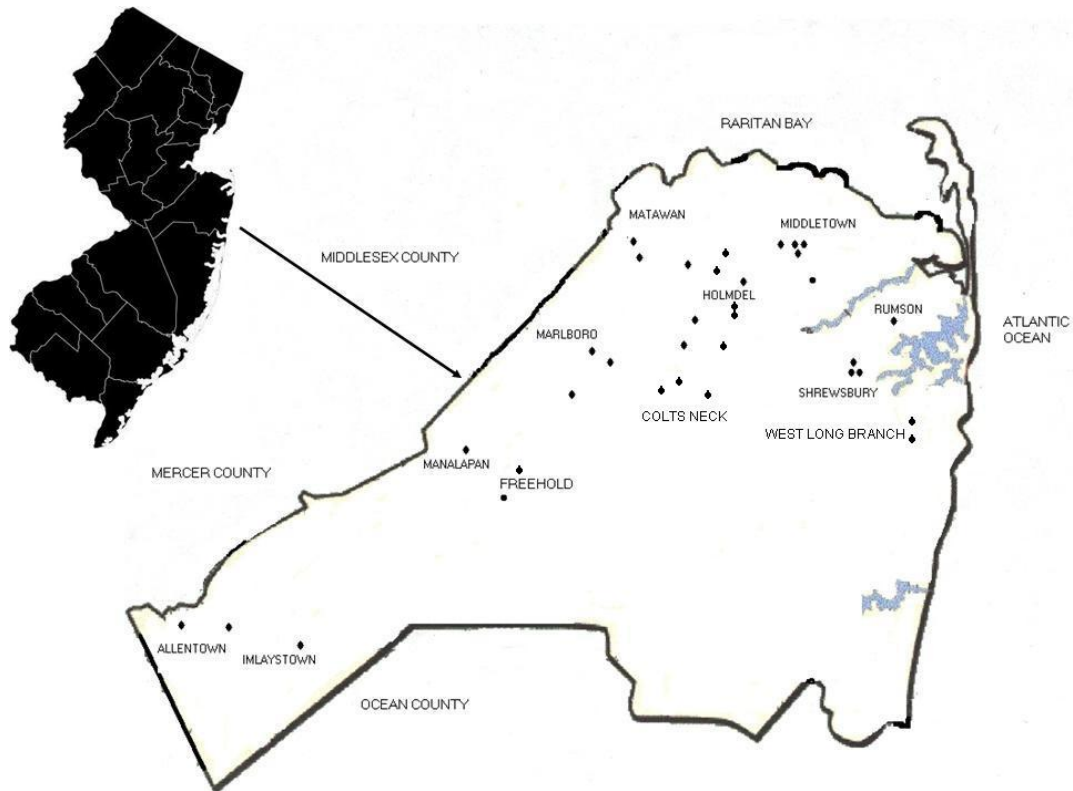
<sup>41</sup> Peter Wacker and Paul Clemens. *Land Use in Early New Jersey* (Newark: New Jersey Historical Society, 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Topanemus Preservation Committee, *Topanemus Burial Ground, Marlboro, New Jersey* (New Jersey: Topanemus Preservation Committee, 1967), 9-12.

<sup>43</sup> i.e. Edward Raser, *New Jersey Graveyard and Gravestone Inscription Locators Monmouth County* (New Jersey: Genealogical Society of New Jersey, 2002), 34, 54, 58, 67.

<sup>44</sup> Kevin Penton, Police report on Holmdel cemetery due this week, *App.com* (November 27, 2010) Retrieved on December 21, 2010 from <http://www.app.com/article/20101127/NEWS/11270330/Police-report-on-Holmdel-cemetery-due-this-week>.

<sup>45</sup> i.e. Raser (2002), 58, 67, 125, 131, 136.



**Figure 1: Map of Monmouth County, New Jersey showing the geographical distribution of eighteenth century gravemarkers.**

### Types of Markers in Monmouth County

Monmouth County’s eighteenth century gravemarkers predominantly consist of the standard headstone that sometimes had an accompanying footstone. More rarely, ledgers, or slab stones, measuring about six feet in length can be found throughout the county. These stones are found in a variety of materials, each with a different and specific location of origin. Due to Monmouth County’s sandy substrate, locally available stones are conglomerates, iron-ore cobbles, and argillite, which have been widely used as fieldstone markers. It is unknown how many eighteenth century fieldstone markers exist since few are dated, but three noteworthy examples are Deborah Lincoln’s 1720 marker, a 1777 marker inscribed “SR,” and a 1764-dated brick with the initials “AR” that can all be found at Ye Olde Robbin’s Burial Ground in Allentown. Many fieldstone markers have been lost; however, the extant examples are noticeably more common in the southwest corner of the county. This may possibly reflect the difficulty a colonist might have experienced getting formal gravestones imported that far inland away from the important Atlantic Coast riverways. The practice of using fieldstones as gravemarkers continued into the nineteenth century where dated examples can be found in Freehold, Imlaystown, and Farmingdale in the southern portion of the county<sup>46</sup>. The rare

<sup>46</sup> Raser (2002), 114-116, 128.

homemade marker can also be found made of argillite such as the 1777 and 1796 stones at the Van Mater and a 1748 stone at the Wikoff family burial grounds in Colts Neck and Freehold, respectively.

A small proportion of gravemarkers made from light gray Pennsylvania marbles were imported into the county. Like the fieldstone markers, a southwesterly skewed distribution is also evident in these marble stones. The four burial grounds found in Allentown, Imlaystown, and Manalapan contain about 96% of the eighteenth century marble stones. This concentration in the most inland areas of Monmouth County could hint at these towns as having closer economic ties to Pennsylvania, especially Philadelphia, where these marble stones were carved<sup>47</sup>.

The bulk of the gravestones was imported from the north and consists of slates from New England and red sandstone from northeastern New Jersey. The slate stones came in a variety of colors from greenish-gray to black and all could be identified as coming from the Steven's carving shop in Newport, Rhode Island. These slate stones are relatively few in number. By far, the greatest proportion of the stones was cut from red sandstone quarried in the Newark area of New Jersey, and they are found in almost every eighteenth century burial ground in Monmouth County. In 1771, *The New York Gazette and Weekly Mercury* published an advertisement from the prominent gravestone carver Uzal Ward which stated that he possessed a long-running, Newark sandstone quarry that had previously belonged to the deceased Samuel Medlis<sup>48</sup>. The Newark quarries continued supplying raw material into the nineteenth century as recorded by John Frazee who carved gravestones in Rahway and New Brunswick<sup>49</sup>. The red sandstone was used to make markers by a variety of carvers from New York and various places throughout New Jersey's northern and eastern areas. The distribution of Pennsylvanian marbles in the southwest and the profusion of stones originating from the north nicely illustrate the description attributed to Benjamin Franklin of New Jersey as a "keg tapped at both ends"<sup>50</sup>.

### **The Cost of a Grave Marker**

After a death, the gravestone had to be ordered, carved, and shipped to the burial place, all of which could require various lengths of time. Horner<sup>51</sup> records that stones were ordered through a local storekeeper who then sent the request to the carver. Due to the similarity in shape and designs carved on stones dated years apart, it seems that headstone blanks were stockpiled and then inscribed when an order was received<sup>52</sup>. As

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<sup>47</sup> Karl Dickinson, compiler, Elijah Hughes Account Book and Diary, *Cape May County, New Jersey Magazine of History and Genealogy* (Cape May County, 1965), 99.

<sup>48</sup> Rita Gottesman, *The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1726- 1776; Advertisements and News Items from New York City Newspapers* (New York: New York Historical Society, 1938), 231.

<sup>49</sup> John Frazee, The Autobiography of Frazee, the Sculptor, Chapter II, *North American Quarterly Magazine* 31(6) (1835), 6-7.

<sup>50</sup> Shelia Skemp, Benjamin Franklin, In *Encyclopedia of New Jersey*, Edited by Michael Siegel, Maxine Laurie, and Marc Mappen, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 288.

<sup>51</sup> Horner (1974), 256.

<sup>52</sup> Stone (1991), 9.

far as the stone's cost is concerned, there may have been a price for the blank and then a charge per letter in the inscription. One of the few known prices concerning gravemarkers comes from the Stevens' Shop from Newport, Rhode Island who charged about two to six pounds sterling for a standard headstone and up to 10 pounds for a large ledger stone<sup>53,54</sup>. In 1727, the Stevens' Shop also charged two pence per letter in a stone's inscription as well as 12 shillings for two cherub heads<sup>55</sup>. A post-Revolution receipt for a marble table tomb ordered from Philadelphia in 1800 disclosed the price for a marble slab on top of banister-like pillars. This itemized bill totals "55 Doll'rs 10 cents" with letters carved at three cents a piece<sup>56</sup>. Table-like gravemarkers fitting this description can be found at the Olde Yellow Meeting House in Imlaystown. The formula of cost per letter seems to have been utilized by some of the red sandstone carvers also. For example, the 1785 Margaret Willson stone in the Dutch Reformed Church of Middletown's burial ground has the number "91" lightly inscribed on the face near the base where it should have been buried. The number "91" neatly equals the number of letters in the inscription. An 1802 receipt for two gravemarkers from an unidentified New York carver indicated the Luyster family of Middletown paid ½ pence per letter in the inscriptions<sup>57</sup>.

Important information regarding gravestone costs may be hidden from a researcher since a large proportion of the marker was intended to be buried out of view. A timely tree removal at the Dutch Reformed Church in Marlboro offered a rare glimpse when several eighteenth century markers were moved for their protection. A 1796 stone for Mary Covenhoven, by the same unidentified carver of Margaret Willson's 1785 stone, carries an inscription of "108" which also corresponds to the number of letters in the inscription. The unidentified carver of these Willson and Covenhoven stones is likely the New York carver of the Luyster stones due to stylistic similarities. An interesting 1757 death's head-adorned stone for Antye Hans at this Dutch Reformed Church contained a mysterious mathematical inscription at the base where it was to be buried (Figure 2). This carving may relate to a pricing technique. The combination of numbers seems to make no sense, but an admitted manipulation of the numbers ( $14 \times 7 + 13 \times 5 = 163$ ) produces a result that is very near to the number of characters ( $n=161$ ) inscribed on the stone. In addition, a large letter "B" is inscribed, and this could indicate another cost such as stone size or iconographic image? Recall from above that the Steven's Shop did charge 12 shillings for two cherub heads to decorate the top of a stone<sup>58</sup>. Other older stones that have been unearthed in Monmouth Country also have carvings resembling numbers near their bases, but the few seen have been illegible.

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<sup>53</sup> Allan Ludwig, *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650-1825* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), 452.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Veit, *Digging New Jersey's Past: Historical Archaeology in the Garden State* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 101.

<sup>55</sup> Ludwig (1966): 452.

<sup>56</sup> Dickinson (1965), 99.

<sup>57</sup> Veit, 2006, pers. comm.

<sup>58</sup> Ludwig (1966), 452.



**Figure 2: Antye Hans' 1757 marker with a mysterious mathematical inscription on the front with the letter "B", Dutch Reformed, Marlboro (Photo by author).**

After the costs for the stones mounted with shipping, carving, and inscribing, the luxury of a headstone was reserved for the wealthier person. This socio-economic influence may be demonstrated in Middlesex County where a 1772 recorded population of 10,204 living people is significantly higher than the roughly 500 legible stones accounting for the deceased of the entire century<sup>59</sup>. Monmouth County also exhibits this disparity. In 1790, the federal census recorded a total population of 16,918 people while only 433 stone gravemarkers are found for the entire eighteenth century, though some more eighteenth century stones likely existed, destruction or being rendered illegible from erosion caused them to not be included in this study<sup>60,61</sup>. This socio-economic influence can be further emphasized since stones are usually found in groupings for the more prominent families.

### **Eighteenth Century Gravestone Iconography**

As discussed by Deetz and Dethlefsen<sup>62,63</sup>, New England gravestone iconography evolved from death's heads, to cherubs, then lastly, to various neoclassical and secular designs. Their seriations showed how the designs fit neatly into battleship or lenticular

<sup>59</sup> Veit (1991), 129.

<sup>60</sup> De Met Anderson and Morris (1985), iii.

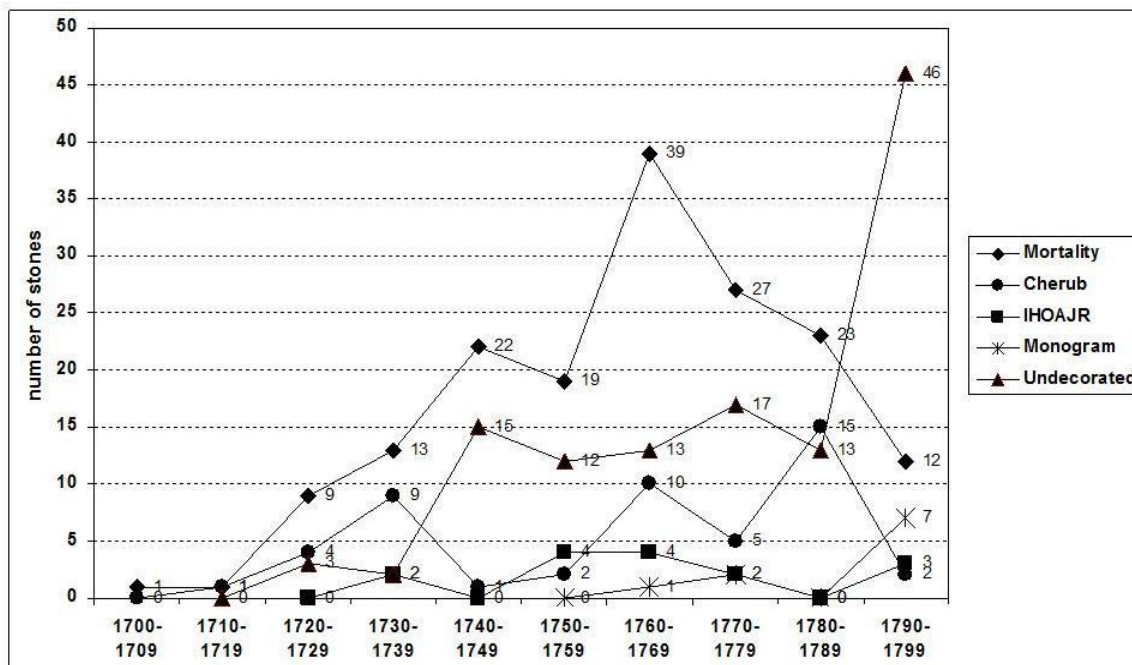
<sup>61</sup> Wacker (1975b), 15.

<sup>62</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966), 504.

<sup>63</sup> Deetz and Dethlefsen (1967), 30.



curves related to the proportion of stones with the designs. Outside of New England, the three-part iconographic seriation is more complicated, and this is certainly true in Monmouth County (Figure 3) (this divergence from the neat Massachusetts seriation is also exhibited in the New York City outskirts<sup>64</sup>). Instead of one style replacing another over time, Monmouth County’s gravestone iconography shows mortality images which are predominately death’s heads remaining the most abundant icon in each decade of the eighteenth century. Though death’s heads are always the most popular icon, the design peaks around the third quarter of the eighteenth century and then it gradually declines with none dating past 1792, which coincides with the death of a prolific carver named Uzal Ward<sup>65</sup>. If following Deetz and Dethlefsen’s<sup>66,67</sup> attribution of the early popularity of the death’s head in New England to the strong influence of the Puritans, then retention of the death’s head iconography in Monmouth County throughout the century could reflect the strong Puritan presence in New Jersey where many Puritans had fled in order to escape the persecution that followed them to New England<sup>68,69</sup>. More likely, since they are present across non-Puritan religions as well as common burial grounds, the sparser, agrarian nature of the county may have limited the penetration of the latest artistic fashions.



**Figure 3: Line chart showing the popularity of the major icons by decade. Mortality icons predominate as the decorative element on the gravestones while cherubs show three distinct peaks of popularity. Only red sandstone markers are illustrated since all marble stones are undecorated and are not part of the New England carving tradition.**

<sup>64</sup> Baugher and Winter (1983)

<sup>65</sup> Zielinski (2004), Section 3 Part 1, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966), 506.

<sup>67</sup> Deetz and Dethlefsen (1967), 31.

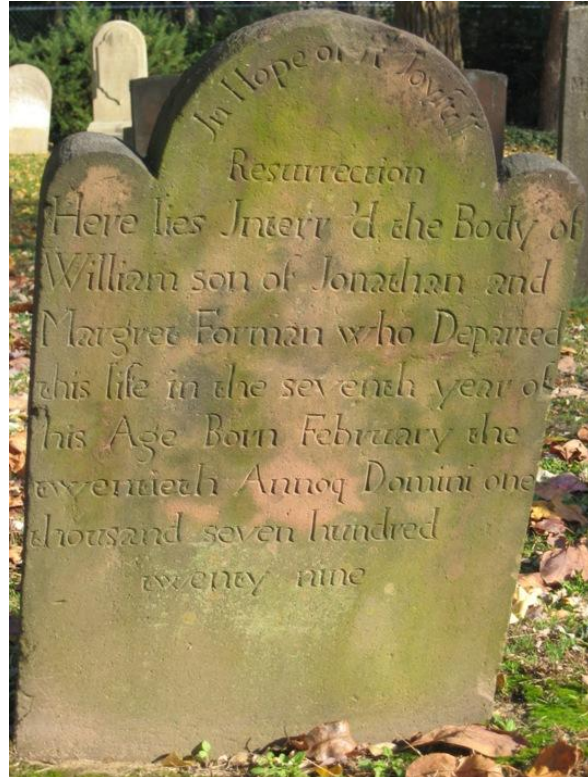
<sup>68</sup> McCormick (1964), 23.

<sup>69</sup> Wacker (1975a), 174.

Also found in burial grounds across denominations (excluding Quakers), cherubs show up relatively early in Monmouth County and they are the second most abundant iconographic design. Figure 3 illustrates that cherub-decorated markers peak in popularity in three decades, where each peak coincides with the activity of recognized gravestone carvers. In New Jersey, the cherub design is similar to the death's head, but frequently a sorrowful, anthropomorphic face replaces the stark skull image. The beginning of the cherub design on gravemarkers in North America has been loosely correlated with the Great Awakening with seeds from the Enlightenment planted as early as the 1720s<sup>70,71,72</sup>. This religious revival

is believed to have led to a freer relationship with religion and a happier personal outlook. The movement is recognized as beginning quite early in the central New Jersey region with the evangelical preachers Gilbert and John Tennent being major players in Monmouth County<sup>73,74,75</sup>. While the death's head image seemed to bind the deceased to the mortal realm where the body decomposed and served to remind others of mortality with an uncertain spiritual placement *post mortem*, the inclusion of cherub images on headstones now placed the deceased in the heavenly realm, even despite the cherubs' sorrowful, frowning faces. Since cherubs are present as early as the death's heads, with the exceptions of obviously backdated stones, it is difficult to

determine if the cherub's early appearance is due to any religious movement such as the Great Awakening. Gravestones are rare during the first thirty years of the eighteenth century, so it may be just as true to say that a growing population with an emerging middle class and increased commercial access caused an increase in gravestone numbers<sup>76</sup>.



**Figure 4: William Forman, 1738, Old Scot's, Marlboro. Carved by the common early death's head carver (Photo by author).**

<sup>70</sup> Bonomi (1986), 131, 133.

<sup>71</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966), 506.

<sup>72</sup> Deetz and Dethlefsen (1967), 31.

<sup>73</sup> Bonomi (1986), 131-160.

<sup>74</sup> McCormick (1964), 96.

<sup>75</sup> Wacker (1975a), 176

<sup>76</sup> Veit (2009), 118.

A motif found in Monmouth County with the inscription “In Hope of A Joyful Resurrection” (IHOAJR) seems to have been a somewhat local development. This design is found on red sandstone markers with the words “In Hope of A Joyful” arched in the tympanum while the word

“Resurrection” is carved horizontally above the epitaph inscription (Figure 4). The design seems to be a local development since most examples have been identified in Monmouth County, while a few examples have also been found in Cranbury in the neighboring Middlesex County. These grave markers are produced by at least two different carvers. One period of the design’s popularity stretches from the 1750s through the 1770s, with the probability of the two 1730s stones being backdated (Figure 3). Later, three stones with IHOAJR appear dating to the 1790s,

made by a previously unrecognized carver, the “Blank Carver” who will be described later. Gravestones inscribed with an expression “In Hopes of a Resurrection to Eternal Glory” can be found in eastern Connecticut, but they are unique in their own rights. An example dated 1771 does not clarify whether one design was influenced from the other<sup>77</sup>. The IHOAJR design is not religion-specific and has been found in burial grounds of Anglican, Baptist, and Presbyterian faiths.



**Figure 5: Ann Smock, 1799, Smock family plot, Holmdel. Probably carved by Henry Osborn (Photo by author).**

Monogram motifs with the deceased individual’s initials displayed in the tympanum were popularized by a few stone carvers late in the eighteenth century and continuing into the nineteenth century. Veit<sup>78,79</sup> attributes the popularity of the monogrammed stones to be an indication of increasing individual importance as well as a greater access to grave markers and a growth of consumerism in the later eighteenth century. The monogram may be the New Jersey carving tradition’s equivalent to the secular/memorializing willow and urn, though these neoclassical icons do appear more frequently later in the nineteenth century on white marble markers. The emphasis on the individual is illustrated well by a pair of gravestones probably carved by Henry Osborne of

<sup>77</sup> Slater (1987), 240.

<sup>78</sup> Veit (1991), 67, 135.

<sup>79</sup> Veit (2009), 117.

Woodbridge, New Jersey that can be found in the Smock family burial ground in Holmdel (Figure 5). The example illustrated here shows Anne Smock's grave marker with her initials "AS" in the tympanum flanked by abstract, linear wings and capped by a cloud-like crown common on cherub and death's head icons. Osborne replaced the anonymous cherub face or skull with the deceased's monogram as if the individual was herself triumphant over death and ascending to a heavenly reward.

Other iconographic designs also appear in Monmouth County, but they are rare. An early variation of the mortality icon is the hourglass that symbolizes the end of life as Time's sand has run out. The hourglass symbol is sometimes found on early sandstone markers in association with the death's heads but it also is found alone (n=2) on slate markers made in Newport, Rhode Island by the John Stevens' Shop dating to the 1720s and 1730s. Another early motif is a rosette design (n=1) dated to 1729, which is a more popular design in neighboring Middlesex County<sup>80</sup>. The rosette design may be a derivative of Pennsylvania Dutch hex designs representing the soul<sup>81</sup>, but it is more likely derived from an ancient decorative symbol that has sporadically appeared on gravemarkers as far back as the Roman occupation of Britain<sup>82</sup>. A third rare design (n=2) is found on ledger stones where roses were carved on the corners and these date to the 1760s. Possibly an indicator of status due to their association with ledger stones, one rose decorated stone at Christ Church in Shrewsbury marks the grave of a past priest of the church. A similar rose motif is found on the corner of a 1789 ledger stone in the Colonial Jewish Burying Ground in Newport, Rhode Island<sup>83</sup>. The rosette and roses are not graphed in Figure 3.

The dominance of the death's head icon throughout the eighteenth century does not allow Monmouth County to fit within the general, three-part pattern observed in Massachusetts<sup>84,85</sup>, New York<sup>86,87</sup>, or even nearby counties in New Jersey<sup>88</sup>. A few studies have identified variations of iconographic change from the classic New England pattern and suggests that areas outside of economic and cultural urban centers like Boston or New York City will tend to exhibit greater conservatism in regards to the diffusion of ideas and fashion which could therefore affect gravestone icon popularity<sup>89,90,91</sup>. Various factors could have influenced the iconographic choices in Monmouth County. Even though it was connected by trade networks to New York City and Newport via the Raritan Bay, the county was a distant, agriculture-dominated suburb. The early settlements were rather scattered due to the area's agricultural dominance, and in part due

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<sup>80</sup> Veit (1991), 4.

<sup>81</sup> Veit (1996), 81.

<sup>82</sup> Ludwig (1966), 148-149.

<sup>83</sup> Gradwohl (2007), 29-31.

<sup>84</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966), 508.

<sup>85</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1967), 404-406.

<sup>86</sup> Baugher and Winter (1983), 49-53.

<sup>87</sup> Stone (2009), 155.

<sup>88</sup> Veit (2009), 129-136.

<sup>89</sup> Baugher and Winter (1983), 48-49.

<sup>90</sup> James Deetz, *In Small Things Forgotten: An Archaeology of Early American Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1996), 120-121.

<sup>91</sup> Deetz and Dethlefsen (1967), 32-33, 48.

to the strong Baptist presence and the additional scarcity of religious leadership, the sharing of new religious and social ideas could have lagged<sup>92,93,94</sup>. The agrarian nature of the country is illustrated by the proportion of stones found in family burial grounds (Appendix 1).

### **The Carvers of Monmouth County's Gravemarkers**

Knowing who carved the gravemarkers provides unique insights into understanding trade dynamics in the colonies. Throughout Monmouth County's burial grounds, a wide variety of stone carvers are represented by their gravemarkers. Though many of the stones' carvers are anonymous, others carved distinguishable icons and lettering styles which allow the markers to be attributed to specific carvers. Attribution is aided by carver's signatures, though only two headstones in Monmouth County were inscribed with the carver's name. As mentioned earlier, stone raw material originated from three main places; grey marbles from Pennsylvania, variously colored slates from New England, and red sandstones from northeastern New Jersey and each carver used a particular raw material.

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<sup>92</sup> McCormick (1964), 92.

<sup>93</sup> Bonomi (1986), 7.

<sup>94</sup> Zielenski (2004), 18.

All but one of Monmouth County's slate gravemarkers came from the talented and long-running John Stevens' Shop of Newport, Rhode Island. These slate gravemarkers are generally adorned with various icons though some unadorned stones can also be found. Vincent Luti's<sup>95</sup> important work on the Steven's Shop has clarified the complicated attributions of their gravestones to specific carvers within the family. While Luti identified many of the Stevens' markers in New Jersey, he did not seem to travel to Imlaystown to see a pair of 1720s dynamic cherubs decorating the Saltar family found in the Baptist burial ground at the Olde Yellow Meeting House in Imlaystown. Carved by William Stevens, these dark slate stones are adorned with an early, smooth-faced, wild-haired cherub with wings that fill the tympanum. The borders are tightly packed with floral designs and rosettes. Both stones also have smaller stones adorned with hearts serving as footstones. Most of the slate gravestones in Monmouth County from the mid-eighteenth century are the work of William Stevens<sup>96</sup>. The four elaborate slate cherubs scattered across the county dating

between 1730 and 1768 can be attributed to this particular brother<sup>97</sup>. His cherubs are easily identified by their round faces, intense eyes, and high-arching, feathered wings. Some of his cherubs appear bald, while others have hair in the form of a simple band around the head, and yet others have a wig-like hairstyle with tightly spiraled knots. Some of these headstones also have smaller, plain footstones that are inscribed with the deceased's name and date of death. Apart from these cherub-adorned stones, three unadorned stones in the Quaker burial ground in Shrewsbury are also attributed to William<sup>98</sup>. These three stones, all dated 1747, are quite similar to the footstones paired with the cherub stones in regards to their size and plain borders (Figure 6). The stones only differ in the inscription where the Quaker stones elaborate the footstone epitaph to include age and exact dates of passing. Perhaps due to ideological beliefs, Quakers preferred unadorned stones and had the typical Stevens' footstone adapted to serve as the headstone (though a red sandstone death's head is present in this burial ground). Similar behavior has been observed in Pennsylvania where "Quaker ideology ...allowed the



**Figure 6: John Allen, 1747, Quaker Meeting House, Shrewsbury. Carved by William Steven's in Newport, Rhode Island (Photo by author).**

<sup>95</sup>Luti (2002). See Luti's text for a full description and illustrations of Steven's stones.

<sup>96</sup> Slater (1987), 107.

<sup>97</sup> Luti (2002), 309, 311

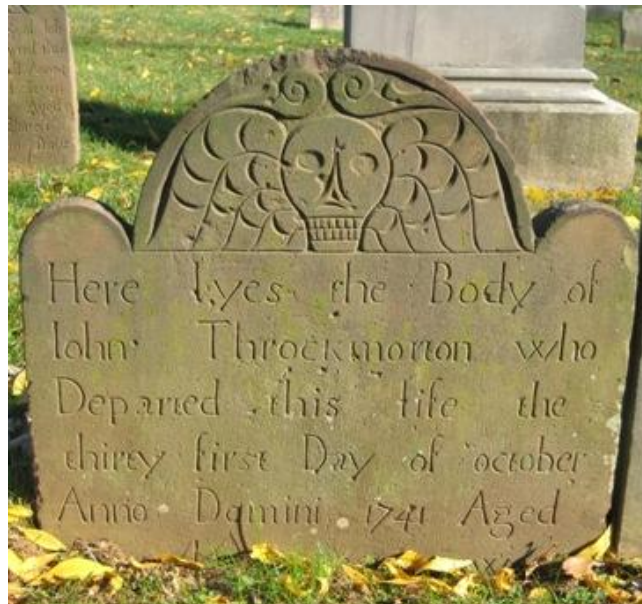
<sup>98</sup> Luti (2002), 309.

popular culture style of marker to be used, but plain without a design”<sup>99</sup>. One carver working earlier than William also used slate markers and carved various icons on his stones which include death’s heads, hourglasses, and an unadorned marker. Luti<sup>100</sup> attributes these stones to a carver identified as “Big-O, Bulb-Skull” carver, who he argues was Phillip Stevens. Phillip Stevens may have moved into New Jersey to intermittently carve in red sandstone and influence the local carving industries. Several death’s head-adorned red sandstone markers with ornate floral borders match the skull shape and inscriptions of the “Big-O, Bulb-Skull” carver<sup>101</sup>.

The other New England stone is a large bluish-gray slate headstone found in the Old Presbyterian Cemetery in Middletown belonging to Isaac Winslow (died 1790) that was adorned with symmetrical, stylized acanthus leaves in the tympanum. Winslow was a native of Berkley, Massachusetts and his uncle, Ebenezer Winslow of Berkley, carved this stone for his nephew<sup>102</sup>.

The red sandstone carvers were as diverse as their counterparts in New England. These artists worked throughout northeast New Jersey, initially in Elizabeth with workshops developing in other towns later. Various New York City carvers working with red sandstone are also present in Monmouth County beginning in the mid-eighteenth century.

Stones from the earliest identified New Jersey carvers, whose shops were in Elizabeth, are rare in Monmouth County. An anonymous carver known as “Old Elizabeth Carver I” is characterized by a stern scene of a skull with crossed bones surrounded by flames and usually an hourglass<sup>103</sup>. One example from this carver exists as a fragmented six feet long slab stone from the Topanemus burial ground in Marlboro, now removed to Saint Peter’s Church in Freehold. This lavish stone contains a pair of the flame-encircled skulls opposite each other with an hourglass in between at the foot of the slab. This tombstone belongs to David Lyell who died in 1725, and his social standing is expressed in the stone with a Latin inscription and his



**Figure 7: John Throckmorton, 1741, Christ’s Church, Shrewsbury. Carved by the common early death’s head carver illustrating the contracting jaw line (Photo by author).**

<sup>99</sup> Stone (1991), 9.

<sup>100</sup> Luti (2002), 141-177, 314.

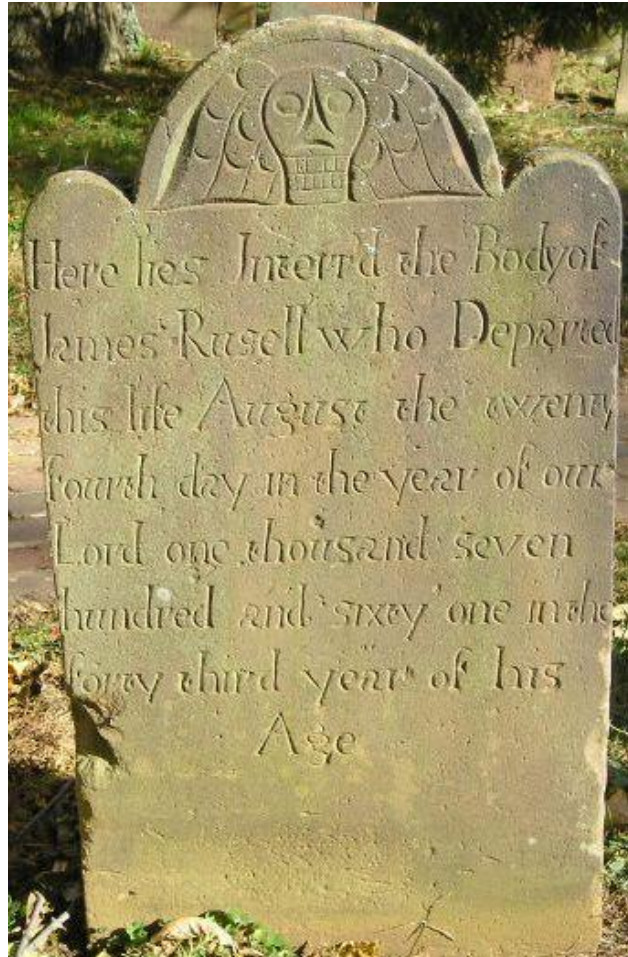
<sup>101</sup> Luti (2002), 165-174, 315.

<sup>102</sup> Veit and Nonesteid (2008), 58.

<sup>103</sup> Welch (1987), 5.

family's heraldic coat of arms near the head. A second carver out of Elizabeth worked slightly later than the "Old Elizabeth Carver I," and his work is characterized by winged skull icons accompanied by hourglasses. This carver is also represented by a single stone in Monmouth County. The 1732 ledger stone of Reverend John Tennent, of the Great Awakening fame, at Old Scot's burial ground in Marlboro is adorned at the head with a winged skull with carefully incised wings and crowned by an hourglass. These two early mortality symbol carvers are rare outside of their Elizabeth home base<sup>104</sup>, yet the clearly indicated high statuses of these two people and the relative scarcity of local carvers at this time allowed these stones to reach as far south as Monmouth County<sup>105</sup>.

Another early death's head icon with distinct earlier and later forms was carved in New Jersey by an unidentified workshop that was very popular in Monmouth County. The early form appears with dates ranging from 1709 to 1752 (Figure 7), although the very earliest examples are probably backdated. These death's heads have segmented wings on each side of a large, bulbous cranium with blank, oval eyes and a triangular nasal aperture. The mouth portions have square teeth and the jaws are relatively narrower with an angled jaw line. The later form has a stronger, squarer jaw and a relatively smaller cranium (Figure 8). This later variety was greatly popular during the 1760s. These anonymously carved gravestones commonly appear in cemeteries from Monmouth County up to Long Island, New York<sup>106</sup>, but they are especially prevalent in Monmouth County and they make up a bulk of the county's death's head-endowed stones. This anonymous workshop also produced a large quantity of undecorated markers as well as the earliest IHOAJR (Figure 4) decorated stones, thus making this workshop responsible for carving most of the eighteenth century gravestones in Monmouth County.



**Figure 8: James Rusell, 1761, Christ's Church, Shrewsbury. Carved by the later common death's head carver illustrating the squarer jaw (Photo by author).**

<sup>104</sup> Welch (1987), 5.

<sup>105</sup> Veit (1991), 132.

<sup>106</sup> Welch (1987), 9.



The two anonymous death's head varieties, as well as the other designs, can be identified as likely being the work of the same carver and/or workshop because of the similarities in the inscriptions' characters. The letters inscribed are distinct with wedge-shaped incisions to form the letters giving an appearance similar to Sumerian cuneiform glyphs. Shown later in figure 11a, the lowercase letter "a" is formed by using a reversed S-curve with a single curve before it. Both curves are unconnected creating a wispy looking letter. The lowercase letters "r" and "t" are also recognizable as having a vertical bar with a short wedge protruding off half way up on the right side of the letters' vertical bars. These gravemarkers also have a peculiarity with the date being fully spelled out, such as "one thousand seven hundred and sixty." The date can also be found written numerically, and these stones tend to be earlier. The spelled out dates are an interesting stylistic attribute which may have helped differentiate this workshop from their contemporaries, or it could have been a method of raising prices since the purchaser may have paid by the letter. Though the location of where this gravestone cutting workshop is unknown, the abundance of this workshop's stones in Monmouth County, hints to a possible nearby origin of carving, but no red sandstone carvers are known to have worked as far south as Monmouth County. Of course, wherever in New Jersey this workshop may have practiced its trade, the red sandstone raw material had to be obtained from the Newark area.

The earliest red sandstone cherub carver has markers present in some of Monmouth County's earliest burial grounds such as Topanemus and Old Scot's in Marlboro. This carver, known as the "East Jersey Soul" Carver, created cherubs with broad, round faces, full cheeks, and pupil-laden eyes glancing off to the side. The hair is formed in knotted lobes and the wings are well-sculpted though short of being feathered, and these culminate in spirals at their tips. In Monmouth County, this carver's stones appear from 1728 to 1746 with the exception of Captain John Bowne (Junior)'s 1715/6 backdated gravestone which is now relocated to Fairview Cemetery from its original location at the Old Presbyterian Cemetery, Middletown. Welch<sup>107</sup> attributes the "East Jersey Soul" carver as the same carver or workshop responsible for the "square-jawed" death's heads mentioned above. After examining the lettering and the dates, it seems as if this is not true in Monmouth County, with one exception. First, the "East Jersey Soul" carver's letters are more uniformly carved with the letter "a" being distinguishingly different between the two. One example in the Old Scot's burial ground has a lettering style like the popular workshop to which Welch attributes some of this design. This particular stone's icon's carving is not as finely sculpted as the other "East Jersey Souls," and it may be an imitation. Secondly, and additional support for a non-local origin of the "East Jersey Souls," is that in the more northern parts of New Jersey, the carver's stones persist later into the 1760s and they are frequently more ornate<sup>108</sup>. This matter gets confusing since William Grant seems to have continued carving stones into the 1760s with an "East Jersey Soul"-type cherub, though an examination of lettering styles makes it seem that none of the "East Jersey Soul"-style stones in Monmouth County were carved by Grant<sup>109</sup>. The "East Jersey Soul" carver's stones in Monmouth County never contain

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<sup>107</sup> Welch (1987), 11.

<sup>108</sup> Veit (1991), 56.

<sup>109</sup> Zielenski (2004), Section 1, 72-73, 81-83; Section 2, 23-25.

secondary designs and the date period ends much earlier than in other New Jersey burial grounds. One would expect stones from a local carver to cluster in the area around his shop throughout the span of his career and also possibly containing some of the more elaborate designs<sup>110,111</sup>.

As the eighteenth century progressed, the population was growing and creating more markets and a demand for craft specialization. More people began devoting themselves fulltime to non-agricultural professions, and this is true in the stone cutting industry of New Jersey<sup>112</sup>. As the middle of the century approached, the number of gravestone carvers expanded to include those known by name and also others who remain anonymous. Also at this time, New York was home to carvers who have work present in Monmouth County.

One of the more proficient gravestone carvers of the eighteenth century, based out of Newark, was Uzal Ward. Ward, as mentioned earlier, owned his own sandstone quarry and probably had apprentices or slaves in gravestone manufacturing. His gravestones in Monmouth County include two iconographic designs, a characteristic cherub and a relatively rarer death's head. Ward's cherub designs are found in two styles, an early square faced variety present in the 1750s and a later, more common, jowl-cheeked form found in the 1760s and 1770s<sup>113</sup>. His lettering style is expressive with curled finials on his characters. His upright headboard-like stones in Monmouth County are found bordered with a solid bar surrounding the inscription. In addition to the cherub and death's head adorned stones, the two rose-adorned ledger stones have been attributed to Ward<sup>114</sup>. Ward's gravestones were relatively popular in Monmouth County compared to other northern New Jersey carvers, and his stones can be found in Baptist, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, and family burial grounds.

Uzal Ward's style was influential to other carvers who adorned markers with pear-shaped cherubs. One identified carver, William Grant, who originally worked in New York City and then later in Newark, New Jersey, was a prolific carver of cherubs with pear-shaped faces and often squinty eyes. While many of these pear-shaped cherubs were flat, the 1781 Joseph Tole stone carved by Grant in Christ Church, Shrewsbury is deeper relief with more circular eyes. Zielenski<sup>115</sup> states that while Grant carved this stone's icon, the inscription was carved by an individual he identifies as a distinct and anonymous "Rounded Pear Head" carver. These pear headed cherubs are usually found with a continuous wing beneath the head curving above stars at the tips. An exception is a ledger stone at Christ Church in Shrewsbury, which has a more common bat-like wing on a cherub at each head corner. This slab, belonging to Sarah (died 1782) and Richard Tole (died 1786), was carved by the same "Rounded Pear Head" carver who inscribed Joseph

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<sup>110</sup> Deetz and Dethlefsen (1967), 33-36.

<sup>111</sup> Deetz (1996), 91.

<sup>112</sup> Veit (1991), 134.

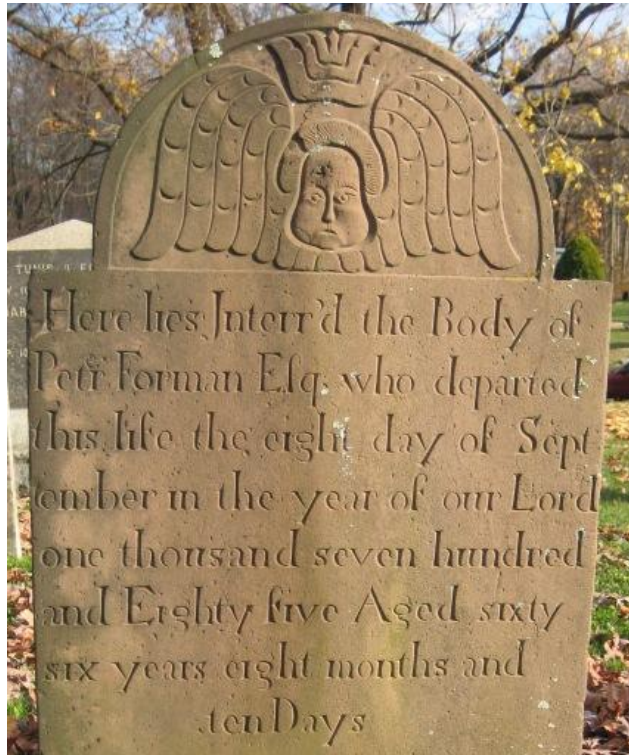
<sup>113</sup> Zielenski (2004), Section 1, 34-64. See Zielenski's thesis for fully illustrated examples of Uzal Ward's stones.

<sup>114</sup> Zielenski (2004), Section 1, 31; Section 2, Part 1, 1.

<sup>115</sup> Zielenski (2004), Section 2, 35; Section 3 Part 1 Appendix B page 4 of 6. See Zielenski's thesis for fully illustrated examples of William Grant's and the "Rounded Pear Head" carver's stones.

Tole's stone<sup>116</sup>. The lettering on these pear-shaped cherubs is plainer than Ward's without Ward's routinely curled finials and with a capital "W" that appears comparatively cramped. These pear-shaped cherub gravestones are later than the Ward stones found in this county, dating between 1781 and 1789. While Grant and other anonymous carvers used a pear-shaped cherub icon, it seems that they worked together<sup>117</sup>.

In the later eighteenth century, a previously unrecognized carver worked in Monmouth County who appears to have imported red sandstone blanks which were then lettered (since this carver was identified, Zielenski has also recognized the presence of the "Blank Carver")<sup>118</sup>. Some of these blanks were received by this "Blank Carver" already endowed with iconographic images as is evident by a few cherubs and death's heads on stones which were clearly carved by Uzal Ward, while the inscriptions were not. The "Blank Carver's" headstones include a greater variety of designs than other carvers present at the time and these include unadorned markers, death's heads, IHOAJR, and cherubs. Which iconographic images the "Blank Carver" carved is difficult to know. The IHOAJR stones dating to the 1790s were clearly influenced by the earlier examples of this design in the county, and they were carved by this stonecutter. The cherub-adorned stones are easily attributed to both Uzal Ward (Figure 9) as well as the "Rounded Pear Head" carver discussed above. The death's head images are similar in style to Ward's death's heads with their wide grins and clean executions. This association with Ward might be supported by the dates. Ward stopped carving stones in 1792, the year before his death, which also happens to be the latest date for the "Blank Carver's" death's head-adorned stones<sup>119</sup>. The "Blank Carver" frequently used stones with squared-off shouldered, which help make his stones stand out in a burial ground, but stones with the typical lobed shoulders are also found.



**Figure 9: Peter Forman Esq., 1785, Old Tennent, Manalapan. "Blank Carver"-inscribed Uzal Ward cherub (Photo by author).**

The temporal distribution of the "Blank Carver's" gravestones places the carver's activity in the last quarter of the eighteenth century (Figure 10). The carver's headstones (n=46)

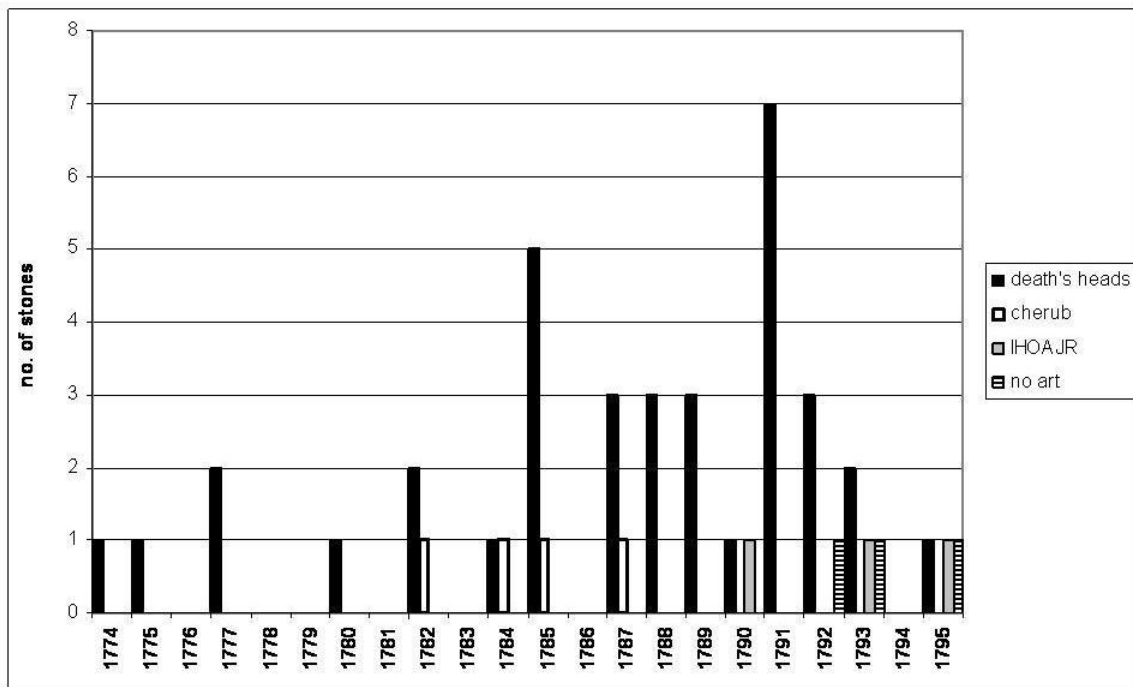
<sup>116</sup> Zielenski (2004), Section 3 Part 1, page 4 of 10.

<sup>117</sup> Zielenski (2004), Section 1, 135-139.

<sup>118</sup> Heinrich (2003).

<sup>119</sup> Zielenski (2004), 4-5.

have been identified dating between 1720 through 1795, with the scattered stones dated 1720, 1732, 1747, 1769, 1774, and 1777 all probably being backdated (the stones from 1720-1769 are not included in Figure 10). The death's head icon was divided into skulls with lobed wings and skulls with flat-based wings in order to see if any possible trends existed in the popularity of each specific form. After differentiating the wing styles, no overwhelming trend materialized. The "Blank Carver" did not use the design of IHOAJR and undecorated gravestones until the later years of his period of work. It is likely that even more unadorned gravestones in Monmouth County may be able to be attributed to this "Blank Carver." Within Monmouth County, the "Blank Carver's" gravestones are found in church burial grounds of the Presbyterian, Anglican, Dutch Reformed, and Baptist faiths, and they can also be found in family burial grounds including the Van Mater, Covenhoven/Gold, Walling, and Wall plots. A survey of some larger burial grounds in neighboring counties did not locate any examples of the "Blank Carver" being sent outside of Monmouth County.



**Figure 10: Distribution of identified headstones by the Monmouth County "Blank Carver". The backdated stones dated 1720, 1732, 1747, and 1769 are not illustrated.**

The subtleties of a carver's inscription can tease apart the many contemporary, often anonymous, artisans<sup>120</sup>, and the gravestone's inscription is the key to identifying stones by the "Blank Carver" (Figure 11a-b). The inscription is structured similar to the earlier, popular "square-jawed skull" workshop's stones where the date of death was usually fully spelt out, though the date of death can also be found inscribed numerically. Looking at the inscriptions' letters, a difference can be identified between the letters carved by the earlier "square-jawed skull" carvers and the "Blank Carver." The simplest

<sup>120</sup> Zielenski (2004).

distinction can be made between the letter “w” of the respective gravestone carver. The earlier “square-jawed skull” carver made his “w” as a pair of clearly overlapping “v’s.” The “Blank Carver” formed the “w” with the middle peak connecting to create a relatively broad platform at the central peak. Mentioned previously, the earlier “square-jawed skull” carver carved a distinctive letter “a” as an awkward appearing reversed S-curve with an unconnected curve in front. The “Blank Carver’s” letter “a” is well formed and all parts of the letter’s anatomy connect in an appearance similar to the letter “a” in the Times New Roman font. The letters “r” and “t” also exhibit distinguishing characteristics that help differentiate the two carvers. The cross bars of the earlier “square-jawed skull” carver are wedge-shaped and protrude off of the mid-shafts of their vertical bars. The “Blank Carver” moved the cross bars towards the tops of the vertical bars. The lowercase letter “t’s” cross bar becomes a serif at the top of the shaft while forming a small, sharp peak. The lowercase letter “r’s” horizontal bar is thin and concave downwards.

a).



b).



**Figure 11: A comparison of the inscriptions of the anonymous “square-jawed” death’s head carver (a) and the “Blank Carver” (b). The letters “w,” “t,” “r,” and “a” are diagnostic letters that differentiate the carvers.**

Other late century New Jersey carvers are also identified in Monmouth County. The Osborn brothers, Jonathan Hand and Henry, begin producing gravemarkers in the late eighteenth century. Due to the “handwriting,” or inscription carving, with signed examples, many of these stones in Monmouth County are likely carved by Henry Osborne. Of his eighteenth century gravemarkers, six contain monogrammed tympanums (refer back to Figure 5) and one is decorated with a cherub. His earliest dated monogrammed headstone is dated 1777 at Old Tennent Church in Manalapan, and

it is probably backdated due to its similarity to the 1794 monogrammed stone to its immediate right. A monogrammed headstone for Catherine White (died 1795) may be the work of Jonathan Hand. The sole Osborne cherub is influenced by the style developed by the Ebenezer Price workshop, another popular workshop in Elizabeth<sup>121</sup>.

The last identified New Jersey carver found in Monmouth County is Aaron Ross of New Brunswick. Ross' only identified work in Monmouth County is James Anderson's 1766 (back dated) monogrammed stone at Old Tennent Church, Manalapan with the deceased's initials in bold block-print within a sunburst. This gravestone is signed at the base.

The New Jersey stone cutting tradition is prevalent in Monmouth County with a variety of New Jersey stonecutters identified throughout its burial grounds. The gravestones carved by northern New Jersey carvers are often illustrated by small numbers of scattered stones. This illustrates that while gravestone trade existed between the regions, it was limited to a relatively few finished gravestones with a supplemental trade in blanks. An interesting observation of the New Jersey carvers is that the Ebenezer Price workshop is absent in Monmouth County. This absence is remarkable since stones from the Price workshop are extremely popular in neighboring Middlesex County<sup>122</sup>.

Along with the New Jersey carvers, gravemarkers from New York stonecutters who used northeastern New Jersey's red sandstone start to appear in Monmouth County in the mid-eighteenth century. One New York gravestone carver in Monmouth County is John Zuricher who carved stones topped with characteristic cherubs. Zuricher's cherubs are either found with very circular faces or drooping, jowled cheeks, while both forms have distinctively knobbed chins. Four of his headstones exist in Monmouth County, which includes the only other signed stone, the 1777 Catherine Norris-Crookshank headstone in the Old Presbyterian Burial Ground in Middletown.



**Figure 12: John Bowne Esq., 1774, Old Presbyterian, Middletown. Carved by William Valentine (Photo by author).**

<sup>121</sup> Welch (1987), 20.

<sup>122</sup> Veit (1996), 83.

Thomas Brown working out of New York City has a few stones scattered around Monmouth County with both cherubs and a mortality symbol. Four stones are adorned with very lightly-inscribed, cherubs. The mortality symbol is simply a pair of crossed bones found on Elizabeth Cook's 1773 stone found in West Long Branch. These crossed bones are reminiscent of those illustrated by Welch<sup>123</sup>.

The other identified New York gravestone carver present in Monmouth County is Thomas Gold. Two of Gold's headstones are adorned with cherubs with circular heads, the segmented death's head-like wings, and small circles beneath their chins. Though these icon-adorned New York gravestones are relatively rare in Monmouth County, their presence, like the presence of New England and northern New Jersey gravestones, speaks to the trade routes available to the early settlers of this region.

The most common New York carver is the unidentified carver referred to in the Luyster family receipt who is occasionally observed with carved numbers relating to inscription cost<sup>124</sup>. Due to the large number of stones present in this county alone, this unidentified carver was probably a large, prolific workshop. These stones are not decorated with any icons and the inscriptions begin "In Memory of..." with the "In" centered in the tympanum in italic script. This carver's stones date as far back as the mid-1780s and they continue to be found into the nineteenth century.

Possibly the most unique carver found in Monmouth County burial grounds is William Valentine. Valentine is responsible for sculpting the most naturalistic cherub-adorned gravestone in medium relief for John Bowne Esquire in the Old Presbyterian Burial Ground of Middletown who died in 1774 (Figure 12). This cherub was executed in English Rococo style to look like a small child with realistic hair, life-like eyes, and feathered wings. On this stone, the word "HERE" at the beginning of the inscription was carved very lightly in calligraphy. An unadorned 1774 headstone for Catherine Patten in Old Scot's of Marlboro has the word "IN" carved very similarly to the "HERE" on the Bowne headstone and is likely another example of Valentine's work. A third example of Valentine's work was in the destroyed Hendrickson burial ground of Holmdel, this stone for Daniel Hendrickson was dated 1776. This lost stone has two cherub faces with one's eyes closed, while the second stares with pupil-less eyes. Paul Joseph McLeod<sup>125</sup> also attributed a death's head to Valentine during his survey in the late 1970s, but its location was not identified and it is presumably lost. The origin of these headstones is unknown. Valentine was from England and may have exported these stones to the colonies<sup>126</sup>, though the raw material (a dark sandstone) suggests that he may have carved them during a visit to New York<sup>127</sup> or New Jersey<sup>128</sup>.

### Personal Choice in Grave Marker Iconography

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<sup>123</sup> Welch (1987), 35-37.

<sup>124</sup> Veit (2006), pers. comm.

<sup>125</sup> McLeod (1979), 23.

<sup>126</sup> Janice Kohl Sarapin, *Old Burial Grounds of New Jersey- A Guide* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 133.

<sup>127</sup> Welch (1987), 42.

<sup>128</sup> Veit (2002).

Deetz and Dethlefsen<sup>129,130</sup> attributed the transition of the gravemarker iconography to major religious trends. When looking at the cemeteries in Monmouth County, it quickly becomes noticeable that the New England pattern does not apply with death's heads persisting quite late as the most popular icon. The research here shows that the Monmouth County patterns were influenced as much by personal choice as by any possible religious beliefs.

The eighteenth century attitudes towards death....[was] that religion and doctrinal changes have little actual effect on people's reaction to death and burial. In an individualistic society, it is, ultimately, the feeling of loss, rather than the concepts of the afterlife, which dominate and shape responses to bereavement and death<sup>131</sup>.

No clues about personal preference materialized through gravestone orders or wills. Instead, arranging the stones by family surnames offers a possible insight. When the cherub gravestones were arranged into family groups, 28 gravestones (60.9%) belong to families with two or more examples in each (Table 1). Eighteen (39.1%) of the total 46 cherub-adorned gravemarkers are found individually without sharing the icon with other family members. The monogram motif, though fewer in quantity, also hints at this personal choice through family groups. Here, four of the seven (57.1%) monogrammed stones can be organized into a pair of families (Table 2). The Mount family has only a single monogrammed headstone in Monmouth County, but Richard Welch's<sup>132</sup> paper illustrates an 1801-dated monogrammed stone belonging to a Humphrey Mount in Cranbury, Middlesex County.

Family Surname	No. of Stones
Saltar	2
Holmes	3
Forman	5
English	2
Wikoff	4
Hendricks	3
Hun	2
Bowne	2
Leonard	3
Tole	2
Families w/ single stones	18

**Table 1: Cherub-adorned markers organized by family surname (n=46).**

Family preference can also be inferred by looking at a specific family. The Throckmorton family was one of Monmouth County's most ancient families and they have the most extant grave markers (n=16) spanning from 1709 through 1790 (and even to the modern day!). Looking at their stones' icons, 11 (68.8%) contain death's heads (Table 3). While other prominent families are choosing other designs, the Throckmortons seem content with continuing use of the death's head motif.

<sup>129</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1966), 508.

<sup>130</sup> Dethlefsen and Deetz (1967), 404-406.

<sup>131</sup> Claire Gittings, *Death, Burial, and the Individual in Early Modern England* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 149.

<sup>132</sup> Welch (1987), 22.



Personal choice through family groups is also evident in the choice of gravestone carver. One example is the three stones dated to 1747 in the Shrewsbury Quaker Meeting House burial ground belonging to the Allen family. All three of these undecorated stones are of greenish-grey slate carved by William Stevens. The Stevens' Shop was also the preferred artist for the gravestones of the Hance (n=2), Stelle (n=3), and Saltar (n=2) families. If one expands the study area to neighboring Middlesex County, the Piscatawaytown (today's Edison) burial ground contains a family plot of the Stelle family dating to the 1750s and 1760s. Here, more Stelle headstones carved by the same Stevens' Shop were preferred, which complements the three earlier, eighteenth century headstones in Monmouth County. Trade networks may have facilitated the presence of Stevens' stones in Shrewsbury, Rumson, and Piscatawaytown due to their respective river accessibility. Illustrating the family's connection to Rhode Island, the Stelles settled in Shrewsbury after leaving Newport. Later, Issac Stelle moves back to Newport and sailed his brigantine between Newport and Perth Amboy, New Jersey<sup>133</sup>.

**Table 2: Monogram-adorned markers organized by family surname (n=7).**

Family Surname	No. of Stones
<b>Smock</b>	2
<b>Sutfin</b>	2
<b>Mount</b>	1
<b>White</b>	1
<b>Anderson</b>	1

Adding to the correlation of family choices with carvers, the anonymous "Rounded Pear Head" carver is responsible for a series of four cherub-endowed gravestones belonging to the Wikoff family at Old Tennent Church in Manalapan.

These stones are also an example of family preference for cherub iconography (Table 1). Not all examples of carver preference have the same icon on each stone. The three Hendricks' stones at the Dutch Reformed Church in Marlboro carved by Uzal Ward consist of different icons, one death's head and two cherubs. While these are just a few examples, finding examples to support this idea of personal and family preference for icon images and carvers can include most of the gravestones found in Monmouth County, as well as in other areas outside this county. The examples that illustrate preference for specific carvers may be the family's desire to attain quality workmanship from either a carver with a good reputation or someone that the family has already had experience with. The stone carver may have also used attributes attractive to the patron such as styles, raw materials, or punctuality in filling orders.

**Table 3: Eighteenth century Throckmorton family gravemarkers showing a preference for death's head icons (n = 16).**

Design	Death's head	IHOAJR	Unadorned	Indeterminate
<b>No. of Stones</b>	11	3	1	1

### The Revolutionary War's Impact on Grave Markers in Monmouth County

<sup>133</sup> Luti (2002), 174.

Using gravemarkers as artifacts, we have already seen the different trade routes available to the early inhabitants of Monmouth County. Gravemarkers can also reveal other historic events. One example that can be illustrated in Monmouth County is the Revolutionary War, which was a majorly disruptive event during the eighteenth century. The gravestone trade was systematically affected by the British occupation of this region, such as the exclusion of some carvers and the disruption of shipping routes. It is recorded that John Zuricher fled New York City to Orange County, New York when the British forces entered the city<sup>134</sup>. Uzal Ward's productivity is recognized to have dropped off during the outbreak of the war when he served as a Loyalist for the British<sup>135,136</sup>. Illustrating the affects of war on the gravestone industry around the Raritan Bay, the autobiographical record by carver John Frazee<sup>137</sup> notes the disruption of the War of 1812 on his personal carving business, which forced him to work in the cloth industry until mason work was available again.

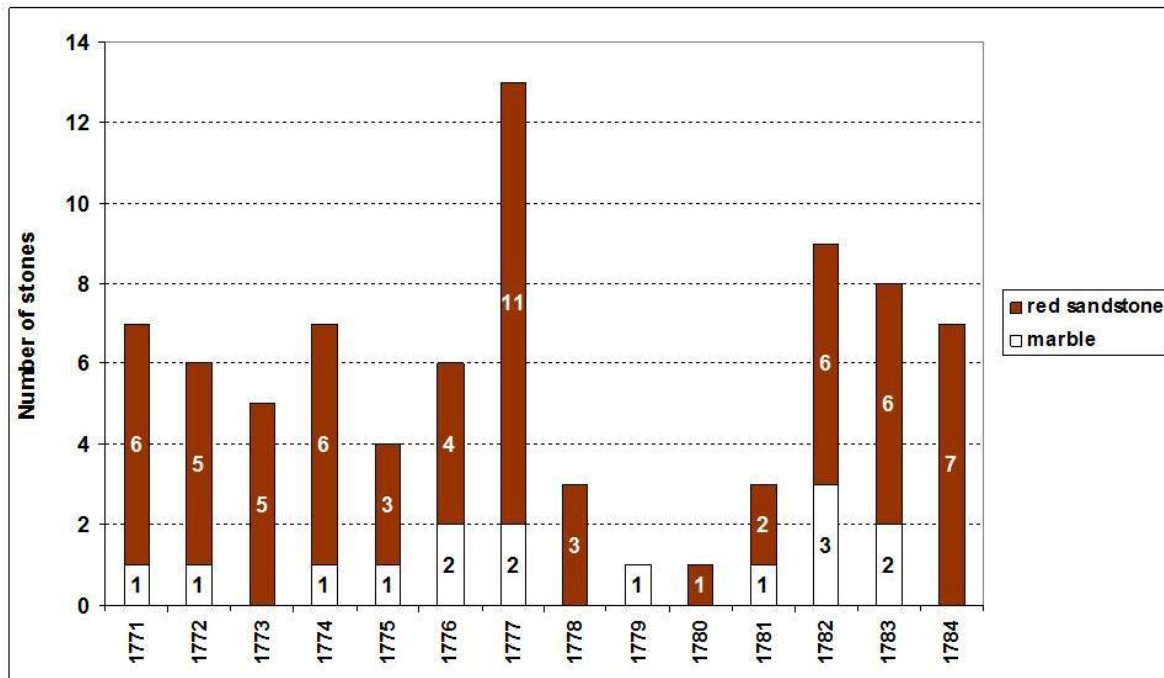


Figure 13: The frequency of gravemarkers dated between 1771 and 1784 showing the effect of the Revolutionary War on gravemarker importation to Monmouth County from 1778 to 1781.

British forces were in the region as early as 1776, but the greatest occupation and disturbance occurring in Monmouth County and the New York City area was between early June of 1778 and early 1782, well after Cornwallis's surrender at Yorktown in 1781. The gravestones illustrate how the British occupation lessened the availability of gravemarkers. The Revolutionary War period accounts for the greatest death toll in the eighteenth century with the 28 of June 1778 Battle of Monmouth, a site neighboring Old

<sup>134</sup> Welch (1987), 33.

<sup>135</sup> Zielenski (2004), Section 2, Part 1 page 15-18.

<sup>136</sup> Welch (1987), 13.

<sup>137</sup> Frazee (1835), 5.

Tennent Church in Manalapan, accounting for hundreds of death on a single day<sup>138</sup>. Figure 13 shows the number of gravestones dated between 1771 and 1784 divided between Pennsylvania-derived marbles and northern New Jersey red sandstones. Between 1778 and 1781, the years of the heaviest British occupation, gravestone numbers drop and the few red sandstone markers present are most likely backdated since some of these markers were carved by the unidentified New York carver with the italic “IN” who was active in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Only eight headstones date within this time frame and two of these originate from Pennsylvania. Pennsylvanian marble headstones are relatively rare normally, so it is difficult to attribute their scarcity during this period to the British occupation. Red sandstone gravestones on the other hand are limited to six examples, with none dated 1779 and only one dated 1780. The British presence in New York City and in Raritan Bay seems to have severely disrupted the trade of red sandstone markers or the raw material to Monmouth County. This disruption in gravemarker numbers during the Revolution is also noted from Long Island, New York<sup>139</sup>.

## Conclusion

The eighteenth century mortuary art of Monmouth County offers insights into the feelings, popular trends, personal choices, and economics of the area’s citizens. Monmouth County shows that it was a strong consumer in the gravestone trade with the numerous religions and family-oriented burial grounds containing gravemarkers from the various available places of gravestone manufacture. Whether the headstone was carved a distance away or imported as a blank and then carved more locally, it was a status symbol to remind the living of the deceased’s social status as it was also a reminder of the fragility of mortal life. While the gravemarkers suggest a social conservatism with the preponderance of death’s head-adorned markers throughout the century, these eighteenth century documents reflect shared ideas across Monmouth County even while the county was taking part in the regional trade networks and nationally significant events. As is shown by all the faiths, religions exhibited shared connections where iconography and the patronage of specific carvers crossed boundaries. Instead, purchasing power, personal choice, and external social events influenced whether gravemarkers were purchased and what type of adornment was placed on the stone. Further work will be needed to determine how the personal preferences of gravestone iconography is demonstrated away from the immediate Monmouth County area such as northern New Jersey or New England where there was greater access to gravemarkers and local carvers.

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<sup>138</sup> Horner (1974), 374.

<sup>139</sup> Levine (1978), 53.

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**Appendix 1: A list of the burial grounds surveyed in Monmouth County with the number of stones recorded from each burial ground.**

Burial Ground	Town	Type	No. of Stones
Van Pelt	Aberdeen	Family	1
First Presbyterian	Allentown	Presbyterian	13
Ye Olde Robbins	Allentown	Family	4
Conover	Colts Neck	Family	1
Van Mater	Colts Neck	Family	13
Polhemus	Colts Neck	Family	9
St. Peter's	Freehold	Anglican	23
Wikoff	Freehold	Family	4
Walling	Hazlet	Family	14
Wall	Hazlet	Family	8
Dorsett Town	Holmdel	Family	8
Luyster	Holmdel	Family	10
Smock	Holmdel	Family	2
Holmdel Cemetery	Holmdel	Nondenominational	4
United Church of Christ	Holmdel	Anglican	9
Hendrickson	Holmdel	Family	1
Old Yellow Meeting House	Imlaystown	Baptist	47
Old Tennent	Manalapan	Presbyterian	89
Dutch Reformed	Marlboro	Dutch Reformed	24
Old Scot's	Marlboro	Presbyterian	21
Topanemus	Marlboro	Quaker then Anglican	15
Mount Pleasant	Matawan	Presbyterian	14
Old Presbyterian	Middletown	Presbyterian	15
Dutch Reformed	Middletown	Dutch Reformed	1
Throckmorton/Lippet/Taylor	Middletown	Family	8
Fairview Cemetary	Middletown	Nondenominational	5
Hartshorne	Middletown	Family	2
Covenhoven/Gold	Middletown	Family	14
Rumson Road	Rumson	Family	2
Christ's Church	Shrewsbury	Anglican	40
Shrewsbury Presbyterian	Shrewsbury	Presbyterian	2
Quaker Meeting House	Shrewsbury	Quaker	5

Old Free Church	West Long Branch	Methodist	4
Green	West Long Branch	Family	1
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>433</b>