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October 6, 2007

Ms. Barbara Donohue, RPA  
Cultural Resource Consultant  
51 Warwick Road  
West Newton, MA. 02465

Re: Assessment of the Mann Family Cemetery, North Attleborough, MA

Dear Barbara,

This letter will serve to provide you with my assessment of the Mann Family Cemetery (often called the Draper/Mann Burial Ground) situated in North Attleborough, MA. I had the opportunity to visit the cemetery with you and Ms. Ann Chapdelaine (representing the North Attleborough Historical Commission) on September 24, 2007. During that visit I also viewed the repaired ledger (stored at the North Attleborough Wastewater Treatment Facility), as well as other fragments currently stored with the historical commission.

This assessment covers basic preservation recommendations for the cemetery, recommendations regarding the stonewall that surrounds the small graveyard, the OPC (ordinary Portland cement) pad within the walled area, as well as treatment proposals for the evaluated stones.

The assessment is offered as a somewhat abbreviated or reconnaissance level study, based on both the size of the cemetery and also my understanding of your client's interests. In spite of this, it provides our best professional recommendations based on the information currently available. I appreciate the opportunity to be involved in the project; please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding our assessment or recommendations.

### **Cemetery Setting**

The cemetery is found on a small parcel of land northwest of the intersection of Old Post Road and Draper Avenue (Figure 1). Situated between two relatively recent single-family dwellings on the outskirts of North Attleborough, the cemetery is accessed by an easement

running from Old Post Road westward to the cemetery, between two houses. The easement is not marked in any fashion and mostly runs through grassed yard areas, although it may incorporate a gullied area. Either within the easement, or in close proximity, is stacked firewood, discarded grass clippings and other lawn trash. The very end of the easement consists of a lightly wooded area, at which point the wall surrounding the cemetery is clearly visible.

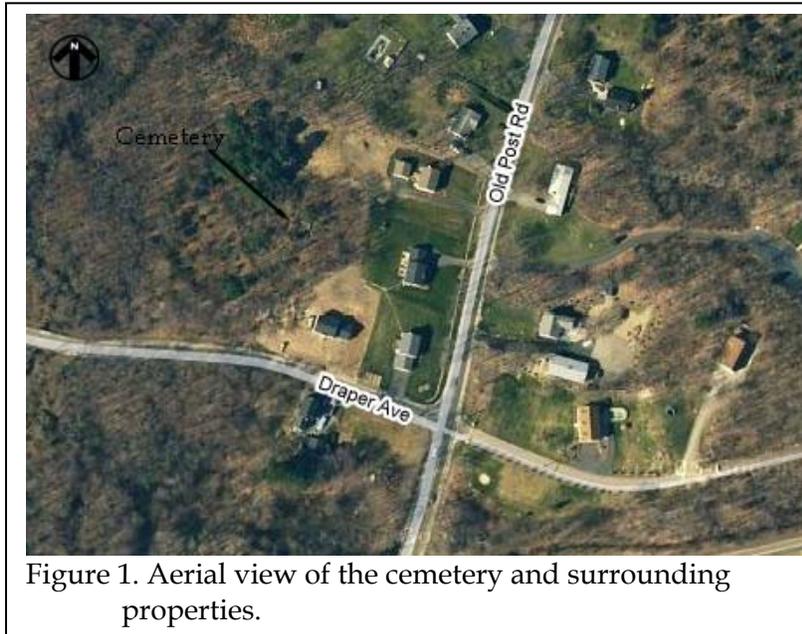


Figure 1. Aerial view of the cemetery and surrounding properties.

While I understand that the setting was historically rural, it is today dominated by the modern neighborhood and structures. The adjacent structures are visible on the access to the cemetery and even from the cemetery itself, since the graveyard is situated on a small knoll overlooking the surrounding tracts to the south. To the north are dense woods. I understand that there is a historic pathway that may lead toward an earlier (and now demolished) structure associated with previous owners of the cemetery and

surrounding lands.

Current vegetation consists of several cedar trees and a variety of hickories. The majority of this vegetation is rather young, probably being less than 50 years old. This suggests that the knoll, in the recent past, was open and trees have begun to grow up around the cemetery only since the area began receiving less maintenance. There is an abundance of herbaceous understory vegetation, including much poison ivy.

At the present time the most defining aspect of the landscape are the surrounding houses that overshadow the scrub-like and rather neglected appearance of the cemetery vegetation.

- There is need for much improvement in the general setting of the cemetery. In particular, understory vegetation – especially the noxious plants – should be completely removed.
- Overstory vegetation should be inspected for health. I observed numerous trees with dead wood, damaged or diseased trunks, double leaders, and other defects. These

should be removed to allow the remaining healthy vegetation a better opportunity for thriving.

- New plantings are required to prevent the cemetery from appearing stark. These plantings should focus on native materials that require minimal maintenance.

### **Access**

Generally, access issues focus on the cemetery roads; in this case, it is appropriate to consider how both the public and maintenance crews will gain access to the cemetery. The current access is invisible to the public and requires clear definition and identification. The route itself is difficult, making it unsuitable for many aged visitors. It also appears to contain hazards, such as the gully and stacked wood. Traffic is also likely to damage the turfgrass, causing erosion and other problems.

- The access route should be identified with signage consistent with that used by the town, placed on Old Post Road. This signage should make regulatory issues immediately clear (such as times the cemetery is open, expected behavior, etc.)
- The access route should be clearly marked throughout its route. Pathways may vary from landscape timbers to paving – the choice should be made in consideration of the anticipated traffic, the ability of the town to maintain the pathway material, and a determination if a pathway meeting ADA requirements is necessary. Another factor to consider is the blending of this pathway with the cemetery context. For example, using slate walking stones would be inappropriate since they might be confused by the public with the stone monuments themselves. Likewise, concrete sidewalks are too harsh and would detract from the setting. It is also necessary to determine if the pathway also will need to be used for vehicular access (thus increasing its width and installing lockable bollards to control traffic).

### **Burial Site**

The burial site consists of two features – the remaining stones and the surrounding rock wall. Both need extensive rehabilitation.

At some time in the past, a rock wall was erected to mark the burial ground and an undated newspaper account explained, “the only way to enter the burying ground is by climbing over the wall.” A photograph (Figure 2) suggests that the wall was in good condition and it appears to have included Portland cement, suggesting a post-1930 date. The photograph reveals that the interior of the walled enclosure was grassed with several scrub trees present. Slate has been used to cap the rock wall. Four headstones and one rock box tomb are shown. The ledger on the box has been slid off, but is otherwise intact. The article lists seven markers in total.

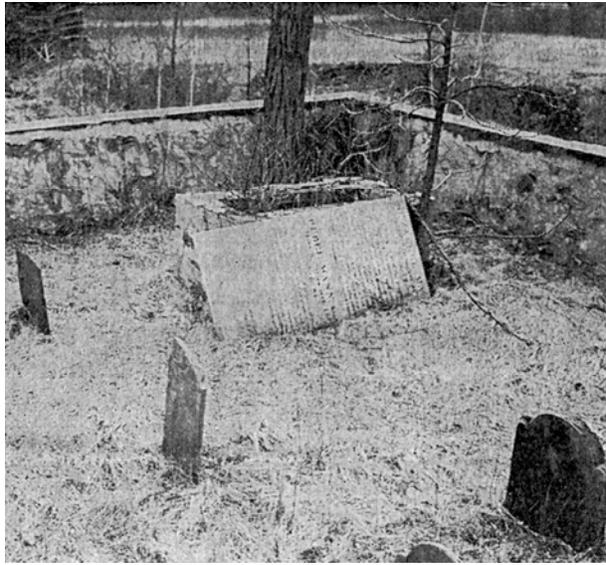


Figure 2. Undated photograph of the cemetery looking toward the south.

By 1951, the condition of the cemetery appears relatively unchanged. The photograph from that period continues to show the ledger intact and three of the stones seen in the undated photograph are again shown. The most notable difference is that cemetery is far more grown up, with the article even mentioning the dense poison ivy that had overtaken the stones.

A 1974 account of the cemetery reveals considerable changes during the intervening 23 years (Figure 3). A hole has been cut into the wall to allow a gate (still present today) to be installed. The interior of the graveyard is no longer grassed; instead, a cement pad has been laid. Many of the stones are by this time broken and

lying shattered on the ground, although several appear to still have most of their fragments. The box tomb has been completely removed and the ledger, still seemingly intact, is now laid on the concrete.

The deterioration of the cemetery between 1951 and 1974 is dramatic. Much of the historic fabric has been destroyed and lost. The cemetery today is represented by only a small portion of what was present initially. While the breaks suggest the cause was vandalism, this was exacerbated by placing the stones in hard, unyielding concrete. Once this was done, extensive damage was virtually assured.

Since 1974 the ledger was also shattered (subsequently repaired by Fannin-Lehner in 2000), as was a stone shown at the far right edge of the photo.

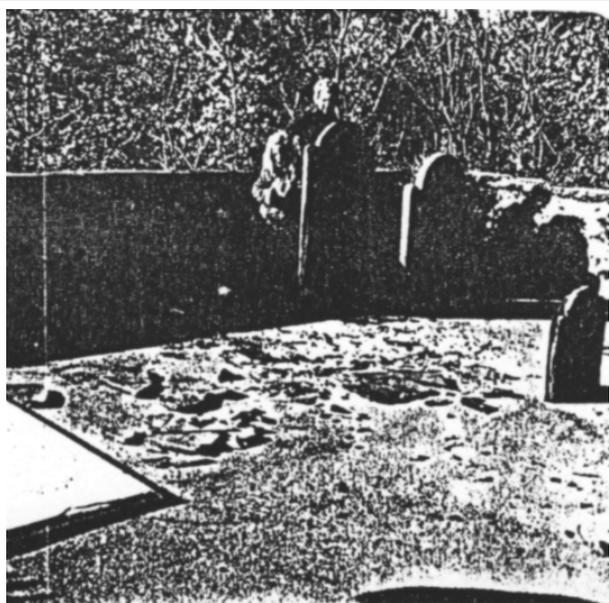


Figure 3. The cemetery in 1974 showing extensive damage and loss.

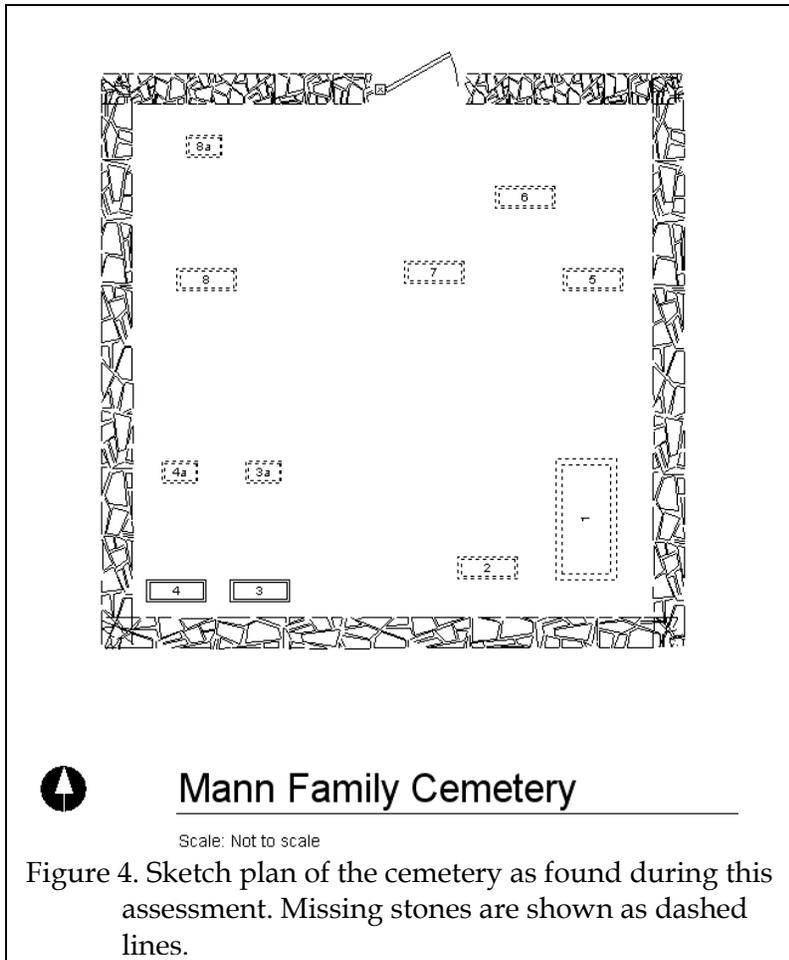


Figure 4. Sketch plan of the cemetery as found during this assessment. Missing stones are shown as dashed lines.

My examination of the cemetery shows evidence of eight marked burials and at least 11 stones (head and foot stones). Today only two of the headstones are still intact and in place (Figure 4). The ledger, now repaired, is still stored at the North Attleborough Waste Water Treatment Plant. Various fragments found during cleaning efforts are stored at the North Attleborough Historical Commission. Most of the stones, however, have disappeared (they are present only as remnants present from the concrete pad extending below grade).

- The concrete pad, identified as 4-inches thick and containing wire mesh reinforcement, should be removed as soon as practical. This will

require a two-step process with the crew exercising the greatest possible caution. The first step will be to cut around the embedded stones using hand-held diamond blade concrete saws. The cut lines should be as close to the stone as practical, but care should be taken to avoid any further damage. After the stones are no longer integral to the slab, paving breakers can be used to demolish the concrete. Afterwards the concrete can be removed by hand, along with the wire mesh.

- Concrete on the individual stones will need to be removed by a stone conservator. Afterwards the remnants can be reset in pea gravel.
- Lawn markers, set flush to the ground, can be installed to provide the inscriptions for the stones missing. This will allow the remnant stones to remain the dominant 3-dimensional focus of the cemetery, but will provide the visiting public with the missing inscriptions. The markers will be clearly modern, avoiding confusion on the part of the public.

- The cemetery will require rehabilitation of the soil, probably including compost and topsoil, with the subsequent planting of an appropriate turfgrass, such as Kentucky Bluegrass.

### Monuments

As discussed above, the majority of the monuments in the cemetery have been extensively damaged and little remains except for the below grade bases (Figure 5). Repair of these stones is not feasible – not only is the bulk of the stone missing, but the fragments remaining are so small that cohesive repair would be very difficult and costly. The fragments remaining, however, should be cleaned of adhering cement and left in place to mark the locations of the original monuments. New lawn markers, placed flush to the ground, can be used to provide the original inscriptions. We do not encourage attempts to replicate the original markers since there is not adequate information. Any reproductions would be artistic creations and not historically accurate reproductions.



Figure 5. Example of a badly fragmented stone at the Mann Family Cemetery.

Of equal concern is the effort to transport the ledger back to the cemetery. While the repair of the ledger off-site was certainly convenient, it failed to take into consideration the difficulty of transporting and resetting a badly fragmented monument.

It will also be necessary to determine if there is adequate information to ascertain if the original monument was a box tomb and, if it was, if there is any detailed information allowing its reconstruction. In lieu of a

new box, it is possible to set the monument as a ledger.

- All broken monuments at the cemetery should be excavated and the adhering OPC removed mechanically by a stone conservator. These monuments should be reset using pea gravel.
- Graves with damaged slate markers should be marked using flush lawn markers that do not detract from the landscape of the cemetery, but allow complete inscriptions to be presented to the public.



Figure 6. Two of the larger fragments held by the Historical Commission.

- The ledger should be reset as a ledger on an OPC base, assuming that there is inadequate information to reconstruct the box tomb.

### Other Features

The only other feature identified at the cemetery is the rock wall. A section of the wall is seen in Figure 7, where it is clear that there are numerous defects. There are several lengths that are significantly out of plumb, several wall areas where rocks

are missing, and an area of displaced coping.

As previously mentioned, the presence of ordinary Portland cement (OPC) in the wall suggests that it (or its repair) post-dates 1930. Moreover, the construction, using large amounts of spoil, rubble, and even brick, is inconsistent with traditional dry laid walling techniques. A



Figure 7. Example of wall failure. Note cracking and loss.

good example of these dry stone techniques can be seen in the 1894 photograph of Draper Road and its many stone walls. These walls were laid without benefit of mortar, relying instead on their sloping construction, numerous pinning rocks, gravity, and frictional resistance. A good website for this construction is the Dry Stone Conservancy (<http://www.drystone.org/>).

In contrast, the present wall is better described as a rubble wall. Such walls often had a core of debris that allowed water drainage and helped prevent freeze-thaw damage that

commonly occurs to mortared walls.

Repair of the wall as it stands will be quite expensive since the damage is sufficiently extensive as to require essentially the entire wall be rebuilt. Historic Scotland recommends that such rebuilding utilize a painted grid coupled with photography to allow the wall to be disassembled and rebuilt into its original position (see <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/informrubble.pdf>). This will be a quite expensive undertaking. Therefore, a reasonable first question involves the historical significance of this wall – is it part of the historic fabric of the cemetery? If so, it is appropriate, in spite of the cost, to repair (i.e., rebuild) the wall. If the wall is not historically significant, then replacement would be a more economic solution.

If the wall is to be replaced, then it should be replaced with materials that are in keeping with the historic context of the property. A chain link fence would be out of place and detract from the character of the cemetery. I strongly recommend the use of dry stone construction – it is historically appropriate and is designed for the harsh environmental conditions of North Attleborough.

There are a growing number of skilled craftspeople capable of building dry stone walls – and these walls have the ability to survive the area climate very satisfactorily. The Dry Stone Conservancy can provide contact information for individuals specializing in this area.

Regardless, some opening will be necessary to allow maintenance and visitation. The existing gate lacks integrity, but could be cleaned and painted for continued use if so desired. Alternatively, it is possible to leave an opening with no gate.

- An initial decision must be made regarding the historic significance of the existing wall. Repair is possible, but will be costly. Replacement is likely a more appropriate option and I recommend the replacement wall be dry laid. This technique is historically appropriate and would blend with the cemetery setting and context.

### **Safety/Security**

Site safety should be considered from the context of parking, the access route, and the site itself.

Currently the only parking available is on the soft, grassed shoulder of the road. Although traffic is not significant, this is both inconvenient and potentially unsafe for many visitors. I imagine that it also makes visitation by school groups difficult. The town should give some consideration to the issue of parking.

As previously mentioned, the access corridor does include features that degrade its safety, including sloping topography, disposal of yard waste, and storage of firewood. All pose threats to the public. As the town identifies and formalizes the route, these obstacles should be dealt with to enhance public safety.

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Although there are few standing stones in the cemetery, the broken slates are sharp and may pose a hazard to anyone who accidentally fell on them. Likewise, the existing wall is unstable in several areas and prevents a collapse hazard. Finally, the isolated nature of the cemetery poses an additional danger to those visiting.

It is not possible to entirely eliminate these hazards. Cities are routinely insured, providing protection for the use of their parks and public conveyances. I assume the Town of North Attleborough has such coverage and it extends to the cemetery – caregivers should investigate this issue and additional insurance should be acquired if necessary.

To minimize the risks several steps are possible. One is to inform visitors of the hazards. Other cemetery owners include such warnings as,

These historic stones and walls are fragile and may pose risks. Please do not climb or sit on them. Keep careful watch of your children at all times.

Please report any damages or suspicious activities to the North Attleborough \_\_\_\_\_. In case of an emergency, please call 9-1-1. The location of this cemetery is \_\_\_\_\_.

The signage should also establish other rules and regulations, such as when the cemetery is available to visitors (sun-up to sun-down, for example), prohibit rubbing, and establish appropriate conduct. This sign should be placed at the road, as well as at the entrance to the cemetery.

It is also critical that the town keep a careful watch on this cemetery. That will entail a two-prong effort. The first will be to have town police routinely patrol the cemetery. Special attention should be paid to the area at night and on weekends, as well as holidays such as Halloween.

The Historical Commission should also use volunteers to monitor the site. Unlike the police, these volunteers will have the ability to actually walk the site and determine the condition of the stones, mowing, and other features. These inspections should take place, minimally, on a weekly basis. A procedure should be established to report any vandalism or damage to the Town Police and immediately file an insurance claim for necessary repairs.

- The town must secure a safe pathway from the road to the cemetery. Consideration should be given to parking arrangements.
- There should be regulatory signage installed at the road (or parking area), as well as at the entrance to the cemetery.

- The Historical Commission should ensure that the cemetery is routinely patrolled on a daily basis by the police department. In addition, the Commission should use volunteers to inspect the cemetery on at least a weekly basis. A set procedure should be developed to report – and respond to – any damages identified at the cemetery.

### **Site Interpretation**

At the present time the cemetery is not interpreted and the few remaining stones present are difficult to see and fail to present any clear reason to visit the cemetery. Thus, it is critical for the Historical Commission to correctly position this cemetery as worthy of visitation.

If it is to be successfully integrated into the third grade history program it will be essential that adequate bus parking be identified in close proximity to the cemetery. It will also be necessary for the Historical Commission to develop curricula materials that integrate the cemetery into the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Although it makes sense to pay special attention to the history and social science framework (available on-line at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/final.pdf>), teachers tend to be especially supportive of curricula materials that can integrate history with science or math, thereby helping them cover multiple areas (as well as demonstrate to their students the value of multiple disciplines). If the Historical Commission wishes for the cemetery to be a viable part of the school program, I strongly encourage the development of appropriate lesson plans that can be made available to the teachers.

Interpretation should extend beyond school groups into the general public. It is critical, however, that those developing interpretation avoid the temptation to place the cemetery in the context that I call, “old white men.” Too often cemeteries are understood as important only because some old white town “father” is buried there. This approach can be seen in the undated newspaper article that devotes over 18-column inches to local history. This frequently has little relevance to the wider population. Appealing to a wider audience can be achieved by delving into the style of the stones, the iconography, burial customs of the period, and the place of the cemetery in the wider context of small rural Massachusetts farms. An effort should be made to make interpretation as inclusive as possible, broadening the context from “old white men” to include women, social history, economic history, and other topics.

Signage should also be of high quality and integrate graphics. I urge that the “traditional” bronze historical marker signage be carefully avoided. Today there are far better options, such as fiberglass, allowing color and graphics in order to attract and retain the public’s interest. Placed on the outside of the wall, such signage might well reduce interior traffic and minimize maintenance requirements.

- Site interpretation should be inclusive and present a broad range of interesting and informative topics. It should not focus exclusively on the Mann or Draper families as

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this will limit outside interest. Site panels should be inviting and integrate graphics and photos.

- In order to promote the site to school groups it will be necessary to develop curricula programs that integrate with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Bus parking will also be critical for many school groups.

### Conclusions

This letter provides a broad overview of the cemetery and steps that are necessary to achieve its long-term preservation. I am attaching several appendices. One provides the transcripts that I have been able to identify of the various stones. The numbering is keyed to the sketch plan of the cemetery (Figure 4). Another provides treatment proposals for the few stones where I believe that treatment is appropriate.

Although there is much work to do at the Mann Family Cemetery, it has the potential to be an important community resource. Its preservation is certainly worth the effort that it will require. Once these steps have been taken, it will be critical for the Town to be consistent in their maintenance efforts. Cemeteries do not survive “deferred maintenance” approaches and will quickly deteriorate – the condition of the cemetery today provides clear testimony to the effects of only a few decades of inattention.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you or your client has questions regarding any of the recommendations. Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this project.

Sincerely,



Michael Trinkley, Ph.D.  
Director

**Appendix 1 - Transcriptions of Known Stones**

Bezaleel Mann, mort. Die Octo tert, 1796, an. aetat, 74. Early imbued with the principles of moral rectitude, he sustained through diversified concerns of a long and active life, the character of an honest man. As a physician, he commanded, during the period of near 50 years, that unlimited confidence and respect, which talents alone can inspire. The features of his mind were sketched by the glowing pencil of nature, filled up with qualities that adorn humanity, and shaded with few infirmities, the frequent attendants on metal excellence. Bebee Mann, his wife, mort. Die Octo tert, 1793, aetat 61. She was a person of bright genius, of fe words, and much reserved in mind. From early youth she marked all her paths with virtue, and timely took the advice Christ gave to his disciples, and made herself a friend of the mammon of unrighteousness, and when she failed, could, with Christian confidence, say that her witness was in heaven and her reward on high.

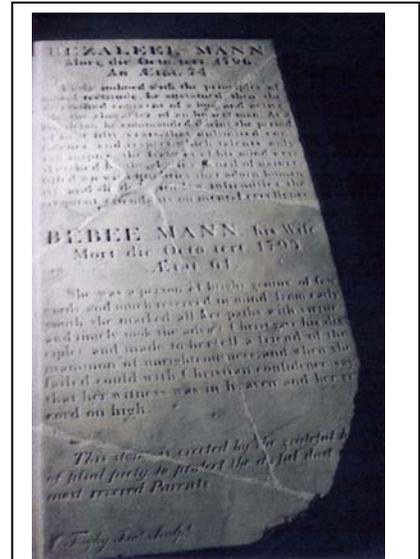


Figure 8. Bezaleel & Bebee Mann stone, after treatment



Figure 9. Herbert Mann stone.

In Memory of Doctor Herbert Mann, who with 119 sailors, with Capt. James Magee, Master went on board the Brigg, General Arnold, in Boston harbor, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup>, 1778, hoisted sail and made for the seas, & were immediately overtaken by the most tremendous snow storm with cold, that was ever known in the memory of man & unhappily parted their cable in Plymouth harbor, in a place called the cow-yard, & he, with about 100 others, were frozen to Death, 66 of which were buried in one grave. He was in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of his age. And now Lord, God, Almighty, just and true are all they ways, but who can stand before thy cold.

This Stone / is erected to the memory / of / Mrs. Mary Draper, / wife of Mr. Josiah Draper & eldest / Daughter of Dr. B.& B. Mann. She / died May 2d, 1808, in the 54<sup>th</sup> Year of / her age. / She conducted her household and her / affairs with discretion. She tempered / her authority with a happy mixture of / tender affection. / She met Death with the resignation / and hope of a Christian.



Figure 10. Mary Draper stone

In memory of Benjamin/ son of Mr. Josiah Draper, / & Mrs. Mary, his wife, / who died Oct.  
12<sup>th</sup>, 1802 / in ye 18<sup>th</sup> year of his age. / In bloom of youth I was cut down, / Just as the grass and  
flowers were mown, / From death's arrest no age is free, / Prepare to die and follow me.

Sacred / To the memory of / Bebe Mann Capron, / only daughter of / Doctor Seth Capron, / &  
Eunice, his wife. / She died grievously / lamented on the 25<sup>th</sup>. / day of Dec. A.D. 1796, / Aged  
21 months & 17 days.



Figure 11. Eliza Mann stone.

Here lies Eliza Mann, / daughter of Jno.  
Milton / Mann. & his wife E/lizabeth  
Mann, who / died Decem'r 27<sup>th</sup>, 1790, /  
aged 1 Year, 9 months & 8 Days. / This  
sweet unfolding beauteous flow'r / Th'  
all bounteous God in love had given, /  
But Soon, too son, 'twas crop'd from  
earth / To bloom in heaven, /  
Transplanted hence.

[ ] /  
Horace Draper / died Aug 7<sup>th</sup> 1794 / Aged [21] Months / Son of  
Mr. Fifer & Mrs. Hannah Draper.



Figure 12. Horace Draper  
stone.