



THE OLDEST SURVIVING COLONIAL CEMETERY

Southold Presbyterian's Old Burying Ground (the term used for burial grounds of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries) has been recognized as the oldest surviving colonial cemetery in the State of New York. The Old Burying Ground is the part of the cemetery owned by the First Presbyterian Church of Southold that lies along the Main Road fence between the Church and the western edge of the property.

No colonial cemetery is considered more important in all New York State. It includes 20 graves older than 1700, an extraordinary number. Box tombs that only the rich could afford are rare in any cemetery; our burying ground has nine. It also distinguishes itself by having stones carved by some of the best of the early colonial stonecutters. They showcase a significant breadth of style in American graveyard art, a folk art that flourished in this country between 1680 and 1810. And as the final resting place for Southold's founders, the Old Burial Ground reveals wonderfully the history of our area.

THE OLD BURYING GROUND'S FIRST DAYS

Puritans from the New Haven Colony, having decided to found a settlement on Long Island, arrived here in Southold in the fall of 1640. These God-fearing settlers built their meetinghouse, now long gone, as a place where their minister and leader, the Rev. John Youngs, could lead them both in worship and in conduct of their settlement's everyday affairs. (Its location is marked by the Founders Monument, at the beginning of row 15 in the burial ground.) Next to the meetinghouse they founded the Old Burying

Ground, or what they called "God's Acre," on the settlement's highest ground.

The Town of Southold and the Church shared responsibility for the Cemetery until 1841. In that year the Town ceded its ownership to the Church. In exchange, the Church formally agreed to continue its practice of accepting for interment any resident of the Town, a policy that remains in effect today.

THE CEMETERY TODAY

Over the years, largely from bequests of local citizens, today's Cemetery has grown to about eight acres. It now divides into four sections: The Old Burying Ground; the larger and older Monument section, which lies to the west of the entry road; and the smaller Memorial section, to the east of the entry road, where graves are marked with inscribed stones lying flat on the ground.

A fourth section of the Cemetery, and the newest, is the Memorial Garden, established for cremated remains. Dedicated in 2013, it was made possible by a generous gift from Dr. John and Mrs. Virginia Campbell; it lies between the Monument and Memorial sections.

NAVIGATING THE GROUNDS

You are invited to stroll through the Cemetery's paths and consider the silent history the stones reveal. You will appreciate how much our tranquil Cemetery is a special place for remembering loved ones.

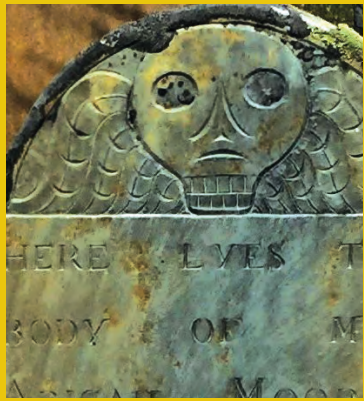
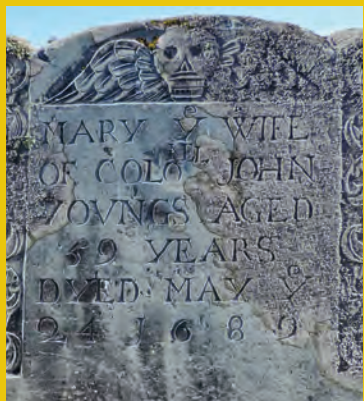
The burial ground has two types of stone grave markers: a handful of unusual "box tombs" and the much more numerous headstones (occasionally accompanied by footstones). In interment, bodies were arranged with their feet to the east. On Judgment Day they would be facing Christ, who was believed to come from the east. Headstones are placed so that their inscriptions face west, allowing a visitor to read an inscription without standing on a grave.

Each of 754 stones in the Old Burying Ground has been assigned two numbers as a way to find its location. Headstone 1-001, for example, is in a particular spot that you can readily locate: In the first row (1), it is the first stone (001).

Here's how the system works:

Each row running north and south is marked by a number. The rows start with "1" on the burial ground's western border and run through "30," near the Church. Look for the small numbered signs placed near the heads of the rows, on the Main Road fence.

Within each row, individual stones can be identified by another series of numbers: Start with number one (001) for the first stone in the row (the one closest to the fence) and count down the row in numerical order. There are no signs for these stone numbers. Simply count down the row until you reach the stone you are looking for.



SUPPORT SOUTHOLD'S OLD BURYING GROUND

The Old Burying Ground is a museum with exhibits that happen to live outdoors. Its antique gravestones are battered by weather and time. Help preserve them by donating to the Cemetery's preservation project.

To make a donation, write your check to:
"The Old Burying Ground"

and sent to:

Southold Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 787
Southold, NY 11971

Your contribution is tax deductible.



Acknowledgements

I have relied on two fine books for information about gravestones: *North Fork Cemeteries* by Clement M. Healy and, most especially, *The Gravestones of Long Island: 1680 - 1810* by Richard F. Welch. Pastor Epher Whitaker's *Whitaker's Southold* was a source for the lives of the Founders, as was local historian Donald Bayles. I owe special thanks to Melissa Andruski, head of adult programs at the Southold Free Library and our cemetery's tour guide, who supplied pertinent historical materials and fine-tuned judgment. Professional preservationists Joel Snodgrass and Zachary Studenroth provided good advice. Fred Andrews took photos and edited both photos and text. Nadira Vlaun did the design. And thanks always to The Rev. Peter Kelley of First Presbyterian for his enthusiastic support.

Jane Andrews
Cemetery Director



A GUIDE TO
**THE OLD
BURYING
GROUND**

