



JOHN WHITE, HAVERHILL, MASS., 1668
Courtesy Dr. Allan I. Ludwig.

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Special Issue on Gravestone Carving

Editorial Preface

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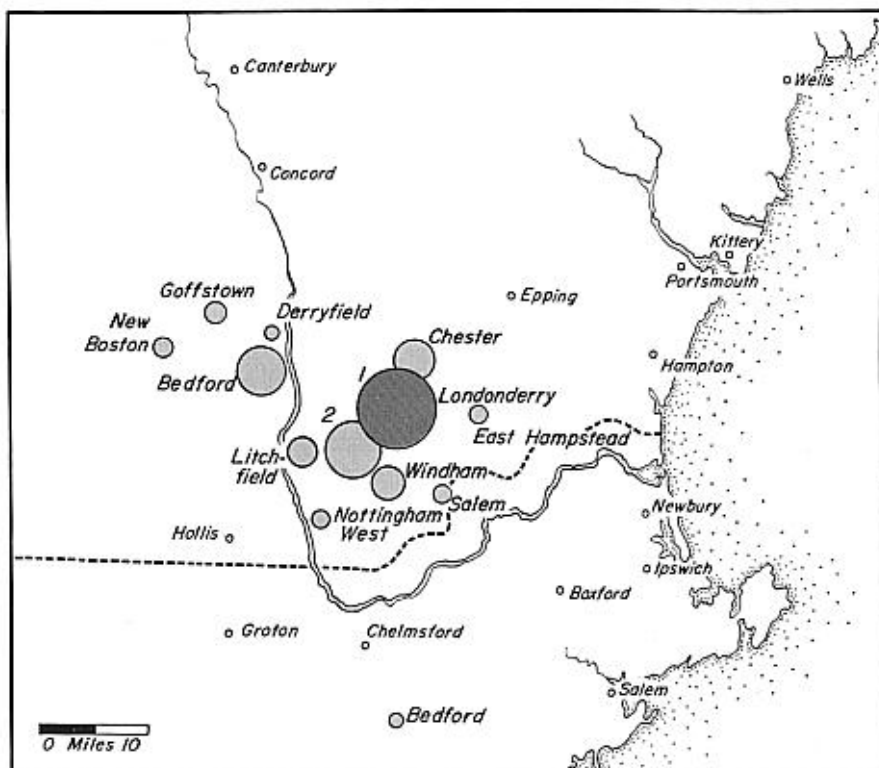
IN 1924 Erich A. O'D. Taylor contributed our first article on gravestone carving and kindled an interest that occupies scholars as much today as ever before. Following his lead, Harriett M. Forbes, active member of the Society between 1914 and 1952, published several more essays before authoring *Gravestones of Early New England* (1927), which remains today undiminished in value. More recently, the continuing interest in gravestone carving enabled the Society to acquire for its library several hundred photographs from Dr. Allan Ludwig's collection, a few of which appear in his excellent study *Graven Images* (1966). Were it not for these earlier studies a new book released by the Wesleyan Press would have less to argue and the following three articles would probably draw less attention.

Peter Benes leads off with a New Hampshire stonecutter that continues his research in probing the lives of these men whose names have almost vanished along

with the meaning of their carvings.* Retrieving this information entails a careful analysis of funerary symbols. Stephen Foster, in the second article, takes issue with Ludwig and others by contending that regional stones such as those found in Essex County, Massachusetts, degenerated in style and technique. Finally, Loyd Grossman examines the art of heraldry as carved on New England stones.

Perhaps too much has been made of the term *puritan* in describing this early art form. We now have reason to believe that the Puritans were less of one mind than was earlier conjectured and that the iconoclasm preached by the clergy may have waxed larger in spiritual meaning than temporal practice. Because many of these sacred markers have either disappeared or fallen into ruin, the need for recording them and deciphering their meaning becomes ever more urgent.

* See Peter Benes, "Nathaniel Fuller," OLD-TIME NEW ENGLAND, Vol. LX, No. 1.



MAP: DISTRIBUTION OF JOHN WIGHT'S GRAVESTONES IN THE LOWER MERRIMACK RIVER VALLEY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE. THIS CUTTER PLACED THE MAJORITY OF HIS STONES IN THE TWO PRESBYTERIAN PARISHES IN LONDONDERRY AS WELL AS IN NEARBY CHESTER. THE REMAINDER TEND TO FOLLOW A WESTERLY DRIFT INTO TOWNS FOUNDED BY FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION SCOTCH-IRISH WHO FORMERLY LIVED IN LONDONDERRY: WINDHAM, BEDFORD, GOFFSTOWN, NEW BOSTON, PETERBOROUGH, LITCHFIELD, AND DERRYFIELD. THIS MAP REPRESENTS THE LOCATION OF ABOUT TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY STONES