

What's in a Graveyard?

by Andrea Leonard

Ghosts? Evil spirits? Hobgoblins? Or sweet memories of loved ones lost? In old Cape Cod graveyards the spirits encountered are those that comfort the bereaved and sometimes intrigue the curious and understanding visitor. Here, beneath the dappling shadows of ancient trees, soothed by the gentle breezes from the surrounding seas, stand the stones that mark the final resting-place of Cape Codders of an earlier era.

In the fall of 1981 at Hillside Cemetery in Osterville, Paul Chesbro, Bucky Crosby, and his wife, Katrina, along with their small son, Luke, copied epitaphs from over 200 old gravestones. The inscriptions will be included in the second book Chesbro and Crosby are compiling for future publication.

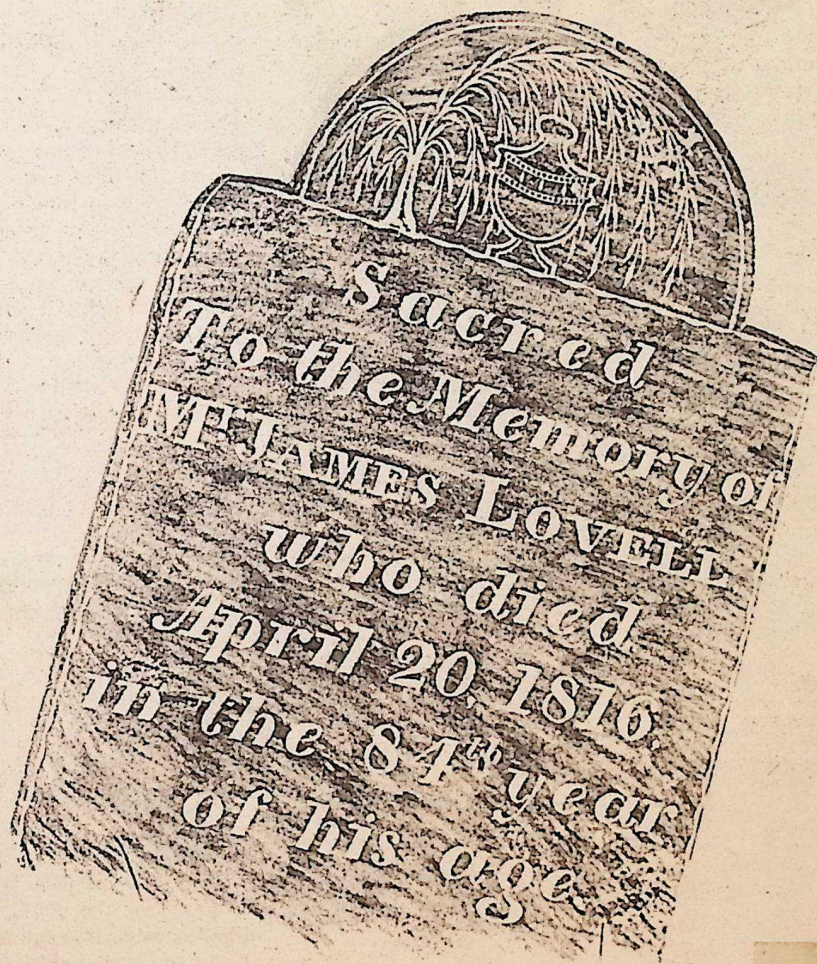
Many of the epitaphs reflect the emotion of the families who survived their beloved deceased. In them, the reader finds it easy to share the pain parents endure with the loss of an only child, to feel the sorrow of sending a son off to sea in a

hours--time spent crouched on the ground in the cemetery reproducing the inscriptions and the carved motifs decorating the memorials. So far, approximately a third of his work has been completed.

"It's just a shame," Chesbro says, "that the cemetery is being neglected and allowed to run down. Many of the graves belong to people who contributed enormously to this village, people responsible for Osterville's development from an isolated settlement to a thriving community. Hillside Cemetery contains the only tangible reminders we have of people

Hand-rubbings

by Paul Chesbro



ship that never returns to home port.

The old stones record, as well, a great deal of village history; some tell, in depth, about the lives of those lying in the quiet peace of the grave, how their kindness and goodness is remembered by those who loved them and the respect with which they were regarded by their fellow-villagers.

Chesbro and the Crosbys spent many Sunday afternoon hours collecting the epitaphs; many of the ancient stones were broken, and others, covered with moss. Through scrubbing with hot water and careful scraping with putty knife and screwdriver, the inscriptions became legible. In some cases, where stones had settled, it was necessary to dig with a small shovel to uncover final lines. Once the epitaphs were recorded, Mrs. Carl F. Riedell of Hollingsworth Road graciously offered to type them.

During this summer of 1982, Chesbro has assumed the task of hand-rubbing all the old slate stones in order that these may be preserved; a selection will appear in the second book about Osterville. This project has consumed uncounted

who left a proud heritage in our keeping. Their efforts deserve more attention, and Hillside Cemetery deserves better care."

On Sunday afternoon, August 15, Chesbro's stone rubbings will be on display at the Osterville Historical Society Museum, the Jonathan Parker House, at the corner of Parker and West Bay Roads, between 3 and 5 p.m. The public is cordially invited to view them.