

Graveyard attendant duties

Hopefully you won't have to remind people that this is a burying-ground and should be treated with respect. **Make sure the stones are protected, children should not run around or climb on the stones, and grownups should not walk on the stones that have fallen or pick or brush at the decaying stone.** This is for safety as well as preservation.

BASIC INFORMATION: The graveyard dates from 1723 and is the oldest Episcopal burying ground in the state. The oldest grave is that of John Johnson (d. 1725) and the most recent is Susan Edwards Johnson Hudson, buried in the family vault in 1913. At that time, the burying ground was declared full and closed. It had a rock wall around it for its first 100 years, then a solid wood board fence for the second 100 years. The iron fence was installed in 1930, and a ceremony was held by Columbia University on May 14, 1931, to dedicate the stone pillars and gate.

If the re-enactors get busy, there are some sites that you can point out to the visitors:

- The seedling from the Charter Oak, planted in the 1930s
- The Johnson Mound, where there are at least 15 Johnsons buried in the vault
- The Roosevelt family graves; Mary Wells Roosevelt was an aunt of President Theodore Roosevelt

The children have a "hunt" page, and you can help them find a skull, an angel, a tree (see accompanying map), a Revolutionary War soldier's grave (look for the American flags), and meet the person who signed the Constitution (Scott Cameron as W. S. Johnson).

ESPECIALLY IF WE GET BUSY OR TOO CROWDED: Remind people that we are serving hot cider and cookies in the ECW room; they can drive around and park in the church lot or follow the markers to walk over and go in the back door.

FAQs:

Is the graveyard haunted? Who knows? In the Bridgeport Post, December of 1896, this item appeared, "Last week the tool box of Benjamin Holmes which was lying in the center of the yard (cemetery), took a sudden start and turned completely over without any visible aid, strewing the contents on the ground. Mr. Holmes, who is a man of veracity, vouches for the authenticity of this story, and while not of a superstitious nature, the repairs which he was doing were completed as soon as possible after this strange occurrence." The people who were mapping in the cemetery did not notice any strange occurrences.

Is Goody Bassett buried here? No.

May I make a rubbing of one of the old gravestones? No, this abrades the surface of the stone.

I'm looking for my ancestor whose last name is . . . At the entrance we will have an alphabetical list and gridded maps that can help identify an approximate location. Not all early Anglicans/Episcopalians are buried here, there are a number of area cemeteries. Refer them to <http://www.findagrave.com/>

There are three ways that people can do further research in this burying ground:

- Our binders with the full listings will be in the ECW room where refreshments are being served and the 300th anniversary timeline will be displayed.
- Go to <http://www.findagrave.com/> and search by location for Stratford, Christ Episcopal Church.
- The Stratford Historical Society also has a library and genealogical research center that is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays year-round.

If someone has family in the graveyard and would like to come back to search, take photos, etc., have them talk to Dottie or Rebecca and we can arrange a time for them.

At 4:00, if you would help us by picking up any loose trash or pieces of paper, we would appreciate it! Thank you so much for your help!