

**Welcome to the Putnam History Museum's Cemetery Crawl of Mountain Avenue and Nelsonville cemeteries. This will take you on a leisurely tour through the cemeteries, touching on the history of the local area and some key figures buried here. While these are not active cemeteries, please still proceed quietly and respectfully through the space.**

During the 1820s and 1830s reform movements in the English-speaking world began to encourage a new form of cemetery. These cemeteries were in natural environments, filled with gravestones that promoted civic and domestic virtues, and often not attached to churches. They sought to ease the pain of death by providing comfort and moral instruction. Before this, gravestones served as a grim reminder of the inevitability of death, with design elements like skulls. New cemeteries began emphasizing and trying to reflect the Christian view of heaven as eternal and paradisaical.

It might surprise you to hear that people longing for sun and fresh air in the 19th century would picnic in cemeteries. Since public parks were not yet commonplace, cemeteries served as a green space to those who could not make the journey to the countryside. As you walk throughout the cemetery, take note of the ways in which the landscape plays a part in your experience. *Starting location: 46 Mountain Avenue, Cold Spring, NY 10516.*

**Begin at the entrance to the Mountain Avenue Cemetery on Cragside Drive. Cross the graveyard and go to the upper right, where the headstones are reddish-brown.**

### STOP 1: THE DAVENPORTS

The oldest headstones in this graveyard have a very distinctive color and shape to them. The tripartite or "three-lobed shape" was the most popular design in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The Davenport headstones are good examples of a late 18th century rendition of this style. The Davenports were some of the earliest European settlers in Cold Spring.



Grave of Elizabeth Davenport

The headstones resemble a colonial bed, with matching footstones. There are 13 headstones in the Mountain Avenue (or Old Cold Spring Cemetery) constructed in this same material or style, most falling within the same approximate period, 1790-1820.

In this period, New Yorkers used sedimentary brown sandstone for grave markers. This particular stone tends to weather well, so details of inscriptions and iconography are well preserved. During the 19th century, white marble became the predominant material used for gravestones. Marble tends to disintegrate in the corrosive atmosphere of New York's changing seasons. Today, the majority of these marble gravestones are unreadable. This is why it is often advised to not take rubbings of grave markers, because the delicate marble carving can scratch and wear away.

**Turn to the north and go toward the marble platform in a fenced off section. To the east of this, stop at the gravestones of Elizabeth and Seymore Birdsall.**

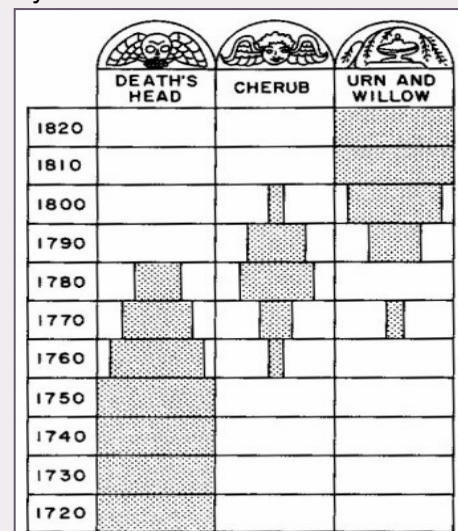
### STOP 2: WEEPING WILLOW

On the gravestones of Elisabeth and Seymore Birdsall, there is a common image carved into the stone. You may spot the weeping willow tree with an urn beneath it. The urn and willow was a popular symbol used in many gravestones in the early 1800s. This symbol represents a shift in attitudes towards death from very literal to spiritual. Earlier gravestones would precede the name of the dead with "here lies the body of" and carvings of skulls, while later editions would read "in memory of" and show the urn and willow, a more spiritual representation of human remains.

For many gravestones, you can figure out when they were carved by using the visual symbols and images. As you walk around the graveyard, look for common symbols on the gravestones.

This method of dating is called seriation. Archaeologists use it to estimate the age of things. Think of stylistic trends in your time; types of clothing, a line of toys, or even baby names. Over time, a style goes from relatively unknown, to popular, and then its popularity wanes. By knowing the time that a style was popular, you can make a good estimate of the period in which it was made.

Here you can see this information graphed for an early Massachusetts cemetery. The size of the grey bar represents the percentage of graves that used that symbol that decade. These are called battleship curves.



Left: Lois A. Johnson, *Natural History*.

Right: Urn and Willow on gravestone of Elizabeth Birdsall.

**Turn away from the Birdsall graves. To the north, about 10 feet, is the gravestone of Rob't Newman, your next stop.**

### STOP 3: MILITARY GRAVES

Many individuals who served in the military wanted that marked on their gravestone, including Robert Newman of the 6th New York Heavy Artillery.

Since many lives were lost during the American Civil War, the United States needed a standardized way to commemorate the dead. In 1861, military gravestones were ordered to be made of wood, painted white, with text in black. But wood did not last long in the elements and needed frequent replacements. Several years of debate ensued over the type of headstone; the two major contenders being marble or galvanized iron coated with zinc. Marble won, and in 1873 Secretary of War William Belknap instituted the first standardized military gravestone for Union soldiers, for use in national cemeteries, like Arlington National Cemetery. In 1879, Congress authorized their use in private cemeteries as well.

These military headstones include a sunken shield design surrounding the name of the deceased, their regiment, and company. Notably, these headstones often do not contain birth or death dates.

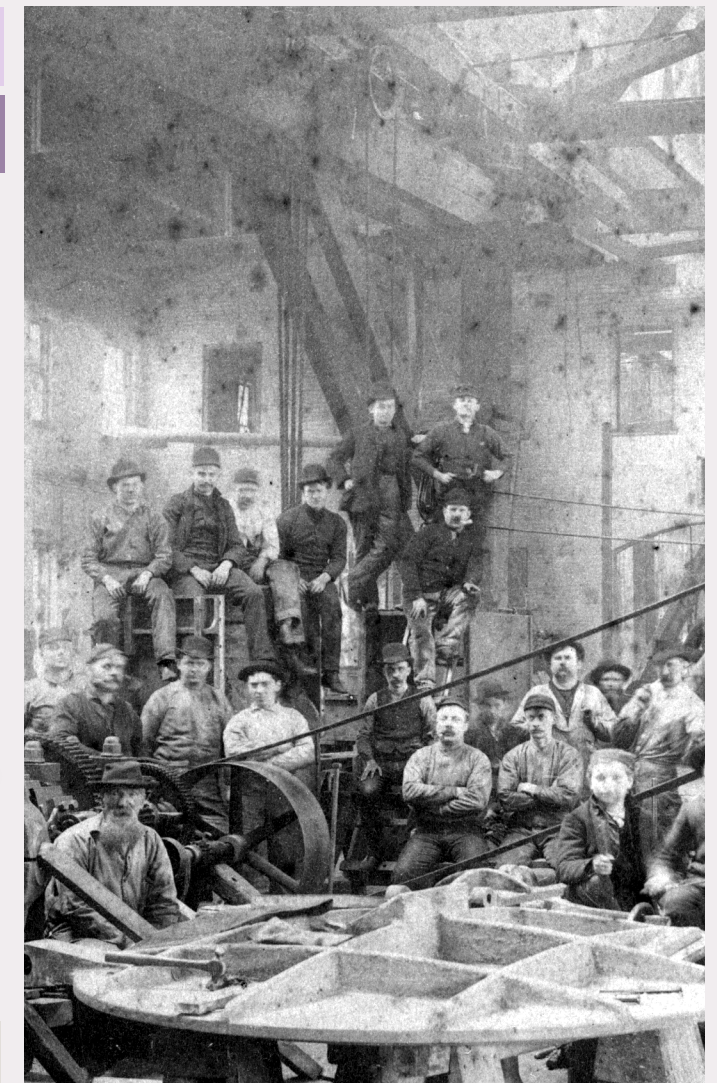


Emblem on grave of Robert Newman

The sunken shield design was also used to mark graves of some American soldiers from previous wars. After the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 and the Philippine-American War in 1902, they used the same grave markers for those veterans. Following WWI, a new design was approved without the sunken shield. Sunken shield gravestones therefore can be identified as likely for a Civil War Veteran, even if they have no dates.

Robert Newman of Company L, 6th New York Heavy Artillery, was one of the soldiers buried with this design on their headstones. The 6th New York, also known as the Anthony Wayne Guard, was organized by William H. Morris, another Cold Spring resident, who is buried in the Morris crypt.

**To your next stop: Further north and slightly to the west is the grave for Patrick Dillon. You'll be able to recognize it from a similar urn-and-willow like the ones you saw earlier.**



### STOP 4: IRISH WORKERS

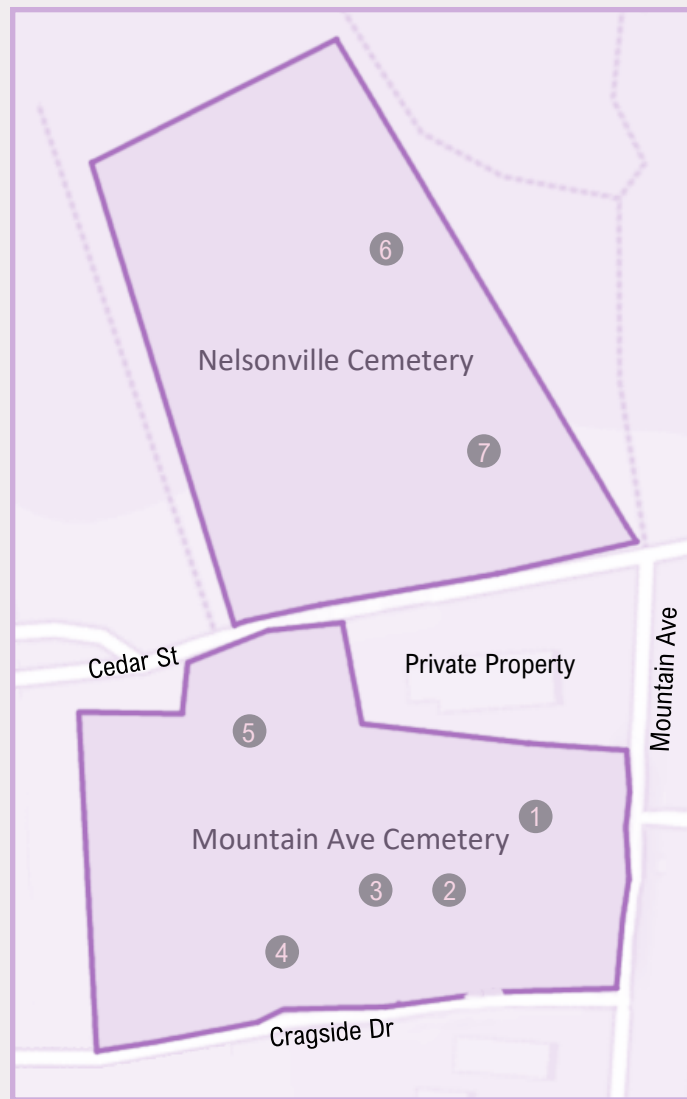
When the West Point Foundry (WPF) opened in Cold Spring in 1818, there was no way of knowing the impact that it would have on local and global history. The WPF brought many skilled workers from Ireland to Cold Spring, impacting the make-up of the local community.

Thrust into a completely new environment, many of these workers felt the strain between their new homes and their old. Most of the Irish workers were Catholic, unlike the Protestant majority of Cold Spring. Many would have also been fleeing the Great Famine (1845-1852). Perhaps this loss of their homeland was what drove many of these immigrants to have the birthplace of the deceased engraved on their headstone.

Hints of the identity of the deceased can be gleaned from their headstones. The initials "I.H.S." on many of the graves marks the deceased as Catholic. On the grave of Patrick Dillon, however, you can see both a willow-and-urn motif and an "I.H.S." The marriage of American willow-and-urns with an IHS monogram represent a powerful visual expression of something new that was being created in the United States: the Irish-American.

**Turn to the west and approach the stone crypt at the edge of the cemetery.**





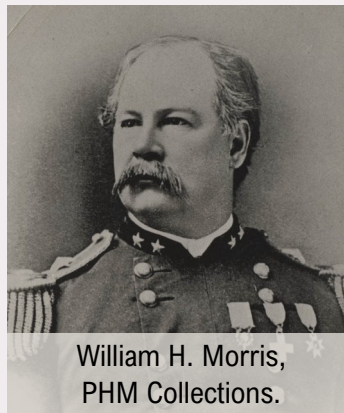
## STOP 5: MORRIS CRYPT

The crypt in front of you holds the remains of the Morris family. George Pope Morris was the founder and editor of several newspapers. At the age of 21, after contributing poetry to many newspapers, he founded his own, *The New York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette*. His original editor withdrew after a year leaving Morris as sole proprietor and editor for the papers 19-year run.

Morris wrote several books of poetry, essays, plays, and opera librettos. Most famously, he wrote poems that turned into popular songs. His most famous songs, such as "Woodman! Spare That Tree!" and "Annie of the Vale," were popular well into the 20th century. He had two operas premiere in New York; *Brier Cliff* (1826) and *The Maid of Saxony* (1844).

Morris married Mary Worthington Hopkins and they had three children: William H., Ida, and Georgianna. William attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and had a distinguished record of military service as a Civil War general. Following the Civil War, William published a book on infantry tactics.

Their family home was known as Undercliff, and was on the aptly-named Morris Avenue.



William H. Morris, PHM Collections.

**Walk up the hill and cross Cedar Street to the Nelsonville/ Cedar Street cemetery. In the eastern corner, there is the gravestone of Samuel Beck, your next stop.**

## STOP 6: FREEMASONS

Freemasons get their name from a fraternal order of stoneworkers, which is why their symbols often use stone working tools. It originated as an organization that regulated the skills of stonemasons. There are three tiers of mason, and they only teach certain secret passwords and handshakes to each level, so they could recognize each other's qualifications for jobs. This is where the tradition of secrecy comes from.

Over time, the freemasons opened their membership to men outside of stone craft. Masons are organized into local Lodges, that serve as a center for the organization. There are two major groups of freemasonry. Regular freemasonry is the type most followed in the United States. It requires that a volume of scripture be open in a working lodge, that every member profess belief in a Supreme Being, that no women be admitted, and that the discussion of religion and politics be banned. Continental freemasonry split off from Regular due to them admitting atheists.

Masonic symbols are used by masons to identify themselves and other masons. The most common

masonic symbol is the square and compass. The square and compass are modeled after stonemason's tools, with the letter 'G' often in the middle, like on the grave of Samuel Beck in front of you. The meaning of the letter 'G' is often debated as signifying "geometry" and connecting with the same meaning as the square and compass, or the "great architect of the universe."

**Back toward Cedar Street, there is an obelisk for the Parker family, your final stop. Take note of the sculpture of an urn draped in fabric to the north.**

## STOP 7: URN & OBELISK

If you imagine many of the buildings and monuments in Washington D.C., they take clear influence from the ancient Greeks and Romans. It was popular in the 18th and 19th centuries to take inspiration from these civilizations in art, architecture, and grave markers.

The urn was a symbol often used in classical texts, as cremation was common in ancient Greece. Even though cremation was uncommon in 19th century America, urn sculptures were very popular in their cemeteries. Moreover, while neo-classical stylings in architecture and art were in decline by the later part of the 1800s, urns remained a common grave marker long after.

As you walk around the cemetery, you will see plenty of urns on top of pedestals, usually draped by a cloth. Some say that the fabric symbolizes the veil between life and death; or a burial shroud.

Obelisks were another icon that became a common grave decoration. Obelisks, originating from ancient Egyptian art, were not used to mark grave sites in Egyptian culture. They were popularized in part from their appropriation by the Romans in the Classical Period. With Napoleon Bonaparte's Egyptian campaign in 1798-99, they gained a foothold in the European and American imagination. Coming from a region with a vast history, the obelisks were seen as timeless and eternal.

The first grand American obelisk was the memorial at Bunker Hill, Massachusetts, for the Revolutionary War battle fought there. Marquis de Lafayette laid its cornerstone in 1825, but it wasn't completed until 1843. The most famous American obelisk is the Washington Monument in Washington D. C., completed in 1884. Both are memorials, but they differ from the obelisks seen before you in both size and meaning. They also differ from Egyptian obelisks, which were generally made from one single piece of rock. American cemeteries echoed these design elements in smaller memorials.



Bunker Hill Memorial, Library of Congress.

**Thank you for embarking upon this history hike!**



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