

## HISTORY

For several years after the settlement of East Haven, the inhabitants were compelled to carry their dead to New Haven and inter them in the ancient burying ground on what is now called the upper Green behind the Center Church. It was an arduous trip, especially during poor weather.

Therefore, on June 13, 1707, it was "agreed to sequester a piece of land for a burying place on the south side of the pond on the Forthill so called, as much as may be spared from highways and watering cattle." Thus began The Old Cemetery in East Haven, Connecticut, first called the "Burying Ground." The oldest stone in the Burying Ground found bears 1712. It isn't likely that there are any earlier dates. Very little attention was given to the burying ground for many years until people began to let their cattle feed in it.

In 1777, a vote was taken that a committee of Jacob Bradley, Samuel Shepherd, and Joseph Hemingway take care of it and that no horses or cattle were to graze on the land. Only geese, sheep, and calves were allowed to feed there.

A hearse house on the northwest corner of the Burying Ground housed a hearse used for funerals. However, the undertaker for East Haven for several years was from North Haven, and he always came a few hours before the funeral to save travel with his hearse bearing the casket. This custom allowed the old town hearse to disappear and the hearse-house to fall to decay and be swept away with other refuse.

The Burying Ground was a free burial place, and after another fifty-two years, it was evident that "what was everybody's business was nobody's." It was deplorable, overrun with sumac and other bushes, briars, and rank weeds. The fences were old and broken, and there were none at all in places, and not infrequently, cattle were seen within its precincts. Everyone deplored the situation, but no one took the initiative to remedy the state of affairs.

In 1849, a society was formed by some young ladies, and it was decided that the Burying Ground was the most needy object in East Haven. Jeremiah B.

Davidson handed out a new crisp five dollar bill to start them off. The membership fee was 25 cents; the fine for inexcusable absence from meetings was 10 cents. This society of young ladies successfully canvassed the town for money and hired Asahel Bradley to clean up the grounds and build fences. The following year Reverend D. W. Havens of the Congregational Church, not to be outdone by the women, organized the men to build a gateway to adorn the Burying Ground and complete the fence.

Formally known as The Burying Ground, in 1868, the Burying Ground took on the name of "Old Cemetery." On October 5, 1868, it was voted that \$50 be appropriated from the town treasury to remove brush, etc.

In most cemeteries there are many quaint and striking epitaphs on stones. One which has attracted much attention, is that of Mr. Edmund Bradley with its seven outlined faces representing three pairs of twins and the eldest born:

**"SEE DEATH REMOVES THE ELDEST SON JUST AS THE FAMILY'S BEGUN AND THREE PAIR OF TWINS IN A SHORT SPACE TO QUICKEN THEM IN THE CHRISTIAN RACE.**

CHILDREN OF EDMUND AND LYDIA BRADLEY"



## STEP INTO A STORY WAS IT FACT OR FICTION?

The story as told by Bill Jackson, a former chairman and town historian.

He was at the cemetery one day and saw this woman in a long old-fashioned dress, wearing a bonnet, carrying a parasol walking down by the Indian Bowl.

He thought she was looking for someone buried there and maybe he could be of some help so he hurried in that direction. But by the time he got there, she had vanished! Did she slip and fall into the bowl? No, she was nowhere in sight and he knew she could not have left the cemetery without him seeing her.

He knew for sure he had seen a ghost!

## TOMBSTONE SYMBOLS

AS YOU WALK THROUGH THE OLD CEMETERY, YOU MAY WONDER ABOUT THE SYMBOLS CARVED ON THE TOMBSTONES.

**Anvil:** Martyrdom

**Angel's head:** Soul's flight to heaven

**Child, sleeping:** Victorian death motif

**Branch, severed:** Mortality

**Drapery over anything:** Sorrow, mourning

**Garlands:** Victory in death

**Handshakes:** Farewell to earthly existence

**Ship:** The church

**Skull, winged:** Flight of the soul from mortal man  
**Cypress:** Sorrow, death, eternal life, Roman symbol for mourning

**Sheaves of wheat:** Time, the divine harvest

**Tree:** Faith, life, the tree of life

Tree, felled: mortality

**Tree trunk, broken:**

Premature death

**Urn, draped:** Death, sorrow

**Willow, weeping:** Grief, death, earthly sorrow, the symbolic tree of human sadness