



Cemetery Volunteer Spotlight – Karin Larson

Documenting engraved information on our cemetery headstones is a vital part of preserving the past. With almost all our town's cemetery gravestones professionally cleaned over the past few years, it is important to preserve what has been engraved before time and the elements make the lettering unreadable. While headstone documentation was done in 1945 by Ida Mallett and again in 1985 by Leland Overlock, neither consistently noted if a headstone had an epitaph.

Epitaphs are a window into the past, allowing the readers to know more about the individual who passed and as a reflection of their loved one's sorrow. They may be brief, such as "Rest in Peace" or long flowing missives that honor the dead. The time and skill that it took masons to painstakingly hand-carve lettering is certainly a testament to their trade and skill.

Cemetery Sexton, Arnold Hill, had a favorite which was engraved on the headstone of John Bogs. John was buried in the Old Settlers Cemetery off Rt. 1, located on the old meetinghouse lot. The headstone features a flying skull carving at the top which was popular for the times and represented a soul fleeing mortality. John Bogs was born in 1723 according to Cyrus Eaton's records in the "Annals of Warren." His parents Samuel and Anna Bogs were amongst the first Scotch Irish settlers in 1735.

The epitaph reads:

"Stop here my Friend and Cast an Eye,
As you are now fo Once was I,
As I am now fo you muft be,
Prepare for Death and Follow me."

John's headstone has been repaired many times and is one of only a few at the cemetery that are engraved. Most burials within Old Settlers were simply noted with field stone head and footstones.

This past summer, I was approached by Karin Larson, the Warren Historical Society Historian, who offered to volunteer with any cemetery projects. Since I began working with the Town, Karin has been instrumental in assisting with research regarding our cemeteries. Since then, she has completed documentation of headstone engravings at Newcomb, Watts, Skinner, Counce and Blake cemeteries. This has been a tremendous undertaking in both time and patience. During the past summer days Karin could be seen diligently scribing the wording of old stones and making notes. This included documenting additional information such as other family members being buried on a lot, changes in wording originally documented, etc. Karin also noted if there were any fraternal organization symbols on the headstones as well as additional historic grave markers.

Through her onsite and online genealogy research, Karin also noted several graves were left out of the cemetery book by oversight in Newcomb as well as tracked down the resting place of several other family members whose final resting place had been previously unknown. All this information is vitally important in preserving our Town's burial history. Her dedication in preserving Warren's past for future generations is invaluable.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please fill out a volunteer form which can be either downloaded at the warrenmaine.org website or you may stop at the Town Office during regular business hours to pick one up. The Cemetery Committee is looking for new members and meets at the Warren Free Public Library on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:15 PM. We will be looking for help with restoration, research and landscaping projects in many of our cemeteries this coming year.

Amanda Shelmerdine
Cemetery Sexton, Town of Warren