

Dennis Village Cemetery - 1728
Route 6-A & Old Bass River Road, Dennis

Bordering a large village green that was once a militia training field, Dennis Village Cemetery is situated at the site of the 1721 first meeting house of what was then the Town of Yarmouth's East Precinct. Burial markers of Colonial slate and brownstone intermingle to make up one of the largest collections in the Mid Cape region. This cemetery, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and set in the Old King's Highway Historic District, dates back to 1728, although a number of unmarked graves suggest an earlier burial ground. It has evolved from colonial slates in solemn rows, the first recorded expansion being in 1797, to more elaborate Victorian marbles in family plots and contemporary granites. Portions of the cemetery are in active use today with future expansion being considered.

The earliest marked burial is that of Mr. John Crowell (d. Oct. 13, 1728), a grandson of one of the first founders. The cemetery contains the remains of many distinguished citizens of the town and their families including Reverend Josiah Dennis (d. Aug. 31, 1763), first minister of the East Parish in whose honor the town was named at its division from Yarmouth and incorporation in 1793; the second minister, Reverend Nathan Stone (d. Apr. 26, 1804); Revolutionary officer Major Micah Chapman (d. Oct. 29, 1792); and Asa Shiverick (d. Apr. 12, 1861), founder of the famous local shipyard and his sons, David, Asa Jr. and Paul who produced the only clipper ships built on Cape Cod.

Soldiers and patriots of conflicts ranging from the Indian Wars and Revolution, to Korea and Viet-Nam are buried here. The town's rich maritime history is represented by the graves of sea captains, mariners and their families. Remembered in this cemetery are the captain and crew of the schooner "Bride," (eight of the crew of 9) the only bodies recovered, of twenty-one Dennis mariners lost in the Great Gale of October 3, 1841. In total, 72 men and 1 woman have markers that reveal they were lost or died at sea.

Distinctive burial markers represent the craftsmanship of the earliest Colonial stonecutters. Carvers from as far away as Boston and Plymouth such as Coye, Geyer, Lamson, Park and Soule may be represented here. Motifs of grim skulls with and without wings, Medusa-haired cherubs, formal portrait heads, sun bursts and the enduring urn with its tree of life adorn the early stones along with poetic epitaphs.

The Receiving Tomb erected in 1875, housed bodies over winter until the earth was thawed and burial could be accomplished. In 2009 this small building was consolidated into a museum that displays burial traditions.

The cemetery has undergone several condition assessments and is currently undergoing conservation and marker repair with the assistance of the Department of Public Works, Dennis Community Preservation funds and federal funds.



Dennis Village Cemetery & Receiving Tomb Museum



Reverend Josiah Dennis & Family



Major Micah Chapman
died Oct. 29, 1792