

# Lesson Plan

## Cemetery Study for New Hampshire History: Meredith Bridge

This is an adaptation of a lesson plan prepared by Linda Hansen while participating in the New Hampshire Historical Society's New Hampshire History Summer Institute.

### What Students Learn

While this particular lesson centers upon a field trip to Laconia's Meredith Bridge Cemetery, it is applicable to cemeteries in any locality and easily expanded to include more activities. Students come to recognize the brevity and precariousness of life in the nineteenth century and come to understand the belief systems of the community as represented by gravestones and monuments, inscriptions, and stone carvings.

### Procedures

In preparation for a field trip to the Meredith Bridge Cemetery, secure permission from the Laconia Parks and Recreation Department. Other towns and cities may have different departments in charge of local cemeteries.

#### **Before the Field Trip**

Have students brainstorm: What is a cemetery? Why do we have cemeteries? What is the purpose of a gravestone? An epitaph? A carving?

#### **During the Field Trip**

Provide students a survey form to use with a partner during their visit to the cemetery. (See the Cemetery Survey form.) Assign each team a certain section of the cemetery to survey or a certain number of graves.

### Lesson Materials

Cemetery Survey Form

## Bibliography

Most entries, as well as other teacher resources, are available through the New Hampshire Historical Society's Tuck Library and its Museum Store.

Cloud, John. "Meeting Your (Film) Maker." *Time* (July 10, 2000): 65–66.

Greene, Janet. *Epitaphs to Remember*. Chambersburg: S.N., 1962.

Hannaford, Mary Elizabeth Neal. *Cemetery Inscriptions, Meredith, New Hampshire. S.L.: S.N.*, 1931.

Hibbard, Mary Gale for the Daughters of the American Revolution. *Old Meredith and Vicinity*. Concord: Rumford Press, 1926.

Jacobs, G. Walker. *Stranger Stop and Cast an Eye: A Guide to Gravestones and Gravestone Rubbings*. Brattleboro: Stephen Greene Press, 1973.

Koerner, Brendan I. "A Matter of Grave Import." *U. S. News and World Report* (June 12, 2000): 52–53.

Strangstad, Lynette. *A Graveyard Preservation Primer*. Nashville: American Association for State & Local History and the Association for Gravestone Studies, 1988.

Vaughan, Charles W. *The Illustrated Laconian: History and Industries of Laconia, N.H.* Laconia: Louis Martin, 1899.

## Assessment Tools and Techniques

### After the Field Trip

Students could tally their survey findings. Discussion could center on these findings: Was life expectancy of the people more or less than the average of the time? Was life expectancy greater for those who lived near the end of the century? What was the incidence of infant or early childhood mortality? (Discuss common childhood diseases that are no longer a threat today.) What were the most common carvings or inscriptions found?

Additional activities could include having students design a gravestone and epitaph from the drawing of a blank headstone that you supply them. Research could be conducted using local directories and histories of the nineteenth century to find biographical information. Newspapers of the period could supply possible causes of deaths. Telephone books and local maps could yield the names of the deceased on street signs or in the names of businesses.

# Cemetery Survey

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Partner's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Section and Number of Graves Assigned: \_\_\_\_\_

## Death Dates

List the date of death and the family name or top name on the gravestone.

Earliest Listed: \_\_\_\_\_

Most Recent Listed: \_\_\_\_\_

Number from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: \_\_\_\_\_

Number from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: \_\_\_\_\_

Number from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: \_\_\_\_\_

## Gravestone Materials

If time permits, list the number of markers made of each type of material. If not, indicate the frequency of the materials used by marking the most frequent as "1," the next most frequent as "2," etc.

Slate \_\_\_\_\_

Schist \_\_\_\_\_

Sandstone \_\_\_\_\_

Marble \_\_\_\_\_

Granite \_\_\_\_\_

Fieldstone \_\_\_\_\_

## Carvings

List the number of markers with each major design. If other designs are prominent, describe them in the space below.

Skulls \_\_\_\_\_

Angels \_\_\_\_\_

Urns/Willows \_\_\_\_\_

Faces \_\_\_\_\_

None \_\_\_\_\_

Other (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

## Epitaphs/Inscriptions

Copy inscriptions or epitaphs from five gravestones that seem interesting or typical of gravestones from a particular period.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Gravestone Data

Choose six gravestones in your area—preferably three recording deaths before 1820 and three recording deaths after 1880. Record the names, dates of birth and death, ages at death, and inscriptions if available.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ DOD: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ DOD: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ DOD: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ DOD: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ DOD: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_ DOD: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Inscription: \_\_\_\_\_

## Artwork

Draw or take a photograph of at least one gravestone in your area.

## Curriculum Information

Information relating to the *New Hampshire History Curriculum* refers to the K-12 resource in two volumes developed by the New Hampshire Historical Society in partnership with Public Service of New Hampshire, the New Hampshire Department of Education, and the New Hampshire Council for the Social Studies. The K-6 volume is available on-line through the school programs section of the Society's Web site (<http://www.nhhistory.org>).

### Grade Level

Middle School and High School

### New Hampshire Social Studies Standards

Geography 2, 4, 5; US/NH History 5

### New Hampshire History Curriculum Focus Topics

Technology and Science; Self-expression

### New Hampshire History Curriculum Eras

1763–1820s: Revolution and the New Nation

1801–1861: Expansion and Reform

1850–1877: Civil War and Reconstruction

1870–1900: Development of the Industrial United States

1890–1930: Emergence of Modern America