

Sturgis Library Archives

MS. 11
Bessie B. Bliven Papers

Extent: 1 clamshell box, 1 oversized flat box, and 2 long chart boxes.

Contents: The collection consists of handdrawn cemetery layouts for the oldest stones in Lothrop Hill Cemetery and Hillside Cemetery, as well as photographs, slides, written materials, including cemetery inventories, correspondence and other material related to Cape Cod cemeteries.

Provenance: Gift of Stephen Bliven, son of Bessie Bliven.

Restrictions: None stated.

Processed by: Pamela Narbeth and Jim Haworth, 4/1998. Recataloged by Lucy Loomis, 2011 and again in 2022.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Bessie Bliven and her husband moved to Osterville in 1969. Bessie was a retired teacher and her husband a retired electrical engineer. Their retirements allowed them to pursue individual hobby interests which they collaborated on for the Bessie B. Bliven Collection.

Bessie Bliven's interest was in gravestones, their artistic form and the histories of many prominent people from the Barnstable area dating back as far as 250 years ago. She inventoried pre-1830 gravestones in seven cemeteries in Barnstable for the Barnstable Historic Commission. These have since been sent to the Massachusetts Historic Commission. She has also made rubbings of many old stones. She compiled typescripts of cemeteries which she donated to the Sturgis Library. They are *Village Cemeteries of Barnstable Town* (1982), *Ancient Stones in Lothrop Cemetery* (1982), and *West Barnstable Cemetery, Pre-1840 Stones* (1982) and are located in the Lothrop Collection.

Richard Bliven used his photography hobby to capture many of the stones in photos and slides. He made copies of old photographs pertaining to the Crosby Boat Building Industry which are now contained in the Osterville Historical Boat Museum. For Barbara Crosby he made photographic copies of old photographs of dated Osterville houses.

Upon Bessie Bliven's death on December 28, 1996, her son donated the entire collection to Sturgis Library.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The Bliven Collection represents an individual interest in local history, cemeteries and well-known family names. Families of Bearse, Loring, Lovell, Scudder, Hallet, Crocker, Hinckley, Martson, Nye, Otis, Sturgis, Phinney, Crosby and Lothrop are included, to name just a few. The cemeteries include Lothrop Hill in Barnstable, Phinney's Lane in Centerville, Hillside in Osterville, Northside in West Barnstable and the Hyannis Baptist.

The collection is divided into three series: Photographs and Slides, Written Materials, and Cemetery Layout Drawings. In Series I there are 6 sheets of slides from seven cemeteries on Cape Cod, cemetery layouts, drawings and rubbings and even a slide presentation. The quality of the collection has been proven by being accepted by the Massachusetts Historic Commission. Slides and photos portray the beauty of the gravestones along with the pertinent inscriptions and family connections.

Among the written materials of Series II can be found correspondence, articles and programs including a script that was used in connection with the slides for presentations. There is a detailed listing of pre-1840 graves in West Barnstable along with inscriptions from the Northside Cemetery and inventories of cemeteries in alphabetical order of families. For the neophyte there are instructions for identifying and recording grave information.

In Series III large graph paper drawings of cemetery layouts can be found of Phinney's Lane (3), Lothrop Hill and Hillside (3).

The gravestone rubbings cover stones from the period of 1745 to 1843.

CONTAINER LIST: Bessie B. Bliven Collection

SERIES I: PHOTOGRAPHS AND SLIDES

Box:	Folder:	Page:	Contents:
1	1	1	Slides to accompany Bliven talk 'Right in Your Own Backyard'
	1	2	Slides of Phinney's Lane, Northside and Lothrop Hill Cemeteries.
	1	3	Slides of Lothrop Hill and Phinney's Lane Cemeteries.
	1	4	Slides of Northside and Lothrop Hill Cemeteries.
	1	5	Slides of Northside, Lothrop Hill, Phinney's Lane, Hyannis Baptist and Hillside Cemeteries.
	1	6	Slides of Hyannis Baptist, Phinney's Lane and Northside Cemeteries.
	2		Photos of Hillside Cemetery, Osterville, 1805-1815, 6 items
	3		Photos of Hyannis Baptist Cemetery 1805-1808, 5 items
	4		Photos of Lothrop Hill Cemetery, Barnstable Village, 1697-1838, 17 items
	5		Photos of Northside Cemetery, West Barnstable, 1756-1830, 9 items
	6		Photos of Phinney's Lane Cemetery, Centerville, 1746-1838, 16 items

SERIES II: WRITTEN MATERIALS

Box:	Folder:	Contents:
1	7	Correspondence, articles and programs, 21 items
1	8	Script for gravestone slide show, 22 pages.
1	9	West Barnstable Cemetery, Pre 1840 graves, 10 pages.
1	10	Northside Cemetery, West Barnstable, List of inscriptions, 10 pages
1	11	Inventories of cemeteries in alphabetical order of families.
1	12	Conference with instructions for identifying and recording grave information.

Oversized Box 2

Gravestone Rubbings

Fldr A-D (Includes some rubbings of decorative elements from unknown stones)

- Mrs. Thankful Claghorn - April 17, 1770
- Nancy Crosby daughter of Nathan and Pasha Crosby - November 20, 1810
- Shubel Davis - June 27, 1745
- Stephen Davis - December 7, 1757
- Stephen Davis Jr. - December 18, 1777

Fldr G-H

- Olive Gardner wife of Andrew Gardner - June 15, 1835
- Mrs. Mehitable Hall widow of Daniel Hall September 22, 1782
- Mercy Hamblin daughter of Capt. Josiah and Mrs. Deborah Hamblin - August 4, 1789
- Mrs. Ester Hamlen wife of Jonathan Hamlen - September 1, 1746
- Lot C. Hinckley son of Lot and Rebecca Hinckley - October 13, 1835
- Susannah Hinckley daughter of Levi and Sarah Hinckley - September 8, 1806 (2 rubbings)

Fldr L-S

- Nehemiah and Rhoda Lovell son of, - April 13, 1790
- William Lovell - April 21, 1753
- Joseph Lumbard - October 14, 1753
- Benjamin Lumbart - May 13, 1777
- Mrs. Mehitable Phinney wife of Paul Phinney - January 28, 1838
- Richard Phinney son of Richard and Marcy Phinney - September 22, 1820
- Thomas Sturgis - December 18, 1763

SERIES III: CEMETERY LAYOUT DRAWINGS & GRAVESTONE RUBBINGS:

OVERSIZED CHART BOX 1 (On top shelf)

- Lothrop Hill Cemetery, Barnstable Village, Layout Charts (3)

OVERSIZED CHART BOX 2 (On top shelf)

- Hillside Cemetery, Osterville, Layout Charts (2)