

## Stories In The Sandstone

*The Oldest Graveyards and Tombstones at the Jersey Shore*



Jill M. Ocone

**Dating back to 1684, the Throckmorton-Lippit-Taylor Burying Ground in Middletown is the oldest cemetery in Monmouth and Ocean Counties.**

**Below: The oldest surviving headstone at the Jersey Shore is that of Job Throckmorton, who died in 1709.**

Throckmorton was a farmer and a landowner, and together they had eight children. Throckmorton represented Middletown in the General Assembly in 1693. He passed away on August 20, 1709 at fifty-nine years old.

Records show that, at the time of Throckmorton's death, an inventory of his goods included six cows, three oxen, a three-year-old colt, two bulls, thirteen small swine, over one hundred twenty bushels of wheat, and other items including a number of land plots.

Throckmorton's tombstone was made out of reddish-brown sandstone with hand-etching, which was common for the early 1700s. The motif at the top, a grinning skeleton head with wings, symbolized victory over death in resurrection. Records show that he was buried near his father, John. Sr., and brother, John Jr., but neither has a surviving headstone.

The reddish-brown sandstone markers survived the years and harsh weather elements surprisingly well. Throckmorton's tombstone has evidence of repair work done at some time, but considering it is over three hundred years old, it is in excellent condition.

The Topanemus Burying Ground, located in Marlboro near the Freehold border, is another one of the oldest cemeteries in the Jersey Shore area. Hidden in the middle of the woods and surrounded on all four sides by housing developments, sign markers are near the trail entrance on Topanemus Road (near the Weathervane Way intersection). The trail and grounds were cleared and restored thanks to separate Girl

Job Throckmorton...Margaret Reid... Alexander Dove...Mary Carhart... Adrian Hun...Joseph Holmes... These aren't the names of the newest Dancing With The Stars cast. Rather, these are the names of early Jersey Shore residents who may have walked on the same ground as you, albeit some three hundred years ago.

And they are the names of the oldest surviving tombstones in the Jersey Shore area. Each of these people had a story, almost as unique as the stories of the graveyards where they are located.

Most of the oldest area cemeteries are found in and around Middletown, which has a long and rich history as one of the oldest settlements in New Jersey.

The Throckmorton-Lippit-Taylor Burying Ground is the oldest cemetery in both Monmouth and Ocean Counties, dating back to 1684. Secretly tucked away behind the Middletown Municipal Complex on Penelope Lane, the cemetery is easily accessible and well maintained. While records indicate that John Throckmorton, Sr. was the first person interred there in 1684, there is no

marker indicating where he is buried.

The oldest surviving headstone, in not only the Throckmorton-Lippit-Taylor Burying Ground, but at all of the Jersey Shore, is that of Job Throckmorton, who was John Sr.'s son. Job was born in 1650 and died in 1709, a mere three hundred six years ago.

According to historical documents, Job Throckmorton married Sarah Leonard. While on the surface it might not seem significant, Sarah came from a family of notoriety—the Leonardo section of Middletown was named after the Leonard family.



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# HISTORIC JERSEY SHORE CEMETERIES

*Autumn is the perfect time to visit one of the many historic cemeteries in the Jersey Shore area. Those listed below are from earliest to latest.*

## **Throckmorton-Lippitt-Taylor Burying Ground**

Penelope Lane, Middletown  
Circa 1684.

## **Historic Presbyterian Cemetery**

Kings Highway and Kings Court, Middletown  
Circa 1684.

## **Topanemus Burial Ground**

*(Note: Several stones were moved to St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 33 Throckmorton Street, Freehold in the 1970s.)*

Topanemus Road (near the intersection of Weathervane Way), Marlboro  
Circa 1697.

## **Old First Church And Cemetery/ Baptist Burying Ground**

69 Kings Highway, Middletown  
Circa early 1700s.

## **Old Tennent Cemetery**

454 Tennent Road, Tennent  
Circa 1708.

## **Quaker Cemetery**

Route 9, Tuckerton  
Circa 1716.

## **Old Manahawkin Cemetery**

Route 9 and Lakeshore Drive, Manahawkin  
Circa 1794.

## **Daniel Henrickson Cemetery**

Kings Highway and Kings Court, Middletown  
Circa 1798.

## **Cedar Grove Cemetery**

*(formerly known as Applegate Cemetery)*  
Cedar Grove Road and Bay Avenue, Toms River  
Circa 1800.

## **White Lawn Cemetery**

Trenton and Borden Avenues, Point Pleasant  
Circa early 1800s.

## **Gravelly Graveyard**

*(formerly known as Old Wooley Cemetery)*  
Fairview Avenue (off Princeton Avenue), Brick  
Circa 1815.

## **Old Methodist Cemetery**

Washington Street and Hooper Avenue, Toms River  
Circa 1828.

—Jill Ocone

Scout and Eagle Scout projects.

The name “Topanemus” is an example of surviving Native American culture and means “an elk drinking from a brook that flows from a spring.” It is believed that the Native American village of Topanemus was located here, with a brook connected to the principal waterways in east Jersey; in other words, Topanemus Brook was an artery to the Atlantic Ocean. Many years later, in 1692, Scottish settlers established a Quaker Meeting House and cemetery at the site.

While some stones were moved in the early 1970s to St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Freehold to save them from vandals (only the stones were moved, not the bodies), there



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**One of the oldest gravestones at The Topanemus Burying Ground in Marlboro is that of Adrian Hun, who died in 1737.**

are still at least twenty stones that can be found deep in the burying grounds. Most are overgrown, and with undergrowth and many fallen trees along the long path, visitors should be wary if they trek onto the trail. However, those who make it through will not be disappointed.

Similar to the Throckmorton's tombstone, almost all of the surviving stones at Topanemus are made of reddish-brown sandstone with various words and motifs engraved by hand on top. In addition to the grinning, winged skeleton symbol, winged cherubs with happy faces, winged angels, skull and crossbones, and willow trees are some of the other types of icons seen on these gravestones.

The oldest gravestone that can be

found in the Topanemus Burying Ground is that of Margaret (Miller) Reid. She came to the United States with her husband, John, and three daughters in 1683 and died on May 1, 1728 at eighty-four years old.

The second oldest stone belongs to Alexander Dove, who died on October 7, 1736 at seventy-three years old. Born in 1663 in Shropshire, England, records show he married Jane Gordon Dove (1671-1754) in the United States.

The remaining oldest headstones in Topanemus date between 1737 and 1738, and include Mary (Bowne) Carhart. Born in 1696, she married Thomas Carhart in 1725. She was the mother of five children and died on August 10, 1737.

Adrian Hun was born in Albany in 1709. Historic documents show that he married a woman named Phebe at some point, and when he died in 1737, they had three children. His gravestone reads,

*Here From all Earthly joys I'm Head  
Into the mansions of the Dead  
Prepare thou Reader for yor must  
Like me be[come] into dust*

Finally, Joseph Holmes, son of Jonathan and Rebeckah Holmes, died at sixteen years old on March 23, 1738. The message on his gravestone is as follows:

*Both old and young, as well as me  
Must in Due time all Buried be  
Under this Body of Cold Clay  
Just in my prime I am call'd away  
Although I am gone before it's Noon  
Christ Jesus Though it not too soon*

Autumn is the perfect time to visit one of the many historic cemeteries in the Jersey Shore area. Listen to the tales told in the wind. Learn the legacies of those who tread before us. Give thanks for those who settled the Jersey Shore in search of religious freedom and economic opportunity. And respect the Jersey Shore's founding mothers and fathers.

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