



IN MEMORY of Thomas Chesebrough A.M. Educated at Harvard College in Cambridge Where he received several Degrees the First in 1726 & The Second in 1729 He was a Good Scholer a great Historian & well acquainted with the Liberal Arts & Sciences he Died with great Resignation in the prime of Life Decem The 11th 1764 Aged 48 Years.

THE OLDEST TOMBSTONE in Stonington Cemetery belongs to Thomas Chesebrough (1707-1754). He was a descendent of William Chesebrough, a founder of Stonington who moved to Wequetequock from Rhode Island in 1649. In 1652, Chesebrough was granted title to “all land between Wadawanuck Point and Wequetequock Cove” by colonial authority in New London.

The Chesebrough-Phelps section of cemetery was the family burial ground for a house that still stands on the corner of North Main Street and Route 1. Thomas Chesebrough’s grave is located near other family members. It is aligned with the head facing the rising sun affirming his anticipation of the second coming of Christ. The custom, though linked to ancient beliefs and practices, was common in mid-18th century New England.

Chesebrough’s gneiss marker was likely the work of the John Stevens Shop - monument carvers who still operate in Newport, RI. The winged head carving on the headstone represents the human form passing or flying from one state to the next. The portal shape was a reminder of the opening between life and the afterlife.

During this period of colonial history, the living were anxious to separate themselves from the dead by interring bodies in a place of insulation (a churchyard) or separation (the outer edges of a town or property). Burials in the Chesebrough-Phelps section of the cemetery are grouped by family as convenience allowed.

There were no public cemeteries in Stonington in the mid-18th century. Chesebrough’s burial place was incorporated into Stonington Cemetery - a planned, non-sectarian cemetery - almost 100 years after he died.