rifflaft in workaday wagons and on foot. In this context, that image of “Transverse Road No. 2” takes on additional meanings. By sinking the road below park visitors’ line of sight, the editors point out, Olmsted prevented traffic collisions and preserved the long vistas and broad views so critical to his restorative mission. True enough, but the wall of trees lining the overhead bridge also shielded genteel park visitors from the road’s delivery carts, working-class roughs, and boys running wild depicted in the illustration. Like the written documents collected in the Olmsted Papers volumes, then, these visual documents will generate historical evidence and interpretive questions alike, surely the mark of an important contribution.


James Blachowicz’s From Slate to Marble is a monumental contribution to the literature on early American grave markers. The book is beautifully produced, well written, and contains some of the most exquisite photographs of gravestones ever published. It is a must-have volume for anyone interested in New England’s early grave markers and will be the go-to reference for scholars interested in this topic. Blachowicz is to be commended on a job well done.

From Slate to Marble builds upon but does not duplicate Blachowicz’s similarly named earlier volume From Slate to Marble 1770–1870: Gravestone Carving Traditions in Eastern Massachusetts. Readers are encouraged to use the two volumes as a set. While Blachowicz’s previous volume focused on Eastern Massachusetts, and some later Boston carvers, volume 2 is more comprehensive. The focus is on the period from 1750 to 1850, and earlier carvers are not discussed in detail.
Like a careful detective, Blachowicz uses the clues left behind by carvers, in primary documents and in the stones themselves, to trace the lives and careers of some of early New England’s preeminent artisans. His work is a model for studying grave markers and the artisans who made them. Indeed, he provides readers with a recipe for tracking these elusive artisans, using probate records, advertisements, legal records, genealogical sources, and the like. Building from these sources, Blachowicz is able to determine a body of work and assemble a comprehensive image database. His forte is analyzing lettering, and he is particularly effective at using epigraphy to identify carvers and their work.

Blachowicz also makes a plea for more researchers to carry out gravestone research, noting that relatively few professional historians are engaged in gravestone studies (p. 7). Although only a passing comment, his call for more scholars to enter the field is useful. Too many historians and art historians have eschewed the sort of primary source research represented by Blachowicz’s work for more theoretical pursuits. Like an entomologist, the author lays out detailed taxonomies of gravestones. His is the foundational sort of research necessary to the growth of all fields of scholarly endeavor.

The volume is divided into four parts: “Part I: Boston-Area Carvers”; “Part II: North of Boston”; “Part III: South of Boston”; and “Part IV: Additions and Corrections to Volume I.” Part I consists of four chapters, detailing the works of the Geyer family, the Lamsons, John Homer, and Daniel and Nathan Hastings. Blachowicz’s first chapter deals with the Geyer family of carvers, who were German immigrants active in Boston during the late eighteenth century. The chapter provides an illustration of how the author explores carvers and shops, using court records, advertisements, and other primary sources to create a context for the carver. The products of the Geyers are examined and illustrated. Lettering is also illustrated and fine maps showing the distribution of markers are provided.

Chapter 2, titled, “Charlestown Survivors,” looks at members of the Lamson family and their work. While examples found as far afield as North Carolina, Virginia, and Nova Scotia are noted, other areas such as New Jersey, which has a handful of Lamson markers, escaped Blachowicz’s notice. Nonetheless, the reader leaves the chapter with an enriched understanding of how four generations of Lamsons supplied the New England gravestone market. The different styles employed by family members are illustrated in all their diversity. Here,
as elsewhere in the volume, particular attention is paid to correcting the misattributions of earlier researchers.

The third chapter primarily examines the work of John (1736–1817) and William Homer (1769–1822). William had a stone-cutting shop, but may have focused primarily on architectural pieces. John was likely trained in the shop of William Codner (1709–1769), one of the finest and most prolific of the New England carvers who produced incredible mortality images, fine cherubs, urns and willows, and some unique designs, such as ships at anchor. His work is found from Nova Scotia to the Carolinas (p. 119). Chapter 4 examines the work of Daniel Hastings (1749–1803) and his son Nathan (1782–1854).

“Part II: North of Boston,” looks closely at the Merrimack River Carvers. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with Robert Fowle and the Noyes family of carvers as well as those from Newburyport. Chapter 7 covers Salem carvers while chapter 8 reviews ones in Bradford and Haverhill. Finally, chapter 9 deals with Lowell’s mid-nineteenth-century carvers.

“Part III: South of Boston,” deals with a large number of carvers, including the incredibly productive Soule family, which included some twenty-one artisans. Using detailed genealogical research, Blachowicz traces the movements of the peripatetic members of the Soule family from town to town. The Soules examined include Beza, Coomer, Luther, Ivory, Asaph, Ebenezer Senior and Junior, and Noah Cushman (who worked with the family). Here, in particular, the quality of the illustrations is extraordinary with excellent photos of Beza Soule’s “Medusa Stones.”

Although the bulk of the volume consists of carver identifications, the final sections are equally important. “Part IV: Additions and Corrections to Volume I,” reassigns some markers previously described in volume 1 and notes the assistance provided by other researchers, most notably Vincent Luti. The volume concludes with an appendix on the “freytag27+” scale. For those unfamiliar with the term, the Freytag Scale is a list of those letters and numerals that are most distinctive and useful in identifying carvers. As Blachowicz notes, “The reason these letters show greater variation is that they all have either non-vertical/non-horizontal rectilinear segments or non-circular curvilinear segments” (p. 645), rendering them particularly useful for sorting out different carvers. There is also a brief discussion of flash photography of gravestones.

Finally, tucked into a pocket at the back of the book is a flash drive, containing over 1,500 color illustrations of the images that were printed in the book in black and white as well as the 108
Freytag Scales in color and a database of over 22,000 gravestones. Also included are an extensive carver list and a list of 1,300 historic burial grounds.

Blachowicz builds upon that of earlier cataloguers of gravestones, including Harriett Forbes, Ralph Tucker, Peter Benes, Theodore Chase, Daniel Farber, and Laurel Gabel. Standing on the shoulders of these giants, Blachowicz has reached far indeed and provided us with a detailed glimpse of New England gravestone carving during one of its most interesting periods. The volume is both scholarly and beautiful; indeed, it would look good on a coffee table. This is not a lightweight book, but a meticulously researched labor of love.

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Stephen Matterson, a professor of English studies at the University of Dublin, begins Melville: Fashioning in Modernity by explaining what motivated him to undertake a study of clothing symbolism in the works of Herman Melville. One Sunday, he was selecting what to wear for the week. He chose different outfits for different circumstances: one for a department meeting, another for an undergraduate seminar, a third for a lecture hall appearance, and something else to meet students at the library. I have worked as a professor for twenty-four years, but never have I heard of any English professor devoting this much thought to his or her dress. Just slip on a tweed jacket with elbow patches and be done.

Matterson’s personal wardrobe got him thinking about how clothes function in literature, so he directed his attention to Melville. Individual chapters treat several works. Oddly, the first chapter discusses The Isle of the Cross, the book-length work Melville never published and presumably destroyed. Melville’s reference to the work in his correspondence with Nathaniel Hawthorne provides the only known indication of its contents. In one letter, Melville makes a woman’s shawl an important motif: a slender detail on which to hang an entire chapter. The specter of Hawthorne gives Matterson the excuse to discuss clothing symbolism in The Scarlet Letter, a discussion that