

CHEST, BOX and HIP TOMBS, and CRADLE Gravestone

Chest tombs are massive memorial structures resembling a rectangular box. The chest tomb or sarcophagus as it was called, had a removable lid. Originated in Egypt, they were used to hold the coffin or could be the coffin itself. Sarcophagi, while designed by the Egyptians, were used by the Greeks and Romans and later by the Europeans. Because these chests remained above ground, they were often ornately carved, decorated or elaborately constructed, and often signified a higher social class. Many old European and Mediterranean cemeteries and even churches have chests or sarcophagi that contain a coffin and a body



inside. In the United States, the chest tomb is placed over an in-ground burial. The chest tomb, if placed on a large flat base is called an **altar tomb**. The Hanson Atkins tomb of 1904 on the south side of the chapel, and the Mary Sherston, to the east of the main entrance, are altar tombs. Another style of the chest tomb is the Silliman grave marker of 1876 with a separate headstone and a rounded sarcophagus-like base. Aside of the first chest tomb is a second tomb with a cross as its headstone. The cross was broken from vandalism in this area of the cemetery several years ago.



The **box tomb** is a rectangular box structure which was popular in the first half of the 19th century and was usually made of brick or the local stone and was undecorated. In some European countries, it signified a lower social class. The box tombs are smaller in mass size than the chest tomb.

However, in the United States, the box and chest tombs are often considered the same and can be plain or decorated. The Taylor (with cross), Shippen, and Morris memorial markers, with burial dates in the early 1900s, are examples of the box tomb. The epitaph is on the lid/top.



A variation of the box tomb is the **hip tomb**. A hip tomb is a chest or box tomb that has a two or four side hipped (pointed) roof either on the top of the chest or by itself. Two memorial markers of the mother and the father in the Shippen plot are hip tombs.



The **cradle gravestone** is a decorative curbing that surrounds a single grave. It is usually made of the same material as the headstone and incorporates it as part of the overall marker design. The cradle gravestone frames the plot and looks like a cradle without the legs, which is how it got its name. It does not necessarily mean that a small child is buried there. Most often the inside of the cradle is left open and may be planted with flowers or has grass growing in it. The cemetery has several styles of the cradle gravestones

situated throughout the cemetery. The majority are located to the north, east, and west within yards of the main entrance.

