

John Bean Memorial Monument in the Elmwood Cemetery

By Don Herbert - 2023

One of the most prominent monuments in Franconia's Elmwood Cemetery is the John Bean Memorial, a tall pink granite monument with an inlaid white marble sculpture of a blacksmith. The monument was erected by Hugh J Bean in memory of his father John Bean (b. 1807- d. 18-Dec-1849), a blacksmith in Franconia.

John Bean was born in Sutton Vermont,^{1,6} the son of Johnathan Bean and Anna Quimby. John moved to Lisbon, NH, and married Ruby Dexter, also of Lisbon, in October of 1831. Soon after their marriage John and Ruby moved to Franconia, NH where they had nine children.

Their second child, Hugh Bean, was born in June 1832. In 1850, at the age of 18 he was a farm hand boarding with Horace and Ira Brooks in Franconia.¹ There are no records of his movements until the 1870 Census when he was age 38. At this time, he was living in Ward 16 District 9 (near West 22nd), New York City with his wife Mary and Son William age 7.³ No occupation is given in the Census. Hugh died in New York City on September 18th, 1873.^{5,6} In his will he requests payment of expenses related to the erection of a monument in the "Franconia burying ground in Grafton Country in the State of New Hampshire the same as I have already directed".⁵

Hugh commissioned the monument around 1860 in honor of his father John Bean and had it shipped to Franconia, NH.¹² At the base of the monument the sculptor has inscribed his name, "JOHN M. MOFFITT SCULP - HUDSON ST. N.Y."



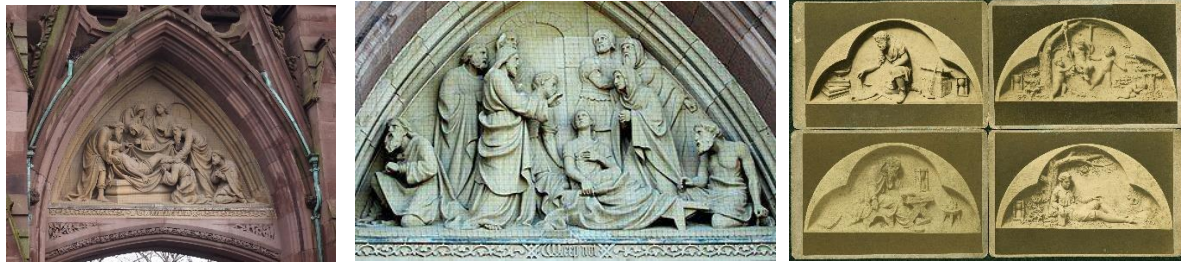
The beautiful detail on the inlay is typical of John Moffitt's art. Details of the face and hands as well as the flowing clothes are common in his works.

Note: It is believed that Hugh is buried beside the monument on the side noting his birth and death.

Artist John M Moffitt

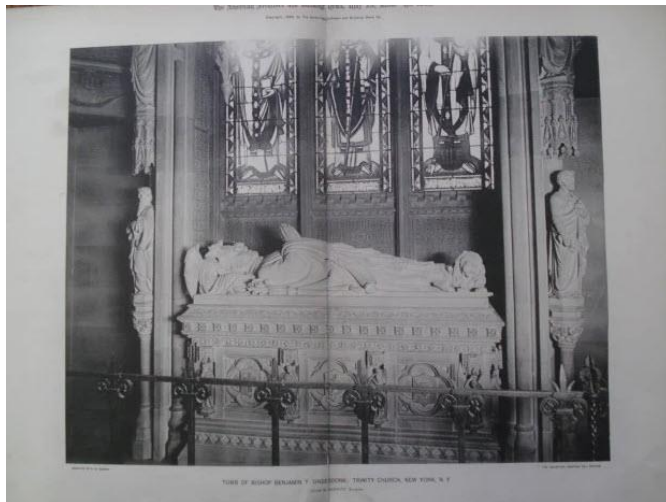
John M Moffitt was born in England around 1837.^{2,3,4,7} He started as a sculptor apprentice at age 15 in London. Records show that in 1860 he was in New York City Ward 20 District 1, with his wife Mary and young daughter, Ellenor. In 1870 he had moved to Ward 16 District 11, New York City,^{3,7} very close to Hugh Bean who lived in Ward 16 District 9.³

One of his earliest commissions was the creation of an inlay sculpture for the 25th Street entrance gate of the famous Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn NY. This gate was constructed in 1861-65.



Panels over the gates at Green-Wood Cemetery*¹¹

After that, he was commissioned for several other works in the cemetery. These include sculptures for other gates, designs for family tombs that include life-size statues.^{7,8} He designed and sculpted the Tomb of Bishop Benjamin T Onderdonk at Trinity Church, New York, NY.⁹ He is also credited with designing many alters in other churches in New York City.^{7,8}



Tomb of Bishop Benjamin T Onderdonk

Other famous works include the ornamental wall covering at the back of the altar for the Packer Memorial Church, in Mauch Chunk, PA; the plan for the soldier's monument in East Rock Park, New Haven, CT, and the drum of the Yorktown Revolutionary monument, erected in 1881.^{7,8,10}

Moffitt died in England on Sep 15th, 1887. There is a monument for him in the Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn NY. It is not clear if he is buried there.⁶



Monument for John M Moffit in Green-Wood Cemetery

Ref.

1. 1850 US Census
2. 1860 US Census
3. 1870 US Census
4. 1880 US Census
5. New York, US. Wills and Probate Record, 1659-1999
6. US Find A Grave Index, 1600-Current
7. Appletons' Cyclopedia of American Biography, 1600-1889
Appletons' Cyclopedia of American Biography, 1600-1889 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA:
www.Ancestry.com
8. Green-Wood Cemetery Website
<https://www.green-wood.com/2018/another-19th-century-sculptor-discovered/>
9. St.Croix Architecture
<https://www.stcroixarchitecture.com/products/tomb-of-bishop-benjamin-t-onderdonk-at-trinity-church-new-york-ny-1896-john-n-moffitt-sculptor>
10. Wikipedia
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green-Wood_Cemetery
11. Courtesy of The Green-Wood Historic Fund.
12. There are some questions about if the monument went directly to Elmwood Cemetery or if it first went to the Willow Cemetery. In 1871 the town voted to create a new cemetery and about 100 burials in Elmwood are dated before 1871. Some burials are known to have been moved from the Willow Cemetery to the Elmwood Cemetery. Personal communication. Jayne O'Connor, Franconia Cemetery Trustee.

Author: Donald J Herbert, PO Box 454, Rangeley, ME 04970. 3rd Great Grandson of John Bean (1807-1849)

Footnote on how this all started: My cousin, Gail Herbert Kimball and I have been working on several genealogy projects. We've been fortunate to be able to connect our families with some well know families in Franconia (Bean, Dexter, Golden, Heath, Herbert, Moody, Quimby). The Bean monument has always been a focal point for the family and its history was always shrouded in mystery and even rumor.

In June 2023 Gail made her annual visit to the Elmwood Cemetery to visit our grandfather's grave (Clayton E. Herbert) and his mother, Eliza Bean Herbert's grave. While there, she also visited the Bean monument and started to wonder about just how we were related to the monument and Hugh Bean, the name of the person inscribed on the side of the monument. Also inscribed on the monument was "Our Father—Erected by Hugh J Bean". Gail reached out to me to see if I knew anything or had recorded anything in my genealogy tree. I was able to quickly determine that Hugh was the son of John Bean, a blacksmith in Franconia. It now seemed that the monument was dedicated to his father, John Bean. It was also easy to connect the dots and discover that John Bean was Eliza Bean Herbert's grandfather and our 3rd Great Grandfather. This gave us the family connection.

Now we had a new question, why was Hugh J Bean's name and dates of birth and death inscribed on the monument dedicated to his father? It wasn't hard to find out that Hugh was the son of John Bean, but we couldn't find any information about where the monument came from, who commissioned it, or who made it. Certainly, Hugh's inscription was added after his death in 1873. Unfortunately, many records about the cemetery were lost in a fire at the town office so we thought it was a dead end. We reached out to several others who might help, but that also did not give us any more information. In other words, we thought the story was going to end there.

Back to Gail, on another trip through Franconia she decided to stop and look at the monument in more detail. That was when she noticed some partially obscured lettering near the base of the monument that read John M Moffitt SCUL. She sent me a text message with that information and that led us to our discovery of the sculptor John Moffitt of New York City. Digging deeper into Hugh Bean I discovered that he also had been in New York City at the same time as John Moffitt. In fact, I found that they lived just blocks from each other. I also found that during this time John Moffitt was a prominent sculptor and had been commissioned to create some panels for the gates of the famous Green-Wood Cemetery in Brooklyn NY. Had Hugh and John crossed paths? Did that lead to the creation of the Bean monument? That is something we still cannot answer. Further research led me to Jeff Richman, a Green-Wood Cemetery historian. I reached out to Jeff, he was intrigued by our discovery and asked for pictures of the Bean monument. To our delight Jeff not only confirmed that the monument was created by Moffitt but has provided some additional documentation and new pictures of Moffitt's work.

Now after three days of digging into old records and piecing together clues, we had a story and that ultimately led me to write the piece above.