

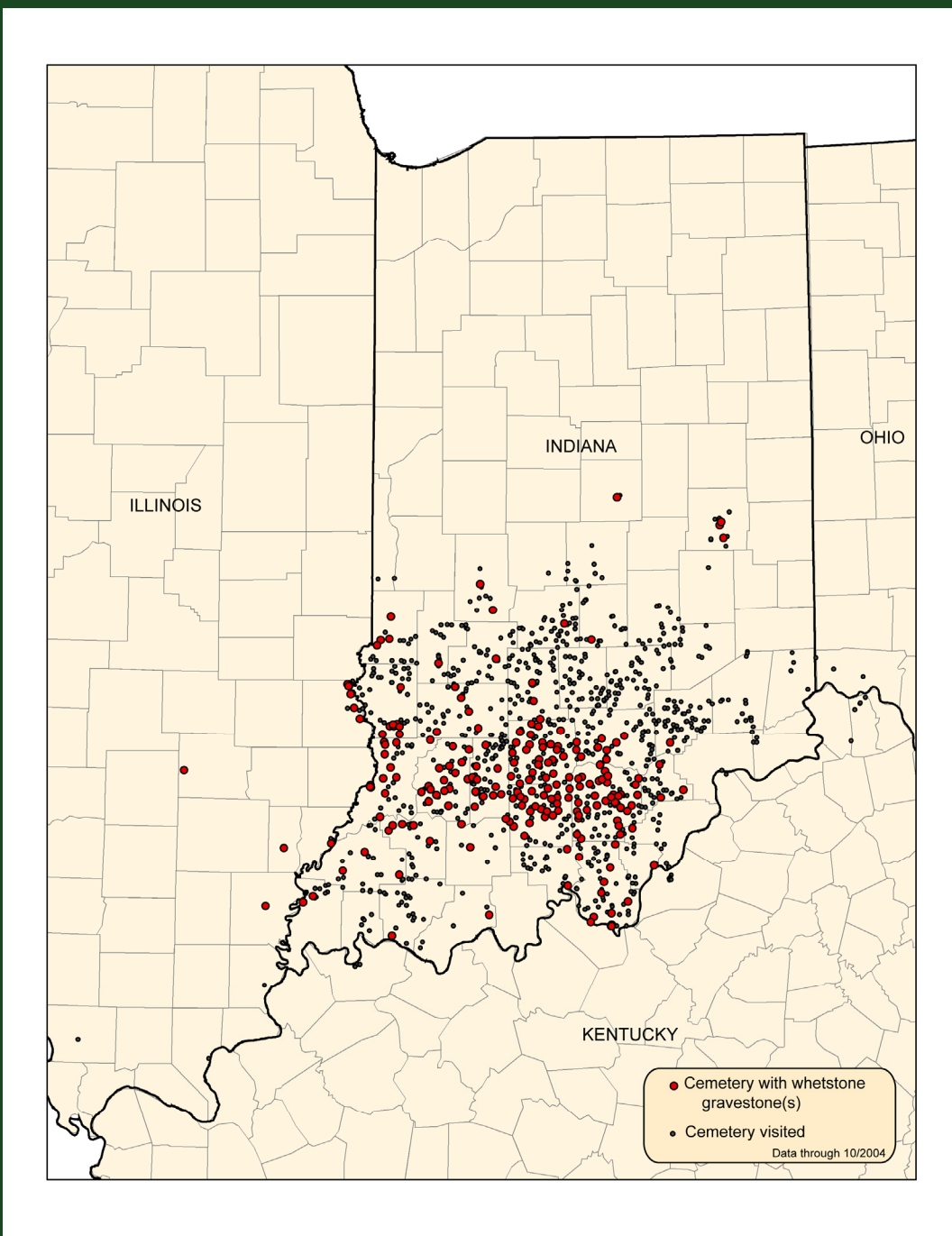
HINDOSTAN WHETSTONE TOMBSTONE INDUSTRY IN INDIANA, 1811 - 1860

INTRODUCTION

Stone from the Hindostan Whetstone beds in southwestern Indiana was used to fashion gravestones during the early 1800s. Whetstone grave markers were among the very first commercial tombstones used in Indiana.

The production of whetstone grave markers peaked during the 1840s and dropped off rapidly in the early 1850s. This drop in production can be tied to improvements in transportation in southern Indiana. The establishment of regional railroad lines opened Indiana to white marble from places like Tennessee, Georgia, and Vermont. The Indiana limestone industry also began to produce and market commercial gravestones. The lighter colors of these later monuments were preferred. Unfortunately, the marble and limestone markers were much more susceptible to the ravages of the weather and deteriorated rapidly. During the late 1800s they were eventually displaced by monuments of igneous and metamorphic rocks such as granite, or, for a short period of time in the 1890s, by metal monuments. The whetstone tombstone industry was by then largely forgotten.

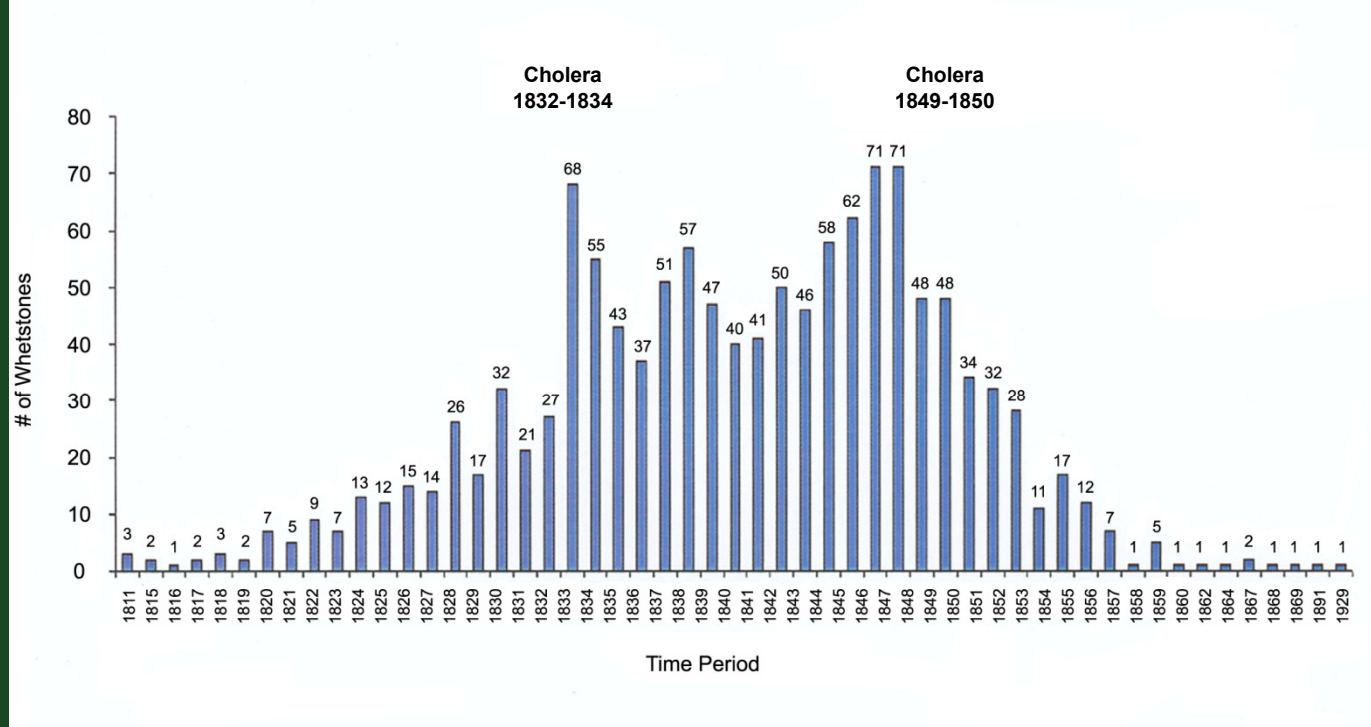
Many of the features visible in outcrops of whetstone are also present on whetstone gravestones. Easily recognizable features are the tan color, the silty nature of the rock, and the well-developed fine laminations visible along the edges of the monuments. Whetstone gravestones are among the oldest preserved in the southern part of the state. Most show death dates ranging from 1820 to 1852, with death dates as early as 1811 recorded. Despite this, most of the lettering and scrollwork looks as though it were carved yesterday rather than 150 to 180 years ago. More than 1,400 whetstone headstones in cemeteries have been identified throughout southern Indiana and southeastern Illinois near the Wabash River.



Map showing the known distribution of whetstone tombstones in Indiana and Illinois.



Type Jd monument



Graph showing the number of whetstone monuments identified in this study and the associated death dates. The popularity of whetstone tombstones peaked during the 1840s. The pronounced decrease in the use of whetstone tombstones during the 1850s can be related to the establishment of railroads in Indiana, the importation of white marble markers, and an increase in the use of limestone markers.



Type Ca monument

Signed by the carver Andrew Waldrip



The thick-thin pairing of the lamina in this headstone identifies it as Hindostan whetstone. The Hindostan Whetstone beds were deposited during the Pennsylvanian Period, approximately 350 million years ago.



Type Cc monument

Signed by the carver, Andrew Waldrip. Signature of the carver is obscured by the grass. Such ornate carving is typical of many Waldrip stones.



Type Cb monument

A relatively small number of headstones were signed by the engraver and/or stone supplier. We have identified 17 carvers or suppliers by name on whetstone monuments. These names typically appear in the lower right corner of the engraved portion of the monument. Over many decades, most of the monuments have settled into the ground so that the signatures are now buried. The signature "S. Healy" (also signed "S. Hely") appears on several monuments in Martin and Daviess Counties.



Type La monument

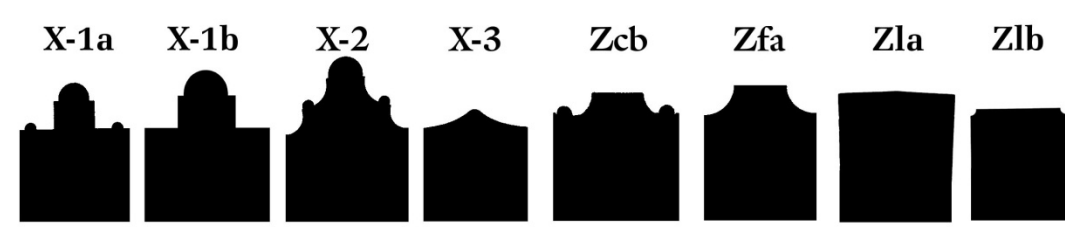
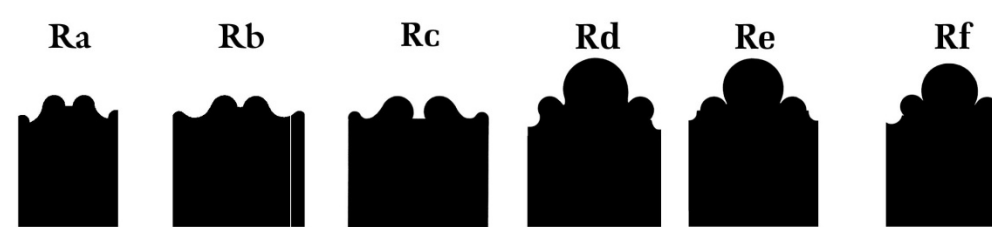
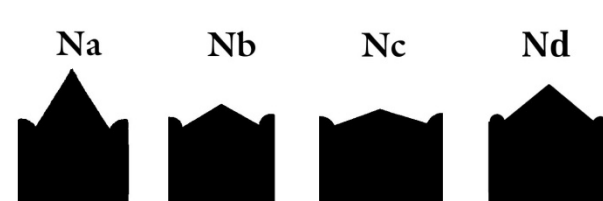
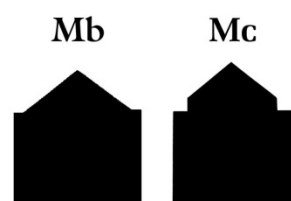
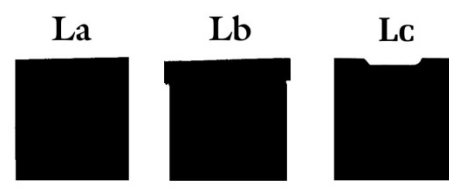
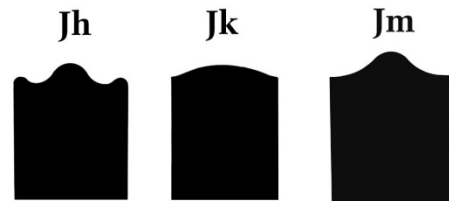
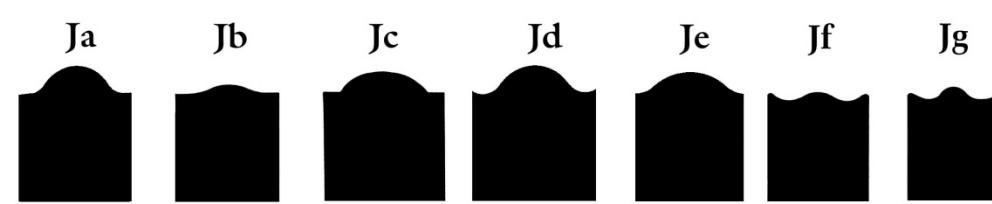
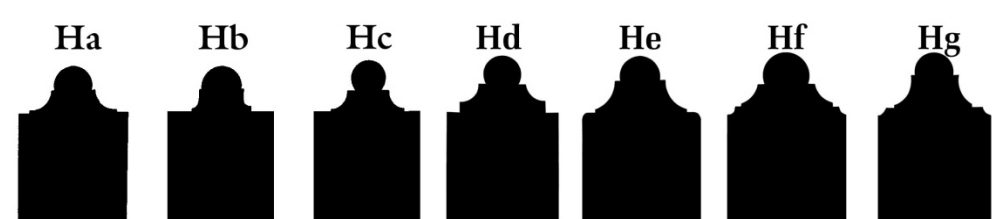
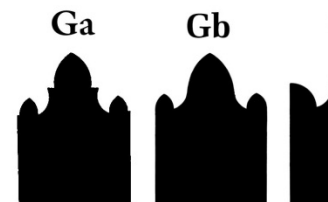
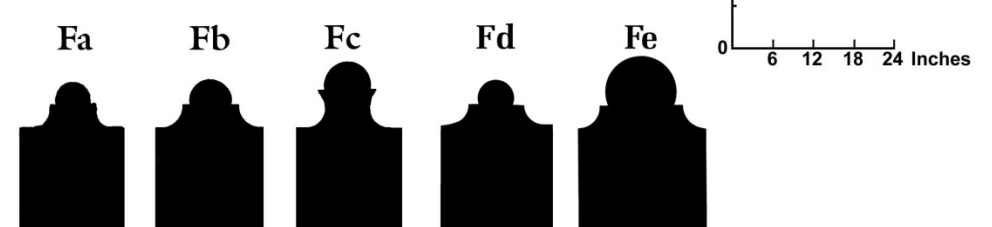
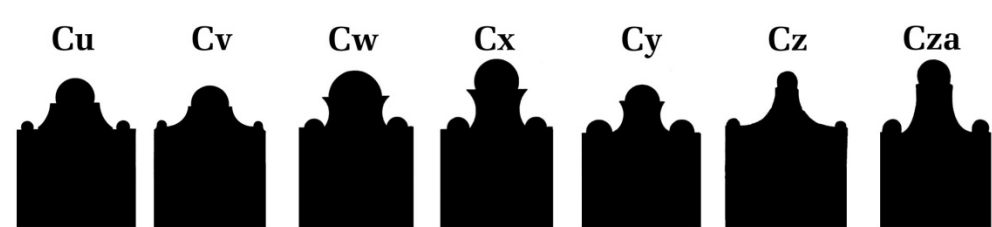
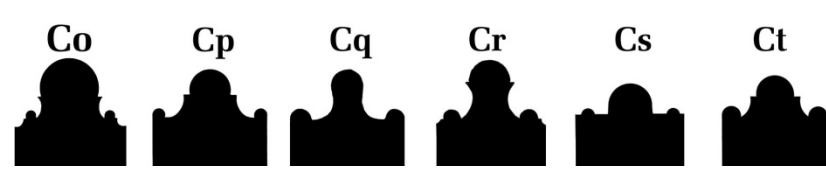
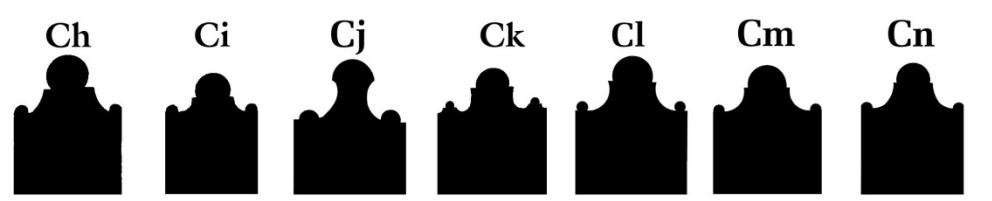
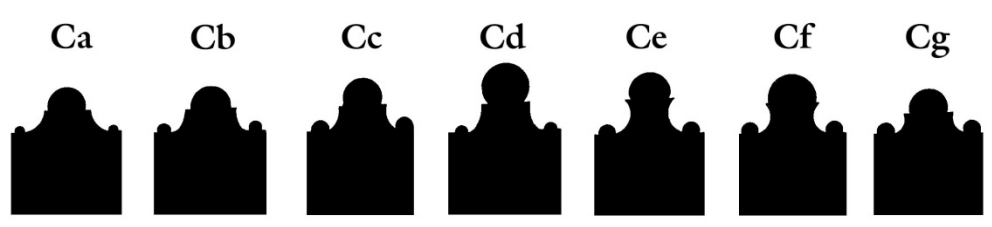
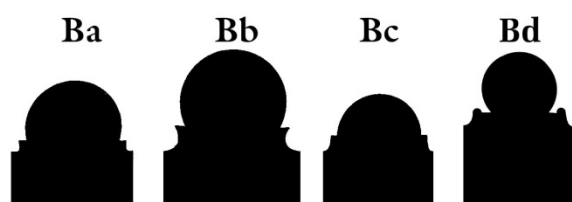
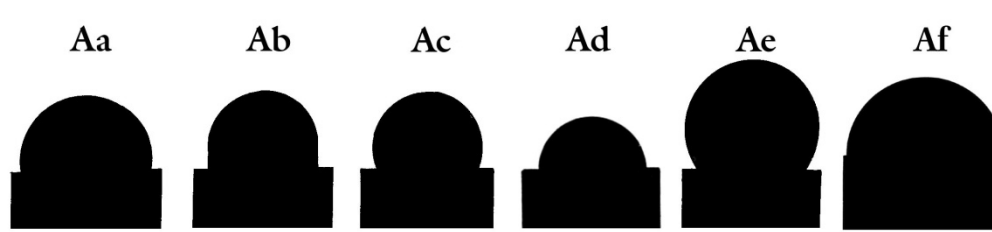
Not all monuments sold were of high quality. Inferior quality stones contained plant or animal fossils and/or very thin clay drapes separating siltstone laminae. In this particular case the front of the monument has spalled away along a weathered clay drape revealing abundant trace fossils on the bedding plane of the stone. These trace fossils include the walking or crawling trails of arthropods, annelids, and insect larvae.



Type Ca monument



Chisel marks are apparent on the back and sides of whetstone tombstones; typically, only the fronts of the monuments are finely finished.



We have identified more than a dozen general tombstone styles; approximately 60 variations on these styles have been identified in cemeteries.



Type Aa monument

Generally, this simple arched style is representative of the oldest whetstone monuments found to date.



Type Nc monument

Whetstone is very resistant to weathering; note the sharp detail of the carving on this monument.



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Indiana Geological Survey

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Poster design: Kimberly H. Sowder

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