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 rock 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 have been identified throughout southern Indiana and southeastern Illinois near the Wabash River.

We have identified more than a dozen general tombstone styles; approximately 60 variations on these styles have been identified in cemeteries. Chisel marks are apparent on the back and sides of whetstone tombstones; typically, only the fronts of the monuments are finely finished. 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.

By Erik P. Kvale and Richard L. Powell
Indiana Geological Survey
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