

# Graveyards of Lovecraft Country

A PREVIEW  
of the FORTHCOMING  
RESOURCE BOOK  
by Bret Kramer



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Page 4: Gravestone illustration by Galen Pejeau

Page 5: Map by Chris Huth

Page 6: "Creepy Veiled Statue" Adapted from the image licensed from iStock Photo

# About Namacknowatt Island

*“The island needs a name. It could be anglo prosaic (Brewster's Point) or anglo poetic (Martha's Vineyard), or Indian. I really like an Indian name because it's more evocative. Monganessett Island or something.”*

*—Keith Herber in an email dated 5/13/08*

## Origins and Development

In May of 2008 I wrote to Keith Herber, who had just announced the formation of Miskatonic River Press, submitting a pair of partially completed scenarios for his first scenario collection *New Tales of the Miskatonic Valley*. While neither scenario was a good fit for the book, he thought one of them, involving a ferry, had some elements he'd like to potentially develop. We exchanged a series of emails fleshing out the ferry scenario, in the process creating a new destination, an island off the coast from Kingsport, which I dubbed 'Namacknowatt'.

Namacknowatt Island made a few minor appearances on the MRP site and in the map of Lovecraft Country included in the front of *New Tales of the Miskatonic Valley* but, due to my tardiness in writing and Keith's desire to get their first book out as soon as possible, the ferry scenario did not make the cut. I continued to work on the scenario and setting anyway, albeit slowly, in hopes of finishing it in time for MRP's next book, but sadly it was not to be, with Keith's unexpected passing the next year.

Ideally we would like to release a special issue of the *Arkham Gazette* about Namacknowatt Island, including a description of the place and its inhabitants as well as finally finishing the scenario I began writing for Keith.

## A Short Introduction

Namacknowatt Island is a small island in Massachusetts Bay, about nine miles southeast of Kingsport and eleven miles south-southwest of Gloucester. Forming a rough triangle, the island is about two miles wide at the widest point; the highest point is Northpoint Hill (187 feet). There is one lighthouse and three other light stations on or near the island. The only settlement of note on the island is officially called Port Nicholson, though most locals simply call it 'Port' or 'Namackport'.

There are very few cars on the island, instead horse and pony drawn wagons are the norm. Daily ferry service connects Port Nicholson to the mainland—twice daily to Kingsport,

once daily to Gloucester and Boston. Many of the buildings date from the early- to mid-19th century, while the Congregational Church, built in 1766, is the oldest extant structure on the island. While fresh water is available thanks to a newly constructed water tower, electricity on the island is supplied by small generators alone; most lighting is still provided by lanterns.

The old Bowditch Mansion, perched above the island on Blackberry Ridge, has been sold to a developer and may soon become the island's first large hotel; unfortunately the Lyle Mansion on the outskirts of Port Nicholson was destroyed in a fire in 1915.

Called *Namaknosigwaki* (“the Spring fishing place”) by the Massachusetts Indians who made occasional use of the island for the seasonal harvesting of fish, shellfish, and blackberries, all of which grew in abundance on and around the island. The first permanent European settlers arrived in 1652 when the island was given in a grant to the Grindletonian minister Isaiah Spaulding, but his Gethsemane Plantation was a failure and the island was abandoned. Starting around 1688 families from nearby Kingsport, unhappy with conditions in the town, began to settle the island. Port Nicholson (named after the British commander during the conquest of Acadia)





the island's first organized settlement, was established in 1711. Fishermen from Namacknowatt were on the forefront of the growing whaling industry, which fueled the growth of the island. Despite being occupied by the British during the Revolution and shipping losses during the War of 1812, the island's wealth and population continued to grow until the decline of the whaling industry in the 1860s and 1870s.

After the end of Namacknowatt's whaling industry, the population of the island declined steeply until hitting a low

of just over one hundred in 1900. In recent years, however, the island has begun to slowly rebound, in part thanks to the draw of its natural beauty and fine examples of traditional New England architecture. Today the island is the home year round to nearly three hundred people and at least triple that in summers, when vacationers flock to island's rustic cabins and beaches. Plans are afoot to improve the island—providing electricity, expand the harbor, and paving roads.

## Sand Hill Burying Ground Namacknowatt Island

As is to be expected considering its size, there is but a single burial site on Namacknowatt Island—**The Sand Hill Burying Ground**. Local tradition says that Indian burials were made on this low, windswept hill on the southeast corner of the island, but there is no evidence to support this belief. The first interments were conducted by the members of the Gethsemane Plantation in the winter of 1652-3, though no trace of these burials remains into the modern day. When the island was resettled by Kingsporters almost half a century later, they resumed using the site. The oldest remaining stone is a footstone for Jeroham Toppan, which dates from 1698.

Today the Burying Ground is better kept than it has been for many years thanks to the work of the town's cemetery board. A new wooden fence augments the partial field stone wall surrounding the grounds, including a plain but functional wrought-iron gate. A gravel path leads to South Point Road, which has recently been macadamized, allowing for ease of travel.

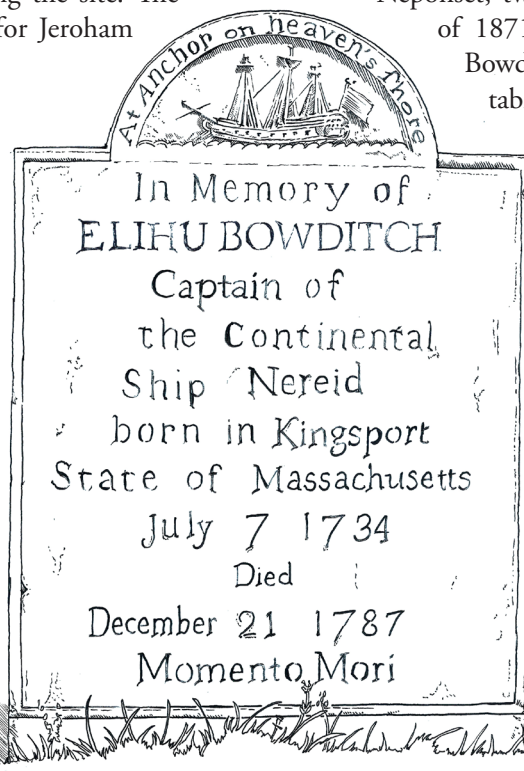
Within the enclosing wall are several buildings. A brick caretaker's shed has recently been built to replace the decayed but not-yet demolished wooden shed nearby. The granite semi-sunken receiving vault is the

largest structure in the burying ground, with space for over a dozen coffins within. A scattering of low shrubs and small trees dot Sand Hill; within the burying ground are a few ornamental trees and one gnarled oak, well over a century old. Local rumors claim pirates or witches were hanged from this tree, but there is no evidence for these claims.

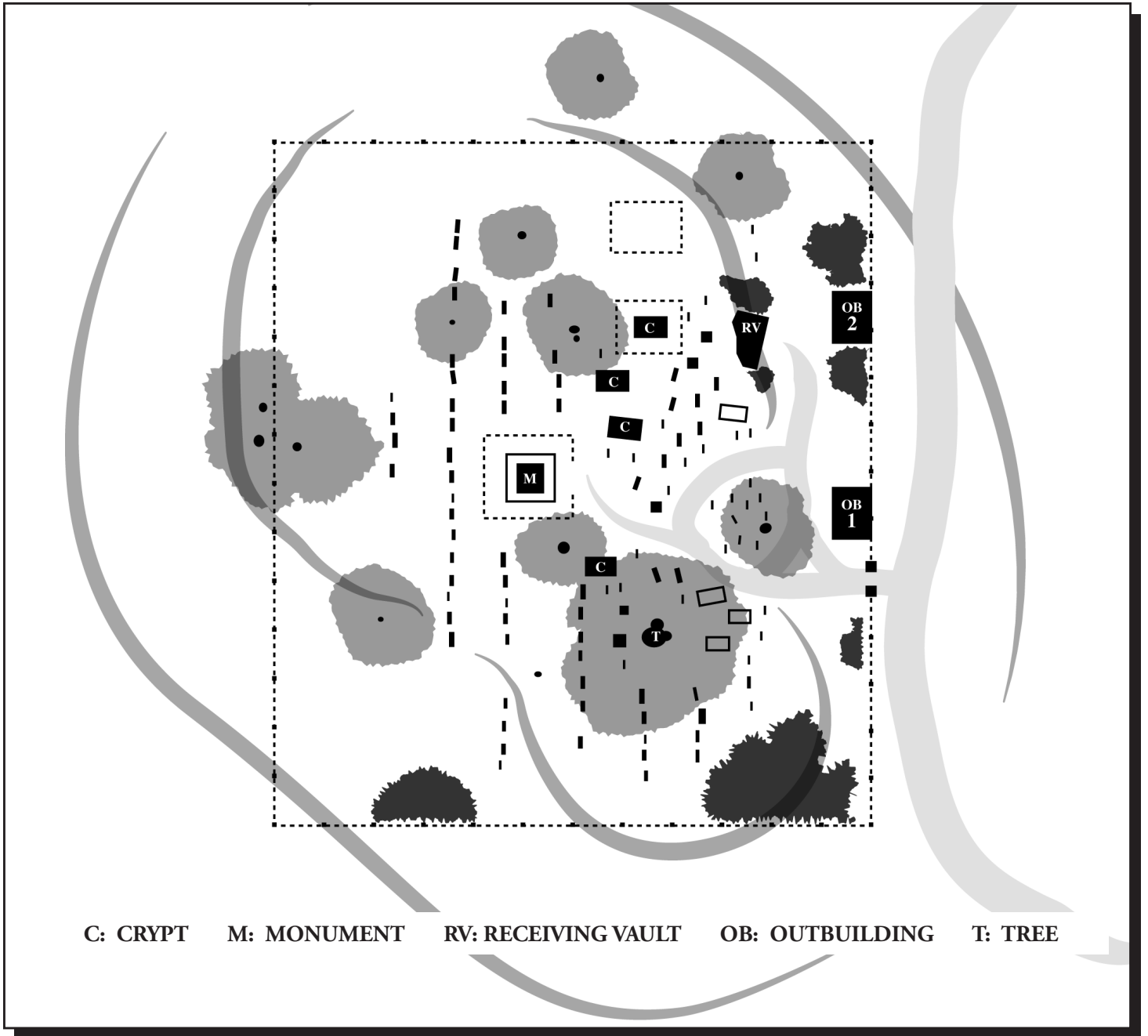
Near the center of the Burying ground a small marble obelisk memorializes the crews of the *Annisquam* and the *Neponset*, two whalers lost in the Nassau Bay wreck of 1871. There are also family tombs for the Bowditch, Lyle, and Pickering families, a few table tombs for some of the island's 18th

century Congregational ministers, and several family monuments and enclosures scattered about. Most of the oldest stones appear to have been carved by Nathaniel Emmes, of Boston, or perhaps one of his students, suggesting an unusual reluctance to use Kingsport or Arkham's carvers of that era. It seems the now forgotten religious conflict that inspired the islanders' relocation to Namacknowatt lingered for at least a generation.

Jonas Connaut, the primary carver of Kingsport stones from the early and middle parts of the 18th century, is well represented here, with more



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than twenty stones, including a beautiful stone for the Rev. Eliezer Corbin (d. 1739), bearing a portrait of the deceased minister preaching from the pulpit. A few stones by the rarely seen Robert Paxton, son of Lebbeus Paxton, also can be found, most notably in the signed memorial to Elihu Bowditch (d. 1787), depicting his ship the *Nereid* under sail [see page 4].

A sprinkling of other stones coming from Arkham carvers of the Miskatonic Valley school, including Abner Yardley

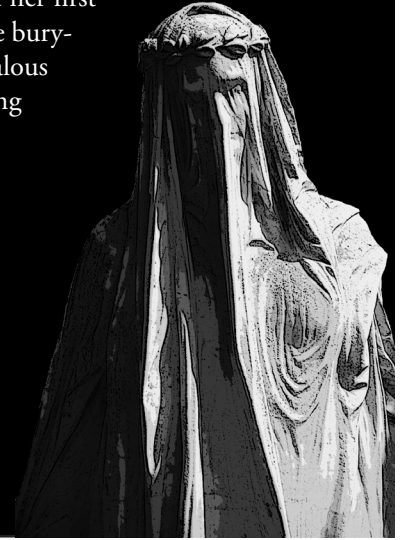
and Timothy Lord, fill out most of the older section of the cemetery, while Arkham's Danielson Company carvers provides many of 19th century stones. Due to the isolation of the island and the relative poverty of some of its fishermen, several small hand-carved fieldstones dating from the late 18th to the early 20th century can be found in the northeast corner of the burying ground, but since the restoration of the grounds the new cemetery board requires all markers be professionally carved.

## The Black Bride

One of the most often told stories to visitors of Namacknowatt Island is that of the Black Bride. The details of the story vary from teller to teller, but the gist of the tale remains the same—a young woman was engaged to a poor sailor against the wishes of her family who had arranged for a far more prosperous match. Tragically, the handsome young fisherman perished at sea. Though she wed the other man, she never forgot her first love and, by night, would visit his grave. The fate of the young woman depends on the teller—in some she lived to old age only to die at her first love's grave, in others she perished young, either intentionally (typically hanging herself in the burying ground), accidentally (becoming lost in a fog and drowning), or even murdered by her jealous husband who followed his wife to the grave assuming her nightly rendezvous were with a living man.

Her shade, a black veiled figure, is said to walk from Port Nicholson to the Sand Hill Burying Ground on the night of the full moon (or on the anniversary of her murder, or her lover's death – it all depends on the teller). Sailors, apparently possessed of exceptional eyesight, claim to have seen her standing among the stones of the burying ground as they round the South Point of the island. It is universally agreed that seeing the Black Bride is a bad omen.

Unfortunately, the truth of Namacknowatt's "Black Bride" has been lost in the mists of time. Perhaps some intrepid scholar might find some record of this unfortunate woman or her lost love...



## Scenario Seeds

Though small, the Sand Hill Burying Ground presents a few adventure options for the Keeper...

**Secret of the Black Bride #1:** The island is swept with rumors that the Black Bride has been spotted in and around the burying ground, with a few short items appearing in the *Kingsport Chronicle*. In truth, a recent transplant from the mainland is to blame. The young woman, an orphan, has recently discovered her ghoulish heritage. Fleeing from her home after an unfortunate incident at the mortuary, she has found a home on Namacknowatt Island, gutting fish and preparing them for shipping. On some nights she comes to the burying ground for reasons she cannot fully admit. Ashamed of her unnatural desires, she flees if she observes others, leading some to mistake her for the Black Bride

**Secret of the Black Bride #2:** As above, but the cause is far more prosaic – the owner of Robinson's Nick-Nacks in Port Nicholson has decided to increase the draw of tourists to the island and sees the ghost story as a convenient way to do so. He has not only hired the young woman to masquerade as the spirit, but has been encouraging sightings by eagerly sharing stories of the haunting with everyone who visits the shop, going so far as to helpfully direct people to the best spots (at a distance) to observe the haunt.

**Revenge of the Kingsport Cult:** Several of the earliest settlers of Namacknowatt were ardent foes of the Kingsport Cult and fled the city to escape its wrath. Recently several of the graves of island's founders have been found violated. The culprit is an inhuman member of Kingsport's cult, recently returned to the area. They have rented an old fisherman's shack on the island from whence they have conducted their grave-robbery. The cultist's intentions are left to the Keeper—do they simply seek to defile the remains of their old foes? Is there some lost artifact of the cult they are seeking to recover? Or perhaps they seek a component for some vile rite for Tulzscha and have chosen to use the remains of their old foes for this purpose.

**The Witch Oak:** Malcolm Veidt (or some other local occultist) has discovered an ancient text discussing obscure druidic rites indicating that oak trees that draw their sustenance from the remains of the dead might be used to contact those dead. The occultist has rented a room in Port Nicholson and has taken to nightly visits to the burying ground attempting to make use of their newly discovered spell. The effectiveness of the spell, or the actual results from casting it, are left to the Keeper.