

## Corn Pounder Headstone or My Ears are Pounding!

Among the grave markers in the three acre Willow Hill Cemetery, is one that stands out. Not because it's the tallest or most elaborate, but because of its uniqueness.

A samp mortar made from granite marks the resting place of octogenarian Cutchogue farmer, horse-trainer, and auctioneer Charles F. Smith. His name is engraved in the stone with his birth and death dates, 1840-1924, and can be found in the southeast section of the cemetery.

It is the very one Mr. Smith used on his own farm. A bowl-like depression is carved out where the corn to be cracked was placed. A weighted pounder or pestle was then used to crush the corn into cornmeal.

In his weekly 1898 Long Island Traveler installments, "Hobbles with the Old Traveler Boys", J. Horton Case wrote that the samp mortar was an institution in those days, and it was said (though he couldn't vouch for its truth) that their Saturday afternoon clattering could be heard along the Connecticut shore.

In his will, Mr. Smith requested the stone mortar be used as his headstone, but placed upside down. However, his surviving family members decided the stone should rest with the hollowed out portion as the top of the headstone, so that when it rains, the hollow fills with water and serves as a birdbath!

By Melissa Andruski