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## **BURIAL HARDWARE**

Burial hardware can be further separated into three functional categories: structural, decorative, and identifying (Springate 1998). Structural hardware involves holding the coffin or casket together (handles, thumbscrews, caplifters, hinges, screws, nails, lining tacks, fasteners and closures). Decorative hardware serves no functional purpose but holds aesthetic value (escutcheons, decorative studs, tacks, and ornamental metal). Identifying hardware conveys the identity of the deceased (plaques and viewing windows). It should be noted that these categories are by no means exclusive and different types of hardware may serve more than one of these functions (Springate 1998).

The terms “coffin” and “casket” frequently have been used interchangeably in archaeological literature, but these terms refer to different types of burial containers (Hill & Pye 2012:96). Coffins are hexagonal burial containers with the broadest point at the shoulders and narrowed widths at the head and the foot (Hill & Pye 2012:96). Caskets are rectangular burial containers developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hill & Pye 2012:96). The majority of the burials at Boot Hill contained caskets, rather than coffins.

Historically, coffin hardware items are manufactured from a variety of materials, including white metal, German silver or Argentine metal, steel, white bronze or "gun metal," antimonial lead, Britannia metal, tin, tinned copper, and wood. “White metal” refers to lead- or tin-based alloys that could include various amounts of zinc, antimony, cadmium, etc., frequently plated in silver or nickel (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:12). German silver or Argentine metal is a combination of zinc, copper, and nickel and produces a silvery white finish, primarily used for coffin handles as a substitute for silver (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:12). Steel, frequently stamped, is used for handles and became popular in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:12).

### **Coffin Handles**

The majority of the handles found in the Boot Hill burials are double-lug, swing-bail handles. These handles are composed of three elements: two lugs, which are attached by screws or nails to the side of the coffin, and the broad, U-shaped bail, which forms the gripping portion of the handle (Springate 1998:3). The bail is attached to the lugs by two metal pins at each end. Swing-bail handles have been in production since the 18<sup>th</sup> century and were used in the southeastern United States from 1856 onward (Davidson 1999:407; Springate 1998:7). The prominence of these handles declined when short-bar and extended-bar handles became more popular, but swing-bail handles have never entirely disappeared (Hill & Pye 2012: 155). Per industry standard, most coffins in the 20<sup>th</sup> century generally had six handles (three on each side), but occasionally four handles were put on an adult casket due to difficulty in securing a sufficient number of pall bearers, reflecting the economic status of the client and the availability of pall bearers (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:10).

Twenty-nine burials at Boot Hill produced coffin handles (ranging from two to six handles per burial). Eleven distinct types of coffin handles were identified: five types composed of stamped ferrous metal and six types composed of cast white metal.

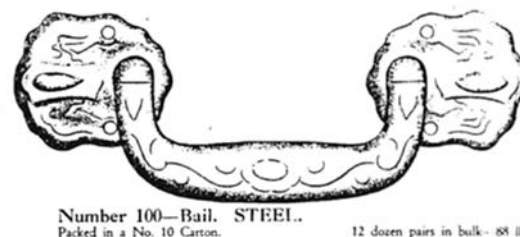
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### **Type 1: Burials 1, 4, 7, 10**

**Estimated date range: 1943-1966** (based on matching handles in historic catalogs)

Coffin handle Type 1 is double-lug swing-bail style, composed of ferrous metal. Each handle is approx. 215mm long. The swing-bail handles (approx. 131x61x19mm) are hollow backed except for the central segment, which has a rounded, swelled grip with an oval cross-section. Though all Type 1 handles were very rusted, decorative elements on the handles could be discerned. The outer surfaces of the handle feature a long oval in the center (23x19mm) flanked by scroll designs (40.5mm in length). Coffin handle Type 1 lugs are roughly round with scalloped edges (approx. 68.5x61x16.3mm). The lugs are made from stamped sheets of metal. Two spiral motifs and other raised decorations are visible on each lug. The lugs were attached to the casket wood by two metal bolts.

Type 1 coffin handles match a drawing of the Sumter Casket Company's Victor adult's swing bail handle, found in the 1956 catalogue. The Sumter Casket Company collection provides an assemblage of dated mid-20<sup>th</sup> century items, many of which could be identified in the Victor Casket Company (1943) and Dixline Casket Hardware Company (1966) catalogs (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:40). During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sumter Casket Company handled Sargent, Stirling, Burlington, National, Victor, Dixline, and Bridgeport hardware (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984, p. 40).



*Drawing of the matching Victor adult's swing-bail handle from the 1956 Sumter Casket Company (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984, p. 41).*

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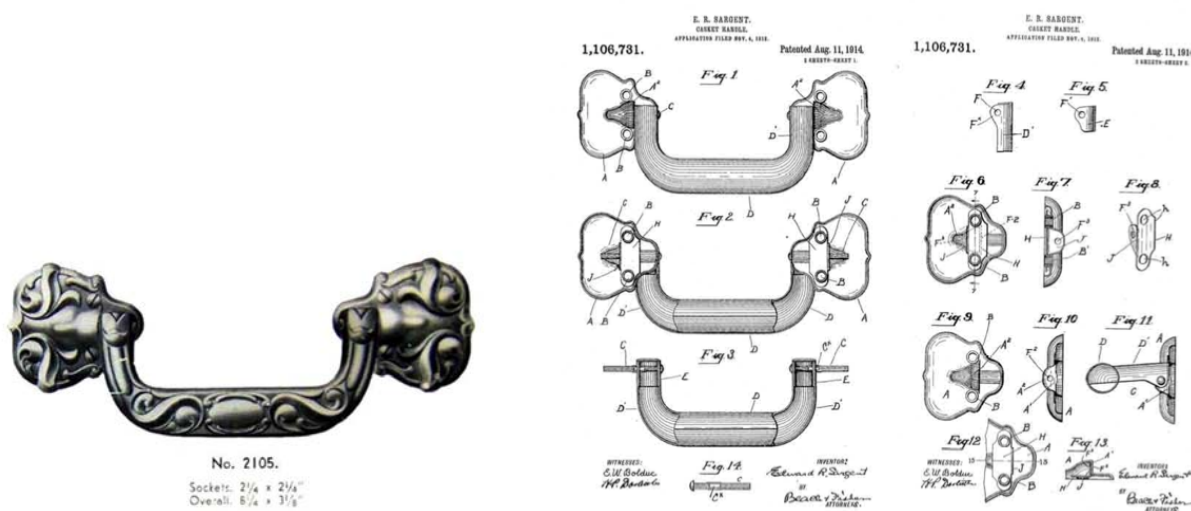
#### Type 4: Burial 34

Estimated date range: 1899-1935 (based on catalog and historic cemetery matches)



Coffin handle Type 4 is double-lug swing-bail style, composed of ferrous metal. Each handle is approx. 215mm in length. The swing-bail handles (approx. 127x63x21.3mm) are hollow backed except for the central segment, which has a rounded, swelled grip with an oval cross-section. The lugs (approx. 60.8x60x13mm) are a rounded rectangular with a protrusion to attach to the handles. Two bolts on the lugs attached the lugs to the coffin handles. Two ferrous bolts for attachment to the casket wood perforate the lugs. The lugs have raised decorations, but no distinct patterns could be discerned due to a high level of rust.

The Type 4 handle may match handle No. 2105 advertised in the ca. 1921 Sargent & Company catalog. Matching handles were also found in a Tennessee cemetery (dating between 1899 and 1933) and a Texas cemetery (dating between 1914-1935) (Pye 2011:88). Edward R. Sargent was granted U.S. Utility Patent No. 1106731 in 1914 for a handle with the same form as Type 4 handles. The goal of the patent was to create a light, cheap, and strong handle by reinforcing the weak points of the handle with pieces of hard metal (Pye 2011:88).



*Edward R. Sargent was granted U.S. Utility Patent No. 1106731 in 1914 for a handle with the same form as Type 4 handles (Pye 2011:88).*

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**Type 5: Burials 11, 12, 25, 55**

**Estimated date range: 1894-1926** (based on matching lugs and handles in historic catalogs)



Coffin handle Type 5 is single-lug swing-bail style, composed of white metal. All Type 5 handles have a single lug with a lamb motif and a small hollow-backed handle. The lug/handle combinations (Type 5a) from Burials 11 and 25 are identical; Burial 55 has an identical lug but a different handle (Type 5b), and Burial 12 has a different lug and a handle too corroded to distinguish (type 5c). All handles and lugs were cast in a mold and some bear raised manufacturer's marks.

The lugs shared by Burials 11, 25, and 55 measure approx. 61x57.5x11mm and are decorated with a motif of a lamb lying down with rays radiating outward behind it. Beneath the lamb are a horizontal floral/scroll pattern and a ridged tulip-shaped motif. The lugs were attached to the coffin by two bolts on either side. The backs of the lugs are stamped with the raised letters "S & CO". The lugs match those found in A.L. Calhoun Jr. store (Figure 11G) documented in Hacker-Norton's and Trinkley's 1984 report on 20<sup>th</sup> century coffin hardware (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:36). Calhoun sold coffin hardware from 1894-1926, paralleling the general popularity of lamb-motif children's coffin handles in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The handles shared by Burials 11 and 25 (Type 5a) measure approx. 82x49x5mm. The handles are decorated with swirls and ridges with a small tulip-shaped motif in the center to match the larger motif on the lugs. The backs of the handles are stamped with the number "103" and a string of smaller numbers or letters that cannot be discerned due to corrosion.

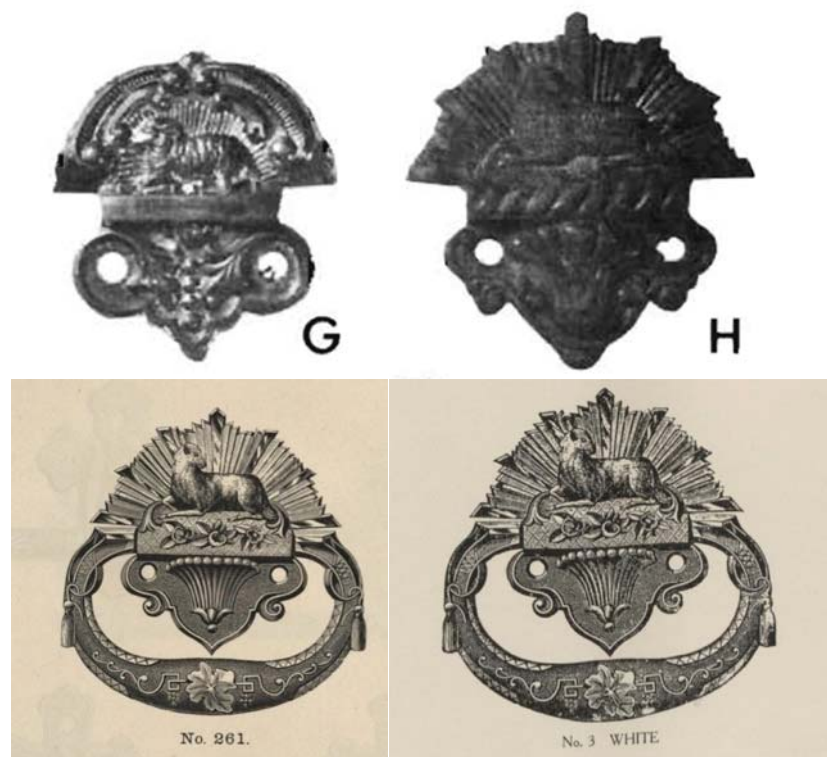
The handles from Burial 55 (Type 5b) measure approx. 82.5x49x7.5mm. The handles are decorated with swirls and ridges. The center of the handle has a small floral pattern matching that on the lug. No manufacturer's marks can be discerned from the back of the handles due to corrosion.

The lugs from Burial 12 (Type 5c) measure approx. 55.8x51.3x5.1mm and, like the other lugs, bear a motif of a lamb lying down. The lamb is set into a half-circle shape with rays

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radiating outward and a scroll pattern at the border. Beneath the lamb, the lugs are decorated with a floral/scroll pattern. The lugs match those found in the A.L. Calhoun Jr. store (Figure 11H), documented in Hacker-Norton's and Trinkley's 1984 report on 20<sup>th</sup> century coffin hardware (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:36). The handles measure approx. 70x37x4.6mm and are decorated with a floral/scroll, though the majority of the handles are too corroded to discern complete decorative elements. One of the handles from Burial 12 (Type 5c) is stamped with the number "32" on the hollow back of the handle.

Single-lug swing-bail handles were associated with child coffins or caskets until the 1950s (Davidson 2008). Lamb-motif handles such as these were popular in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Hacker-Norton & Trinkley (1984), children's coffins generally had only four handles; the presence of four handles in each of these burials corroborated this. Common children's handles were of the drop variety, with cherub, heart, or lamb images (Hacker-Norton & Trinkley 1984:10; Springate 1998). Particular decorative elements, including the lamb motifs, were almost exclusively made for children's coffins. Matching or similar lugs and handles were found in Hacker-Norton and Trinkley's report on the Calhoun collection, including the lugs from Type 5a and 5b (identical to Figure 11G in Hacker-Norton & Trinkley) and the lugs from Type 5c (identical to Figure 11H in Hacker-Norton & Trinkley). The Type 5 handles may match Figures 11C, 11D, and/or 11E in Hacker-Norton & Trinkley. A silver-plated handle/lug combination identical to that found in Burial 55 (Type 5b) was found in both the 1881 Sargent and Co. catalog (No. 261) and the Hearne Bros. and Co's catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (No. 3) (Hearne Bros. & Co.:3; Sargent & Co. 1881:5).



*The top left lug matches the lugs from Burial 12 (Type 5c). The top right lug matches the lugs from Burials 11, 25, and 55 (Type 5a and 5b) from the Calhoun collection, documented by Hacker-Norton and Trinkley (1984:24). The lower left handle is a Sargent and Co. silver-plated coffin handle from the 1881 catalog, identical to Type 5b. The lower right handle is a Hearne Bros. & Co. white metal coffin handle dating between 1900 and 1930.*

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### **Type 7: Burial 15**

**Estimated date range: 1883-1930** (based on similar handles in historic catalogs and cemetery excavations)



Coffin handle Type 7 is double-lug swing-bail style, composed of white metal. Each handle is approx. 220mm in length. The swing-bail handles (approx. 107x51.8x11mm) are hollow-backed with a ferrous metal center. The outer surfaces of the handles are decorated with swirl and scroll motifs. The lugs measure approx. 82x64.84x4.3mm and are shaped like five-pointed oak leaves. The tops of the lugs are decorated with leaf veins and each has a single raised acorn where the handles attach to the lugs. Ferrous metal screws perforate the lugs on either side of the acorns for attaching the lugs to the coffin. One of the lugs on each handle is stamped with the number "10", but no other manufacturer's marks are visible.

Coffin handle lugs identical to these (with the oak leaf and acorn motif) were found in a burial from the Stirrup Court Cemetery in Ontario in the grave of a man who died in 1883 (Woodley 1992). Similar (but not identical) lugs with oak leaves and acorns were present in the Hearne Bros. and Co's catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (Hearne Bros. & Co.).

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**Type 8: Burials 22, 50, 52**

**Estimated date range: 1890-1930** (based on general popularity of similar style handles)



Coffin handle Type 8 is double-lug swing-bail style, composed of white and smaller in size than other handles. Each handle is approx. 155mm in length. The swing-bail handles (approx. 86x45x9mm) are hollow-backed with a ferrous metal center. The outer surfaces of the handles have raised scroll patterns near the lugs and ridges running lengthwise along the long part of the handle. Two pins protrude from either side of the handle and insert into hollow, raised protrusions (18.7x14x9mm) on the lugs. The lugs are leaf-shaped and measure approx. 40x40x3mm. The lugs have raised scroll/leaf decorations. The protrusions for handle attachment are flanked by two holes perforated by ferrous bolts for attaching the lugs to the coffin. The backs of the lugs are stamped with the number "196".

Small white metal coffin handles such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hearne Bros. & Co.). While this particular style could not be identified in any catalogs or other cemetery excavations, a general date of 1890-1930 can be applied given the general popularity of similar handles.

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### Type 9: Burial 36

**Estimated date range:** 1900-1930 (based on identical handle in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog)



Coffin handle Type 9 is double-lug swing-bail style, composed of white metal and smaller in size than other handles. Each handle is approx. 190mm in length. The swing-bail handles (approx. 106x45.5x10.4mm) are hollow-backed with a ferrous metal center. The outer surfaces of the handles are decorated with a line down the center and rays fanning outward on either side. The ends of the handles near the attachment point by the lugs have floral and swirl designs. The handles are attached to the lugs with a metal bolt that extends into a raised protrusion on the lugs. The lugs (approx. 54x53.5x11.2mm) are attached to the coffin by two ferrous metal screws that perforate the lugs on either side of the handle attachment points. The lugs are decorated with floral patterns on either side of the handle attachment. The outer tips of the lugs are decorated with a fan motif composed of rays that extend from the handle attachment point to the edge of the lug. No manufacturer's marks are visible on the handles or the lugs.

Small white metal coffin handles such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hearne Bros. & Co.). An identical handle/lug combination was found in the Hearne Bros. and Co's catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (No. 15) (Hearne Bros. & Co.:6).



*White metal coffin handle identical to Type 9 from the Hearne Bros. and Co's catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (Hearne Bros. & Co.:6).*

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**Type 10: Burial 43**

**Estimated date range: 1900-1930** (based on general popularity of small white metal coffin handles)



Coffin handle Type 10 is double-lug swing-bail style, composed of white metal and smaller in size than other handles. Each handle is approx. 158mm in length. The swing-bail handles (approx. 90.5x39x7.5mm) are oval in cross-section. The outer surfaces of the handles have raised decoration with a vertical band in the center of each handle. Two pins protrude from either side of the handles and insert into hollow raised protrusions (approx. 18.5x12.6x8mm) on the lugs. The lugs (approx. 46.4x42x2.9mm) are oval-shaped with raised swirl decorations and a flower on the top and bottom of each lug face. The protrusion for handle attachment is flanked by two holes perforated by ferrous bolts for attaching the lugs to the coffin. The back of one of the lugs on each handle is stamped with the number “863”.

Small white metal coffin handles such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While this particular style could not be identified in any catalogs or other cemetery excavations, a general date of 1890-1930 can be applied given the general popularity of similar handles.

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### **Type 11: Burial 51**

**Estimated date range: 1890-1930** (based on general popularity of similar style handles)



Coffin handle Type 11 is double-lug swing-bail style, composed of white metal and smaller than the majority of other handles recovered from the Boot Hill burials. Each handle is approx. 152mm in length (compared to the approx. 215mm of most other handles). The swing-bail handles (approx. 88.4x45.8x7.6mm) are oval in cross sections with ferrous metal centers. Ferrous bars 13mm long extend perpendicular to the handles at each end for fitting into the raised protrusions on the lugs. The fronts of the handles are decorated with an oval surrounded by small rays in the center and floral/swirl designs up the sides. The lugs are leaf-shaped and measure approx. 29.4x41.6x2.9mm. The tops of the lugs bear raised rectangular protrusions (approx. 17.3x15x9mm) for the handle to attach via the aforementioned bar. Ferrous bolts perforate the lugs above and below the raised protrusions for attaching the handle to the coffin. The lugs are decorated with raised ridges, bumps, and swirls. The undersides of the lugs are stamped with the number "58" but no other manufacturer's marks are visible.

Small white metal coffin handles such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. While this particular style could not be identified in any catalogs or other cemetery excavations, a general date of 1890-1930 can be applied given the general popularity of similar handles.

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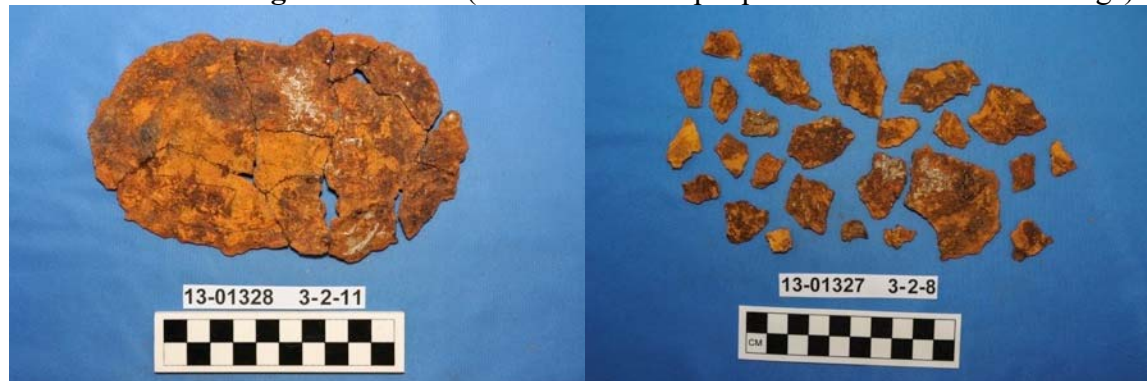
## Metal Plaques

Metal plaques are a common form of decoration in late 19th and early 20th century burials, most often composed of stamped tin or cast white metal (Basse 2013:51). According to Hacker-Norton & Trinkley (1984:11), plaques are generally rectangular or oval in shape and are "attached to the lid of the coffin, usually in the center over the thoracic or pelvic area" (Lebo 1988). While the wealthy customers could afford plaques cast in silver- or gold-plated brass and stamped with personalized messages, inexpensive plaques were stamped with more generic phrases such as "At Rest", "Our Darling", or "Rest In Peace" (Davidson & Mainfort 2006:151).

Sixteen burials at Boot Hill produced metal plaques. Fifteen of these bear either the message "At Rest" or "Our Darling" and one appears to be blank (it is possibly a nameplate). Seven types of plaques have been identified, although due to the high level of degradation, all nine ferrous plaques have been categorized as Type 1. Due to the presence of similar and/or identical plaques advertised in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog, a summary date range of 1900-1930 can be applied to the plaques.

### Type 1: Burials 4, 8, 9, 21, 27, 28, 29, 37, 46

**Estimated date range: 1900-1950** (based on similar plaques found in historic catalogs)



The Type 1 metal plaque is composed of ferrous metal and found in nine burials. Type 1 plaques are stamped from a thin sheet of metal (approx. 2-3mm thick) and appear to have been oval or rectangular in shape. The plaques had flat raised centers bearing the words "At Rest" and decorated edges. No Type 1 plaques are complete, but words and decorations could be discerned from fragments from some burials. Plaques from three burials (27, 28, and 37) had visible decoration and writing, indicating that at least two variations of ferrous metal "At Rest" plaques are present. It is likely that the Type 1 plaques in the other six burials also bore the words "At Rest" but are too broken for the lettering to be discerned.

In Burial 27, plaque fragments displayed the letters "S" and "E" in plain capital block letters. In Burial 28, plaque fragments displayed the letters "S", "E", and "S" in plain capital block letters. One of these was glued back together, revealing that the plaque is oval in shape (approx. 160x93mm) with scroll designs around the edges. In Burial 37, a large plaque fragment displays the words "At Rest" in highly stylized script (as opposed to the block letters from burials 27 and 28).

While all plaques are too fragmented and/or rusted to identify exact matches in catalogs and other cemetery excavations, similar plaques are present in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (Hearne Bros. & Co.:60-67). A summary date range of 1900-1950 can be applied to the Type 1 plaques removed from the Boot Hill burials.

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### **Type 2: Burial 11, 25**

**Estimated date range: 1900-1930** (based on matching plaque found in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog)



The Type 2 metal plaques is composed of white metal and found in two burials. The plaque is rectangular and measures approx. 102x59x4mm. The top of the plaque bears the words "Our Darling" in fancy script. The borders of the plaque are decorated with scrolls and a raised rounded nub pattern. No manufacturer's marks are visible, although the heavy corrosion on the reverse of the plaque may have obscured small markings.

White metal plaques such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hearne Bros. & Co.). An identical plaque was found in the Hearne Bros. and Co's catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (No. 106J) (Hearne Bros. & Co.:6). The plaques could also be inscribed with other messages and appear to have been specifically designed for infant and child burials.



*A plaque identical to Type 2 plaques was found in the Hearne Bros. and Co's catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (No. 106J) (Hearne Bros. & Co.:65).*

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### **Type 3: Burial 12**

**Estimated date range: 1900-1930** (based on similar plaques found in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog)



The Type 3 plaque is composed of white metal. The plaque is rectangular and measures approx. 91x51.2x6.6mm. The top of the plaque bears the words "Our Darling" in fancy script. The border of the plaque is decorated with a raised scroll pattern. No manufacturer's marks are visible, although the heavy corrosion on the reverse of the plaque may have obscured small markings.

White metal plaques such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The plaques could also be inscribed with other messages and appear to have been specifically designed for infant and child burials (Hearne Bros. & Co.). A summary date range of 1900-1930 can be applied to the Type 3 plaques removed from the Boot Hill burials.

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#### **Type 4: Burial 15, 36**

**Estimated date range: 1900-1930** (based on matching plaque found in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog)



The Type 4 plaque is composed of white metal and found in two burials. The plaque is scroll-shaped and measure approx. 152x64x10mm. The top of the plaque bears the words “At Rest” written in fancy, raised script. The plaque is perforated in the upper left and lower right corners with small ferrous pins for attachment to the casket wood. No manufacturer’s marks are visible, although the heavy corrosion on the reverse of the plaque may have obscured small markings.

White metal plaques such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hearne Bros. & Co.). An identical plaque was found in the Hearne Bros. and Co’s catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (No. 112E) (Hearne Bros. & Co.:66).



*An plaque identical to Type 4 plaques was found in the Hearne Bros. and Co’s catalog from Whitakers, North Carolina, dated to 1900-1930 (No. 112E) (Hearne Bros. & Co.:66).*

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### **Type 6: Burial 43**

**Estimated date range: 1900-1930** (based on similar plaques found in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog)



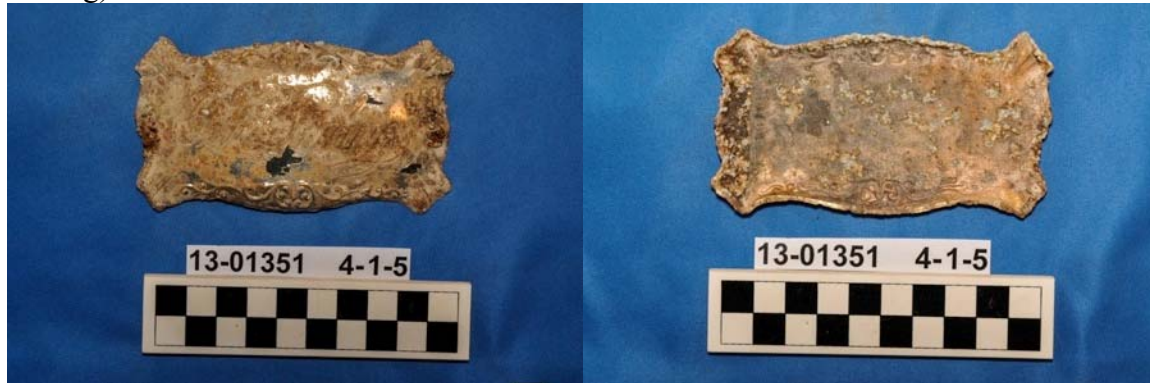
The Type 6 plaque is composed of white metal. The plaque is oval-shaped and measures approx. 104x58.3x10mm. The top bears the words "Our Darling" in raised, fancy, flowing script. The edges of the plaque are decorated with raised floral/scroll patterns. The plaque has a small hole at either end for attachment to the casket lid. No manufacturer's marks are visible.

White metal plaques such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The plaques could also be inscribed with other messages and appear to have been specifically designed for infant and child burials (Hearne Bros. & Co.). A summary date range of 1900-1930 can be applied to the Type 3 plaques removed from the Boot Hill burials.

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### **Type 7: Burial 51**

**Estimated date range: 1900-1930** (based on similar plaques found in the Hearne Bros. & Co. catalog)



The Type 6 plaque is composed of white metal. The plaque is rectangular and measures approx. 104.8x55.7x8.2mm. The top bears the words "Our Darling" in raised, fancy, flowing script. The plaque is perforated at either end by small ferrous pins for attaching it to the casket lid. The back of the plaque is stamped with the numbers "2070". The plaque is composed of a black material and gilded in a thin layer of shiny silver material.

White metal plaques such as these appear in hardware catalogs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The plaques could also be inscribed with other messages and appear to have been specifically designed for infant and child burials (Hearne Bros. & Co.). A summary date range of 1900-1930 can be applied to the Type 3 plaques removed from the Boot Hill burials.