

A TOUR OF THE GRAVE YARD OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN MORRISTOWN

Note: The grave yard is open to visitors during daylight hours only. Visitors enter at their own risk. It is best to stop when looking around rather than to wander aimlessly, as grave markers and shins are known to be mortal enemies.

Location #1—Along The Wall About The Middle Of The Parking Lot Behind The Sanctuary Building

This area is the oldest section of what is the earliest known burying ground in Morristown. The oldest woman interred in the burying ground is believed to be Abigail Goble who was born about 1680. Her marker, directly in front of you, displays some of the classic stonemason's art common in early grave markers. Notice the hand coming from the clouds to cut down the "Tree of Life." Although the congregation of the church did not begin forming until 1733, the earliest visible grave marker is dated 1731. That marker denotes the resting place of Martha Parson. It is located to your right, near the wall, this side of the large centograph.

Abigail Goble

Martha Parson

As was the tradition in colonial cemeteries, early interments were with the feet of the deceased facing East. This made it a simple matter for the deceased to rise up to meet the angel Gabriel, who would be arriving from the East. This resulted in earlier grave markers having a North-South orientation, the angle of the layout before you. Other than that, early interments were somewhat haphazard. In some cases, they were in whatever place the family and friends of the deceased pointed out. One grave was encroached upon to make room for another, which in turn was disturbed to make room for a third. The remains of strangers often were placed between members of the same family. In 1833, a plan to correct these practices was adopted by the Trustees of the Church. In 1855, Evergreen Cemetery opened, and the Trustees of the Church began restricting interments to families with private plots. In the years that followed, some families chose to relocate remains of loved ones to the new cemetery. In 1990 a Memorial Garden was created along the Morris Street side of the cemetery to the right of where you are standing. The Memorial Garden provides a spot for placement of cremains of loved ones.

Early Interments

The vast majority of grave stones found in the grave yard were placed between the 1730s and the 1850s and offer a good sample of grave stone art of their time. The earliest stones were of sandstone. This reddish brown sedimentary stone, found along the banks of New Jersey rivers was popular with local carvers because of the ease with which it could be worked. In the early 19th century, marble gained in popularity, perhaps due to the growing classical influence in the arts. Not being available locally, marble was more expensive than sandstone. It also was more difficult to carve. Both sandstone and marble have difficulty standing up to the ravages of time. Typical of some of the earliest carvings were "Death Heads" with their hollow eye sockets, square tooth grin, and angular nose. As the stark Puritan view of death, sin, and damnation softened the figures took on a more cherub-like appearance representing the ascending soul or angel and "The Hope of Resurrection." Still later figures included other metaphoric forms e.g., three flowers representing "The Trinity," a shell representing "The Resurrection and Life Everlasting," and the weeping willow representing "Sorrow and Weeping With Grief."

Grave Stone Art

With that little bit of history and background, you now are ready to proceed to Location #2. You may do so by walking to your right along the wall and around the bend until you reach the gate in the fence. Take time to notice the rings embedded in the wall. They are the last evidence of the horse stables that once stood on this site. They were used to tether horses of worshippers during church services.

"Tether Rings"

Location #2—The South Entrance Gate To The Grave Yard

On passing into the grave yard through the gate, to your immediate left is the sandstone grave marker of Elizabeth Freeman Ford Lindsly. The inscription is on the side which faces away from where you are standing. In 1681, when six months old Elizabeth Freeman arrived in America at Philadelphia, it had but one house. A year later the family moved to Woodbridge, New Jersey, where Elizabeth was to meet and marry John Ford. Among the descendants of Elizabeth and John are Jacob Ford, Sr., Jacob Ford, Jr., and Jacob Arnold, whose graves you will pass in a few moments. Among their other descendants are Stephen Vail, owner and operator of Speedwell Iron Works; Alfred Vail, co-inventor of the telegraph; Theodore Vail, the first President of AT&T, whose mansion on South Street has been expanded in condominiums; George W. Bush, 43rd President of The United States; and his mother Barbara Pierce Bush. Following John Ford's death, Elizabeth married John Lindsly 1st, whose marker is right next to hers. John Lindsly was the third child and first male child born in Newark. He was one of the original members and first Elders of the church. His date of birth i.e., 1666, qualifies him as the oldest person buried in this cemetery.

Elizabeth Freeman
FordLindsly

John Lindsly 1st

Immediately behind the grave markers of John and Elizabeth Ford are the "Table Top" grave markers of Jacob Ford, Sr. and his wife Hannah Baldwin Ford. Jacob Ford, Sr. was a prominent land holder and manufacturer of iron, who served as a member of the New Jersey House of Assembly and as a Judge of the Morris County Court. Jacob and Hannah were the parents of Jacob Ford, Jr., whose grave is just to the right of theirs.

Jacob & Hannah
Ford, Sr.

From 1772 to 1774 Jacob Ford, Jr. built the mansion that bears the family name. He also built the Powder Mill on the banks of the Whippany River, which provided much needed gun powder for General Washington's troops. Jacob died in January 1777, barely a month after leading the Morris County Militia in a successful skirmish against the British under the command of Brigadier General Alexander Leslie at Springfield. Jacob was buried with full military honors by order of General Washington. His likeness appears on the Century 21 building. Nearby is the white "Table Top" marker of Jacob's wife Theodosia Ford. She was the daughter of Timothy Johnes, first Pastor of the Presbyterian Church. During Washington's Second Encampment in Morristown in the Winter of 1779-1780, Theodosia lived with her children in two rooms off the kitchen of the mansion her husband had built, while Washington used the rest of the mansion as his headquarters.

Jacob Ford, Jr.

Theodosia Ford

At the foot of the grave of Theodosia Ford is the grave stone of John Lindsley 3rd, Grandson of John Lindsley 1st. In addition to a distinguished military career in both the French & Indian War and the American Revolution, like his Grandfather he served as an Elder of the Church. His death was due to Consumption which he battled for several years after falling into the icy Delaware River during the famous Christmas Day Crossing in 1776.

John Lindsley 3rd

Placed flat on the ground to the left of the large tree, which stands near the cemetery wall, is the white grave marker of Dr. Timothy Johnes, Jr. Timothy was the son of Reverend Timothy Johnes and brother of Theodosia. Timothy gained fame as "The Surgeon On Horseback" during "The Mud Rounds" i.e., General Washington's retreat across New Jersey in the Fall of 1776 prior to the Battle of Trenton and the Battle of Princeton. He later acquired a share of Jacob Arnold's splitting mill at Speedwell, which he eventually sold to Stephen Vail. Now proceed to Location #3.

Timothy Johnes, Jr.

Location #3—Under The Large Evergreen You See As You Face Toward Headquarters Plaza

Standing under the boughs of the evergreen, notice the grave of Major Joseph Lindsley just to the left of the two "Table Top" markers at the base of the tree. Major Lindsley was an Elder of the Church and Head Carpenter in the construction of our Second Meeting House between 1791 and 1795. It would serve as our Meeting House for the next hundred years. Major Lindsley, whose home was near the present site of the Westin Hotel, also managed the Ford Powder Mill following Jacob's Ford Jr.'s death in 1777.

Joseph Lindsley

While still under the boughs of the evergreen and facing toward Headquarters Plaza, look to the left and slightly to the rear. You should be able to see grave of Captain Peter Dickerson. It's a large grayish white tablet placed flat on the ground about two rows over. Peter was a carpenter and keeper of the tavern at the corner of Spring and Water Streets, which was the site of the first meeting to raise a militia in Morris County in early May of 1775. Peter personally supplied all of the equipment of the Company he commanded in the first year of the Revolution. He is said to have been so popular with those who served under his command, that when other units were being depleted as enlistments ran out at year end in 1776, his troops re-enlisted en masse. During the war, his tavern was leased to Robert Norris, so in some historical accounts it is referred to as Norris's (or Norres) Tavern. The tavern, which served as the site of the trial of Benedict Arnold for malfeasance in office while Governor of Philadelphia, was largely destroyed by fire in the early 1900s.

Peter Dickerson

As you emerge from under the boughs of the evergreen walking toward Headquarters Plaza, look to the right for the nearest large tree. Just in front and to the left of the tree you should see the sandstone marker for Abigail Conkling. In line with Abigail's marker but on the far side of the tree is the "Table Top" marker of Silas Condict, Esq. Silas served as Chairman of New Jersey's Committee of Safety formed to keep an eye on British sympathizers prior to and during the war. Silas served for many years as President of the Board of Trustees of the Church, first having been elected to the Board in 1772. In 1774 the Trustees directed him to take a trip to Perth Amboy, Capital of East Jersey, to record the Church's Charter. A copy of the Charter hangs in the Tower Entrance of today's Sanctuary. Between 1781 and 1784 Silas was a member of the Continental Congress. He also served on the committee to draft the first Constitution of the State of New Jersey and as Speaker of the House in the New Jersey Legislature. In 1799 he had a home built by Joseph Cutler which until recently served as the home of the Montessori School on Cutler Street. Silas Condict's likeness also is one of those that appears on the Century 21 building.

Silas Condict

At the same spot i.e., as you come out from under the boughs of the evergreen, to the left there are two large grayish white markers and a large sandstone marker flanked by shorter markers. The large sandstone marker is that of Colonel William DeHart. If you walk around to the front of the markers, you'll see that Colonel DeHart's marker has deteriorated badly. This type of deterioration, called "exfoliation," is caused by expansion and contraction of moisture trapped between the stone's layers. Colonel DeHart, a lawyer by profession, was authorized to purchase 500 pounds of powder and a ton of lead to be kept in a magazine for the use of the militia being raised in Morris County in the Spring of 1775. The munitions were stored somewhere within his residence which once stood at the corner of DeHart and South Streets. Now you are ready to proceed to Location #4.

William DeHart

Location #4—The Knoll Where The Steeple Of The Second Meeting House Now Stands

On the knoll you are near several sites of interest. The steeple is the top fifteen feet of what once stood atop The Second Meeting House. It was lowered to the ground and donated to The Washington Associated where it rested on the grounds of the Ford Mansion until it was returned to the Church by the National Park Service in the mid-1930s. Recently it was restored and moved to the present site. To your immediate left is a marker honoring Colonel Daniel Hitchcock of the Second Rhode Island Regiment and its successor units, who died of wounds and exposure following the Battle of Princeton in early January 1777. He also is said to have had an involvement in the burning of the HMS Gaspee by Rhode Island Patriots in 1772. About twenty five feet away near the wall, you will see a cluster of four Table Top markers. The closest marker to you is that of Thomas Kinney, Esq., the Morris County Sheriff, who served briefly as Captain of the Light Horse Troop. The Troop gained fame for its ability to make rapid strikes against the British. Next to Thomas Kinney's grave is the upright sandstone grave marker of Benjamin Hathaway. A physician and inn operator, he was the first President of the Board of Trustees after the church's Charter was granted in September 1756. Benjamin donated the land near the intersection of Morris and Spring Streets where the Parsonage was built resulting in Reverend Timothy Johnes becoming his neighbor.

The Steeple

Daniel Hitchcock

Thomas Kinney

Benjamin Hathaway

In the opposite direction about twenty-five feet away is the grave of Colonel Jacob Arnold. In 1775, Jacob took over as proprietor of Arnold's Tavern which had been founded by his father Samuel Arnold. The tavern served as Washington's Headquarters during the Winter of 1776-1777. He also succeeded his business partner Thomas Kinney as Captain of the Light Horse Troop. Jacob Arnold's likeness is another of those appearing on the Century 21 building. As for the tavern, it went through several owners and finally was moved to the edge of town along Mount Kemble Avenue, where it became the the first site of All Soul's Hospital. Jacob Arnold's home still stands in Washington Valley across from "The Old School House." A few markers to the right of Jacob's are those of his parents Samuel and Phebe Ford Arnold. Phebe was the eldest daughter of Jacob & Hannah Baldwin Ford, Sr.

Jacob & Sarah
Arnold

Samuel & Phebe
Ford Arnold

Also nearby are a short brownstone marker and five large grayish white markers. The tallest of these is a memorial to the family of Isaac Canfield. Among those interred at this site is Margaret Caldwell Canfield, Isaac's wife. Margaret's father was Reverend James Caldwell, who served as a Chaplain for Colonel Elias Dayton's Regiment during the American Revolution. Reverend Caldwell probably is most famous for passing out hymn books from the Presbyterian Church in Springfield to members of the militia to use as wadding during the Battle of Springfield in May of 1780 with the admonition, "Fill 'em full of Watts boys!" Margaret's mother Hannah, is said to have been shot point blank with one of her children by a Hessian soldier while hiding in the Parsonage of the Connecticut Farms Presbyterian Church in Union. In the early 1800s, Margaret started the first Sunday School in Morris Plains in the old stone school house which once stood on West Hanover Avenue at the corner of what today is Irondale Road. The school went on to become the Morris Plains Presbyterian Church.

Margaret Canfield

Nearby, marked by yet another medallion of The Daughters of the American Revolution, is the resting place of General John Doughty. Doughty was an artillery officer in the American Revolution who went on to serve briefly as Chief of Staff of the United States Army. His impressive home once stood where Mount Kemble and Colles Avenue meet. Apartments now occupy the site. In 1825, John was Chairman of the Committee to Host General Lafayette's return visit to Morristown. General Doughty's likeness is another one of those appearing on the Century 21 building.

John Doughty

Farther off to the left is the white grave stone of Joshua Guerin, a blacksmith, who served as a Sergeant in the Morris County Militia. His home still stands at the corner of Jockey Hollow and Sugar Loaf Roads at the entrance to Jockey Hollow National Park. You now are ready to proceed to Location #5.

Joshua Guerin

Location #5—The Midpoint Of The Path From The North Entrance Gate To The Rear Of The Grave Yard

On the right of the path is a stone marker placed by The Daughters of the American Revolution in memory of Revolutionary Soldiers buried in the cemetery in 1777. Although periodic surveys of grave markers and church records have resulted in the identification of over 1,500 individuals who have been interred in the grave yard, at least one account mentions the number 4,000. During the small pox epidemic of 1777, it is known that there was at least one mass burial of 150. Many years later workers constructing a burial vault unearthed a variety of brass buttons and fragments of blue uniforms. This memorial is a lasting tribute to those who served and whose resting place in the Church Yard today is unmarked.

The DAR Memorial

Nearby is the resting place of John Gwinnup. In 1775, John, a hatter by trade, bought property in "The Hollow" at the corner of Spring and Water Streets from the L'Hommiedieu's for his home and shop. He went on to serve as a Private in the Morris County Militia and died of a fractured skull in January 1777. John's widow Rachel later married John Stephenson. John and Rachel operated a general store at the site in "The Hollow" for many years. The house was replaced in the 1820s. The 1820 house was moved to Speedwell Village in 1969 and replaced on the site by The Union Baptist Church.

John Gwinnup

Toward the rear of the cemetery on the right side of the path is the Johnes Family Plot with its memorial to Reverend Timothy Johnes, who served the Congregation so faithfully for over fifty years, including the days of the American Revolution. During the small pox epidemic of 1777 Reverend Johnes took an active role in encouraging the citizenry to be inoculated against the disease. The distinctive green plaque was placed by his great granddaughter, Elizabeth Little sometime after Timothy's remains were relocated to Evergreen Cemetery in 1876. The re-interment is said to have been at the request of his second wife's family, in order that she might be reunited with other family members. A likeness of Reverend Timothy Johnes appears on the Century 21 building.

The Johnes Family

Nearby, on the same side of the path, is the iron fenced plot of the Phoenix Family. One of those buried in the plot is Daniel Phoenix, Jr., who operated a distillery in Washington Valley on School House Lane across from "The Old School House." The property, later owned by long-time church members Dr. and Mrs. Anson Perina, came to be known as "Still Hill" and is thought to be the birthplace of "Jersey Lightning." The Phoenix family went on to build and operate a hotel and tavern in Mendham that today serves as the Mendham Town Hall. Cato, who served the family so faithfully for nearly forty years, rests just outside the iron fence.

The Phoenix Family

Cato

Closer to the front of the burying ground, on the opposite side of the path is the King Family Plot. At the rear of the enclosure is the brownstone marker of Frederick King. He served as an "Express Rider" during the Revolution and went on to become Morristown's first Postmaster. Along the right side of the enclosure is the grayish white marker of Frederick's son Henry King. Henry was Morristown's second Postmaster.

The King Family

Behind the King and Davis Family Plots is the Vail Family Plot. The large gray obelisk marks the resting place of George Vail. George was a silent partner in his brother Alfred's efforts to develop the Telegraph with Samuel F. B. Morse. George went on to serve two terms in the United States Congress. His home, "The Willows," still stands on Speedwell Avenue above Speedwell Lake. Nearby are the graves of Davis Vail and his wife Hannah More Vail. She was a great granddaughter of John and Elizabeth Freeman Ford. In addition, Hannah and Davis were the parents of Stephen Vail and grandparents of Alfred and George Vail. Although he is buried in St. Peter's Church Yard, Alfred Vail deserves special mention for creating a lasting record of those buried in this cemetery. Following his retirement in 1849, Alfred, who once was under the care of the Women's Association of the Church in preparation for a career in the ministry, undertook the task of writing a history of the Vail Family in America. In the Spring of 1851, as a part of that effort, he prepared a record of inscriptions on all the markers in the grave yard. Given the perishable nature of tombstone over time, he is owed a tremendous debt of gratitude by succeeding generations.

The Vail Family

On the right of the path closer to the gate is the Johnson Family Plot including markers for Jacob Johnson and his son Mahlon Johnson. Jacob was a member of The Light Horse Troop. Mahlon ran a store in "Littleton" at what today is the southeast corner of the Route 202/Route 10 intersection in Morris Plains.

The Johnson Family

As you exit the grave yard through the gate to the driveway, the Mills Family Plot can be seen on the right. The oldest of the markers in this plot are the eight sandstone markers lined up near the corner of the "1776 On The Green" building. Included among these are Timothy Mills and his wife Phebe Mills. Timothy was a farmer and tanner by trade. The home of Timothy and Phebe on Mills Street, which once was considered the edge of town, is the oldest home remaining in Morristown. Timothy, who served in the Morris County Militia during the Revolution, was one of the early Elders of the Presbyterian Church, being ordained on November 6, 1761.

The Mills Family

The grave stones seen in the Grave Yard probably tell only half the story. Unmarked are the graves of many soldiers interred in one or more mass graves, who died during the outbreak of small pox in 1777. In addition the Bill of Mortality recording deaths in the Presbyterian & Baptist Congregations between 1768 and 1807 reveals the names of over 1400. Fully half of that number probably were interred here without ever having a marker placed.

The Bill of Mortality

Those seeking information on specific Morristown families may find Who's Who In the Colonial Burying Grounds Of Morristown, New Jersey & Where Are They Now compiled by Scott Shepherd useful. This compilation includes the names of those listed in Who's Who In The Grave Yard Of The Presbyterian Church, as well as, the Bill of Mortality and a list of those reinterred at Evergreen Cemetery when the Old Baptist Church Burying Ground and the Methodist Episcopal Grave Yard were vacated in the last half of the 1800s. A copy is available in The Local History Room of the Joint Free Public Library of Morristown & Morris Township, 1 Miller Road, Morristown.

Other Sources Of Informantion