

Revolutionary War Soldiers in the The "Old Burial Ground" and the Washington Cemetery

by Ron Eisert

The year 2006 will mark the 225th anniversary of the creation of Washington County in 1781. That year also the city of Washington was laid out by David Hoge and named Bassettown. Originally the settlement was known as Catfish Camp when first settled in about 1770 and throughout the decade. Early settlers came here from Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania. Most were Ulster Scots from Northern Ireland as well as from other parts of Great Britain and from German speaking principalities of Europe.

Many of these early pioneer settlers to Washington were buried in the city's first burial ground known as the "Old Graveyard" or the "Old Cemetery". It stood in what was the northwest quarter of the town between North Alley (now Spruce) and Walnut St. This is the present site of the John F. Kennedy Catholic School behind the Immaculate Conception Church. It occupied the entire area where the school and the adjacent playground and parking lot exists extending down to the apartment complex. There is a popular belief that the I.C. church also stands on the site of some of the cemetery. This misconception is probably due to the fact that the nearby Lutheran church was built on the site of an old cemetery shortly before the I.C. church was constructed. A map of the city lots published in the 1876 Caldwell's Atlas of Washington County clearly shows both cemeteries as they existed. Apparently David Hoge set aside certain lots for this burial ground but no record is to be found of any deed from the Hoges to the community. This cemetery was the city's primary burying ground until after the Washington Cemetery on Park Ave. was incorporated in 1853. In 1785 David Hoge conveyed ownership of the town lots to his sons John and William. These included lots #268 thru 272 of the original plan of the town which were used as the burying ground.

The first internment occurred in 1795 and the last was in 1896. Of the hundreds of internments in the old Washington cemetery there were over 60 men who served in the American Revolution. This graveyard probably contained more Revolutionary War soldiers than any cemetery in Washington County. Some served in the Continental Army under Gen. Washington and others served in various militia units. These individuals were identified by a WPA project in 1934-35 and by the Washington County Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution. Another source was "Miscellaneous Cemeteries of Washington County Vol. 3". A number of these soldiers were removed from the old cemetery by family members many years ago and re-interred in the new Washington Cemetery. I believe that most of these re-internments occurred in the last part of the nineteenth century or early twentieth century. The borough encouraged residents who had loved ones buried in the old graveyard to have them removed and re-interred in the Washington Cemetery or elsewhere. However, most of the internments were lost and obscured by the ravages of time and neglect.

As early as 1881 the cemetery was described as being in deplorable condition being overrun with locust trees, briars, broken fences, headstones broken and down and "large excavations". The first record of old burials was made in 1906 by Alice Mills Seaman and John Seaman as a "Record of bodies remaining in the Old Graveyard as indicated by stones and monuments then standing". The Seaman family lived on Chestnut St. on lots now occupied by the Immaculate Conception Church. According to Earle Forrest's History of Washington County (1926) many headstones were carried off and used in walks. In the 1930's an unorganized local boys baseball team, known as the "graveyard spooks", would play other city neighborhood teams here.

There were even attempts in the last century to have all the standing headstones placed horizontally so that the cemetery could be used as a playground for children. In 1915, the city engineer David Morrow, made a survey of the cemetery and located 313 graves, and recorded the legible inscriptions as well as prepared a plan of the cemetery. These two surveys done in 1906 and 1915 undoubtedly provided the 331 names that appear on the plaque in the Hoge Memorial on Walnut St. Although some 21 Revolutionary War patriots names appear on the 1906 record only 6 names appear on the plaque. Undoubtedly hundreds of other burials once existed here and were lost. Of course all the burials were removed or destroyed when the cemetery was excavated about 40 years ago prior to construction of the school. The remains that were recovered are housed in the Hoge Memorial Burial Ground dedicated in 1973 behind the school.

The writer has compiled a list of 46 names of these patriots who deserve to be honored for their service to the cause of liberty. Some veterans whose remains once rested here include David Redick, the surveyor who laid out the town, Absolum Baird, a surgeon in the Continental Army and first physician in the city. Hugh Wylie served as an early postmaster of the city and Col. David Williamson of the Washington County militia and the third sherrif who was buried in a paupers grave. John Hoge, who served as an Ensign in the Ninth Pa. Regt. was also a surveyor, judge, and one of the founders of the town. William Hoge was also buried in the "Old Graveyard" and along with his brother John were later re-interred in the Washington Cemetery. Due to the fact that apparently no records were kept of the burials and the later removal of burials it is impossible to determine for certain that the following listing is complete and totally accurate. Many patriot's graves in the county are listed as unknown by the DAR and on the Veterans Administration Graves Registration records.

Since most of these patriots were Scots Irish, they were probably members of the early Presbyterian churches in the community. Nearby on the east side of N. Franklin St. at the site of the First Lutheran Church, was the old German Lutheran church and cemetery where many of the early German settlers in Washington were buried beginning in 1817. The remains of some 373 persons were excavated before construction of the new church in 1925 -1926 and placed in a crypt in the basement of the church. This cemetery was less than one third the size of the "Old Graveyard" so one can only imagine how many more burials once existed in the latter cemetery. In fact, in 1888 a law was enacted restricting additional burials because of overcrowding. Many of the poor of the town were buried here in unmarked graves. It is probably not unreasonable to assume that perhaps as many as a thousand internments existed. In 1897 a borough ordinance was passed prohibiting any additional burials in the "Old Graveyard" and the "Lutheran Graveyard".

The year 2006 would present an excellent opportunity to dedicate a fitting memorial to these patriots of the American Revolution whose remains once rested here. It would be erected adjacent to the Hoge Memorial on Walnut St. and would consist of a granite memorial with the names of these 46 patriots. An alternative tribute could be in the form of a bronze tablet with these names, attached on the outside of the Hoge Memorial. However it may be safer to place a bronze tablet at the school building on Spruce Alley. The following is a list of the veterans whose names would appear on the memorial. It does not include those whose remains that are known to have been removed and are interred in the Washington Cemetery.

John Armstrong
David Allen
George Aster
Jeduthia Baldwin
Robert Barr
Gabriel Blakeney
Daniel Carr
Patrick Cavanaugh
Samuel Clark
William Cummings
Walter Denny
Walter Dewey
William Doak
Richard Finley
Peter Fleming
James Gilmore
Isaac Graham
John Henderson
Samuel Johnson
Daniel Kehr
Michael Keller
Joseph Kirkpatrick
James Laird
William McCalmont
Thomas McClland

James McClland
Daniel McClintock
John McClintock
George McClintock
William McClintock
James McGowen
Samuel McMullen
John Mitchell
James Milligan
John Marquis
Joseph Pentecost
Peter Poole
Benjamin Ramsey
David Redick
James Smith
Thomas Stockley
Joseph Wherry
David Williamson
James Workman
Hugh Workman
Hugh Wylie

The Washington Cemetery

Because of overcrowding in the old graveyard, its neglected condition, and its proximity to the town, residents of the community suggested finding an alternative burying ground.

However it was not until 1852 that a concerted effort was made to secure an attractive location outside the city. Sarah Foster Hanna, President of the Washington Female Seminary, initiated a meeting of a number of citizens to meet at the Seminary to discuss establishing a new cemetery. On March 3, 1853 the Washington Cemetery Company was incorporated with the following board of managers: Rev. Thomas Hanna, Hon. Jacob Slagle, Dr. Matthew Clark, John Bausman, Sample Sweeney, Alex Murdock, and David Wilson.

The company purchased land owned by Alex Sweeney, James Stream, and John McClland on what was the Upper Ten Mile Plank Road about 1/2 mile past the Fairgrounds (W&J Athletic Field). This ground was quite attractive with a beautiful view of the town of Washington. The cemetery originally consisted of 36 acres, but additional land was also acquired from Joseph Huston, and William Huston. In 1882 the cemetery comprised some 68 acres. Today it encompasses about 270 acres and contains over 44,000 burials.

The first internment was the infant child of Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Hays on Nov. 1, 1853. As mentioned earlier many families of the Washington area removed their loved ones from the old graveyard and buried them here in family plots purchased in the new cemetery. During the Civil War the cemetery donated a large conspicuous lot to be used as a burial place for the fallen soldiers. A circle of land was reserved for a Soldiers Monument to be erected in memory of the fallen Union soldiers. Money was collected from citizens of the community and the monument became the first major contribution towards the beautification of the cemetery.

The monument overlooks the Veterans section of the cemetery where soldiers from all wars from the Civil War to the present time are buried. However all the veterans of the American Revolution were gone by the time the cemetery was created. Nevertheless, there are a number of patriots reburied in family plots in the Washington Cemetery. I have located and photographed the graves of 14 patriots buried in various sections of the older part of the Washington Cemetery in Sections C, E, G, & H. Several veterans that were reportedly moved from the old graveyard could not be located or identified on records at the cemetery office. They include Gabriel Blakeney who served at Long Island, was a prisoner, served as a Lt. in the

Flying Camp and later was a private in the 8th Pennsylvania. Newspaper accounts of his death say he was a Colonel. Blakeney is listed on the 1906 record of tombstones standing in the "Old Graveyard".

Another Colonel whose grave location is uncertain is Jeduthia Baldwin, a surgeon in the Continental army. He left no will and no orphans court records exist suggesting he left no family. He is not on the 1906 record of the old graveyard and is not on record at the Washington Cemetery. I believe that an error occurred somewhere along the way as to whether what was the recorded in some sources as the Washington Cemetery was actually the "old Washington Cemetery" or "Old Graveyard". Therefore I believe both Baldwin and Blakeney were not reburied in the Washington Cemetery and should be on the roster of names of soldiers whose remains were lost because of construction of the the school.

Perhaps the most familiar Revolutionary War soldier here is Col. George Morgan of Morganza near Canonsburg. He was born in Philadelphia, educated at Princeton and was a partner in the trading company of Baynton, Wharton and Morgan. He established a trading post at Fort Pitt and had traveled the Ohio Valley as far as the Illinois country dealing with the Indians. He was appointed Indian agent for the Western Department of the Continental Army with the rank of Colonel and it was his responsibility to negotiate with the various tribes of the Ohio country to prevent them siding with the British forces. He died at his plantation Morganza in 1810 and was re-interred from a graveyard on his farm.

Col. Absolum Baird served as a surgeon with Baldwin in the Continental Army under Gen. Wayne, came to Washington in 1786 and became the city's first physician. William Mckennan was born in Delaware and served as a Lt. in Capt. Kean's Company of the Flying Camp Regiment. Wounded at Brandywine, his stone reads he was a Colonel. John Hoge served as an Ensign in the 9th Pennsylvania Regt. and was a delegate to the state convention in Philadelphia. He was also one of the proprietors of the town. In the same family plot is John Hoge Walker who crossed the Delaware River with Washington.

Jacob Schaffer served in the Lancaster Co. militia, Abraham Wotring was an Ensign in the Northampton Co. militia. Hugh Wilson served in the 13th Pennsylvania Regt. and his brother James a Lieutenant in the Washington Co. militia. Thomas Scott was the first representative from Washington County to Congress and was a member of the state convention that ratified the Constitution. Jacob Weirich was in the Washington County militia and earlier in the war was a prisoner on Long Island. Robert Stockton was one of the first veterans to be re-interred in Washington Cemetery (1856). He had served in the Cumberland Co. militia and fought at Trenton and Monmouth. James Morrison served as an Ensign in the 8th Pennsylvania Regt. and the Washington County Rangers.

The writer is a member of the George Washington Chapter, Sons of the American Revolution.

