

Graveyard Tour

Welcome to the Great Choptank Parish and this historic cemetery. The past will sneak up on you when you look at the cornerstone of this large granite church that has stood at the corner of Church and High Streets since 1883. The first church here was a frame building erected in 1693, just one year after Dorchester County had been subdivided into two parishes, the Great Choptank Parish and Dorchester Parish. The church in 1693 was known simply as the Church in Cambridge. That first church eventually fell into total disrepair, and in 1794 a new brick building was erected. The second church which actually is the first one to be known as Christ Church stood for about 90 years, until it was destroyed by fire on Thanksgiving Day 1882. The present structure, with its Gothic architecture, was built in 1883 during the rectorship of the Rev. Theodore Barber, one of the outstanding clergymen to serve the Great Choptank Parish. Barber Hall which stands just behind this church is named for him.

The churchyard has been a burial ground since the latter half of the seventeenth century. A few of those buried here might actually be under the foundation of the present church. There are also several persons here who rest in unmarked graves, and they are undoubtedly among those in the oldest graves which were probably not marked with tablets or monuments of stone.

My own journey into the graveyard of Christ Church began well over 20 years ago when I was requested by the junior warden at the time to bring the graveyard records up to date and enter all the data into a computer database. I was somewhat fortunate in that Christ Church had a good foundation of information thanks to the efforts of the late Dr. Guy Steele and the late Lawrence Ewell who were both devoted to the preservation of historical information in general and the graveyard in particular. However, I had about 20 years of uncharted information to gather following the death of Mr. Ewell when no accurate records were kept. So it began.

I carefully entered all the material I could gather from the church's records into my data base, and then I hit the graveyard going grave to grave. There are over 1500 entries of persons buried or lot holders in the graveyard. Of those 364 are in what is called the "Old Graveyard." I will briefly tell you about some of the historical stones at Christ Church.

Robert Goldsborough 1733-1788 was educated in England. His ability made him a member of numerous state conventions during the turbulent period preceding the Revolutionary War. He was a member of the Congress that adopted on July 4,

1776, the Declaration of Independence, a framer of Maryland's first Constitution in 1776, and a member of the Convention in 1788 that ratified the Constitution of the U. S. His grave and that of his wife Sarah Yerbury of England are two of those which are probably under the present church.

The earliest dated monuments in Dorchester County are those of **William and Magdalen Stevens** which were moved to Christ Church in 1940 from the Huffington Farm where the Cambridge County Club is now located on the banks of the Choptank River. In 1997, the stones were removed from the churchyard, underwent restoration, and were placed inside the church for safekeeping. Magdalen Stevens died in 1678 and her husband William Stevens died in 1684. The Stevens family came to Maryland in 1651 first settling in what is now Calvert County before moving to Dorchester. William Stevens became one of the first justices of Dorchester County in 1669. The Stevens were ardent Quakers and good friends of George Fox, the founder of the Quaker religion. Many meetings of the Quakers were held at the Stevens home on the Choptank.

Many colonial politicians are buried behind these brick walls as well as Revolutionary War patriots and veterans from the Civil War, the War of 1812, the Mexican War, the Spanish American War, Korea, World Wars I and II and Vietnam. Christ Church is especially proud of the **Revolutionary War patriots**.

Richard Pattison 1761-1825 was born on Taylors Island. He was a Justice of Dorchester County from 1794-1818 and a member of the General Assembly of Maryland from 1796-1799. His inscription says simply *In memory of Richard Pattison who departed this life November 10, 1825 aged 61 years A Soldier of the Revolution.*

Another patriot, **Captain John Brohawn** 1761-1820 was also from Taylors Island. His monument reads *In Memory of John Brohawn of the Revolutionary War who was born April 1761 and departed this life November 10, 1820 Respected by his neighbors. A good citizen and honest man. Give Joy or Grief. Give Ease of Pain. Take life or friends away.*

Lt. John Stewart McNamara 1755-1823 was a Revolutionary War veteran from the Lakes District. His interesting inscription reads *"All of you that pass by pray think on me. Think that I was once in the world like thee but now lie mouldering in the dust in hope to rise among the just."*

Major Francis Turpin 1759-1829 lived and died at his home Rehoboth on the Nanticoke River near Eldorado. This soldier's inscription reads: *"Stop passenger as you pass by, As you are now, so once was I...I had my share of earthly care...As I was living as you are, But God from all has set me free...Prepare for death and follow me."*

Nathan Griffin 1759-1837 another Revolutionary War veteran was from Town Point. His monument reads *"At an early age, he joined the Revolutionary Army and nobly went forward in defense of his country's invaded rights. He lived to enjoy the blessing of that Independence for which on several occasions he so gallantly fought. In private life, the integrity of his principles commanded the respect and esteem of all who knew him. He was a kind and affectionate father, a tender and indulgent parent, and a firm and uncompromising friend. Reader, he was truly an honest man."*

The graves of the Revolutionary soldiers were brought to Christ Church from various locations in the county through the efforts of Dr. Guy Steele.

Other early stones Dr. Steele caused to be moved from Weston are those of Major **James Billings**, a native of Whitehaven England who died on the 14th day of September 1747 at Vienna, Maryland and his wife **Ann Billings** daughter of the Hon. Col. John Rider, Esq. who died on February 17, 1756 aged 43 years at Vienna. Also, the marker for **Henry Steele** 1718-1782 was moved from Weston. Henry Steele came from England in 1749 and settled near Vienna where he became a large and prosperous property owner. He was a Justice in 1759, a Burgess from 1763-1770, and a member of the General Assembly in 1777.

This historic resting place is the burial site for four **Maryland governors**: Governor Charles Goldsborough, Governor Henry Lloyd, Governor Phillips Lee Goldsborough, and Governor Emerson C. Harrington. There is a monument here commemorating a fifth governor, Governor John Henry, who was a member of this parish and whose grave at his home "Weston" on the Nanticoke River was washed away through erosion.

Governor John Henry - This stone was erected to his memory by his descendants. It is said that the bones of the Billings and Steele families that were moved here from Weston are buried together under the Governor John Henry memorial monument. John Henry was a lawyer, statesman, and governor. He was born in 1750 and died in 1798. John Henry was a member of the Continental Congress from 1777-1788, a member of the U. S. Senate from 1789-1797 and Governor of Maryland from 1797-1798. His monument says that he is *"Honored for His*

Wisdom and Political Integrity.” He was the son of Col. John and Dorothy Rider Henry. John Henry married Margaret Campbell.

Governor Charles Goldsborough 1764-1834 was born at Hunting Creek and educated at the College of Pennsylvania, now the University of Pennsylvania. He was a member of the Maryland Senate, a member of the House of Delegates, a U. S. Representative and finally the Governor of Maryland in 1819. He was the son of Charles and Anna Maria Tilghman Goldsborough. Governor Goldsborough first married Elizabeth Goldsborough daughter of Judge Robert Goldsborough of Ashby in Talbot County and second married Sarah Yerbury Goldsborough daughter of Charles Goldsborough of Horns Point in Dorchester County.

Governor Henry Lloyd 1852-1920 was a member of the Maryland State Senate from 1882-1884, Governor of Maryland from 1885-1888 and a Circuit Court Judge from 1892-1908. He was the son of Daniel and Catherine Henry Lloyd. Governor Lloyd’s paternal grandfather was Governor Edward Lloyd and maternal great grandfather was Governor John Henry. During his term Governor Lloyd sanctioned a reduced ten hour workweek for children, enacted a bill that inspected tobacco, and regulated the Eastern Shore oyster fishing industry. Governor Henry Lloyd’s inscription reads “*The strife is o’er, the battle done. The victory of life is won. The song of triumph has begun. Requiescat in Pace.*”

Governor Phillips Lee Goldsborough 1865-1946 was State Comptroller in 1897 and Governor of Maryland from 1912-1916. He was a U. S. Senator from 1929-1935. While governor, Goldsborough’s term of office is credited with improvements in the school laws and the creation of the Workman’s Compensation Commission. He was the son of Worthington and Henrietta Maria Jones Goldsborough.

Governor Emerson Columbus Harrington 1864-1945 was State Comptroller in 1911, and Governor of Maryland from 1916-1920. He organized the Council of Defense during World War I and the State Parole Board was adopted during his tenure. Governor Harrington was considered one of the outstanding trial lawyers of the State of Maryland. He was born at Madison, Dorchester County, the son of John E. and Annie Thompson Harrington.

There is a love story hidden deep in a tomb in this picturesque graveyard. Among the governors, colonial politicians, Revolutionary War patriots, and veterans from various wars and other confrontations lurks the intriguing story of Williamina Elizabeth Smith Goldsborough which is just waiting to be told.

Williamina Elizabeth Smith Goldsborough lived from 1762 to 1790. She was the wife of Charles Goldsborough of Horns Point and daughter of the Rev. Dr. William Smith, first provost of the University of Pennsylvania and first president of Washington College. He also wrote the *Preface to the Book of Common Prayer* which is still used today as it was adopted October 1789 in Philadelphia.

At a young age Williamina Smith became engaged to Dr. Thomas Cradock (1752-1821), son of the Reverend Thomas Cradock, first of the family in this country and Rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Garrison Forest. Dr. Cradock was educated for a medical career in Philadelphia. When his suit for the hand of Williamina was frowned upon by her father in part because Dr. Cradock's father had refused to support his future father-in-law's candidacy for Bishop of Maryland, the young couple with the assistance of Colonel John Eager Howard, made plans to elope, but at the last minute Williamina, "fearing her father's displeasure," had second thoughts and backed out. Afterward she sent Dr. Cradock a ring with her miniature, said to have been painted by Major Andre', which the good doctor retained until the day of his death.

Williamina Smith returned to Chestertown to be with her family. On one especially rainy day, this lively young lady when walking in the mud of the unpaved Chestertown streets lost one shoe in the mud. As she was struggling to cope, a young man asked her what she was doing. Her retort was "putting my best foot forward." That man was Charles Goldsborough son of the Hon. Robert and Sarah Yerbury Goldsborough of Dorchester County whom Williamina married on May 15, 1783.

Charles and Williamina Smith Goldsborough had three young children when she tragically died in 1790. Her parents the Rev. Dr. and Mrs. William Smith came to Christ Church and placed her monument which has the following inscription in the churchyard:

"In memory of Williamina Goldsborough wife of Charles Goldsborough, Esq. of Dorset County Maryland daughter of the Rev. Dr. William Smith and Rebecca, his wife of Philadelphia. She died December 19, 1790, age 28 years."

To the memory of Williamina Elizabeth Goldsborough Her mournful parents inscribed this tablet. *"Called from this mortal scene in the Bloom of life.... Here lies a much loved Daughter; Mother; Wife....To whom each Grace and Excellence were given....A saint on Earth, an angel now in Heaven...to her sad shrine with trembling steps and slow...bereaved parents come to speak their woes...to grave it deep in*

*monumental stone... and with a husband's sorrow mix their own...But
ah! no further trace this tablet bears...Line after Line is blotted with
their tears."*

But the story doesn't end here! To get back to Williamina's first love Dr. Thomas Cradock. Although a great society figure and able physician, he never married but devoted himself to his estate Trentham and to his church where he served as a vestryman for many years. The portrait ring which Williamina Elizabeth Smith had painted for him to remember her by remained in his possession and that of his nephew's family for several generations until 1950 when his great, great nephew donated it to the Maryland Historical Society.

A curiosity in the graveyard is the stone of **Ann Weller** who died in 1817. She was the wife of the Rev. George Weller, a rector of this parish, and a native of Bedford, NY. In the 188 years since her burial, her tombstone has been devoured by a tree and only a small corner of the stone is visible now. The Graveyard Committee placed a marker at the foot of the tree a few years ago in her memory.

The tombstone for **Bushrod Lake, III** who lived from 1876-1878 is called a cradle monument because of its shape. An especially moving verse is on that monument says "To Our Little Darling" J. Bushrod the beloved son of Levin and Maggie E. Lake born 21 Sept. 1876 and departed his parents 2 yrs. 2 mos & 5 days *When God in His mysterious love took him to his Heavenly Home.*

There are many more persons buried here in the shadow of Christ Church who have served our county, state, and country loyally in various capacities over the three hundred year period that the churchyard has existed. It is for all of them, that we, who are interested in the preservation of this historic resting place, are laboring to see that Christ Church Churchyard is preserved for future generations.

Dear Ancestor
Your tombstone stands among the rest;
Neglected and alone.
The name and date are chiseled out
On polished, marbled stone.
It reaches out to all who care
It is too late to mourn.
You did not know that I exist
You died and I was born.

Yet each of us are cells in you
In flesh, in blood, in bone.
Our blood contracts and beats a pulse
Entirely not our own.
Dear Ancestor, the place you filled
One hundred years ago
Spreads out among the ones you left
Who would have loved you so.
I wonder if you lived and loved,
I wonder if you knew
That someday I would find this spot,
And come to visit you.

Author Unknown