

Our Churchyard/Cemetery

link to the transcriptions of the stones in the cemetery

A FEW OF THE INTERESTING TOMBSTONES

THOMAS LINGLE

PVT., FILBERT'S CO. PA. VOLS.

REV. WAR

1742- 1811

THE FOUNDER OF THE

TOWN OF ST. THOMAS

Thomas Lingle is recognized as the founder of the Town of St. Thomas which gradually became known as Linglestown. When he arrived in the area in 1765 he saw the potential for developing the simple community into a planned town. His original plans are available.

FRANCIS WENRICH
SERVED IN BATTLE AT BRANDYWINE,
GERMANTOWN & ON THE FRONTIER

AGAINST THE INDIANS

1750-1827, aged 77 years

In 1784 Franz Wenerich and wife, Elizabeth, came to the area and purchased land from Andrew Berryhill. That land included the log parochial school and house of worship for the area. In 1792 the Wenrich's sold the section of land that included the school/church to the four congregations who worshipped there – Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and German Reformed.

GEORGE PLETZ
IN THE YEAR 1828 DID GEORGE
PLETZ DIDDY IN SEPTEMBER

??DAY HIS AGE 20 YEARS 1

MONTH AND 10 DAYS

In September, 1828 George Pletz and his brother built a flying machine and attempted to fly from the mountain into Fishing Creek Valley. They did not succeed. George, age 20, broke his neck and died. His brother survived with a broken arm.

IN
MEMORY OF
JOHN EISENHOWER

Died JUNE 21, 1861

Aged 87 years 4 months

and 16 days

Served Pennsylvania Militia Revolutionary War and 5th Class Capt Henry Snevely's Co at the time of the Whiskey Rebellion. John was the half brother of the great great grandfather of the 34th president of the United States, Dwight David Eisenhower. His wife, Catherine Planck ,daughter of Jacob Planck, a signer of the deed to the church property, is buried next to him. The church has a copy of an extensive Eisenhower genealogy.

INDIAN
PRINCESS
WHITE
FEATHER
SIOUX TRIBE

8-24-1939 84Y

Known as Mary Greene, Mary Redd, Mary Taylor, White Feather, and Eagle Feather, the stories say that she was an American Native princess, a Sioux from the Dakota territory, taken from the arms of her dead mother, Prairie Flower, after a massacre by the American government. As a youth she was sent to the Carlisle Indian School and after that she never left central Pennsylvania. Her funeral was attended by many Native Americans. There are pictures of the funeral in the church archives.

SLAVE BURIALS

The oldest part of Wenrich's cemetery is on its east side. From 1794 to 1857 the second place of worship stood to the west of that old cemetery. In 1857 the third and present church building was erected to the east of the old cemetery and the area of the second building became a part of the cemetery. From then on, the cemetery expanded to the west.

“The well to do people among our early settlers had slaves. When they died they had to be buried. Many of these servants were buried on the outside of our old cemeteries. Such is the case on these grounds, where slaves were buried on the outside of the cemetery fence, and west of the second place of worship.

These fifty feet west of the old church site, up to the Meese plot, was the first addition to the old cemetery. In this strip the slaves of Colonial days were buried, that were brought to the church for burial. Nearly every grave that was dug, the grave diggers came on human bones, buried long ago. A full grown body was dug upon in Oct 1938.” —from “Records of Wenrich's Reformed Church (now St. Thomas United Church of Christ), Lower Paxton Township. Cemetery Records; Baptisms, 1791-1938” Nevin Moyer and Earle W. Lingle, n.d.

The photo shows the plot of ground between the site of the second church and the Meese plot, and is the land in which the slaves were originally buried. It is currently filled with graves dating from the 1840's to the early 1900's – graves that were dug at least 50 to 100 years after the last slave burials here. The location of this plot was determined using the description given above: “These fifty feet west of the old church site, up to the Meese plot.” Fortunately, the exact location of the second place of worship is marked by a large stone in the cemetery. The Meese plot, which marks the western boundary of the original slave burial grounds, is about twenty paces, roughly fifty feet, west of this marker. The Meese memorial stone is visible in the photograph. It's the tall column near the top of the hill in the right third of the photograph.

None of the slaves buried here are identified in any known records, and it's not known how many slaves are buried here. The age of the burial grounds and the importance of this church to the colonial community tends to support the belief that a large number of slaves are interred here in unmarked graves. The most likely period of time in which slaves were brought here for burial is in the years from the church's founding in 1730 until the building of the second church in 1793-4. Because attitudes towards slavery changed drastically during the Revolution, and especially after 1780 when the Gradual Emancipation law was passed, it is unlikely that many slaves were buried at Wenrich's Church after the 1770's. That half century, however, from 1730 to 1780, encompasses a time when hundreds of slaves toiled in the surrounding fields and lived in the communities served by this church.

- the source for this text is the **afrolumens** project, central Pennsylvania African American history for everyone.