

Sugarcreek Baptist Church Cemetery Self-Guided Tour Notes

Introduction to Sugarcreek Baptist Church and Cemetery

- *Nov. 2, 1799 church organized
 - *meets in one parishioner's home
 - *9 members: 4 men, 5 women
- *1802 acquires 1.5 acres from Aaron Nutt, a Centerville co-founder
 - *enough land for church and cemetery
 - *commissioned Aaron to build log cabin church by July
 - *to be paid in produce and cattle if completed on time;
 - if not, payment will be 50 lbs. sterling
 - *church completed on July 3, 1803
- *July 4, 1807, Benjamin Robbins, another co-founder of Centerville, and Whitely Hatfield lay out cemetery in "proper manner"
 - *rows run north/south, parallel to Main St.
 - *graves face either east or west
 - *tall monuments mark family plots with individual stones nearby
- *until 1868, additional land added
- *until 1926, plots sold
- *1979 Michael Karowitz last burial
- *458 graves total
- *American Revolutionary War and other war veterans interred here
- *2 of 3 founding fathers of Centerville buried in this cemetery
 - *Aaron Nutt
 - *Benjamin Robbins
 - *Benjamin Archer, the third founding father, moved on to Washington Twp., Allen Co., Indiana, due to financial issues
 - *primary developer of Fort Wayne, Indiana

1. Ramsey Children Monument

- *3 children from Ramsey family buried in this spot
 - *Washington dies March 25, 1854 at 1 y, 9 m, 13 d
 - *Rebecca dies March 16, 1859 at 1 y, 2 m, 19 d
 - *John dies March 22, 1859 at 3 y, 1 m, 22 d
- *assumption is they died from illness, typical during the time period

2. Pease Family

- *Anne, wife of Horace, dies April 29, 1829 at 28 y
- *William, son of Anne, dies May 5, 1830 at 1 y, 1 m
- *assumption is Anne dies from childbirth complications and her son dies the following year, not uncommon during the time period

3. Dr. John Hole

- *born April 30, 1755 in New Jersey
 - *one of seven children; family struggles financially
 - *John allowed to go to school until age 11
- *family doctor fosters John and educates him in medical arts
- *serves in American Revolution as personal physician/surgeon to Brigadier General Richard Montgomery
 - *at Battle of Quebec on Dec. 31, 1775 when Montgomery is killed in military advance on fort in front of John
- *marries Mercy (Massee) Ludlow Hole in NJ after war
- *moves with family and other relatives to Northwest Territory (Ohio)
 - *settle on today's Hole's Creek, approximately where windmill house stands on the corner of Alex-Bell and Mad River Rd. *uses
- land warrants earned in war to purchase 1,089.35 acres
 - *builds two water-powered sawmills on creek
- *practices medicine
 - *first doctor in Miami Valley area
 - *travels as far as Sidney, Hamilton, Xenia, etc. on horseback, often takes several days, sleeps outside in all weather
 - *paid in produce, animals, goods
 - *becomes ill, weakened in Quebec and from exposure to elements
 - *dies Jan. 6, 1813 at almost 58 y
- *father to 10 children; 5 die before wife Massee who dies in 1842 at 83 y, 5 m
- *buried in this plot with John:
 - *Massee left of John
 - *Nancy, daughter, left of Massee, dies at 43 in 1840
 - *Jeremiah, oldest son, right of John, dies at 32 two yrs before John
- *Massee sells almost 400 acres to settle John's estate
 - *61 acres sold to investors for water-powered textile mill on creek
 - *beginning of Woodbourne, industrial mecca of Montgomery Co. in mid-1800's
- *Montgomery Co. named after General Montgomery on John's suggestion
- *1940, American Medical Association places new pink granite stone monument
 - *honors his career as first and only doctor in county for five years
 - *John Hole Elementary School built on Hole property in 1956
 - *AMA monument relocated to front of school in 1959
 - *New stone marker placed here

4. Three Little Tombstones

- *3 children (siblings) buried here from Erastus & Sarah Maxwell family
 - *first tombstone: child dies in 1866 at 5 m, 27 d
 - *third tombstone: child dies in 1867 at 3 y, 5 m, 11 d
 - *middle tombstone: child dies 1869 at 8 y, 1 m, 1 d
- *illness probable cause for early deaths
 - *epidemics of small pox, scarlet fever, flu, & tuberculosis common
 - *living past childhood a privilege not all achieve
 - *children necessary for help with farm work,
 - *leaving strong legacy a priority
 - *each year, month, and day counted as important
- *Erastus & Sarah have 3 sons that live to adulthood
 - *While visiting one grown son in 1915, Sarah is hit by an “interurban traction car” that she was trying to catch and is killed at age 76.
 - *Erastus lives until 1918 and the age of 85.
 - *Both are buried in the new Centerville Cemetery on Maple Ave.

5. Kirby and Miller

- *James Kirby and William Miller fight on Union side in Civil War
 - *flag markers say “GAR” meaning Grand Army of the Republic
 - *very decorative, ornately carved flags and military symbols on tombstones

6. Kelseys

- *Jesse Kelsey is first murder victim in area in 1862
 - *tombstone reads: *My husband's grave. Died by the hand of an assassin.*
 - *killed in cold blood in front of wife Unity
- *live on farm on South Main St. where old Kroger sits
 - *Jesse is prominent hog farmer, age 33
 - *Unity expecting couple's first baby
- *Jesse comes home from hog market with a lot of money on Sept. 6
- *the Kelseys are asleep when an intruder comes in through bedroom window and shoots at Jesse, misses
 - *Jesse ushers Unity out of room as the second shot kills him
- *Unity runs to neighboring farm
 - *next morning she identifies intruder as Samuel Robbins, age 22, grandson of co-founder Samuel Robbins
 - *has been one of Jesse's farm hands before the Civil War
 - *AWOL from duty in war
 - *brings home pistol, acting bizarre
 - *hung for his crime
- *Unity gives birth to baby boy about 12 days later
 - *names him Jesse Jr. (lives on farm entire life of 78 years)
 - *Unity never remarries
- *Unity dies four years after Jesse at age 32, buried immediately in front
 - *tombstone reads:
 - My wife's grave. Unity wife of Jesse Kelsey...*
 - Rest mother in quiet sleep, while friends in sorrow weep,*
 - and hear their heartfelt offering, bring near thy grave, thy praises sing.*

7. Robbins Family

- *Centerville-Washington History provides granite plaque by tombstone of co-founder Benjamin Robbins
 - *born 1760 in New Jersey
 - *dies 1837 in Centerville at nearly 77 y
- *1796 family travels to Northwest Territory from NJ with Aaron Nutt, Benjamin Archer, and their families; related through wives
- *1797 Ben builds one-room log cabin with loft, the back of current day Routsong Funeral Home
- *1803 violent storm damages cabin; builds another
- *1809 replaces log cabin with stone home
- *buried in this plot with Benjamin:
 - *wife Bathsheba, sister of Aaron Nutt, to his right
 - *dies 1848 at almost 88 y
 - *William C., three year old son of Benjamin and Bathsheba's seventh child Samuel and his first wife Eliza
 - *buried next to Benjamin, tombstone missing
 - *dies in 1828
 - *Eliza dies ten years later at 32 y, 9 m, 23 d
 - *at right of Bathsheba
- *interesting facts about son Samuel:
 - *blacksmith by trade
 - *first mayor of Centerville in 1830
 - *remarries second wife Mary after Eliza dies
 - *has three more sons
 - *oldest son is named Samuel
 - *born in 1840
 - *Jesse Kelsey's killer in 1862

8. Nutt Family

- *Centerville-Washington History provides the granite plaque by the limestone tombstone of co-founder Aaron Nutt
 - *1776 medallion in ground in front of tombstone
 - *American Revolution flag holder by tombstone in honor of service
 - *born July 17, 1758 in New Jersey
- *Aaron born into poor family; mother dies when he is 5
 - *at age 14, mother apprentices him to tailor
 - *tailor releases Aaron from agreement for serving in his place in the American Revolution
 - *Quaker raised, believes in peaceful means and ways; serves primarily as scout and teamster
 - *does shoot at man once during a battle
 - *legend says he never pointed a gun at a person again the rest of his life
- *marries Quaker widow Mary Archer, sister of co-founder Benjamin Archer, in NJ after war
- *moves toward Northwest Territory with brothers-in-laws plus families
 - *meets John Symmes, Continental Congress member who has been granted land between Miami Rivers for loyalty to George Washington during war (funded Washington's retreat through NJ)
 - *John asks the men to survey his land, likes harmonious look of group
 - *agree to survey, proceed through PA, KY, into OH
 - *in KY, three of Mary and Aaron's children die of smallpox, one week after another for three consecutive weeks
- *in Ohio, founding fathers draw lots for plats of land
 - *Aaron draws last straw, ends up with 320 acre plat that ends up having the most springs
 - *from Franklin St. to Alex-Bell to Cemetery Dr. on east side
 - *west side borders Benjamin Robbins's plat which also has a lot of springs
 - *Benjamin Archer's plat is northeast of Centerville, adjacent to Alex-Bell and along Cloy Rd.
- *Aaron is true entrepreneur and good friend to all
 - *tailor, tavern owner, auctioneer, merchant, building contractor, township official, investor, tanner
 - *people gravitate toward his jovial, kind, temperate nature
- *Aaron and Mary have six more children
- *Mary dies in 1817 at almost 61 y
 - *within four months, Aaron marries another Quaker widow, Martha Pedrick Craig, 38 years old with two children
 - *Aaron and Martha have two more sons
- *Aaron dies after long illness in 1842 at 83 y, 10 m, 16 d
- *buried in row with Aaron are Mary are several family members
 - *buried in row behind them are Martha and other family members

9. Munger Family Plot

- *Edmund Munger, esteemed general from War of 1812, buried here
 - *lives 1763-1850
 - *dies at age 86 by falling from a ladder in his barn
- *wife Eunice Weller Munger is buried to his right
 - *in all, they have ten children
 - *lives to 101 y
- *Edmund moves here from New England with nephew Benjamin Maltbie and families
 - *difficult journey; took 2 years
 - *soon after, the Kellogg and Tibbals families from New England join them
 - *settle in southwest region in township in area of Yankee St.
 - *street named after these early citizens
- *during lifetime, Edmund...
 - *is a blacksmith
 - *is a county commissioner 1804-1808
 - *serves in Ohio Seventh General Assembly
 - *is Washington Twp. clerk 1809-1826
 - *is credited with helping to start local library in 1810
 - *has a highly acclaimed military career in the War of 1812
 - *Ohio militia under his command
 - *attains rank of Brigadier General
 - *well respected among his men

10. Doolittle Family Plot

- *iron railing encloses the plot
- *Enos Doolittle ran Doolittle's Tavern where Town Hall sits now
 - *one of the finest inns west of the Alleghenies
 - *has large dining room and ballroom
 - *William Henry Harrison stays here once
- *buried in plot is his wife Bathsheba, daughter of co-founder Benjamin and Bathsheba Robbins
 - *dies Feb. 28, 1845
 - *some of Enos and Bathsheba's children are buried here
 - *Enos moves to Columbus after wife's death

11. Joseph Pease

- *Joseph's tiny tombstone is directly behind the Doolittle plot
- *dies Sept. 11, 1860 at 5 m, 1 d
- *special feature on tombstone
 - *sleeping figure of young boy on top
 - *during 1800's, tombstone carvings of angels or children signify youth or innocence
- *no other family members are buried near him

DISCLAIMER: "Walk among the Tombstones" was released in the fall of 2020. This tombstone was perplexing with the child figure on top but records indicating the age at death to be 50 yrs, 1 day. Upon cleaning the tombstones in May, 2021, it became clear that Joseph Pease was actually 5 months, 1 day old when he died on September 11, 1860. The thorough cleaning revealed more of his stone. History was uncovered!

12. Watkins Family Plot

- *cement wall marks the boundaries of original plot
- *mid-late 1800's, John C. Watkins is tobacco farmer and businessman
 - *leads committee to buy land and build the first high school
 - *brick building constructed in 1884
 - *now Las Piramides Restaurant
 - *remains high school until the 1924 consolidation
 - *nine district school houses (grades 1-8) and high school into one building
 - *current Magsig Middle School
- *John's children, May and Allen, plus other family members in this plot

13. Thatcher Family Plot

- *impressive, granite family plot marker replaces the original
- *four corner stones border the plot
- *David Thatcher is buried here
 - *1832 invests quarter of the money needed to replace the Sugarcreek Baptist Church log cabin with a stone building
 - *dies in 1889 at 83 y, 3 m, 14 d
- *Mariam, David's wife, is to the left of the tall family monument
 - *1854 dies at 43 y, 8 m, 7 d

14. Reverend Wilson

- *tombstone is a cement tree that is missing branches
 - *cement poured into mold to create, writing carved on flat panels
 - *style used in the late 1880's
 - *tree is obviously dead, like Rev. J. H. Wilson
 - *however, symbols of life are present
 - *ferns and plants edge the bottom, growing up toward heaven, showing new life
 - *cross at top represents life after death
- *J. H. Wilson lives from 1840-1887
 - *dies at 47 y.
 - *expensive tombstone implies deep respect for him
 - *front panel announces "Meet me in heaven"
 - *back panel says "At rest"