

Interesting Facts about Whipps Cemetery

The Gardens. You may have noticed the Rose Garden, Butterfly Garden, and Iris Garden. Daffodils are one of the most popular flowers. After their early spring blossoms, bright yellow Celandine poppies cover the cemetery followed by day lilies, phlox, and other summer flowers. The early tradition of adding vinca along the pathways continues today. Many benches, angels and bird baths are placed throughout.

Angel Garden. Whipps Cemetery is also known as the Angel Garden. You may have noticed many stone angels during your stroll.

Trees, boxwood shrubs. A variety of native shade trees and shrubs are placed throughout the cemetery with benches nearby for meditating and reflecting. Boxwood, a popular shrub in 19th century cemeteries, line many paths. Many trees were donated in honor of loved ones.

Maintenance. Howard County Master Gardeners and community

volunteers nurture the gardens, design educational materials escort tours, and give presentations in the Woodland Theatre.

Water Supply. Early on, water was carried by volunteers from home and Ronald Bradley, a neighbor, ran a water hose to the cemetery. The Bradley family's generosity helped establish the lovely gardens you see today. Water facets were later installed.

Adopting Gardens. Individuals, families, clubs and organizations may adopt a section in the Whipps Garden Cemetery. Guidelines are to re-create a garden that reflects the traditions of the Victorian age such as the planting of heritage and native shrubs, perennials, and annuals that will adapt to the garden environment. Adopters are required to follow accepted procedures for the care of the old marble gravestones. Adopters are urged to do research at the Howard County Historical Society on the person/family buried in their section.

Whipps Garden Cemetery

A Self-Guided Stroll through the Park



3651 St. John's Lane
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Everyone is welcome to visit Whipps Garden Cemetery anytime at your leisure to enjoy the gardens and explore the gravesites. Volunteers are welcome every Thursday from 9 a.m. until 12 noon. Rain day on Friday, from March through October as weather permits. For more information and sign up to volunteer, please contact

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Whipps Garden Cemetery

A Self-Guided Stroll through the Park

(Follow the numbered signs)

This one-acre cemetery was established in 1833, yet some gravestones were from the 1820s. William Whipps bought the land in 1855, and the deed noted the presence of “an old graveyard.” It was a Whipps family plot, and later became open to the public. The last burials were in 1915.

As the years passed, vines and underbrush invaded the cemetery as well as trash and debris. Restoration began in 1987, led by Barbara Sieg, president of St. John’s Community Association. She was assisted by descendants of the Whipps family, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, area garden clubs, and neighborhood volunteers. Native plants and a garden path were added to the tranquil, shaded site.

The Howard County Master Gardeners and community volunteers now provide dedicated care and maintenance. It is owned by The Friends of the Whipps Cemetery and Memorial Gardens, Inc., a non-profit organization.

NOTE: Begin your stroll at the entrance. Follow the numbers along the pathways, starting with #2, follow numbered signs clockwise around the cemetery. At #14, go up hill ending with #18 and head back to entrance, ending at St. John’s Lane Front Bank.

Enjoy your stroll through Whipps Garden-Park Cemetery.

1. Entrance. During the late 80s gardeners defined an entrance with six tons of granite donated by Piccarilli Quarries. Frank Ditman, a gardener and stonemason, and volunteers built the granite wall. An ironworker set the iron gate and fencing on top of the wall.

When land for the St. John’s Church rectory was being cleared, Barbara and a neighbor dug and transplanted many daffodils and other plants here. Whipps Cemetery began to be known for its daffodils. An annual fundraiser called Daffodil Days is held early in April.

15. Butterfly Garden. This garden was created in 2008 and has many colorful flowers and native plants that attract butterflies. Among the plants are: Monarda, Butterfly Weed, Catmint, Golden Rod, Coreopsis, Veronica, Helianthus among others. Many of these are sold at Whipps annual plant sale in May.

16. Branch & Twigs Garden Club Garden. This area is maintained by a local garden club and includes one of the many benches where visitors may rest and enjoy the flowers. This garden is a favorite spot for photographers. Hosta, nandina, bleeding heart, and mahonia are among the numerous plants.

17. Woodland Theatre. A rustic outdoor theater was built in 2007 as an Eagle Scout Project by Eric Suydam and Boy Scout Troop 1997. It was patterned after a theater at Monticello, and serves as a space for horticultural presentations with seating for up to 30. White oaks shade the tranquil setting.

18. Annie Vernay Gravesite. A white picket fence surrounds the tombstone of Annie Vernay, a young child who lived from June 1861 to Sept 1862. It is said a cemetery visitor wrote a poem about her.

St. John’s Lane Front Bank. Daylilies were planted to highlight the entrance. A narrow chipped path extends along the front of the garden, with hand dug steps leading up to an iron gate. A hand railing was added, and a brass plaque was set into one of the granite pillars to identify the cemetery.



This garden is planted with assorted flowering part-shade herbs surrounding a statue of St. Francis of Assisi and pinks. Herbs include catmint, chives, oregano, woolly thyme, lemon balm, and creeping rosemary. Other plants surrounding the garden are green velvet boxwood shrubs, monarda, baby Joe Pye weed, Echinacea, St. John's wort and anise hysopp.



14. Sibling of the famous Wye Oak. The oldest white oak in the U.S. stood for more than 450 years in Wye Mills, near Easton, MD. It was 31 ft. in circumference, 96 feet tall, and had a 119 ft. crown spread. The tree showed unusual resistance to oak wilt fungus and gypsy moths. The Wye Oak was toppled during a thunderstorm in 2002. It was cloned by a horticulturist at the University of Maryland by grafting buds from the tree onto seedlings from its acorns. Two seedlings from the Wye Oak's acorns were planted here and in the Branch & Twig Garden Club section. Another seedling was planted at Mt. Vernon. The white oak is Maryland's state tree.

Rhododendron Garden. (No number) A garden of Olga Mezitt rhododendron was planted in 2010. It serves as a backdrop to the Butterfly Garden, and replaces the Iris Garden, which was relocated to another area. Spring blossoms add a splash of color here.

2. Iron Railing. Some iron railings and tassels were found in the cemetery. Some family plots are surrounded by the original iron fencing, which dates to the mid-1800s, and bears the insignia of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.), a service organization similar to today's Rotary and Lion's Clubs. Many I.O.O.F. members were blacksmiths, and William Whipps was a well-known blacksmiths in Howard County.

3. Bay-Wise. The Whipps Cemetery was awarded Bay-Wise Certification in 2008 for utilizing practices to protect the natural resources throughout the Chesapeake Bay water shed. One practice that Master Gardener volunteers utilize (and something home gardeners should try to replicate) is to avoid using pesticides and herbicides to maintain the flower beds. Learn more about Bay-wise at this Web site: www.baywise.umd.edu.

4. The Colonel Thomas Dorsey Chapter of the DAR. This chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution adopted a cemetery section in 1953. Members were the first to inventory the graves at Whipps Cemetery, which proved invaluable during restoration efforts. Unfortunately, some of the headstones were damaged beyond recognition in the overgrown graveyard, and could not be confirmed when restoration was underway in the 1980s.

5. Cross Country Garden Club. This section, near the iron-gate entrance, features large English boxwood and a stone angel looking down from its pedestal. In recent years, drought and snowstorms killed or severely damaged several of the boxwood. The garden club, together with Master Gardeners re-designed the area and added shade-tolerant heritage and native shrubs and perennials. A memorial redbud tree (*Cercis canadensis*) was planted here to honor the historic preservation and horticultural efforts of Bette Chambers, past president and long-time member of Cross Country Garden Club.

6. Gaw's Garden. This section was the first to be cleared. As it was cleared, head stones coupled with a foot stone were uncovered. Foot stones typically had carved initials to match the headstone. A granite border surrounded the plot and was originally enclosed by an iron railing. A large triple-shaped stone marks the graves of all six of the Gaw's children (inscribed on one gravestone) who died within a decade of each other. The first died on June 12, 1846 and the last died on September 16, 1857. Many children are buried at Whipps, which is a sad reminder of the poor health conditions prevailing in the 1800s. A Maryland state flag adorns each child's gravesite.

7. John White Grave Site. John White is the oldest grave in the cemetery, born about 1780 and died in August 1828. Mr. White is the father of William Whipps' first wife Sarah Earlougher White. William Whipps is the founder of this cemetery. Sarah Earlougher occupied a grave in this family group next to her father.

8. Children's Iris Garden. This colorful spring garden was created in 2010. All iris bulbs were donated by Master Gardeners. A variety of bearded irises surround a lovely redbud tree.

9. Rose bay rhododendrons. Plants were donated by Tom Gardener and they were planted opposite the Children's Iris Garden in the corner garden. This section honors a friend named Nancy.

10. Whipps' Garden. As restoration of Whipps' Cemetery progressed, a line of broken and damaged gravestones were discovered nearby and relocated to the cemetery. Included were stones of William and Samuel Whipps. William was Samuel's father. Samuel (1813-1909) was father of 26 children, married twice. He was a charter member of Independent Order of Odd Fellows Lodge, a blacksmith, farmer, and son of the cemetery's founder. Dean Korpan, an archaeologist, helped restore many of the broken gravestones. William Whipps' gravestone was the first to be mended. A photo of Samuel Whipps is near his gravesite. He was director of the cemetery after his father, William Whipps, died.

Daylilies, often planted in old cemeteries, cover the area behind the gravestone. White violets spreading among the daffodils provide bright spring blooms. Liriope borders

11. Riparian Border. In 2009 Whipps was awarded a Howard County Watershed Enhancement Grant to enhance the cemetery's riparian border, improve its eco-friendly environment and educate residents on gardening practices that improve water quality. A 17-ft by 65-ft riparian buffer on the south slope lies about 75 feet from the stream, which flows to the Patapsco River, was created and planted. Mostly native trees and shrubs comprise the buffer, which help prevent water run-off.

12. Rose Garden. Master Gardeners designed and built the Rose Garden. This is one of the few sunny spaces in the cemetery, and a small stream flows through the area. A dry creek bed was added to accommodate water run-off in 2007. Most of the roses are continuing to thrive with the caring maintenance of Master Gardeners.



13. Barbara Sieg's Herb Garden. This parterre garden was created to honor Barbara's vision to restore Whipps Cemetery. She spent more than 25 years studying, designing, and working to restore Whipps Cemetery. She retired from active participation at Whipps in December 2010. A parterre is a formal garden design with planting beds typically edged in stone, hedges, and paths arranged in a symmetrical pattern. French parterres originated in 15th-century such as the Chateau of Versailles.