

Interesting Facts

The first burial in the cemetery was Weimer Siler, who is one of the three Revolutionary War soldiers buried here. William Addington and William Trammell also fought in the Revolutionary War.

Slavery was a factor in the early life of southern Appalachia. The more prosperous pioneer settlers of Macon County brought their slaves with them to work on the farms and in other businesses in which they were engaged. In the 1850 census seven individuals who are buried in the cemetery owned more than 150 slaves. Oral tradition holds that there may be enslaved individuals buried here in unmarked graves.

In the open area on the south side of the cemetery, the second United Methodist Church was built in 1860. It had a slave balcony which seated Black congregants for more than twenty years after the Civil War. Between 1885 and 1890 the Black congregants established New Hope Methodist Church about two miles west of Franklin. Upon its closing in 1945 the church membership moved to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church on Green Street.

The Celtic cross in our cemetery at the crest of the hill was installed in 1976 by Mr. James Bryson Porter, who grew up in Macon County. The cross was made by the internationally known sculptor, Robert Koepnick, based in Dayton, OH. The decoration is related to musicians and musical instruments.

Ellen Jane was a composer and in the music publishing business living in Dayton, OH. Mrs. Porter's grandfather, Rev. Dr. Edmund Simon Lorenz, was founder of the Lorenz Publishing Company in Dayton, which still publishes church music today. Both James and Ellen Jane were accomplished musicians. Mr. Porter played the organ, and Ellen Jane composed church music. She was also active in the hand bell movement in the mid-50s. They were instrumental in the selection of the Shantz organ in the church sanctuary.

One of the most prominent individuals buried here is Silas McDowell (1795-1879). He was born in the York District of South Carolina and orphaned at age two. He acquired a farm in Haywood County (now Macon). His interests included fruit growing, horticulture, animal husbandry, and geology. Although not trained as a scientist, he made large contributions to the botanical exploration of western NC with his most noted article, "Theory of the Thermal Zone, published in 1861, which developed the concept of a "thermal belt," defining which areas were ideal for growing crops. He also served as a clerk in the superior court for sixteen years. Today his papers and correspondence are in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of NC at Chapel Hill.

Some of the occupations of those buried here include: 34 farmers, 12 merchants, six physicians, four salesmen, two constables, and two ministers.