

MASSY  
HARRISON

# ANCIENT FREEPORT CEMETERY: 1794-1914

Research by Robert Lucas, FROM, TARENTUM, PA.

The Village of Freeport, Pennsylvania was laid out into a plan of 135 lots about the summer of 1796 by William and David Todd, according to a brief history of the town recorded in the HISTORY OF ARMSTRONG COUNTY, PA., by Robert Walter Smith, published in 1883.

The name "FREEPORT" was selected by the Todd brothers, proprietors of the village and its founders. On April 8, 1833, the small town incorporated into a borough, although the town was already in existence thirty-seven years.

According to Smith's history of Freeport, the first burial in the Freeport "cemetery" was in 1794, two years prior to Todd's Plan of Lots.

The first person to be buried was a Miss Faits who was drowned while attempting to cross Buffalo Creek in 1794. A contradiction however arises in Robert McKee's article in the October 30, 1903 edition of the FREEPORT JOURNAL, where he states that one James Armstrong gave the property for the "Freeport Cemetery."

Editor of  
the Freeport  
Journal

Perhaps some Freeport historian can shed some light on this seemingly contradiction: was the land given by the Todds or the Armstrongs?

If the first burial was made in 1794, then the cemetery predates the Plan of Freeport. Mr. McKee does not list Miss Faits among those buried in the ancient cemetery, but perhaps her headstone, if there was one, did not exist by 1903. In his article, Editor McKee states that

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## Ancient Freeport Cemetery

he visited the old cemetery on Fourth Street in Freeport, and recorded some 110 names and dates of death from headstones that were still in existence or legible in 1903.

Some of those families named were among the list of original property owners, a record of which may be found on page 408 in Smith's HISTORY OF ARMSTRONG COUNTY, PA.

The oldest headstone dated 1818 and the most recent burial in 1864. By 1864, the need for additional burial space was recognized and a meeting was called in the winter of that year. In the spring, on the 16th, of march, 1865, the new "FREEPORT CEMETERY" was organized with Dr. David Alter elected to be President of the Board of Managers. The new site would be on a hill, northwest of the town in South Buffalo Township.

This writer presumes, that sometime shortly after 1903, the in-town burial ground fell into disuse, and some of those buried in the old cemetery may have been reinterred in the new.

Among those buried in the ancient cemetery were identified with the American Revolution: namely Capt John Craig, John Harbison, and his wife, the legendary Massa Harbison.

**BURIALS** in the ANCIENT FREEPORT BURIAL GROUNDS on Fourth Street, Freeport, Pa.

ALTER, H. H., d. 1860 ; ALTER, Lucinda, D. 1851 ; ALTER, Mary Galbraith, D. 1862 ; ANTHONY, Thomas, d. 1847 ; ARMSTRONG,

## Ancient Freeport Cemetery

James, d. 1859, age 86; ARMSTRONG, Rev. Richard (Methodist), d. 1859, age 84; ARMSTRONG, Sophia, d. 1842; ARMSTRONG, Thos. d. 1854; ATKINSON, W. T., d. 1855; BARRETT, Rebecca J., d. 1856; BITTS, Anna M., d. 1850; BITTS, William, d. 1848; BOLE, James Sr., d. 1836, age 84; BOLE, James Jr., d. 1854, age 73; BOLE, Mary, age 1836, age 82; BORELAND, Dr. D. M., d. 1848; BRENNEMAN, Abner, d. 1841; CAIN, Harrison, d. 1850; CAIN, child of Thos. d. 1857; CLAWSON, George, d. 1852; CLAWSON, Mrs. James, d. 1844; CONGLETON, John, d. 1853; CRAIG, Capt. John, d. 1850, age 97; CRAIG, Mattie, wife of Capt. John, d. 1825, age 69; CRITCHLOW, Margaret, d. 1848; DIKE, infant (no date); DIKE, infant (no date); DONALDSON, Dr. J. A., d. 1849; EASLEY, Mrs. Andrew, d. 1839; ELLIOTT (no date); ELLIOTT, Jane, d. 1854; FORBAS, Mary, d. 1852; GALBRAITH, Samuel, d. 1850; GIBSON, W. B., d. 1848; GIVEN, Alexander, d. 1827; HARBISON, James, d. 1845; HARBISON, Jane, d. 1846; HARBISON, John (no headstone); HARBISON, Massa (no headstone); HAWS, Issac, d. 1850; HAYMAKER, Nancy, d. 1843; HENDERSON, William, d. 1832; HILL, Robin, d. 1859; HILLIARD, Mary, d. 1855; HOUGHTON, Mrs. Robert, d. 1830; JANES, Bessie, daughter of R. M., d. 1863; KARNS, Mrs. S. D., d. 1847; KEEVER, John, d. 1838; KEEVER, Nancy, d. 1842; KUHN, Henry, d. 1852; KUHN, Mrs. Jacob, d. 1855; LOGAN, John, d. 1849; LOVELL, infant, d. 1857; LOVELL, Mrs. Noah, d. 1857; McCLAIN, H. W., d. 1839; McDONALD, Christiana, d. 1841; McDONALD, Harriet, d. 1841; McDONALD, Rebecca, d. 1850; McGRAW, Mrs.

## Ancient Freeport Cemetery

James, d. 1851 ; MCGINNIS, Andrew, d. 1847 ;  
MCGINNIS, Elizabeth, d. 1839 ; McILWAIN,  
Robert, d. 1845 ; McKEE, Elizabeth, d. 1834 ;  
McVITTIE, Hannah R., d. 1843 ; McWILL-  
IAMS, child of T. J., d. 1856 ; McWILLIAMS,  
child of T. J., d. 1856 ; MEGRAW, John, d.  
1847 ; MEHAFFEY, Stephen, d. 1846 ;  
MELLON, David, d. 1850 ; MOORHEAD, Mrs.  
S. P., d. 1851 ; MURPHY, Mrs. Jerry, d.  
1849 ; OSBORNE, Rebecca, d. 1852, age 20 ;  
PAINTER, William A., d. 1844 ; PATTERSON,  
Andrew, d. 1832 ; PATTERSON, infant son of  
J. S., d. (no date) ; PIPER, Othello, infant  
son of W. M., d. (no date) ; PUTNEY, William  
d. 1850 ; PUTNEY, child of William P., d.  
1850 ; PUTNEY, child of William P., d. 1850 ;  
ROSS, Elizabeth, d. 1846 ; ROY, Josephine,  
d. 1839 ; RUPP, James, d. 1858 ; RUPP, Mary  
d. 1832 ; RUPP, d. 1832 ; RUPP, d. 1832 ;  
SHOOP, James, d. 1859 ; SINGER, Daniel, d.  
1849 ; SMYTHE, Christianna, d. 1854 ;  
SPROULL, James, d. 1821 ; SPROULL, Jane,  
d. 1821 ; SYPHAX, child of G. W., d. 1856 ;  
SYPHAX, child of G. W., d. 1859 ; TRUBY,  
George W., d. 1853 ; TRUBY, Nancy, d. 1841 ;  
TRUBY, Samuel, d. 1852 ; VARNER, John,  
d. 1856 ; VARNER, Levi, d. 1850 ; VICKERS,  
George, d. 1848 ; WEAVER, Absalom, son of  
Peter, who died at Stone River, 1864 (Civil  
War Vet) ; WEAVER, David, d. 1849 ;  
WEAVER, George, d. 1838 ; WEAVER, Henry  
E., d. (no date) ; WEAVER, Jacob, d. 1841 ;  
WEAVER, John H., d. 1830 ; WEAVER, Mrs.  
Peter E., d. 1851 ; WEAVER, Samuel, d. 1818 ;  
WILSON, Elizabeth, d. 1835 ; WILSON, Eliza-  
beth, d. 1862 ; WILSON, Rebecca Ann, d. 1855 ;

## Ancient Freeport Cemetery

and H. WINGARD, d. 1835.

P. S. The eventual disposition of the graves in the old Freeport Cemetery appears to have been well underway by 1914, according to a brief history of the burial grounds found on page 163 of J. H. BEERS & Co. history of ARMSTRONG COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, 1914.

The Beers history says that the old cemetery was located opposite the present Presbyterian Church, next to the schoolhouse, and that many Freeport pioneers were buried there.

The account further states that "most of the bodies have been removed to the new cemetery, and the rest will soon be taken away to permit the extension of the school building."

Mr. Robert McKee, Editor of the Freeport Journal is to be commended for his forethought as to the importance of providing a "public record of the burials" in the old burial grounds. It so often happens, that many of these cemeteries were created without a systematic method of management and record keeping. Perpetual care is the only way that such burial grounds can be kept from becoming a community eyesore due to neglect of the lot owners.

In many areas, descendants of original lot owners with the help of interested citizens, have taken steps to begin a fund for perpetual care which will in future years provide revenue to maintain the grounds. We hope others will soon follow there lead.