

MEMORIAL MARKERS

Dating back 150 years, the Baber Cemetery has an extensive array of memorial markers. Some are typical of a particular time period, like the Egyptian Revival period from whence came many of the Egyptian style obelisk. When the Mt. Laurel Cemetery was first opened by Trinity Episcopal Church in 1845, and later when Charles Baber opened his cemetery aside of Mt. Laurel in the 1850s, the memorial markers (then called grave stones) were very simple and standard looking. Mostly, they were very thin square slabs or stone tablets that were made from slate, sandstone, brownstone, or limestone, and were dependent upon on the availability of composition materials at hand. The mortality rate was high, especially in children and coal miners. Because of the composition material, many of the markers did not hold up well, and the names faded. Also, from this time period, came two types of the cradle style:



one was a stone frame or border placed around the grave which allowed grass or flowers to grow on the grave. The second type still framed the grave, but it had higher sides like a cradle with an upward curving stone at the head with the name engraved there. It also was opened in the middle which allowed for the growing of grass and the planting of flowers.



By the early 1900s with the abundance of craftsman and materials, and perhaps steady income from coal mining, the memorial markers were made from a better quality of materials; and they became very large and blocky. Also at that time, family owned plots became very prevalent because most family members lived and died within the community in which they were born. Pedestal styles and monoliths came into being at this time which stood centered in the plot with either just the last name of the family inscribed on the pedestal and memorial markers placed around the pedestal with individual names, or all the names were inscribed on the four sides of the pedestal and there may or may not have been small stone markers identifying the placement of the individuals.



Many styles of memorial markers came and went. The late 1800s and early 1900s had not only the cradle style described above, but there were chest, box, and hip styles which basically looked like square coffins. From the tall pedestals and monoliths also grew the eclectic style and the block style which had traces of Greek or Roman design. The eclectic style was not as tall as the pedestal and monolith, but it was more ornate and looked like a small house or shelter with a roof on it. The block style was just that, a long or high (4-5 feet) solid block usually with flowers or ivy carved into it. There was the obelisk style from the Egyptian Revival period. And very, very prominent during the 1900s were the crosses. They came in many styles with some laying flat on the ground, some looking like a coffin with a cross on the top, and others standing tall on a one or three tiered pedestal. Aside from the foundation or tiered base, the crosses themselves were very stylish with some being Celtic, others blocky and chunky, others having a tapered top and cross bar, and others being simple in a squared off design.



And in the 1900s, we also had the mausoleums that were usually owned by very wealthy and prominent families. Baber Cemetery only has two: Atkins and Comloquoy. Comloquoy has a stained glass window in the back. The mausoleums tended to be more private because unless you had the key to enter and see the scripted names of those buried inside, no one knew who or how many were buried there. There is one unusual mausoleum called a tumulus. It is buried in a slight mound with the caskets placed in the tumulus and the memorial markers placed on the top of the mound to designate who is buried there.



Today's markers, predominately polished granite, are customized to any shape and size. They are personalized with laser etchings of any color and can include pictures of the deceased loved one and their hobby, interest, and pet.

