

Early History

The Burying Ground on East Third Street contains many of the pioneers of Lexington from the nineteenth century. For local historians this little plot of land has been referred to as the “Westminster Abbey” of Lexington because of the prominence of those buried there.

Trustees of Christ Church purchased the property in December, 1832 from Charlton Hunt, the first mayor of Lexington and son of John Wesley Hunt. The parish needed a new graveyard for burial of its members because there was little room left in the graveyard next to the church on Market St.

From 1832 to 1850 approximately 400 burials took place in the cemetery, many dying of cholera due to the epidemic of 1833 and another in 1849. In 1847 Christ Church records show that 150 bodies were moved from the Church area to the burying ground.



Restoration

The cemetery was well kept for the first half century of its existence. In the early 1900's it fell into disrepair. Several brief efforts were made at restoration. From about 1916 to 1945 a resident caretaker did routine maintenance to the cottage and grounds. In 1946-47 a group of Christ Church women spent much time clearing away the excess trees and bushes. They also recorded data about the grave sites. Other efforts were made in the 1970's and again in the 1980's.

About 1990, a lasting restoration effort was begun, led by Lucy Shropshire Crump and Carole Thomas Pettit. Their goal was to restore the cottage and grounds and make them a community attraction. Because of their vision and the continuing work of many dedicated volunteers, the grounds are now fundamentally restored and are available for all to use and enjoy.

The Sexton's Cottage

In 1867, a cottage of Carpenter Gothic Architecture was constructed. It was built for the housing of a grounds caretaker. Since 1993 the cottage has served as a meeting and retreat center. The care of the cottage is handled by church volunteers. Many church and community gatherings are hosted annually at the cottage.



The Old Catholic Property

In the year 2000, Christ Church purchased the lot adjacent to the Burying Ground from the Catholic Diocese of Lexington. This location was utilized from about 1808 to 1838 for the first brick Catholic chapel in Lexington. It was also the cemetery, primarily for the early Irish-Catholic population. Most of the bodies originally buried here have been moved to the Calvary Cemetery in Lexington.

The Labyrinth

In 2002, a walking labyrinth was created. The labyrinth is an ancient sacred design equipped with a simple pathway leading to and from a center. Labyrinths have been used throughout history for varying purposes, including decoration, play, meditation and prayer. Although the path-pattern remains unchanged, no two experiences walking a labyrinth are the same.

The Labyrinth can be found at the back of the lot between the OEBG and the Fire Station on 3rd St.



THE “WESTMINSTER ABBEY” OF LEXINGTON

Revolutionary War Monument

Standing on the property is a flag and monument giving tribute to the eleven Revolutionary War soldiers buried in the cemetery. All but five were removed to the Lexington Cemetery in the latter part of the 1800's. In addition, at least three War of 1812 veterans are buried here and one Union soldier is memorialized on the grounds.

London Ferrill Community Garden

In 2008, Christ Church Cathedral in partnership with the Martin Luther King Neighborhood Association, created a community garden to grow vegetables primarily for the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. The focus of the garden is to teach people how to grow, harvest, prepare and preserve fresh vegetables - and to feed the needy. The goal is to foster a positive interaction and a greater understanding of being true neighbors. Hundreds of pounds of vegetables are given to those in need, neighbors and community organizations annually.

The garden is named for London Ferrill, minister of the First African Baptist Church from 1823 to 1854. He is the only known black person buried at the Old Episcopal Burying Ground. His life exemplifies the values of being connected to your neighbor.

In 2009, the gardens were expanded to add a fruit orchard and berry-bushes. Future plans include building an outdoor bread-baking oven and beehives for tree and bush pollination.



Docent-guided Tours

Regular visiting hours will be offered during the Summer and Fall months. Private docent-guided tours may be made available on request. The facilities are also available for group meetings or retreats.

Use of the grounds or facilities may be arranged by calling Christ Church Cathedral at 254-4497.

Located in downtown Lexington at the intersection of Third Street and Elm Tree Lane. The entrance is on Third St.

More information is available on the church website: www.cclex.org.



Mission Statement

The Old Episcopal Burying Ground is a gathering place with a garden atmosphere that offers a clear presentation of the history of the grounds and opportunities for personal growth and community connection.

owned & maintained by



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