

BURYING GROUND #2

1745 - 1904

(Located Northeast of the Sanctuary)

This is the largest and most prominent of the burying grounds, and it contains the most grave sites. It is the only one which was separately deeded and specifically designated as a burying ground. This deed is dated February 19, 1745 and conveys from William Hoge, Sr. to trustees of Opequon Meeting House "a tract or parcel of land containing two acres, as a burying place". It further describes its location as "situate, lying, and being near the Presbyterian Meeting House where it now stands on the land of said William Hoge, Sr.". This deed is recorded in Frederick county Deed Book #1 at Page #275.

This burying ground contains the oldest marked grave site in the valley of Virginia (Wilson-1742), and in it are buried many of the early settlers who founded Opequon Meeting House in 1736. While there are many grave site markers remaining today which honor this early settler class, there are many additional burials belonging to this group, as well as succeeding generations, whose identities and burial sites are unmarked and unknown.

Assumption is made that these unmarked grave sites either had no original markers, or because of the ravages of time, attrition, or circumstance they were removed. Among the burials here with unmarked grave sites are those of William Hoge, Sr. (1660-1749) and his wife Barbara Hume, and Dr. Robert White (1688-1752) a British navy surgeon, and members of his family. The Hoge family is supposed to be buried just inside the entrance gate, and the White family in the northeast corner of the burying ground. Of course there are many others whose identities and burial locations are forever lost.



This old photograph was taken shortly after the Civil war ended in 1865. It shows the destruction visited upon it by Union soldiers during the war. Note that the stone walls have been removed on both the west and south sides of this old burying ground.

The current enclosed area of this burying ground is only about three fourths of an acre. Since there were no metes and bounds designated in the original deed no one knows exactly where the remainder of the original two acres is situate. No doubt it extended across the current road in some direction because the current road to the church was not in existence prior to 1933.

During the two hundred fifty year existence of this burying ground it has been enclosed with some type of fencing. In the original conveyance of the two acres, William Hoge made provision "for its impalement", and guaranteed free timber for its installation and ongoing repair. This would imply that its first "impalement" was of wood. At a later date the burying ground was enclosed by stone walls, but during the Civil War, occupying Union soldiers hauled many of these stone walls away to their campgrounds and built fireplace chimneys for their cooking purposes. In 1897 when the current sanctuary was built, an iron fence and entrance gate were installed as a memorial gift by the Gilkeson family.

This old burying ground was used for about one hundred and sixty years, until it became filled in the early 1900's. It is believed that the last burial to occur here was in 1904 (McCauley).



This recent photograph was taken at approximately the same location as the one on the previous page. This is the same view as it appears today.

BURYING GROUND #3

1790 - 1860

(Located South / Southwest of the Sanctuary)

This burying ground is fairly small in size., being only about thirty feet by thirty-five feet in area. It is located about ten feet south-southwest of the present sanctuary south wall. Originally, it was immediately adjacent to the south wall of the stone church built in 1790. While not documented, it is believed that this burying ground was established at the time the 1790 church was built. Assumption is made that since the burying ground on the north end of the church was filled about this time, there were still requests by some members of the congregation for burial sites very near the church or Meeting House.

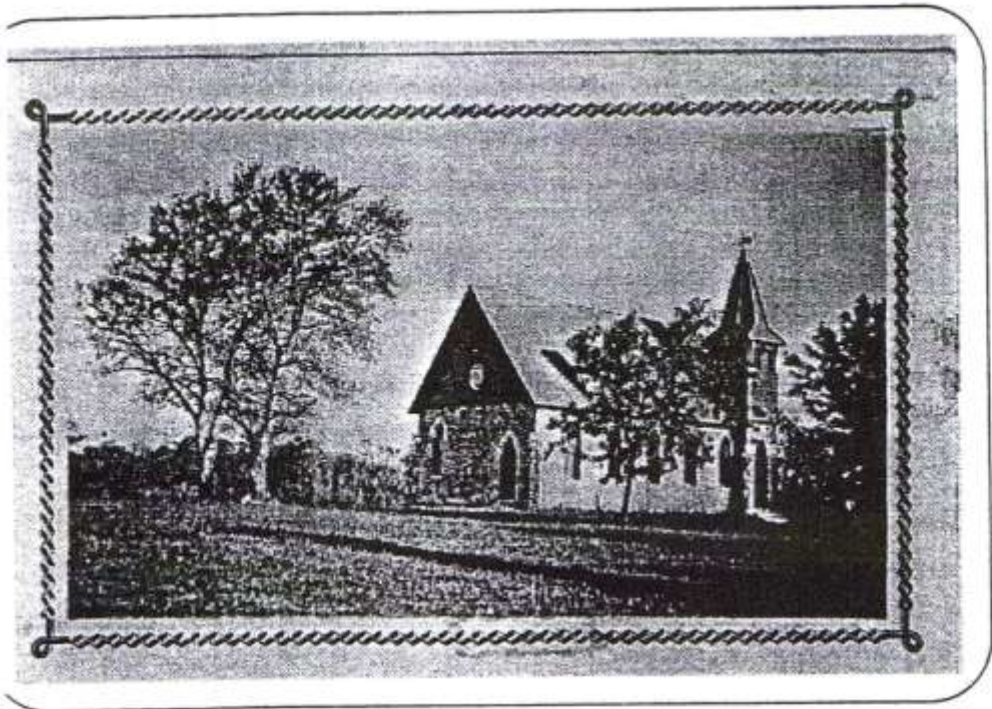
Unfortunately, the identities of most of those buried in this location are unknown due to removal of grave site markers during the Civil War. It is known however that many members of the Chipley family are buried here, as well as some members of the Simrall family. Captain William Chipley, an officer in the Revolutionary war was buried here in 1811, and many of his family after that date. Most all of the burials in this location occurred between 1795 and 1860. As far as is known there were no burials in this burying ground after the Civil War.

At each corner of this burying ground a mahogany tree was planted. These trees however did not live long, and they were replaced by aspen trees. At least two of these aspen trees lived for more than a hundred years, until in the mid 1930's they were cut down and burned for firewood in the wood stoves of the church. As late as the mid 1950's an aspen tree thicket grew in this location.

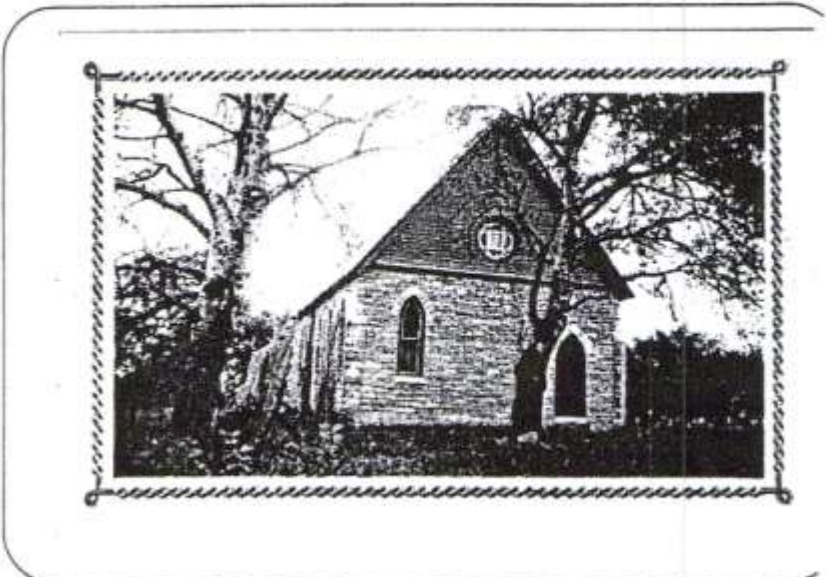
Of all the burying grounds at Opequon this one perhaps received the most unkind treatment. Prior to the Civil War it had been enclosed by stone walls, but the occupying Union soldiers tore down the stone walls and hauled them away for other use. Most of the grave sites in this burying ground had been marked with white marble slab markers. They were removed also, and are said to have been used by the soldiers for bread boards, and for repairing the roads.

After the present sanctuary was built in 1896-97, and upon the coming of the automobile, this ground was at times used as a parking lot. In 1955-56 when the new educational building was being constructed the area was used for a staging ground for building materials, equipment parking) etc. Additionally, when excavation work for the east wall of the new building was in progress it encroached upon this burying ground, and the residual remains of one or two burial sites were disturbed.

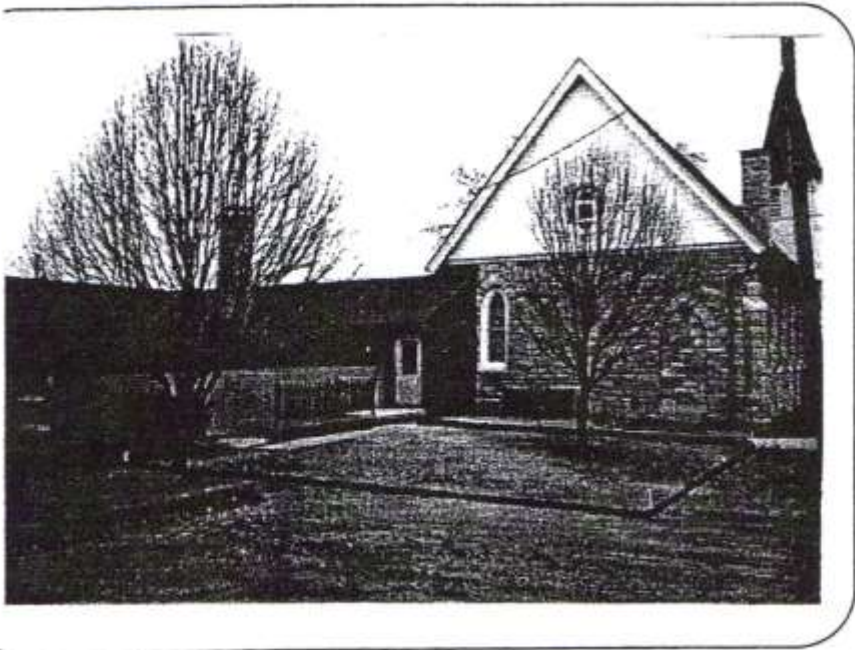
General location of this old burying ground can be visualized as follows: Its north boundary is approximately ten feet south of the current sanctuary south wall, its west boundary approximately three feet inside the east wall of the fellowship hall, its south boundary approximately in line with the fellowship hall south wall, and its east boundary approximately in line with the east wall of the current sanctuary.



These two photographs were taken about 1915. They show the general location of Burying Ground #3.



Burying ground #3 is located between these two aspen trees and the South wall of the Sanctuary.



This recent photograph outlines the location of burying ground #3.

BURYING GROUND #4
1804 - 1866

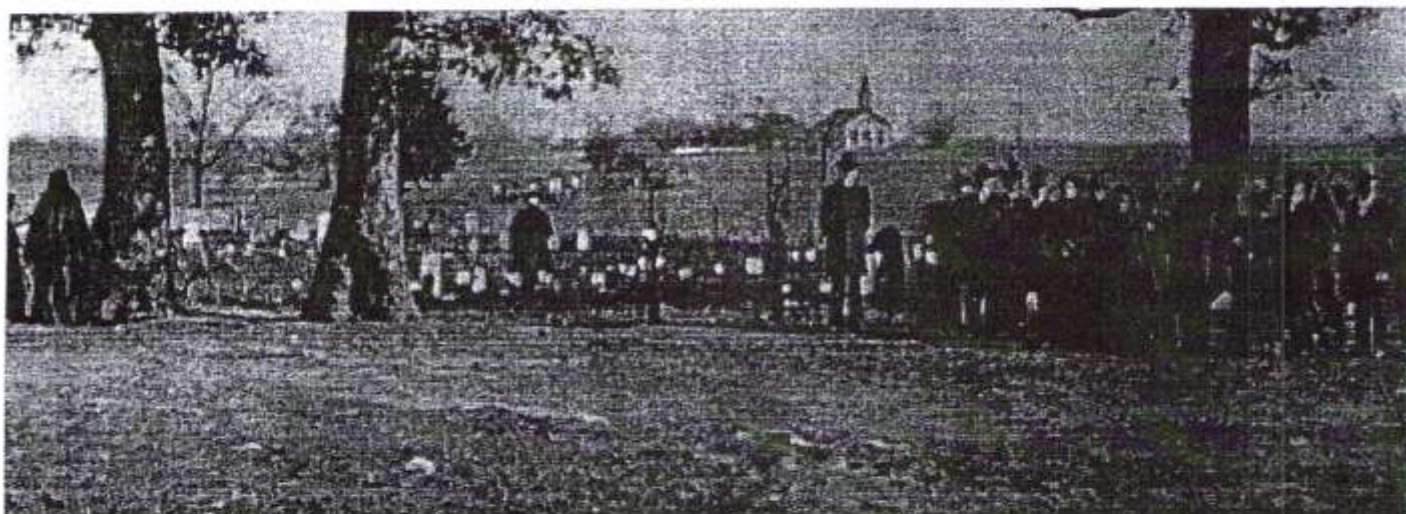
(Located 200 Feet East of Burying Ground #2)

This is the only burying ground which is not located on Opequon Church property. Its size is not large, being only about forty feet by forty feet in area. Its origin is somewhat uncertain, but is believed it perhaps originated as a family burial ground. Whatever its origin it definitely has a close relationship with Opequon Church.

While it appears today to be located in an open field, this was not the original situation. At the time it was being used as a burying ground its location was the southwest corner of a small fenced parcel of land which was apparently owned by the Beemer family.

While the majority of the burials in this location are those of the Beemer family there are also several burials here who were members of families who are buried in burying ground #2 (McCauley, Steele, Kern). It is known that all of these families, including the Beemers, were members of, or had association with Opequon church.

The earliest burial here is that of John Beemer, Sr. who died in 1804. His wife Hannah died in 1830 and is also buried here. John Beemer was of German decent and was the first Beemer to settle in this valley in the seventeen hundreds. They had eight children, and several of them are buried here. The last known burial in this burying ground was that of Edgar S. Steele in 1866, who died as a child.



This old photograph was taken about 1900 and shows the location of Burying Ground #4. Its location is in left center of the picture and is immediately above the man's head who is walking in Burying Ground #2. The church in the background is Grace Methodist church in Kernstown, and is where Opequon congregation worshipped after Opequon church burned in 1873.

Most of the grave sites in this burying ground were originally marked with white marble slabs, An old photograph taken about 1900 shows them standing like white sentinels in their privately fenced area. Sometime, however, in the early part of the 1900's these grave site markers were severely vandalized. They were pushed down and in many cases broken into pieces.

The location of this old burying ground can presently be identified as being under and around a large walnut tree now growing in its midst.

