

CEMETERIES

Knoxville is home to hundreds of cemeteries, churchyards, and old family graveyards. Many are too worn to read, but the oldest legible gravestone dates to 1793—that of Samuel Carrick's wife, Elizabeth, at Lebanon at the Forks Cemetery.

Knoxville offers a virtual history of the American cemetery, from the churchyards and family plots known to the early settlers, to the stylish Garden Cemeteries of the mid-19th century, to the formal military cemeteries that started with the Civil War. Most are safe and well-kept. A few are obscure and overgrown. Listed here are just a few of the most historic and easiest to visit.

Note: Please remember that, except for military cemeteries, most of Knoxville's graveyards are private property, and governed either by the business that runs the cemetery, a church, or a foundation. Although polite visitors are usually welcome in the daytime, some cemeteries prefer that you seek permission from the main office.

DOWNTOWN

A FIRST PRESBYTERIAN

Located at 620 State Street

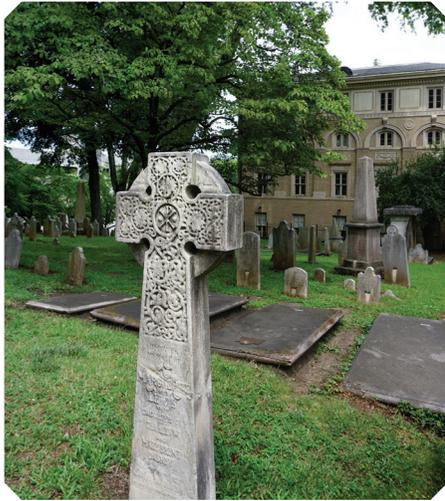
First Presbyterian churchyard's downtown space was a gift of settler James White, whose original 1786 fort was immediately north of

this site. He surrendered his turnip patch for the establishment of a church and cemetery; the city had immediate use for a cemetery, and it was established about 20 years before the 1816 construction of the church. White and his family are buried here. Knoxville's oldest graveyard was here in the 1790s, when visitors remarked on it, though the oldest grave legible today dates to 1800. That one happens to be among the churchyard's most famous. It's the horizontal stone belonging to William Blount, signer of the U.S. Constitution (the only one buried outside of the original 13 colonies); the first and only governor of the Southwestern Territory; and, albeit briefly, one of Tennessee's first two U.S. senators. His wife Mary, namesake of both Maryville and Grainger County, is buried at his side.



GRAVESTONE OF SAMUEL CARRICK (1760-1809)
FOUNDER OF KNOXVILLE'S FIRST CHURCH





MARGUERITE DABNEY'S MONUMENT,
FIRST PRESBYTERIANS ONLY CROSS

Others buried here include U.S senators John Williams (an ancestor of the playwright Tennessee Williams), and Hugh Lawson White. Both became opponents of the first Tennessee president, Andrew Jackson. White, who was for a few months president pro tempore of the U.S. Senate, ran for president in 1836, an anti-Jacksonian gesture

that helped spawn the Whig Party. Other notables include Samuel Carrick, founder of Knoxville's first church, First Presbyterian—and also founder of Blount College, which evolved into the University of Tennessee.

According to an early description, the graveyard is the resting place of people “of all races and creeds.” The graveyard was closed to new burials in the 1850s, as cemeteries were moving to larger fields in rural areas.

Note the scarcity of religious icons, like crosses. The graveyard includes only one crucifix, a Celtic cross near the front, a later memorial to a teenaged girl, Marguerite Dabney, who's buried elsewhere. That lack of crosses reflects the early Protestants' skepticism of graven images. Crucifixes were not seen widely in this part of the country until after the Civil War.

Also of interest are a particular concentration of death dates. About one tenth of all the graves in this churchyard date to the summer and fall of 1838, the era of perhaps the worst epidemic in Knoxville history—“the fever that was fatal to so many,” as one stone's inscription describes it. Its cause remains unknown.



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN GRAVEYARD ON STATE ST

The oldest graveyard welcomes a noisy EGG HUNT each EASTER SUNDAY

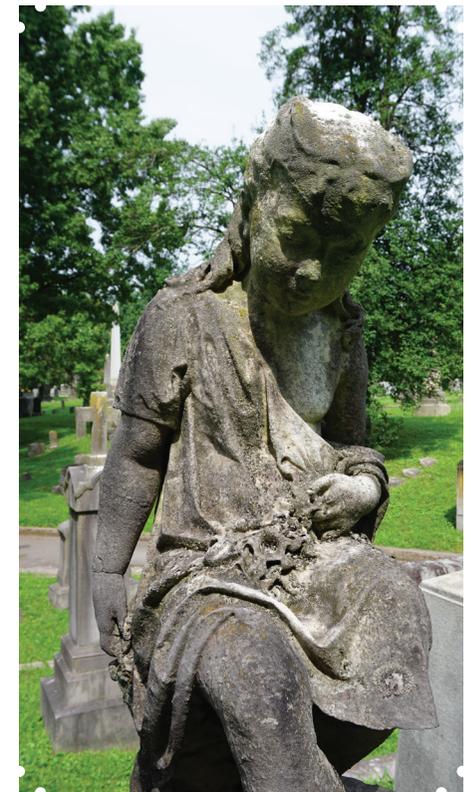


OLD GRAY, WITH ITS PARK-LIKE SETTING, IS JUST A SHORT WALK FROM DOWNTOWN

B OLD GRAY

*Located at 543 North Broadway
865-522-1424 • oldgraycemetery.org*

Across 14 acres of wooded hills, Old Gray Cemetery makes for a fascinating afternoon walk, and probably has more history per minute of strolling than any other cemetery in the region. Founded in 1850, its name has nothing to do with the Civil War—a common misperception—or with the color of its stones. It's in honor of Thomas Gray, the English poet famous for “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.” Within walking distance of downtown (near the far northern end of Gay Street, in fact), Old Gray is Knoxville's best example of the “Garden Cemetery” movement that began in Paris in the early 19th century, which pictured cemeteries as lovely parks to be visited, with horticulture and meandering lanes. Although privately owned, from its earliest days Old Gray stood in for a public park in a city that lacked one.



STATUE MEMORIALIZES LILLIAN GAINES
WHO DIED AT AGE 7 IN 1876

Most of OLD GRAY'S STATUES depict girls and women who died young