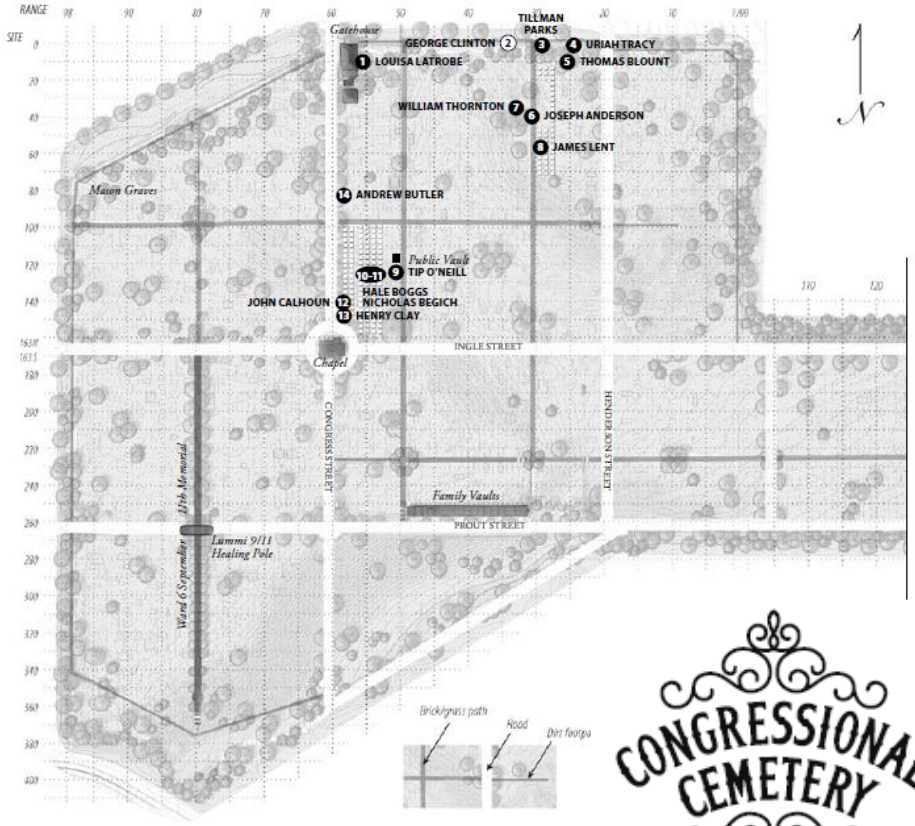
13. HENRY CLAY (1777–1852) was known as the "Great Compromiser" for his ability to bring others to agreement. He was the founder and leader of the Whig Party and a leading advocate of programs for modernizing the economy, especially tariffs to protect industry, and a national bank; and internal improvements to promote canals, ports and railroads. As a war hawk in Congress demanding the War of 1812, Clay made an immediate impact in his first congressional term, including becoming Speaker of the House. Although the closeness of their cenotaphs would suggest a friendship, Clay and Calhoun disliked each other in life. R60/S149

14. ANDREW PICKENS BUTLER (–1857). As the Nation drifted toward war between the states, tensions rose even in the staid Senate Chamber of the U.S. Congress. When Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts disparaged Senator Andrew Butler of South Carolina (who was not present) during a floor speech, Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina, Butler's cousin, took umbrage and returned to the Senate two days later and beat Sumner severely with a cane—the first blows of the Civil War. R60/S84

With thanks to archivist and historian, Sandy Schmidt, whose decade of dedicated research produced over 25,000 obituaries on our web site, without which we could not tell the stories of the hundreds of individuals who make up the tapestry of heritage at Historic Congressional Cemetery.



Founded in 1807 as Washington Parish Burial Ground, Congressional Cemetery soon became America's first de facto national cemetery, predating Arlington Cemetery by 70 years. By the 1830s, several decades of congressional appropriations for infrastructure gave rise to the popular name "Congressional Cemetery." The Cemetery grew from 4.5 to 32.5 acres, and holds more than 55,000 individuals in 30,000 burial sites, marked by 14,000 headstones. The federal government owns 800 sites, including 165 cenotaphs which honor members of Congress.

The Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the restoration, interpretation, and management of Congressional Cemetery. It is predominantly a volunteer-based organization relying on over 400 neighbors, history buffs, conservators, dog walkers, and armed forces personnel each year to restore and maintain this national treasure. Established in 1976, the Association is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We welcome you to become a member of the association to help us continue our third century of service to the Nation's Capital.

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Congressional Cemetery

Bicentennial Heritage Festival

1807 2007

Association for the Preservation of Historic Congressional Cemetery

Community · Leadership · Discovery

Walking Tour

Cenotaphs

History comes to life in Congressional Cemetery. The creak and clang of the wrought iron gate signals your arrival into the early decades of our national heritage. Surrounding you are the men and women who shaped the new capital and gave substance to the new nation—congressmen and tradesmen, diplomats and domestics, explorers and architects, soldiers and musicians.

Congressional Cemetery is home to 165 "cenotaphs," which honor members of Congress who died in office during the first several decades of the nation's history. Designed by architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, who was then working on the new south wing of the Capitol, these identical Aquia Creek sandstone cenotaphs reflected the classical inspiration that was shaping the city plan and its new Capitol building. They were a marked departure from the typical shape and size of early American

gravestones, which were generally colonial-type tablets. Latrobe's influences were clearly classical and European. Although the term *cenotaph* refers to any empty tomb, at Congressional Cemetery the term is used for these Latrobe-inspired monuments—which sometimes marked an actual burial and sometimes not; only 80 congressmen and senators are interred at Congressional. Historic photos show that the cenotaphs were painted white at some point. Despite Latrobe's best intentions, public opinion of the cenotaphs tended to be less than favorable even in the earliest years of the burying ground. The use of the cenotaphs was discontinued in 1876 when Senator Hoar of Massachusetts argued that this tradition should be abandoned, saying that "the thought of being buried beneath one of those atrocities brought new terror to death." By that time, congressmen were typically transported home for burial and a national cemetery system had been established following the Civil War. Until the Civil War, however, this was the nation's sole place of burial for the federal government, and in effect, the first national cemetery. As you walk the trail of this self-guided tour, note the artistry and craftsmanship of the memorial stone carvings and try to decipher the cultural language of the iconography.

A WORD OF CAUTION: The centuries have made many grave markers and sites unstable. Please be careful near grave markers and watch where you step: depressions and sink holes lie hidden in grass, and footstones and corner markers can trip the unwary.

1. LOUISA LATROBE (1808), the infant daughter of the architect of the Capitol, Benjamin Latrobe, was one of the first interments at Congressional. Sadly, she would not be the only child to be buried in the cemetery. R56/S12

2. GEORGE CLINTON (1739–1812) studied law and was a member of the Continental Congress from 1774 to 1776 when General Washington ordered him to take the field as Brigadier General of Militia, which prevented Clinton from signing the Declaration of Independence. He was the first Governor of the State of New York from 1777– 1795. He was elected Vice President under both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. He made an unsuccessful bid for the Presidency in 1808. R30/S5 REMOVED

3. TILLMAN BACON PARKS (1872–1950) was a Representative from Arkansas from 1921–1937. He is the last Congressman to be buried in the Congressional Cemetery. R29/S6

4. URIAH TRACEY (1755–1807) of Connecticut was the fourth interment and the first congressman to be interred in the cemetery, just four months after it opened. His body was transferred from Rock Creek Cemetery. He served first in his state legislature from 1788–1793, then in the Senate from 1796 until his death in 1807. In addition to a short period of military clerical service, he was a major general of militia in a company that marched from sundry places for the relief of Boston in 1775. R24/S1

5. MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS BLOUNT (1749–1812) entered the Revolutionary Army at age 16, then went on to a long congressional career as a North Carolina Representative. He was interred with military honors. His funeral procession was long and distinguished, starting with a detachment from the Marine Corps followed by the Vice President, members of Congress, heads of departments and other offices, and members of the public. R25/S8

6. JOSEPH INSLEE ANDERSON (1757–1837) served in the revolutionary Army. He fought in several battles under General Washington and ended with the brevet rank of Major. He then practiced law and was appointed by Washington as a judge in the Southwestern Territory, which later became Tennessee. In 1797 he became a Senator and served for 18 years. In 1815 he was appointed Comptroller of the U.S. Treasury. R31/S44

7. WILLIAM THORNTON (1757–1826). From an early age William Thornton displayed interest and discernible talent in "the arts of design." Although heir to sugar plantations, young Thornton was apprenticed for a term of four years to a practical physician and apothecary. In 1786 he came to America where he attempted to lead free black Americans to Sierra Leone. In 1792 Thornton learned about the design competitions for the U.S. Capitol and the President's House, both to be erected in the new federal city on the banks of the Potomac. He won the competition and a prize of $500 and a city lot. This is the only cenotaph for a nonmember of Congress. R33/S39

8. JAMES LENT (1782–1833) of New York was the first person to have a cenotaph in the cemetery. After a cenotaph monument had been ordered for him, his family decided to bury him in the family burial ground in New York. Congress then decided to place the monument as a memorial anyway in 1839, establishing the tradition of cenotaphs for Congressmen who died in office. R29/S68

9. THOMAS P. "TIP" O'NEILL (1912–1994), a longtime leader in the Democratic Party, was both Majority Whip and Majority Leader in the House of Representatives. He served as a Massachusetts Representative from 1952–1986, and Speaker from 1977–1986. He was known for his political acumen and commitment to the rationale of government assistance to the needy. He is the last Congressman to have a cenotaph of non-standard design placed in the Cemetery. R51/S125

10. HALE BOGGS (1914–1972), a lawyer and senator from Louisiana, he served as a Democrat in Congress until he left to enlist in the U.S. Naval reserve where he served until the end of World War II. He later served on the Warren Commission to report on the death of John F. Kennedy. While he was House Majority Leader he died in a plane crash over Alaska where he had been campaigning in 1972. The bodies of the several people on board, including Nicholas Begich (see below) never were found. R53/S123

11. NICHOLAS BEGICH (1932–1972), an Alaskan, served in his state senate for eight years. In 1970 he was elected to the at-large seat for the state. He was on the same plane as Hale Boggs. During the period after the crash when the search for bodies continued, Begich was elected to a second term. Boggs and Begich share the same cenotaph. R53/S123

12. JOHN C. CALHOUN (1782–1850) held several government positions: Vice President (twice—with President John Quincy Adams and President Andrew Jackson); Senator from South Carolina; member, state house of representatives; Secretary of War for President James Monroe; and Secretary of State in the Cabinet of President John Tyler. He was hailed as one of the giants of 19th century American politics. Along with Henry Clay and Daniel Webster he set the terms of every important debate of the day. Calhoun was acknowledged by his contemporaries as a legitimate successor to George Washington, John Adams or Thomas Jefferson, but never gained the presidency. R60/S146