

15. Owen — This plot contains the grave of Hugh G. Owen, who died the morning of July 15 of “intemperance,” according to the Aug. 8, 1861 *Hillsborough Recorder* issue. His mother is next to him, as is a brother, Henry. Earlier in life, Henry had been fined by town commissioners for cutting down a tree without permission.

16. Stroud — Henry Calvin Stroud, a soldier who died during the Civil War, is perhaps best known as the husband of Octavia Stroud. Local lore says she saved the Colonial Inn on West King Street by waving his masonic apron from an upstairs window when Union soldiers occupied the town in 1865. Next to Stroud is his daughter, Rebecca.

17. Strayhorn — Near the church’s educational building lies the Strayhorn family. William F. Strayhorn was a Hillsborough mayor while his wife, Harriet H. Strayhorn, was postmaster. He assumed that post after her death. Their infant son, William Edmund Strayhorn, is buried next to them.

18. Ratliffe — Follow the paved walkway to the right to find the grave of Fannie A. Ratliffe (1836-1934), the longest living person in the cemetery. All the archival Hillsborough newspapers from the 1920s to the 1940s were destroyed in a fire, leaving her obituary lost to posterity.

19. Charles P. Owen — Continue along the walkway to the large, white obelisk of Charles P. Owen (1821-1835). When erected, it was the cemetery’s tallest and most expensive monument. Moisture has made the marble monument’s lettering indistinct. Groundwater and ill-advised cleaning efforts caused damage, and the granite blocks around the base do not fit. Whether they are from another marker or are part of this one is yet unknown. In 2015, a researcher discovered that Owen was a student in Hillsborough at the time of his death and a son of former Gov. John Owen.

20. Wilhelm — The Rev. W.F. Wilhelm (1831-1893) is our final stop. A popular minister at the Presbyterian church for 10 years, he was buried just opposite the church entrance.



TOWN OF
HILLSBOROUGH

Old Town
Cemetery



Circa 1757

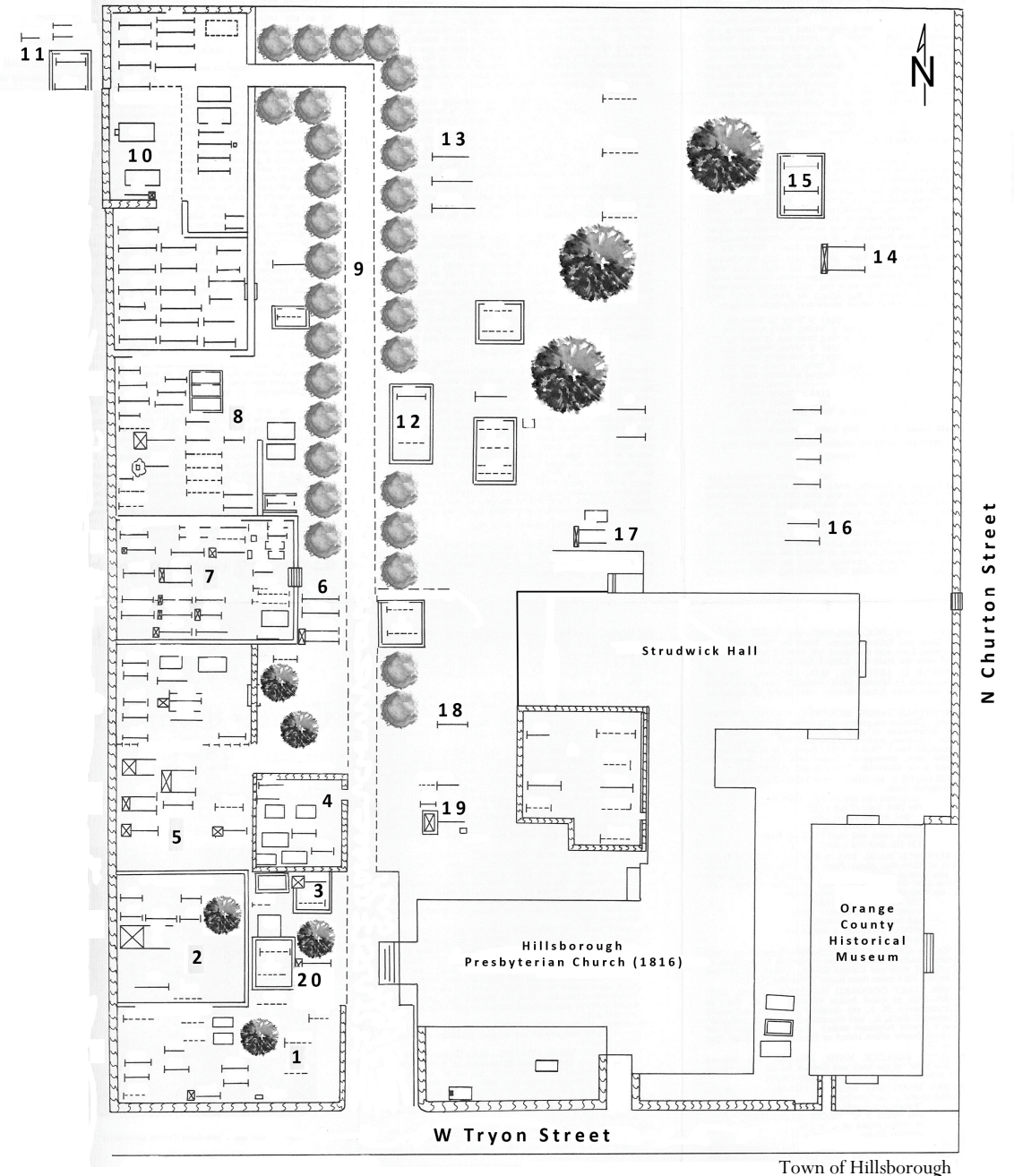
In a brief circling of this cemetery, discover major figures and ordinary people, children to the aged, and tombstones hiding hopes and fears, happiness and tragedy from Hillsborough’s past.

Questions?

Contact Hillsborough Public Space and Sustainability Division:

- 919-296-9600
- www.hillsboroughnc.gov

**The Old Town Cemetery (1757)
Hillsborough, North Carolina**



History

The Hillsborough Old Town Cemetery is one of the oldest public burial grounds in North Carolina. Records date to 1757 when 1 acre here was sold to the Vestry of St. Matthew's Parish Church. But local lore says the field had been used as an informal graveyard since before 1754, when Hillsborough was established.

The cemetery consists of two parts with different histories. The eastern half, now dotted with a few scattered tombstones, was the original burial ground. In August 2016, the Town of Hillsborough undertook a ground-penetrating radar survey that located more than 100 possible unmarked graves. The more crowded western half consists of 11 private cemeteries as well as individual tombs. Walls of fieldstone, brick or hedgerows were added to delineate the plots, as well as to protect them from stray pigs and cows. The private graveyards had their own fencing. Today, the cemetery is nearly encircled by stone walls dating from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The following is a selection of burials that follow the path shown on the map.

Private Cemeteries

1. Richards — Henry Richards Sr. was a master brickworker who worked closely with John Berry (see Site 5). Wife Eliza is beside him. The masonic sign on his tombstone is one of four in the cemetery. Sons Hiram (1844-1863) and Roscoe (1843-1867) served in the Civil War. Twelve more Confederate soldiers are buried in the Old Town Cemetery.

2. Graham — William Alexander Graham, N.C. governor, vice presidential candidate and U.S. and Confederate States senator, bought the plot for his family in 1870. His obelisk notes his wife, Susan Washington Graham, and shows the maker's mark. Sophronia Graham is recalled with a dove and delicate flowers. Drill work gives texture to her lamb footstone.

3. Murphey — Archibald DeBow Murphey, father of N.C. public education and advocate for canals and roads, was a major political and judicial figure of the early 1800s. He died during winter while visiting the Twin Chimneys house on West King Street and was interred here due to impassable roads. A descendant, seeing Murphey's understated tomb marker, raised money for the 1895 obelisk by selling her jewelry. Behind is the grave of Elizabeth Murphy,

possibly a close relative or even one of his eight children despite her surname's spelling.

4. Taylor-Graves — The nine chronologically arranged graves begin with the tabletop tomb of John Umstead Taylor, erected by University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's Dialectic and Philanthropic Societies. An urn symbolizes UNC and the flame of knowledge. Learned societies also served as burial clubs then for members. Longtime UNC Professor Ralph Henry Graves and wife Emma Taylor Graves are buried here. Note the detailed carving of oak leaves and acorns on his tombstone; a skilled carver made the marker appear to be composed of different stones.

5. Berry — The obelisk of John Berry, important politician, businessman and builder in brick, is here. He constructed the 1844 courthouse in the town's center and is attributed as the builder for several churches and the Masonic Lodge on West King Street. His importance later waned; the *Hillsborough Recorder* newspaper wrote of him as "Capt. Jno Berry of Hillsboro," recording his death without a biography or specific death date.

6. Witherspoon — Just outside the Nash-Strudwick Private Cemetery are four Witherspoon family members, presumably buried in the closest

available plots to the already-filled Nash-Strudwick cemetery. Their ancestor, the Rev. John Witherspoon, is buried in the private cemetery. The organizer and first pastor of Hillsborough Presbyterian Church was a half-brother to N.C. Chief Justice Frederick Nash, buried just a few feet away.

7. Nash-Strudwick — As you enter, notice the early tombstone of Abigail Brown. The cemetery wall in this section was built after her burial and diverts around her gravesite. The monument, formerly hidden by ivy and vines, was rediscovered during a cemetery cleanup in 2014. Dr. Edmund Strudwick was an N.C. Medical Society founder.

8. Hooker-Brown — Nathan Hooker bought this section from the grandson of William Hooper (see Site 10) in 1846. The large quartzite boulder that became Margaret Hooker Brown's tombstone was selected by her as a child.

9. Student's Walkway — The flagstone walkway between a hedgerow of ancient boxwoods led from the famous Burwell Academy for Young Ladies, just two blocks north, to the Hillsborough Presbyterian Church. This area also contains the grave of Burwell student Elizabeth Coit, an orphan from South Carolina. She died during an epidemic characterized by dysentery and high fever in 1852.

10. Hooper-Hogg-Norwood — This cemetery began the long series of private burials in 1790, including that of William Hooper, one of revolutionary America's leading politicians. The inscription "Signer of the Declaration of Independence" was carved later and avoids a pre-existing crack. In 1894, the federal government disinterred Hooper and moved some of the grave's contents to the Guilford Courthouse National Military Park. To the east is the burial place of James Hogg, Hooper's close friend and an important businessman and benefactor to a fledgling UNC. The tombstone is a replica of the original, which was found in 2014 within the grave of Elizabeth Murphy (see Site 3).

11. Turrentine — Before leaving the Hooper-Hogg-Norwood cemetery, look over the exterior wall to the west and notice the Turrentine tomb-



stones. Five burials are here. The first was 3-year-old Eugene (1863-1866).

Public Cemeteries

The area to the east with few tombstones was the original public burial ground for Hillsborough. The uneven surface hints at burial locations. Ground-penetrating radar has detected more than 100 possible unmarked graves.

12. Heartt — This enclosure is designed to set a family away from others while also keeping out animals. It belongs to Edwin A. Heartt, the *Hillsborough Recorder's* associate editor. His wife, father and daughter may be buried here as well.

13. Bruce — George W. Bruce was the son of Abner Bruce, longtime Superior Court clerk in Orange County. George took over the position upon his father's death. He was also headmaster of a well-known "English School," a school that did not stress classical languages. He lost his wife, Harriet, when she was 35 in 1842; she left a family of six children, the youngest 3 weeks old. During the next 10 years, George also lost two daughters and a son.

14. Badgett — To the west are the graves of William S. Badgett and his wife, Maria Lynch Badgett. A newspaper account tells us they wed on June 8, 1871, in the nearby Presbyterian Church. He died of scarlet fever four years after wedding, leaving behind his wife and two small children. Maria lived until 1932.