Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Church

National Historic Site
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Cemetery Guide

A Bridge to the Past

The Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Church Cemetery has been in continuous use since the early 1700s and is one of the oldest burial grounds in Philadelphia. Swedish immigrants arrived here three centuries ago and made this section of the Delaware River Valley their new home. Many of them were buried here, including sea captains and more than a dozen Revolutionary War soldiers. Their tombstone engravings offer us a tangible link to the history of this sea-faring community and the creation of a new nation.

Photographed by Graydon Wood

Explore the historic cemetery using this self-guided brochure. ***Watch your step*** on the uneven pathways weathered by time.

Cemetery Map and Guide

1 George Ord

This sea captain made a small yet daring contribution to the American Revolution. Ord stole gunpowder from the British on the island of Bermuda and then gave it to the Continental Army.

2 John Hanson Memorial

This granite memorial was erected in 1967 to honor the contributions of several men of Swedish descent. Among those honored are Johann Printz, the first colonial governor of New Sweden; John Morton, a signer of the Declaration of Independence; and John Hanson, the first President under the U.S. Articles of Confederation.

3 John Hunterson

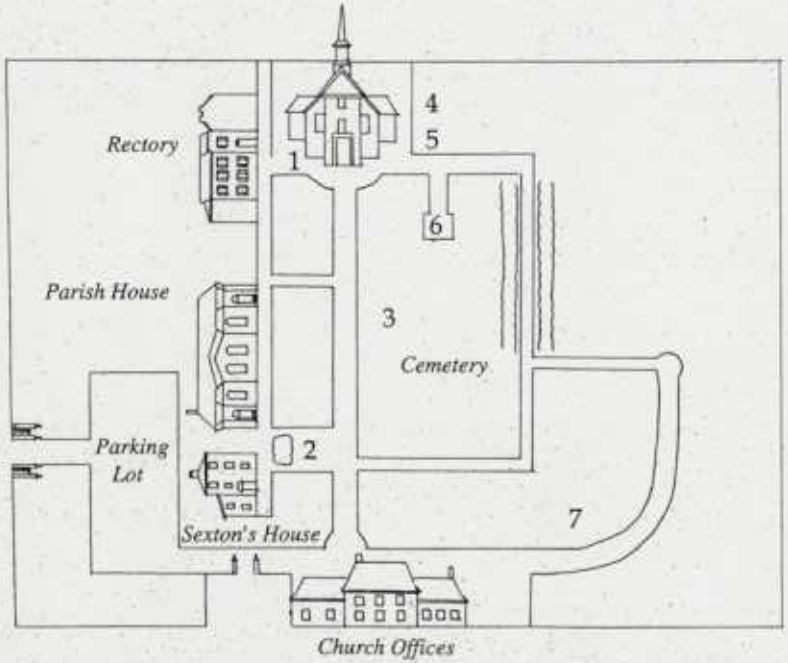
This Civil War soldier was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1897 for an act of valor. Hunterson, "while under fire voluntarily gave up his own horse to an engineer officer whose horse had been killed, thus enabling the officer to escape with valuable papers in his possession."

4 Lizzie Martin

On December 24, 1857, Lizzie Martin died at age nineteen. Her parents had the following inscription carved on her tombstone:

When Christmas bells rang out their chime
And holly boughs and sprigs of rhyme
Were hung on many a wall,
Our Lizzie in her beauty's prime
Lay in our darkened hall.
The Yule log burned on the hearth
We sang no song of Christmas mirth!
With hearts bowed down -- with spirits riven
We gave our darling's soul to heaven.

This tombstone has sunk so far into the ground that the inscription has been covered by the soil.



Look for the markers to follow the tour route.

5 Peter and Andreas Sandel

These are among the oldest surviving tombstones in the Gloria Dei Cemetery, dated 1708 and 1711. A minister of this church, Andreas Sandel, laid to rest his two infant sons here.

6 Alexander Wilson

This Scottish emigrant specialized in ornithology, the study of birds. Wilson studied and sketched birds of the eastern United States for ten years before publishing his *American Ornithology*. Since his untimely death at forty-six years of age, Wilson has been called a "pioneer writer of the bird essay."

7 Revolutionary War Officers

The remains of eight Revolutionary War officers and their families were relocated to this cemetery several decades ago.

Soldier and artist James Peale survived seven battles and attained the rank of captain during his service in the Continental Army. Despite his skill as an artist of miniature portraits, James was overshadowed by his more famous brother, Charles Wilson Peale. Four of James Peale's daughters also became accomplished still-life or portrait artists.

A native of Ireland, William Irvine served in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. By the war's end, Brigadier General Irvine commanded the garrison at Fort Pitt (Pittsburgh) on the American frontier. Irvine returned to Philadelphia in 1793 to serve as a United States Congressman.

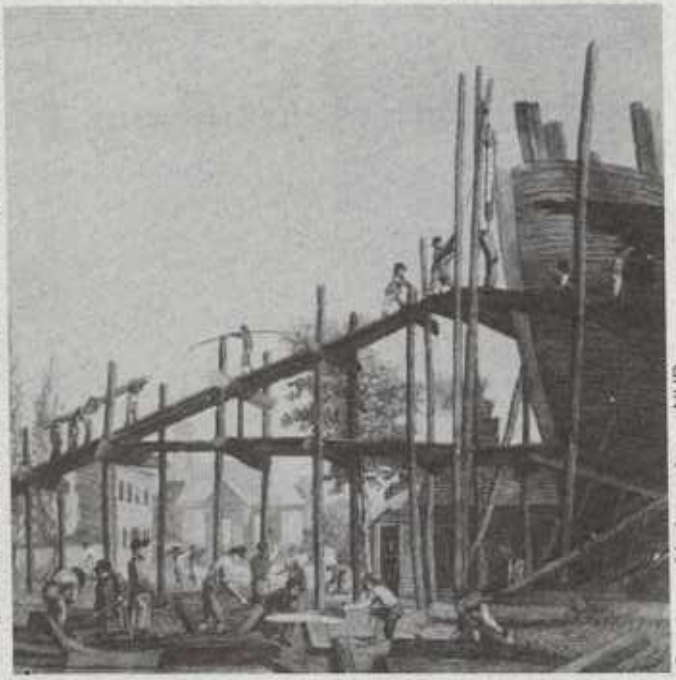
Visit Queen's Village

Queen Christina
1626-1689

This neighborhood derived its name from Queen Christina, the Swedish monarch who ruled during its early settlement. The area eventually became known as Southwark. Once home to several shipyards, Southwark was vital to the early economy of Philadelphia and the naval defense of the United States. Several ships of the U. S. Navy were built here in the 1790s, when the city was the nation's capital. The frigates *United States* and *Philadelphia* were built south of the Gloria Dei Church and cemetery.

Sparks' Shot Tower, located one block west of the Gloria Dei Church, is one of the most unique landmarks in Queen's Village. Constructed by Thomas Sparks and John Bishop in1808 to produce lead ammunition, this was the first shot tower built in the United States. Although its technology is extinct, the tower remains a unique visual reference point to this section of the city's waterfront.

Philadelphia's oldest neighborhood continues to grow and change. Explore the streets of Queen's Village with its many restored 18th and 19th century houses, offering us another bridge to the past.



Courtesy of Independence NHP

Preparation for War to Defend Commerce

The building of the frigate *Philadelphia* with the Gloria Dei Church in the background.
Published by W.Birch & Son, 1800.