

A SELECTION OF EPITAPHS AT ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

This self-guided tour encompasses some of the gravestones at St. Paul's Church National Historic Site. *The tour takes approximately 45 minutes.* Specifically, the tour focuses on the epitaphs of some of the individuals that are buried within the cemetery. Although the epitaphs at St. Paul's cemetery vary in theme, all are meant to memorialize the deceased. In our churchyard, religion clearly seems to be the dominant theme as the families often turned to religious appeals to cope with the painful departure of their loved ones. The map on the reverse side will assist in locating the stones. **The tour begins at gravesite of Mary Smalls.**

1. *Mary Smalls: 1790-1820*

"Affliction sore long time she bore, physicians aid was vain; till God pleased to give her ease, and free her from her pain."



Smalls appears to have suffered for an extended period of time before being given God's grace and "allowed to die." Religiously, the author may have felt that God was testing Smalls' willpower and strength. Though no clear indications are provided regarding her ailment, it may

have been unpreventable and untreatable due to the limits of the medical field during this time. However, with today's modern advances in medicine Smalls would have likely survived.

2. *John Ward: 1778-1806*

"In this dark tomb remains my partner dear. So much esteem'd and lov'd by me while here; I hope and trust to see thee as thou art, in heavenly glory never more to part."



Ward's wife appears to have written this epitaph, which signifies her love for her husband. Although a death before thirty was common during the early 19th century, it still proved to be sorrowful and depressing for family members. The wife's words have

religious significance since she believes that they will later reunite in heaven.

3. *Joshua Pinkney: 1809-1867*

"Deprived of sight in early manhood, he ever bore his loss with Christian resignation."



This epitaph relates to blindness in the 19th century. Pinkney was blind throughout most of his life and apparently was able to live his life as a "good" Christian by accepting his health condition. By the early 19th century, there was a greater focus on the needs of blind individuals. Louie Braille's

writing system as well as the first publically funded school for the blind, were created in 1834 and 1837, respectively. It is unknown how these advances affected Pinkney's life.

4. *Aaron Ogden Price: 1806-1845*

"An honest man is the noblest work of God."



A quote by the English Poet, Alexander Pope, who lived between 1688 and 1744, is engraved on Price's gravestone. According to this quote, an honest man is able to serve God in the most ethical way and an individual of high moral standards best reflects God.

Visitors to Price's grave would be reminded of the importance of being good and having respectable values. The person who chose this epitaph wanted to make it known that Price lived a moral life and that the visitors should as well.

5. *Elijah Townsend: 1786-1807*

"I've paid the debt to nature due."



This epitaph describes death as a natural part of life rather than a woeful and mournful time. Elijah Townsend contributed his role to society, and thus was deemed "ready" for death. Different variations of this epitaph were prevalent throughout the United States during the 18th and 19th centuries. The poetic verse: "Death is a debt to nature due, which I have paid and so must you," was a common epitaph during this time period.

6. *Susannah Meyers: 1828-1858*

"Farewell dear wife, thou art gone. To fairer worlds on high. Thy soul has gained a happy place with Jesus in the sky."



Most likely, Ferdinand Meyers wrote this epitaph upon the death of his wife, Susannah, whom he deeply loved. Meyers appears to have found comfort in believing that her soul would be with Jesus. As she is buried with her son William, who died at

the age of three months, Susannah may have died due to complications during childbirth. In only a short period of time, Ferdinand had lost both his wife and son, which might explain the religious tone of this epitaph.

7. *Phenias Rich: 1771-1810*

"Reader, behold and drop a tear. Here lies a tender husband, an affectionate father, and a dear friend."



In this epitaph, the writer encourages the reader or a visitor of the gravestone to outwardly display their grief through crying. Through his enumeration of adjectives, the writer wanted the visitors to be well aware of the admirable characteristics that Phenias displayed throughout his lifetime. It can be assumed that he was well-respected by his wife, his family, and his friends.

8. *Thomas: 1792-1813*

"Well done thou good and faithful Servant: enter thou into the joy of thy reward."



In this epitaph, Philip and Deborah Rhinelanders thank Thomas for his work as their servant during his lifetime. "Enter thou into the joy of thy reward," suggests religious significance, signaling that he would be rewarded for his faithful work in heaven. During Thomas' lifetime, enslaved

Africans or "servants" as they were known represented 10-15% of Eastchester's population. Servants like Thomas would have been used as farm hands, domestic servants, or as apprentices to craftsmen. Slavery was abolished in New York in 1827, roughly 14 years after Thomas' death.

9. *Edward Gay: 1837-1928*

"[Tomorrow] to fresh woods and pastures new!"



This epitaph originates from John Milton's 1637 pastoral poem "Lycidas." The poem memorializes Milton's friend, Edward King, who had drowned in the Irish Sea after his boat sank. This quote may suggest that life does not necessarily

end with death as there are fresh woods and pastures or new opportunities in heaven. Gay was known for his work as a landscape painter and use of this particular line could also signify Gay's emigration from Ireland to the United States in 1848. The gravestone is a marble bench, the size of a loveseat, designed by Gay's son as a testimony to his parent's love.

10. Mangle Minthorne Pell: 1788-1805

“Died at East Chester the 16th day of August 1805 of the Epedemic prevailing in the City of New York Aged 16 Years 10 Months and & 5 days.”



Mangle Pell’s epitaph indicates he was struck down by the yellow fever epidemic of 1805, one of many that struck the United States during the late 18th and 19th centuries. At the time, New York City paid little attention to health and often took reactive stances in response to outbreaks and epidemics. In the year of Pell’s death, the New York City Board of Health was established to combat the deadly epidemic. New York City spent more than \$25,000 trying to fight Yellow Fever, yet the budget dramatically decreased after this outbreak until the next one had struck the city in 1819.

11. Lewis Rich: 1822-1892

“We meet upon the level and we part upon the square.”



This epitaph originates from the 1854 Masonic poem, “The Level and the Square,” written by Brother Robert Morris, the Poet Laureate of Freemasonry. This quote is symbolic of the system of morality that was created by the Freemasons, a highly influential fraternal organization or brotherhood. “Meet upon the level” suggests that all Freemasons are of equal stature and “part upon the square” symbolizes the advice Freemasons state to one another, in order to remember the ideals of honesty and morality. Rich appeared to have been a proud Freemason who believed in and upheld the ideals of the organization.

12. Samuel Treadwell Pell: 1755-1786

“Thus after returning victorious from the field of Mars, he cheerfully obeys the summons of eternity from whence there is no return.”



Pell was an officer in the 4th New York Regiment in the Continental Army. He fought in the Battle of Saratoga in upstate New York and was part of Washington’s encampment at Valley Forge in Pennsylvania. His father and brother, also veterans of the Revolutionary War, most likely designed this stone and wrote this epitaph. The Trophy of Arms on the top and the allusion to Mars, the Roman god of war, in his epitaph reflect his long devotion to military service. During this era, such symbols and wording frequently appeared on gravestones reflecting the Neoclassical revival. This enthusiasm for classical antiquity demonstrates the tremendous importance of Roman ideals to the Americans of the late 18th century.

