



Please treat the cemetery with care and respect.

- Many of these gravestones are not securely fastened to their bases and can be easily tipped over and broken. Please do not climb, lean or sit upon the gravestones.

- Gravestones can be further damaged by the oils left by touching. *Please do not touch the gravestones.*
- Gravestone rubbings, if done improperly, can cause irreversible damage. Rubbings are allowed only with permission and guidance of the USDA Forest Service at Grey Towers.

Laurel Hill Burial Ground

Today and the Future

Stewardship and resource protection are a major focus of the mission of the USDA Forest Service at Grey Towers National Historic Site.

Rehabilitation work in the burial ground began several years ago with extensive archeological studies and removal of trees that were a hazard, causing damage to many headstones.

In addition, invasive plants, shrubs and brush were removed. A dry-laid stone wall along Old Owego Turnpike was repaired and is now maintained.

The Pike County Historic Preservation Trust has funded entry signs and replaced damage or worn entry signs when needed.

Volunteers have been recruited to assist the USDA Forest Service in implementation of the Laurel Hill Burial Ground Preservation Project.

A key partner is the Grey Towers Heritage Association which has formed the Laurel Hill Burial Ground Restoration Crew which works with the US Forest Service on restoration and maintenance activities.

The Preservation Project work plan includes cutting and trimming grass and ground cover, maintaining trails/footpaths, including the original hearse drive and access roads, restoration of historic fences and railings, repairing stone walls, and preservation and restoration of grave markers.

Another important component of the work plan is interpretation and public information. This has included development of interpretive materials and interpretive programs and development and installation of signage and wayside exhibits.



Public is welcome dawn to dusk.

GREY TOWERS

HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

Grey Towers Heritage Assoc.
P.O. Box 188, Milford, PA 18337
GreyTowers.org

To volunteer to help care for the burial ground or for more information, call 570-296-9625 or email info@greytowers.org



Located near the junction of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania at 151 Grey Towers Drive, Milford, PA 18337.

Laurel Hill Burial Ground

Known Burials from 1821-1920's

Grey Towers National Historic Site



GREY TOWERS

HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

Laurel Hill Burial Ground

Laurel Hill Burial Ground, established in 1821, contains 112 monuments, ranging from undressed fieldstone markers for paupers’ graves to more elaborate obelisks and carved markers.

The majority of burials occurred from 1821–1899. There are some interesting examples of 19th century gravestone carvings, including ‘urn and willow’ patterns and ‘clasped and pointed hands’ designs. The majority of the headstones are lettered and have engravings that are visible and readable. Two obelisk monuments also are present. At least six monuments are missing for unknown reasons.

Old burial practices, such as single unmarked graves and burying one coffin on top of another, have made the positive identification of all those buried in the cemetery impossible. What we do know is that Laurel Hill is the burial site for many of Milford’s early residents, including several generations of Pinchot family members.

Other prominent family plots include the Quick, Bowhanan and Gooding families.

The names, dates and inscriptions on the headstones tell a story of what life was like in this small riverside community during the 19th century. The construction of the stones tells us the range of status of the families.

Some engraved art work and designs indicate religious beliefs. We also know that many children

died, perhaps from disease, during the first half of the century.

The formal Milford Cemetery, located just outside of the borough on Route 209 South, was dedicated in 1868. The Laurel Hill Burial Ground, which simply did not have room to expand to accommodate a growing town population, was displaced by the newer one and it fell into disrepair.

During Laurel Hill’s active years, hardly any trees — except a few large red oaks and Norway spruce — existed in the cemetery. Over time, nearly a hundred hemlock trees grew amid the tombstones. Acids and soluble salts, tannic acid from the trees and organic acids released by mosses and lichens have expedited the disintegration of the stones. The sandy, loamy soil couldn’t hold the roots of the massive trees, causing several to fall on and damage the stones and iron gates that surrounded the family plots.

In 1963, Gifford Bryce Pinchot donated the Grey Towers estate —including the Laurel Hill Burial Ground —to the USDA Forest Service, the agency founded by conservationist and former Pennsylvania Governor Gifford Pinchot.

Grey Towers now serves as a center for conservation leadership and education and a model for historic preservation and stewardship. For those early residents who lived, died, and now have been laid to rest in Milford, Grey Towers serves as a living legacy.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are some Pinchots buried here and others in the Milford Cemetery?

Constantien and Marie Pinchot, Cyrille Constantien Desire Pinchot and his first and second wives, Sarah Dimmick and Eliza Cross, and their sons Cyrill H. and John F. were buried here before the Milford Cemetery was established.

James and his wife Mary Pinchot, and their son Gifford and his wife Cornelia, as well as other family members, were laid to rest at Milford Cemetery.

Why are there so many tree stumps?

Over 100 years of neglect resulted in hundreds of trees growing amid the graves. The Forest Service at Grey Towers left the trees because of potential damage to the graves and headstones.

In 2001, after high winds and ice brought down heavy limbs and branches, it became clear that leaving the trees was a hazard to the cemetery and the visitors.

Still, the concern about the damage that could be caused by pulling up the root systems remained, so the decision was made to keep the stumps.

Why are so many stones toppled and broken?

Some headstones were broken by falling trees or limbs.

Also, over time, the low ph of the soil, in combination with freeze/thaw conditions, contributed to the decay of the mortise construction of some monuments.

As the mortar disintegrated, the gravestones eventually toppled. Acids and soluble salts have also damaged most of the fallen stones.

Why do the stones look so bad?

The dark damp conditions caused by the heavy canopy of hemlocks that have grown here promoted the growth of moss and lichen on many of the stones. Moss and lichens release organic acids that cause etching and decay of gravestones.

The current sugary-like surface of many of the marble stones was caused by tannic acid released by the pines and hemlocks, which attack the carbonate structure of marbles.

The black spots are caused by acid rain permeating calcium sulfate into the carbonate structure on many of the stones.



Why do some graves have footstones?

Some graves have a headstone and a smaller, similarly shaped footstone that is inscribed with the initials of the deceased and sometimes the date of death.

The two together provided the “bed of earth” in which the deceased would “sleep.” The sleep metaphor also was the reason for the traditional bed-board shaped profiles of the gravestones.

What is the significance of the artwork on some of the stones?

Ethnic traditions brought to small communities by stone cutters eventually were adopted by the people in the region. Some of the art on the stones in this cemetery, and their interpretations from Biblical passages, include:

A flower cut from the stem (found on children’s stones):
“...cometh forth like a flower and is cut down.”

A hand pointing upwards:
“The way to the reward of the righteous.”

Urn & Willow: *“Mortality and earthly sorrow.”*

Willow tree: *“Earthly sorrow, mourning.”*

Why the new burials (1970, 90 and 91)? Is this an active cemetery?

The more recent headstones are not burials, but memorial markers placed by families after 1963, when the Pinchot family donated Grey Towers to the Forest Service and the cemetery became inactive for burials.

Why are there depressions in the ground?

Depressions develop over time when the wooden coffins deteriorate and collapse.

Also, some coffins may have been exhumed and moved to the new Milford Cemetery after its development.

