

## ***Maplewood Cemetery***

Street Address: 425 Maple Street

Map & Parcel: 530203

Present Zoning: R1A

Original Owner: City of Charlottesville

Present Owner: City of Charlottesville

Historic Name: Maplewood Cemetery

Date/Period: 1827-

Style: Various

Land Area: 3.6 acres

Condition: Fair

Sources: ACHS files, City records University of Virginia Library, Special Collections

### **Criteria for Historic Designation**

*1. The historic, architectural or cultural significance, if any, of the structure or site and whether it has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register:*

Maplewood Cemetery is Charlottesville's oldest public cemetery. When Charlottesville was laid out in 1762, the city plans did not include a public burying ground. At that time, many people were buried near their parish church or in family plots on their own property. One such informal cemetery existed on land near Park Street owned by Peter Lott, where his friends, family and neighbors were buried. In 1827, Maplewood was established as the town's official cemetery, a 3.6-acre property now located a few blocks northeast of downtown Charlottesville on land which was once a part of the farm granted to the Merriweather family in 1735. When the new cemetery opened, many of the stones (and perhaps remains) of those buried on Park Street were transferred there. Maplewood's oldest gravestone, that of Letitia Shelby, the wife of Kentucky's first governor who died in 1777 while visiting relatives in Albemarle County, was probably one of those stones transferred from the burying ground on Park Street. Maplewood Cemetery is currently bordered by Lexington Avenue, Maple Street, 8th Street, and Kelly Avenue, but it was originally located on farmland outside the city limits, in accordance with sanitary codes of the time. As Charlottesville grew and annexed more territory, however, the cemetery was swallowed up by the residential neighborhood that surrounds it today. The city's annexation of 1860 included most of the cemetery land, and the rest was incorporated in the annexation of 1888. Because Maplewood Cemetery is the oldest public cemetery in Charlottesville, a walk through its jumbled paths takes the visitor through the history of the city itself. James Alexander, in his recollections of the city recorded shortly before his death in 1874, said of the cemetery, "It is well to sit around the tombs of those whom we once knew; it brings to remembrance the happiness enjoyed in their company while living, and the good which has resulted from their example of piety and trust in God, and of the further necessity of being, like them, prepared for death." As was noted in the Daily Progress Historical and Industrial magazine of 1906, "any history of this vicinity would indeed be incomplete without a sketch of these cities of the dead (Charlottesville's public cemeteries) within whose confines the remains of its past brilliant careers as well as those who in their time constituted the woof and warp of the complex fabric of

human existence.” Maplewood Cemetery is not currently listed on either the National Register of Historic Places or the Virginia Landmarks Register.

*2. The association of the structure or site with an historic person or event or with a renowned architect or master craftsman:*

Among Maplewood’s deceased patrons are some of Charlottesville’s most prominent citizens, including Paul G. McIntire, Charlottesville’s benefactor, as well as heroes of the Civil War and several foreign wars. Many Confederate soldiers and officers are also buried at Maplewood, including Brigadier General John Marshall Jones, Brigadier General Armistead Lindsay Long, and Colonel John Bowie Strange. In addition, newspaper accounts in the Daily Progress of June 10, 1902 assert that there are over 100 unmarked Confederate graves in the cemetery. Charlottesville’s principal role as a Confederate Hospital between 1861 and 1865 is reflected by the numbers of these graves as well as the marked graves of several soldiers from other parts of the South who were mortally wounded in battle and buried here. In addition to Charlottesville’s white Civil War heroes, Maplewood Cemetery contains the remains of some of the city’s African-American residents, both prominent and unknown. Upon its establishment in 1827, Maplewood was designated as the “white” cemetery for the town, but there were a few exceptions to this rule. Some of the black “servants” (slaves?) buried here include “Hagar, Faithful Servant,” a domestic servant of R.K. Meade at the Piedmont Institute. Newton Hagar is believed to have been her name prior to emancipation. Linie Winston, “A Faithful Servant,” is also buried at Maplewood, but no other information is available to identify her. In addition, notable free black citizens of the community were also interred here. For example, Fairfax Taylor, an African-American civil rights activist who lobbied for equality for newly freed black citizens after the Civil War, is buried at Maplewood. His son, James T. S. Taylor, was among 25 blacks elected to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867. Robert Scott, Sr. and Jr. are also both buried here. The Scott family was of mixed Native- and African-American heritage, and played a significant role in Charlottesville’s cultural life. They were excellent musicians, and played for town events as well as at Monticello. Family members were considered “nearer white than Negro” and were allowed to vote until 1910 when voting laws and racial definitions became more restrictive. Maplewood also contains the remains of other interesting Charlottesville residents and visitors. For example, Maud Coleman Woods, daughter of prominent Charlottesville businessman Micajah Woods, was selected to represent North America at the Pan American Exposition of 1901 for her “flower-like sweetness, unconventional perfection, and almost seraphic purity of expression,” and was thus an early “Miss America” of sorts. She died of typhoid fever at the age of 24 and was buried at Maplewood, as was her father and other family members. Benjamin Franklin Ficklin, co-founder of the Pony Express and Civil War blockade runner, died in Washington DC after choking on a fishbone and was returned to Charlottesville for his burial at Maplewood. Job Foster, a New York native and performer in Robinson & Eldred’s Circus Company, was killed by an elephant while visiting Charlottesville with the circus in 1851 and is also buried here. John Neilson, an Irish workman who worked with Thomas Jefferson on the University of Virginia grounds, is buried here as well. Other family names with significant ties to Charlottesville include those of Spottswood, Massie, Sinclair, Fry, Peyton, Burnley, Payne, and many others. These people, in addition to the many unmentioned dead, contributed in some way to the cultural life of Charlottesville and their graves remind visitors of the city’s place in history, from the Civil War and Reconstruction through the wars

and other events of the 20th century and on to the present. The cemetery is now closed to new patrons, but there are still occasional burials for descendants of families with inherited plots.

*3. The overall condition and aesthetic quality of the site or structure and whether it is or would be an integral part of an existing design control district*

Maplewood Cemetery is currently in fair condition, although many of the gravestones have been defaced or have deteriorated due to time and weather damage. There have been repeated instances of vandalism in the cemetery, including graffiti and physical destruction of the stones. Many are pushed over and broken as a midnight prank. Others have fallen over due to the passage of time and harsh weather, and are occasionally moved by cemetery visitors to prevent injury, which separates them from the grave to which they belong. Broken stones are also often repaired poorly, using inappropriate materials which are ineffective and occasionally cause additional harm. The walls around the perimeter of the cemetery are in need of repair, and many of the fences or stones surrounding family plots are deteriorating. The cemetery is not currently part of an existing design control district.

*4. The age of the structure:*

As stated earlier, Maplewood Cemetery was established in 1827. Some grave markers and perhaps the associated remains were transferred to the cemetery after it opened, which explains the presence of some older stones. The oldest grave marker in the cemetery is dated 1777.

*5. Whether the structure is of such old or unusual design, texture and material that it can be reproduced only with great difficulty, if at all; Whether the structure or any of its features represent an infrequent or the first or last remaining example of a particular detail or type of architecture in the city:*

Maplewood is unique among city cemeteries for many reasons, one of which is its design. Although the cemetery was established at the beginning of the reform movement which gave rise to planned garden cemeteries such as Mt. Auburn cemetery in Cambridge, MA and Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, VA, Maplewood's design is more reminiscent of earlier, family burial grounds. It is surrounded by a low brick wall, and trees and bushes are interspersed throughout. There are no formal paths, walkways, or streets, as can be found in more formal garden cemeteries, and the stones and gravesites are laid out irregularly throughout the property. Thus, unlike later cemeteries such as Riverview and Hollymeade, which are planned "memorial gardens," Maplewood's design reflects 18th century burial practices which are no longer used today. The overall design of the cemetery is not its only distinguishing historical feature. The gravestones, mausoleums, and family plots are also unique to their time period. In addition to representing much of Charlottesville's history through the names and stories depicted on the gravestones, the markers in Maplewood cemetery provide an interesting glimpse into the funerary traditions of the past 170 years. "Using local stones, local artisans crafted gravestones that reflected contemporary theology, economics, or demographics. These carvings represent some of the finest early American art." Late 18th and early 19th century funerary symbols included soul effigies, death's heads, portraits, hourglasses, crossbones, urns, mourners, and willows. Later in the 19th century more hopeful images predominated, with elaborate symbolic

meanings. Natural images were very popular, particularly at the height of the Victorian era. Many three-dimensional monuments were created, and a greater variety of materials were used. At Maplewood, simple slate and granite stones from the earliest graves lie alongside more elaborate bronze and marble sculptures from later eras. The cemetery also includes a Greek Revival mausoleum built for the Mason-Minor family. Because the design of the gravestones and memorials found in the Maplewood Cemetery capture the specific stylistic period when they were erected, the unique historical styles and the overall historic fabric they combine to create cannot be easily or effectively reproduced. The destruction and/or further deterioration of these stones, or of the cemetery itself, would be an irreplaceable loss to the Charlottesville community.

*6. The degree to which the original distinguishing character, qualities or materials of a structure have been retained:*

Most of the stones in the Maplewood Cemetery are original. A few have been replaced by more modern markers, but the majority remain as they did when they were erected, weather damage, vandalism, and natural subsidence excepted.