

The Historic Cemetery in Pine Grove Furnace State Park

One of the features of the ironmaking community that is still visible, though not often visited today, is the cemetery barely half a mile southeast of the old furnace. In earlier times the entire furnace area and Mansion would have been visible from the hilltop. The cemetery is at the top of Murphy Road, which begins off Bendersville Road across from the Family Campground. Today a State Park sign marks the entrance along the aptly named Cemetery Road. There is not much to see. Only one marker with legible writing is still in the ground.

The cemetery is known to have been in use by the 1790s, but may be older (the iron furnace started making iron in the 1770s, and in the decade before there was a sawmill here). One of the last burials was for a Hungarian building a railroad, killed in a dynamite explosion in 1891.

A limestone quarry is directly next to the cemetery, once producing a valuable commodity for iron smelting and for agricultural purposes. It is claimed that at some point in the 19th century, as the quarry expanded, the excavation hit the edge of the cemetery and a few graves were exposed (and coffins tumbled out!). This contributed to the end of burials here.

We do not know how many people are buried at Pine Grove Furnace – estimates range from 40 to at least 100. Many shallow depressions in the ground are now visible, demonstrating the location of at least some burials. Future surveys may help establish the true number.

The cemetery was neglected in the decades after heavy industry ended at Pine Grove Furnace (the blast furnace last made iron in 1895; the brickworks ended in 1907). Grave markers became overgrown with weeds and eventually trees, and vandalism occurred. Some markers were reportedly shot with rifles – note a shattered stone on the display table across this room. Some of the gravestones displayed here were still in the cemetery as late as the 1960s, though perhaps not in their proper burial locations. At some point, State Park staff decided it was better to remove the remaining misplaced stones for safekeeping in the Park Office collection.

Since then, successive efforts have been made to remove vegetation and repair what little remains of the original setting. Cleanup of the site was performed in the 1980s and has begun again over the past few years. A major problem today is Japanese barberry, an invasive plant that forms dense thickets. Crews from the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps and volunteers from the Friends of Pine Grove Furnace have removed much of the barberry, but now the cemetery is overrun by native ferns. The work is ongoing.

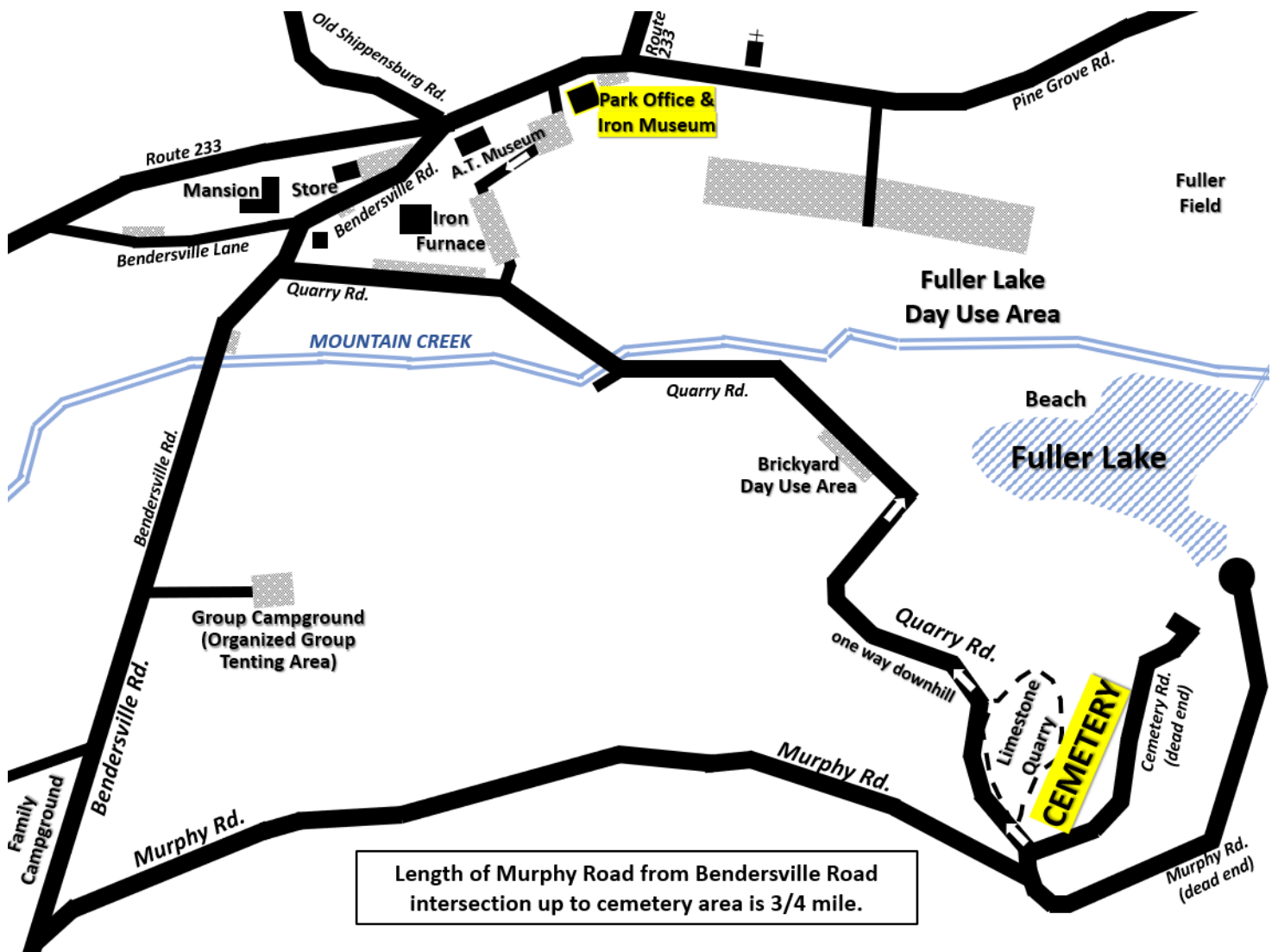
Beneath the ferns is a carpet of periwinkle (*Vinca minor*). Early European settlers often planted periwinkle in cemeteries because its green leaves are attractive year-round, its has pretty purple flowers from early spring through the summer, and it helps suppress the growth of other plants (but not barberry and ferns, apparently!). Periwinkle is not native and can be invasive in some settings. However, at the Pine Grove Furnace cemetery it is contained, and has likely been there since the cemetery was started in the late 1700s – so it is allowed to remain as a significant aspect of the historic site.



A sign on Cemetery Road, at the top of Murphy Road, marks the entrance.

Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) is still growing in the cemetery. This periwinkle was probably first planted in the 1790s or earlier.







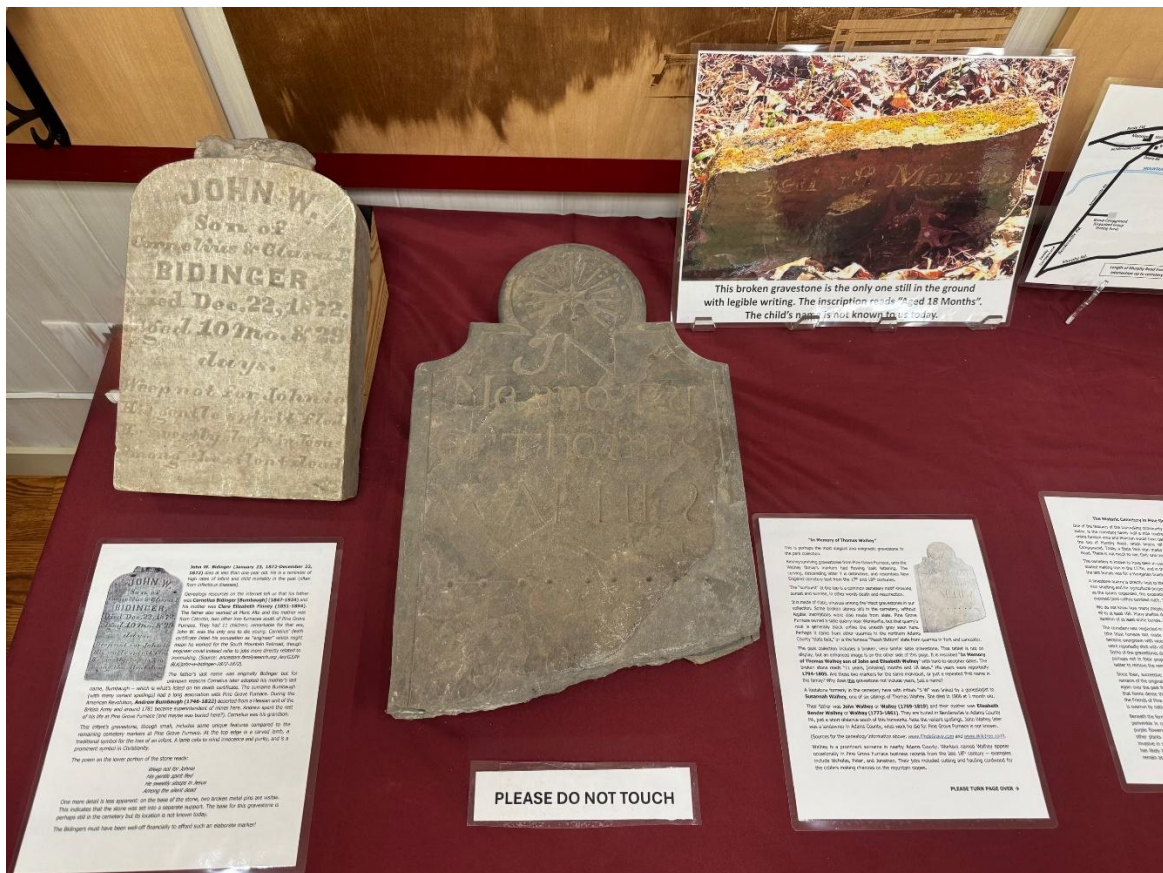
This broken gravestone is the only one still in the ground with legible writing. The inscription reads "Aged 18 Months". The child's name is not known to us today.

Here is the stone in July 2025 after being cleaned and treated with D/2, a biocide created for gravestones:



Photographs of the park museum with the rotating display for 2025-2026:





JANE ARTHUR EGE and her son GEORGE WASHINGTON EGE (the second)

Pine Grove Furnace was built probably in the 1770s (the earliest history is a bit murky). **Michael Ege (1752-1815)** became Ironmaster here in the 1780s, but his home base was in Boiling Springs at the Carlisle Iron Works – his 1795 mansion still sits on a hill overlooking Children's Lake there.

Michael Ege's eldest son **Peter Ege (1776-1847)** married **Jane Arthur (1774-1841)**. The Arthur family were among the earliest owners/builders of Pine Grove Furnace. Such unions were called "iron marriages" and it was often said that "an Ironmaster's son would marry naught but an Ironmaster's daughter."

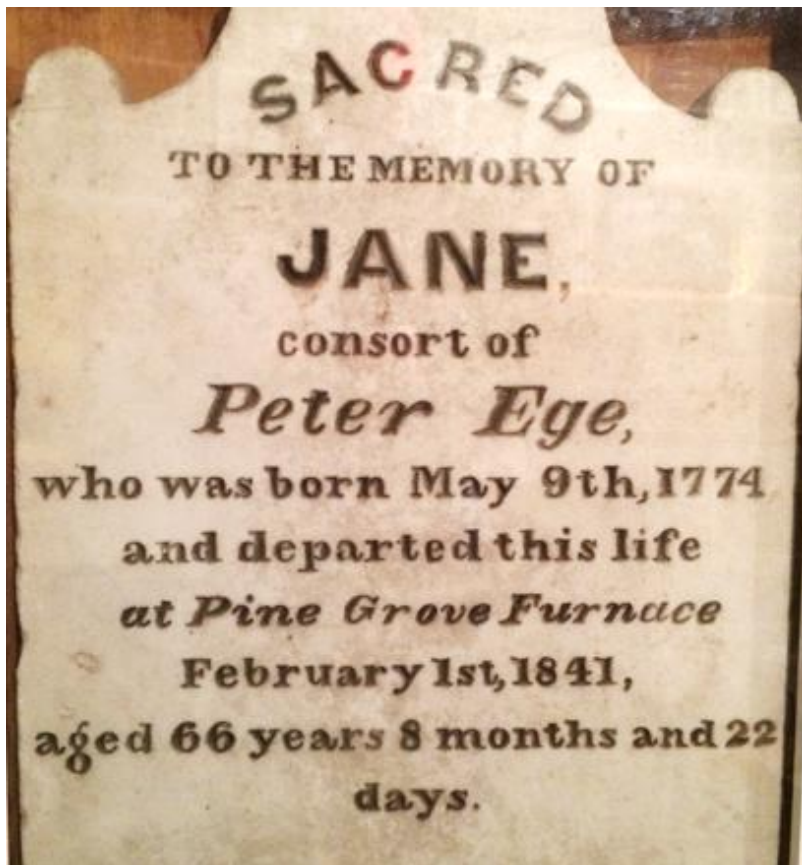
Peter and Jane married on September 12, 1799, and she gave birth to twins on June 26, 1800. At the time, Peter Ege was managing Cumberland Furnace on behalf of his father Michael. The young couple came to Pine Grove Furnace not long afterwards, probably later in 1800 or 1801. Peter first managed this ironworks for his father, then inherited it, and was here all his adult life though he lost control of the business in the late 1830s.

Jane had seven children in six births. Her first children, the twins born in 1800, were named **George Washington Ege** and **Martha Washington Ege**. Why? One story is that the presidential Washingtons attended the 1799 Ege wedding (not physically impossible but unverified, and doubtful) or at least Martha sent a gift: a fancy ring. George or Martha supposedly asked that the first child from the marriage be named for them (according to a 20th century family legend). Despite the family story, a more likely reason the Ege twins were named George W. and Martha W. is that the "Father of the Country" George Washington had died after a sudden short illness in December 1799 -- and during the period of national mourning, many children in the country were named after him. Indeed, naming children after the Washingtons remained a common practice for a long time.

Here's where it gets complicated. **George Washington Ege died in January 1801 at less than a year old**. His resting place is not known today but not thought to be at Pine Grove Furnace. His twin sister **Martha Washington Ege died in 1885** and is buried in Kansas where she lived -- many members of the later Ege family moved to the Midwest in the years before the Civil War.

So, how did George Washington Ege end up in our local ironworks cemetery? **Jane in 1808 had another son, also given the name George Washington Ege**. This, her fifth child, died in 1831 here at Pine Grove Furnace. We don't today know why George Washington Ege (the second) died at age 23. He was buried in the community cemetery here at Pine Grove Furnace. His mother died ten years later and was buried next to him. Today the exact location of their graves within the small cemetery is unknown.

Little can be seen at the cemetery, which was neglected (and the markers broken and abused) in the first part of the 20th century. The few remaining gravestones are now in protective storage in the State Park's historical collection. The cemetery in Pine Grove Furnace State Park is at the top of Murphy Road which starts across from the park's Family Campground. It is marked with a large park sign but is barely recognizable as a graveyard today.



Jane Arthur Ege died at Pine Grove Furnace, no doubt in the Ironmaster's Mansion, and was buried in the community cemetery next to a son George Washington Ege (the second) who had died a decade earlier.

We do not today know where their graves are within the cemetery. The gravestones were neglected and abused in the early decades of the 20th century, and eventually were placed in the State Park Office historical collection for safekeeping. They are mostly kept in storage, but are occasionally put on display in the museum.

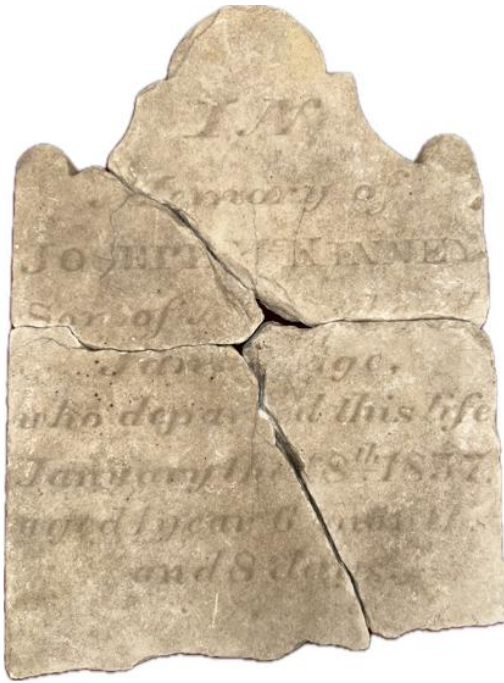


Footstone for Jane Arthur Ege (not on display)

Old burials sometimes included not just a “headstone” – such as the very large marker in the vertical case for Jane Arthur Ege, the Ironmaster’s wife – but also a smaller “footstone” at the other end of the grave. The footstone would be inscribed with the initials of the deceased, such as “**J E**” for Jane Ege. A footstone was needed to define the end of the grave because cemeteries were often crowded and not arranged in a simple regular grid pattern. This footstone, over two feet long, is appropriately sized for Jane’s large headstone and her prominent social position.



This is the gravestone for **George Washington Ege the second (1808-1831)**. We today do not know why he died at age 23. He was buried in the cemetery here, and his mother was buried next to him a decade later. Though part of the stone is missing, including his full name, we know this stone belongs to him because his dates are known from other records. How much of the inscription can you decipher?



This is the gravestone of **Joseph McKinney Ege (July 10, 1835-January 18, 1837)**. Like several other stones in our museum, it is a sad reminder of high infant mortality rates in the past (often from infectious diseases). Joseph no doubt was born in, and died in, the Ironmaster's Mansion that still stands today in Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

How much of the inscription can you decipher? Note that the design is similar to other Ege gravestones on display.

Young Joseph's father was **Michael Peter Ege (1803-1853)**, a son of Ironmaster Peter and Jane Arthur Ege (her large gravestone is across the room). When Peter was trying to avoid creditors in 1835, his two sons Michael Peter and Joseph Arthur together took over as Ironmasters, but also ran into financial problems during the Panic of 1837. The furnace was sold in bankruptcy to Judge Frederick Watts in 1838. Watts was married

to Henrietta Ege, from the branch of the Ege family at the iron furnace in Boiling Springs, and he did not kick three generations of his wife's family out of the Mansion. The Ege clan finally left Pine Grove Furnace around 1844 when Frederick's brother William Miles Watts bought the ironworks.

Joseph was the first of two children of Michael Peter and Jane Louisa Ege. Here is their wedding notice in a local newspaper, the *Adams Sentinel* of August 25, 1833. Note the bride's name: her first name "Jane" is visible on this gravestone. However, the surname — spelled "McKinney" in all other records — almost seems to be inscribed "McKenney" on the stone! Was the name misspelled, or is it truly an "I" plus confusing blemishes on the stone? Anyhow, while not all of the inscription is legible, portions of the parents' names are visible. That, plus the child's age, confirm his identity based on other records such as the massive *History and Genealogy of the Ege Family in the United States 1738-1911* by Rev. Thompson P. Ege (published in 1911).

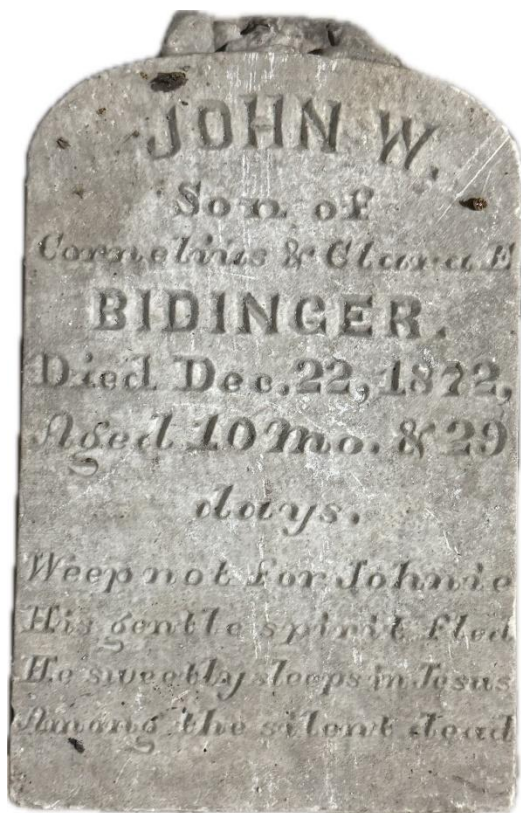
MARRIED,
On Wednesday evening last, by the
Rev. Henry R. Wilson, Mr. Michael P.
Ege, of Pine Grove Furnace, to Miss
Jane Louisa, only daughter of Major Jo-
seph McKinney, of Shippensburg.

Why is this stone so badly fragmented? It is said that vandals fired hunting rifles at cemetery markers in the mid 20th century. It's possible this stone was one of them, based on its appearance: notice the curious fracture pattern and a small gap in the center. What do you think?

SEE ENLARGED PHOTO ON NEXT PAGE

IN
memory of
JOHN F. KENNEDY
Son of
age,
who departed this life
January 18th 1877.
aged 1 year 6 months
and 8 days

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH



John W. Bidinger (January 23, 1872-December 22, 1872) died at less than one year old. He is a reminder of high rates of infant and child mortality in the past (often from infectious diseases).

Genealogy resources on the internet tell us that his father was **Cornelius Bidinger [Bumbaugh] (1847-1924)** and his mother was **Clara Elizabeth Finney (1851-1894)**. The father also worked at Mont Alto and the mother was from Catoctin, two other iron furnaces south of Pine Grove Furnace. They had 11 children; remarkable for that era, John W. was the only one to die young. Cornelius' death certificate listed his occupation as "engineer" which might mean he worked for the South Mountain Railroad, though engineer could instead refer to jobs more directly related to ironmaking. (Source: [ancestors.familysearch.org /en/G3JN-BLK/john-w-bidinger-1872-1872](https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/G3JN-BLK/john-w-bidinger-1872-1872)).

The father's last name was originally Bidinger but for unknown reasons Cornelius later adopted his mother's last name, Bumbaugh – which is what's listed on his death certificate. The surname Bumbaugh (with many variant spellings) had a long association with Pine Grove Furnace. During the American Revolution, **Andrew Bumbaugh (1746-1822)** deserted from a Hessian unit of the British Army and around 1781 became superintendent of mines here. Andrew spent the rest of his life at Pine Grove Furnace (and maybe was buried here?). Cornelius was his grandson.

This infant's gravestone, though small, includes some unique features compared to the remaining cemetery markers at Pine Grove Furnace. At the top edge is a carved lamb, a traditional symbol for the loss of an infant. A lamb calls to mind innocence and purity, and is a prominent symbol in Christianity.

The poem on the lower portion of the stone reads:

*Weep not for Johnie
His gentle spirit fled
He sweetly sleeps in Jesus
Among the silent dead*

One more detail is less apparent: on the base of the stone, two broken metal pins are visible. This indicates that the stone was set into a separate support. The base for this gravestone is perhaps still in the cemetery but its location is not known today.

The Bidingers must have been well-off financially to afford such an elaborate marker!

JOHN W.

Son of

Cornelius & Clara E.

BIDINGER.

Died Dec. 22, 1872,

Aged 10 Mo. & 29

days.

Weep not for Johnie

His gentle spirit fled

He sweetly sleeps in Jesus

Among the silent dead

"In Memory of Thomas Walhey"

This is perhaps the most elegant and enigmatic gravestone in the park collection.

Among surviving gravestones from Pine Grove Furnace, only the Walhey family's markers had flowing italic lettering. The curving, descending letter Y is distinctive, and resembles New England cemetery text from the 17th and 18th centuries.

The "sunburst" at the top is a common cemetery motif showing sunset and sunrise, in other words death and resurrection.

It is made of slate, unusual among the intact gravestones in our collection. Some broken stones still in the cemetery, without legible inscriptions were also made from slate. Pine Grove Furnace owned a slate quarry near Wenksville, but that quarry's rock is generally black unlike the smooth grey seen here. Perhaps it came from other quarries in the northern Adams County "slate belt," or is the famous "Peach Bottom" slate from quarries in York and Lancaster.



The park collection includes a broken, very similar slate gravestone. That tablet is not on display, but an enhanced image is on the other side of this page. It is inscribed "**In Memory of Thomas Walhey son of John and Elisabeth Walhey**" with hard-to-decipher dates. The broken stone reads "11 years, [missing] months and 18 days." His years were reportedly **1794-1805**. Are these two markers for the same individual, or just a repeated first name in the family? Why does this gravestone not include years, just a name?

A footstone formerly in the cemetery here with initials "S W" was linked by a genealogist to **Susannah Walhey**, one of six siblings of Thomas Walhey. She died in 1806 at 1 month old.

Their father was **John Walhey** or **Walley (1769-1819)** and their mother was **Elizabeth Bender Walhey** or **Walhay (1773-1861)**. They are buried in Bendersville in Adams County PA, just a short distance south of this ironworks. Note the variant spellings. John Walhey later was a landowner in Adams County; what work he did for Pine Grove Furnace is not known.

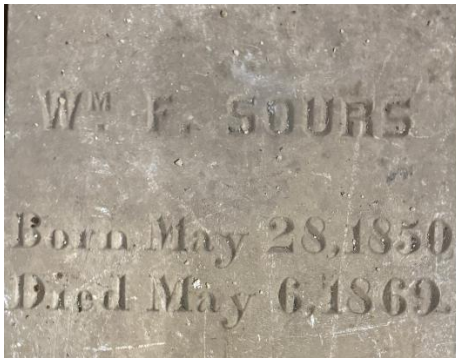
(Sources for the genealogy information above: www.FindaGrave.com and www.Wikitree.com).

Walhey is a prominent surname in nearby Adams County. Workers named Walhey appear occasionally in Pine Grove Furnace business records from the late 18th century — examples include Nicholas, Peter, and Jonathan. Their jobs included cutting and hauling cordwood for the colliers making charcoal on the mountain slopes.

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We do not have specific information about **William F. Sours (1850-1869)**, who died just before his 19th birthday. His gravestone is plain, and the inscription is brief compared to some others on display here.

The surnames **Sours** and **Sowers** often appear in business records and newspapers about Pine Grove Ironworks (the ironworks included the furnace plus a finery forge at what we now call Laurel Lake). One example: "At Laurel Forge, Cumberland County, Pa on November 12, 1874, **George W. Sours**, aged 43 years, 1 month, 18 days died." (*Star and Enterprise*, December 1, 1874). We can guess George was related to William. Curiously, in 1858 Ironmaster William Watts brought a lawsuit against George Sours related to 100 acres of mountain land (*Carlisle Herald*, January 20, 1858). We don't know why.

Some of the men in the Sours family worked at our furnace as *moulders*. This highly skilled job in the casting house involved setting wooden forms into special sand, creating a hollow space that would be filled with molten iron.

Genealogy for the Sours family shows their long presence in this area, often working in the iron industry here or elsewhere. From an archive in the University of North Carolina:

"The Sours, or Sowers, family members are descendants of Adam Siers, an iron worker born in Germany (circa 1720) who settled in Mary Ann Furnace, Pennsylvania, about 1770. His son Paul (circa 1755-1840) worked as a blacksmith in Adams County, Pennsylvania, married Magdalena Thron, or Trone, and had ten children. Paul's second son, Adam Sowers II (1782-1851) became a hatter, married Mary Dickson (1783-1864) and took over part of the Dickson farm in Cumberland County near Idaville, Pennsylvania...

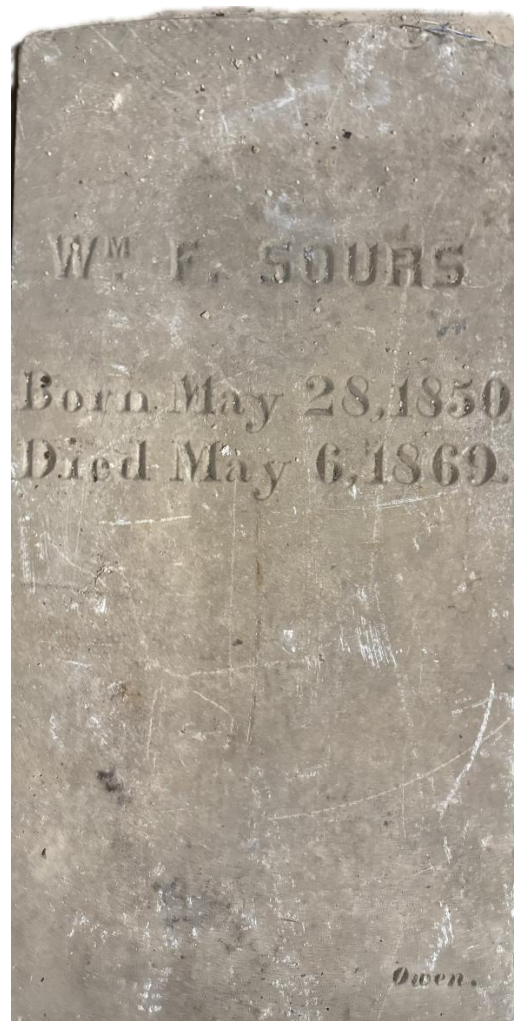
"John Dickson Sours was born on the family farm. As a young man, he followed his older brother Paul (1812-1874) to Findlay, Ohio... He returned to Idaville in 1841 to make his headquarters with his parents while he served as a Methodist circuit rider and rural school teacher. In 1856, he married Anna Mary Mears (1828-1917) and brought her to live at the family home. In 1869, he moved to Mechanicsburg, Adams County... Of his six children, two sons and a daughter died in childhood...

"William Sours (1818-1903)... was a blacksmith and moulder who worked at various furnaces in Pennsylvania before moving to Virginia in 1844. He worked at foundries in Virginia... moved to Big Lick (now Roanoke VA), where he bought a foundry..."

<https://finding-aids.lib.unc.edu/catalog/04435>

Surely these branches of the Sours somehow connect to William F. Sours who died here. It is possible there were other members of the family buried at Pine Grove Furnace but their gravestones are lost to us today. Do you know any details about them? Please share!

At the bottom, a single word appears: "Owen." It was common for stonecutters to include their initials, name or symbol at the foot of a gravestone. Owen was surely a stonecutter or mason in the region, but it's such a common name that we can't easily narrow it down.



Cemetery Mysteries – Can You Help?

At far right on this table are fragments of “plastic” grave markers or memorial tablets. They’ve been in the State Park collection for decades. However, we don’t know how they got into the collection. Were they ever actually in our cemetery? Who are the people named?

The material appears to be **Bakelite**, a type of plastic widely used in the first half of the 20th century for industrial purposes and for consumer goods including jewelry. Its use in exterior settings like a cemetery seems to have been infrequent, because though it is resistant to environmental degradation it is also quite brittle – as demonstrated by these fragments.

There are even more black plastic pieces in the park collection than are displayed on this table. Together, they maybe represent at least three people. We don’t know why they’re broken, is this an example of vandalism?

The most clearly preserved name is **Nunemaker**. That surname is not uncommon in the Adams County/Gettysburg area to our south, as well as around Harrisburg. (For example, there was Nunemaker’s Mill in the 19th century in Liberty Twp, Adams County; and John Nunemaker was an Adams County Commissioner in 1875). The very useful *FindaGrave.com* site lists many records for “Nunemaker” in Pennsylvania. The first name is missing here, but considering the likely middle initial W., the most relevant record seems to be **John Wesley Nunemaker** (1871-1945). His gravestone in Camp Hill is not in the same style as the Bakelite pieces we have. He lived in Harrisburg in his later years, and had worked for Bethlehem Steel in nearby Steelton. It seems possible to us that he or his family could have had a cabin in our area, and perhaps the marker was a memorial in a favorite place though he is buried elsewhere. John W. Nunemaker’s mother was **Ann M. Nunemaker** (1845-1905), note the spelling. She died at Catoctin Furnace in Maryland, demonstrating a long family connection to ironmaking. She does not seem to be represented in the pieces here.

Other Bakelite fragments might have the name Gertrude and a birth year 1889. The *Find a Grave* website lists **Gertrude Viola Lineman Nunemaker** (1887-1963). Same individual? We aren’t sure. There’s a two-year difference, but that may be due to poor record-keeping or deliberate shifting of dates, which is not uncommon. On the other hand, she was born and died far away in Venango County PA, and closely related people on *Find a Grave* tend to be from that part of Pennsylvania as well.

If you have any ideas about who these people were, and why the park has their memorials, please let us know!

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TOP: John W. Nunemaker's actual gravestone in Camp Hill, near Harrisburg.

BOTTOM: Some of the other fragments on display here. Note what may be "Gertrude."



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