



Key Moments in St. Peter's History

A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.

Cemetery – the Early Years

Located adjacent to the church where we worship each week, is St. Peter's cemetery, an integral part of the history of our parish. In addition to being the final resting place for many who attended at St. Peter's before us, numerous memorials in the cemetery tell a story about the spirit of our forbearers.

Ground for the original graveyard was gifted from James M. Coale, son of Richard and Catharine Coale, formalizing the donation by his father. While there are no known records to confirm when the first burials took place, we know that some Catholics who died in earlier years were buried elsewhere and later reinterred to St. Peter's cemetery. One such example is Catharine McSherry Coale. Her headstone contains an inscription that upon her death in 1815, she was buried at the church yard in Conewago, Pennsylvania and moved to St. Peter's in October 1860.

Early burials are located in the St. Peter's section of the cemetery, the section closest to Route 75. Some stones can be deciphered; while others, particularly the marble stones, are worn and largely illegible. But they stand as a literal reminder of our links to the past.

In this section is a monument to the Calvary Group, often noted as the first memorial to the Titanic, which was blessed by Fr. Samuel Kavanagh to the memory of the Titanic dead on April 19, 1912 - nine days after the tragedy.

In that same section, closer to the 3rd and current church, is a monument known by most as the Bunke Memorial. This Nativity crèche with Joan of Arc at the top, was erected to the memory of Private William Bunke, the only parishioner of St. Peter's (and Libertytown) to die in WWI.

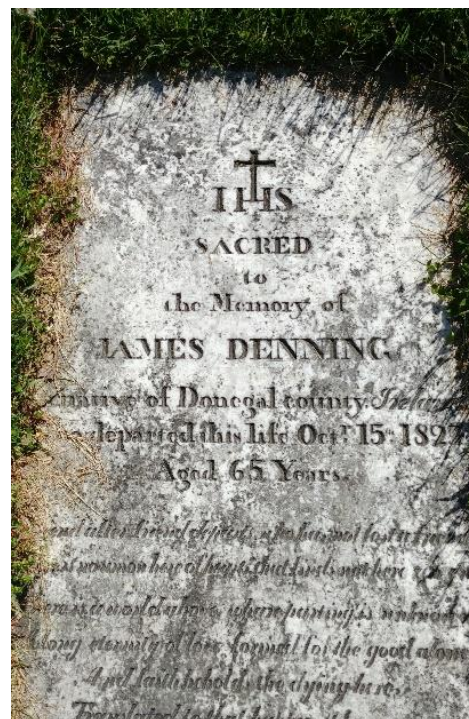


Figure 1 James Denning Tombstone in Cemetery c. 2022



*Figure 2 Blessed Mother Statue
July 2022*

East of the St. Peter's section, is the Blessed Mother section – also part of the original cemetery and marked with a statute of the Blessed Mother. Fr. Kavanagh took a special interest in beautifying the cemetery grounds during his pastorate. In 1915, the Baltimore American ran a full page pictorial of the grounds of St. Peter's, including the cemetery, which showed many plantings and walkways constructed under his direction. Upon his death in 1923, Fr. Kavanagh was buried at the foot of the Blessed Mother statue in the cemetery of which he was so fond.

Between the St. Peter and Blessed Mother sections, on the north end of the Cemetery is the Holy Family section, dedicated for burials of preborn and newly born children. A Memorial to the Unborn, rebuilt in 1998, marks this special section.

Our cemetery has continued to grow – in burials and with donations of land – over the second 100 years. Watch for a future article highlighting the more recent additions to this sacred resting space of our Parish ancestors.



*Figure 3 Memorial to the Unborn
August 2022*