MONTGOMERY COUNTY CEMETERY INVENTORY REVISITED

BURIAL SITE INFORMATION

Name: **Poolesville Methodist Church Cemetery**	Inventory ID: **124**

Alternate name:

Address: **17605 West Willard Road, Poolesville, MD 20837**

Website:

GPS coordinates: Latitude: **39.145373**   Longitude: **-77.418299**

FindaGrave: https://www.findagrave.com/cemetery/2132875

BURIAL SITE TYPE

Category: ☒ **Religious**   ☐ Community   ☐ Family   ☐ African American   ☐ Other:

BURIAL SITE EVALUATION

Setting/location description: ☐ Rural   ☒ ~~Urban(?)~~   ☒ **Suburban**   ☐ Wooded   ☐ Other:

General condition (See conditions sheet): ☐ Excellent   ☒ **Good**   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor   ☐ None

Is there a formal entrance? ☒ **Yes**   ☐ No   Accessibility: ☐ Inaccessible   ☐ By foot   ☒ **By car**

Is cemetery active (recent burials)? ☐ Yes   ☒ **No**   Is there a cemetery sign: ☒ **Yes**   ☐ No

Is cemetery being maintained? ☒ **Yes**   ☐ Minimal   ☐ No   (If yes, note caretaker's name below)

Are there visible markers? ☒ **Yes** ☐ No	Approximate number of burials/visible markers: **16**	Date ranges: **1845–1864**

Description: (markers, materials, arrangement, landscaping/vegetation, fence, paths and roads, etc.)

• **Grave markers condensed to one area. Well placed for protection.**

• **Private entry gate**

• **Extent of burial area not visible**

BURIAL SITE CONTACT

Name: **Commissioners of Poolesville**

Relationship to burial site: **Owner**	Advocacy contact: Email Commissioners

Address: **19721 Beall Street**	Phone:

City: **Poolesville**	State: **MD**	ZIP Code: **20837**

BURIAL SITE SURVEYOR

Name: **Glenn Wallace**	Survey Date: **1/27/2018**	Time Spent: **20 mins**

Address:	Phone:

Email: mococems@gmail.com

Photographer: **Glenn Wallace**

COMMENTS

Suggestions for follow-up:

N/A

Safety issues, invasive vegetation removal, fence removal/restoration, signage, trash, erosion, vandalism:
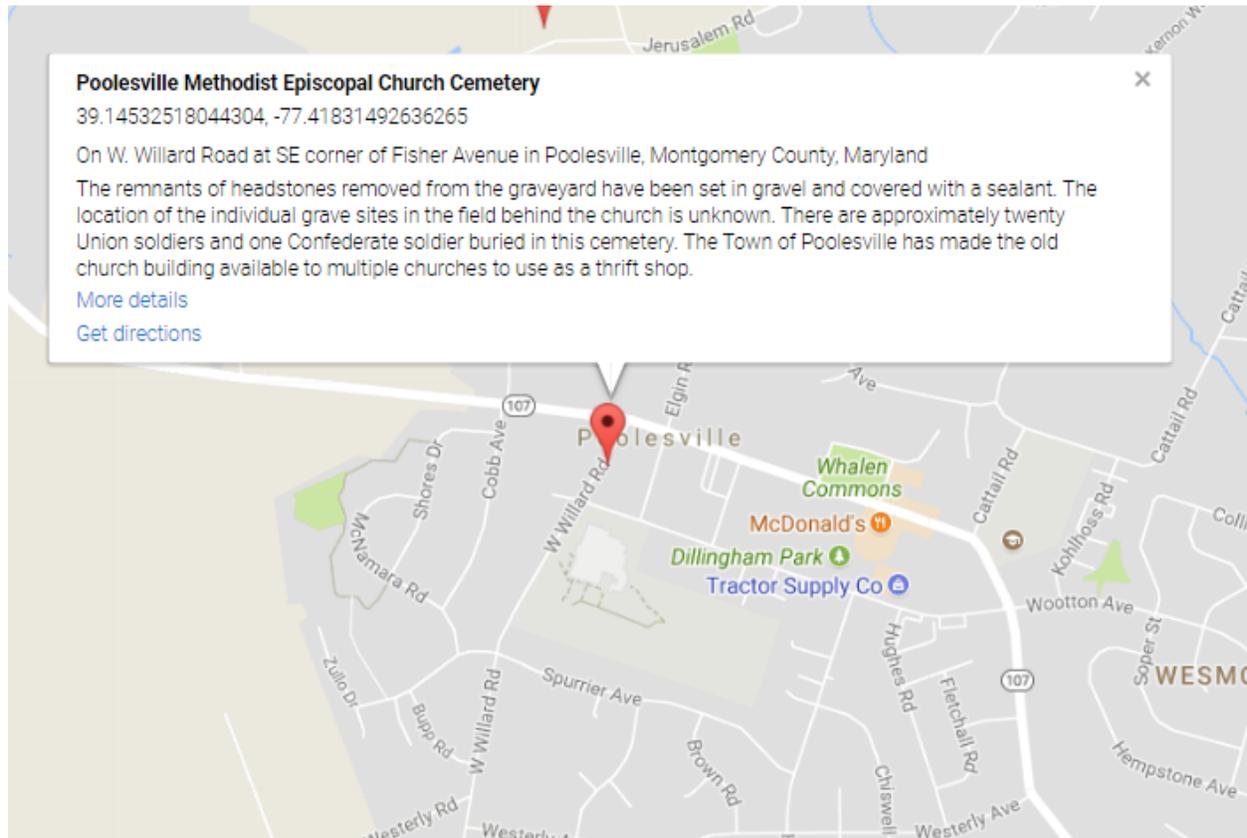
N/A

Anything of significance about this cemetery?

N/A

SOURCES

Cite sources used and resources available:

Poolesville Methodist Episcopal Church Cemetery
39.14532518044304, -77.41831492636265

On W. Willard Road at SE corner of Fisher Avenue in Poolesville, Montgomery County, Maryland

The remnants of headstones removed from the graveyard have been set in gravel and covered with a sealant. The location of the individual grave sites in the field behind the church is unknown. There are approximately twenty Union soldiers and one Confederate soldier buried in this cemetery. The Town of Poolesville has made the old church building available to multiple churches to use as a thrift shop.

More details

Get directions

The Poolesville Methodist Church Cemetery
Who is Buried There?
By Jack Toomey
(Reprinted from February 25, 2005)

Many of us pass the small white building on the left side of West Willard Road just before Poolesville High School without a thought. Some of us know it as the Thrift Shop and occasionally drop in to see what is for sale—but this building has a long history that is integral to the history of Poolesville.

In the early 1800s, the citizens of Poolesville founded the Methodist Episcopal Church which would be the pioneer church for these denominations in the Poolesville area. The original church building was erected in 1826, and it was sufficiently large for worship until 1868 when the current brick building was built on West Willard Road. Later, there was a division in the congregation and a new Methodist church was built on Elgin Road. The old church was painted white, the large windows were bricked in, and the building was sold. Since then, the building has been used for a multitude of purposes. It has been used as a voting place, a dance hall, a school building, a place for band rehearsal, a drug store, a veterinarian's office, the town hall, and now we know it as the Thrift Shop. The Town of Poolesville purchased the building in 1954.

What many might not realize is that the grounds surrounding the old church building encompass a cemetery and include the remains of some of Poolesville's oldest citizens and Civil War soldiers, some of whom were killed in battle. We thought our readers might be intrigued to learn a little bit about the soldiers who fought and died nearby and ended up buried in the town.

In 1839, the congregants of the Methodist Episcopal Church saw the need for a burying ground for their members, and a cemetery was established. Ruth Eagle, a twenty-two-year-old woman, was the first person to be buried there in 1839. Some of the other early burials at this site were Richard P. Spates, who was born in 1792, and his wife Amelia. Ellen Hiser, born in Sheperdstown, West Virginia in 1808 and died in 1850, was buried there. Others buried on the site are A. P. Eversole who operated a wagon wheel repair shop in town, Mary Hyatt, George F. Hughes, Daniel Heffner, who was born in 1782, Elizabeth and Margaret Leapley, Mary Freechtigg, Nancy Shanks, Benjamin Wood, Elton Moulden, and Anne Reed.

In 1861, war came to Poolesville. By October of 1861, there were about fifteen thousand soldiers stationed here because of the strategic location between the nation's capital and the shallow fords that crossed the Potomac River. Camp life was pleasant for some, and one youngster, enlisted as messenger boy, remembered years later that he had become skilled at capturing wild turkeys with his bare hands. He wrote, "We were on our way to camp when I saw a flock of turkeys...I jumped off the wagon like a shot and caught it in a cloud of feathers...but since General Stone had forbidden foraging, I let it go....but when the officers approached [and asked why he hadn't held on to the turkeys] I jumped that fence...and ran into that meadow and returned in two minutes flat with the turkeys in hand." It appears that this young boy was happy to leave Poolesville. He mentioned that "Sgt. — was ordered back to (Massachusetts) to enlist recruits and I asked permission to accompany him...and I took two nice fat Maryland opossums north with me."

Another soldier wrote to his family in November of 1861 that "we are encamped on a slave holder's plantation here [Poolesville] and we find that his rail fence makes first rate camp fires...but the cold came last Sunday and there was nearly four inches of snow on the ground." Since the living conditions were spartan, and there was little protection from the elements, soldiers fell sick and some died before they saw battle. Since several soldiers shared a tent here in the first months of the war, overcrowding was a problem. Wet campsites, overwork and exposure, and damp clothing were blamed for much of the illnesses such as consumption and typhoid; however, a citizen, familiar with army life, suggested that the government should send soldiers' pay directly to their families or wives making it impossible to buy "bad pies and rotgut whiskey!" One soldier from the Fifteenth Massachusetts wrote to his mother, "Please ask the ladies to make the mittens with a forefinger so the soldiers can handle their (rifles)."

The Sixty-ninth Regiment of the Pennsylvania Infantry was almost entirely made up of Irish immigrants. They were sent to Poolesville to provide patrol and protection at the several shallow crossing points on the river. Imagine how different these lads must have found Poolesville compared to their native land! While the regiment did see action, six of their members died here of disease. The remains of Privates Patrick Driscoll, Patrick Higgins, Stewart McCormick, Patrick Doyle, William Kearney, and Alexander Stokes lie in the churchyard today.

The Fifteenth Regiment of the Massachusetts Infantry sent hundreds of soldiers to Poolesville. They had been recruited from Worcester County, Massachusetts and arrived in Poolesville during the summer of 1861. Corporal Malvin Howland, who was a teacher, Private Edward Ware, a shoemaker by trade, and Private Frank Hildreth, who was a harness maker in Fitchberg, Massachusetts, all became sick, died, and were buried in the church cemetery.

On October 16, 1861, the Third Regiment of the Wisconsin Infantry was stationed near Harper's Ferry. They became engaged with a Confederate force near there and Privates Henry Clemans, Daniel Tuttle, and George Mather were killed. Their bodies were sent to Poolesville for burial.

On October 21, 1861, one of the most controversial battles of the war was fought near Poolesville. At dawn, inexperienced commanders sent Union soldiers from Poolesville to the banks of the Potomac River. They crossed the river to Harrison Island (just south of White's Ferry) where they intended to attack a Confederate force that was believed to be stationed near Leesburg. Most did not realize that there was a high bluff to climb on the Virginia side of the river. During the ensuing fiasco, over two hundred Union soldiers were killed or were reported missing and probably drowned. Some of the bodies were found weeks later downstream in Washington. Colonel Edward Baker, a personal friend of President Lincoln, was killed, and his body was carried to Poolesville and was viewed by townspeople and fellow soldiers at the Frederick Poole House which still stands on Fisher Avenue.

The Fifteenth Massachusetts Regiment suffered heavy losses in this battle. Privates Lewis Haril, a currier by trade, Luther Turner, a blacksmith before the war, and Sergeant Moses Warren, a spinner before enlistment, were all killed in action and buried at the

Poolesville cemetery. Corporal Andrew Cowdrey, a carpenter, Privates Samuel Sibley, a miller, and Alonzo Belknap, a shoemaker, were also buried in the cemetery. In the ensuing months, their families had their bodies exhumed and returned to Massachusetts for burial.

The Twentieth Regiment of the Massachusetts Infantry also sent soldiers to Balls Bluff. Lieutenant William Putman and Privates Alexander Barber and Albert Stackpole were killed and buried at the church cemetery. A letter, sent to the Stackpole family, said, "Albert Stackpole has since died of his wounds. He bore his sufferings with courage and patience. We buried him as a soldier on Sunday last. A small inscription marks his grave, near the main road leading to the ferry." Later, Lieutenant Putman was sent back to Massachusetts for burial. Lieutenant Oliver Wendell Holmes, who later became a Supreme Court Justice, was wounded in this battle and in 1884 mentioned Lt. Putman in a speech. He said, "I see a fair-haired lad...still young. As I awoke from my first long stupor in the hospital after the Battle of Balls Bluff, I heard the doctor say, 'He was a beautiful boy,' and I knew that one of those speakers was no more."

Private Luther Olney of the First Rhode Island Artillery and Private Andrew Harper of the Seventy-second Pennsylvania Infantry were also killed and were buried at the cemetery.

It is believed that other Union soldiers who were killed at Balls Bluff were either buried at the church cemetery or near their camps in Poolesville or at Edwards Ferry.

Later in the war, Privates Thomas Davis and Charles Merrill of Maine, and Alonzo Pickett from New York, died of disease and were buried there.

Apparently, the last burial took place at the cemetery about 1864. After years of neglect, many of the headstones were broken or removed. By 1957, almost all of the headstones were missing, and the remaining ones were placed in storage.

In 2002, the Town of Poolesville, Boy Scout Troop 496, the Historic Medley District, and the Elgin family undertook a project to restore the unmarked graveyard. Fencing, landscaping, an exhibit sign, headstone display, benches, and a memorial were installed making it a dignified setting to honor these early residents and fallen heroes.

Montgomery County Cemetery Inventory Photograph Log

Cemetery Name: Poolesville Methodist Church Cemetery		Inventory ID: 124	
Photographer: Glenn Wallace		Date: 1/27/2018	
Time	**Photo No.**	**Description and direction you are facing** (Ex: detail of wall around Carr plot facing North)	
9:48 am	1	Cemetery entrance gate, facing south-west	
9:48 am	2	Condensed grave markers, facing south	
9:49 am	3	Historic interpretative sign	
9:49 am	4	Condensed grave markers, facing west	
9:53 am	5	Plaque of the buried veterans	
9:55 am	6	Panoramic from west to north to east	
9:55 am	7	Panoramic from east to south to west	
9:56 am	8	Grave markers and entrance gate, facing north	

1. Cemetery entrance gate, facing south-west

2. Condensed grave markers, facing south

3. Historic interpretative sign

4. Condensed grave markers, facing west

FROM DISTANT HOMES THEY CAME AND SERVED
THESE BROTHERS OF A REPUBLIC TORN.
MUCH WAS LOST, MUCH MORE PRESERVED
BY BRAVE MEN WE FOREVER MOURN.

NAME	RANK	UNIT	BURIED
DAVIS, THOMAS W.	PRIVATE	23RD MAINE	1863, JAN. 14
MERRILL, CHARLES W.	PRIVATE	23RD MAINE	1863, JAN. 19
BELKNAP, ALONZO		15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, OCT. 24
COWDREY, ANDREW W.	CORPORAL	15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, NOV. 4
HARIL, LEWIS	PRIVATE	15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, NOV. 5
HILDRETH, FRANK A.	CORPORAL	15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, OCT. 4
HOWLAND, MALVIN	ORDERLY SERGEANT	15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, AUG. 27
KELLY, PATRICK		15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, OCT. 15
SIBLEY, SAMUEL		15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, NOV. 6
TRUNER, LUTHER G.		15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, NOV. 1
WARE, EDWARD E.	PRIVATE	15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, SEP. 23
WARREN, MOSSES J.	SERGEANT	15TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, OCT. 25
BARBER, ALEXANDER M.	PRIVATE	20TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, NOV. 21
PUTNAM, WILLIAM L.	2ND LIEUTENANT	20TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, OCT. 22
STACKPOLE,	PRIVATE	20TH MASSACHUSETTS	1861, OCT. 25
UNIDENTIFIED	CORPORAL	3RD NEW YORK	1861, DEC. 16
PICKET, ALONZO	PRIVATE	11TH NEW YORK	1863, AUG. 26
DOYLE, PATRICK J.	PRIVATE	69TH PENNSYLVANIA	1862, MAR. 15
DRISCOL, PATRICK	PRIVATE	69TH PENNSYLVANIA	1861, DEC. 13
HIGGINS, PATRICK	PRIVATE	69TH PENNSYLVANIA	1861, OCT. 14
KEARNEY, WILLIAM	PRIVATE	69TH PENNSYLVANIA	1862, FEB. 19
McCORMICK, STEWART	PRIVATE	69TH PENNSYLVANIA	1862, FEB. 15
STOKES, PATRICK	PRIVATE	69TH PENNSYLVANIA	1862, APR. 3
HOOPER, ANDREW J.	PRIVATE	72ND PENNSYLVANIA	1861, OCT. 23
OLNEY, L.C.	CORPORAL	1ST RHODE ISLAND	1861, OCT. 22
JENKINS, SAMUEL		35TH VIRGINIA	1862, DEC. 15
CLEMANS,	PRIVATE	3RD WISCONSIN	1861, OCT. 24
MATHER,	PRIVATE	3RD WISCONSIN	1861, OCT. 24
RAYMOND,	PRIVATE	3RD WISCONSIN	1861, OCT. 24
TUTTLE,	PRIVATE	3RD WISCONSIN	1861, OCT. 24

5. Plaque of the buried veterans

6. Panoramic from west to north to east

7. Panoramic from east to south to west

8. Grave markers and entrance gate, facing north

At Rest in Poolesville

In the 1860s, Poolesville's population swelled from approximately 350 to over 15,000 when Civil War infantry, artillery, and cavalry soldiers were camped in the area. With both Union and Confederate troops maintaining a local presence, battles and skirmishes took place repeatedly over the four years of the war.

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Buried in this small town, with very little recognition, are the remains of at least 31 young Civil War soldiers. The graves are located in the historic Methodist Cemetery at 17605 West Willard Road in Poolesville.

A partial list of the soldiers interred at the site does exist and Heritage Montgomery has begun researching their histories. Of the 31 buried in Poolesville, 14 are from Massachusetts – eleven from the 15th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment and three from the famous 20th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment. The 20th Massachusetts was known as the Harvard Brigade because the officers, as well was some of the soldiers, were young Harvard graduates. Among the officers were Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., who was injured at the battle of Ball's Bluff in October 1861, and Paul Revere, Jr.

One young officer in the 20th Massachusetts who died from wounds received at the Battle of Ball's Bluff was William Lowell Putnam, an ardent abolitionist (pictured left). Born in 1840, he was a law student at Harvard College when the war broke out. At the age of 21 he was commissioned Second Lieutenant of Company E, 20th Massachusetts Infantry. Putnam died of a gunshot wound and was buried on October 21, 1861.

© Massachusetts Historical Society

Another soldier from the 20th Massachusetts buried at the site is Albert Stackpole. He was from Nantucket and died at the age of 18. The third soldier was Alexander Barber. No records could be found on his service but he was buried on November 21, 1861.

As we started our investigation, our goal was to tell the story of all 31 young soldiers. But the accounts have proven to be so interesting we will need to do more research about these brave young men buried in our county. We hope at sometime in the future to see a permanent reminder of their service at the site.

Other units represented at the cemetery are the 69th Pennsylvania (The Forgotten Irish or "Paddy Owen's Regulars"), 1st Rhode Island, 72nd Pennsylvania, 3rd Wisconsin, 3rd New York, 35th Virginia, 23rd Maine, and 11th New York.

From the 15th Massachusetts:

Sgt. Melvin Howland (Berkshire Co.)
Born: 1838. Died: Aug. 1861, age 23
Occupation: Teacher

Private Edward Franklin Ware (Worcester Co.)
Born: 1835. Died: Sept. 1861, age 26
Occupation: Shoemaker

Cpl. Frank Hildreth (Middlesex Co.)
Born: 1841. Died: Oct. 1861, age 20
Occupation: Harness maker

Patrick Kelley (Worcester Co.)
Born: 1841 or 1842. Died Oct. 1861, age 20 or 21
Occupation: Spinner

Moses James Warren (Yorkshire, England)
Born: 1828. Died Oct. 1861, age 33
Occupation: Weaver

Luther Gray Turner (Middlesex Co.)
Born: 1836 or 1837. Died Nov. 1861, age 24 or 25
Occupation: Blacksmith

Cpl. Andrew W. Cowdrey (Worcester Co.)
Born: 1834. Died: Nov. 1861, age 27
Cpl. Cowdrey was buried in Poolesville but his family later had his body returned to Worcester County for burial at Leominster.

Lt. Henry Northey Hooper (Norfolk Co.)
Born: 1839.
There is some confusion about Lt. Hooper. He is listed as buried in Poolesville but also recorded as a prisoner taken at the Battle of Ball's Bluff. Massachusetts' records show he actually died in 1873.

Alonzo Boardman Belknap (Worcester Co.)
Born: 1826. Died: Oct. 1861, age 35
Occupation: Boot maker
Buried in Poolesville but returned to Massachusetts for burial at the Wilkinsonville Cemetery in Worcester County.

Samuel Sibley (Worcester Co.)
Born: 1820 or 1821. Died: Nov. 1861, age 40 or 41
Occupation: Miller
Samuel Sibley was buried in Poolesville but his family later had his body returned to the Douglas Cemetery in Worcester County.

Lewis Haril
Died: Nov. 1861
He is listed as buried in Poolesville but we have found no record of his service.