History comes to life in Congressional Cemetery. The creak and clang of the wrought iron gate signals your arrival into the early decades of our national heritage. Surrounding you are the men and women who shaped the new capital and gave substance to the new nation—Congressmen and tradesmen, diplomats and domestics, explorers and architects, soldiers and musicians. The English war was a distant quiet thunder on the finger lakes of New York when the residents of the U.S. capital settled in for the sweltering mid-summer heat of Washington, little knowing just how hot the young city would soon become.

In August of 1814 the British struck. Retaliating for the American burning of York (which was at the time the capital of Canada), the British attacked Washington, setting fire to the magnificent Capitol Building, the White House and many other public buildings, with flames so high they were seen miles away. President Madison and what was left of the government fled the city while First Lady Dolley Madison frantically cut George Washington’s portrait from its frame at the White House. Not far away, Stephen Pleasonton, a Treasury clerk, gathered documents to safeguard them against the flames: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the papers of George Washington.

On the riverfront, Commodore Thomas Tingey, builder of the Navy Yard and the last U.S. officer in the city, finally gave the order to Mordecai Booth: Burn the Navy Yard! As you walk the trail of this self-guided tour, note the artistry and craftsmanship of the memorial stone carvings and try to decipher the cultural language of the iconography.
1. **CAPTAIN THOMAS TINGEY** (1750–1829) was one of the founders of the Congressional Cemetery and first Commandant of the Navy Yard. He and his family lived in the Commandant’s house for so many years that, at his death, it was found he had willed the house to his family. Although the family moved out, the Captain’s ghost has refused to budge. R57/S1

2. **MORMEDACI BOOTH** (1831) was for many years the principle clerk in the Commandant’s office of the Navy Yard. As the Capitol Building went up in flames during the British invasion of August 1814, Commodore Tingeay gave Booth the order to burn the Navy Yard. R53/S2

3. **GRIFTH COOMBE** (1845) was one of the best-known men in the early days of Washington and a very successful man of business. His wife was Mary Pleasonton, sister to Stephen (see #7). His residence at the corner of Georgia (now Potomac) Avenue and Third Street SE was one of the first and finest houses in Washington. When the British were advancing upon Washington in August 1814, General Winder and his small army retreated from Maryland into the city and encamped on the Navy Yard Common. He chose the house of Griffith Coombe for his headquarters where he received the President and his cabinet and war councils before he left with his troops for Bladensburg. R50/S20-29

4. **DR. WILLIAM THORNTON** (1828) was born in the West Indies and studied medicine in Scotland. He entered a contest to design the U.S. Capitol exterior and won. He later designed the Octagon House. Summoned by Martha Washington in George Washington’s final hours, he arrived too late, but still suggested a warm lamb’s blood transfusion, which was not undertaken. During the War of 1812, while the British were setting the city to flames, he personally appealed to the British officers to spare the Patent Office, of which he was Superintendent, and the resident models of patented devices. R33/S39

5. **GEORGE WATTERSTON** (1783–1854). As the war with England raged around the city, Watterston marched with Captain Benjamin Burch’s company to meet the British at nearby Bladensburg. He returned to the city to find his own house pillaged, the Capitol in ruins, and the fledgling Library of Congress within the Capitol building destroyed. In 1815, President Madison appointed George Watterston as the first full-time Librarian of Congress. WATTERSTON VAULT

6. **MARY J. INGLE CAMPBELL** (1801–1839) was born in the Ingle homestead on New Jersey Avenue to one of the most prominent families in the city. At the age of eleven, Mary Campbell witnessed the torching of the city during the British invasion in the War of 1812. Her recollections describe the terrific rainstorm that helped drown the fires set by the British, and the actions taken by citizens to quench the flames and care for injured British soldiers left behind, as well as her discussions with the British Commander Admiral Cockburn. R37/S213

7. **STEPHEN PLEASONTON** (1855) was a clerk in the Treasury Department during the War of 1812. Upon hearing rumors that the British were nearby, he and others obtained course linen bags into which they placed the original Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, most of the international treaties and national laws, and General Washington’s Revolutionary War papers, together with many other documents. Despite the great demand for wagons or anything with wheels, Pleasonton found some carts and amid the general panic, carted the bags to a mill beyond Georgetown. In the middle of the night he decided this location lacked security and rose to take the documents by horseback to Leesburg, 35 miles away. R43/244

8. **PATRICK CROWLEY** (1798–1886) was an apprentice at the National Intelligencer when the British made their raid on this city in 1814, and recorded the sacking and destruction of public buildings. He noted that General Ross was praised for the respect he showed to citizens who did not interfere with his troops, but that Admiral Cockburn was despised for his indifference of citizens’ rights. Mr. Francis Key sent a manuscript copy of “The Star Spangled Banner” to the Intelligencer and gave permission to Crowley to print it on slips of paper to distribute. Crowley made about two hundred dollars by its sale on the streets. R64/S321

9. **COL. WILLIAM WINSTON SEATON** (1785–1866), in his youth was referred to as the “most elegant young man in Virginia.” He became co-owner with Joseph Gales of the National Intelligencer. The British troops burned the newspaper’s offices in retaliation for their harsh criticism of the British. Seaton served in the battle of Bladensburg. Later in life he served as the Mayor of Washington for five terms (1840–1850). R57/S165

10. **JOSEPH GALES** (1786–1860) moved to Washington around 1807 to join the National Intelligencer. A few years later, he and his brother-in-law, William Seaton, became the owners of the paper. Joseph and Juliana Gales were on a trip to Raleigh at the time of the British invasion in 1814. Their city house at Ninth and E Streets narrowly escaped being burnt when the housekeeper had presence of mind to close all the shutters and put a sign “For Rent” on the front door. As the Intelligencer was known to be the Government organ, the printing establishment was put to flame and completely destroyed by the advancing British troops. R55/S168

---

A WORD OF CAUTION: The centuries have made many grave markers and sites unstable. Please be careful near grave markers and watch where you step: depressions and sink holes lie hidden in grass, and footstones and corner markers can trip the unwary.