

Maple Grove Cemetery, Richland Township

First record of the cemetery land is from 1826, when Henry Wampler purchased the land during a sale directed by a 1796 act of Congress. Henry's kin Mary Wampler, who died in 1830, is the first recorded burial. Visitors can still find her headstone near the back corner of the cemetery. Rumor has it, though, that the first burial was actually of a boy who sustained injuries in a fall. The second grave in the first row is reported to be Sally Whitsell, an African-American woman. Unfortunately, her gravestone can no longer be found.

Over the next twenty years, multiple people were buried on the private land next to the "old Wampler school house." In 1849, the current owner John Chord sold a one acre tract, including the private burial sites, for the sum of \$80 for "a public burying ground and for that use and that only unless said Neighborhood Church desires to build a public meeting house" according to *History of Maple Grove Christian Church* compiled by Iris Stanger. Then in 1850, John Stanger and his wife Ann deeded an additional acre for a meeting house that was "to be free and open to any religious denomination when not occupied by the members of the North Liberty Church of Christ." Interestingly, evidence indicates the church was built before the Stangers deeded the land.

Two church structures have stood on the land adjacent to the cemetery, the log building North Liberty Church and the current church, originally called Maple Grove Church and currently called Grace Way Community Church. The current church and cemetery are surrounded by a stone fence typical of the area. Though there appears to be burial space remaining inside the fence, a small portion of the fence has been removed to give access to recent burials outside the fenced cemetery. The cemetery is well cared for, with evidence of recent headstone repairs, and is currently in use. Of no surprise, the Wampler and Stanger families are heavily represented.

Visitors to the cemetery may notice that many of the older headstones are carved in a similar, unusual style reminiscent of chess pieces. One headstone, for a five year old boy, is a large ball. There are also several tree stump headstones, from various eras. Veterans from the Civil War, World War II, and the Korean conflict are buried in the cemetery.