

DECEMBER

“Peaceful”

The month of December, while being a busy month to most people and businesses, is a serene, peaceful month here at the Charles Baber Cemetery. The cold, snow, ice and frigid winds of winter have not yet begun. It is usually dark by 4:30PM because of daylight savings time and the shortening of daylight hours ending with the December winter solstice. There may still be some vestiges of fallen leaves around if the cemetery workers couldn't get them all vacuumed in time before rain and snow prevented their removal. We may have a few snowfalls, but often it is a light dusting that may disappear in a day.



The foot traffic, in the form of joggers, and parents and grandparents walking toddlers or pushing baby strollers have become nonexistent. Also, the school children crossing the property to and from home and school will cease for a week or more during Christmas break. Many of the dog walkers and their dogs are all bundled up, especially the small dogs.

As the foot traffic quiets down with the upcoming winter months, so do the trees. Most of them are settling in for a long winter's nap. And most of them have shed their leaves, and now stand bare. While this winter barrenness brings a feeling of sadness and maybe even dread of the upcoming winter months, other paths of wonderment open up. Now the barren beauty of the shapes, and trunks, and limbs of the trees shine forth. Each species is different. Even similar species like the white oak (by the chapel), the pin oak (by the 16th St. loop), the swamp white oak (west side of pond), and the red oak (on terraces east of the chapel) all have different trunk striations. As does the sugar maple (east of the pond), the Norway maple (front and east of the chapel), and the sycamore maple (1 to east of chapel and 1 down the hill from the chapel). Some trunks have very deep grooves, some have pointed striations, some have diamond shaped striations, others have blocks—some are short squares and others longer and vertical, some have very smooth trunks, some have spotted trunks, some have large humps and bumps almost like gigantic goose pimples.

The tree branches are very prominent. How they create the shape and symmetry of the tree is very evident. Some shapes are tear dropped, others are almost perfect triangles, some are very irregular and stick out every which way, others are bunched up and spread out at the top creating a puffy affect, while others have lower heavier branches that hang downward while their upper lighter branches are reaching skyward. The dwarf red maples are artistry at its best with their graceful twisting and curving branches. And then we have the evergreen trees of the Norway spruce, the eastern white pine, the many varieties of arborvitae, the cryptomeria, and one lonely douglas fir. These trees now stand tall, green, and prominently in the stark landscape. It is almost as if they take up a silent vigil as they stand sentry over the property while the other trees rest for the winter.



There is such a quietness and a serenity about the property as it settles down for the winter. The trees seem to take on the Christmas spirit bringing peace, comfort, and a closeness to nature.