



# FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

Issue 46

Medina, Ohio

May 2022

## National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom:



The Friends of the Cemetery are pleased to announce that Spring Grove Cemetery has been accepted to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program (NTF). In a March 29, 2022 National Park press release announcing 16 new designated NTF sites across the U.S., including Spring Grove, Diane Miller, National Program Manager of NTF said, "Each listing holds a unique part of the Underground Railroad story, and we look forward to working with members to amplify the power of these places." Spring Grove's NTF designation is an honor to Medina and its history and role in the Underground Railroad. In our initial application to the NTF, we put forth H.G. (1818-1876) and Elizabeth (1821-1893) Blake who are buried in Section 5 at Spring Grove. The Blakes sheltered freedom seekers at their Medina home on East Washington Street. Future plans are to submit additions to our NTF listing to include others associated with the Underground Railroad who are buried at Spring Grove. The National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom serves to "honor, preserve and promote the history of resistance to enslavement through escape and flight."

We thank Friends Trustees who worked on the NTF project, especially Debra Hallock and Karen Thorn who spearheaded the effort and drafted the application! Due to the efforts of the Friends of the Cemetery, Spring Grove Cemetery now has the distinction of two National Park designations – the National Register of Historic Places and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom - as well as an Accredited Global Arboretum designation.



# Friends of the Cemetery

775 East Washington Street  
Medina, Ohio 44256

## To reach us:

info@friendsofmedinacemetery.org  
330.725.8861 - Ext. 1055

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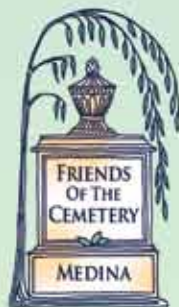
## Photos

Beth Coleman

Teresa Merkle

Dottie Nemec

Designed by  
Ron Bell/Advision Design



## Memorial Day 2022:

For more than 130 Memorial Days (or Decoration Days), generations of Medina folks have made their way down East Liberty Street from the Uptown Park to Spring Grove Cemetery for memorial services to honor those who have given their lives while serving in the U.S. armed forces. We are so happy that we are able to resume that grand tradition this year after the 2-year Covid pandemic hiatus. The Spring Grove chapel and mausoleum will be open to the public and staffed from 9:30 a.m. until the end of the memorial service at Spring Grove. Please make plans to stop by and take a look inside these two historic buildings. We look forward to seeing everyone!



*Decoration Day 1892*



*Decoration Day 1934*

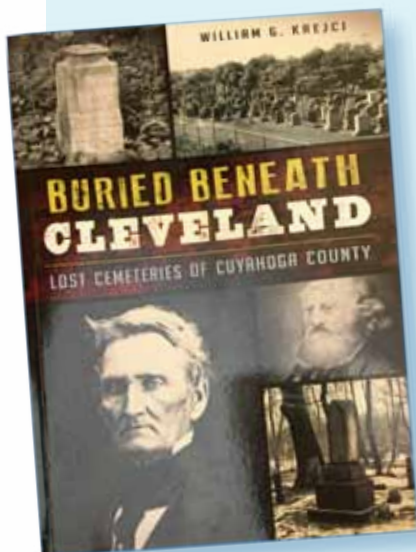


*Memorial Day 2002*

## Friends of the Cemetery Members Meeting:

We plan to resume our annual Members' Meeting on Sunday, September 18, 2022 at 2:00 pm at the Spring Grove Chapel. We have a special treat! Author William Krejci will be our featured speaker. Mr. Krejci is a Northeast Ohio native who has written *Buried Beneath Cleveland – Lost Cemeteries of Cuyahoga County*, a fascinating book about the fate of more than fifty cemeteries (and those buried within them) as urban sprawl took over Cleveland during the 19th century. Since the Spring Grove chapel's capacity is 50 people, it will be necessary to take reservations for this member only event. To secure your seat, email us at [info@friendsofmedinacemetery.org](mailto:info@friendsofmedinacemetery.org) with your name and number in your party, please include your phone number too. If you prefer, you may also call us at 330-725-8861, Ext. 1055.

**Please note our phone number goes through City Hall – once you reach the City Hall recording, press # and then our Ext. 1055 to get our office voice mail and leave your message and your phone number.**



## Friends of the Cemetery Celebrate 25th Anniversary:

In 1997, the then two-year old Medina City Cemetery Commission was busy soliciting funding for projects within Spring Grove Cemetery from local charitable foundations. The Commission was advised that a Master Plan of Spring Grove Cemetery was necessary to solidify ideas and suggestions into one document that would serve as a guide for concerns and future planning of the cemetery as well as prioritize needed improvements. The Letha E. House Foundation agreed to fund \$20,000 of the \$22,500 cost of a Master Plan and the City of Medina funded \$2,500. In the resulting Master Plan document, the formation of a Friends advocacy group was high on the list of priorities. At the 1997 Memorial Day festivities, visitors to the Spring Grove chapel were invited to sign a volunteer list to help organize and/or support a Friends group. An organizational meeting was soon held that resulted in the formation of Friends of the Cemetery. In 1999 the Friends filed for and received non-profit status. The Friends were fortunate to have many generous patrons and supporters including the Letha E. House Foundation, the Willard Stephenson Foundation and the Feckley Foundation and, in 2003, Edward C. Mears gifted his estate to the Friends of the Cemetery. Even though it had been three decades since Ed Mears had lived in Medina, it was still a special place to him. Spring Grove Cemetery is

where his parents and wife are buried. It was his hope that through the gift of his estate the Spring Grove Master Plan could be completed, and, indeed, due to Mr. Mears' bequest, all the items in the 1997 Spring Grove Master Plan were implemented. In 2018, a new Master Plan of Spring Grove was created.



The remarkable gifts and support from Edward C. Mears, the Letha E. House Foundation, the Willard Stephenson Foundation and the Feckley Foundation have made it possible for the Friends to fund \$2 million in capital improvements at Spring Grove Cemetery and Old Town Graveyard since 1997! The Friends of the Cemetery have also been greatly blessed through the years with a wonderful membership base! So many people from Medina and surrounding areas, and, in fact, from all over the United States have so generously contributed to the organization. We thank our faithful members for supporting and believing in our mission of the beautification, historic preservation, and maintenance of Medina's two municipal cemeteries. We celebrate the Friends of the Cemetery 25th anniversary and remain committed to the Friends mission into the future!

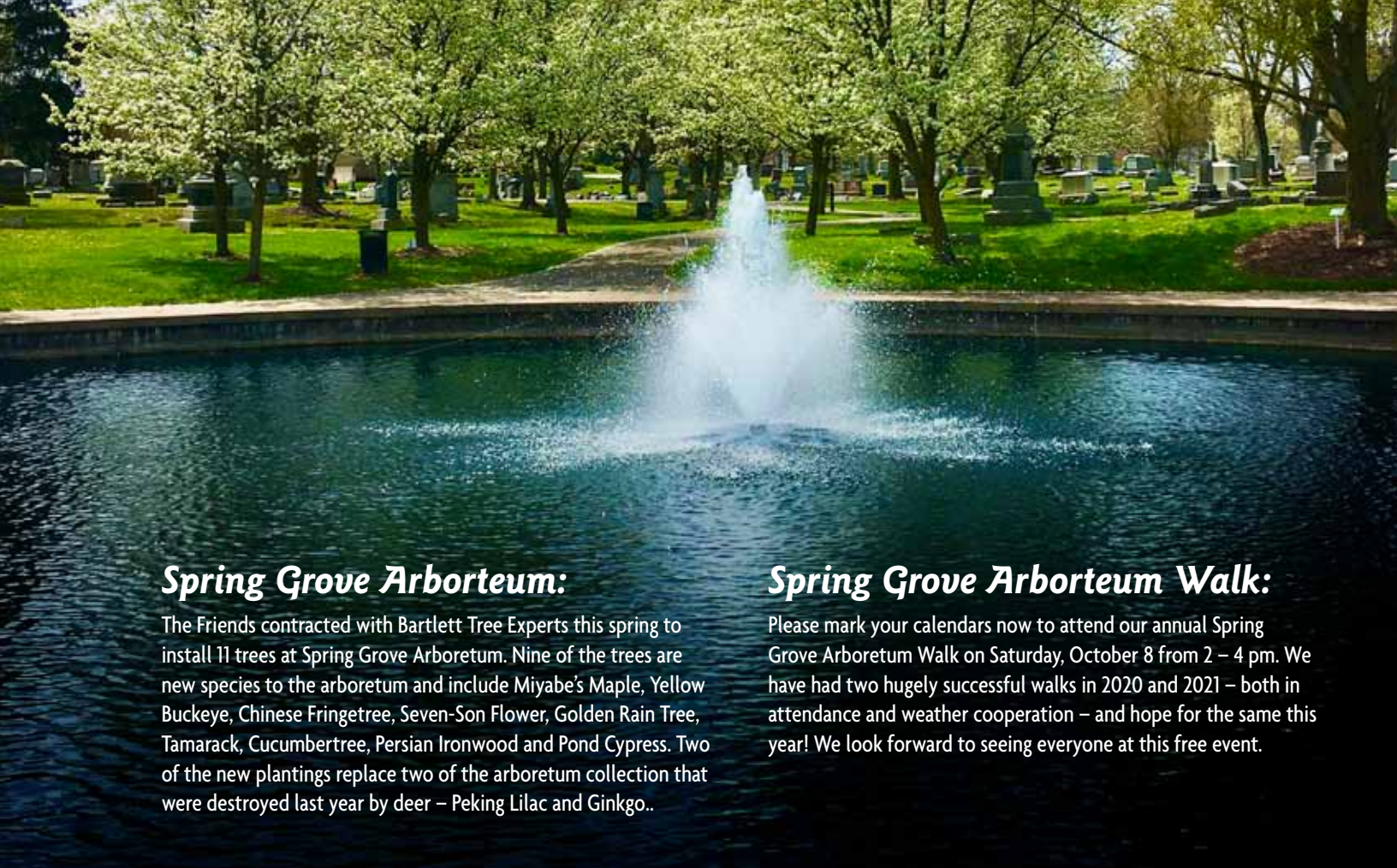
## Old Town Graveyard

In April the Friends contracted with Williams Trenching of Medina for \$9,800 to complete a two-pronged underground drainage system at Old Town. The new drainage system intersects the middle of the graveyard east to west along the existing walkway as well as along the north to south sidewalk on the western edge of the property next to the County Administration Building parking lot. This work also included the regrading and leveling of the East Friendship Street sidewalk.

Also in April, the Friends hired R&T Fence, Inc. of Streetsboro to replace the chain link fence on the western border and the old iron fencing along the eastern and northern borders of the graveyard with new black aluminum 42" high Victorian-style fencing with quad finial posts. Decorative scrolled posts, as well, will adorn the corners of each of the sidewalk entry points on the east and west sides of the graveyard. The total cost to the Friends for this

fencing project is \$89,775, which includes signage at the eastern and western entry points. The lovely original wrought iron fence at the front of the graveyard facing East Liberty Street is in wonderful condition and was not disturbed during this project. The Friends thank the City of Medina for removing the old fencing in preparation for the new.





### **Spring Grove Arboretum:**

The Friends contracted with Bartlett Tree Experts this spring to install 11 trees at Spring Grove Arboretum. Nine of the trees are new species to the arboretum and include Miyabe's Maple, Yellow Buckeye, Chinese Fringetree, Seven-Son Flower, Golden Rain Tree, Tamarack, Cucumbertree, Persian Ironwood and Pond Cypress. Two of the new plantings replace two of the arboretum collection that were destroyed last year by deer – Peking Lilac and Ginkgo..

### **Spring Grove Arboretum Walk:**

Please mark your calendars now to attend our annual Spring Grove Arboretum Walk on Saturday, October 8 from 2 – 4 pm. We have had two hugely successful walks in 2020 and 2021 – both in attendance and weather cooperation – and hope for the same this year! We look forward to seeing everyone at this free event.

### **Arboretum T-shirts:**

Show your support of the Spring Grove Arboretum – Medina County's first and only arboretum – \$15 for local pick-up or if you'd like your t-shirt mailed, shipping charges will apply. Choose between forest or kiwi green in S, M, L or XL. Contact the Friends office to

order yours by emailing: [info@friendsofmedinacemetery.org](mailto:info@friendsofmedinacemetery.org) or call: 330-725-8861 Ext. 1055 – **please note our phone number goes through City Hall – once you reach the City Hall recording, press # and then our Ext. 1055 to get our office voice mail and leave your message and phone number.**



# *Historical Walk*

Our annual Historical Walk at Spring Grove Cemetery is scheduled for Saturday, August 6 starting at 1:00 pm at the Spring Grove Chapel. This is another very successful event we sponsor and is free and open to the public. The event is stroller, wheelchair, wagon & pet friendly. Make plans to attend now!

# Richard C. Coleman, Jr.

## Medina County's First African American Head Coach



By Beth Coleman

Richard C. Coleman, Jr. was born at Medina Community Hospital on January 12, 1952 to Richard C. Coleman, Sr. and Viola M. (Jackson) Coleman. Richard was the fourth child born to RC and Viola. He grew up in a household with nine siblings. The close family ties and the sense of community he grew up loving would put him on a path that made him determined to make Medina his home.

Richard's parents moved to Ohio in 1949 from Bryson City, North Carolina during the time of the great migration where southerners were moving to the north in search of jobs in the booming manufacturing industries. Richard's father was a Navy veteran and he first relocated to Orrville and shortly thereafter relocated to Medina. In Medina, Richard's father found work first at Henry Furnace. Henry Furnace made cast iron heaters. The pig iron used in the production of the furnaces became in short supply due to the War Assets Administration and a deal with Kaiser-Frazer. Richard's father then obtained employment at The Ford Motor Company in Brookpark, Ohio where he completed his career and provided for his growing family.

Richard grew up attending the Fellowship Baptist Church in Medina. His parents were founding members of the church; Richard and his siblings attended throughout his youth. A community of fellowship and friendships were formed that lasted a lifetime.

During Richard's youth he attended both Buckeye school district and then Medina City school district. It was not uncommon to find Richard engaged on the playground after school and to be involved in any sporting activity that he could convince someone to allow him to participate.

During Richard's high school days, he was an active participant in baseball, basketball, and football. While attending Medina High

School he lettered and became a member of the Medina "M" club. In his senior year he was awarded Athlete of the Year, an honor that he always cherished. Life wasn't always easy in the Coleman household. With both parents working Richard often came home from football practice and, while washing his uniform for the next day, he would take care of his younger siblings and wash their clothes too. He was always willing to help someone.

There were special Medina families that became a community of influencers that had an impact on his life and helped form the man that he became. One local family provided Christmas presents in his youth and he always remembered them fondly. There were several special friends from childhood and high school that he never forgot and regularly mentioned as key influencers in his life. This is the community of spirit in Medina that he never wanted to leave.

Richard's athletic experiences throughout his youth set him on a path which led him to the decision to attend college and major in physical education with an emphasis on coaching and a minor in psychology. Several of Richard's siblings entered the service and proudly served our country, others chose a theological path. Richard's decision to enter college was met with his strong determination to succeed and he became the first of his siblings to graduate from college. Richard attended junior college at Iowa Lakes Community College in Estherville, Iowa where he played basketball, baseball, and football. He was recognized and awarded in 1971 to the Iowa Lakes Community College All Conference Team to a defense position. He later went on to attend Westmar College in Le Mars, Iowa where he also played all three sports; a feat that is mostly impossible to do today. He graduated in May 1977 achieving his goal with a bachelor's degree in Physical Education and a minor in Psychology.

*Continued on page 6*

When Richard returned to his hometown of Medina, he found it challenging to find work in his field as a young black man. He found disappointment in not being able to find a job in the field which he loved and had spent years preparing to embrace and fully engage. In 1977 Jimmy Carter was President of the United States and the economy was in a recession. The unemployment rate was 6.4%; but for African Americans the unemployment rate was 14%. The economic conditions of those times were minor setbacks for his determination and his desire to live and work in the community in which he grew up.

In the early years after college, he found employment in cellular phone industry, insurance, and printer sales. He also continued playing in basketball leagues at the JCC with friends and volunteering to coach in local youth leagues. In March of 1979 he was hired by St. Francis Xavier School as an interim Physical Education instructor for grades 1 through 9. While this was just a semester position; he was ecstatic about organizing and implementing recreational activities for various grade levels in a group atmosphere.

The interaction with the students and the ability to create and implement physical education activities spurred the continued desire to coach. In October of 1979 Richard was appointed to the Head coaching position of the Girls Varsity basketball program at Cuyahoga Community College. He coached the girls' basketball team from October 1979 through 1981 bringing it from a losing program to a winning program. The final women's season record was 21 wins and 6 losses.

In 1981 he was appointed to the Men's head basketball coaching position at Cuyahoga Community College. He counseled and recruited for the 1981 season. He developed a hardworking and driven team but left the position at the end of the season due to the basketball program at the western campus being cut out of the budget in 1982.

During the entire college coaching experience, he remained employed in sales and coaching basketball. He grew both professionally in the field of sales, and in coaching and recruiting experiences, creating a professional network in the coaching field which he loved.

As he continued to grow with sales experiences, it provided the flexibility that he needed to explore coaching opportunities and to stay connected to professionals that could help him re-enter

the coaching field. The next opportunity that became available to him was a JV coaching position for the Cloverleaf girls' program in 1994. He always looked at the potential in any opportunity. He had experience in coaching girls at the college level but, coaching girls at the high school level was even more exciting to him because of the tremendous opportunities that came with the enactment of Title IX that prohibited sex discrimination in educational opportunities and it had continued to evolve since enacted initially in 1972. He felt that girls had not had as many opportunities on the court and, as a result, had not learned any bad habits. He saw these girls as a tremendous coaching opportunity. He knew something about missed opportunities and overcoming odds. He was determined to show his coaching ability. They won 10 of their first 15 games. He was certain that they could continue their success in the following year. While he was not hired for the next season he didn't give up and he kept pursuing opportunities that arose in Medina County.

In June of 1997, Richard was named to the head coaching position of the girls' basketball team at Cloverleaf in Medina County. This was the opportunity that he had prepared for his entire life. As a minority and young man that loved his community, it was a dream come true. Nearly 5 ½ weeks after being named to the girls' head coaching position at Cloverleaf Sr. High School, he died on July 27, 1997, before having coached his first head coaching high school game.

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

– Maya Angelou

Richard rests at Spring Grove in Section 16 next to his son, Jeffrey, who departed after him and other family members along with a community of other citizens whose lives have stories that have value to Medina and its history. Please remember this when you drive by Spring Grove Cemetery and consider contributing to the upkeep of this historical site by supporting Friends of the Cemetery.

**Editors Note:** We thank Friends of the Cemetery member, Beth Coleman, for contributing this beautiful article "in loving memory" of her husband's "aspirations and achievements."

### **Main Street Medina Award:**

Trustees Jerry Gunner and Hank Waite were on hand at the Main Street Medina awards presentation on January 27, 2022 to accept the 2020 Medina Heroes Award for Preservation on behalf of the Friends of the Cemetery.



# *Friends of the Cemetery*

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 Donna Zatezalo  
 Grace Zay  
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\* designates new member  
 † designates life-time member  
 ◊ designates corporate member

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Todd & Melody Costello	Colleen Gunner Selden
Amy Demlow	Dave & Cathy Gunner
Beth Coleman	Mike & Laura Gunner
Patrick & Karen Feron	Regi Haire
Alan & Luann Gunner	

### *New Lifetime Members since December 2021*

Susan Chmelik  
 Amy Demlow  
 Patrick & Karen Feron  
 Robert & Shirley Hyde

### *New Corporate Members since December 2021*

Nancy Gowe  
 Jim & Joan Krejci  
 Gerald & Marsha Whitnable



# FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

775 East Washington Street  
Medina, Ohio 44256

## *Become a Friend of the Cemetery*

If you have not yet joined the Friends of the Cemetery, we'd love to have you become a part! For your convenience, we have provided a self-addressed envelope in this newsletter. Our membership schedule is included on the envelope flap. If you have been a member in the past, but do not see your name listed on page 7, please take time today to renew your membership using the envelope.

*"Show me the manner in which a nation or community cares for its dead and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the law of the land, and their loyalty to high ideals."*

*William Gladstone*

*Don't forget to check us out on the web at:*

**[www.friendsofmedinacemetery.org](http://www.friendsofmedinacemetery.org)**



Memberships are available as follows:

Senior _____	\$10.00	Supporting _____	\$100.00
Individual _____	\$15.00	Heritage _____	\$250.00
Family _____	\$25.00	Lifetime _____	\$500.00
Contributing _____	\$50.00	Corporate _____	\$1,000.00

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