

FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

Issue 42

Medina, Ohio

May 2020

History of the Spring Grove Patriotic Buntings

 In 1996, several years before the establishment of the Friends of the Cemetery, the Medina City Cemetery Commission decided to recreate the Memorial Day patriotic buntings as seen in old photographs taken at Spring Grove Cemetery circa 1890's. Cynthia Szunyog had asked the Medina County Historical Society to look for old photographs of the cemetery and the Cemetery Commission was thrilled when several photographs of the Spring Grove Entry Gate and the Soldiers' Monument were found and lent to be copied. With no funds, and after much brainstorming, leg work, and phone calls, Joe Walker, the City Service Director at the time and member of the Cemetery Commission, came up with \$360 to purchase red, white and blue sailcloth. Several ladies, among them experienced

seamstresses Betty Trump, Laura Handy, and Margaret Beckwith, along with Teresa Merkle, Cynthia Szunyog, Janis Zachman and Virginia Jeandrevin, met in the Medina Church of Christ's basement to prepare the cloth for sewing. The preparation was no easy task as the bunting for the Entry Gate measured 60' X 10' and the one for the Soldier measured 50' X 5' feet! After the massive lengths of material were stripped and pinned for sewing, Hal Miley, a local upholsterer, graciously agreed to do the sewing on his industrial upholstery machine. Once the buntings for the Entry Gate and the Soldiers' Monument were sewn, how to hang them became our next hurdle. The City's bucket truck would do the job of

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Friends of the Cemetery

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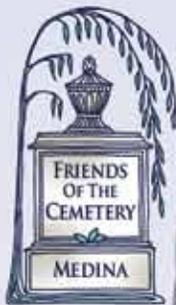
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getting the bunting up on to the entry gate, but we had to figure out how to hang it without drilling into the stone of the structure. It was decided the only way to do this was to use ropes to hang it. Janis Zachman hand-sewed loops all along the 60' top hem of the bunting to accommodate carabiner clips that provide the channel a rope can be run through. The bunting was then anchored in place by tying the ropes around the structure's cap stones. To create a drapery valance effect, gussets or pleats also had to be sewn into the bunting. Janis accomplished that task on her grandmother's 1941 Singer sewing machine. Jim Cook brought his ladders and climbed to the top of the gate to help with the effort while folks below, using the old photographs as a guide, directed the draping of the bunting so it would look exactly like it did in the 1890's. The hanging of the Soldier's bunting was yet another challenge. Jim Cook, along with his crew, volunteered to make the ascent up to the soldier's shoulders and, with direction from spectators below, did a beautiful job draping our 24' Soldier's Monument just as it



looked in the old pictures. Two years later, a photo of Jim's helpers, Nate Simpson and Ryan O'Callaghan, on ladders draping the soldier appeared on the front page of the Gazette. As the 1996 Memorial Day weekend came and went, we all felt great pride in what had been accomplished, however, we are still left scratching our heads as to how in the world those folks before the turn of the 20th century were able to get those huge buntings made and hung without our modern-day conveniences (electric sewing machines, bucket trucks, etc.)?

Editor's Note – Interesting Facts:

The 1996 buntings are still in use today, however, in the year 2000 they went missing! After a frantic, and, unsuccessful search around the cemetery and City Hall, Mayor Jim Roberts, who was always a staunch advocate and supporter of our cemeteries, had replacement buntings professionally made and paid for by the City just in time for the 2000 Memorial Day weekend. Those replacement buntings continued to be used for a number of years until one day, not long ago, Nino Piccoli, our current City Service Director, stumbled upon the original 1996 buntings tucked deep in a closet at City Hall. The 1996 buntings were put back into service immediately.

The City continues to use the bucket truck to hang the entry gate bunting, but nowadays the Medina City Fire Department uses their ladder truck to put up the soldier's drape. Sexton, James Hjort, has the whole procedure down to a science!

Photo of Nate Simpson and Ryan O'Callaghan as it appeared in the Medina Gazette.



1890's Entry Gate



Hanging the bunting in 1996

Historical Structures Preservation

Perspectus, a Cleveland architectural firm specializing in restoration, completed their assessment of our historic structures at Spring Grove which included the 1892 Entry gate, 1884 Chapel, 1888 Civil War Soldiers' Monument, and 1921 Mausoleum. With this document in hand, the Friends will have the ability to prioritize current maintenance issues. The preservation and maintenance of these structures ranks high on the Friends' priority list.

Historical
Architecture
Perspectus



Spring Grove Arboretum

Eric Hinzman of Bartlett Tree Expert Company surveys a tree in Section 4 at Spring Grove

In January, the Friends entered into a contract with Bartlett Tree Expert Company for \$12,550 for a tree inventory and survey at Spring Grove Cemetery. Bartlett completed site work in April and we eagerly await the final document. We have learned some preliminary information from the survey that tells us that there are 613 trees at Spring Grove of which there are 68 species, 14 specimen trees and 53 feature trees. Specimen trees, according to Eric Hinzman of Bartlett Tree, are "large trees that exhibit good structure and form for a particular species" and feature trees are "particularly aesthetically pleasing, typically a larger tree with good form and structure set off by itself." Bartlett was quite impressed with the health, condition and diversity of our trees. This is not surprising since the Friends have a 20+ year investment in the trees and plant

material at Spring Grove. As you visit the cemetery, you may notice the tags that are now on each of the 613 trees. As part of the inventory, the trees were tagged with information to help identify and, eventually, navigate with a mobile device. Bartlett assures us that the tags have a very superficial impact on the tree itself and are placed discreetly where they are not quickly noticed. The documentation of our tree collection through this professional tree inventory and survey is the first step in arboretum accreditation at Spring Grove. The survey also includes Bartlett's ArborScope which is "a tree management application using Google Mapping" that provides tree record keeping, data management, and mapping.

At its inception in 1884, Spring Grove was designed after the Rural Cemetery Movement as a garden cemetery. The Friends mission has been and remains the historic preservation, beautification and maintenance of Spring Grove Cemetery and Old Town Graveyard.



Wadsworth Ohio's Woodlawn Cemetery Advocacy Group

Last summer Deb Holcomb contacted the Friends of the Cemetery for advice on how to start a cemetery advocacy group for Wadsworth's historic Woodlawn Cemetery. Deb, having always had an interest in family history and cemeteries, had been noticing that the Woodlawn cemetery needed more care than the workers could provide. After being gifted a book on cemeteries across the U.S. and world that included stories of cemetery "friends" groups, Deb decided to start an advocacy group for Woodlawn. Deb visited and toured Spring Grove with Teresa Merkle and attended a Medina City Cemetery Commission as well as a Friends of the Cemetery Trustees meeting, asking many questions and listening to a lot of information and recommendations. After visits with Woodlawn's sexton, Wadsworth Mayor Robin Laubaugh, Robert Patrick, Wadsworth's Service Director, and approval from Woodlawn Cemetery's Trustees, Deb put out the call, via the Post Newspaper, the Medina County Gazette (they did a front page article) and a local radio station interview, for any interested Wadsworth residents to attend an organizational meeting at the Wadsworth library. Her first meeting on November 7, 2019 brought out 15 attendees. In December, the group elected officers, drew up by-laws and are in the process of obtaining 501c3 status! The newly elected officers, along with Woodlawn Cemetery personnel, attended a cemetery database informational meeting with our own Spring Grove Sexton, James Hjort, in January to start work on improving Woodlawn's current record keeping. The group has continued to meet monthly and has recruited the help of local Boy Scout troops to have a general spring clean-up while maintaining social distancing. We wish the Wadsworth group our best and have promised to be of support and encouragement to them. The Friends are glad others in our community and, in fact, all over the world, realize the importance of cemetery historic preservation, beautification and maintenance. If there are others interested in starting an advocacy group for your local cemetery, please contact Teresa Merkle, President of Friends, at the number and/or email address listed on this newsletter.

FOC member Jim Cook repairs a single slate shingle on our 1884 Spring Grove Chapel that was dislodged during the severe storm we had on April 7. FOC member Dean Bowman assists from the ground.

Thank you Jim & Dean!



1918 Medina County and the Spanish Flu Pandemic by Tom Hilberg

In late Spring and very early Summer 1918, Influenza made its appearance in Medina County; there were large numbers of colds, “le Grippe” (a common term for the flu at that time) and pneumonia. Then just as quickly it had appeared, it disappeared and things returned to normal.

It was Friday, October 11, 1918 that the first notice appeared in the local newspapers that something was going on. The headlines blared: “Taboo on all Public Meetings” Schools, Churches, Sunday Schools, Picture Shows Closed. Epidemic Of Flu Responsible. Health Officer Harding Takes Precautionary Measures Though There Are Few Cases. Other Places Take Same Action.” The article stated that, “The epidemic of influenza which has become so general all over the country, particularly in the Army camps, has reached Medina County.”

Wadsworth and Seville had been closed in similar manner the previous Monday, and on Thursday, Lafayette schools were closed. It was recommended that children be kept in home as much as possible and prevented from associating with others, especially those having sickness in the family. People were warned to “avoid contact with persons coming from other sections of the country where influenza is known to be prevalent.”

Does all of this sound familiar? Think about it; there were no hospitals like today, not that many doctors, no internet access for information. Funerals were held at home; they had to be private family only, although other mourners could stand outside.

There are no numbers as to how many Medina folks were sick that year or the number of dead from the flu, but the most frequent

official cause of death was listed as “pneumonia.” The first death in the county was reported to be Blake Myers of Spencer who also suffered from tuberculosis. It was reported that Spencer and Hinckley were badly afflicted. In Spencer, one of their two doctors, Dr. Charles Stephan, fell victim. Miss Pauline Myers, sister of the first victim also died. And the Postmaster and his family also became sick which caused the Post Office to be closed.

During the third week of the outbreak, Medina Village lost Amos W. Mamaw and Dr. Floyd E. Nichols, who died at his home on East Washington Street. The good doctor had caught cold while canvassing for the Fourth Liberty Loan drive the previous week. He went home sick and the cold developed into influenza pneumonia. Desperately ill for several days, he died October 23, 1918. He had been a member of the Medina High class of 1910, attended Western Reserve University in Cleveland for a year, then went to dental college at the University of Michigan, graduating in 1914. He was in practice with his father, Dr. Abner P. Nichols, in the Gazette Block. He was also a Second Lieutenant in the Medina Home Guard.

Across Medina, the Gazette reporters were reporting on the sickness and deaths from all corners of the County. On Friday, November 8, 1918, the Gazette reported that the ban on public gatherings would be lifted the next day. Schools were to resume on Monday. On November 11, the war ended and large crowds gathered to celebrate Liberty Day; too many people lowered their guard. The next week the flu flared again. Schools closed, along with churches and Sunday schools. Just as we in 2020 celebrated Easter without church gatherings, 1918 was the year without Christmas. Life didn’t start to return to normal until after January 1, 1919.

So brief the time by Teresa Merkle



Set between the sidewalk along Route 18 and the cemetery roadway lies a very narrow portion of lawn known as Section 12. For over 100 years in that section, there’s been an unassuming little gravestone, a lamb carved at its center with the name of Evelyn

Ruth Butdorff and dates March 23, 1918 – October 31, 1918. With its proximity so close to the walking path, I wonder how many times over the past 100 years someone has walked by this little grave and wondered who Evelyn Ruth Butdorff was, why she died so young, and who she belonged to. For those of us who have lost children, especially very young children, there is a real fear that your baby might be forgotten over time, but every life has a story, no matter how long it was lived. Resting in that little grave is one of the innocents the 1918 global pandemic claimed. Spanish Flu as it was called in 1918 was no respecter of persons, however the elderly and very young were particularly ravaged by its effect. Evelyn Ruth Butdorff succumbed at just 7-months old on October 31, 1918 to secondary pneumonia brought on by the Spanish flu virus. She had been born in Medina on March 23, 1918 to John and Effie (Grissinger) Butdorff joining older siblings, Helen Edith born in 1913, Ballard Otis born in 1915 and Marcine Elizabeth born in 1916. Evelyn’s Medina Gazette obituary states she died early Friday morning, October 31, and a private service, conducted by Rev. Bryenton, was held at the

home, 735 South Court Street, at 2 pm the following day, Saturday, November 1. Burial took place following that 2 pm service in Section 12 at Spring Grove Cemetery. (Coincidentally, Spring Grove burial records indicate baby Evelyn’s burial was the next one to follow Dr. Floyd Nichols – see Tom Hilberg’s article above.) The Gazette obituary goes on to state that both Mr. and Mrs. Butdorff and two of their other three children were also ill, we presume with the flu. We wonder



Evelyn Ruth Butdorff

if the parents were physically able to attend the burial of their baby. We do know, however, that the rest of the family made a full recovery and those three older children lived well into adulthood. The Butdorffs went on to have three more children and eventually moved from Medina to Wayne County in 1936. It is comforting to know Evelyn was never forgotten by her family. We thank Janet Ferguson, of Medina, for sharing the story of her aunt Evelyn Butdorff for this article as well as the accompanying family picture.

Editor’s Note: Spring Grove interment records indicate a spike in burials during the height of the pandemic between mid-August 1918 and spring 1919 with recorded burials of 81 in an 8-month period.

Friends of the Cemetery

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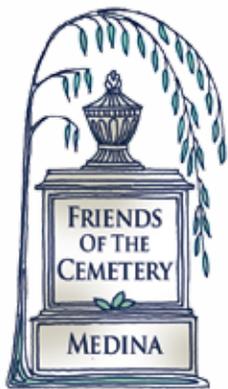
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Due to the pandemic, we've not been in the office regularly and have not sent out renewal notices to our members. If it has been a while since you sent in your yearly membership gift, please consider doing so in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. If you have not yet joined the Friends of the Cemetery, we'd love to have you become a part!



FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

775 East Washington Street
Medina, Ohio 44256

Become a Friend of the Cemetery

"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

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www.friendsofmedinacemetery.org



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