



# FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

Issue 37

Medina, Ohio

December 2017

## *New Master Plan*

In 1997, the Medina City Cemetery Commission received funding from the Letha E. House Foundation to commission the creation of a Master Plan for Spring Grove Cemetery. This Plan has been the guideline for all projects and improvements that have been undertaken at Spring Grove over the past 20 years. In fact, one of the recommendations contained in the 1997 Master Plan was to form a citizen's advocacy group whose focus would be the beautification, preservation and maintenance of Spring Grove. The Friends of the Cemetery came into existence within months of the publication of the original Master Plan. Since 1997, approximately \$1.4 million has been funded through the Friends to accomplish all the wonderful improvements and restorations we see and enjoy in Spring Grove and Old Town Graveyard. In fact, most all of the recommendations in the 1997 Master Plan have been accomplished. Since 20 years have passed, it is time for a new plan based on the current conditions and

needs of Spring Grove Cemetery and Old Town Graveyard.

This past August we met with Tom Zarfoss, landscape architect, of Behnke Associates, Inc. of Cleveland to begin the process of developing a new Master Plan. We are very fortunate to have Tom oversee the new project as he did the original Spring Grove Master Plan as well as its update in 2007. Tom and Behnke Associates have been in the business for many years and have compiled an impressive résumé in architectural landscape design of many of the most beautiful places in Ohio and so we were quite honored when Tom recently wrote to the Friends and City administration that **“Spring Grove is the best looking municipal cemetery I have ever seen.”** We take great pride in his statement and look forward to carrying out the recommendations that will come from the new Master Plan which should be complete by year's end.



# Friends of the Cemetery

775 East Washington Street  
Medina, Ohio 44256

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

## To reach us:

[info@friendsofmedinacemetery.org](mailto:info@friendsofmedinacemetery.org)  
330.725.8861 - Ext. 1055

## Trustees

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Teresa Merkle

Cynthia Szunyog

## Photos

Teresa Merkle

Cynthia Szunyog

## Board Meetings

First Thursday at 7 pm

FOC office

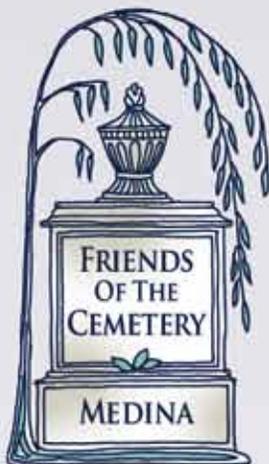
775 East Washington Street

Conference Room

Please call first.

Designed by

Ron Bell/Advison Design



## New Trustees

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Debra Hallock and Paul Wood to the Friends of the Cemetery Board of Trustees. Both Debra and Paul are natives of Medina and have strong ties to the community. On joining the Board, each shared the following:



Debra: *"I want to support the preservation and development of two of Medina's most valuable historic resources and city parks. Spring Grove and Old Town hold profound meaning for families with loved ones buried there and have also become destinations for those who seek genealogy, beauty, art, peace and exercise."*

Paul: *"I have always believed that preserving history is so important. Having a beautiful cemetery where we can reflect on lives lived and making a place people want to spend time is part of the process. Through travels all over the U.S. visiting historic cemeteries, I know our Spring Grove Cemetery is a beauty that requires caretakers who will retain its quality for generations to enjoy."*



We welcome Debra and Paul and know they will be great assets to the Board. We appreciate their willingness to share their talents and abilities as we look to the future and the implementation of the new Master Plan.

## Mears Photos

The Friends have quite an extensive collection of photos we inherited from the Edward C. Mears Estate. These photos include many faces of long passed Medinians that we wanted to identify and label for posterity's sake. We got together a fine group of "seasoned" Medina residents who knew the Mears family and remember many who helped build Medina in the late 1950's through early 1970's. On a chilly Saturday morning, Don Simmons, David Kellogg, Jeff Eble, Ralph Waite and Bob Hyde gathered at the Mears Building to look at a large number of photos and put names with faces and identify many buildings. We thank them for their time and for sharing many memories of "old" Medina. We appreciate Hank Waite, Cynthia Szunyog, Linda Fenn and Teresa Merkle for their help in facilitating this endeavor. Our next step is to have these photos digitized.



# Maintenance Storage Structure

The Friends have contracted with Northern Construction Management LLC, of Hinckley, Ohio, to build a storage structure to cover existing spoil piles behind the new Spring Grove maintenance

building. The cost of construction is \$28,850. We look forward to the completion of this structure and the nice finishing touch it will add to the Spring Grove maintenance area.

## Friends of the Cemetery Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Cemetery was held September 10, 2017. We had a good number present for the meeting which included a review of Friends projects in the cemeteries over the 2016-2017 year as well as election of Officers and Trustees. Dennis Leach, Cynthia Szunyog, Teresa Merkle and Vickie Fleming were all re-elected to three-year terms as Trustees. John Gill, who has served as Vice-President of Friends for quite some time, asked to resign that office due to health issues. John

will, however, remain on the Board of Trustees. Jerry Gunner was elected to step in as Vice-President of Friends. Teresa Merkle, President, Linda Fenn, Secretary and Vickie Fleming, Treasurer, were all re-elected to their respective offices. After the business meeting, Roger Smalley, Chairman of the Medina Bi-Centennial Celebration Committee, brought us up to date on plans for Medina's 2018 Bi-Centennial festivities. We thank Roger for joining us at the meeting and for all his efforts in bringing together Medina's 200-year celebration.

## Historical Walk

As usual, the weather cooperated for our annual cemetery walk on August 19. The rain held off and the sun came out. Speakers were Pat Morgan, Pat VanHoose, Bob Hyde and Cynthia Szunyog. Thanks to efforts to publicize the walk and especially to Bob Hyde who placed a notice about the walk on Facebook's Roadside History of Medina County, we had a good crowd, including the entire board of the Medina County Historical Society as well as Medina's own Macy Hallock chauffeured by Mark Overholt. Walkers first visited the graves of Cora and Luther Dorwin (whose last name is misspelled on the tombstone) where listeners were gripped by the story of Lucas's death on Lake Superior during a terrible storm. Bob Hyde told about the Alden family, descendants of John Alden of Mayflower fame. Their Federal style house stood on the north side of the Square where the Amuse Euro Bistro restaurant is today. The next speaker, this writer Cynthia Szunyog, told about two members of the McDowell and Blake families, Helen B. McDowell and her little brother Harry Blake who died at the age of 7. The Blake girls, Elizabeth and Helen, were the daughters of H. G. Blake and

married the McDowell brothers, Blake and Oakley, known as O.H. The well-known and much-loved McDowell family has provided Medina history with endless fascinating stories thanks to cousins Ted McDowell and Betsy Phillips Whitmore who had the wisdom and foresight to record family memories. (See Ted McDowell's comments about family history in this newsletter.) The last talk of the day took place inside the mausoleum where Pat Morgan spoke about Levi Branch, son of Lawson and Cordelia Branch who came to York Township in 1830. Levi was born in 1848 and became a successful farmer. He had a particular interest in "psychic" things and eventually moved to California to join a spiritualist group there. Levi's son Fred Branch was a partner in the furniture and funeral business Branch and Longacre. The Longacre Furniture Store was located on the Square in what is now The House of Hunan Restaurant. Some readers will remember Longacre's store and the beautiful stained-glass sign that stretched across the front of that business. As always, our historical stroll was enjoyed by all. Thanks to everyone who participated.

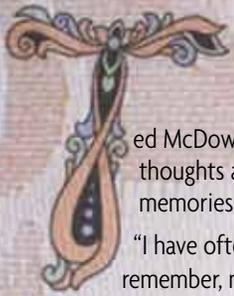
## Fall and Winter Decorations

The regulations for Spring Grove Cemetery call for fall decorations to be removed by December 15 and Winter Decorations removed by March 15. On or after those dates, Cemetery staff will remove any remaining and/or unsightly decorations.

# Memories

by Cynthia Szunyog

## from the McDowell Family



ed McDowell introduced his family history with these thoughts about the importance of recording family memories.

"I have often wished that a few of the people I remember, now long since gone, had taken the time to make some notes about relatives they knew or knew about. Yet people rarely have any interest in things of this sort and when one gets old I suppose it becomes harder and harder to get at it. In the general scheme of things, family history is probably not too important but to at least some of us who are fortunate enough to be on earth for a fairly long time, it does have some interest.

First, who were these people we came from, what were they like, what did they do and what did people think of them? Almost all of us, of course, are made up of good and things not so good and the writer's opinion is just that—the writer's opinion. Nevertheless, in looking back on events through the years, a writer's thoughts probably would be fairly typical of what many other people thought."

Twelve years later, at the age of 91, Ted recorded his memories of what Medina was like when he was young. Recorded memories like these are precious, not just for family members but also for all of us who appreciate learning about the past.

## Christmas at Byo's house

by Gloria Brown

"Christmas at Byo's is a story in itself," wrote the late Ted McDowell, former president of the Old Phoenix Bank. He tells that story in a family history he wrote in 1979. "When I was a child, all of our family spent four or five days there during the Christmas season and it was truly one of the happiest memories that most of us will ever have."

"Byo" was the affectionate nickname given to his grandmother, Elizabeth Blake McDowell, the matriarch of a large, close-knit family. She lived with her widowed daughter, Bessie McDowell Hewes, in a grand Victorian home with a tower and wrap-around porches, located on Prospect Street, at the end of West Washington Street.

Ted McDowell's family lived in a house on South Court Street – not a great distance away, but nevertheless, journeyed to Byo's in considerable style. "Our family would arrive on Christmas Eve via a horse and cutter (a small sleigh). Once, I recall that the family cow was in tow and a turkey gobbler on board for Christmas dinner." Another family member, the late Betsy Phillips Whitmore, whose family drove in from Akron every year, wrote her own version of Christmas at Byo's.

"When we were children, Blake McDowell's family of five, Harry and Kate Rowe's family of five, our Phillips family of five and in some years, Corwin McDowell's family from Boston moved into the big house and stayed a week. (Another son, Rob and his wife lived nearby on Blake Avenue.) "Given such a houseful, it meant that 16



Photo courtesy of the Drew Phillips family

or more people sat down at the table for three meals every day. The men of the family even returned from uptown for a family lunch."

Betsy Whitmore goes on to say that the dining table had seven leaves and there was a bell under the carpet for Byo to call the maid. The typical holiday dinner table, she recalled, featured a turkey at one end and a goose at the other. For the children, being in the big house was a great adventure and included playing paper polo in the front hall. "The goals were the entrances to the dining room and the large parlor. We would slide around the hall on cushions batting the ball with bats made of rolled up newspapers – and soon the hall was awash with torn newspapers."

Aunt Bessie Hewes did establish some "necessary rules and regulations" for the children and these included admonitions to play in house slippers, not take away keys to doors, to stay off the front stairs and the please remember that "this house is not a barn."

However, Betsey Whitmore writes, “the anticipation of Christmas defies description.” On Christmas Eve, there was the tradition of a semicircle of chairs. Mrs. Whitmore writes,

“There would never be sufficient room under the Christmas tree for all the gifts, so dining room chairs were placed in a semi-circle around the large fireplace in the large hall. Each chair was assigned its owner based upon age. According to routine, Uncle Blake would help the children set cookies and milk on the hearth for Santa Claus. Then, after the youngsters were in bed, the parents would fill the chairs with gifts and cover them with large car blankets. The next morning was filled with great anticipation and excitement. Everyone had to rush into every other bedroom to wish dear ones Merry Christmas. I can still hear the merriment and goodwill ringing in my ears...

After dressing, we formed a parade in the upstairs hall according to height. Our instruments of good cheer were pots and pans and spoons and our carol a tin pan parade which proceeded down the stairs into each room and through the kitchen. Our destination was the front hall where we lined up before our chairs and were permitted to open one gift before breakfast.

After breakfast we gathered in our family units to finish opening our presents.”

According to family custom, the Christmas tree was not decorated until late in the afternoon on Christmas day. That task fell to the gentlemen of the family who located the tree behind the sliding doors of the dining room. “We thought the opening of those doors to unveil the beautiful ten or twelve foot tree almost too exciting

to bear! Mrs. Whitmore wrote. “Sadly, only one snapshot of our Christmas gatherings remains.”

The tree was simply decorated with candy canes and real candles. And the Christmas table was laden with cakes, cookies and punch, but no liquor. “Those who wanted something stronger,” Mrs. Whitmore confides, “would gather across the street at Rob McDowell’s. These lapses, among others – such as Kate Rowe’s smoking – were always kept from Byo.”

Christmas night brought more relatives and friends from Leroy (now Westfield Center) and Cleveland, including the Hawleys and Griesingers.

“After the guests arrived,” Mrs. Whitmore writes, “we had another grand parade, this time with Byo at the head in the place of honor. We would promenade through the downstairs of the house. The promenade ended with each couple forming an arch through which every other couple danced. I can still see the young people wearing the latest fashions – short skirts, dropped waist lines, feathers and head bands – dancing the Charleston and the Black Bottom.”

The home is currently owned by Byo’s great-great-grandson and Betsey Whitmore’s nephew, Drew Phillips. Betsey Whitmore ended her 1988 family history with the following words “We now meet once during the holiday season to have a family gift exchange and carol sing. Drew has fires in the front hall and parlor, a Christmas tree and Christmas refreshments. Maybe someday, there will be dancing as well.”



## *Elizabeth Blake McDowell ~ 1842-1932*

Elizabeth Blake McDowell was born on December 4, 1842 in one of the first frame houses built in Medina. The house was located on the northwest corner of West Washington and Elmwood Streets. Her parents were both pioneers. Her father, the Honorable H.G. Blake had come to Medina County as a parentless 12 year old and eventually became one of Medina’s leading citizens – Congressman, lawyer, businessman, mayor, founder of the Old Phoenix Bank. Her mother was Elizabeth Bell whose family settled in Seville.

Elizabeth said she had a very happy childhood and girlhood. One of her early memories was of riding on the back of an elephant when P.T. Barnum brought his circus to town. The other memory was less pleasant. She witnessed runaway slaves in bloodied condition being given secret shelter by her parents when their home on East Washington Street was a stop on the Underground Railroad.

When the Civil War began, H.G. Blake was a U.S. Congressman and Elizabeth, then nineteen, accompanied him to Washington. She was a favorite with the Ohio delegation, and as a result, she said, “We had entrée to just about every affair. And I didn’t miss many opportunities” Elizabeth happened to be in the Senate the day the southern senators resigned their positions and gave farewell

speeches. She was particularly struck by Jefferson Davis who would become president of the Confederacy. At the end of his speech, she recalled, “He looked all around the Senate Chamber and with a look of inexpressible sadness, lowered his head and walked out.” She married R.M McDowell in 1863 and when the war ended, they returned to Medina. His twin brother, O.H. McDowell married Elizabeth’s sister Helen, and H.G. Blake built twin Victorian houses for his daughters on West Washington Street. The houses are still there. The McDowell brothers went into business with H.G. Blake and after Blake’s death, R.M. McDowell became president of the Old Phoenix Bank.

In 1890, Elizabeth and R.M. McDowell built a grand Queen Ann style house on Prospect Street across from their previous home. It cost \$10,000 to build – an enormous sum at the time. Elizabeth McDowell had five children, two daughters and three sons. According to her grandson, Ted McDowell, “She was a woman of much vitality, bright and interested in life. Her church was very important to her and she was active in the social and community life of the town. But I think of her mostly for the great love she had for her family. The lives and affairs of her children were her life and she did love and think so very well of all of them.” Elizabeth Blake McDowell died on May 6 1932, several months short of her ninetieth birthday. She is buried in the family plot at Spring Grove Cemetery.



# *The* **Spring Grove Encampment**

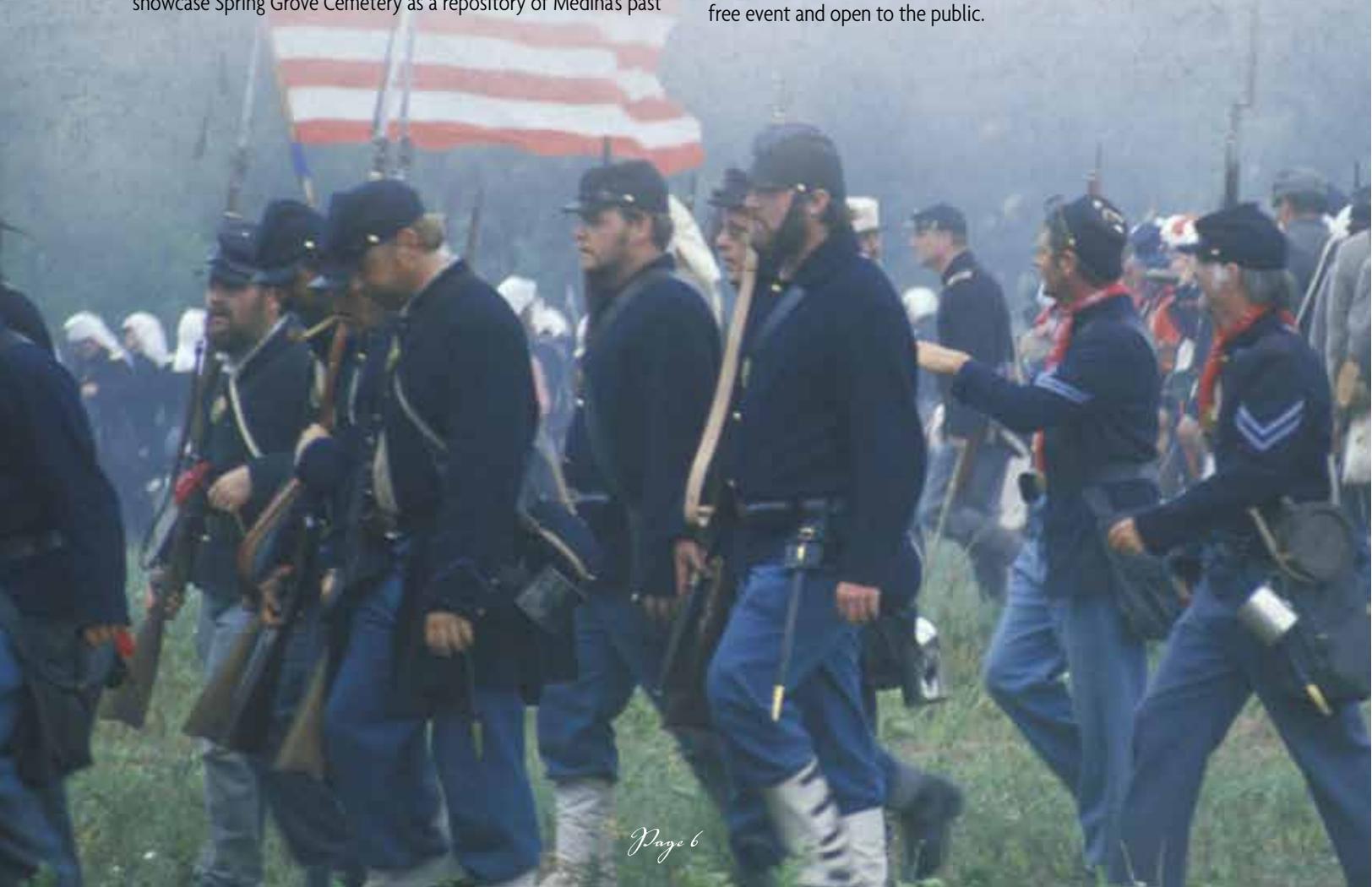
**Memorial Day Weekend**

**Saturday, May 26th, 2018, 9:30 to 5**

**A**s part of Medina's Bi-Centennial celebration, the Friends of the Cemetery will host a Civil War encampment on the grounds of Spring Grove Cemetery on Saturday, May 26, 2018. The goals of this event are to: (1) bring a high quality Bicentennial experience that respectfully honors Medina's Civil War history while educating those in attendance about our past, (2) to showcase Spring Grove Cemetery as a repository of Medina's past

and the importance of its historical preservation, and (3) to bring public awareness to the beautification, restoration and hard work done in Spring Grove Cemetery through the diligent efforts of the Friends of the Cemetery over the past 20 years.

Please mark this date on your calendar and invite friends and family to return to Medina for this unique experience. This is a free event and open to the public.



# *Friends of the Cemetery*

## MEMBERSHIP LISTING - DECEMBER 2017

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 Deanne Longacre  
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### *In Memory Donations*

#### **In Memory of Helen Streett**

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 Elwood & Doris Naragon  
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#### **In Memory of Mary Lovice & Herbert Furse**

Mary Kay Klein

\* designates new member

† designates life-time member

◊ designates corporate member

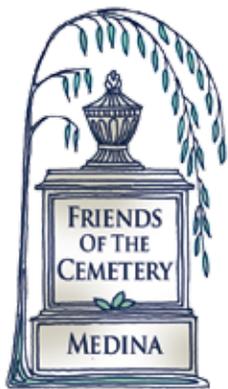
### *New Members since May 2017:*

Michael E. Batchelder	Ray & Madeline Larabee
Pat Dohoda	Mark & Sherry Overholt
Brian & Carole Feron	Gina Turner
Virginia Hall	

### *New Lifetime Members since May 2017:*

Elizabeth Streett Cassella  
 Ray & Madeline Larabee

*I*f you have not yet joined the Friends of the Cemetery, please do so today. 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 above, please take time today to renew your membership using the enclosed envelope.



# 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*

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



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Membership enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to:

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