

FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

445 W. Liberty Street,
Suite 219
Medina, Ohio 44256



FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

Issue 18

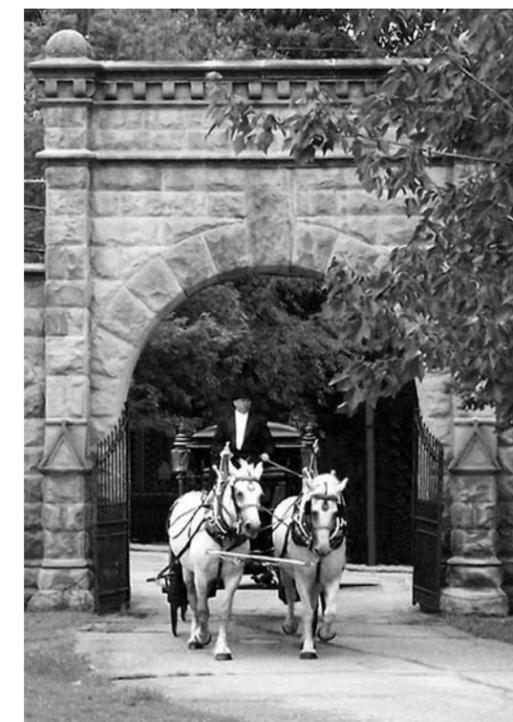
Medina, Ohio

May 2008

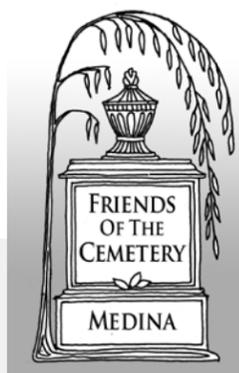
Memorial Day

Memorial Day will be celebrated Monday, May 26. The Spring Grove chapel and the mausoleum will be open to the public from 9:00 a.m. until after the Memorial Day service at the Soldiers' Mound. We welcome you to stop by.

"I have never been able to think of the day as one of mourning; I have never quite been able to feel that half-masted flags were appropriate on Decoration Day. I have rather felt that the flag should be at the peak, because those whose dying we commemorate rejoiced in seeing it where their valor placed it. We honor them in a joyous, thankful, triumphant commemoration of what they did." -Benjamin Harrison



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Memberships are available as follows:

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Contributing _____	\$50.00	Corporate _____	\$1,000.00

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Chapel Restoration



Cemetery, Medina, Ohio.

This year the Friends of the Cemetery plan to begin restoration of the chapel at Spring Grove Cemetery. Built in 1884, the chapel was the first structure to be placed in the cemetery. It was originally known as the "vault" because caskets were often stored in the basement during the winter months until the ground thawed enough to dig graves in the spring. At some point in the history of the building, the original tall front doors, along with their wrought iron gates, were removed. According to Ralph Waite, of Waite and Son Funeral Home, the chapel became run down and by the late 1940's the main floor was being used to store equipment and, occasionally, bodies. Subsequently, part of the chapel was partitioned off and used as an office. In 1983 the cemetery office moved from the chapel to the maintenance building in the southeast corner of the cemetery and the building was returned

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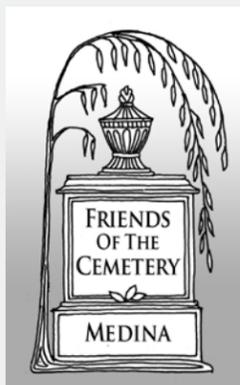
Teresa Merkle
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Photos

John Gill
Cynthia Szunyog

Board Meetings

First Thursday at 7 pm
FOC office-Liberty Row
445 W. Liberty Street
Conference Room
Please call first.



to its original use as a chapel.

This winter the Friends of the Cemetery invited architects from three firms specializing in the restoration of historic structures to visit the chapel in order to evaluate its condition. We recently submitted requests for proposal to these three firms. Restoration of the chapel has long been on our list of priorities and has become more urgent as the results of deferred maintenance become more obvious.

Some of the most crucial areas to be addressed are the slate roof, flashing and edge details and the cellar walls and drainage as well as some masonry repair. The original doors were an important part of the building and so similar replacements need to be found or built. Old postcard photographs of the exterior of the chapel show the entrance doors with



Decorative Ceiling and Arches

their wrought iron gates, which we would like to duplicate. Restoration of the interior would include removing the drywall so that the beauty of the decorative arched wooden ceiling and window details can again be appreciated. The floor covering and lighting will also be addressed.

The goal of this project is to make the chapel structurally sound and to

restore both the exterior and the interior as close as possible to what it was in 1884. We hope to promote the use of the restored chapel to the public not only for funeral services, but also as a gathering place for community meetings, recitals and various types of events.

We are interested in finding old photographs of the chapel as well as more information about its history.

Easter Sunrise at the Chapel

By Linda Fenn

Following a suggestion by Interim Minister Sharon Kiesel, the Medina United Church of Christ Congregational has held Easter Sunrise services in the Chapel at Spring Grove Cemetery for the past two years. The 1893 Chapel is an appropriate setting for the service and celebration of Easter Sunday. This year Pastor Neal Sadler led the service with Dan Hunter providing the music.

An important part of this service is the traditional "flowering of the cross". The cross was made by church member and custodian, Carl Jessie, more than ten years ago for the church's Easter Sunrise services. The cross starts out stark and empty. The

worshippers then place real flowers on the cross covering it completely to symbolize the resurrection of Jesus and new life from the death of Good Friday. Later the cross is brought back to the church for display during the other Easter services.

Historical Background:

"The Flowering Cross" is a tradition that dates back to the 6th century. It is based on a legend that says at the moment Jesus died, the cross itself started to bloom. The legend further states that the wood of His cross came from a tree grown from a seed of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden.

Letha E. House Memorial

The Letha E. House Memorial was set in place at the north end of the new lake on a bitterly cold day November day. Stone setters from Kotecki Monuments made the tricky job seem almost effortless. The memorial is about 6 feet tall, made of light gray Vermont granite. There are engraved inscriptions on three sides. On the left side of the memorial are her name and dates (1880-1968) and a tribute to her generosity "A gentle and generous lady dedicated to enhancing beauty and historic restoration of Medina County." A portrait of Letha House as a young girl and the inscription "Letha House Lakes" grace the side facing the lake and the Pat Mears Garden. The portrait is hand-etched on polished black stone. The right side lists many of the projects funded by Letha House.

It was a long time between the first designs for the memorial and the final installation. A number of people worked to make this a fitting and beautiful memorial. Cindy Allman did the original design with help and advice from Elmer Zarney, Charles



Setting the Letha House Memorial



Letha House Memorial

Griesinger and Cynthia Szunyog wrote the inscriptions and they all worked together to create the final design. The Letha E. House Foundation donated \$329,000 to build the new lake and restore the old lake, requesting that the lakes be named and referred to as The Letha House Lakes. In addition, the Foundation has contributed approximately \$134,000 to restore and enhance the cemetery. Spring Grove Cemetery would not be the beautiful restored landscape that it is today without the Letha E. House Foundation.

ED MEARS PLAQUE

A bronze plaque inscribed "Columbarium erected

through the generosity of Edward C. Mears 2004" will be installed on the side of the columbarium wall at Spring Grove. The plaque will be visible as you come down the walk toward

the lake or from the walk leading from the Pat Mears Memorial Garden. Before

he passed away, Mr. Mears expressed a desire to fund the building of the first columbarium wall and monies from his Estate were used for that purpose.

Master Plan Update

The Update to the 1997 Master Plan for Spring Grove Cemetery was completed and published this winter. Behnke Associates worked with the City Cemetery Commission to prepare the Master Plan Update, which will be presented to the City's Public Properties Committee for their approval. The Update, funded by the City and the Friends of the Cemetery, reviews the recommendations of the 1997 Plan, documents accomplishments to date and presents a revision of the "Budgets and Priorities" to reflect current needs and construction costs. The development of Section 19, the area at the east end of the cemetery and north of the maintenance building, is addressed

in the Master Plan Update. The area was resurveyed and layout and grading plans and a topographical survey are included in the document. The City is anxious to begin planning for the development of this part of the cemetery.

The Master Plan Update makes reference to the contributions of the Friends of the Cemetery. "It (FOC) has, with help from the City, Foundations and others, leveraged considerable investment in the cemetery. Their accomplishments to date have significantly improved the appearance of Spring Grove Cemetery."

Mike Wright will be missed

Mike Wright, former sexton at Spring Grove, was recently named Director of the Medina Community Recreation Center. The Friends of the Cemetery enjoyed a great working relationship with Mike and wish him the best in his new position.

James Hjort Named Sexton



James Hjort

James Hjort was appointed Sexton by the City of Medina early this year. He replaced former sexton, Mike Wright.

James has worked for the City since January of 2000. He was employed in the Shade Tree Department until he left in 2004. He returned in April of 2005 and was employed as the part-time cemetery laborer. He is happy in his new position as Sexton and enjoys the opportunity of making the decisions as to what needs to get done at the cemetery and seeing that it is accomplished! One of his long-range goals is to get all the old cemetery maps updated so that they are readable.

James enjoys spending time with his wife and four children. He likes to work on his computer. James resides in Brunswick.

The Friends of the Cemetery know that the cemeteries are in good hands with James at the helm. We look forward to many years of working with him.

Oddfellows Philanthropy Continues

On April 1, 2008 the Oddfellows (Morning Star Lodge #26) announced their intention to offer the monies necessary to purchase a grave plot in the Baby Section at Spring Grove to all grieving families who are in the unfortunate position of having to purchase such a plot. Families may use these funds if they wish, or decline.

We thank the Oddfellows for their continued care for and support of the Baby Section and their desire to enhance the projects that they have undertaken over the past several years!

Lake Maintenance and Gardens

The Friends of the Cemetery have again contracted with Ken Halko of Pond Control Services to maintain the two lakes at Spring Grove during the 2008 season. This maintenance includes seasonal pondweed, and algae control and blue dye added to both ponds to inhibit algae growth.

The fence continuation project along the edge of the old lake was completed in December. Medina Fence added 100 feet of fence to the wooden fencing that had been installed as a part of the lake project.

#1 Landscaping has been hired for 2008 to maintain the Soldiers' Mound Perennial Gardens, the Pat Mears Memorial Gardens, the chapel beds and the columbarium rose bed. We have been very pleased with Juli Kovacs and her crew at #1. Juli has been with us since 2002 at which time she owned her own gardening business. In 2004 Juli joined #1. We are fortunate to have such a competent garden specialist!

Tree Work

The Davey Tree Expert Company pruned and fertilized trees in Spring Grove and Old Town Cemeteries again this winter. Fifty-seven trees were pruned in Spring Grove Cemetery and ninety-one trees were fertilized. In addition, twenty trees were fertilized in Old Town Graveyard. We continue to lose some of the older trees in our "grove". We anticipate that more trees will be planted in the fall.

Cemetery Restoration Presentation

Kurt Leahey, a specialist in cemetery conservation and restoration with a Masters Degree in Historic Preservation, made a presentation at the March meeting of the Cemetery Commission. Several Friends of the Cemetery trustees were also present. Kurt was invited to speak about what needs to be done to better preserve Old Town Graveyard and repair its gravestones. Kurt restored several cemeteries in Kentucky during a time when that state offered funding for conserving Civil War era cemeteries.

Old Town Graveyard is in relatively good condition, but it is obvious to anyone walking through the cemetery that many stones are broken and/or lying face up in the grass where they will be further damaged by weather and mowers.

Kurt told us that the first steps in preserving an historic cemetery are to photograph the stones, recover broken fragments, and map and number all the gravestones. The next steps are conditions assessment, prioritization, and treatment proposals and plans followed by implementation.

Some of the principles of cemetery restoration are reversibility and "do no harm". Everyone who has spent time in old cemeteries has seen examples of bad restoration-super adhesives that have failed or damaged the stone, iron rods that have rusted and stained stones, etc. That's why it's so important to hire a specialist who has experience and knowledge of the most recent advances in the field of stone restoration.

Kurt showed us photos of stones that had fallen and broken apart and then had been reattached, repaired and reset. Methods used are gentle cleaning, antimicrobial cleaning, resetting and leveling, and patching and pointing with repair mortar. Mortar in-fills, mechanical reattachment of fragments and stone consolidation are also used. Materials are very important. Soft mortar, fiberglass or stainless steel rods, etc. are used and very careful workmanship is required.

Conservation and restoration of the gravestones in our old cemetery would begin with a Cemetery Preservation Master Plan that would include documentation, conditions assessment, prioritization, treatments plans and cyclical maintenance recommendations. Volunteers could be trained to document, photograph and map stones. Please let us know if you are interested in helping with documentation.

Dave Thomas, Former Sexton, Remembers the Chapel

Dave Thomas worked at Spring Grove Cemetery from 1968 until 1991 and was the sexton for most of that time so he is a valuable resource in helping to discover what went on at the cemetery during that period.

Dave remembers the interior well. The length of the east part of the chapel formed a room that was the cemetery office. There was a hallway that extended from the doors to the office area, with storage rooms on either side. In the back part of the storage room at the right was a bathroom. Unlike the rest of the interior, that area did not have a lowered ceiling but was open to the decorative wooden ceiling of the chapel. Studs had been nailed to the brick interior walls, which had been covered with wooden paneling.

We don't know when the window was cut out of the south wall nor when the little bathroom addition at the back was built. Dave remembers that when he worked there the bathroom addition was used to store the gas for the mowers.

At some point around 1982, a saleslady from Kotecki Monuments happened to be in the storage room and admired the wooden ceiling. She thought that it was really a shame not to use the chapel for its intended purpose. Along with Dave and his boss, who was in charge of both the water department and the cemeteries, she went to City Council to ask that the building be returned to its use as a chapel. Council appropriated \$10,000 to return the building to a chapel and put the office in the maintenance building.

The work was done in the winter of 1982-83. The wood paneling was removed and the interior was dry-walled and painted. New lights, baseboard and carpeting were installed. The rededication of the chapel was on Memorial Day, 1983. We thank Dave Thomas for sharing his memories.

Planting Regulations

Regulations for planting at the cemetery read as follows:

All monuments are permitted a seasonal planting area extending no more than ten inches (10") from the foundation on the burial side of a monument. All decorations, ornaments and flowers must be installed within this area. No bushes or large plants are permitted. Only one (1) shepherd's hook or one (1) potted plant is permitted on a marker.

Book Review

Cemeteries of Northeast Ohio - Stones, Symbols and Stories

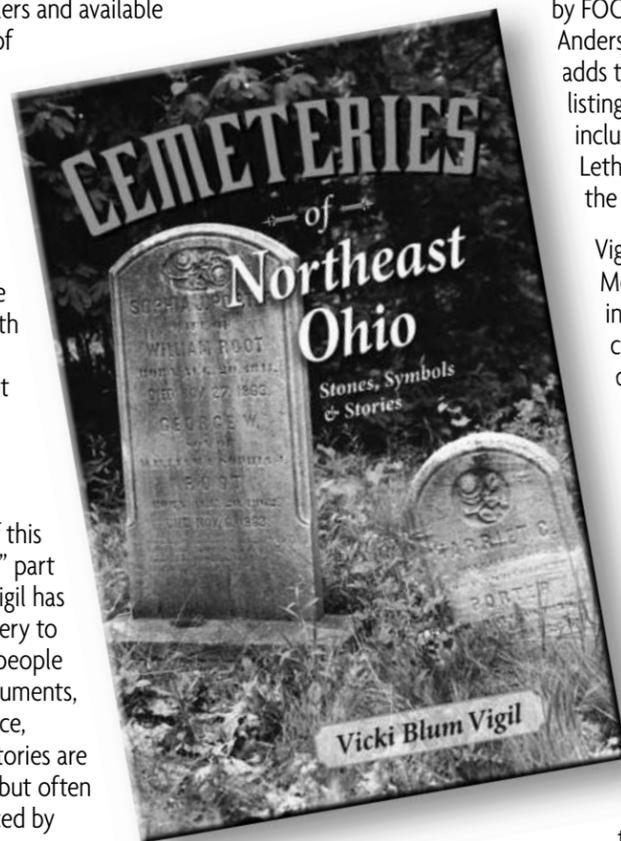
Just arrived at local booksellers and available at Amazon.com is Friends of the Cemetery member Vicki Blum Vigil's newest authoritative volume on cemeteries. *Cemeteries of Northeast Ohio - Stones, Symbols and Stories* is, first and foremost, a guidebook to 147 Northeast Ohio cemeteries. Each listing includes the address, telephone number, size (both acreage and number of burial plots), owner or caretaker, and other salient contact information. Other nearby cemeteries are identified, as well as points of more general interest.

That's the guidebook component of this highly informative book. The "story" part is even more interesting. Author Vigil has exhaustively researched each cemetery to ferret out wonderful stories of the people buried, unusual and interesting monuments, customs, design, historical significance, curiosities and other topics. The stories are always informative, sometimes sad, but often amusing. The narratives are enhanced by many photographs.

Medina County is well represented with listings for the following cemeteries: Maple Hill and Ridge in Hinckley, Mound Hill in Seville, Myrtle Hill/Hardscrabble in Valley City, Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery in Rittman, and of course, our own Old Town Graveyard and Spring Grove in Medina City.

Four full pages are devoted to Spring Grove Cemetery in Medina. Readers will learn about the events leading to the creation of the cemetery in 1883 and about the primary public structures. Spring Grove is described as "a beautiful rural cemetery with curvaceous drives throughout."

Some of the monuments and gravesites highlighted in the narrative include the Fairfax Smith monument, the Courtney Lawrence gravesite, the Blake-McDowell family lot, the gravesites of Nicholas Van Epp, Max Ammerman, Ed Mears and A. I. Root. Vigil tells the humorous stories of Aaron Sanders and Reuben J. Hyde and of the generosity of Letha E. House. A photo supplied



by FOC Trustee John Gill of the lovely Anderson Italian marble angel sculpture adds to the listing. The Spring Grove listing is amazingly up to date, as it includes a reference to the just installed Letha E. House monument adjacent to the lake.

Vigil credits FOC Trustees Teresa Merkle and John Gill for assisting in her research of the Medina cemeteries, and notes the existence of the Friends of the Cemetery and the work we do.

The book also contains numerous appendices, including a listing of pet cemeteries, genealogical resources, instructions on grave stone rubbings, a roster of Revolutionary War soldiers buried in Northeast Ohio, a bibliography and two different indexes. My favorite appendix is a glossary of terms, abbreviations and symbols pertaining to cemeteries.

This is a multi purpose book. For the "armchair traveler," the book is a fascinating compilation of both well-known and obscure stories of our cemeteries. It is also a book to keep readily at hand in the car when the opportunity exists to explore a new cemetery or become more acquainted with a favorite cemetery in Northeast Ohio.

Vigil has dedicated her book as follows: "to the cemetery workers, the sextons, superintendents, caretakers--they go by many titles and perform many tasks. Know that you are appreciated for your care of these sacred places. You are valued for your strong work ethic and many kindnesses that often go unnoticed."

How beautifully said and how true her words are.

I enjoyed every page of this book, and know that you will too.

Published by Grey & Company, www.grayco.com © 2007

Reviewed by:
Janis Hutchins Zachman
FOC Trustee

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