
FRIENDS OF THE CEMETERY

MEDINA, OHIO

Issue 5

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Mausoleum Renovations Completed

By: John Gill

After a number of years of negotiations, delays and red tape, City Council finally approved a new copper roof for the mausoleum at Spring Grove Cemetery. Repointing and cleaning of the exterior of the building was also included in the contract. The Letha E. House Foundation graciously extended funding toward this project to get the ball rolling. Construction began in September, 2001.

I was asked to follow the construction on a daily basis. There were three crews that cleaned the building and installed the new roof over a 6-week period. The first crew used a low-pressure spray to clean the building without doing damage to the stone. They also replaced and/or patched much of the mortar in the joints between the stones. The second crew removed the old roof and installed a new rubber roof, as it would be a week or more before the third crew arrived to install the copper roof.

A copper roof is very expensive due largely to being labor intensive. However, it is a roof that should last 100 years or more and, because of its life, it is actually a very good value. It consists of an array of 16-1/2 x 22-1/2 inch copper panels, each interlocked with the previous panel. There are three tabs that attach the panel to the roof with 1-1/2 inch long screws threaded into the concrete sub roof. The edges of the panels are then soldered all the way around.

As each day went by, I was more impressed with what we had accomplished! I wish everyone could see the roof, not just for its beauty, but to see what has been done to protect part of Medina's great historical asset: Spring Grove Cemetery. I think it is important for the citizens of Medina to know what a great thing this Administration, this Council and the Letha E. House Foundation has done to preserve the mausoleum. A building is only as good as its roof and this is a good one!

Thanks To Mayor Roberts

The Friends of the Cemetery wish to thank Mayor Jim Roberts for his unwavering support of the cemeteries. The Mayor has always been a "friend" to us and has worked diligently to promote the maintenance and beautification of both City cemeteries. His administration espoused the Master Plan and has been a supporter of the projects that have been undertaken. We wish him the best in his future endeavors.

Challenge for the Future

By: Cynthia Szunyog

The Friends of the Cemetery was formed to insure that there would always be a group of private citizens making sure that the Medina City Cemeteries would always be well cared for and that their historic significance would be respected. "Always" is an ambitious goal, but also a worthy one and a challenge for those of us who are building the capacity of this organization.

Great and visible progress has been made since the present City Cemetery Commission was created in 1995 and the Master Plan was completed in 1997. The Friends of the Cemetery is an outgrowth of the Master Plan. We have been blessed with major donations from several local foundations as well as individuals who have donated trees and benches. The City has cooperated with the Cemetery Commission and the Friends of the Cemetery to improve conditions in the cemeteries, providing funds for drainage, stone straightening, tree planting, etc. and for the badly needed restoration of the mausoleum. In addition, the City has improved the operations of Spring Grove Cemetery. City Forester, Tim Swanson, recently appointed to oversee the cemeteries, and Sexton, T. Stephen Janidlo, have worked to make things run more smoothly and in cooperation with Friends and the Cemetery Commission.

We are very optimistic about the future. However, we cannot depend totally on funds from the City and foundation grants. To guarantee the future of our cemeteries, we need more and larger contributions from individuals and from other organizations. Indeed, as a public charity, a percentage of our funding must come from public support. Large foundation grants need to be balanced by more funds from the public.

Our members and friends can help in several ways. Members bring us both money and support. If you are not currently a member, please join us. If you are a member, tell others about us, give gift memberships and send us names to add to our mailing list. Please consider an additional donation or a higher membership level.

It is our hope that some people who care deeply about our cemeteries will make a generous, significant donation. The Friends of the Cemetery pays for the maintenance of the perennial garden around the Soldiers' Mound and the plantings around the chapel and for crown pruning and

fertilization of cemetery trees. When additional funds were needed to pay for the services of the restoration architect for the mausoleum, Friends stepped into the breach. When funds are not forthcoming from other sources, Friends is there. Tree and garden maintenance, purchase of benches and attractive litter receptacles cannot be funded through the City budget. Private donations will make it possible to respond to emergencies and add enhancements to the cemeteries. Please consider a holiday donation to the Medina City Cemeteries.

Membership Roster

An insert is included with this newsletter listing the Friends of the Cemetery membership. If you don't see the names of your friends or neighbors, please encourage them to become advocates of these two great treasures – Spring Grove and Old Town Graveyard.

Also enclosed is a self-addressed envelope, please use this to become a “friend” of the cemeteries or to update your membership. Your renewal date is printed on your mailing label.

New Trustees Installed

The Friends of the Cemetery is pleased to announce the election of two new trustees to our Board. Jerry Gunner and David Kellogg began their terms this fall. Jerry heads the Baby Section Refurbishment and Maintenance Program for the Oddfellows organization. He brings to us many years of civic involvement and organizational skills. Dave is a great supporter of the cemeteries and an asset to the Board. Both men are life-long residents of Medina.

Lake Project

The Spring Grove lake project is moving forward. The next step is to have design development drawings completed by Behnke Associates, Landscape Architects. If foundation funding is approved, we hope to have this phase completed this winter.

Feckley Foundation Plaque Installed

Before the creation of the current Cemetery Commission, the Shade Tree Commission received a grant from the Feckley Foundation to do some restoration work at Old Town Graveyard. A plaque acknowledging the Feckley Foundation was recently placed at Old Town Graveyard. Tim Swanson oversaw the ordering of the plaque and our Cemetery Advocate, Art Riedel, had the plaque mounted on a stone and then placed near the Old Town Graveyard sign, using his landscaper's touch to prepare the soil and mulch the site. In the spring, myrtle groundcover will be planted in the semi-circular bed.

Baby Section Maintenance

The Oddfellows service organization did such a wonderful job taking care of the Baby Section this summer. Not everyone is aware that the Oddfellows perform all the maintenance of this very special section of Spring Grove Cemetery. This includes mowing of the grass, weeding and watering of the plants and lawn. This dedicated group brings all their own equipment (even lawn mower) to the site and faithfully tends the garden and gravesites. Their devotion is inspiring and we know their solicitude is of comfort to the parents and families of the precious little ones buried there.

A special thanks to Jerry Gunner for coordinating and overseeing this effort.

Winter Tree Work Proposed

You will recall that last winter the Letha E. House Foundation funded a winter tree maintenance project at Spring Grove Cemetery. This included the pruning and hydraulic deep root fertilization of 60 mature trees.

Friends of the Cemetery wish to continue the maintenance of the trees within the cemeteries and will seek funding for the 2002 winter season. This project will include pruning at Old Town Graveyard as well as Spring Grove. One hundred twenty of our young trees at Spring Grove will receive deep-root fertilization.

A Note from the Sexton

By: T. Stephen Janidlo

It was early May, 2001. It was also quite early in the morning, maybe 2:30 a.m. I was diligently operating the City's Ira Messenger Memorial water treatment plant when I noticed something out of the ordinary. It wasn't a chlorine leak, a calcium hydroxide overdose or even a break in a water main. It was a Civil Service notification nestled among E.P.A. reports and vacation requests. It was for a soon-to-be vacant position at Spring Grove Cemetery. My reaction was: “I don't know the first thing about it...but, I'll surely learn in a hurry.”

So, in mid-May, I took over the so-called “Sexton” position. It soon became obvious that the title was completely *démodé*. Given the frequency of questions, comments and requests, as well as complaints and concerns, etc., “Sexton” seems to have nothing to do with this position. This is an especially viable perspective when one realizes that I do not excavate the ground for burials, nor am I in the employ of a church or diocese. I'd like to see the City re-designate this position as “Concierge.” The term is not only

appropriate, but adds a modicum of contemporary spin. So, essentially I deny being a sexton and admit to being a “concierge.”

What else do I admit to being? Among other things, I am a writer, poet, musician, studio engineer, producer and composer. I am completely self-taught in every phase of Mantis Music (the title given to both the musical endeavor as well as the state-of-the-art facility). Critics insist that I am equally adroit on both keyboard and guitar, but I feel that I am accomplished on piano and percussion as well.

Little by little and over the years, I’ve made some of my dreams come to fruition. My ultimate goal, musically, is to be doing film scores. In the meanwhile, I shall continue to be as pragmatic as an artist can be, and remain Concierge for the City of Medina.

Thoughts from Our Cemetery Advocate

“TREES PLEASE!” - This year’s theme slogan of the Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association’s bumper sticker. Despite the past summer drought, we have been “pleased” with the results of the pruning, cabling and feeding programs of the large, old trees at Spring Grove Cemetery and the results of having irrigated with “gatorbags” for the younger and more recently planted trees. A follow-up program has been proposed for our older “sentinels” at Spring Grove and Old Town Graveyard. In view of drought stress becoming apparent in 120 younger, recently installed trees at Spring Grove, I have immediately addressed a late fall feeding program to encourage a resurgence of bud development and growth for spring on these trees.

Memorial trees dedicated to loved ones continue to be available through purchase with the City Forester at the Spring Grove office. Tree plaque orders are received through me, Art Riedel, Cemetery Advocate at 330-722-2706.

Earlier this year, a request was made for a memorial tree near the Baby Section. Since this was for memorializing a baby, it seemed very appropriate. An alternate granite stone engraved marker was chosen – of course, different from the conventional bronze plaque used elsewhere in Spring Grove. The granite marker that was installed is located just north of the Baby Section at the base of a large Crimson King Maple. Please stop to see this lovely marker. For inquiries and/or order of similar granite markers, please contact me.

One hundred Dutch Master daffodils should spring forth this spring with a bright note around the front of the chapel at Spring Grove, contrasted by a mass foreground of grape hyacinths. Also, 100 new Spanish Bluebells or Blue

Campanula have been planted around the Soldiers’ Monument perennial gardens courtesy of the Friends of the Cemetery.

It’s been most gratifying to see increased interest of City constituents in the improvements at Spring Grove. The complete remodeling and re-staffing of the cemetery office has implemented and improved management cooperation and an improved system of maintenance.

It should do our hearts and minds good to support a halo of amenities directed to beautifying places for our loved ones passed – this also works for our living and our posterity as well.

Our souls are revived “patriotism is back!” God Bless America!

P.S. “TREES PLEASE!” bumper stickers are still available at the City Desk or contact me at the number listed.

Spring Grove Lore

By: Robert Hyde

“Frogging at Spring Grove”

As a local Medina resident since birth, I have fond memories of the two Spring Grove “lily pad” ponds, as they were called in those days. Number one pond was filled in many years ago, but our “frogging” pond still remains as the west pond in Spring Grove.

My grandpa, Reuben J. Hyde, lived just two houses south of my parents’ home on South Broadway when I was growing up and attending Lincoln School in the late 1930’s and early 1940’s, prior to WWII and still in the height of the depression. In addition to all the vegetables you could think of and utilizing the fruits of apple, pear and cherry trees in the yard, Reuben had a delectation for two other free eatables, namely frog legs and dandelion greens.

Both of these were in abundance in the Spring Grove Cemetery and were available for the picking by his grandsons and their friends for a few pennies for a pail of each! “Greens” were a snap to cut with my cub scout knife during the daytime, but catching frogs was a dark, nighttime project and in a cemetery “lily pad” pond, no less at the age of 10 years.

Armed with BB guns, flashlights, pails and boots, accompanied by brave friends, we would set out for Spring Grove for the nightly catch of frogs at the number two pond for Grandpa, with our parents’ approval. Scary sounds admixed from all parts of the cemetery in addition to our croaking frogs, paralyzed by the flashlights we held. After

what seemed like an eternity, we would head for Grandpa's with our catch of five to ten frogs to collect our giant reward. The only thing worse than hunting in Spring Grove at night was watching Grandpa skin the frogs headed for the frying pan or icebox!

It is ironic that since 1946, Reuben Hyde and his wife, Bertha, are buried in the Hyde cemetery plot that was won in a poker game (but that's another story), and within thirty steps of the source of his favorite eatables.