

Transitions



APRIL 2015

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A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As Spring quickly approaches and we make plans for the year ahead, it's inspiring to look back at all we've accomplished in the past year - none of which could have taken place without the hard work and dedication of volunteers!

Last October marked the first anniversary of the establishment of Friends of Forest Home Cemetery.

A **self-guided tour** has been prepared and is available for visitors to pick up at the entrance to the Cemetery, or to view and print from our website.



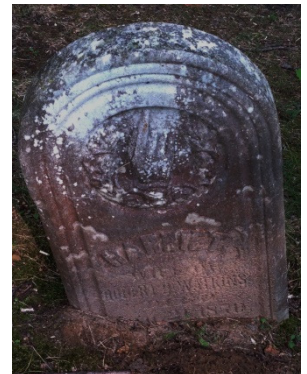
Last June, Friends volunteers cleaned and beautified the **Babyland Section** in the far back of the cemetery. Decorative additions to the area include a concrete bench, a trellis, and a birdbath, as well as many new plantings.

We conducted three **guided walking tours** last year. During Danish Festival, we offered multiple tours featuring Greenville's Danish merchants and businessmen. In September, the "Secret Societies Tour" gave attendees a history of various fraternal organizations and highlighted some more notable local members. And in October, our most popular tour - "Murder, Mayhem & Mystery" - entertained and informed visitors with tales of unusual and sometimes grisly deaths. (See pics on page 2.)

The **Adopt-A-Veteran** program has resulted in thirteen Civil War soldiers' headstones in the G.A.R. section being straightened and cleaned by volunteers. Combined with improvements to the monument and cannon, this section is really starting to shape up.

Last July, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery was officially approved as a **501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization**. This means that any contributions made to Friends from October 2013 onward are deductible on your income taxes.

With the 501(c)(3) designation, Friends is now eligible to apply for grants. In fact, last October, Friends was awarded a \$7,000 grant from the Greenville Area Community Foundation to have a professional restorer clean, straighten, and repair the headstones in the "Old Cemetery" section at the back of Forest Home. For more information on this and other projects, please take a moment to read through the rest of our newsletter.



I hope you will consider making a contribution to help support future events and projects as we work to preserve and improve the grounds, as well as cultivate the cemetery as a community resource!

Paula Christiansen, President

What's Inside:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| A Glimpse of History | 4 |
| Fargo Mausoleum Repair | 4 |
| Restoration of "Old Cemetery" | 3 |
| Upcoming Events | 2 |

A NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF FOREST HOME CEMETERY, INC.

108 W. South Street, Greenville MI 48838 (616) 894-9922

www.friendsofforesthome.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAY 2, 2-4 PM
MAY 5, 6:30 PM
MAY 25, NOON
JUNE 12-15

VOLUNTEER WORK DAY
LIBRARY PRESENTATION
MEMORY DAY EVENT!
OLD CEMETERY
RESTORATION

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Join us for the first volunteer Work Day of 2015! We'll be meeting at the parking lot behind the community mausoleum at 2 p.m. on **Saturday, May 2**. We'll be working on various cleanup projects throughout the Cemetery.

Even if you can't work in the Cemetery, we hope you'll stop by to donate any of these items: hostas, 1 hanging plant, flowers for urns and planters, wood chips, and empty gallon jugs.

Weather looks to be ideal: sunny with temps in the mid-60s. For camaraderie and relaxation, you can't beat working in Forest Home Cemetery!



The Baby's Grave

A butterfly basked on a baby's grave,
 Where a lily had chanced to grow;
 "Why art thou here with thy gaudy dye,
 When she of the blue and sparkling eye
 Must sleep in the churchyard low?"

Then it lightly soared, through the sparkling air,
 And it spoke from its shining track:

"I was a worm, till I won my wings;
 Now she whom thou mournst like a seraph sings!
 Wouldst thou call the blessed one back?"



~ Anonymous

**"FOREST HOME CEMETERY:
 GREENVILLE'S FORGOTTEN
 TREASURE"**

On **Tuesday, May 5**, at 6:30 p.m., Friends of Forest Home Cemetery will be presenting "Forest Home Cemetery: Greenville's Forgotten Treasure" at the Flat River Community Library, 200 W. Judd St., in Greenville. Join us for a PowerPoint presentation loaded with interesting stories and photos of the early days of Forest Home Cemetery and various individuals buried there. We'll also have information about our Adopt-a-Veteran program. There is no charge for this event.

We hope to see you there!

SO MANY WAYS TO GIVE . . . Did you know that you could leave property or money to Friends of Forest Home Cemetery in your Will? For help with charitable giving as part of your estate plan, contact Attorney Kathleen Dunne, (866) 989-2241. Did you also know that when you sign up for AmazonSmile and shop like you always have, Amazon will donate .5% of the purchase price from your eligible purchases to the charity of your choice - including Friends of Forest Home Cemetery? To learn more, go to <https://smile.amazon.com/about>.

MORE PICS FROM MURDER, MAYHEM & MYSTERY TOUR





GRANT AWARDED TO RESTORE “OLD CEMETERY” SECTION

In October 2014, the Greenville Area Community Foundation (GACF), through the Ray and Mary Tower Fund, awarded Friends of Forest Home Cemetery a \$7,000 grant to cover the expense of contracting with an experienced preservationist to repair, level, clean, and straighten the headstones in the historic Old Cemetery section of Forest Home Cemetery. With the assistance of corporate donations (Mersen USA of Greenville has graciously donated \$250 to the project), and contributions from other sponsors and individual donors, the work will be done by Carter’s Cemetery Preservation this June. We’re so very grateful and excited to be able to preserve some of the oldest, most fragile stones in Forest Home Cemetery!

History

The bodies interred in the Old Cemetery section are some of the earliest burials in Greenville. There are approximately 57 headstones contained within this area, which is located past Como Lake and section 32, at the back of the cemetery (across the road from Babyland). These individuals were originally buried in what was then called the “Old Eureka Cemetery,” where the water tower and Veterans Memorial Park are currently situated. The 4-acre piece of land for the burial ground was purchased by Eureka Township from city founder, John Green, in 1850.

In June 1873, just over 1 year after Carpenter Merritt purchased the land for Forest Home Cemetery, Mr. Merritt offered to donate 4 acres to the City if it would close the old cemetery. In considering his offer, the Common Council noted, *“The old cemetery is of light sandy soil not well adapted to the purposes for which it was set apart. The burial plot is almost destitute of shade and barren of vegetation and stands exposed on the public highway. . . . Forest Home Cemetery is an appropriate resting place for the departed, a retired, undulating, shady retreat. Certainly, if this is a representation of the case, it seems best to order the old cemetery closed.”*

Once the City agreed to close the old cemetery, no further burials were allowed there and Carpenter Merritt began advertising lots in the newly established Forest Home Cemetery. In 1874, an ad was placed in the Greenville Independent, notifying family members to make private arrangements to disinter the bodies buried at the old cemetery, and that any remaining bodies would be moved to Forest Home. While most burials in the Old Eureka Cemetery were transferred by family members to private lots in Forest Home, those that remained as of 1907 were disinterred and reburied in the current Old Cemetery section.

Interestingly, it took **34 years** for the City to complete relocation of the Old Cemetery, and Carpenter Merritt (who died in 1903) never lived to see the fruits of his offer. Friends of Forest Home Cemetery is deeply grateful for the support of GACF and Mersen USA, and hopes other community members will follow suit in supporting the preservation of this unique piece of Greenville’s history. Stop by this summer to check on our progress!



A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY



Myron Rider was born February 25, 1823, and first settled in southeast Michigan with his parents in 1830. Michigan was little settled then (it did not join the Union until 1837), and there were limited educational opportunities.

When he was 18, Myron began teaching school. Five years later, he became a merchant in Plymouth, MI.

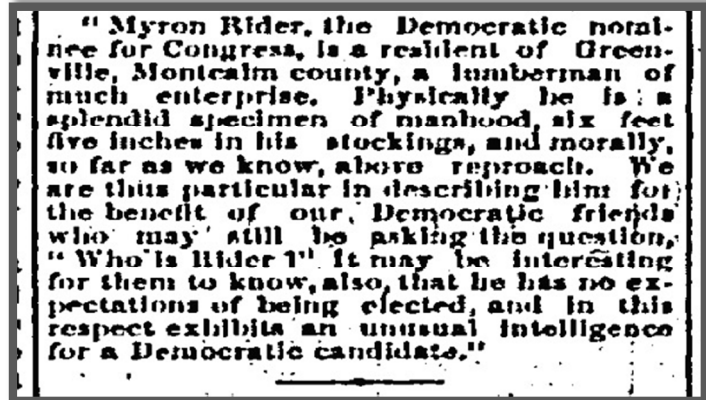
Myron married his first wife, Mary Marshall, in 1847, and 2 years later she gave birth to their only son, Arthur.

In the spring of 1850, leaving his wife and young son behind, Myron and six other men started out for California via Panama. Four members of the party died along the way. Myron and two other survivors reached California in September. Myron's daughter, Ellen, was born that same month, while Myron was away. He remained in California for 1 year until, finding the enterprise to be unprofitable, he returned home to Plymouth.

The Rider family moved to Montcalm County in 1854 when Myron was 31. He became a lumberman, but soon afterward removed to a new farm in Bushnell. In 1856, he was elected probate judge and held the office for one term.

At the beginning of 1857, Myron moved to Greenville, which was then the county seat for Montcalm County. While in Greenville, he engaged in mercantile business, milling, lumbering, and farming. He was unanimously chosen the first mayor of the City of Greenville.

In 1864, Myron's son, Arthur, died. He was 15. Myron later became a leading politician and was nominated as the Democratic candidate for Congress in 1866. Covering his nomination, the Muskegon Chronicle gave a rather effusive, yet humorous, description of the man:



In 1871, a 6-week-old infant was laid on the Rider family's doorstep in Greenville. They eventually adopted the baby girl and named her Maude.

Myron was a prominent member of the Masonic order, belonging to the Ionia commandery of the Knights Templar. For many years in its early history, he was master and high priest of the Greenville lodge and chapter.

In later years, Myron was unsuccessful in business. His wife, Mary, died in 1880, and Myron married Mae Durkee shortly thereafter. At the time of Myron's death, he lived and worked as a merchant in Trufant.

Myron Rider died of paralysis on January 18, 1881, at the age of 57. Funeral services were presided over by the Masonic order. His obituary in the Greenville Independent simply stated: "One of the prominent men of Greenville's early history has gone to the other life."

CHECK IT OUT!

Repair work has begun on the Fargo mausoleum—our first major restoration project. Thanks to Robin Frey, Fargo descendant, for giving us permission to undertake this important work. And thanks to volunteer mason, Wesley White, who is doing a first-rate job!

