

Transitions



JANUARY 2014

VOL. 1, No. 1

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to the newsletter of the Friends of Forest Home Cemetery! We are a newly-established, non-profit group, incorporated in the State of Michigan in October 2013. It is our goal to provide hands-on volunteer assistance to restore and preserve this beautiful historic cemetery.

A stroll through this magnificent cemetery will reveal the gravesites of veterans of our nation’s wars – from the War of 1812 to the present – as well as merchants, doctors, lawyers, politicians, teachers and preachers, the wealthy and the poor, all of whom played a role in determining the destiny of our area. The grounds of Forest Home Cemetery are teeming with majestic old oak and pine trees, flowering bushes, and abundant wildlife. Thousands of markers and monuments can be explored along the winding drives in this 32-acre cemetery.

I hope you’ll consider joining us as we move forward in an effort to return Forest Home Cemetery to its once proud heritage!

Paula Christiansen, President



The home of Carpenter C. Merritt, founder of Forest Home Cemetery. The community mausoleum, built in 1922, now sits on the site of the former Merritt residence.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The park-like rolling hills of Forest Home Cemetery began with a single gravesite: the final resting place of Carpenter C. Merritt’s 3-year-old son, Vernie. Inspired by the beauty of the surrounding acreage, Mr. Merritt toured a number of graveyards around the country – including, most notably, the Mount Hope Cemetery in New York – before returning to Greenville and laying out the roads and burial plots of Forest Home Cemetery.

When Mr. Merritt died in 1903, his son-in-law, Chris Larke, took over managing the Cemetery. The City of Greenville acquired the Cemetery in 1917, and in 1922 built the community mausoleum on the site of the old Merritt home. When the snow melts, come check out the mausoleum and the final resting place of Vernie and Carpenter C. Merritt!

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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

FEBRUARY 6

APRIL

MAY

MAY 25

SUMMER-FALL

BIG BOY FUNDRAISER

SPRING CLEANUP

SELF-GUIDED TOURS AVAILABLE

MEMORY DAYS EVENT

THEME-BASED GUIDED TOURS

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR CEMETERY

Beginning in May, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery will make a self-guided tour available on its website. This printable tour will highlight key areas of historical significance in the development of the Cemetery, including Babyland, the Veterans Park section, the GAR section, the community mausoleum, and more. We'll also be offering a playful, yet interesting self-guided tour for kids – something to entertain them while the folks take their tour.

The self-guided tour is designed for a combination of driving and walking, and you can devote as much or as little time to exploring as you want. The tour is free, although voluntary donations are gladly accepted.



The Gibson Mausoleum

SPRING CLEANUP

In April, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery will be hosting a Spring Cleanup in the Cemetery. Volunteers may choose to fresh-

en up a family member's grave or may join us in Babyland (section 32), where we will be cleaning and restoring infant grave markers and the surrounding vegetation. Members will be on hand to guide and assist volunteers. All that's required is some time, elbow grease, and a desire to honor the precious little ones who have passed.



FEBRUARY FUNDRAISER

On February 6, we'll be hosting a fundraiser at the Greenville Big Boy. To join us for this important event, simply clip out and bring the coupon (at right) to the Greenville Big Boy between 6:30 a.m. and 10 p.m. on February 6.

Throughout the day, we'll be holding a silent auction of items of local interest, as well as launching our Adopt-a-Veteran project.

The proceeds from the fundraiser will be used, in part, to cover the cost of applying for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, which will allow our donors to realize the maximum benefit from their donations.

IN MEMORIAM

The beginning of the New Year is the perfect time to make a donation to Friends of Forest Home Cemetery in memory of a loved one. In return for your generous donation, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery will locate your family member's grave and upload a photo at the Find-a-Grave website. Your memorial contribution will also be recognized in our Spring newsletter.

Friends of Forest Home Cemetery depends heavily on financial donations from like-minded individuals to continue the important work of locating, documenting, and restoring gravestones and monuments.

Please consider making a donation today! If you have questions or would like to direct your donation to a specific project, please call Paula Christiansen at (616) 894-9922. You can also find out more about our work, donations, and volunteer opportunities by going to our website:

www.friendsofforesthome.org

WE HOPE YOU HAVE A BIG APPETITE TO HELP

PLEASE JOIN US FOR A FUNDRAISER TO BENEFIT:

**Friends of Forest Home Cemetery
Thursday, February 6th
6:30 AM to 10 PM**

During this event, Big Boy® will donate 15% of your food purchases when you present this flyer to the cashier.

Visit us for the fundraiser at:
**Greenville Big Boy
1500 W. Washington Street
(616) 225-0158**

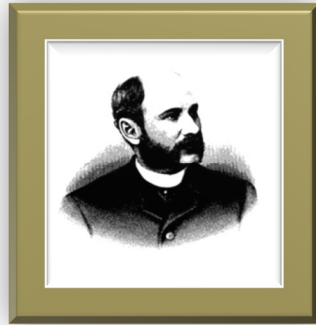


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A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY

Rufus F. Sprague (section 4) was born in Milan, Monroe County, Michigan, on July 12, 1842. His parents, Ephraim and Almyra Sprague, had moved to the area from New York 2 years earlier. When his mother died in 1847, Rufus's family returned to New York, where they lived near Seneca Falls.



Between the ages of 12 and 16, Rufus worked summers and attended school during the winter. At the age of 17, he began learning the tinner's trade at Baldwinsville, New York. Rufus was 18 years old when the Civil War broke out. One year later, he responded to Lincoln's first call for volunteers by enlisting as a corporal in Company H of the 14th New York Volunteer Infantry. His company joined the demoralized Union forces on their retreat after the first battle of Bull Run.

In November 1861, Rufus became seriously ill with typhoid fever. He spent 3 months in the hospital, then returned home on furlough to complete his recovery. Six months later, he rejoined his regiment at White House Landing, Virginia; and in June 1862, he was seriously wounded in the battle of Gaines Mill. By October 1862, Rufus was back with his regiment at Sharpsburg, Maryland, and fought in the battles of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville before mustering out of the service on May 17, 1863.

After retiring from military service a couple months shy of his 21st birthday, Rufus found work as a clerk in a Syracuse bookstore. Shortly thereafter, he moved to the Pennsylvania oil fields where he served as superintendent and manager of affairs for a large corporation near Oil City, before going into business for himself. Like many great businessmen, his fortunes suffered a setback and by 1866 Rufus had returned to regular employment, working as a clerk for a Chicago firm. In 1867, he took a sales position with H & F Bandy, an Ohio manufacturer of engines and sawmill machinery.

It was while traveling for H & F Bandy that Rufus came back to Michigan in 1868. Determined to settle down, he secured a position as a bookkeeper with Jewett & Crosman in Howell, where he remained for 2 years. In October 1870, he partnered with Hon. John D. Norton of Pontiac to open a lumberman's supply store (Norton & Sprague) in Langston. He bought out Mr. Norton's interest 4 years later, and continued alone in that business until he disposed of it in 1877. By that time, the lumber supply of the region had been largely exhausted.

On June 5, 1872, Rufus married Mary J.S. Blanck of Howell. His wife was an artist and an "active participator in

the leading social life in the city." Both were active members of the Greenville Congregational Church.

Between 1877 and 1920, Rufus was instrumental in organizing and running a number of key businesses, including Lovell Bros. & Green (which he purchased with his brother, L. Wells Sprague, and renamed Sprague Brothers); the Grand River and Greenville Log Running Company; and the Gordon Hollow Blast Grate Co. (which he also organized with his brother and presided over until he retired in 1920). He served on the board of directors for the Ranney Refrigerator Co.; The Skinner & Steenman Co.; Moore Plow & Implement Co.; Greenville Floral Co.; and the Commercial State Savings Bank. And he was instrumental in forming the Greenville Telephone Exchange and the Greenville Board of Trade.

10th Year of Uninterrupted Success.

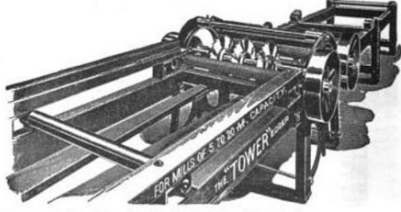
THE GORDON HOLLOW BLAST GRATE.

Insures a full head of steam regardless of weather conditions or the character of your fuel. Steams successfully with green or water-soaked saw dust, bark or refuse from cypress, hemlock, elm, cottonwood, etc. In short, nothing combustible is too poor for fuel. In many cases it pays for itself each month. Over 1,000 sets in daily use in saw and coeprage mills, factories, etc.



THE LIGHT-RUNNING "TOWER" EDGER.

A complete two and three-saw Gang Edger for small mills, costing but \$125.00 to \$145.00. Why pay three or four times this sum for an edger that requires double the power and is consequently less effective? The Tower is the acme of convenience, strength and durability. It improves the quality of your output and increases it from 10 to 25 per cent. each day, and pays for itself each season.



For prices and printed matter illustrating and describing the Gordon Hollow Blast Grate or the Tower Edger, address the sole manufacturers,

GORDON HOLLOW BLAST GRATE CO., Greenville, Mich.

Rufus was also active in politics. He served twice as the Mayor of Greenville, ran on the Democratic ticket for regent of the University of Michigan once, and ran unsuccessfully for governor (on the Democratic ticket) in 1896. He was a member of Leroy Lodge 9, the Knights of Pythias, and a 32nd degree Mason. He also authored, "The True Nature of Value," which was a nationally known treatise on the subject of political economy.

Rufus F. Sprague died in his home at 601 W. Washington Street on May 3, 1923, at the age of 81. Funeral services were held at his residence, and were attended by 60 members of the Ionia Knights Templar.





FRIENDS OF FOREST HOME CEMETERY, INC.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Our Mission: To clean, maintain, preserve, and restore this historic municipal cemetery; to locate graves, provide tours, and organize community events highlighting the contributions of individuals buried there; and to otherwise cultivate the cemetery as a community resource.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Home phone/cell: _____

Work phone (opt): _____

Email address: _____

Preferred method of contact (circle all applicable):

Work phone Home phone Cell phone Email

Other (specify): _____

If by phone, best time to call: _____

There is no fee to become a member of Friends of Forest Home Cemetery, but we accept voluntary donations to fund our work. Would you like to make a donation at this time?

Yes: \$ _____ No

I am interested in the following:

Receiving newsletter Volunteering for cemetery cleanup Fundraising

Giving cemetery tours Receiving training in headstone/monument restoration

Other (specify): _____

Detach and mail your application, with donation if any, to Paula Christiansen, 108 W. South Street, Greenville MI 48838. Questions? Email us at foresthometfriends@gmail.com, or call (616) 894-9922.

OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Paula Christiansen, (616) 894-9922
Vice President: Gerry Christiansen, (616) 894-9922
Secretary/Treasurer: Kathleen Dunne, (616) 824-9601
Director: Elizabeth Hern, (616) 788-5059

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

Friends of Forest Home Cemetery wishes to thank those individuals who made generous donations to its work this Fall.

Making a donation is easy and the funds are well spent! For more information, contact Paula Christiansen, (616) 894-9922, or visit our website at: www.friendsofforesthome.org.

Membership in the Friends of Forest Home Cemetery, Inc., is available to all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, veteran status, or age.