

# Transitions



JUNE 2014

VOL. 1, No. 2

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Warm weather is finally making its way into Michigan after a long, harsh winter. Members of Friends of Forest Home Cemetery are anxious to begin working on projects at this historic site. Board members have kept busy this winter with administrative tasks, planning events, developing tours, and targeting projects for improvement at the Cemetery.

During our brief 6-month existence, we have held a successful fundraising event at Big Boy Restaurant, hosted Memory Day, published newsletters, created a website, launched the "Adopt-A-Veteran" initiative, and applied for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. Many kind donors have allowed us to accomplish the above-mentioned goals.

As with any non-profit, monetary contributions are the lifeblood of our organization, and we need your continued support to help fund our projects. Please consider making a generous gift in memory of a loved one!

*Paula Christiansen, President*

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## ADOPT-A-VETERAN!

The Adopt-a-Veteran program was developed to help finance the refurbishment of the markers of the more than 200 Civil War soldiers known to be laid to rest at Forest Home Cemetery, and to raise awareness of the sacrifices of veterans of all wars.

When you adopt a veteran, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery will clean the soldier's headstone with a product recommended by professional conservators and specifically formulated for that purpose. If any straightening of the marker is required, that will be done as well.

Sponsorships vary in cost, starting at \$25 each, depending on the extent of restoration needed for a particular marker. When completed, a photo of the cleaned headstone will be sent to you, and your name will be included in our newsletter as having adopted a veteran.

Generous donors have already sponsored the following soldiers:

- Pvt. James J. Freeman - adopted by Brenda Dillon
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Newell J. Pratt - adopted by Elizabeth Hern
- Pvt. James K. Fisher - adopted by Ronald Corwin
- Pvt. Leonard Fleck - adopted by Bill & Margaret Rexius
- William F. VanHouten – adopted by Patrick Dunne
- Pvt. Simeon J. Hale – adopted by Denise Gietzen

Our initial focus is on those soldiers who are buried in an area of the Cemetery known as the "G.A.R." (Grand Army of the Republic) section, where many of our local Civil War soldiers are laid to rest. Last summer, members of the Sons of Union Veterans

*(continued on page 3)*



Headstone of Newell Pratt before cleaning.

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 . . . . .**

**JUNE 21, 12-2 P.M.      BABYLAND CLEANUP**  
**LATE JUNE                SELF-GUIDED TOURS AVAILABLE**  
**AUGUST 15-17          DANISH FESTIVAL GUIDED TOURS**  
**SEPTEMBER 21         SECRET SOCIETIES GUIDED TOUR**  
**OCTOBER                 MURDER AND MAYHEM GUIDED TOUR**



**DANISH TOURS**  
**AUGUST 15-17, 2014**

Friends of Forest Home Cemetery is presenting the first of its guided tours on August 15-17 in conjunction with the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Danish Festival. The tours will feature the gravesites of Danish immigrants who were merchants and businessmen in the early days of Greenville. At each featured site, visitors will learn about our Danish heritage through stories and anecdotes highlighting these settlers.

The tour schedule, which can also be found in the Danish Festival program, is as follows:

Friday, August 15, 3 p.m.  
 Saturday, August 16, 2 p.m.  
 Sunday, August 17, 2 p.m.

Tickets for these walking tours will cost \$6 per person (no charge for children under 12), and will be sold at the Friends booth located in the WAN MarketPlace at Veteran’s Park, or at the Cemetery prior to each tour. For more information, call (616) 894-9922 or visit [www.friendsofforesthome.org](http://www.friendsofforesthome.org).

Participants may park at the garage near the front of the Cemetery and should arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled tour.

Even if you can’t make one of our tours, be sure to visit the Friends booth in Veterans Park. Members will be on hand to provide information about the Cemetery, its history, and future projects.

*“Let life be as beautiful as summer flowers; And death as beautiful as autumn leaves.”*  
 ~Rabindranath Tagore

**SELF-GUIDED TOURS**  
**AVAILABLE IN JUNE**

This June, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery will begin offering a self-guided tour of key sites in the Cemetery. The tour will consist of a map with historical information, and will be posted at the entrance to the Cemetery. A copy of the tour may also be printed off from our website at [www.friendsofforesthome.org](http://www.friendsofforesthome.org). The tour is free, but voluntary donations may be made by credit card online or by check through the mail. Your donations will allow Friends of Forest Home Cemetery to continue expanding its programs and offerings to the public.



Community Mausoleum, built on the site of the former Merritt home.

**PLEASE DONATE!**

The work of Friends of Forest Home Cemetery is only made possible through generous donations from the public. Please consider making a donation today. We accept credit cards online, or your donation may be mailed to Paula Christiansen, 108 W. South St., Greenville, MI 48838. **Thank you!**

**BABYLAND CLEANUP**



Members of the public are encouraged to join us on **June 21, from 12-2 p.m.** to clean and beautify Babyland, which is located past Section 32 toward the back of the Cemetery. Most people agree that Babyland is largely neglected. Yet 131 infants are laid to rest there – some without markers, and others with plain, funeral home markers that are increasingly hard to read.

We’d like to make Babyland a nicer place to visit and enjoy. Toward that end, Friends is looking for individuals or businesses who might be willing to donate a stone bench, decorative grasses or other vegetation, a bird bath, or other appropriate statuary.

In addition, Friends is seeking donations to fund a larger monument with “Babyland” engraved at the top and a commemorative poem inscribed thereon. Anyone interested in making a donation or sponsoring a commemorative monument may visit our website or contact Paula Christiansen at (616) 894-9922. We look forward to seeing you on June 21!

**ADOPT-A-VETERAN** *(cont. from page 1)*  
of the Civil War, Post No. 1, cleaned and painted the G.A.R. memorial which is located there. In September, volunteers of Friends of Forest Home Cemetery raked and cleaned the area around the burial sites. And in May 2014, volunteers patched and painted the cannon base, and began planting flowers and a border around the base. It is a goal of our group to complete the restoration of this particular section of the Cemetery to commemorate the Civil War Sesquicentennial this year.



Headstone of Newell Pratt after cleaning.

To participate in the Adopt-a-Veteran program, please visit [www.friendsofforesthome.org](http://www.friendsofforesthome.org) and view those soldiers who are waiting to be adopted. If you do not have internet access, just phone or drop us a note and we will mail you the information!

We hope you will consider honoring the memory of one or more of these long-forgotten men and boys by helping Friends to restore their grave markers.



## PROPER CLEANING OF HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

To maximize the long-term cleanliness and beauty of your headstone or marker, and to minimize damage to the environment, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery offers the following suggestions:

### DON'Ts

The following should **NEVER** be used when cleaning a headstone or marker:

**Bleach** – Salts in the bleach can damage all stones, and can cause erosion and yellowing.

**Acids** – Muriatic acid and other products containing acids (Lime Away, Naval Jelly, etc.) can cause irreversible damage, such as crystallization, to stone surfaces.

**High-Pressure Water** – High-pressure water can seriously damage a marble, sandstone, or limestone marker.

**Soaps, Detergents & Household Cleaners** – Do not use products such as TSP, Calgon, Fantastic, Formula 409, Spic and Span, Borax, Ivory, household detergents, or any abrasive cleaners. These can dramatically promote further biological growth after cleaning.

**Tools** – Never use metal tools, such as a wire brush or putty knife while cleaning headstones.



### DOs

The following procedures and cleaning agents are recommended by professional conservators:

Wear rubber gloves and eye protection while working. Start by thoroughly rinsing the headstone with water. (If you use a garden hose, make sure the pressure does not exceed 60 psi.) Remove soil and any deposits of biological growth such as lichen, moss, algae, and fungus using a natural bristle brush, toothbrush, or wooden craft stick. Avoid using a dry brush on the stone; dip your brush frequently in water to reduce friction.

If needed, use a non-ionic detergent as shown below:

**Vulpex** – 1 part Vulpex per 6-7 parts cold water; available from janitorial and photography suppliers

**Orvus** – 1 oz. per 5 gallons of water; available from farm and feed stores

**Photo-Flo** – 1 oz. per 5 gallons of water; available from photo supply stores

**D/2** – This anti-microbial, nontoxic, biodegradable solution kills organic growth on stones and does not damage headstones. By far, D/2 is the product most often used by experts in headstone conservation.

Whatever cleaning solution you use, do not allow it to dry on the headstone; always rinse the stone thoroughly after any cleaning.

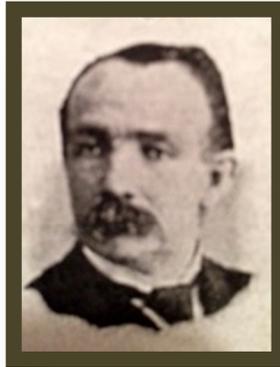
The use of sealants is not recommended for use on headstones, since they can prevent the stone from “breathing.”

Friends of Forest Home Cemetery frequently uses D/2 to clean and restore headstones. If you would like more information on the availability and proper use of D/2, please contact Paula Christiansen at (616) 894-9922.



## A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY

Carpenter C. Merritt was born in Venice, New York, on August 6, 1839. His parents later moved to Ridgeway, PA, where Carpenter received his elementary education, finishing at Starkey seminary. Carpenter then moved to Detroit, where he worked for his brother while pursuing studies at a commercial college. Carpenter subsequently returned to Pennsylvania where he taught public school for 3 years.



old treeless cemetery west of the city and giving them a new home in beautiful Forest Home.”

To be near the cemetery, Carpenter built his home, “Lakeside” on a high bank overlooking Manoka Lake. The home was destroyed by fire in 1879, but was rebuilt and used as a summer residence thereafter.

For years, Carpenter ran an undertaking business, first in partnership with Fred Roenigk, and later with Anthony Faber. In addition to the cemetery and undertaking business, Carpenter served on the board of education and as city collector. He was active in the Congregational Church, serving as an alderman, Sunday school superintendent, and later as trustee. His wife was also active in the church, where she sang and played the pipe organ.

In March 1862, Carpenter came to Greenville to help a brother in the mill. He married Mary Antolina (“Lina”) Morehouse (also of New York) on September 2, 1863. Lina had been educated at a young ladies’ seminary in Binghamton, NY, and taught school for 4 years after graduating from the seminary.

In 1866, the Merritts moved to Flint, where they lived for about a year. When they returned to Greenville in August 1867, Carpenter established the third drugstore in Greenville (the other two were operated by J.M. Fuller and W.N. Pettee).

In late 1871, shortly after the untimely death of his 3-year-old son, Vernie, Carpenter purchased from E. Middleton the 32-acre parcel of land that would become Forest Home Cemetery. Vernie was the first burial in the cemetery.

Forest Home was beautifully situated between three lakes: Baldwin, Fatal (now Manoka), and Como, and was comprised of rolling hills, valleys, and dales. For 3 months, Carpenter toured some of the best cemeteries out east, gathering ideas and making plans for the layout of Forest Home Cemetery. After the grounds were surveyed, Carpenter added walks and drives that complemented the beauty of the cemetery, which he continued to maintain for 30 years.

### Forest Home Cemetery.

**This new and beautiful Cemetery is now open for sale of burial lots. Persons wishing to obtain desirable locations for the interment of their dead, will do well to call early and make their selections of lots.**

**C. C. MERRITT, Supt.**

Advertisement in *The Greenville Independent*, July 3, 1872.

Carpenter’s obituary in *The Greenville Independent* described the transformation of Forest Home Cemetery:

“Only earlier citizens can realize the great change produced by Mr. Merritt. At first the tract was in a wild, unbroken condition, some points inaccessible because of fallen timber and dense undergrowth. And none but older citizens can understand the labor involved in removing the dead from the

Carpenter belonged to a number of fraternal organizations: for 20 years until his death, he served as secretary of the Washington Club; he was a charter member of the Lincoln Club, and the Cayuga and Tompkin Counties clubs; and he was a member of the Knights of Pythias, the Masonic Order, the Pioneer Society, and the A.O.U.W. (Ancient Order of United Workmen). He was an honorary member of other fraternal societies because of the burial lots he gifted for their dead.

Lina Merritt also belonged to various fraternal organizations, including the Women’s Relief Corps, the Pythian Sisters, the Pioneer Society, the Washington and Lincoln clubs, the Greenville Current Events club, and the Bloss club of Rochester, NY.

In addition to their son Vernie, Carpenter and Lina had three daughters: Maude, Mildred, and Eloise.

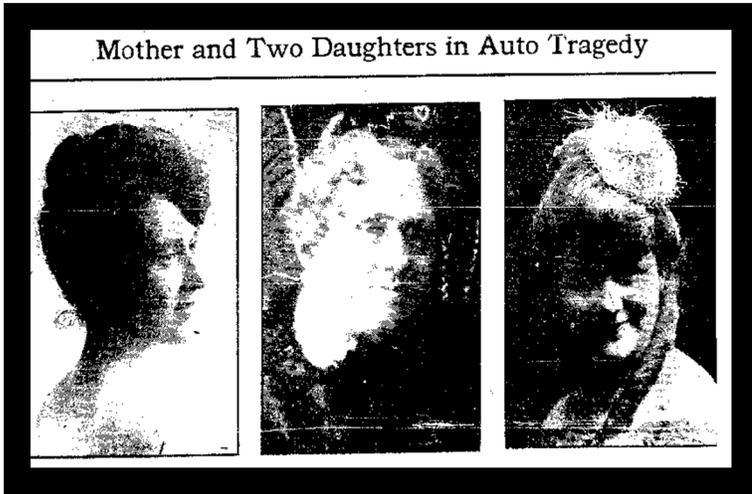
Carpenter Merritt died on February 28, 1903, at the age of 63. At his request, the Knights of Pythias rendered fraternal services, including providing a guard of honor at the Merritt home. Mayor Fred Ranney requested a suspension of business during the funeral services for one of Greenville’s “oldest and most honorable citizens.” And at the service, Reverend A.B. Curtis read from a poem by Whittier:



“Farewell! A little time, and we  
Who knew thee well and loved thee here,  
One after one shall follow thee,  
As pilgrims through the gate of fear  
Which opens on eternity.  
Yet we shall cherish not the less  
All that is left our hearts meanwhile,  
The memory of thy kindness  
Shall round our weary pathway smile,  
Like moonlight when the sun has set,  
A sweet and tender radiance yet.”

(cont. from page 4)

For a number of years after Carpenter's death, his wife Lina carried on the undertaking business with Anthony Faber. But on June 23, 1914, Lina was tragically killed when the car she was traveling in stalled on the railroad tracks at Hale's crossing, just 1-1/2 miles north of Greenville. The car was driven by Mrs. Merritt's daughter, Mildred, who was also critically injured but survived the accident. Mrs. Merritt's other daughter, Eloise, escaped injury by jumping from the car immediately before the crash. The sad task of tending to Lina's body fell to her husband's long-time partner, Anthony Faber.



Headline from *The Greenville Independent*, June 24, 1914

In the last years of her life, Lina Merritt had traveled to California and Florida. She also spent several months each year with their daughter, Maude, who resided in Rochester, New York.

Tragedy continued to stalk the Merritts in 1914: the Merritt home at the front of the Cemetery was destroyed by a second fire of unknown origin on December 7, 1914. The home had been unoccupied for some time, but contained a large amount of furniture and valuable paintings of the late Mrs. Merritt.

In 1921, the community mausoleum was built on the site of the former Merritt home (see picture, page 2).

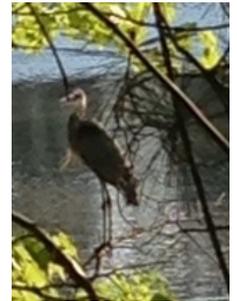
## THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF FOREST HOME CEMETERY



On any given day, the rolling hills of Forest Home Cemetery are bathed in nature's bounty and habited by all manner of birds and animals.

Just outside the Cemetery, a blue heron lives on Manoka Lake.

Inside the Cemetery, a chickadee builds her nest in the barrel of the old cannon on the G.A.R. lot. And the rat-a-tat sounds of a piliated woodpecker echo through the woods.



Just off section 21, a wild turkey hustles across the way. Squirrels chase each other through the trees and a woodchuck dashes behind the hillside barrier in front of the Middleton mausoleum.

For a peaceful walk, there is no finer spot than Forest Home Cemetery. The next time you feel the stress building, take a break and visit the Cemetery. Or join us in the rewarding work of restoring Forest Home Cemetery to its former glory.

### STAY TUNED . . .



For our next newsletter, where we'll give you a sneak peek into the fascinating world of benevolent secret societies – the subject of our September guided tour. Many leaders of early Greenville society, including Carpenter Merritt, belonged to multiple fraternal organizations, such as the Knights of Pythias, the Masonic Order, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and the Ancient Order of United Workmen. You'll learn more about the roles and rituals of these societies, their origins, and their symbols, and what to look for on the grave markers of their members. You won't want to miss it!

