

# Transitions

July 2018

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## A Message from the President



Welcome to another beautiful summer at Forest Home Cemetery! It's always refreshing to see the flora and fauna return as the temperatures rise. Trees of many species, some dating back to the founding of the cemetery in 1871, provide shelter to the abundant wildlife and afford lovely views from the many hills.

In mid-May, Friends planted flowers in several urns around the cemetery, including the Fargo mausoleum, John Green's monument, Harroun's monument, I.O.O.F. (Odd Fellows) lot, Knights of Pythias lot, the G.A.R. memorial, and cemetery founder Carpenter C. Merritt's lot. Additional renovation and planting is still under way on Merritt's lot.

On May 28, Friends hosted a Decoration Day event at the G.A.R. section to honor the memory of all veterans buried at Forest Home Cemetery. You can find more details about the program in this newsletter. If you weren't able to join us this year, we hope you'll come next year to help us mark the holiday in traditional fashion.

Over the summer, Friends volunteers will be cleaning the veterans' headstones that were sponsored through our Adopt-A-Veteran program last fall. Ordinarily, this would have been accomplished sooner, but a prolonged water shut-off (for repairs) and unseasonably hot weather kept us from completing the task earlier in the season.

For those who are curious about the status of the Gibbs mausoleum, Friends has submitted a detailed repair request to the City, in hopes that the repairs will be completed and the mausoleum restored to its prior glory before the end of the summer. You can find further updates on our Facebook page.

Finally, you can preview some of the interesting programs and tours that we have planned for 2018 in the Upcoming Events section of this newsletter. Mark your calendars and check our Facebook page for more details!

We hope to see you out at the Cemetery . . .

~ Paula Christiansen, President

## "MAGNIFICENT TOMBS" TOUR

Ever wonder about the mausoleum buildings at Forest Home Cemetery – who is interred inside and what is their life story? Friends has done considerable research on the occupants of these mausoleums and has scheduled a walking tour in August to answer some of these questions.

Although there will not be access to the interiors of the buildings, at each site there will be a presenter to chronicle the stories of these early citizens of Greenville. There will also be display boards at each of the nine stops on the tour with images and more facts about those individuals.

The tour will take approximately 90 minutes to complete and will begin at the Community Mausoleum at 11 a.m. on Saturday, August 25. Additional tours will be started every half hour, with the last tour starting at 1:30 p.m. Admission for the tour is \$5 per guest.

We look forward to seeing you!

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## A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY

William Dunham Johnson was born in Wilson, New York, in 1839, one of five children born to Ephraim and Elizabeth Johnson. In his youth, William worked on the family farm with his father. He met and married his first wife, Sarah “Augusta” Baker, on November 16, 1859, at the age of 20.

William and Augusta moved to the area in 1869, when the lumbering days were at their zenith. William’s brother, Charles, a veteran of the Civil War, came with them. They first settled in Cedar Springs, then moved to Greenville in 1871, joining the lumbering firm of Hileman & Hesser in Trufant. After leaving the lumbering business, William and his brother Charles went into the stock-raising business and owned two large stock farms.

In 1879, William and Augusta built a magnificent home at 121 S Franklin St, at the corner of Franklin and Orange, for a total cost of \$3,700. In 1889, they were joined by Augusta’s niece, Laura Richardson, who lived with them as a member of their family for 25 years. William’s brother Charles built a stately home on the south side of E Washington St, between Clay and Lafayette.

Once the lumber business was gone, William manufacturing business to take its place. State Bank and served as its President for used his own and other investors’ money to foster manufacturing and commercial community. In addition to running the Charles served on the board of directors such as Ranney Refrigerator Co and Vilas

William and Augusta were married for 37 a “long and painful illness” in 1896. religious and social circles, and was widely works in the new lumber town of Trufant. funeral, the Ranney Refrigerator factory employees could attend the funeral, which



*The Johnson house at 121 S Franklin St*

William married his second wife –Sarah J. Platt – on August 30, 1898. Sarah had previously been married to William Morris for 15 years before he died in 1886. Sarah and William Morris had two children together – a daughter who died in infancy, and a son who died 7 years after his father. When Sarah married William Johnson, she was a childless widow, 10 years younger than William, who worked as a clerk at the bank. Sarah died on December 22, 1906, at the same age as William’s first wife! As reported in the January 2, 1907 edition of the Greenville Independent:

Everyone knew about the long and heroic struggle she was making against the inexorable advances of an insidious and mortal malady. Never did she falter or repine but filled with the beautiful spirit of the Christmas tide, with plans all made and gifts ready for loved ones, happy in the anticipation of the joys of Christmas, she became weary for a moment and fell into that ‘dreamless sleep that kisses down the eyelids still.’

Over the years, William held a number of positions in public office, including alderman, mayor of Greenville (three terms), member of the state central committee of the Republican party, first president of the Greenville Republican Club and of the Greenville Board of Trade, and was a leader of every boosting proposition that was for the City of Greenville’s benefit. He was also active in the social and fraternal life of the City, being an honored member of the Washington Club, the Pioneer Society, the Knights of Pythias, and the Masonic fraternity.



## A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY - continued

William Johnson died on November 14, 1914, "full of years, full of successful achievements, full of honors and full of golden deeds." His pallbearers included some of the leading members of society whose names are widely recognized even today: F.S. Gibson, C.H. Gibson, W.C. Johnson, Charles Gibson, W.H. Browne, Dr. W.A. McLean, M.F. Wilson and George W. Perry. Honorary pallbearers were R.F. Sprague, T.I. Phelps, E.S. Clark, W. Matlock, E. Rutan, T.B. Winter, T.J. Potter, C.J. Drummond, B.E. Avery, C.T. Wright, J.H. Edsall, and John Lewis. His obituary in the Greenville Independent summarized the breadth and depth of William Johnson's contributions to Greenville society:



[R]eared in the humblest walks of life, he grew by his own indomitable courage, his steadfastness to purpose, his strict integrity and high regard for honesty to the greatest place of honor in the gift of the citizens of the city in which he lived and helped to build, to that of one of its foremost, honest, charitable and upright men. No greater praise, no juster tribute can be paid to him than 'when he departed he took a man's life along with him,' and as complete a piece of American manhood as our city has ever produced. His character was so beautifully rounded, his life so perfect in all that goes to make a man, his example so inspiring, contact with him so helpful, that, in his death, we who have known him so many years feel we have lost our wisest counsellor and our most trusted friend.

....

No man can enter into the official, commercial, social and fraternal life of the city for nearly half a century as has Mr. Johnson, without having left his impress; and in his case if there had been no official, commercial, social or fraternal activities to distinguish his career, the beautiful lawn with its luxuriant shrubbery and fragrant flowers which he maintained at his home for the more than thirty years that he there resided and which exemplified the finest and most beautiful elements of his temperament, will leave a memory as fragrant and beautiful as the shrubs and flowers he so much loved.

William Johnson had no children from either marriage. William, both wives, his brother Charles, and several other family members are all buried in the Johnson mausoleum at Forest Home Cemetery.

### The "Magnificent Tombs" Tour

August 25, 2018, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

A 90-minute tour, with departures from the Starting Point every half hour  
Starting Point: Community Mausoleum, Forest Home Cemetery

The word "mausoleum" means "magnificent tomb" and was used to describe the massive marble tomb built for Mausolos, king of Caria. Built by his wife Artemisia, it was counted among the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.

Join us as we explore the beauty and history of the  
"magnificent tombs" at Forest Home Cemetery!

**Tickets: \$5/person**

Hosted by Friends of Forest Home Cemetery

For more information, contact Kathleen Dunne, (616) 824-9601





## DECORATION DAY TRADITION REVIVED

The 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the observance of Decoration Day was celebrated in traditional style at Forest Home Cemetery on May 28, as veterans and members of the community came together to remember and honor the sacrifice of our veterans who gave “the last full measure of devotion.”

Memorial Day – or Decoration Day as it was originally known – was first established in May 1868 by order of Major General John A. Logan, a former Union army commander and head of the G.A.R. (Grand Army of the Republic), an organization of Union veterans. In his order to the military posts, Maj. Gen. Logan determined that Civil War veterans’ graves should be decorated “with the choicest flowers of springtime,” adding: “We should guard their graves with sacred vigilance . . . Let pleasant paths invite the coming and going of reverent visitors and fond mourners. Let no neglect, no ravages of time, testify to the present or to the coming generations that we have forgotten as a people the cost of a free and undivided republic.”

Because soldiers were typically buried on the battlefield where they fell, and some were later reinterred in military cemeteries, it is difficult to account for all who died during the Civil War. But historians place the estimate between 650,000 and 850,000 dead – a number that was not surpassed in all subsequent wars combined until the Vietnam War. Two-thirds of those killed during the Civil War died of disease. To date, more than 1,264,000 American soldiers have given their lives in the service of our country.

Decoration Day was celebrated throughout the nation on May 30, From 1868 to 1971. After World War I, the day was expanded to

## Upcoming Events

<b>Magnificent Tombs Tour!</b>	August 25, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Forest Home Cemetery	Admission: \$5
<b>A History of Service</b>	September 25, 3 p.m.
Fighting Falcon Museum	Admission: Free!
<b>Murder, Mayhem &amp; Madness Tour</b>	Oct 27 - 2 p.m., Oct 28 – 6 p.m.
Forest Home Cemetery	Admission: \$6/adult, \$4/child
<b>WWI Centennial Jubilee 2!</b>	November 11 or 12
Location TBD	Admission: TBD

*cont. . . .*

honor those who have died in ALL American wars. And in 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday, though it is still often called Decoration Day.

In keeping with past tradition, the memorial service hosted by Friends of Forest Home Cemetery was held in the G.A.R. section, and featured the raising of the flag, an invocation and historical commentary, singing of the Star-Spangled Banner and My Country ‘Tis of Thee, a recitation of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, and placement of a memorial wreath in front of the Civil War monument while Taps was played. Color guard services were provided by William Garlick, a Vietnam veteran, past Greenville VFW Post Commander, and incoming Sr. Vice Commander; Tony Kasperek, a Vietnam veteran and Master at Arms of the Greenville American Legion; and Marty Posekany, a retired Navy Master Chief and incoming Commander of the Greenville VFW post. Presenters included Briana Herzog and Kathleen Dunne, both board members of the Friends of Forest Home Cemetery. Lending her voice and talents to the singing was Do Good Gal, Brynn Strickland. And two vintage military jeeps were provided by David Sherman, a Vietnam veteran, and Bob Christensen.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, carnations donated by Greenville Floral were provided for guests who wished to decorate a veteran’s grave. Based on the positive feedback received from participants, Friends of Forest Home Cemetery has committed to continue offering historical Memorial Day celebrations at the cemetery, and hopes to coordinate more closely with other local group activities. “We should be able to cross-promote and support each other’s events,” said Friends Vice President, Kathleen Dunne.

