

# Transitions



October 2019

Vol. 5, No. 2

## A Message from the President

As Friends wraps up another summer at the historic Forest Home Cemetery, we now look forward to some exciting Fall activities.

In June, Friends presented a virtual tour of the cemetery’s **Magnificent Tombs** in the Silver Theater at the Flat River Historical Museum. Attendees learned the family histories of those buried in the community mausoleum and the seven remaining private mausoleums, and enjoyed the opportunity to see new exhibits at the museum.

In August, Briana Herzog led visitors on an **Historical Family Walk**, sharing cemetery history and customs along the way. Friends also launched its Kids Activity Worksheet to keep younger guests engaged. For those who missed the August tour, Briana is leading a family-friendly **Fall Color Tour** on October 12 at 2 p.m. (more information on page 2). It’s the perfect opportunity to enjoy the autumn beauty of the cemetery.

**Murder, Mayhem, & Madness** returns this year, with Undertaker Chris Hunter presenting true stories of individuals

who died in unusual and sometimes mysterious circumstances. The tour will be offered on two days: Saturday, October 26, at 2 p.m. and Sunday, October 27, at 5 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for adults, and \$5 for children under 13.

In honor of Veterans Day, Friends is offering a special program on the evening of November 11 at the Flat River Historical Museum. **A History of Service** will feature real-life stories of veterans buried at Forest Home Cemetery, including several who served in the War of 1812. This issue of the newsletter highlights the fascinating biography of Civil War veteran, Dr. John Avery. His story and others will leave you with a renewed appreciation for the service and sacrifice of our veterans over the years!

In September, work began on the Appleton mausoleum, which was in very poor condition. You can read Margaret Appleton’s biography in our October 2018 newsletter, which is available on our website. Friends got permission from one of Appleton’s descendants, and the challenging project has been progressing slowly. We hope you’ll consider making a donation to help offset the cost of preserving this piece of history.

Friends recently added complimentary doggie waste bags at our tour post at the cemetery entrance. The City has plans to install permanent doggie stations in the future. Please remember that the City ordinance requires dog owners to keep their pets on a leash at all times and to properly dispose of dog waste.

We hope to see you at one (or more!) of our upcoming events. Watch Facebook and your email for more details. And be sure to take a drive or walk through the cemetery this Fall to marvel at the beauty of the grounds!

~ **Paula Christiansen, President**

## What’s Inside:

A Glimpse of History . . . . .	3-4
Are you a Taphophile? . . . . .	2
Cemetery Q & A . . . . .	2
Upcoming Events . . . . .	2, 4

Cemetery Q & A

**Q: When I buy a burial plot at Forest Home Cemetery, do I own the land where I'm buried?**

**A:** No, what you purchase is like an easement – the right to be buried in that spot. The land continues to be owned by the City.

**Q: Will the City of Greenville take care of my plot after I'm buried?**

**A:** When you pay for a plot, some or all of the purchase price goes toward perpetual care. Perpetual care includes mowing and trimming grass, removing leaves, providing water, and maintaining trees, roads, and pathways in good condition. The City does not take care of your headstone or anything that you plant or place on the gravesite.

**Q: What happens if a family member's headstone is damaged by mowers or fallen trees?**

**A:** You should notify the City of any damage caused by mowers or fallen trees. Sending a picture would be helpful, but is not required. The City will then submit a claim to its insurance carrier. If approved, the City will repair the damaged headstone.

**Q: If I want to clean or fix someone's headstone, can I do it?**

**A:** A headstone is the private property of the family who places it there. You should never attempt to clean or repair someone else's headstone without first getting permission from a family member or descendant.

**Q: Who should I contact if I'm concerned about the condition of a gravesite or the cemetery grounds?**

**A:** You should call or write the City of Greenville, Attn: George Bosanic, 411 S Lafayette St, Greenville MI 48848, (616) 754-5645.



Are you a Taphophile?

Noun

**ta·pho·phile** (plural taphophiles)

1. A person who is interested in cemeteries, funerals, and gravestones.

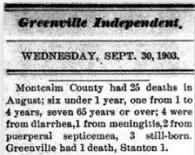
[derived from Ancient Greek, meaning "to love graves"]

Synonym: tombstone tourist.

For centuries, people have made pilgrimages to the burial sites of religious icons and leaders. In fact, during medieval times, people went to gravesites or shrines to venerate saints. In China, the ancient tradition of Ancestor Worship also involved the veneration of dead relatives by visiting their burial sites.

During the 19th century, garden cemeteries began to appear, which encouraged visitors to stay and visit in the cemetery.

Cemetery records have also been a way of verifying genealogical data. Making gravestone rubbings was practiced for centuries as a way of providing this documentation and appreciating the carvings on the tombstones. Among genealogists, scouring cemeteries looking for the graves of dead ancestors is a common and longstanding practice with individuals often relying on limited and outdated information to find burial sites.



Back by Popular Demand!  
**Murder, Mayhem & Madness Tour\***  
 at Forest Home Cemetery  
 (Presented by Undertaker Chris, and led by the Grim Reaper)



Saturday, October 26, 2-4 p.m.  
 ~ or ~  
 Sunday, October 27, 5-7 p.m.  
 \$8/person, ages 13 & over  
 \$5/person, under 13 years



\*Due to the sensitive nature of this tour, including graphic details about accidents, murders, and suicide, this tour may not be suitable for children under 13 years of age.



Be sure to arrive at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start time. **Costumes optional!** To purchase tickets in advance, call Kathleen Dunne at (616) 824-9601, or visit the Friends website at: [www.friendsofforesthome.net/Upcoming-Events.html](http://www.friendsofforesthome.net/Upcoming-Events.html).

## A GLIMPSE OF HISTORY

### Dr. John Avery

February 29, 1824 – January 21, 1914

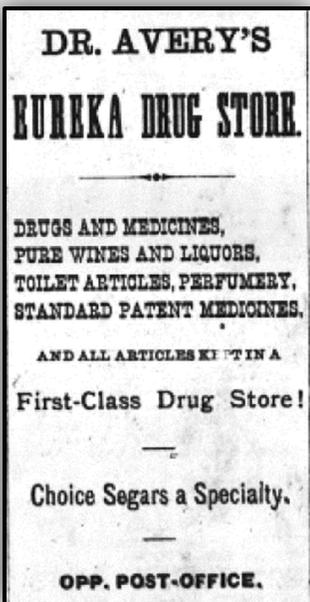


A leap-year baby, John Avery, Jr., was the oldest of seven children born to John and Sally Avery in Watertown, New York. He moved with his parents to the Michigan territory in 1836 and attended the Grass Lake Academy near Jackson. Avery attended school in the winters and worked on his father's farm in the summers until he was 21. He began the study of medicine in 1847, and received his doctoral degree from Cleveland Medical College in 1850.

In 1851, John married Jane Ewell, and they had four children. He began his medical practice in partnership with Dr. J.B. Barnes in Owosso. Then, in the spring of 1854, he moved to Ionia and practiced with Dr. D.W. Bliss.

When that engagement was over, he relocated to Otisco Township and established his own medical practice.

In August 1862, at the mature age of 38, John Avery enlisted as an assistant surgeon with the 21<sup>st</sup> Michigan Volunteer Infantry at Ionia. (His youngest daughter, Minnie, was born shortly before he left for the war.) In January 1863, Avery was promoted to full surgeon. In that capacity, he was present at the battles of Perryville, Stone River, Lookout Mountain, Chickamauga, and Bentonville. He later served with the Army of the Cumberland in Kentucky and Tennessee, and was with General Sherman on his March to the Sea. By the end of the war, he was promoted to Brigade Surgeon. Fifteen years later, Avery became a charter member of Greenville's William A. Kent G.A.R. Post 83 when it was organized in 1882.



Dr. Avery established his permanent residence in Greenville in 1867. His knowledge as a physician and his surgical skills were so highly valued that he was called upon to practice medicine in all of West Michigan. In 1872, he built a brick store (where Beamers Tanning is now located), renting out the lower part to Slawson's Drug Store and seeing patients in the office above the store. In 1875, Avery retired from active practice. He purchased Slawson's stock and sold drugs, but still saw the occasional patient on the side.

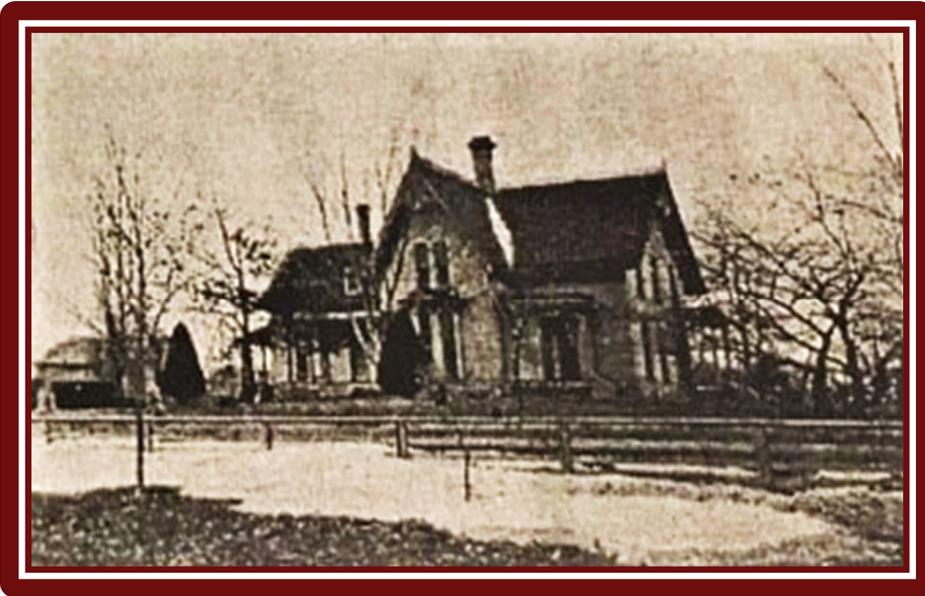
In 1870, Avery acquired 10 acres and built an impressive family home in 1875 (see picture on page 4). Except for the orchard that was already on the land, Avery placed every tree on the property himself. He took a deep interest in everything pertaining to his home. Several years later, Avery's oldest son, Frank, graduated from West Point in 1878, and served in the regular army. His youngest daughter, Minnie, died in 1880 from bronchitis, at the age of 18.

Avery served in the State House of Representatives from 1869 to 1870. He was an active member of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Greenville, and served as President on the State Board of Health for 12 years. A Republican, he also served a 4-year term in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1893-1897. During that time, he introduced and advocated for a resolution admitting women to Michigan State University. He was also a lifelong member of the masonic fraternity.



*Avery's family monument in Sect. 12.*

## A Glimpse of History – continued from page 3.



At left: Dr. John Avery's house, built on 10 acres at the corner of West Washington and Baldwin streets in 1875. The house was torn down after Dr. Avery's death, and the home of Congressman Francis O. Lindquist (below) was built in its place.



After leaving Congress, Dr. Avery returned to retired life in Greenville. The following year, on October 6, 1898, he delivered an address at a reunion of the 21<sup>st</sup> Michigan Infantry in Ionia. In his speech, Avery reminisced about the differences between military service during the Civil War as compared to service during the 3-1/2 month-long Spanish-American war, which had just ended. He spoke eloquently of the 1,000 untrained and undisciplined young and middle-aged men who left Ionia for the front in September 1862; of the hardships and ravages of war, including hundreds of cases of malaria, typhoid fever, and diarrhea, that thinned their ranks to not more than 300 soldiers present and fit for duty just 2 months later. Avery also remarked on the way old adversaries came together as one to defeat the Spanish monarchy in Cuba:

[Under President William McKinley's] wise leadership . . . sectional lines and class lines are fast disappearing . . . When confederate leaders and union leaders and their sons fight side by side with equal patriotism and courage, no one will any longer ask or care whether they wore the blue or the gray 35 years ago. They all wear the blue today and follow the same flag. . . Comradeship in danger, in exposure and in suffering, makes a companionship through life and all classes of one brotherhood.

Avery's wife, Jane, died a few days before Christmas in 1908. Dr. Avery lived 6 years longer and was confined with paralysis for last 2 years of his life. He died at his home on January 21, 1914, at the age of 89.

**EDITORS NOTE:** Dr. John Avery will be among the veterans honored at the History of Service program on November 11. We hope you'll join us at the historical Silver Theater, to hear this and many other fascinating stories. And while you're there, be sure to roam around the museum to see some of the new exhibits! All proceeds from this event support the ongoing work of Friends of Forest Home Cemetery, including its veterans' flag holder project.

**In Honor of Veterans Day**

Friends of Forest Home Cemetery presents:  
**"A History of Service"**

**Featuring real-life stories about the service and sacrifice of our local veterans in major conflicts, beginning with the War of 1812.**

**Presented at the Flat River Historical Museum, 213 N Franklin St.  
November 11, 6:00 p.m., with reception at 5:30 p.m.  
Admission: \$10/person**

Tickets may be purchased on site or in advance at [www.friendsofforesthome.net](http://www.friendsofforesthome.net).  
For more information, call Kathleen Dunne, (616) 824-9601.