

*City of Grand Haven
Historic Conservation District Commission*

Lake Forest Cemetery Self-Guided Historic Walking Tour

Come, take a leisurely walk and learn about the interesting people who lived in the City of Grand Haven, Ottawa County, MI between the 1800—1900s.

Lake Forest Cemetery Tour information is brought to you by a collective effort from:



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Cemetery History

In 1867 the necessity arose to move Grand Haven's cemetery from what is now called Central Park to 40 acres on each side of Lake Avenue. This property became known as Lake Forest Cemetery. The first burial was in September 1873.

Lake Forest Cemetery
1304 Lake Avenue
Grand Haven, MI 49417
616-847-3489

The Lee Memorial Chapel Building

Lt. James Lee

1917—1943

James Lee Memorial Chapel

Located at the entrance of the cemetery, the chapel was a gift to the City in memory of James L Lee who was lost in flight over St. Nazaire, German-occupied France, while piloting a B17 bomber during World War II. A memorial stone is located on the west side of the chapel. Construction of the chapel began in 1966 and has a capacity for 100 mourners.

Notable Graves

Arend VanderVeen, MD

1840—1930

Block C

Kate (Howard) VanderVeen

1850—1935

Block C

In 1861, days before his 21st birthday, Arend joined the Michigan Infantry and became known as the “boy surgeon.” On guard duty in Washington D.C., he was witness to the hanging of the conspirators who assassinated President Lincoln. VanderVeen built a home at 508 Washington Street. His wife Kate would signal Arend with a lantern from their home’s third story cupola to let him know there was an emergency call.

Charles Boyden

1843—1897

Block E (Mausoleum)

In 1871, with HC Akeley as his partner, Charles started the Boyden & Akeley Shingle and Sawmill on the south side of the Grand River. After being injured at his mill in Missouri and dying shortly after, Mr. Boyden was returned to Grand Haven by private train to be buried.

George Parks

1817—1880

Block 20

Beginning in 1853, “Captain” George Parks’ schooner, “Michigan,” carried passengers between Grand Haven and Grand Rapids. He became Grand Haven’s first mayor in 1867.

Healey Cady (H.C.) Akeley

1836—1912

Block 42

Born in 1836, at age 22, Healey settled in Grand Haven about the same time the railroad headed to West Michigan. This helped the Boyden & Akeley Shingle and Sawmill become one of the most successful lumber mills.

Pierre C. Duvernay

1790—1862

Block 7

Pierre was French-Canadian and traveled with Reverend Ferry to Grand Haven. His wife, Julia, was the daughter of an Indian chief and tended the sick, even though she spoke little English.

Harvey B. Blount (Blunt)

1840—1917

Block 11

(Name not on marker, but he is believed to be buried here with his wife, Emiline Blunt, and mother-in-law, Hanna H. Cox.)

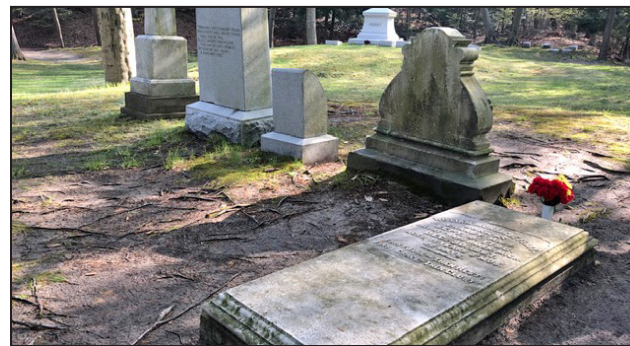
Mr. Blount was born into slavery in Kentucky in 1840 and settled in Grand Haven with his wife in the late 1860s. Harvey worked as a custodian for several businesses in downtown Grand Haven.

Reverend William Montague Ferry

1796—1867

Block 27

As Grand Haven’s founder, Reverend Ferry was born in 1796. He and the Ferry family are buried here on Ferry Hill. In 1835, he chose to build his log home (current location of Kirby Grill), on the corner of Washington and Water (Harbor) Streets.



Jaramiah Smith

1839—1873

Block 28

In September 1873 Mr. Smith was the first burial in Lake Forest Cemetery. He was a Grand Haven cigar maker who died aboard the sinking steamer, “Ironsides.” Jaramiah was buried in Potter’s Field, but his marker is several lots away from the pauper site.

Frederick Graves

1835—1921

Block 31

In 1835, Frederick was born into slavery in Virginia where he escaped by hiding for five days in a haystack. He was attached to the Confederate Army but later joined the Union Army. He moved to Grand Haven after the war.

Jean Baptist Parrissien

1812—1912

Block 31

As Grand Haven’s first mail carrier, Mr. Parrissien carried the mail on foot using the Indian trails. He lived among the Indians before settling in Grand Haven and died at supposedly over 100 years old. His monument was dedicated by the community in 2016.

Benjamin Jones

1824—1913

Block 26

He was born a slave around 1824 in Tennessee and journeyed to Grand Haven under the guidance of Reverend Ferry. He enlisted in the US Colored Troops and was buried with military honors in the Grand Army of the Republic cemetery plot.

G.A.R. Weatherwax Monument

Block 26



The Grand Army of the Republic Weatherwax Post #75 monument honors all those who fought during the Civil War and has stood in the cemetery since the 1890s. The post was disbanded in 1927.

Henry Pennoyer

1809—1886

Block 30

As Ottawa County’s first sheriff, elected in 1838, Mr. Pennoyer served in both the State House and Senate. Because of his size 14 shoes, the Indians and voyageurs nicknamed him, “Big Foot.”

Veterans of all Wars Memorial Boulder

Block 29

A memorial boulder with a bronze plaque is dedicated to the veterans of all wars; a plaque honors the veterans of the Spanish-American War on one side and all veterans on the other.

Potter’s Field

Prior to 1875—1984

Block 22

Most cemeteries had a Potter’s Field where persons were buried who were paupers or had no known relatives. In 1875, City Council mandated the removal of all bodies from Potter’s Field in the mid-town cemetery (now Central Park). Potter’s Field in Lake Forest Cemetery was said to be full in 1898, but a few graves were added up to 1984. Most graves are unmarked.