

Self-Guided Davisburg Cemetery Historical Tour

Davisburg Cemetery was established in 1844 when the founder of Davisburg, Cornelius Davis, donated the land upon the death of his wife Agness and fellow settler Mrs. Candace Morley.

The cemetery was affiliated with the Protestant Methodist Church which was organized in 1843. Thirty years later a church building was constructed on Davisburg Road opposite the cemetery. The church, known as the "Brick Church," stood across the street from the cemetery for 43 years but was destroyed by fire in October 1916.



In addition to the Davis Family, Davisburg Cemetery is the final resting place of many prominent first settlers of Springfield and many veterans of wars dating back to the American Revolution.

Enjoy your History Hunt as you tour through this beautiful, historical place. The ground is uneven and you may find some tipped over stones. Please be careful, don't climb or sit on any monuments, and watch your step.

PHOTO CREDIT: Historical photos for this tour are mainly the work of local photographer and resident Lester J. Smith (1918 – 2004). Mr. Smith generously donated all of his historical negatives to the Springfield Township Friends of the Library in 2003. Photos are available for purchase at the Library.

1 Theodore F. Griggs

This unique marker is made of white bronze by the American White Bronze Company of Chicago. White bronze is actually sand-casted zinc. It has a characteristic blue-gray color. After sections were cast and assembled, they were sand blasted to roughen the surface and then treated with a process called steam bluing. This type of material weathers very well and looks almost as good today as when it was installed.

Did you notice the symbols on the monument? On one side is a dove which symbolizes peace and purity. The sheaf of wheat on the other side can represent the harvest or a person who has lived a long life.

This monument is for Theodore F. Griggs. Mr. Griggs was born in New Jersey and was a farmer. He registered for the draft during the Civil War but there is not a record of any service during the war. He died in 1885 at age 59.

The small stone next to this monument is for his wife. She is listed as "Mrs. Elba Elliott widow of T.F. Griggs and W.H. Elliott". She died in 1916 at age 85. She has parts of two small bible verses near the bottom of the headstone: "She hath done all she could" and "A noble Christian".

The other stone is for Linn Griggs, the son of Theodore and Elba. He died in 1928 at age 71.

2 Fred A. Schultz

Fred Schultz was born on July 29, 1878 in Michigan. His parents were from Germany. He married his wife Sarah Roe on November 22, 1903 in Davisburg. They had five daughters and three sons.

Fred had many occupations. In the 1940 census his occupation is listed as a cobbler. He purchased the harness shop in 1933 from William Barsby. The harness shop is still standing in town and is currently owned by the Springfield Township Historical Society. Mr. Barsby operated a cobbler's shop in the building. Fred Schultz continued that tradition and also added watch/clock repair and harness-making. Fred was also a barber.

His son Karl remembers that, "his father not only operated the shop but was a custodian for the Masonic Temple and he operated the milk house in town and also served as Township Clerk for more than 55 years and he put in two gardens every year."

The Schultz family not only worked in the harness shop, they lived in it. The upstairs was used as living quarters from 1938 to 1959. Fred passed away in 1960 at the age of 82.



3 Philip Frisbie Family

Philip S. Frisbie was born in 1807 near Seneca Lake in New York State. Philip was one of the first landowners in Springfield Township. He originally located in Lapeer County in the fall of 1833 and soon afterwards purchased land in Springfield and moved to the township sometime between 1834 and 1841.

His wife Calista G. Farnum Frisbie is buried next to him. They had eight children. Calista endured a great deal of loss in her life as she outlived her husband, three sons and one daughter. She lived to be 70 and died in 1890.

Each marker in this row of family graves has some kind of unique symbol on it. The two markers at the end have a hand pointing up which symbolizes the soul rising to the heavens. These two graves are of brothers William Levi Frisbie and Atwell Abner Frisbie. They were both 25 years old when they died. Another son, James, was a Civil War soldier. He enlisted in 1862 in the Michigan 5th Cavalry as a private. James was wounded during the war and taken prisoner but was later released in a prisoner exchange. He died in 1930 at the age of 90.

4 John E. Thompson

John Thompson was born in 1845 in Springfield Township. His parents, John and Sarah/Jane, were born in England. John was married to Theodotia Ingersoll on June 22, 1869. They had five children: George, Viola, William, Harry, and Leita.

During the Civil War, John enlisted in 1864 as a private at age 18 in the Michigan 5th Cavalry Company G. He fought in the Battle of the Wilderness, Shenandoah Valley Campaign, Cedar Creek, Winchester and Spotsylvania. He mustered out in 1865 at Ft. Leavenworth. He received a disability for a lung disease he contracted during the war.

After the war, John had a farm at Big Lake for over 30 years. He lived on the farm until 1902 when he and his wife moved to the village of Davisburg. In 1901 he became Davisburg's first mail carrier on a rural route. He delivered mail for ten years until ill health forced him to retire.

His wife died in 1924 and John died in 1939 at the age of 94 as one of the last living Civil War veterans in Springfield Township.



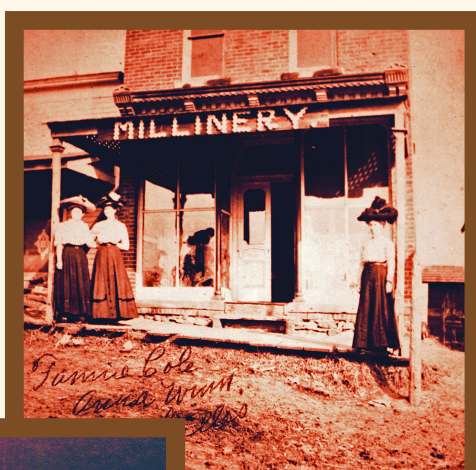
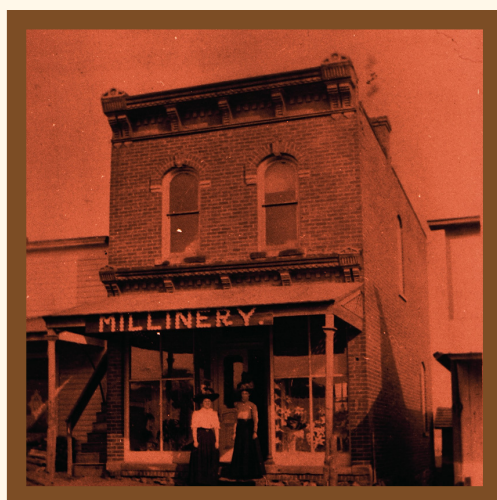
5 Lulu Gillies

Lulubel Hudson Gillies was born on July 4, 1865 in Ellisburg, New York to parents Daniel and Melvina (Wheeler) Hudson. She moved to Davisburg when she was an infant. She had one sibling, a sister—Bertha Montgomery.

Lu married Herbert Gillies of Flint on June 27, 1888 when she was 23. Unfortunately their marriage only lasted three years—Herbert died, probably of tuberculosis, on June 12, 1891. He is buried in Flint.

Lu Gillies owned and operated a millinery store—her first store was on Eaton Road. She then bought a brick building in downtown Davisburg. She employed several local young women, some of whom boarded with her. People came from all over on the train to have hats made.

For years she took care of her invalid parents. Her home was located on Andersonville Road. Lu died in 1935 at the age of 70.



6 E.B. Murgittroyd, Doctor Hall and the Anna Hall Murder Mystery

Edward B. Murgittroyd was born in the state of New York and moved to Springfield Township in 1857. In 1862 he married Sarah Marie Wright and the newlyweds settled in Davisburgh. Mr. Murgittroyd was a well-known citizen of Davisburgh. He was the town undertaker and also owned and operated a wagon building business. Edward and Sarah had two daughters, Harriet (Hattie) and Sarah Edelene (Lena). Edward Murgittroyd died in 1878 at the age of 43. After his death his wife, Sarah, became involved in a murder case.

Anna Hall was the wife of Dr. Nathan C. Hall. In 1880 Anna died of an unknown illness and the citizens of Davisburgh suspected that the doctor had poisoned his wife in order to be with the widow Murgittroyd. Sarah Murgittroyd was a close friend of Dr. Hall and Anna.

Davisburg Cemetery figured prominently in the high profile murder trial of Dr. Nathan C. Hall and the case made it to the Michigan Supreme Court. Anna was buried somewhere in the area behind Edward Murgittroyd's monument. However, because of the murder investigation, her remains were exhumed by authorities, tested and reburied, and then discovered missing just prior to a second planned disinterment. Anna Hall's body was later found, returned to her family and reinterred elsewhere.

Eventually after three trials, Dr. Nathan C. Hall was acquitted. In November 1883 Dr. Hall and Sarah Murgittroyd were married in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Many years later in 1919, Lena Murgittroyd wrote a lengthy document detailing what she remembers of her family and the murder trials.



Mrs. Stephanie Creasey (Davisburg Elementary) presenting the murder mystery for a guided tour at the 2010 Davisburg Heritage Festival

7 George M. Lyons

This “chair” could be a pulpit or an open book. Open books were sometimes used on graves of the clergy representing the Word of God. This symbolism is fitting since it is a monument for the Reverend George M. Lyons and his wife, Harriet, the two markers in front.

Reverend Lyons was a minister of the Davisburg Methodist Protestant church (the church shown at the start of the tour which was located across the street but burned down in 1916.) Rev. Lyons was also a minister for a time in Medina, Michigan. George was born on November 3, 1829 in New York. He married Harriet in 1853. George died in 1907 at age 77 and Harriet passed in 1913. They had two daughters, Carrie and Hattie.

Do you notice the other symbols on the monument? The draping over the back can represent mourning, the ferns in the front can stand for humility, and the tree trunk at the base may symbolize the tree of life.

8 E.D. Turner Family

Edwin D. Turner was born in 1828 in Massachusetts, the son of Daniel J. and Catharine Webb Turner. Daniel came to Springfield Township from Monroe County, New York in the fall of 1844 with his family. Edwin was 18 years of age when the family settled in Davisburg.

Edwin D. Turner married Catharine M. Frazier and they had six children: Eugene, Julia, Levina, James, Seymour, and William. A piece of William's original gravestone was found in recent years buried behind a home across Davisburg Road. William has a small marker behind the family monument but the uncovered gravestone had a more detailed inscription which showed William died April 25, 1858 at 5 years, 8 months, 25 days.

Edwin became the owner of his father's 120 acres and eventually owned a total of 425 acres of land in the Township. The Turner Farm was located on Davisburg Road just west of Dixie Highway.



9 Cornelius Davis

Cornelius Davis was born in 1791 in Ulster County, New York. He traveled to Michigan by way of the Erie Canal in 1836 with his wife Agnes Winfield Davis and their eight children. The first winter was spent in a log cabin. Cornelius erected a sawmill and the first frame house in Davisburg. He also established a post office and built a gristmill. He owned 720 acres that was granted to him for his service in the War of 1812.

Agnes died in 1844 and was one of the first burials in this cemetery, which was established when Mr. Davis donated the land. Cornelius married his second wife, Anna Donaldson in late 1844.

Cornelius Davis was the first Township assessor and a Justice of the Peace. He died in 1857. The name Davisburgh was given to the community in honor of its founder.



10 Gracie Gage and the Tree Trunk Monument

Probably the most recognized stone in this cemetery is this tree trunk. This was a popular gravestone form from the 1880s until the 1920s. The trunks varied in size and height. Branches were broken off to show a family member had died. Bark appeared to be peeled back to reveal the epitaph. Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward's catalogs sold them. Many times the trunks were adorned with different symbols.

The trunk also has vines and sunflowers on it. Sunflowers are rare on gravestones. They can symbolize the divine light of God because sunflowers face the sun like most Christian graves (the deceased is placed to face east toward the rising sun).

A poem is inscribed that reads:

*Earthly ties are broken, broken
Rudely sundered one by one
Parting words are often spoken
Ere life's journey half is done.*

*Cherished forms are dying, dying
Pleasures fade like frosted flowers
Smiles and tears are strangely blended
In this weeping world of ours.*

This monument was in honor of Lewis Gage's young wife, Gracie. The small trunk headstone next to the monument lists Gracie E. Gage.

Grace was born in New Jersey in 1869 to Theodore and Elly Griggs. (Do you remember where else you saw the name Theodore Griggs?) Her parents later moved to Davisburg. She married Lewis C. Gage on March 15, 1887 in Davisburg. Gracie died in 1892 at age 23. Lewis moved to Pontiac and didn't remarry until August 1903 at age 42. He died in 1923 and is buried in Oak Hill Cemetery in Pontiac.

11 Solomon Jones

Solomon Jones was born near Saybrook, Connecticut in 1760. Mr. Jones enlisted at age 15 in July 1775 in the Connecticut Militia. Solomon served through the Revolutionary War and also in the War of 1812 (serving in the Vermont Militia). He came to Michigan in 1843 and located in Springfield on land he was awarded from serving in the War of 1812. He was married first to Joanna Drury and secondly to Mrs. Hannah Friday. He had seven children. Solomon died in 1865 at the age of 105. The grave was marked on July 6, 1916 by the General Richardson chapter of the DAR.

