

# Author knows something about most cemetery residents

BY KEVIN KELLEY

## Fairview Park

Guess how many people are buried at Fairview Park Cemetery.

Depending on your guess, it's probably more than you think. (The number, documented by researcher Sharon Guinaugh, is noted at the end of this article.)

Guinaugh, who spent 10 years researching the city-owned cemetery and its residents, will lead a tour of the cemetery at 7 p.m. tomorrow. The cost of the tour is \$15 and includes a beverage and dessert afterward at the Emerald Necklace Inn.

Tomorrow evening's tour, the third Guinaugh has given this summer, will focus on 14 pioneer families whose members are buried at the cemetery.

Guinaugh's 2010 book, "Come Walk With Me: Exploring Fairview Park - Rockport Cemetery, Cuyahoga County, Ohio," includes just about everything one would want to know about the burial ground. Beginning with a history and timeline of the cemetery, the book includes brief biographical sketches of many of its inhabitants.

"Everybody's in here, even the people who were moved," she said. In the 19th century, she said, it was not unheard of for people to be buried in one cemetery and later moved to another.

Appendices include listings of causes of death and occupations. (Not surprisingly, farming was the top job of those buried at the cemetery.)

The first documented burial at the cemetery took place in 1831, Guinaugh said, even though a sign along Lorain Road erroneously states the first burial was in 1811. The last plots were sold in 1991, although an exception was made following the sudden 2004 death of Fairview Park Board of Education President Maureen Cundiff.

The more recent burials were, by necessity, cremations due to limited space.

With the help of the Fairview Park and Rocky River historical societies, as well as families of decedents, Guinaugh managed to find a remarkable number of photos that she included with her biographies.

"I never even thought there'd be pictures of some of these people," she said.

Guinaugh said she hopes readers of her book will learn that many of the area's early settlers were just regular people.

More than 60 veterans, from seven different wars, are buried in Fairview Park Cemetery. Veterans are denoted in "Come Walk With Me" with a star. Most of the cemetery's veterans served in the Civil War. One, Josiah Kellogg, fought in both the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, Guinaugh said.

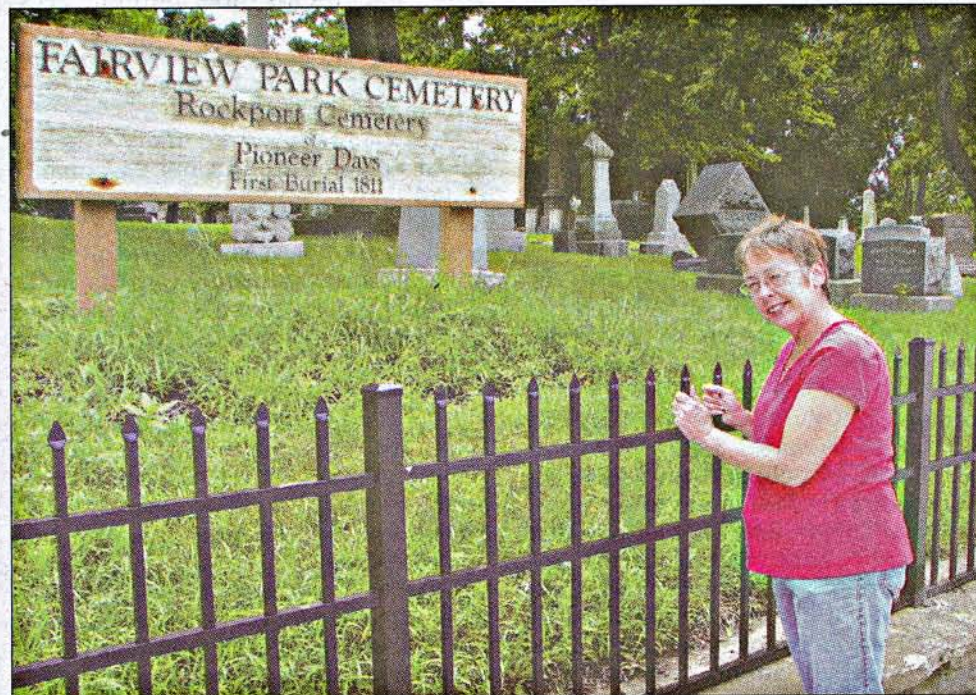
One big league baseball player is buried in the cemetery, Guinaugh said. Otto Hess, who died in 1926, pitched for the Cleveland Naps, a forerunner of the Cleveland Indians. Hess married the daughter of George Sweet, Fairview Park's first mayor and the only mayor buried in the cemetery.

Guinaugh went into high gear during the last three years of her research in a successful effort to get the book published for the city's centennial last year.

Research proved difficult at times, she said, because early cemetery record keeping was spotty at best. Death certificates were not legally required by state law until 1867, she said, and the current state system of recording deaths was not instituted until 1908.

In addition, more than a quarter of the persons buried in the cemetery lack a headstone.

"Some people couldn't afford it,"



Author Sharon Guinaugh will lead a tour of Fairview Park Cemetery Thursday evening. Her 2010 book on the cemetery provides biographical sketches of many of the cemetery's inhabitants. (West Life photo by Kevin Kelley)

she explained.

And at least one person – Walter P. Harbath, who died in 1970 – has a headstone but is actually buried in Florida, where he retired two years before he died, she said.

Guinaugh said she solved the mystery of the missing Section I, which is mentioned in some early cemetery records. For some reason, officials remapped the cemetery sometime between 1908 and 1917, she said. By superimposing a newer map over an older map, Guinaugh realized Section I is actually located in Section H.

A 1979 graduate of Fairview High School, Guinaugh served as archivist and president of the Fairview Park Historical Society. She said she gave up her involvement in that organiza-

tion to devote more research time to the book. In her foreword to "Come Walk With Me," Mayor Eileen Patton calls Guinaugh the city's "cemetery historian."

As for the number of people buried in Fairview Park Cemetery, Guinaugh said she has documented 1,035 burials but thinks there have been even more.

"Come Walk With Me" sells for \$24.95 and can be purchased at PJ's Day Spa, at 20400 Lorain Road; the Emerald Necklace Inn, 18840 Lorain Road; or online from the publisher, American History Press, at <http://www.americanhistorypress.com>.

For more information about Guinaugh's cemetery tour, contact her at 440-777-3189, or by e-mail at [b4i1in-life@sbcglobal.net](mailto:b4i1in-life@sbcglobal.net).