

## Rochester

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# Cemetery tour provides insights to Rochester's past

Tickets for 'Music in the Stones' go on sale this weekend

By Mary Beth Almond  
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ROCHESTER — This weekend, the public will have the chance to snap up the first tickets for a fall guided tour of the oldest cemetery in Oakland County, Mount Avon Cemetery in downtown Rochester, while learning about Rochester's history.

Rochester-Avon Historical Society member Deborah Larsen said there is an incredible amount of local history connected to Mount Avon Cemetery.

"It's not only the oldest in Rochester — it's the oldest platted cemetery in Oakland County, platted in 1826. There are actually some burials in the cemetery that are believed to maybe even be from before the cemetery was platted, so it is a very, very old and historic cemetery," she said.

Last fall, the society held its first cemetery tour, which Larsen said was so popular, the group decided to make it an annual event.

"There are many, many, many stories to be told from among the people who are buried in the cemetery, and lots of local history to be shared. We're going to give just a small slice of it in this event, but we hope we can keep this going for years to come," she said.

The society is giving the community a second opportunity to learn about different people from the past during the Music in the Stones Mount Avon Cemetery Walk 1-5 p.m. Sept. 28 at the cemetery.



Photo by Deb Jacques

**Jim Purdon, of Rochester, pictured above, who serves on the city's Cemetery Commission, waters the plants near the Potter's Field headstone in Mount Avon Cemetery.**

“With our theme, Music in the Stones, most of the characters they will be meeting in the cemetery are musicians or have a musical connection. Some of them will actually be performing music as part of their presentation,” Larsen said.

The family-friendly event is a great way to learn a lot more about the community and connect with the past while enjoying a bit of music and theater, Larsen added.

“We want to stress it’s not a Halloween fright show or anything like that. There is nothing scary about the cemetery walk. Children are certainly welcome and would enjoy it. ... We had a lot of families on the walk last year that had a good time,” she explained.

The 45-minute timed tours will depart from the municipal parking lot at Third and Walnut streets, where ticketholders will be transported to and from the cemetery via shuttle van. Led by tour guides, visitors will then walk through the Mount Avon Cemetery, listening to stories of the lives of a few of the people buried there.

“This year, the tour guests will actually get to go inside the mausoleum and they’ll meet a couple of prominent Rochester citizens from the past who are entombed in there. They will also meet a prominent member of the clergy from our history. Beyond that, we’ll let it be a surprise,” Larsen said.

RAHS member Rod Wilson said the stories will be told in first person by re-enactors dressed in period costumes, who will share their stories through musical performances.

“When they go to each person, that person talks to them about who they are and some of their history in the community. In this case, they will either sing or play an instrument, or there will be some other music around,” he said.

Tickets, which are nonrefundable, are \$15 per person. The proceeds will fund the Rochester-Avon Historical Society’s local history and preservation projects. Advance tickets go on sale July 11-13 at the Historical Society’s Sidewalk Sales booth in downtown Rochester. After July 13, tickets may be purchased at the Rochester Regional Chamber of Commerce office, located at 71 Walnut St., Suite 110, or through the Historical Society’s online store at [www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.rochesteravonhistoricalsociety.org).

The number of tickets is limited, so Larsen recommends purchasing them in advance.

“We had such a good response last year, I think it’s possible we may sell out this year,” she said. “The early tour times sold out quickly — tickets are for a particular time, and people tend to want the tours earlier in the afternoon.”

Rochester Hills Chrysler Jeep Dodge, Pixley Funeral Home and Potere-Modetz Funeral Home are sponsoring the Mount Avon Cemetery Walk.

For more information, email [rahsupdates@gmail.com](mailto:rahsupdates@gmail.com) or call [\(248\) 266-5440](tel:248-266-5440).

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