

John Ball Park Drive, S.W.

John Ball was born at Tenny's Hill near Hebron, New Hampshire, on November 12, 1794. He arrived in Grand Rapids in 1836 as a land agent for East Coast investors and decided to stay. He opened a law practice the following year, and then was elected to the first Michigan legislature. In 1838 he built a house at 458 Fulton E. and lived there the rest of his long life. He served on the Grand Rapids Board of Education for 21 years, from 1848 to 1869. He married Mary T. Webster, a school teacher, on December 31, 1849. John Ball died on February 3, 1884, leaving 40 acres to Grand Rapids for the park which bears his name. A bronze statue in his honor, designed by Gertrude VanHouten and executed by Pompeo Coppini, was dedicated at the park on September 20, 1925. The girl is a Ball cousin, Virginia. The boy is Albert (Bob) Ball, great-grandson of the pioneer (cf. Ed White, "Fixing History," GRP 07/27/2001 A1 & A4).