

Oak Grove Cemetery
Name of Property

La Crosse County, Wisconsin
County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Oak Grove Cemetery
Other names/site number: N/A
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing):

2. Location

Street & number: 1407 La Crosse Street
City or town: La Crosse State: WI County: La Crosse
Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following

level(s) of significance: National Statewide Local
Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
Daina Penkiunas, Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Officer	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
Title:	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	3	Buildings
1	0	Sites
3	1	Structures
5	1	Objects
10	5	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/Cemetery

FUNERARY/Cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Classical Revival/Neoclassical

Gothic Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Limestone, granite, marble, bronze

Narrative Description

Introduction

Encompassing approximately 55 acres of land on the upper south side of the City of La Crosse, Oak Grove Cemetery is a cohesive historic landscape representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement that became fashionable in the United States between the early 1830s and about 1900. Although the earliest burials in the cemetery date to 1852, the existing landscape design took shape between 1878 and about 1930. The property retains a high degree of integrity and is defined by its network of curving pathways, its gently rolling topography that provides scenic vistas at its higher elevations, its wooded landscape, and its wide variety of grave markers and monuments that range in size and complexity from modest stone slabs to grand obelisks, statuary, and mausoleums. The cemetery contains ten contributing resources including one building (a large community mausoleum), three structures (all small family mausoleums), five objects (all memorial grave markers or commemorative monuments), and one site (the cemetery grounds). The cemetery also contains a large memorial arch that was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 (Losey Memorial Arch, National Register 02000598). In addition, the cemetery contains thousands of small and mid-sized monuments and grave markers

that contribute to its historic setting, but that are too numerous and small in scale to count as individual resources. The property also contains five noncontributing resources of recent construction including three buildings (one office/garden mausoleum complex and two maintenance buildings), one structure (a small family mausoleum), and one object (a columbarium). Oak Grove Cemetery is currently (and was historically) divided into numbered sections of varying sizes and shapes; these sections are referenced in the descriptions below and are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Setting

Oak Grove Cemetery sits on an irregularly-shaped plot of land (comprised of nine individual parcels) that is roughly bounded by La Crosse Street (State Highway 16) to the south, the La Crosse Marsh to the west, the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse softball complex and University maintenance facilities to the north (beyond which, the La Crosse Marsh continues), and Myrick Park (a 23-acre city park that also contains a historic city waterworks building) to the east. Along the western edge of the cemetery, a wide band of mature trees follows the cemetery's meandering western edge, providing a physical and visual barrier between the cemetery grounds and the adjacent marshland. The upper portion of a stone retaining wall that was built along the western edge of the cemetery in 1878 is visible along the cemetery's western edge, but backfilling (completed at an unknown date) has obscured the remainder of the wall; the visible portions of the retaining wall are not of sufficient scale to be included in the property's resource count but are elements of its historic setting. The heavy tree line that borders the marsh continues along the northern edge of the cemetery where it serves as a physical and visual barrier between the cemetery grounds and the University softball complex.

The cemetery is bisected by East Avenue North (the former location of the Green Bay & Western Railroad track), creating a clear division between the east and west halves of the cemetery which were historically referred to as the cemetery's eastern and western divisions. Sitting slightly below the level of the cemetery grounds on each side, East Avenue North is a two-lane, paved roadway with a curbed concrete sidewalk and pedestrian lighting along its east side. A row of wood utility poles runs along the west side of East Avenue North while both sides of the roadway are lined by a variety of trees and shrubs that provide a visual barrier between the public roadway and the cemetery grounds. South of the cemetery, the campus of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse is located on the opposite side of La Crosse Street with several residence halls, parking lots, a parking garage, administrative buildings, and a soccer/la crosse field overlooking the cemetery. Sitting slightly below the level of the cemetery grounds, La Crosse Street is a two-lane, paved city street with concrete curb and gutter and grass terraces and sidewalks along both sides; mature trees are planted at intervals within the terraces and a modern chain-link fence runs along the north edge of the sidewalk to provide a physical barrier between the public sidewalk and the cemetery grounds; the chain link fencing continues along the eastern, western, and northern edges of the cemetery's eastern division and a portion of the eastern edge of the western division. The cemetery's primary entrance drive is accessed from La Crosse Street at the southwestern corner of the cemetery grounds; secondary entrances include an entry drive accessed from La Crosse Street at the southern end of the cemetery's eastern division and two access drives located opposite one another across East Avenue North.

Site and Grounds

Encompassing approximately 55 acres and more than 30,000 individual burials, Oak Grove Cemetery sits atop a slight rise at the edge of the La Crosse Marsh and features gently rolling topography throughout with the highest elevations located at the north end of the grounds which allows for scenic views of the wooded bluffs east of the city. A network of curvilinear, paved pathways provides vehicular and pedestrian access throughout the grounds with a single crossing at East Avenue North connecting the cemetery's eastern and western divisions (this crossing also serves as an entry point for each side of the cemetery from East Avenue North). Throughout the cemetery, mature trees line many of the pathways and additional trees, shrubs, and other naturalistic plantings are scattered throughout; in general, plantings avoid the appearance of any formal or prescribed arrangement in favor of a naturalistic, wooded aesthetic. The overall effect of this design gives the cemetery a sheltered, rustic appearance. This aesthetic is further enhanced by the non-linear arrangement of the pathways which, when coupled with the mature trees that dot the landscape, prevents clear views of the entire cemetery in any direction. All pathways are asphalt paved with the exception of a relatively short path at the north edge of the western division which has been gated off to the public and is primarily used by cemetery maintenance staff.

Entering the cemetery through the main entrance drive at the southwest corner of the grounds, the entry drive passes under a monumental Classical Revival stone arch, known as the Losey Memorial Arch, that has served as the cemetery's formal entrance since its construction in 1901 (the Losey Memorial Arch is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places; see brief description below). Beyond the arch, the drive branches to the east and west with the west drive opening into a paved parking area and driveway for a noncontributing brick cemetery office building that was constructed in 1989 with an attached garden mausoleum extension that was completed in 1998 (see full description of this building below). Behind (north of) the office and garden mausoleum complex are two noncontributing maintenance buildings that were constructed in 1974 and 1989; both are metal pole barns that are shielded from view by their location behind the office building and by a brick wall with a metal gate that extends from the northeastern corner of the office (see additional description of the maintenance buildings below). The parking area extends along the south face of the office and garden mausoleum with an exit drive at the west end of the facility.

The eastern branch of the entry drive curves into the main cemetery grounds where it joins the cemetery's network of interconnected, curvilinear drives. These pathways serve to delineate numbered sections of the cemetery. A recently-constructed columbarium sits at the western end of Section 101 near the junction of the entry drive and the main network of pathways (the columbarium was constructed in 2012; see full description below). North of this, at the western edge of Section 8, facing the westernmost pathway, a bronze plaque mounted on a concrete post commemorates newspaper correspondent Mark H. Kellogg (1833-1876); Kellogg was noted as a pioneer newspaper journalist in his use of telegraph communications and was serving in this capacity when he was killed at the Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. The commemorative plaque was installed at the gravesite of Kellogg's wife in 1976 by local media and press

organizations; because of its relatively small size, the plaque is not counted as an individual resource.

Each of the cemetery's approximately 65 sections typically contain between 100 and 200 individual and family plots each; exceptions include Sections 1 through 19 which are significantly smaller (typically containing between 10 and 45 plots each) and are not delineated by individual pathways between each section (this area comprises the earliest portion of the cemetery that was in use prior to its acquisition by the Oak Grove Cemetery Association). Within most of the cemetery sections, burial plots are arranged in rows, although the wide variety of sizes, styles, and shapes of grave markers prevents any appearance of uniformity. A small number of family burial plots in the western division of the cemetery are delineated by stone coping or wrought iron fencing. Sections reserved for veterans (portions of Section 32, 99, and 101) contain larger concentrations of burials and feature uniform military headstones.

The majority of interments at Oak Grove are marked by modestly-sized stone grave markers that date between the 1850s and the present day. The style of these grave markers ranges from fairly simple, engraved stone tablets (characteristic of many of the earlier burial markers as well as those in the veterans' sections) to ornate marble, granite, and limestone markers that are more representative of funerary art from the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These small and mid-sized markers include a number of obelisks; various markers that include some element of small-scale statuary or architectural/figural sculpture; several "treestones" (stone markers sculpted to resemble tree trunks); and a stone bench marker. None of these small and mid-sized grave markers are of sufficient size relative to the cemetery's monumental-scale markers to be counted as individual resources, but contribute to the cemetery's historic setting and to its significance as a representative collection of nineteenth and twentieth century funerary art.

A relatively small number of family and commemorative plots in the cemetery's western division contain monuments of a distinctly larger scale than those in the remainder of the cemetery; these resources are included in the property's resource count and include one large obelisk, three monuments incorporating large statuary elements, and one bronze sculpture (see individual descriptions below). In addition, Oak Grove Cemetery contains a substantial community mausoleum built in 1912 and three small family mausoleums built between 1887 and 1924 (see individual descriptions below). A fourth family mausoleum was constructed in 1985 and is considered to be a noncontributing resource due to its relatively recent construction. All of the cemetery's family mausoleums are located at the north end of the cemetery's western division where the higher elevation provides scenic views across the landscape and of the bluffs east of the city.

Contributing Buildings, Structures, and Objects

Contributing buildings, structures, and objects located within Oak Grove Cemetery include one community mausoleum, three private family mausoleums, and five large-scale monuments. The property also contains one memorial arch that has already been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Due to the large number of smaller and mid-scale monuments and grave markers throughout the cemetery grounds, only those monuments that are of a distinctly larger scale than the surrounding majority are counted as individual resources. Small and mid-sized

grave markers that are representative of distinct trends in funerary art are not counted as individual resources, but representative examples of these are included in the property's photographic documentation (see additional information regarding funerary art in Section 8 below).

The following are brief descriptions of the contributing buildings, structures, and objects located within Oak Grove Cemetery.

Oak Grove Mausoleum (Map location B, Photos 5-10)

This Neoclassical mausoleum was constructed in 1912 following a design by Bennett F. Siebert with the People's Mausoleum Company (Waterloo, Iowa) serving as contractor. The building is located near the center of the western division of the cemetery, immediately east of Section 25. The mausoleum is rectangular in plan with stone block walls and a flat roof with a vaulted center flanked by rows of skylights (these are not visible from a pedestrian view outside the building). It is oriented along a north-south axis with paved paths running parallel to the west and east (front and rear) sides of the building. Primary characteristics of the building's exterior include a stepped stone foundation; stark expanses of smooth, unbroken wall space; a projecting cornice and unornamented frieze band that wraps around each façade; and a classical portico at the front entrance. The west (front) elevation of the building is symmetrical in composition with slightly projecting end and center bays. The only fenestration along the front façade consists of the doorway centered in the center bay. This entrance is comprised of a pair of double doors of metal construction with a rectangular, single-light transom above. The doors and transom sit within a rectangular stone surround that is flanked by Corinthian pilasters with a full entablature above. The front entrance is sheltered under a projecting stone portico. The portico features paired Doric columns that rest on shared stone pedestals; the columns support a pedimented gable roof. The stone pediment is accented with stone modillions and the building's year of construction is engraved in its center ("A.D. / 1912"). Below the pediment, a frieze is inscribed with the words "OAK GROVE MAUSOLEUM" with triglyphs centered above each of the support columns. Both side elevations feature three regularly-spaced, rectangular stained-glass windows with stone surrounds; the windows are protected on the exterior by semi-transparent panels that act as storm windows and obscure views of the stained glass from outside the building. The east (rear) elevation of the mausoleum features slightly projecting end bays and a projecting center bay. The only fenestration in the rear elevation consists of a pair of wood panel double doors with a rectangular, single-light transom that is centered in the projecting center bay; this rear entrance features a simple stone surround, mirroring the window surrounds on both side elevations.

The interior of the mausoleum contains a vestibule, chapel, side wings (each of which contains two parallel corridors), and a storage area and receiving tomb. In general, the building's interior is characterized by its smooth marble walls and floors, its vaulted and coffered ceilings, and its stained-glass windows and skylights. The mausoleum contains eight family vaults (with five or ten individual crypts each), 549 individual crypts, two columbaria (containing a total of 104 receiving spaces), and a receiving tomb containing 50 individual vaults. The mausoleum's front entrance opens into a small vestibule with a coffered ceiling that features gated doorways in each of its side walls. These doorways are accented by classically-inspired marble hoods and provide

access to private family vaults, each of which contains ten individual crypts. The vestibule is open to a wide center hall that serves as a chapel. The chapel features marble walls and a vaulted, peaked ceiling with two horizontally-oriented, rectangular stained glass windows just below the ceiling in each wall (the surrounding wall space in the vaulted upper portion of the chapel is clad in painted stucco or plaster, as is the ceiling).

Two open doorways in each side wall of the chapel are capped by delicate linear engraving; these doorways provide access to parallel corridors containing individual crypts that line the walls of each corridor from floor to ceiling. Each crypt is denoted by a marble panel bearing the information of the individual to whom it belongs. Stained glass skylights within coffered ceilings run the length of each corridor, providing ample light to the interior; additional light is provided by stained glass windows in the north and south walls. Each wing also contains three additional private family vaults with gated entrances and classically-inspired marble hoods; two of the three vaults in each wing contain five individual crypts while one in each wing contains ten individual crypts. Each pair of parallel corridors comprising the north and south wings is connected by a shorter corridor at its outer end. Columbaria were installed at the outer ends of each wing in recent years.

The eastern wall of the central chapel space (opposite the front entrance) contains two individual wood-framed doors with semi-transparent glazing and square transoms (which also contain semi-transparent glazing); the marble wall above this is inscribed with delicate linear detailing. A small marble dais is centered between these doors; the dais supports a small marble pulpit that is ornamented by a diminutive cross and engraved bands of classical detailing. A two-light sconce is centered in the wall above this. Both doors in the eastern wall provide access to a storage area located within the projecting east bay; this space features marble floors and marble wainscoting with plaster walls and ceiling. The east wall of this storage room contains a single wood door (with semi-transparent transom) that provides access to a receiving tomb (a temporary storage space for bodies during winter months when frozen ground prevented grave digging). The receiving tomb features a concrete floor, vaulted concrete ceiling, and side walls lined with rectangular concrete vaults (25 vaults on each side). A pair of wooden doors in the receiving tomb's eastern wall provides exterior access.

C.C. Washburn Monument, 1885 (Map location C, Photo 11)

Located in Section 31, just north of the Oak Grove Mausoleum, this monumental granite obelisk was erected in 1885 as a grave marker and memorial to Cadwallader Colden Washburn (1818-1882). The obelisk was designed and constructed by Smith Granite Works of Rhode Island. It consists of a square stone foundation atop which sits a pedestal from which rises a smooth stone obelisk. The pedestal is inscribed on each of its four sides with different epitaphs commemorating Washburn's accomplishments. The pedestal is further ornamented with carved bands of stylized botanical motifs and "WASHBURN" in relief along its base. At 45 feet in height, the Washburn Monument stands as the tallest monument in Oak Grove Cemetery. It is surrounded by a low, decorative wrought iron fence. In addition to his role as a prominent local businessman and philanthropist, C.C. Washburn served as a Major General during the Civil War (1862-1865), a United States congressman (1855-1861 and 1865-1869), and the governor of Wisconsin (1872-1874).

Civil War Monument, 1913 (Map location D, Photo 12)

Located in Section 32, this memorial to area veterans of the Civil War was constructed in 1913 (the sculptor or monument firm responsible for the work is unknown). The monument faces southeast, is composed of gray granite, and consists of a statue of an approximately life-size Union soldier atop a large, tapered, three-tiered base of rusticated granite. The uniformed soldier is depicted at ease, facing straight ahead, and holding an upturned rifle. A smooth stone panel in the southeast face of the base reads, "IN MEMORY OF OUR DECEASED COMRADES / 1861-1865 / ERECTED BY WILSON COLWELL POST NO.38 / G.A.R." Two 1,200-pound brass Civil War era cannons flank the monument; these were installed in their current locations in 1916. Behind (northwest) of the monument are four uniform rows of small stone tablets marking veterans' burials.

Hixon Monument, 1913 (Map location E, Photo 13, 22)

Located in Section 37 and installed in 1913, this monument consists of a patinated bronze sculpture of a mother and two small children designed by French-born sculptor Leonard Crunelle (1872-1944). The figures sit atop a stepped granite base with a curved front that is inscribed with the family name (Hixon) and a short poem. A smooth granite slab with a gently curved upper edge serves as a backdrop for the sculpture; the upper corners of the slab are minimally accented by three small, vertically stacked squares engraved with botanical motifs. The monument sits within a semicircular recess that is accessed via three shallow stone steps flanked by abutting, curved stone benches (exedra) that face inwards toward the sculpture. The monument's architectural elements (the base and exedra composition) were designed by the Chicago firm of Pond & Pond. It stands within the Hixon family plot as a memorial to Minnie (Scott) Hixon (1863-1909), wife of Frank P. Hixon, and other members of the Hixon family, several of whom held prominent roles in La Crosse business and civic affairs from the 1850s through the 1960s.

Losey Memorial Arch, 1901 (Map location A, Photo 14)

Located at the southwest entrance to the cemetery, this Classical Revival arch was constructed in 1901 following a design by local architects Hugo Schick and Andrew Roth with the Crosby and Hynne Granite Company (La Crosse) serving as contractors. Constructed of limestone with a darker sandstone foundation, the structure features a wide center arch (through which the cemetery's main entry drive passes) with narrower pedestrian-scale arches on each side. The arch was installed as a memorial to Joseph W. Losey (1834-1901), a local attorney and long-time president of the Oak Grove Cemetery Association who led efforts to improve the cemetery during its formative years. The Losey Memorial Arch was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 under *Criterion C: Architecture* as an excellent example of the Classical Revival style as articulated in a commemorative monumental arch.¹

¹ National Register of Historic Places. Losey Memorial Arch. La Crosse, La Crosse County, Wisconsin. National Register #02000598.

Gund Mausoleum, 1924 (Map location G, Photo 15)

This small Neoclassical mausoleum was constructed in 1924 in Section 97. It is rectangular in plan with granite walls and a pedimented gable roof. The front elevation faces south and contains a central pair of ornamental bronze doors within a simple stone surround that is inscribed with the family name (Gund) above the doors. The entrance is sheltered under a shallow portico consisting of four fluted Ionic columns that support an unornamented entablature and an equally austere pediment. A full-width granite step provides access to the entrance. Other ornamentation consists of squared pilasters that are located at each corner of the structure. A rectangular window with metal grille is centered in the rear elevation. A poured concrete embankment provides erosion protection in back of the structure where the ground slopes away from the cemetery. The mausoleum was constructed to serve members of the Gund family, heirs to one of the largest breweries in La Crosse which operated between the 1890s and the advent of prohibition.

Cargill Mausoleum, 1887 (Map location H, Photo 16)

Located in Section 49 and built into a slight rise, this small Neoclassical mausoleum was constructed in 1887. It is rectangular in plan with granite block walls and a pedimented gable roof. The front elevation faces north (away from the adjacent pathway) and features a central doorway with a decorative metal gate and simple stone surround. The entrance is sheltered under a shallow portico that is accessed via three full-width, shallow stone steps and is supported by squared pilasters at the outside corners and smooth Ionic columns on each side of the entrance. These support an unornamented entablature bearing the name "S.D. GARGILL" in relief at its center. Above this is an unornamented pediment. Each side elevation features a single rectangular window with simple stone surround and decorative metal grille. Squared pilasters, mirroring those of the primary façade, adorn both rear corners of the building. Approximately ten feet west of the structure, a freestanding set of stone steps are built into the hillside to facilitate access to the front side of the structure. The mausoleum was built to serve the Cargill family, founders of the grain elevator company of the same name that has since become a multi-national corporation. The mausoleum bears the name of S.D. (Samuel Davis) Cargill.

Easton Mausoleum, 1888 (Map location I, Photo 17)

This small Gothic Revival mausoleum was constructed in 1888 at the north end of Section 37 at the top of a slight rise. It is rectangular in plan with smooth granite block walls, a rusticated granite foundation, and a front-facing gable roof. The structure's front elevation faces south and features a central doorway sheltered by a small entry porch that bears the name "EASTON" across its upper face. The doorway is enclosed by a bronze gate (behind which is a pair of stone doors with bronze handles). Above the doorway is a decorative, trefoil arch stained-glass window featuring botanical imagery. The entry porch that shelters the doorway is accessed via a stone step and consists of two beveled stone piers that support short columns with exaggerated Corinthian capitals; these support a peaked roof with a trefoil arched underside. Centered in the wall above this is a small quatrefoil window opening set within a circular recess. Above this, a stone panel caps the gable end and bears the year 1888 in relief. The top of this stone cap serves as a base for an ornate stone cross that is accented with small Corinthian columns and a center

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rosette. The mausoleum is further ornamented by highly decorative bands of botanical carving above the doorway on each side of the entry porch. Each side elevation features a single, narrow, trefoil arched, stained-glass window. A small quatrefoil window is located just below the gable in the rear (north) elevation. Approximately 16 feet in front (south) of the building, a set of three stone steps is set into the slight rise atop which the mausoleum sits to facilitate access. This mausoleum was constructed to serve Jason and Sarah Easton and family. Jason Clark Easton (1823-1901) was a prominent banker, railroad stockholder, and owner of vast amounts of agricultural lands in the upper Midwest.

McMillan Monument, c.1900 (Map location J, Photo 18)

Located in Section 32, this stone monument was erected c.1900. It consists of a rectangular, stepped base that serves as a pedestal for a rectangular block featuring rounded columns with Corinthian capitals at each corner. This is topped by a pyramidal cap upon which sits a square pedestal that supports an approximately life-size stone statue of a robed woman with a raised right arm; a large, garlanded cross rises to the height of the figure's shoulder and is supported by her left arm. The monument was designed by an unknown artist and installed at Oak Grove Cemetery as a memorial to the family of Alexander and Sarah (Parker) McMillan; Alexander McMillan (1825-1901) was a founder of the Black River Logging Company and served terms as mayor of La Crosse, county commissioner, and state assemblyman.

Wood Monument, c.1900 (Map location K, Photo 19)

Located in Section 32 and facing north, this stone monument was erected c.1900. It consists of a stepped granite base (bearing the name "WOOD" in relief) from which rises a squared pier that is inscribed with epitaphs to members of the Wood family in each face with a decorative inscribed band of botanical detailing above. The cap of the pier is a pedestal with overhanging triangular hoods, the front-facing of which is ornately inscribed with a W and scrolling, botanical detailing. This cap serves as a base for an approximately life-size statue of an angel that is carved in a lighter colored stone than the base below. This somber figure stands robed with crossed arms supporting a long trumpet. The monument was installed at Oak Grove Cemetery as a memorial to various members of the Wood family, including Helen (Wood) Manville (1839-1912) who was a nationally recognized poet.

Noncontributing Resources

The cemetery's five noncontributing resources include a small family mausoleum, a columbarium, an office with an attached garden mausoleum, and two maintenance buildings. All are considered to be noncontributing resources due to their relatively recent dates of construction.

Trane/Hood Mausoleum, 1985 (Map location F, Photo 25)

This small Contemporary mausoleum was constructed in 1985 along the cemetery's wooded northern edge in Section 97. It is rectangular in plan with smooth granite walls and a flat slab roof with a slightly curved parapet ornamenting the front elevation. The structure faces south and is symmetrical in composition with a center entrance enclosed by a metal grille door. A simple door surround consists of a narrow band of carved botanical motifs. A carved garland is centered above the door with "TRANE / HOOD" inscribed on each side of this. Stepped blocks

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act as low wing walls on each side of the structure and bear the names and birth/death dates of members of the Trane and Hood families. A cut stone landing in front of the mausoleum is flanked by concrete urns. The mausoleum was constructed for members of the Trane and Hood families, several of whom were reinterred here following its 1985 construction. The families were known for the business founded by James and Rueben Trane in 1913. The Trane Company, manufacturer of heating and cooling equipment, has since become an international corporation.

Columbarium, 2012 (Map location L, Photo 26)

Constructed in 2012, the columbarium is located in Section 101 just beyond the Losey Memorial Arch at the cemetery's main entrance. This resource consists of ten rectangular granite and marble columbaria that are symmetrically arranged around a diamond-shaped walkway clad in red brick. Each columbaria wall is divided into a grid of individual niches that are enclosed by marble panels. At the center of this group is a grass area landscaped with seasonal plantings and a central flagpole. Low, bi-level, yin-yang shaped fountains of concrete block construction sit at the north and south ends of the columbarium ensemble.

Oak Grove Cemetery Office and Garden Mausoleum, 1989/1998 (Map location M, Photos 27-28)

The cemetery office building was constructed in 1989 with the garden mausoleum built off of its southwest corner in 1998. This one-story complex is irregular in plan with brick walls and flat and hipped roofs, the latter of which are clad in metal shingles. The front elevation faces south and is asymmetrical in composition; the brown brick walls are accented by a narrow stone or concrete beltcourse that continues across the primary façade above the foundation level. A projecting, hipped-roof mass contains a central pair of wood and glass doors recessed under a projecting gable with stone cladding; these doors provide access to an interior chapel. Individual round-arched windows flank each side of this entry bay. East of this is another hipped-roof mass containing a three-part arcade behind which are recessed individual banks of metal-framed casement windows. A projecting, gable-roofed entry bay in the building's east elevation contains a metal-framed glass door that provides access to the office portion of the complex. The interior of the building was remodeled in 2021 with modern fixtures and finishes throughout. A full-height brick wall projects from the southwest corner of the office building; a hipped roof shelters a gated opening in the wall that serves as a direct entrance to the open-air garden mausoleum within. East of this, the unbroken expanse of brick contains individually-mounted metal lettering that reads "OAK GROVE / CEMETERY / GARDEN / MAUSOLEUM." The walls on either side of this are accented by three recessed planter bays under metal-shingled pent roofs. A hipped-roof archway is located in the mausoleum wall's southwest corner with metal grilles located in the space within the arches. The brick mausoleum wall extends along the west and north ends of the lot on which it sits, enclosing a mown-grass lawn. A brick wall extends from the northeast corner of the building and contains a metal gate, through which the cemetery's maintenance buildings are accessed.

Maintenance Buildings, 1974/1989 (Map locations N and O; Photos 29-30)

Constructed in 1974, the easternmost maintenance building is a rectangular metal pole barn with metal walls and a metal shed roof. The front elevation faces south and contains four vehicular bays with overhead metal doors and a single pedestrian-scale entrance. An additional pedestrian door and a sliding window are located in the building's east elevation. Constructed in 1989, the westernmost maintenance building is a rectangular metal pole barn with metal walls and a metal-clad gable roof. The front elevation faces south and contains a single vehicular bay with overhead door and a single pedestrian-scale entrance.

Resource Inventory

The following inventory lists each counted resource within the property's historic boundary and includes each resource's historic name, resource type, date of construction, Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) number, and contributing (C) or non-contributing (NC) classification.²

Historic Name	Resource Type	Construction Date	AHI #	Classification
Oak Grove Cemetery	Site	1878-1930	68737	C
Oak Grove Cemetery Mausoleum	Building	1912	80184	C
Losey Memorial Arch	Structure	1901	42198	C (NRHP listed)
C.C. Washburn Monument	Object	1885	34888	C
Civil War Monument	Object	1913	245663	C
Hixon Family Monument	Object	1913	42184	C
Gund Mausoleum	Structure	1924	42190	C
Cargill Mausoleum	Structure	1887	42203	C
Easton Mausoleum	Structure	1888	42254	C
McMillan Monument	Object	c.1900	245664	C
Wood Monument	Object	c.1900	245665	C
Trane/Hood Mausoleum	Structure	1985	68736	NC
Columbarium	Object	2012	245669	NC
Oak Grove Cemetery Office and Garden Mausoleum	Building	1989, 1998	245666	NC
Maintenance building (west)	Building	1989	245667	NC
Maintenance building (east)	Building	1974	245668	NC

Integrity

Oak Grove Cemetery retains all of its original character-defining features, including its winding pathways, rolling landscape with scenic views at its highest elevations, wooded perimeter with intervening trees and other plantings throughout the grounds, and range of funerary markers

² The Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) is a publicly-accessible digital database maintained by the Wisconsin Historical Society. The AHI is searchable by a variety of parameters and can be accessed through the Wisconsin Historical Society website at www.wisconsinhistory.org.

ranging from grand monuments and mausoleums to simple stone tablets. In addition, the original spatial relationship between pathways, burial plots, and built features is largely unaltered. The proportion of recent burials (those with newer grave markers) to historic burials is relatively small and, with the exception of the Trane-Hood Mausoleum which is located at the far northeastern corner of the western division, the modern grave markers are typically not of a size and scale to overwhelm or encroach on the cemetery's historic appearance. As such, the historic features continue to dominate the landscape and the cemetery remains clearly recognizable as a representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement.

Although newer burials are not limited to any individual part of the cemetery, the most recent section opened for the sale of burial plots is Section 102 at the southwestern edge of the cemetery's western division; no pathways or landscaping features were added or removed to facilitate the opening of this section in 2002. In addition, the grave markers in this area (and in other areas opened in the later twentieth century) are in keeping with the size and scale of the majority of those in the older parts of the cemetery and make up a relatively small proportion of the 55-acre site.

The only other major alterations occurring outside of the period of significance are the construction of the cemetery office and garden mausoleum complex, two maintenance buildings, a small family mausoleum, and a columbarium. Although construction of the office complex required the demolition of the original caretaker's residence and greenhouse, the office complex and the adjacent maintenance buildings are clustered at the extreme southwest corner of the cemetery in a location that is physically separated from the historic cemetery grounds and which has always been reserved for administrative and maintenance functions. As such, the buildings do not encroach on or detract from any significant historic landscape features, and the addition of these buildings does not detract from the cemetery's historic landscape design. Although the columbarium is located within the historic cemetery grounds, it has been designed to fit within the level, circular space that had historically been reserved for a decorative fountain (removed around the mid-twentieth century), requiring no significant alterations to the cemetery's historic path alignment or topography. In addition, its location near the cemetery entrance does not significantly detract from historic vistas within the cemetery grounds. Similarly, the 1985 construction of the Trane-Hood Mausoleum at the northeast corner of the grounds has not altered the historic circulation paths in this area and its location at a far edge of the western division is not a substantial intrusion on the historic landscape.

END OF DESCRIPTION, DO NOT DELETE

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Landscape Architecture

Art

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is checked.)

N/A

Period of Significance

1878-1930

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

1878, 1885, 1887, 1888, 1901, 1912,
1913, 1924

Architect/Builder

Bliss, Henry Isaac
Thorpe, John
Siebert, Bennett F.
People's Mausoleum Company

Statement of Significance: Summary

Although it began in the mid-nineteenth century as a simple burial ground with little attention to landscape design, Oak Grove Cemetery began to take on its present aesthetic in 1878 when the Oak Grove Cemetery Association began its transformation of the site into a park-like sanctuary. In keeping with the Rural Cemetery Movement that had taken hold in the United States during the nineteenth century, Oak Grove was designed with a network of meandering pathways, a border of mature woodland, many naturalistic plantings and mature trees shading the pathways and interspersed throughout the landscape, and gently rolling topography that provided scenic vistas of the city's eastern bluffs at its highest points. Together, these features render Oak Grove Cemetery a fine representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement. In addition, Oak Grove contains an especially fine and varied collection of historic burial markers, monuments, and mausoleums that are excellent examples of funerary art and architecture from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The period of significance for Oak Grove Cemetery is 1878, the year the Oak Grove Cemetery Association began to implement its landscape design for the site, to 1930, the approximate year the latest portions of the cemetery were laid out in keeping with its original naturalistic aesthetic.³ Because of its local significance in the area of *Landscape*

³ City mapping from 1931 and aerial imagery from 1938 indicate that the primary pathways in the eastern division had been executed by this time, although individual sections were opened for burials in phases through the remainder of the twentieth century.

Architecture and Art, Oak Grove Cemetery is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion C*. The property meets the conditions set forth in *Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries* as it derives its primary significance from its distinctive design features as a fine representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement and from its wide collection of historic funerary art and architecture.

Period of Significance and Justification

The period of significance for Oak Grove Cemetery is 1878, the year the Oak Grove Cemetery Association began to implement its landscape design for the site, to 1930, the approximate year the latest portions of the cemetery were laid out in keeping with its historic naturalistic aesthetic.

Criteria Consideration

Oak Grove Cemetery meets the conditions set forth in *Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries* as it derives its primary significance from its distinctive design features as a fine representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement and from its wide collection of historic funerary art and architecture.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Historic Context

The following historic context includes a brief overview of the history and development of the city of La Crosse, a detailed property history of Oak Grove Cemetery, a history of the Rural Cemetery Movement, and a brief overview of nineteenth and twentieth century funerary art.

City of La Crosse

Located in western Wisconsin at the confluence of the Black and Mississippi Rivers, the present-day area of La Crosse was home to the Ho-Chunk, Ojibwe, and Sioux long before the first Euro-American settler arrived in 1841. Prior to permanent Euro-American settlement, French explorers in the late seventeenth century named the location “La Crosse” after the game they observed native peoples playing on the prairie (the name may have been derived from the French name for field hockey, “le jeu de la crosse,” literally translated as “the stick game”). Initially established as a fur trade outpost in the early 1840s, the community grew rapidly due to its important location along the upper Mississippi River. By 1853, the population of the settlement had reached 543. Within three years, this number had more than doubled and, in 1856, La Crosse was formally incorporated as a city.⁴ At that time, the La Crosse Marsh – a vast wetland located on either side of the La Crosse River – served as the city’s northern boundary and separated it from the neighboring village of North La Crosse (which boasted a number of important industries of its own as well as a growing population).

With a reliable steamboat landing since at least 1852 as well as the arrival of the La Crosse & Milwaukee Railroad in 1858 and both the Chicago & North Western Railroad and the Green

⁴ “La Crosse, Wisconsin,” Wisconsin Historical Society, [wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2392](https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2392) (accessed March 12, 2020).

Bay & Minnesota Railroad in 1876, La Crosse quickly became an important regional transportation center and was ideally situated to expand its already prominent lumber and brewing industries. Not surprisingly, the city's population during this period exploded with the number of residents more than doubling between 1860 and 1870 and nearly doubling again between 1870 and 1880, by which time La Crosse had become Wisconsin's second largest city with a population of 14,505.⁵ A substantial portion of this population growth resulted from the annexation of the adjacent village of North La Crosse in 1871. The city's population would continue to rise through the early twentieth century. During this time, La Crosse continued to serve as an important transportation and industrial center for the surrounding region. The city also became known as a regional center for education with three colleges and universities established between 1890 and 1912, the most prominent of which was the La Crosse State Normal School (the forerunner of today's University of Wisconsin – La Crosse).⁶

Another population increase occurred during the 1920s at which time the city grew by nearly 10,000 residents so that by 1930 its population had reached 39,614. This rapid population increase resulted in a construction boom that averaged more than one hundred new buildings each year of the decade.⁷ Through the remainder of the twentieth century, the city's economic stability and growth continued as it became home to a number of national corporations and major health care systems. The economic benefits of this development, coupled with the continued growth of the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, has ensured the regional prominence of the city through the present day.

Property History

An early burial ground was established within the present-day boundaries of Oak Grove Cemetery in 1851 when local church deacon, farmer, and land agent Samuel T. Smith set aside between seven and eight acres of land south of the La Crosse Marsh to be operated as a secular cemetery on what was then the city's north side. Prior to this, residents utilized an informal burial ground on the city's west side (no above-ground evidence of this cemetery remains). The first burial at the new city cemetery occurred in 1852, and by 1857 the site had been named "Wautonga Cemetery" (reportedly a Native American term meaning "Oak Forest"), although by the 1860s, most publicized accounts refer to the site simply as "the La Crosse Cemetery." Smith operated the cemetery as a private enterprise, selling burial plots at twenty dollars each; however, he made few improvements to the site and without adequate maintenance, the cemetery soon became overgrown, and broken fences did little prevent cattle and hogs from wandering the cemetery or young people from "desecrating the grounds with Sunday shooting."⁸

By 1869, a local newspaper described the neglected condition of the cemetery as nothing less than "a disgrace to the city" with additional editorials echoing this sentiment.⁹ The same year,

⁵ Joan Rausch and Richard Zeitlin, *City of La Crosse, Intensive Survey Report: Architectural and Historical Survey Project* (prepared for City of La Crosse, Wisconsin by Architectural Researches, Inc., August 1984 with addendum prepared by Joan Rausch and Carol Lohry Cartwright, July 1996), 16-20.

⁶ "La Crosse, Wisconsin," Wisconsin Historical Society, [wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2392](https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Article/CS2392) (accessed March 12, 2020).

⁷ Rausch, Zeitlin, and Cartwright, *City of La Crosse, Intensive Survey Report*, 23.

⁸ "Cemetery Sold," *La Crosse Daily Democrat*, July 10, 1869.

⁹ "La Crosse Cemetery," *La Crosse Daily Republican*, July 13, 1869.

Name of Property

Smith sold the cemetery to Gideon Strasberger, a retired railroad administrator who purchased additional land east and south of the original site, bringing its size up to 32 acres.¹⁰ However, without an organized cemetery association, community group, or church congregation to care for the property, maintenance continued to be inadequate. By the early 1870s, many in the community considered the condition of the city cemetery to be shamefully out of step with La Crosse's growing regional importance and an embarrassing detriment to civic pride.

Recognizing the great need for stewardship of the site, prominent members of the community formed a non-profit organization in 1872 for the purposes of acquiring and improving the cemetery grounds.¹¹ Incorporated as the Oak Grove Cemetery Association of La Crosse, the group purchased the cemetery grounds for \$3,000 in 1873. Henry I. Bliss, a Yale educated civil engineer who served lengthy terms in La Crosse as both the City Engineer and County Surveyor was chosen as the Association secretary with J. Irwin Smith serving as president. In anticipation of the formal organization of a cemetery association and the much-needed expansion of the early cemetery plat, a letter from an unnamed citizen printed in the *La Crosse Republican and Leader* pleaded, "In the name of all that is joyous and creditable, when the addition comes to be plotted, let a competent and artistical engineer be employed, capable of a serpentine line, and able to give meandering walks and drives, which shall sweep with the natural slopes and declivities of the site" in contrast with the original burial ground that, in the opinion of the writer had been "irretrievably spoiled at the outset with a wretched plan of absolute squares [with no] picturesqueness or variety in effect."¹² When Henry Bliss completed his formal survey of the cemetery grounds in 1878, platting new pathways and laying out new sections, the resulting design was perfectly aligned with this description.

By this time, the Association's debt from its purchase of the property had been cleared and, under the direction of prominent local attorney Joseph W. Losey (who initially served as trustee and then as president of the Oak Grove Cemetery Association from 1879 to his death in 1901), laborers were hired to begin clearing overgrown brush and broken fencing from the site. As work progressed, Bliss' plans for the site were reported to include the installation of a network of walking and driving paths that followed the natural topography of the land and the construction of a terrace with a stone retaining wall along the marsh edges of the property (the stone retaining wall remains, but has been largely infilled so that only the upper portion of this is visible along the cemetery's western edge – see Photo 1). Numbered sections were laid out, the majority of which were defined by the surrounding pathways. Plantings included up to three thousand evergreen trees to be set along the periphery of the site, approximately 300 elm and maple trees planted throughout the grounds, and hundreds of climbing ivies and vines planted near the old oak trees that remained on the site.¹³ By the summer of 1879, the construction of graveled pathways throughout the grounds had been completed with a large circular area near the cemetery entrance reserved for a naturalistic "rock work" fountain (no longer extant) designed by local plumber, machinist, and gardener Prosper Steves; during the same period, Steves also

¹⁰ *History of La Crosse County, Wisconsin* (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881), 512-513.

¹¹ "Cemetery Association," *Republican Leader*, November 30, 1872.

¹² "The Cemetery," *Republican Leader*, April 16, 1872.

¹³ "The Cemetery," *La Crosse Chronicle*, October 25, 1878.

"The Silent City," *La Crosse Chronicle*, September 26, 1878.

designed numerous flower arrangements and other plantings on the grounds. Construction of a caretaker's residence at the southwest corner of the cemetery (no longer extant) began in July 1879; this modest, Gothic-Revival building would serve as the home of the cemetery superintendent and his family (a role held briefly by Prosper Steves). At about the same time, construction of La Crosse Street – the sole access road to the cemetery – was completed at the urging of the Cemetery Association (although the road had been surveyed and appears on maps as early as 1857, contemporary accounts indicate that it had yet to be fully extended).¹⁴

Much of the praise for the completion of this work was credited to Joseph Losey who had been the Cemetery Association's leading promoter from its earliest days. Losey was also responsible for executing the Association's business affairs during this period and raising the majority of the needed funds to pay for the site's vast improvements; in addition, it was reported that Losey personally oversaw most aspects of the cemetery's on-site development since its acquisition by the Oak Grove Cemetery Association.¹⁵ By the close of 1879, the design for Oak Grove Cemetery, as envisioned by Henry Bliss and Joseph Losey, had been fully executed and the grounds had become a source of pride to city residents. A contemporary observer of the completed design praised its park-like nature, writing that from the cemetery's entrance

“winding drives and walks radiate to every part of the cemetery. These are bordered with native trees of various kinds, as the elm, basswood, ash, hard maple, etc. while evergreens are profusely scattered...In process of time, almost every drive will be a continuous archway of shade, forming vistas of rare beauty, at once most pleasing to the sight and most grateful to all having occasion to ride or walk beneath the protecting canopy of foliage.”¹⁶

With the completion of the cemetery's site work, Joseph Losey began to investigate the requirements needed for the construction of a greenhouse on the grounds. Such a building would allow for the production of new plants for ongoing cemetery maintenance and beautification and would also produce flowers to sell to plot owners and cemetery visitors. Losey travelled to Chicago's Lincoln Park Conservatory to locate a professional gardener to assist with the planning and construction of the building. To this end, Losey hired German-born landscape gardener Paul Zoellner who had been working in this capacity at Lincoln Park. Zoellner traveled to La Crosse to supervise construction of Oak Grove's greenhouse and returned to Chicago upon completion of the work.¹⁷ Located adjacent to the supervisor's residence (on the site of the existing cemetery office complex), the greenhouse – consisting of a block of parallel, connected glass-roofed buildings and a brick entry block – was completed in 1884. The same year, Losey, acting as president of the Oak Grove Cemetery Association, offered Zoellner a position as assistant to Prosper Steves, who was then serving as acting superintendent of Oak Grove; Zoellner accepted this offer and was promoted to superintendent two years later – a position he held until his retirement in 1936.¹⁸

¹⁴ “The Cemetery,” *Republican & Leader*, July 1, 1879.

¹⁵ “The Cemetery,” *Republican & Leader*, July 1, 1879.

¹⁶ History of La Crosse County, Wisconsin (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881), 512-513.

¹⁷ “Biography of Paul Zoellner, Sr.” in Oak Grove Cemetery vertical file at La Crosse Public Library Archives, La Crosse, WI (accessed April 27, 2023).

¹⁸ “Biography of Paul Zoellner, Sr.” in Oak Grove Cemetery vertical file at La Crosse Public Library Archives, La

In the fall of 1885, Oak Grove Cemetery received its first major monument: a memorial obelisk commemorating former Wisconsin governor, Civil War general, and U.S. congressman, Cadwallader C. Washburn. The 44-ton obelisk arrived from Smith Granite Works of Rhode Island in September 1885 and, over the course of three weeks, was conveyed to the cemetery by 32 draft horses and installed on its foundation near the center of the cemetery grounds.¹⁹ Two years later, the first of the cemetery's private family mausoleums – the Neoclassical style Cargill Mausoleum – was constructed in Section 49, at the north end of the cemetery to serve members of the family of Midwestern grain magnate Samuel D. Cargill. As the city's only secular cemetery during this period, Oak Grove also served large numbers of the city's middle- and working-class residents and continually surpassed the La Crosse Catholic Cemetery – La Crosse's only other sizable cemetery in operation at the time – in terms of individual burial plots sold (in 1888 alone, Oak Grove Cemetery was reported to have held more than three times as many burials over the course of the year than the Catholic Cemetery).²⁰

The cemetery's appeal as a final resting place for prominent La Crosse residents continued through the remainder of the nineteenth century with the erection of the Easton Mausoleum in 1888 (constructed for the family of prominent financier, Jason Clark Easton, in Section 37), sculptural monuments to the McMillan and Wood families, and a number of smaller memorials to other prominent families and individuals.²¹ Foreseeing the future need for expansion of the cemetery grounds, the Oak Grove Cemetery Association purchased additional acreage east of the Green Bay & Western Railroad track in 1892; this area would be referred to as the cemetery's eastern division.²² Following the death of Joseph Losey in March 1901, the cemetery received what was (and is) unquestionably its largest and most visible memorial to a single individual. Donations from citizens of La Crosse, recognizing that Losey had done "more than anyone else in beautifying Oak Grove Cemetery," funded the construction of a large, Neoclassical memorial arch spanning the entry drive at the cemetery's southwest corner.²³ Designed by local architect Hugo Schick (of the firm Schick & Roth), the structure was built by the Crosby and Hynne Granite Company over the course of four months and was dedicated in May 1902 during a grand ceremony featuring a brass band, a variety of prominent speakers, and a large crowd who had gathered to pay their respects.²⁴

In 1904, the Oak Grove Cemetery Association initiated plans to enlarge the cemetery by developing the remaining land at the eastern end of the western division (roughly Sections 39-50). To this end, the Cemetery Association hired John Thorpe, a Chicago-based horticulturalist and landscape gardener who had formerly served as Superintendent of the Bureau of Floriculture

Crosse, WI (accessed April 27, 2023).

¹⁹ "The Washburn Monument," *Republican & Leader*, September 29, 1885.

²⁰ "Oak Grove Cemetery," *Republican & Leader*, January 11, 1889.

²¹ "At Oak Grove Cemetery," *La Crosse Chronicle*, September 16, 1891.

"The Stoddard Memorial," *Republican & Leader*, July 11, 1896.

²² La Crosse County, Wisconsin, Deed Book 79: 114, 475.

²³ "J.W. Losey Made Early Park Plan," *La Crosse Tribune*, July 29, 1910.

²⁴ "Losey Memorial Arch Dedicated in La Crosse," *Brandon Times*, June 5, 1902.

National Register of Historic Places, Losey Memorial Arch, La Crosse, La Crosse County, Wisconsin, National Register #02000598.

Name of Property

at the 1893 Worlds Columbian Exposition. Thorpe's design platted burial plots in the remainder of the cemetery's western division and "extend[ed] the drives to conform with the balance of the cemetery."²⁵ Thorpe's considerate design ensured that the naturalistic and rustic aesthetic of the site remained its key characteristic. By 1910, the cemetery could be easily accessed via a regular route on the city's streetcar system, and a writer for the *La Crosse Tribune* proudly observed the completed design for Oak Grove's western division, noting that "strangers who visit Oak Grove have been heard to say that while there are larger cemeteries within the borders of the nation, and very beautiful ones, there are few more beautiful than Oak Grove of La Crosse."²⁶

During his time in La Crosse, Thorpe also drew plans for Myrick Park (formerly known as Lake Park, which borders the cemetery to the east), and reports suggest that he likely crafted the design for Oak Grove's eastern division during this period as well. However, site work within the eastern division was not begun until 1909.²⁷ By the fall of 1909, an entrance drive from La Crosse Street had been completed to the new eastern division as the Green Bay & Western Railroad line between the two tracts prevented direct access to the eastern tract from the west. With the desire to physically connect these two spaces, the Cemetery Association considered a future project to construct an ornamental concrete "viaduct" over the railroad tracks, although such a plan was never executed.²⁸ The same year, the Oak Grove Cemetery Association issued a public notice that automobiles and bicycles would be allowed within the cemetery grounds, although this privilege was extended only to lot owners and required a permit.²⁹

While the Oak Grove Cemetery Association was engaged with the development of these new portions of the cemetery grounds, local clergy and businessmen began advocating for the construction of a chapel on the cemetery grounds to provide a shelter for winter services; at the time, the Cemetery Association remained uncommitted to such a project in the belief that it could not justify the expenditure.³⁰ However, by 1912, interest not only in a chapel, but in a community mausoleum led the Cemetery Association to approve construction of a substantial mausoleum in a clearing at the center of the western division at a cost of \$132,000. Designed by Bennett F. Seibert (Mansfield, Ohio) as contracted by the People's Mausoleum Company (Waterloo, Iowa), the mausoleum contained both individual and family crypts as well as a modest chapel. The People's Mausoleum Company completed its construction of the facility in late fall 1912, following which a number of burials at Oak Grove were disinterred and relocated to the new mausoleum at the request of families who had purchased crypts in the new building.³¹ A dedication ceremony for the Oak Grove Mausoleum was held in July 1913 with an estimated attendance of nearly one thousand.³² Local newspapers covering the mausoleum's construction considered it an asset to Oak Grove Cemetery and to the community at large, describing the

²⁵ "Will Enlarge Oak Grove Cemetery," *La Crosse Leader Press*, April 9, 1904.

²⁶ "J.W. Losey Made Early Park Plan," *La Crosse Tribune*, July 29, 1910.

²⁷ "Plan is to Extend the Burying Ground," *La Crosse Chronicle*, October 2, 1909.

²⁸ "Plan is to Extend the Burying Ground," *La Crosse Chronicle*, October 2, 1909.

²⁹ "Oak Grove Cemetery Association," *La Crosse Tribune*, April 26, 1909.

³⁰ "Chapel at Oak Grove Cemetery," *La Crosse Tribune*, April 9, 1907.

³¹ "Nine Bodies are Disinterred Today," *La Crosse Tribune*, November 21, 1912.

³² "Dedicate Tomb at Oak Grove," *La Crosse Tribune*, July 6, 1913.

Name of Property

County and State

building as “one of the most beautiful community mausoleums that has yet been built” and “a structure of exceptional artistic beauty.”³³

Two additional memorials were installed in the cemetery in 1913: a sculptural memorial to Minnie (Scott) Hixon and a prominent monument to local veterans of the Civil War. Installed in a shady setting in Section 37 with accompanying granite benches from which to contemplate the work, the Hixon Memorial stands as the cemetery’s most overt example of “high art.” The work was commissioned by Frank P. Hixon to serve as a memorial to his wife Minnie (who had passed away in 1909) and to adorn the Hixon family plot. This bronze sculpture of a mother and children was designed over a two-year period by French-American sculptor Leonard Crunelle with the stone elements (the base, background slab, and flanking benches) designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Pond & Pond. Upon the work’s completion, the work was highly praised by local art professor David Orland Coate and by Crunelle’s mentor, Lorado Taft, the latter of whom was then regarded as one of the country’s foremost sculptors. In a letter to Professor Coate, Taft wrote that

“nothing more beautiful than this [figural] group has come from an American sculptor’s studio within the last ten years...His group has a compactness, a sculptural simplicity of mass worthy of the best period; while within its almost austere contours is a wealth of light and shade. Strength and tenderness are here combined in harmonious record. The grave mother figure protects her young, who smile back their unconscious gratitude...here...is a message of grace and affection which will speak to refined souls through the years to come...America is the richer for this work.”³⁴

With similar sentiment, Dr. Coate remarked upon the monument’s particular distinction among the surrounding cemetery markers: “Not often is a work of art from a prominent sculptor brought to a city of this size; still more rarely are the monuments in the average cemetery of sufficient artistic merit to make them objects of more than passing interest to any but the friends of those whose resting places they mark...the Hixon monument...is a work of high art...in which our whole community may take pride.”³⁵

Dedicated the same year as the Hixon Memorial, the cemetery’s Civil War Monument was sponsored by the local chapter of the Grand Army of the Republic to mark the gravesites of local veterans of the Civil War. The monument (consisting of an approximately life-sized stone sculpture of a uniformed soldier atop a rusticated granite base as executed by an unknown artist) was dedicated in a grand ceremony in May 1913.³⁶ The monument was further embellished with two Civil War era brass cannons that were installed on either side of it in 1916.

³³ “Oak Grove Cemetery One of Most Beautiful Burial Grounds in the Country,” *La Crosse Tribune and Leader Press*, May 30, 1920.

“Nine Bodies are Disinterred Today,” *La Crosse Tribune*, November 21, 1912.

³⁴ Lorado Taft to D.O. Coate, October 27, 1912. As published in “The Hixon Memorial and Its Sculptor,” *La Crosse Tribune*, December 14, 1913.

³⁵ “The Hixon Memorial and Its Sculptor,” *La Crosse Tribune*, December 14, 1913.

³⁶ “City United to Honor Heroes of Great Struggle,” *La Crosse Tribune*, May 30, 1913.

The next major installation at Oak Grove occurred in 1924 with the construction of the Neoclassical style Gund Mausoleum in Section 50. Constructed as a final resting place for members of the prominent Gund family (heirs to one of the city's largest breweries), the mausoleum was the last to be constructed at Oak Grove within the property's period of significance.

By the 1930s, the cemetery's western division had largely taken on its present appearance as trees planted fifty years previously had reached full maturity, most of the existing major monuments and mausoleums had been constructed, and all pathways delineating individual sections were in place. Although numerous available lots ensured that burial in the western division would continue through the remainder of the twentieth century (and to the present-day), the majority of monuments and markers constructed during the later twentieth century were of a relatively modest scale (per Cemetery Association guidelines adopted during this period). Meanwhile, by about 1930, the primary pathways in the cemetery's eastern division had been laid out, although individual sections were opened in phases over the following years beginning at the southern end of the tract and moving north.³⁷ Although the Green Bay & Western Railroad tracks dividing the cemetery grounds had been abandoned by the railroad company in 1922, they remained in use by the city for years afterward to facilitate delivery of coal to the municipal pumping station that had been built just north of Oak Grove's eastern division. Finally, in 1956, the City of La Crosse purchased the former railroad right-of-way and converted this portion of the route to today's East Avenue North.³⁸ This prompted the Cemetery Association to extend pathways in each division to the new East Avenue North to allow for easier vehicular and pedestrian access between the two cemetery tracts.

Throughout the remainder of the twentieth century, the most substantial developments at Oak Grove Cemetery consisted of the construction of new administration and maintenance buildings in the southwestern corner of the cemetery and the construction of the last of the cemetery's private family mausoleums. The first of the existing pole-barn type maintenance buildings was constructed in 1974 behind (north of) the cemetery's greenhouse and caretaker's residence.³⁹ By 1982, the Cemetery Association had deemed the greenhouse to be too costly to maintain and ceased its use of the building; finally, in 1987, the greenhouse and caretaker's residence were demolished to make way for the construction of the existing office building.⁴⁰ This was constructed in 1989, along with a second pole-barn type maintenance building, located west of the earlier maintenance shed. In 1998 a garden mausoleum addition was constructed at the office building's southwest corner. A smaller construction project completed during this period consisted of the 1985 erection of a small family mausoleum for members of the Trane and Hood families just north of Section 47 at the north end of the cemetery's western division. The most recent projects within the cemetery grounds occurred in 2002 with the opening of Section 102 (in

³⁷ La Crosse County Aerial Photo Collection, 1938-1974. Robinson Map Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison (Madison, WI).

³⁸ "Council Places \$9,700 In New Budget to Buy Rail Property," *La Crosse Tribune*, August 23, 1956.

³⁹ La Crosse County Aerial Photo Collection, 1938-1974. Robinson Map Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison (Madison, WI).

⁴⁰ Glenda Lee (Oak Grove Cemetery Association) to Anita T. Doering (email communication), May 1, 2008. In Oak Grove Cemetery vertical file at La Crosse Public Library Archives (accessed April 27, 2023).

an area at the southern end of the western division that had been included in the original landscape plan, but that had not been previously identified for burials) and in 2012 with the installation of a columbarium on the circular site formerly occupied by an ornamental fountain near the cemetery's primary entrance (the fountain had been removed decades earlier). Today, Oak Grove Cemetery remains open to the public and continues to offer space for a variety of burial options.

Rural Cemetery Movement

In early American history, burial in urban areas typically occurred in churchyards not far from town centers. However, as urban populations increased through the first decades of the nineteenth century, churchyards became overcrowded with burials and the valuable real estate on which they sat was frequently threatened by residential and industrial expansion. The encroachment of cities into these early burial grounds caused contemporary observers to lament the lack of reverence for the dead.⁴¹ By the early 1830s, the need for new burial grounds, located outside of city centers, had become imperative. At the same time, the country's increasing urbanization had led city dwellers to adopt a highly romanticized view of the natural world.⁴² In contrast with the colonial attitude that nature was an element to be conquered and civilized by its conversion into useful farms and cities, Americans in the first half of the nineteenth century began to view nature as a valuable resource to be sought out and preserved.⁴³ Meanwhile, American landscape architects (a professional title first used in this country by Frederick Law Olmstead in 1863) had become inspired by the garden-like design of the prestigious French cemetery, Pere-Lachaise, which had been established in 1804. Additional inspiration came from the naturalistic Romantic European garden designs of the previous century in which vast country estates had been transformed into sprawling pastoral landscapes.⁴⁴

The combined result of the country's increasing urbanization, the overcrowding of city cemeteries, and landscape designers' professional interest in European garden precedents was the Rural Cemetery Movement – named for the out-of-town locations of its garden-like landscapes. America's first "rural" cemetery was Mount Auburn Cemetery, established in 1831 outside of Boston. Contrary to the preceding churchyard burial grounds where "landscape seldom extended beyond the sporadic shrub or tree," Mount Auburn was heavily landscaped with a wide variety of mature trees and other plantings, evoking a wooded glen.⁴⁵ A number of similarly modeled cemeteries followed in the 1830s and 1840s; these included Philadelphia's Laurel Hill Cemetery in 1836, Brooklyn's Green-Wood Cemetery in 1838, and Lowell Cemetery in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1841. In Wisconsin, Milwaukee's Forest Home Cemetery was established in 1850, making it the state's first representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Thomas Bender, "The 'Rural' Cemetery Movement: Urban Travail and the Appeal of Nature," *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 47, No.2 (June 1974), 200-202.

⁴² Bender, "The 'Rural' Cemetery Movement," 202-204.

⁴³ Jeffrey Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement: Places of Paradox in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Lexington Books, 2017), 17.

⁴⁴ Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, "Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places," National Register Bulletin 41 (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993).

⁴⁵ Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement*, 3.

⁴⁶ National Register of Historic Places, Forest Home Cemetery, Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin,

Typical rural cemeteries included expansive acreage and were established at hilly, wooded sites between one and five miles outside of the cities they were meant to serve. The sites were further enhanced by grading and the selective thinning and planting of trees and other vegetation. Such plantings were often designed to create picturesque views opening onto broad vistas.⁴⁷ Additional design elements included gently curving pathways and winding drives that gradually ascended to the cemetery's uppermost elevations. Monuments and gravestones were of various shapes and sizes with large markers and mausoleums serving to confirm social status; the most prominent of these were often located at the site's most idyllic locations, such as those providing scenic vistas.⁴⁸ Because rural cemeteries were almost always secular and lacked the adjacent church building to house necessary records, tools, and maps, most featured any combination of gatehouse or office building, tool shed, and caretaker's residence.⁴⁹

Generally designed by professional landscape architects and gardeners, these rural cemeteries were crafted to provide a sense of sanctuary, solitude, beauty, and repose. Such cemeteries were meant to be spiritually uplifting – a marked contrast from the somber austerity of traditional churchyards. In this way, the new type of cemetery was designed as much for the living as for the dead, and it is not surprising that early rural cemeteries soon became favorite destinations for picnics and family excursions. Not coincidentally, this period also marked a shift away from the terms “graveyard” and “burial ground” to the more genial “cemetery.”⁵⁰ Established before the development of large public parks, rural cemeteries provided a city's residents with the opportunity to engage with nature in well maintained, park-like settings. In fact, in many cities that boasted such a landscape, “a visit to the local cemetery was considered de rigueur for the tourist.”⁵¹

Due, in part, to the popularity of early rural cemeteries as public recreational grounds, cities began developing public parks for this purpose, spurring the nineteenth-century urban parks movement as well as the designs of the Romantic garden suburbs of Llewellyn Park in New Jersey (planned by Alexander Jackson Davis in 1852) and Riverside, Illinois (planned by Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmstead in 1869).⁵² With new natural spaces designed for public recreation, the cemetery as a recreational destination began to lose its appeal. Beginning in the last years of the nineteenth century, designs for both cemeteries and parks moved away from the naturalistic toward more the formal landscape planning popularized by the “City Beautiful” movement which emphasized monumental grandeur and well-ordered landscapes.⁵³

National Register #80000166.

⁴⁷ Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, “Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places,” National Register Bulletin 41 (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993).

⁴⁸ Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement*, 118.

⁴⁹ Smith, *The Rural Cemetery Movement*, 56.

⁵⁰ Stanley French, “The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the ‘Rural Cemetery’ Movement,” *American Quarterly*. Vol. 26, No. 1. (March 1974), 38.

⁵¹ Bender, “The ‘Rural’ Cemetery Movement,” 196.

⁵² Bender, “The ‘Rural’ Cemetery Movement,” 210.

⁵³ Elisabeth Walton Potter and Beth M. Boland, “Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places,” National Register Bulletin 41 (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1993).

Funerary Art in the United States

Prior to the mid-seventeenth century, burials of European settlers in what would become the United States were typically marked with plain stones or stones inscribed with a minimal amount of information such as the name and birth/death dates of the deceased. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, grave markers began to take the shape of upright stone tablets, many of which began to incorporate a limited range of symbology associated with death and mortality (such as skulls, bones, and coffins, known collectively as “memento mori”); during the same period, inscriptions on grave markers generally reinforced the view of death as “a biological endpoint” (i.e., “here lies the body of John Smith”).⁵⁴ However, by the eighteenth century, funerary imagery turned away from direct depictions of death toward more symbolic and spiritual imagery. As a result, grave markers began to feature more serene representations of angels, cherubs, or more abstract motifs (such as the urn-and-willow – a recognized symbol of mourning and rebirth); at the same time, personalized memorial epitaphs became increasingly common.⁵⁵

Beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, public interest in funerary art increased along with the rise of the Rural Cemetery Movement. In contrast with crowded, urban churchyards, so-called “rural” cemeteries offered spacious lots that were often purchased by families well in advance of need. As a result, funerary art became seen as a way for cemetery lot holders to contribute to the beautification of rural cemeteries’ park-like landscapes, as well as a means of prominently displaying their own wealth and influence. The years between the mid-nineteenth century and about 1930 are generally regarded as the peak period of American cemetery art. The most popular styles incorporated into the designs of cemetery markers and monuments during this period included the Classical Revival style (as represented by the Oak Grove Cemetery Mausoleum, the Gund and Cargill Mausoleums, the Losey Memorial Arch, the McMillan Monument with its robed figure atop a classically embellished base, and countless other smaller grave markers that incorporate various classical motifs); the Egyptian Revival style (as represented by the grand obelisk that is the Washburn Monument as well as Oak Grove’s vast number of smaller obelisks); and the Gothic Revival style (as represented by the Easton Mausoleum).

In addition, certain symbolic forms and figures became especially common between the mid nineteenth century and the early twentieth century; these include the urn (a traditional symbol of death), the harp or lyre (a symbol of hope and worship in heaven), drapery (a symbol of sorrow and mourning and frequently used in conjunction with an urn or harp); and the lamb (a symbol of innocence that was frequently used at the graves of children). Oak Grove Cemetery includes examples of each of these with sculpted urns atop decorative stone piers (both draped and undraped examples) being especially numerous. In addition, the Victorian interest in

⁵⁴ Joanna Wilson Green, “Evolution of Funerary Symbolism,” Virginia Department of Historic Resources, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/cemetery-newsletter-content/the-evolution-of-funerary-symbolism-or-whats-with-all-the-willow-trees/> (accessed May 11, 2023).

⁵⁵ Joanna Wilson Green, “Evolution of Funerary Symbolism,” Virginia Department of Historic Resources, <https://www.dhr.virginia.gov/cemetery-newsletter-content/the-evolution-of-funerary-symbolism-or-whats-with-all-the-willow-trees/> (accessed May 11, 2023).

floriography (the “language of flowers”) resulted in grave markers with carved or inscribed flowers and plants that symbolized particular sentiments (as seen in numerous grave markers at Oak Grove). Similarly, an interest in representations of the natural world during this period led to the popularity of grave markers sculpted to resemble tree trunks, several examples of which are scattered throughout Oak Grove Cemetery’s western division; known as “treestones,” these grave markers reflect their naturalistic surroundings and typically represented a life cut short. Finally, and not uncommon even in secular cemeteries like Oak Grove, are those grave markers and monuments that incorporate religious iconography, numerous examples of which are present at Oak Grove (including small crosses and other symbols incorporated into numerous individual grave markers as well as larger free-standing stone crosses that adorn family plots).

By the 1930s and through the post-war years, public tastes in funerary art became more modest and utilitarian and many cemeteries began to promote the use of flat markers which allowed for open lawns and easy maintenance. However, even modest gravestones and flat markers continued to display restrained floral motifs, religious symbols, and personal signifiers (such as fraternal society emblems). Sections of Oak Grove that were opened for burials after about 1930 (including much of the eastern division) typically display more modest and restrained grave markers than those in the older parts of the cemetery.

Comparative Analysis

Only one other cemetery in La Crosse is of comparable age, size, and general composition to Oak Grove Cemetery: the La Crosse Catholic Cemetery at 519 Losey Boulevard South. Located just under one mile southeast of Oak Grove on the city’s east side, the Catholic Cemetery was established in the early 1850s with additional expansion through the latter half of the nineteenth century, bringing it to its current size of approximately 32 acres. The landscape design of the Catholic Cemetery was largely completed between 1885 and 1910 and features four rock grottoes and 14 Stations of the Cross in the form of gabled boxes with glass enclosed bas-relief scenes. A small, Gothic Revival chapel was constructed in the cemetery grounds in 1891 and was individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. The grounds also contain a maintenance facility with seasonal greenhouses, the majority of which were constructed in the latter twentieth century and a chapel mausoleum constructed in 1978 (requiring the removal of one of the four historic grottoes).⁵⁶ Garden crypts were added behind the mausoleum in 1981 and 1982. The cemetery also contains an altered caretaker’s residence, and several monumental sculptures of religious figures ornament the grounds.

Overall, the La Crosse Catholic Cemetery is not highly representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement. Although it was initially located just beyond the city limits and features a fair amount of trees and other plantings, its overall topography is largely flat and, aside from one pathway that loops around a portion of the cemetery, the majority of the grounds feature a grid-like arrangement of sections with linear rows of burial plots. In addition, as a Catholic Cemetery, the site was not intended to serve in a park-like capacity for the wider La Crosse community (in contrast with Oak Grove Cemetery which was considered to be a community

⁵⁶ Joan Rausch and Richard Zeitlin, *City of La Crosse, Intensive Survey Report: Architectural and Historical Survey Project* (prepared for City of La Crosse, Wisconsin by Architectural Researches, Inc., August 1984 with addendum prepared by Joan Rausch and Carol Lohry Cartwright, July 1996), 230.

Name of Property

asset and functioned in much the same way as a nineteenth-century public park). Finally, the majority of funerary art displayed throughout the grounds of the Catholic Cemetery is understandably limited to works featuring Christian figures and iconography rather than the wide variety of burial markers and monuments that are present at Oak Grove; as such, it is not considered to be an especially fine representative of a broad range of historic American funerary art. Although not necessarily comparable to Oak Grove Cemetery in terms of its landscape design or cemetery art, the La Crosse Catholic Cemetery is an excellent example of a planned Catholic cemetery of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

There are currently 14 cemeteries in Wisconsin that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Of these, only three are individually listed as distinct representatives of the Rural Cemetery Movement: Forest Home Cemetery in Milwaukee (designed by Increase A. Lapham in 1850), Evergreen Cemetery in Menomonie (designed by Cleveland and French in 1874), and Oak Hill Cemetery in Lake Geneva (designed in 1880, unattributed). Riverside Cemetery in Oshkosh (established in 1855, designer unknown) is also listed in the National Register, not as a distinct representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement, but simply as a site that “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a cemetery landscape of the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries,” including an isolated section that exhibits the Rural Cemetery Movement aesthetic.⁵⁷

Both in its landscape design and in its high degree of integrity, Oak Grove Cemetery compares favorably with Forest Home, Evergreen, Oak Hill, and Riverside Cemeteries. All four National Register listed cemeteries, like Oak Grove, feature the curvilinear pathways and naturalistic landscaping associated with the nineteenth century Rural Cemetery Movement. However, the original settings of both Forest Home and Evergreen Cemeteries have been subsequently altered. Originally sited at what was, in 1850, the far western edge of Milwaukee, Forest Home Cemetery is now completely surrounded by dense residential and commercial development, diminishing the property’s integrity of setting (although the original landscape design remains intact, albeit expanded greatly between 1850 and 1880). Evergreen Cemetery has also experienced alterations to its historic setting due to the 1955 construction of a new dam on Lake Menomin which significantly raised the water level, inundating one of the cemetery’s access roads, significantly diminishing its original acreage, and effectively turning the cemetery into an island.⁵⁸

Lake Geneva’s Oak Hill Cemetery is probably the most comparable to Oak Grove Cemetery in terms of its overall setting, age, appearance, size, and integrity. The 40-acre Oak Hill Cemetery in Lake Geneva retains a high degree of integrity and is a complete representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement with no alternative or later design trends present within its boundaries (the portions of the cemetery that were developed in the twentieth century are in keeping with the original naturalistic aesthetic of the site). Similarly, Oak Grove Cemetery (the subject property), is fully representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement with all areas within the cemetery

⁵⁷ National Register of Historic Places, Riverside Cemetery, Oshkosh, Winnebago County, Wisconsin, National Register #03000578.

⁵⁸ National Register of Historic Places, Evergreen Cemetery, Menomonie, Dunn County, Wisconsin, National Register #06001117.

boundaries – including those that were platted in the twentieth century – conforming to the site’s original design with curving, meandering pathways; rolling topography; and relatively dense, informal plantings of trees and shrubs. These same characteristics define the landscape of the National Register-listed Oak Hill Cemetery. Both cemeteries also feature a range of grave markers, monuments, and family mausoleums, although Oak Grove Cemetery is further characterized by its centrally-located 1912 community mausoleum. Both Oak Hill Cemetery and Oak Grove Cemetery were originally sited at the outer edges of the cities they were meant to serve – a key attribute of cemeteries designed in the Rural Cemetery fashion. Although Oak Hill Cemetery has remained on the outskirts of Lake Geneva (partially due to the relatively restrained growth of Lake Geneva), Oak Grove Cemetery is now centrally located within La Crosse (due largely to the annexation of the former village of North La Crosse), but its location at the edge of the La Crosse Marsh has prevented encroaching development from surrounding the cemetery so that it retains much of its “edge-of-town” feel. It is also worth noting that Oak Grove Cemetery, unlike Oak Hill, developed around an earlier burial ground so that its location was chosen by its first owner in 1852 (likely for the availability and affordability of the land) rather than by the Oak Grove Cemetery Association that reimagined the site in the late 1870s according to the ideals of the Rural Cemetery Movement.

As a representative of the Rural Cemetery Movement, and in terms of its overall design, integrity, age, and collection of historic cemetery markers, monuments, and mausoleums, Oak Grove Cemetery compares favorably with other National-Register listed cemeteries in Wisconsin and is a better representative of this movement than La Crosse’s Catholic Cemetery.

Concluding Significance Statement

With a landscape plan designed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and executed between 1878 and about 1930, Oak Grove Cemetery is a fine representative of the nineteenth century Rural Cemetery Movement. The so-called “rural” cemeteries constructed as part of this movement were characterized by locations distinctly outside of or on the fringes of the cities they were meant to serve, networks of meandering and interconnected pathways, naturalistic landscapes with a variety of trees and other plantings, and a rolling topography that often rose to create dramatic vistas across the landscape. Oak Grove Cemetery displays all of these key features, as well as a wide variety of grave markers, mausoleums, and monuments representing evolving trends in funerary art beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. Because of its local significance within the history of landscape architecture and funerary art, Oak Grove Cemetery is eligible for National Register listing under *Criterion C*.

Land Acknowledgement

This nomination recognizes the depth of human presence here, the ancestral homeland of American Indians for millennia. From as early as the seventeenth century, Euro-American exploration and settlement, military campaigns, and government programs, all had the effect of repeated displacement of Indians of many tribal affiliations. This continuous tribal movement resulted in Wisconsin being home to many tribes who originated from other parts of the country, generating a pattern of immigration, relocation, and formation of a new homeland. Some of these tribes remain in Wisconsin but others may not. We acknowledge that the property that is the subject of this nomination is located on land long occupied by American Indians.

Archaeological Potential

To be drafted and reviewed by the Office of the State Archaeologist

Preservation Activities

The Oak Grove Cemetery was evaluated as potentially eligible for the NRHP during a survey of La Crosse conducted in 1996. Eligibility was re-affirmed prior to the writing of this nomination. As a partner with the Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the National Park Service (NPS) participating in the Certified Local Government (CLG) program, the City of La Crosse is required to maintain a system to survey and inventory historic properties. That entails regular surveys with updates every 20-25 years to identify properties that appear potentially eligible for the NRHP.

END OF STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE DO NOT DELETE

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory # See resource inventory table in
and/or Archaeological Site Inventory #: Section 7

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Oak Grove Cemetery

La Crosse County, Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

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END OF BIBLIOGRAPHY DO NOT DELETE

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 55.61 acres

Provide either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude:	_____	Longitude:	_____
2. Latitude:	_____	Longitude:	_____
3. Latitude:	_____	Longitude:	_____
4. Latitude:	_____	Longitude:	_____

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>641788</u>	Northing:	<u>4853281</u>
2. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>641935</u>	Northing:	<u>4853440</u>
3. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>641988</u>	Northing:	<u>4853464</u>
4. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>642081</u>	Northing:	<u>4853590</u>

Verbal Boundary Description

The historic boundary of Oak Grove Cemetery is an irregular polygon that corresponds with the outside edges of the nine legal tax parcels that comprise the cemetery. Beginning at the southwest corner of the cemetery grounds (the northeast corner of La Crosse Street and Oakland Street), the western historic boundary runs north for approximately 120 feet along the western property line of the westernmost cemetery parcel; from there, the western boundary line runs east for approximately 99 feet, then turns to run north for approximately 288 feet, then turns east to run for approximately 676 feet, then turns north and northeast to run for approximately 529 feet, then turns east to run for approximately 178 feet, then turns north to run for approximately 75 feet, then turns east to run for approximately 327 feet before turning north to run for approximately 410 feet, corresponding with the outside parcel lines. From there, the northern historic boundary runs east for approximately 1,705 feet along the northern tax parcel lines and crossing East Avenue North. At that point, the eastern historic boundary line runs south for approximately 1,080 feet along the easternmost cemetery tax parcels and coinciding with a chain link fence between the cemetery and the neighboring city park. From there, the southern historic

boundary line runs west along the chain link fence that borders the property along the north side of La Crosse Street (and coinciding with the southern tax parcel line) for approximately 1,845 feet and crossing East Avenue North; from there, the boundary continues to follow the angle of La Crosse Street to run southwest for approximately 962 feet along the southern tax parcel line to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the nominated area includes all of the existing legal tax parcels comprising the Oak Grove Cemetery grounds and coincides with the cemetery boundaries as developed during the property's period of significance. Although other areas were historically owned by the Oak Grove Cemetery Association (including the area immediately north of the cemetery's western division, currently owned by the University of Wisconsin), these areas were never utilized for cemetery purposes and were subsequently sold. The historic boundary is visually delineated by the existing tree line between the cemetery and the La Crosse Marsh along the western edge of the property (although portions of the historic boundary project slightly into the marsh in keeping with the location of the tax parcel edges at this location), by the existing tree line and chain link fencing along the northern edge of the property, and by a chain link fence running along the eastern and southern edges of the property. The historic boundary encompasses the property's ten contributing resources (and the previously NRHP-listed Losey Memorial Arch) as well as the 55.61 acres historically and currently associated with the cemetery.

Additional UTM References:

5. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>642383</u>	Northing:	<u>4853582</u>
6. Zone::	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>642599</u>	Northing:	<u>4853582</u>
7. Zone::	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>642616</u>	Northing:	<u>4853254</u>
8. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>642061</u>	Northing:	<u>4853240</u>
9. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>641780</u>	Northing:	<u>4853150</u>
10. Zone:	<u>15N</u>	Easting:	<u>641768</u>	Northing:	<u>4853185</u>

END OF GEOGRAPHIC DATA DO NOT DELETE

11. Form Prepared By

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Additional Documentation

Figure Log

- Figure 1: Sketch map of Oak Grove Cemetery nominated area, April 2023.
Figure 2: Photo key of Oak Grove Cemetery, April 2023.
Figure 3: Plan of Oak Grove Cemetery as drawn by Henry I. Bliss, c.1878.
Figure 4: Bird's eye view illustration of Oak Grove Cemetery, 1887 (Wisconsin Historical Society).
Figure 5: Historic photo, looking north along path at western edge of grounds, 1887 (La Crosse Public Library Archives).
Figure 6: Historic photo, looking through grounds, c.1881 (La Crosse Public Library Archives).
Figure 7: Aerial photo of Oak Grove Cemetery, 1938.
Figure 8: USGS Map of Oak Grove Cemetery, May 2023.

Figure 1: Sketch map of Oak Grove Cemetery nominated area, April 2023.

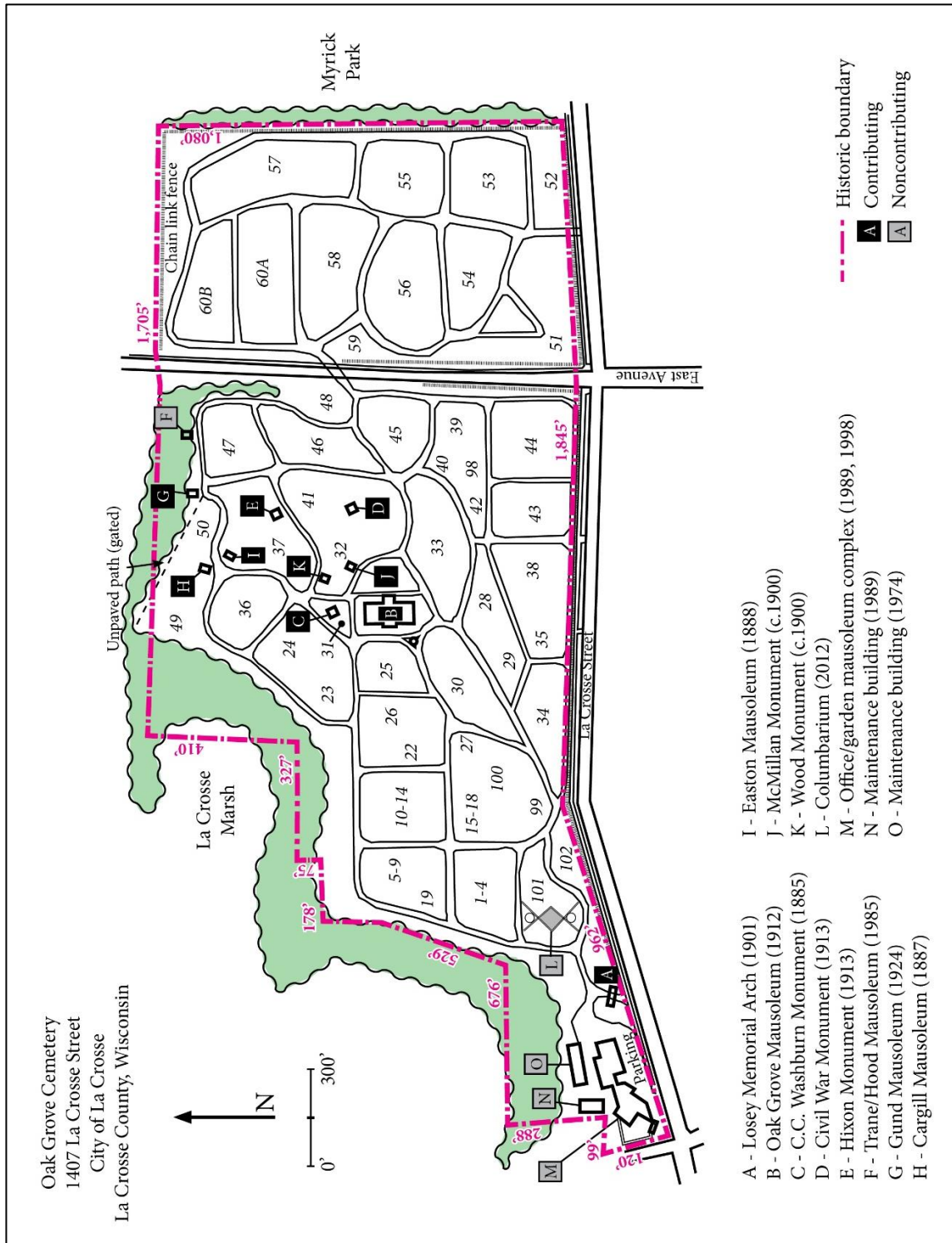


Figure 2: Photo key of Oak Grove Cemetery, April 2023.

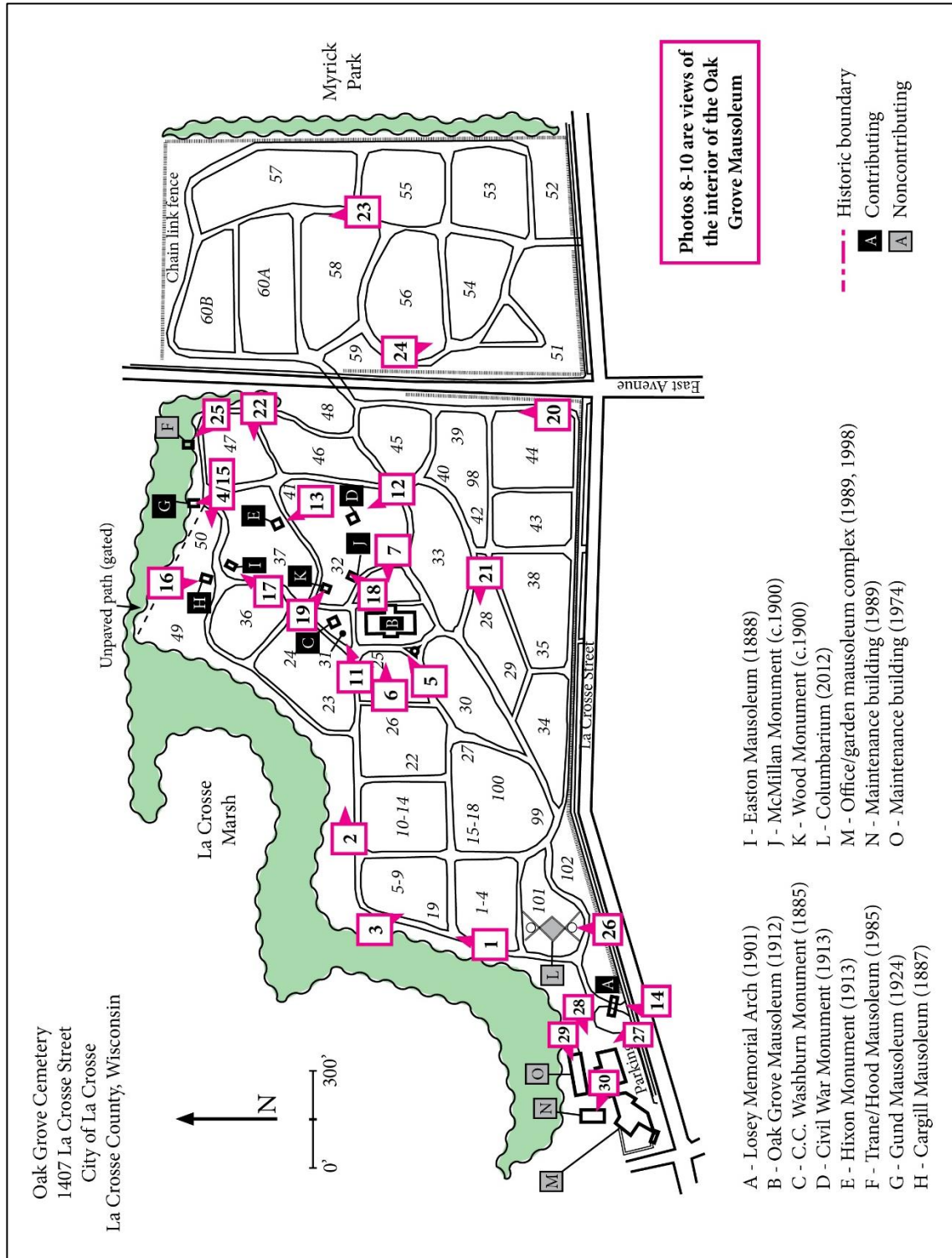


Figure 3: Plan of Oak Grove Cemetery as drawn by Henry I. Bliss, c.1878 (Wisconsin Historical Society).



Figure 4: Bird's eye view illustration of Oak Grove Cemetery, 1887 (Wisconsin Historical Society).

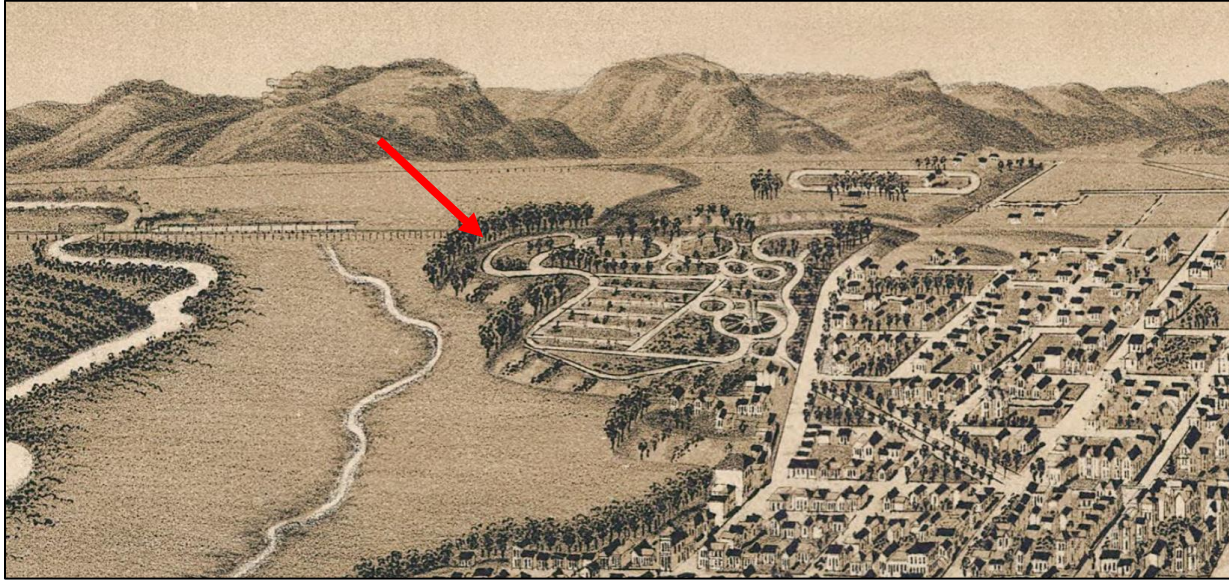


Figure 5: Historic photo, looking north along path at western edge of grounds, 1887 (La Crosse Public Library Archives).



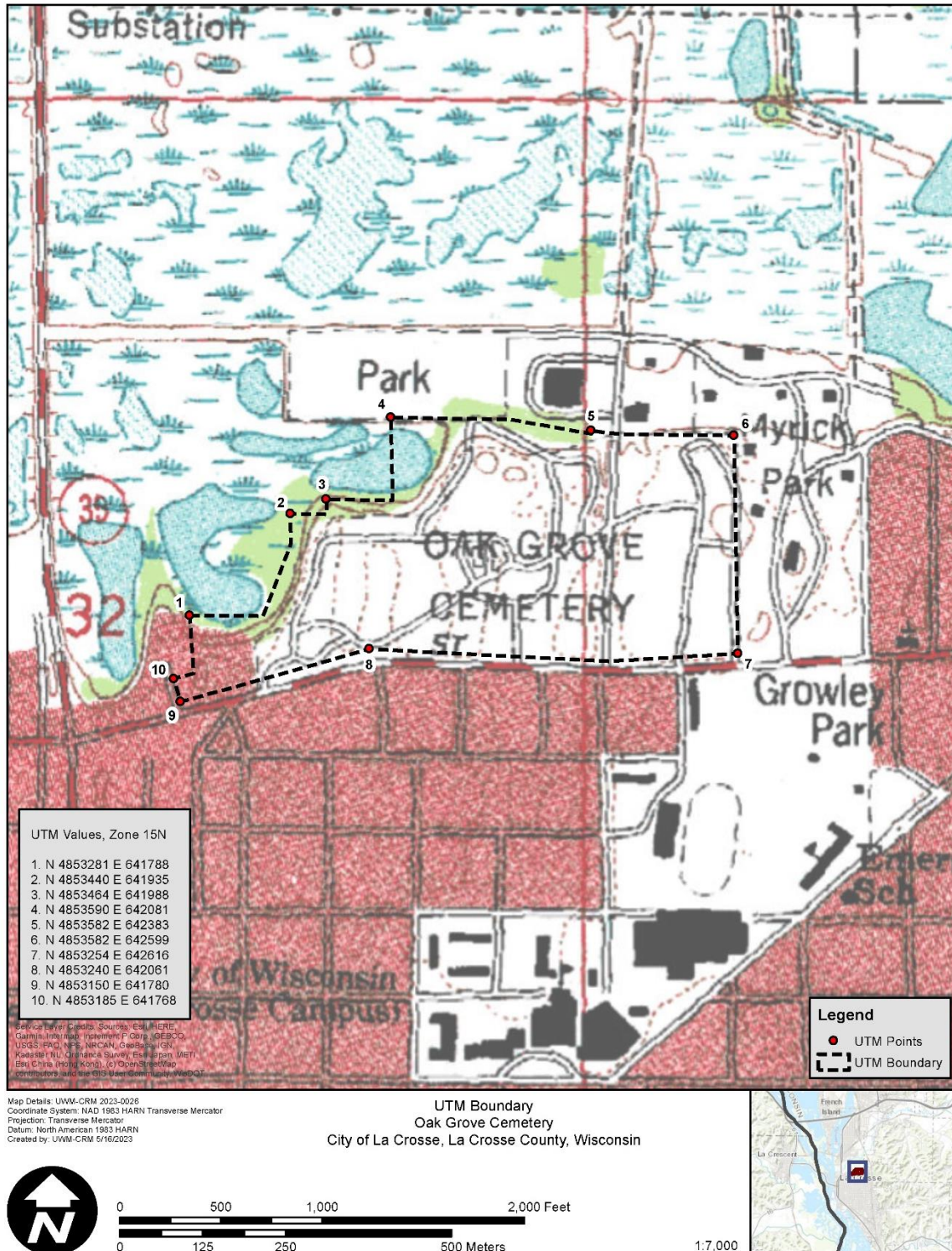
Figure 6: Historic photo, looking through grounds, c.1881 (La Crosse Public Library Archives).



Figure 7: Aerial photo of cemetery, 1938 (UW-Madison, Robinson Map Library).



Figure 8: USGS map of Oak Grove Cemetery with UTM references, May 2023.



END OF FIGURES SECTION DO NOT DELETE

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once in the photograph log. The photograph order must correspond with the photograph log.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Oak Grove Cemetery
City or Vicinity: City of La Crosse
County: La Crosse County State: Wisconsin
Photographer: Gail Klein, UWM-Cultural Resource Management
Date photographed: April 27, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 30

View along pathway west of Sections 1-4, looking north

2 of 30

View along pathway north of Section 10, looking east

3 of 30

View along western edge of Sections 8 and 19, looking southeast

4 of 30

View along northern edge of Section 50, looking west

5 of 30

Oak Grove Mausoleum, west (front) and south elevations, looking northeast

6 of 30

Oak Grove Mausoleum, detail of entrance in west (front) elevation, looking east

7 of 30

Oak Grove Mausoleum, east (rear) elevation, looking west

8 of 30

Oak Grove Mausoleum, interior, central chapel space, looking east

9 of 30

Oak Grove Mausoleum, interior, central chapel space, looking west

10 of 30

Oak Grove Mausoleum, interior, looking northeast toward western corridors

11 of 30

C.C. Washburn Monument in Section 31, looking northeast

12 of 30

Civil War Monument in Section 32, looking northwest

13 of 30

Hixon Memorial in Section 37, looking northwest

14 of 30

Losey Memorial Arch at cemetery entrance, looking north

15 of 30

Gund Mausoleum in Section 97, looking north

16 of 30

Cargill Mausoleum in Section 49, looking south

17 of 30

Easton Mausoleum in Section 37, looking northeast

18 of 30

McMillan Monument in Section 32, looking northeast

19 of 30

Wood Monument in Section 32, looking east

20 of 30

View along eastern edge of Section 44, looking north

21 of 30

Example of treestone grave marker in Section 28, looking west

22 of 30

View of intersecting pathways between Sections 37, 41, 46, and 47, looking west

23 of 30

View along pathway east of Section 58, looking north

24 of 30

View along pathway, looking south toward Section 51

25 of 30

Noncontributing Trane-Hood Mausoleum in Section 97, looking northwest

26 of 30

Noncontributing columbarium in Section 101, looking north

27 of 30

Noncontributing Oak Grove Cemetery office and garden mausoleum complex, looking northwest

28 of 30

Noncontributing Oak Grove Cemetery office and garden mausoleum complex, looking west

29 of 30

Noncontributing eastern maintenance building, looking west

30 of 30

Noncontributing western maintenance building, looking west

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

- Tier 1 – 60-100 hours
- Tier 2 – 120 hours
- Tier 3 – 230 hours
- Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Karina Bolanos, Executive Director				
organization	Oak Grove Cemetery Association		date	May 17, 2023	
street & number	1407 La Crosse Street		phone	608-782-6956	
city or town	La Crosse	state	WI	zip code	54601

If there are other interested parties that should be noticed, please provide in the tables below

name/title	_____				
organization	_____		date	_____	
street & number	_____		phone	_____	
city or town	_____	state	WI	zip code	_____

name/title	_____				
organization	_____		date	_____	
street & number	_____		phone	_____	
city or town	_____	state	WI	zip code	_____

name/title	_____				
organization	_____		date	_____	
street & number	_____		phone	_____	
city or town	_____	state	WI	zip code	_____