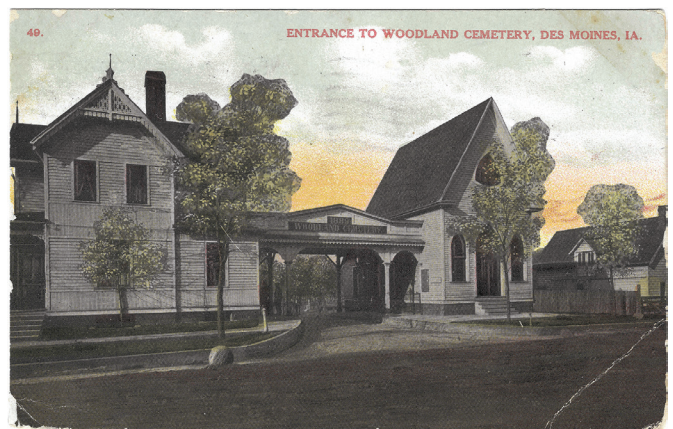


HISTORY OF Woodland Cemetery

In 1848, two years after Iowa became a state, the first 5 ½ acres of land that would become Woodland Cemetery were donated by farmers John Dean, Abel Cain, Lewis Jones, Henry Everly, and Jonathan Lyon. Modeled after Garden Cemeteries that had become popular in the mid-19th century, and influenced the creation of city parks, Woodland Cemetery has beautifully landscaped grounds, curving pathways, and dozens of trees, distinguishing it from the grid-style cemeteries that became prominent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The cemetery grew, first in 1864, when 36 ½ acres were added from land purchased by the city, and again when St. Ambrose Cemetery was incorporated into Woodland. Today, the cemetery is 69 sprawling acres, including sections for Independent Order of Odd Fellows, St. Ambrose, and Emmanuel Jewish Cemeteries, and is filled with unique headstones, mausoleums, and stories of individuals now buried on the grounds.



Entrance to Woodland Cemetery Erected 1889

Today, with generous help from public and private funds plus thousands of volunteer hours, Woodland has restored and cleaned monuments. In addition, Veterans and unmarked baby graves now have appropriate headstones. And, each December volunteers participate in Wreaths Across America by donating and placing memorial wreaths on veterans' graves to mark the holiday season. The cemetery was designated a local historic landmark in 1986 and is part of the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

Take a leisurely stroll as residents did in years past and acquaint yourself with the history of Des Moines.



The City of Des Moines owns the cemetery which is managed by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Woodland by the Numbers

69

ACRES in Woodland



1848

perhaps the **FIRST BURIAL** in Woodland, Parmenas Saylor has the stone with the earliest date

2

GOVERNORS OF IOWA interred in Woodland



39

MAUSOLEUMS in Woodland

30

MAYORS OF DES MOINES buried on the grounds



536

previously unmarked **BABY GRAVES**, now marked thanks to generous donations from the community

1,362

KNOWN VETERANS buried in Woodland, from the War of 1812 to modern day

5

CIVIL WAR GENERALS are buried in Woodland

1

MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT, Emory Jenison Pike, is buried in Woodland

Over 50,000

INDIVIDUALS INTERRED in Woodland Cemetery



Receiving Vault

Cemetery Sections

Emmanuel Jewish Cemetery

Located in the northwest corner of Woodland, the Emmanuel Jewish subsection was founded in 1871. This section is owned by the Temple B'nai Jeshurun on Grand Ave. One often sees small stones on Jewish graves which are left in honor of the deceased.

St. Ambrose Catholic Cemetery

Relocated from another location, the St. Ambrose subsection was founded in 1871, and later deeded to the city by the Catholic Diocese of Des Moines in 1923. A major fire destroyed many records for this section of the cemetery, making research for this section difficult. The St. Ambrose section is the northern most section of the cemetery.

Independent Order of Odd Fellows

The Independent Order of Odd Fellows is a fraternal organization with local lodges focused on serving the community. Many lodges purchased cemetery land and often provided some funeral services for their members. The Odd Fellows section is located on the east edge of Woodland.

GAR

There are two Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) sections in Woodland, GAR East and GAR West. The GAR was a veterans group formed by Union soldiers at the conclusion of the Civil War and served as a fraternal, charitable, and lobbying organization for veterans. Hundreds of other GAR members are buried elsewhere in the cemetery.

World War I

Just north of the entrance to Woodland is a section dedicated to soldiers who died in World War I. Each of the men buried in this section was originally buried in France, but reinterred after the war. A monument commissioned to be installed in the section proved too large and was instead installed on University Ave. just east of the Des Moines River.

Receiving Vault

The receiving vault was added to Woodland Cemetery in 1888 to provide a space to store the bodies of those who died in the winter months when the ground was too frozen to dig. The vault was cold enough to prevent significant decomposition until the bodies could be buried in the spring.

Symbolism



ALPHA AND OMEGA

The first and last letter of the Greek alphabet, representing God, creator of the beginning and end.



ANCHOR

Represents faith set in strong foundations.



BROKEN COLUMN OR TREE

A broken column or tree indicates a life cut short.



CELTIC OR IRISH CROSS

A cross within a circle, generally representing eternity.



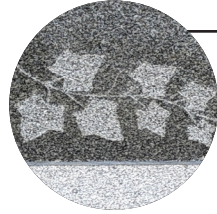
DRAPED URN

The cloth draping the urn guards the ashes, believed by some to mean the soul has departed the shroud of its body.



FERN

Ferns, which grow in shady places, represents humbleness.



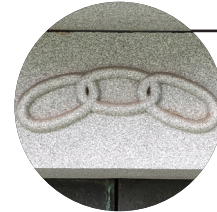
IVY

Symbolizes immortality, or everlasting love and friendship.



KNIGHTS OF PYTHIAS

Represented by a shield and coats of armor. The Order of Knights Pythias is an international fraternal organization, started as a secret society for government clerks. The letters FBC stand for friendship, benevolence, and charity.



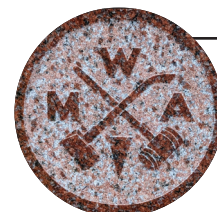
ODD FELLOWS

The three chain links of the Odd Fellows stand for Friendship, Love, and Truth.



SQUARE AND COMPASS

Common symbol for the Masons.



WOODMEN OF THE WORLD

Represented by a stump or log, axe, wedge, and other woodworking motifs.



WREATH WITH LABARUM

Wreaths were used by Romans to crown victorious soldiers and athletes and thus represent victory over death. The labarum combines the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

HISTORY QUEST QR CODES

As you wander the grounds of Woodland Cemetery, you will note small white signs with a QR code next to dozens of headstones. Use the camera feature of your smartphone to scan each code to view a short video clip and learn more about the individual buried there.

TOURS

The City of Des Moines offers three tours of Woodland Cemetery:

- Woodland Cemetery Historical Tour
- Civil War-themed tour
- Notable Women's Tour

Tours run every spring and summer. Register for a tour using the link below.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

Each December donated wreaths are laid on the graves of veterans buried in Woodland. Visit the website below for information on sponsoring a wreath.

VOLUNTEER

Interested in volunteering at Woodland? Visit the link below to learn more!

Symbolism Credit: Kimberly Powell
www.thoughtco.com/photo-gallery-of-cemetery-symbolism-4123061

Photos submitted by Mike Rowley/Kristine Bartley

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dsm.city/cemeteries
515-248-6320