



# Oakwood Cemetery

National Register of Historic Places

## The Artistic Styles of Historic Grave Markers

A project of Red Wing Arts



ART &  
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TOURS



## About Red Wing Arts Art & Architecture Tours

**Welcome!** For over 65 years, Red Wing Arts has engaged our community in the celebration of arts. We are the Welcome Mural, Depot Gallery, Concerts in the Park, Fall Festival and much more. Our mission is to build a vibrant community fueled by the arts. We enrich lives by connecting, celebrating, inspiring and leading through shared art experiences.

If you have had a chance to explore Red Wing you know that we are surrounded by natural beauty. We live among a great abundance of art which includes architectural design and carefully crafted landscapes in public spaces.

I invite you to slow down, relax, and take a closer look at the beauty around us. Celebrate the many forms of art that exist in our community and create shared arts experiences with these walking tours. I look forward to hearing about your experience.

- Emily Guida Foos, Executive Director, Red Wing Arts

### Acknowledgements

Red Wing Arts Tour of Art and Architecture was prepared in 2020 by former Red Wing art teacher, Joyce Peterson, and her husband, retired Red Wing City Planner, Brian Peterson. Design of the brochure was furnished by Kirsten Ford. All are members of Red Wing Arts and Joyce and Kirsten are current board members.

### Prizes and Hashtags

Please tell us about your experience on our Oakwood Cemetery Tour by posting your comments along with a selfie or favorite photo from Oakwood Cemetery to social media with the hashtag **#RWAOakwood**. We will randomly draw names for prizes at local restaurants.

**Prize drawings will end on September 5, 2020.**

**If you would like to help support our organization, please make a donation to:** Red Wing Arts, 418 Levee Road, Red Wing, MN 55066.

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*“Cemeteries have been a place of peace for me since I was a child and my parents took me to our family cemetery in the middle of farm country to place flowers on our relative’s graves. Cemeteries can be silent and somber places but they can also be a place of great natural beauty and contain an astounding variety of manmade beauty in the art of headstone design. My great-great-grandfather worked in the marble industry in the 1880s and 1890s in Milwaukee and maybe it’s just in my DNA to love a great work of art carved from stone.”*

- Joyce Oelkers Peterson

## Cemetery Etiquette

- 1 Follow rules for cemetery hours and obey slow driving speeds. Dogs are not allowed.
- 2 Be respectful of mourners. If you see a funeral or funeral procession in progress please return to that area later, in respect for the family.
- 3 Honor the grave sites. Take care to only walk between headstones and do not walk or stand on burial plots. Most burials are behind the marker so stay on the side closest to the lettered side. Please avoid touching the headstones as they can be fragile.
- 4 Children are very welcome. Talk to them about where they are going and what they will see and help them to develop respectful behavior.
- 5 Help keep our Oakwood Cemetery in pristine condition.



# Red Wing's Oakwood Cemetery

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**Oakwood Cemetery has been the final resting place for people of Red Wing for more than 160 years.**

The initial 35 acres were acquired in 1857, although the first burial on the site predates that year. At first, there was little organization, citizens simply selected a site within the cemetery boundaries. However, in 1863, the city council platted lots and laid out roadways along with appointing a volunteer sexton. In late 1865 the city council adopted a formal ordinance for management of the cemetery and designated it as "Oakwood." An additional 33 acre parcel was acquired that same year. The cemetery now covers 140 total acres.

In 1889, cemetery management underwent a major reorganization when the city council established a cemetery board of trustees. According to the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Oakwood Cemetery, the board established new guidelines, stating: "In beautifying the grounds, the trustees will adhere to the lawn plan as far as practicable." The changes made in 1889 represented Red Wing's own expression of what became known as the Rural Cemetery Movement. The movement began with Mount Auburn Cemetery in 1831, located just outside of Cambridge, Massachusetts. It took the cemetery out of the center of the city or church yards and into a park-like setting. Red Wing's new cemetery board fully embraced these ideals and established a plan for curving roadways and careful park-like landscaping.

Red Wing went through an extraordinary period of civic investment in the first decade of the 20th century. This local manifestation of the City Beautiful Movement began with

the establishment of the Red Wing Civic League in 1903, which inspired dozens of projects intended to beautify the city, beginning with the riverfront and including several institutional buildings in downtown Red Wing. Within this context, Margret Betcher donated funds in 1908 for construction of a chapel in Oakwood Cemetery in memory of her husband, Charles. That same year, an additional gift from Elijah Blogett in memory of his wife Sarah was received for the construction of a stone entrance. Both the chapel and entrance were designed in Late Gothic Revival style by Clarence H. Johnston Sr. recognized as one of Minnesota's foremost architects of his era.

Oakwood Cemetery came to prominence during the height of cemetery art in America. Over time, the cemetery has become an outdoor museum of memorial art and symbolism. Between 1850 and 1930, three styles of monument art were popular during the heyday of cemetery art: Medieval Revival (round Romanesque lines or delicate detailed Gothic style); Classical Revival (use of urns and Greek temple architecture); and Egyptian Revival (obelisks and pyramids). Oakwood Cemetery has many excellent examples of these three styles. In addition, in the 1920s and 1930s, monument art was influenced by "Art Moderne" and "Art Deco" that can also be found at Oakwood. Another popular motif featured at Oakwood is the "Natural" style that copied the rugged look of natural rocks or trees. One of the styles most unique to Red Wing and particularly noteworthy are the monuments done by workers in the local pottery and sewer pipe industries.



Did you know?

Tours of Oakwood Cemetery can be explored by walking, biking, or driving. If you would like to take a walk on a rustic hiking trail there is one located adjacent to the chapel, to the left (when facing the chapel from the gateway).

Our map is meant to help you on your quest to find all the marked headstones, but because cemeteries can be logistically confusing, if you need another reference, the City of Red Wing has a complete map of streets and burial plots. Go to > City of Red Wing, Mapping, Oakwood Cemetery in the Map Gallery. You can search for the name of the memorial you are looking for.

<http://corw.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=9c53755df49e4b6faee86a991720fd1e>

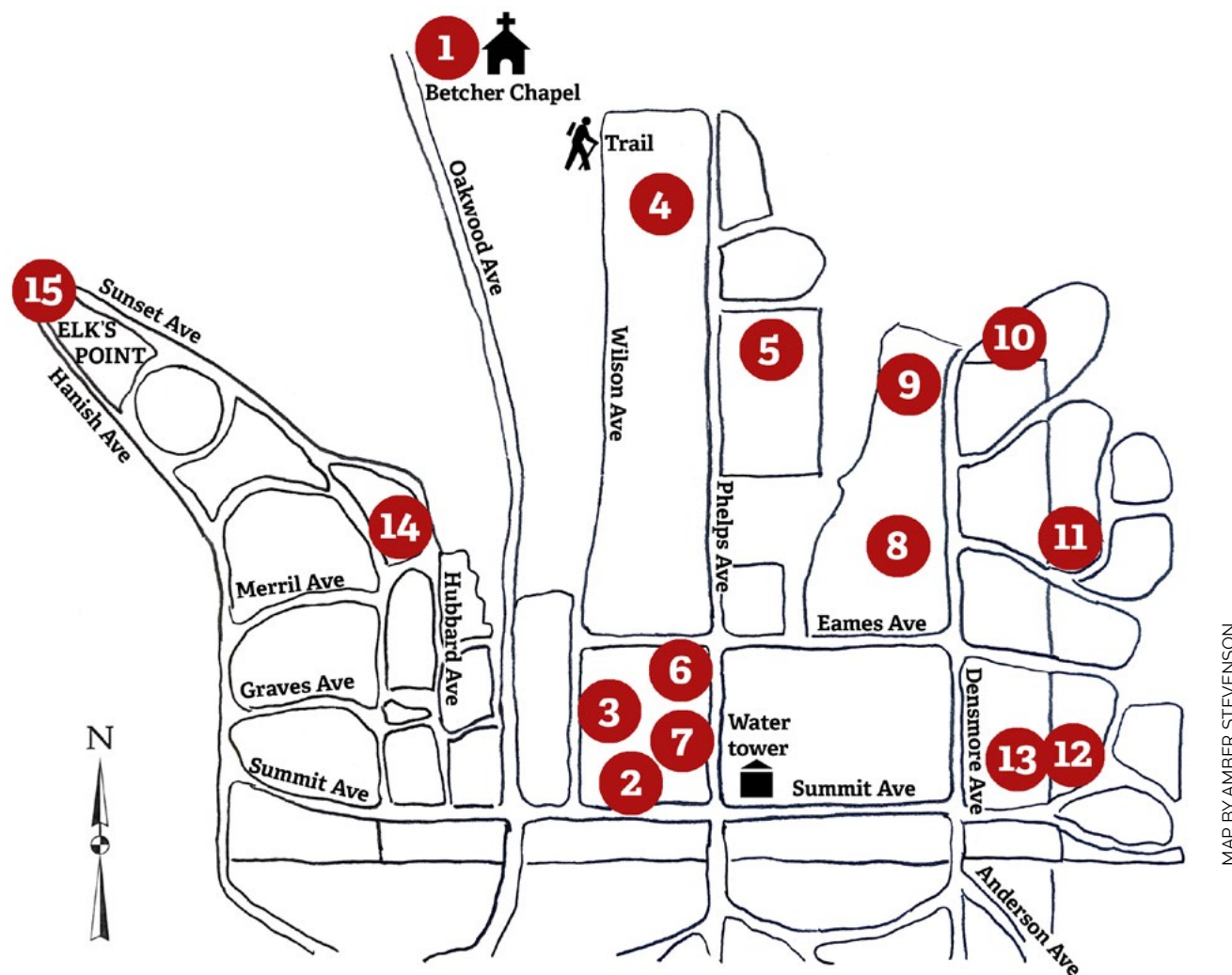


**1 Blogett Gateway and Betcher Chapel**

One of the common features of the rural cemetery movement was the idea that the cemetery should be set aside as a special place and this was often done with a gateway element to mark the entrance and the fact that the visitor is now entering a place separate from the rest of the community. In addition, since the 19th century, cemeteries were moved away from the church yards and downtowns, creating the need for a chapel located on the grounds of the cemetery. The Blogett Gateway and Betcher Chapel were constructed in 1908 and both fulfill this requirement. Both are designed in Late Gothic Revival style by noted architect Clarence H. Johnston Sr. Mr. Johnston also designed the water tower that was placed on the highest point of the property. Note, the special "Betcher Memorial Window" depicting the resurrection on the rear façade of the chapel.

**2 Helen S. Bunch**

A recognizable art style found in Oakwood is Victorian Gothic Revival. Architecturally, it is characterized by the pointed arched windows like those of Medieval European Cathedrals. Many of the earlier gravestones in Oakwood are influenced by this style, their age being identifiable by the very slim thickness of the stone. Helen died at the young age of 38 and her husband, Quinton, purchased this hand carved memorial for her.



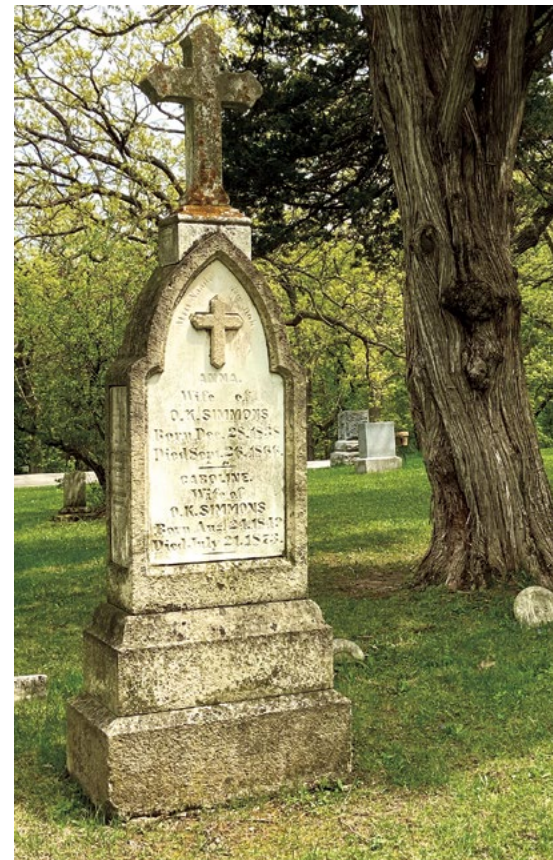


**3 Louise M. Morley, Local Clay Pottery**

Little Louise Morley died at five years old on January 5th of 1903. Most likely her father William, who was employed as a clay sewer pipe worker, lovingly constructed this white clay memorial to his daughter with four sides of tribute. One side with a raised letter inscription reads: "Darling farewell but not forever. There will be a glorious dawn and we shall meet to part no more on the resurrection morn." The original cross at the top, broken over time, no longer remains.

**4 Anna and O. K. Simmons**

This is another example of the Gothic Revival style with the pointed church arch shape and symbolism of the cross. Ole K. Simmons was born in Norway and came to live in Red Wing in 1857. Tragically, his first two wives and his first four children are buried here. He then married his third wife Nesine and they raised four children who all lived long lives.



**5 Clara G. Larson**

This second example of the many handmade clay headstones here at Oakwood is a memorial to Clara Genevieve Larson who died at age 12. The life-like bark and hand lettering are likely made by her father Jacob who also made clay sewer pipe as an occupation. Clara was adopted by her parents Jacob and Thirza.



**6 John M. Friedrich Family**

This is a monument for an early merchant family in Red Wing and is an excellent example of the Classical Revival style of cemetery art that became popular in the late 19th century. The design was influenced by Greek and Roman temple architecture, and includes four "Composite Order" columns that are a late Roman development of the Corinthian Order using Ionic volutes (scrolls) and Corinthian acanthus (leaf) decoration on the capitals.



**7 Gordon**

From the 1880s to the 1920s mourners were turning away from symbols of death to symbols of life, like this unusual tree-like headstone, emblematic of the "Natural" style. Trees provide a powerful symbol of life and eternity and recall the life left behind. Red Wing residents of the time could order their own, personalized tree shaped headstone from the Sears Catalog. Buried here are William and Mary Gordon. William served with Company F, 1st Minnesota Infantry during the Civil War.



**8 Hill**

Oakwood has many examples of the use of classical revival influences that include columns, the urn motif and architectural details based on Greek and Roman temples. These styles were common in the late 1800s and early 1900s. A broken column can symbolize a life cut short and Sarah Hill's husband, James, may have felt that was the case when Sarah died at age 67.



**9 Nordholm**

The Art Deco style of visual arts, architecture and design first appeared in France before World War I and spread to the U.S in the 1920s and 1930s. This marker is an excellent example showing the greatly streamlined and delicate design features of the deco style. This stone marks the final resting place of Nels and Hannah Nordholm, and their 3 daughters, Swedish immigrants who had made Red Wing their home.



**10 Skramstad**

This unique gravestone is a good example of the "Natural" style that was popular between 1880 and 1920 with its emphasis on nature using a rough rock texture and floral embellishments.



**11 Betcher**

Classical Revival style architecture reached Red Wing in the late 19th century and into the early 20th century. Do you see a design resemblance between the Betcher monument and Red Wing's Sheldon Theatre? The Sheldon was constructed downtown around the same time that this marker was placed in Oakwood. Local business man Charles Betcher was born in Prussia in 1830 and died in 1903. His wife, Margaret, donated the funds in 1908 for the Betcher Memorial Chapel at the entrance to Oakwood.



**12 Swanson**

Christian crosses are common symbols found in Oakwood, but this Celtic Cross (with the circle around the cross that symbolizes eternity) has beautiful floral and crown carvings making it particularly noteworthy. J. Frederick Swanson was a son of Andrew Swanson who was engaged in a variety of early Red Wing business enterprises. J. Frederick worked in the family furniture business.

**13 Wilkinson**

This Egyptian Revival style memorial was adopted by Victorian-era Christians during the late 1800s and the obelisk was a common feature that came to represent rebirth and a connection between earth and heaven. A number of obelisk monuments can be found throughout Oakwood. John Wilkinson came from Liverpool, attended Hamline University here in Red Wing and became an extremely successful dry goods merchant.



**14 Zigneigo**

This angel was not meant to merely honor the people buried in this resting place but she also brings comfort to the people who mourn here, as well. Religions all over the world see angels as messengers and for some religious groups an angel stands as a reminder to those who mourn that the deceased has been welcomed to heaven. This carved marble angel watches over the Zigneigo family plot.



## 15 Oakwood Overlook

The trustees who moved forward to redesign Oakwood in 1889 were intent on remaking the cemetery with careful attention to creating a parklike landscape. One of the unique advantages of the Oakwood location is the fact that it lies at the top of one of the many bluffs and the view from this prominent overlook provides a scenic panorama of Red Wing nestled in the Mississippi River Valley.

Please take a moment to enjoy the view, post a photo to social media using **#RWAOakwood**, and let us know a little about your experience.



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