

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



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# 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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Oakwood Cemetery

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 1258 Cherry Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Red Wing

vicinity N/A

state MN code MN county Goodhue code 049 zip code 55066

### 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

Britta L. Bloomberg 12/22/11  
Signature of certifying official/Title Britta L. Bloomberg, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

Minnesota Historical Society  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  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] 2/14/12  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Name of Property

**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	1	buildings
		district
1		site
3		structure
		object
5	1	<b>Total</b>

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY: cemetery

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY: cemetery

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> C. Revivals: Late Gothic Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE; STONE

walls: STONE

roof: ASPHALT; TILE

other: STONE

METAL

Name of Property

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

Oakwood Cemetery is located on the bluffs southeast of the downtown commercial center of Red Wing, Minnesota, a city of 17,000 residents on the Mississippi River. As the terrain gently rises from the riverfront, residential streets, primarily Bush Street, East Avenue, and Central Avenue, extend toward the steep Mississippi River Bluffs, forming a residential neighborhood known as the South End. The bluffs of the Mississippi River define the site, with a beautiful entrance at the base of the bluff at the terminus of East Avenue. In 1908, wealth patrons provided for erection of a stone gate and chapel, both designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. Passing through the portal of the Blodgett Memorial Gate, the visitor follows a quarter mile road through a ravine to the crest of the bluff. In the cemetery proper, on the upper bluff, Oakwood Cemetery takes advantage of its natural landscape to express popular late nineteenth century views on cemetery design. There are three contributing structures, one contributing building, and a contributing site — the cemetery itself.

The property encompassed in this nomination includes the portions of the cemetery, roughly sixty acres, that reflect the implementation of the “Lawn Plan” and excludes portions added after 1921.

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**Narrative Description**

See attached continuation sheet.

Name of Property

**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.)

Property is:

- 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.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1857-1921

**Significant Dates**

1871, 1889, 1908

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Johnston Sr., Clarence H. (architect)

Swanson, Hubert (architect)

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins with platting of the cemetery in 1857 and ends in 1921. In 1922, the city acquired substantial additional acreage to the south. Its management reflects a twentieth century approach to cemetery design and use, rather than the "Lawn Plan" that defines the older portions.

Name of Property

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

The cemetery reflects important aspects of community history and embodies the principles of the rural cemetery movement of design through its overall plan, landscaping, grave markers, buildings, and structures.

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)**

Oakwood Cemetery is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in the area of Social History. It is also eligible under Criteria C for its local significance under Landscape Architecture as a historic vernacular landscape. Criteria Consideration D applies because it derives its primary significance from historic events that reflect important broad patterns of our history.

For more than a century and a half, Oakwood Cemetery has been the final resting place for the people of Red Wing, Minnesota. Its grounds and buildings reflect the changing social attitudes related toward death and commemoration, giving expression to the "rural cemetery" movement, including a careful attention to the natural setting of cemeteries. Following the formation of a cemetery commission in 1889, Oakwood was carefully managed and redesigned to reflect the Lawn Plan promoted nationally by Adolph Strauch of Cincinnati, emphasizing open vistas, careful arrangement of vegetation, and aesthetic supervision of monuments and gravestones. The capstone of this era came in 1908, when the Blodgett Gateway and the Betcher Memorial Chapel were dedicated, transforming the entry into the cemetery grounds. Designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston Sr., they reflect the milieu of the first decade of the twentieth century in Red Wing.

The period of significance begins with the city's acquisition of the property in 1857 and ends in 1921.

**Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)**

See attached continuation sheet.

**Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)****9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)**

See attached continuation sheet.

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

**10. Geographical Data****Acreage of Property** 60 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	15	538380	4933493	3	15	538416	4932992
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	15	538408	4932698	4	15	537891	4933003
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The north, east, and west boundary of the nominated property follows property boundaries of Oakwood Cemetery, Goodhue County Parcel 556251140. The southern boundary extends to the southern edge of Cemetery Sections E-1, E-2, F-1, G-1, L-1, and O-8.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the nominated property includes the parcel of land historically associated with the cemetery during the period of significance. Following acquisition of an additional forty acres in 1922, the cemetery management plan shifted away from the Lawn Plan instituted by the cemetery board in 1889.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Daniel J. Hoisington

organization

date Summer 2011

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state MN

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Oakwood Cemetery

Goodhue County,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

Minnesota

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

See attached continuation sheet.

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**Property Owner:**

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

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications 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.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

**7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

Oakwood Cemetery is located on a 104-acre site on the bluffs southeast of the downtown commercial center of Red Wing, Minnesota, a city of 17,000 residents on the Mississippi River. The surrounding neighborhood is primarily residential housing. The nominated property encompassed in this nomination includes the portions of the cemetery in use before 1922, roughly sixty acres.

One of Oakwood's most unique resources is the cemetery's own landscape, a combination of topography, roads, paths, plants, historic monuments, buildings, and other structures. There are three contributing structures, one contributing building, and one contributing site. There are hundreds of objects (monuments, statuary, gravestones) that are landscape features and are not counted individually. However, they contribute to the overall significance of the site. There are approximately 17,500 graves within the cemetery as a whole.

Although still in use, the nominated portion of the cemetery retains good integrity, with the contributing buildings and structures in excellent condition. The cemetery management has not altered circulation patterns or existing grave markers or monuments, although some new graves are interspersed among the old.

**Oakwood Cemetery**

**Built: 1857**

**Resource Count: one contributing site**

The site itself, with its landscaping, horticultural plantings, and numerous grave markers and monuments, is the major contributing resource. For purposes of this nomination the cemetery is treated as a historic vernacular landscape. There is no record of a single master landscape architect. Instead, commission members became familiar with popular literature about cemetery management and translated the ideas into practical use.<sup>1</sup>

Oakwood's natural terrain is complemented with plantings and roadways that were subject to a general, but informal, plan. Trees were planted in groupings according to variety, and interspersed with shrubbery. Winding roadways, instead of straight roads, provide access to the sections and complement the landscape effect. Although the gravel roads have been paved, they are basically the same width as they were historically and maintain the integrity of the original circulation pattern. Within those patterns, the

<sup>1</sup> Local commission members contributed at least three articles to the principal national cemetery journal between 1891 and 1901. First published in 1891 as *The Modern Cemetery*, the first issue led off with an essay by Adolph Strauch. See bibliography.

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cemetery board informally regulated individual grave markers and family monuments, using loose guidelines that encouraged compatibility to the surrounding in scale and style,

The entrance to the cemetery is located at the end of East Avenue, a tree-lined, residential street that leads directly into the downtown commercial district to the north. The entry is framed by the Blodgett Memorial Gateway (Photo 1, 2, 3, 4), which opens to a park-like setting that includes the Betcher Memorial Chapel (Photo 5, 6, 7, 8) surrounded by an open sloping lawn. There are no burial sites in this area. This area is separated from the cemetery proper by steep bluffs, which, except for the main road, are deeply wooded. To the northwest of the East Avenue entrance, a path enters the woods and continues up to the main cemetery.

To the right, Oakwood Avenue ascends the bluff through a ravine, rising to 400 feet above the river (Photo 9). A shallow culvert, located fifty feet to the east of the road, drains water from the upper ridge, with several stone retaining walls. Approximately four hundred feet up the road from the entrance, on the left (west), a vault (Photo 10) is located in the hillside, with a slightly recessed entry. Opposite the vault, a roughly circular and flat embankment provided a turn-around for wagons and hearses after they delivered caskets to the vault. The quarter mile road, on reaching the crest, opens into the cemetery proper and the east-west Summit Avenue.

The cemetery plan is shaped by topography. Two deep ravines break the bluff, creating three promontories or plateaus extending a quarter mile north of Summit Avenue. These are reached by a series of north-south roads with intersecting connectors. The land surface features gently rolling natural hillocks, so that there are few extended views, even along straight cemetery roads (Photo 14). This follows a guiding principle of the "Lawn Plan" espoused by Adolph Strauch in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, that "the surface of the grounds be modulating rather than flat."<sup>2</sup> The vegetation includes grassy lawns with numerous interspersed trees, typically poplar, oak, and evergreens. The deep, untended woods in the ravines are rarely more than 200 yards from any gravesite.

In keeping with the Lawn Plan, graves are typically arranged by family plot, marked with a principal stone marker, surrounded by low headstones for individual family members (Photo 13). Among the prominent monuments are ones associated with civic and business leaders, such as those found in the Betcher, Sheldon, and Friedrich family plots (Photo 15). Most are more modest in size.

There are only two mausoleums in the cemetery, consistent with Strauch's guidelines. He wrote, "It should be the policy to discourage the erection of vaults. . . . How much more natural and appropriate to see the grass-covered graves of a family, side by side, than to have them remain unmixed with the earth,

<sup>2</sup> Adolph Strauch, "Modern Cemeteries," *The Modern Cemetery*, 1 (March 1891), 3-4.

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deposited on stone shelves above ground.” The Cogel family mausoleum is sited underground on a steep hill slope on Hack Avenue. The Bixby mausoleum, on the other hand, is above ground. It is a stone rectangular structure employing the rough form of a Greek temple, with a front gable and typanum. It is located off Hubbard Avenue to the west of the entry road and ravine.

Among the many gravestones, a distinctive grave marker type was created by Red Wing Pottery workers for departed family members, most often for their children. These are handmade, stoneware gravestones and plant stands, of which twelve have been identified within the cemetery, with 1912 as the latest date. Nine are in the form of a tree stump. (Photo 16)

The older cemetery has only two commemorative monuments, both located at the head of the entry road as one crests the hill. One, a granite statue, was erected in 1900 in memory of local firemen who died in service. (Photo 17) The second is a simple slab marker in memory of veterans of the Spanish-American War. Within proximate distance are several soldiers’ graves, including a row of stone markers for Civil War veterans (Photo 18).

Within the nominated property’s boundary, only one section has been substantially changed since 1921. In 1952, the Red Wing Elks Lodge #845 created a “Monument Point” in the northwest corner of the cemetery. The space is roughly 100 yards in length and fifty yards at its widest point, with two internal roads meeting at a high point overlooking the Mississippi River valley below. It is kept as open lawn with interspersed trees, and holds no graves. A low stone wall demarcates the outer edge of the lookout, with a small parking area. At the point, the Elks erected a ten-foot tall granite monument, dedicated to “our departed brothers.”

A newer section of the cemetery, acquired in 1922, extends to the south with a service road to Cherry Avenue. This gate is usually closed, but offers access during the winter months when the main road is closed due to weather conditions. This newer section is more open than the older portions, with smaller lots and fewer trees amidst the lawns. A large tract of this section remains unused, left simply as grassy lawn. This portion of the cemetery is excluded from this nomination since its use reflects a twentieth century aesthetic, focusing on closely-spaced individual graves rather than family plots.

### **Blodgett Memorial Gateway**

**Built: 1908**

**Resource Count: one contributing structure**

The Blodgett Memorial Entrance was designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston Sr. and constructed in 1908. It consists of a wide main arch and two smaller arches. It is built of Red Wing limestone, with

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massive pillars and arches surmounted by stone trimming and a cross crowning the center of the arch. The total height to the top of the arch is twenty-seven feet.

Over the central arch are the words "Oakwood Cemetery." At each of the sides, there is a recess running back sixteen feet and on each side of this a tablet bearing the memorial inscription. On the left side of the gateway, the inscription reads: "The Memorial Gift of Elijah H. Blodgett to the City of Red Wing." On the wall to the right of the archway and directly opposite are the words: "Until the morning breaks and the shadows roll away."

The entrance with the archway and the fence extends the 60 feet across East Avenue and 150 feet each side of the fence. Over this entire distance there is a stone foundation with a neat coping and surmounting this is a five-foot steel fence with six-foot stone posts finely capped.

**Charles A. Betcher Memorial Chapel**

**Built: 1908**

**Resource Count: one contributing building**

Completed in 1908, the Betcher Memorial Chapel, designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston, Sr., is located on the left side of the road leading up to the cemetery. It was constructed of Red Wing limestone, laid in a random coursed ashlar pattern. The roof is sheathed in red tile, which extends beyond the front of the building to form a wide porte-cochere. The spire retains the red tile exterior, with ornamental metal crockets, terminating with a copper cross. A circular concrete drive passes in front of the entrance to the building.

The plan is a Greek cross with identically shaped gables extending in each of four directions. The east and west elevations have large, finely-divided Gothic-arched windows flanked by buttresses. The front and rear gables (north-south) are pierced by round openings for stained glass windows. To the rear, there is a small crematorium, one story in height with a segmentally-arched double entry door on the west elevation and a tall, square stone chimney.

Entering the chapel, the main room is 38 feet square, with brick interior walls. The ceiling features Gothic arches. The floor of the chapel area is a reinforced concrete slab supported on steel beams. Marble trim is used throughout the room with marble steps leading to the chancel. The seats and lectern, all original, are made of ash. Seats are placed on both sides of a catafalque (stage on which is placed the coffin) in the center of the room. Directly under the chapel is a basement, with a lift to raise and lower caskets. The lower level floor is a slab on grade.

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### **Vault**

**Built: 1880**

**Resource Count: one contributing structure**

The vault is located on the east side of Oakwood Avenue, roughly one-third of the distance between the entrance and the cemetery proper. It was constructed in 1880 for storage of caskets during inclement weather. The exterior wall is ashlar Red Wing limestone with a carved date stone, engraved '1880', above the wide rollup, garage-type door. On either side of the entrance, ashlar stone retaining walls extend approximately twenty-five feet. The interior is a single room, roughly 16 x 20 feet, with a domed concrete roof. In 2010, heavy rains severely damaged the upper retaining wall. On the opposite side of Oakwood Avenue, there is a raised earthwork formation, providing a level turn space for hearses and other vehicles.

### **Water Tower**

**Built: 1908**

**Resource Count: one contributing structure**

Designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston Sr., it replaced a windmill on the site that was used to pump water. Towers were a common feature in English picturesque landscapes and are often found in late nineteenth century cemeteries. The tower is octagonal, with ashlar limestone construction and a peak hipped roof with red tile, echoing the motifs of the Betcher Chapel. There is a single entry, wood door on the west elevation. The interior has a ground floor room, now used for storage, electric pump works in the space that formerly held a large water tank through the middle portions, and top tier with multiple openings, but accessible only from the outside via metal rungs on the northwest side.

### **Cemetery Office**

**Built: 1961**

**Resource Count: one noncontributing building**

The office, erected in 1961, is a one-story building with garage entries on the ground floor on the south elevation. It was designed by architect Hubert Swanson. The building is 25' wide x 38' 8" long. It features a low-pitched hipped roof with red tile sheathing. The construction is wood-frame with an ashlar stone exterior. The upper floor holds several small offices, while the ground floor has two rollup garage-type doors. This is used for service trucks and equipment.

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Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

**8. NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Oakwood Cemetery is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in the area of Social History. For more than a century and a half, Oakwood Cemetery has been a final resting place for the people of Red Wing, Minnesota.<sup>1</sup> The property was first acquired by the city in 1857, although the first burial on the site predates that year. Its location on a bluff distance from the city center reflects changing attitudes toward death and commemoration. By 1889, as Red Wing grew and prospered, the city authorized the formation of a commission to supervise the cemetery, formalizing business management of its affairs and removing day-to-day decisions from the city council.

In 1908, the Blodgett Memorial Gateway and the Betcher Memorial Chapel were dedicated, transforming the entry into the cemetery grounds. Designed by architect Clarence H. Johnston Sr., they reflect the milieu of the first decade of the twentieth century in Red Wing. Spurred by the newly-organized Red Wing Civic League, community organizations, businesses, and governmental institutions — with an assist from wealthy citizens — initiated the construction of some of the city's finest historic structures.

The Cemetery is also eligible under Criterion C as a historic cultural landscape. Following the formation of the cemetery commission in 1889, Oakwood was carefully managed and redesigned to reflect the altered aesthetic and spiritual values associated with landscapes. Those views, shaped by the rise of the "rural cemetery" movement, included a careful attention to the natural setting of cemeteries. The landscape values, as codified under the new cemetery board, came from Adolph Strauch, Superintendent of Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, who focused on expansive areas of lawn and clusters of trees and shrubs. Indeed, it became known as the "Lawn Plan."

It is eligible under Criteria Consideration D because it derives its primary significance from historic events that reflect important broad patterns of our history.

The period of significance begins in 1857, when the city acquired title to the property, and ends in 1921. The following year, the city purchased an additional forty acres for the cemetery and began to move away from the principles of the Lawn Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Red Wing has three other major cemeteries. St John's Lutheran Cemetery (also referred to as the Old German Cemetery) is located off Highway 61 on North Service Drive. Calvary Cemetery is the primary burial site for parish members of the Church of St. Joseph. Burnside Cemetery (also referred to as the Shiloh Cemetery) was originally outside the city limits. Red Wing took over management in 1971 following consolidation of Burnside Township into the city.

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Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

### The City of Red Wing

Originally the site of a Dakota farming village, in 1837, Samuel Dentan and Daniel Gavin brought their wives to this location as missionaries with the Evangelical Missionary Society of Lausanne (Switzerland). Over the next decade and a half, the missionary outpost became a small mixed race settlement. Following the signing of the Traverse des Sioux and Mendota treaties in 1851, land for Euro-American settlement became available for sale, and a U.S. Land Office opened here under Christopher Graham and William Phelps' direction. Within a few years the missionary outpost was transformed into a bustling riverfront trade center with a population of 1,251 in 1860.<sup>2</sup>

Despite a temporary slowdown resulting from the Civil War, the 1860s marked a decade of phenomenal growth as the population grew to 4,260 by 1870. Riverfront trade boomed as wheat production increased on surrounding farms. The early economy centered on the wheat trade. In 1874 alone, 2,418,622 bushels of wheat were shipped from Red Wing, leading to its designation as "the greatest local wheat market in the world." However, regional shifts in settlement and transportation caused the industry to slip by the 1880s.

The city had developed a diversified industrial base by that time. The first area shoe factory opened in 1861, marking the beginning of the city's important leather and shoe industry. The river brought access to the great forests of northern Minnesota and Wisconsin, providing raw materials for the Red Wing Manufacturing Company (lumber, sash and door) and the Red Wing Manufacturing Company (furniture). The Red Wing Stoneware Company and the Red Wing Sewer Pipe Company turned the rich clay deposits into finished goods. Three rail lines passed through town, offering an excellent transportation network.

### Oakwood Cemetery

From the very founding of the town, Red Wing citizens have recognized the need for burial grounds. According to one early settler, missionary J. H. Hancock, his wife was the first white person buried within the city limits, following her death in March 1851. He later wrote, "At her own request she was buried on Indian ground at the foot of the towering bluff. When a more advanced civilization came to found a city on the site of this Indian village and the ground was wanted for business blocks, a city for the dead was platted on the summit of the southern bluff overlooking the place, and to this cemetery her remains were removed. A marble slab at Oakwood cemetery now marks it."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Frederick L. Johnson, *Red Wing: A Portable History* (Red Wing, Minn.: City of Red Wing Heritage Preservation Commission, 2007), 1-8.

<sup>3</sup> Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, ed. *History of Goodhue County, Minnesota* (Chicago, Ill.: 1909), 532.

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Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

Recognizing a need to formally set aside land as part of their new town, in 1854, the Land Claim Association commissioned two surveyors, David Hancock and Stephen Hart, to select a proper tract of land. They chose a thirty-five acre tract on south Red Wing, although the city did not acquire ownership until December 1857. The grounds were apparently used for burials almost at once — a John Williams, victim of cholera, was apparently the first to be interred here. Among the early graves were the five victims of the sinking of the Galena, a large Mississippi steamboat that exploded on the evening of July 3, 1858.

There was little organization, however, as one writer said, “Burials were made here and there upon the grounds as fancy in each case dictated.” With no official registry, the location of some graves is unknown. Citizens simply selected a site within the cemetery boundaries. In 1863, the city council stepped up their efforts to organize the cemetery, finally platting lots and laying out roads. A volunteer sexton was appointed to supervise the records.

Finally, in late April 1865, in the midst of the nationwide mourning of Abraham Lincoln, the city council adopted a formal city ordinance for management of the cemetery, now designated as “Oakwood.” An additional strip of land was acquired that same year, increasing the total property by thirty-three acres. The first official registry began in 1868.<sup>4</sup>

The city completed a full survey of the cemetery in 1871, finally establishing boundaries of individual lots and designating one area as a Potters’ Field. If a family did not have money for a lot, they could be buried in this section, although some were later transferred to other locations as money became available. It appears, from the 1868-1870 registries, however, that there was already an informal Potters’ Field. In 1868, for example, of ninety burials at Oakwood, forty-nine were listed as being in an undesignated area.

Intended to offer a place of burial for the indigent, its merits were often debated. One newspaper story carried a typical complaint:

There are some people who would just as soon bury their relatives in the potters’ field and there are no further expenses. Here is an instance. A man, who owns a little property and has enough money to live comfortably, called at the clerk’s office and wanted a permit to bury his wife. Every effort was made to induce him to buy a single grave, but he wanted her buried in the potters’ field because it would only cost him \$5, saying, “Dat is good enough for she.”<sup>5</sup>

There were few improvements or changes after 1865. In 1880, a limestone vault, measuring 16 x 20 feet, with “two foot walls, arched and covered with earth over a coating of cement . . . and a ventilating chimney.” It was built into the hillside just inside the entrance to the grounds, to be used for temporary

<sup>4</sup> *Red Wing Daily Republican*, July 25, 1889.

<sup>5</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, October 31, 1906.

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storage of bodies. Completed that fall, construction included additional site work, including “a wing retaining wall running three rods out from each side of the front.” A sewer line was dug across the road above the vault to help with drainage. In addition, a flat surface was graded just opposite the entrance, allowing a place for vehicles to turn around and return back to the city streets.<sup>6</sup> The vault provided for proper storage of caskets during the winter months when the steep climb up the bluff could be difficult to traverse. In 1896, cemetery commissioner H. B. Wilson described the route: “The only road . . . was up a steep, ungraded ravine which had been gullied out by the action of the surface drainage during the lapse of untold centuries. Up this narrow ravine, the first settlers of Red Wing conveyed the remains of their deceased friends, as best they could, for several years. From time to time, as necessity required, a narrow road has been graded along one side of this gully.”<sup>7</sup>

In 1889, cemetery management underwent a major reorganization. Until that time, the city council directed the whole operation, with entries listing burials appearing regularly in meeting minutes. In April 1889, the council authorized formation of a cemetery board of trustees, which held its first meeting the following month and selected Daniel Densmore as its chair. Densmore, a native of New York, came to Red Wing in 1857, and served in the Civil War, eventually commanding the 68th Regiment of U.S. Colored Troops. At war’s end, he returned to Red Wing and, with his brothers, bought a foundry that laid the basis for his prominent role in the community. Six other men, including prominent business leaders A. H. Boxrud, O. D. Anderson, and Charles Betcher, Sr, joined Densmore on the board.<sup>8</sup>

The commission placed the day-to-day management under a paid superintendent, who recorded payments and handled burial arrangements. They selected carriage maker Herman Hanisch for the post, one that he held for more than twenty years. The new board instituted a set of regulations aimed at transforming the cemetery into an orderly, well-kept retreat.<sup>9</sup>

### The Rural Cemetery Movement and the Lawn Plan

The changes instituted in 1889 must be understood within the nation’s changing attitudes toward death and commemoration, reflecting altered aesthetic and spiritual values associated with landscapes. Before 1800, cemeteries were typically associated with churches, but as urbanization rapidly increased in the early nineteenth century, these graveyards could not meet the needs of a growing city. Indeed, health

<sup>6</sup> *Red Wing Advance*, September 15, November 10, 1880; “Receiving Vault in Oakwood,” *The Modern Cemetery* 2 (February 1892): 142-143.

<sup>7</sup> *Red Wing Daily Republican*, July 22, 1896.

<sup>8</sup> Densmore is the uncle of noted Minnesota ethnographer Frances Densmore.

<sup>9</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, May 7, 1889; Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, *History of Goodhue County*, 726.

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concerns about the spread of disease and the contamination of water supplies pushed cemeteries out of the center of most large cities.

The rural cemetery movement began with the establishment of Mount Auburn Cemetery in 1831. Located just outside Cambridge, Massachusetts, it took the cemetery out of the city and placed it into a park-like setting where the dead could find eternal rest. As Emily Dickinson wrote after a visit to Mt. Auburn in 1846, "It seems as if Nature had formed the spot with a distinct idea of its being a resting place for her children."<sup>10</sup>

Coinciding with the growing popularity of horticulture and the Romantic aesthetic taste for pastoral beauty, Mount Auburn was developed as a "domesticated landscape" popularized by 19th century English landscape design. Its plan included retention of natural features like ponds and mature forests with added roads and paths that followed the natural contours of the land, as well as the planting of hundreds of native and exotic trees and plants. It also encouraged the use of family lots, keeping kindred together in the afterlife, with ornamental monuments rather than the cold slabs of stone often found in earlier cemeteries. The effect of a walk through Mount Auburn, one writer noted in 1848, served "to soften the general tone of feeling, to quench the fire of passion, to moderate the aspirations of ambition, to dispel the illusions of hope, to allay vanity and frivolity, to admonish of the shortness of time and the reality and nearness of eternity."

This was a remarkable change. As Historian David Sloane states, "It is difficult today to understand the experimental nature of the cemetery plan. New Englanders had been burying their dead on town commons for two centuries. The association of meeting house and graveyard was one of the distinguishing features of New England life."<sup>11</sup> Indeed, the very name 'cemetery' — Greek for 'sleeping chamber' — was widely used for the first time.<sup>12</sup>

The enormous success of Mount Auburn and its imitators grew from the public's acceptance of the physical isolation of the dead from the living. The public accepted such a change only within the naturalistic landscape that the founders created from the hills and valleys of the new cemetery. It was a

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<sup>10</sup> Emily Dickinson to Abiah Root, September 8, 1846, *Letters of Emily Dickinson*, ed. Thomas J. Johnson and Theodora War (Cambridge, Mass.: 1958), 1:36-37. Also see Stanley French, "The Cemetery as Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the 'Rural Cemetery' Movement," *American Quarterly* 26 (March 1974): 268-79; Blanche Linden-Ward, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscape of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1989).

<sup>11</sup> Sloane, David Charles. *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 44-45.

<sup>12</sup> Barbara Rotundo, "The Rural Cemetery Movement," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 109 (July 1973): 231.

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controlled return to nature, shaped by curving roads that followed the natural terrain and carefully placed trees and shrubs. By redefining “the boundary, beyond which the living cannot go nor the dead return,” Mount Auburn’s planners altered the conventional perspective of the grave and established the cemetery as an important cultural institution within the society.

Within fifteen years, nine major cemeteries were patterned after Mount Auburn: Laurel Hill in Philadelphia (1836; NHL, 1998); Green-Wood in Brooklyn, N.Y., Mount Hope, Rochester, N.Y., Green Mount, Baltimore, Md. (1838); Albany Rural, Albany, N.Y. (1841); Allegheny, Pittsburgh, Penna.; Spring Grove, Cincinnati, Ohio (1844); Elmwood, Detroit, Mich., and Swan Point, Providence, R.I. (1846). By 1849 the idea had reached the Mississippi (Bellefontaine, St. Louis, Mo.) and the west coast by 1863 (Mountain View, Oakland, Cal.).<sup>13</sup>

The rural cemetery movement provided the inspiration for the location of Oakwood cemetery on a wooded bluff, somewhat distant from the town itself. The aesthetic landscape values, as codified under the new cemetery board, came from Adolph Strauch, Superintendent of Spring Grove Cemetery, Cincinnati, who greatly influenced the direction of the rural cemetery movement, following his appointment there in 1859.

As rural cemeteries grew in popularity, individual lot owners began to use increasingly elaborate plantings and outsized monuments to distinguish their family’s resting place. The focus centered on the family plot, often enclosed by fencing or copses of trees, such as weeping willows or evergreens. Critical of Spring Grove’s increasing cluttered landscape, Strauch emphasized the visual impact of the cemetery as a whole. He curbed ornamentation of individual lots, placed restrictions on lot enclosures, and encouraged less development of the natural form of the land. His regulations limited burial lots to a single monument, with headstones not to exceed two feet in height. By lessening the appearance of gaudy monuments and railings that were so much a part of cemetery layouts at the time, Strauch focused more on expansive areas of lawn and clusters of trees and shrubs. Indeed, it became known as the “Lawn Plan.”<sup>14</sup>

Strauch’s influence went well beyond cemetery landscapes. In 1914, landscape architect O. C. Simonds wrote, “Perhaps no man in the United States since A. J. Downing’s time has done more for the correction and cultivation of public taste in landscape gardening than Adolph Strauch.” In a nod to another great

<sup>13</sup> David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 54.

<sup>14</sup> Blanche Linden-Ward and David C. Sloane, “Spring Grove: The Founding of Cincinnati’s Rural Cemetery, 1845-1855,” *Queen City Heritage* 43 (Spring 1985): 17-32; *Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Convention of American Cemetery Superintendents, 1897*: 22-23.

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American landscape architect of the era, Simonds also noted, “[Frederick Law] Olmsted used to say that when he needed inspiration, he visited Spring Grove.”<sup>15</sup>

### The Transformation of Oakwood Cemetery

In Red Wing, the newly-constituted Cemetery Board fully embraced these ideals in 1889. In their first published rules and regulations, the cemetery board spelled out a clear vision: “In beautifying the grounds, the trustees will adhere to the lawn plan as far as practicable.” Although the following quotes are lengthy, they convey the extent to which the Red Wing Cemetery Board of Trustees echoed the philosophy and the very language exemplified by Strauch’s lawn plan.<sup>16</sup>

Hence it is that the advanced sentiment of the age finds in the smooth undulation of wooded lawns, the silent responding of hill to vale, the stateliness of noble trees, the reverent benediction of leafy branches, the deep murmur of breeze and bough, the listening stillness of leaf and zephyr breath, the tintings of beautiful flowers, the voicing of wild birds, the broad band of noonday light upon the tall monument, and the soft glinting of broken sunbeams touching gently the humble headstone — finds in these, each and all blending, the harmony of elements that most beautifully and poetically expresses the hallowed memory and the joyous serenity and bright rest of dear friends who have gone on before.

The possibilities of such a fortunate combination of fitting landscape elements this city possesses in its Oakwood cemetery. Nature has endowed it most profusely. There needs only that the rare qualities of these elements be appreciated, their influence respected, and their material forms be held with a sacredness which will not tolerate the least thought of disfigurement, blot, or blemish upon them. The grounds should be the pride of every citizen. They should be elegant and graceful, even as our dead are beautiful.

To the stately beauty and tranquil retirement of the grassy burial lawns, there are added, as attractions, the startling heights and depths of the canyon parks, that, cutting deeply into the plat, ensure to Oakwood cemetery, within itself, a grandeur of fine scenery possessed by few preserves of this character. If the

<sup>15</sup> O. C. Simonds, “Adolph Strauch,” in *The Standard Encyclopedia of Horticulture*, Liberty Hyde Bailey, editor (New York: MacMillan, 1914); Noel Dorsey Vernon, “Adolph Strauch: Cincinnati and the Legacy of Spring Grove Cemetery,” in *Midwestern Landscape Architecture*, William H. Tischler, editor (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 1-22; G. B. Tobey, “Adolph Strauch, Father of the Lawn Plan,” *Landscape Planning 2* (1975): 283-294.

<sup>16</sup> Several of the regulations closely echo the language of similar strictures at Strauch’s Spring Grove Cemetery.

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mood of the grave-ridged slopes becomes too oppressive, a glance down the deep glens, amid the orchards of picturesque oaks and delicate birches, gives a diversion both effective and enchanting.<sup>17</sup>

Each piece of the landscape was part of the whole.

In selecting our ornamentation, each and every member thereto contributed, be it grassy slope, shrub, stone, monument, or tree, should be selected and studied, not only to furnish its quota of correct tone influence to the scene, but also to duly assist its neighbors in maintaining their special characteristics . . . A shrub that demonstrates its ardor of growth in cliquish tufts and spreading hedges, clambering upon graves, and forbidding a view of aught beyond itself, is too full of brushy haste, too suggestive of pettiness and excitement to be admitted upon the picture of dignified elegance which we feel befits the spirit of these grounds. . . . A low, drooping tree, in every branch the clear and favorite pantomime of uncontrollable grief, as seen from the lot on which it stands, may from another aspect present only the depressing presence of a frowsy, uncanny thicket.<sup>18</sup>

The visual landscape extended to the grass and dirt, as the handbook continued: "That bank, too, which cannot be made to wear a coat of green, and which could not be trimmed if it did, may not expose brownness to the avenue, but, interrupting a charming vista from another view, will show simply raw, rude, and vulgar."

These ideals were translated into practical changes in landscape design and management at Oakwood Cemetery. Announcing the changes, the local newspaper noted: "The cemetery trustees are making some extensive improvement at the cemetery in regrading streets and generally improving the appearance of the grounds. The work already done shows that the placing of the management of the cemetery in the hands of a board was wise and timely."<sup>19</sup>

The most obvious change took place with the circulation system. Although the roads appear in the plat, they were informally laid out before 1889. Work began at once on the road leading up from East Avenue to the cemetery grounds, as crews constructed a "well-graded, smooth roadbed, covered with gravel and cinders." New sections of the cemetery were platted with curving roads, often flowing along the upper edge of the bluff. Existing avenues were altered as well, requiring that hundreds of older graves be dug up and the bodies transferred to formal plots. Nearly half could not be properly identified.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> *Rules and Regulations*, 1-2.

<sup>18</sup> *Rules and Regulations*, 6-7.

<sup>19</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, May 4, 1889.

<sup>20</sup> *Red Wing Daily Republican*, November 2, 1889, January 4, 1890; Mary Eaton-Dehn, "Oakwood Cemetery: A Peaceful, Final Resting Place," *Today Magazine*, October, 2002, 10.

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More than simply standardizing the road pattern, the new regulations set strict guidelines for the look of the cemetery. Until this time, as one author said,

Thirty-five years of go-as-you-please had left their mark on everything. Over 800 lots were graded up like army earthworks. A lot was not acceptably fixed until it had a forest tree at each corner — one lot, 12 by 25 feet, sported twelve fir trees. When Mr. X would grade his lot, he got earth by digging a hole in Y's lot. Y in due time would recoup himself out of X or Z, leaving in exchange arm loads of roots and litter. . . . If there was a bright plat of grass, why, that was just the place to burn brush and truck. One hundred and twenty-six monuments postured through all the degrees of slant from a little too much leaning to wrong end up.<sup>21</sup>

A more general rule of thumb was established, empowering the trustees to “prevent or remove any erection, inclosure, or inscription which they may deem injurious to the immediate locality, [or] prejudicial to the general good appearance of the grounds.”<sup>22</sup>

The new plan included a small pond at the head of the east ravine, with a windmill on the crest of the bluff, erected to supply water for the ponds, but also for watering the lawns. The pond, which no longer exists, was described as twenty by sixty feet, with the shore lined with cobblestones.<sup>23</sup>

In addition, personal behavior came under the purview of the trustees, who hope to ensure that visitors would have a peaceful and restful time during their sojourn at Oakwood Cemetery. “A strict observance of decorum will be demanded of all visitors to the grounds,” the regulations continued. Picnics and alcohol were banned. Dogs were forbidden and horseback riding was prohibited.<sup>24</sup>

In the end, wrote “One of the board” in a 1901 article in the national journal, *Park and Cemetery*, “We have more exactly the beautiful rural cemetery.” The trustees boasted of the beauty of the cemetery, saying, “Did Oakwood Cemetery possess in scenic ornament but this one attraction, it were enough to entitle the place to marked consideration; but, blending all these diverse and rare characteristics, it is worthy the most liberal admiration of every connoisseur and lover of the varied forms and moods of landscape beauty.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Red Wing Daily Republican*, December 2, 1902; “How an Old Cemetery Was Improved,” *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening* 11 (November 1901): 166.

<sup>22</sup> *Charter Provisions, Ordinances, and Rules and Regulations for the Government of Oakwood Cemetery* (Red Wing: Red Wing Printing Company, 1889).

<sup>23</sup> *Red Wing Daily Republican*, May 2, 1890; “Waterworks at Oakwood,” *The Modern Cemetery* 3 (June 1893): 143.

<sup>24</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, May 10, 21, 1889.

<sup>25</sup> “How an Old Cemetery Was Improved,” *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening* 11 (November 1901): 166.

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**The Gateway and the Chapel**

Following the 1889 managerial transformation, news stories about the cemetery recede from front page into the obituary column for the next sixteen years. After a change in its policy to restrict the supply of gravestones to national cemeteries, the federal government began to offer markers for the growing number of the Civil War veterans buried in the private and city cemeteries, including many found in Oakwood. Among the prominent soldiers laid to rest during these years was General James Brisbin, a veteran who organized the 5<sup>th</sup> U.S. Colored Cavalry.

There were other memorials as well. In 1896, the city's firemen organized a fund to place a monument in the cemetery, with a lot large enough to hold its deceased members. Soon after the cemetery reorganization, one of the upper Mississippi's worst disasters brought new permanent residents to Oakwood. In July 1890, the steamer *Sea Wing* was towing a barge from Red Wing south to Lake City, filled with nearly 200 passengers on an excursion to Camp Lakeview — the state militia's summer encampment. A sudden storm — possibly a tornado — swept over Lake Pepin, overturning the barge, tossing its cargo into the water. Forty-two people lost their lives, with thirty laid to rest in Oakwood Cemetery.<sup>26</sup>

Additional property was acquired in 1897, when the cemetery commission purchased land between the entrance near the burial vault and Fifteenth Street. Initial plans, calling for a gate and house for the sexton, never saw fruition. Eleven years later, the cemetery commission took steps to use that additional property, extending its northern entry and adding a magnificent stone entry arch and chapel.

This phase of cemetery construction needs to be seen within the context of the community. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Red Wing went through an extraordinary period of civic investment, spurred by a booming economy and a leadership cadre with a strong sense of responsibility. The Red Wing Civic League, organized in 1903, was instrumental in stimulating public interest in beautifying the city.

Theodore B. Sheldon, a successful businessman and Red Wing City Council member, left a bequest of \$83,000 to the City of Red Wing. Along with the funds, he stipulated that the money was to be used to develop a public institution for "some public benefit but nonsectarian purpose in the said City of Red Wing." The trust directors, including Sheldon's second wife Annie, decided upon a theater. In 1904, four years after Sheldon's passing, construction was complete on the T. B. Sheldon Memorial Auditorium.

<sup>26</sup> *Red Wing Daily Republican*, May 5, 1896; Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, *History of Goodhue County* (Chicago: 1909), 495-497.

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In 1906, John Rich donated funds for the improvement of Broadway, hiring landscape architect William Finklenburg to create a mall up from the Milwaukee Road Depot near the river to the heart of the “intellectual center of town” — as the *St. Paul Dispatch* called the blocks that held the Sheldon Auditorium, Christ Church, and the Carnegie Library. Soon after, the federal government committed to build a new post office on the mall.<sup>27</sup>

Within this same five-year span, Red Wing opened a new city hall in 1905, consolidating administrative offices, a jail, and the fire station in one building. The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, & Pacific Railroad built a striking Classical Revival depot near the levee that same year, followed quickly by Great Western Railroad, which erected a spacious depot and division office on Main Street. The St. James Hotel underwent a substantial expansion. Two religious organizations joined the construction wave, with the Methodist Episcopal Church and Trinity Lutheran erecting beautiful new stone edifices that still grace the city. In 1907, two businessmen, W. C. Krise and E. H. Foot, donated \$10,000 for construction of a wing to the Red Wing City Hospital in memory of Joshua Pierce, a prominent banker.<sup>28</sup>

The *Republican* proudly reprinted an editorial from the *St. Paul Dispatch*, labeling the community as “The Desirable City.” The capital city newspaper praised marvelous blending of commerce and charity in the making of a live, livable, lovable city,” and attributed it to the “private generosity, the gratitude of rich men and women to the city that has made their wealth possible, [in] so shaping and developing Red Wing, with continual gifts of parks and boulevards, theaters and libraries and hospitals, as well as the more basic improvements.”<sup>29</sup>

Although the cemetery board had expressed a desire for a chapel as early as 1891, in early 1906, its members told the local newspapers that goal, including a larger casket storage vault, was its most important priority. That summer, Charles A. Betcher announced that his mother wished to donate \$10,000 to finance construction of a chapel, given as a memorial to her late husband.<sup>30</sup>

Her husband, Charles Betcher, was a native of Germany, who immigrated to the United States in 1849. After settling initially in Winona, where he opened a hardware store, in 1856, Betcher moved to Red Wing. In this city, he expanded his original business into the booming lumber trade, where he made a substantial fortune. One of its leading citizens, he died in 1903. His son, Charles Arthur Betcher, took his place in both business and civic affairs, and served on the Cemetery Commission at the time of his mother’s donation.

<sup>27</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, January 16, 23, 1907.

<sup>28</sup> Trinity Lutheran later consolidated with two other congregations and is now United Lutheran Church.

<sup>29</sup> *St. Paul Dispatch*, December 13, 1906.

<sup>30</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, April 4, 1906.

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Margaret Gorthrup Betcher placed several conditions on her gift. First, the city must agree to grade the road from East Avenue through the grounds up to its north entrance. This included extending East Avenue, a prominent residential street, beyond Twelfth Street. Second, the chapel grounds, as she referred to them, were to be used solely for that purpose and not be used for graves. Third, the chapel would have a memorial window dedicated to her late husband.<sup>31</sup>

The cemetery board and the city council readily accepted the gift. The council began condemnation proceedings against C. N. Hewitt, who apparently was reluctant to sell his property, located between the end of East Avenue and the existing entrance. The additional land shifted the cemetery's primary entrance fifty feet to the north.<sup>32</sup>

Within weeks, Clarence H. Johnston Sr. was retained as architect. At the time, he was recognized as one of Minnesota's foremost architects. Born near Waseca, Minnesota, Johnston (1859-1936) studied architecture briefly at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but was trained primarily as an apprentice and draftsman with prominent architects in St. Paul and in New York City. He opened his own office in St. Paul in 1882. In May 1901 he was appointed architect for the Minnesota State Board of Control, recently created by the state legislature to oversee the building and operation of Minnesota's state-funded institutions. At about the same time he became architect for the University of Minnesota's Board of Regents.

During the next thirty years Johnston designed hundreds of buildings for the state's extensive University facilities, normal schools, correctional facilities, hospitals, veterans home, tuberculosis sanatorium, asylums, schools for the handicapped, orphanages, state capitol complex, and state fairgrounds. He left the post of State Architect in 1931.

Johnston also maintained a prolific private practice. His non-state secondary school and collegiate commissions include buildings at Shattuck School (Faribault), Macalester College (St. Paul), Seabury Divinity School (Faribault), St. Paul Seminary (St. Paul), Hamline University (St. Paul), and the College of St. Theresa (Winona).

Among his residential commissions, Johnston had recently drawn the plans for a new home at 1015 Fourth Street for John Rich, a prominent Red Wing leader and friend of the Betchers. He also designed the homes of Bernard Gerlach (704 Bush St.) and C. E. Friedrich (626 Plum St.), so his work was well known in the city. In addition, at the conclusion of his cemetery work, he drew plans for an English Tudor Revival style home for Charles A. Betcher at 1025 Fourth Street.

The architect promptly visited the cemetery and came back to the commission with plans. Although the general location of the chapel had already been selected, the architect made more specific site choices.

<sup>31</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, October 3, 1906; Minutes, City Council, City of Red Wing, May 5, 1908.

<sup>32</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, October 10, 31, 1906; January 2, 1907.

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Soon after Johnston was hired, another civic leader stepped forward with an additional gift. Elijah Haskell Blodgett offered \$5,000 for erection of a stone entrance in memory of his wife of fifty years, Sarah Sturtevant Blodgett, who died on March 28, 1906. From New England stock, Blodgett settled in Red Wing in 1866 and took up employment at the grain elevator owned by T. B. Sheldon. Eventually made a partner in the firm, Blodgett sat on the board of the city's leading industries, such as LaGrange Mills and the Red Wing Union Stoneware Company.<sup>33</sup>

The Blodgett Memorial Gateway represents one of the hallmarks of the later stages of the rural cemetery movement. The appropriate gateway immediately established the identity of the cemetery as a place different from the commercial world. Passing through its portals, the gates of the cemetery created between the worlds of the living and the dead, and then, drawn into the natural landscape up the entry road through the ravine to the crest of the hill, the visitor gradually left behind the worries and concerns of the city. The local newspaper would boast: "Few cities, when the whole plan is completed, will have an entrance to God's acre more beautiful than Red Wing will have at Oakwood."

The monthly trustees' minutes suggest that Johnston's plans were submitted in the late winter months of 1907 and enthusiastically approved. However, when estimates came back, the expense of the chapel grew to \$14,000. In a letter to the Board of Trustees, dated April 20, 1908, Charles A. Betcher wrote: "Marked changes can be made, such as cutting off the spire, using something other than tile for the roof, etc., and thereby reduce the cost materially, but I feel that if possible, the character of the building should be maintained." To that end, Betcher informed the trustees that Margaret Betcher had agreed to increase her donation.<sup>34</sup>

The estimates for the archway, \$5,125, came in at the budgeted level. At this point, the name of the donor had not been made public, and Betcher simply states: "Let the unknown donor agree to pay the amount named as his share of the gate and fence." Not until the July 24, 1907, meeting of the City Council was Blodgett's name mentioned in public in connection with his gift.

The younger Betcher took on much of the responsibility of managing the project, offering to "buy all the stone in one lump sum" because "quite a saving can be effected on this heaviest item." Although there are no contemporary newspaper accounts, during this period, Oakwood Cemetery contracted with Clarence Johnston for an additional building — a water tower, to be located on the highest point in the property.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Goodhue County News*, January 2, 1907. Blodgett also left a bequest of \$12,000 to the hospital.

<sup>34</sup> *Red Wing Republican*, May 22, 1907.

<sup>35</sup> Commission ledgers, Clarence H. Johnston papers (N 46), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis. Also see Paul Clifford Larsen, *Minnesota Architect: The Life and Work of Clarence H. Johnston* (Afton, Minn.: Afton Historical Society Press, 1996).

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Construction began in late summer under the supervision of A. R. Brink, a local contractor. Over the next few months, only a few construction reports are found in the local newspapers. Work on the gate and chapel were completed just before Memorial Day, 1908.

One of the remaining mysteries is the creator of the Betcher memorial window. The *Red Wing Eagle* noted, "In the rear wall of the room, directly back of the chancel, is a memorial window. It is an exquisite work of art. Designs were submitted by twenty of the leading glass manufacturers of the East and from these was selected the one in the edifice. The subject of the window design is the Resurrection." We have no record of the twenty competitors or the name of the winning designer.

In August, the chapel was dedicated at a program attended by more than 2,000 people. Among the speakers, Mayor A. P. Pierce said, "The chapel and the gateway are for the use of all alike — rich and poor, high and low. All will enter those portals, and into the same beautiful resting place of the dead on the same common footing."

The dedication of the Betcher Memorial Chapel, honoring one of the members of the 1889 cemetery board, marks the end of an era for the cemetery. Few changes took place over the next fifteen years, and management generally adhered to the lawn plan. In 1922, a forty-acre tract of land just south of Oakwood came up for sale, and the trustees jumped on the opportunity to expand the cemetery's boundaries. As the new roads and plots were developed, however, a simpler aesthetic took hold, with less attention to the natural landscape. Grave lots were laid out in a more standardized plan, with increasing uniform rows of similar sized markers. The only substantial addition since that time came in 1953, when the city acquired approximately a dozen acres off newly-developed Cherry Street, allowing for an entrance on the south side of the cemetery and improved year-round access to the grounds. Much of the land in this portion of the cemetery remains an open lawn.<sup>36</sup>

That same year, the local Elks Lodge acquired a use of a newly-developed section on Sunset and Hamish Avenues. The idea, they stated, was "creation of a memorial point, with other organizations joining in." Although the Elks placed a monument here, other community associations did not follow. This section of the cemetery remains open woods and park-like, with a low stone wall and scenic overlook of the Mississippi River valley.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Minutes, City Council, City of Red Wing, May 5, 8, 1922; August 7, 1952; January 8, December 2, 1953. The largest tract was 6.7 acres purchased from Mabel Frazier.

<sup>37</sup> *Red Wing Republican Eagle*, Elks Dedication Edition, January 21, 1966.

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In 1961, the cemetery board built a new office and maintenance building, replacing an older tool house built in 1880. Using plans by architect Hubert Swanson, it was “designed and constructed in keeping with other structures at the cemetery, so as to enhance the appearance of this sacred place.”<sup>38</sup>

A major change in the management of the cemetery came in 1971, when the revised city charter eliminated the Board of Trustees, placing the cemetery under the direction of the Department of Human Services.

**Conclusion**

Oakwood Cemetery, established in 1857, continues to serve as the final resting place for citizens of Red Wing and is still in use for burials.

Oakwood is an excellent representation of the new attitudes that changed how local residents viewed the cemetery during the last half of the nineteenth century, particularly following an 1889 reorganization of cemetery management when the newly-constituted cemetery board instituted the “Lawn Plan” pioneered by Adolph Strauch. When viewed within the context of the creation of the Civic Association in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Blodgett Memorial Arch, the Charles Betcher Memorial Chapel, and the water tower — all completed in 1908 and designed by Clarence H. Johnston Sr. — illustrate the civic-minded leadership of the community that left a lasting imprint through its significant architecture. For these reasons, it qualifies for the National Register under Criterion A for Social History.

It also qualifies under Criterion C as a historic vernacular landscape. The buildings are only part of the overall sensibilities of late nineteenth and early twentieth century that are conveyed by Oakwood Cemetery — the dramatic portal of the entrance that passes the visitor from “modern” life into the timeless; the long, climbing road to higher ground, passing a burial vault; then up to the cemetery proper with its rolling terrain, curving roads, and gravesites, all bounded by steep, deeply wooded ravines. As cemetery commissioner H. B. Wilson wrote in 1896, “One can scarcely conceive of a lovelier place in which to lie down and sleep his last sleep, than Oakwood Cemetery in the city of Red Wing.”

<sup>38</sup> Minutes, City Council, City of Red Wing, June 1, 1961. Swanson was a Red Wing native, but his offices were located in Minneapolis.

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Name of Property: Oakwood Cemetery

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Name of Property: Oakwood Cemetery

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Name of Property: Oakwood Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Red Wing

County: Goodhue County

State: MN

Name of Photographer: Daniel J. Hoisington

Date of Photographs: November 2010, May 2011

Location of Original Digital Files: Minnesota Historical Society, City of Red Wing

Photo #1 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0001), Blodgett Gate, northwest elevation, camera facing up southeast, East Avenue.

Photo #2 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0002), Blodgett Gate, northwest elevation, camera facing east.

Photo #3 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0003), fence, southeast elevation, camera facing northwest.

Photo #4 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0004), Blodgett Gate, southeast elevation, camera facing northwest, East Avenue.

Photo #5 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0005), Betcher Chapel, southwest elevation, camera facing northeast.

Photo #6 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0006), Betcher Chapel, southwest elevation (left), camera facing northeast.

Photo #7 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0007), Betcher Chapel, northeast elevation (right), camera facing northwest.

Photo #8 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0008), Betcher Chapel, interior view, southeast wall, camera facing southeast.

Photo #9 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0009), entry road from Blodgett Gate, facing south.

Photo #10 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0010), vault, west elevation, camera facing southeast.

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Photo #11 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0011), office, west elevation (left), camera facing northeast.

Photo #12 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0012), water tower, west elevation (left), camera facing northeast.

Photo #13 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0013), cemetery view, camera facing east.

Photo #14 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0014), cemetery view, Phelps Avenue, camera facing south.

Photo #15 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0015), cemetery view, camera facing southwest. Friedrich Family Monument.

Photo #16 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0016), Red Wing Pottery grave marker, camera facing east. Inscription reads: "Baby Olson, Born March 11, 1898, Died March 11, 1898."

Photo #17 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0017), Firemans' Monument, camera facing southwest.

Photo #18 (MN\_Goodhue County\_Oakwood Cemetery\_0018), Spanish-American War Veterans Monument, Civil War veterans grave markers on the left, camera facing south.

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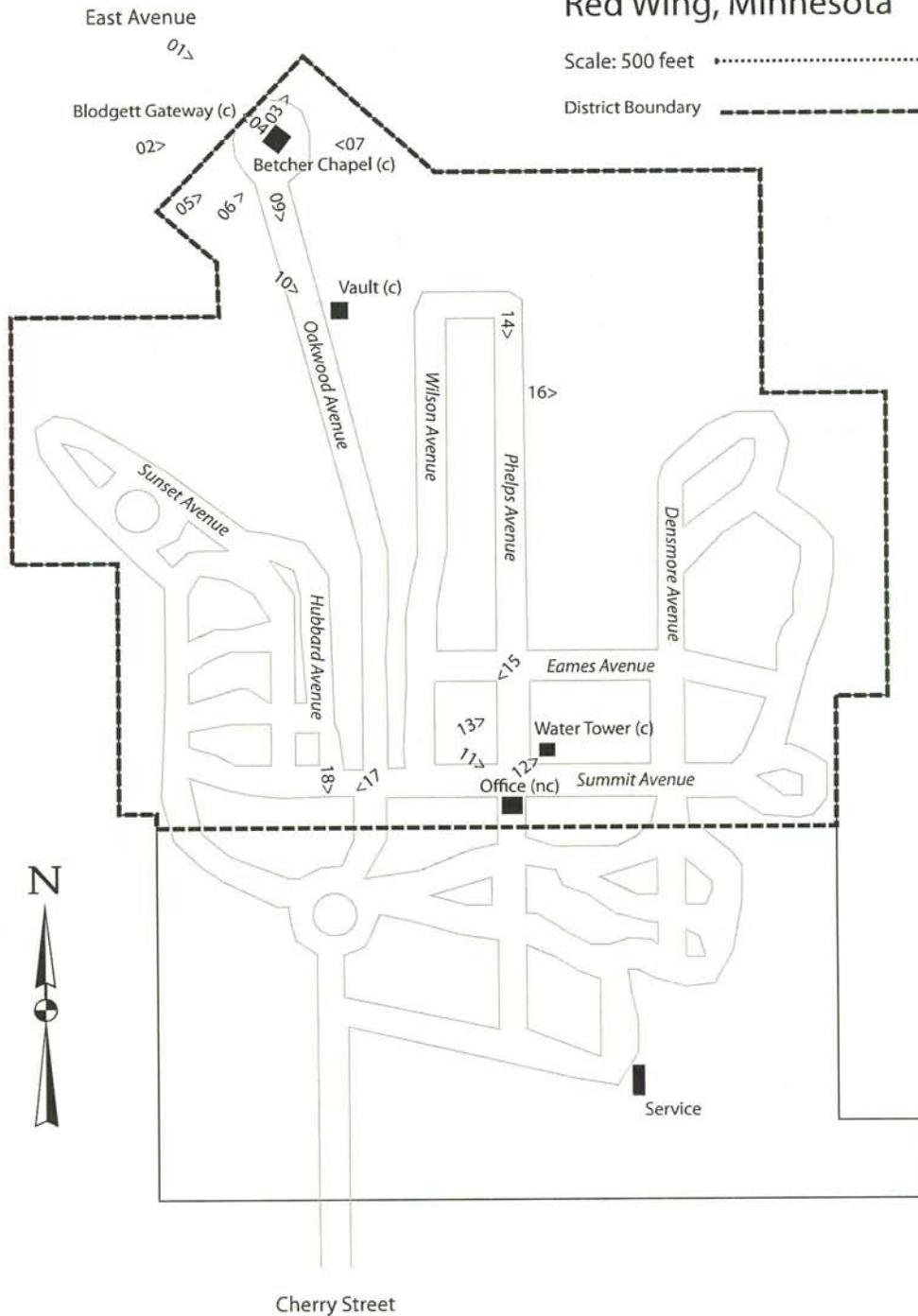
Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

Figure 1: Cemetery Map with photo locations

Oakwood Cemetery  
Red Wing, Minnesota

Scale: 500 feet

District Boundary



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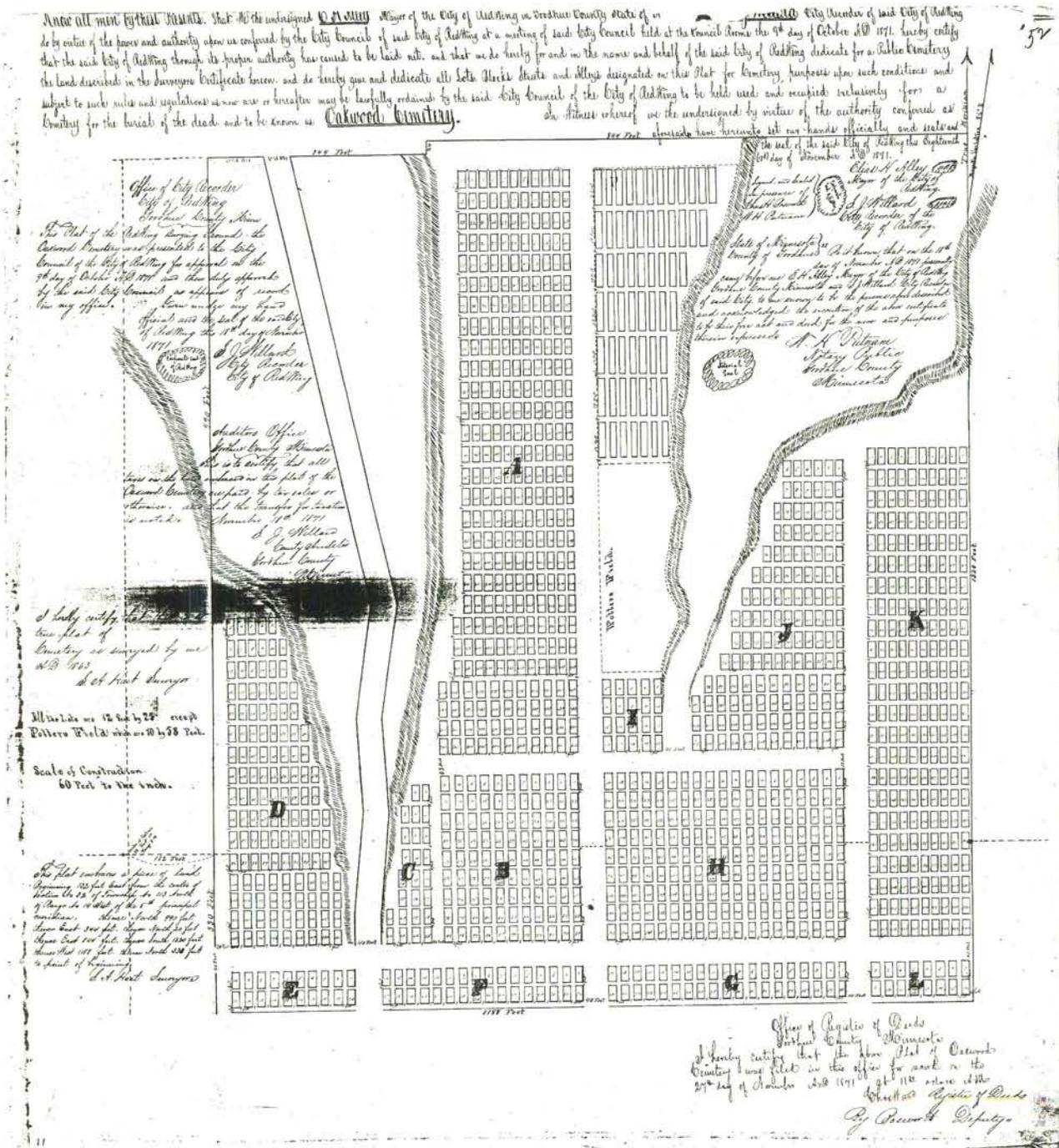
Name of Property: Oakwood Cemetery

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Figure 2: Cemetery Map, 1871 survey



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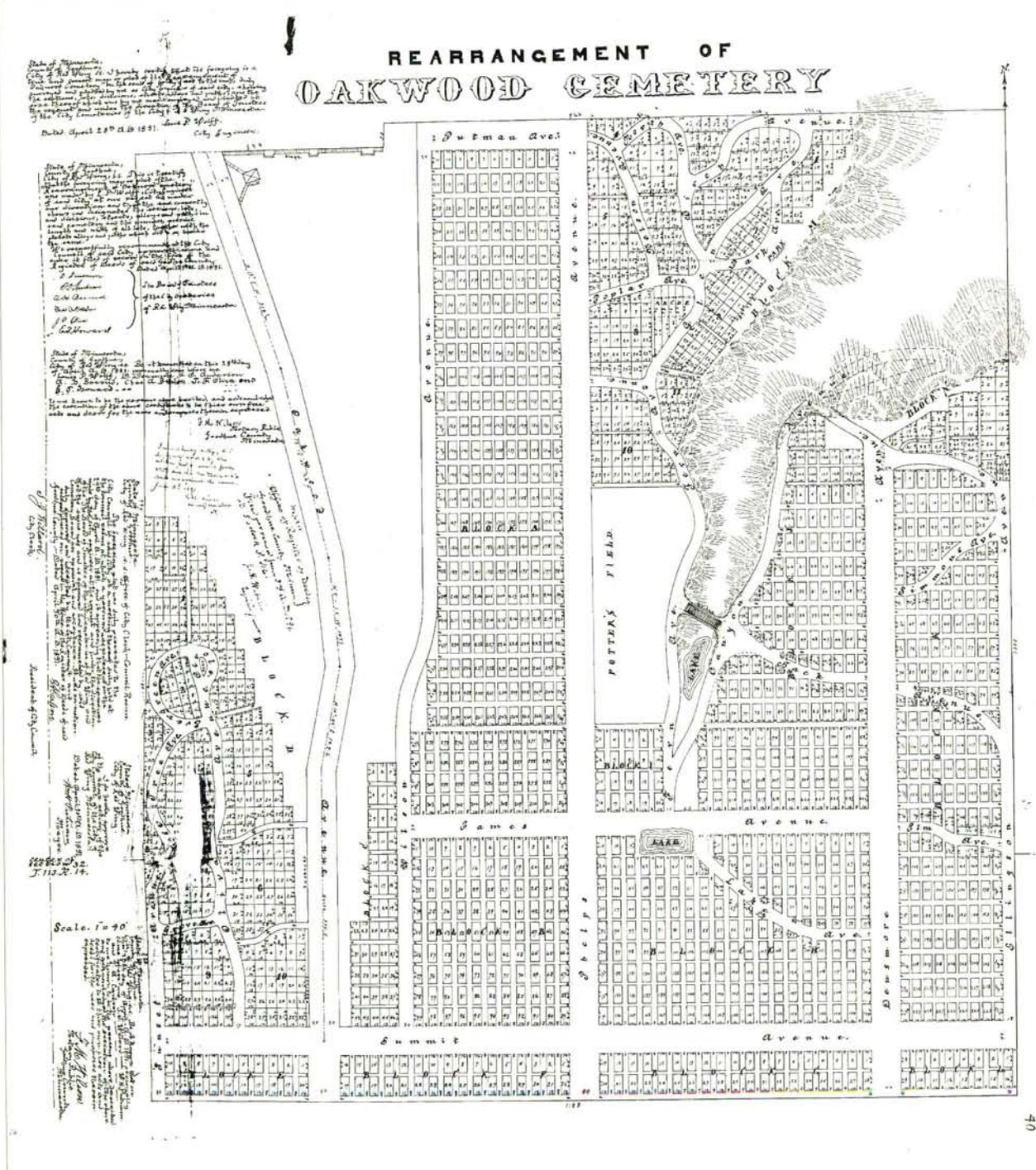
Name of Property: Oakwood Cemetery

County and State: Goodhue County, MN

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Figure 3: Cemetery Map, 1891 survey



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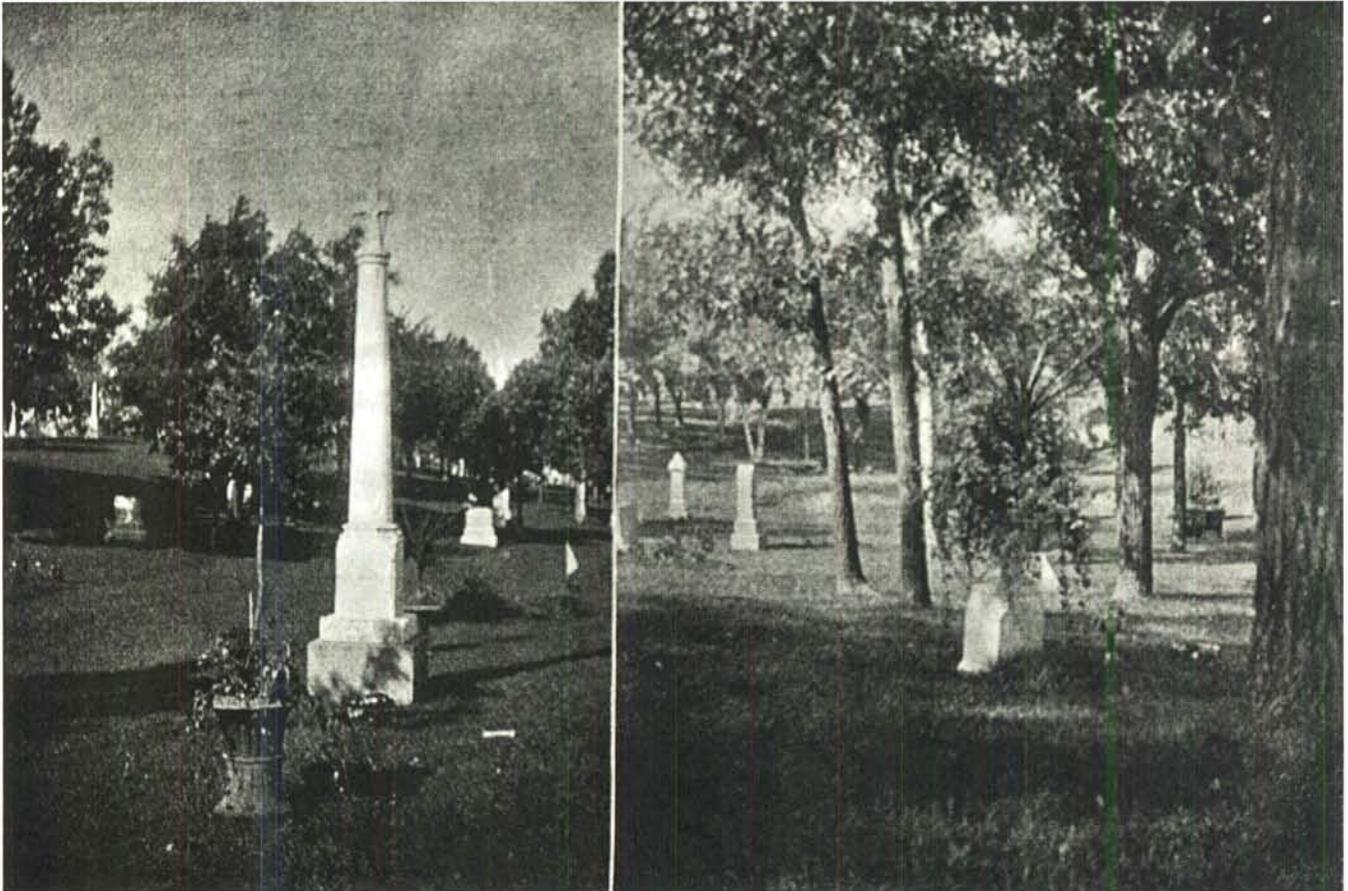
Name of Property: Oakwood Cemetery

County and State: Goodhue County, MN

Section number: Additional Documentation page: 6

Name of Multiple Property Listing (If applicable)

Figure 4: Photographs from *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening* Vol. 11 (November 1901), 166.



Minnesota Historical Society  
State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102  
651/259-3451



**TO:** Carol Shull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places

**FROM:** Denis P. Gardner

**DATE:** December 12, 2011

**NAME OF PROPERTY:** Oakwood Cemetery

**COUNTY AND STATE:** Goodhue County, Minnesota

**SUBJECT:** National Register:  
 Nomination  
 Multiple Property Documentation Form  
 Request for determination of eligibility  
 Request for removal (Reference No.     )  
 Nomination resubmission  
 Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.     )  
 Additional documentation (Reference No.     )

**DOCUMENTATION:**

- Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
- Multiple Property Documentation Form
- Continuation Sheets
- Removal Documentation
- Photographs
- CD w/ image files
- Original USGS Map
- Sketch map(s)
- Correspondence
  - Owner Objection
    - The enclosed owner objections
    - Do  Do not  constitute a majority of property owners

**STAFF COMMENTS:**



MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0001



MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0002



MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0003



MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0004



MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0005



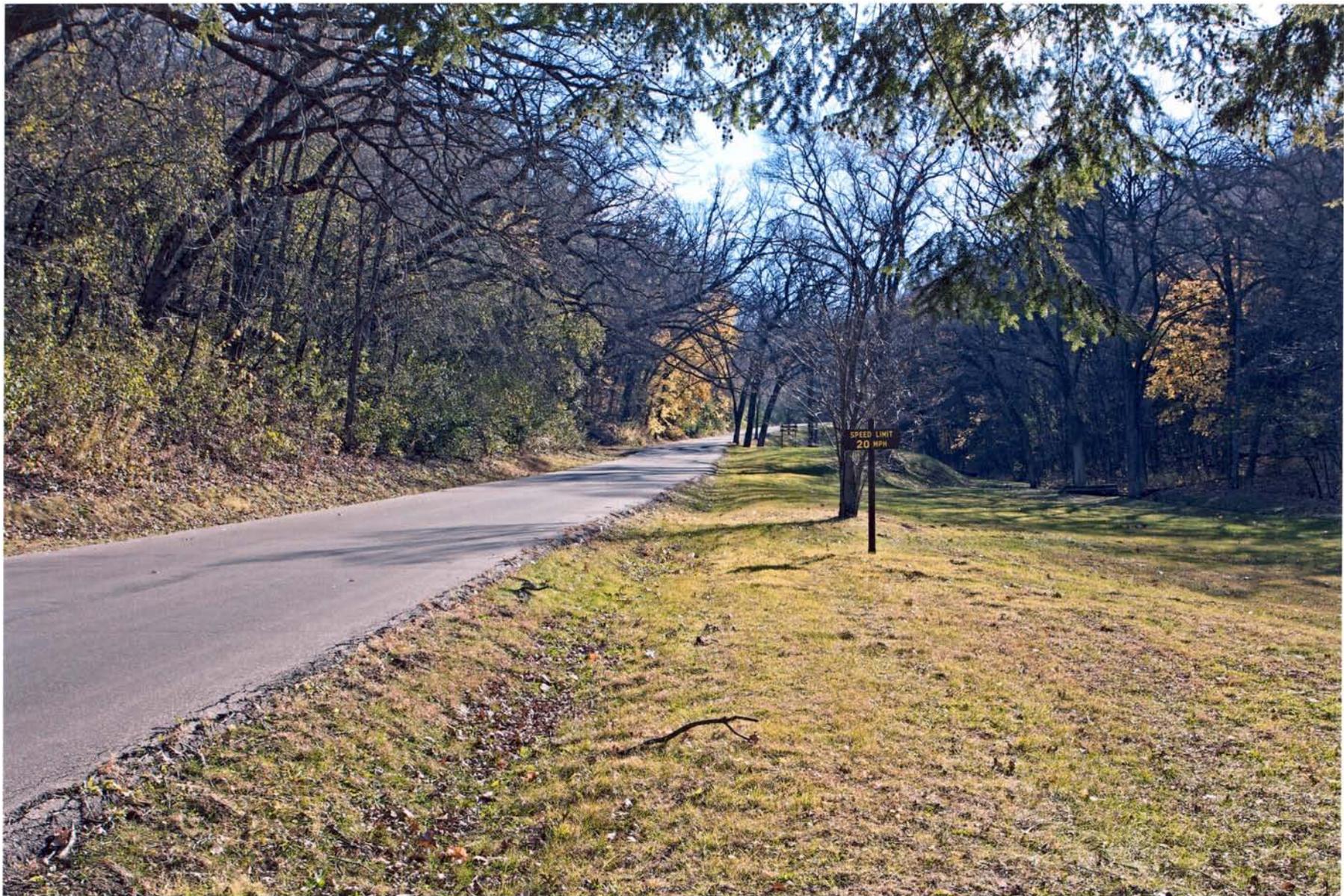
MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0006



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MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0011



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MN GOODHUE COUNTY OAKWOOD CEMETERY HISTORIC DISTRICT 0014



MN Goodhue County Oakwood Cemetery Historic District 0015



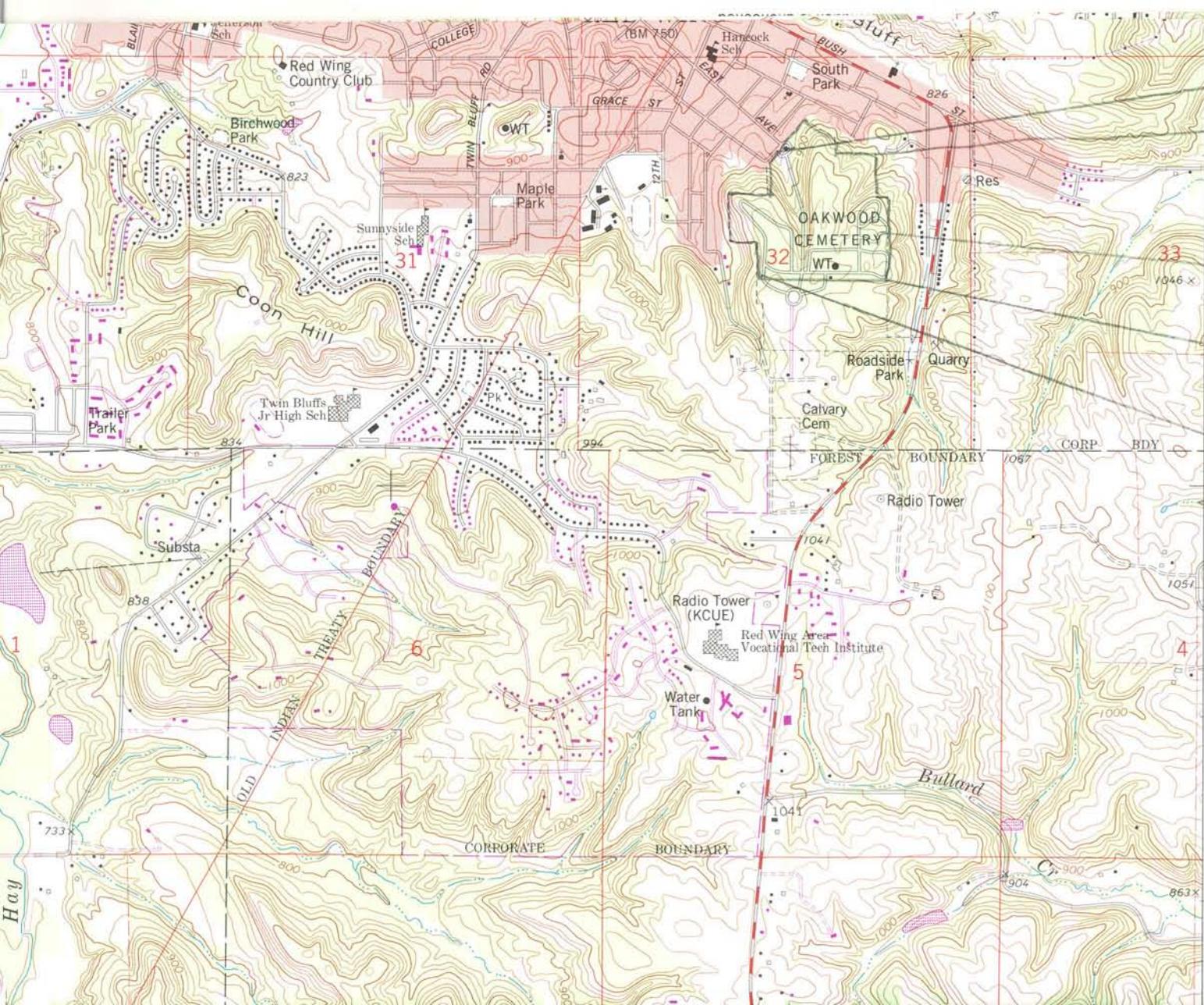
MN Goodhue County Oakwood Cemetery Historic District 0016



MN Goodhue County Oakwood Cemetery Historic District 0017



MN Goodhue County Oakwood Cemetery Historic District 0018



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Oakwood Cemetery  
Goodhue Co., MN

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