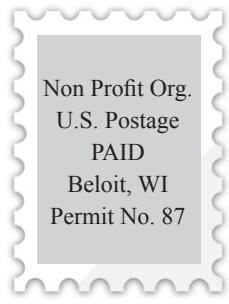


Beloit Historical Society
Confluence
845 Hackett St.
Beloit WI 53511

Address Service Requested

Beloit
Historical Society

The Vision of the Beloit Historical Society is to make history a focal point of community pride and to serve as a constant reminder to the community of its great and diverse heritage. Visit our web site at beloithistoricalsociety.com



Confluence



The dead and the living: A little bit about Oakwood cemetery

The deceased glide into a world that differs from this one only in its diminished intensity. The living enter the world of the cemetery which differs from the hustle and bustle of modernity presenting one with tranquility and silence. Cemeteries aren't just for the deceased. They are also for the living. The cemetery is a different place, a quieter space and those of today are viewed differently than they once were: From an abode of the dead to a cultural institution for the living. Cemeteries started to be viewed this way since the 19th century.

Through the last one hundred and seventy three years Beloit has not only provided a dwelling for the dead but also a site for the living, for those who find them interesting as something to study, for those families of the deceased. Loved ones visit with flowers and prayerful thoughts and take a moment at the grave in the whispering quiet of Oakwood, Beloit's first official cemetery which opened in 1840 and was named, as the record shows, by Mrs. W. Doland. The area was then a bucolic setting on eleven acres. There are today 18,468 grave spaces at this old place some of which are occupied, some not. In 1944 there were 9000 grave spaces on 28 acres and acreage hasn't increased since then. There is some confusion as to Beloit's first unofficial cemetery with Mechanics Green mentioned as site of the first burial. More concrete evidence suggests Horace White Park, known as the Public Park, as the first cemetery established in 1837. It is from Horace White Park that Eleazer Crane (d.1837), Chloe Blodgett(d.1838) and Caleb Blodgett (d.1840) were removed to be re-buried at Oakwood when it became official that Oakwood would be Beloit's cemetery. These latter two people were, so to speak, the mother and father of Beloit. It was Caleb who greeted members of the New England Emigrating Company when they arrived in the later part of 1836. Oakwood is home to Beloit's founders and its first builders.

This is a cemetery decorated with an array of statuary, some of it impressive and interesting. Adorning the graves of August and Sophia Milton, John and Elizabeth Dunbar, Richard and Emma Martin, Charles and Mary Burrow, Samuel and Ann Pye and Kate Grout, are cement trees. These were fashionable for cemeteries of the Victorian period and it is certain that all of them were built by Jackson Monument (Alvin Jackson 1832-1921). Made of Bedford Stone (from Bedford, Indiana) the most dramatic of these is that of Kate Grout who died in 1884 at the age of 21. Kate, it was said, had a habit of taking her book, writing pad and binoculars outside to read, write and look at things while sitting under a tree. Trying to ride out a summer storm of one of those Victorian days she was struck by lightning and killed. Her parents commemorated the site of her burial at Oakwood, appropriately, with a cement tree with a niche carved into it where she would have leaned into the tree for support. This tree monument (pictured right) is located close to another one that is prominent in Oakwood and that is the Broder Mausoleum. Probably a novella could be written about the Broder girls alone, particularly

Continued inside



Photos with Santa in Sleigh!

Sunday 1-3 pm - \$5

Christmas Stories

Cookies, hot cocoa & cider



No charge for admittance

- Historical Display of Christmas Trees plus...**
Five NEW Christmas Trees decorated by
- Attic Quilts - "Cozy Cabin Christmas"
 - Bushel & Pecks - "Christmas Harvest"
 - The Cheese People - "Hickory Dickory Dock"
 - The Nest Egg - "It's a Warm & Fuzzy Christmas"
 - The Villager - "The Milagro Tree"



BHS Lincoln Center hours are noon to 4 p.m. Tuesday-Friday and by appointment on Saturday. Call 608-365-7835.

Beloit Historical Society

Founded 1910

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Board meetings are the third Thursday of every month at 4:15 p.m. and are held at Lincoln Center, 845 Hackett Street.

The Newsletter, *Confluence*, is published quarterly for the membership of the Beloit Historical Society to inform readers of Society activities as well as educate them on the history of Beloit. The Beloit Historical Society manages two sites, Lincoln Center Museum with main offices at 845 Hackett St. and Hanchett-Bartlett Homestead, 2149 St. Lawrence Ave. For further information please call (608) 365-7835 or e-mail us at Pkerr@beloithistoricalsociety.com. Or see our web site at beloithistoricalsociety.com.

Alice Cassidy Broder, but also on the "murder" of the brother Paul, the fight waged against the city and the Catholic church, but suffice it here to merely state that the mausoleum was, and still is, an impressive structure dedicated to the good Catholic family of Jacob Broder who came to Beloit in 1849. The sepulcher (pictured below) was built in 1883.

There are also two others of less ornate design: those of Keller-Morse and Edward and Hannah Rutledge. Then there are the spire-like markers that shoot up to the trees like those marking the graves of Allen, Shaw, Hackett, Spenser, Merrill and Peet just to mention a few. And there are statues commemorating



Aside from the statuary, there are the stories of the dead like the one of George Mack murdered by his wife and accomplices in 1878, and then there's the one about Albert Wirtz the Titanic victim, and that of Joseph Bowling, the African American, one of Beloit's first, who became a respected bootmaker and then the one of Johnny Strothers who was the only Black man in Rock County to fight in the Civil War. And speaking of the Civil War there are three soldiers from that war and from the famous Iron Brigade who are also buried at Oakwood.

Arguably the most famous person buried there is Roy Chapman Andrews, the adventurer and scientist who discovered that dinosaurs laid eggs. Then there are all those older others who built Beloit such as the Blodgetts, the Goodhues, the Bicknells, the Colleys, the Howes and the Hobarts.

There have been three additions of land made to Oakwood since it opened. There have been no additions since 1944. What the city did for more space was to create another cemetery called East Lawn

(pictured on cover) which opened in 1922 with its first burial being in 1923. East Lawn has triple the acreage of Oakwood offering 90+ acres and 31,273 grave spaces. The first person buried at East Lawn was Jeanette Jensen, 11 April 1923. There are other cemeteries



that, on average, throughout the year, there were seven burials between Oakwood and East Lawn. He also



mentioned that at Oakwood from 1840-1954 there were 10,277 burials and at East Lawn from 1923-1954, 5,723. He

discussed that it took 6-10 full time people to maintain the two cemeteries and that a lot of manual labor was saved with purchase, in 1953, of a mechanical grave digger at a cost of \$5,300.00. This latter one was never used.