

A TOUR OF
MEMORIAL SYMBOLISM
at Lakewood Cemetery

Lakewood Cemetery was founded in 1871 during the height of cemetery art in America. Over time, as monuments have been erected and preserved, the cemetery has become an outdoor museum filled with memorial art that is rich with symbolism.

As memorial rituals and styles have changed over the years, many of the meanings behind these historic symbols are no longer commonly known. Lakewood has created this tour guide to help visitors decipher some of the symbols found within its gates.

A cemetery is a perpetual record of yesterday.

— *This is a Cemetery*,
AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Much of the memorial art found at Lakewood was popular during the Victorian era (c. 1840-1900); architectural styles of the turn of the century included Classical or Greek

Revival, Egyptian Revival, and Gothic Revival. These artistic styles used their own language of symbols to speak to visitors about the culture, values, and identity of the monument's patron.

Though much of the symbolism from the Victorian era originates from Christianity, there are many cultures and religions represented at Lakewood, due to the rich diversity of the Minneapolis community that Lakewood serves.

The first section of this booklet will guide you through some of Lakewood's more elaborate and symbol-filled monuments. Additionally, we have included a separate listing of the more common symbols found here. A few examples are marked on the tour map at the back of this booklet. However, you will discover many more as you walk through Lakewood.

Many memorials bear symbols that are entirely personal to the individual or family buried there. More information on some of the families in this guide can be found in Lakewood's history book. It is also important to note that sometimes a symbol may have multiple interpretations. We have included the more universal translations in this guide.

Enjoy your tour!

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

(refer to the map at the back of this booklet)

A. LAKEWOOD MEMORIAL CHAPEL

The Lakewood Memorial Chapel, completed in 1910, contains many religious and secular symbols from the alcove's olive trees to the twelve angels that circle the dome to the muses on the walls—all depicted in stunning mosaics. Explore this historic building using the visitor's tour guide found inside the chapel or in Lakewood's administration building.

B. WALKER MONUMENT

The Walker monument, erected in 1917, was sculpted in the most popular of the Victorian-era architectural styles, the Classical Revival style, most easily recognized by its Greek columns. In addition to its artistic quality, many of the style's architectural elements have significant meaning.

The **female figure draped in robes** (at the top of the monument) is a common symbol of sorrow or grief. When a woman is accompanied by children, as this example is, it denotes charity and love. The children signify truth, purity,



and innocence, which were highly esteemed virtues of Victorian life.

The large, heavy **anchor** that wraps around the woman is a common Christian symbol for hope, one of the three theological virtues: faith, hope, and love. It was an attribute of Pope Clement who, in the 1st century A.D., was bound to an anchor and cast into the sea. Because of its shape, the anchor also serves as a symbol for

the Christian cross—the bottom curve representing receptivity to spiritual matters. In addition to its religious meaning, the anchor was used in the 18th and 19th centuries for the more literal depiction of the seafaring profession.

The female figure seated on the right (from the front view of the monument) is holding a **book** that has the Greek letters for “alpha” and “omega,” a biblical reference to the beginning and the end. In Victorian culture, books often represent the Bible and the faith of its reader. The open book is associated with the human heart—its thoughts and feelings open to the world. Books can also symbolize a person's accomplishments.

The **ivy vine** growing on the side of the stone bench symbolizes remembrance, immortality, friendship, and faithfulness. In this case, the ivy is portrayed as an evergreen that clings while climbing, signifying the need for protection. Because ivy grows quickly, it embodies regeneration, sensuality, and revelry. The ivy wreath, as seen on other memorials, is symbolic of joviality.

The **Greek columns** that help define this monument's Classical Revival style also have meaning: Full columns, such as these, represent a full and noble life; columns that are broken emphasize death.

The intricate floral detail surrounding the monument is a likeness of the **acanthus plant**. One of the oldest cemetery motifs, acanthus is associated with the rocky ground of ancient Greek cemeteries. It is the most common architectural detail in classical monuments and depicts heavenly gardens.

C. FRIDLEY MONUMENT

The Fridley monument, erected in 1901, was also designed in the Classical Revival style. The **arch** so common to this architectural style signifies victory over death and being rejoined with a partner in heaven.

The floral motif surrounding the Fridley family crest (at the top center of the monument) is in the shape of **honeysuckle**, which represents the bonds of love, fidelity, and resurrection. There are two **flaming torches** on either side. Burning torches or flames suggest life, resurrection, and in some cases, liberty.

The seated female figure holds a **partially closed book**. While the open book in the Walker monument is symbolic of openness of the heart, the closed book can sometimes denote secrecy or mystery.

Surrounding the female figure is ornamentation sculpted in the shape of **laurel garland**. A symbol for victory, laurel was first worn by the ancient Romans in parades after triumph in battle. Laurel is usually associated with someone who has attained distinction in the arts, literature, athletics, or



military. Laurel is an evergreen thought to have purifying powers that could result in immortality.

The carved flowers at the bottom of the monument are **rosettes**. Rosettes represent the Lord, promise, and love. This particular rose, called a mystic rose, symbolizes mother, or more specifically, the Virgin Mary.

D. PILLSBURY MONUMENT

The most distinguishing feature on this monument, completed during the 1890s by the Pillsbury family, is the carved **sheaf of wheat**. The sheaf of wheat has many meanings. It signifies a long and fruitful life, usually of more than 70 years. Mr. Pillsbury lived to the age of 74 years, which was unusual at that time of his death in 1901, when more than half of all deaths occurred before the age of 40, and only one person in four lived to be age 60.

Wheat, one of the most basic foodstuffs, was thought to be a gift from God, particularly because its origins were unknown. For this reason, it denotes immortality. It also signifies resurrection because of its use as a harvested grain.



In the case of this monument, the sheaf of wheat has a more literal meaning—it symbolizes the family's prosperous milling business.

E. SANFORD MILLER COE MONUMENT

This monument, circa 1870s, shows a common design used by Christian families. As seen here, there are four sides with a particular symbol carved into each side; the symbols include an **anchor**, a **cross with a crown**, **oak leaves**, and the **family crest**.



The anchor is symbolic of the virtue hope. The cross with the crown represent the virtues of faith, resurrection, and the glory of life after death. The oak leaves are symbols of strength in faith and virtue and also represent endurance and eternity. The family crest is the family's connection with God.

F. BABY LAWRENCE MONUMENT

Monuments erected for young children were common during the Victorian era, when youth and innocence were especially valued. This one, completed in 1900, may have been a likeness of the child at the time of his death. The child is shown sleeping, not only to represent his body at rest, but because sleep was believed to be the tie between life and death.



The tiny **budded roses** floating above the child's head have two meanings: The roses are a universal symbol for everlasting love, and the tiny buds represent a life that was denied the opportunity to flower.

The scallop **shell** shape of the monument is another symbol used in Victorian Christianity. The shell signifies birth, baptism, the pilgrimage of life, and the

resurrection after death. The shell's hard casing protects life, the pearl inside, and its aquatic nature associates it with the feminine, lunar, and virginity. The scallop shell was the emblem of St. James, the patron of pilgrims and so came to symbolize a pilgrimage. It is also associated with the guardian angel Raphael and the Virgin Mary.

Shells hold meaning in many religions. The Hindu goddess Lakshmi and the Greco-Roman goddess Aphrodite were carried ashore on a scallop shell. In Buddhism and Hinduism, the conch shell's call awakens the faithful from ignorance. The conch also is a sign of victory over samsara, or suffering existence, in Buddhism. In Chinese Buddhism, the conch shell can signify a prosperous journey, and in Islam it represents the hearing of the divine word.

G. YUE MONUMENT

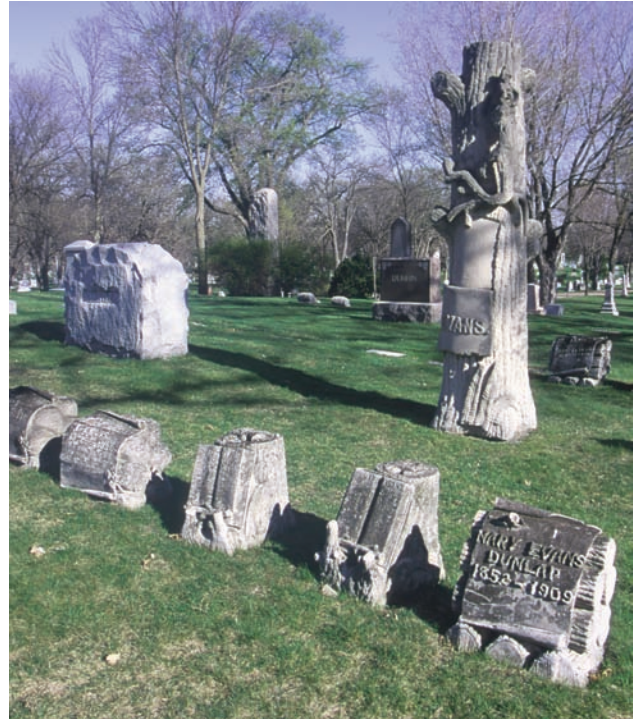
This modern monument, erected by the Yue family in the 1980s, has ancient religious and spiritual meaning. These magnificent creatures are called **Chinese lions**. The family chose these lions to serve as guardians that watch over those buried here and chase away evil spirits.



Chinese lions sometimes look similar to Foo Dogs – another type of special guardian in the Buddhist tradition. Foo Dogs are often seen in male/female pairs at entrances to important Chinese buildings and often, cemeteries.

H. EVANS MONUMENT

These wonderfully detailed “**treestones**” are a product of the Victorian Rusticity movement, popular from the 1880s to about 1905. This monument was purchased and placed at Lakewood in 1896 for the Evans family. (At the time, a family could actually purchase and personalize these unique memorials out of a Sears Roebuck catalog.)



The tree is a universal symbol of life, knowledge, and human fruition. A tree trunk, in this case, represents the brevity of life; the severed branches depict mortality. In Scandinavian mythology, the roots and branches of the world tree “Yggdrasil” bind together heaven, earth, and hell.

The surrounding gravestones were carved as parts of the tree, showing that they are all descendants or members of the family. Scrolls are used to register the individual names and dates. Several stumps display a **scythe and a sheaf of wheat**. Together these symbols represent a life cut short and the final harvest. The scythe is traditionally carried by the Grim Reaper.

Ferns are carved into the base of the main monument and on the backsides of some of the individual headstones. Ferns grow deep in the forest and are said to be found only by those who have truly searched for them. They symbolize humility, frankness, and sincerity.

COMMON MEMORIAL SYMBOLS FOUND AT LAKEWOOD CEMETERY

As you stroll through Lakewood's grounds, look for the following common symbols:



Urn—The most common funerary symbol after the cross, the urn is a traditional symbol for death because of its ancient use for holding ashes. Ancient Egyptians believed that the urn was symbolic of immortality, just as they believed that removing and enclosing the internal organs of the body and placing them into an urn preserved the deceased's vitality for eternity. The urn is also a symbol for a house or dwelling. When the urn is draped, it becomes a symbol for a house of mourning. ♦

Harp—The harp represents hope, joy, and music. It is the symbol of St. Cecilia, the patron saint of musicians, and is often associated with worship in heaven. ▼



Drapery (also called pall)—Drapery is a symbol for sorrow, grief, and mourning. Some believe that the draping represents the collapse of the partition between life and death, and others that the drape represents the shroud left after the soul departs the body. Drapes are seen in conjunction with a number of symbols, most commonly with the urn, harp, and cross.



Obelisk—The obelisk became popular when the Egyptian Revival architectural style hit its peak in the late 1800s. As the style was adapted by Victorian-era Christians, the obelisk came to represent rebirth and a connection between earth and heaven. ▲

Celtic cross—The Celtic cross is strongly tied to mother nature and Irish and/or Scottish heritage. The four arms of the cross represent the four elements of water, fire, earth, and air. The Irish also see the four provinces of Ireland, with the fifth province being the circle in the center of the cross. The Celtic knots, the endless interlaid patterns in the cross, have meanings that range from the mystery of life and death to immortality and eternity. ✚



Ship with gates—Many cultures associate the ship or boat as a vehicle in which humans cross from one world into the next. A pilotless boat suggests that the soul's journey is guided by a higher power. ●

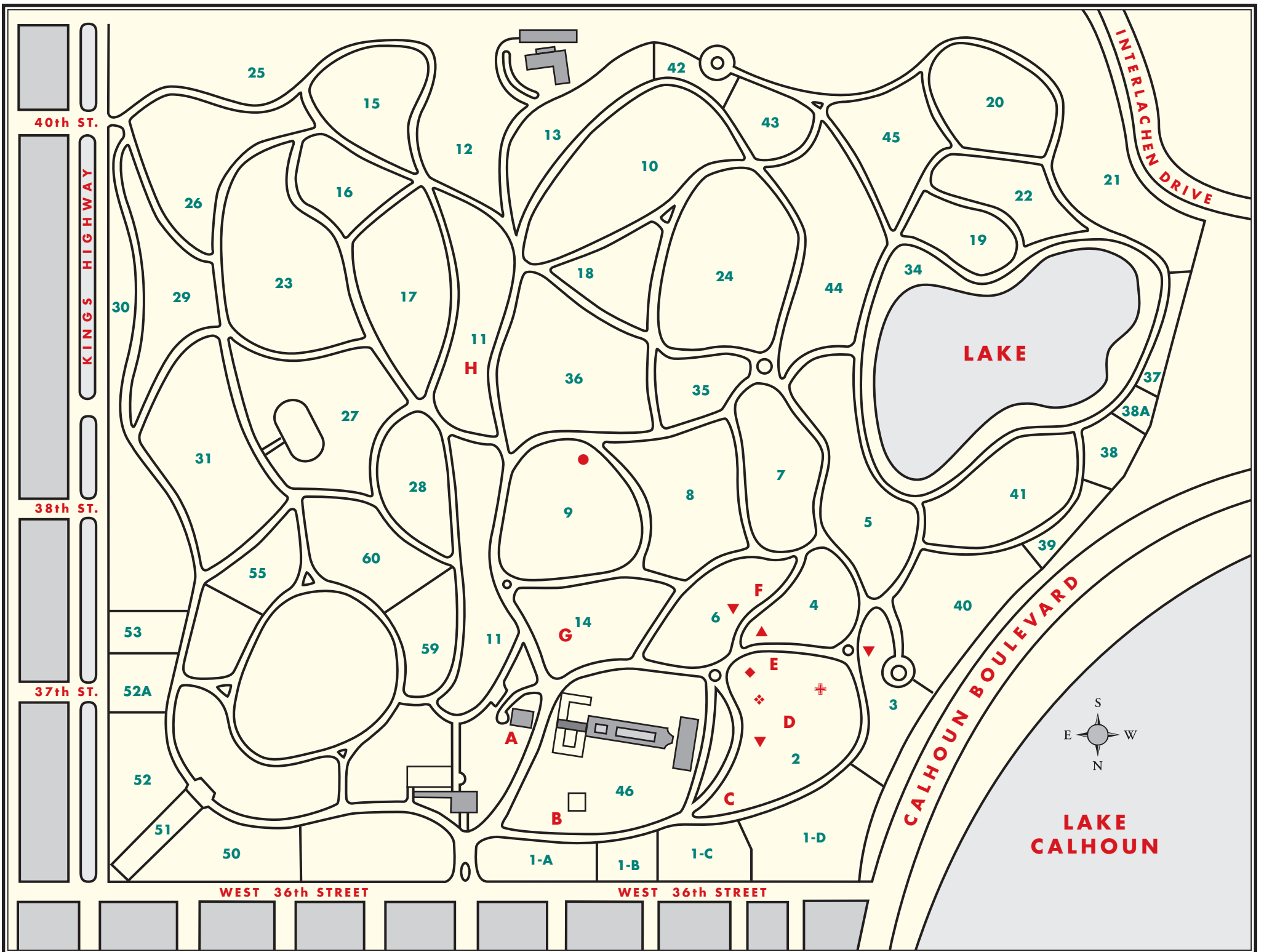
Hands—A hand holding a heart is symbolic of charity and typically seen on memorials of members of the Independent Order of Oddfellows. Clasped hands symbolize a farewell or last goodbye. ❖



COMMON FLORAL SYMBOLS

Flowers in general symbolize frailty and immortality. The following symbolic flowers and trees are represented by being carved into memorials or as live plants planted near a grave:

- **Apple blossom**—fame
- **Azalea**—temperance, moderation
- **Crocus**—youthful gladness
- **Daffodil**—regard, death of youth, desire, art, grace
- **Daisy**—innocence of children, Jesus as a youth
- **Fern**—sincerity, humility, frankness
- **Fleur-de-lis**—flame, passion, ardour, mother
- **Forget-me-not**—remembrance
- **Hawthorn**—hope, merriness, springtime
- **Holly**—foresight
- **Honeysuckle**—bonds of love, generosity, devoted affection
- **Ivy**—remembrance, faithfulness, undying affection
- **Lilac**—versatility
- **Lily**—innocence, majesty, purity, Virgin Mary
- **Lily of the valley**—return of happiness, purity, humility
- **Morning glory**—resurrection, mourning, youth, farewell
- **Oak**—hospitality, strength, honor, eternity, endurance, liberty
- **Palm**—spiritual victory, success, eternal peace
- **Pansy**—remembrance
- **Pine**—eternity, everlasting life
- **Pine cones**—regeneration, healing
- **Pineapple**—hospitality, good host
- **Poppy**—peace, rest
- **Rose**—love, beauty, hope
- **Rose bush**—everlasting love, victory, pride
- **Shamrock**—Ireland as country of origin, luck
- **Sunflower**—adoration
- **Thistle**—earthly sorrow, Christ's crown of thorns, Scotland as country of origin
- **Tulip**—love, charity
- **Violet**—modesty, faithfulness, graciousness, affection, humility
- **Weeping willow**—sorrow, grief, mourning



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MAP KEY

- A** LAKEWOOD MEMORIAL CHAPEL
- B** WALKER MONUMENT
- C** FRIDLEY MONUMENT
- D** PILLSBURY MONUMENT
- E** SANFORD MILLER COE MONUMENT
- F** BABY LAWRENCE MONUMENT
- G** YUE MONUMENT
- H** EVANS MONUMENT
- ◆ URN
- ▼ HARP
- ▲ OBELISK
- ⊕ CELTIC CROSS
- SHIP WITH GATES
- ❖ HANDS
- 1-A** SECTION DESIGNATIONS

If you enjoyed this tour and would like more information about history and art at Lakewood Cemetery, you will enjoy reading *Haven in the Heart of the City: The History of Lakewood Cemetery*. The book is available in Lakewood's administration building and local bookstores. We also invite you to take a copy of each of our other tour guides: "Lakewood Cemetery: A Self-Guided Tour" and "Lakewood Memorial Chapel: A Visitor's Guide." Both are available in the administration building, mausoleum, and chapel.

Lakewood Cemetery Hours

Gates are open 7 days a week, including holidays.

Summer: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Labor Day to Fall Daylight Savings: 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Fall Daylight Savings to Spring D.S.: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Administration Building Hours

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday: 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Mausoleum Hours

Open 7 days a week, 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Lakewood Memorial Chapel Hours

Monday-Friday: 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

If locked, please seek assistance
at the administration building.

LAKEWOOD CEMETERY

Celebrating Life Since 1871

3600 Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55408
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