



Fact Sheet & Backgrounder

Year founded

1871

Location

36th Street & Hennepin Avenue in Uptown Minneapolis

Mission:

To serve families and community by offering commemorative services to honor, celebrate, and remember a loved one's life in a place of beauty and solace.

Vision:

To reimagine the role of a cemetery in modern life and make memorialization more relevant, accessible and inviting for new audiences and generations.

Organization

- Nonprofit and open to all (nondenominational, nonsectarian) - since its founding
- Employs 25 full-time staff and 30+ seasonal workers
- A nonprofit 501c13, governed by a Board of Trustees
- Lakewood Heritage Foundation is a nonprofit 501c3 (established in 2018)

Lives Commemorated

Over 200,000 lives commemorated

300+ casket burials per year

1,400+ cremations (in crematory) per year

400+ cremation urn burials/placements per year

Today's Leadership

- Governed by a Board of Trustees
- President, Chris Makowske
- Director of Buildings & Grounds, Paul Aarestad
- Director of Finance & Administration, Kelsie Mateski
- Director of Family Services, Kelly Leahy
- Director of Marketing & Outreach, Julia Gillis

History and Founding

- Lakewood Cemetery Association was founded in 1871, four years after Minneapolis was incorporated, and 13 years after Minnesota achieved statehood
- Minneapolis was a booming city at the time, boasting 13,000 residents
- Several progressive city leaders convened on Aug. 7th, 1871 to form Lakewood, including Col. William King, George Brackett, Dorilus Morrison (first mayor of Minneapolis), Charles Loring (Father of Minneapolis Parks), Thomas Lowry, and William Washburn, among others

- The founders hoped to achieve a common goal: To offer every individual an opportunity for burial in a beautiful and peaceful setting by forming a public, nondenominational cemetery, available and affordable to all citizens.
- The land they chose was rural – at the time, Minneapolis' southern edge was where Franklin Avenue is today. Families and visitors travelled by horse-and-buggy along an unpaved road to reach Lakewood. (Note: Decades prior to Lakewood's founding, the land was home to a Dakota village, known as Heyate Oturwe.)
- Lakewood conducted its first burial in 1872, a young woman named Maggie Menzel.
- The cemetery was officially dedicated on September 16th, 1872

Landscape Design & Grounds

- 250 acres of land bordered on the north by West 36th Street, on the south by Lyndale Park, on the east by Dupont Avenue, and on the west by Bde Maka Ska Parkway
- Designed in the "garden" or "rural" cemetery landscape design – based on the design of Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio; the landscape architect, C.W. Folsom, was also the superintendent of Mount Auburn Cemetery near Boston.
- Garden cemeteries were created as places for people to spend time – with rolling hills, picturesque views, water features and lots of trees. They were often founded in rural areas, miles away from city limits.
- Lakewood was heavily influenced by a love of horticulture – two of its first Board members, George Brackett and Charles Loring, were also founding members the Minneapolis Park Board; and one of the city's first florists, Richard Mendenhall, was also a Board member. Lakewood's second superintendent, Ralph Cleveland, was the son of Horace Cleveland, a prominent Midwest landscape architect.
- Lakewood is considered an urban forest, with thousands of trees and natural wildlife including deer, fox, ducks and songbirds.
- Lakewood features a peaceful and serene 8-acre lake, called Jo Pond, 80 feet deep, developed in 1913. A popular spot for nature lovers, the lake offers benches and quiet open spaces to reflect along its wide shores. This area serves as the site of Lakewood's annual Lantern Lighting Celebration.

Greenhouses & Gardens – acquired in 1888

- One of only a handful of cemetery greenhouse operations left in the U.S.
- The greenhouses were acquired in 1888 when Lakewood expanded east
- Lakewood once had six large greenhouses – each the size of a football field!
- Today, two greenhouses remain: the largest is the oldest operating greenhouse in Minnesota, built in 1886; smaller greenhouse was built in 1929
- Flowers are grown to maturity in the greenhouse for planting prior to Memorial Day – the largest visiting weekend of the year
- 95,000 flowers planted each season throughout the cemetery, in gardens and family lot planters
- Known for the tulips that greet visitors at the front entrance each spring
- Sell fresh flowers, potted plants and seasonal wreaths (for placement at the cemetery only)

Crematory – 1908

- Lakewood operates a licensed crematory on site
- The original crematories were constructed in 1908, when the cremation rate was below 1%. Today the cremation rate is nearly 70% in Hennepin County.
- Its two historic crematories were fueled by oil (no longer efficient, discontinued use)
- New crematories built in mid-1990s
- Viewing room adjacent to the crematories allows families moments of closure as they witness the start of the cremation
- Provides cremation services to more than 1,400 families each year.
- Lakewood has created dedicated spaces within its spectacular grounds, specifically for cremated remains—and have thoughtfully designed a variety of spaces where urns and ashes can be forever kept.

Historic Chapel - 1910

- One of the most perfect examples of Byzantine mosaic art in the United States, the Lakewood Memorial Chapel, was completed in 1910.
- Designed by local architect Harry Wild Jones, who also designed the first Lake Harriet Pavilion, Butler Square, private homes and other landmark buildings in the Twin Cities area
- Modeled after the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey
- Mosaic interior designed by Charles Lamb (Lamb Studios, New York); interior was modeled after the San Marco Cathedral in Venice, Italy
- More than 10 million mosaic tiles fill the interior, including a 40-foot dome ringed with 12 angels and four “muses” along the side walls (hope, memory, love and faith) based on watercolor paintings by Lamb’s wife, Ella Condie Lamb
- Includes a lower-level columbarium (room) for cremation niches (limited space still available)
- Primarily used for funeral and memorial services; dozens of weddings are held in the chapel each year; also serves as the site for Lakewood’s popular Music in the Chapel concert series (currently on hold)
- Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983
- Through the years, visitors have been astonished to find such an outstanding architectural jewel in the heart of the Midwest. Many experts now believe that a work of such magnitude could not be recreated at any price today, as artisans possessing the necessary skills have passed into history.
- Museum-style exhibit in lower level about the chapel’s history and creation

Administration Building - 1929

- Designed by local architect, Ernest Kennedy, in the Greek Revival style
- Primarily used as office space for staff, and for meeting with families
- Replaced a gatehouse-style building that the cemetery staff had outgrown

Memorial Community Mausoleum - 1967

- Completed in 1967, Lakewood’s first mausoleum, a building for above-ground burials, is a Modernist style structure designed by Detroit architects Harley, Ellington, Cowan & Stirton using a blend of enduring Minnesota granite, bronze and steel
- Offers more than 3,000 crypts and 2,400 cremation niches
- 24 large stained-glass windows express both religious and secular themes

Garden Mausoleum and Reception Center - 2012

- Completed in 2012; designed by HGA Architects & Engineers and landscape architects Halvorson Design Partnership
- A masterpiece of contemporary architecture, it features abundant natural light, evoking a sense of spirituality, warmth and comfort—and a close connection to Lakewood's greatest asset: the landscape.
- Has won numerous high-profile awards for its architecture – including from the American Institute of Architects
- Offers more space for cremated remains than caskets, reflecting growing cremation rate
- Space for receptions available for memorial/funeral gatherings and other events
- A chapel for committals and services is also available in this building

Lakewood's Living Memory Tree - 2019

- The Living Memory Tree is a way for guests to honor the memory of a loved one and express their sentiments in a creative way.
- It is reflective of a tradition in many cultures to tie pieces of cloth onto special trees to represent a message, blessing or prayer. These Wishing Trees, Peace Trees or Prayer Trees can be found in countries all around the world.
- Biodegradable cotton ribbons are available from Lakewood at no charge.

Programming & Events

- Over the years, Lakewood has worked to create experiences, events and meaningful traditions designed to invite the community in – to share Lakewood's art, history and natural treasures, and to support families in celebrating the memories of loved ones. Events are open to the public, and include:
 - **Seasonal Celebrations.** A series of events tied to seasonal shifts and popular holidays — such as Memorial Day, Earth Day, Mother's Day and Fall Colors — that have become an annual tradition for many families and community members.
 - **Learn @ Lakewood.** A series of workshops and seminars lead by experts and professionals in their field, meant to spark conversations and explore diverse perspectives related to death, dying and memorialization.
 - **Lakewood Experience Series.** A series of immersive experiences created to expand understanding and bring new depth and meaning to subjects like grief, healing and remembrance through personal reflection and creative expression.
 - **Explore Lakewood.** A wide array of tours and events focused on helping people discover the natural and historic treasures of this unique urban sanctuary. Includes events such as walking tours of history and art, birding, photography, sketching, and more.
 - **Music in the Chapel (currently on hold).** A monthly concert series held in Lakewood's historic chapel that features an eclectic range of performers who appeal to diverse musical tastes, with an emphasis on local artists.

Cremation, Burial and Memorialization Offerings

It's a myth that Lakewood Cemetery is full. In fact, Lakewood has many thousands of memorial options available and dozens of acres of undeveloped land. Offerings include:

- Casket burial, and mausoleum crypts (casket placement in a building)

- Cremation urn burial, and cremation niches (urn placement in a building)
- Scattering
- Memorial wall (a name carved in stone if one's ashes are scattered at Lakewood or elsewhere, or kept at home)
- Memorial Tree Program – sponsor a tree planting in memory of a loved one
- Living Memory Tree – a community memorial of colorful ribbons tied to a tree (free)
- Ceremonies and receptions in Lakewood's beautiful and award-winning chapel and Garden Mausoleum – including weddings in Lakewood historic chapel!
- Greenhouse services – plantings, floral bouquets and wreaths
- Cremation services (as mentioned above in the Crematory section)

Trends in end-of-life planning and care

- **Cremation** has changed the way consumers view end-of-life traditions. In 1970, cremation was chosen in 5% of deaths in Hennepin County. Today, cremation is chosen in nearly 70% of deaths in Hennepin County, and approx. 55% in Minnesota.
- **Greater diversity** of religions, cultures and ethnicities drives a multitude of end-of-life rituals and traditions. Interests also differ by generation.
- **Personalization.** Baby Boomers (and subsequent generations) are looking for greater ability to personalize end-of-life traditions vs. a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Green or natural burial** – the “green” trend extends to cemeteries as more and more people look for ways to be environmentally responsible.
- **Death doulas, funeral celebrants and other emerging roles.** New roles, such as death midwives and funeral celebrants are emerging to help individuals and families plan for end of life.
- **The “death positive” movement,** a general (and growing) movement toward opening platforms for discussion about the inevitability of death and dying
- **Virtual memorialization.** Websites like Find a Grave have leveraged technology to help us remember and memorialize.
- **Covid-19 pandemic** – restricted families' ability to be together and fueled a desire for livestreaming and Zoom ceremonies; many chose cremation and are keeping the urn at home, waiting for it to be safe to bring their families together for a memorial service.

Notable Memorials

Countless people, events and organizations represented at Lakewood have made a difference locally and nationally. Here are just a few of the many famous names you may recognize:

- Hubert H. Humphrey – Minneapolis mayor, U.S. Senator and Vice President of the United States
- Lena Olive Smith (1885-1966) – civil rights advocate and first Black woman licensed to practice law in Minnesota
- Abram M. Fridley (1817-1888) – Minnesota State Representative; Fridley, Minnesota, is named in his honor
- Emily O. and Ralph Goodrich Grey (1834-1916, 1830-1904) – early Black pioneers on the Minnesota frontier
- Dr. B. Robert Lewis (1931-1979) – Minnesota's first black state senator
- John Lind (1854-1930) – Minnesota governor
- Charles A. Lindbergh (1859-1924) – U.S. Congressman, father of famed aviator Charles Lindbergh

- Charlotte Van Cleve (1819-1907) – early women’s suffrage leader and the first woman elected to the Minneapolis school board
- Floyd B. Olson (1891 – 1936)– Minnesota’s first Farmer-Labor governor
- Clara Ueland (1860-1927) – prominent women’s suffragist
- Rudy Perpich (1928-1995) – longest serving governor of Minnesota
- John S. Pillsbury (1827-1901) – Minnesota governor
- Orville L. Freeman (1918 – 2003) – popular Minnesota governor, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture (1961-1969)
- Paul Wellstone (1944-2002) – popular U.S. Senator from 1991 until his death in 2002
- Dr. Robert S. Brown (1863 – 1927) – first Black physician licensed to practice in Minneapolis
- Curt Carlson (1914-1999) – founder of the Carlson Companies and Gold Bond Stamps
- Abby and Richard Mendenhall (1832-1900, 1928-1906) – early settlers who co-founded the Sisters of Bethany home for single mothers (Abby) and worked as one of Minneapolis’ first florists (Richard)
- William and Kate Dunwoody (1841-1914) – left millions of dollars to found the industrial trade school, Dunwoody Institute (William), philanthropist who built housing for single working women (Kate)
- Franklin C. Mars (1884-1934) – creator of the Milky Way candy bar
- Archie and Phebe Givens (1919-1974, 1922-2015) – prominent Minneapolis entrepreneurs and philanthropists
- T.B. and Harriet Walker (1840-1928) – founded the Walker Art Museum (T.B.), philanthropist who co-founded the Sisters of Bethany (Harriet)
- Cecil Newman (1903-1976) – civil rights leader and founder of an influential local Black newspaper
- Theodore Wirth (1863-1949) – an internationally recognized horticulturist and park developer
- B. Cassius (1907-1983) – interracial union organizer and owner of multiple influential Minneapolis restaurants and entertainment centers
- Dr. Reuben Youngdahl – minister who grew Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church to be the largest Lutheran church in the United States
- Beatrice Ohanessian (1927-2008) – Iraq’s first woman concert pianist and classical composer
- Cedric Adams (1902-1961) – Minnesota journalist and on-air radio personality
- Bill Goldsworthy (1944-1996) – original member of Minnesota North Stars, known for his “Goldy shuffle”
- Bobby Marshall (1880-1958) – multisport athlete from Minneapolis who was the first Black football player to play in the Western Conference (now Big Ten)
- Leslie C. Kouba – wildlife painter
- Johann Emil Oberhoffer (1867-1933) – violinist and composer, conducted local and national symphony orchestras
- Frances Cranmer Greenman (1890-1981) – painter, critic, and writer
- Tiny Tim (1932-1996) – famous and beloved entertainer
- Robert Menzie McAlmon – 1920s-30s publisher, writer, and poet in New York and Paris. He was a publisher and friend to Ernest Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and James Joyce.



- Harry Wild Jones (1859-1935) – architect famous for many Minneapolis designs, including Lakewood’s chapel
- Richard G. Drew (1899-1980) – inventor of Scotch Tape
- Brotherhood of Paternal Order of Elks – bronze elk commissioned in 1900
- Showman’s Rest – Circus performers
- Chinese Community Memorial – marked by a pagoda sculpture
- Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) Monument – donated by Lakewood in 1889 to honor Civil War veterans
- Soldiers Memorial – honors Minnesota’s veterans of the Civil War, Spanish-American War and World War I
- Minneapolis Fire Department Relief Association – a fireman in the square-billed cap and dress uniform of 1892 stands atop of this monument
- Washburn “A” Mill Explosion Memorial Obelisk – lists the names of the 18 men killed in the worst milling disaster in Minneapolis history in 1878

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