City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common	(2) Historic (if applicable)
Forest Hill Cemetery	Forest Hill Cemetery

II. Location

(1) Street Address	(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)
1 Speedway Road	Tenth Aldermanic District

III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)

Cemetery

(2) Zoning District	(3) Present Use
Conservancy	Cemetery

IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s)   City of Madison - Parks

(2) Street Address	(3) Telephone Number
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Madison, WI 53709	266-4711

V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number	(2) Legal Description
0709-214-0501-9	See attached

VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)

Good

(2) Altered or Unaltered?	(3) Moved or Original Site?
Altered	Original site

(4) Wall Construction

Not applicable

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).
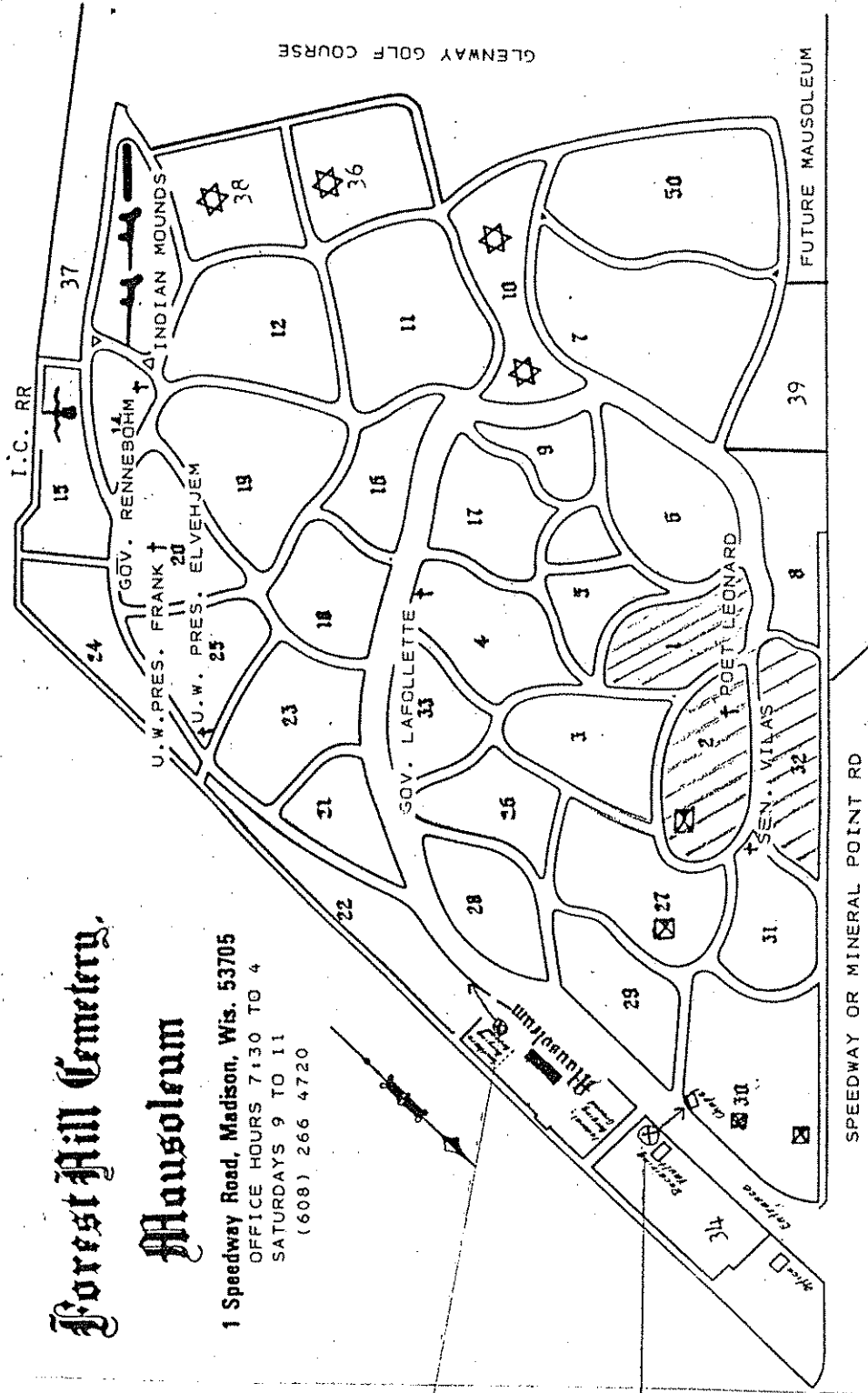
Landmark Nomination
Forest Hill Cemetery
Legal Description

All that part of E 1/2 of NW 1/4 and W 1/2 of NE 1/4 of Section 28
lying North of right-of-way of Illinois Central Railroad and North
of the 50 feet strip of land parallel to SD right-of-way and
adjoining SD right-of-way and owned by SD Railroad. Being 60
acres more or less. Also a parcel of land lying in SE 1/4 of SW
1/4 of Section 21 and lying South of the Mineral Point Road. Also
a parcel of land in W 1/2 of SE 1/4 of Section 21 lying South of
the Mineral Point Road, Forest Hill Cemetery and Municipal Golf
Course.

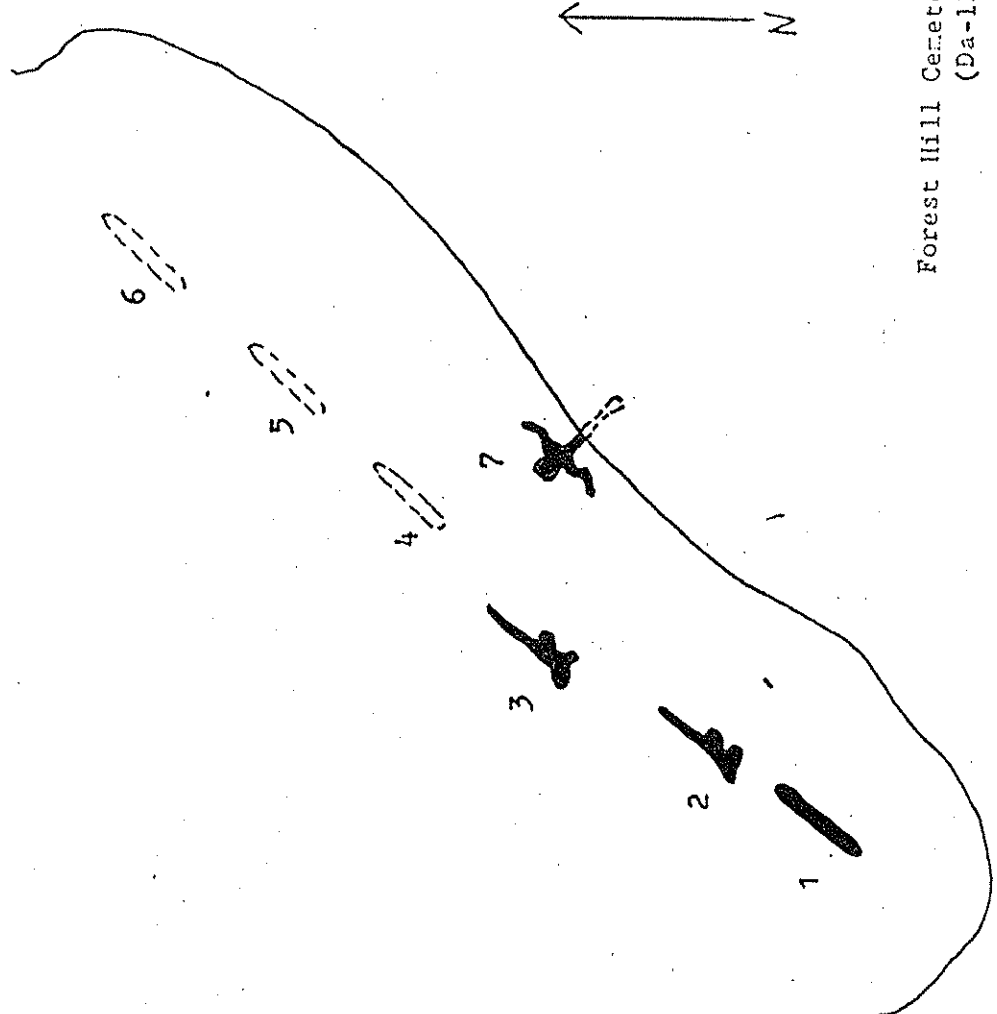Sketch map

Forest Hill Cemetery, Mausoleum

1 Speedway Road, Madison, Wis. 53705

OFFICE HOURS 7:30 TO 4
SATURDAYS 9 TO 11
(608) 266 4720

GLENWAY GOLF COURSE

I.C. RR

INDIAN MOUNDS

37

15

14 GOV. RENNEBOHM

GOV. FRANK

U.W. PRES. ELVEHJEM

20 PRES. ELVEHJEM

24

25

12

11

10

7

50

39

FUTURE MAUSOLEUM

38

36

19

16

6

9

8

23

18

17

5

GOV. LAFOLLETTE 33

4

POET LEONARD

21

3

2

SEN. VILAS 32

28

15

27

31

29

22

30

34

SPEEDWAY OR MINERAL POINT RD

oldest sections - platted Summer 1859

Mausoleum

Photo 2

Photo 1

Forest Hill Cemetery Mound Group
(Da-134)

⟨_-_-⟩ = Destroyed mound or portion of
mound

82.5
ft

VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

Owned by the City of Madison, Forest Hill Cemetery is located on a wooded, gently rolling site about two-and-one-half miles west of the Capitol Square. Describing the area in 1837, one observer wrote, ". . .the land rises gently all around its [Lake Mendota's] margin, receding and rising gradually into a gentle eminence, for about a mile from the lake, and the whole of this lovely shore is studded and adorned with spots of wood and thick groves, giving the idea of the park scenery in England, or the rich views of Italy. . ."

In 1858, the year after the City acquired the land from John and Maria Wright, Madison Mayor George B. Smith described the location as "a choice and beautiful one. It is high and sightly, overlooking the entire City and surrounding lakes. No more appropriate place could be selected for the burial of the dead. . ." A thousand years earlier, Woodland Indians had built a group of seven effigy mounds on the site. (The Forest Hill Cemetery Mound Group, Da-134, was added to the National Register in 1974).

The highest point in the cemetery is about 100 feet above the level of Lake Mendota, visible to the northeast, and Lake Wingra, to the southeast. An 1859 description identified the site as "high rolling ground...handsomely ornamented with Oak and other shade trees." Although nature and routine maintenance undoubtedly have altered the site's original vegetation, oak canopies still exist throughout the cemetery.

This park-like landscape proved the ideal setting for Forest Hill's "rural" cemetery plan, patterned after those so popular in the mid-19th century throughout the United States.

From the main entrance on Speedway Road at the cemetery's northeast corner, a broad avenue leads southward and gradually uphill past the John Catlin Memorial Chapel, a High Victorian Gothic structure built in 1878 in honor of one of Madison's early settlers. Just across the avenue and southeast of the chapel is the cemetery's receiving vault. Both the Catlin chapel and the receiving vault are built of yellow sandstone, a popular locally-quarried material in the mid-19th century.

Just past the chapel, the avenue forks; turning right (west) leads one to the cemetery's highest point and a network of curvilinear drives which define the cemetery's oldest sections. Sections 1, 2, 32 and a part of Section 3 were marked off into lots in the Summer of 1859. Here are found the graves of many of Madison's most prominent families--early settlers, business owners and politicians.

The main avenue's left fork leads south past the Forest Hill Mausoleum, erected 1916. The mausoleum is flanked on the north by the Federal Burying Ground, where 287 veterans and soldiers' orphans lie. Just south of the mausoleum is "Confederate Rest", a plot surrounded by stone coping, where 139 Confederate prisoners of war who died at Camp Randall were buried in 1862. More recent soldiers' graves are located near the southern border of the cemetery, adjacent to the effigy mounds in Sections 15 and 35.

Near the western edge of the cemetery is Section 10, purchased by Madison's first Jewish congregation, Ahaweth Achim, in 1858. It contains the graves of some of Madison's earliest Jewish citizens.

Mounds

The Forest Hill Cemetery Mound Group once consisted of seven mounds: a line of six mounds made up from northeast to southwest of three linear mounds, two panther effigies and another linear. A short distance to the southeast of the center of this line was a single flying goose effigy. Expansion of the cemetery caused the destruction of the first three linears in the line sometime after 1905. The head and a portion of the neck of the goose were destroyed in 1886 in grading of the Illinois Central right-of-way. According to a letter written by Charles E. Brown in 1928, all of the mounds had been dug into by relic hunters, but Brown does not specify the amount of damage done. The mounds have been restored and today no traces of the vandalism remains. The head of the goose has not been restored. No professional excavation was done in these mounds.

Although the mounds are surrounded by the graves of recent Madisonians, none of them have had burials intruded into them.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner	(2) Original Use
City of Madison	Cemetery

(3) Architect or Builder	(4) Architectural Style
Plan by William M. Hough	Not applicable

(5) Date of Construction	(6) Indigenous Materials Used
1857-1862	Sandstone on older buildings

(7) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the significance of the nominated property and its conformance to the designation criteria of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance (33.01), limit of 500 words.

VIII. List of Bibliographical References Used

1. Butterfield, Consul Wilshire, ed. 1880. History of Dane County, Wisconsin... Chicago: Western Historical Company, 761.

2. Common Council, City of Madison. 1858-1862. Common Council Proceedings.
3. Madison: City of Madison.

4.   18 June 1856
       5 April 1858
5.   24 May 1858
       4 April 1859
6.   17 April 1860
      15 April 1862

7. Daily Argus and Democrat (Madison, Wisconsin)
8.   1858. Item on laying out of cemetery grounds. 12 March.

(Continued)

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title

Susan Haswell, Project Assistant and Katherine Rankin, Preservation Planner

(2) Organization Represented (if any)

UW Dept. of Landscape Architecture and City of Madison

(3) Address	(4) Telephone Number
25 Agriculture Hall Madison, WI 53706	231-6880

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

September 28, 1989

Landmark Nomination
Forest Hill Cemetery

Bibliographic References, continued:

1858. "Died". William M. Hough obituary.
18 December, 3.

Ferslew, W. L. E., 1858. Madison City directory and business
advertiser. Madison: Bliss, Eberhard & Festner, 22.

Heggland, Timothy F., 1987. The University Heights District: A
walking tour. Madison: Madison Landmarks Commission and
Regent Neighborhood Association, 2.

Mollenhoff, David V., 1982. Madison: A history of the formative
years. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 200.

Zanger, Jules, 1980. Mount Auburn Cemetery: The silent suburb.
Landscape 24 (2): 23-28.

Halsey, John R., original Forest Hill Cemetery mound group landmark
nomination, March 10, 1975, in possession of the Madison
Landmarks Commission.

VII.(7) Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

Forest Hill Cemetery has significance in the development of American landscape architecture as a manifestation of the nationwide rural cemetery movement.

A uniquely American phenomenon, the rural cemetery movement began in 1831 with the creation of Mount Auburn Cemetery near Cambridge, Massachusetts. A group of prominent Bostonians who were dismayed by the City's crowded, unsanitary graveyards established a new cemetery outside the City limits, intending it to be not only a burial ground but an experimental garden, as well. Mount Auburn was "one of the first self-consciously conceived, fully controlled, permanent public landscapes in America." (Zanger 1980, 23)

Visitors by the thousands flocked to Mount Auburn, strolling its 30 miles of serpentine carriage avenues and footpaths, picnicking, and enjoying vistas of grand tombs, monuments and ornamental plantings. Over the next few decades, rural cemeteries appeared in almost every major American city--Philadelphia's Laurel Hill (1836), Brooklyn's Green-Wood (1838), and Chicago's Graceland (1860), to name but a few. Their overwhelming popularity signaled city dwellers' need for recreational space and gave impetus to the city parks movement.

Madison's first municipally-owned cemetery was located in Block 180 (now Orton Park, added to the National Register in 1977). After only a few years in operation, the 3.5-acre site was filling up fast. In 1856, citizens urged the Madison Common Council to locate a new cemetery outside the city limits. (Common Council Proceedings, 18 June 1856)

In January 1857, the City purchased a rural, 80-acre tract from John and Maria Wright for $10,000 in City bonds. The Common Council adopted the name "Forest Hill" in December 1858.

Although originally located outside the city limits, Forest Hill shares the fate of many rural cemeteries, having become surrounded by development. Rural cemeteries also may be identified by their site-sensitive plans, in which paths and drives usually follow the topography in a curvilinear fashion. Sites often were chosen for their scenic qualities, providing vistas where visitors could rest and contemplate. Many rural cemetery designers consciously attempted to create an environment that would provide an uplifting or inspiring experience for visitors, reflecting a change in cultural attitudes towards death which evolved during the Victorian era.

Forest Hill was designed by Madison's City Surveyor, William
Moseley Hough (1803-1858), a Connecticut native who came to
Madison in the Spring of 1853. (Daily Argus and Democrat, 18
December 1858) Prior to becoming a surveyor and civil engineer,
Hough had been a teacher and principal in Pennsylvania, New Jersey
and New York State. He began laying out the cemetery in March
1858 (Daily Argus and Democrat, 12 March 1858), but died that
December, before his design could be executed.

The task was completed by Augustus Ligowsky, City Surveyor from
April 1859 to April 1860. (Butterfield 1880, 761) The Common
Council paid Ligowsky $224 in March 1862 "for surveying and making
a large map of the cemetery ground," but the map apparently no
longer exists. (Common Council Proceedings, 15 April 1862)
According to a Madison City ordinance, the official map of Forest
Hill is one drawn by O. H. St.G. Anson in 1902.

Hough's plat was presented to the Common Council on May 24, 1858,
but it also apparently no longer exists. (Common Council
Proceedings, 24 May 1858) If a planting plan for Forest Hill ever
existed, it also has disappeared. The earliest landscaping
efforts consisted of cutting brush and firewood, the income from
which funded further improvements. Prominent Madison architect
Stephen Vaughn Shipman provided plans and specifications for an
entrance gate, for which he was paid $19. (Common Council
Proceedings, 4 April 1859) Construction of the gate and a fence
was nearly complete by April 1859, but the project was slowed by
lack of funds to pay the workmen's wages. Despite constant
funding problems, the chairman of the Common Council's cemetery
committee, Darwin Clark, remained confident that "...for beauty,
location and design [Forest Hill] will compare favorably with the
noted eastern cemeteries." (Common Council Proceedings, 4 April
1859)

Apparently, no trace of the original gate or fence remains, and
without Hough's or Ligowsky's maps, it is impossible to determine
to what extent the original plan has been altered. But its rural
location and topographically sensitive, curvilinear plan
positively identify Forest Hill as a rural cemetery.

Forest Hill has further significance in Madison's landscape
history because it was the City's first curvilinear plan. Not
until 1893 was there another curvilinear plat in Madison--
University Heights, a residential subdivision. (Heggland 1987, 2)

In addition to its significance in landscape architecture, Forest
Hill contains the graves of several persons of transcendent
importance in local, state and national history. Among those with
a national reputation are historian Frederick Jackson Turner
(1861-1932); Progressive Party leader Robert M. LaFollette, Sr.

(1855-1925); and humanitarian Cordelia Harvey (1824-1895), who was
instrumental in establishing military hospitals in the north
during the Civil War. Several Wisconsin governors are buried at
Forest Hill, as well as a number of University of Wisconsin
administrators and faculty.

"Confederate Rest" also is historically significant as one of the
northernmost Confederate burial grounds.

Mounds

The surviving mounds of the Forest Hill Cemetery Mound Group are
among the finest existing examples of effigy mounds left in the
City of Madison. For definition and clarity of form they are
excellent. It is especially fortunate to have most of the goose
effigy preserved as this was always a rare form. The extent to
which these effigy mounds might owe their extraordinary state of
preservation to restoration is unknown. It does not seriously
differ from mounds which have never been plowed.

After a tragic beginning when three of the mounds were destroyed
by insensitive cemetery expansion, these effigy burial mounds
which were probably erected between A. D. 500 and A. D. 1000 have
co-existed with the graves of hundreds of 19th and 20th century
Madisonians without further disturbance. Although they are
surrounded by recent interments, the mounds have not had recent
burials intruded into them. Located as they are in the midst of
Madison's most historic cemetery, these remnants of the Effigy
Mound Tradition seem as likely to survive as any archeological or
historical sites in the state.
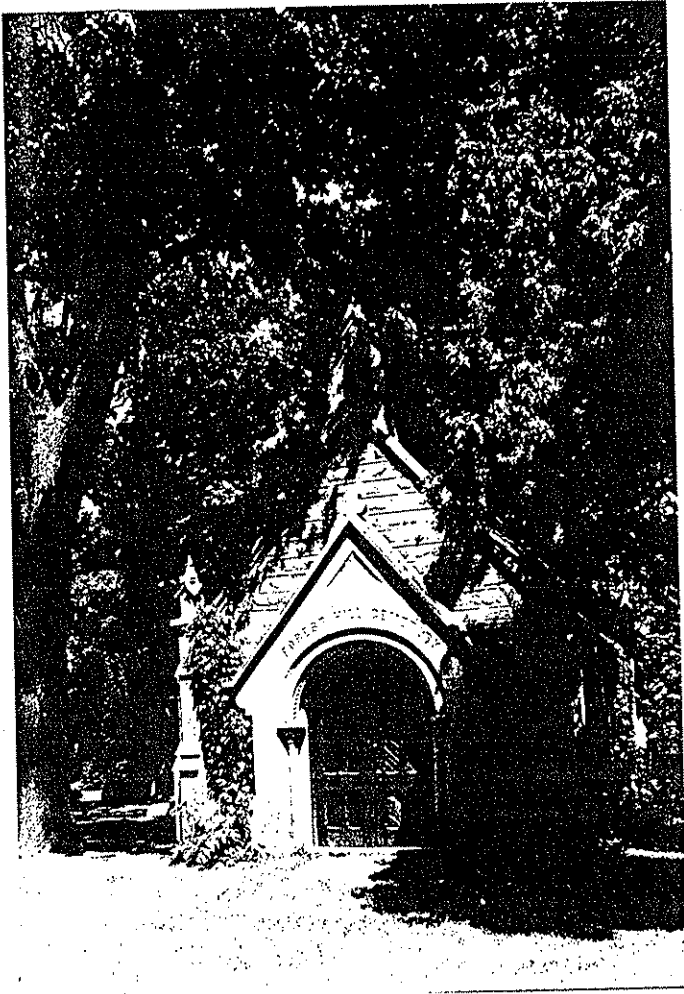
General View
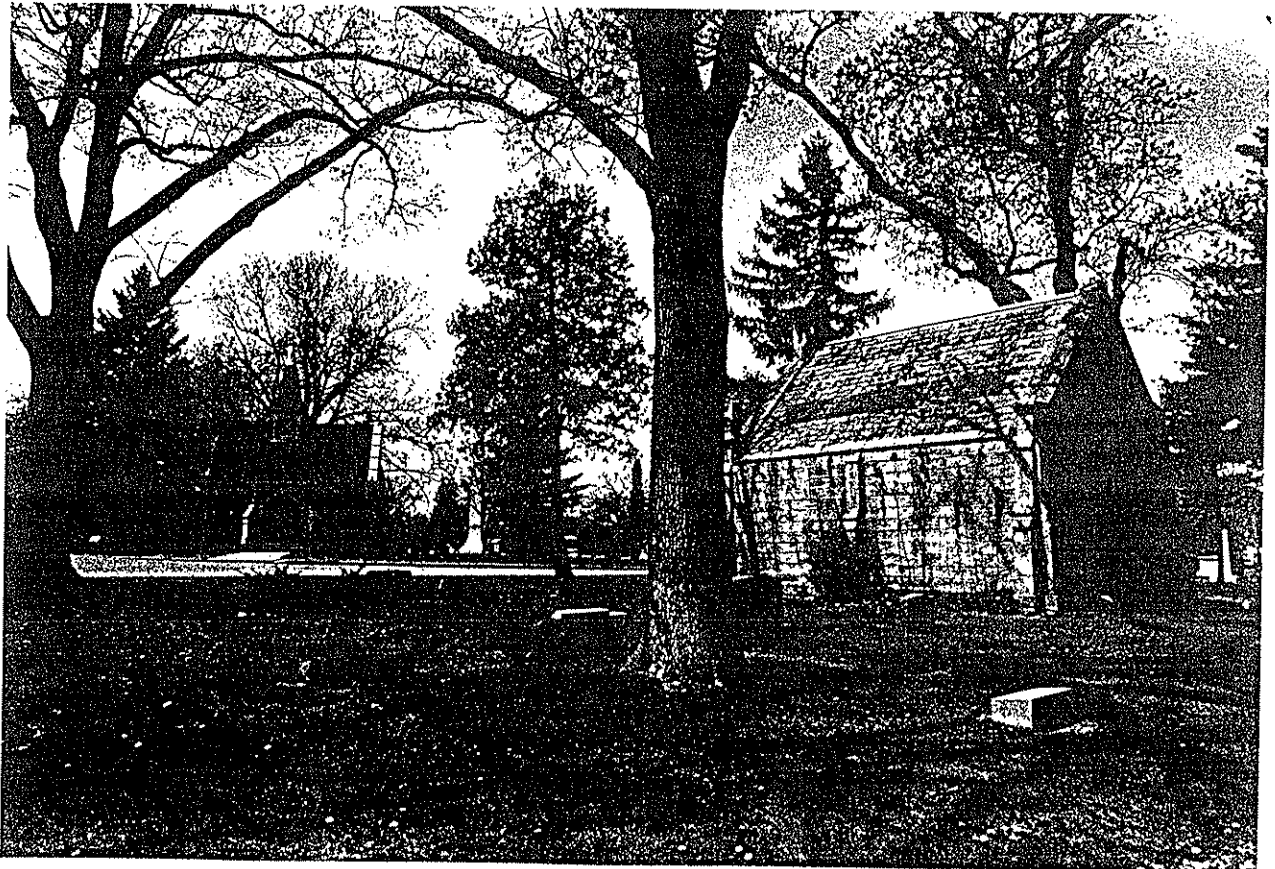
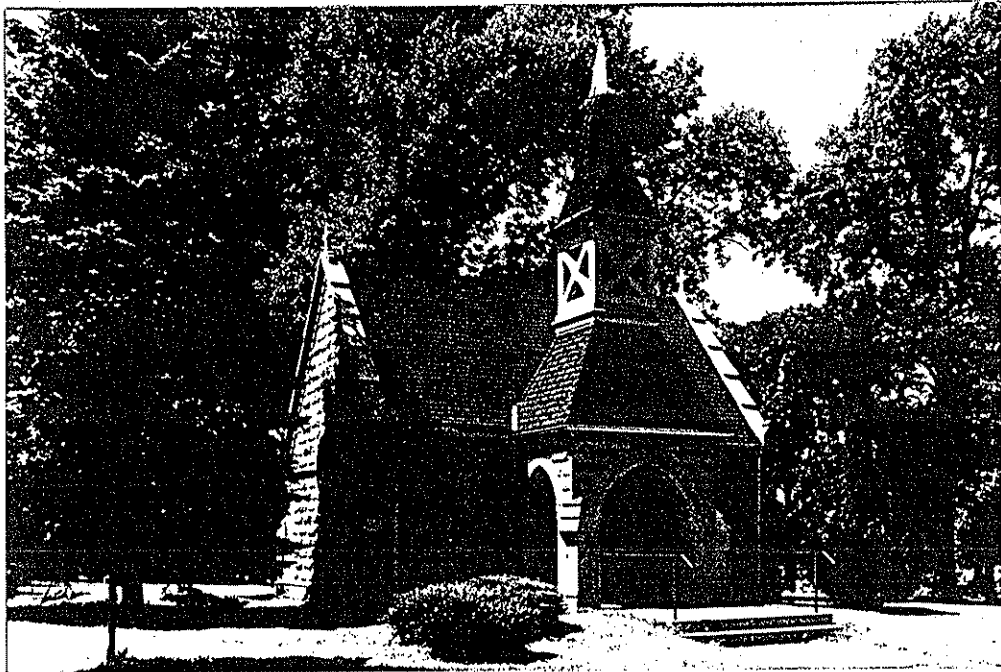Original Crypt and Catlin Chapel
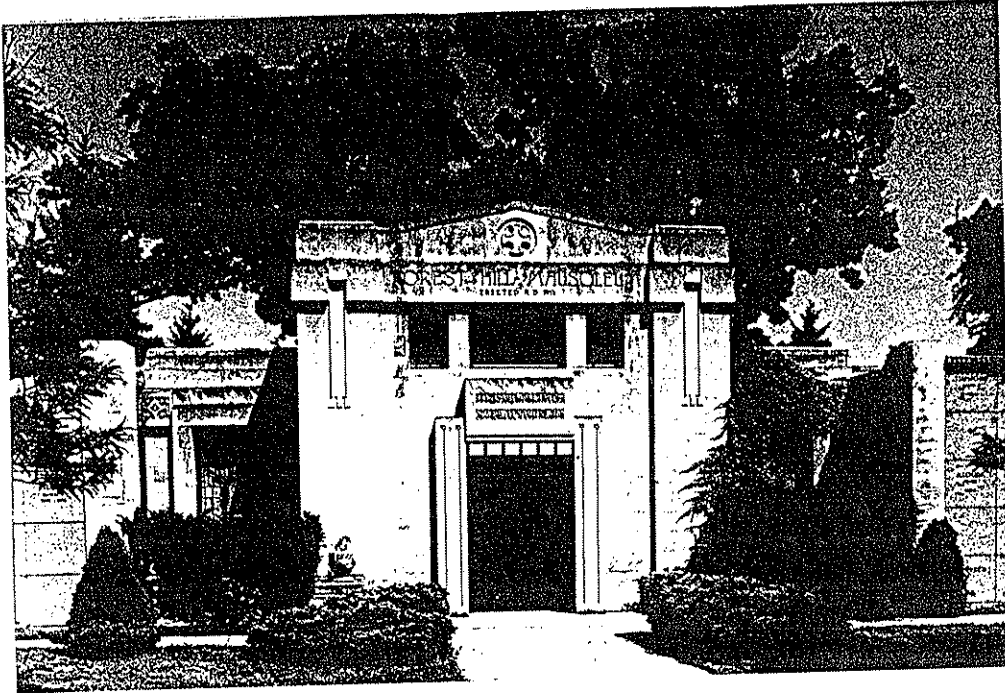
Mausoleum, built 1916

One of the military sections

Original cemetery crypt

John Catlin Memorial Chapel, 1878