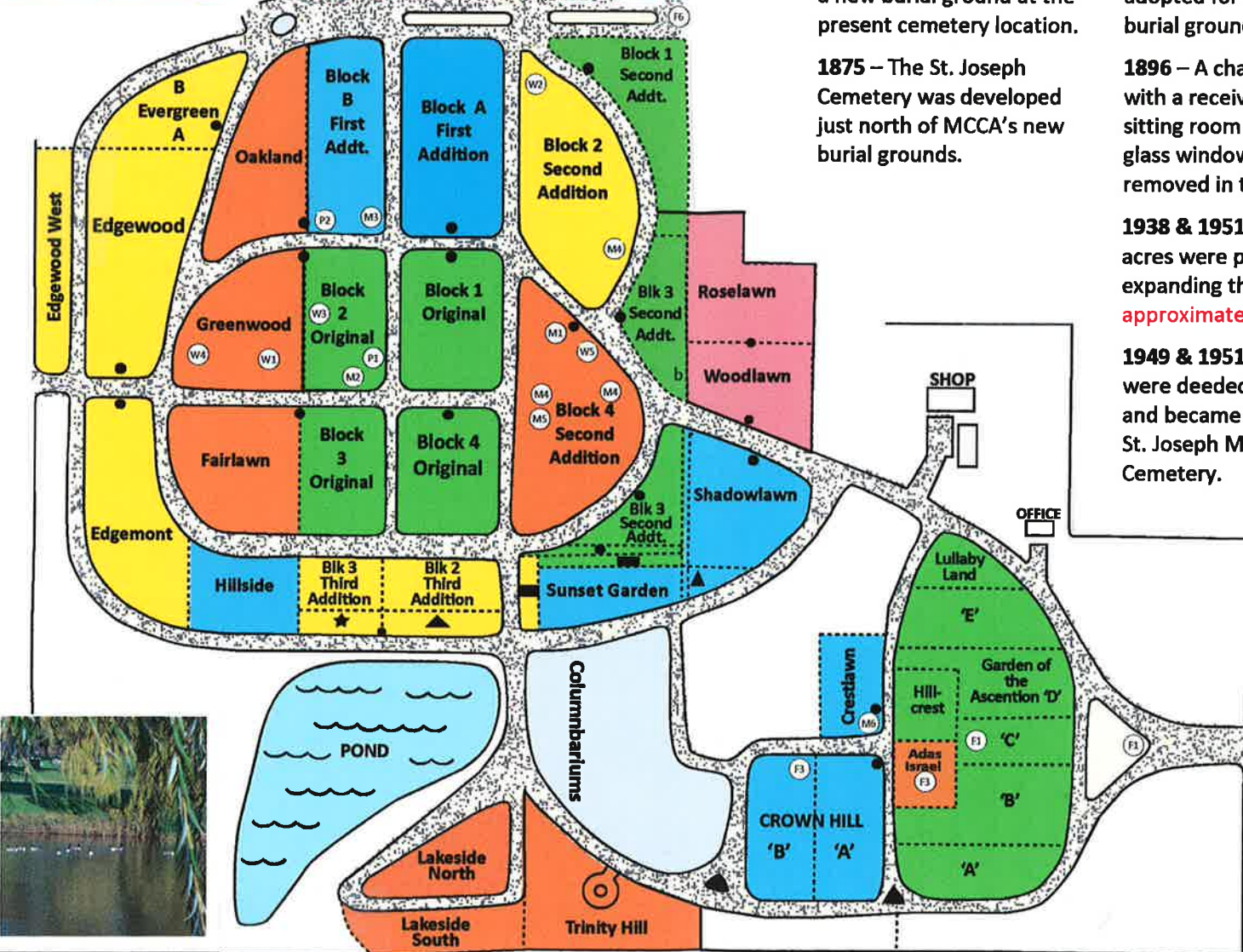


Beautiful  
Sacred  
Historic



## Historical Highlights

**1853** – Mason City's first grave-yard was a small one located northeast of town.

**1867** – The Mason City Cemetery Association (MCCA) purchased land for a new burial ground at the present cemetery location.

**1875** – The St. Joseph Cemetery was developed just north of MCCA's new burial grounds.

**1893** – Bodies from the Northeast graveyard were relocated to MCCA's new burial ground.

**1894** – The name of Elmwood Cemetery was adopted for the MCCA burial grounds.

**1896** – A chapel was built with a receiving vault and sitting room with stained glass windows. It was removed in the 1950's.

**1938 & 1951** – Additional acres were purchased, expanding the grounds to **approximately 90 acres**.

**1949 & 1951** – Cemeteries were deeded to Mason City and became the Elmwood – St. Joseph Municipal Cemetery.

## MAUSOLEUMS IN ELMWOOD

**M1 Smith Mausoleum** In 1908, William Smith had the first mausoleum built in Elmwood Cemetery. Because of the common name, research has not provided any information about the family.

**M2 Vermilya - Dilts Mausoleum** Built in 1912. **George Vermilya's family is buried here while George is buried elsewhere in the cemetery. George was one of the early pioneers of Mason City.**

**M3 Emsley - Adams Mausoleum** Thomas G. Emsley founded City National Bank in 1875. Upon his death in 1904, Mary Ann (Church) Emsley became the first woman bank president in Mason City. Mary also worked to establish a free public library and was an active suffragette. She later married Charles A. Adams.

**M4 Melson Mausoleum** Built 1915 for Minnie Melson by her husband, Joshua G. Melson, a Mason City contractor. Minnie was a popular Mason City teacher who died at age 51. Joshua hired prairie school architect Barry Byrne to design a mausoleum in the same prairie style as "The Castle", the home he built for Minnie in River Heights, an area he developed. Joshua and his second wife Julia are buried under the flower bed outside of the mausoleum.

**M5 Lake Mausoleum** Built in 1962 as final resting place for Albert L. Lake and his wife Clara (Hanson) Lake. Albert Lake, a Mason City contractor, built many businesses, including the Radio Chapel in Mason City and the Clear Lake Fish Hatchery.

**M6 Swale Mausoleum** Distinguished surgeon and gynecologist, Dr. Clarence W. Swale was educated at home and in London, Berlin, Paris and Copenhagen. He was a founder and president of City Park Hospital. The mausoleum was built in 1915.

**M7 Height Mausoleum** Ralph Height Jr. was a talented organist and music director at St. James Lutheran Church in Mason City. He was killed in a car accident in 1961 at age of 29. His wife, Connie, dedicated her life to raising their young son. She died in 2011 and returned to be with Ralph in their eternal rest.

**M8 Barclay Mausoleum** Martha (Thomas) Barclay was a well known English instructor at North Iowa Area Community College gourmet cook, world traveler, public speaker and frequent hostess. Her above ground burial chamber was built in 2004.



## PEOPLE OF INTEREST

**W1 Meredith Willson, 1902-1984**, Author and composer of "The Music Man" rests in the family lot with his mother Rosalie, second wife Rini, sister Dixie and brother Cedric & wife. Willson's father John (W2), grandparents Alonzo & Mary (W3), great grandparents Thomas & Phebe (W4) are also in Elmwood. Meredith Willson's first wife Elizabeth von Bomel (W5) is buried in her family's lot.

**P1 George Brentner 1802-1897** Born in Germany. At age 13, George stowed away on a ship to America and settled in Virginia. He married Julia Printz and moved west in a covered wagon. They sought fortune in the California Gold Rush in 1849. After acquiring some wealth the Brentners and their six children moved to North Iowa. In 1853, Brentner and John Long platted the town of Mason City and donated the land for Central Park.

**P2 Henry I. Smith 1840-1910** Born in England and settling in north Iowa, Smith entered into service at Shell Rock Fall, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa. He achieved rank of Captain in Company B, 7th Iowa Infantry. During the Civil War, Smith earned the Medal of Honor for heroism at Black River, NC.

**P3 John L. McMillan 1824-1885** McMillan built the first cabin in Mason City in 1853, a combination store and home for his family. The first sermon preached in Mason City took place in this cabin. McMillan teamed up with Elisha Randall, John B. Long and George Brentner, who had common interests in building an urban community and a trading center for a wide area. They also provided leadership for political battles and civic undertakings.

**P4 Horace G. Parker 1829-1897** Born in New York, Parker settled in Cerro Gordo and held many local political positions, eventually becoming a state senator. He developed the Parker Opera House which was the cultural and social Mecca for Mason City during the 1880's. Parker was owner of the Cerro Gordo Republican newspaper from 1862-1867 and built the flour mill on Willow Creek in 1870.

**P5 Elizabeth Muse Norris 1892-1981** Elizabeth Muse came to Mason City with her father Will F. Muse, Globe Gazette editor from 1898 until 1931. Elizabeth worked as a reporter for the paper and traveled the world with her father. She married Ralph Norris in 1927 and lived around the country before returning to Mason City in 1969. The Elizabeth Muse Norris Charitable fund was founded in 1983 and assisted numerous non-profit organizations with charitable grants.

**P6 Edward R. Bogardus 1850-1927** In 1959, Bogardus, age 9, came to Rock Falls with his uncle George Vermilya, and moved to Mason City in 1861. He worked in A. T. Parker's printing business and in his uncle's lumber business. Bogardus's architectural skills are evident in many prominent buildings he designed in the Midwest including the Keerl/Decker house and the Duncan Rule house.

**P7 Elisha Randall 1818-1897** One of the first settlers, Randall came to Mason City in 1855. He built the first saw mill in the county that was powered by water. Randall also built a water powered gristmill and later added machinery for the manufacturing of flour.

## FEATURES OF INTEREST

**F1 Veterans Plaque** In 1922, the Mason City Veterans Memorial Association donated a flag staff that was installed at the original entrance with an iron plaque dedicating it to their 'heroic dead'. The plaque was restored and relocated to the main entrance in 2011.

**F2 Garden of Ascension Sculpture** This bronze bas-relief figure depicts a life size figure of Christ ascending to heaven. It was designed by Louis J. Motto, a sculptor from Miami, FL, cast in Florence, Italy and installed on a natural limestone base in 1955.

**F3 Jewish Bible Sculpture** - An open bible of cast bronze mounted on a pedestal of native stone identifies this section of the grounds that was set aside in 1954 as a burial site for members of the Jewish faith at the request of the local Adas Israel Synagogue.

**F4 Mary Ellen Ward Meditation Area** - Funded through a bequest to the cemetery from Eunice Park to honor her mother Mary Ellen Gribben Ward, this feature reflects the pride in her Irish heritage, passionate interest in reading and fondness for gladiolus.

**F5 Leo Gribben Viewing Area** This special viewing area overlooks the historic sections of the cemetery. Leo Gribben was a loving uncle to Eunice Park who took care of her during childhood. This area and most of the restoration of the historic entrance were funded by the Eunice Park bequest.

**F6 Original Cemetery Entrance** In 1867 the main entrance was a small single lane with a wrought iron fence and gate at Hoyt Street, now 10th Street SW. Eventually the entrance grew to two lanes with limestone columns with no gate. In 2011 the columns were repaired and new gates installed.

## Elmwood-St. Joseph Cemetery

### HISTORICAL GUIDE MAP



### *Beautiful ~ Sacred ~ Historic*

Elmwood – St. Joseph is a fascinating place filled with natural beauty and historical significance.

Dating back to 1867, many of the area's early pioneers and city founders have their final resting places here, in addition to war veterans and famous citizens.

This historical guide map highlights some of the people and points of interest. There are many more, so enjoy exploring.

*Please be respectful of our sacred grounds and of family members visiting their loved ones.*

Direct questions, compliments, concerns, corrections and information about your interesting family members to  
Elmwood@masoncity.net