

LAKESWOOD MEMORIAL CHAPEL

A Visitor's Guide







WELCOME TO THE LAKEWOOD MEMORIAL CHAPEL

Lakewood Cemetery's Memorial Chapel is the architectural centerpiece of the cemetery. It was designed by Minneapolis architect Harry Wild Jones, who also designed many well-known Minneapolis landmarks, including Butler Square and the Washburn Park water tower. Jones modeled the chapel after the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. The interior, created by New York designer Charles Lamb, was inspired by the mosaic design in the San Marco Cathedral in Venice. When Lakewood Memorial Chapel was completed in 1910, it was the only building in the United States with an authentic mosaic interior, and it is a stunning work of art.

The Lakewood Chapel stands today virtually unchanged in appearance from the day it was completed. The Skinner pipe organ, new entrance doors, a vestibule, and exterior railings were added in the late 1930s (the vestibule was later removed). In 1987, repairs were made to the roof and clerestory windows. In 1996, Lakewood embarked on a year-long project of renovating the chapel. Under the guidance of architect Jim W. Miller, AIA, new lighting and heating systems were installed, a new crematory was built in the lower level, and the front entrance was landscaped.

We invite you to explore this beautiful building using this tour pamphlet as your guide. We have included details of the chapel's history and brief explanations of the meanings behind many of the special symbols and details in its design.



THE + DAY + BREAK + AND + THE + SHADOWS + FLEE +



The chapel you see today is Lakewood's third building used for funeral services. A temporary wooden chapel, built shortly after Lakewood's founding in 1871, was

replaced by a modest stone structure in 1890. But a permanent chapel remained a long-term goal.

In 1906, Lakewood's trustees formed a committee to guide the chapel's development and solicit design concepts from leading architects. At the board's request, the committee agreed to include a crematory in the chapel design.

In March 1908, the Lakewood Building Committee selected Harry Wild Jones, a prominent Minneapolis architect, to design the chapel. Jones's design was modeled after the Hagia Sophia, originally built as a Christian church for Byzantine Emperor Justinian I in 537 A.D., in what is now Istanbul. In June 1908, the winning bid was selected for the construction contract—\$59,440—and construction began in August.



THE EXTERIOR

From a distance, you can see the chapel's dome and roof of Gustavino tile with outer roofing of Spanish roll tile. As you approach, you see the red St. Cloud granite walls and the new front landscaping of beige granite.

The chapel's entrance includes double doors of solid bronze, embellished with ancient religious symbols. Alpha and Omega symbolize the beginning and the end, an Alisee Patee cross represents



the four evangelists, and a peacock symbolizes resurrection and immortality. The doors are capped with a stained-glass transom in the Art Nouveau style.

THE INTERIOR

The glass doors that lead from the entryway into the chapel once were covered with curtains. As part of the 1996 renovation, the copper frames were cleaned, the curtains were removed, and new glass panes were installed. They were decorated by Minneapolis glass workers with etched symbols echoing those on the bronze doors and the mosaic olive trees inside the chapel.

When you enter the chapel, you are greeted by the most perfect example of Byzantine mosaic art in the United States. To complement the Byzantine flavor of the chapel's structure, interior designer Charles Lamb, from Lamb Studios in New York, suggested a Byzantine mosaic design based on the interior of the San Marco Cathedral in Venice. In 1909, Lakewood's Board of Trustees commissioned Lamb to complete the chapel's interior at a cost of \$25,000.



Under Lamb's direction, an artisan from Lamb Studios laid out the chapel interior's design on a flat surface, then built molds corresponding to the building's walls and curves. Lamb traveled to Rome to enlist the services of six of Italy's most highly accomplished mosaic artists, who had just completed a project in the Vatican. Working in Venice, they created more than 10 million mosaic pieces, called tessellae, from marble, colored stone, and glass fused with gold and silver. The tiles, each no larger than a fingernail, were attached to

gummed cloth and shipped to Minneapolis. The artists themselves arrived in the summer of 1909 and painstakingly assembled the masterpiece inside the chapel.

THE DOME

Some of the most spectacular mosaic details in the Lakewood Memorial Chapel are overhead. Twelve angels adorn the dome, relating to the Old Testament's 12 sons of Jacob, 12 tribes of Israel, and 12 gates to the Holy City, and the 12 disciples of Christ in the New Testament. The four angels holding red roses are positioned at the four points of the compass, symbolizing the four corners of the earth. The colors of the gowns also have symbolic meanings—red for life, yellow for death, blue for resurrection. The fully extended wings of the angels symbolize their protective spirit. The angels have no visible feet because, according to lore, they never touch the earth.

If you stand beneath the chapel's dome and begin to speak, you'll notice the effect of Harry Wild Jones's architectural plan. The acoustics are so nearly perfect that speakers in the chapel's center or front can be heard clearly throughout the room without microphones. The dome is 40 feet high and ringed with 24 stained-glass windows in the Art







Nouveau style. The windows, set in copper, serve as a sundial, telling the time of day and the season.

Four large mosaic figures adorn the side walls below the dome. They represent Love, Hope, Memory (photo inside back cover), and Faith. Originally, the side walls were simply to have been covered with multicolored mosaic tiles. But Lamb convinced the Lakewood board that “figures of heroic size” to “personify the virtues” would be the crowning touch. If you look closely at the faces, you’ll see how well the artisans were able to blend the colored tiles. The four figures are based on paintings by Ella Condie Lamb, a noted portrait artist of the time and wife of Charles Lamb.

THE ALCOVE

The alcove at the front of the chapel is lined with entwined mosaic olive trees, whose fruit is known for healing properties. The changing colors in the leaves represent the cycle of life from spring to

winter. The mosaic sky behind the trees is graduated from daytime to nighttime to subtly emphasize the same theme. In 1910, the Building Committee debated whether to extend the row of olive trees over the arches to the left and right inside the alcove, even though the trees over the arches would have no trunks, or to stop the trees before the arches so all trees would stand complete. If you stand in the alcove, you can see that Lamb’s desire to continue the scene prevailed.

Below the olive trees stand the pulpit and a chair, both carved from white Grecian marble and inlaid with gold and blue mosaics. They are similar to the chairs of the four mosaic figures below the dome. Lamb intended that they draw visitors’ eyes to the front of the chapel.

RESTORING THE CHAPEL’S ORIGINAL BEAUTY

Part of architect Miller’s task in 1996 was to undo alterations made to the chapel over the past decades. Yellow paper was removed from behind the stained-glass windows in the dome and the alcove at the front of the chapel. A reddish brown carpet covering the marble floor was taken up. Copper doors and window casings were polished. A large stained-glass chandelier globe, designed by Lamb, was restored to its place above the pulpit.





A new computerized lighting system was installed to show the true beauty of the chapel's interior. Twenty-four lighting combinations allow Lakewood to light the chapel appropriately for each occasion. At the same time, four new torchères (floor lamps) were crafted by contemporary Minnesota artisans to match the metalwork and glass light fixtures already in the chapel.

A PRICELESS ARCHITECTURAL JEWEL

Nearly a century ago, the trustees of Lakewood Cemetery Association set high standards for the chapel. They chose the best quality in materials and artistry. They were clearly pleased with the results at the end of their long project, as their letters show. "Those who have inspected the Chapel as a whole are carried away with the work," wrote George Brackett, chairman of the Building Committee, in October 1910. Through the years, visitors have remarked at finding such an outstanding architectural jewel in the heart of

the American Midwest. In 1931, one journalist wrote, "If this chapel were somewhere in Europe, thousands of Americans would visit it each year. Never have we seen anything to equal it in this country—not even the famous mosaics of the Library of Congress at Washington impressed us so greatly."

In 1983, the chapel was added to the National Register of Historic Places. Many experts now believe that a work of such magnitude could not be recreated at any price today. Artisans possessing the necessary skills have passed into history. The 1996 renovation maintains the high standards set when the chapel was built nearly a century ago. The best materials were used and highly skilled artists were chosen to do the work. The Lakewood Memorial Chapel will continue to be a beautiful sanctuary for the community through the 21st century and beyond.

If you enjoyed this tour and would like to learn more about Lakewood and early Minneapolis history, 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 our pamphlet "Lakewood Cemetery: A Self-Guided Tour" and explore our beautiful grounds.

LAKESWOOD 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,

except Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

LAKESWOOD CEMETERY

Celebrating Life Since 1871

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