

# Saved from Obscurity

The Story of Pleasant Hill Cemetery  
– Eden Prairie, Minnesota

**N**estled in the southwest corner of Eden Prairie, Minnesota, is a heritage site known as the Pleasant Hill Cemetery. This small patch of land just off the Pioneer Trail overlooks the valley of Purgatory Creek and forms a natural terrace. It was originally purchased in 1885, and shortly thereafter, it was platted as a pioneer cemetery with 96 lots.

At that time, the Rural Cemetery Movement was gaining popularity across the nation. Isolated family farmstead burials and crowded church graveyards were being cast aside in favor of new, thoughtfully regulated cemeteries with ample walkways, charming nature scenes and embellished landscapes. While this cultural shift bloomed, Eden Prairie grew.

## Enduring the Changes

As time wore on and methodology evolved, so did Pleasant Hill Cemetery. Like other cemeteries in the area, it

faced undercapitalization. The status and stability of the community would be apparent in how well-appointed and maintained its cemetery was. In the 1920s, upkeep suffered due to families dying out or moving away. As the 1930s approached, local cemetery boards took over maintenance of their grounds and set up perpetual care trust funds to cover increasing costs.

This change to lawn cemetery methodology is evident at Pleasant Hill Cemetery. Most older cemeteries will have an old and a new section due to this modern approach. New sections were platted with efficiency and capacity in mind. Meanwhile, the remnants of the Rural Cemetery Movement were discarded. In 1966, the Eden Prairie Presbyterian Church, on the south end of the property, was removed and Section II of the cemetery was added. Five years later, land on the east side of the cemetery was purchased for Section III, yet another expansion. Then in 1987, the administration of the

cemetery was handed over to the city of Eden Prairie at the request of the Pleasant Hill Cemetery Association.

## A Cemetery Revitalized

Fast forward to the present day. Overcrowding and land scarcity are clouds looming over many cemeteries. The historical Pleasant Hill Cemetery was no exception. In 2018, the threat of closing it to further burials was imminent for Eden Prairie. Without new revenue to help cover the rising costs of maintenance and operation, the cemetery was at risk of becoming obsolete. With over 125 years of operation, this turn of events would be devastating to the local community.

Fortunately, a plan was made to carry Pleasant Hill Cemetery through its next metamorphosis. To meet the new tradition of cremation and sustain the livelihood of the cemetery, the decision was made to install an Ossuarium from Eickhof Columbaria.



The new memorial garden and Winchester Ossuarium at Pleasant Hill Cemetery.  
*(Photo courtesy of Eickhof Columbaria)*



