

A publication of the Downers Grove Historical Society

VOICES THAT ARE GONE

A Guide To Historic
Main Street Cemetery

Downers Grove, Illinois

Phyllis Betenia, Montrew Dunham,
Carol Wandschneider

The Downers Grove Historical Society

Founded in 1968, the Downers Grove Historical Society is a non-profit volunteer organization whose funding comes solely from membership dues, donations, grants, and the sale of books and other educational items. Its mission is “to preserve the history of Downers Grove so that present and future generations can better understand the past.” Its work includes the ongoing Main Street Cemetery preservation project, the Historic Sites and Centennial Homes Documentation programs, production of books and video materials on the history of Downers Grove, as well as special events and programs.

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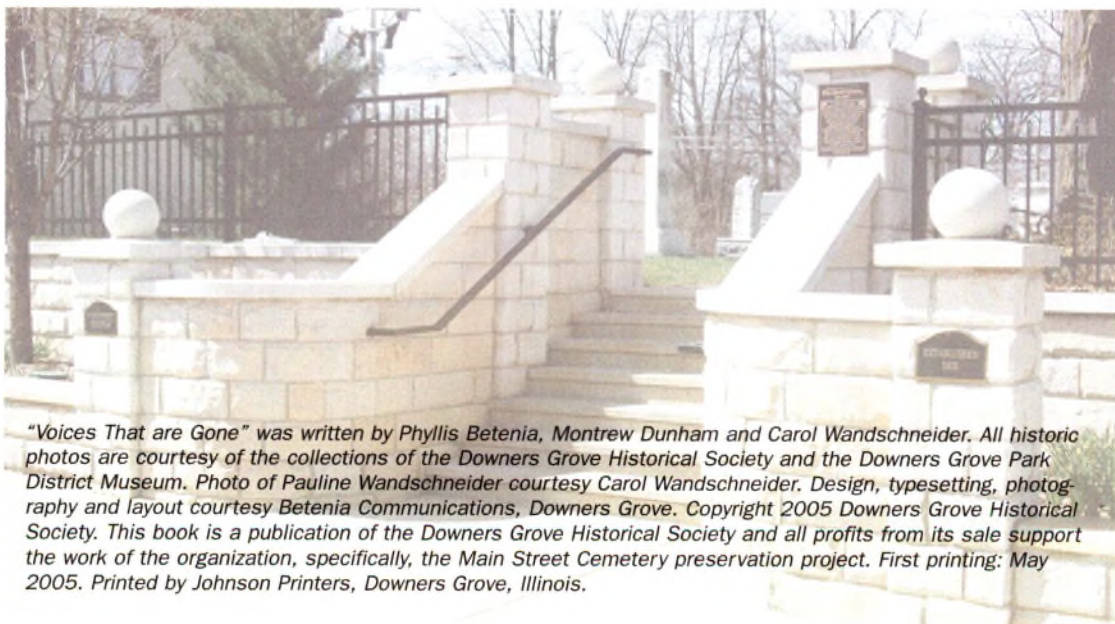
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Donations of any amount are always welcome. Support is needed to continue the Main Street Cemetery preservation project. Donations can be sent to the post office box indicated above.



“Voices That are Gone” was written by Phyllis Betenia, Montrew Dunham and Carol Wandschneider. All historic photos are courtesy of the collections of the Downers Grove Historical Society and the Downers Grove Park District Museum. Photo of Pauline Wandschneider courtesy Carol Wandschneider. Design, typesetting, photography and layout courtesy Betenia Communications, Downers Grove. Copyright 2005 Downers Grove Historical Society. This book is a publication of the Downers Grove Historical Society and all profits from its sale support the work of the organization, specifically, the Main Street Cemetery preservation project. First printing: May 2005. Printed by Johnson Printers, Downers Grove, Illinois.

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A Guide To Historic Main Street Cemetery
Downers Grove, Illinois

Commemorating the cemetery's 150th year:
1856 - 2006

Phyllis Betenia, Montrew Dunham, Carol Wandschneider

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Downers Grove, Illinois

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*When the twilight shades fall o'er me,
And the evening star appears,
Mem'ry brings the past before me,
Joys and sorrows, smiles and tears;
Then again bright eyes are gleaming
With the love once in them shone,
Then like music heard while dreaming,
Come the voices that are gone.*

from "Voices That are Gone"
Lyrics by Robert Campbell, Music by
Stephen Foster, 1865

Published by the Downers Grove Historical Society

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About the Authors

Phyllis Betenia, the Historical Society's publicist and vice president, is a graduate of Columbia College, Chicago. Founded in 1984, her award-winning company Betenia Communications specializes in publication design, copywriting, and promotions. She designed the Historic Sites and Centennial Homes plaques, the Honorary Historic District signs, and produces the Society's **Gazette** newsletter. She received the 2002 Illinois Humanities Council's Studs Terkel Humanities Service Award from Downers Grove for her work with the Historical Society.

Montrew Dunham, author of the books "**Downers Grove Revisited**," and co-author, with Pauline Wandschneider, of "**Downers Grove 1932-1982**," has also authored many children's books on historic subjects. Montrew earned a B.A. from Butler University, Indianapolis, and an M.A. from Northwestern University. She is a director of the Downers Grove Historical Society and a former teacher and counselor in Downers Grove Community High School District 99.

Carol Wandschneider continues her mother Pauline Wandschneider's preservation of the village's history by volunteering and working part-time since 1980 at the Downers Grove Park District Museum. Carol grew up in Downers Grove, attended local schools and graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in Home Economics, which has led to her career as a food service manager. She distinctly remembers family vacations where her mother made the family stop at every historical marker en route. Despite this, (or maybe because of it), Carol works to make sure the traditions and stories of Downers Grove are preserved.



This bronze plaque on the cemetery entrance recognizes Main Street Cemetery as a Downers Grove Historic Site.

VOICES THAT ARE GONE

A Guide To Historic Main Street Cemetery Downers Grove, Illinois

A small cemetery in the heart of downtown Downers Grove is the final resting place of many members of the village's founding families. Located on the west side of Main Street between Curtiss and Grove Streets, the half-acre park-like setting provides a respite from the hustle and bustle of downtown. Most central cemeteries were relocated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to accommodate the growth of the business district. For that reason, Main Street Cemetery holds a rare distinction: it is reputed to be among only two in the country to still exist in a downtown location. It is the final resting place of nearly 100 people — babies and children, Civil War soldiers who died from their wounds, mothers, fathers, a veteran of the War of 1812, a former slave, politicians, store owners, blacksmiths, farmers — who lived their lives in joy and sorrow, triumph and tragedy, in the Village of Downers Grove.



Samuel Curtiss

The Beginning

In 1856, Samuel Curtiss, a respected town father, donated a portion of his sheep pasture for use as a cemetery. He later received \$15 for the land, collected from people who formed a cemetery association. Thus began Main Street Cemetery.

Prior to 1856 there was a log cabin at the southeast corner of Maple and present day Main Street. Two small graves were located nearby. In 1850, a four-year-old son of the Pye family was buried there and 18-year-old Sarah Richards was buried beside him in 1853. One day Henry Carpenter, who was sitting around the old stove at the Methodist Church (located at 1032 Maple Avenue) with his friends, told how saddened he was by the sight of those two lonely little graves as he looked out the door of his house and how he

wished that Downers Grove had a more permanent burial ground.

As a result, Samuel Curtiss donated the land for the cemetery and the two bodies were moved by 1856 when the daughter of Henry Faul was listed as the first person buried in the new cemetery. A Burying Ground Association was formed in 1864 with John A. Richards presiding. Henry Carpenter was elected president, T.S. Palmer, secretary and Austin Richards, trustee. Among

them, they collected \$10.50 for the balance of the money still owed Samuel Curtiss. Plots were sold for \$5; each plot contained five or six grave sites. Many plots were never sold. The Main Street Cemetery would be the final resting place for both Samuel Curtiss and Henry Carpenter.

Today, the cemetery entrance is on the east side of the property. However, at first the entrance was on the west side because the original Main Street was located one block west of present day Main Street. Some of the favorite engravings on the stones include calla lilies, folded hands, angels, swallows, roses and the Bible. Often the stonemason's initials – or even name and town – were engraved on the stone. Crosses are not found on any of the stones as that symbol was not prevalent in Protestant cemeteries at that time.

In 1876 the land was plotted by the Downers Grove Cemetery Association. Some years later, an article in the local newspaper, *The Downers Grove Reporter*, stated that the land was deeded to DuPage County. However, the County has never been able to find a record of this transaction.

A metal pipe and cedar post fence stood along the west side of the cemetery in 1881. Years later, Miss Harriet Strong, whose ancestors were among the village's first settlers, remembered the delight of some mischievous boys when they hid at one end of the fence and moaned into the pipe when timid young ladies walked past!

In 1890, a 58-foot strip of land on the cemetery's north boundary was sold to the Village of Downers Grove for \$550. This gave more land to the new Memorial Village Hall that was being constructed just north of the cemetery.

In the 1920s the Downers Grove Woman's Club raised \$800 to build a concrete wall and steps on the east side of the cemetery along Main Street. Shrubs and hanging vines were planted to give the cemetery a more park-like appearance.

Modern Times

A 1960 census of the cemetery by the Daughters of the American Revolution listed 72 gravesites. Of these, 24 were of children under the age of 15, a sad statistic of the times. Another later inventory added 23 more graves to the earlier census. The last person buried in the cemetery was Emma Foster Miller in 1938.

The deteriorating condition of the cemetery in the late 1970s and early 1980s prompted Pauline

SIDEBAR TO HISTORY: Pauline Wandschneider (1904 - 1993), was active in numerous community organizations, and was one of the founders and president of the Downers Grove Historical Society. The Society was incorporated in 1968. The Park District purchased the Blodgett House, 831 Maple Avenue, to use as a historical museum on her advice. The museum grounds are named Wandschneider Park in honor of Pauline and her husband, Fritz, who was the village's plan commission chairman for 25 years.



Wandschneider and the Downers Grove Historical Society to appeal to the village to obtain the rights to the land so the village could maintain the cemetery. In 1981, the Village Council resolved to establish control of the cemetery and the village has maintained it since that date.

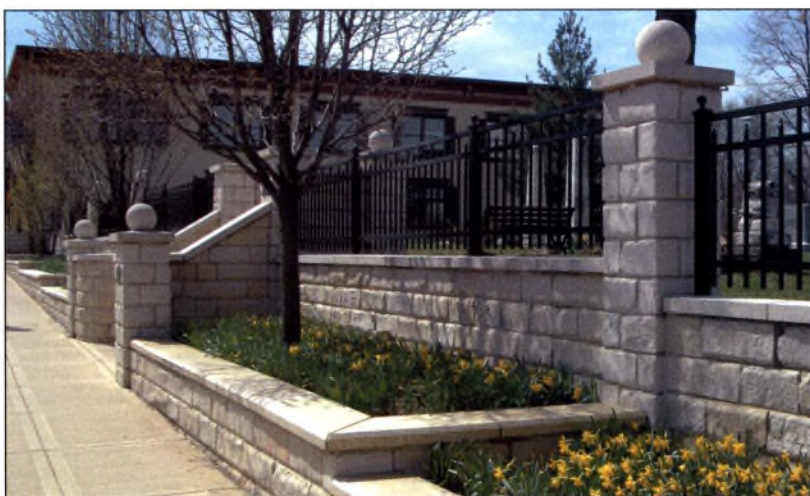
In 1982, for the 150th anniversary of the village, the Village Council voted \$2,500 for renovations to the cemetery and the grave markers. Then again in 1993, the village spent almost \$19,000 for landscaping and restoration in the cemetery.

In 1999, the Downers Grove Historical Society Board of Directors presented the Downers Grove Village Council with a proposed long-term plan for the preservation of the cemetery. The Downers Grove Historical Society board members reviewed the history of the cemetery and researched the records of the cemetery. The Society board members also engaged in research that included meetings with cemetery restoration experts. The board then developed the long-term plan which had as its most important goal the identification of markers that could be repaired and the replacement of those that could not, as well as to mark graves whose stones had long ago deteriorated and no longer existed.

On March 21, 2000, the Village Council agreed that the Downers Grove Historical Society would act as the steward of the cemetery and implement the preservation plan. The Historical Society board members began working with an experienced monument company to identify gravestones that could be repaired and those that would need to be replaced.

Over the next four years, the Historical Society contributed nearly \$22,000 to repair and/or restore monuments and markers in the first three phases of a four-phase restoration program. Work continues yearly as funds allow. The goal is to complete the major work and then to continue to monitor the cemetery markers for work they may need in the future. It is estimated that the total on-going project will cost at least \$75,000.

In the summer of 2000, along with the improvements to the downtown, the Village of Downers Grove installed the handsome stone wall and entrance along the Main Street border of the cemetery. Ideas for the style and material of the wall were contributed by Historical Society board members to be in keeping with an historic style, and influenced the final design.



Today, the Downers Grove Department of Public Works (Forestry Department) continues to be responsible for the upkeep and appearance of the cemetery grounds. The Garden Club of Downers Grove often plants flowers that beautify the cemetery grounds.

On June 16, 2001, the Downers Grove Historical Society conferred its annual Historic Sites recognition plaque for the year 2000 to Main Street Cemetery. The bronze plaque is inscribed with a brief history of the cemetery and is located on the north pillar at the cemetery's entrance.

The following is not a complete list of the cemetery's inhabitants. Unfortunately, over time, the history of some of the inhabitants — as well as even the names of other inhabitants — was lost. The numbers after the descriptions are a guide to finding the gravestones. The numbering system begins at the front (east side) of the cemetery. Markers that are located south of the sidewalk that divides the cemetery are identified as south, while those north of the sidewalk are identified as north. Refer to the map on the inside back cover.

June 16, 2001: Main Street Cemetery receives recognition as an Historic Site from the Downers Grove Historical Society. Among those present at the ceremony were (first row, L to R) Thomas Sisul, Duane Baker, Jerry Yoksoulian, Elizabeth Evans, Mayor Brian Krajewski. (Second row, L to R): Evelyn Poulin, Emily Evans, Greg Evans. (Third row, L to R): Martin Tully, Grace Dicke, Mark Zabloudil, Joan Read and Bob Arehart.



WHO'S BURIED IN MAIN STREET CEMETERY?

Note: Since 2000 The Downers Grove Historical Society has, as part of its commitment to the preservation of Main Street Cemetery, replaced markers that were either missing or irreparable. These markers look like the Ahern marker at right and the Attwood marker, directly below this copy. In addition, new bases were made for markers whose foundations had deteriorated and other markers were professionally repaired. This work is ongoing and is supported by donations, membership fees, grants from the Downers Grove Village Grants Commission, and the sale of videos and books such as this.

*Ahern,
No first name visible
d. 1859*

Died in 1859, 48 years old. Type on marker reads

“Natives of
France.”

(No. 35 South,
at far south end
of cemetery)



W. H. Attwood 1821-1864

Could be William, son of Charles Atwood (sp.) who came to Downers Grove in 1845. If so,

William was a member of Company D, Volunteer Infantry, and he probably died in the Civil War at the age of 23. (No photo. Location unknown)



The Emily Attwoods

There are three Emily Attwoods buried in the cemetery: An Emily Attwood Pye was the wife of William B. Pye (see p. 17). She died April 6, 1869 at 22 years, 8 months, 17 days.

She is buried by the large Pye family monument that is located towards the back of the cemetery on the northwest side. Buried south of the sidewalk is Emily Attwood, aged 2 years, 11 months, one day. The dates of her birth and death are not known; neither is their relationship, if any. There is also an Emily Spragg whose maiden name was Attwood; thus the third Emily Attwood (see p.19). (Child, Number 38 South; Emily Attwood Pye, Number 21 North)

Mary Bartle
1859? - 1878

Died in 1878 at the age of 19 years, the daughter of Charles and Jane Bartle. (Number 20 North)



N.A. Belden 1819-1864

Among the first blacksmiths in Downers Grove, Belden's blacksmith shop was just west of the current Methodist church on Maple Avenue west of Main Street. Pierce Downer, Downers Grove's first settler, for whom the town was named, was an early customer. He reportedly said to Belden, "I don't suppose you can shoe a horse, but if you will

nail it so I can get him up to Babcock's Grove (now Lombard), that will do." Downer said later that the job Belden did was so good that he went to no one else thereafter. Belden was a trustee of the Methodist Church circa 1852. (Number 28 South)



Fannie Randall Belden

N.A. Belden's wife, Fannie is buried next to him. They were married in 1843. Their daughter Callie (Calla Belden Bush) married Henry Bush. Callie's and Henry's son Guy was president of the Downers Grove Village Board and served six terms on the Illinois State legislature. After Henry Bush's death, Callie married widower T. S. Rogers, president of the Board of Trustees of Downers Grove. (No marker)



Four Generations: In 1898 or 1899 (clockwise from bottom left) Guy Bush posed with his new baby, Lucille Bush, his mother Callie Belden Bush and his grandmother, Fannie Randall Belden. Baby Lucille lived a long life: she was born September 7, 1898, and passed away July 27, 1999. Guy's wife — and Lucille's mother — is not pictured. Her name was Annice Wilcox Bush.



Isrel (or Israel) Blackburn 1818-1902

Born into slavery in Virginia, he joined the Union Army during the Civil War, where he became a First Sergeant in the 124th U.S. Colored Infantry, Company C. He moved to Downers Grove in 1866, where he was befriended by Samuel Curtiss who sold him three acres of land for use as a vegetable garden.

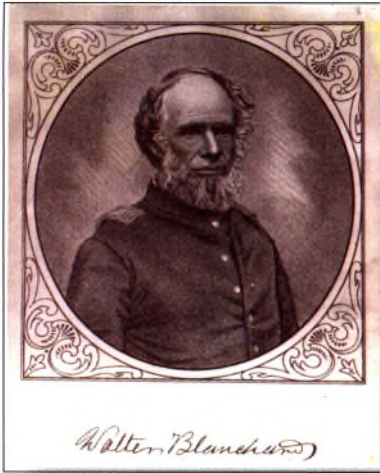
That land is currently

owned by the First Church of Christ Science at 1101 Curtiss Avenue. Isrel Blackburn was a signer of the Petition for the Incorporation of Downers Grove in 1873. The original gravestone deteriorated and was replaced by American Legion and Historical Society members sometime prior to 1982. It is a duplicate of the original. (Number 26 North)



Downers Grove Civil War veterans, members of the GAR, posed for a group photo many years after the war. Isrel Blackburn is in the top row, sixth from left. At top left is an enlargement of Blackburn made from this photo.

SIDEBAR TO HISTORY: The Grand Army of the Republic or "GAR" was formed in Decatur, Illinois shortly after the Civil War by Benjamin F. Stephenson. It was the largest veterans' organization of Union soldiers. The GAR promoted comradeship among vets, worked to increase pensions, assist war widows and children, and maintained old soldiers' homes. In 1868 the GAR Commander-in-chief John Logan, a Civil War general, inaugurated the observance of Memorial Day to honor fallen soldiers.



Walter Blanchard 1807-1863

After his first wife died in childbirth, Blanchard journeyed to Downers Grove from the Eastern United States in 1836 and bought land. He returned east, and soon married his second wife, Alvira Norris. She came back with him to Downers Grove and bore him four children in addition to rearing the daughter from his first marriage. Blanchard's sister, Martha, was the wife of Henry Carpenter (see p. 11). Walter Blanchard was a supervisor at the first Downers Grove Township meetings, from 1851-1853, and again in 1855 he was supervisor of the Township of Downers Grove. He also served as a probate judge for DuPage County.

When the Civil War began, at the age of 54 years, he was commissioned a captain and raised a company of 90 men for Company K of the 13th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, 16 of whom were from Downers Grove. He was mortally wounded during the Chattanooga/Ringgold Gap campaign. His last words were said to be, "Don't give up boys! Fire away!" There are two stones: the original (**Number 36 South**), and a newer one that is one row in front (east) of the old. (**Number 34 South**)



(R) Walter Blanchard's two gravestones.
(Above) The inscription on the newer stone.



SIDEBAR TO HISTORY: A question of dates... Although both of the Blanchard monuments state Captain Blanchard's date of death as November 18, 1863, the roster of Company K, 13th Illinois Volunteer Infantry, lists his death as December 4, 1863. Because the Battle of Chattanooga occurred November 23 – 25, 1863, and the four-hour-long Ringgold Gap battle took place November 27, 1863, it is quite likely the November 18 date is incorrect. It is easy to imagine the captain was mortally wounded at Ringgold Gap on November 27 and died from his wounds one week later on December 4. Ringgold Gap was a Confederate victory.



The Blodgett monument, front. Names of other family members buried in the plot are inscribed on its sides (see p. 10).

Israel Blodgett 1797-1861

Israel Blodgett was born in Amherst, Massachusetts. As a young man he was a machinist at the Harper's Ferry Arsenal. There, he worked with a young black man, a slave, whose wages went to his master. One day the slave asked Blodgett how to get to Canada and Blodgett replied, "Follow the North Star." Soon after, when the slave was realized to be missing, Blodgett was blamed for his disappearance and was sent back to Massachusetts. This had a profound effect on Israel Blodgett and led to his later harboring runaway

slaves in the basement of his house on Maple Avenue as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Blodgett had a long career as a blacksmith with the U.S. Army before coming

SIDEBAR TO HISTORY: The Underground Railroad was not a "railroad," nor was it "underground," but was a loose network of abolitionists — people who were against slavery — who helped slaves escape to Canada and freedom. It is estimated that the Underground Railroad helped 100,000 slaves escape in the years from the Revolutionary through the Civil War.

to the area. He moved to Illinois in 1830, settling at first in Lisle Township. In 1835 he bought land from Joel Wells and moved to Downers Grove in 1836 with his wife, Avis Dodge Blodgett, and their six children. Their two youngest children were born in the house that he built on the land where the Downers Grove Park District Museum now stands at 831 Maple Avenue. Blodgett set up a blacksmith shop and along with shoeing horses, repairing farm equipment and guns, he designed and built a self-



scouring plow. This plow was invaluable to the pioneers trying to cultivate the heavy prairie soil.

One of his sons, Wells, became president of the Wabash Railroad headquartered in St. Louis.

Wells received the Congressional Medal of Honor in the Civil War. Another son, Henry, was a prominent U.S. judge. In 1892 a third son, Charles, built the house that is now the Downers Grove Park District Museum on the family's land.

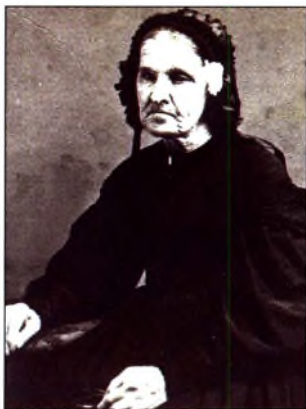
The (second) Israel Blodgett house, built circa 1849, is still standing at 812 Randall. It was moved from its original location on



831 Maple when the Charles Blodgett house was built there in 1892. (Blodgett monument, with names of Israel, Avis, and Daniel, Number 18 North. Small headstones: Father, Mother, Mary, Daniel, Numbers 14-17 North)

Avis Dodge Blodgett 1796-1882

Wife of Israel Blodgett.



Avis Blodgett

Mary Pomeroy Blodgett 1828-1856

Mary, the daughter of Avis and Israel, was one of the first school-teachers in Downers Grove. She taught in their house when it was the village's first school, a job she began at the tender age of 12.



Daniel Kingsley Blodgett 1830-1849

Daniel was a son of Avis and Israel Blodgett. He was only a teenager when he died.

(Left) Grave markers of Avis ("mother"), Mary, and Daniel Blodgett.



(Left and above): Two sides of the Blodgett monument with the names of siblings Daniel and Mary. (Right): One of four small stones that mark the corners of the Blodgett family plot.



Henry Carpenter 1810-1891

Carpenter came to Downers Grove from the Eastern United States in May of 1839 and bought half the land owned by his brother-in-law Walter Blanchard. There were just six families in the Grove at that time. Unable to make a living as a farmer, in 1845 he sold his land and opened the first general store with a \$600 stock of groceries. In 1852 he donated land for the first Methodist church, although he was not a member.

His son Walter was killed by an explosion of an engine boiler at at the Chicago Burlington & Quincy Railroad. Henry never got over his son's loss; consequently, in 1857 he sold his store to Mr. Leonard Hatch and Mr. Eldred Thatcher and his 40 acres of land to others. He built a home at Maple and Lane Place. In 1858 he was a signer on the petition to the C B & Q Railroad to build a line through Downers Grove from Aurora to Chicago. He also was the first president of the Cemetery Burying Ground Association, founded in 1864; served as a village trustee in 1873 and was the village postmaster.



His wife, Martha Blanchard Carpenter (1813-1952), and three children are also buried in Main Street Cemetery.

The Henry Carpenter home, built about 1845, is still standing at 1047 Maple. The house served as a general store and the first post office when the Carpenter family lived there. (**Henry Carpenter Family monument, Number 9 South; Unknown Carpenter child, Number 8 South**)

(Left): A gravestone marks an unidentified child of Henry and Martha Carpenter. Martha was the sister of Walter Blanchard. (L to R): This single three-sided gravestone marks the resting place of Henry Carpenter, his wife, Martha, and two of their sons, Walter and William H.



John P. Cotes 1806-1881



In 1857 John P. Cotes was a trustee of the Methodist Church. He refused to sell a part of his land for the new railroad depot in 1864 for any less than his asking price of \$500. The citizens of Downers Grove

raised the money and purchased his house and land. He then bought land north of the tracks on Highland Avenue extending to Ogden Avenue. This necessitated the continuation of Highland Avenue north to Ogden Avenue so that he would have access to his land.

His wife, Mary C. Cotes (1805-1857) is buried here, and also their son, John S. Cotes (1836-1863), a veteran of Company B. Illinois 105th Infantry, who died at Murphysboro, Tennessee, perhaps in the soldiers' hospital located there, during the Civil War.

(John P. and Mary Cotes, Number 4, South; John S. Cotes, Number 5, South)



Samuel Curtiss 1789-1887

Samuel Curtiss was born in Connecticut and grew up in Vermont. He served in the war of 1812, and it was with the land grant (or "scrip") that he was awarded as a veteran that he bought most of the land that is now the central business district of Downers Grove. Samuel Curtiss came to Downers Grove with his wife and three sons in 1836 and built a log house, a tavern, and stables on Maple Avenue for farmers traveling to Chicago. In order to increase the traffic on the road between their houses, and business for his tavern and Israel Blodgett's blacksmith shop, the two men improved the trail, which is now Maple Avenue, by dragging a heavy log.



(L to R)
The Samuel Curtiss marker and both sides of the Mary Curtiss marker.

Samuel Curtiss was the first in the village to subdivide a part of his land. He helped establish the first post office and his son Eli was the first postmaster.

Curtiss, like Blodgett, was an active member of the Underground Railroad. He was very generous, and often used his money for the betterment of the community. The cemetery is on land that he owned and donated for its use, although he was later paid a modest amount for the land by the Cemetery Association.

Buried with Samuel Curtiss are his wife, Mary Hatch Curtiss, his sons and their wives. There are also two young great-granddaughters whose parents were Curtiss's grandson Samuel and his wife, Nettie Curtiss: Edna, one year old, and Edith, two years old.

(Samuel Curtiss, Number 12 South; Mary Curtiss, Number 13 South; Edith Curtiss, Number 8 North; Edna Curtiss, Number 9 North)



Charles Curtiss (p. 14), a son of Samuel and Mary Curtiss, and his wife Mary Thatcher Curtiss posed for this family photo in the 1890s. Charles is on the porch, (far right) and Mary is to his left. Their son Charles II (leaning on porch railing, second from left) holds his son, Ted Curtiss.



Roswell Curtiss 1830-1913

A son of Samuel and Mary Curtiss, he came to Downers Grove in 1836 with the family. He worked in his father's tavern until it burned down in 1857. He then worked at a general store in Wheaton. After that, he worked in Chicago for a while but was back on the family farm in Downers Grove by 1877. In 1890 he had a house on Maple Avenue at the time the first sidewalk in Downers Grove was laid.

Buried with him are his wife, Cordelia Lyman Curtiss (1830-1886) whom he had married in 1855, and their year-old-son, Willie (1861-1862).
(Roswell, Cordelia and Willie Curtiss, Number 14 South)



Charles Curtiss 1828-1897

A son of Samuel and Mary Curtiss, he came to Downers Grove in 1836 with the family. In the 1850s he followed the gold rush to California with his brother Henry, but returned to Downers Grove no richer for the trip. He was a Village Trustee in 1873 and served in the Illinois General Assembly in 1887-88. By 1892 he was president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank (located at 5135 Main Street) and was publisher of the *Downers Grove Reporter* in 1895. He served as village president three different terms for a total of six years. It is said he installed the first street sign, hand-painted, by his home at the corner of Curtiss and Washington Streets.

Buried with him is his wife Laura Thatcher Curtiss (1839-1918) whom he had married in 1856. Her parents, Harriet and Eldred Thatcher, are also buried in the cemetery (p. 20).
(Charles and Laura Thatcher Curtiss, Number 15 South)

Leah Faul d.1868

Daughter of Henry and Lena Faul, who died in 1868 at the age of 18 years. (Burial location unmarked)

Martha Faul d.1856

Daughter of H & M Faul, age 8 months. She was the first person buried in Main Street Cemetery. (Number 10 South)



Alexander French (A.F.) Foster 1815-1903

Foster came to Illinois in 1836, settling first in Will County. By 1849 he was renting the tavern that belonged to Levi Aldrich, and he was another of the men from Downers Grove who followed the lure of gold to California. He returned to Downers Grove where he built a home on Maple Avenue west of the Methodist Church, which he had also helped to build. He worked in Chicago as a carpenter returning only on weekends to be with his family.

Buried with him are his wife Nancy O. Foster, whom he had married in 1839; his son Alex, corporal in Company B, Illinois 105th Infantry, and also Emma J. Foster Miller and her husband, Francis "Frank" Miller. Emma Miller was a member of the Woman's Club at the time they raised funds to build the cement wall for the cemetery in the 1920s. She was the last person to be buried in the cemetery, but there is no existing marker. (Foster monument, 23 South; N.O. Foster, 19 South; A.F. Foster, 20 South; Francis Miller, 21 South; Alex. F. Foster, 22 South)



Detail of the Corporal Alexander F. Foster, N.O. Foster, A.F. Foster and Francis Miller grave-stones. (Bottom of page): The Foster family plot. There is no longer a gravestone for Emma (Foster) Miller, wife of Francis Miller.





Lester Hunt *d. March 17, 1862*

Aged 18 years, 7 months, 19 days. Possibly a casualty of the Civil War, but no more is known. (Number 26 South)

Benjamin B. Morgan
1827-1914

Buried with his wife, Julia A. Morgan (1841-1931) and their daughter, Flora B. Morgan

who died in 1880 at the age of 16. Also on this plot: William H. Morgan (1885-1904). (Flora, Number 4, North; William, Number 5 North; Benjamin, Number 6 North; Julia, Number 7 North)



Richard Oldfield 1836(?) – 1884

Oldfield came to Downers Grove from the Eastern United States in 1847. As a young man he farmed and was in the butchering business. It was said that he lost an arm in a gun accident and so

he began raising horses. He also served as a tax collector for the Township. He is buried with his first wife, Kate E. Dixon Oldfield, who died in 1865 at age 25 just four years after their marriage. Their three-year-old daughter, Alice Kate Oldfield, who also died in 1865, is buried here. Kate E. and Alice Kate share the same grave-stone. Kate E.'s inscription is on the east side of the stone and her daughter, Alice



Kate's, is on the west side of the stone.

(Richard Oldfield, 24 South; Kate E. and Alice Kate, 25 South)



(Far left, center): Richard Oldfield's stone shows an attempted repair from the 1980s. (Far left and adjacent left): Two sides of the same stone, with Kate E. Oldfield's inscription on one side and her three-year-old daughter Alice Kate's on the other.

Mary R. Puffer d.1864

Mary, who died at age 26, was the wife of Henry Puffer, Jr. and daughter of J. P. and M.C. Cotes.

(Number 6 South)



Austin Pye d.1861

Age two months. Relation to other Pyes buried in the cemetery is not known. (Number 30 South)



William B. Pye 1843-1904

William is buried between his two wives, Emily Atwood (see "The Emily Attwoods," p. 1), who died in 1869 at age 22 years, and Mary Jane Thomas, 1849-1888, 39 years. He outlived them both by many years. (Pye monument: Number 24 North)

(Not pictured) Three gravestones in the Pye plot read, "Emily," "W.B. Pye," and "Jenny," the last presumably for Mary Jane Thomas Pye. (Right): The limestone base of the Pye monument eroded and was replaced with a new granite base as part of the Historical Society's Main Street Cemetery preservation project.



(Top, right): The Mary R. Puffer monument, with an enlargement (black and white negative) of the inscription. (Left): The Pye monument, with inscriptions (shown in close-up, bottom left and right), for William Pye and his two wives. (Directly below): Close-up of the Pye monument art that reads "Asleep in Jesus."



Austin Richards 1819-1903

Richards came from New York state where he was a wagonmaker and farmer. He arrived in Downers Grove in 1855 and farmed. In 1870 he sold his farm, which was north of the railroad tracks and later became Sheldon's Addition. He was elected a trustee of the Burying Ground Association for the cemetery in 1864. In 1873 he was one of the signers of the Petition for the Incorporation of Downers Grove. After he sold his farm, he retired and lived in a home near Maple Avenue and Main Street.

Buried with him are his first wife, Angeline Richards who died in 1864,

and their 20-year-old son, Samuel T. Richards (1842-1862), who was killed in the Civil War. (Austin, Number 33 South; Angeline, Number 32 South; Samuel T., Number 31 South)



Gravestones of Austin, Angeline and Samuel T. Richards.

Martin Root 1803-1885

Root arrived in Downers Grove in 1843 from the Eastern United States. He is buried with his wife Abigail Root who died in 1873. Amos Root, who died in 1871, is also buried here; their relationship is not known. Three of Abigail and Martin's young grandchildren are also buried here: Helen, age 5; James, age 11, and Albert, age 3. Their parents were Elijah and Jeanette Root. (Root Family monument, Number 3 South)

SIDEBAR TO HISTORY: More American soldiers were killed in the Civil War than any other war. Nearly half a million men from both armies lost their lives, a large portion of the population. The figure includes both combat deaths and deaths due to disease and accidents. It took decades for the south, where most of the fighting took place, to begin to recover.



Both sides of the Root Family monument. (L) Inscriptions for Martin, Abigail and Amos. (R) Inscriptions for three of Abigail and Martin's grandchildren, Helen, James, and Albert.



John K. Smith 1798-1872

He is buried along with his wife, Eliza Smith, 1804-1875, and their children: Sara, Margaret, Emma and two sons, Gerald and John who fought in but did not return alive from the Civil War. (Smith, Number 7 South)



William and Emily Spraggs 1821-1864 & 1829-1864

William Spraggs was born in 1819 in Walsoken, Norfolk County, England. He was a market gardener. His first wife, Susan, died in



1853 and in 1854 he married Emily Attwood. They had two children, Arthur William and Emily Louisa. They emigrated to America in early 1864 and within six months the couple died from diphtheria or typhoid. Their children were raised by Emily's uncle John Attwood on his Downers Grove farm. (William, Number 40 South; Emily, Number 41 South)



(Left and center): The Walter and Michael Sucher stone is inscribed on both sides. It had fallen and was reinstalled in 2004 with funding from the Downers Grove Historical Society's ongoing Main Street Cemetery preservation project. (R) The Philip Sucher stone is a replacement for the original that had deteriorated beyond repair.



Sucher Children

Three of Michael Sucher's 11 children are buried here: Walter, age eight years, Philip, age unknown, and Michael, age one year.

Michael M., the father, was born in France in 1811 and immigrated to New York and then moved to Downers Grove. He bought 160 acres of land and later added another 80 acres for a total of 240 acres. He served as a highway commissioner from 1850-1857. He eventually sold his land and moved to Iowa, where he raised fine horses. Sucher and his wife are probably buried in Iowa. (Michael and Walter share one stone: Number 16 South; note that it is two-sided. Philip Sucher, Number 37 South)



Harriet N. Thatcher 1815?-1855

Married Eldred Thatcher in 1838. Their daughter, Laura, married Charles Curtiss, son of Samuel Curtiss. Eldred had a second marriage to Charlotte Smith. (Number 1 South)

Louisa A. Thomas 1855-1933

Helped to organize the Downers Grove Woman's Club. She is buried on the Pye plot. (Number 25 North)



John Manning Wells 1848-1932

Born in England, Wells came to Downers Grove as a young man. He married Arvilla Bond and

they had two daughters and three sons. One daughter, Gracie, died when she was five years old. It was in her memory that he later devoted himself to the Girl Scouts. In 1895 he was in the real estate, loan and insurance business on Main Street. He also served as village clerk and collector. By the 1920s he was caretaker of the Forest Preserve on 55th Street. He thought the Girl Scouts should have a cabin of their own to use for camping and overnight stays. He requested the land from the Forest Preserve and solicited the local merchants to donate money and goods to build the log

(Top and center, above) Memorial to "Daddy" Wells, inscribed front and back. (Bottom): Grace's grave with plantings by the Garden Club of Downers Grove. (Right): The Sarah Wells monument, which reads, approximately, "Sudden was the death I met and great surprise to all. When God did say I must away could I refuse his call?"

The stonemason, justifiably proud of his work, signed the Sarah Wells monument. It appears to read, "G.H. Kryler, Naperville."



cabin, which was dedicated in 1926. In deep appreciation, the Girl Scouts called him Daddy Wells.

Buried with him are his wife, Arvilla, little Gracie, and his mother, Sarah. (Grace Wells, Number 1 North; John M. "Daddy" Wells memorial, Number 2 North; Sarah Wells, Number 3 North)



Schuyler C. Wheeler 1868-1891

Young son of Allen M. and Elizabeth Bateman Wheeler. Buried with him are other children of Allen and Elizabeth; Nora A., 11 years and Myrtle, 3 years. (Wheeler monument, Number 10 North; Schuyler Wheeler, Number 11 North; not pictured: Nora, Number 12 North and Myrtle, Number 13)



SIDEBAR TO HISTORY: Why isn't Pierce Downer, the village's first settler, buried in Main Street Cemetery? At the age of 51 Pierce Downer, who was born in Plainfield, Vermont in 1782, came to the area from Rutland, New York. He joined his eldest son, Stephen E., a mason on Chicago's first lighthouse. He settled in Downers Grove and was a farmer until his death in 1863. Pierce Downer died one day after his wife, Lucy Ann, died. It was his wish to have Lucy Ann buried in Main Street Cemetery. However, St. Joseph Creek, which ran through downtown, was too high to cross to get to the cemetery. He chose instead to bury her on the highest point of his property. It is rumored that he died while digging her grave. They are both buried on what was a portion of their land at 4524 Linscott. This cemetery is located between two private homes on a residential street and is managed by the Downers Grove Park District. The Pierce Downer house still stands at 4437 Seeley Avenue.

managed by the Downers Grove Park District. The Pierce Downer house still stands at 4437 Seeley Avenue.

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Old cemetery is breath of fresh air in downtown **Chicago Tribune**

Denise Linke Published May 12, 2004

The grassy half-acre parcel on Main Street in Downers Grove lies swathed in quiet, though traffic jangles through the downtown business district just outside the low brick (sic) wall.

The trees sway softly in the breeze, and daffodils nod here and there beside small American flags. A brick pathway divides the land halfway down the middle, with a bench at one end of it and a commemorative boulder at the other marking it as a memorial byway of the Garden Clubs of America.

Once a sheep pasture, the 148-year-old Main Street Cemetery provides a small spot of urban open space that's unique in the western suburbs. While other towns relocated their founders' graves to accommodate growth in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Downers Grove's leaders enclosed it to preserve it as a public park.

"I'm glad it's here," said resident Antonio Gonzalez as he walked through it on a sunny April afternoon. "It's like having a little countryside in the middle of all the stores.

"The graves make it a special place."

Sam Curtiss, the original owner of the land, inhabits it still with several generations of his family. Other founding families, like the Blanchards, Spraggs and Wells clans, are heavily represented among the tombstones.

Several veterans lie buried there, too: Cpl. Alex Foster of the 105th Illinois Infantry and Israel Blackburn, a former slave who fought in the Civil War in his mid-40s, then settled in Downers Grove to raise his family after the war.

But the cemetery's green expanse is what endears it to downtown workers and visitors.

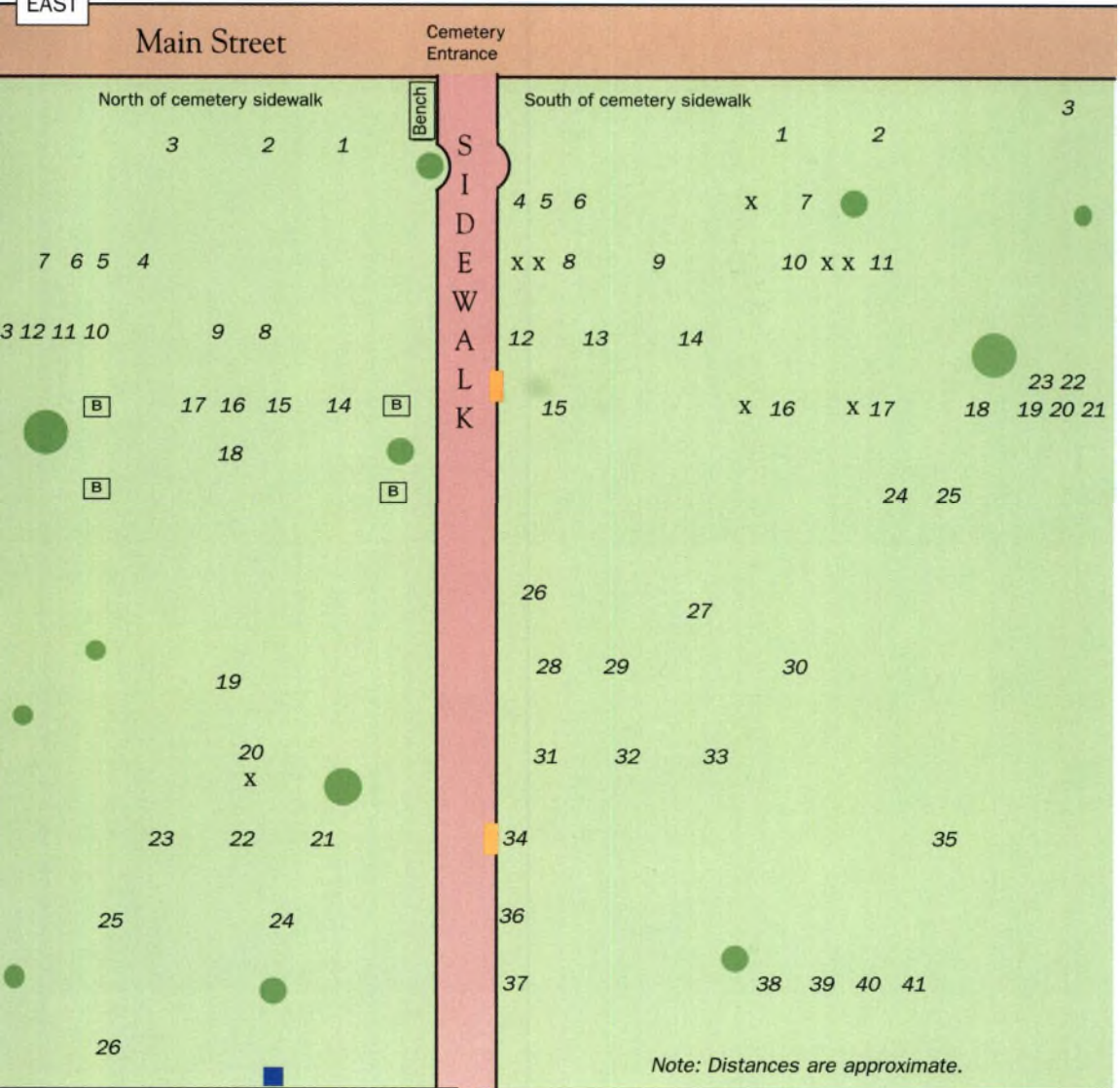
"It provides breathing space for us," said Lynne Watka, co-owner of Bead Heaven just two doors down from the cemetery. "It's very quiet and peaceful.

"I think it's comforting to know we can have open space here in downtown."

"I used to be against cemeteries, but now I'm grateful for them because they preserve nature," added lifetime resident Kindred Asha. "It's nice to have a little bit of grass and trees down here where I can go on my breaks from work.

GUIDE TO MAIN STREET CEMETERY

- Tree
- Streetlamp
- X Remains of old stones



Note: Distances are approximate.

North of Cemetery Sidewalk:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Grace Wells | 17. Daniel Blodgett |
| 2. John M. Wells | 18. Blodgett monument |
| 3. Sarah Wells | B = stones that mark corners of Blodgett family plot |
| 4. Flora Morgan | |
| 5. William Morgan | |
| 6. Benjamin Morgan | |
| 7. Julia Morgan | 19. Otis |
| 8. Edith Curtiss | 20. Mary Bartle |
| 9. Edna Curtiss | 21. Emily Attwood Pye |
| 10. Wheeler monument | 22. W.B. Pye |
| 11. Schuyler Wheeler | 23. Jennie Pye |
| 12. Nora Wheeler | 24. Pye Monument |
| 13. Myrtle Wheeler | 25. Louisa Thomas |
| 14. Father (I. Blodgett) | 26. Isrel Blackburn |
| 15. Mother (A. Blodgett) | ■ Garden Club Marker |
| 16. Mary Blodgett | |

South of Cemetery Sidewalk:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Harriet N. Thatcher | 16. Walter & Michael Sucher | 30. Austin Pye |
| 2. W. B. Pratt | 17. Unreadable | 31. Samuel T. Richards |
| 3. Root Family | 18. John Shephard | 32. Angeline Richards |
| 4. John & Mary Cotes | 19. N.O. Foster | 33. Austin Richards |
| 5. John S. Cotes | 20. A.F. Foster | 34. Walter Blanchard, new |
| 6. Mary Puffer Cotes | 21. Francis Miller | 35. Ahern |
| 7. Smith Family | 22. Alex. F. Foster | 36. Walter Blanchard, old |
| 8. Carpenter child | 23. Foster monument | 37. Philip Sucher |
| 9. H. Carpenter family | 24. Richard Oldfield | 38. Emily Attwood, child |
| 10. Martha Faul | 25. Kate E. and Alice | 39. Reynolds |
| 11. Samuel Merrett | 26. Lester Hunt | 40. William Spragg |
| 12. Samuel Curtiss | 27. Unknown (A.F.) | 41. Emily (Attwood) Spragg |
| 13. Mary Curtiss | 28. N.A. Belden | |
| 14. R., C., & W. Curtiss | 29. Cotes? (baby) | |
| 15. Charles & Laura Curtiss | | |



MAIN STREET CEMETERY

What was once a sheep pasture is the last resting place of nearly 100 of Downers Grove's founding families. This sacred place, begun in 1856, is reputed to be one of only two remaining cemeteries located in a central business district. It provides a tranquil, park-like setting to the downtown area.

Voices That are Gone is a guide to Main Street Cemetery at its 150th year and the people forever at rest in its grounds.

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Historical Society

\$5.00 U.S.

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The Downers Grove Historical
Society's Main Street
Cemetery preservation
project