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Photographs of Graceland Cemetery by Carol Betsch appearing on pages ii, vi, 14, 32, 48, 64, 86, 108, 132, and 162, and in the gallery of color plates following page x, were specially commissioned for this book. All photographs © Carol Betsch, 2011.

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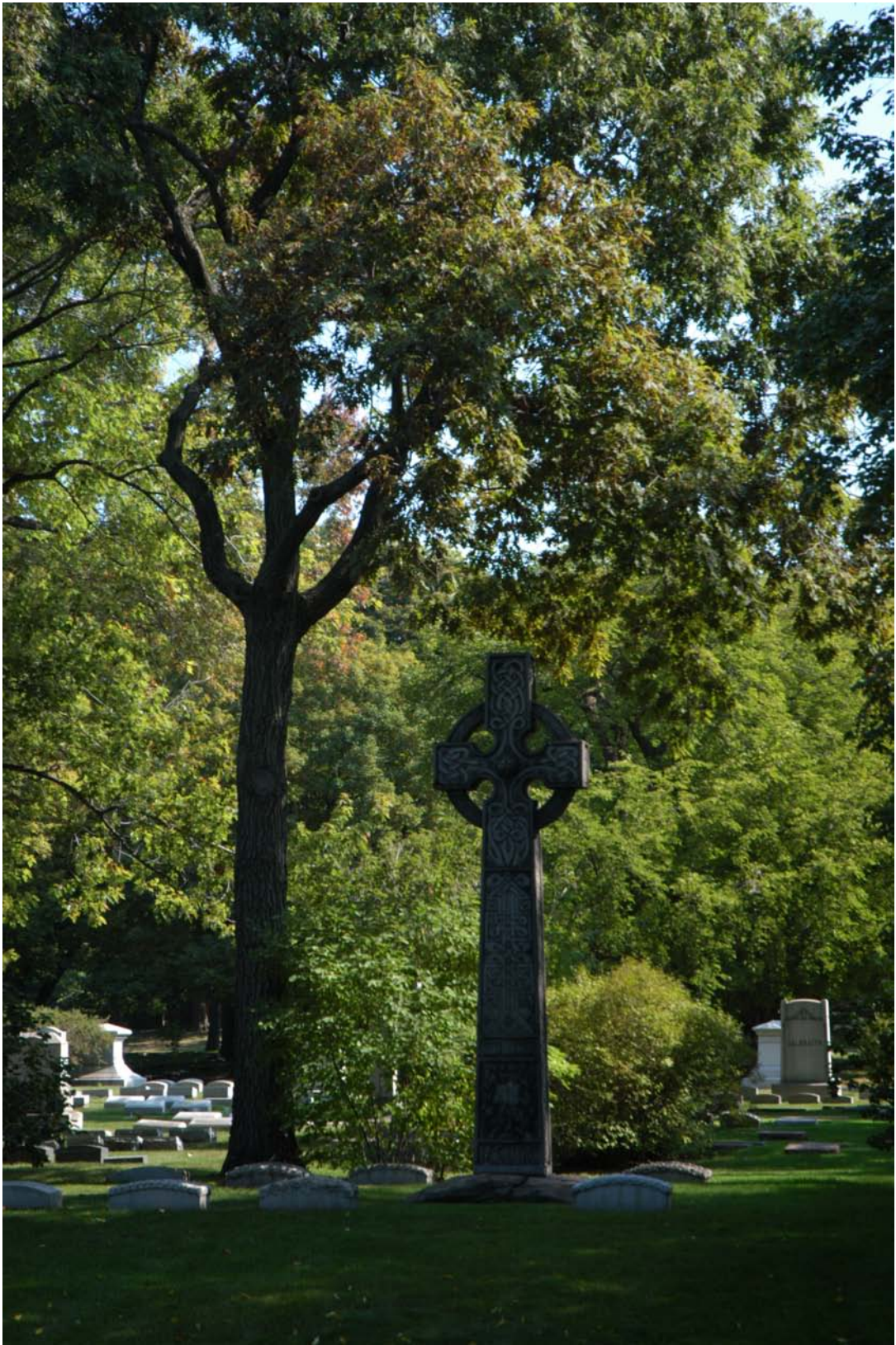
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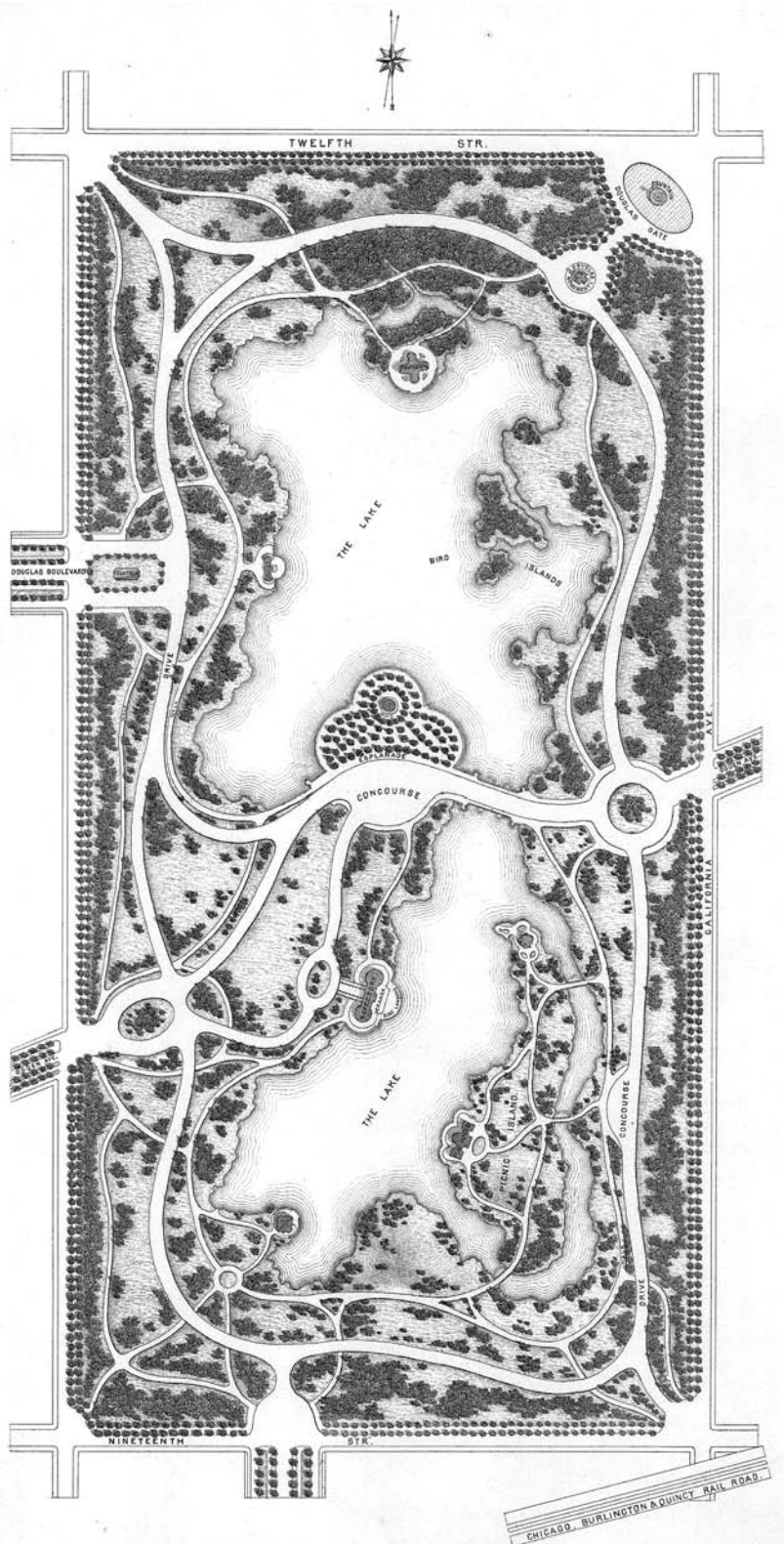
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Preface

This book can be traced back to the efforts of three individuals who have long had an interest in Chicago's Graceland Cemetery putting its best foot forward to the public. Robert T. Isham Jr., John K. Notz Jr., and Frederick G. Wacker III, Trustees of the Graceland Cemetery Improvement Fund, all shared the belief that the cemetery would be well served by paying far greater attention to the history of its landscape than had been the case for many years, at least since the 1920s. Although widely considered a pivotal design in the history of American landscape studies, Graceland had never before been the subject of a book-length study, and these individuals persisted in their belief that such a document would aid immeasurably in the pursuit of the cemetery's landscape goals.

A Walk through Graceland Cemetery, a guide written by Barbara Lanctot and published by the Chicago Architecture Foundation in 1977 (and revised several times since), was one of the first authoritative treatments of the site. In 1985, the eminent historian Walter Creese published an insightful essay on Graceland's design in his book *The Crowning of the American Landscape: Eight Great Spaces and Their Buildings*. However, neither of these publications delved into the layers of design that had been contributed by as many as seven landscape gardeners. In generally accepted lore, O. C. Simonds, who had the longest tenure at Graceland as superintendent, receives full credit for the design. When the Library of American Landscape History approached the trustees with a proposal to develop a definitive book on this influential



5.6. William Le Baron Jenney's layout for Chicago's Douglas Park (1871). Jenney was then in partnership with engineers Louis Schermerhorn and John Bogart.

Courtesy Chicago Park District Special Collections.



cemetery overlooking the Mississippi River in Moline, a city in northwestern Illinois that was the home of the agricultural equipment company founded by John Deere. Two years earlier, the eminent Moline citizen Charles H. Deere (1837–1907), John Deere’s son, had commissioned Jenney to design his new residence, Overlook. The architect responded with a three-story “Swiss villa,” reminiscent of his earlier Riverside houses. As its name suggests, the house occupied a commanding hilltop position, with prospects not only to the river but also to the Deere factory.⁵⁷

Deere’s new house plans were finished by March 1872. A local newspaper predicted that it would be “one of the finest residences in the county, equipped with all the modern conveniences.”⁵⁸ Jenney probably also designed Overlook’s seven-acre surrounds. Contemporary photographs reveal a winding approach road, terminating in a circular drive and porte-cochere entry. The grounds, resembling more a private parkland than a garden, included an array of outlying buildings, such as a gazebo, a greenhouse, and a carriage house.⁵⁹

In 1873, around the time Overlook was completed, Moline elected Charles’s father, John, who had largely retired from the family business, as its mayor.⁶⁰ Acting in this new capacity soon

5.7. Humboldt Park as realized in Jenney’s design.

From Simon, Chicago, the Garden City.



**8.1. Graceland's
chapel and
mortuary crypt in
1904.**

From *Graceland Cemetery*
(Chicago: Photographic
Print Co., 1904), courtesy
Trustees of the Graceland
Cemetery Improvement
Fund.

corporated a small chapel. The new chapel was a sweeping design departure from this now stylistically archaic structure. It also markedly contrasted with the cottagelike Graceland railroad station. With this chapel Holabird & Roche established a new architectural aesthetic for the cemetery. Brueggmann's description of the chapel as "almost primeval" is especially apt, as the firm's design took its cues from the massive stone structures of the Bostonian architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Drawing inspiration from his close friend and collaborator Frederick Law Olmsted, Richardson sought to imbue his buildings with a sense of antiquity or the primordial, relying, for instance, on rough-hewn stone construction.⁴ Richardson's John J. Glessner house in Chicago (1885) offered an inspirational source close to home.

At the outset of the project Holabird & Roche, presumably in consultation with Lathrop and Simonds, identified an undeveloped portion of Section C, southwest of Greenwood Avenue, as the best position for the new building. The chapel is comparatively far removed from the main carriage entry on Clark Street, and this may simply reflect that the Buena Avenue entrance had now become

more popular. But Simonds would later advocate that a cemetery chapel “be placed some distance within the grounds to give it greater seclusion and quietness,” and it may be that he made the same argument to Lathrop about the siting of the Graceland structure.⁵ Constructed of Waupaca granite from Wisconsin, the chapel appears to emerge from the undulating topography. The building complemented Graceland’s landscape chromatically as well, suffusing the scene with the earthy red, brown, and green tonalities of its granite walls and reddish-brown Spanish tile roof.⁶ Here, architecture and landscape merge and become continuous. One critic, reviewing the firm’s work in 1897, also discerned this fusion, commenting that the chapel had become “almost covered with climbing vines.”⁷ Simonds adorned the chapel grounds with trees and shrubs, and Tanglewood Path now gained additional prominence as the direct pedestrian link between the new building and the railway entrance at Buena Avenue. In order to enable carriage access to the chapel, Simonds projected a new drive—roughly a half cul-de-sac, oblong in shape—off of the southwest side of Greenwood Avenue. Within the chapel itself Simonds was able to indulge in a bit of landscape gardening as well. One lower section of the roof had a large skylight, and beneath it grew a “semi-circle of palms and potted plants,” gracing the chapel interior with an ethereal profusion of tropical greenery, even in the otherwise bleak winter months.⁸ (Fig. 8.2)



8.2. The chapel’s interior in 1904.

From Graceland Cemetery, courtesy Trustees of the Graceland Cemetery Improvement Fund.



**8.12. Playwright
Kenneth Sawyer
Goodman's lakeside
mausoleum (1919).**

Photograph © Kate
Corcoran; used with
permission.

rop died in 1889, his son arranged for an American elm nearly three stories tall to be uprooted from a Michigan farm, transported to Graceland, and replanted on his father's plot.²⁹

By the opening decades of the twentieth century Graceland was no longer a rural cemetery. Now its environs were urban, annexed by the city of Chicago in 1889, and the Graceland Cemetery Company itself furthered the transformation, subdividing its properties beyond the

cemetery's limits in accordance with layouts by O. C. Simonds. (Figs. 8.13 and 8.14) In 1891, for instance, the company sold a parcel of its land just north of the cemetery, marketing it as the Sheridan Drive Subdivision. It was fully developed by 1929, and today it is known as Sheridan Park. A designated historic district, Sheridan Park is comprised largely of houses and apartment hotels. In another example of the company's real estate development pursuits, Simonds prepared plans in 1914 to subdivide a parcel of land opposite the cemetery, fronting Southport Avenue. Three-story brick apartment buildings replaced the open land and remain today.

ACCOLADES

After the 1900 Exposition Universelle, Simonds's work at Graceland continued to attract praise. In 1903 it captured the attention of the New York-based horticultural writer and critic Wilhelm Miller (1869–1937), who described Graceland (and Spring Grove) as the “most perfect expression” of the “modern” or “park-like” cemetery, in the popular magazine *Country Life in America*, and he credited Simonds with making Graceland “the admiration of the world.”³⁰ Following Miller's article was one by Simonds himself, “The Planning and Administration of a Landscape Cemetery.” The pair of essays was illustrated by six photographs of Graceland. This would not be the last time Wilhelm Miller promoted Simonds and his work at the cemetery.

In 1910 Frank A. Waugh (1869–1943), a professor of landscape gardening at the Massachusetts Agricultural College (now the University of Massachusetts Amherst), called the cemetery an “American Masterpiece” in his book *The Landscape Beautiful*. That Simonds had employed what Waugh labeled the “natural style of gardening” at the cemetery was central to winning his esteem. Although he believed Simonds to be “a highly independent worker,” Waugh contended that he had “still been influenced to a considerable extent by the work of the elder Olmsted.” “Nevertheless,” he continued, “Graceland Cemetery is peculiarly his own enterprise.” Indeed, “in its present form,” Waugh writes, “he may be said to have established it,” and “there is hardly a piece of work to be found anywhere in the United States which is more directly and completely the personal product of one man's labors.” Waugh distinguished Graceland from its more conventional counterparts: