



**VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
MARCH 20, 2019 AGENDA**

SUBJECT:	TYPE:	SUBMITTED BY:
19-ADR-0001 5158 Main Street	Designation of a Historic Landmark	Devin Kamperschroer Planning Intern

REQUEST

The Village of Downers Grove is seeking Historic Landmark Designation for the Main Street Cemetery located at 5158 Main Street based on the criteria that the property has significant value as part of the historic, heritage and cultural characteristics of the community and is a source of civic pride and identity for the community.

NOTICE

The application has been filed in conformance with applicable procedural and public notice requirements.

GENERAL INFORMATION

**OWNER/
APPLICANT** Village of Downers Grove
801 Burlington Avenue
Downers Grove, IL 60515

PROPERTY INFORMATION

BUILDING DATE: Circa 1856
HISTORICAL BUILDING USE: Main Street Cemetery
EXISTING BUILDING USE: Main Street Cemetery
PROPERTY SIZE: 0.93 Acres
PIN: 09-08-305-015

ANALYSIS

SUBMITTALS

This report is based on the following documents, which are on file with the Department of Community Development:

1. Application/Petition for Public Hearing
2. Certificate of Acknowledgement Form
3. Historic Landmark Information Form
4. Project Narrative
5. Correspondence from the Downers Grove Historical Society

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Village of Downers Grove is seeking Historic Landmark Designation for the Main Street Cemetery located at 5158 Main Street under criteria 12.302.B.1 and 12.302.B.6 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The cemetery is a notable local landmark due to its location and association with the history

of Downers Grove. As one of the very few cemeteries in the country remaining in a downtown business district, the Main Street Cemetery is the final resting place for many of the Village's founding families, including the Curtiss, Blodgett and Carpenter families. Samuel Curtiss donated part of his sheep pasture for the burial ground, which served the community from 1856 until the last interment in 1939. The cemetery hosts many war veterans, abolitionists and Isrel Blackburn, a freed slave and Civil War veteran.

In 1981 the Village assumed control of the cemetery, with the Downers Grove Historical Society acting as steward. With this partnership the cemetery has seen several renovation and maintenance efforts including monument restoration, new sidewalks, a new pergola and as part of a downtown revitalization project in 2000, the Village completed the construction of a more elaborate stone wall and landscaping between the cemetery and sidewalk (i.e. the Main Street entrance).

In 2017, the Downers Grove Historical Society sought feedback from the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) about the potential to designate the cemetery on the National Register of Historic Places. It should be noted that cemeteries and graves are among those properties that ordinarily are not considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places unless they meet special requirements. Namely, the cemetery has to retain enough historic features from their period of significance or the grave of a historical figure is eligible if the person is of outstanding importance and there is no other appropriate site or building directly associated with their protective life.

Citing several of the upgrades that have occurred at the cemetery, including the Main Street entrance, the IHPA made the determination that the cumulative effects of the improvements is such that the cemetery no longer retains the historic integrity in terms of design, materials and feeling and the site would not be eligible for the National Register. The IHPA noted that the site could be considered for local landmark status through the Downers Grove Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Though several of its features are not historic, such as the landscaping and architectural features (i.e. Main Street entrance, rear fence and pergola), the Village is requesting landmark status for the site itself in addition to several historic grave markers located on the site. The site is home to 95 grave markers. The Downers Grove Historical Society identified 27 specific markers (attached) deemed appropriate for requiring a certificate of appropriateness in the event the markers are proposed for relocation or replaced with a design or a material that is not considered in-kind. Should this site be given landmark status, a certificate of appropriateness would only be required for alterations or repairs to the 27 identified grave markers as described in the following table:

	Approval Type
Removal or replacement of one of the 27 identified historic grave markers (not in kind material or not consistent with the original design)	COA - Major
Replacement of one of the 27 identified historic grave markers (in kind replacement with concrete or original material and similar design)	COA – Minor
Landscaping, lighting, fence improvements, pergola improvements, painting, Main Street entrance maintenance, sidewalk placement and maintenance, commemorative stone placement, general routine maintenance and cleaning, movement or replacement of non-historic grave markers and grave marker repair for all markers.	No COA

COMPLIANCE WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

Additional information regarding the request is outlined in the attached list of recommended historic markers and photographs. The Village would like to thank the Downers Grove Historical Society for

their assistance in preparing this application.

Landmark designations require evaluation based on Section 12.302 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, *Landmark Designation Criteria*. Staff finds the request complies with Section 12.302A and Section 12.302.B, *Landmark Designation Criteria #1 and #6* as described below.

Section 12.302.A.

The proposed landmark is either over fifty (50) years old; in whole or in part or is under fifty (50) years of age and possesses exceptional importance such as might be recognized immediately for its reflection of an extraordinary political event or architectural innovation; and

The cemetery was established in 1856. This standard is met.

Section 12.302.B

That one or more of the following conditions exist:

- 1. The property has significant value as part of the historic, heritage or cultural characteristics of the community, county, State or Nation;**

The Main Street Cemetery, primarily active from 1856 to 1939, is one of Downer's Grove's oldest cemeteries. Although several upgrades have occurred since the mid-1900s, there are still numerous grave markers that have significant value as part of the historic heritage and cultural characteristics of the community. Several founding families of the Village of Downers Grove are buried in the cemetery, including members of the Curtiss, Blodgett, and Carpenter families. Other notable individuals such as freed slave Isrel Blackburn are buried here as well. This criteria is met.

- 2. The property was owned by a person or persons of historic significance to the community, county, State or Nation;**

This criteria does not apply.

- 3. The property represents the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural period, style, type, method of construction or use of indigenous materials;**

This criteria does not apply.

- 4. The property represents notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, State or Nation;**

This criteria does not apply.

- 5. An area that has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.**

This criteria does not apply.

- 6. A source of civic pride or identity for the community.**

The cemetery is one of the few remaining in a downtown business district in the nation. The cemetery is a visible reminder of the history of the Village of Downers Grove. The cemetery is the final resting place for many of the members of the Village's founding families, mothers and fathers, babies and children, Civil War soldiers, a veteran of the War of 1812 and a former slave. It is a source of civic pride. The site is also home to numerous events and programming throughout the year including the annual Living Cemetery Event and many others as identified in the attached list. This criteria is met.

- 7. The property is included in the National Register of Historic Places.**

This criteria does not apply.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENT

Staff has not received any neighborhood comments regarding the proposal at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

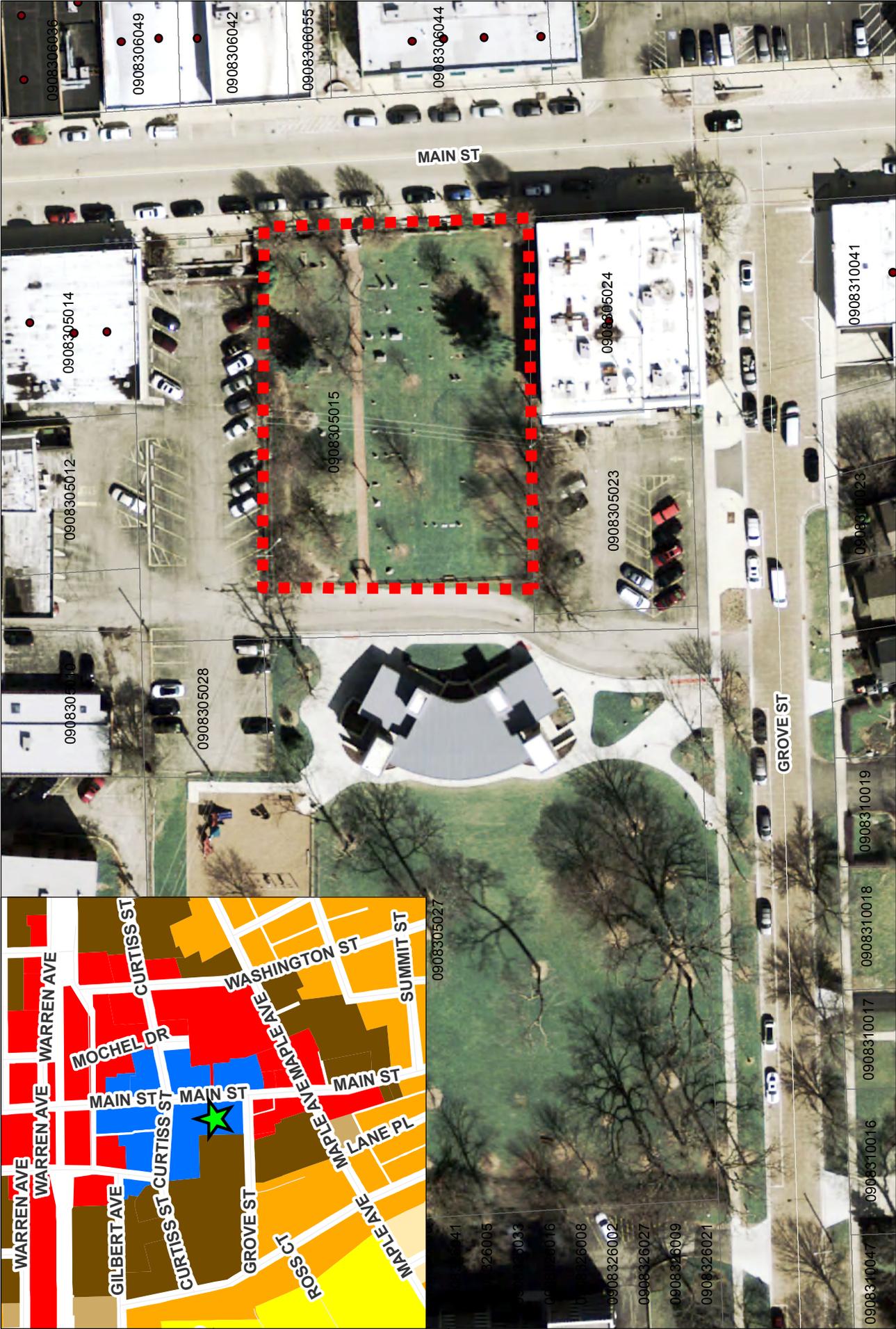
Staff finds the petition complies with the criteria in Section 12.302 for Landmark Designation. Based on the findings above, staff recommends the Architectural Design Review Board make a positive recommendation to the Village Council for landmark status of the Main Street Cemetery located at 5158 Main Street.

Staff Report Approved By:



Stan Popovich, AICP
Director of Community Development

P:\P&CD\PROJECTS\ADRB\PROJECTS\2019 Petitions\19-ADR-0001 - Main Street Cemetery\Staff Report 19-ADR-0001 - Main Street Cemetery.doc



Main Street Cemetery - 5158 Main St - Location Map



Main St

1

2 3

4 5

6

7

15

8 9

16

10 11

Lamp Post

17

18

19

14

13

12

19

Cellar Door

20

28

Emmett's Brewing

25

21

Lamp Post

26

24 22 23

21

26

21

27



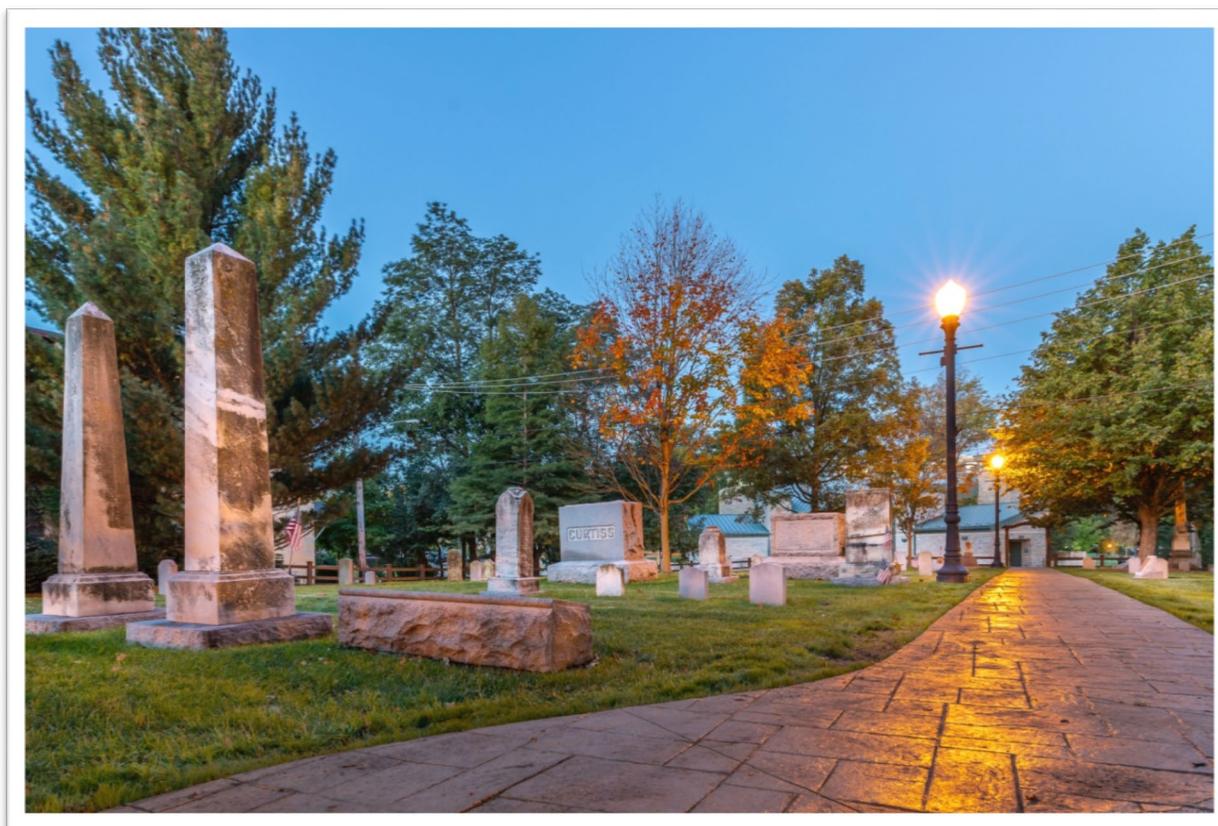
North

27

Fishel Park

Updated 4/1/2019

**Downers Grove
Main Street Cemetery Monuments
Proposed for Landmark Status**



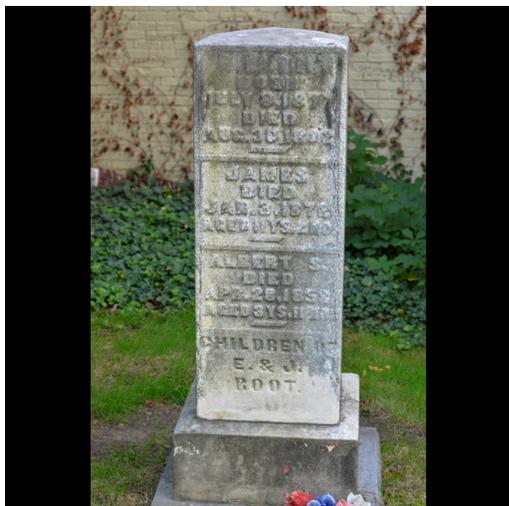
Photography courtesy of Slav Polinski of Slav Polinski Homes

The Downers Grove Historical Society recommends the following monuments in the Downers Grove Main Street Cemetery be included in the landmark application due to their overall contribution to the historic character of the cemetery.

Entire inventory of monuments at www.mainstreetcemetery.com

List of Monuments

(1) Martin Root and Family	Page 3
(2) Sarah Wells	Page 3
(3) Gracie Wells	Page 4
(4) John S. Cotes	Page 4
(5) Mary R Puffer	Page 5
(6) Flora Morgan	Page 5
(7) Henry Carpenter	Page 5
(8) Samuel Curtiss	Page 6
(9) Mary Hatch Curtiss	Page 7
(10 - 14) Blodgett Family (5 stones)	Page 7
(15) Wheeler Family Monument	Page 9
(16) Alexander French Foster	Page 9
(17) Charles Curtiss	Page 10
(18) Walter Sucher/Michael Sucher	Page 10
(19) Kate Dixon Oldfield/Alice Kate Oldfield	Page 11
(20) Dr. George S. Otis	Page 11
(21 - 24) William Bradford Pye Family (4 stones)	Page 12
(25) Samuel T. Richards	Page 13
(26) Walter Blanchard	Page 14
(27) Isrel L. Blackburn	Page 14
(28) Alvin Porter	Page 15



(Front of (1))

(1) Martin Root and Family

Born: 1784
Died: 1865

Biography



(Back of (1))

Martin Root was born in Massachusetts in 1784. He moved to Benson, Vermont where he met Abigail. They married in 1814. By 1821 they had six children, Emily, Maria, James, Amos, and twins Elijah and Elisha. By 1843, the family decided to move west to Lisle where land was still available for a good price. Buried here in the Main Street Cemetery along with Martin are his wife Abigail Stearns Root, son Amos and three grandchildren, Albert, James, and Helen. The grandchildren were the children of Elijah.



(2) Sarah Wells

Born: 1811
Died: October 20, 1883

Biography

Sara Wells was the mother of John Manning Wells. In 1883 she passed away at the age of 72. She died just a few days after her granddaughter Gracie who is also buried near her in the Main Street Cemetery.



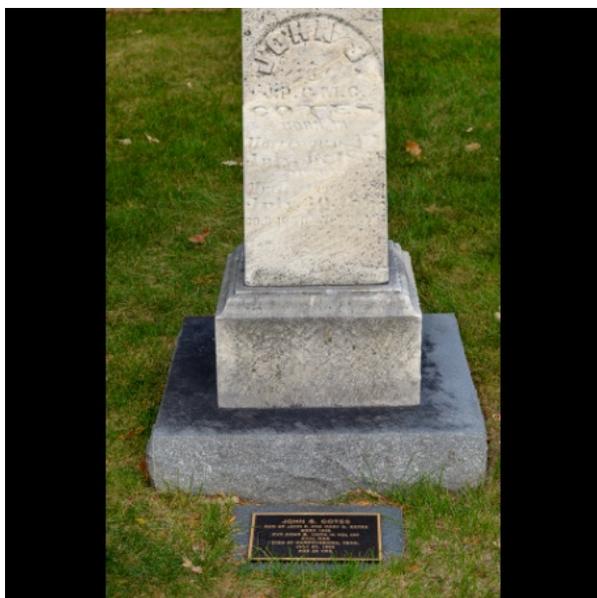
(3) Gracie Wells

Born: 1877

Died: January 5, 1883

Biography

Gracie Wells was the daughter of Arvilla Bond and John Manning Wells. Gracie passed away in 1883 at the tender young age of age of 5. In her memory, her father worked with the local officials to see that a cabin for the Girl Scouts was erected in the Maple Grove Forest Preserve just west of downtown Downers Grove. It was known as the Daddy Wells cabin. The cabin is no longer in existence.



(4) John S. Cotes

Born: 1836

Died: 1857

Biography

John S Cotes was the son of John P and Mary Chapin Cotes. John served in Company B, Illinois 105th Infantry. He died while in service to his county at Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 1863.



(5) Mary R. Puffer

Born: 1838

Died: 1864

Biography

Mary Cotes Puffer was the daughter of John P and Mary Chapin Cotes. She died just a few months after her brother in 1864. Mary married Henry Puffer, Jr. Mary is buried with her parents, while her husband who remarried is buried elsewhere in the cemetery with his parents and second wife.



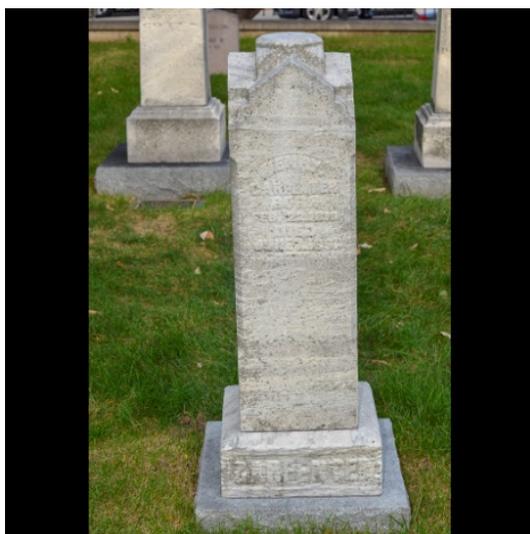
(6) Flora Morgan

Born: 1864

Died: 1880

Biography

Flora A. Morgan died at the young age of 16. She is the first of the family to be buried in the family plot in the Main Street Cemetery. She was the daughter of Benjamin and Julia Morgan.



(7) Henry Carpenter

Born: 1810

Died: 1891

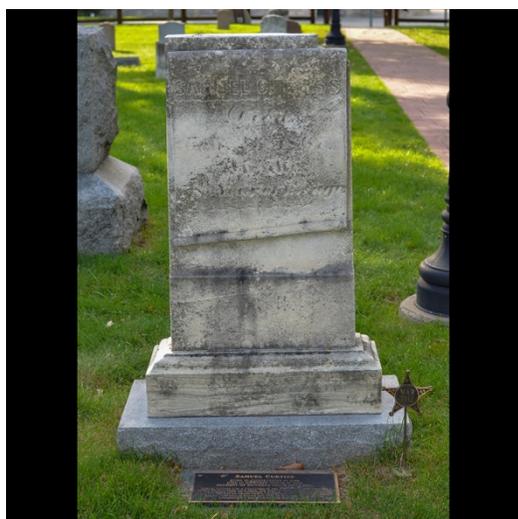
Family

[Martha Blanchard Carpenter](#)

Biography

Henry and Martha Blanchard Carpenter were from New York where they married in 1832. Henry worked as a saddler and harness maker but after letters from Walter Blanchard, brother of Martha, who had moved

to Illinois in 1836, he decided to come west and farm. Walter sold him a piece of his land and the family moved here in 1839 when there were only 6 families in the settlement. Henry did not like farming so he decided to open a general store as there was none here. After obtaining a load of goods for \$600.00 from Chicago brought in by Elisha Root the store opened in 1845. Located on the trail a little west of the Blodgetts the store soon became a meeting place for those who lived here. No one had much money so Henry gave credit and joked "That anyone who could tie his own shoes could have credit in his store." Henry shared the same dislike for slavery as the Blodgetts. Martha and Henry had 3 children, 2 boys and one girl. One son died at the age of 5 in 1848 and an accident in 1857 took the life of their son Walter. Not having a real cemetery in the village when someone died they were just buried on family land. So, Henry talked his friend Samuel Curtiss into selling part of his cow pasture near the Carpenter home to be used for a cemetery. In 1856 the Main Street Cemetery was established as the burial place for the village and Henry became the President of the Burying Ground Association. The death of Walter, son of Henry, was a hard blow for the family so Henry decided to sell the store and he worked as a shoemaker. He also sold part of his land to the Methodist Church for a site for their building. Keeping up with local affairs he signed the Incorporation Papers in 1873, supported the coming of the railroad through town and served as postmaster and village trustee. Henry and Martha saw their daughter marry Eugene Farrar in 1864. He was the grandson of the Stanleys and first pioneer child born in Downers Grove. Martha lived to see her 6 grandchildren before she died in 1882 at the age of 69 and Henry died nine years later when he was 81 years old.



(8) Samuel Curtiss

Born: 1789

Died: 1867

Biography

Samuel and Mary Hatch Curtiss began their life together in 1813 in Royalton, Vermont. Samuel was born 1789, the year George Washington became our first President and Mary was born 4 years later. Sam volunteered during the War of 1812. By 1830 they had a family of 5 sons and like many others they wanted to provide a better future for them. So, with \$1000 they came to Illinois in 1836 and purchased part of the Israel Blodgett claim in Downers Grove, some 400 acres. The land here was a wild frontier and some Native Americans were still in the area. Having land in the center of the village Samuel established a tavern, stable, and early post office. Along with Israel Blodgett he improved the trail through town that is now Maple Avenue including planting many Maple trees along the roadway. As others, here he opposed slavery and helped with the activities of the Underground Railroad. Some of the land he owned became the Main Street Cemetery in 1856 and another piece was sold to the Baptist Church. When former slave Isrel Blackburn came to town after the Civil War, Samuel gave him land to farm. By 1864 Samuel sold a portion of his land for the first subdivision here.

Samuel was a very generous man and tried to use his money for the betterment of the community. He died a few years after the Civil War at the age of 78. Mary died in 1883.



(9) Mary Hatch Curtiss

Born: 1793

Died: February 23, 1883

Biography

Mary Hatch was born in Vermont and married her husband Samuel Curtiss in 1813. In 1836 she helped move their family to Downers Grove when the land here was still a wild frontier. Mary lived here almost 50 years before she died in 1883.

(10-13) Blodgett Corner Markers



(Left to right)

(10) Blodgett northeast corner marker

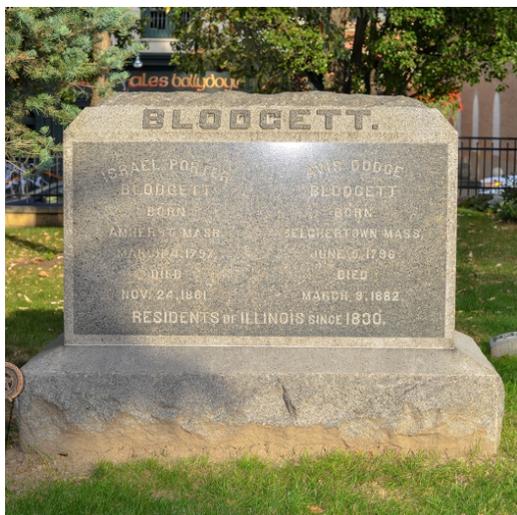
(11) Blodgett southeast corner marker

(12) Blodgett southwest corner marker

(13) Blodgett northwest corner marker

Information

These four small, similar stones block off the Blodgett section of the cemetery.



(14) Blodgett Family Monument

Biography

Israel and Avis Blodgett were married in Amherst Massachusetts in 1820. Israel was born the day John Adams was inaugurated as the second President of the United States, March 4, 1797. He was a machinist and blacksmith like his father and Avis was the daughter of a farmer. As they began their family, Israel felt moving west would be best. So, in 1830 Israel joined a group that set out to find land in Illinois leaving Avis in Massachusetts with several small children. By 1832 he had found land near Naperville and sent for the family. Arriving the year of the Black Hawk War, the Blodgett's joined other pioneer families who traveled to Ft. Dearborn in Chicago for safety. Israel stayed behind and served as a Corporal in the company led by Captain Naper to defend against Black Hawk if he arrived. Soon the threat was over and the families returned. By 1836 the family made another move, this time to the settlement of Downers Grove where Israel bought about 500 acres of land. They built a cabin on an Indian Trail now called Maple Avenue and raised their family of 7 boys and one girl. Israel farmed and operated a blacksmith shop while Avis kept house and saw to the education of her children. She believed it was important for them to have a good education and she taught her daughter Mary so she could also teach. With the help of neighbor Sam Curtiss, they improved Maple Avenue and planted trees along the road. By 1846 they were able to build a second home that was much bigger than the one room cabin they lived in for 10 years. Israel and Avis were against slavery and their home would become a stop on the secret underground railroad network in DuPage County. Often the lantern in their window signaled their house was a safe place for runaway slaves to find food, clothes and transportation to Chicago on their way to Canada. The family was saddened at the death of son Daniel in 1849 and then daughter Mary in 1856. Six of their sons reached adulthood and become valued citizens of the state. Three fought in the Civil War, one became a judge another a lawyer and one was Mayor of Waukegan, Illinois. Their youngest son Charles remained on the family land here and ran the farm when his father died in 1861. Avis lived to be 86 and died in 1882. The Blodgett land would eventually pass to Will, the son of Charles, who lived in Downers Grove until his death in 1933.



(15) Wheeler Family Monument

Allen and Elizabeth Wheeler were early settlers of Downers Grove. Of their ten children, three are buried in the Main Street Cemetery. Two daughters, Nora (age 11) and Myrtle (age 3), died of Scarlet Fever in 1880. Their son Schuyler died in 1890 at the age of 23 and was the final member of the Wheeler family buried in the cemetery.



(16) Alexander French Foster

Born: 1815
Died: 1903

Biography

Alexander French Foster married his wife Nancy Olivia Adams in 1839. After several moves, the family finally settled on a house on Maple Avenue. Alexander worked as a carpenter often spending much time in Chicago while Nancy took care of the family that now numbered 8 children. Their lives, like many in Downers Grove, were touched by the Civil War. Even though Alexander was in his 40's, he enlisted in Company B of the 105th Illinois Infantry. Following the example of his father and father-in-law, he wanted to serve his country. His service lasted about a year as he was injured, sick with typhoid, and spent some time in Andersonville Prison before being discharged in 1863. His life after discharge was full of illness, but he resumed his trade life as a carpenter, helping to build the Methodist Church on Maple Avenue. He was a member of the Grand Army of the Republic Naper Post and live to the age of 88.



(17) Charles Curtiss

Born: 1828

Died: 1897

Biography

Charles came to Downers Grove in 1836 with his family and parents Samuel and Mary Curtiss. In the 1850's he followed the gold rush to California with his brother Henry but returned no richer. He was a Village Trustee in 1873 and served in the Illinois General Assembly in 1887-1888. By 1892 he was president of the Farmers and Merchant Bank (located at 5135 Main Street) and was publisher of the Downers Grove Reporter by 1895. He served three terms as village president, for a total of 6 years. It is said Charles installed the first street sign in Downers Grove near his home at the corner of Curtiss and Washington Streets.

He is buried with his wife Laura Thatcher Curtiss whom he married in 1856. Her parents, Harriet and Eldred Thatcher, are also buried in the separate section of the cemetery.



(18) Walter Sucher

Born: 1854

Died: 1863

Michael Sucher

Born: 1843

Died: 1844

Biography

Walter and Michael are two of three young children of Michael Sucher and Catherine Wolf buried in this cemetery. Though they died nearly 20 years apart they share a headstone.

Their parents were born in Alsace, France. They immigrated to America and came to Downers Grove in the early 1840s. Michael bought 200 acres in the Downers Grove area where they raised 11 children. In addition to farming, Michael was also the postmaster and commissioner of highways for Downers Grove Township. Michael also was a horse breeder. In 1882 Michael and Catherine sold their land in Downers Grove and moved to Ogden, Iowa.



(19) Kate Dixon Oldfield

Born: March 11, 1840
Died: September 22, 1865

Alice Kate Oldfield

Born: 1862
Died: August 26, 1865

Biography

Kate Dixon Oldfield and daughter Alice Kate Oldfield share this same headstone as they died about one month apart from each other. Kate's inscription is on the east side of the stone and daughter Alice Kate's inscription is on the west side. Kate's husband Richard, who died two decades later, is buried next to them.

Richard Oldfield came to Downers Grove in 1847. As a young man he farmed and was in the butchering business. It was said he lost an arm when he was accidentally shot as a result of two men fighting over a gun. He also served as a tax collector for the township. After the death of his wife he married Emma Ambrose. They lived in Downers Grove until Richard died of mysterious causes in 1884. An inquest into his passing was held with leading citizens of Downers Grove serving on the jury. His cause of death was ruled to be congestion of the brain.



20) Dr. George S Otis

Born: 1844
Died: October 22, 1881

Biography

Dr. George S. Otis was born in Wisconsin in 1846. He graduated from the Boston Veterinary College about 1861 and came to Chicago about 1867 to open his practice. He was renowned for his expertise in all the diseases and injuries of horses. His first office was located on 12th Street in Chicago and by 1874 he had moved his home to Downers Grove. The Burlington train, now

Burlington Northern, made it practical to work in the city and live in the western suburbs, a practice that continues to this day. In November 1875, Dr. Otis joined the Chicago Veterinary College on Wabash avenue in Chicago. He worked there only for 6 year as he died at the young age of 35 from heart disease. Otis Avenue in Downers Grove is named in his honor. Dr. Otis was married to Ellen Goeway from New York. They had one son, Robert Roy Otis. After the death of their husband and father, the family moved to Minnesota to live with Ellen's mother.



(21 - 24)

(21) Pye Family Monument

(22) William Bradford Pye

Born: 1843
Died: 1904

(23) Emily Atwood Pye (1st wife)

Born: 1847
Died: 1869

(24) Mary Jane Thomas Pye (2nd wife)

Born: 1849
Died: 1888

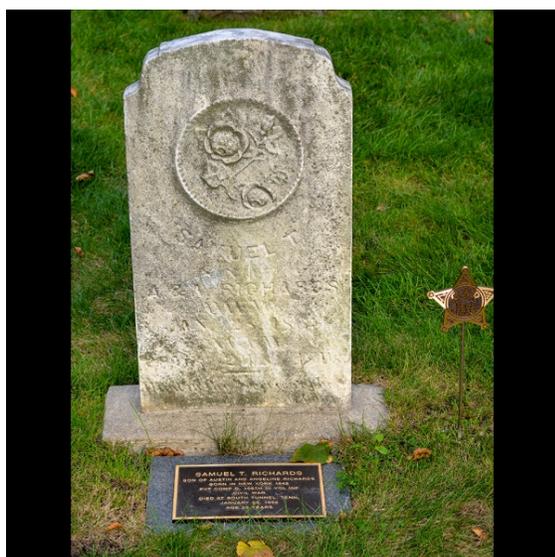
Biography

William Pye and his family are honored with an obelisk style monument that is the tallest monument in the Main Street Cemetery. William is buried between his two wives near the monument. Louisa Thomas, the sister of his second wife, is also buried nearby.

William was born in England in 1843 and came to America when he was 14 years old around 1857. Several other members of his family lived in area, so he probably lived with them in his childhood.

When William was 23, he married his first wife Emily Atwood. Her family was also from England. They were only married for 3 years until she died at the age of 22. There is no record of children from this marriage.

William's second wife was Mary Jane (Jenny) Thomas. Jenny was 21 years old when they wed in 1870. William and Jenny probably lived near her parents in Chicago. They had three children Florence, John, and William. Jenny died at the young at the age 39. In 1900, Jenny's sister Louisa Thomas came to live with them to assist with raising the children, she was last to be buried in the Pye plot in 1933.



(25) Samuel T. Richards

Born: 1842

Died: January 26, 1863

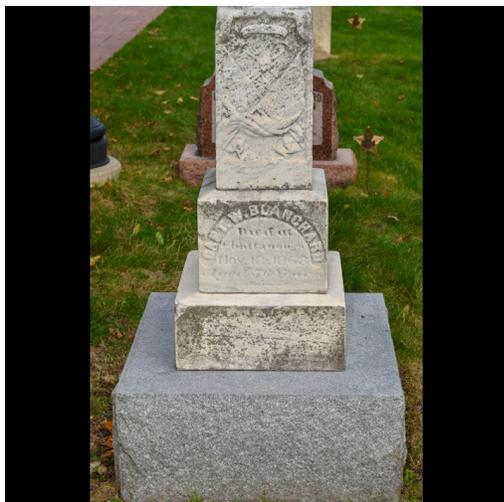
Biography

Samuel Richards was the oldest son of Austin and Angeline Trusdell Richards. When he was 20, Samuel decided to enlist in the Union Army. On September 2, 1862 he enlisted in Company D of the 105th Illinois Infantry. Fellow Downers Grove residents John Cotes and Alexander Foster joined company B. Only Alexander survived the war. John

Cotes died after the battle of Murfreesboro, Tennessee on July 25, 1863 and Samuel Richards died on January 28, 1863 in Tunnel, Tennessee.

Note: the plaque at the base of the stone has the incorrect year of death.

Four members of the Richards family are buried in the Main Street Cemetery. In addition to Samuel, his parents and one of his sisters are buried here. Samuel's parents, Austin and Angeline, came to Downers Grove in 1855 from New York. Of their 5 children only 3 were living when they arrived. The Richards bought a farm on the north side of the village. Austin being a trustee of the Main Street Cemetery had his son Samuel brought back to be buried here. The loss of their son in the Civil War may have been too much for Angeline as she died 1864. After her death Austin sold the farm and moved to a home on Maple and remarried. He was interested in village affairs and signed the Incorporation Papers of 1873. Austin and his second wife Elizabeth Cole had 3 children. In 1885 their daughter Irene died of typhoid fever. She was only 16 and her death was very sudden. She was buried next to her brother Samuel who died in the Civil War, a brother she never knew. Austin died in 1903 and is buried with his family.



(26) Walter Blanchard

Born: 1807

Died: November 18, 1863

Biography

Walter Blanchard was born in New Hampshire in 1807, arrived in Downers Grove in 1836, just 4 years after Pierce Downer. Here he raised a family of 5 children while he practiced law and eventually served as a DuPage County judge for 7 years. Interested in politics he was present at the Wigwam in Chicago when Lincoln was nominated for President in 1860. As the Civil War approached, Walter could not ignore the call to help. He organized a company of the 13th Illinois Infantry, even enlisting himself at the age of 54. His sons William and Franklin also joined. As Captain of this company he fought alongside his men and sadly he was wounded on November 27, 1863 at Ringgold Gap. His leg wound caused a great loss of blood and the best efforts of the doctors could not save his life. His body was escorted back to Downers Grove for burial. His service and sacrifice for DuPage County was remembered for years after his death. Major Edward Blodgett, son of Israel Blodgett, remembered the Captain as "a man like no other and whose memory may be an inspiring force for all as the years go by."



(27) Isrel L Blackburn

Born: May 3, 1818

Died: March 15, 1903

Biography

Sergeant Isrel L. Blackburn was born into slavery on May 3, 1818. For the first 48 years of his life he was the property of John Bowman of Mercer County Kentucky. His life changed in 1864 when his owner sold him to the Union Army at Camp Nelson, Kentucky. Isrel became a member of Company C of the 124th Colored Infantry, just one of the 175 colored regiments formed during the Civil War. When the War was over Blackburn made his way north and found a new home here. He was given a piece of land owned by Samuel Curtiss to farm and raise his family of 5 children. Proud of his new home he was one of the signers of the Incorporation Papers in 1873 and a member of the Naper Post of the Grand Army of the Republic that held meetings in Downers Grove. Every Decoration Day,

now called Memorial Day, he could be seen walking along in the cemetery to honor the veterans buried here. Blackburn who was called Uncle Larry by many died in 1902 at the age of 90.

(28) Alvin R. Porter



Born: January 12, 1858
Died: November 28, 1858

Biography

Alvin was the son of Avah and Abigail Andrews Porter. His parents moved to York Township having come from the east. Upon his marriage to Abigail, they purchase 100 acres of land in Downers Grove township near Cass. Baby Alvin was born a short time later and died when he was less than a year old. He is the only member of the family to be buried in Main Street Cemetery.