

Outreach WRAP Initiative: Walk, Reflection and Prayer

Exploring Rosehill Cemetery (5800 Ravenswood Avenue)

Think of these Lenten WRAPs as mini pilgrimages: “a journey, often into an unknown or foreign place, where a person goes in search of new or expanded meaning about their self, others, nature, or a higher good...”

Timing/distance: A pilgrimage to Rosehill Cemetery from Atonement would be a half-hour’s walk; a walk around Rosehill may take an hour (or more if you want to do some exploring on your own). Total distance, from Atonement, around Rosehill and back, would be perhaps 5 miles or two and one-half hours’ (brisk) walk. If you drive there, parking is available inside the gates (turn left) alongside the administrative offices. Their map is attached with much more detail than provided here.

This guide is designed for families and some of its **sites that may be of especial interest to kids are in bold**. This walk provides an opportunity to explore the ways people think about mortality and immortality in the monuments they use to mark their lives on earth. It shows us how other faith traditions distinguish themselves in death. Rosehill is a less exclusive site than the better-known Graceland, but it still offers more than a bit of Chicago history. The route suggested here will identify some of the sites that may be of interest but be aware that few of the 25 miles of internal roads are named within Rosehill’s 350 acres (Chicago’s largest non-sectarian cemetery) and it is easy to lose your bearings.

Background: There are several northside cemeteries that pre-date the Civil War and the Chicago Fire, all established in the mid-19th century. Cemeteries generally cater to the religious affiliations and/or origins of their clients, which explains the smaller, German Protestant Wunder’s Cemetery just south of Graceland and the adjacent Jewish cemetery, both established in 1851. To relocate 2,000 graves from the city’s first burial site in what is today Lincoln Park, Rosehill was created in 1859, and Graceland – a private cemetery – in 1860. These sites were all north of the city limits at mid-century, surrounded by farms, when they served as park-like refuges from the crowded city to the south. The incorporation of Edgewater into Chicago (and building Church of the Atonement) would not happen until 1889.

The rise on which the cemetery is located was named after a farmer, Hiram Roe, (sometimes identified as a tavern keeper) who sold his land to the city in 1859, but not until it was promised that the cemetery be named in his honor. Legend has it

that a city clerk's mistake (or a map maker's error) was responsible for its current name: Rosehill. If you approach the entrance from Ashland & Clark, on West Rosehill Drive, you will see the broad, ceremonial boulevard that was designed as its entrance. Just after you pass under the Metra tracks, look on the right, for the stairs (now boarded up) built to convey visitors (and coffins) arriving by rail in earlier days.

One result of its early date of creation is that these 350 acres were frozen in time and you would not be mistaken to think of yourself as walking on ecologically sacred soil. Spared from development that changed the land on the north side of Chicago from celery farms to concrete roadways, Rosehill is an island that has been relatively untouched since the days when Clark Street and Ridge Avenue were native American trails. The towering trees are testament, probably among Chicago's oldest trees; ecologists will tread reverently on this land.

The Rosehill entrance gate was designed by William J. Boyington in 1869; he designed another Chicago landmark from the same Joliet limestone that famously survived the Chicago fire. It will not take much imagination to guess which one.

Burial areas within the cemetery are identified either with alphabetic letters (A-W) or numbers (1-29, 100-122), presumably designating three phases of planning that may also correspond to a rough chronology of internment in those areas. The oldest (A) is largely dedicated to Civil War casualties and it will be the last on our itinerary. Another determinant to where people are placed in this non-sectarian cemetery, has to do with who or what they were in this world: gravesites of like-minded folk are frequently clustered together. This means clusters based on religion: the few Catholics (more frequently found in Catholic cemeteries) will be together – usually easily recognizable as the graves with crosses. Jewish graves will be together; Orthodox will be in clusters. From other groupings of graves the ethnic and national composition of Chicago can be read: you will find clustered together folks of Polish, German, Italian, Russian, Swedish, Chinese, Japanese, etc., heritage, most recently, Vietnamese. There is even a section for stillborn babies. Some of these religious and ethnic groupings will be pointed out on this walk itinerary; this is a walk that reminds us of our historical roots in this city, but it also reminds of the hard-wired affinities we struggle against to live as brothers and sisters in urban America.

TOUR: Directly across from the parking lot is the final resting place of Charles Hull, whose Halstead Street house was leased to Jane Addams – the beginning of “Hull House” that, for forty years served the needs of new immigrants in Chicago.

A note to kids: If you do not make much noise during your walk you are likely to see some of the 12-15 deer that live in Rosehill and can be seen grazing most days; to the most observant will go the reward of seeing several coyotes that also call Rosehill home.

Start walking north on the road that leads to the parking lot; directly opposite the parking, on your left (section F) is the grave of Frances E. Willard, founder of the WCTU (Women’s Christian Temperance Union), and in the circle just west is the Volunteer Firefighter Monument. At the northern end of section F lies Augustus Garrett who served as Chicago’s mayor in the 1840s and founded Northwestern’s Garrett Biblical Institute. **Kids need to find a railway car carved in limestone** nearby (section 2) commemorating the man who designed the first railway car.

In section 91, at the NE corner of Rosehill, is the tallest obelisk in Illinois (marking one of 12 former mayors found there). If you look back across the cemetery, you will see an impressive number of other obelisks. Why obelisks? (Or why *tekhenus*? – that is the name given by the Egyptians, who first made them; we use the Greek word for a *tekhenu*, obelisk). **Older kids will know** the name of the highest in the world and a national monument in Washington DC.

The original obelisks had writing on their sides (hieroglyphics) and may be the oldest known funerary marker of mankind. What does their continued use in the 19th and 20th centuries connote? Originally it was a symbol of a sun ray (homage to the sun god Ra), as one authority explains it, “the pointed pillar of the obelisk symbolizes the journey of the spirit from the vibrations of the material “earthly” world to the subtle energies of the etheric field.” Has this evolved to be a secular symbol of a quest for eternal life?

The Washington Monument in D.C. was built in 1848; “Long” John Wentworth’s obelisk, here, was constructed forty years later to memorialize another somewhat larger than life politician, the Chicago mayor and publisher who was probably instrumental in the purchase of Hiram Roe’s farm to create this cemetery (his first term ran 1857-1858). There are at least 12 other mayors of the city interred at Rosehill.

Turn west on the road between sections 1 and 91; we will follow this road as it bends slightly southwest until we reach the Gothic and Romanesque style Horatio May Chapel. Standing in front of the chapel, facing the lake, you will see Calvin Coolidge's VP, Charles Dawes' mausoleum in section 102, to your left.

Now, as you face the Chapel, follow the road on your left that goes northwest, between sections 15 and 17. On your left will be Robert Scott (of Carson, Pirie, Scott) and at the next crossroads, in section 14 on your right, is the controversial figure, Avery Brundage, the man who was President of the International Olympic Committee between 1932 and 1972 and has since been defamed for his racism, sexism and anti-Semitism.

Continue west to the next to the last road and turn left (south). On your right, across the fence, is the West Ridge Nature Preserve, established in 2015 (a 20-acre CPD tract that was, formerly part of Rosehill (entrance on Western). Deer sometimes appear in the Nature Preserve, presumably the high hurdlers from Rosehill.

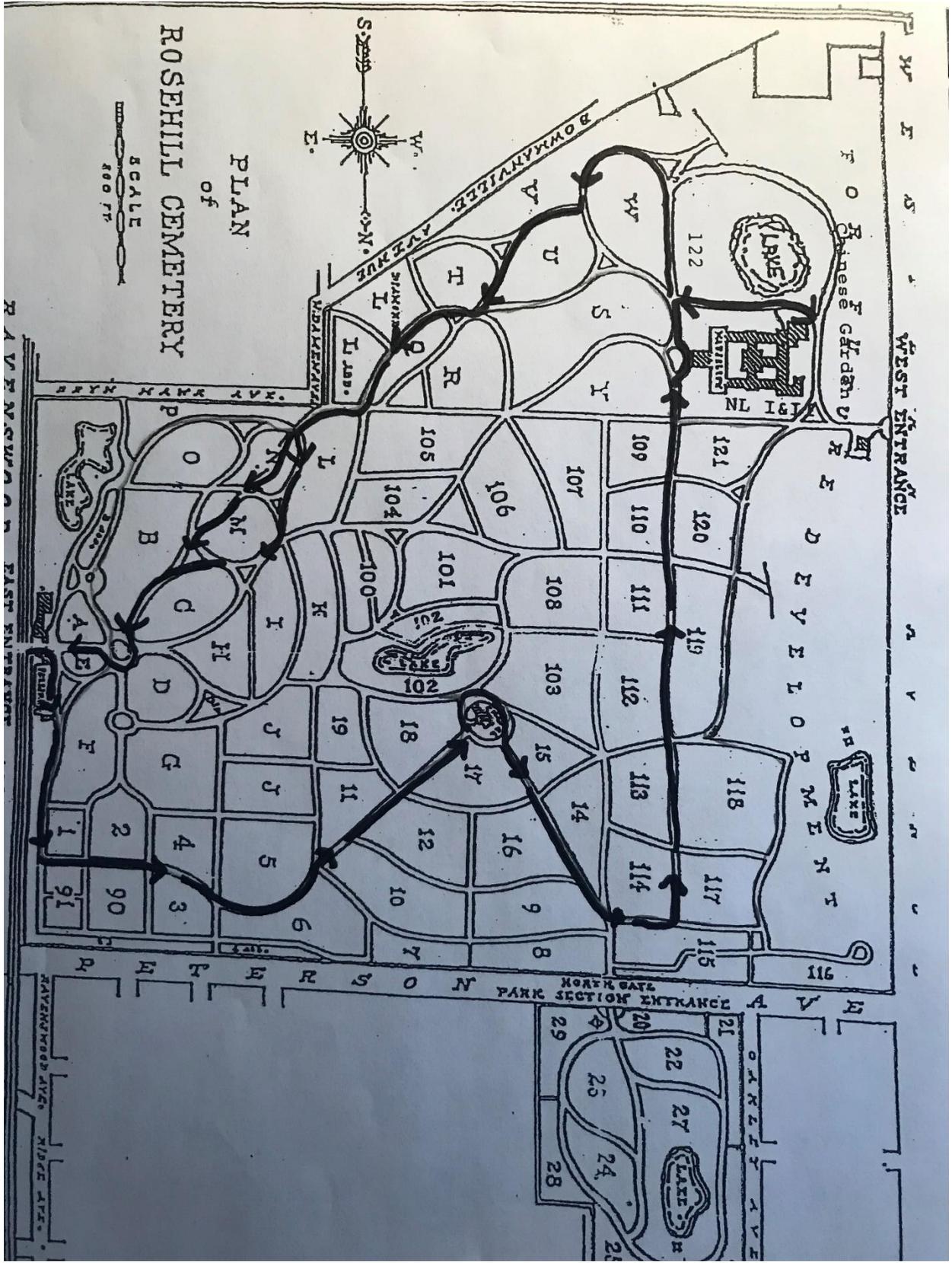
The massive building you will come to on your right is Rosehill Mausoleum, the largest in Chicago, and final resting place for Governor Ogilvie, and the founders of Montgomery Ward and of Sears, as well as Marshall Field president, John G. Shedd, and many, many others. The interior is mainly marble, with family rooms, bronze gates, and several Tiffany windows. We might well wonder who is enjoying the opulence of their afterlife and views from the Tiffany windows, but the popularity of free-standing family mausoleums, many of which we have passed on our walk, seems to be as compelling as the obelisks described above. In the words of the mausoleum internet sales page, they can be thought of as "a contribution to your lasting legacy." It is interesting to see the dominant Greco-Roman architectural style of these monuments, not unlike the obelisks, reckoning back to a moment that (white) society could be comforted in a symbol or style that was the beginning of (their) time. The price of eternity, in the form of a family mausoleum at Rosehill, ranges between \$50,000 and \$125,000.

Immediately south of the Rosehill Mausoleum entrance is a cluster of Jewish graves, some of which bear poignant messages about the holocaust, and following around the south side of the Mausoleum is a garden dedicated to Japanese and, adjacent, Chinese graves. Behind the Mausoleum are more recent, South and East Asian burials.

Continuing south on the road fronting the Mausoleum you will pass a City tree dump and chipping facility on your right before the road curves east. Follow the roads that lead down the eastern side of the cemetery. If you want to increase your walk, taking a right whenever possible and you will skirt the wall (the other side is Bowmanville Ave). Whether you take the long way or cut through sections N and M (as suggested on the attached map) you will see a pond in the east corner of the cemetery, and from there you will be headed north, back to the main gate. Just before section N, **look for two greyhounds** (one in bad shape) guarding a gravesite. As you head east, **kids might be interested in finding Levi Day Boone**, [section N] Chicago's mayor in 1835-36 when the city was begun and a grandnephew of Daniel Boone. And passing through section N there is a sculpture of sculptor, Leonard Volk, who created Lincoln's well-known bust at the State Capital in Springfield (and several monuments in Rosehill). If you have not yet seen any deer (unlikely), you will find a stone stag on the left in section M, and a bit further at the intersection of M and C is an effigy of a mother and child, beautifully conserved under glass.

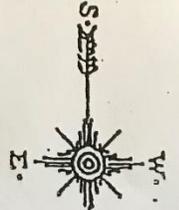
Just before you arrive back at the administrative offices is the resting place of 350 of Chicago's Civil War dead, including some from the Illinois Eighth Calvary, famed for firing the first shots at Gettysburg. The Rosehill Civil War Museum is part of the administration complex, directly across from the Civil War Memorial area, and a map showing 30 of the most notable Civil War grave at Rosehill is available at the administrative offices. The soldiers and sailor's monument, "Our Heros," stands at the center of the Civil War section, designed by the Mr. Volk you met back in section N.

Now, to share your walk: send any photos that we can circulate and with them please add a phrase or two of moment(s) during your walk when you felt God's presence or saw signs of his work. Armchair anthropologists may want to reflect on what cemeteries tell us about ourselves and our society; in what ways is Graceland a reflection of our values?



PLAN
of
ROSEHILL CEMETERY

SCALE
200 FT



EAST ENTRANCE

WEST ENTRANCE

Chinese Garden

LAKE

LAB.

DEVELOPMENT

LAKE

PARK SECTION ENTRANCE AVE

NORTH GATE

HAYWARD AVE

PETERSON PARK

BOMKAVILLE AVENUE

SINKING STONE

LAKE

LAKE

LAKE

OAKLEY AVE

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