

A photograph of a woman in a long, light-colored dress standing on a grassy lawn, looking towards a large tree and a building in the background. The scene is set outdoors with a clear blue sky and a paved path leading towards the building. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

*From Strawberry Hill  
to Crown Hill:*

**Rich past,  
progressive present,  
enduring future**





## Dear Friends of Crown Hill,

The Crown Hill Heritage Foundation's mission is to preserve and celebrate the architectural, cultural, and natural heritage of the city's oldest urban green space. We thank you for supporting Crown Hill's critical restoration and preservation projects. Now that we have embarked on the master plan known as **Tomorrow's Crown Hill**, we hope you will join with us as we institute a strategic approach to measuring and meeting the needs of our enduring community asset.

Crown Hill is more than a cemetery. It is Indianapolis' Central Park. It is a place of remembrance and reflection for the families and friends of those who have gone before us. It welcomes runners and cyclists, historians and families, frequent visitors and those who are new to its more than 555 acres of natural and historic treasures.

In these pages, we offer you a fresh look at how Crown Hill came to be the place we love, and how its initial mission has shaped everything we do today. It shows you exactly what **Tomorrow's Crown Hill** seeks to protect and preserve.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith O. Norwalk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Keith O. Norwalk  
President and CEO

# Before Crown Hill Cemetery



An engraving of Alexander Ralston's official 1821 Indianapolis civic plan of the Mile Square appears on his memorial at Crown Hill.

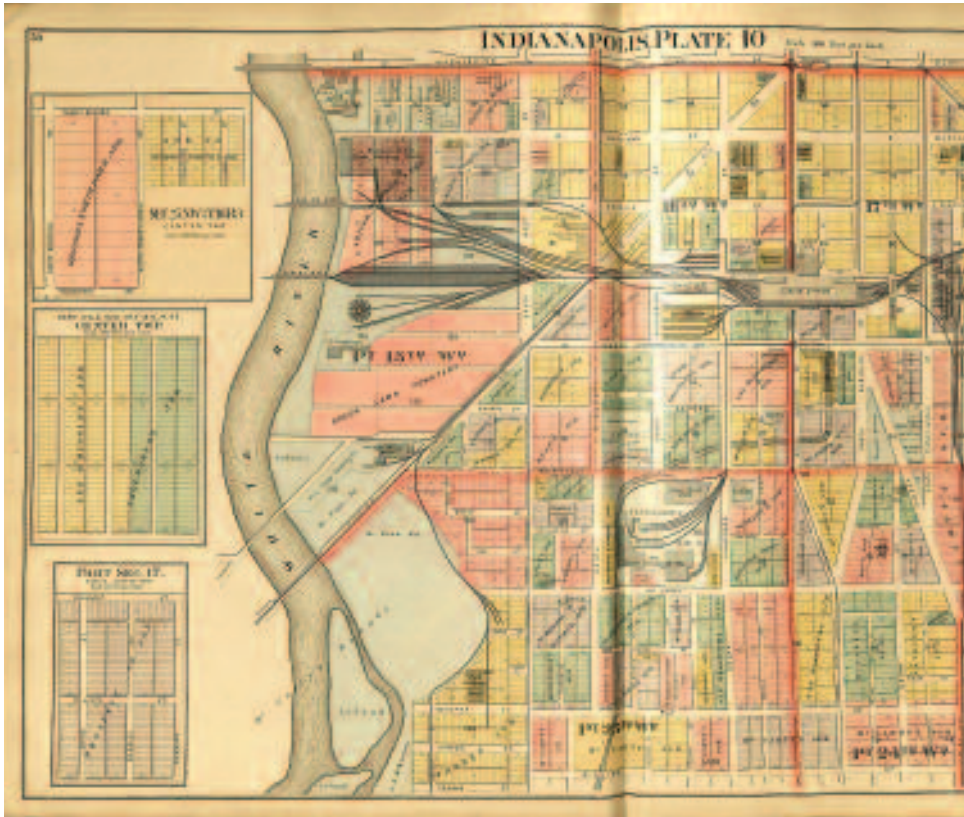
Cities often outgrow their resources. The first Indianapolis civic plan covered one square mile, with 101 plats for residential, commercial, and civic development. Along with a courthouse and city market, the plan included City Cemetery on five acres overlooking a marsh near the White River. When local merchant Daniel Shaefer died of malaria, he became City Cemetery's first interment.

City Cemetery filled up. Nearby, Union Cemetery emerged in 1834, and more than doubled in size in 1852. In 1860, Greenlawn Cemetery opened near the White River. Two years later, federally purchased land enlarged Greenlawn to accommodate Confederate prisoners who died in Indianapolis hospitals. Eventually, all three cemetery grounds merged as Greenlawn Cemetery.

Civil War dead crowded Greenlawn's 25 acres, raising civic concern about available burial space. In August 1863, Hugh McCulloch, a Fort Wayne native who later became U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, visited Indianapolis on business. In a conversation with Indianapolis financier James M. Ray, McCulloch spoke highly of a new Fort Wayne cemetery and its designer, John Chislett, a landscape architect and cemetery superintendent from Pittsburgh.

Timely praise: Indianapolis leaders invited Chislett to make a presentation at the State Bank of Indiana in September. On September 25, the Association of Crown Hill formalized the non-profit corporation that would develop a new cemetery, one that Indianapolis would not outgrow.

# Replacing Greenlawn Cemetery



John Chislett made his original presentation to 10 Indianapolis civic leaders, all of whom joined Crown Hill's initial Board of Corporators. Three of them accompanied Chislett on his search for the right cemetery location: a tract no larger than 600 acres and no farther than six miles from the city limits. Numerous site inspections yielded no results until they toured Martin Williams' farmstead almost three miles from town. The land included a popular picnic spot dubbed "Strawberry Hill" for its topography and ample annual fruit crop.

Greenlawn Cemetery stood near a bend in the White River.

Map Collection, Indiana Division, Indiana State Library. *Atlas of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana*. Griffing, Gordon & Co. 1889.



Martin Williams' acreage became John Chislett's prime acquisition target, but the farmer balked at selling. As a result, the first purchases for the new cemetery came from two other farmers, Jonathan Wilson and James Trueblood, followed by Williams, who had changed his mind. Gradually, throughout the rest of the 19th century and into the 20th, Crown Hill grew, first below 38th Street and later above it.

Chislett planned Crown Hill as a rural cemetery, filled with parklike terrain and graceful trees. Implementing his plan fell to his son, Frederick W. Chislett, who moved to Indianapolis at the end of 1863 to become Crown Hill's first superintendent. Martin Williams' log cabin on Crown Hill's south slope became the Chislett family's first residence.

Frederick Chislett built roads, drained marshes, cleared vegetation, and added an entrance on the cemetery's western border on what is now Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street, all in time for a dedication ceremony on June 1, 1864. That gathering of 400 heard prayers, a band, and a speech before setting off to choose lots and admire the view. Crown Hill sold 35 lots in its first auction a week later, but the cemetery already had begun its work as a place of rest. A young tuberculosis victim named Lucy Ann Seaton became Crown Hill's first burial one day after its dedication ceremony.

# How Crown Hill Cemetery grew



From initial acreage through final additions, Crown Hill Cemetery's grounds expanded with purchases, culminating in 1911.



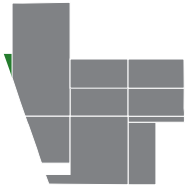
1863



1864



1865



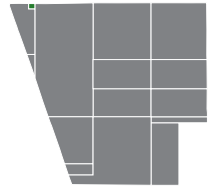
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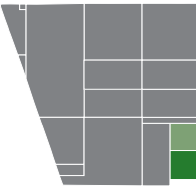
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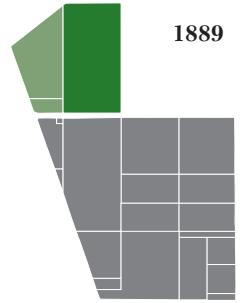
1878



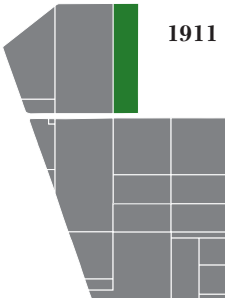
1883



1889



1911



**1863 October**

- Jonathan Wilson  
2 parcels (20 + 20)
- Martin Williams, 3 parcels  
(78.03, 50.03, 26.13)
- James Trueblood, 2 parcels  
(20 + 20)

**1863 December**

- Henry and Levi Wright (6.1)

**1864 March**

- Henry and Levi Wright (22.23)

**1865 August**

- Dorman N. Davidson (2.58)

**1871 July**

- Edwin J. Armstrong and Others  
2 parcels (40 + 40)

**1871 October**

- Edwin J. Armstrong,  
Bennett Bryan (4)

**1875 November**

- F. M. Finch (13.02)

**1877 April**

- John and Mary Gray (0.38)

**1878 July**

- A. and E. Burchard (10.16)

**1878 August**

- G. A. Danley (10.16)

**1883 May**

- Joseph Curzon (2.35)

**1889 July**

- Mary H. Ruddell (80)

- W. M. Foley (47.25)

**1911 October**

- Fred and Bernie E. Cline (40)

# Crown Hill Cemetery: For the living



Crown Hill's design as a rural cemetery gives it the authentic charm of a natural, unspoiled green space within the urban environment.

From its inception, Crown Hill followed the rural style of cemetery design. A rural cemetery looks like unspoiled natural green space, a park-like setting in which to celebrate life as well as remembrance. Parts of the land acquired for Crown Hill already served as popular places to picnic and enjoy the outdoors. Perhaps the nearly three miles between Crown Hill and the city itself provided a meaningful distance from marshy terrain that spawned mosquitoes and malaria. The beauty of the Crown itself so struck John Chislett on his site visit to Martin Williams' farm that he instantly exclaimed, "That is the spot!" and urged the cemetery's founders to secure this acreage "at whatever price you have to pay."

Rural cemeteries provide an escape to nature. Despite the work required to transform land into interment space, rural cemeteries look all but untouched by human intervention. Their winding lanes seem like habitual paths rather than planned roads. Their rolling fields provide timeless natural vistas.

Crown Hill is the largest green space within the city of Indianapolis. Today, the city has caught up to Crown Hill and passed it, expanding toward all points of the compass. Within Crown Hill's grounds, however, time stops. Standing under a tree, in a wooded clearing, in the midst of an open field, or atop the Crown itself, Crown Hill's visitors can picture themselves enjoying these same vistas 50, 100, or even 150 years in the past, and foresee these sights remaining untouched for many years into the future.

# Nature at Crown Hill Cemetery



Crown Hill's trees give it its character at the same time that they help clean the air, acting as natural carbon dioxide filters.

Crown Hill and its trees have been inseparable since the cemetery's birth in 1863. The acquisitions of acreage that created Crown Hill brought densely forested terrain onto its grounds. In recent years, Crown Hill initiatives have sought to nurture the cemetery's woods.

More than 4,100 trees representing 110 species flourish on Crown Hill's grounds. Through the **Crown Hill Tree Program**, individual donors can plant new trees, adopt existing specimens or place remembrance markers next to them, or create named endowments to offset tree-care costs. Although attempts to establish a tree nursery on the cemetery grounds proved unsuccessful, Crown Hill is planning to apply for **Level II ArbNet accreditation** through the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program. Accreditation shows that a facility meets internationally recognized standards of professionalism in the care and management of its tree population.

In conjunction with the Indiana Bicentennial, **Tomorrow's Canopy** raised funds to inventory the cemetery's tree population. This effort also purchased, planted, and continues to care for 200 trees to help offset the devastation wrought by the invasion of the emerald ash borer, which killed 344 trees on the Crown Hill grounds.

Crown Hill's trees contribute to the cemetery's beauty. They also help remove carbon dioxide from the air, lower urban temperatures, reduce rainfall runoff, and increase the habitats available to animals and beneficial insects. In every season, trees enhance quality of life for everyone.

# Crown Hill Cemetery: The future



**Tomorrow's Crown Hill** provides for a planned future based on a holistic approach to known and foreseeable problems and challenges.

Keeping Crown Hill's beauty alive for generations to come requires nurturance, maintenance, restoration, and repair, none of which nature can supply. **Tomorrow's Crown Hill**, the master plan for the cemetery's strategic care, takes a multiphasic approach to assessing and prioritizing needs, pioneering new ways to uphold Crown Hill's founding mission, and inviting the community into the process of supporting Crown Hill.

As the cemetery has welcomed Indianapolis onto its grounds for more than 150 years, it has shaped itself to match community needs. The Companion Meadow shelters treasured pets, honoring the bonds between humans and their animal friends. The Indiana AIDS Memorial provided the first such place of remembrance in the United States. Heroes of Public Safety honors the men and women who give their lives to protect the public. The Scattering Garden accommodates those who wish to return directly to nature. These features and more show Crown Hill's commitment to offering respectful service to all who seek it.

Through **Tomorrow's Crown Hill**, you can help assure that the cemetery's urgent needs are met and its long-term mission upheld. We thank you for every thought with which you honor this timeless place of reverence, and every gift you make to help it endure for generations to come.

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