

Lakewood Cemetery Memorial Chapel, Minneapolis, Hennepin County



A GEM of Byzantine architecture rises among the monuments in Lakewood Cemetery marking the final resting places of Minneapolis's best-known residents, the Memorial Chapel. Minneapolis architect Harry Wild Jones, who designed the Tangletown neighborhood, returned from a trip to Istanbul inspired by the Hagia Sophia and modeled the Lakewood chapel after this famous cathedral that was later converted to a mosque.

The Memorial Chapel's true glory reveals itself once you step inside: a stunning example of Byzantine mosaic art designed by the New York ecclesiastical architect Charles Lamb. Inspired by the mosaic design of the Basilica di San Marco in Venice, Italy, Lamb handpicked six of Italy's most skilled artisans to craft more than 10 million square tiles no bigger than a fingernail. The artisans followed the tiles to Minneapolis, where they painstakingly arranged them into colorful images, including olive trees, angels, and four large figures representing Love, Hope, Faith, and Memory.

At the time of its completion in 1910, the Memorial Chapel was the only building in the United States with a mosaic interior. It continues to be regarded as one of the most perfect examples of Byzantine mosaic art in the country and was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Jones, the Minneapolis architect, capped the modified cruciform interior with a dome that rises 65 feet and is ringed by stained glass windows, which function as a sundial marking the time of day and season. It's a marvel of both sight and sound. If you stand directly beneath the dome and speak, your voice will carry clearly throughout the interior thanks to its perfect acoustics.

A yearlong renovation begun in 1996 included removing a carpet to uncover the marble floor, cleaning shellac off the darkened windows, returning a large stained



Interior of the Lakewood Cemetery Memorial Chapel, circa 1910. (MNHS COLLECTIONS)

glass chandelier globe to its place above the pulpit, and installing a lighting system to highlight the interior's beauty. Today, the building above the crematorium hosts weddings as well as funerals, marking beginnings and endings.

—John Rosengren

Sources

Sharlene Hensrud, "The Most Perfect Example of Byzantine Mosaic Art in the US," homesmsp.com; "Lakewood Memorial Chapel," minneapolismn.gov; "Lakewood Memorial Chapel," Placeography.org; "Places at Lakewood: Memorial Chapel," lakewoodcemetery.org.

This feature was made possible by the Henry and Donna Morgan Fund for Research and Publications.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society, and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or users or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission: [contact us](#).

Individuals may print or download articles for personal use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#). Include the author's name and article title in the body of your message. But first--

If you think you may need permission, here are some guidelines:

Students and researchers

- You **do not** need permission to quote or paraphrase portions of an article, as long as your work falls within the fair use provision of copyright law. Using information from an article to develop an argument is fair use. Quoting brief pieces of text in an unpublished paper or thesis is fair use. Even quoting in a work to be published can be fair use, depending on the amount quoted. Read about fair use here: <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>
- You **should**, however, always credit the article as a source for your work.

Teachers

- You **do not** need permission to incorporate parts of an article into a lesson.
- You **do** need permission to assign an article, either by downloading multiple copies or by sending students to the online pdf. There is a small per-copy use fee for assigned reading. [Contact us](#) for more information.

About Illustrations

- **Minnesota History** credits the sources for illustrations at the end of each article. **Minnesota History** itself does not hold copyright on images and therefore cannot grant permission to reproduce them.
- For information on using illustrations owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, see [MHS Library FAQ](#).