

Cody Kern
Architectural Profile



The Forest Home Chapel is in the Forest Home Cemetery of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In 1847, St. Paul's Episcopal Church leaders began discussing development for a cemetery open to all Milwaukee citizens on the southside of the city. The cemetery is constructed to be a 'garden cemetery' meant to maintain the natural landscape of the area. By 1890, the cemetery would contract the architectural firm of Ferry and Clas to build a chapel to be used for funeral services. A few years later in 1896 the first crematory in Wisconsin and the upper Midwest would be added to the chapel's basement consisting of a waiting room outside the crematory where families could wait until the cremation was completed. Although originally intended to provide a place for funeral service the chapel has been used for other services such as weddings and

lectures throughout the years. The Forest Home Chapel remains a staple of the cemetery designated as a historic landmark of Milwaukee in 1973.

Discussions of a chapel being established began as early as 1851, but it wouldn't be until 1890 that the firm of George Ferry and Alfred Clas would be contracted to build the Forest Home Chapel. Finished in 1892, the chapel was built in an English Gothic revival style made of beautiful reddish Lake Superior sandstone. As one walks into the Forest Home Chapel above them are oak wooden beams with lights hanging from the ceiling. Multiple rows of oak millwork pews start near the front lining almost to the back of the chapel on the left and right. The walls consist of glazed brickwork built with an arc in the front where an altar and cross are stationed and where the casket is placed for funeral services. Behind the brick wall arc, altar and cross are beautiful stained-glass windows. On both sides of the service area are two glass conservatories where tropical foliage exists allowing natural sunlight to beam into the chapel giving it a tropical feel. During its heyday the conservatories would be filled making it unique and different than any other chapel or funeral home in Milwaukee and Wisconsin. One of the chapel's popular appeals in the early 20th century was that it allowed funeral services to take place indoors during the winter, which provided shelter for individuals from the cold Milwaukee weather. A wooden door is in the front on the right side which leads downstairs to where the crematory is located.

In 1896 a crematory would open in the basement of the Forest Home Chapel. It is believed that a crematory was anticipated in the original construction of the chapel because an elevator existed to lower a casket to the basement before the crematory was built. However, there's a crypt in the basement where bodies would be stored when the ground was too frozen for the gravediggers. While walking downstairs the crypt is located on the right side as soon as one reaches the basement. Past the crypts the basement and crematory consist of white marble walls

with Corinthian borders. Near the crematory is a waiting room where families would wait after helping push the casket into the dual oil-fueled incinerators. In the waiting room is an altar in case families wanted to pray while waiting. The crematory would be in use until 1997 when it would shut down and be replaced with a natural gas fueled crematory at a new facility located in Forest Home.

Because of Forest Home Chapel's marvelous exterior and interior, it remains a popular place for funeral services serving all denominations. It has also gained interest to be used for other services, such as weddings and lectures. And the chapel and crematory are alluring sites for thousands of people every year who come to visit for a tour of the location.

