



The “Waiting Station” at Historic Crown Hill Cemetery

When Crown Hill Cemetery opened its gates for the first time on June 1, 1864, it placed the main entrance of the facility on its western boundary—at Michigan Road. For twenty years funerals and memorial processions filed through the old gateway.

There was a second cemetery entrance then, as well. It was located on the east of Crown Hill, situated at the end of a long tree-lined lane that connected the rolling cemetery grounds with the Indianapolis and Westfield Gravel Road (today known as Illinois Street). For two decades it was merely referred to as the east (or back) entrance of what was becoming the premier burial grounds in the Indianapolis area.

In 1884, the back gateway was advanced to the forefront. Crown Hill’s Board of Corporators decided to convert the east entryway into the cemetery’s main entryway. Indianapolis was moving steadily northward along Meridian Street and the adjacent avenues that were incorporated into a growing capital city. They realized it was time to bring the main entrance closer to the public, and so the main entrance was removed from the west side and relocated at what is now 34th Street and Boulevard Place.

Plans for a new entrance included the construction of a three-arch entrance and a new administration building. The previous office at the west gate was small, partly because an office in downtown Indianapolis was available to the public during the facility’s earliest years, and partly because the cemetery had few interred during its first twenty years. But burials were nearing the 8,000 mark by the end of 1884, and the records that accompany such interments were growing, too. The old office at the cemetery simply was not large enough any longer.

William Brown, a local architect, was employed by Crown Hill to determine the costs for erecting both an archway entrance and administration building. He selected the drawing of another architect, Adolf Scherrer, that called for a “gate keeper’s residence and office” as well as a three-arch entryway. Construction of these commenced in May, 1885.

Scherrer’s design for what is now referred to as the “Waiting Station,” included a sitting room, dining room, kitchen, and three bedrooms for the residence. The office consisted of a

general waiting room, ladies' waiting room, two offices, a bell tower, fireproof vault, and lavatories. Amazingly, construction of this and the archway entrance were completed by late fall of 1885.

The cost of erecting the combination that now stands at the 34th Street entrance was slightly over \$48,000. The precise date for its completion is not known, however a statement published in November, 1885 said the gateway project "was hastened at the last in order to admit the funeral procession of Vice-President [Thomas A.] Hendricks—the first to pass through the new gates."

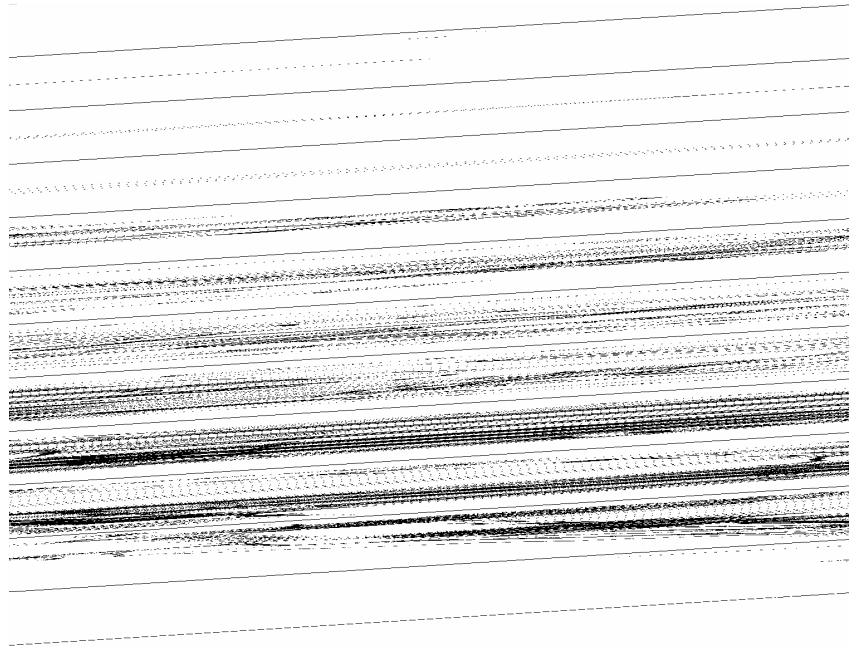
Over the years, all sorts of people have visited the "Waiting Station." During its 110-year history it has been a gathering place for those attending funerals, and others who came to be escorted to a burial site within Crown Hill's historic grounds. During the early and middle part of this century, persons took the street car to cemetery from various locations throughout the city. When they arrived near the entrance, they walked to the administration building and waited for friends to arrive. As a result, the administration building became a rendezvous for people who came from everywhere. Thus, the administration building at Crown Hill became generally known as the "Waiting Station," a term still used when referring to this beautiful old brick and masonry structure.

The building was in use as the Crown Hill office until 1969 when a new administration building was erected inside the gate at 38th Street and Clarendon Road. In 1970, the "Waiting Station" was leased to the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana for twenty-five years for one dollar per year. From September of that year until February, 1971, it was restored by this organization, who then made it their office for the next two decades. Until November of 1995, it was occupied by a grief counseling organization.

Crown Hill reoccupied the "Waiting Station" in January 1996, making many services more accessible to the public. Here visitors can acquire funeral and burial information, material of a historic and general nature, and learn, too, about what is available in the cemetery records that can be used for genealogy purposes. Information regarding historic tours offered by Crown Hill can also be obtained when visiting the old office at 34th Street.

Another restoration of the interior of the "Waiting Station" was complete in January 1998 as part of "Phase One" of the Crown Hill Heritage Foundation's Millennium Project. The Crown Hill Heritage Foundation was formed in 1985 to raise funds necessary for the restoration of Crown Hill's valuable historic structures. Additional funds are needed to restore the building's exterior as we work to return the Waiting Station to its original Victorian splendor. For information on this project or on the Crown Hill Heritage Foundation, please call the cemetery at (317) 920-4165

Physical Description of the “Waiting Station”



The “residence” for the gatekeeper should consist of the following (June 23, 1884):

- One sitting room about 15' x 15'
- One dining room, 12' x 15'
- One kitchen, 11' x 12'
- Three bedrooms, 12' x 12'
- One tool room, 12' x 24'
- One general waiting room 22' x 36'
- One ladies' waiting room, 16' x 24'
- One waiting room, 16' x 24'
- One office, 18' x 20'
- One office, 12' x 12'
- One Bell Tower
- A fire-proof vault
- Lavatories and closets conveniently arranged to the waiting room