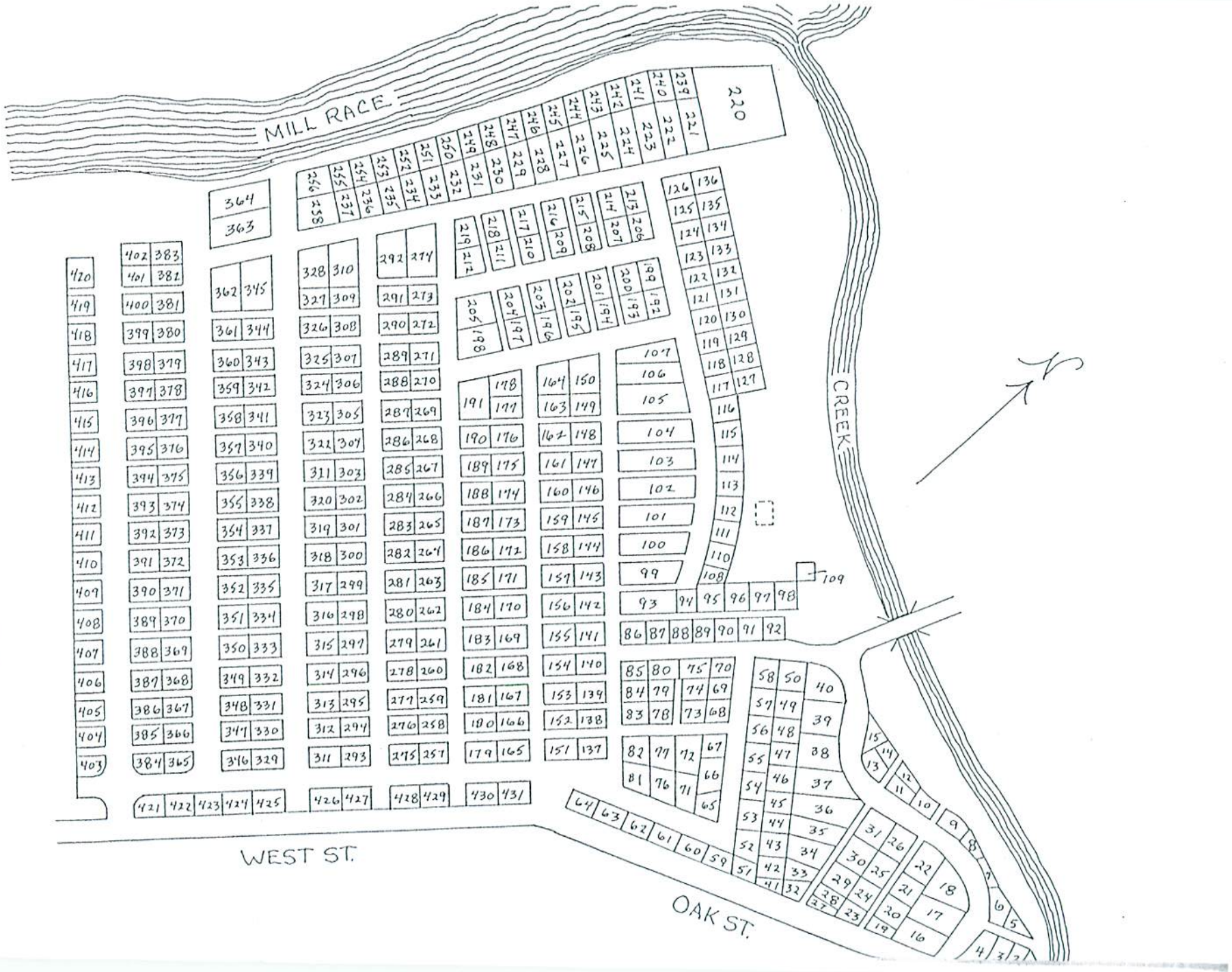

MILL RACE
CREEK
WEST ST.
OAK ST.
Oakwood Cemetery (Original Section)

MAR 30 1993

PREFACE

The south portion of Oakwood Cemetery, herein catalogued, lies on a sandy bluff overlooking the east branch of the Kankakee River, known locally as the "Mill Race." Shaded by giant oaks and generally cooled by a river breeze, it is a favorite spot for summer evening walks.

As Wilmington was one of the area's first settlements, Oakwood has, since the 1830's, been a burial place of choice for residents of Wilmington and surrounding townships in Will and Grundy Counties.

This portion of the cemetery, south of a shallow creek, contains burials from 1838 to the present time, while the "new" part, north of the creek, dates only from about 1907.

The earliest burials, interspersed with newer ones, are generally confined to lots 99 through 113 and have markers set at a different angle. These "angled" lots, noted in the editorial information following the lot number, were generally discontinued in the 1840's. The first map of Oakwood, filed at the Will County courthouse in 1854 by the owner, Hiram O. Alden, unfortunately excluded this original section of the cemetery.

As this map, and each map of subsequent additions, used different lot-numbering systems, the repetition of numbers made lot identification unduly complex. Hence, for the purpose of this book, a wholly consecutive numbering system and an accompanying map have been provided. These lot numbers are NOT the ones still in use by the cemetery.

A three-row parcel of lots, part of the 1881 addition, were apparently sold to the adjoining Catholic Cemetery. The transition is imperceptible and it takes a sharp eye to distinguish the border between the two cemeteries.

Early cemetery records were destroyed in a 1923 fire at the home of the Secretary-Manager, Julius Luther. Both Mr. Luther's daughter, Mary, and James McGovern, a former cemetery maintenance worker, recall that there were once a number of wooden markers - perhaps an inexpensive alternative to a stone marker - of which not one remains today.

Until its destruction by fire a few years ago, a two hole outhouse/shed served not only as a "comfort station," and reference point, but also as a refuge from heavy rain. (One wonders at the circa 1900 sensibilities and the "privacy" of a two hole outhouse.) Only the limestone foundation remains just north of lot 113 which is indicated on the map by a dotted line.

Oakwood burials include residents of the Soldier's Widows' Home once located in Wilmington. Founded in 1895 by the Woman's Relief Corps (W.R.C.) and the G.A.R., it opened in March of 1896. After a few years, the State of Illinois took over the operation, so residents' graves are marked with military-style markers. These, alas, give only the name and date of death. While the majority of these markers

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