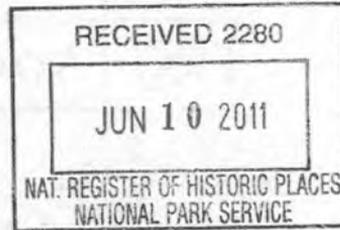


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**United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number Circa 8012 North Cemetery Road N/A not for publication  
city or town Evansville N/A vicinity  
state Wisconsin code WI county Rock code 105 zip code 53536

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_ nationally \_ statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date June 7, 2011

State Historic Preservation Officer - Wisconsin

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_ meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot

Rock

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the

National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the

National Register.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National

Register.

other, (explain:)

*Ethan H. Beall*

7-20-11

*[Signature]*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as  
as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- structure
- site
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources  
in the count)

<b>contributing</b>	<b>noncontributing</b>
	buildings
	sites
	structures
3	6 objects
3	6 total

**Name of related multiple property listing:**  
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property  
listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources  
previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/work of art

FUNERARY/ graves/burials

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/work of art

FUNERARY/ graves/burials

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation GRANITE

walls N/A

roof N/A

other GRANITE

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

**Description:**

The Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot is located in the Maple Hill Cemetery in the City of Evansville, in Rock County, Wisconsin, and it contains by far the largest and the most artistically ambitious funeral monument in this cemetery.<sup>1</sup> The plot was intended to be the final resting place for Almeron Eager, his family, and future generations of his family, and the principal resources within it were erected in 1904, two years after Almeron Eager's death. Almeron Eager (1838-1902) came to Evansville in 1868 and subsequently became an important figure in the business life of nineteenth century Evansville. In the process, Eager amassed a considerable fortune for that time and in his last years he developed a well deserved reputation as a generous philanthropist. This reputation was enhanced by the numerous charitable bequests contained in his will, one of which was a bequest of \$10,000 to the citizens of Evansville to pay for the erection of a public library building in that city.<sup>2</sup> Among Eager's final bequests was a provision that a sum of "from \$7,000 to \$10,000" be spent on the construction of a funeral monument in the Maple Hill Cemetery in Evansville. The resulting monument became the centerpiece of the Eager family plot, which measures 42.75-foot square and is the largest family plot in the cemetery. This plot is encircled by a low dressed granite grave fence that has granite pedestals at its four corners, solid granite rails, and additional granite pedestals that flank each the four entrances to the plot. These entrances are centered on each of the plot's four sides and a wide walkway leads up to the base of the monument from each of these entrances. Each of these walkways is covered in dressed granite slabs and additional slabs form a path that encircles the eight-foot-square base of the monument, which is positioned in the center of the plot. The monument itself measures some twenty-feet-tall and it is made entirely of dressed and sculpted granite. This monument rests on a tall three-stepped base that supports a square plan pier, on the top of which is placed the life-size statue of a woman, one of whose hands rests on a several foot tall anchor, the woman and anchor together being a traditional symbol of hope. The monument is further decorated with various Christian and secular symbols and the name "A. Eager" is incised into the south-facing face of the base. In addition to the grave fence and the monument there are seven individual granite headstones within the plot and two bronze grass markers.<sup>3</sup> The entire plot is in perfect condition today and both the monument and the plot's grave fence are excellent examples of this still unidentified monument maker's superior artistry and craftsmanship.

Maple Hill Cemetery is situated on the east side of Cemetery Road and it is located approximately 1000 feet north of East Main Street; East and West Main Street (which is also U.S. Highway 14) is the

<sup>1</sup> The population of Evansville in 2000 was 4039.

<sup>2</sup> This legacy eventually resulted in the construction of the Eager Free Public Library in 1908, which is listed in the NRHP (8-16-1977) and was designed in the Prairie School style by the Madison, Wisconsin firm of Claude & Starck.

<sup>3</sup> The bronze markers are not included in the resource count because of their small scale.

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**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 2

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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principal east-west thoroughfare in the city of Evansville.<sup>4</sup> Cemetery Road intersects with East Main Street approximately one-half-mile east of the intersection of USH 14 and State Highway 59, which is the principal north-south thoroughfare in the city, and this road extends north from Main Street to the cemetery site and then continues on further north and out beyond the city limits. Cemetery Road is, of course, named after the cemetery itself, which was established in 1855 and was gradually expanded until it reached its present 18-acre size. For most of its history the cemetery has been surrounded on all sides by open cultivated farm land and, while a modern subdivision now abuts its east side, its north, south, and west sides still face out onto open farmland today.

Maple Hill Cemetery is a well maintained non-denominational community cemetery, it has a rectilinear plan whose shortest sides parallel Cemetery Road, and it consists of mown greensward that is ornamented here and there with plantings of both coniferous and deciduous trees. The land within the cemetery boundaries is flat and it is laid out on a modified grid plan whose fourteen sections are each bordered by the cemetery's system of graveled driveways. Within each section, the gravestones and monuments are laid out in orderly rows and the several thousand gravestones display many different styles and sizes and they are broadly representative of the monument maker's craft during the period of the cemetery's development. The cemetery's layout is of the family plot type, where graves are arranged by family affiliation. The size and design of Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot, however, clearly sets it apart from all of the other graves in this cemetery and this distinctiveness is immediately apparent, whether seen from ground level or even from the air.

Plot

The Almeron Eager Family Plot measures 42.75-feet-square, it is located on the southeast corner of Block 2 in Section M of the cemetery, and it is bordered by gravel driveways on both its south and east sides. As noted previously, the eight-foot-square base of the monument is placed in the exact center of the plot and it is ringed by a pathway composed of square granite slabs. Additional granite slabs also form the straight pathways that lead from the centers of each of the four sides of the plot up to the monument; these four equal length paths divide the plot into four equal sections, each of which has a single large flowering shrub in its center and is covered in mown grass. These four sections contain the various Eager family graves and their associated headstones and the entire plot is encircled by a low granite grave fence.

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<sup>4</sup> Maple Hill Cemetery lies within the corporate boundaries of the city of Evansville.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 3

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

Grave Fence (C)

This plot is encircled by a low dressed granite grave fence that is made up of eight 18-foot-long sections, each of which has granite pedestals at both ends that support a granite rail. The four pedestals that form the four corners of this fence each have a square plan and they are approximately two-feet-tall. The four sides of each of these pedestals are flat and each of these sides terminates in a segmental arch that gives the tops of each pedestal a very shallow cross-vaulted appearance. These corner pedestals are visually subordinated to the more elaborate Gothic Style-influenced granite pedestals that flank both sides of the 6.75-foot-wide entrances that are centered on each of the four sides of the plot. These eight flanking pedestals are each approximately two-and-one-half-feet tall and they each have a square plan plinth upon which is placed a somewhat smaller square plan shaft that has chamfered corners. The three sides of these shafts that are not connected to a fence rail are all identical and each side has an equilateral arch-shaped panel incised into its surface near the top of the side, which top has triangular arch shape and is crowned with three stacked horizontal cylinders.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the rear ends of these four groups of cylinders all touch one of the four sides of a short, centered, still smaller, square plan, pyramidal topped, obelisk-like element that crowns each shaft.

The fence rails that connect these pedestals are all approximately one-foot-tall, eight-inches thick, and 16-feet-long; they are each formed out of a single piece of dressed granite. The bottoms of these rails are raised approximately six inches above the surface of the ground and these bottoms are flat, as are the sides, while the tops of the rails are rounded and have a continuous segmental arch-shaped curve.

Monument (C)

The Almeron Eager memorial monument is placed in the exact center of the family plot, it is approximately 20-feet-tall and is made entirely out of dressed and sculpted granite. It consists of a pedestal that supports a tall pier upon which stands the culminating life-size statue of a woman. This monument rests on a thick dressed granite plinth that is eight-feet-square and approximately one-and-one-half-feet thick. The upper surfaces of this plinth are beveled and they slope gently upward to the bottom of the pedestal's narrower but taller square plan dado or die. The north, east, and west faces of this dado are unadorned but the south-facing face contains a broad incised panel that bears raised letters that read "A. Eager." The upper surfaces of this dado are also beveled and they also slope gently upward to the bottom of the slightly less wide square plan cincture that forms the bottom of the slightly narrower square plan base of the shaft of the pier. This base is as thick as the dado below but

<sup>5</sup> The fourth side of each shaft is identical in shape to the other three sides but the space where the incised pointed arch panel would be located is instead covered by an end of the fence rail.

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**Continuation Sheet**

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Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

it has concave sides that slope up to the bottom of the tall square plan shaft of the pier. Here too, the north, east, and west faces of this base are also unadorned, but the south-facing face contains a centered flat-surfaced, semi-circular-arched feature that bears a laurel wreath carved in high relief on its face. This wreath is positioned directly above the name panel below that was described previously.

The shaft of the pier that rests on the base just described has a square plan and it tapers very gradually as it ascends to a simple astragal molding that separates the neck of the shaft from the broader square plan capital that crowns it. This capital does not follow any one stylistic convention. Instead, its lowest part has a cavetto shape and it is decorated with a continuous band of Gothic Revival style-influenced floriated leaf-like ornaments that are carved in high relief. Placed just above this is a taller element that has sides that slope steeply inward and upward to the bottom of a narrower three-part base that supports the statue. Each of the four sides of this element also has a, flat-surfaced, semi-circular-arched feature centered on it whose face bears an incised circular panel within which a religious or secular symbol that is carved in low relief is set. The east-facing side of this element bears a Masonic emblem, the west-facing side bears the entwined letters A and O for Alpha and Omega, the south-facing side bears a cross with a crown, and the north-facing side bears another Masonic symbol.

The monument is crowned by a classically inspired life-size statue of a young woman. This statue stands on a three part base that is composed of a square plan plinth, a square plan torus that has concave sides that slope up to the narrower square plan base that underlies the statue. The figure faces south and stands erect, she is clad from her neck to her feet in a flowing seamless garment that is open at the neck and tied at the waist and her right hand rests on the top of a tall anchor that has a garland of roses and lilies entwined around its shaft. Her left arm is bare to the elbow and is extended upward towards her neck where her left hand holds the folds of the garment that enfolds her together. She is bareheaded, her long hair flows down her back almost to her waist, and it is parted in the center and frames her serene, classic face.

Headstones (1 Contributing, 6 Non-Contributing)

There are seven dressed granite headstones located within the four quadrants of the plot. Although the size of these headstones differs somewhat, they are all of the same design and are of the tablet type, being set at a right angle to the ground. Each stone has a rectangular plan, straight sides, and a segmental-arched top. The top segmental-arched surface of each headstone bears the name of the occupant of the grave, which is spelled out in raised letters, while the sides bear the inscription that contains the birth and death dates, which are incised into the stone. Only Almeron Eager's own headstone is considered to be a contributing resource. The other six headstones were put in place

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Section 7 Page 5

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County. WI

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many years later (1924 is the date of next oldest burial) and therefore lie outside the period of significance.

Integrity

All the elements that combine to make up the Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot are of exceptionally high quality and they are in a perfect state of preservation and are very well maintained. The same is true of the surrounding plots and of the Maple Hill Cemetery as a whole, which is maintained by the City of Evansville and which is still the principal burial ground for the city today.

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Name of Property

Rock  
County and State

Wisconsin

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ART

### Period of Significance

1904

### Significant Dates

1904

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Unknown

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 1

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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**Significance:**

The Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot was built in 1904 and it is a highly intact and very rare example of the very elaborate funerary monuments that were sometimes erected by wealthy members of communities in Wisconsin during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Eager Plot was identified as a potentially eligible collection of resources having local significance under National Register (NR) Criterion C (Art) by the City of Evansville Intensive Survey, which was undertaken in 2005-2006.<sup>6</sup> The results of this research are detailed below and support the listing of these resources in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) using Criterion C.

The Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot is locally significant under NR Criterion C because it is an excellent and unusually elaborate example of the turn-of-the-century monument maker's craft. Funerary monuments executed on this scale were very expensive to fabricate and they are very rarely found in even the largest cities in Wisconsin, let alone in smaller communities the size of Evansville. The memorial monument that Evansville business leader Almeron Eager dictated should be located at the center of the family plot in Maple Hill Cemetery following his death in 1902 cost from \$7500.00 to \$10,000.00 when it and its associated grave fence were finally completed and erected in 1904. The resulting ensemble is by far the largest, costliest, and most impressive funeral monument in the Maple Hill Cemetery. In addition, the granite used in the construction of the plot's resources is of the best quality and the plot's resources also display a very high level of craftsmanship in both their execution and their design and are excellent examples of Late Victorian era funerary art.

**Historic Context:**

A detailed history of the city of Evansville and its built resources is embodied in the *City of Evansville Intensive Survey Report*, printed in 2006. Consequently, the historic context that follows deals primarily with the history of Almeron Eager and his funerary plot, and, to a lesser extent, with the history of the Maple Hill Cemetery in Evansville of which this plot is a part. An excellent general history of Evansville and of the Maple Hill Cemetery up until 1920 is included in local historian Ruth Ann Montgomery's outstanding 1990 book *Evansville: Glimpses of the Grove*, and much of what follows is taken directly from this history. Even more detailed is a newspaper article Montgomery wrote that covers the history of the Maple Hill Cemetery from its beginnings in 1855 up until the beginning of World War II.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hegglund, Timothy F. *City of Evansville Intensive Survey*. Evansville, WI: City of Evansville, 2006. Copy on file at the Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI.

<sup>7</sup> Montgomery, Ruth Ann. "History Behind Evansville's Silent City." *Evansville: The Evansville Review*: May 21, 1997, pp. 8-9.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 2

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

What is now called Evansville was first settled as early as 1839, and by 1845 the settlement, which was originally called "the Grove" because of a large stand of timber that was then located just to the northwest of it, consisted of four or five log houses and a single frame house. In 1847 and 1848, a saw mill and grist mill were built by Erastus Quivey on Allen's Creek, a small river that runs diagonally through the community and which for many years thereafter was Evansville's source of water power.

In 1855, the community was finally surveyed, platted into lots, and renamed "Evansville," although by that time quite a number of buildings already existed in the community.

The original plat consisted of a rectangular [shaped] elongated grid, and included Main, Church and Liberty streets crossed by Fourth Street on the west and extending to Railroad Street (now Maple Street) on the east side. Main Street continued eastward almost to Cemetery Road. There were no deviations provided for natural features such as winding Allen's Creek. Although there was no village green or town square, the ample square plot for the Methodist Seminary (built in 1855) provided a focal point at the [west] end of Church Street. Its site on a knoll, now obstructed by tree canopy and subsequent town development, also contributed to its importance on the plan. This aspect of the original plat is cultural as well as visual, as the early settlers were traditionally religious-centered New Englanders. However, the center of the town's activity, then as now, was at the corner of Main and Madison [streets].

The 1855 plat shows that Evansville's citizens were interested in town-building and future development; the right-of-way of a proposed railroad is clearly shown. But its delineated lots and streets does not reveal the town's true mid-nineteenth century spatial character. An 1858 map showing existing structures, in conjunction with research on land ownership at the time, does illustrate that Evansville's population of about 800-900 ca.1860 was limited mainly to just Main and Church streets.<sup>8</sup> Land was [typically] owned in several adjacent plots, and the distance between houses was relatively great. While development occurred by regular lot size accretions on the south side of Main Street, the north side of West Main was characterized by long linear strips of land stretching [north] to what is now Lake Leota. Thus village lots were contiguous to farm fields. This pattern of land utilization along the north side of West Main Street remained until the 1890's, when lots were gradually subdivided and sold as additions to the town plat.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Zellie, Carol and Gail Hunton. *Evansville Architectural Survey & Presentation Plan*. Evansville: 1976, p. 8. Map of Rock County, Wisconsin. Chicago: A. B. Miller & Orrin Guernsey, 1858. This map is also reproduced on p. 19 of *Evansville: Glimpses of the Grove*. The houses and other buildings shown on it, however, probably represent only the more prominent buildings in the village. Never-the-less, Zellie & Hunton's analysis is essentially accurate.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 3

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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As the foregoing suggests, once one passed Allen's Creek going east in 1855, the lots that bordered East Main Street were more lightly settled than the lots that bordered West Main Street. This more suburban character was reflected in the size of the lots that were platted along both sides of East Main Street east of Allen's Creek as well, these lots being somewhat wider and deeper than those that line West Main Street. These larger lots extended all the way east out to an unnamed north-south-running intersecting road that would soon become known as Cemetery Road because, in 1855, the same year that the village was platted, what would become known as the Maple Hill Cemetery was organized on a six-acre site on the east side of this road.

The original cemetery [in Evansville] was located in what is today commercial and residential property on the east side of the first block of South Madison Street. When the village of Evansville was platted on Nov. 3, 1855, the leaders of the community had already decided that a cemetery should not be located in the middle of prime real estate.

On November 26, 1855, the Evansville Cemetery Association paid \$200 to Peter S. Brizze and his wife, Adelia. In return the private corporation took title to four acres of land to be used as a burial grounds. That same day, the Evansville Cemetery Association purchased 2 acres of land for \$100 from Thomas Robinson and his wife.

The land is shown on current maps of the cemetery as the original plot, Blocks 1 and 2. The six acres of land was considered ample for the needs of the cemetery group.<sup>10</sup>

Once the new cemetery was an established fact, 61 burials from the original cemetery were exhumed and the coffins transferred to the new site. The private Evansville Cemetery Association would continue to manage their new cemetery for the next eighteen years, but eventually the financial and practical problems associated with running such an organization on a voluntary basis finally caught up with them.

The Evansville Cemetery Association continued to operate the cemetery as a private burial ground until 1873. At the Feb. 3, 1873 [meeting], the village trustees received a petition from Levi Leonard and 70 others asking the village to accept responsibility for the Evansville Cemetery. The Village trustees agreed and assumed the \$495.40 debt of the cemetery association.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Montgomery, Ruth Ann. Op. Cit., p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Montgomery, Ruth Ann. Op. Cit., p. 8. The City of Evansville still continues to own and manage the cemetery today.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 4

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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It was also during this early period of the cemetery's history that Almeron Eager made Evansville his permanent home. Almeron Eager (1838-1902) was born on the family farm on March 14, 1838, in Sangerfield, Oneida County, New York, and he received his education in the district school of that location. Eager's father eventually brought his family west in the spring of 1855, and located on a new farm in the Town of Union, which is just a few miles north of Evansville. Almeron Eager's father died in 1861, but in the meantime Almeron had purchased 80 acres in the Town of Union, which he improved and afterwards sold. He then purchased a 200-acre tract two-and-one-half-miles east of Evansville and by 1863 he was prosperous enough to propose marriage to Miss Olivia Boyce, whom he married on Nov. 26, 1863.

Eager's subsequent history in Evansville is a classic story of continuous financial and personal success. Under his management, the Baker Manufacturing Company became the principal industry in Evansville and, because of this and other personal investment successes, Eager became one of Evansville's most respected and wealthy residents. Upon his death in 1902, at the age of 64, his obituary in the local newspaper was at pains to note the varied accomplishments of a man who had become one of Evansville's most important and well-liked citizens.

In 1868, Mr. Eager moved to this city [Evansville] and in partnership with W. S. Smith, opened a general store. They continued in this business fourteen years after which they bought tobacco for three years. Mr. Eager became associated with the tack factory in 1883 as secretary, and held that position during the company's career. In 1873 Mr. Eager, in company with A. S. Baker, L. M. Shaw, L. Mygatt, C. Snashall and W. S. Smith organized the Baker Manufacturing Co., to engage in the manufacture of windmills, pumps, etc. In 1885 he was elected President of this corporation.

The deceased was a member of Union Lodge A.F. & A.M., also of Chapter No. 35 R.A.M., and Janesville Commandery No. 2 Knights Templars. He was a Republican and took pride in the fact that that he cast his first vote for Abraham Lincoln. He was Town Treasurer for a number of years, a member of the Board of Evansville for many years and President of the Board for three years. He was also a member of the County Board of Supervisors for nine years. On Nov. 6, 1900, he was elected Assemblyman for the Second District of Rock Co. ...

**United States Department of the Interior**  
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**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 5

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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By hard work, honesty, and frugality in his younger days, Mr. Eager has amassed a large fortune and in his latter years was a most generous giver to charitable and worthy institutions, giving at one time \$1000.00 to Lawrence University. He was a kind and devoted husband and father and one who was exceptionally well thought of by the entire community.<sup>12</sup>

Nor was his generosity to others limited to the gifts that he had made during his lifetime. A week after his death the local newspaper filed an additional report on Eager's burial and then proceeded to list the contents of his will.

Evansville paid due respect to its once honored citizen, Almeron Eager, who was laid away in the cemetery in this city on last Friday. The business places were all closed and the Baker Mfg. Co.'s plant of which Mr. Eager was the president, ceased its labors and the employees attended the funeral in a body. It is estimated that his holdings in this world's goods will amount to something like \$250,000.

About thirty legacies of \$1,000 each, to be paid in five years were left to relatives and many were in recognitions of deeds of kindness shown him in years past. ...

Two thousand dollar was left to the Methodist church of this city, the interest to apply on the pastor's salary. Ten thousand dollars was bequeathed to the city of Evansville for a free public library building to be known as the "Eager Library." A life sized statue of the donor to be placed at the entrance. One thousand dollars was appropriated to parks improvements, the money to be spent for evergreens.

The will also provides for a monument that will cost from \$7,000 to \$10,000; similar to the Bowen monument in Brodhead. Allen S. Baker, Geo. L. Pullen and Robert D. Hartly were appointed executors and trustees. The income of the estate for fifteen years is to go to his widow and daughter, and at the expiration of that time to be equally divided.<sup>13</sup>

Two more years passed before Eager's provision for his cemetery monument could be fulfilled due to the large size of the monument. When it was finally finished and arrived in Evansville, the local newspaper took notice.

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<sup>12</sup> "Passed Away. Almeron Eager." Evansville: *The Evansville Review*, October 16, 1902, p. 1. Obituary of Almeron Eager. The Baker Manufacturing Co. is still in existence in Evansville today and it is now, and has always been, one of Evansville's largest employers.

<sup>13</sup> "Left Large Sum to This City. Gone But Not Forgotten." Evansville: *The Evansville Review*, Oct. 23, 1902, p. 1.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 6

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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A traction engine is being used to convey the Eager monument from the depot to the cemetery and to assist in its erection. This monument is by far the largest and most expensive ever erected in this city cemetery.<sup>14</sup>

The cemetery where this monument was erected had also evolved and grown during the thirty-four year period of Eager's residence in Evansville.

In 1883, the village purchased and set out maple trees as borders for the cemetery. A row was planted on the north and west edges of the cemetery. Another row of maples was planted down the main aisle. Because of the trees, the cemetery soon became known as Maple Hill. ...

As the village grew, the cemetery also grew in size and additional land was required. In July 1889, the village purchased land from C. J. Mitchell for \$125 an acre. This became known as the Mitchell Addition and is located east of the original purchases. ...

Two additional pieces of land were purchased in the early 1900s, the Campbell and Sawtelle additions. The earliest burial in the Sawtelle addition is 1900 and the earliest in the Campbell addition is 1911. Both additions are south of the original burial grounds.<sup>15</sup>

Additional enlargements to the land area of the cemetery were made in subsequent years and so were such improvements as graveled drives and running water, the latter improvement being done in 1938 with WPA crews doing the work.

Today, this historic cemetery contains the graves of nearly everyone who has been of note in Evansville's history and many of their grave markers are also substantial examples of the monument maker's craft. Never-the-less, the monument that Almeron Eager caused to be erected is still the showpiece of the cemetery and it is a fitting memorial to a man who left his mark on the city and to a family whose members remain important and respected members of the Evansville community.

**Art:**

The Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot is eligible for listing in the NRHP under NR Criterion C (Art) as a locally significant, highly intact, representative example of Late Victorian era funerary art that exhibits the high artistic values that characterize the best and largest examples of the

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<sup>14</sup> *Evansville Enterprise*. August 26, 1904, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Montgomery, Ruth Ann. Op. Cit., p. 9.

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**National Register of Historic Places**  
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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funerary artwork of this period. The 42.75-foot-square Eager plot contains a centrally placed, twenty-foot-tall, solid granite monument that memorializes both Almeron Eager and his family, and the entire plot is encircled by a solid granite grave fence. This monument and its surrounding fence were made between 1902 and 1904 and they both exhibit a very high standard of design and a very high degree of craftsmanship that were the result of an expenditure of funds on the part of Almeron Eager that was without precedent in its local context. Sets of resources such as these are rarely found in any but the largest cities in Wisconsin and they are rare even there because of the considerable expense involved in their creation. Consequently, it is believed that the Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot is significant as a superb and a very rare representative example of this type of funerary art that also helps to illustrate the common artistic and societal values that existed at the time it was created.

The design of funerary art, like architecture, tends to follow fashion, and for much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the two were quite closely linked, especially when large sums of money were being expended. Consequently, when the Greek Revival style was in fashion in architecture, for instance, the larger scale funerary monuments of the period tended to feature classically inspired elements such as columns, entablatures, and the like, while the funerary monuments of the Victorian era tended to display the eclecticism that was characteristic of the architecture of that era.

For example, the elaborate monumentation characteristic of cemeteries of the Victorian era was derived from the influence of the romantic movement in literature and art, which revered nature and sentiment. Grief and devotion could be expressed nobly in artistic terms by means of a code-like imagery. Pyramid-capped mausoleums and tapering shafts on pedestals were among the popular monument forms drawn from the ancient world. Because of their associations with Egyptian sepulchral monuments signifying eternal life beyond the earthly realm, the pyramid and the obelisk became symbols for Christian belief in the eternity of the spirit. Indeed, obelisks were so widely used as gravemarkers that they, along with classical columns, account for much of the bristling quality of cemetery landscapes of the period. Some of the imagery was figural, encompassing effigies and idealized figures as well as lambs, cherubs, and other orders of angels.<sup>16</sup>

The Almeron Eager monument and its grave fence are excellent examples of the eclectic mix of stylistic elements that are often present in the more elaborate monuments of the Victorian era. The tall, very slightly tapering pedestal that forms the lower part of the monument is essentially a square plan classical pier in inspiration but it has a capital whose foliated ornaments are essentially Gothic

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<sup>16</sup> Potter, Elisabeth Walton and Beth M. Boland. *National Register Bulletin 41: Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, National Register of Historic Places, 1992, p. 12.

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Section 8 Page 8

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

Revival style elements, as are the pedestals that support the ends of the grave fence. The life-size statue of a young woman that crowns the monument, meanwhile, is essentially a product of Renaissance Revival Style classicism. The monument and its associated plot also make considerable use of the coded symbolism that is typical of the funerary monuments of this era. Not surprisingly, most of these symbols are associated with the Christian religion. For instance, the monument itself is placed at the center of a plot that is laid out on a symmetrical plan which, when seen from the air, consists of a Greek Cross having four equal length arms. The base of the monument's pedestal and the base of the statue both consist of three elements, which are based in part on classical designs but are also emblematic of the Trinity or of the three Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Likewise, the laurel wreath that is placed above Almeron Eager's name on the south-facing side of the pedestal represents victory, eternity, and immortality. Several of the symbols that adorn the various sides of the capital that crowns the pedestal of the monument also have Christian associations. The entwined Greek alphabet letters Alpha and Omega on the capital's west-facing side are linked to the book of Revelation and refer to the beginning and the end of things. Similarly, the entwined crown and cross on the capital's south-facing side is a symbol of the sovereignty of the Lord and of victory. It is also, however, a symbol that is associated with the Knights Templar, a Masonic order to which Almeron Eager belonged. In addition, Eager's membership in several Masonic orders is also explicitly shown in the Masonic emblem that is found on the east-facing side of the capital.<sup>17</sup>

Christian symbolism is also integral to the figural life-size statue of the young woman that crowns the monument. The woman is shown supporting an anchor, a Christian symbol of hope and steadfastness. Hope is also one of the three theological virtues, along with faith and charity, and these virtues are often represented by a young woman, who, in the case of hope, is always shown with an anchor. In addition, the anchor is entwined with a garland formed of roses and lilies, both of which have associations with purity and are meant to emphasize the character of the woman who holds it.<sup>18</sup>

All of these features are formed out of beautifully hand-carved, high quality granite and they are the work of still unidentified but obviously talented craftsmen. Unfortunately, no information has been found that would aid in the identification of the firm that made the various resources that comprise the Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot, but the fact that the monument was moved from Evansville's train depot to the cemetery certainly indicates that the firm was not a local one. The source of the overall design of Eager's monument and its grave fence, however, was noted in Eager's will, which specified that his monument should be "similar to the Bowen monument in Brodhead." The Bowen monument is indeed similar and it is located about twelve miles south of Evansville in the

<sup>17</sup> Keister, Douglas. *Stories in Stone*. New York: MJF Books, 2004, pp. 48, 113, 146, 176, 190-193.

<sup>18</sup> Keister, Douglas. Op. Cit., pp. 50, 54, 103, 111.

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Section 8 Page 9

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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Greenwood Cemetery in the equally small city of Brodhead, Wisconsin. "Bowen" was Ephraim Bowen (1824-1890), a native of New York State who moved to Brodhead in 1867 from the nearby village of Albany, Wisconsin and thereafter followed a successful business career that was in some ways not dissimilar to Eager's own career.

In 1867, he [Bowen] removed to Brodhead and having disposed of his business in Albany, invested largely in pine lands in Green Bay, and for some time carried on a successful lumber business. Two years later, he, with others established the first bank in Brodhead and he continued in the banking business until 1881, when he withdrew, the care of his own private affairs requiring all his time and strength.<sup>19</sup>

In the process, Bowen "accumulated a large fortune" and, while the specifics of his will are not known, he too apparently specified that a large monument be erected in his local cemetery to commemorate his life. Bowen's granite monument was erected on a triangular plot, but it is otherwise very similar to the Eager monument, both in its size and design and in the quality of its execution. Indeed, except for having to encircle a triangular plot, the granite grave fence that surrounds the Bowen monument is identical in design to the one that surrounds the Eager plot and the design of the central monument's pedestal, which also supports a life-size statue of a woman, is virtually identical as well and is also nearly identical in size. The principal difference between the two is that in Bowen's case the statue of the young woman carries a laurel wreath: a symbol of victory and eternity and immortality. It is tempting, therefore, to speculate that the same firm might have made both monuments, but as of yet there is no evidence to support such an assertion.

It is clear from the results that Eager's trustees interpreted his request literally and saw to it that his monument was indeed similar in almost every respect to that of Bowen's. Just how free a hand the trustees of either man had in the design of these monuments is a matter of conjecture, of course, but Eager's trustees, at least, had a clear idea of what their man wanted.

What is striking is that these two men should both have wished to construct such large and costly monuments in community cemeteries that belonged to cities of such small size.<sup>20</sup> Both monuments were by far the largest monuments in their respective cemeteries when they were erected and both are still so today. It must also be remembered that the cost of both was between seven and ten thousand dollars at a time when a sizable and quite elaborate Queen Anne style house could have been built in either Evansville or Brodhead for the sum of \$3500. It is therefore not surprising that such elaborate

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<sup>19</sup> "Died." *Brodhead Independent*. March 14, 1890, p. 4. Obituary of Ephraim Bowen. See also: "Funeral of Hon. Ephraim Bowen." *Brodhead Independent*. March 21, 1890, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Evansville's population in 1900 was 1864.

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Section 8 Page 10

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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funerary monuments are very rarely found in Wisconsin, not even in its largest cities. The nearby capitol city of Madison, Wisconsin, for instance, had a population of 19,164 in 1900 and it has two main historic cemeteries, Forest Hill Cemetery and the adjacent Resurrection Cemetery. While both of these cemeteries have their share of tall granite obelisks, neither has any monuments that come close to being as elaborate or as large as the Eager and Bowen monuments.

It is not to be supposed, however, that either Eager or Bowen intended to create a monument to themselves that would have fallen outside the accepted mores of their time. Instead, what perhaps seem like extravagance to us had very different meanings in the times in which these men lived. Both men certainly knew that monuments such as these were symbolic of their worldly success but they probably also believed that they were symbolic of lives that had been lived in accordance with the religious and moral virtues that were valued by the communities in which they lived, virtues such as frugality, prudence, fair dealing, and the taking of initiative. Both men, in fact, lived unostentatious lives, as was noted by one of the clergymen who officiated at Bowen's funeral, who said it was "not meet to eulogize the departed, who led a life ever adverse to ostentation."<sup>21</sup> What Eager was really doing, so he probably believed, was not celebrating himself so much as he was commemorating the importance of living a life by the right principles, and this would have been in full accord with the views of his peers in his community, very few of whom would have questioned either the right or the propriety of making such a statement in this particular way. This was still the era of monuments, after all, a time when life-size, three-dimensional marble or bronze or granite statues were being erected to commemorate people and events all across this country and everywhere else in the world where Western influence reached. In causing this monument to be erected after his death, Almeron Eager was only doing what so many others have done throughout recorded history; attempting to pass on the values he believed in to future generations.

It is therefore believed that the Almeron Eager Funerary Monument and Plot is eligible for listing in the NRHP under NR Criterion C (Art) as a locally significant, highly intact, unusually large and elaborate example of Late Victorian era funerary art. The size and the design of these resources set them apart from all the other funerary monuments in this cemetery and it is believed that they also exhibit the high artistic values that characterize the best and largest examples of the funerary artwork of this period. In addition, it is further believed that these resources also reflect the moral and societal values of the period in which they were created as well. What might seem an ostentatious display today was once one of the few sure ways by which one generation could pass its values on to succeeding generations, the worldly success that such a monument symbolizes on the one hand also

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<sup>21</sup> "Funeral of Hon. Ephraim Bowen." *Brodhead Independent*. March 21, 1890, p. 4.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
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being symbolic of the virtues by which such a success was achieved. In addition, such a monument also expresses the belief that the virtues that were practiced in this life will be valued in the next.



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Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 1

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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Continuation Sheet

Section 10 Page 1

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Section M, Block 2, Lot 76. Maple Hill Cemetery, Evansville, WI.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries contain all the land that has historically been associated with the Almeron Eager Family Plot in Maple Hill Cemetery.

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot

Rock

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

**name/title**

**organization**

**Street & number**

**city or town**

**state** WI

**date**

**telephone**

**zip code**

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section photos Page 1

Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
Evansville, Rock County, WI

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**Items a-d are the same for photos 1 – 8.**

Photo 1

- a) Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot
- b) Evansville, Rock County, WI
- c) Timothy F. Heggland, November, 2009
- d) Wisconsin Historical Society
- e) General View, View looking N
- f) Photo 1 of 8

Photo 2

- e) General View, View looking NW
- f) Photo 2 of 8

Photo 3

- e) General View, View looking W
- f) Photo 3 of 8

Photo 4

- e) General View, View looking SE
- f) Photo 4 of 8

Photo 5

- e) General View, View looking E
- f) Photo 5 of 8

Photo 6

- e) General View, View looking NNE
- f) Photo 6 of 8

Photo 7

- e) Grave Fence Detail, View looking W
- f) Photo 7 of 8

Photo 8

- e) Monument Base, View looking N
- f) Photo 8 of 8

FIGURE 1:

EAGER, ALMERON, FUNERARY MONUMENT AND PLOT  
EVANSVILLE, ROCK CO., WISCONSIN

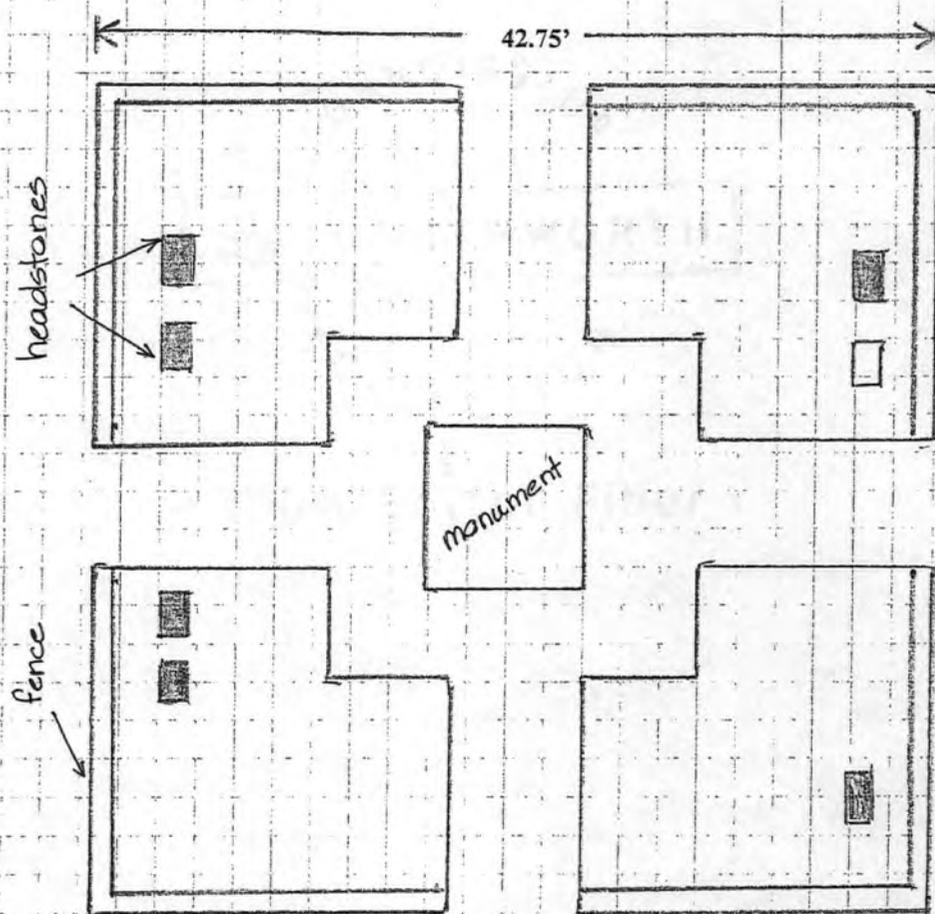
Non-Contributing Resources:



N



Not to Scale



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WISCONSIN, Rock

DATE RECEIVED: 6/10/11 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/29/11  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/14/11 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/26/11  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 11000477

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 7.20.11 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Eager, Almeron, Fishery Monument & Plot  
Evansville, Rock Co., WI  
) of 8



Eager, Aumeron, Funerary Monument & Plot  
Evansville, Rock Co., WI

2 of 8



Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument + Plot  
Eau Claire, Rock Co., WI  
3 of 8



Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument + Plot

Evansville, Rock Co., WI

4 of 8



Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument & Plot  
Evansville, Rock Co., WI  
5 of 8



Euger, Almeron, Funerary Monument & Plot  
Evansville, Rock Co., WI  
6 of 8



Eager, Almeron, Funerary Monument + Plot

Evansville, Roett Co., WI

7 of 8

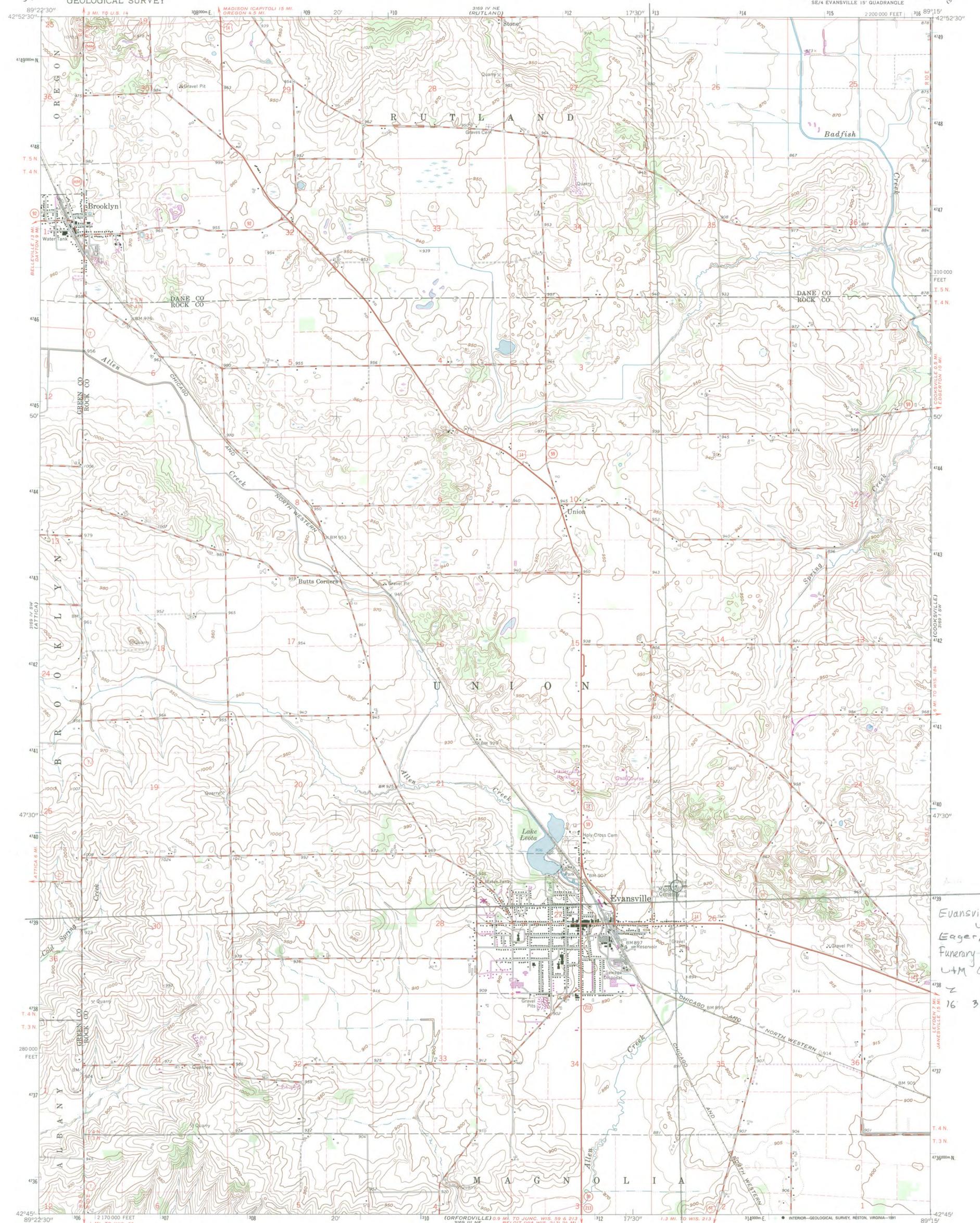


A. EAGER.

Eager, Almeron, February Monument & Plot

Evansville, Rock Co., WI

8 of 8



Evansville, Rock County,  
WI  
Eager, Almeron,  
Funerary Monument and  
Plot  
UTM Co-ordinates  
Z E N  
16 313030 4739200

Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
in cooperation with State of Wisconsin agencies  
Control by USGS and USC&GS

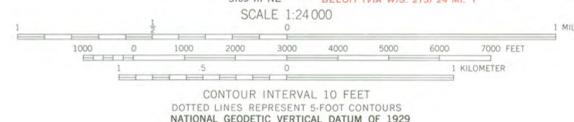
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1960. Field checked 1961

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Wisconsin coordinate system, south zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 16, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where  
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs  
taken 1971. This information not field checked

Map photoinspected 1981  
No major culture or drainage changes observed



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
AND WISCONSIN GEOLOGICAL AND NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY, MADISON, WISCONSIN 53706  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

The difference between 1927 North American Datum and North  
American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5-minute intersections  
is given in USGS Bulletin 1875. The NAD 83 is shown by  
dashed corner ticks

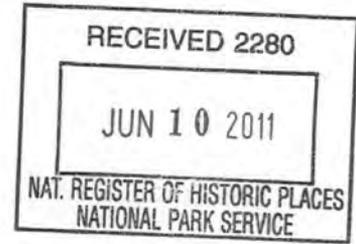
ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

EVANSVILLE, WIS.  
SE/4 EVANSVILLE 15' QUADRANGLE  
42089-G3-TF-024  
PHOTOINSPECTED 1981  
1961  
PHOTOREVISED 1971  
DMA 3169 IV SE—SERIES V861



WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY



**TO: Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places**

**FROM: Daina Penkiunas**

**SUBJECT: National Register Nomination**

The following materials are submitted on this 7th day of June 2011,  
for nomination of the Eger, Almeron, Funerary Monument and Plot to the  
National Register of Historic Places:

- 1 Original National Register of Historic Places nomination form
- Multiple Property Nomination form
- 8 Photograph(s)
- 1 Original USGS map(s)
- 1 Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)
- Piece(s) of correspondence
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMENTS:**

- Please insure that this nomination is reviewed
- This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
- The enclosed owner objection(s) do \_\_\_\_\_ do not \_\_\_\_\_  
constitute a majority of property owners.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_