



# Oak Leaves

## Oak Hill Cemetery Association

1705 Mt. Vernon Rd. S. E. • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52403

*Oak Hill Cemetery is non-profit lot owner association dedicated to preserving the heritage of Linn County, Iowa.*

Although a week doesn't go by when someone will ask, we get most of our questions about Tillie at this time of year. And as interesting as Oak Hill Cemetery is, the story of Tillie is just that, a story. While you can actually FIND first person accounts of the haunting of Coe College by Helen, or that can say they witnessed something unusual in the dorms, we cannot find one

person who can say they have witnessed a Tillie sighting. It appears that with the exception of a few details every account is just a repeat of the same story. Is there a spirit presence at Oak Hill? You cannot be in cemetery without feeling some sort of connection to these people, and remember them as they lived. Is it haunted by either friendly or evil spirits? We find no evidence,

For those of you who are unfamiliar, or have never done an internet search, there are several stories and all vary in content. If you use the Google Search Engine and the following keywords [Tillie+Oak Hill+Cedar Rapids] or [Paranormal+Tillie+Oak Hill+Cedar Rapids] or [Ghost+Tillie+Oak Hill+Cedar Rapids] The most common search results follow.

<http://www.zerotime.com/ghosts/cemet.htm>

Oak Hill Cemetery - Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
*A Czech girl haunts this graveyard carrying flickering candles and trying to pull people into one of the mausoleums. The ghost is believed to be named Tillie. She is buried in the potters field section of the cemetery.*

[http://www.iowacenterforparanormalresearch.com/new\\_page\\_9.htm](http://www.iowacenterforparanormalresearch.com/new_page_9.htm)

### TILLIE'S GRAVE

Oak Hill Cemetery, located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has long been believed to be haunted by the ghost of Tillie, a witch that is buried in the potter's field section of the cemetery. It is said that Tillie tries to grab people and pull them into the mausoleums when they venture into the cemetery at night. Tillie's grave is marked by an elaborate iron fence that surrounds the grave. This fence is believed to trap Tillie so that she cannot escape.

An investigation into Tillie's grave has revealed that the witch Tillie, is not a witch at all. The grave is the resting place of two Czechoslovakian infant girls that died when their parents were passing through the area sometime in the late 1700's or early 1800's. The iron fence is common decoration for Czechoslovakian graves and is in no way meant to trap the dead. Tillie's grave is haunted, not by the two infant girls, but by the living. Over the years, people have tried to dig up the bodies, they've pounded wooden stakes into the soil. Evidence of small fires and candle wax surrounds the grave site. When I returned to the grave site a few weeks ago to photograph the iron fence for this article, I found that the fence is no longer there.

END OF INVESTIGATION

<http://release-me.net/iowa.php>

*Cedar Rapids - Oak Hill Cemetery - It is said that Tillie, a small Czech girl, can be seen at night caring a flickering candle, and has said to have tried to pull people into a nearby Mausoleum.*

[http://www.unexplainable.net/artman/publish/article\\_3081.shtml](http://www.unexplainable.net/artman/publish/article_3081.shtml)

*The Oak Hill Cemetery in Cedar Rapids is said to be haunted by the ghost of a young girl named Tillie, who has been spotted during the night with a lit candle in her hand.*

[http://www.myufo.com/2006/03/haunted\\_places\\_in\\_iowa.html](http://www.myufo.com/2006/03/haunted_places_in_iowa.html)

*Cedar Rapids - Oak Hill Cemetery - It is said that Tillie, a small Czech girl, can be seen at night caring a flickering candle, and has said to have tried to pull people into a nearby Mausoleum.*

<http://www.diepart.com/87801.html>

*Cedar Rapids - Oak Hill Cemetery - It is said that Tillie, a small Czech girl, can be seen at night caring a flickering candle, and has said to have tried to pull people into a nearby Mausoleum.*

<http://www.theshadowlands.net/places/iowa.htm>

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### The Iowa Road Guide to Haunted Locations

*This book published in 2007 tells a similar tale, but goes on to include variations of the other stories, and includes a passage reading "If you are lucky enough to find Tillie's grave you be will be rewarded with 30 days of good luck. If you decide to be disrespectful you will be cursed with 30 days of bad luck." The preface of this book also carefully disclaims "The places listed in this book have neither been proved or disproved to be haunted."*

but we will try to break down the story into facts.

One lady who has lived next to Oak Hill Cemetery for most of her adult life (for most of 60 years), has been looking for Tillie without a sighting. The family of Mr. Pisney, grounds keeper in residence for over 40 years, has never seen Tillie.

One major problems with most of these stories is this fact.

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*SHE IS BURIED IN THE POTTERS FIELD  
SECTION OF THE CEMETERY.*

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*The potters field referred to is not part of the Oak Hill Cemetery.* In 1853, when Mr. Gabriel Carpenter laid out Oak Hill Cemetery, and operated its as a for-profit cemetery, first called the Oak Hill Cemetery Company, he gave a separate plot of ground which adjoins the cemetery to the City of Cedar Rapids. *The area designated as City Cemetery on the map is under the control of and maintained by the City Parks department. The only connection Oak Hill Cemetery has to this area is the fact that the only way to get to City Cemetery is through Oak Hill.* Confusion about this area was compounded when a WPA project in the first half of the 1900's did not identify this area as a separate area.

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*THE GRAVE IS THE RESTING PLACE OF TWO  
CZECHOSLOVAKIAN INFANT GIRLS THAT  
DIED WHEN THEIR PARENTS WERE PASSING  
THROUGH THE AREA SOMETIME IN THE  
LATE 1700'S OR EARLY 1800'S.*

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*Note the date of the development of the cemetery. Iowa did not become established as a territory or a state until the 1840's.* Unless you consider a date after 1853 as the early 1800's it would have been likely that Tillie would have been buried in the Village Cemetery also known as Washington Cemetery located at Eight Street and Fifth Avenue S.E., with the known remains relocated to Oak Hill Cemetery at a later date. There are a 11 known Tillies and 11 Matildas buried in Oak Hill, none as a child, and the earliest death date in the 1893.

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*A CZECH GIRL HAUNTS THIS GRAVEYARD  
CARRYING FLICKERING CANDLES  
AND TRYING TO PULL PEOPLE INTO  
ONE OF THE MAUSOLEUMS.*

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*Another problem with this story is the fact that there are no mausoleums near the part of the cemetery known as City Cemetery.* It is doubtful that if she wanted to scare you she would waste the time or effort to pull you to one of them. *Also the Oldest Mausoleums did not appear until the 1890's, so Tillie would have been a very old ghost by the time the first one was constructed.*

*If you do take the time to look through the records for city cemetery, the number of unknown or unnamed infants or young children on record will stagger you.* Many do not have marked grave sites, their existence is known only by a compiled list of death records.

You may ask anyone who is working at Oak Hill Cemetery for details, but they DO NOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN the exact location, and if they do find out, they have agreed it would be best to let Tillie rest in peace. We cannot speak for the City Parks Department workers but we hope they feel the same.

***How did the Tillie story get started?***

We have been told the story can be traced back to a city worker from the time period of the 1960's or early 1970's. As mentioned earlier, City Cemetery is not part of Oak Hill and is maintained by the City Parks Department. The son of a former grounds keeper, who grew up in the house on the cemetery, tells us the story started out as a prank to scare a rather gullible and nervous worker.

**Does anyone have any written reference to Tillie before 1960? Is so we would love to see it, so we can help clear up any mystery about the origin of the story. If not his version is the most credible we have to date.**

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*TILLIE'S GRAVE IS MARKED BY AN ELABORATE  
IRON FENCE THAT SURROUNDS THE GRAVE.  
THIS FENCE IS BELIEVED TO TRAP TILLIE SO  
THAT SHE CANNOT ESCAPE.*

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Anyone who remembers a fence, knows the fence has been removed, but even when it was in place it gave no clue to the identity of the person in the grave. This fence never existed in Oak Hill Cemetery.

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For whatever reason, without any individual coming forward to declare "I was at Oak Hill and this is what I saw" the story continues.

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**Some people would rather see a cemetery as scary or creepy rather than as a testament to the memory of the people who lived.** For many people this cemetery is the only place that says "I was here, and I made a difference." Families may have moved on, or as someone once told me, "Nothing man made lasts forever." Any buildings or land associated with their name may no longer be in existence, or has since changed ownership names.

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**For anyone who is seeking thrills this Halloween season, we strongly suggest other entertainment options.** Many local businesses and organizations in the area work hard to create the haunted experience for your enjoyment and fantasy.

**This is a good time to remind everyone that Oak Hill Cemetery CLOSSES AT DUSK. Not just on this day but every day of the year.** This includes foot and vehicle traffic. Extra measures are taken on Halloween to prevent activity after dark on this evening. We ask that you please respect the memory of everyone buried at Oak Hill, by taking your thrill seeking elsewhere.