

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

MOUNT AUBURN CEMETERY

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Mount Auburn Cemetery

Other Name/Site Number: n/a

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Roughly bounded by Mount Auburn Street, Coolidge Avenue, Grove Street, the Sand Banks Cemetery, and Cottage Street

Not for publication: \_\_

City/Town: Watertown and Cambridge

Vicinity: \_\_

State: Massachusetts Code: MA County: Middlesex Code: 017

Zip Code: 02472 and 02318

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: \_\_

Public-State: \_\_

Public-Federal: \_\_

Category of Property

Building(s): \_\_

District: X

Site: \_\_

Structure: \_\_

Object: \_\_

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

4

1

6

15

26

Noncontributing

4 buildings

\_\_ sites

4 structures

\_\_ objects

8 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 26

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: n/a

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_ Entered in the National Register
- \_\_\_ Determined eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- \_\_\_ Removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_ Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic:	Funerary	Sub:	Cemetery
Current:	Funerary Agriculture Recreation and Culture	Sub:	Cemetery Horticultural facility Monument/marker

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century:  
 Exotic Revival (Gateway)  
 Gothic Revival (Bigelow Chapel; Washington Tower; Story Chapel and  
 Administration Building)

## Materials:

Foundation:  
 Walls: Stone (granite, sandstone); brick  
 Roof: Stone (slate)  
 Other: Metal (iron) - Fences  
 Stone (granite); concrete - Curbs  
 Stone (granite, marble, sandstone, limestone, slate); brick; metal (bronze) -  
 Monuments, tombs, mausoleums  
 Pavement – asphalt and gravel

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.****OVERVIEW**

Mount Auburn Cemetery is located on a 175-acre site near the Charles River on the Cambridge-Watertown border. The historic gateway entrance is on Mount Auburn Street. This street is the main road between Harvard Square and Watertown Square and takes its name from the cemetery. Although this entrance and about twelve acres in the northeastern corner of the property are in Cambridge, the majority of the cemetery is in Watertown. To the east of Mount Auburn is Cambridge City Cemetery (begun in 1854 and once modeled on the landscape design principles of Mount Auburn) and to the west is a historic Roman Catholic Cemetery founded in the mid-1850s. The surrounding neighborhood includes residential housing, schools and buildings associated with commercial and light industry uses.

Mount Auburn's most unique resource is the cemetery's own landscape, a combination of topography, water bodies, avenues, paths, living plants and historic monuments, buildings and other structures. While it has seen great changes over 170 years, the original design of the rural cemetery is largely intact, and its historical integrity and origins are evident to visitors. Successive generations have added discernable historical layers to the original landscape, resulting in a complex tapestry that reveals the ideals and values of nearly two centuries. Mount Auburn Cemetery preserves a remarkably illustrative chronicle of American landscape design, attitudes toward death and commemoration, aesthetic and spiritual values, material culture and changing technology.

The present topography, as originally intended, still creates a series of well-defined spaces. The site is part of a glacial moraine and includes four ponds and a variety of knolls and dells. The highest elevation is a prominent hill, 125-feet above the Charles River, now known as Mount Auburn and once called Stone's Mount, that provides a panoramic view of downtown Boston and the surrounding countryside. The topography is varied, giving the area a distinctly romantic air. A network of ponds and wetlands and a mature forest of native pines, oaks and beeches towering over the surrounding farmland created a special rural character in 1831. These components of the landscape were critical in the original site choice and design intent and remain visible and obvious today.

Most of the original circulation system and a sizable number of large native trees, similar to the 1831 mature forest, are still present. The winding roads and paths follow the natural contours of the site, and in keeping with the horticultural interests of the Cemetery's founders, they are named in most cases for trees and plants. Hundreds of nineteenth-century iron road and path signs are still in use and lead today's visitors on rambling pilgrimages retaining much of the feeling of the original landscape.

The over 30,000 monuments and associated structures provide a unique overlay to the living material. The Cemetery contains an exceptional and diverse collection of nineteenth and twentieth century monuments and sculpture, including significant works by Horatio Greenough, R. Ball Hughes, Thomas Crawford, Thomas Ball, Edmonia Lewis, Martin Milmore, and Augustus Saint Gaudens. The cultural landscape also contains a rich variety of vernacular memorial art, including cast-iron and wrought-iron fences, granite curbing and mausolea of a wide variety of styles, with particular strength in the mid-nineteenth century. These eye-catching

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monuments and gravestones reveal in obvious and subtle ways much of the values and beliefs of those who chose them.

The cemetery's overall design was to serve as an example, consoling the bereaved and inspiring visitors to contemplate their mortality in an uplifting spirit of melancholy. Just as John Winthrop and the Puritans intended to make Boston a model community of the living, Mount Auburn's founders set out to create another model--a "silent city on a hill" for the dead.

Early descriptions of the site stressed the beauty of the natural features of the landscape and the need for only slight embellishment. The nature that was valued by Mount Auburn's founders, however, was a civilized landscape, enhanced by subtle manipulation by the hand of man. It was based upon English eighteenth-century ideals of scenery--a pastoral or domesticated landscape rather than a sublime wilderness.

The spot, which has been selected for this establishment, has not been chosen without great deliberation,. . . It stands near a fine sweep in Charles River. It presents every variety of surface, rising in one part into a beautiful elevation, level in others, with intermediate depressions, and a considerable part of the whole covered with the natural growth of wood. In fact, the place has long been noted for its rural beauty, its romantic seclusion, and its fine prospect; and it is confidently believed, that there is not another to be named, possessing the same union of advantages.<sup>1</sup>

The avenues and paths were laid out to follow the natural contours of the topography and in a winding and picturesque fashion to reach throughout the site. When the land was still farmland, frequent visits by neighbors had developed rough paths through the area -- one following the high ground of the natural curves of an esker or ridge that runs diagonally through the property. This path remains in today's landscape and is romantically called Indian Ridge Path. The circulation system of the Cemetery retains a high degree of integrity and contributes to the historical feeling and character of the landscape.

In the more level portions, avenues were about 18-20 feet wide and were considered suitable for carriage roads. Paths, about six feet in width, were laid out in the "more broken and precipitous parts." Lots were set back six feet from the passageways, keeping a sense of spaciousness in the landscape. In the early decades of the Cemetery's history, the paths and avenues were graveled and later, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were treated with asphalt. The Trustee minutes of February 26, 1872, note that the Committee on Grounds will consider "the expediency of covering paths with *asphaltum* instead of gravel, wherever it can be done without detriment to the growth of the trees or shrubbery."

Four architecturally significant buildings contribute to the character of the landscape: the Egyptian Revival Gateway (1832, rebuilt 1842-43); Bigelow Chapel (1840s, rebuilt 1850s, renovated 1899 and 1924); Washington Tower (1852-54); and Story Chapel (1896-98).

The Egyptian Gateway to Mount Auburn was one of the first buildings placed at the new Cemetery. Designed by Dr. Jacob Bigelow, it was first built in wood dusted with sand in 1832. In 1842-43 when funds permitted it was rebuilt in Quincy granite by Octavius T. Rogers who was the only contractor willing to undertake making and placing the carved cap, or cornice stone, in a

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<sup>1</sup>Address prepared by Edward Everett published in the Boston papers, 1831, quoted in Jacob Bigelow's *History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn*, 1860, pp. 134-135.

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single piece. This cornice stone is thought to be the largest piece of carved granite placed in a built structure in the United States at that time. The gate is in the "Egyptian style," its height being 25 feet, and whole length, including the lodges, 60 feet. The piers are 4 foot square, the central entrance 4 feet wide and the greatest length of cornice 24 feet. Dr. Bigelow reported that he took the design for the gate from "some of the best examples in Denderah and Karnac, in which the piers are vertical, and the curve of the cornice vertical in its lower half. The banded cylinder, the foliage of the cornice, and winged globe are Egyptian. On the latter a lotus flower is turned over, so as to conceal the head of the fabulous animal with which the ancient are usually defaced. The size of the stones, and the solidity of the structure, entitle it to a stability of a thousand years." On the outside of the gate is this inscription:

THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN  
TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS  
AND THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN  
UNTO GOD WHO GAVE IT. [Ecclesiastes, 12:7]

On the opposite side [facing into the Cemetery]:

MOUNT AUBURN CONSECRATED  
SEPTEMBER 24TH, 1831.

Although the alcoves inside the gate were roofed over with granite in 1861 and some minor modifications made to the doorways, the gate preserves a high degree of integrity and is probably the most widely recognized symbol of the cemetery. Originally carriages entered through the central portal and pedestrians through the entrances on each side where lodges for the gatekeeper and superintendent were located. [This gate served as an important model for other cemeteries. It was widely copied and examples include the Old Granary Burying Ground in Boston (1840), Cypress Grove Cemetery in New Orleans (1840) and Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester, NY (1838, no longer standing)]. In 1908 turnstiles were added at the sides and in 1913 gated entrances were added to each side to provide entrances for automobiles.

In 1845 a cast-iron fence was added, running the length of the cemetery along Mount Auburn Street. In 1979-81, the cemetery replaced most of this iron fence with chain-link. After considerable discussions with the Cambridge Historical Commission and other interested parties, sections of the iron fence adjacent to the gate were repaired and replaced.

Bigelow Chapel was designed in the Gothic Revival style by Dr. Bigelow working with Gridley J. F. Bryant. The chapel and the Washington Tower were planned in the original scheme to follow the Romantic Picturesque style of architecture envisioned for the cemetery grounds. Constructed in the 1840s and rebuilt in the 1850s of Quincy granite, it is used for public programs and funeral and memorial services. In 1899 the interior was renovated by architect Willard Sears to accommodate the first crematory located in a cemetery in Massachusetts. In 1924 the interior was again completely redone by the leading architectural firm of Allen and Collens in their popular Gothic style. A 1970 addition on the west side is the current crematory. The exterior preserves a high degree of integrity. With some modifications, the original 1845 stained glass windows imported from the firm of Allan and Ballantyne of Edinburgh Scotland remain intact.

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Washington Tower, also designed by Dr. Bigelow working with architect Gridley J. F. Bryant, continues to serve as the landmark by which the cemetery is recognized. Included in the original plan for the cemetery, Washington Tower, honoring the country's first president, was built in 1852-54. Towers were a common feature in the English picturesque landscapes, and the addition of this tower to the cemetery carried out the original intent of the founders as well as providing an architectural landmark identifying the cemetery at a distance. Dr. Bigelow wrote in his 1860 *History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn* that he modeled it on the general plan of some of the round towers of the feudal ages, with a gallery, battlements, Gothic windows and an interior spiral staircase. The tower was constructed by the firm of Witcher and Sheldon of Quincy for a contracted cost of \$18,500. The substantial Quincy granite blocks were hammered smooth on both sides and each makes a part of the inside and outside surfaces of the wall. Invoices in the cemetery's archives establish that architect Bryant billed Mount Auburn \$75 for a "set of plans and making drawings of a tower, designed by Dr. J. Bigelow, to stand on Mt. Auburn, in the cemetery including time & explanations, & including drawings of windows." The sturdy building is an enduring emblem of "the Boston Granite Style." When built, the 62-foot tall tower and the Bunker Hill monument in neighboring Charlestown were two of the tallest landmarks, establishing Mount Auburn's visual and metaphorical prominence as fully intended by the founders. Designed to provide a panoramic view and to be seen from miles away, it also provides a focal point within the cemetery. Sightlines are maintained between the tower and other cemetery focal points. Standing high over the dell below, it concludes the metaphor of ascension intended by the founders. The tower quickly became a highly visited spot. Because of its historical associations the view was considered among the finest on the continent. The panoramic view is enjoyed by today's visitors as well and although viewers may need to look harder to see the nineteenth-century sights touted by the early guidebooks, the view establishes the association between the cemetery, Boston and the surroundings. With periodical repointing of the granite and repair of the wooden windows, the tower is as substantial today as when it was first built.

Story Chapel and Administration Building complex was designed by architect Willard Sears and constructed of Potsdam sandstone in 1896-98. Sears (1837-1920) was chosen as the architect following a design competition, for which the architectural firms of Longfellow, Alden and Harlow; Coolidge and Wright; G. Wilton Lewis and Willard Sears submitted proposals. The trustees of the cemetery required that the proposed new building, adjacent to the Egyptian Revival gateway, fit appropriately into the site and not conflict with the existing architecture. Sears described his design as following the "English Perpendicular Style" and he chose Potsdam sandstone for both its durability and rich and variegated color. It is a more academic version of the English Gothic style than Bigelow Chapel. The historical antecedents of the design clearly made this building a favored addition to the cemetery. Published reports show that the chapel proved to be a welcomed choice for memorial services.

The exterior of the building maintains historical integrity although some changes have been made over the decades. The three-story bell tower originally was topped by a short spire that was removed in 1935. In that same year a small addition was added to northwest corner of the chapel, providing a bathroom and a small room for family use. A porte-cochere at the entrance to the chapel on the west façade was removed in 1971 due to structural weakness and its inability to accommodate large hearses and most automobiles.

Architect Sears spoke of the chapel as being inspired by fifteenth-century English parish

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churches. This inspiration can be read in the traditional interior of the chapel. The ceiling is richly embellished with wooden beams carved with decorative angels. The brickwork is embellished with sandstone and carved limestone tracery at the windows and along the interior wall between the nave and a long north hall. Although the brick was painted in the 1980s, recent renovations have involved a careful removal of the paint from the entrance vestibule and north hall, revealing the warmth of the original brick. Carved wooden pulpits and pews are expressive of late nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts aesthetic interests. The chapel is furnished with glass windows, some opalescent glass probably dating to the original construction. In 1929 architects Allen and Collens supervised the installation of richly colored stained glass in the windows of the nave and chancel. The large chancel window includes figures of Christ and angels and is signed by Earl E. Sanborn, a noted artist working in the New England area. The interior of the Administration Building, part of the same complex, was extensively renovated in 1990 by Ann Beha Associates. Story Chapel is currently used for public programs as well as funeral and memorial services. Mount Auburn Cemetery is now installing a small exhibition in the north hall of the chapel and plan to open the chapel as an orientation center as well as continue its use for services and programs.

In 1920 a small rest house for visitors was built at the southwest corner of the cemetery. This structure, designed in a freely adapted medieval style, was planned to provide amenities for visitors in the newly developed sections of the cemetery.<sup>2</sup> Apparently the need for this building diminished over the decades as the use of automobiles gave visitors increased mobility. After being employed for the storage of equipment for several decades, it was removed in the late 1970s.

Mount Auburn provides striking visual evidence of the transformation in attitudes towards death and commemoration occurring in the nineteenth century. Throughout the colonial period, graveyards were barren, unsightly, purely functional places for the disposal of the dead, displaying stern warnings about man's postmortem fate. Poorly maintained, Boston's burial grounds were overcrowded and full of gaping graves. Mount Auburn was a radical shift in taste. It offered a peaceful, serene location for the burial of Boston's dead in perpetuity, an innovative post-Revolution concept. Even the use of the term "cemetery" to refer to ground burial was unprecedented in the American vernacular. Derived from the Greek word for "dormitory" or "place of sleep," it indicated new notions of death stemming from Enlightenment philosophy. Rather than depicting the horror of death, Mount Auburn's monuments and picturesque landscape were designed to provide solace and comfort to the bereaved, emotions now highly acceptable due to nineteenth-century liberalized religious attitudes.

In marked contrast to colonial burial grounds, the cemetery was also intended to provide a place for the commemoration of the lives and works of the deceased. Concerned with shaping a common celebratory history for the new nation, Mount Auburn's founders wanted monuments erected to reflect the accomplishments of notable individuals. This "cult of heroes," accompanied by appropriate inscriptions, was intended to provide instruction and enlightenment to future generations. Public memorials for which a group of citizens would collectively raise money to commemorate an individual or group, were another early concept at Mount Auburn. The members of the 1840 U.S. Naval Expedition who died in the Fiji Islands were remembered by their shipmates with an imposing obelisk. In 1847 "The Friends of the Slave," a group of

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<sup>2</sup>This building was included in the 1975 National Register nomination of Mount Auburn Cemetery.



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Boston abolitionists, erected a commemorative monument to the Reverend Charles Torrey, who died in a Baltimore prison while serving a sentence for his anti-slavery activities. Consistent with their civic and aesthetic goals, Bostonians attempted to make Mount Auburn “as remarkable for the treasures of art collected there as for its scenery.” They patronized leading American sculptors such as Horatio Greenough, Thomas Crawford, Henry Dexter and Robert Ball Hughes. Monuments were ordered from a growing network of suppliers both local and national as well as from sources of highly-prized carved marble monuments in Italy.

Greek, Roman, and Egyptian forms and motifs, often translated through French sources, provided appropriate associations with the past for both private memorials and major architectural features built by the cemetery. The Egyptian Revival style that inspired the entrance gateway and the Sphinx, commemorating the preservation of the Union in the Civil War, was particularly admired for its ancient associations with death. Many of the smaller gravestones are in a Gothic style, reminding us of the nineteenth-century association of Gothic architecture with homes and domestic structures. Some monuments represent the work of the finest sculptors of their time as Americans chose to commemorate private citizens with the grandeur once reserved for royalty and the nobility. The great majority of monuments and tombs were smaller in scale, but they stimulated the development of a growing monument industry. Together they form an extraordinary collection of vernacular art. In the process, Mount Auburn was transformed by mid-century into a “museum without walls,” often referred to as a “sculptured garden.” The monuments and gravestones of Mount Auburn contribute to the site as a whole, establishing its historical significance. Before public art museums, visitors came to the cemetery to view the art of the sculptor and monument carver. Mount Auburn's collection of monuments and gravestones represents some of the earliest examples of the significant work of American sculptors in the nineteenth century.

From the beginning Mount Auburn provided many burial options to accommodate a wide range of burial needs. To generate funds for the cemetery, standard lots (300 square feet) were sold by subscription, and purchasers became Proprietors with voting rights. In addition, public lots were established to provide single graves for those who could not afford standard lots, were without families, or were visiting Boston at the time of their deaths and required local burial. (Before the development of embalming in the 1860s, largely as a result of the appalling casualties of the Civil War, bodies were rarely shipped to distant homes.)

As Mount Auburn increased in popularity, evolving attitudes towards death and commemoration gradually transformed the cemetery's appearance. By the 1850s, classical monuments were interspersed with more personal and sentimental memorials, often of marble, which could be carved into elaborate shapes, such as grieving women, sleeping infants, guardian lambs or dogs, and lavish floral representations. This growing sentimentalism led to the “domestication of death,” based upon a more optimistic belief in universal salvation and family reunion in heaven. To enhance this domestic effect, burial lots were sometimes furnished as Victorian parlors, including settees, sculptures, urns, and arbors. Through such elaborate efforts, some cemetery occupants sought to sustain a social hierarchy beyond the grave. Most of these monuments are still in place.

During this period, Mount Auburn's landscape was also physically transformed. The number of burial lots had grown to nearly 3,000, and most of the original “Sweet Auburn” site had been developed. Cemetery statistics and photographs from the late 1850s indicate that nearly half the

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lots were enclosed by cast-iron fences, which ranged from the simple and inexpensive to very elaborate compositions incorporating some of the rich funerary iconography of the era.

Individual monuments increasingly became embellished with such symbols as willow trees, oak leaves, anchors, inverted torches, broken columns, ivy vines, and severed buds. In the 1860s, cast-iron fences lost their appeal, and the newly developed technologies for quarrying, transporting and carving granite encouraged the defining of family lots with heavy curbing. In the short span from 1859 to 1875, over 1,000 lots were enclosed by granite borders. The overall effect was described by one visitor as a "clutter of patchwork squares." Both fences and curbs around lots were maintenance nightmares and made burials and installations of monuments very difficult. By the 1880s, the cemetery management was recommending that lot owners remove both fences and curbs and indeed offered to remove them at no cost. By 1900 over 1,000 cast-iron fences and 65 granite curbs had been removed, and by 1950 an additional 500 fences and 500 curbs had been removed. Today, although the majority of these fences and curbs have been removed over the decades, an important collection of these cast-iron fences and granite curbing remains. The cemetery is committed to the preservation of the approximately 60 remaining family-lot fences and 400 curb enclosures in their original settings. The preservation and remarkably high artistic qualities of these collections are unusual and provide a special view of the material culture of the mid-nineteenth century.

Changing burial practices also affected the appearance of the cemetery. Smaller lots were developed to meet evolving social and economic needs, creating a more compact layout. The demand for public lots increased. At the same time, more elaborate above-ground structures proliferated. Hillside tombs were built, and both the cemetery and private owners constructed many such "buildings." One early 1840s example is the brownstone Gothic Revival tomb for the Winchester family designed by architect Arthur Gilman along Narcissus Path. Several ornamental areas were laid out, providing fountains and flower beds surrounded by gravel paths for promenades. All of these developments can be read in the landscape today.

In the 1850s and 1860s the cemetery began to alter the natural features of the landscape by filling in low wet areas. The large, multi-lobed pond called Garden Pond seen in the 1831 map was eventually filled in and changed into a nearly circular Halcyon Lake during an almost fifteen year-long process (1856-1871) of moving fill from nearby ridges into the wetland. Several other "superfluous pond and hollows" were also filled by lowering neighboring heights during this period. Such reclaimed areas soon became prized burial lots. This process of creating flat filled areas at the sites of former low wet areas can be read in the landscape by careful observers today. Such filled areas are characteristically flat with adjacent lots having the same ground plane and often demonstrate a later style of monuments and gravestones than the slopes surrounding them. An underground drainage system and water pipes were put in place and several fountains were installed.

In the 1870s when Mount Auburn developed the parcel of level land stretching southward from the height of Mount Auburn and the tower, the cemetery trustees and management chose landscape design ideas championed at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio, one of Mount Auburn's progeny. Landscaped by Adolph Strauch in the 1850s, Spring Grove's sweeping lawns, stripped of fences or curbs and extraneous decoration, met extensive waterbodies. Memorials on family lots were restricted to a central, dominant monument accompanied by smaller, ground level grave markers. By the 1870s, Strauch's landscape lawn plan at Spring Grove had become a

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model for American cemeteries, including Mount Auburn, and its principles can be seen at Mount Auburn today in the layout of new sections, in particular the “Stone Farm” area, south of Washington Tower in an area originally purchased in 1854.

Mount Auburn continued to purchase adjacent parcels of land to the west and southwest during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the new memorial park concept, pioneered at Forest Lawn in California, influenced Mount Auburn’s Willow Pond development. In 1929, in just over a year's time, a marshy field in an area purchased in 1889 southwest of the original holdings was transformed into a natural-appearing pond, surrounded by clustered plantings and sloping lawns. Here the memorials are virtually invisible, creating the appearance of a park. Evidence of burials and graves is not seen. There are no reminders or celebrations of death. The area developed section by section, each section called a garden: Azalea Garden, Aronia Garden, Begonia Garden. Nothing defines or evokes the thought of the grave. The early twentieth-century cemetery landscape reflects a twentieth-century attitude, a virtual denial of death, a refusal to think about it. Willow Pond’s designer Lawrence S. Caldwell wrote:

The design and completion of the modern cemetery require the skilled services of a landscape architect who is a thoroughly trained and specialized person. He should be able . . . to develop ultimately a cemetery that one would wish to visit as a beautiful park. It should become a location of venerable trees and excellent landscapes. It should be a place for all hardy plants, a safe haven for birds, and a spot where visitors would have seclusion and quiet for a full appreciation of the beauty of nature.<sup>3</sup>

Wider roads with gentle curves that automobiles could travel easily and that provided for parking were designed. Visitors arrive at the cemetery in cars; those who come to visit the graves of family and friends frequently spend most of their time at the cemetery in their cars. Many visitors to graves come only on holidays, leading to traffic jams in the cemetery at certain times. The wide roads were designed to accommodate these new twentieth-century patterns and attitudes.

By the twentieth century, it was difficult to sell family lots with many graves. Families are smaller now with few children dying in childhood; families are often dispersed over vast distances; and people place less importance on burying family members together. Cemetery management adapted to these changes by designing and selling single graves.

The Willow Pond section is embellished by works of art and commemorative structures installed by the cemetery. Instead of expensive personal monuments and mausolea built by individuals, the cemetery provided focal points by placing cheerful, uplifting memorial art in the landscape.

A considerable tract of desirable land has been set aside on which nothing will be allowed above grade . . . The beauty of the cemetery will be increased by these regulations which seem to be favorably received by present owners and by those buying lots. -- Charles Almy, President, One Hundredth Annual Report (Mount Auburn Cemetery, 1931).

Lawn markers allowed cemetery planners to create open park-like vistas with no visible monuments. Lawn markers reduce maintenance costs since a mower can run over them. These uniform-shaped markers are made of bronze, slate or granite. Looking closely at these twentieth-century markers reveals the words and images that are chosen for them. Many of these markers

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence S. Caldwell, “Modern Cemetery Design and Development,” *The American City* (March 1935).

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have been designed with great attention to detail. Many reveal the personality of the person buried by showing what the person liked. Often these personal emblems represent hobbies, reflecting a tendency to define ourselves by what we do in our leisure time.

The growing interest in cremation in the early twentieth century represents the acceptance of an alternative treatment of the body after death. Concerned with over-development of its landscape, the cemetery has developed throughout the twentieth century a wide variety of interment space for cremation. At Willow Pond the space set aside for the burial of cremated remains shows a different pattern of markers in the landscape, smaller and more closely placed.

In some areas developed in the post-World War II era, consulting architects Arthur and Sidney Shurcliff fostered designs with a more rectilinear layout focused on low maintenance and maximum utilization of space with plantings arranged to give the appearance of a series of adjacent rooms. Although areas in this far southwest extension of the cemetery developed after 1950 may be seen as innovative significant examples of this period of cemetery landscape design, this post-World War II developed section does not contribute and is not discussed in detail in the statement of significance.

The ongoing implementation of the recommendations of Mount Auburn's Master Plan (1993) is emphasizing and sharpening the various landscape character zones of this complex site, making the historical stages of the cemetery even more obvious to visitors. For example, the rural character of Consecration Dell, where the consecration ceremony was held on September 24, 1831, remains and has been enhanced by recent plantings.

All around us there breathes a solemn calm, as if we were in the bosom of a wilderness . . . Ascend but a few steps, and what a change of scenery to surprise and delight us. We seem . . . to pass from the confines of death, to the bright and balmy regions of life. -- Justice Joseph Story's Consecration address, September 24, 1831

The allegorical journey described in Judge Story's Consecration Address--the ascent from the darkness of the dell to the "bright and balmy regions of life" at the summit of Mount Auburn, where the winding Charles River and the distant City of Boston are seen--can still be experienced today.

The cemetery contains an internationally significant living horticultural collection--its trees, shrubs, and groundcovers. Nearly 6,000 trees, representing almost 600 varieties and 75 genera, are labeled and recorded, and some 250 species of shrubs and groundcovers are represented. Some species, indeed some actual trees, date from the earliest period of the cemetery and serve to illustrate the picturesque scenery intended by its founders. Other species represent the burgeoning selection of horticultural materials brought to New England and cultivated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Of particular interest to those interested in the development, evolution and preservation of the cemetery as an example of a cemetery, cultural landscape and social institution are the cemetery's own extensive archives. These collections contain the organization's comprehensive business records from 1831 to the present as well as materials relating to the cemetery's popularity and position as the first "rural" or garden cemetery in America. Included in the historical collection are trustee minutes and committee reports, annual reports, correspondence, financial and legal

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documents, horticultural and landscape records, architectural and engineering plans, and maps. A significant collection of prints, photographs and drawings documents the visual appearance and development of the cemetery. Memorabilia includes guidebooks from over five decades, lavish nineteenth-century illustrated guides, newspaper clippings, broadsides, and related souvenir materials. Mount Auburn's archival materials have been surveyed, inventoried, catalogued, and are housed in a climate-controlled storage area.

### INVENTORY OF SELECTED BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES

For purposes of this nomination the cemetery is treated as an historic district that includes a cultural landscape. The site itself, with its landscaping, horticultural plantings, and numerous tombs and grave markers and art, is the major contributing resource. The following is a list of important buildings, structures, and objects within the site, the most prominent of which are identified on the cemetery map attachment. There are 4 contributing buildings. Over 100 mausoleum and hillside tomb structures are extant as well as numerous fences and gates around some plots that contribute to the overall significance of the site. (Five of the most prominent mausoleums and tombs are highlighted below as well as a prominent set of fence and gates.) There are thousands of objects (monuments, statuary, gravestones, benches, vases, urns) that are landscape features and are not counted individually. They contribute to the overall significance of the site. (Fifteen of the most artistically outstanding and interesting of these objects are discussed individually below.)

(Structures and objects are identified in the list by the names of the burial lots associated with them and their cemetery addresses.)

#### BUILDINGS

Gateway, on the north edge of the cemetery on Mount Auburn Street (map section D9)  
Story Chapel & Office, Central Avenue (map section D9)  
Bigelow Chapel, Chapel Avenue (map section E8)  
Washington Tower, Mountain Avenue (map section D4)

#### STRUCTURES

Scots Charitable Society cast-iron fence and gates, intersection of Fir and Walnut Avenues (1840s, architect: T. Voelker; highly embellished) (letter O on map) (Figure 13)

#### Selected Mausolea and Tombs (by historical associations, artistry, workmanship, or illustrative significance)

Receiving Tomb, Greenbrier Path (a hillside tomb built in 1832, one of the oldest extant structures at Mount Auburn)

Freeland Mausoleum (1870s granite mausoleum, first free-standing mausoleum at Mount Auburn, architect: Henry Van Brunt) Lot #699 & 700, Lawn Avenue

Lodge Tomb (1860s brownstone Gothic side hill tomb, architect: unknown, possibly S. Woodcock, burial place of three United States Senators: George Cabot, Henry Cabot Lodge and his grandson Henry Cabot Lodge) Lot #3613 Oxalis Path (#37 ON MAP)

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William Winchester Tomb (1840s sandstone Gothic side hill tomb, architect: Arthur Gilman) Lot # 380 Narcissus Path

R. H. White Mausoleum (1898 Neoclassical granite mausoleum, architect: Willard Sears), Lot #8000 Eagle Avenue

**OBJECTS**

Selected Monuments, Gravestones and Statuary of Special Interest (by historical associations, artistry or illustrative significance)

**Hannah Adams** (first monument erected at Mount Auburn, 1832, Neoclassical marble pedestal, a model for cemetery monuments throughout the country, signed "Fecit Cary & Dickinson") Lot # 180 Central Avenue at Walnut Avenue

**Hosea Ballou** (1859 marble full-size portrait statue, artist: Edward Brackett) Lot # 103 Central Avenue (#3 ON MAP)

**Amos Binney** (1847-1850 Neoclassical large marble monument carved in Rome, with 2 figures in niches, artist: Thomas Crawford) Lot # 1390 & 1391 Heath Path. (LETTER A ON MAP)

**Nathaniel Bowditch** (1847 bronze portrait statue, in 1847 first life-size bronze cast in United States; recast in Paris in 1886, artist: R. Ball Hughes) Lot # 2290 Central Avenue and Chapel (LETTER B ON MAP)

**Charles Bulfinch** (limestone urn on pedestal, modeled after a design of Robert Adam thought to have been brought from England by Bulfinch in late 1780s) Conserved 1993. Lot #2308 Bellwort Path (#11 ON MAP)

**William Ellery Channing** (Neoclassical marble sarcophagus, designer: Washington Allston, carver: Alpheus Cary) Lot # 678 Greenbrier Path (#13 ON MAP)

**Jonas Chickering** (1872 marble with figures on pedestal, artist: Thomas Ball) Lot # 2282 Magnolia Avenue. Conserved 1996. (LETTER C ON MAP)

**Maria Copenhagen** (1872 marble angel with bronze trumpet, artist: Martin Milmore) Lot # 3733 Sycamore (MAP SECTION B8)

**Harriet Kezia Hunt** (1870s marble figure on pedestal "Hygeia," artist: Edmonia Lewis) Lot # 2630 Poplar Avenue at Lily Path (LETTER K ON MAP)

**Henry Coffin Nevins** (1890s limestone ledger stone with upright portion, two palm fronds in relief on a large horizontal slab with carved cherubs holding garlands in the low upright section. artist: Augustus St. Gaudens) Lot # 4659 Eagle Avenue & Jonquil Path (LETTER M ON MAP)

**Thomas Handasyd Perkins** (1840s marble dog carved in Italy, artist: Horatio Greenough) Lot # 108 Central Avenue (LETTER N ON MAP)

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**Robert Gould Shaw** (large 1840s brownstone enclosure with ancient classical marble insert and 1860s bronze plaque commemorating grandson Col. Robert Gould, officer of the famed Civil War 54th Regiment of African-American soldiers. Monument designed by architect Hammett Billings and executed by Alpheus Cary) Lot # 85 Pine Avenue (#53 ON MAP)

**The Sphinx** (1872 granite figure commissioned by Dr. Jacob Bigelow to commemorate "the preservation of the Union, the destruction of African slavery, by the uprising of a great people, by the blood of fallen heroes." Sculptor: Martin Milmore) located just south of Bigelow Chapel. (LETTER Q ON MAP)

**Gaspar Spurzheim** (1832 marble sarcophagus imported from Italy, modeled after the classical sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus, now in the Vatican Museum. First known use of this popular style in an American cemetery.) Lot # 181 Central Avenue

**Charles T. Torrey, "Slave Monument,"** (late 1840s marble obelisk with 2 bronze reliefs, artists: J & T. Carew) Lot # 1282 Fir & Spruce Avenues. Conserved 1998. (LETTER P ON MAP)

Structures and gravestones dating from founding of the Cemetery in 1831 to 1945, when the more rectilinear layout focused on low maintenance and maximum utilization of space began to be used at Mount Auburn, are considered contributing and reflect the period of significance of the site.

#### NON CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS

Service Plant & Garage (1934 additions, not contributing)  
Shed (not contributing)  
Greenhouse (1971 addition, not contributing)

#### NON CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES

Auburn Court Crypts (1974, not contributing)  
Willow & Birch Court Crypts (1985, not contributing)  
Bridge at Auburn Lake (1941)  
Pump House (1932, not contributing)

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  
 Nationally: X Statewide:    Locally:   

Applicable National

Register Criteria: A X B    C X D   

Criteria Considerations

(Exceptions): A    B    C    D X E    F    G   

NHL Criteria: 1 and 4

NHL Exception: 5

NHL Theme(s): II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements  
 2. Reform Movement

III. Expressing Cultural Values

1. Educational and intellectual currents

5. Architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design

6. Popular and traditional culture

Areas of Significance: Architecture  
 Art  
 Community Planning and Development  
 Landscape Architecture  
 Material Culture  
 Social History

Period(s) of Significance: 1831-1945

Significant Dates: 1831, 1835, 1874, 1929

Significant Person(s): n/a

Cultural Affiliation: n/a

Architect/Builder: Bigelow, Jacob; Dearborn, Henry A. S.; Wadsworth, Alexander;  
 Bryant, Gridley J. F.; Lovering, James W. (superintendent 1873-95)  
 Shedd and Sawyer, Consulting Engineers (1870s); Scorgie, James  
 (superintendent 1895-1921); Sears, Willard; Caldwell, Laurence,  
 Consulting Landscape Architect (1929-37); Shurcliff, Sidney and Arthur,  
 Consulting Landscape Architects (1938-1960s)



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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****SUMMARY**

Mount Auburn initiated the great age of American cemetery-building with its establishment in 1831. Its gentlemen founders guided its original design following their intensive study of European landscape examples adapted to American social goals and didactic intents. It was organized as a non-profit corporation, and its design marked a major shift in the way Americans buried their dead. It inspired great progeny – other cemeteries, the first public parks and the first designed suburbs in the nineteenth century. Shaped by intellectual endeavor, emotional aspirations, dreams and fundamental human needs, its well-preserved cultural landscape represents a distinct American design. As the country's first large-scale designed landscape open to the public, Mount Auburn is a place of national significance.

Mount Auburn had a profound influence upon nineteenth-century attitudes about death, burial, and commemoration and was widely imitated. Major structures, especially the Egyptian Gateway, Bigelow Chapel, and Washington Tower, are architecturally significant and were frequently copied. Long before the American park movement, Mount Auburn and other cemeteries modeled after it were major attractions and pleasure grounds, shaping landscape, horticultural, and artistic tastes and helping to articulate the need for public parks and gardens. The landscape of these cemeteries provided inspiration for the nation's first public parks and picturesque suburbs designed by the early generations of American landscape architects. It has been recognized as one of the most significant designed landscapes in the country.

Over the past thirty years, scholars have increasingly explored cultural landscapes as reflections of societal change. Social, landscape, and urban historians who have provided compelling examinations of American urban open spaces, e.g. Thomas Bender, David Schuyler, David Sloane and Kenneth T. Jackson, have explored Mount Auburn's seminal role in the rural cemetery movement and made clear how the lessons taught by the landscapes of rural cemeteries helped to shape national concepts of urban form.

Dr. Blanche Linden's *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (1989) provides a detailed examination of the social and cultural history of the cemetery. Dr. Barbara Rotundo, in reviewing *Silent City on a Hill* for the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, points out that the characteristics of rural cemeteries have become deeply embedded in the American consciousness, so much so that it is often taken for granted that the ideal American cemetery should be a tranquil retreat with grass, flowers and trees.<sup>4</sup>

During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Boston grew from a small village into a major commercial center. Land was at a premium in the newly incorporated city, which had used up much of its original peninsula and was in the process of filling adjacent areas for expansion. Among the priorities of Mayor Josiah Quincy in 1823 was the development of a safer, healthier city. A specific concern was the condition of the city's burial grounds. The burial grounds were seriously overcrowded in the rapidly expanding city; additional space was no longer available within the city limits. Residents were concerned that the burial grounds were contaminating

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<sup>4</sup>Review in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* by Barbara Rotundo (June 1991), pp. 218-219.

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water supplies and that gases emanating from graves threatened public health. Furthermore, attitudes about death and burial were changing significantly. Burial grounds were typically barren landscapes--overcrowded, poorly maintained, devoid of plantings, and lacking a sense of permanence--which reinforced old notions of the horror of death. As Puritanism declined and Calvinistic fears were replaced by a more benign introspection about mortality, New Englanders began to embrace melancholy and sentimentalism as desirable states of mind. Concurrently, they began to explore new burial concepts.

An effort to initiate burial reform had been attempted in Connecticut in the late eighteenth century. In 1796, James Hillhouse had organized a small 6-acre area in New Haven, Connecticut, to establish a hygienic permanent burial grounds. This non-profit organization included provisions for large, family-sized lots held in perpetuity. Now called Grove Street Cemetery (NHL, 2000) and located within the Yale University campus, the cemetery reveals its original tight grid layout. This early experiment with a new burial concept was not copied. Thirty-five years passed before Mount Auburn initiated the rural cemetery movement.<sup>5</sup>

In Boston, Dr. Jacob Bigelow, a Boston physician and Harvard professor, was the first to take action. In 1825, he called a meeting of prominent Bostonians to explore the new concept of a "rural" cemetery, a place beyond the city limits "composed of family burial lots, separated and interspersed with trees, shrubs, and flowers, in a wood or landscape garden."<sup>6</sup> To describe their ideal cemetery, Bigelow and his associates used naturalistic terms congenial with the growing romanticism of their era and incorporating the pantheistic philosophy that equated God's truth with the processes of nature. Reminiscent of the pastoral ideal in the writings of Virgil and Horace and the sentimental poetry of William Wordsworth and William Cullen Bryant, it was to be a place for the living, as well as the dead, where nature would provide solace and inspiration. It should serve as an exemplar of landscape and artistic taste. His suggestion was met with approval although it took several years to locate a suitable site and develop the organizational structure for this new concept.

In 1831, the new Massachusetts Horticultural Society formally undertook the venture using a 72-acre piece of property four miles west of Boston on the Cambridge-Watertown line. Harvard students and local residents, who used the property as a retreat, called it "Sweet Auburn" after the town in Oliver Goldsmith's poem "The Deserted Village." The property had been in the possession of several generations of the Stone family, early settlers in Watertown who had farmed sections of the space cultivating fruit trees and occasionally grazing sheep. The more rugged sections with many low wet areas were reportedly popular sources of wild berries and wild flowers. In 1825, Boston merchant and gentleman architect George Brimmer had purchased a large section of the area with plans to create a country estate and a reported interest in saving the extensive growth of mature trees, rather unusual in eastern Massachusetts at this time.

Making the case for locating Mount Auburn four miles from the city, Edward Everett, who later served as a United States Senator from Massachusetts and president of Harvard, wrote:

Our burial places are, in the cities, crowded till they are full; . . . Trees . . . have rarely been planted about our graveyards; the enclosures are generally inadequate and neglected, the graves indecently

<sup>5</sup> Barbara Rotundo, "Mount Auburn: Fortunate Coincidences and an Ideal Solution" *Journal of Garden History* 4, no. 3 (1984): p. 261.

<sup>6</sup> Jacob Bigelow, *A History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn* (1860; reprint, Cambridge, MA: Applewood Books, 1988), p. 2.

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crowded together, and often, after a few years, disturbed.<sup>7</sup>

Bostonians were inspired by the example of the cemetery of Père Lachaise, founded in 1804 by the French government on the outskirts of Paris on the former estate of La Chaise, King Louis XIV's confessor. "[W]hen the keynote speaker at the second annual festival of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1830 proposed a new type of cemetery for Boston, he presented the project as a variant of Père Lachaise."<sup>8</sup>

General Henry A. S. Dearborn, President of the Horticultural Society, who took primary responsibility for laying out the landscape of the new cemetery in 1831 and 1832, "praised those aspects of Père Lachaise that reflected English landscape taste, and he determined to incorporate the best aspects of it in his new cemetery. Dearborn looked for design inspiration to English gardeners and aesthetic theorists . . ." <sup>9</sup> Indeed, "[b]y the nineteenth century, the legacy of the English garden, with emphasis on *le genre sombre*, the melancholy components in the landscape, lay primarily in providing precedents for new pastoral cemeteries, the prime examples of which were founded outside Paris at Père Lachaise in 1804 and outside Boston at Mount Auburn in 1831."<sup>10</sup>

Dearborn sent to Europe for books and maps illustrating and describing the landscapes of English gardens and Père Lachaise Cemetery. With the assistance of a young civil engineer and surveyor, Alexander Wadsworth, and a committee of well-educated Bostonians, Dearborn laid out the grounds following the natural features of the land. An experimental garden was established where the latest varieties of fruits, flowers, and vegetables as well as exotic specimens were cultivated for demonstration. Hundreds of trees were planted in the 1830s, creating the framework for a later arboretum.

Dearborn's affiliation with Mount Auburn ended in 1835 when the cemetery and the Horticultural Society "separated owing to irreconcilable purposes."<sup>11</sup> Although the experimental garden that Dearborn once envisioned for Mount Auburn did not continue, the interest in horticultural experimentation and the practice of high standards of horticultural maintenance and care continue today as part of the cemetery's mission. By 1835 Mount Auburn had acquired additional adjacent properties, growing to 110 acres in size.

Although the cemetery and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society were separated in 1835, the horticultural interests of the early lot owners remained an important part of the cemetery. Early

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<sup>7</sup>Address prepared by Edward Everett published in the Boston papers, 1831, quoted in Jacob Bigelow's *History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn*, 1860 pp. 137.

<sup>8</sup>Richard Etlin, "Père Lachaise and the Garden Cemetery," *Journal of Garden History* 4, no. 3 (1984): p. 222.

<sup>9</sup>Blanche Linden-Ward, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989) pp. 183-84. During the early decades of the nineteenth century Père Lachaise, however, had rapidly lost its "bucolic ambiance" as it became crowded with stone monument and family mausolea. Indeed Bostonians learned from Père Lachaise's development and sought to maintain the sylvan qualities of Mount Auburn by discouraging the building of tombs and mausolea and the erection of lavish and ornate monuments in the early decades of Mount Auburn's development.

<sup>10</sup>Blanche Linden-Ward, *Silent City on a Hill*: p. 63. See chapter 2 of *Silent City* for an extensive discussion of English landscape development.

<sup>11</sup>Blanche M. G. Linden, "Henry Dearborn" in Birnbaum, Charles A. and Robin Karson, eds. *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 2000), p. 83.

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promoters of the new cemetery included prominent, influential men such as Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court Joseph Story, General Henry A.S. Dearborn, John Lowell, Samuel Appleton, and Edward Everett.

Joseph Story, the first president of Mount Auburn and Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court, spoke at the consecration of Mount Auburn on September 24, 1831, describing the intentions of the new cemetery. In his Consecration Address he said:

A rural Cemetery seems to combine in itself all the advantages . . . to cherish all those associations which cast a cheerful light over the darkness of the grave. . . . Spring will invite the footsteps of the young and Autumn detain the contemplative. . . . The grave hath a voice of eloquence...which steals with a healing balm into the stricken heart, and lifts up and supports the broken spirit; which awakens a new enthusiasm for virtue.

The first burial took place in July 1832 and within a few years monuments and tombs were erected. Dr. Bigelow's early prediction that "in a few years . . . no place in the environs of our city will possess stronger attractions to the visitor" was fulfilled. Mount Auburn provided its visitors passive, edifying recreation and was conceived as a teaching tool. Joseph Story's 1831 consecration speech stated the idea clearly: "the grave hath a voice of eloquence . . . which addresses all times, and all ages, and all sexes." These "repositories of the dead . . . instruct us in the true value of life." Parents and teachers urged youth to visit the cemetery to learn from the lives of notables interred there and to acquire proper ambitions and aspirations for their own lives. Ministers and moralists argued that the place served as a catalyst for virtue. It displayed family values and enduring social cohesion. Couples frequented the cemetery for courtship walks, cultivating melancholy emotions by reading sentimental verses engraved on the stones.

Many people went to Mount Auburn simply to find relief from the increasingly hectic life of the burgeoning city. Thomas Bender points out that Mount Auburn and other cemeteries founded after it were established "on sites of natural beauty with the intention of conserving the original character. They were to be enclaves of natural beauty adjoining the artificial urban environment."<sup>12</sup>

Others came primarily as tourists, having heard that a walk through the cemetery was an indispensable component of a visit to Boston. According to the *American Cyclopaedia of Useful Knowledge* (1835), the cemetery was "justly celebrated as the most interesting object of the kind in our country"--not unlike twentieth-century museums or amusement parks in its appeal.

Numerous guidebooks provided maps, suggested tour routes and descriptions of individual monuments, and provided appropriate contemplative and spiritual readings. For a time, a gatekeeper even published a newspaper, *Mount Auburn Memorial*. As early as 1845, an omnibus provided direct access from Boston. In 1847 the Fitchburg Railroad established a station at Mount Auburn, and after 1856 the horse-drawn street railway stopped at the entrance to the cemetery. In the 1850s and 1860s, to accommodate its growing number of visitors, Mount Auburn added a series of amenities and conveniences--awnings, a well and pump, cast iron signs, settees, privies, and a reception house with a refreshment stand. Stereographic views and

<sup>12</sup>Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1975) p. 83.

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souvenirs of Mount Auburn were popular.<sup>13</sup>

The cemetery became a sightseeing destination as thousands of visitors from Europe and other American cities roamed its sinuous paths and wrote about its attractions. Many visitors were so impressed by the beauty and many features of the place that they returned home intent on creating a similar urban amenity for themselves.

Within fifteen years, nine major cemeteries were patterned after Mount Auburn: Laurel Hill in Philadelphia (1836)(NHL, 1998); Green-Wood in Brooklyn, Mount Hope in Rochester, and Green Mount in Baltimore (1838); Albany Rural in Albany (1841); Allegheny in Pittsburgh, and Spring Grove in Cincinnati (1844); and Elmwood in Detroit and Swan Point in Providence (1846). By 1849 the idea had reached the Mississippi (Bellefontaine in St. Louis) and the west coast by 1863 (Mountain View in Oakland).

Like Mount Auburn, these cemeteries were placed in sites of natural rural beauty outside the cities they served. Like Mount Auburn, they were designed for the living as well as the dead, with the landscape features so highly praised at Mount Auburn: topography of great variety, elevations commanding panoramic views, level portions and valleys offering romantic seclusion, winding paths and roads following the natural land contours, reflective ponds, inspirational monuments and art, and careful landscaping of trees and plants. "The new cemeteries represented an emerging national culture, one created by the new urban cities of America . . . . Americans were concerned about understanding the history of their communities and nation, strengthening the family, maintaining the virtue of rural life, and encouraging respect for the dead."<sup>14</sup>

Closer to home, Mount Auburn inspired a diffusion of rural cemeteries throughout New England in the 1840s and 1850s. This development is particularly evident in smaller and younger cities such as Worcester and Lowell, MA, and Augusta, ME, which were linked to Boston through established cultural ties.<sup>15</sup>

In 1848, Henry A. S. Dearborn promoted the creation of Forest Hills Cemetery in Roxbury, where he was serving as mayor. Following the model established at Mount Auburn, he led the choice of "a 71-acre site with a varied terrain thought to be conducive to the development of a picturesque landscape . . . [a]s at Mount Auburn, he let the lay of the land determine placement of avenues, paths, plantings, and ponds."<sup>16</sup>

The characteristics of Mount Auburn set the pattern for American cemeteries, a different pattern from other countries. Kensal Green and Highgate, two early English rural cemeteries, "were owned by private stock companies expecting to pay dividends from profits, American cemeteries

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<sup>13</sup>See Blanche Linden-Ward, "Strange but Genteel Pleasure Grounds: Tourist and Leisure Uses of Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemeteries" In *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture*, edited by Richard E. Meyer (Ann Arbor: U.M.I. Research Press, 1989).

<sup>14</sup>David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 56.

<sup>15</sup>Arthur J Krim, "Diffusion of Garden Cemeteries in New England" Manuscript presented at the New England-St. Lawrence Geographical Society Meeting, 1983.

<sup>16</sup>Blanche M. G. Linden, "Henry Dearborn" in Charles A. Birnbaum and Robin Karson, eds. *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 2000), p. 83.

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were private but non-profit. Both types were new, since up to this time burial grounds had belonged either to churches or local governments . . . Interestingly, the first charter granted in 1838 to Green-Wood, one of the conspicuous pioneers, made it a private stock company, but when few people showed any interest a second charter issued in 1839 made it non-profit. Usually the charters specified that any money remaining after expenses should be used for improvements in, or ornamentation of, the cemetery. Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester, New York, organized in 1838, was owned by the city, and this established the second but less frequent American pattern of municipal ownership."<sup>17</sup>

In addition to its role as initiator of the rural cemetery movement, Mount Auburn was influential in the development of the American urban park movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. American cities during the early nineteenth century provided few outdoor places for public enjoyment or recreation. As in Europe, the only pleasure grounds that existed were private estates of the wealthy. Public spaces served as common grazing areas, market places, and parade grounds for the militia. The industrialization of New England led to a growing separation of workers from their rural agricultural past and produced a new awareness of the value of nature. Social reformers increasingly promoted the beneficial qualities of the natural landscape for legions of workers in newly industrialized cities.

The influence of Mount Auburn on the development of the public parks movement was clearly recognized. Andrew Jackson Downing, editor of *The Horticulturist* and America's first landscape designer, pointed to the popularity of Mount Auburn and other rural cemeteries in his crusade for public parks. Writing in the July 1849 issue of *The Horticulturist*, he argued for the development of public parks and gardens citing the popularity of the rural cemeteries.

Eighteen years ago, Mount Auburn, about six miles from Boston, was made a rural cemetery. It was then a charming natural site, finely varied in surface, containing about 80 acres of land, and admirably clothed by groups and masses of native forest trees. It was tastefully laid out, monuments were built, and whole highly embellished. No sooner was attention generally roused to the charms of this first American cemetery, than the idea took the public mind by storm. -- *The Horticulturist*, July 1849

As he later noted to President Millard Fillmore, urging the development of the Mall in Washington, "A national park like this ... would exercise as much influence on public taste as Mount Auburn in Boston has done. Though only twenty years have elapsed since it was laid out, the lesson there taught has been so widely influential that at the present moment the United States, while they have no public parks, are acknowledged to possess the finest rural cemeteries in the world."<sup>18</sup> Gradually, cities across the nation began to build parks, creating landscapes similar to Mount Auburn but without its graves.

David Schuyler points out that although many of America's "rural" cemeteries have now been engulfed by sprawling cities and are so crowded with graves that they retain little of their original beauty, they left an enduring legacy in the form of public parks.<sup>19</sup> Mount Auburn Cemetery remains among the best preserved examples of its type.

<sup>17</sup>Barbara Rotundo, "Mount Auburn: Fortunate Coincidences and an Ideal Solution" *Journal of Garden History* 4, no. 3 (1984): p. 257-58.

<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Blanche Linden-Ward, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), p. 12.

<sup>19</sup>David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. 54.

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A thoughtful examination of Mount Auburn's cultural landscape reveals distinctive and evolving American attitudes towards death, commemoration, religion, ethics, nature, family, community, individualism, and interment practices. Within its present 170 acres, Mount Auburn can be explored as a museum with "period rooms" representing all aspects of American cemetery design and cultural traditions.

In the nineteenth century Boston was a center of cultural activities and intellectual ferment. Many nationally known Bostonians are buried at Mount Auburn. Among those buried or remembered there are Louis and Elizabeth Agassiz, Philips Brooks, Charles Bulfinch, Dorothea Dix, Mary Baker Eddy, Edward Everett, Asa Gray, Horatio Greenough, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Winslow Homer, Julia Ward Howe, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Amy Lowell, James Russell Lowell, and Charles Sumner.

Although founded by and initially marketed to the predominantly Protestant elite, Mount Auburn quickly reflected the community's rich religious, ethnic, and racial diversity. Unlike some cemeteries, Mount Auburn did not set aside different sections for individuals of different religions or ethnic origins, nor did it maintain such information in its records. Instead, an examination of the monuments and their inscriptions reveal the increasingly diverse ethnic origins of the cemetery's occupants. When new lots were created between the older ones, names and traditions associated with successive waves of immigration--Irish, Italian, Eastern European--were added to the cemetery and provide fascinating juxtapositions of cultures. For example, the introduction and gradual proliferation of carved "tree of life" imagery on monuments in the twentieth century reflects the development of the Armenian population in neighboring Watertown and its growing use of the cemetery.

The strong social and intellectual force of Boston women is revealed in the many monuments dedicated to such leading figures as Margaret Fuller Ossoli, transcendentalist, author and reformer; Julia Ward Howe, social reformer and early feminist; Dr. Harriot Hunt, pioneering doctor; Harriet Jacobs, former slave and author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*; Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science; Isabella Stewart Gardner, patron of the arts; and Fannie Farmer, cookbook author. In fact, the Cemetery's first monument, erected by "her female friends" in 1832, was dedicated to historian Hannah Adams, who supported herself through her publications.

The layout of lots and who is buried in them reveal significant demographic changes and an evolution in the makeup of the nuclear family during the nineteenth century. In the mid-nineteenth century, at a time of increasing public emphasis on domesticity and the emotional bonds of family, Mount Auburn popularized the practice of owning family lots for eternity. A family lot was generally 15 feet by 20 feet, providing twelve to twenty or more graves. Lot owners were required to mark the corners of their lots and permanently mark their lot number on their space. They had the right to erect gravestones and monuments, cultivate trees and plants and enclose the lot with a wall or fence. Indeed, lot owners were expected to care for their own lots. Frequently large monuments were erected in the center of the lot before any burials occurred. Guidebooks commented freely on the good taste or lack of it displayed by lot owners in embellishing their lots. Lots were often decorated with the same care as the family home with vases, cast-iron chairs and benches, plantings and other embellishments. As decades passed, families decreased in size due to a variety of social and economic influences. Lots contained

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fewer occupants as family members became increasingly mobile and relocated. Improved medical care resulted in longer life expectancies, particularly for children (children five and under comprised fully one-third of burials at Mount Auburn until the mid-nineteenth century). Fewer women died during childbirth, affecting the size and makeup of the extended family. Evidence of these social changes may be read in the landscape today.

In the twentieth century, the cemetery's dual functions as burial ground and recreational site have assumed new forms. The flat marker memorial park concept eventually came to Mount Auburn in 1929, leading to the creation of new naturalistic landscapes patterned after the large American estates built from the 1900s to 1930s. After World War II, new sections of Mount Auburn began to be developed following the late twentieth century cemetery design of using plantings to give the appearance of rooms focussing on the maximum use of space. These post World War II sections, because of their very different design philosophy, do not contribute to the current nomination and therefore, the period of significance ends in 1945.

The recreational aspect of Mount Auburn continued in the twentieth century as well. Mount Auburn's arboretum and other horticultural collections, established in the 1830s, received new attention in the 1930s. Bird-watching became a popular pastime. As natural areas disappeared in the urban metropolis and the quality of maintenance of public parks declined, the cemetery became increasingly valued by many people who sought its expansive and tranquil beauty. Today, with the pressures of dwindling space, it is pioneering new burial and commemoration options.

The rise of the historic preservation movement has also led the cemetery to explore new ways to protect and rejuvenate both its built and natural resources. The cemetery's mission remains the same as it was in 1831 but the techniques for fulfilling it have changed. This new American landscape continues to evolve and provide new ideas for the use, preservation and enjoyment of its many resources. Today, Mount Auburn continues its historic dual role as sacred site and pleasure ground, serving as an active cemetery and a vital educational and recreational resource in an increasingly urban area.

Mount Auburn Cemetery, founded in 1831, initiated America's rural cemetery movement. Mount Auburn's national significance is its role as the first rural, landscaped cemetery that became the role model for many other nineteenth century cemeteries as well as public parks. Its historic associations and beauty make it an internationally renowned cultural landscape, and today it is a significant component of the region's horticultural resources, urban greenspace, and cultural network. A private non-profit corporation, Mount Auburn remains an active, non-sectarian cemetery and continues as a leader in the development of interment and memorial options appropriate for a site of its historical significance.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government: Cambridge Historical Commission
- University
- Other (Specify Repository): Mount Auburn Cemetery, 580 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 175 acres

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	19	322870	4693500
B	19	323770	4693480
C	19	323760	4692350
D	19	322860	4692380

## Verbal Boundary Description:

In Cambridge and Watertown, bounded by Mount Auburn Street on the north, Coolidge Avenue on the east and south, Grove Street and Sandbanks Roman Catholic Cemetery on the west. Within the overall site, the section bounded by Mount Auburn Street on the north, Coolidge Avenue on the east and south, and Story Road (a cemetery road) and Sandbanks Roman Catholic Cemetery on the west contributes to the cemetery's period of significance, 1831-1945. The more modern (mid- to late twentieth century) sections to the south and west of Story Road do not contribute to the significance of the nomination.

## Boundary Justification:

The boundaries describe the integral, contiguous landscape of the property that has historically been known as Mount Auburn Cemetery since 1831, including those parcels added during the period of significance that retain historic integrity.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK ON  
MAY 27, 2003

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