Pittsburgh’s Allegheny Cemetery and the Victorian Garden of the Dead

Book Review Essay by Roy Lubove

Allegheny Cemetery: A Romantic Landscape in Pittsburgh
By Walter Kidney
Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, 1990. Pp. 156. Foreword, illustrations, index. $34.95

[These cemeteries were all the rage, and so deeply was the want felt which they supplied, and so truly beautiful were they in themselves, that it is not to be wondered at if people were slow to perceive that there was a certain incongruity between a graveyard and a place of recreation. The truth is, people were glad to get fresh air, and a sight of grass, and trees, and flowers with, now and then, a pretty piece of sculpture... without considering too deeply whether it might not be better to have it all without the graves and the funeral processions. — Clarence C. Cook, A Description of the New York Central Park, 1869]

Most Pittsburghers do not realize that the 300-acre Allegheny Cemetery, established in the city’s Lawrenceville neighborhood in 1844, has more than local significance. Yet the Victorian rural or romantic cemetery, embodied in Allegheny, profoundly influenced and reflected American attitudes toward life as well as death (although it flourished for little more than a quarter-century, 1830-1860). It brought forth, among educated wealthy urbanites, a vision of the city of the dead as a model for the city of the living. Allegheny Cemetery thus exemplified an extraordinary episode in western culture. Before examining Walter Kidney’s superbly illustrated volume on Allegheny Cemetery, it is necessary to explore that broader context of Anglo-American aesthetic theory, social values, and landscape design in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The first and most influential of the romantic cemeteries was Mount Auburn, established in 1831 in Cambridge, Mass. It was emulated, in the following decade, by Laurel Hill, Philadelphia, 1836; Green-Wood, Brooklyn, 1838; Mount Hope, Rochester, N.Y., 1838; and Albany Rural Cemetery, 1841. Cemeteries based on these models then spread widely throughout the East and Midwest.1 The rural cemetery was an extraordinary cultural icon during its brief hegemony because its picturesque landscape and moral tutelage offered the living guidance on the qualities of a benign environment and social order, one which contrasted favorably with the emergent industrial civilization. The rural cemetery served its educated, elite sponsors as an experiment in utopia building; it enabled them to design a totally controlled environment which would reflect their aesthetic, religious, social, and cultural values. The city of the dead, in essence, was the prototype for the city of the living.

The American rural cemetery like Allegheny was rooted, in part, in changing attitudes toward burial and funerary architecture in eighteenth century France, culminating in the famed Parisian cemetry of Pere Lachaise (1804). In his monumental analysis of The Architecture of Death, Richard Etlin asserts that Pere Lachaise “represents a turning point in one thousand years of Western history.” It embodied new attitudes toward death and burial translated into a new form language — the picturesque landscape or garden of the dead: “Almost every plot was surrounded by a railing of wood or iron and planted with shrubs and fragrant flowers. The tombstones themselves were hung with wreaths of leaves and flowers, and wild training vines were abundant.”2 It was redolent also with history, the resting place of the illustrious of France, and with a riot of great funerary sculpture — a kind of uneartly competition among the dead to inhabit the greatest, grandest tomb.

The radical transformation of the city of the dead could not have occurred without a new sensibility in Western culture, one which viewed the traditional cemetery (i.e., the mass communal grave in the heart of Paris) as “pernicious to the health and revolting to the senses.” Moreover, the treatment of the dead as so much refuse was an affront to “the very dignity of human life itself.”3 A new concept of burial, compatible with a new romantic sensibility, required a landscape of consolation rather than terror and fear. An Arcadian tableau beyond the city, inspired by eighteenth-century English

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aesthetic theory and landscape gardening, would enable the living to commemorate and unite with the dead in a kind of cosmic continuity mediated by nature. Such communioon would be impossible amidst the stenchs and disease-generating mi asm of the traditional graveyard.

It would be a didactic communio that the living would be inspired and instructed by the illustrious dead. The new cemetery would function as an academy of moral philosophy, "a call to the glory that vebrates beneficent virtue and intellectual prowess." The new Parisian cemetery and its successors in the United States thus testifed to a "faith in the natural harmony of ethics and esthetics, and in the necessary docility of the public to lesson which came to them through the sens es..." 4

These lessons would be communicated through the cemetery's arangement of art and nature to reflect the attributes of beauty and picturesqueness. Along with the concept of the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque were the controlling aesthetic values in the extraordinary transformation of the eighteenth century English landscape associated with William Kent, Lanceolot (Capability) Brown and Humphry Repton:

It was at Rousham, between 1720 and 1725, and later at Stowe, that Kent created the first two great works of that picturesque landscape art which Brown was to practise with such distinction and on such an enormous scale that he did what no one man had ever done before or has ever done since, transformed the countryside of a land. In both cases he created gardens as landscape paintings, using 'classical' buildings, hills, water, trees and carefully planned perspectives to make 'natural' scenes such as would never have occurred in nature.... 5

The revolution in taste expressed in Kent's landscapes had a powerful and influential patron in Lord Burl-ington. Its aesthetic theorist was the Third Earl of Shaftesbury. The publicists included Joseph Addison in The Spectator and Alexander Pope in The Guardian. They subscribed to the aesthetics of Platonic Idealism delineated by Shaftesbury in The Moralists (1709). He declared that harmony, proportion and balance were the essence of both beauty and morality (or truth). Beauty and truth in landscape — the qualities of harmony, proportion and balance — demanded a repudiation of the severely geometric and architectonic landscapes of the French, Italians

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and Dutch (especially, at the outset, the toipical style). For nearly a centu-ry the English would struggle to define the alternative landscape, and specifically the mix of sublime, beauti-ful and picturesque which best expressed the beauty and truth inherent in nature. 6

Significant also in shaping the new aesthetic of nature and its expres-sion in landscape gardening was the tradition of 17th century landscape painting, evident most notably in works by Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Salvador Rosa. It was not a question of translating their paintings of the sublime and beautiful into landscapes; the concept is preposterous because a painting re-presents a fixed, one-dimensional perspective, while a landscape is a three-dimensional experience which varies over time and space. Rather, the great landscape art of Poussin and his contemporaries suggested a similar enhancement of nature through art using trees, water, and soil instead of paint.

The landscapes of Brown and Repton, for the most part, favored the beautiful as the most appropriate expression of Shaftesbury's neo-classical aesthetic of harmony, balance, and proportion. Thus the English countryside became a world of lakes, serpentine paths, gently undulating terrain, clusters of trees, shrubs, bushes, and flowers. But this concept of a gentle pastoral universe was sharply challenged in the late eighteenth century by exponents of the picturesque. Rev. William Gilpin published his Observations Relative to Pictur-esque Beauty in 1789. He singled out "roughness" as the foundation of the picturesque aesthetic: "roughness of texture, with irregularity of outline, with contrasting lights and shades, with variegated and graduated colors." But Gilpin represented a dead end in the application of the picturesque to landscape because of his identification of the picturesque with painterly or pictorial representation. 7

More forceful advocacy came from Sir Uvedale Price, author of Essay on the Picturesque (1794) and his friend, Richard Payne Knight. Price did not define the picturesque as landscapes which emulated pic-tures; rather, he pursued "principles of composition governing all visual phenomena, isolated to be sure in the works of great painters." 8 This involved sharp critiques of the beautiful as an exclusive basis for landscape design, a sustained effort to define the attributes of the picturesque which distinguished it from both the sublime and beautiful, and the creation of an aesthetic of art in nature which synthesized the beautiful and picturesque — as did nature itself. Thus the monotony and blandness of the beautiful would be invig-
orated by the roughness, variety, and surprise of the picturesque."

Eighteenth century aesthetic speculation culminated in Archibald Alison's influential Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste, first published in 1790. Alison's theory of subjective association helped establish the philosophical basis for nineteenth century romantic art, architecture, and landscape; most pertinently, his theory affirmed the link between sensory perception and ethics or morality — so central to rural cemetery advocacy in the United States. Alison overturned aesthetics rooted in Platonic Idealism, the belief that beauty or other attributes were inherent in the object and independent of the observer. Instead, he established a subjective basis for aesthetic experience, a view critical to the emergence of romantic expression in western culture. He argued that when objects of beauty or sublimity stimulated the senses and emotions, they simultaneously stirred the imagination. It was this power of imagination which precipitated the train of association which endowed the sensory impressions with moral or ethical significance. Indeed, in the absence of imagination, any emotional sentiment would be vacuous: "If the mind is in such a state as to prevent... freedom of imagination, the emotion... is unperceived."10

According to Alison, the goal of the artist or landscape gardener was to improve upon and not merely imitate nature. This improved nature, purged of its flaws, would have a more powerful impact upon the imagination and the associations and moral reflections it would stimulate. The superiority of art in landscape to original nature “consists in the purity and harmony of its composition, in the power which the artist enjoys, to remove from his landscape whatever is hostile to its effect, or unsuited to its character.” At the disposal of the artist were “all the sublimity and beauty of the moral and intellectual world.” The challenge, then, for the creators of the rural cemeteries was to apply art to nature in such a way as to intensify the moral experience, to design a physical environment which would stir the senses and emotions and imagination. Thus would “the Material Universe around us” become a “scene of moral discipline.”11

Eighteenth century English landscape design exemplified the art of the beautiful and picturesque. English aesthetic speculation led to a theory of subjective association which linked sensory impression with moral awareness through the workings of the imagination.12 The French, in

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“Eighteenth century English landscape design exemplified the art of the beautiful and picturesque;”

Pere Lachaise in 1804, had applied English landscape practices to cemetery design. The question is why did Americans throughout the East and Midwest, beginning with Mount Auburn Cemetery in 1831, feel compelled to create a new world of the dead in the form of a pastoral and picturesque Arcadia?13

One powerful incentive to create a new habitat was the condition of the parish graveyards. A second was a diminished fearfulness in the contemplation of death deriving from pantheistic rationalism, romantic sentimentalism, and the possibilities of universal, egalitarian salvation. In contrast to today, when a visit to a New England colonial graveyard is a cheerful prospect, “the first colonists brought with them a half-pagan, half-Christian heritage of burial and graveyard design. Under the world, the perpetually sunless place of Hell, demons, and putrefaction quivered beneath the graveyard grass.”14 The Puritan church graveyard was not meant to comfort and console. It was to be a grim reminder of the imminence of death; even children “were made to think of death at as early an age as nature would allow.” By the early nineteenth century, parish church burial grounds were likely to be crowded, chaotic, “p foul smelling, unattractive eyesores.”15 They blocked the path of urban expansion and were thus an economic burden. Most important, they were increasingly feared as health hazards whose putrefactions emitted disease-breeding gases and miasmas.

The repudiation of the traditional burial ground and a democratization of the prospects for eternal life in the bosom of Jesus did not lead automatically to the adoption of the large-scale, rural-romantic cemetery. Its popularity in ante-bellum America derived from its fulfillment of powerful social and cultural aspirations. It represented a design- or form-language through which those aspirations could be expressed.

The rural cemetery was a unique response to disintegration of the unity of “family, church and community” in the period 1780 to 1820.16 It represented an alternative community, a planned environment which would nurture family unity, religious idealism and community cohesion. As historian Thomas Bender has explained, the romantic cemetery would serve as a “counterpoint” to “America’s rapidly growing cities, marked by visual monotony and social chaos.... As the urban environment became paved over, more hurried and commercial, a change of scenery, reminiscent of the rural past, a readily accessible natural sanctuary within close proximity to the city, became necessary.”17 This powerful need for community and moral order found other expressions in the early nineteenth century, all of which involved art or artistic enhancement of nature. With one exception, they all involved a concept of community which contrasted with and repudiated the expanding urban-commercial culture.

The zeal for monument building in the period, such as the Bunker
Hill or Washington obelisks, testified to the quest for a national identity in ante-bellum America: monuments "could become the cement of patriotism, holding individual elements and succeeding generations together in a grip of virtuous emotion." They would affirm republican idealism, patriotism, spirituality, and the existence of a national community. As in the romantic cemetery, the force of history and commemoration would link generations.

The romantic suburb of Llewellyn Park, Orange, N.J., established in 1853, offered an alternative way of life for those unfulfilled or frustrated by the city. Designed by Alexander J. Davis, and consisting of 350 acres on the eastern slope of a mountain, the community was nestled amidst forests of oak, hickory, chestnut, cedar, and pine. Located in the center of the tract, comprising some 60 acres, the village was encircled by an access road. It was traversed by a wooded ravine, "affording material for ornamental water and cascades, which have been tastefully made throughout its course." Sprinkled throughout the grounds were "kiosks, seats, and bridges, constructed in rustic-work, to be in keeping with the natural character of the surrounding forests."19

Llewelyn Park might be described as a tragic tribute to A.J. Davis’s friend and colleague, Andrew Jackson Downing. During his brief lifetime (1815-1852), Downing exerted a profound influence on American architectural and landscape practice. More than any single individual, he adapted the English landscape tradition — of Kent, Brown, Repton, Price, Knight, and J.C. Loudon — to the American scene: "It was he who removed from the rural countryside the connotation of the awkward, unwashed, and unlettered — and so described the delights and rewards of rural living that among the fashionable he started a massive exodus to the open countryside."20 Downing’s aesthetic centered on the distinction between the beautiful and picturesque — the former characterized by simple flowing forms, and the latter by "striking, irregular, spirited forms." Also in keeping with the English tradition, he affirmed the aesthetic principle which was central to rural cemetery design: "By Landscape Gardening, we understand not only an imitation... but an expressive, harmonious, and refined imitation. In Landscape Gardening, we should aim to separate the accidental and extraneous in nature, and to preserve only the spirit, or essence."21

Downing’s landscape aesthetic corresponded with that of the rural cemeteries. Similarly, he related design choice to social and cultural objectives — if art refined and improved upon nature, then nature would be better equipped to convey its ethical and moral lessons, producing better citizens and community life. And, again like the creators of the rural cemeteries, he saw in the countryside an alternative (and superior) way of life:

It is... love of rural life and this nice feeling of the harmonious union of nature and art, that reflects so much credit upon the English as a people, and which, sooner or later we hope to see completely naturalized in this country. Under its enchanting influence, the too great bustle and excitement of our commercial cities will be happily counterbalanced by the more elegant and quiet enjoyments of country life.22

In Downing’s view, those who cared nothing for the appearance of their communities and homes were likely to be morally deficient. Indeed a community barren of streets planted with trees signified the prevalence of moral delinquency; men who “do not care how their own homes and villages look, they care very little for fulfilling any moral obligations not made compulsory by the strong arm of the law....” But contemplate a community graced by avenues of elms and other expressions of good taste, “and you also place before us the fact, that it is where order, good character, and virtuous deportment most of all, adorn the lives and daily conduct of its people.”23

Massachusetts villages best approximated Downing’s ideal of a non-urban environment which facilitated good citizenship. From end to end, the State was filled with flourishing villages whose tree-lined streets sheltered “goody rows of neat and substantial dwellings, full of evidences of order, comfort, and taste.” The citizens of Massachusetts, he believed, understood the advantage, “morally and socially, of orderly, neat, tasteful villages; in producing better citizens, in causing the laws to be respected, in making homes dear and more sacred, in making domestic life and the enjoyment of property to be more truly and rightly esteemed.”24

Downing, like other exponents of an Arcadian republic, realized that cities and industry could not be abolished. What could be accomplished was the creation of a countervailing force, an alternative model. Thus, if the city could not be eliminated, it could be naturalized. Nature, the pastoral, could be incorporated into the urban fabric. Downing became a leading exponent of municipal parks for the deprived urban populations, an amenity and source of social betterment well advanced in Europe. Originating as pleasure grounds for royalty and aristocracy, they had now become public spaces. Among the parks cited by Downing were the Garden of the Tuileries in the heart of Paris; the 500-acre public garden in Munich established by Count Rumford; the broad greenbelt surrounding Frankfurt (“one of the most delightful sights in the world”); the connected series of great London parks — Hyde Park, Regent’s Park, St. James and Green parks and Kensington Gardens. London was also blessed with its many “squares,” filled with trees, shrubs, flowers and fountains, as well as the nearby Hampton Court, Richmond Park and the National Gardens at Kew.25

Downing expressed disdain for the 160 acre park proposed in 1851 for New York City by Mayor Kingsland. It was little more than a child’s
playground for a city of nearly three-quarter million. Downing suggested no less than 500 acres, and envisioned the park as the center of the city's social and culture life. It would contain monuments, art, winter gardens of glass, zoological gardens as in London and Paris, horticultural and industrial exhibits. Downing admonished his contemporaries who “so little understand the elevating influences of the beautiful in nature and in art, when enjoyed in common by thousands and hundreds of thousands of all classes without distinction! They can never have seen, how all over France and Germany, the whole population of the cities pass their afternoons and evenings together, in the same beautiful parks and gardens.” Most important, perhaps, the public park — nature refined by art — would become a source of social harmony in the class-ridden cities; it would function as an instrument of public education “where the common school and ballot-box leave it, and raises up the working-man to the same level of enjoyment with the man of leisure and accomplishment.”

Downing's American model for the urban park was the rural cemetery. By the 1840s it had become clear to him and others that the world of nature and art expressed in the cemetery could be recreated in the cities but without the dead, graves, and funeral processions. Indeed, from their inception with Mount Auburn in 1831 they had served as popular pleasure grounds in every community where they existed. Mount Auburn, among others, became a mecca for foreign and American visitors:

It became the favorite 'resort' for both New Englanders and visitors, who read the monuments or simply communed with nature. Couples frequented the cemetery for courtship walks, cultivating melancholy emotions by reading sentimental verses engraved on the stones.... Teachers urged youth to visit the cemetery to learn from the exemplary lives of notables interred there.... It displayed family values and enduring social cohesion in the face of... death. Visitors would profit spiritually from its many lessons.27

Citing Mount Auburn, Green-Wood and Laurel Hill, Downing proclaimed that the United States had surpassed Europe in the creation of beautiful rural cemeteries. Their popularity insured the success of comparable urban parks, which would “largely civilize and refine the national character.”28

The rural cemetery represented one of the great cultural achievements of the United States. It became the vessel for the landscape art and aesthetic theory of 19th century Britain, including the critically important association of the senses and the moral faculties. In the cemetery, art improved upon nature and thus heightened the ethical experience. The art consisted not only of the lush pastoral-picturesque design of the landscape — the meandering paths and drives, ponds, trees, shrubs, and flowers — but of the funerary sculpture. Proprietors competed to erect architectonic memorials which, among other things, testified to the piety and status of their families. A stroll through the romantic cemetery is akin to a kaleidoscope of revival architecture and ornamentation in sculpture — classical, Gothic or Egyptian columns, obelisks, angels, temple-like mausoleums, sphinx, lotus flowers, and serpents. It would surely contribute to the elevation of taste in a democratic republic.

The sculpture and tombstones with their inscriptions would accomplish another purpose. They commemorated the patriots and civic leaders of the past. Contemplation of their memorials and deeds would link the generations and arouse in the living a spirit of pride in the nation and community. The cemetery would thus be a force for civic betterment. The community elites — professional, business, educated — who created the rural cemetery expected that it would be a place “where monuments can be erected to our illustrious men... one common depository, where their great deeds might be perpetuated and their memories cherished by succeeding generations.”29

The union of art and nature in the rural cemetery was calculated to establish a new relationship between living and dead. This was a compound of romantic melancholy and sentimentalism, didactic moralism and religious piety. There was much in common between the cemetery ethos and the consolation literature of the period, “the mourners' manuals, lachrymose verse, obituary fiction and necrophiliac biographies popular at the time...” According to one authority, Ann Douglas, this pervasive literature represented a “sentimentalization of Northern culture” promoted by clergy, women, and the non-evangelical sects as a means of asserting their dominance in the world of death; here the Christian virtues — “passivity, meekness, gentleness, reverence for the past and for the weak” — could be affirmed.30 These sentiments were compatible with the mood of sweet melancholy fostered by the cemeteries. The cemeteries and consolation literature also espoused a belief in death as akin to a change in status and place rather than an eternal loss; the dead now resided in a new (and better) community which the living could visit.

An enlightened, rational elite in the nineteenth century rejected the legacy of the graveyard as a place only a “step removed from Heaven, and half a step from Hell.”31 The rural cemetery they created was not a place of terror, but a sanctuary in which living and dead formed a community. At the core of that community was the family, “for the cemetery had become, in many ways, the refuge of the psychologically overburdened family; it was, at last, the place where peace and calm would be the rule, where the dissolving bonds of consanguinity would be ever strong.” It reflected “new emotional sensibilities” including “the
rise of affective individualism” and the “intensified cohesion of the nuclear family.” The organization of the cemetery testified to the centrality of family in many ways. It was a private, non-profit corporation which sold lots to individual proprietors on behalf of the family unit. They defined their holdings with iron railings or fences as well as funerary sculpture and plantings. Families could anticipate an eternal union in the embrace of nature and art.

The rural cemetery was a land of nature and art, of ancestral memories, patriotism and civic virtue, of romantic melancholy, sentimentalism, religious piety and didactic moralism and, not least, of the family united through eternity. It was, in a fair literal sense, a city of the dead which the living might emulate. The problem with the city of commerce and industry was that it lacked the benign sensory stimuli of the city of the dead, that union of nature and art which enhanced both individual and civic probity. The city of the living, to the contrary, promoted competition, aggression, materialism, vice and crime, poverty, intemperance, and family disintegration. It would become a fit place to live and work only to the extent it emulated the environment and ideals of the cemetery. Municipal park advocacy such as Downing’s represented an attempt to accomplish this. It was an extraordinary moment in American culture when the city of the dead was acclaimed as the model for the city of the living. The rural or romantic cemetery of 1830-1860 was surely one of the most unique utopias in western history.

Allegheny Cemetery, one of the first, largest, and grandest of the American gardens of the dead, thus represents one of Pittsburgh’s most significant cultural legacies. As much as architect H.H. Richardson’s Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail or the Beaux-Arts architecture of Oakland’s Civic Center, it is a singular and irreplaceable civic treasure. Appropriately, Walter Kidney’s Allegheny Cemetery: A Romantic Landscape in Pittsburgh was published by the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, thus acknowledging the Cemetery’s claim to historic preservation status. And one would hope that Kidney’s volume would help correct an historiographical lapse. The extensive historical literature on the rural cemetery movement virtually ignores Allegheny Cemetery.

The pictorial content of Allegheny Cemetery is its great strength. Every aspect of this lush world of nature improved by art is covered: gatehouses and entrance towers at Butler Street and Penn Avenue, administration and service buildings, landscape design, the astonishing funerary sculpture. There is also a sectional map on page 98, although, surprisingly, no map of the cemetery’s location within Pittsburgh; this would have been useful to non-Pittsburgh residents. The last chapter, “A Guide to Allegheny Cemetery,” comprises about one-third the entire book and is devoted to a section-by-section photographic survey of outstanding monuments along with text describing their inhabitants and features. It would be impossible, even if one never visited Allegheny Cemetery, to peruse these pictures without comprehending the powerful sensual and emotional impact of the rural cemeteries. Contrasting that world of art, nature, memory and commemoration in Pittsburgh with the “real” world beyond its boundaries on Penn and Butler, one might well wonder which is better (except for one detail, to be sure).

An aerial color photograph on page 21 illustrates the portion of Allegheny Cemetery known as the “lawn-plan Gardens of Peace and of Four Seasons.” The lawn plan concept of cemetery landscape design superseded the picturesque format. It originated at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati (the largest of the rural cemeteries at some 730 acres). Established in 1844, it turned to the lawn garden plan under the leadership of Adolph Strauch, the Prussian-born landscape gardener hired as superintendent in 1855. The lawn plan, essentially, involved a thinning out of the picturesque landscape:

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Exponents of the lawn plan had become exasperated with the many fences, elaborate monuments and lotholder autonomy, all of which contributed to an individualistic clutter and severe maintenance problems. The lawn plan, the triumph of the “beautiful” and pastoral over the picturesque, can be interpreted as a thrust toward centralized, professional management of the cemetery as well as a design choice. Significantly, the Association of American Cemetery Superintendents was organized in the late 1880s. The rural cemeteries contributed greatly to the development of landscape architecture in the United States, providing employment opportunities for landscape gardeners or architects at an early date.

One can hope that the lawn plan’s “Gardens of Peace” and “Four Seasons” will not expand beyond their present boundaries in Allegheny.
Cemetery. They have all the allure of a suburban lawn with ground level slabs to designate the location of the dead. And the counterpart to the tacky shoebox buildings which ooze over the urban environment is Allegheny's Temple of Memories. Kidney generously describes this low-slung, flat-roofed chunk as done in "simple style... more or less Classical, outwardly faced in limestone with some red granite detailing...." However well it might function as an above ground burial facility housing 8,000 crypts, it has the architectural merit of a K-Mart.

Kidney's descriptive text focuses on the cemetery grounds, structures, maintenance and management. The text is not social or cultural history, which would have called for exploring the aspirations of the business and professional elites who founded the cemetery in 1844, the origins of the cemetery's design, and the cemetery's role in city life. But the text does contain much useful information about the world within the 300 acres of grounds (of which 200 are improved, accommodating 117,000 dead). Among other things, Kidney discusses the contributions of the successive superintendents, the first of whom was John Chislett (1800-69). We learn that he was an English architect, trained in Bath, who had lived in Pittsburgh since the early 1830s. His talents in the Greek Revival were revealed in the Bank of Pittsburgh (c.1835) and in a predecessor to Richardson's courthouse in 1841. Although Kidney notes that Chislett was instructed to survey and design the grounds, and that his "careful planning and foresight formed the foundation for the present beauty of the Cemetery," we do not learn anything about his design and its origins. Whether this is because the information does not exist is not clear — the book lacks documentation of any kind.

Somewhat frustrating also is the limited depiction of the key role of William Falconer, superintendent from 1903 to 1928. A Scotsman and a graduate of the Royal Horticultural School at Kew near London, Falconer emigrated to the United States in 1874. He would become superintendent of the Botanical Gardens at Harvard. His skills impressed Charles A. Dana, publisher of the New York Sun, who chose him to manage his estate. He wrote extensively on gardening and established the magazine Gardening. Edward Bigelow, Pittsburgh's Director of Public Works and a park advocate, hired him as superintendent for Schenley Park in 1896. He soon became superintendent of the city's entire park system. Henry Phipps commissioned him frequently to collect specimens

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for the Phipps Conservatory, and he exerted further influence in the area as the landscape architect for estates throughout Western Pennsylvania. As superintendent of Allegheny Cemetery, Falconer wrenched it in the direction of the lawn plan. Within 10 years, he had removed nearly eight miles of stone and iron fences, and three-quarters of a mile of hedgerows. He removed cobblestone and gravel paths, converting them into lawns. Miles of roadway were reconstructed and drained under his direction; he developed a comprehensive water system and planted a forest of trees and shrubs.

Kidney observes that the cemetery "owes much of its modern character to William Falconer," and that "his quarter-century of administration is still remembered admiringly, especially for its courageous attack on curbs, fences, and other inconveniences left from the past." If Falconer had such a critical impact on the cemetery's design, one needs to know more about the character of his reconstruction and, not less important, what might have been lost as a result of his pastoral alterations.

The contribution of Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation to the well-being of Allegheny Cemetery was not limited to Kidney's book, a graphic landmark (if somewhat less as social and cultural history). PH&LF was instrumental in the creation of the Allegheny Cemetery Historical Association in 1980. Since the cemetery could not accept foundation funds in light of its status, Landmarks proposed a charitable organization to act as the cemetery's restoration agent. Landmarks, Kidney notes, funneled the initial foundation seed funds from the W.P. Snyder Charitable Foundation. Landmarks' chairman, Charles C. Arensberg, is vice-president of the Historical Association, and Torrance M. Hunt, Sr., a Landmarks and cemetery trustee, has served as chairman and president of the board of the Historical Association since its inception. Thus PH&LF's long-time strategy of practical historic preservation will contribute significantly to the proper maintenance and support of Pittsburgh's unique Victorian garden of the dead.

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1 The New Haven Burying Ground Cemetery of 1796 (later Grove Street Cemetery) was probably the first to deviate significantly from the churchyard tradition. It established the precedent of a private association to incorporate, acquire land, and prepare a plan. In this case, it was a gridiron divided into parallelograms with paths wide enough for two carriages. Lombardy poplars lined the roadways. The driving force behind the Cemetery was James Hillhouse, Connecticut congressman and senator. Along with public health considerations, Hillhouse's "commitment to returning nature to the lives of the city residents helped motivate him...in the plan for a new cemetery." David C. Sloane, The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History (Baltimore, 1991). Sloane's volume is the best general account of the American cemetery as a social and cultural institution. Kenneth T. Jackson and
Camilo José Vergara, Silent Cities: The Evolution of the American Cemetery (New York, 1989), is a splendid pictorial survey with brief but informative text.


3 Richard A. Etlin, “Landscape of Eternity: Funerary Architecture and the Cemetery, 1793-1881,” Oppositions 8 (Spring 1977), 18. “The new cemetery,” Etlin suggests, “was not only a solution to the insularity of traditional burial practices... but it was finally to be a cultural and social institution in itself—a museum of great art... and at the same time, a school of virtue, whose commemoration of great achievements would inspire a responsive citizenry and whose environs were conducive to the art of memory and contemplation.” (15-16)


6 Other advocates of a new landscape aesthetic included Richard Steele and Stephen Switzer. The latter, a gardener to the royal family, advocated design irregularity in Iconographia Rustica (1716). Earlier in the 18th century, tentative, limited departures from the geometric style were attempted by Sir John Vanbrugh (the architect with Henry Wise at Blenheim on behalf of the Duke of Malborough), and Charles Bridgeman. See Hyams, Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton, 5-8; Edward Hyams, The English Garden (New York), 57-64; Derek Clifford, A History of Garden Design (New York, 1963), 129-30; Norman Newton, Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), 208ff.


9 Brown’s exemplification of the beautiful, according to Clifford, involved sparse means and simple patterns: “contours of green turf, mirrors of still water, a few species of trees used singly or in clumps or in loosely contrived belts—and that was all.” Clifford, A History of Garden Design, 159.


11 Ibid., I, 122; II, 440.

12 Another exponent of the theory of subjective association based on sensory impression was Johann Georg von Zimmermann: “This tenet of romantism [sic], that landscape scenery would assuage grief and elevate the emotions, became a recurring theme among writers describing the influence of rural cemeteries.” David Schuyler, “The Evolution of the Anglo-American Rural Cemetery: Landscape Architecture as Social and Cultural History,” Journal of Garden History 4 (no. 3), 294.

13 Oddly, the first romantic English cemetery, Kensal Green, northwest of London beyond Paddington, was inspired by Pere Lachaise which, of course, had been inspired by English landscape design. The picturesque plan included a circular drive “from which meandered winding roads and paths.” John Francis Marion, Famous and Curious Cemeteries: A Pictorial, Historical, and Anecdotal View of American and European Cemeteries and the Famous and Infamous People Who are Buried There (New York, 1877), 19. Kensal Green was established in 1831, the same year as Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Mass. The influential English landscape gardener, J.C. Loudon, had proposed a year earlier in the Morning Advertiser that “there should be several burial grounds, as far as practicable, equi-distant from each other, and from what may be considered the centre of the metropolis; they be regularly laid out and planted with every sort of hardy trees and shrubs.... These [and other burial grounds] might be made, at no expense whatever, botanic gar-

dens....” Quoted in James Stevens Curl, The Victorian Celebration of Death (Detroit, 1972), 55. Loudon, however, was no advocate of picturesque cemeteries on the grounds that it encouraged their use as pleasure grounds. He favored the creation of parks for that purpose and “instead of naturalistic treatment of the landscape he recommended greater formality and restraint in planting.” Schuyler, “The Evolution of the Anglo-American Rural Cemetery,” 301. Schuyler suggests that Loudon’s vigorous anti-naturalistic advocacy, his 1843 publication, On the Laying out, Planting and Managing of Cemeteries and on the Improvement of Churchyards, and his design of a rectangular axial Cambridge cemetery contributed to the abandonment of the naturalistic style in favor of “utilitarian and geometric burial grounds” in England.

14 John R. Stigoe, Common Landscape of America, 1580 to 1845 (New Haven, Conn., 1982), 220, 221. Stigoe notes that “every graveyard... was intentionally chaotic, intentionally representative of sudden piersces, stranglings, disorders, darkness, and horror.” (227)


16 Stannard, “The Brief, Sentimental Age of the Rural Cemetery,” 43, 44.


Bender pursued this counterculture analysis with a focus upon the experience of Lowell, Mass. “As urban growth forced Lowell out of the interpretive framework that blended art and nature together to the enhancement of both, a vision of city and country as distinct but abutting each other emerged. By mid-century cityscape and landscape were treated as counterpoints.” (74) The Arcadian or pastoral vision of a nation which blended art, commerce, and nature in a single “middlescape” could no longer be sustained.

a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery (Columbus, 1989), 295.
28 A.J. Downing, “Public Cemeteries and Public Gardens,” July 1849, in Downing, Rural Essays, 159. Downing described the rise of the rural cemeteries as a remarkable illustration of public taste, considering that only 20 years earlier one found nothing better than common graveyards overrun with high grass, weeds and thistles. He was not impressed by the New Burying Ground at New Haven, where “a few willow trees broke the monotony of the scene.” (154)
29 Ibid., 183.
31 Stilgoe, Common Landscape, 220.
32 Stannard, “The Brief, Sentimental Age of the Rural Cemetery,” 54; Linden-Ward, Silent City on a Hill, 192.
33 In the case of Mount Auburn, the rural cemetery was conceived also as a center for scientific horticulture. Instrumental in its creation in 1831 was the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and its co-founder, Henry A.S. Dearborn. They expected that the cemetery would include a section for an experimental garden which would “bolster the American agricultural economy.” Nationalism and scientific ideals thus influenced the founders of the first rural cemetery. Within a short time, however, the plans for a horticultural sector were contested by the lot proprietors, who favored more privacy, and the plan was abandoned by 1835. Linden-Ward, Silent City on a Hill, 174, 175, 184, 207, 209-11. By the same author, see, “Strange but Gentle Pleasure Grounds: Tourist and Leisure Uses of Nineteenth-Century Rural Cemeteries,” in Richard E. Meyer, ed., Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture (Ann Arbor, 1989), 293-328. The significance of Mount Auburn is examined in Stanley French, “The Cemetery as a Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the ‘Rural Cemetery’ Movement,” American Quarterly 26 (March 1974), 37-59.
34 The Civil War, with its carnage, punctured the romantic sentimentality about death which sustained the rural cemetery. Post-war municipal park systems and other sources of recreation diminished the appeal of the cemeteries as pleasure grounds. Science and secularism made it increasingly difficult to sustain the faith in the after-life so central to the cemetery belief in the communion of living and dead.
35 The project received substantial support from Torrence M. Hunt, Sr., and was sponsored by the Hunt Foundations of Pittsburgh. Its photographer was Clyde Hare.
36 Even worse, Allegheny Cemetery was never addressed by scholars in the pages of the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, recently superseded by Pittsburgh History.
37 Sloane, The Last Great Necessity, 103.
38 “Falconer: Horticulturist, Editor, Park and Cemetery Executive,” The Cemeterian (1975), 26-32. This publication was brought to my attention by Robert Gangwere, editor of Carnegie Magazine.
39 Kidney, Allegheny Cemetery, 4, 54. I am informed by Professor Edward Mulder at the University of Pittsburgh that the Olmsted firm prepared a 68 page report for Allegheny Cemetery dated Dec. 28, 1901. Since Falconer became superintendent in 1903, the report might have influenced his reconstruction program.

Blackcoats among the Delaware: David Zeisberger on the Ohio Frontier
by Earl P. Olmstead

THE mission program among Native Americans on the Ohio frontier was among the greatest challenges undertaken by the early Moravian Church in America. In this book, Earl Olmstead provides a careful and illuminating account of the life work of the best-known Moravian missionary, David Zeisberger, and that of his assistant and successor, Benjamin Mortimer.