released in time for Halloween, this double issue of the Preservation Quarterly explores a suitably morbid subject: cemeteries and related objects, artwork, and customs.

If you ask "what do cemeteries have to do with the Smithsonian or the study of architectural history, historic preservation or nineteenth century furniture?" you might be justified in your query.

Persevere, however, and you will discover a connection.

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THE ADAMS MEMORIAL

Should a visit to the Rock Creek Cemetery be on your Halloween itinerary, you will be visiting one of Washington’s most outstanding works of sculpture: the Adams Memorial, a copy of which is on exhibit at the National Museum of American Art. Seated on a semicircular bench of classical design, you will find yourself face to face with a large (5'10"/1.79m high) shrouded bronze figure seated on a boulder. The setting invites the visitor to pause, to contemplate the meaning of this composition. The figure’s intense gaze seems to see beyond the living where no peaceful resolution of the eternal question has presented itself. The enveloping hooded cloak with its deep folds gives emphasis to the feeling of withdrawal. Yet placement of the figure in the same space as the visitor creates a compelling bond between the living visitor and the statue.

Author and historian Henry Adams commissioned sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens to execute this statue in 1886. There has always been some debate as to the meaning of the work. Many thought the monument was a memorial to or even a statue of Adams’ wife Marion because it was erected shortly after her untimely death by suicide. It became apparent after his own death that Adams had commissioned a sepulchral memorial to mark the plots of both spouses. He frequently signalled that the site was in the nature of a joint crypt referring, as he did in a letter of 1896, to “that charming residence I have constructed for myself at Rock Creek.” While the interpretation of the work has always been a subject of discussion, the least examined question about this compelling work seems to have been the source of its style. Yet the two are inter-related.

Although considered one of the greatest American sculptors of his day, St. Gaudens was genuinely European, born in Ireland in 1848, the son of a French father and Irish mother. However, he was raised from the age of six months in the United States. In 1861 he was apprenticed to a cameo cutter, acquiring a trade which showcased his tactile and visual gifts. By 1867 when he left New York for Paris, he had already begun the formal study of sculpture. After further preparatory classes in France, he won admission to the prestigious Ecole des Beaux Arts (School of Fine Arts) in 1868. He studied there under the sculptor François Jouffroy (1806-1882). Jouffroy’s studio was desirable for excellent instruction and for preparing students who garnered the top honors and commissions offered by the French establishment. Jouffroy was a mentor who introduced the skilled cameo cutter to the sculpture of heroic figures. Through him St. Gaudens joined a tradition of classically inspired sculptors.

The sculptural tradition he tapped to achieve the figure drew its precedents from those which he would have known as a student: plaster casts of Greek draped figures and the heavily cloaked mourning figures of northern Renaissance master Claus Sluter. In Rome, where he lived and studied as well, he would have seen Michelangelo’s massive draped figures in the famous fresco painting of the Sistine Chapel. Lorado Taft, a famous sculptor of the next generation, identified his "pictorial" modelling as French and French likewise the source of his themes. To this stylistic influence was added, Taft believed, an American "staidness and dignity" that was responsible for the sense of powerfully restrained emotion characteristic of Saint Gaudens’ work. In the Adams memorial, Taft’s formula is most accurately depicted.

St. Gaudens returned in this monument to a concept he would have known well from his years in France, the brooding tomb figure seen on many monuments in the Parisian cemetery called Père Lachaise. The type of a mysterious draped female figure leaning against a funeral stele or monument was usually considered a spirit, not tangible, marking the passage of the deceased to another world. Such a figure, sculpted by St. Gaudens’ close friend Mercie, was exhibited at the Salon of 1889. St. Gaudens, visiting Paris that year, could not have failed to see it on exhibition.

In deciphering its meaning, the figure cannot be separated from its place in a graveyard. The figure which seems to traverse the middle

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2 Lorado Taft, 241.
ground between this world and another is familiar in the French nineteenth century vocabulary. The fact that an unauthorized copy of St. Gaudens' figure was made in 1906-1907 for a gravesite in Baltimore's Druid Ridge Cemetery confirms that the composition was still understood in early twentieth century America as a piece of funerary art belonging in a cemetery. The full figure was not liberated from its cemetery setting until two bronze copies were cast in 1966, one for the Museum of American Art.  

When commissioning the monument, Henry Adams directed the sculptor to discuss with John La Farge ideas about Buddhist philosophy and symbolism and to have beside him photographs of the works of Michelangelo. St. Gaudens, having studied images of the Buddha in drawings and photographs, converted his understanding of the contemplative attitude they represented into the enigmatically peaceful face. Friends close to Henry Adams described it as "The Peace That Passeth Understanding... full of poetry and suggestion, infinite wisdom, a past without beginning, and a future without end" and Kwanon, the Buddhist image of compassion. Adams, who said his own name for it was "The Peace of God", stated that "The whole meaning and feeling of the figure is in its universality and anonymity."  

Michelangelo was a stylistic reference occurring more than once in Adams' letters, especially in connection with the memorial. He was equally admiring of the great Renaissance master's Sistine Chapel frescoes and his sculpture. Most specifically he admired the Slave in the Louvre. He did not, however, think that work was properly named "slave," but described it as "a primal energy," a natural spirit struggling to free itself from bonds which might be earthly but not man-made. Lorado Taft alone of the critics identified the Adams memorial figure as a "genius," a spirit not of the earth but occupying a very earthly/physical space. In conjuring Michelangelo as a reference point for the sculptor, Adams identified the memorial as a spirit of the place as well, struggling in its contemplative way with the earthly bonds.  

The Adams Memorial, 1891, by Augustus Saint Gaudens.  

The stylistic evidence relates the figure to a tradition of French funerary sculpture. Its history, too, indicates that it is understood as tied to the cemetery. The identity of the figure would seem to be the "genius" of the place, composed of the pre-Christian spirit of the natural setting and the broadly religious concept of the meaning of death and the hope of resurrection.  

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5 Henry Adams to Mabel Hooper (23 March 1897). Henry Adams to Richard Watson gilder. (23 march 1897). HA to Louisa Hooper. (20 May, 1899, in Florence) all vol IV.
MR. SMITHSON GOES TO WASHINGTON

When James Smithson, the English scientist whose bequest founded the Smithsonian Institution, died in Italy in 1829 at the age of 64, he was buried in the English cemetery on the heights of San Benigno outside of Genoa, in a grave site purchased by his nephew, Henry Hungerford.

During its formative years, the Institution collected bits of biographical information as well as a few small objects to commemorate Smithson's life. One such object was a daguerreotype of his grave site purchased for the Gallery of Art in 1857. Later, in 1891, believing that it was the Institution's obligation to maintain the grave, the Smithsonian's secretary Samuel P. Langley deposited thirty pounds of coal with the treasurers of the British burial ground for the care of Smithson's tomb.³ Langley could not have predicted at the time that, in addition to collecting biographical facts and objects relating to the Institution's patron, the Smithsonian would eventually "collect" Smithson himself.

In 1901 the Regents of the Smithsonian were notified by the British Consul in Italy that by 1905 Smithson's grave would have to be relocated due to expansion of the stone quarry at the foot of the hill upon which the cemetery rested. Smithsonian Regent Alexander Graham Bell urged that Smithson's remains be brought to this country for re-interment within the Institution that his bequest founded. His proposal met with resistance from the other Regents, but after two years he finally won approval. Late in 1903 Bell embarked for Italy with his wife, arriving in Genoa on Christmas Day. During a pelting winter storm on December 31, Smithson's remains were exhumed under Bell's direct supervision. Present throughout and undeterred by the inclement weather, Mrs. Bell "pluckily took a great variety of photographs of the place and ceremonies," according to a witness' account.⁷ On January 7, 1904, before the casket was sealed for its journey to the United States, Mrs. Bell placed in it a wreath fashioned from the leaves of a tree which had grown at Smithson's grave. The Bells then left the port of Genoa aboard the German steamerhip Princess Irene with its precious cargo.

Entering U.S. waters on January 20, after a fourteen day voyage, the Princess Irene was escorted to the pier at Hoboken, New Jersey, by the U.S.S. Dolphin at the direction of President Roosevelt. Smithson's coffin was then transferred to the Dolphin for the final leg of its journey to the Washington Navy Yard. On January 25, 1904 after brief ceremonies on the dock, carriages carrying Bell, Langley, and other dignitaries and the caisson bearing the coffin were escorted through the streets of southwest Washington by a squadron of the United States Calvary. Upon their arrival at the Smithsonian Building, Bell symbolically handed over Smithson's remains to the Institution with the words: "And now, my mission is ended and I deliver into your hands... the remains of this great benefactor of the United States."⁸ Draped in the U.S. and British flags, the coffin had been placed in the center of the Great Hall for the short but impressive ceremony; afterwards it lay in state upstairs in the old Regents' Room of the South Tower where his few personal effects had been on exhibit since 1880. With Smithson's journey at an end, Smithsonian officials then embarked on a journey of their own: to erect a permanent monument to honor the Institution's patron.

SMITHSON'S MEMORIAL

The year-long endeavor to find a fitting final resting place for James Smithson began on a small scale in February, 1904 with Assistant Secretary Richard Rathbun suggesting two possible sites for a simple tomb. The scope of the project soon broadened considerably when the Board of Regents formally recommended that a Smithson memorial be funded by Congress.⁹ Secretary Langley was

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6 Secretary's Files, SIA, RU-7000, box 4, folder 6, letter from Langley to G.B. Goode, August 6, 1891.
7 Secretary's files 1904, SIA, RU-7000, box 4, folder 10, letter dated March 15, 1904, from A.G. Bell to Langley with attached notes by Wm Henry Bishop, U.S. Consul at Genoa, Italy.
8 Smithsonian Annual Report for 1904, pp. XX - XXXIII, 4 - 10.
9 Smithsonian Annual Report for 1904, p.5.
directed to contact renowned artists to prepare designs for monuments. However, Langley was not alone in his search; a few members of the Board of Regents had also begun to solicit designs from artists and architects. Proposals were received, reviewed, and dismissed, one by one throughout 1904.

The scale of the designs varied greatly over the course of the year, from grand to modest as it became increasingly clear that Congress would not provide funds for the project. The reputations and skills of the designers were as dissimilar as the designs; some designers were only locally known, while others were nationally prominent. The artists contacted were Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the most prominent American artist of the day, his brother Louis Saint-Gaudens, and Gutzon Borglum, a young New York artist who later sculpted the Mount Rushmore Memorial. The list of architects included the Washington D.C. architectural firm of Totten & Rogers, New York architect Henry Bacon, designer of the Lincoln Memorial, and Hornblower & Marshall, the Washington firm employed at the time by the Smithsonian in the planning of the National History Building.

Totten & Rogers conceived two monumental tombs which, if either had been built, would have dwarfed the present day Lincoln Memorial. Bacon submitted two plans for garden structures, one a pergola, the other, an excpectra, or semi-circular stone bench, each to be erected over an underground tomb; Louis Saint-Gaudens was to provide the sculptural elements for these monuments. Borglum's sculpture of a seated Smithson, contemplating a mineral (presumably Smithsonite), was also to rest atop an underground tomb. Two suggestions for yet smaller monuments were made: one to copy the small circular tholos-like Choragic Monument to Lysicrates in Athens (an idea dismissed as too modest); the other to reuse the so-called "Syrian" sarcophagus (a gift to the United States in 1839 by Jesse Duncan Elliot, Commodore-in-Chief of the U.S. Navy in the Mediterranean) which stood in front of the National Museum Building (now A&I). Finally, two proposals (one by Borglum and one by Langley) called for retrieving Smithsonian's original sarcophagus-shaped grave marker from Italy and incorporating it into a crypt-like room to be built inside the Smithsonian Building. Of all the proposals and designs submitted, only Langley's proved viable, given limited Smithsonian funding available for the project.

By November 1904, preparations were underway for crating and shipping the Italian grave marker to the Smithsonian. Packed in sixteen crates, it left Italy...
on December 8, 1904, on the same ship in which Smithson’s remains had been transported, the "Princess Irene," and arrived in New York on December 28th.  

A simple dignified mortuary chapel was created in the room to the left of the north entrance of the Smithsonian Building by Hornblower & Marshall. The room featured three non-ecclesiastical stained-glass windows, a plaster ceiling with a deep cove molding and a floor made of dark Tennessee marble. The entrance to the room was sealed off by a heavy iron gate fashioned from pieces of the fence which had surrounded the Italian grave site. Photographs of the chapel show a somber and contemplative room, an effect further enhanced for the dedication ceremony by two large palm and laurel wreath arrangements flanking the Italian marble monument. The significance of the palm as a symbol of eternal peace and the laurel wreath, emblematic of glory, made these appropriate adornments for the neo-classical tomb.  

Entombment took place on March 6, 1905, in a small ceremony following the Regents’ meeting. Smithson’s casket was carried downstairs from the old Regents' Room in the presence of the Regents and was sealed in a vault specially built beneath his original monument. The austere "Mortuary Chapel," as it was then called, was to be a temporary resting place for Smithson’s remains only until "adequate provision for their fitting interment" and a proper memorial was provided for by Congress. In the ninety years that have passed since Smithson was brought to this country, the Institution bearing his name has literally grown up around him. Far exceeding anything he could ever have envisioned, the Smithsonian Institution became the most splendid memorial to his memory.

OF SARCOPHAGI AND SYMBOLS

James Smithson’s sarcophagus shaped marble monument, which was erected on his grave in Italy and brought to America in 1905, is an object of veneration and curiosity. Many read the inscription, but few people today understand the symbolic language of the marker’s very shape and its decoration.

The sarcophagus is an ancient funerary form, historically constructed to hold earthly remains of the deceased (see: Etymological Morsel, Preservation Quarterly, Summer, 1992). The size of such a monument not only implied sig-

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10 Secretary’s files 1904, SIA, RU-7000, box 5, folder 1. Also: Secretary’s files 1904, SIA, RU-7000, box 5, folder 1.
12 Smithsonian Annual Report for 1905, pp.67.
significant wealth, but created large surfaces for appropriate ornament. The Smithson monument was not a repository, but merely a grandiose marker of the grave below. When the Crypt was designed, a red Tennessee marble base was built to house the coffin at the level of the floor.

The upper portion is supported on platforms carved in the shape of lions’ feet. On the long sides, medallions are comprised of a moth inside a laurel wreath, decorated with branches and ribbon. A coved frieze is carved with a scallop shell, serpents, a bird, bunches of foliage and more moths. In brief, the iconography (artistic symbolism) is as follows: the lion represents strength, and its paws have been a fashionable decorative device since the late 17th century. The long-lasting laurel leaf signifies artistic achievement and eternity. Awarded to winners of athletic contests in classical Greece, the laurel wreath symbolized victory. The branches with their foliage generally represent the Tree of Life, which provided life, food, and shelter. The scallop shell was a favorite decorative device of the Greeks and Romans, who associated it with the sea, and thus with eternity and rebirth. Worms and moths might be seen as symbols of evil and decay, but, to the ancients, the serpent was "an object of veneration, as a repository of great wisdom and power." Moths, having "died" as caterpillars, exhibit new life after death. Finally, birds represent flight, particularly that of a soul ascending to Heaven.

In shape, the upper portion of the Smithson monument also resembles a large, rectangular urn, because of its curved, tapering sides, lobed lid, and a pine cone finial. The urn as a funerary form is traced to the Kerimikos cemetery of ancient Athens, where vessels holding crematory ashes were placed on pedestals. Since then, use of the form has been so widespread that it no longer denotes cremation of the deceased.

A finial, carved as a flame, was often set on urn monuments, where it symbolized the renewal of life or the Christian resurrection. Smithson’s memorial was capped with a pine cone, instead, which symbolized regeneration. This is particularly apt given that his bequest to America has borne fruit a thousand times over in its mandate for "the increase and diffusion of knowledge."  

**THE SMITHSONIAN & ARLINGTON CEMETERY**

Surprisingly, there are several connections between two of the most well-known sites in Washington, D.C.: the Smithsonian Institution and Arlington Cemetery. The most important of these is engineer Montgomery Meigs.

Montgomery Meigs' involvement with the Smithsonian began in 1876 when he designed a preliminary plan for the new National Museum building. He later assisted architects Adolph Cluss and Carl Schulze with the development of the roof truss system for the new structure, now known as the Arts and Industries Building. Meigs was appointed a member of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian on December 26, 1885 and served until his term expired in December 1891. Meigs' career culminated with perhaps his greatest structure, the Pension Building, erected between 1882-1887.

Meigs' involvement with Arlington Cemetery can be traced back to June 1837. Fresh out of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Second Lieutenant Meigs accompanied First Lieutenant Robert E. Lee on a mission to survey the Mississippi River. Meigs and Lee had several commonalities: they were both from the South, Lee a Virginian and Meigs a Georgian; they were both West Point graduates; officers in the United States Army; and engineers.

Lee and Meigs surveyed the river from Iowa to St. Louis. Together they devised a plan to render the Des Moines Rapids and the Rock River Rapids navigable. Their aim was to alter the flow of the river to save the harbor of St. Louis. The two men worked together from June 1837 to December when Lee returned to his beloved home, Arlington House, across the Potomac from Washington, D.C.  

When war was declared between the northern and southern states in April 1861, Robert E. Lee resigned his commission from the United States Army and moved to Richmond, Virginia, leaving his wife Mary behind at Arlington House. Soon after, it became evident that the Union Army was going to cross the Potomac and Mary Lee vacated Arlington House. On May 24, 1861, Union troops occupied the house and military installations were built on the 1,100 acre estate.

In the same year, Joseph E. Johnston resigned as Quartermaster General of the United States Army to join Robert E. Lee in the Confederate cause. Montgomery C. Meigs was Johnston’s replacement. Meigs’ duties as Quartermaster General included oversight of government land use for military purposes and construction of all military and transportation facilities.

Historians have always believed that the primary reason for the selection of Arlington for a cemetery was an act of revenge carried out by Montgomery Meigs against his old colleague in arms Robert E. Lee for his allegiance to the Confederacy. Meigs’ own family had been divided by the war, for his brother elected to fight for the Confederacy. On November 19, 1863, Abraham Lincoln dedicated the first National Cemetery for the dead of the north on the Gettysburg Battlefield. Casualties only increased as the war continued, and in 1864 the Federal government decreed that additional burial grounds must be found for the dead. Montgomery Meigs was tasked with finding suitable land. Meigs wrote to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton suggesting that Robert E. Lee’s estate Arlington, which had been confiscated by the Federal government, be used for a cemetery. “The grounds about the mansion are admirably adapted to such a use,” Meigs wrote on 15 June 1864. That same day, Stanton informed Meigs that he would allot 200 acres of the estate as burial ground. 17

In August 1864, twenty-six men were buried around Mrs. Lee’s rose garden. By the end of the war, 16,000 dead were buried near Arlington House, including 2,111 unknown soldiers buried in a mass grave in the "Tomb of the Unknown Dead from the Civil War." Meigs’ involvement with the cemetery continued with his design of cast-iron headstones coated with zinc, similar in style to the original white-washed wood headstones. Although Meigs’ design was not adapted, one Meigs headstone exists today in Section 13 of the cemetery. 18

The Confederacy and Arlington House were both lost to Robert E. Lee. With the grounds near the house used as a cemetery, there was no way the Lees would, or could, ever return to their home to live, and it was only from a distance during separate visits to Washington after the war that the Lees saw their home for the last time. Shortly after Robert E. Lee’s death in 1870, his eldest son Custis filed suit claiming that the confiscation of the estate during the Civil War

was unconstitutional. After years of complicated legal proceedings, Lee won and ceded the title of the estate to the United States government for $150,000 in 1883. Arlington was now an official national cemetery.

Meigs died in 1892, and was buried in Section One of Arlington Cemetery, less than one hundred feet from Mrs. Lee’s rose garden. Meigs’ father, wife, and son are buried with him, the latter memorialized by a reclining statue showing the young man as he died fighting for the Union Army near Harrisonburg, Virginia in October 1864. The remains of Meigs’ father were moved from Congressional Cemetery to join his son. His grave is marked with the original tombstone from Congressional Cemetery.

As you drive through the 612 acres which comprise Arlington Cemetery today, you see a massive stone gateway standing somewhat forlornly in the middle of a road which divides the many rows of white headstones. Something about its appearance seems familiar: the gate appears to be constructed of the same material as the Smithsonian Institution Building, Seneca sandstone.

Several different stone types were considered for the Smithsonian Building. A Building Committee was formed in February 1847, led by Robert Dale Owen, a Congressman from Indiana, to select the construction material for the Smithsonian Building. Several different stone types were investigated, including Aquia Creek freestone, used in several government buildings. Owen visited the Seneca sandstone quarries in March. He reported that the dark red stone “is comparatively soft, working freely before the chisel and hammer, and can even be cut with a knife; by exposure, it gradually indurates, and ultimately acquires a toughness and consistency that not only enables it to resist atmospheric vicissitudes, but even the most severe mechanical wear and tear.” Owen was sufficiently impressed with the Seneca stone that the Building Committee selected it as the material for the Castle Building in March 1847.

In 1870, Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs recommended to Secretary of War William W. Belknap that a gate be erected to denote the entrance to Arlington Cemetery. The 1870 Report of the Quartermaster General to the Secretary of War states, “The adoption of a handsome arched gateway of sandstone with iron gate, has been recommended. It is intended to build this gateway, which is to have plain Doric columns and rustic piers, with an arch of ten feet, at five of the largest and most visited cemeteries. The first one will be built at Arlington, Virginia; the others will probably be erected at Fredericksburg, Virginia, Marietta, Georgia, Nashville, Tennessee and Vicksburg, Mississippi.”

Irish-born architect Lot Flannery was selected to design the gates in 1871. Flannery selected Seneca sandstone. The Quartermaster General’s Report for 1871 states that “the work therein is progressing but slowly, owing to the difficulty of obtaining suitable stone from the quarry.” This lack of stone may be why the gate was not completed until 1880, five years before its namesake, General George B. McClellan, died.

The gate was erected as a tribute to General George B. McClellan who used Arlington House during the winter of 1861-1862 as headquarters during his command of the Army of the Potomac. The name MCCLELLAN is carved at the top of the gate with the inscription "Here Rest 15,585 of the 515,555 citizens Who Died in Defense of Our Country 1861 to 1865." Quotations from Theodore O’Hara’s poem "Bivouac of the Dead" are inscribed on each side of the gate. Meigs’ presence is also noted here, for the name MEIGS is carved on the left column. McClellan, it is interesting to note, is not buried in Arlington, but is interred in Riverview Cemetery, Trenton, New Jersey.

Today similar gates exist in the national cemeteries of Marietta and Nashville. These gates are not made of Seneca sandstone but of gray granite. The McClellan Gate is a tribute not only to its namesake, but also to Seneca sandstone, indigenous to the Washington area. Due to overuse in the 19th century, the quarry of Seneca sandstone is now protected by the National Park Service in Poolesville, Maryland.

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FROM FURNITURE FACTORY TO FUNERAL HOME

Among the holdings of the Smithsonian’s Castle Collection are some large pieces of mid-nineteenth century furniture which underscore the connection between furniture making and undertaking in America. During the nineteenth century, furniture dealers commonly sold coffins and acted as undertakers, in addition to supplying interior furnishing. The collection includes two massive bookcases which were manufactured around 1840 by the Jenkins Company of Baltimore, Maryland, a company whose history is an example of the evolution from a cabinetmaking shop to a professional funeral parlor.

For most of the nineteenth century, the Jenkins cabinetmaking shop was located on Light Street in Baltimore, where it produced a wide variety of furniture and decorative trimmings. The Jenkins Company traces its roots back to 1799, when founding cabinetmaker, Michael Jenkins, was also the first coroner of Baltimore. By mid-century the firm was known as Henry W. Jenkins & Son, Funeral Directors and Cabinetmakers. Today Jenkins boasts of being the oldest funeral home in continuous operation in America.

Coffin burial in America became common during the colonial period, heightening the demand for the manufacture of coffins and funerary services. Early American burials, of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, often took place in church yards. During the seventeenth century, most people were buried in simple cloth winding sheets. As Americans became more prosperous and urban areas more densely settled, coffin burial became increasingly common, and the services of a specialist became more necessary. It is unlikely that coffin making existed as a separate trade in America until the country achieved the urban density to support such an enterprise. Rather, carpenters or cabinetmakers produced coffins as a sideline.

The skills of the early American cabinetmaker extended naturally into the coffin making trade. A woodworking craftsman not only made coffins on demand but offered the additional funerary services of an undertaker. It was not unusual for a craftsman to advertise his services with the image of both a cradle and a coffin, placing his work in the context of the continuum of life. The coffin making business, although a sideline, probably guaranteed a craftsman at least some work during lean times.

The Henry W. Jenkins Furniture Co. in 1864.
As a trade, coffin making emerged from the cabinetmaking trade, and the profession of undertaker was a further outgrowth from the coffin making trade. At first, an undertaker’s duties simply consisted of attaching the lid of a coffin where it was customary to have an open coffin prior to the burial. Later these services were extended into the establishment of the funeral parlor or funeral home.

In rural and remote regions of eighteenth and nineteenth-century America, where the conditions for specialization of labor were slower to develop, the coffin maker was likely to be the local carpenter or cabinetmaker. Since the cabinetmaker offered coffin making as one of his services, assuming the role of undertaker was at first a simple extension of the trade. With the momentum of urban industry in the last century, the ancient woodworking technologies progressed from craft, to trade, to profession.

Even in cities and large towns, it took quite a while for undertaking to be distilled into a completely separate profession. Churchyard burial required only the help of the pallbearers to remove the deceased to the grave. The advent of the landscaped, garden cemetery on the outskirts of town, necessitated a formal method of conveyance to the cemetery. The hearse, a glazed, horse-drawn funerary carriage, was designed for this practical and highly ritualized purpose.

The introduction of the hearse, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, hastened the development of the undertaking trade. As part of the romanticization of the grieving process during the nineteenth century, the hearse served as more than transportation. The coffin’s journey in the hearse was the instrumental focus of the funeral procession, which symbolized the soul’s journey through life. As the nineteenth-century funerary rite expanded, becoming longer and more elaborate, the practice of embalming became more common. Therefore, funerary practices increasingly required more than just the services of a craftsman to nail, peg or screw down the lid of a coffin.

The Jenkins bookcases are particularly fine examples of nineteenth-century cabinet making. They are solidly built, massive case pieces of exceptional detail and quality. In the context of the Jenkins Company history, The Castle Collection bookcases illustrate a connection to the historic evolution of the furniture and cabinetmaking trade, as it progressed from one of broad woodworking manufacture to increased specialization.

**COFFIN TOOLS**

Certain tools were common to the coffin building trade, such as the **UNDERTAKER’S BRACE**. This was a small iron brace used to attach the lid of a coffin. A brace, sometimes called a "sweep-drill," holds either a spiral drill bit for drilling, or a screwdriver bit for driving screws. A brace has a "chuck," or a set of mechanical jaws at the bottom for holding the bit, a flattened round knob or "head" at the top for gripping or "bracing" the drill, and an offset handle or "sweep" in the middle, which allows the craftsman to rotate the center section around an axis, causing the bit to turn and drill a hole, or drive a screw. The head of an undertaker’s brace is attached to the top of the sweep with a thumbscrew so that it can be folded up and discreetly carried. This tool held a screwdriver bit for closing a coffin lid after the viewing of a corpse.

A hand plane is an ancient woodworking tool with an adjustable blade for leveling and smoothing wood. Interestingly, however, the term COFFIN PLANE does not designate a coffin maker’s plane but any wooden-bodied hand plane that was formed in the shape of a coffin. A coffin plane was usually either a flat-bottomed smoothing plane used to smooth boards, or a curved-bottom compass plane used to smooth a curved surface. These planes are sometimes also referred to as "boat-shaped planes."

Source:
TOMB WITH A VIEW

Mount Auburn, Oak Hill and the Rise of Rural Landscape Cemeteries in America

Oak Hill Cemetery, the place of internment for Smithsonian Secretaries Joseph Henry and Spencer Baird (see Preservation Quarterly, Fall, 1994), is a significant Washington landmark. Founded in 1849 by William W. Corcoran (the wealthy 19th century banker who commissioned the original Corcoran Gallery building, now the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery of Art), Oak Hill was Washington's first rural landscape cemetery and part of a new revolution in the design of burial grounds which swept through east coast cities during the mid-19th century. The emergence of the rural landscape cemetery came in response to the inadequacies of older burial practices in dealing with the urban growth and cultural change in America at the end of the 18th century.

The founders of Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the first "rural landscape" cemetery, attempted to address many of the shortcomings of past burial grounds, particularly their lack of space and grim appearance, by adapting the "picturesque" style of landscape design for use in the cemetery. The informal, naturalistic beauty of the "picturesque" style, based on 18th century English landscape gardens, accommodated the psychological needs of the relatives of the deceased and cemetery visitors. The ex-urban site of the new cemetery also dealt with many of the physical limitations of the earlier urban burial grounds. The immediate popularity of Mount Auburn Cemetery reflected the success of this new approach and inspired extensive replication in cities throughout America. The widespread dissemination of the "rural landscape" type, exemplified by the planning of later cemeteries like Oak Hill in Georgetown, in turn helped establish a new tradition of landscape design in America.

Prior to the 1830s, the deceased were buried primarily in churchyards or city commons. By the early 19th century, however, many old burial grounds had become overcrowded and unsightly spaces in the increasingly dense urban fabric of expanding east coast cities. Dilapidated grave yards, such as King's Chapel Burying Ground in Boston, consumed tracts of prime real estate and provided stark contrasts to the vitality of life in the bustling city centers. The foul smells issuing from the crypts and semi-exposed graves also provided offensive and unwelcome reminders of the proximity of these symbols of death and decay to the activities of daily life. As public health concerns grew over the decomposition of corpses in the heart of downtown, progressive city leaders began to look for alternatives to the traditional churchyard burial.

Coincidental with the growth of physical problems associated with urban burial grounds, new attitudes toward death and commemoration began evolving in America at the end of the 18th century. Conventional interments in small, sometimes unmarked graves in local churchyards became less appropriate as cities grew beyond the more intimate scale of the small town. Waves of new immigrants and shifts in native populations often erased the communal memory of the locations of ancestors' graves, even of famous persons. In some cases, smaller family burial grounds were obliterated entirely by urban development when ownership of the land passed out of the hands of descendants. Growing concerns over maintaining a connection with the past helped generate interest in permanent memorials for the deceased. Related to the movement to erect public monuments for national heroes, the enthusiasm for memorials also reflected a desire to define the history of the new nation and perpetuate the virtues of American civilization. Cemetery monuments, in celebrating the lives of certain worthy individuals, became one means of cultivating American nationalism.

European cemeteries, such as Père La Chaise in France, set precedents for more humane burial practices. At Père La Chaise, marble memorials and trees offered the consoling power of art and nature in place of the traditional depiction of the horror of death manifested in the grim burial grounds.24 Arranged in close proximity along the major corridors throughout the cemetery, the grave monuments at Père La Chaise gave the impression of a "city of the dead" separate from the world of the living, where visitors could come to mourn the deceased or celebrate the lives of notables interred there.

English landscape gardens provided another source of inspiration for the new cemeteries. The "picturesque" style of planning, which characterized these 17th and 18th century landscapes of the English nobility, utilized informal plantings and curvilinear paths to evoke a sense of primordial nature. Enlightenment thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic appreciated these naturalistic environments for their associations with individual liberty and antique virtue. Moreover, the natural world emerged in the minds of many progressive intellectuals at the beginning of the 19th century as a moralizing force in contrast to the decay of values evident in urban life. For Americans, rural environments also held positive associations with America's agrarian heritage and evoked images of an unspoiled Arcadian wilderness at a time when industrial development was rapidly consuming tracts of land in metropolitan areas. With the founding of Mount Auburn, these disparate trends coalesced into a movement for the creation of rural landscape cemeteries. Jacob Bigelow, a Boston physician and philanthropist, formed a voluntary society in 1825 for the creation of a new ex-urban cemetery. Concerned about maintaining a "rural" setting within the confines of the rapidly expanding Boston metropolitan area, Bigelow and others chose a scenic property in Cambridge overlooking the Charles River as the location for their enterprise.25 In 1830, George W. Brimmer provided the farm land (which he had originally purchased for his own use) for the cemetery, later named "Mount Auburn." After acquiring and consecrating the land, Bigelow began to sell 15x20 foot plots. Investment in these lots, purchased for eternity and tended by the cemetery staff, helped raise the initial funding for the development of the landscape. The use of private financing and the sale of lots in perpetuity signaled Mount Auburn's break from traditional burial practices in New England.

Mount Auburn's founders adopted the naturalistic, informal planning of the "picturesque" style to accentuate the rural character of its ex-urban site. The initial construction of the landscape at Mount Auburn began in 1831. In place of regimented rows of grave markers, Henry S. Dearborn, one of the founders of the cemetery, laid out miles of winding paths following the contours of the hills and valleys in the scenic landscape [see Figure 1]. By 1832, he had overseen the completion of most of the major landscape features. The property retained a forested appearance, broken only by the occasional field, pond or hill top. Dearborn enhanced the native beauty of the landscape with imported trees and plants associated with or evocative of death and mourning. In this manner, he constructed a landscape which provided consolation to the grief stricken and a suitable, even pleasant place, to reflect on the lives of the departed. By contrasting the strict rectilinearity of the urban grid, the informal, naturalistic environment of the cemetery became a space both physically and spiritually apart from the rest of the city.26

The presence of large, sculptural monuments throughout the landscape, replacing the small thin slabs of the burial grounds, reflected a new view of the role of the cemetery. The death's head motif, common on older burial ground markers, was replaced by a neo-classical aesthetic, symbolizing the shift toward a more secular, liberal view of death and salvation.27 Elaborate grave markers celebrated the life of the deceased individual, rather than merely indicating a place of burial. Descendants or other visitors could come to reflect on the deceased's contributions in life. The monuments preserved a sense of continuity with the past.

24 Sloane, p.50.
25 Linden-Ward, p.178.
26 Linden-Ward, p. 178.
27 Linden-Ward, p.218.
while providing lessons in civic morality in their recognition of the virtues of the departed. When the deceased played a major role in the nation or even the local community, the division between family memorials and civic monuments blurred, as sightseers often outnumbered relatives in visits to the grave. By objectifying familial and civil values, cemeteries responded to the need both for private remembrances and public monuments.28

Mount Auburn set a precedent for cemetery design which enjoyed great popularity in other cities as well. Washington was one of the earliest cities to have its own landscape cemetery. In 1848, William W. Corcoran purchased from George Cobin, a Georgetown landowner, 15 acres of land comprising an area formerly called Parrott's Woods. Under his direction, the Cemetery Company, organized to oversee Oak Hill, was incorporated by an Act of Congress on March 3, 1849. In 1851, Captain George F. de la Roche finished laying out the series of winding paths and level terraces which descended down into the valley created by Rock Creek [see Figure 2]. By 1853, Corcoran had spent over $55,000 to fund the preparation of the roads and terraces and to erect a chapel and gate house.

Oak Hill embodied the planning ideals of the picturesque, exemplified by Mount Auburn cemetery. The paths respect the contours of the hills, winding an informal, curvilinear course around the landscape. The series of natural rises and hill tops reveal long views across the landscape and down into the creek bed. The addition of marble commemorative monuments and sculptural grave markers, commissioned in later years by prominent Washington families and individuals, completed the romantic quality of the landscape. The combination of natural beauty with manmade embellishments intended to evoke poetic associations. Somber reflection became the hallmark of the romantic era landscape cemetery.

Many specific features of Oak Hill underscored its connection to Mount Auburn. The path names, such as "Primrose" and "Violet", followed the fashion established at Mount Auburn for names inspiring pastoral associations. Details from the top of the fence at

28 Linden-Ward, p.297-300.
Oak Hill closely resembled the open lotus form which embellished the iron railings at Mount Auburn. The inclusion of a small English Gothic chapel (designed by James Renwick) on the grounds of Oak Hill closely paralleled Gothic chapel selected for Mount Auburn over the originally proposed "temple" structure.

The beauty and novelty of rural cemeteries had the unintended consequence of creating spaces immensely popular with city dwellers. Seeking relief from urban life, visitors flocked to these early cemeteries to picnic, ride horses and tour the bucolic settings. Even more restrictive visitation rules imposed later at Mount Auburn and other cemeteries did little to stem the tide of persistent tourists. As this trend continued, horticulturists, landscape enthusiasts and others concerned with the quality of urban life began to call for parks within the city limits created for the diurnal recreation of the living in addition to those intended for the eternal repose of the dead. As Andrew Jackson Downing, the famous, mid-19th century landscape designer, noted in an essay in the *Horticulturist*, "But does not the general interest, manifested in these cemeteries, prove that public gardens, established in a liberal and suitable manner, near our larger cities, would be equally successful?..." 29

Early landscape designers such as Frederick Law Olmsted were commissioned by municipal governments to create landscape parks out of the developing urban fabric of the expanding east coast

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cities. Inspired in part by the informal layout of these early cemeteries, the city parks of that era were almost universally characterized by winding paths, broad vistas and picturesque bodies of water. Cemeteries like Oak Hill influenced the landscaping of many great public spaces in urban America, such as Central Park in New York or, closer to home, the Smithsonian Pleasure Grounds, located at one time on the Mall in front of the "Castle" building. For cities, the rural landscape cemetery became not only an answer to the needs of the deceased but also the vision of a more humane way of living.

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