

Sweet Auburn

Fall 1990

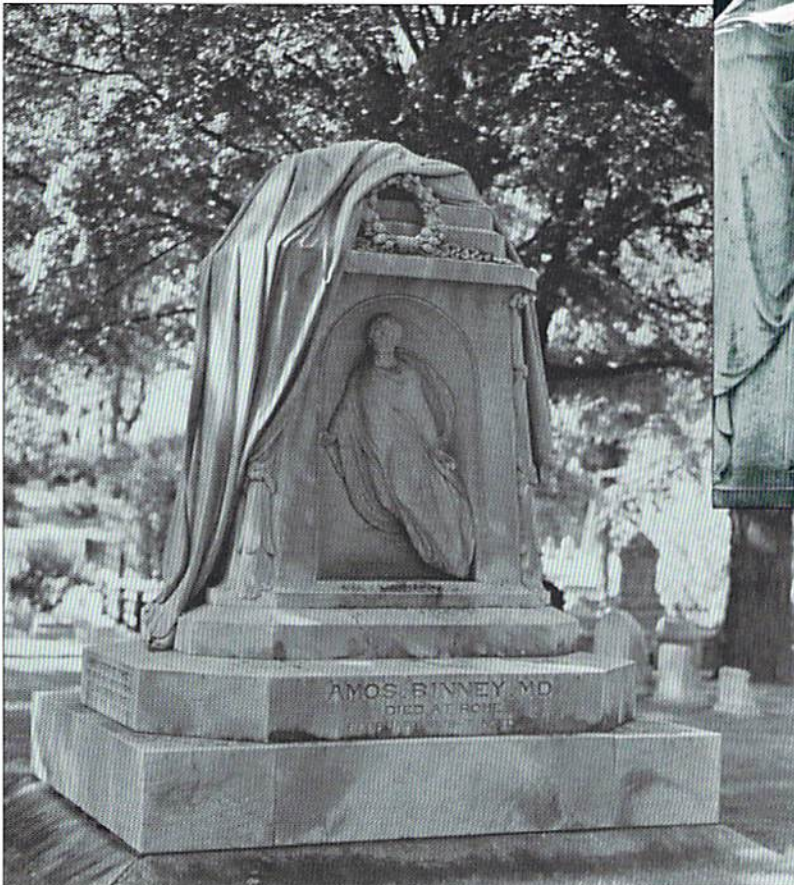
The Newsletter of the Friends of Mount Auburn

Greek Sculpture, Roman Sculpture and American Taste: The Mirror of Mount Auburn

The story told here begins almost two generations before the establishment of Mount Auburn Cemetery. Plaster casts of the famous Greek and Roman statues in the Musée Napoleon and from the Vatican and Borghese collections in Rome reached the United States in the years well before the War of 1812. The French (Houdon), British (Chantrey) and Italian (Canova) sculptors who sent portraits of the founding fathers in togas and Roman armor to the young Republic stimulated the taste for finished marble memorials of contemporary worthies in the Neo-Classic mode. When Lulio Persico carved his "Genius of America" for the central pediment of the Capitol building in 1828, the iconographic world of Hellenistic Greece and imperial Rome became very much a public part of the American scene.

Starting in the 1830s, the Americans sculpting abroad in Florence and Rome turned to the standard Roman copies, for instance, the Apollo Belvedere and the seated Roman

William C. Clendaniel
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Nancy Murphy
Newsletter Layout
Emily Hiestand
Original Newsletter Design
Shea Brothers
Printer



(Above) Binney Monument, north face
(Left) Binney Monument, south face

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Chickering Monument

“Colonel Shaw’s family monument includes a Graeco-Roman relief of about 50 B.C. brought from Athens to Boston in the 19th century.”

Shaw Monument



emperors as Zeus in the Rotunda of the Vatican, as founts of inspiration. And yet, other influences compounded to create memorial sculpture that could be both pedantic and poetic—the Italian Renaissance masters contributing to the Cupids and children in Horatio Greenough’s “Love Captive” (1832) or the notions of the American frontier producing Horatio Greenough’s “The Rescue” (1837), a big public commission for the balustrade of the Capitol. Greenough (1805-1852), of course, has his own modest tomb in Mount Auburn. His tomb is not far from a fluffy marble dog he sculpted for the Thomas Handasyd Perkins plot on the Cemetery’s Central Avenue.

Thomas Crawford’s bronze doors, “Washington and the Revolution” (1855), for the Senate wing of the Capitol and Randolph Rogers’ Columbus doors for the Capitol’s Rotunda mixed Grecian compositions, Roman illusionism, and Renaissance to Neo-Classic details in a way that brought the greatest of the past into the mainstream of United States historical commemoration. Seven years previously, Thomas Crawford (1813-1857), working in Rome, had created his monument for Amos Binney, M.D., Mount Auburn’s dramatic entry into the world of American Neo-Classic, Neo-Roman sculpture.

Amid the naturalistic portrayals in bronze and marble of the years before and after the Civil War, from Robert Ball Hughes’ “Nathaniel Bowditch” (1847) for Mount Auburn to Thomas Ball’s “Lincoln and Emancipation” (1874) in Washington and Boston, other currents surfaced. The funerary and symbolic aspects of Egyptology were parts of these. Thus, Martin and Joseph Milmore’s “American Sphinx” or “Union Sphinx” (1872) on the “acropolis” beyond the Egyptian gates of Mount Auburn could be the very spirit of Romano-Egyptian sculpture reincarnated. Even Franklin Simmons of Portland, Maine (1839-1913), used a form of Graeco-Egyptian peasant iconography for his “Jochabed, Mother of Moses” (1873), reflected in figures of “Mother” (with or without the babe) seated in Mount Auburn and the Cambridge City Cemetery. In 1873 Thomas Ball (1819-1911) completed his marble “Chickering Monument” with its Neo-Classic vision of “The Realization of Faith” as a pair of figures on top and its Roman Muse in a *tondo* on the front of the pedestal. This complex composition was one of the latest major ensembles in the Graeco-Roman ideal tradition at Mount Auburn.

Using the sources observed and studied in France rather than Italy (then enduring the turmoil of reunification), Augustus Saint Gaudens (1848-1907) turned the Civil War memorial into a creation of triumphant Romanism rather than a hodgepodge of naturalistic figures and Hellenistic allegorical personifications. The much-celebrated bronze and stone memorial to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and his black soldiers marching through Boston to embark for their heroic destiny at the defenses of Charleston, South Carolina, was dedicated in 1897 at the summit of Boston Common opposite the State House. The scene of soldiers with their bedrolls, knapsacks and rifles, the Colonel with his sword drawn (to salute the Governor) and his horse, and Fame flying above with her laurel and poppies (Victory and Death) was truly a rebirth of the Menorah relief of the triumphal processions in the Arch of Titus at Rome about the year 82. The Roman marble panel has been brought to life in new garb and modern attributes at the threshold of the twentieth century. Colonel Shaw’s family monument in Mount Auburn, a Roman two-columned, pedimented *tempietto*, on the side of the “piazza” between the Egyptian Gothic Bigelow Chapel and the Sphinx, includes a Graeco-Roman relief of about 50 B.C. brought from Athens to Boston in the nineteenth century.

The return from the Roman to the Greek worlds in American sculpture was well presaged in the late works of Augustus Saint Gaudens and in the monuments by his near-contemporary Daniel Chester French of Concord, Massachusetts (1850-1931). Although Augustus Saint Gaudens never finished his allegorical figures for the front of the Boston Public Library, they became heroic bronze women, “Art” and “Science,” at the hands of Bela Lyon Pratt (1867-1917) in 1911. The Greek prototypes belonged with the Demeter of Knidos in the British Museum, a statue created perhaps by

Leochares around 350 B.C. Statues like those of Bela Lyon Pratt found their way onto the commemorative reliefs and medals of artists working in the administrations of United States Presidents from Grover Cleveland to Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Comparable memorials featuring allegorical women in bronze were created for America's parkland cemeteries. In the Boston area, good examples are to be found in Forest Hills Cemetery, Jamaica Plain, where the sculptural commemorations are generally a generation later than those at Mount Auburn. Augustus Saint Gaudens and his pupils could also wander off down Italian Renaissance pathways, as his Henry Coffin Nevins Memorial (1895) at Mount Auburn with its cherubic angels crouching beside a wreath in front of a slab with a cross bears excellent witness.

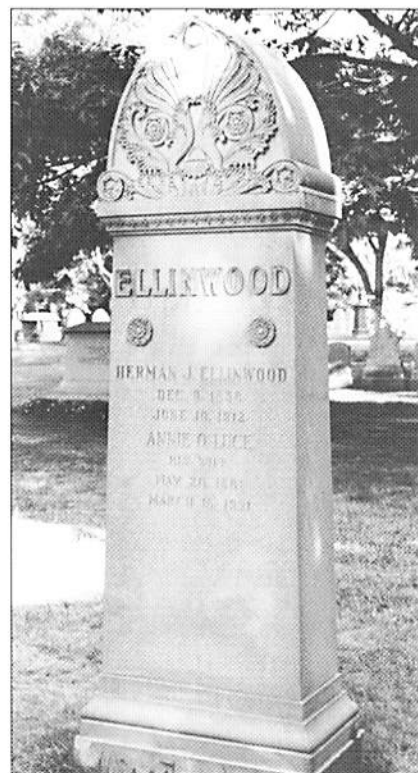
The parallels with Greek sculpture moved back in time as the twentieth century gathered momentum. Augustus Saint Gaudens' stele for James McNeill Whistler, 1906 to 1907 at West Point, in an architectural setting designed by Henry Bacon, immediately suggests the Calvert Stele of about 490 B.C. from Thymbria Farm on the Dardanelles in the Troad. (A stele [Greek] or stela [Latin] is a carved, inscribed commemorative or funerary shaft set on a base or in the ground, hence a tombstone.) This stele was associated with Francis Bacon, excavator of Assos in the 1880s, and has been long in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The Grecian stele of Herman J. Ellinwood (died in 1912) in Mount Auburn draws on these same ancient and modern sources. An anthemion ornament of honeysuckle and acanthus leaves tops the modern as it does the ancient Calvert Stele (which legend has it stood on the Tomb of Ajax at Troy), and the austere inscriptions are carved in the shaft between two canonical Grecian rosettes.

The influence of architectural drawings and reconstructions of exedrae (semicircular walls with benches) made by the Bacon cousins, Francis and Henry, in the Agora and Street of the Tombs at Assos, can be seen all over America in the settings which Henry Bacon designed for the sculptures of Daniel Chester French. The Henry Wadsworth Longfellow monument in the park between Brattle and Mount Auburn Streets in Cambridge shows French's concepts of the characters in Longfellow's writings carved in low relief as a *sacra conversazione* on a curving exedra by Henry Bacon. Collaboration between Daniel Chester French and Henry Bacon reached its apogee in 1922 when the former designed the great seated figure of the Emancipator and the latter created its Dorian temple setting, the Lincoln Memorial, in Washington.

In the late 1920s and 1930s the sculptors of major public monuments, working in the styles of Pheidias and the Parthenon (440 to 430 B.C.) and earlier monuments in the Greek world, filled the pediments of government buildings in Washington and the nation's other major cities with marble, granite or limestone figures in various Neo-Hellenic and even Neo-Etruscan traditions. They decorated these buildings with very Grecian architectural ornaments, for instance, copies of temple doors. They placed freestanding statues worthy of the Athenian fifth century B.C. greats, Myron, Pheidias, and Kresilas or Alkamenes, in front of their Neo-Roman buildings. The forerunner of these movements at Mount Auburn is the stele to the Lockwood family (Rhodes and Henrietta Lockwood, both died in 1905), across Fir Avenue from Thomas Crawford's Binney Monument and its spiritual successor by some sixty years. The blessing angel (Amor Caritas) of the Lockwood memorial is purely in the Pheidian style by way of Augustus Saint Gaudens in his unfinished tomb for Edwin D. Morgan in Cedar Hill Cemetery, Hartford, and in similar, later commissions (1883 to 1898). The Lockwood composition, divine protection of two small children, was also determined by tastes in painting of the time, notably Abbot H. Thayer's *Caritas* of 1895, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Cornelius C. Vermeule, III, is Curator in the Department of Classical Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and Professor of Fine Arts, Boston College.

All photos for this article except for the Binney Monument south face are by Cornelius Vermeule.



Ellinwood Stele

“The Lockwood composition was also determined by tastes in painting of the time...”

Lockwood Stele



Special Children's Program: With a Little Help From Our Friends

"Now we learned about trees. I remember the trees—dogwood trees and maple trees, too. The colors—pink, brown, green too. I like to learn about trees. Trees are good for you. You were very good to us. I like you a lot. Thank you."

Desirae

"I like to go to the Mount Auburn Cemetery. I would like to go again. I learned about trees. I like trees. I wish I had a long visit. I want to come again. I want to thank you for what I learned."

Catherine

This spring the Haggerty School in Cambridge had a wonderful opportunity to develop an "enrichment" program in science which involved the use of Mount Auburn as an outdoor classroom. The program involved six groups of students and teachers from kindergarten through the third grade as well as the school principal and parent and community volunteers. The study units at Mount Auburn were led by Jean Rosenberg, the Cemetery's Assistant Director for Membership & Programs.

The activities were taken from *Project Learning Tree*, an interdisciplinary environmental education program. Each group of students visited the Cemetery twice to complete the nature study of trees, accompanied by their teacher or principal and volunteers. In addition they visited the Aberdeen Street Cambridge library, where librarian Karen Kosko shared a story, Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, and invited them to continue their research and study using the library's resources. A culminating activity involved an art experience that resulted in a beautiful wall mural, "The Haggerty Tree of Life," depicting an assortment of truly unique birds, butterflies, ladybugs, and spiders that were made from felt.

This program was fulfilling for both the children and the adults. It is a powerful example of the rich (and often) untapped resources and opportunities for teaching and learning which exist within our community. It had been one of those "memorable" school experiences.

Dr. Joseph Petner, Principal
The Haggerty School

"I thank you for showing us all the beautiful trees and flowers. I want to go again. I wish I could see a Korean tree and a tree with pinkish flowers. But you don't have it."

Emily



*Letters from Rena Synnott's First Grade Class, Haggerty School
Photos courtesy of the Haggerty School*

Justin Winsor
1831-1897

Born January 2, 1831, in Boston, Justin Winsor was the son of Nathaniel and Ann Thomas (Howland) Winsor, both from families long settled in Duxbury. After studies at Harvard College and in Paris and Heidelberg, he devoted

himself to literary and historical work. In 1867 he was made a trustee of the Boston Public Library, and a year later its superintendent. The nine years of his administration showed a marked development in the growth and usefulness of the library. His annual reports, rich in statistics and general suggestions, and his bibliographical and historical notes in the catalogues and bulletins of the library were the beginning of a new era in library science. In 1877 Winsor became librarian of Harvard University and held this position until his death. He was a leader in his profession, insisting that books were meant to be widely read and circulated rather than merely stored on library shelves. His broad scholarship and ready recognition of new methods of instruction made the library, to quote his own phrase, "the centre of the university system, indispensable and attractive to all." Not only did he increase the value of the library to the college community, but he was always glad to extend its aid, by the loan of books, to scholars residing even at a distance from Cambridge. He was one of the founders of the American Library Association and

served as its first president from 1876 to 1885.

In the field of American history and cartography, he was a leading authority. His first book, *A History of the Town of Duxbury*, was published during his freshman year at Harvard, and his last was issued after his death. The most important work that he planned and edited was the eight-volume *Narrative and Critical History of America* (1884-89), in which the different topics were treated by specialists. He had already edited a similar

cooperative work, *The Memorial History of Boston* (1880-1881), which was called the best composite history of any town ever written up to that time. His most important independent work dealt with the discovery and exploration of America. The first volume, *Christopher Columbus, and How He Received and Imparted the Spirit of Discovery* (1891), was followed by three books on the settlement of the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. His works constituted a standard and permanent contribution to the literature of American history.

He died in Cambridge, October 22, 1897, and is buried on Yarrow Path, Lot 832, F8 on the map.

Article is taken from *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, Volume 1, James T. White Co., 1898*, and *Foster W. Russell's Mount Auburn Biographies, 1953*.



An Invitation to Join
The Friends of Mount Auburn

**Please enroll me as a member of the
Friends of Mount Auburn.**

Senior Citizen/Student \$10
 Individual \$15
 Household \$25
 Contributor \$50

In addition to my membership dues, I would also like to contribute \$_____ to help defray the costs of the Friends.

Contributions over membership dues are deductible from income taxes to the extent provided by law.

Enclosed is my check for \$_____ payable to *Mount Auburn Cemetery*.

M
Names(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

If you would like this to be a gift membership, please enclose your name and address so that we may notify the recipient.

Friends of Mount Auburn
Mount Auburn Cemetery
580 Mount Auburn Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138
617/547-7105

Holiday Gift Membership

The upcoming holidays are an appropriate time to remember someone with a gift membership in the Friends. If you would like to share Mount Auburn's heritage with a friend, please use the form above.

Silent City on a Hill

Blanche Linden-Ward's *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* received a 1990 national Historic Preservation Book Award in May from Mary Washington College in Virginia.

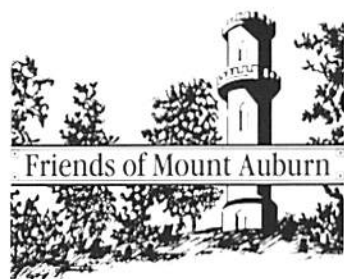
A review by Kenneth I. Helphand appears in the August issue of *Landscape Architecture*. Helphand writes that "Linden-Ward's finely researched volume, profusely illustrated with photographs by Alan Ward, builds a complex web of antecedents, precedents and connections which led to Mount Auburn's establishment in 1831. . . . [and] follows its development for 40 years, examining changes in how the landscape was perceived, used and understood. . . . Mount Auburn and other rural cemeteries played a central and formative role as models in the American parks movement of the 19th century. A reexamination of the cemetery in our day might have similar implications for our contemporary landscape."

Silent City on a Hill is available at the Cemetery office for \$51.98, tax included. The price for members of the Friends is \$41.58.



Birkbeck Chapel. Photo by Alan Ward

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Mount Auburn Cemetery
580 Mount Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138



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