

Sweet Auburn

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The Newsletter of the Friends of Mount Auburn

Mount Auburn's Consecration — Joseph Story's Address

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The consecration and dedication of Mount Auburn Cemetery took place on Saturday, September 24, 1831. A temporary amphitheater was fitted up with seats in the deep circular dell, now known as Consecration Dell, just north of the highest point on the grounds. In the center of the Dell was a small spring-fed pool, and on its northern edge, a platform was erected for the speakers. To the right of the speakers' rostrum, rows of seats were placed for the band, choir and members of the arrangement committees. An audience of nearly two thousand people were seated among the trees on the sloping hillsides. At noon, led by the band, the procession of officers, orator and clergy entered the Dell. The order of performance was as follows: instrumental music by the Boston Band, introductory prayer by the Reverend Dr. Henry Ware, hymn written for the occasion by the Reverend John Pierpont, address by the Honorable Joseph Story, concluding prayer by the Reverend Mr. Pierpont, and music by the band.

In commemoration of Mount Auburn's 160th anniversary year, we extract from Judge Story's emotional address portions describing how Mount Auburn's natural beauties might "administer comfort to human sorrow and incite human sympathy."

My friends!

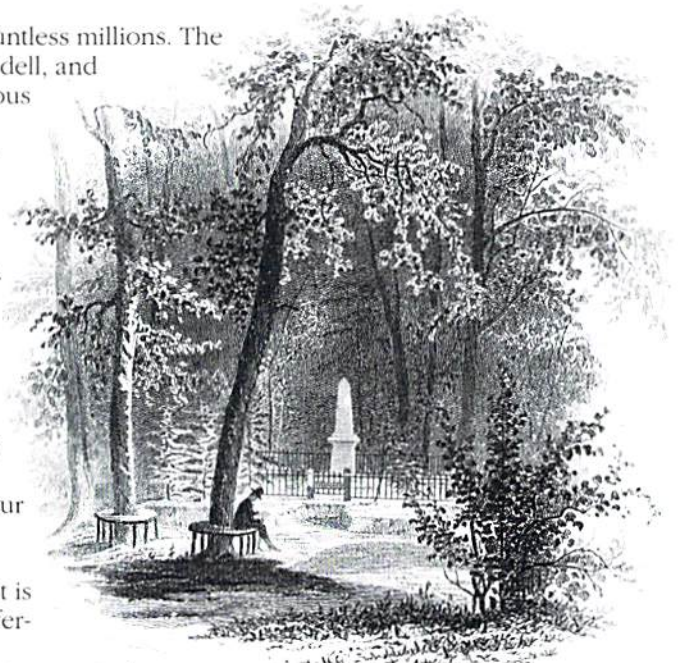
The occasion, which brings us together, has much in it calculated to awaken our sensibilities, and cast a solemnity over our thoughts.

We are met to consecrate these grounds exclusively to the service and repose of the dead.

The duty is not new; for it has been performed for countless millions. The scenery is not new; for the hill and valley, the still, silent dell, and the deep forest, have often been devoted to the same pious purpose. But that, which must always give it a peculiar interest, is, that it can rarely occur except at distant intervals; and, whenever it does, it must address itself to feelings intelligible to all nations, and common to all hearts. . . .

It is the duty of the living thus to provide for the dead. It is not a mere office of pious regard for others; but it comes home to our bosoms, as those who are soon to enter upon the common inheritance.

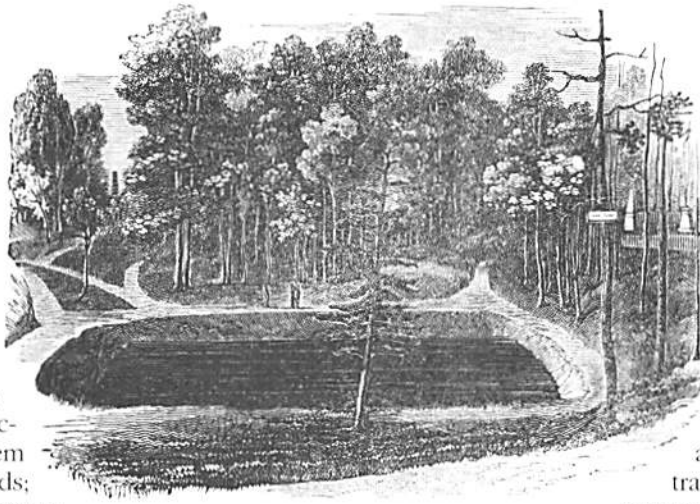
If there are any feelings of our nature, not bounded by earth, and yet stopping short of the skies, which are more strong and more universal than all others, they will be found in our solicitude as to the time and place and manner of our death; in the desire to die in the arms of our friends; to have the last sad offices to our remains performed by their affection; to repose in the land of our nativity; to be gathered to the sepulchres of our fathers. It is almost impossible for us to feel, nay, even to feign, indifference on such a subject. . . .



Story Family Lot, Narcissus Path.
Engraving by James Smillie, ca. 1847.

But it is not chiefly in regard to the feelings belonging to our own mortality, however sacred and natural, that we should contemplate the establishment of repositories of this sort. There are higher moral purposes, and more affecting considerations, which belong to the subject. We should accustom ourselves to view them rather as means, than as ends; rather as influences to govern human conduct, and to moderate human suffering, than as cares incident to a selfish foresight.

It is to the living mourner—to the parent, weeping over his dear dead child—to the husband, dwelling in his own solitary desolation—to the widow, whose heart is broken by untimely sorrow—to the friend, who misses at every turn the presence of some kindred spirit—it is to these, that the repositories of the dead bring home thoughts full of admonition, of instruction, and, slowly but surely, of consolation also. They admonish us, by their very silence, of our own frail and transitory being. They instruct us in the true value of life, and its noble purposes, its duties, and its destination. They spread around us, in the reminiscences of the past, sources of



*Consecration Dell.
Engraving from The Picturesque
Pocket Companion, 1839.*

pleasing, though melancholy reflection. . . .

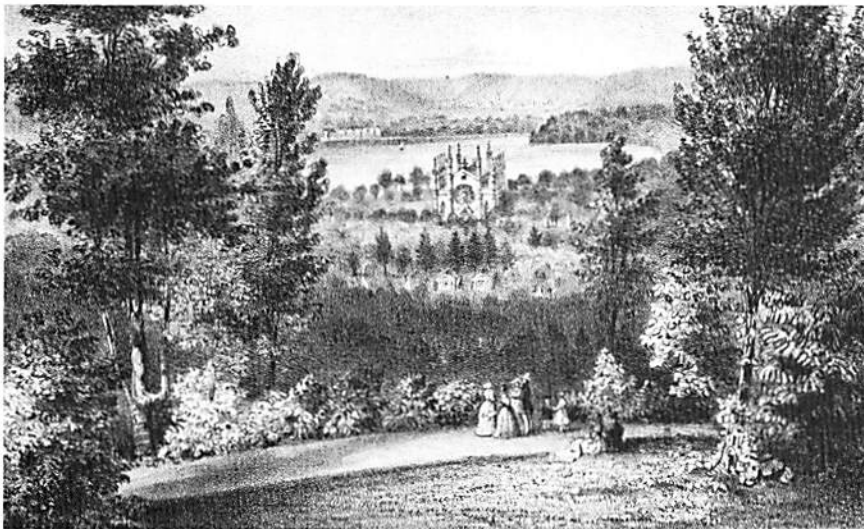
A rural Cemetery seems to combine in itself all the advantages which can be proposed to gratify human feelings, or tranquillize human fears; to secure the best religious influences, and to cherish all those associations which cast a cheerful light over the darkness of the grave.

And what spot can be appropriate than this, for such a purpose? Nature seems to point it with significant energy, as the favorite retirement of the dead. There are around us all the varied features of her beauty and grandeur—the forest-crowned heights; the abrupt

acclivity; the sheltered valley; the deep glen; the glassy glade; and the silent grove. Here are the lofty oak, the beech, that “wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,” the rustling pine, and the drooping willow;—the tree, that sheds its pale leaves with every autumn, a fit emblem of our transitory bloom; and the

evergreen, with its perennial shoots, instructing us that “the wintery blast of death kills not the buds of virtue.” Here is the thick shrubbery to protect and conceal the new-made grave; and there is the wild-flower creeping along the narrow path, and planting its seeds in the upturned earth. All around us there breathes a solemn calm, as if we were in the bosom of a wilderness, broken only by the breeze as it murmurs through the tops of the forest, or by the notes of the warbler pouring forth his matin or his evening song.

Ascend but a few steps, and what a change of scenery to surprise and delight us. We seem, as it were in an instant, to pass from the confines of death to the bright and balmy regions of life. Below us flows the winding Charles with its rippling current, like the stream of time hastening to the ocean of eternity. In the distance, the city,—at once the object of our admiration and our love,—rears its proud eminences, its glittering spires, its lofty towers, its graceful mansions, its curling smoke, its crowded haunts of business and pleasure, which speak to the eye, and yet leave a noiseless loneliness on the ear. Again we turn, and the walls of our venerable University rise before us, with many a recollection of happy days passed there in the interchange of study and friendship, and many a grateful thought of the affluence of its learning, which has adorned and nourished the literature of our country. Again we turn, and the cultivated farm, the neat cottage, the village church, the sparkling lake, the rich valley, and the distant hills, are before us through opening vistas; and we



*View from the top of Mount Auburn.
Engraving from A Catalogue of Proprietors, 1846. MAC Archives.
Fresh Pond with ice houses along its edge is visible beyond Mount Auburn's
Bigelow Chapel, built in 1845.*

breathe amidst the fresh and varied labors of man. . . .

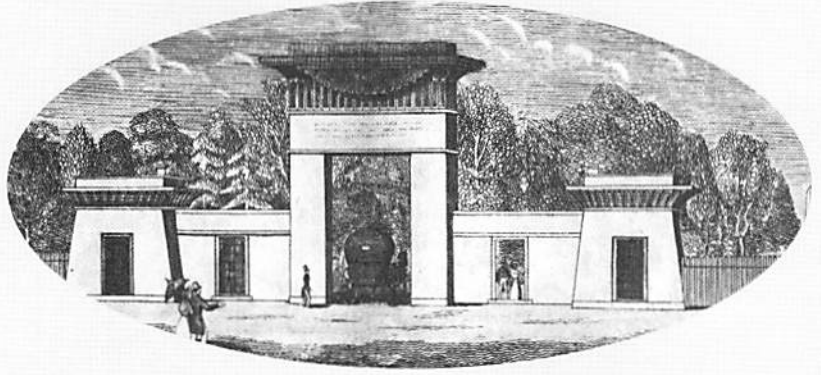
And we are met here to consecrate this spot, by these solemn ceremonies, to such a purpose. The Legislature of this Commonwealth, with a parental foresight has clothed the Horticultural Society with authority (if I may use its own language) to make a perpetual dedication of it, as a Rural Cemetery or Burying-Ground, and to plant and embellish it with shrubbery, and flowers, and trees, and walks, and other rural ornaments. And I stand here by the order and in behalf of this Society, to declare that, by these services, it is to be deemed henceforth and forever so dedicated. Mount Auburn, in the noblest sense, belongs no longer to



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the living, but to the dead. It is sacred, it is an eternal trust. It is consecrated ground. May it remain forever inviolate! . . .

Let us banish, then, the thought, that this is to be the abode of a gloom, which will haunt the imagination by its terrors, or chill the heart by its solitude. Let us cultivate feelings and sentiments more worthy of ourselves, and more worthy of Christianity. Here let us erect the memorials of our love, and our gratitude, and our glory. . . . And let us take comfort, nay, let us rejoice, that in future ages, long after we are gathered to the generations of other days, thousands of kindling hearts will here repeat the sublime declaration, "Blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."



Entrance. Engraving from Mount Auburn, with a Catalogue of Proprietors and Tombs, N. Dearborn, 1839.

Brief Early Chronology of Mount Auburn

- 1825** Jacob Bigelow held a meeting to promote idea of a suburban cemetery, composed of family burial lots in a wood or landscape garden.
- 1825** George Watson Brimmer purchased "Stone's Woods," known more familiarly as "Sweet Auburn," a tract of land situated on the border of Cambridge and Watertown.
- 1829** Massachusetts Horticultural Society incorporated.
- 1830** Brimmer agreed to sell "Sweet Auburn" for the establishment of a cemetery, under the auspices of the Horticultural Society.
- Spring 1831** Many individuals visited "Sweet Auburn" to become acquainted with its scenery and natural advantages.
- June 8, 1831** Committee voted to purchase "Sweet Auburn" (about 72 acres) for six thousand dollars, on behalf of the Horticultural Society, as soon as one hundred subscribers for lots, at sixty dollars each, should be obtained.
- June 23, 1831** Massachusetts General Court passed act authorizing Horticultural Society to establish a rural cemetery.
- August 1831** One hundred lots taken. Garden and Cemetery Committee set up. A subcommittee of General Henry A. S. Dearborn (president of the Horticultural Society), Jacob Bigelow, and George W. Brimmer set up to procure an accurate topographic survey of the tract and to report on a plan for laying it out in lots. Subcommittee hired Alexander Wadsworth, civil engineer.
- Sept. 24, 1831** Public consecration and dedication of the Cemetery held.
- Fall 1831** Avenues laid out. General Dearborn supervised workmen and transplanted from his own nurseries healthy, young forest trees to the grounds. Dr. Bigelow had the plan of the grounds prepared by Wadsworth lithographed and gave names to ponds, avenues, and places.
- Nov. 28, 1831** First choice of lots offered for sale by auction.
- Jan. 10, 1832** Deed to the land transferred to Horticultural Society by Brimmer.
- July 6, 1832** First interment, child of Mr. and Mrs. J. Boyd, on Mountain Ave.
- Fall 1832** A wooden entrance gate based on a model by Dr. Bigelow was constructed. In 1842 the wooden gateway was rebuilt to the same design in granite.
- March 31, 1835** Massachusetts General Court passed act to incorporate the Proprietors of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn. The Cemetery became the property of the new corporation, distinct and separate from the Horticultural Society.

Recalling "Sweet Auburn"

By Arthur Krim

The inspiration for the name of Mount Auburn Cemetery is generally acknowledged to be the Oliver Goldsmith poem, *The Deserted Village*, published in London in 1770. With Goldsmith in mind, Harvard College students are said to have frequented the Mount Auburn site, then called Stone's Woods, and named their rural retreat from the opening line, "Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain." Two Harvard students, Colonel George Sullivan, class of 1801, and Charles W. Greene, Esq., class of 1802, are noted in the fourth Massachusetts Horticultural Society report of 1832: "they bestowed its dearly cherished name upon the scene of their youthful meditations." Indeed, Jacob Bigelow as a Harvard College student, class of 1806, is said to have visited "Sweet Auburn" with fellow student George Watson Brimmer, class of 1803, both important figures in the development of the Cemetery. The question of how Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* came to be known by Harvard College students is answered in part by recent research into the Harvard University Archives that retains the early records of student activities, including the Hasty Pudding Club to which many of the students belonged.

Harvard College in the period after the Revolutionary War still maintained a strict educational curriculum for the training of New England ministers and merchants under President Joseph Willard. Thus, when a Boston edition of Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village* was first published in 1790, it was considered popular poetry outside the formal Harvard course offerings. The founding of the Hasty Pudding Club in 1795 gave Harvard students a social setting for the popular arts with performances in oratory and poetics. According to Club records, Washington Allston was named as a "Poet" in 1798 along with Jacob Bigelow in 1804. Other members included George Brimmer and Alexander Everett, both early supporters of Mount Auburn Cemetery and close friends of Bigelow. The "Sweet Auburn" poets, George Sullivan and Charles Greene, were accepted as members of the Hasty Pudding Club in 1799 and 1801, respectively.

Little is known of Sullivan's background beyond his Boston birth in 1783, whereas Charles Greene, born into a prominent Boston Loyalist family in 1783, was a noted Harvard student with strong ties to the College. His father Daniel Greene had graduated from Harvard in 1768 but was forced to leave for Antigua during the Revolution. In his senior year of 1801, Charles won mathematical honors for his drawing of the College House, known as the "Greene View" in the Harvard Archives, and was awarded the Hopkins Prize for Classics with a copy of Goldsmith's *History of Greece*.

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society report of 1832 cites the "Sweet Auburn" designation as dating from "some thirty years since," thus matching the graduation of George Sullivan in 1801 and Charles Greene in 1802. In their later careers, both men pursued traditional professions far removed from their youthful poetry in

Cambridge. From Harvard, Charles Greene traveled to Europe in 1806 and returned to merchant ventures in Boston. Unsuccessful in commerce, he opened a private boarding school in Jamaica Plain and retired to the Greene family residence in East Greenwich, Rhode Island, where he died in 1857, his wife Fanny surviving him to 1879. George Sullivan was later involved in the New York banking business and died at an advanced age in 1866. While the true nature of the "Sweet Auburn" inspiration may never be known, Charles Greene and George Sullivan should now be appreciated as originators of Mount Auburn's picturesque name, recalling the youthful poetry of the Hasty Pudding Club in their Harvard College years.

Arthur Krim is a Charter Member of the Friends of Mount Auburn and is former Chairman of the Geography Department at Salve Regina College in Newport, RI.

Facsimile copy (reduced in size) from the 1790 Boston edition of Goldsmith's The Deserted Village. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society. Although the present-day reader may be more familiar with Irish author Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield or his very successful play She Stoops to Conquer, the immediate popularity of The Deserted Village upon its publication added greatly to his fame and fortune.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE.

By DR. GOLDSMITH.

SWEET AUBURN! loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheer'd the lab'ring
swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
And parting summer's ling'ring blooms delay'd.
Dear lovely bow'rs of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when ev'ry sport could please,
How often have I loiter'd o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endear'd each scene!
How often have I paus'd on ev'ry charm,
The shelter'd cot, the cultivated farm,
The never-failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighb'ring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,
For talking age and whisp'ring lovers made!
How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train, from labour free,
Sate beneath the spreading tree

Joseph Story
1779-1845

This note is quoted from Foster W. Russell's Mount Auburn Biographies, 1953.

"Joseph Story, jurist, professor, Congressman. A profound interpreter of the law and one of the foremost American

legal authors of all time. He graduated from Harvard second in his class only to William E. Channing, after putting in fourteen hours a day for months at a time. He was confessedly a grind, his son later saying of him that

'his real exercise was in talking.' He delighted his hearers with a continuous flow of wit, anecdote, and criticism. Although elected to Congress for one session as a Republican member from a Federalist stronghold, it was to his influence that Jefferson ascribed the repeal of the Embargo Act. At the age of thirty-two he was appointed Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court to his great financial sacrifice, the youngest man ever to be so appointed. He was later highly eligible for the office of Chief Justice, but President Jackson, in whose hands the appointment lay, thought him 'the most dangerous man in America.' His opinions as Associate Justice, however, were highly important in developing the American system of equity jurisprudence. His decision that



Statue of Joseph Story by his son William Wetmore Story, 1854. Commissioned by the Trustees of Mount Auburn, this statue remained on display at the Cemetery until 1935 when it was given to the Harvard Law School. 19th-century stereographic photograph from the MAC Archives.

the Supreme Court should have appellate jurisdiction over all state courts made a basic and permanent change in the whole conception of Federal judicial power. Waves of public approval, as well as angry denunciation by those with vested interest in the African slave trade, greeted some of his decisions. He ruled that a cargo of slaves who had revolted and killed their ship's officers should be freed and returned to Africa instead of being turned over to their Spanish claimants. In other decisions during the War of 1812, he took advantage of the opportunity to put Federal maritime law on a firm basis.

An early advocate of training for the law in a law school rather than in an office, when made the first Dane Professor he brought the enrollment of the Harvard Law School from eighteen to one hundred and fifty under the stimulus of this brilliant teaching. He was a passionate seeker of the truth and applied a scientific and philosophic approach to the fundamental principles of the law. Concurrently with his work both as Justice and a Harvard Law School professor and dean, he brought out many volumes of commentaries on the law which gave their author an international reputation and are still remarkable for their learning and lucidity. These proved

An Invitation to Join The Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery

Please enroll me as a member.

- ___ Senior Citizen/Student \$10
- ___ Individual \$15
- ___ Household \$25
- ___ Contributor/Organization \$50
- ___ Additional Contribution \$ _____

The Friends of Mount Auburn Cemetery is a Section 501 (c)(3) charitable trust promoting the appreciation and preservation of the cultural, historic and natural resources of America's first garden cemetery, founded in 1831. Contributions over membership dues are deductible from income taxes to extent provided by law.

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

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 Cemetery
580 Mount Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
617/864-9646

so popular that the income from their sale sometimes reached the then munificent sum of ten thousand dollars a year, and several were translated into German and French. He took an active interest in civic affairs, being called upon to make many public addresses. One of the original promoters of Mount Auburn Cemetery, he served for ten years as its first president."

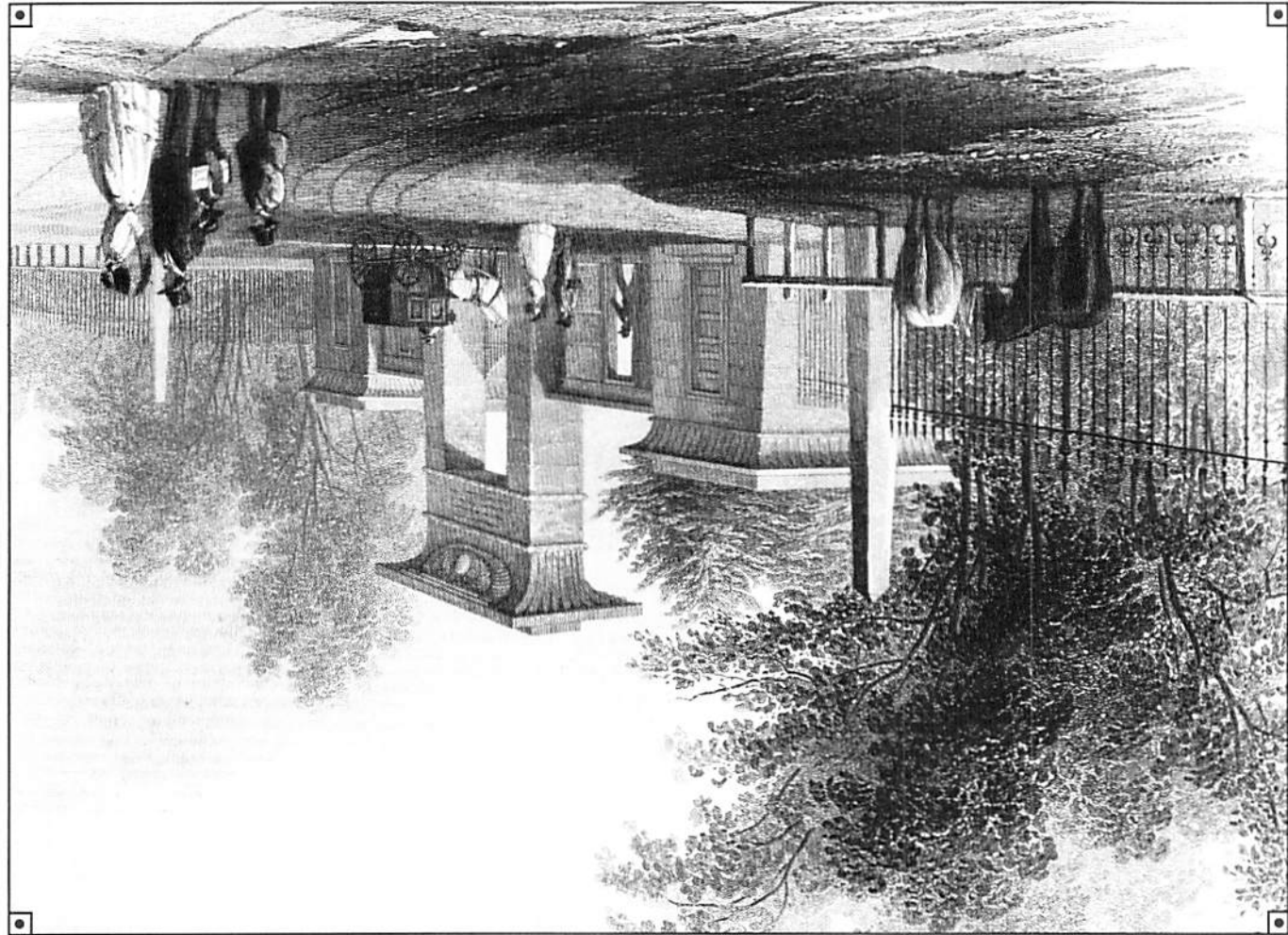
He died in Cambridge on September 10, 1845, and is buried on Narcissus Path, Lot 313, D6 on the map.



Mount Auburn Notecards Available

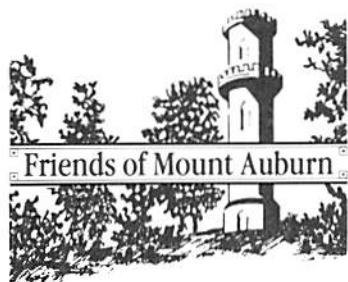
Notecards printed with the 1847 engraving "Entrance to the Cemetery" are now available at the Office in the Administration Building. This drawing, seen on the back panel of this newsletter, was engraved by James Smillie for *Mount Auburn Illustrated*. The 4.5" x 6.25" folded cards are printed on cream-colored recycled paper and come with matching envelopes. The inside of the card is blank, suitable for your own personal message. The cards are 75 cents each, six for \$4.00 or twelve for \$7.00. Proceeds from the sale of the cards support the Friends of Mount Auburn.

Entrance to the Cemetery, Engraving by James Smillie, circa 1847



MAC Archives

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Mount Auburn Cemetery
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