

Sweet Auburn

The Newsletter of the Friends of Mount Auburn

Spring 1990

Creating A Usable Past: Reasons For Mount Auburn's Founding

"If we were able to go back to the elements of states and to examine the oldest monuments of their history, I doubt not that we should discover in them the primal causes...the habits, the ruling passions, and, in short, all that constitutes what is called the national character."

– Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1832)

Tocqueville, like Americans of his era, believed in the possibility of reinventing the state in republican form and in the necessity for building monuments to epitomize and preserve civic virtue, to shape the character of the citizenry, and to stabilize society in order to forestall the inevitable decline and ruin of civilization. In new republics, the art of the painter, sculptor, architect, or landscape gardener would augment and perpetuate the work of statecraft. Art, thought Thomas Jefferson and Mount Auburn's founders, would function by redefining a history in secular terms compatible with political ideals and ideology and their preservation.

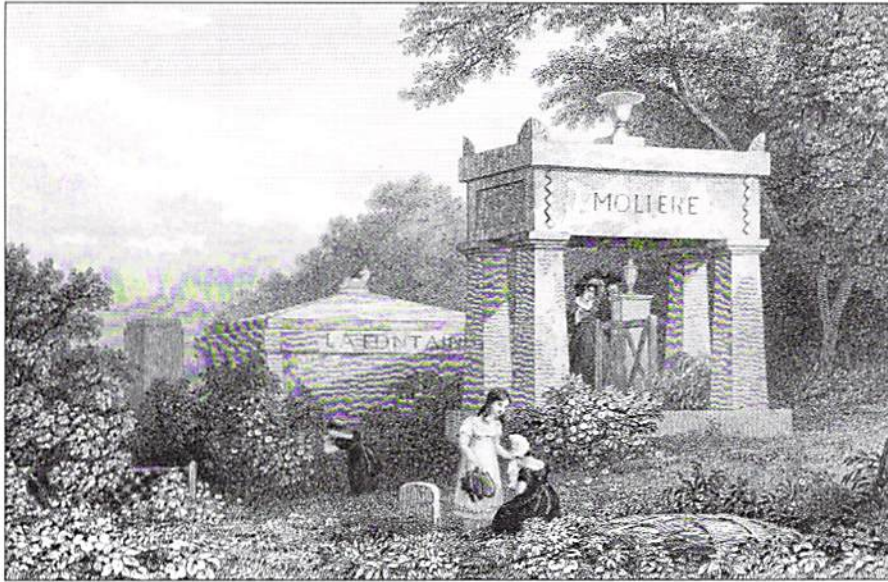
Americans in 1831, the year of Tocqueville's visit and Mount Auburn's founding, believed in the importance of material commemoration of the young nation's cultural leaders. They knew the debates of the French revolutionary era on the importance of creating a "cult of ancestors" as a way to redefine history and culture. Americans, like the French, drew

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The Serpentine River and Grotto in Stow Gardens, England, circa 1760
Blanche Linden-Ward collection





*Tombs of La Fontaine and Molière in Père Lachaise Cemetery
Engraving by Frederick Nash, 1822
Blanche Linden-Ward collection*

heavily on the Whiggish aesthetics and philosophy that inspired the development of eighteenth-century English gardens and landscapes of memory — but memory newly fabricated in secular terms as an alternative to the medieval, ecclesiastical, and monarchical past.

For six years before Tocqueville's visit, Bostonians had been planning a new funerary institution and landscape for display of commemorative monuments of the sort that had become fashionable as well as politically functional in England and France. Mount Auburn Cemetery was designed to reflect republican taste, ideology, and a new post-revolutionary definition of history. Its founders' motivations were more idealistic than practical, although, in the process of forming America's

first "rural" cemetery, they also reformed local burial practices at a time of rising urban land costs, fear of church control of burials, and suggestions that burials in the city might endanger public health. If Tocqueville had arrived a year or so later, his hosts undoubtedly would have given him a tour of the Cemetery, run by an innovative, nonsectarian, nonprofit corporation, because Mount Auburn illustrated many of the characteristics that the French political philosopher considered distinctly American. It exemplified their ability to work through voluntary associations to create



*Wordsworth believed
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institutions to stabilize society and to raise the level of culture. Bostonians proudly presented Mount Auburn to visitors as their chief tourist attraction and evidence of local and national worth.

But the founding of Mount Auburn cannot be fully understood without analysis of the Whiggish origins and ideological meanings attached to elements of its design idiom. This idiom was derived from eighteenth-century English landscape gardens, and it was subsequently applied in an exemplary fashion by the design of Père Lachaise Cemetery in a suburb of Paris in 1804. Concepts of a linear, unchanging sacred past in which God intervened in the lives of men through dramatic, cataclysmic events gave way by the eighteenth century to an emphasis on

Nature and its cycles as operative principles behind the course of history as well as metaphors for it. Providence might still intervene, but man became empowered to change the course of history by making a dramatic break with the past, with tradition, and with established law, thereby challenging orthodox authorities who labeled such action sin and sacrilege. Rediscovery of both Nature and the classics became subversive to Christian orthodoxy and sectarianism. Both Nature and classical culture provided vocabularies to redefine the past and man's

relationship to it. The "enlightened" believed in the revolutionary possibility of hastening the inexorable forces of Nature in cyclical history, of swinging the pendulum of Time back to a Golden Age, an Arcadian new beginning, an Eden before Adam's Fall. Thereafter, they would reinterpret history in secular terms, with celebration of the founding events and individuals who epitomized civic virtue and moral philosophy, aspects of the natural law and basis for the new republican nation — the United States.

God transcendent in Nature, just as surely as any form of literature.

Dr. Jacob Bigelow, General Henry A.S. Dearborn, and other founders of Mount Auburn were well versed in these ideas, as well as in the elements of landscape and architec-



Mount Auburn

Cemetery...

a complex cultural institution intended to be much more than simply another place for burial of the dead.



Binny's Monument, Engraving by James Smillie, 1847

tural design considered rich in symbolic significance and capable of epitomizing these notions about God, Nature, and history. They applied these ideas in their design of the Cemetery as a didactic landscape of memory, a complex cultural institution intended to be much more than simply another place for burial of the dead.

Philosophers, aestheticians, and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic recommended institutionalization of ideology through commemorative monuments and landscapes of memory. Wordsworth believed that landscape gardening, in particular, was a liberal art like poetry and painting, capable of moving "the affections under the control of reason." By melding classicism and naturalism, the designer could teach moral lessons of philosophy and natural law, contributing to the development of a "cult of melancholy" or a "cult of ancestors" to convey and preserve messages of Man's relationship to

Drawn from Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery, Ohio State University Press, 1989.

Blanche Linden-Ward received her PhD from the History of American Civilization Program at Harvard in 1981. She is Associate Professor and Coordinator of the American Culture and Communication Program at Emerson College.

Mezzogiorno, A Journey to Baroque

An Exhibition by Linda J.G. Kopp

The University of Massachusetts Medical Center Gallery in Worcester, MA, will present a one person exhibition of paintings and drawings by Linda G. J. Kopp from June 1-30, 1990.

The exhibition, entitled *MEZZOGIORNO, A Journey to Baroque*, will include work from 1978-1990. The earlier works are stylized building portraits that utilize a classical organization of space and pattern. The more recent works focus on statuary from historic Mount Auburn Cemetery and utilize

a more fluid, baroque geometry. Their ornate mats and mixed media frames are an integral part of the image.

Ms. Kopp, a graduate of the Masters Program in Fine Arts at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, has exhibited extensively on the East Coast. Most recently, her work was included in the annual juried exhibition of the Boston Women's Caucus for Art at the Federal Reserve Bank in Boston. She is presently living in Arlington, MA.

In an artist's statement Ms. Kopp writes:

My first trip to Germany in 1987 had a major effect on my approach to picture making. Previous to this, I felt connected to a classical tradition in painting. Giotto, Piero, Fra Angelico, Ingres, and the like, were painters that I responded to most intensely. Early Italian Renaissance, Flemish and Indian miniature paintings were the works I studied. In Germany, I discovered the Baroque. I marveled at the ornate Riemenschneider altarpieces in Rothenburg, the multidimensional ceiling fresco by Tiepolo in Wurzburg, and the elaborate reliquary art in Fulda.

At about the same time in my life, two important changes occurred in my work. Since the early '70s my approach to making paintings was to make "notes" or sketches of the subject on site and then to work from these in the studio. Since, for the most part, the places I chose to depict were in my immediate environment, I was able to pass by the place and to renew my impressions during the course of making the picture. When time became more limited for me a few years ago, I found it more practical to use photographs as sketches. The use of photography affected the images greatly. Earlier works were



Mother & Child, Mount Auburn Series #4, 1988, watercolor on paper

representational, but spatially abstract and simplified. The newer pieces have a photographic quality, with more realistic space and detail.

The second significant change was one of subject matter. My paintings from 1972-76 were abstract landscapes which led into a more than ten-year interest in architecture as subject, actually as figure in the landscape. The "building portraits" developed from simplified geometric planes of color and texture into detailed renderings of buildings in complex landscape settings. The

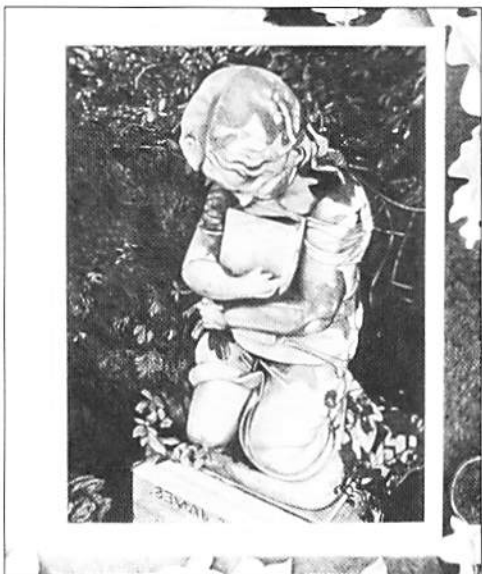
places are depicted at specific moments in time, and the mood is mysterious and sometimes psychologically disturbing. At about the same time as the German trip, I visited Mount Auburn Cemetery for the first time. The Cemetery, with its Victorian statuary and park-like setting, opened up to me a new and seemingly endless resource. The stone figures replaced the buildings in my landscape. Important elements of my past paintings, the mood and mystery, have a deeper effect now with the new images, images with their own special connotations and implications.

The new images I began working with were more organic and reminded me of some of the artwork I experienced in Germany. I began to explore a variety of new resources that I had not paid much attention to in the past, such as the Pre-Raphaelites and other Victorian painters, Art-Deco, the glass work of Tiffany, and the English ceramic tile designers. This led me to develop more complex and ornate images by adding decorative mats and frames to the

watercolor paintings and pencil drawings in the new "Mount Auburn Series." I still feel very much tied to the Renaissance, but have, through this new body of work, discovered a means of continuing to follow the classical tradition with the addition of exciting new elements from a romantic history that I am just beginning to truly understand.

The University of Massachusetts Medical Center Gallery is located at 55 Lake Avenue North in Worcester. The gallery hours are Monday - Sunday, 9 am-9 pm. For further information please contact Linda Kopp at 617-648-3214 or the gallery at 508-856-2558.

Cross and Flowers, Mount Auburn Child Series #III, 1989, graphite on paper & mat



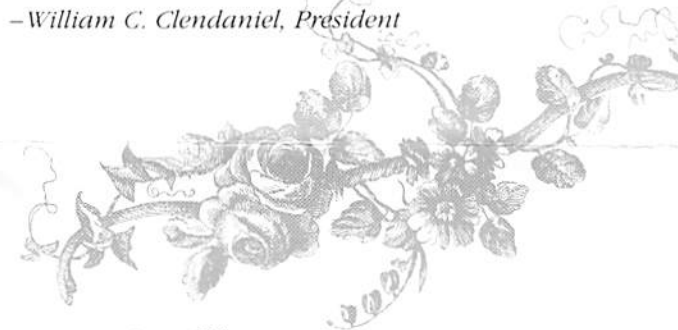
Building Renovation

Mount Auburn's historic Administration Building, built in 1896-1898, will undergo a thorough renovation this summer. The Trustees have approved the staff's recommendation to upgrade the plumbing, electrical, heating and air conditioning systems and to provide additional office space and redecorating. Ann Beha, a noted Boston architect specializing in the restoration of older buildings, has provided us with a sensitive design, restoring some of the historic character of the building as well as providing customers and visitors with a more gracious welcome to the Cemetery.

The office staff will move into Story Chapel for what is expected to be at least four months of construction. We regret that the Chapel will be unavailable for services and educational programs during this time. Bigelow Chapel will be used instead. We hope customers and visitors will be patient with the inevitable disruptions.

Another major project being carried out this summer is the removal of asbestos from all Cemetery buildings. Although the Story Chapel columbarium will be closed briefly at some point, this work will have much less impact on the public. We will continue to provide the best service possible during all this work, and we are confident the temporary dislocation will be well worthwhile.

—William C. Clendaniel, President



New Staff

Last November, Mount Auburn was most fortunate to employ Janet Heywood as Membership Coordinator for the Friends to work with Jean L. Rosenberg, Assistant Director for Membership and Programs. In addition, she is assisting Librarian/Archivist Kathleen D. Leslie.

Before coming to Mount Auburn, Janet worked for Spaulding Company, Inc. for 15 years as a sales representative of general offset printing. Her educational training is in biology and biochemistry. Since 1981 she has volunteered as associate editor and production manager of the bimonthly journal *Bird Observer*. She is very interested in observing birds, documenting their population distributions and behavior, and promoting the exchange of information about birds and the environment. As a cartographer, Janet has prepared maps for numerous birding publications. In her spare time, Janet is an active gardener, amateur watercolor painter and computer enthusiast.

Janet will be administering the Friends education and membership programs as well as overseeing *Sweet Auburn* and other Friends' publications during Jean's maternity leave this summer and fall. We hope members and visitors will have the pleasure of meeting her soon.

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.

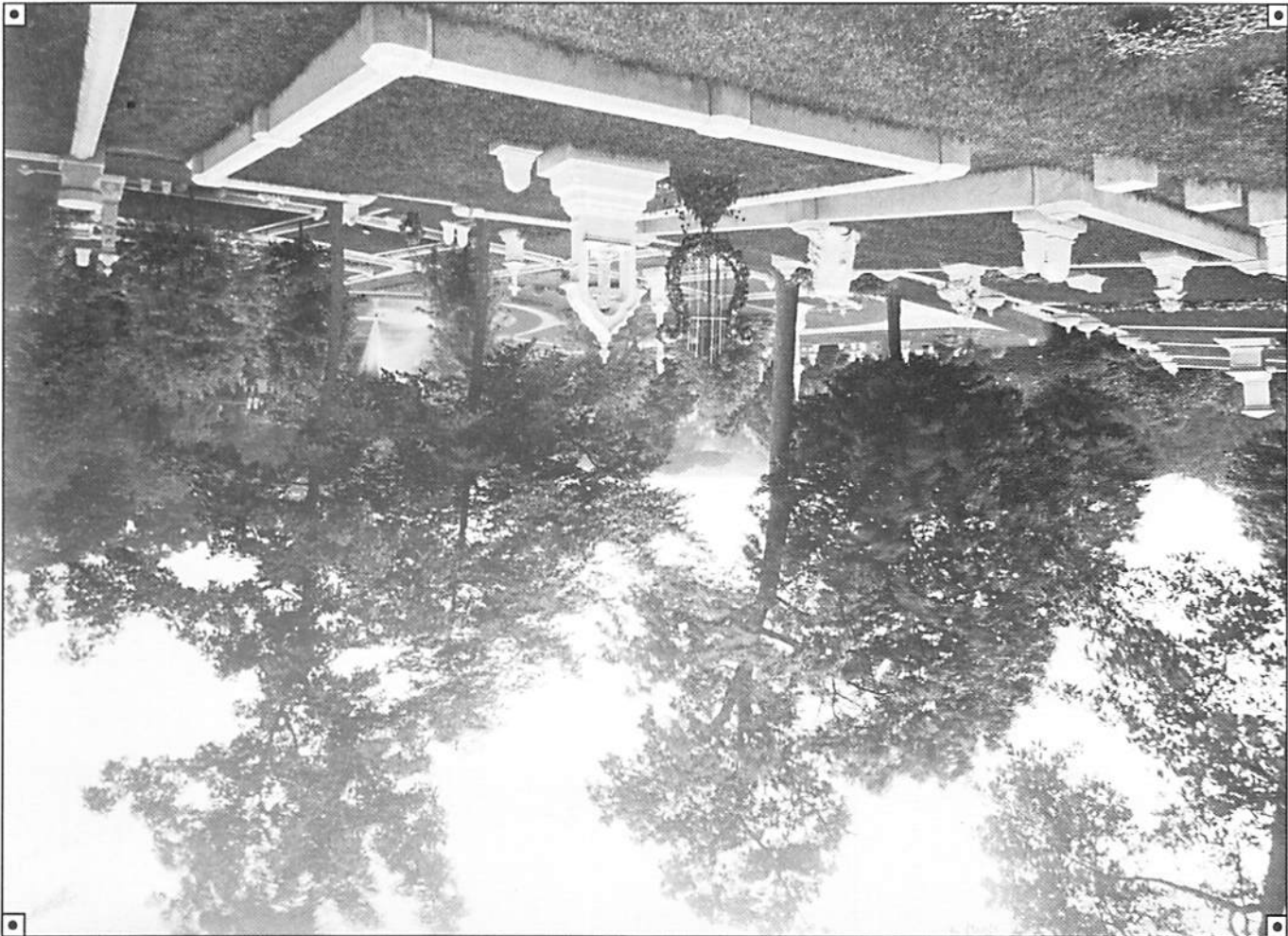
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Publications

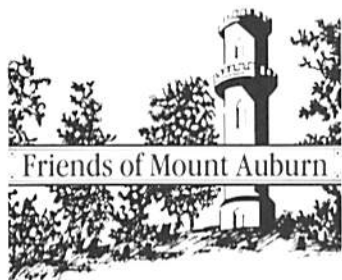
This Spring two new publications will be sent to members of the Friends with the newly-designed Mount Auburn Cemetery Annual Report for 1989. Members will receive *Mount Auburn in Bloom*, which is primarily a list of flowering trees and shrubs, and *Birds of Mount Auburn — Spring Migrants*. The bird list was organized with the assistance of member Robert Stymeist, and we are most grateful for his contribution. Members who have chosen not to receive the Annual Report will be sent these new publications in a separate mailing. They are available to the public for 25 cents each. We hope you enjoy them and will encourage others to stop by the Cemetery and pick up a copy.

Did You Know...

...that this season the Cemetery's greenhouse staff will grow 26,000 summer annuals for use as bedding plants and cut flowers? From 28 genera of annuals, 95 varieties will be grown, including 16 varieties of begonias, 3 mixes and 9 colors of impatiens, and 10 varieties of geraniums.



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