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“A grave subject:” Hollywood Cemetery and the ideology of death in mid-nineteenth
century America

By

Kelli Brooke Nelson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of
Mississippi State University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in History
in the Department of History

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2017

“A grave subject:” Hollywood Cemetery and the ideology of death in mid-nineteenth
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During the nineteenth century, Americans began to develop a new relationship with death. Urbanites were less confronted with the constant presence of the dead and dying than they had in the past. A new trend in cemeteries also developed as a result. The Rural Cemetery Movement promoted the idea that the dead should be buried amongst a natural setting that was pleasing and calming to visitors. The first few initial cemeteries were an immediate success, but this was not the case in Richmond, Virginia. Although the developers had grand ideas about their cemetery project, Richmonders opposed the cemetery in the first several years. They feared that the cemetery would stunt the growth of the city or even harm the health of the city's citizens. Over time, however, Richmonders began to accept the cemetery and with this they formed a new understanding of nature that was pleasing and allowed Americans to value natural settings.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of the struggle to develop a new type of cemetery in Richmond, Virginia that took place from 1847 to 1860, and how an endeavor meant to copy northern examples created a southern shrine. Hollywood Cemetery's early history demonstrates how Americans grappled with changing attitudes about death, urbanization, and nature. It is a material example of how Americans relinquished some of their traditional ideas on the relationship between humans and the natural world and instead began to understand the value of nature through leisure, an ideology that would spawn city, state, and national parks by the end of the century.

Death is a mystery. Although many individuals and groups claim to know what comes after life desists, there is no real way to study what happens when existence ends. The living, then, are left wondering. Wondering about what they will feel, how it will end, and how to prepare. Because of these mysteries various cultures have developed their own practices on how to best usher the dead from the world of the living, possibly onto some other plane, and how to best help the living cope with the loss of family and friends, or even their own mortality. These practices, however, are not static because as the living continue to exist they cope with economic, political, social, and other cultural issues. As men and women grapple with everyday life, their ideas about death evolve.

All studies about death are then, out of necessity, analyses of the living. Humans will never actually know what it means to die, but the ways humanity thinks about death, dying, bodies, decay, murder, suicide, funerals, cemeteries, etc. can reveal a great deal about changes in culture and society. In 2008, historian Drew Gilpin Faust wrote that humans “approach death in ways shaped by history, by culture, by conditions that vary over time and across space.” She stressed that “even though 'we all have our dead,' and even though we all die, we do so differently from generation to generation and from place to place.”¹ In his 2015 monograph, Thomas Laqueur argued that the dead continuously “work” through the living, as those who have yet to meet their end place meaning upon the remains of those who have passed.² While corpses are technically the same as any other piece of refuse, we instill them with tremendous symbolism, mainly because they remind us of our own impending demise. Although absent of the piece that once made them the people we loved, we, for the most part, treat the dead in similar respects to the living in order to appease ourselves. Death is frightening and death rituals are often mechanisms to help us cope with that fear.³

¹ Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), xi.

² Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

³ Phillipe Aries work *The Hour of Our Death: A Classic History of Western Attitudes Toward Death Over the Last One Thousand Years* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981) is the most significant work on attitudes about western views of death. Historians of death in America have explored various aspects of the dying process from the ways different groups of Americans viewed death and dying to the funeral industry to the rise of scientific medicine. The first well-known work on the funeral industry in the country came from Jessica Mitford in 1963, in her book *The American Way of Death* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963). It is a scathing critique on funeral practices, arguing that since the advent of the industry in the late nineteenth century, undertakers took advantage of grieving families throughout the United States trying to convince them that certain options were required by law and that the families needed to buy expensive coffins for their deceased loved ones. In 1980, James Farrell published a response to Mitford’s work called *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980) where he argued that Mitford misunderstood the development of the industry, and therefore, was not quite fair in her assumptions. Other historians have explored how war has changed American attitudes

Americans in the mid nineteenth century began to distance themselves from the actual processes of dealing with the dying and dead as a means of coping with the dread of death. Before this time, families usually had the responsibility of caring for those on their deathbeds and preparing the bodies after they passed. But as the nineteenth century progressed, this intimacy with death eroded. By the end of the nineteenth century, a funeral industry that removed all elements of dying from families and put it into the hands of trained professionals emerged.

Several scholars have explored the reasons for this transition. In 1980, James Farrell published a work called *Inventing the American Way of Death 1830-1920*. According to Farrell, Victorian views of religion and science affected ideas about death throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. His goal was to chronicle what he called the “dying of death”—a phrase he borrowed from an 1899 English article—and he argued that the process was a result of the development of a middle-class identity.

about death. Gary Laderman argued that the industry began after the Civil War in his work, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996). Additionally, Laderman explored the cultural significance of the industry in his work, *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Suzanne E. Smith argued that African American funeral directors were important social and political figures in black communities in *To Serve the Living: Funeral Directors and the African American Way of Death* (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 2010). Drew Gilpin Faust also argued that the Civil War dramatically shifted American views about death and dying in her work, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008). As American soldiers and their families clung to old traditions of dying well, the war ripped apart physical bodies as well as conventional customs. Michael Sappol explored the impact of scientific study in anatomy on views of corpses in his work *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002). New understandings of the body led to new attitudes about dying and new opinions on how to remain alive. In 2015, Thomas Lacquer published a significant monograph about the various ways corpses have “worked” in the minds of the living to represent cultural and social attitudes at various times in the book *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015). Other historians of death in America have concentrated on the attitudes about death in the early eras of the country. These include David E. Stannard’s *The Puritan Way of Death: A Study in Religion, Culture, and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), Erik R. Seeman, *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), and Nancy Isenberg and Andrew Burstein, eds. *Mortal Remains: Death in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

Farrell defined the “dying of death” as “the cultural circumvention of dread of death.”⁴ Over time, instead of existing as a prominent part of life, death became something that average individuals could put out of their minds until they absolutely needed to confront it. This process, according to Farrell, occurred as Americans moved away from “romantic naturalism” that “highlighted the idea of death as decay” and adopted the tenets of “scientific naturalism.”⁵ Scientific naturalism concentrated more closely on contemporary developments in the field of science and challenged previously held notions on humanity’s uniqueness in the natural world.

Historian Gary Laderman situated the “dying of death” after the Civil War in his work *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799-1883* (1996) where he argued that the conflict and the constant presence of death were the most important factors in the development of the funeral business.⁶ Others also argued that the Civil War ripped away citizens’ abilities to conduct their traditional death rituals that comforted the living. Drew Gilpin Faust called these traditions the “Good Death,” and argued that contemporary Americans attempted to continue these customs even in the midst of the chaos of war. According to Faust, a good death meant that “the deceased had been conscious of his fate, had demonstrated willingness to accept it, had shown signs of belief in God and in his own salvation, and had left messages and instructive exhortations for those who should have been at his side.”⁷ Ideally, the dying’s family members would be gathered around to witness the person’s last words, but on the battlefields, when families

⁴ James Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 5.

⁵ Farrell, *Inventing the American Way*, 7-8.

⁶ Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996).

⁷ Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 17.

could not be present, other soldiers made it their task to relay the particulars of a fallen comrades' death to family members back home. These ideas stemmed from long held religious traditions, dating back to at least the fifteenth century where religious convictions trained citizens to prepare for giving their souls and resisting the devil's temptations.

Laderman argued that the Civil War also provided lessons about living conditions, sanitation, and embalming that led to the development of the funeral industry. He claimed that the war became a catalyst for rapid advancements as medical professionals obtained more opportunities for dissection and practicing embalming techniques. In another work, *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (2003), Laderman elaborated on the workings of the funeral industry and argued that critics vastly underestimated the importance of the business. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the dramatic impact of death in the Civil War had softened to images of serene battlefields and peaceful cemeteries. Additionally, the relationship between the living and the dead had evolved. For many Americans, "it was easier to imagine the dead than to actually encounter them in everyday life."⁸ Advances in medicine had decreased the mortality rate and increased life expectancy so much so that average citizens could go many years without confronting death in any way. When they did interact with the dead, it was often in the capacity of an embalmed and prepared corpse artfully arranged to mimic the living. Funeral directors increasingly took up the task of dealing with the bodies, and the average American could escape the gruesomeness of death.

⁸ Gary Laderman, *Rest in Peace: A Cultural History of Death and the Funeral Home in Twentieth-Century America* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.

Although many of these scholars position the transition of American death rituals in the postbellum years, Hollywood, and the Rural Cemetery Movement in general, display that the “dying of death” was already occurring before the war began. In addition, while Farrell argues that this occurred as Americans moved away from romantic traditions, the locations discussed in this dissertation demonstrate that Romanticism actually played a very important role in shadowing humans from their fears of what death might be. Rural cemeterians began building landscapes that distracted the living from dread. They hoped that their cemeteries would become places that might attract more than just the families of the deceased, and that people would visit at other times than just during funerals. In the process, rural cemetery developers helped define nature in a new way. The nature landscapes of rural cemeteries were supposed to project peace and calm rather than fear and disgust. The ideology that nature could be a place of tranquility and contemplation contradicted old beliefs that humans must cultivate and control the natural world in order to mitigate its dangers.

Before the advent of rural cemeteries, graveyards within urban areas usually took up a portion of the city commons or churchyards. According to intellectual historian Stanley French, people began “to complain about the frequently revolting state of [urban] burial places” in the early nineteenth century.⁹ The French had already constructed a garden cemetery outside of Paris in the early 1800s and in the 1820s and 30s, Americans began to take notice of the development. In 1831, citizens around Boston dedicated the first American rural cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Known as Mount Auburn,

⁹ Stanley French, “The Cemetery as a Cultural Institution: The Establishment of Mount Auburn and the ‘Rural Cemetery’ Movement,” *American Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (March 1974): 41.

the proprietors argued that their new cemetery was the perfect solution to the abhorrent conditions of city graveyards.

The proprietors claimed that Mount Auburn was open for people of all classes despite that the developers were elites. Because funds from plot sales went toward maintaining and improving the cemetery, farmers and mechanics could purchase plots by contracting their labor. However, the nature of the cemetery lent itself to a representation of division among the classes. Families could section off their plots by constructing elaborate fences or colossal monuments. The proprietors required that fences be made of metal or stone instead of wood and markers could be made of any type of stone other than slate. Laderman asserted that, despite the supposed openness to all classes, rural cemeteries actually provided “the middle and upper classes a space for disposal more suited to their tastes and expenses than the churchyards and graveyards being swallowed up and disregarded by expanding city life.” People of all classes were given the chance to obtain burial plots in places like Mount Auburn, but the middle and upper classes dominated the landscapes.¹⁰

Other scholars speculated on the reasons for the emergence of the rural cemetery movement. In her own analysis of Mount Auburn, titled *Silent City on a Hill: Picturesque Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (1989), Blanche Linden addressed the origins of the campaign and argued that several different beliefs coalesced during the early nineteenth century to create a cult of melancholy that brought about desires for burial reform. Some of these desires included a new emphasis on Calvinistic conceptions of death and reiterations of the importance of nationalism. In the 1820s,

¹⁰ French, “Cemetery as Cultural Institution,” 45; Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains*, 44.

these sentiments led Mount Auburn proprietors to establish a location that they envisioned would allow space for public commemoration of heroes and contemplative strolls through the natural landscape. Instead, the attractiveness of the cemetery's landscape undermined its peacefulness. Tourists flocked to Mount Auburn and the proprietors quickly had to implement new rules to regulate both foot and carriage traffic.¹¹

The attempt to maintain placidness in the cemetery was an important facet to the rural cemetery movement because, as various historians have stressed, reactions to urbanization were integral to the development of these cemeteries. Historians, such as Thomas Bender and Ellen Stroud, explored various attitudes about the changing nature of urban areas as related to death at this time. These examinations reveal much about how Americans viewed the cemetery landscape in the context of their changing world. In addition, many of the works that concentrate on the relationship between the cemetery landscape and cities reveal significant information about Americans' uneasiness with rapid mechanization and industrialization in the mid-nineteenth century.

In 1974, Bender reflected on this relationship between the natural landscape of cemeteries and the rise in urbanization in his article "The 'Rural' Cemetery Movement: Urban Travail and the Appeal of Nature." He analyzed two cemeteries in Massachusetts: Mount Auburn and Lowell Cemetery. Bender looked at Mount Auburn as the first of its kind; as the first instance of development of a cemetery strictly outside city limits. Additionally, the nature of Lowell, Massachusetts, as a town built for and around textile factories, made it central to American thought on industrialization. Therefore, Lowell

¹¹ Blanche Linden, *Silent City on A Hill: Picturesque Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Amherst; University of Massachusetts Press, 2007).

Cemetery, established in 1841, easily demonstrated the division between the boom of urbanization and specific efforts to separate the natural landscape.

Maintaining these landscapes proved difficult in some areas. In “Dead Bodies in Harlem: Environmental History and the Geography of Death” (2006), Ellen Stroud discussed some of the problems promoters faced in trying to establish a rural cemetery in their region. Just after the establishment of Mount Auburn, administrators of Trinity Church in New York began advocating for the development of a new cemetery that would alleviate their problems with overcrowding in the urban location. In 1842, the church obtained a parcel of land outside of the urban city center where they could develop their vision. However, by 1862, the cemetery had proved to be difficult to maintain and was falling into disrepair: “trees had not been trimmed, paths were obstructed by overgrown bushes, . . . plantings on graves had not been tended to . . . many graves were identified only by a small stick, . . . and the church committee found bodies piled in coffins in the receiving vault, some having been there waiting for burial for seven years.”¹² Once the vestry became aware of the situation, they fired the cemetery superintendent and hired a new manager along with an “engineer and a landscape architect to transform the cemetery into a properly picturesque place of rest.”¹³

Hollywood and other rural cemeteries were also meant to mitigate the ills of urbanization. In a time of growing industrialization, some worried that living among the mechanization and chaos of the city was actually harmful to the physical health of individuals. Many of these people also believed that spending time in nature could

¹²Ellen Stroud, “Dead Bodies in Harlem: Environmental History and the Geography of Death,” in *The Nature of Cities: Culture, Landscape, and Urban Space*, ed. Andrew C. Isenberg, 62-76 (New York: University of Rochester Press, 2006), 68.

¹³ Stroud, “Dead Bodies in Harlem,” 68-69.

alleviate some of the ill effects of city living. The men of Hollywood Cemetery argued that their location could provide Richmonders with this type of escape, that it would provide the city's citizens with a tranquil setting where they might uplift their minds and spirits. They believed that Richmond was the perfect setting for this because the city was quickly growing in industry and population. Richmond bustled with an array of visitors to its many shops, theaters, hotels, and railroad depots. Merchants, artisans, middle-class entertainment seekers, white laborers, slaves, slave traders, along with crowds of other residents and visitors moved through the city streets each day going about their business.¹⁴ The developers of Hollywood Cemetery claimed that this chaos of the city needed a place of respite, and they would provide it.

Additionally, the landscape that could provide relief from the urban atmosphere also projected high culture. Americans desired their cemeteries to rival the lush and extravagant gardens of Europe, and Stanley French stressed that in the absence of grand gardens about which other countries boasted these rural cemeteries became locations that individuals could claim as purely American culture. Margaretta Darnall explored the ways these cemeteries achieved this aim in an article about Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis. Darnall concentrated on the picturesque qualities of rural cemeteries. She argued that in their pursuit to rival the English and French gardens, Americans utilized the same European traditions in their cemeteries. They “quite literally portrayed an antique landscape of death, as described by Virgil and others, and did so with the aid of a visual

¹⁴ Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 37-46.

vocabulary made popular in Europe during the previous century.”¹⁵ These European ideals included a deep reverence for the classics that translated into elaborate scenic details. Cemetery designers concentrated on natural rhythms of the landscape and worked to highlight rivers and natural elements in the area. Darnall emphasized that in Bellefontaine Cemetery, designer Almerin Hotchkiss, who was also the designer for New York’s rural cemetery known as Greenwood, “paid attention to the creation of reflecting ponds, to the contrast of light and shade in composition, to preserving the existing trees, and to building a collection of specimen trees throughout the cemetery.”¹⁶ The picturesque landscape allowed visitors an opportunity to absorb and enjoy nature in a classical landscape.

However, creating a picturesque landscape was just the first of a two-pronged effort to create cemeteries that would alleviate the woes of urbanization. Citizens also worried that cemeteries in the cities would cause more sickness and death. Many of the works involving urbanization follow the rising understanding of anatomy, germ theory, and the general spread of disease. Gary Laderman demonstrated that new ideas about science and technology informed people’s decisions about burials in his work *The Sacred Remains*. In the wake of developing human sciences, people reconsidered the place of humans in the natural world and developed new understandings of human mortality. Putrefaction also became a major concern as people worried that decomposition released miasmas into the air. City dwellers feared that the noxious air promoted the spread of

¹⁵ Margaretta J. Darnall, “The American Cemetery as Picturesque Landscape: Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 18, no. 4 (1983): 249.

¹⁶ Darnall, “Picturesque Landscape,” 252.

diseases like yellow fever and cholera, and they, therefore, advocated for the movement of cemeteries to the city's outskirts.

Like Laderman, historian Michael Sappol demonstrated that early nineteenth-century developments in medical studies increased public awareness of the fragility of human bodies. Sappol, however, concentrated more on the ways the rise of anatomy as a profession influenced contemporary identities in his work *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (2002). Much like Laderman, Sappol demonstrated that understandings and misunderstandings of these ideas largely increased desires for the separation of cemeteries from the cities. In addition, Sappol successfully argued that new scientific understandings “contributed to the making of professional, classed, sexed, racial, national, and speciated selves.”¹⁷ People used new scientific knowledge to reconfigure their identities as they tried to understand the changing world around them.

Nineteenth-century change motivated people to establish rural cemeteries and the movement reflected emerging ideas. According to several of the writers already addressed the rural cemetery movement represented a break from many of the older customs associated with burial in the United States. Hollywood shows that this change also affected attitudes about usefulness of the environment. Rather than place corpses in crowded graveyards within the cities, nineteenth century Americans chose to bury their dead in lavish garden-like cemeteries with landscapes meant to invoke serene emotions.

An important aspect missing from the historiography of the rural cemetery movement is a detailed analysis on the ideologies about nature that permeated the

¹⁷ Michael Sappol, *A Traffic of Dead Bodies: Anatomy and Embodied Social Identity in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1.

campaigns to remove cemeteries from urban areas. Many of the historians mentioned above approach the subject but lack any in-depth exploration of the topic. Thomas Bender's article comes closest, but Bender concentrated more on the ways nature became the "opposite" of urban. However, he did not consider what "nature" actually meant in this context. Before and during the eighteenth-century many Americans believed that man could and should take efforts to change and "improve" nature in various ways.¹⁸ However, this idea changes by the turn of the twentieth century. Aaron Sachs' argued that in death Americans understood the environment differently than previously assumed. He specifically concentrated on Mount Auburn and the rural cemetery movement to make his argument in his work *Arcadian America: The Death and Life of an Environmental Tradition* (2013). According to Sachs, the rural cemetery movement is an example of environmental thought in the nineteenth century. He asserted that the engineers of Mount Auburn were consciously making an argument about space and natural limitations as they constructed the landscape. This demonstrated a greater understanding and concern about the environment during this time than has previously been assumed by most historians. Rural cemeteries were local places in which Americans saw the majesty of the environment.

Sachs' argument about rural cemeteries was a response to William Cronon's article "The Trouble with Wilderness; or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,"(1995) where the author argued that the image of a pristine wilderness—one that had not been corrupted by human hands—developed during the late nineteenth century and led Americans to forget the wonder of environmentally important locations in their own

¹⁸ Barbara Rotundo, "The Rural Cemetery Movement," *Essex Institute Historical Collection* 109, no. 3 (1973):234.

backyards, parks, and other ordinary spaces of nature.¹⁹ Sachs' work meant to rescue an environmental tradition that he argued combined with ideologies about death and dying to bring about an appreciation for natural settings in the style of ancient Greek and Roman pastoralism. However, Hollywood demonstrates that the appreciation Sachs discussed only came with the removal of particular emphasis on the gruesomeness of death and the environment's potential to bring this about if not controlled by human hands. Hollywood's story shows how Americans began to develop the image of "nature" that would lead to the "Trouble with Wilderness;" it displays how as Americans accepted that death should be a restful sleep amidst nature, they also began to see certain nature settings as tranquil and useful to the human mind and spirit. Once Americans began to see a power in nature's aesthetic qualities, they began to value it differently, but only in particular arrangements that could invoke emotional responses. Over time, people forgot that these places had been manmade, and instead focused on the healing properties of communing with "nature."

Richmond became the capital of Virginia in 1780, and by the 1840s had become a major industrial city of the South. The beginning of the nineteenth century represented a "new era" in Richmond industry. While some urban areas of the South developed earlier through a connection with the cotton industry (New Orleans, Charleston, etc.), Richmond and other locations in predominantly tobacco-growing regions began to urbanize as they became involved in processing industries. Like Baltimore, Richmond became a major

¹⁹ William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), 69-90.

flour-milling hub in the nineteenth century and could boast of numerous other industrial products by the 1860s.²⁰

With the first part of the James and Kanawha Canal complete, waterpower became significant for manufacturing in the city. Flourmills expanded in Richmond at the turn of the century and rivaled tobacco as one of the leading manufactured products in the Old Dominion. Flour milling brought national and international fame to Richmond as exports traveled to the western United States, South America, and across the Atlantic. Milling in the city was dominated by three family groups: the Gagello family, the Haxall family, and the Cunningham family. These families owned several slaves and their milling businesses helped strengthen the lumber business in the city as barrels had to be constructed to ship the grain. Many of the men in these prominent families also established other enterprises in cotton, woolens, nails and other iron products. Besides flour other businesses that remained prominent in the city were tobacco, gunpowder, cotton, iron, beer, ceramics, musical instruments, paper, coaches, soap, and candles. Richmond was the South's most industrial and wealthiest city by the 1850s.²¹

Iron production also became significant to the city. The Tredegar Iron Works began in the late 1830s and produced cannon, chain, and railroad rails. While Tredegar was one of the leading reasons for moving the Confederate capital from Montgomery, Alabama to Richmond during the Civil War, the foundry was an exceptional part of the

²⁰ Leonard P. Curry, "Urbanization and Urbanism in the Old South: A Comparative View" *Journal of Southern History* 40, no. 1 (February 1974), 43-60; David R. Goldfield, "The Urban South: A Regional Framework" *American Historical Review* 86, no. 5 (December 1981), 1015; James C. Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society, 1877-1984* (1984; repr., Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1988), 5-9.

²¹ Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City* (1976; repr., Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1990), 62-63, 133; Thomas S. Berry, "The Rise of Flour Milling in Richmond," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 78, no. 4 (October 1970), 391-392; Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 16.

Richmond economy even before the war began. By the 1860s, Tredegar had already supplied forty train cars for various railroads in the South, and on the eve of the war, it was ranked eighth in the world's leading iron producers.²²

Also by the 1840s, Richmond was a major transportation hub. The ports brought in products such as coffee and sent out everything from grain to chewing tobacco. The city boasted of two railroads, the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad and the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad, by the end of the 1830s, and with this, the city became the southern most link on a northern railroad system. Just a decade later, three more railroads linked Richmond to the rest of the state. Although the project had a rocky start, Richmonders celebrated the completion of the James River and Kanawha Canal in 1840.²³ These facilities linked Richmond to the nation and provided the city with outlets for its manufactured products. As they gained more connections, businesses grew in the capital and profits increased.

In 1800, the population was about half white and half black. Many slaves in the city worked for the manufacturing plants and the slave trade was prominent. By 1852, there were 28 slave traders among Richmond's citizens, but not everyone believed in the practice. Two of the city's most prominent newspapers, the *Enquirer* and the *Whig*, admonished the peculiar institution, but their efforts against the practice stopped in print. The Tredegar Iron Works depended so heavily on slave labor that white workers became alarmed and demanded that the black workers be dismissed from certain jobs. This, however, did not sit well with the plant owner, Joseph Reid Anderson, and he fired those

²² Cobb, *Industrialization and Southern Society*, 6-7; Nathan Vernon Madison, *Tredegar Iron Works: Richmond's Foundry on the James* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2015), 15-19.

²³ Dabney, *Richmond*, 117, 134; Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 4, 19.

who protested. Free blacks often worked as porters and waiters in hotels. Others worked as barbers and blood-letters.²⁴

The white population encompassed wealthy merchants, a middling merchant and artisan class, a lower laboring class, and the very poorest. The wealthy built lavish homes around Richmond, while the lowest class lived on a section of land just outside the city called “Screamersville” in tenement houses. The middle classes often took up antebellum reform agendas, especially temperance. They even partnered with wealthy industrialists who recognized the need to keep their workers sober. Other middle-class citizens took up crusades against Richmond’s illicit entertainments, such as gambling dens and houses of prostitution that were staples of the city’s poorer sections.²⁵

The urban nature of Richmond with its hustle and bustle, industrial context, and growing population made Hollywood developers believe that their city was the perfect place to establish a rural cemetery. However, other Richmond citizens were not as enthusiastic. Hollywood Cemetery’s promoters struggled in the beginning because rather than believe the location to be a natural oasis away from the city, many people of Richmond argued that the presence of the graveyard was actually bad for the urbanites. Many believed that the cemetery would block progress of the city and potentially harm the health of its citizens. Rather than subscribe to the arguments presented by the Hollywood Cemetery men, some Richmonders held to older traditions that diseases spread through natural elements and that land should be used for profit. The debates over how the land should be used prevented Hollywood from gaining incorporation for several

²⁴ Dabney, *Richmond*, 64, 111, 130; Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 43.

²⁵ Dabney, *Richmond*, 113; Kimball, *American City, Southern Place*, 47-48.

years. In the end, however, Richmonders eventually accepted the cemetery and by the 1860s, Hollywood was an important feature of the Richmond landscape.

By analyzing the debates in Hollywood's early history and its subsequent acceptance, this dissertation is a cultural study of the changing relationship between humans and nature in the mid-nineteenth century. Historians of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century have shown that Euro-American's relationship with nature was often one of fear. Nature had the power to maim or kill. Plants could be poisonous; animals could attack people or crops, ruining food supplies; storms could strike people down, or drown them in floodwaters; droughts could hinder harvests. They even believed that natural elements could carry diseases that could spread through entire populations.²⁶ However, this image of the natural world began to change during the nineteenth century as various groups and individuals pushed for both conservation and preservation of natural resources and landscapes.

Hollywood's struggle to begin illustrates one way that this shift occurred. The cemeterians had to argue against the idea that nature was harmful especially when combined with decaying matter. While they claimed that the landscape would heal the residents, others argued that it would only bring death and disease while also preventing the city from expanding. Through the promoters' continued efforts coupled with contemporary Romantic ideologies, however, the people of Richmond began to accept the idea that they should bury their loved ones in this landscape and even visit the cemetery outside of times of grief. The people of Richmond even began to bring others to

²⁶ Roderick Nash, *Wilderness in the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967); Alan Taylor "Wasty Ways: Stories of American Settlement," *Environmental History* 3, no. 3 (July 1998): 291-310; Conevery Bolton Valencius, *Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

the cemetery upon their visits to the city. Hollywood became a tourist attraction that allowed city citizens and outside visitors to stroll through “nature” and commune with the elements.

Chapter One provides the reader with background on the Rural Cemetery Movement. Beginning with Mount Auburn in Cambridge, Massachusetts in the 1830s, cities across the northeastern United States began establishing rural cemeteries, and argued that these burial sites were necessary to alleviate some of the ills of urbanization in their growing metropolises. The arguments the developers espoused emerged from the Romantic impulses that permeated nineteenth-century American culture. The cemeteries were meant to evoke similar emotional responses as the landscape paintings they mimicked, and these were the arguments the Richmond men used to validate their project in the late 1840s.

Things did not work out as well as the Hollywood developers hoped, however, and some of the controversies they faced with acquiring and holding land are the subject of Chapter Two. Enthusiastic in the beginning, the men purchased 42 acres of land and sought subscribers to provide funds for the initial purpose. Several prominent men of the city paid \$100 to \$200 dollars with the understanding that they would be repaid once people began to purchase plots. However, their repayment was delayed for several years as the Virginia General Assembly continuously denied the cemetery men’s proposal for incorporation; a prominent family brought a grievance against the cemetery; and the *Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser* promoted a campaign against the endeavor. The Hollywood Company eventually settled the grievance but their efforts to convince the General Assembly to support them and public opposition remained significant.

One of the biggest arguments against the cemetery concerned its proximity to the city's reservoir and to the James River. This is the subject of Chapter Three. The river, so important to industry in the city, was supposed to serve the cemetery's aesthetic goal of providing a picturesque landscape. Instead, Richmonders feared that the essences of dead bodies would seep into their water supply, potentially spreading diseases such as typhoid, yellow fever, and cholera. Cholera was especially frightening to the city's citizens because it had ravaged the city only a decade before and, unfortunately for the cemetery developers, returned to Richmond just after they began their project. The Hollywood developers remained persistent, however, and eventually found support among the city council members. Although they still did not obtain incorporation, the general feeling in the city began to turn in the cemetery's favor.

This turn and the subsequent projects the men developed are the subject of Chapter Four. Despite their detractors, the rationale eventually seeped into the culture of the city, and Richmonders began to visit the cemetery in droves. Visitors to Richmond stopped by on their way through town, and a local citizen even began a trolley line to transport people to the location. In 1856, the men finally gained incorporation from the Virginia General Assembly, ensuring that their company would endure beyond the lives of the original developers. Two years later, the Hollywood Cemetery Company successfully petitioned to have the remains of James Monroe removed from New York and placed in their cemetery. With this the cemetery became a significant tourist attraction and continued to entice visitors to its gates.

Hollywood is an example of a "natural" space used to promote an idyllic image of a particular place. It does for Richmond what state and national parks do for the states

and the nation; it elevated the minds of citizens and displayed Richmond in a positive light. However, this would not be possible if Americans had maintained old ideologies about nature that defined the natural world as a frightening and deadly cesspool of disease that could only be plowed or built upon to decrease the danger. Places like Hollywood, Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, etc. could not be points of pride for their locations without Americans developing a more positive outlook on nature settings. The positive outlook that developed in the nineteenth century defined an aesthetic value for nature-scapes as Romantic impulses began to outweigh fears of the environment. Diminishing fears of the environment occurred as Americans became less connected to the dread of death. As death became less a part of everyday life, people could also forget that the environment might kill them at any second. Hollywood's story demonstrates how this change in attitude occurred at the local level.

The men who developed Hollywood initially hoped that their project would display the sophistication of their city. Many of the board members were also those involved in industries throughout Richmond and by displaying their city through the cemetery, they could increase their business and profits when other Americans and even Europeans began to see that Richmond was a well-established and highly cultured metropolis. However, they unexpectedly faced strong opposition from their fellow Richmonders that made the initial years of the cemetery project much more difficult and costly than the cemetery men first assumed. The traditional ideas that disease and development were much more significant than burying the dead in a lush landscape took the developers by surprise, but they continued to argue for their project. Eventually, and to their delight, new Romantic ideologies that defined nature as useful for human minds

began to eclipse old beliefs. As death became more abstract, Americans could focus on nature being helpful rather than harmful.

The eventual success of Hollywood brought visitors to Richmond and displayed the city as a sophisticated site. Shortly after Hollywood successfully reinterred Monroe, the Civil War cleaved the country apart. So close to the Union states and the eventual capital of the Confederacy, Richmond played a significant role in the conflict. Once Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox, the process of dealing with the carnage began. The federal government established national cemeteries to house the Union dead, but the ex-Confederates had to take other measures. Hollywood opened a section of the cemetery for the burial of thousands of unknown Confederate dead, and in 1869 the Hollywood Memorial Association of the Ladies of Richmond erected a 90-foot pyramid to memorialize both the men and the Lost Cause. This solidified Hollywood's prestige and remains one of the major tourist attractions to Richmond visitors. Hollywood had become a place for visitors and memorials, confirming the transition of cemeteries from locations of sadness and decay to places where people could remember and revere the past.

CHAPTER II

“FOR THE SANCTITY OF THE TOMB:” THE RURAL CEMETERY MOVEMENT

On the night of October 22, 1886, Henry T. Louthan, a resident of Richmond, Virginia wrote a record of his day in his diary: “Directly after dinner I went down and took a walk with sister Mary and cousin Katie Sale out to Holly-wood Cemetery. This cemetery is a real woods with beautiful drives and is a pleasing place for a ‘city of the dead.’”²⁷ The phrase is revealing. In Louthan’s time, Hollywood Cemetery was not only an established site for burial and interment, but as his diary entry suggests, it was part of the Richmond social scene, attracting thousands of tourists each year. Even today, the 135-acre cemetery is a popular site for visitors wishing to see the graves of presidents James Monroe and John Tyler and the graveyard’s most famous feature, the 1869 granite pyramid dedicated to thousands of Confederate soldiers buried within the grounds.

Hollywood cemetery officially began when four men, Joshua J. Fry, William Henry Haxall, Isaac Davenport, and William Mitchell, Jr., purchased 42 acres of land from the Harvie family in 1847.²⁸ Hollywood was part of a new trend in cemeteries known as the Rural Cemetery Movement. This new type of cemetery—with its “natural” setting where families were buried together in purchased plots—was popular in Europe

²⁷ Diary of Henry T. Louthan, October 22, 1886, Loutan Family Papers, 1722-1990, Mss1 L9361, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

²⁸ Hollywood Cemetery Company (Richmond, VA), deed, June 24, 1847, Minute book, 1847 June 23-1868 March 26, Hollywood Cemetery Company (Richmond, VA) Records 1847-1929, Mss3 H7298 a, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter cited as Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes).

and several had already been established in the American northeast before Hollywood. The Richmond men felt that their city needed this type of cemetery because, they argued, the population was growing at such a rapid pace that the dead would soon fill the local church and city-owned cemeteries. However, this argument for the cemetery was likely not their only motivation. They believed that this type of cemetery could display to the world that Richmond was a sophisticated city, keeping up with the latest trends in health and culture. According to the men of Hollywood and their predecessors in other rural cemeteries, these locations were more healthful for both bodies (living and dead) and minds of city citizens. These new cemeteries represented a combination of nature and culture where cemerterians carefully arranged natural elements to insight emotional responses.

The idea behind rural cemeteries was one of many to cross the Atlantic during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In 1765, the French were the first to establish a garden cemetery outside of urban boundaries. As a reaction to public outcries over crowded cemeteries within Paris, the French government established Cimetière du Père Lachaise. After the upheaval of the revolution, French citizens sought a restful location for their dead. In stark contrast to the chaos they had faced, French citizens placed value on the serene landscape with its soft curves and rolling hills.²⁹ They began to understand nature as a means for healing. Contemplation of the landscape and the connection to the spirit that it fostered were crucial to connecting people with their emotions.

²⁹ Mary H. Mitchell, *Hollywood Cemetery: The History of a Southern Shrine* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1985), 5; Suzanne Turner and Joanne Seale Wilson, *Houston's Silent Garden: Glenwood Cemetery, 1871-2009* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 5-6.

The American Rural Cemetery Movement began in 1831 when people from around Boston gathered outside of Cambridge, Massachusetts to dedicate Mount Auburn Cemetery. At this time, it encompassed 72 acres of land and became the first rural cemetery in the United States. After this, numerous other men in various cities



Figure 2.1 View in Mount Auburn, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Walter, Cornelia W. and James Smillie. *Mount Auburn Illustrated. In Highly Finished Line Engraving, from Drawings Taken on the Spot.* New York: R. Martin, 1847.

throughout the country followed the example of Mount Auburn. These cemeteries were notable for their garden-like landscaping, where the dead rested in “nature” while the living absorbed the benefits of the bucolic surroundings. A majority of these cemeteries were placed in northeastern states: five in Massachusetts, five in New York, three in

Ohio, two in Pennsylvania, etc.³⁰ Besides Mount Auburn, some of the most famous locations were Laurel Hill in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Greenwood in Brooklyn, New York. Each cemetery followed similar patterns and was established to provide individuals among the city with a natural landscape in which to bury their dead.

The rise of the middle class during the Victorian Era meant a larger percentage of Americans had both the time and the funds to explore the country, and tourism became a flourishing American activity with citizens visiting natural and historical sites such as Niagara Falls, Bunker Hill, and Natural Bridge. Historian John Sears argued that large, natural sites such as Niagara and Yosemite helped foster national pride, but tourists also visited local, urban establishments such as asylums and cemeteries. These places were products of growing populations in the cities, and cemeteries especially became attractive to not only those within the cities but outsiders as well.³¹ Vacationers came to northeastern states to take the “grand tour” around New York, the Hudson, and into

³⁰ While certainly not exhaustive, the most succinct list of rural cemeteries available is can be found in Blanche Linden, *Silent City on a Hill: Picturesque Landscapes of Memory and Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007) Appendix II. The only exceptions to the northeastern rule on Linden's list are two cemeteries in Kentucky—Cave Hill (1848) and Lexington Cemetery (1848) both in Lexington—and Bonaventure in Georgia. Cave Hill is unique in that the location was already home to the City Pest House where individuals with contagious diseases were sent to either recover or die away from the majority of the city. The cemetery began when the mayor and the city council realized that they needed to attach a graveyard to the location, but they did not initially intend on it being a rural cemetery. Instead, they happened to hire a civil engineer who had experience with creating rural cemeteries and convinced the council members that a garden-like burial ground was most advantageous (“Cave Hill Cemetery: Early History” http://www.cavehillcemetery.com/about/cemetery/early_history/ Aug. 8, 2016). The Lexington Cemetery began with a charter from the Kentucky General Assembly in 1848, but the men involved did not purchase land for the cemetery until January 1849 (“Lexington Cemetery: Cemetery History, 1848-1860” <http://www.lexcem.org/index.php/2012-12-26-14-45-57/cemetery-history/1848-1860> Aug. 8, 2016). In addition, Linden has listed Bonaventure as chartered in 1848. However, this date is debatable. Bonaventure began as a private family cemetery until a man named Peter Wiltberger purchased the land in 1846. Wiltberger came up with the idea of creating a rural cemetery on the already landscaped estate, but he died before he was able to bring his plan to fruition. His son, William Wilberger, took up his father's work and in 1868 gained a charter for the Evergreen Cemetery Company.

³¹ John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (1989; repr., Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 87-100.

Canada, but as historian Cindy S. Aron indicates, visits to hot springs in Virginia also became popular. And while tourists made their way to the springs, they stopped at other attractive sites in the state and the men of Hollywood likely hoped to benefit from this already established enterprise.³²

Rural cemeteries represented a dramatic shift away from church graveyards that had been the dominant burial sites for centuries. This happened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as standards of prestige moved from piety to wealth. Early nineteenth century Americans put more emphasis on conspicuous consumption than their ancestors because wealth was no longer restricted to only the richest few. As more people gained the ability to display their wealth through purchases, cemeteries followed the trends and offered image-conscious Americans a means to display their wealth and prestige even in death.

This new outlook on burial places was accompanied by evolving ideas about nature. Nineteenth century Americans had begun to appreciate nature in particular ways, but older traditions of fearing the natural world often persisted. To the Puritans, nature meant “wilderness” and wilderness was frightening. They believed that evil dwelt among the darkness and the wilderness was a place filled with unknowable creatures and other dangers. According to historian Perry Miller, their ideas about wilderness were connected to their image of civilization. Civilization meant human control of the environment, and wilderness was the absence of that control. Puritans believed that man had the right and the responsibility to tame wilderness in order to overcome the dangers it presented. This

³² Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131-133.

idea evolved throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, as Europeans became Americans.³³

As Americans began to envision a country to call their own, their views about what lay west influenced their ideas about the natural world. Thomas Jefferson argued that a nation of farmers would develop into a virtuous country, but in order to create this country of yeoman, more land would be necessary. Henry Nash Smith argued that nineteenth century Americans envisioned the West as a symbol for the potential of an American empire. Western lands could make America an influential trade route connecting the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. However, the West was not virtuous alone. Instead, the value of the West lay in human's ability to cultivate it, to make it their own. According to Smith, the West was the "Garden of the World" that allowed Americans to fulfill their destiny of controlling the land.³⁴

But by the nineteenth century, the "garden" had developed a second definition. Instead of only appreciating the pastoral—the cultivated land that humans manipulated—Americans also began to value "nature" in what they understood as a pristine state.³⁵ Many of the first immigrants to America traveled to the continent in an effort to practice their specified version of religion. In his profile of Robinson Jeffers, who was a nineteenth-century American poet, Robert Zaller claimed that the first English settlers saw North America as a place where they could create their own Promised Land. However, the wilderness they encountered proved more difficult to overcome than they

³³ Perry Miller, "Nature and the National Ego," in *Errand into the Wilderness* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 204.

³⁴ Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950).

³⁵ Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964).

initially assumed. Eventually, though, Americans began to see the wilderness as the paradise they sought. Instead of fighting against the wilderness, Americans embraced it.³⁶

With this, the Sublime became one of the most significant concepts in nineteenth-century American terminology about nature. The Sublime was the idea that nature held an awesome power to both inspire and impart fear in the average individual. In his 1787 work, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Edmund Burke defined the Sublime's philosophical influence and argued that natural landscapes could cause fearful contemplation. According to Burke, the "passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror." However, this fear did not emerge from a loathing or dread of what was to come. Instead, the horror of the Sublime that Burke described emerged from the awe of God's power and immense creation.³⁷

Many late eighteenth and early nineteenth century artists sought to capture this feeling in their landscape paintings. The artists who took nature as their subject depicted powerful scenes of majestic mountains, raging storms, and huge landscapes to evoke a sense of awe, on the brink of horror. This method of evoking the Sublime, enveloped the viewer in a world of light and dark representing life and death and the extent of God's power in the world of men. In this sense, nature became something both frightening and inspiring. These images inspired the viewer to embrace an emotional response to natural elements.

³⁶ Robert Zaller, *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 4.

³⁷ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: J. Dodsley, 1787), 95.

These ideas about the Sublime emerged from Romanticism and the sentimental culture that reigned during the nineteenth century. Sentimentality was the idea that emotions were a guide to truth and emerged from the eighteenth century view of sensibility, which encouraged people to explore their emotions and to get in touch with their feelings. This was in direct opposition to Enlightenment ideas that concentrated on reason over emotion and discouraged people from showing their feelings in most situations.³⁸ As people began to explore their emotions, they also began to see value in the pursuit. By the 1800s, Americans saw utility in feelings. Therefore, people took anything constructed or seen as emerging from pure emotion as the absolute truth, including things like heart-felt letters or a dying person's last words.

Romanticism encouraged emotional responses to many things in nineteenth-century American life. Although there are many definitions of what constitutes the Romantic period or Romanticism many of the social, political, and cultural tenets of romanticism were reactions to modernization. The romantics often rejected what they saw as the loss of the individual in a growing consumer world. Transcendentalists, one major sect of romantic thinkers, argued that people needed to get in touch with their true selves instead of constantly striving to accumulate materials, and men such as Henry David Thoreau argued that this could best be achieved by communing with nature. As a whole, Romanticism emphasized the importance of the individual and rejected rationalism and formal rules. Romantics were introspective and valued individual responses to the world.³⁹

³⁸ Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 552n69.

³⁹ Hugh Honour, *Romanticism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979),16.

This idea affected the way people viewed everything, especially art and nature and led to the development of a concept known as the Picturesque. While artists



Figure 2.2 View in Greenwood Cemetery, New York, New York. Cleaveland, Nehemiah and James Smillie. *Green-Wood Illustrated. In Highly Finished Line Engraving, From Drawings Taken o the Spot.* New York: R. Martin, 1847.

sometimes debated on what, exactly, made something picturesque, the consensus was that nature provided forms worthy of depicting. Sometimes known as the father of the Picturesque, writer, artist, and priest William Gilpin tried many times to define the style, arguing that roughness or wildness made certain scenes picturesque. Others argued that this definition was too simplistic and did not adequately depict the range of what could be considered picturesque. However, Gilpin continued to pursue a definition and devoted his

life to both art and writings on the subject, which others used as markers for their own explorations of the term for centuries.⁴⁰

According to Gilpin and other contemporaries, such as the painters Joshua Reynolds and Richard Wilson, the Picturesque was a composition on the physical landscape that was worthy of painting.⁴¹ Not everything in nature was worthy of this designation, but when certain light combined with trees, bushes, and/or animals it could produce a pleasing effect. A picturesque scene might even include man made objects such as statues or ancient ruins. Gilpin encouraged travelers to seek out these scenes and embrace the wonder of these landscapes in hopes that nature's beauty might inspire greater morality.⁴²

Although the Picturesque existed in nature, it was up to humans to recognize this specific type of beauty. Synthesizing Gilpin's arguments, author Carl Paul Barbier stated the Picturesque required three distinct elements: "art, nature, and a man of sensibility and

⁴⁰ Gilpin's writings on the subject include *An Essay on Prints: Containing Remarks upon the Principles of Picturesque Beauty* (1768), *Observations on the River Wye, and Several Parts of South Wales, etc. Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Summer of the Year 1770* (1782), *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England, Particularly the Mountains and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland* (1786), *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1776, on Several Parts of Great Britain, Particularly the Highlands of Scotland* (1789), *Remarks on Forest Scenery, and Other Woodland Views (Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty), Illustrated by the Scenes of New Forest In Hampshire* (1791), *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* (1792), *Observations on the Western Parts of England, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* (1798), *Observations on the Coasts of Hampshire, Sussex, and Kent, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Summer of the Year 1774* (1804), *Two Essays: One on the Author's Mode of Executing Rough Sketches; The Other on the Principles on Which They are Composed* (1804), *Observations on Several Parts of the Counties of Cambridge, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex. Also on Several Parts of North Wales, Relative to Picturesque Beauty in Two Tours, the Former Made in 1769, the Latter in 1773* (1809); Carl Paul Barbier, William Gilpin: His Drawings, Teaching, and Theory of the Picturesque (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 100-106.

⁴¹ William Gilpin, *An Essay upon Prints, Containing Remarks upon the Principles of Picturesque Beauty* (London: J. Robson, 1768), 2; David Marshall, "The Problem of the Picturesque," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (Spring 2002), 414.

⁴² William Gilpin, *Three Essays on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; And on Sketching Landscape to Which Is Added a Poem on Landscape Painting* (London: R. Blamire, 1794), 46-47.

culture to link the first two.” Therefore, the Picturesque was an interaction between two elements based in the lens of man’s eye. The artist looked to nature for inspiration and “the way of looking at landscape . . . was largely determined by the use of criteria derived from an analysis” of landscape painting. Therefore, nature provided standards for evaluating art and art provided standards for evaluating nature.⁴³

Because nature and art combined in the Picturesque this not only allowed artists to create paintings of landscapes but to also arrange landscapes resembling paintings. Therefore, humans could organize nature in such a way that invoked the powers of the Picturesque; that encouraged greater morality and a higher sense of being in the viewer. When rural cemetery proprietors began establishing their graveyards, they used this idea.⁴⁴ The men and the landscape architects they employed used natural elements to arrange the landscape in a way that might inspire visitors to lead more righteous lives and to look beyond themselves to make the world a better place.

In doing this, cemetery proprietors demonstrated how they understood nature. They mainly saw value in nature’s aesthetic qualities, and emphasized the need to arrange the landscape while maintaining that it should look “rough” and “wild.” Here we can see the emergence of what William Cronon called “The Trouble with Wilderness.” Historians have come to understand that there is no such thing as natural landscapes devoid of human manipulation, and the cultural turn in environmental history has made significant

⁴³ Barbier, *William Gilpin*, 99.

⁴⁴ Architectural historian, Margaretta J. Darnall discusses this idea in her article about Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri entitled “The American Cemetery as Picturesque Landscape,” which appeared in volume 18, number 4 of the *Winterthur Portfolio* in 1983. In this article, Darnall argued that rural cemeterians sought to rival English and French gardens by using the same traditions and language in their cemeteries. She compares Bellefontaine to other views of European landscapes to demonstrate the combination of classical revival and the picturesque in American Rural Cemeteries.

strides in revealing the role of human construction of “natural” environmental settings, especially in national and state parks. After his work in both Yosemite and Central Park, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted complained that many visitors believed the areas to be in their organic state. Although others besides Olmsted knew his designs to be arranged, the bulk of nineteenth century Americans wanted to connect with nature and simply neglected the fact that these places had been arranged by humans. Their pursuit of pristine nature led to an arbitrary division where only lands seen as absent of human corruption were deemed worth preserving.⁴⁵

Part of the reason for this divide was because many believed nature was the antithesis of urban-industrial culture. Rural cemetery developers argued that the “natural” landscapes they developed could alleviate some of the ills of urbanization. The “nature” in the cemeteries served as peaceful sanctuaries against the chaos of the city. While planners often designed cities in classical revival styles historian John W. Reps argued that new design theories “based on informality, naturalism, romanticism, and the picturesque” became significant in the 1830s when engineers first began implementing these ideas in cemeteries.⁴⁶ The rolling hills, winding paths, and lush gardenesque atmosphere of the cemeteries were meant to provide relief from the anxieties of the urban, industrial spaces.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon, ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1995), 69-90; Anne Whiston Spirn, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, William Cronon, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co. 1996), 111-112.

⁴⁶ John W. Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 325.

⁴⁷ Thomas Bender, “The ‘Rural’ Cemetery Movement: Urban Travail and the Appeal of Nature,” *New England Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (June 1974), 202.

Rapid urbanization often caused citizens to experience anxieties caused by the rush of change and movement they experienced within the cities. In response, this fostered a desire for more access to nature and historian Thomas Bender emphasized that cemeteries became the counterpoint against the urban landscape. People were looking for an alternative to the city and cemeterians argued that they would find it in the rural landscape they had designed. The efforts made by the cemetery managers were deliberate maneuvers to create an ideal natural escape from the city that, while being artificially arranged and filled with tombstones and roads, would allow the visitor to disconnect from the chaotic elements of urbanization.

Many historians have claimed that rural cemeteries were the first step toward the creation of public parks. By the 1850s Olmsted and his partner Calvert Vaux believed that the citizens of New York could greatly benefit from a nature park in the middle of their city so they submitted their design for what would eventually become Central Park. Similar to the cemeterians who came before him, Olmsted argued that interaction with nature would benefit people both physically and mentally.⁴⁸ It is easy to see why so many authors have made this connection because rural cemetery proprietors advertised their creations as natural places that helped urbanites escape and tap into a higher reality.

Besides improving the mental wellbeing of city citizens, cemeterians argued that their landscapes were also physically healthier for visitors, both living and dead. The expanding populations of urban areas meant that people were often packed together in unsanitary conditions. As more living came to the cities, more dead accumulated and overcrowding in city and church cemeteries became a significant problem. As urban

⁴⁸ Spirn, "Constructing Nature," 93-94.

populations grew, cities needed to find new grounds in which to bury their dead. By the 1830s when Mount Auburn, Laurel Hill, and Greenwood were dedicated, Boston's population exceeded 60,000, Philadelphia's was more than 80,000, and New York was just about to reach 300,000 citizens.⁴⁹ As the numbers of the living increased, so did the numbers of dead, and existing burying grounds filled to the brim.

A sanitation revolution was also occurring at the same time that American rural cemeterians began developing their landscapes. Booming urbanization in the early nineteenth century meant people were crowded together and diseases spread quickly. Cholera, yellow fever, typhoid, and other diseases plagued urban populations and urbanites searched for the causes. Before this time, many blamed the poor or non-whites for the spread of epidemic diseases, but as historian Charles Rosenberg argues this was becoming less common into the nineteenth century. While they still often blamed the poor, people of urban populations also began to search for culprits among the food and water that the poor consumed. Miasma theory also suggested that any sort of decomposing organic matter had the potential to cause disease, including human bodies.⁵⁰

With this idea in mind and often alarmed by overcrowding in cemeteries within the cities, rural cemetery supporters begged their fellow man to understand the dangers they saw to the health of city citizens and the threat to the bodies of the dead. In his work on the history of Mount Auburn, Jacob Bigelow stated that his idea for the cemetery

⁴⁹ Campbell Gibson, "Populations of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990," U.S. Bureau of the Census: Washington D.C., 1998. <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html#notes> (accessed October 2016).

⁵⁰ Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (1962; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 28; Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 58-60; Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 114-117.

began “about the 1825 [when] my attention was drawn to some gross abuses in the rites of sepulture as they then existed under churches and in other receptacles of the dead in the city of Boston.”⁵¹ Although he gave no details, Bigelow supposedly began his pursuit of a rural cemetery after he witnessed his daughter’s burial being mishandled.

For the living, inner-city cemeteries had the potential to cause sickness or even death. Writing on the benefits of rural cemeteries, specifically Greenwood in Brooklyn, author Nehemiah Cleaveland implored that “the introduction of the rural cemetery be hailed as . . . the return to more healthy usages.”⁵² During the nineteenth century, many people believed decaying matter held the potential to harm the living by spreading hostile particles through the air. Physicians warned the people of the cities that the gases emitted by bodies in the cemeteries could irreparably hurt or even kill those who visited or simply walked by the dead. Doctor W.F. Chambers of London blamed a fever that had gripped the citizens of Brooke Street in the city to “over crowded burying-grounds” and Doctor Thomas Southwood Smith, a sanitary reformer, claimed that from “the decomposition of dead organic substances, whether vegetable or animal, aided by heat and moisture, and other peculiarities of climate, a poison is generated, which, when in a state of high concentration, is capable of producing instantaneous death.”⁵³

Stories of unfortunate individuals who opened graves or stood too close to dead bodies then suffered from the effects of dangerous miasmas filled medical journals. A doctor’s assistant in France died after helping remove the liver of a cadaver whose

⁵¹ Jacob Bigelow, *A History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn* (Boston and Cambridge, MA: James Munroe and Company, 1860), 1.

⁵² Nehemiah Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Illustrated*. In *Highly Finished Line Engraving, From Drawings Taken on the Spot* (New York: R. Martin, 1847), 43.

⁵³ Louis Mackall, *Oak-Hill Cemetery, or, A Treatise on the Fatal Effects Resulting from the Location of Cemeteries in the Immediate Vicinity of Towns* (Washington D.C.: Henry Polkinhorn, 1850), 5.

decomposition was “far advanced.”⁵⁴ A fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society recounted the story of “a large fat man [who] had been superficially buried in the ground.” According to the author, gases were emerging from the ground where the man had been buried and when three local citizens attempted to move the body “two of them [became] sick at heart, and vomiting, gave up the enterprize [sic]; the third,—determined to finish it,—persevered, fell sick, and died in ten days after.”⁵⁵ These stories, rural cemeterians argued, demonstrated the risk of having cemeteries within the cities where citizens could easily encounter the gasses.

An 1840s article in the *New York American* claimed that ancient civilizations placed cemeteries outside their cities “because the presence or vicinity of the dead would not only contaminate pure air, but incommode the inhabitants by the stench they would occasion.”⁵⁶ Classical revival was a significant trend largely during the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth. It mainly pertained to art and architecture but also seeped into other parts of society, including cemeteries. Not only did cemetery advocates call for the construction of classical tombstones, but they also used American desires to emulate the ancients to make their case. Joseph Story of Mount Auburn claimed the Greeks were the first to bury their dead outside the cities but the Romans and Egyptians also held this tradition.⁵⁷ The proprietors of Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia added the Etruscans

⁵⁴ Robley Dunglison, *The American Medical Intelligencer* (Philadelphia: A. Waldie, 1838), 133.

⁵⁵ A Fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society, *Remarks on the Dangers and Duties of Sepulture: Or Security for the Living, with Respect and Repose for the Dead* (Boston: Phelps & Farnham, 1823), 14.

⁵⁶ Laurel Hill Cemetery. “Miscellanies, Selected from Various Publications Respecting Laurel Hill, Interment in Cities, Etc. Etc.” in *Guide to Laurel Hill Cemetery, Near Philadelphia with Illustrations* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, 1847), 150.

⁵⁷ Joseph Story, *An Address Delivered on the Dedication of the Cemetery at Mount Auburn*, September 24, 1831 (Boston: Joseph T. & Edwin Buckingham, 1831), 8-9.

and the Turks to this list.⁵⁸ In their minds, these ancient cultures represented the height of civilization, and they understood that it was healthier to remove the dead from the cities. Having the dead in close proximity could cause nausea, seizures, a number of lingering illnesses, or even death.

The cemetery men argued that the conditions of graves in the city were so deplorable that something needed to be done. They claimed that bodies were piled atop each other so much that the newest burials were barely beneath the surface. Bigelow and others argued that having a cemetery near, but outside of, the city would remedy this issue by providing more room for individual burials. In a work published after Mount Auburn had become popular, Bigelow discussed his arguments, which included claims that many things, including “convenience, health, and decency require[d] that the dead should be moved from our sight.”⁵⁹ Overall, Bigelow and his fellow rural cemetery supporters argued that cemeteries outside the city would be better for both the living and the dead.

The living were often disturbed by the idea that their deceased loved ones were potentially being mistreated in overcrowded church and city cemeteries. The idea that corpses should be treated with respect is almost ubiquitous. For centuries, nations, cultures, and religions set standards for properly disposing of bodies as well as specific rites and rituals that should be performed in order to usher the dead from this world, possibly onto another. Defiling a corpse has often been seen as one of the worst offenses a person could commit, and combatants sometimes mistreated the dead as a means of

⁵⁸ Laurel Hill Cemetery, *Guide to Laurel Hill*, 20.

⁵⁹ Jacob Bigelow, “A Discourse on the Burial of the Dead,” in Bigelow, *A History of the Cemetery of Mount Auburn* (Boston and Cambridge, MA: James Munroe and Company, 1860), 193.

disrespecting their enemies.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the way a culture treated the dead has often been seen as a mark of civilization. The better a culture treated its dead, the more advanced and sophisticated they were, and those who did not treat their dead with respect were called savages.

For nineteenth century Americans, respect for the dead meant providing them with the same bourgeois amenities as the living. The dead should have a quiet, comfortable place to rest and rural cemeteries would provide this.⁶¹ According to rural cemeterians, nature was peaceful and the only acceptable place for eternal repose because it represented the antithesis of the bustling city. At the dedication of Abney Park Cemetery in London a reverend argued that nature “heart-stirring, impressive, and universal, in her eloquence, pleads of the sacredness of man’s remains—for the sanctity of the tomb.”⁶² The dead should be left alone to sleep in the comfort of nature, and the “natural” surroundings of rural cemeteries could provide this.

They also believed that city cemeteries were bad for the dead. Rural cemetery proprietors often argued that urban cemeteries at least disrespected their dead loved ones and at most put their resting bodies at risk of being disturbed. In his speech at the dedication of Mount Auburn, Joseph Story asked, “Why should we expose our burying-grounds to the broad glare of day, to the unfeeling gaze of the idler, to the noisy press of business, to the discordant shouts of merriment, or to the baleful visitations of the

⁶⁰ Erik R. Seeman, *Death in the New World: Cross-Cultural Encounters, 1492-1800* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 55-57.

⁶¹ Thomas W. Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 217.

⁶² “Extract from a sermon by Rev. Mr. Archer, at the Dedication of Abney Park Cemetery” in *Guide to Laurel Hill Cemetery, Near Philadelphia with Illustrations* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, 1847), 176.

dissolute?”⁶³ Cities were filled with noise and frivolity and were, therefore, no place for the dead to rest.

But the noise of the city was not the only danger to cemeteries; development of the city might even put the dead at risk. Dr. Robley Dunglison, an English physician and eventually the first professor of anatomy and medicine at the University of Virginia, asked about expansion in Philadelphia, “How often has it happened, in the progress of our own city to its present population, that places of worship have been disposed of, their cemeteries desecrated, and ashes, which, at the period when they were deposited there, it was presumed, would ever remain free from violation, been exhumed and scattered to the winds?”⁶⁴ Dunglison feared that the progress of the city would mean the dead would be disturbed or forgotten. He advocated for rural cemeteries as a solution to this problem. Situating the cemeteries outside of the cities, therefore, would provide some protection from the growing city.

The “natural” setting of rural cemeteries also provided a peaceful and serene landscape and was, therefore, the appropriate place for the dead. The men of Laurel Hill argued that nature was a fitting place for burials because it provided a type of sanctuary, and that the elements—“the cave, the rock, the ravine, the verdant field”—displayed the “wild and rural character” of a location, which “designate[d] its remoteness from the pursuits of daily life.”⁶⁵ The distinctions rural cemetery supporters made with these arguments are interesting because they both separate and tie the city and country together. They argued that nature was a better place for the dead because it was removed from the

⁶³ Story, Address at Mount Auburn, 12.

⁶⁴ Dunglison, American Medical Intelligencer, 134.

⁶⁵ Laurel Hill Cemetery, *Guide to Laurel Hill*, 21.

city. However, the need for a rural cemetery only arose as the city became more chaotic with a growing population and an increase in the number of deaths.

In addition, rural cemetery supporters maintained that the unmolested ground was the best place for bodies. Many quoted Genesis 3:19—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return”—in their arguments about why the nature-filled lands of rural cemeteries were better for the dead. They believed that God made humans from the Earth and that bodies would return to that state after death. Additionally, many cemetery proprietors argued that this process was best achieved in a location surrounded by natural elements. After citing this Bible verse, Nehemiah Cleaveland of Greenwood Cemetery questioned what was the best way to achieve a return to the Earth “most completely and naturally?” The answer, he argued, was “by single interments in the free soil.”⁶⁶ Many believed that overcrowding in church cemeteries meant that people were often buried atop others, therefore, open fields were necessary to provide enough room to bury each person on their own. In addition, Cleaveland’s assertion about “free soil” pertained to the idea that people should be buried in unadulterated ground. According to others like Cleaveland, God made human bodies from the soil and the best way to get the bodies back to the Earth was in rural cemeteries.

Furthermore, rural cemetery supporters claimed that a specific type of nature was best for the dead to return to the Earth. The author of a guide to Laurel Hill made this assertion by quoting from a story in Genesis where Abraham, refusing to bury his wife Sarah in a tomb, purchased a cave and the surrounding field to lay her in her final resting

⁶⁶ Cleaveland, Green-Wood Illustrated, 43.

place.⁶⁷ The author argued that the story “suggests to the living the duty of securing a respectful attention to the disposal of the remains of their friends . . . and it gives us a model of taste and beauty in the selection of spots designed for permanent burial-places.”⁶⁸ The author’s description of Abraham’s chosen location to bury Sarah suggests that cemetery supporters were not just making claims about the significance of just any natural landscape. Instead, they argued that respect for the dead meant placing loved ones in locations attractive to the living.

Although Abraham just happened upon a site he felt was befitting to lay his wife in its organic state, the men of rural cemeteries worked to develop their “natural” locations into dazzling sites. In biblical times, the cave where Abraham laid his dead wife’s body was part of the existing landscape and, for the most part, Abraham made no effort to adjust the existing visual elements in some way to fit his particular need. Abraham’s interaction with the cave was limited to digging the soil, placing Sarah’s body in it, and departing, leaving the scene virtually as he found it. In nineteenth century rural cemeteries, humans made deliberate decisions about the arrangement, quantity, and type of trees, shrubs, and sometimes even wildlife that would make up the cemetery.

When looking for land they would use to create their cemetery spaces, some developers found appropriate locations in estates that were being sold off in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Estates offered large swaths of land often already arranged in ways that made them ideal for the cemeterians seeking to provide natural elements as a draw to their locations. These lands were often already cleared of trees or landscaped in garden-like arrangements with bushes and trees deliberately placed

⁶⁷ Story, Dedication of Mount Auburn, 3.

⁶⁸ Laurel Hill Cemetery, *Guide to Laurel Hill*, 20-21.

to appeal to visitors. In addition, large estates were ideal because of the amount of land not being used for other purposes. The proprietors of Mount Auburn began planning about six years before they were able to dedicate the burial ground but apparently had some difficulty in coming up with a spot to locate their cemetery. They tried several times to buy various tracts of land only to fail according to Bigelow “either from the high price at which the land was held, or from some reluctance of the owners to acquiesce in the use proposed to be made of the premises.”⁶⁹ Owners were not always thrilled to sell their lands knowing that it would become a place for the dead. They hoped that their land could be used for a less dreadful purpose. The land on which the men of Mount Auburn finally began their cemetery belonged to a man named George Brimmer. Brimmer, a friend of Bigelow, had recently purchased a tract of land that he wished to preserve for public use. The portion of land he sold for Mount Auburn was familiarly known as Stone’s Woods to many and as “Sweet Auburn” to the students at nearby Harvard.⁷⁰

Laurel Hill began on a tract that the famous landscape architect, Andrew Jackson Downing called “an elegant country residence . . . displaying a gradenesque beauty in the trees, shrubs, &c.” Before this statement, however, Downing emphasized that Laurel Hill had not been “formed upon a picturesque natural surface, covered with natural forest trees.”⁷¹ According to Downing, the land where Laurel Hill would eventually be located was not in its organic state, but was instead an already cultivated space. The previous owners had arranged the natural elements to their liking to show off their wealth and taste. This gave the cemetery managers a start on their own work.

⁶⁹ Bigelow, *History of Mount Auburn*, 1-3.

⁷⁰ Story, *Dedication of Mount Auburn*, 29; Bigelow, *History of Mount Auburn*, 3-4.

⁷¹ Laurel Hill Cemetery, *Guide to Laurel Hill*, 172.

The men who designed these suburban cemeteries were the first landscape architects in the United States. In 1836 Laurel Hill became the first professionally designed rural cemetery. Previously in Mount Auburn, one of the proprietors had taken his own time to design the grounds, but the men of Laurel Hill sought out a professional. In the end, they hired a man named John Notman. Notman had trained in landscape architecture in Scotland and London before making his way to Philadelphia in 1831 on a ship called the *Thames*. Also on board the vessel was a man named John Jay Smith, who later became the originator of the concept of a rural cemetery in Philadelphia. It is likely that the two men interacted on their trip across the Atlantic and that Smith sought out Notman to design the landscape.⁷² Notman went on to design at least two other rural cemeteries, including Hollywood. Landscape architects became the artists creating a picturesque in cemeteries. Oftentimes, in a similar manner as landscape painters who arranged elements in their work to convey the message they wished to deliver, rural cemetery architects fashioned landscapes that invited visitors to contemplation. In these landscapes, the message was that by strolling through the nature they had designed and the tombstones that were added, death could be forgotten—or, at least grief could be eased—and visitors could be elevated to new spiritual heights.

The natural combined with the artificial compositions of these cemeteries were supposed to invoke soothing emotions. The 1847 *Guide to Laurel Hill* advertised that the Philadelphia cemetery would “terminate the angry and embittered strifes [sic] of men . . . [and] calm the troubled and contending spirits.”⁷³ In his address at Mount Auburn, Story

⁷² Constance Grieff, *John Notman, Architect (1810-1865)* (Philadelphia: Athenaeum of Philadelphia, 1979), 18.

⁷³ Laurel Hill Cemetery, *Guide to Laurel Hill*, 22.

explained that nature itself encouraged these feelings in the visitors. Standing amongst the trees and graves in Mount Auburn, he said, “there breathes a solemn calm, as if we were in the bosom of the wilderness, broken only by the breeze as it murmurs through the tops of the forest.”⁷⁴ Visitors could get lost in the landscapes and forget their worries.

The proprietors even thought that these locations could be used to study nature. Initially, Mount Auburn developers struggled to find a suitable location that they could afford. Their luck changed, however, in 1829 with the establishment of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Jacob Bigelow was one of the founding members, and he proposed that the new society join with others in favor of the cemetery to finally make it happen. On November 27, 1830, the men met to discuss their plans and decided it would be best to attach an experimental garden to the cemetery project, that way the Horticultural Society could also benefit from the endeavor. When the Philadelphia city government incorporated Laurel Hill they specified that a portion of the land be set aside for a “cultivated garden.”⁷⁵ Eventually, the cemetery held over 170 different varieties of plants, each listed in *A Guide to Laurel Hill* so that visitors could get a sense of the numerous different types of foliage the cemetery offered. Before Greenwood was established as a cemetery, sportsmen used the land to hunt birds, but the cemetery proprietors stopped this when they purchased the land for their own uses. Later they decided to attempt to replenish the bird populations by releasing “a number of foreign birds,” including “sky-larks, wood-larks, goldfinches, thrushes, robins, and blackbirds.” However, in one of the

⁷⁴ Story, Dedication of Mount Auburn, 17.

⁷⁵ “The Act of Incorporation by the Legislature of Pennsylvania in 1837,” in *Guide to Laurel Hill Cemetery, Near Philadelphia with Illustrations* (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, 1847), 52.

biggest failures of trying to bring in new natural species, the birds flew away from the cemetery, and as far as the cemetery managers could tell, never returned.⁷⁶

This attempt at “reviving” some form of nature again demonstrates how the cemeterians and their visitors understood the landscapes they were creating. While many of the cemetery managers argued that these locations were not only for the wealthy, they were still places that, as historian Gary Laderman put it, “sought to capitalize on middle-class desires for respectability, refinement, and order.”⁷⁷ Laderman was mainly discussing the rise of the funeral industry, but although lower class citizens might be able to buy individual plots in specified sections of the cemeteries, the cemeterians still played on the desires of the middle and upper classes. In their assessments, it would take men and women of higher standing to properly utilize the cognitive properties of the cemeteries. According to Laurel Hill, the masses would see the cemetery as a reminder of death’s egalitarian qualities, but the “cultivated mind” would see the landscape as “a volume of the book of nature and of human destiny, which is ever read with interest and profit.”

Despite supporters’ arguments in favor of rural cemeteries, others were not easily convinced that their loved ones should be buried outside of the cities. Some believed that it was disrespectful to bury the dead so far from the living where it would be easy to forget them. Nehemiah Cleaveland of Greenwood cemetery suspected that to some, burying “their friends in a *rural* cemetery, seemed . . . like burial in some open field,

⁷⁶ Nehemiah Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864* (New York: Anderson & Archer, 1866), 73.

⁷⁷ Gary Laderman, *The Sacred Remains: American Attitudes toward Death, 1799-1883* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), 45.

where the sacred relics would be subject to unrestricted depredation.”⁷⁸ Removing graves from the city also meant that it would be harder and less convenient for the living to visit and ensure the protection of the deceased’s remains.

In addition, some writers stated that Christians believed that being buried next to the church actually helped bring favor upon the dead. In order to combat these objections, however, rural cemetery proponents argued that the idea that churches were the appropriate places for the dead was not as long-standing as people in the nineteenth century believed. In the same article that discussed why the Greeks and Romans placed their cemeteries outside the city, the *New York American* argued that cemeteries only moved into cities as Christianity became more popular. The author stated that Christian martyrs were the only ones who were initially buried next to churches because they had devoted and given their lives to the church so fully, but as more people converted to Christianity, more requested these special burials either due to their supposed piety or because of their monetary contributions to the church.⁷⁹

Other writers called the idea “foolish,” “actuated by their religious zeal,” and claimed that tradition kept some from seeing the real dangers cemeteries within the city posed. One author implored that “those who apprehend no danger from the presence of cemeteries in towns, clearly understand that it has been proved, beyond possibility of doubt, that the cause of many diseases . . . is contained in the exhalations arising from putrefying animal substances—that the ‘grave yard’ is the most fruitful source of such

⁷⁸ Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery*, 26.

⁷⁹ “Appendix: Article in the *New York American*” in *Guide to Laurel Hill Cemetery, Near Philadelphia with Illustrations* by Laurel Hill Cemetery (Philadelphia: C. Sherman, 1847), 152-153.

exhalations.”⁸⁰ To rural cemetery supporters, nothing could outweigh the benefits of moving the cemetery outside of the city.

The Rural Cemetery Movement represented nineteenth century views about the identity and value of nature. According to the developers in northern cities such as New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, urbanites needed a dose of nature to help them escape the city. However, nature could not do this job on her own. Instead, cemeterians had to create the appropriate landscapes that would help citizens heal. Convincing others that they needed this, however, was not easy as the idea of inner-city cemeteries was so ingrained in the minds of urban dwellers. But after listening to arguments about the dangers of overcrowding in inner-city graveyards and the benefits of nature, the people of the cities began to accept these newly established cities of the dead.

When Hollywood began in 1847, the proprietors used many of the same arguments as their northern counterparts, but it took several years before Richmonders embraced their own rural cemetery. The men who supported the creation of Hollywood believed that their city could benefit from a rural cemetery both in the health benefits it would provide and because it demonstrated Richmond’s sophistication to the country. The cemetery men wished to show that, just as their northern counterparts, Richmonders were cultured and at the height of taste. In addition, the cemetery could give visitors a glimpse of Richmond’s industrial strength. To the men of Hollywood, their own rural cemetery could display to the world that Richmond was a refined city where business and industry thrived.

⁸⁰ Mackall, *Oak-Hill Cemetery*, 3-4, 20.

Most of the men who began the Hollywood project were wealthy, business owners in the city of Richmond. The ones who made the initial purchase of the land for the cemetery were William Henry Haxall, Joshua J. Fry, William Mitchell, Jr., and Isaac Davenport. Haxall was the inheritor of a lucrative flourmill company begun by his father, Philip Haxall, in 1809. William and his brother Bolling A. Haxall, who was also an early supporter of Hollywood Cemetery, became partners at their father's death in 1831. Their flourmill was a significant staple to Richmond society and exported the product worldwide. At their peak, the mill exported seven hundred barrels of the product per day. Joshua J. Fry was a commission merchant in the city and descendant of another Joshua Fry, who was a prominent politician and created an early map of Virginia with Thomas Jefferson's father. Mitchell was a silversmith who owned a lucrative business on Main Street in Richmond where he sold watches, jewelry, and specialized silverware. Davenport became the first president of the Board of Trustees for the cemetery. He was a prominent businessman and senior partner of the firm Davenport and Allen Auction Company. Their warehouse, which still stands in Richmond, was used for trading both dry goods and slaves.⁸¹

Besides the original purchasers, Thomas Ellis, the second president of the Board was one of the most prominent men in Hollywood's history. Ellis was a long-time resident of Richmond. His father, Charles Ellis, was business partners with John Allan, Edgar Allan Poe's adoptive father. Until 1824, the two ran a mercantile business within the city. In the 1820s, Thomas Ellis attended the University of Virginia and, after

⁸¹ Lyon Gardiner Tyler, *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1915), 2:330; Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976): 63; Peters, *Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery*, 3.

graduating, served as Secretary of Legation in Mexico. In 1853, he became president of the James and Kanawha Canal Company, which worked to construct a canal on the James River to facilitate trade and commerce in the Old Dominion.⁸²

The men who started Hollywood made it clear from the beginning that they would not profit directly from the money they obtained selling plots. Their regulations stated that the money would only be used to pay back any original investments, keeping up with repairs, or for improving the cemetery lands. However, the cemetery envisioned would attract visitors from outside of the city, display Richmond's industrial works, and show that the city was keeping pace with fashionable trends. This could only benefit the proprietors. It would certainly boost Richmond's reputation around the country and in Europe, and it might bring in new customers for their businesses. As the men worked to develop the cemetery and to convince Richmonders that it would benefit them, they constantly argued that the natural landscape of Hollywood would not only benefit the dead and protect the health of the living, but it would also exhibit the advantages the city had to offer to those outside of its boundaries. Hollywood's "natural" setting that was supposed to relieve so many ills of urbanization also, then, worked to advertise the industries of the city.

⁸² Thomas H. Ellis, "Edgar Allan Poe," *Richmond Standard*, May 7, 1881; Thomas H. Ellis, *A Memorandum of the Ellis Family*, rev. ed. (Richmond, VA: n.p., 1906), 60; James T. Morehead, *Report of the Committee on Retrenchment of the United States Senate* (Washington D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1844), 399.

CHAPTER III

“VISITERS FOR THE SAKE OF—*A DELIGHTFUL RIDE:*” HOLLYWOOD LANDS AND CONTROVERSY

When Joshua J. Fry, William Henry Haxall, Isaac Davenport, and William Mitchell, Jr. began their project, they envisioned creating their own version of the northern cemeteries that had been developed over the past decade. They used many of the same arguments as their predecessors in their attempts to convince Richmonders that the city needed this type of burial ground, but the men of Hollywood also sought to create a space that would showcase both Richmond and Virginia. In this process, they learned that many people of the city did not share the same enthusiasm for the project, and the men struggled to get the cemetery started. The arguments launched against the cemetery demonstrated how some Richmonders understood the city they inhabited. According to the men of the Hollywood Cemetery Company, Richmond was an industrial city keeping pace in both culture and industry with northern cities, but opponents of the cemetery project saw their city as something more particular and special. To them, Richmond was a city that had found a way to surmount the ills of the industrial North. Richmond was a place separate and more virtuous and did not need northern influences in their industries or cemeteries.

Like Mount Auburn, the men of Hollywood Cemetery purchased a portion of land that had once belonged to a large estate, and in this case, the location had once been part of William Byrd III's home "Belvidere." The Byrd family was significant to Richmond's history. In the early eighteenth century, William Byrd II owned a large portion of land around the James River. During the 1730s, he decided to take a portion of his property and lay it out for a town. He then enlisted the help of a man named William Mayo to draw up the plans. This town, which Byrd designated as Richmond, officially gained a charter from the Virginia General Assembly in 1742.⁸³



Figure 3.1 Map of lots available in Byrd lottery. Micajah Bates. "Plan of the City of Richmond, Drawn from Actual Survey and Original Plans." 1835. Library of Virginia.

⁸³ James K. Sanford, *Richmond: Her Triumphs, Tragedies, and Growth* (Richmond, VA: Metropolitan Richmond Chamber of Commerce, 1975), 10.

Upon his father's death in 1744, William Byrd III inherited the significant acreage around the James. In 1748, Byrd married his first wife, Elizabeth Hill Carter and soon after he built the home he called Belvidere, which sat in an area of the city now known as Oregon Hill. While traveling around the area in 1759, a London reverend named Andrew Burnaby described the Belvidere estate as "romantic and elegant as any thing I have ever seen. It is situated very high, and commands a fine prospect of the river . . . Over all these you discover a prodigious extent of wilderness, and the river winding majestically along through the midst of it."⁸⁴ Hollywood would eventually occupy this scene.

Byrd's marriage to Carter was likely an unhappy one. She was lonely at Belvidere and died—most likely from committing suicide—in 1760.⁸⁵ The next year, Byrd married his second wife and moved out of the home on this estate to return to his boyhood home at "Westover." By this time, Byrd had accumulated a significant debt probably due to gambling, and he decided that the best way to alleviate the problem would be to hold a lottery for a portion of his lands (Figure 3.1). As early as July 23, 1767, he advertised "a scheme for disposing of, by way of lottery, the land and tenements . . . being the entire towns of Rocky Ridge [now Manchester] and Shockoe, lying at the Falls of the James River, and the land thereunto adjoining." He first stated that the drawing would take place in June 1768. However, things did not go as planned and in April of that year, he advertised that the drawing would instead take place on November 2.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Andrew Burnaby, *Travels Through the Middle Settlements in North America, in the years 1759 and 1760. With Observations upon the State of the Colonies* (London: T. Payne, 1775), 8.

⁸⁵ "Letters of the Byrd Family: William Byrd, 3rd," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* vol. 37, no. 4 (October 1929), 301-315.

⁸⁶ "A Scheme," *Virginia Gazette*, July 23, 1767; "This is to give notice," *Virginia Gazette*, April 28, 1768.

Changing the date was the first public indication that something had gone wrong. Byrd unfortunately made the mistake of allowing interested individuals to purchase their tickets on credit. His announcement on April 28 stated that the drawing would take place in Williamsburg, and he requested that “all gentlemen . . . who have taken tickets are desired to have their money there at that time.”⁸⁷ Byrd’s request, however, largely went



Figure 3.2 1817 map showing eventual location of Hollywood Cemetery. Richard Young. "Map of the City of Richmond and its Jurisdiction including Manchester." 1817. Library of Virginia.

unanswered as the problem of obtaining payments continued for several years. As late as July 19, 1770, Byrd placed articles in the *Virginia Gazette* stating that he had received

⁸⁷ “This is to give notice,” *Virginia Gazette*, April 28, 1768.

less than a third of the payments for the tickets, and he demanded that the “gentlemen” pay up or face suit.⁸⁸

A man named David Hylton was the lucky winner of Belvidere and an adjoining 100 acres of land surrounding the home. In 1770, Hylton advertised his winnings for sale, but likely did not sell it until many years later.⁸⁹ Bushrod Washington, nephew of George Washington, held the home and land in 1795, and sold it to Colonel John Harvie in 1798. The Colonel died in 1807 and left the home to his widow, Margaret, who sold it to Benjamin Harris in 1814.⁹⁰ However, it does not seem that she sold all the Harvie land in the area, as some of it must have gone to Harvie’s children. An 1817 map of Richmond shows the home owned by Harris with some portions of land to the west owned by John Harvie and others owned by John Clarke, former superintendent of the Virginia Manufactory of Arms and co-designer of the Virginia State Penitentiary (Figure 3.2).⁹¹

In 1847, when Joshua J. Fry, William Mitchell, Jr., William H. Haxall, and Isaac Davenport purchased the land it belonged to John Harvie’s son, Jacqueline B. Harvie. Jacqueline Harvie was a general in the United States Navy then later became a senator in the Virginia General Assembly. Eventually, he married Mary Marshall, daughter of Chief Justice John Marshall.⁹² Harvie apparently assisted his mother in caring for the estate after his father died in 1807. Records show that his father left him with a significant amount of wealth but the precise forms it took remain unknown. What is clear, however,

⁸⁸ “It gives me grief,” *Virginia Gazette*, July 19, 1770.

⁸⁹ “To be Sold,” *Virginia Gazette*, March 8, 1770.

⁹⁰ Edward L. Ryan, “Byrd’s ‘Belvidere,’” Vertical Files, Belvidere, Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA.

⁹¹ Elizabeth Johnson Barnett, “John Clarke (1766-1844): Richmond Architect and Industrialist,” M.A. Thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA (2001), 5-9.

⁹² *The Harvie Family*, January 1928, Vertical File, Belvidere, Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA, 10.

is that the younger Harvie was in financial trouble by the end of the 1830s and mortgaged several portions of his land. In 1847, Lewis E. Harvie, then executor of the estate sold 42 acres, on which sat the Harvie family burial ground, to the cemetery directors.⁹³

Mary Mitchell, Hollywood Cemetery historian, claims that the portion of land the cemetery directors purchased was once known as Harvie's Woods. Supposedly, this land was used for recreational hunting, but this claim remains unsubstantiated.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the land contained numerous types of trees when the men purchased it, including elm, poplar, and holly, from which the men devised the name of the cemetery.⁹⁵ Large estates were often the perfect places to establish rural cemeteries. Wealthy owners often took the time to arrange their land into romantic gardens where their guests could get a glimpse of the owner's artful taste. Sometimes due to mismanagement, like Byrd, or possibly due to plummeting prices in the agricultural market, large southern landowners had to sell significant portions of their property in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, especially in Virginia. Although unfortunate for the seller, places like Belvidere were fortuitous for rural cemetery developers as the romantic atmosphere they hoped to cultivate was already partially constructed. When the Hollywood men purchased the land was very wooded but still needed some work before it could become the picturesque setting they envisioned.

By establishing their cemetery on this land, these men attempted to follow the example of the other prior rural cemeteries. As a growing city, the men argued that

⁹³ Note, n.d., Vertical File, Belvidere, Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA.

⁹⁴ Mary H. Mitchell, *Hollywood Cemetery: The History of a Southern Shrine* (Richmond, VA: Virginia State Library, 1985), 7.

⁹⁵ John Notman, "Report Accompanying Plan of Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, VA," February 12, 1848, Minute book, 1847 June 23-1868 March 26, Hollywood Cemetery Company (Richmond, VA) Records 1847-1929, Mss3 H7298 a, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter cited as Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes).

Richmond needed this kind of cemetery as inner-city graveyards filled up and supposedly threatened the health of city residents. And Richmond was growing. According to the U.S. Census “Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990,” Richmond was one of the 25 largest cities in the country from 1800 to 1850. While Richmond’s population did not grow as rapidly as some other cities, it climbed steadily during this time from just under 6,000 in 1800 to almost 28,000 by 1850.⁹⁶

With this growth, rural cemetery supporters argued that their city needed a new place in which to bury the dead. The most prominent church cemetery at the time was St. John’s parish church and it sat in the heart of the original plot William Byrd II had set aside for the city. As the population of Richmond grew so did the numbers of the dead buried in the church cemetery. Some citizens chose to be buried in family plots on their own land, but many Richmonders elected to sleep their final sleep under or in the grounds surrounding the church. In the late eighteenth century, the city had to expand the church grounds to accommodate the number of people who wanted to be buried on the grounds, but the grounds continued to fill.⁹⁷

In the 1820s, Richmond’s Common Council began efforts to establish a new burial ground in the northern section of the city to alleviate some of the problems with St. John’s and other local cemeteries filling up. At their meeting on May 25, 1820, the councilmen agreed that due to the rapid filling of older graveyards in the city, they should

⁹⁶ Gibson, Campbell. “Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990,” Washington D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Population Division <https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/twps0027.html#notes> (accessed October 2016).

⁹⁷ “St. John’s Churchyard,” <https://www.richmondcemeteries.org/st-johns-churchyard/> (accessed September 2017).

appoint a committee to look into locating other grounds that the city might purchase for the exclusive burial of the dead.⁹⁸ They looked at various pieces of land and purchased a few, including land on Shockoe Hill. On September 9, 1822, the Common Council voted to appoint a committee to begin surveying the land for the new burial site.⁹⁹

Shockoe began with four acres but spread quickly. Beginning with Mrs. Mary McCormick, who was actually buried on the site before the city elected to have it surveyed, at least 44 people were buried in the city cemetery during its first year. Almost twice as many were buried on the land in 1823. With the exception of 1832 when cholera first hit Richmond, this trend of anywhere between 80 and 100 burials a year continued, and in 1843 the city sought to increase the size of Shockoe.¹⁰⁰

The men of Hollywood watched St. John's and Shockoe filling up and resolved that Richmond could use another area for burying the dead. The developers of previous rural cemeteries argued that inner-city graveyards were detrimental to the living, especially as they filled up. With Richmond's two most prominent cemeteries overflowing, the Hollywood men argued that Richmonders were in danger of facing the health risks supposedly posed by the overcrowded cemeteries so they began their plans to build a new cemetery that would alleviate the problem as well as showcase and bring business to the city.

The Hollywood proprietors estimated that over the period of 1837 to 1847, the city collected about five hundred dollars each year from fees and the cost of burial plots

⁹⁸ Richmond Common Council, "Committee Appointed to Enquire into Expediency of Obtaining Ground for One or More Burial Places," Richmond Common Council Records, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA, 7:79-80.

⁹⁹ Richmond Common Council, "Committee Appointed to Cause Same to Be Laid Off," Richmond Common Council Records, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA, 7:267.

¹⁰⁰ A. Bohmer Rudd, Shockoe Hill Cemetery Richmond, Virginia: Register of Interments April 10, 1822-December 31, 1950 In Two Volumes, 1 (Washington D.C.: A. Bohmer Rudd, 1960),

in Shockoe with the price of a plot at forty dollars and burial fees ranging from \$1.25 to \$2.00 depending on the age of the deceased. The men also considered that plots in Mount Auburn in Cambridge and Green Mount near Baltimore charged one hundred dollars for each plot. With this, the men estimated that by using less than one-third of the land they held and charging fifty dollars per plot, the cemetery would earn \$152,250. They hoped to be able to sell 200 plots initially, earning them \$10,000, and about 30 plots per year, yielding “an income of \$1500 per annum for 94 years.”¹⁰¹ They always claimed that the proprietors would not benefit from these earnings, and instead the money would go toward upkeep on the cemetery grounds. Nevertheless, Hollywood was supposed to generate a large amount of money quickly and for a long period, but this did not occur the way the men had hoped.

In 1847, the Richmond men were eager to bring a garden cemetery to their city, and once they obtained the appropriate land from the Harvie family, they immediately began making arrangements. They held the first meeting of subscribers at the Farmers Bank of Virginia on August 3, 1847. During this first gathering, the men resolved to establish a Board of Trustees to manage the grounds. The next day they elected members of the board, including Isaac Davenport as president, Joshua Fry treasurer, and Thomas Ellis, William Haxall, and James Gardner as trustees.

At their initial meeting, they also fixed the price of a share in the cemetery at 100 dollars, and formed a committee to solicit subscribers to the project. Subscribers had to buy at least one share to help the cemetery begin and commit to supporting the project until the city granted incorporation. Once this occurred, the upkeep of the cemetery

¹⁰¹ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 25-26.

would fall to the cemetery corporation rather than on individuals. Additionally, creating this corporation would allow the cemetery to continue even after the initial subscribers left or died. Once the city granted incorporation to the cemetery company, the subscribers would become members who would periodically vote on policies and elect members to the Board of Trustees.¹⁰²

After the first meeting, the men began making plans for the cemetery grounds. They contracted with a local company to build a fence to enclose the 42 acres as well as grading the surrounding streets and building a bridge across a ravine near the entrance. Later that month, the men discovered that John Notman, architect of Laurel Hill Cemetery might be on his way to their area for another project. In November, Thomas Ellis wrote Notman requesting he devise a plan for the cemetery's landscape. In February 1848, Notman presented the Richmond men with his proposal.

Notman's plan included an entrance on the northeast corner of the land, where visitors could get an open view of the entire grounds. This, according to Notman, was "the most desirable point to get first glance of the beautiful variety of hill and valley which distinguishes Hollywood above any cemetery I have seen."¹⁰³ However, Notman went on to say that the beauty of the landscape must be secondary to its usefulness. Although conforming to the existing land patterns—letting the land "dictate" where the designers would place roads—was supposedly one of the main principles of the rural cemetery movement, Notman made it clear that this was only true in as far as the land achieved the designer's purpose. People must be able to get carriages close to their plots,

¹⁰² Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 10-15.

¹⁰³ John Notman to the Trustees, February 12, 1848 in Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 27.

and it was imperative that numerous citizens have plots directly adjacent to a road. The plan for Hollywood Cemetery included numerous winding roads to avoid the excess of hills throughout the landscape, however, Notman maintained that this was beneficial for the cemetery because it produced many corner lots, which were usually the most desirable.¹⁰⁴ Because rural cemeteries were partially about showing off, having an extensive amount of corner lots and lots next to roads allowed more citizens to display their gravestones and elaborately arranged plots to cemetery visitors.

Rather than name the streets after natural elements, like trees or plants, Notman suggested that the roads be “called after the name of the first person who shall erect a monument or family tomb, or to whom such shall be erected.”¹⁰⁵ This plan was almost in line with what the Hollywood men envisioned for their cemetery. They saw Hollywood as place particularly for Richmond; a landscape that would showcase the best of Virginia, from its people to its natural elements. While the company members did not take Notman’s suggestion, Thomas Ellis, the second president of the Hollywood Cemetery Company, proposed a combination of names for the walkways on the grounds. He recommended natural names like Brook, Prairie, Summit, Canary, and Magnolia, along with spiritual titles, such as Sabbath, Temple, and Benediction. He also included names associated with Virginian historical figures, such as Dinwiddie, Byrd, Fauquier, and Monticello.¹⁰⁶ Ellis’s suggestions of these names are indicative of how the subscribers viewed the cemetery project and invoked a combination of natural elements that demonstrated the appeal of Richmond and Virginia.

¹⁰⁴ Notman, “Report,” Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 29-31.

¹⁰⁵ Notman “Report,” Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 29.

¹⁰⁶ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 91-98.

To the men of Hollywood, their cemetery would demonstrate the culture and sophistication of their city and state. Mount Auburn, Laurel Hill, and Greenwood brought prestige to their cities and highlighted the romantic appeal of their “natural” landscapes. In Richmond, visitors to the cemetery would have a chance to commune with nature in a way that would elevate their hearts and minds. While this occurred, they might also get a sense of the majesty of the Virginia and its capital, thereby uplifting the image of the location as one of an elegant city poised at the height of civilization.

Tying the cemetery to Virginia was one of the most important connections the men hoped to make. The state had been a centerpiece for the development of the United States and the cemetery men hoped to highlight this fact by connecting the landscape to some of the state’s most prominent figures. And while visitors to the cemetery connected to the state, they would get a glimpse of the prominence of Richmond’s citizens. In addition, the magnificent headstones along with the lavish landscaping would demonstrate what Thomas Jefferson had illustrated in his famous book *Notes on the State of Virginia*; that the natural beauty of the state displayed the prestige of America. Therefore Hollywood Cemetery would show multiple layers of sophistication in the city, the state, and the country.

After coming up with landscaping plans for the cemetery, the Board of Trustees petitioned the Virginia General Assembly to incorporate their company in 1848. Incorporation would ensure the stability of the cemetery by creating a perpetual body to oversee regulation and maintenance of the grounds and thereby reassure those who chose to buy plots that their graves and the graves of their loved ones would be protected in perpetuity, but the assembly members rejected the bill. One of the main reasons the VGA

rejected the bill came from a man named Peter P. Mayo, great-grandson of Major William Mayo who helped the elder Byrd layout a plan for Richmond. In January 1848, Mayo wrote to the General Assembly requesting they reject the cemetery men's proposal because he claimed it impeded upon his own rights. Mayo owned a tract of land just west of the cemetery and he argued that the Hollywood Cemetery men did not give public notice of their intentions, and therefore, did not give him (or others) time to stop the cemetery proprietors.

It is clear, however, that inaccessibility to his land was not the only issue Mayo had with the cemetery. Throughout the petition, Mayo's language demonstrated his negative opinion on the entire endeavor. He addressed the issue of the pending bill for incorporation of the men "under the name and style of the 'Hollywood Graveyard Company of the County of Henrico,' or by some [other] fanciful name of like import," clearly demonstrating his distaste for what he saw as a brazen endeavor. He went on to say that in their "newly awakened sympathy for the dead" the men of the proposed Hollywood Cemetery Company had forgotten the rights of the living. He believed that the HCC were not doing this for the virtuous reasons they claimed. Throughout the petition, Mayo called the project a "joint stock graveyard," and he ended his letter by asking the Virginia General Assembly to

pass a general law prohibiting private individuals from establishing grave yards or cemeteries in or near any incorporated town or city for the interest of the dead for compensation or involvement; and declaring, that they shall be established only upon the application of, or consent of the public authority of the town or city, in or near which, it is proposed to establish such grave yard or cemetery . . . Your petitioner respectfully submits, that a general law of this character is necessary to

guard the interests of the public, and the rights of individuals, from the cupidity and malice of others.¹⁰⁷

Mayo clearly believed that the cemetery men were out to take advantage of the public by exploiting sympathies for the deceased. According to his petition, no one should be able to gain either wealth or prestige off the backs of the grief-stricken.

Mayo's issues with the cemetery demonstrated that some Richmonders were not convinced that this new project would benefit their city. The Hollywood developers were excited to bring this sophisticated idea to their city, but others saw their project much differently. After Mayo presented his petition to the General Assembly, the councilmen rejected the bill for incorporation, thereby demonstrating that they were also not convinced that Richmond needed a rural cemetery.

After the men's failed attempt at gaining incorporation, they resolved to abandon their pursuit and sell the land at public auction later that month. Many believed that the project was becoming too expensive, and felt that selling the land before they got into more debt would be best. This never happened, however, because some of the subscribers argued against it and in May 1848 they began laying out rules and regulations for the cemetery. It is clear that the men at first believed there was not a way to correct the problem the governing body had with their plans, but they decided to continue despite this.¹⁰⁸

Mayo brought his land-access grievance to the Hollywood Cemetery men in September 1848. Mayo along with his brother Joseph and nephew Abel argued that construction of the cemetery would impede their access to lands adjacent to the

¹⁰⁷ Peter P. Mayo to the Virginia General Assembly, January 4, 1848 Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA.

¹⁰⁸ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 39-40, 113-114.

southwestern portion of the cemetery by blocking a road that they alleged had been in use for at least twenty years. However, a man named Joseph Pleasants, engineer for the cemetery company, argued that “the old trace referred to could scarcely be regarded as a road.” He stated that the Mayos “had themselves closed it by cutting a ditch across it and by putting up a fence upon the embankment of the ditch,” and the cemetery men resolved to “resist the claim of the Messrs. Mayo to the right of way.”¹⁰⁹ This proved to be one of the worst decisions the men made in the first years of their cemetery project because they gained a powerful enemy whose arguments would have detrimental effects on their efforts to get the cemetery started.

Despite lingering problems after their first attempt at incorporation and with the Mayos, the men continued to work on landscaping the grounds and promoting the cemetery. In April 1849, Ellis reported on the company’s activities during the previous year. He stated that Hollywood had fifty-five subscribers and that the company had sold eighty-seven plots at one hundred dollars each. The Board of Directors had hoped to have more subscribers by this time but despite their efforts to advertise to other prominent Richmond citizens, they were unable to obtain any more. However, they continued to push forward, stating that “too much had been then done to abandon the undertaking.” By this time, the men owed almost four thousand dollars to various contractors in the city.¹¹⁰

And their problems persisted. The cemetery also had other difficulties convincing Richmonders to accept the cemetery, especially because many still feared the spread of disease, and did not consider the cemetery a place for peaceful contemplation. One of the cemetery directors’ most prominent efforts to establish their location as a showcase for

¹⁰⁹ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 56-57.

¹¹⁰ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 100-101.

Virginia and the country was their attempt to persuade the state legislature to place a monument to George Washington in Hollywood. During the late antebellum era, as the country became more and more divided over the issue of slavery, many Americans looked to the Revolutionary experience for lessons and reassurances.¹¹¹ In addition, Virginians were painfully aware of the decline in their states' production of prominent figures in the federal government. George Washington, however, stood as a testament to Virginia's greatness and the state government sought to build a new monument to him in their capital city. When the Hollywood men learned of the legislature's plans, the directors saw this as a chance for the cemetery to quickly become a Richmond icon and to attract more visitors. In addition, if the government decided to place the monument atop the highest hill in the cemetery, it would demonstrate their acceptance of the endeavor.

In order to convince the General Assembly to place the monument in their cemetery, the men argued that the elevation of a hill in their establishment would make the monument visible from great distances around the city, thus bringing in visitors to the city. The Cemetery Board of Directors wrote in May 1849 that anyone traveling on the James River by way of the James and Kanawha Canal and on the Petersburg and Danville Railroads would be able to see the statue as they traveled near the city.¹¹² The cemetery directors also argued that once visitors were enticed to the spot, they would not only be able to view the monument, but they would also get a glimpse of Richmond's greatness. A statue to one of the most significant figures in American history would fulfill the image

¹¹¹ Kimball, American City, Southern Place.

¹¹² Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 101.

the cemetery men hoped for Hollywood. It would display the greatness of their city and demonstrate to the world that the cemetery a solid feature of Richmond's magnitude.

According to Wellington Goddin of the cemetery company, tourists to the monument would be able to see many of Richmond's churches, civic buildings, private residences, natural wonders, and its numerous industrial works: "the Planter's Cotton Factory—the Tredegar Iron Foundry, with its thick cloud of black smoke and fitful red flame flashing upwards—the State Armory, floating the combined flag of Virginia and the Union—the Franklin Paper Mill—the Titan Gallego Mills—the group of flour, wool, and iron mills and machine shops belonging to the Messrs. Haxall."¹¹³ Despite that the cemetery was supposed to be an escape from the ills of industrialization and urbanization, the cemetery men also wanted the location to advertise the numerous manufacturing establishments housed in Richmond. They wanted to promote their city through the cemetery, displaying Richmond as modern in both industry and culture.

The cemetery directors then tried to convince the legislators to place the statue on their grounds by commissioning a lithograph of the cemetery. They thought that displaying the intricate landscaping and natural beauty of the grounds would be enough to convince the assembly members to place the monument there. However, their plan backfired rather spectacularly. On June 5, 1849 the *Richmond Enquirer* reported that "things are in a really strange fix" within the city government. The previous Saturday reports had emerged that cholera had returned to Richmond, and the legislators were continuously debating whether they should leave the city and reconvene elsewhere in

¹¹³ Wellington Goddin, "Richmond, V. Saturday Morning, June 9, 1849. Holly-Wood Cemetery," *Richmond Enquirer*, June 12, 1849.

order to avoid potentially contracting the disease. However, they could not come to a consensus.

Unfortunately for the members of the Hollywood Cemetery Company, this was the same day they placed their lithograph on the legislators' desks. According to the report in the *Enquirer* on Monday, the lithograph had "produced various impressions. Some thought that it was designed to alarm the body, others that it was intended to ridicule the tears" of those who wished to leave the city.¹¹⁴ Cholera was likely going to kill numerous people throughout the Richmond, and some council members thought the depiction of the cemetery was meant to remind them of this. They had already seen the disease come through their city once so their anxieties were heightened. They feared the power of miasmas spreading through the air and knew how easily diseases could wreak havoc upon their city. Additionally, they still did not understand exactly how cholera spread, so in their minds, anything might bring disease and death to their doorsteps. Looking at the image of a cemetery, seemed like a warning or suggestion that the council members would be in their own graves soon enough. Despite the Hollywood men's attempt to use a beautiful landscape to ease the pain of death, the cemetery still reminded men and women that their lives would eventually end and possibly soon with cholera on the way. The government men did not appreciate being reminded of their mortality at the time, and although the men of the cemetery could not have predicted this in order to remedy it, the incident only added to their growing problems.

Despite their first failed attempt at incorporation and the subsequent gaff with the monument plans, the directors still held hope that the legislature would eventually rule in

¹¹⁴ "Richmond, VA," *Richmond Enquirer*, June 5, 1849.

their favor, and they would therefore be able to pay their debts. With this in mind, the men decided they would hold a dedication ceremony on June 25, 1849. In the days leading up to this, both the *Richmond Enquirer* and the *Richmond Whig and Public Advertiser* printed lengthy pieces respectively for and against the endeavor. Ever the supporter of the cemetery, the *Enquirer* advertised the dedication ceremony and the public mission of the cemetery directors to “embellish it [the cemetery] with every thing [sic] that can inspire tenderness and veneration for the dead.” The cemetery men also placed an advertisement in the *Enquirer* stating they would auction off cemetery plots at 4 o’clock the day after the dedication.¹¹⁵ But the *Whig* made it clear that they were not in favor of the project. The paper continuously printed letters and articles against privately funded cemetery, and it did not help that their rival newspaper supported Hollywood.

In 1804, a man named Thomas Ritchie began the *Enquirer* as a horn for Richmond Democrats. Soon after, a man named John Pleasants began the *Whig* specifically to ensure that the party had their own voice in the city. The two papers had a history of rivalries, most significantly on their opinions of James K. Polk with the *Enquirer* supporting him and the *Whig* lambasting him with insults. Thomas Ritchie, though, left the paper just after Polk was elected and left his son, Thomas Ritchie, Jr., in charge of the *Enquirer*. In 1846, the younger Ritchie and Pleasants became involved in an editorial duel that eventually spilled over into a physical contest, where Ritchie fatally shot Pleasants.¹¹⁶ With Thomas Ellis a Democrat, the *Enquirer* supported the cemetery project so the *Whig* had a number of reasons not to go along with the cemetery.

¹¹⁵ “Consecration of Holly-Wood,” *Richmond Enquirer*, June 15, 1849; “Sale of Lots in the Holly-Wood Cemetery,” *Richmond Enquirer*, June 15, 1849.

¹¹⁶ Dabney, *Richmond*, 66, 130-131.

The *Whig* published two scathing letters in their June 15, 1849 edition. The first letter, which appeared on the front page, attacked the idea of rural cemeteries in general, quoting from Notman's plan and asked who "would have considered it a recommendation to a burying ground to possess attractions for that class who *interested by novelty and beauty* would be induced—to become *visiters* [sic]? Visiters for the sake of—a *delightful ride!*" The author did not think a cemetery was the appropriate place for visitors as many rural cemetery developers argued. The author believed that inviting visitors to the cemetery undermined the purpose of the place, which was supposed to be sacred. While rural cemetery proprietors believed they were maintaining this sacredness, the author argued that the graveyard would be used more like a playground, disrespecting those buried within the gates. The idea that the cemetery would be helpful to the hearts and minds of visitors had not yet permeated Richmond culture.

The author went on to ask who would "have dreamed that in the progress of improvement in feelings as well as in morals and politics, we here, in the Metropolis of this old fashioned Commonwealth, copying the example of our more refined brethren of the North, were about to convert our graveyards into places of amusement for gay and unthinking crowds?" The idea that a cemetery would become a spot of recreation was appalling to the writer. He also believed that Richmond already had appropriate views on etiquette of cemeteries. Virginia was a refined and conservative state and progress in industry did not mean losing their principles. He suggested that there was something un-Virginian, if not un-southern, about the idea of recreation in a cemetery.

The author further argued that Richmond did not need this type of cemetery because the dead were protected in the state. He claimed that "in no country on earth are

the ashes of the dead more secure or more sacred than in Virginia,” and he argued that the only way the dead would be disturbed was by those individuals who “following still the footsteps of our more enterprising Northern brethren will disinter the bones of those who may be buried in Holly Wood.” Here he alluded to the idea that by asking people to visit the cemetery, by attracting them to walk the grounds and enjoy the landscape, the cemetery men were also attracting the eyes of those who might wish to take over the enterprise and use the land for other purposes. The city cemetery at Shockoe, he argued, was much less likely to be disturbed because the land was “so much less desirable for the uses of the living.”¹¹⁷ Making a cemetery an attractive tourist destination undermined the sanctity of such places. Northerners might approve of such a thing, he intoned, but not Richmonders.

The idea that the cemetery lands might be inappropriately used for other endeavors was likely a significant factor for most who objected to the cemetery’s construction. The Whig party dominated in Richmond during the late antebellum years. Even in the 1840s when Democrats controlled the state, Richmond “remained steady in the Whig column” supporting the Whig party’s “message of internal improvement, social reform, and economic advancement” notes historian Gregg Kimball.¹¹⁸ In the second letter in the June 15 edition of the *Whig*, the author argued that Hollywood Cemetery stood in the way of the progress of the city. According to the writer, no one would wish to live in the vicinity of constant grief and reminders of death’s imminence. This writer’s

¹¹⁷ “Holly Wood Cemetery Company” *Richmond Whig*, June 15, 1849.

¹¹⁸ Gregg D. Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 10.

argument demonstrates that the image of death was much more powerful than the potential healing properties that the landscape might provide.

In addition, the author did not see the same value in the cemetery that the Hollywood men saw. They believed it would bring people, and therefore business, to Richmond, but the letter writer felt that the project would harm Richmond's industry. He even suggested that any businesses along "the entire line used for funeral processions" would suffer from a lack of patronage because the lines of grieving citizens following behind corpses would discourage customers from frequenting the area.¹¹⁹ While the men of Hollywood argued that their cemetery would help Richmonders forget their grief as they stood in the beautiful natural surrounding, many citizens of the city were not convinced. Hollywood might have been beautiful, but it was still a place for the dead and a reminder to all that life would eventually end.

However, these were not the only issues the *Whig* writer had with the cemetery. The author next questioned the necessity of burying the dead in decorated places. If the dead should be buried in locations intended to inspire "*tenderness and veneration for the dead, or win the living to virtue,*" he wondered, then "how very ignorant or remiss have our public authorities, nay our whole native State heretofore been in omitting to secure them?" According to the author, these things were just for show and only induced petty competition. The wealthy, who the author believed were the only ones who could afford to buy plots, only sought notoriety as they purchased sections of the grounds, not for the sacred purpose of laying their loved ones in a natural and restful setting. He even had issue with the cemetery directors' incorporation of well-known Virginians in their plans

¹¹⁹ "Holly Wood Cemetery," *Richmond Whig*, June 15, 1849.

because it would “stimulate the ambition” of those who thought they could match themselves to John Marshall, George Washington, or Thomas Jefferson. Adorning graves, he believed, served no purpose as “decorated monuments are perhaps as often erected and lofty panegyrics as often inscribed over the ashes of the unworthy, as over those of the virtuous and the just; and as often prompted by vanity and ambition, as by gratitude or affection.”¹²⁰ Decoration was vain. It did not inspire virtue and instead only fed frivolity and greed, and these vices had no place when it came to the dead. The dead should be respected and while the cemetery men saw decoration as respectful, others in the city found it disrespectful. Many of these ideas permeated Richmond’s culture, and the Hollywood Company suffered from lack of selling plots for several years.

Despite the opposition they faced, the directors decided to dedicate their cemetery on June 25, 1849. They also elected to auction off plots the following day. The dedication went smoothly. The ceremonies opened with a prayer from James L. Reynolds of Richmond’s Second Baptist Church, and local journalist, Oliver P. Baldwin, editor of the *Richmond Republican*, provided the main address. During his speech, Baldwin described the natural appeal of the cemetery, it did not actually matter to the dead where they rested, but their surviving loved ones could find solace in the landscape. The living would benefit from interaction with the picturesque scene the proprietors constructed. Just as in Mount Auburn and the grand gardens of Europe, citizens and travelers to Richmond would feel the peacefulness of a place so beautiful and wonderful.

Baldwin queried about the utility of nature, asking, “Why has [God] throughout His whole creating exhibited at once a power that awes the mind, and the beauty that

¹²⁰ “Holly Wood Cemetery Company,” *Richmond Whig*, June 15, 1849.

enraptures the heart? . . . Why make that field of grain, which is presently to be converted into food for man, so attractive to his eye?” Because the beauty of nature elevated and healed men’s spirits, he argued, Hollywood and cemeteries like it were useful. The natural vista added “to the cup of human happiness” and “wipe[d] . . . tear[s] from the mourner’s eye.”¹²¹ While nature was most certainly useful for growing crops, it was also useful in an unplowed state. The artistic landscape of the cemetery comforted the living, while elevating their minds to higher understandings of life. Nature’s aesthetic properties were just as significant as its production potential.

Baldwin also elaborated on many of the same arguments that northern cemetery proprietors used, saying that the cemetery project went “back to the most ancient customs of the world” when God called the biblical patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to place their burial sites in tree-adorned fields away from the gaze of the living. Even “heathen nations,” according to Baldwin, buried their dead among the trees, shrubs, and flowers. Placing the dead in a picturesque landscape showed signs of civilization and culture. Rural cemeteries, Baldwin argued, were the appropriate places for the dead.

Baldwin also appealed to the emotions of nineteenth-century Americans who were afraid or fed-up with industrialization. He decried the custom of “placing graveyards amid the dust and glare of the cities, entirely destitute of ornament, exposed to public gaze, and surrounded by a thousand distracting associations.” These things, he argued, “may be in keeping with utilitarian age and a money-loving spirit, but it is far from being consonant with that liberality and good taste which are the distinguishing characteristics of our community.” Here Richmond was something different than those

¹²¹ Oliver P. Baldwin, “Address,” Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 131.

“other” cities where capitalism and the rush of industry sucked the life from its laborers. Whereas the detractors called the cemetery a greed endeavor, Baldwin argued that the rural landscape was actually in opposition to the avarice of the industrial market. He praised the fact that the establishment of such cemeteries as Mount Auburn, Greenwood, and Laurel Hill meant that “good taste” was breaking through “even in those portions of our country which are eminently distinguished by their commercial and practical spirit.”

Once Baldwin had argued that these cemeteries were in some ways more virtuous than those in the cities because of their natural elements, he also claimed that rural cemeteries provided places for families to remain together in death as they had been in life. He described one aspect of what Drew Gilpin Faust labeled as the “good death,” where the dying individual was surrounded by loved ones during passing and illustrated the significance of being surrounded by family in the grave.¹²² According to Baldwin, everyone could relate to the desire of being encircled by loved ones in both life and death. Many feared that the family and community structure was breaking down. Therefore, the idea of cemetery plots devoted to the family was increasingly appealing to Americans.¹²³ In her work on Bellefontaine Cemetery in St. Louis, another rural cemetery, historian Ruth Bohan claims that rural cemeteries then became shrines to the family as individuals associated the landscapes with the home. According to Bohan, people gradually began to see the cemetery as “an intermediary home or way station between the family’s earthly home and its long-awaited heavenly home.”¹²⁴ In the

¹²² Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death in the American Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2008), 6.

¹²³ Ruth Bohan, “A Home Away from Home: Bellefontaine Cemetery, St. Louis, and the Rural Cemetery Movement,” *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 13 (1988): 135.

¹²⁴ Bohan, “Home Away from Home,” 139.

cemeteries, the bodies of family members would lie together while their souls reconvened in heaven.

Other types of burial places before rural cemeteries held different structures. Church cemeteries did not physically place families together the same way. Instead, members were mainly placed where space allowed, which could mean families were close together, but more emphasis was placed on connection to the church than on specific family ties. Family burial sites did exist before rural cemeteries, but these new types of graveyards were the first to place separate families among a community. Additionally, Bohan argued, rural cemeteries gave urban families the opportunity to place the families together even when they lacked a sufficient amount of acreage to accommodate their deceased loved ones. Rural cemetery promoters argued that this was important because their locations provided protection to family plots, whereas burial grounds on private land could be plowed over in the event that the family had to sell their property.¹²⁵

Not only would those in the cemetery lie next to their deceased loved ones, those who remained would be able to visit the graves. In rural cemeteries like Hollywood, the deceased would never be forgotten for, Baldwin claimed, everyone feared that upon their death “nature and man would show no greater sign of change than when a leaf falls from yonder tree, or a drop of yonder river dries upon its shore.”¹²⁶ These cemeteries gave people a place in which to build graves that would ensure someone remembered the person beneath the ground, or at least gave a thought to the deceased as they wandered along the paths in the gardenesque setting. According to the cemetery men, these

¹²⁵ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 120.

¹²⁶ Baldwin, “Address,” Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 129.

picturesque scenes would bring honor to the deceased as they eternally rested in the artful landscape.

Despite these benefits, however, Baldwin claimed that the cemetery setting was less significant to the dead than to the living, not just because it stood as a peaceful retreat but because the landscape held an “elevating and purifying effect . . . upon their happiness and their daily lives.” Nature was useful because it encouraged humility. The environment was a constant reminder of man’s mortality. Death was the great equalizer and nature was a reminder of death. Man, Baldwin explained, daily interacted with the dust to which he would eventually return. The combination of nature and death made Hollywood’s graves places of reflection and rejoicing in the idea that the deceased might inhabit a place even more beautiful than the garden cemetery. While the rural cemetery might be a place to contemplated death, death did not have to be gruesome. Instead of images of disease and decay, the rural cemetery’s landscape was a place of slumber and harmony.

The beauty of the landscape should allow people to envision a pleasant afterlife, rather than concentrating on moldering bones and putrefaction. Baldwin declared that the living could “anticipate his future inheritance, and like Moses standing upon Mount Pisgah, gaze over the ‘swelling flood’ of death on ‘fields of living green.’” In addition, the Hollywood Cemetery Company’s improvements increased the utility of the landscape, making it “doubly beautiful with its wondering paths and avenues, and the flowering shrubs and bushes which will . . . increase its hallowed secrecy and retirement.”¹²⁷ The natural setting they had helped cultivate consoled the living and

¹²⁷ Baldwin, “Address,” Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 131-132.

reminded them that earthly pursuits were fleeting. The tomb prompted meditation and humility, ever reminding the rich that their successes were fleeting and the poor that their struggles would end. Spending time in the cemetery, Baldwin argued, increased morality, and decorated cemeteries strengthened this effect as nature helped purify the hearts of visitors.¹²⁸

After finishing his explanations of the cemetery's virtues, Baldwin went on to praise the men of the Hollywood Cemetery association, stating that they chose the ideal spot that encompassed all the necessary features to elevate the minds of Richmond's citizens and visitors. Describing the cemetery, Baldwin pointed to the number of trees "inviting retirement and repose, and spreading forth their mighty alms as if to consecrate this scene to holy purposes." Like others, Baldwin also pointed to the view of the city and river. From Hollywood Hill, visitors could get a sense of the grandeur of both the city and the state by gazing upon the factories, churches, political buildings, and cultural icons. From this point, Baldwin illustrated, visitors to the cemetery could glimpse reminders of Patrick Henry, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and other famous Virginians. Hollywood was the perfect spot for advertising the best of Richmond.¹²⁹ While visitors walked amongst the dead, they would be reminded of the triumphs of the living.

Baldwin concluded his address with a description of the sadness that surrounded death and the grave. However, he once again encouraged those facing grief to look around at the landscape and to listen for the "voice of God" among the natural elements. In addition, he implored those listening and those who would later come to the cemetery to contemplate the graves, believing that this would inspire humility, charity, and faith.

¹²⁸ Baldwin, "Address," Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 131-133.

¹²⁹ Baldwin, "Address," Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 134-135.

Hollywood, Baldwin argued, would stand as a place where virtue lived among the dead, and this inspirational character would only grow with time as Hollywood endured.¹³⁰

In the end, Baldwin's heartfelt dedication was also intended to demonstrate to listeners the benefits of buying plots in the cemetery. Becoming a part of the Hollywood structure would mean that they were buying into something that would supposedly bring beauty to the city and uplift the hearts and minds of everyone and that the Hollywood men hoped would boost the economy by bringing in more business. Baldwin's eloquent speech encouraged Richmonders to become part of the high-class endeavor that would improve the city through increased tourism, commerce, and magnificence. Who would not want to be part of the splendor he described?

After a prayer from Reverend George Woodbridge of the Monumental Church in Richmond, the dedication ended, and the directors set the sale of plots to begin at 5 o'clock the next evening. The *Enquirer* claimed that the dedication was a success. The writer commented that even with the summer heat the proceedings had attracted a "large" crowd and many praised Baldwin's address, although the paper did not provide any numbers.¹³¹ With the success of the dedication in the books, the Hollywood Cemetery men were no doubt elated, but their happiness faded the next day. First, the *Enquirer* announced that the Virginia Legislature had decided to place the Washington Monument in Capitol Square rather than the cemetery.¹³² But that was only the beginning of the Hollywood Company's troubles that day. As men and women gathered on the cemetery grounds waiting for the auction to begin, Mayo arrived with an injunction barring the

¹³⁰ Baldwin, "Address," Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 136-137.

¹³¹ "Holly-Wood Cemetery," *Richmond Enquirer*, June 29, 1849.

¹³² "The Virginia Legislature," *Richmond Enquirer*, June 26, 1849.

directors from selling the land and commanding their appearance in court a few days later. Despite their commitment to resist Mayo's claim, the injunction dealt a significant blow to the cemetery sales and the Hollywood men had to admit defeat in the first of many battles they would face. The next day, the men agreed that they would compromise with Mayo by purchasing the land in question, sixteen and a half acres for which they paid twelve hundred dollars. Mayo agreed almost immediately and on June 27 requested Wellington Goddin of the cemetery company to draw up the deed. Mayo also stated that he was "very glad to put an end to a controversy between myself and the gentlemen for whom I have so high a regard."¹³³

It is possible that Mayo may have just been looking to get money from the company, but as a wealthy businessman in Virginia, it seems more likely that he had different aspirations. Mayo's efforts to block the Virginia General Assembly from granting incorporation to the company and his injunction to halt the sale of plots after the dedication were both major blows to the cemetery project. The Hollywood Company rescheduled their auction for July 5, but the damage was already done. Either without the momentum from the dedication or in consequence of the opposition pushed by Mayo and the *Whig*, the company only sold seven plots, two of which went to men from the cemetery company.¹³⁴ Once again, the men resolved to push forward, but little did they know, their biggest problem was about to emerge.

The general opposition to the cemetery did not fade after the dedication. In January 1850, Ellis, president of the Hollywood Cemetery Company was still working to

¹³³ Peter P. Mayo to Wellington Goddin, June 27, 1849, in Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 141.

¹³⁴ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 142.

contradicted many of the claims that opposing Richmonders assailed on the cemetery project. His three-pronged argument began with a statement that the directors and subscribers of the enterprise were prominent businessmen and would, therefore, not want to do any harm to the growth of the city. Secondly, he emphasized the appropriateness of the cemetery's distance from the city. The originators were careful not to choose lands too far from Richmond for fear that an excessive distance would deter visitors and make it difficult to transport the bodies during funeral processions, but the area was also far enough away that it would not disrupt city citizens' everyday lives. Finally, Ellis stated that the land was "wholly unsuited to the general improvement of the city." The city previously had a chance to develop the land but did not. Ellis argued that the wooded area the cemetery company chose for their project contained too many steep hills that impede any type of building.¹³⁵ Some of these issues remained in the minds of Richmonders, but another controversy proved even stronger in the upcoming years for the Hollywood Company.

¹³⁵ Thomas Ellis, report, Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 144-147.

CHAPTER IV

“WE FEAR THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS MAY BE INCREASED:” THE CEMETERY AND FEARS OF DISEASE

Although the men of the Hollywood Cemetery Company managed to come to a compromise with Peter Mayo, they still faced opposition from many Richmonders. The most significant issue they faced after the land controversy was whether the cemetery was healthy for the city’s citizens. The nineteenth century view of disease was one of chaos. Americans often lived in fear the spread of deadly diseases, and the terror was only heightened by the fact that they often could not pinpoint the causes. They did, however, have some idea that decaying matter could cause illness, and Richmonders immediately associated this with Hollywood. Despite the HCC’s efforts to locate the cemetery outside the limits of the city, many still worried that the decaying bodies posed a threat to their air and water. Richmonders’ continued objections to the project demonstrate that their fears of death and disease were stronger than their desire for what many saw as an elitist endeavor.

Historians of medicine have called the nineteenth century a “medical revolution” and the foundation for modern medicine.¹³⁶ Spurred by new technologies as well as problems of industrialization, medicine rapidly evolved as physicians argued for a more

¹³⁶ Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: A Medical History of Humanity* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 306; W.F. Bynum, *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), xi.

scientific approach. They stressed anatomy, data gathering, and experimentation to understand how diseases affected the human body. As medical practice evolved during the century, practitioners began to identify that maladies such as consumption actually worked differently than they had once assumed and would eventually understand just how tuberculosis and other diseases “consumed” the bodies of their patients. New ideas developed throughout the century as physicians tried to find answers, and as they did so, average individuals’ understanding of diseases began to evolve.

Working through the details of diseases’ effects on human bodies promoted new sanitary developments in urban environments. People lived crowded together in squalid conditions with polluted streets and water supplies in which diseases spread quickly. Although nineteenth century Americas were not yet aware of the manner in which germs spread, they had some idea that filth bred disease. This led many city governments in places such as New York and Cincinnati to make efforts to clean up the streets. In fact, according to historian Alan I. Marcus, attempts to prevent disease from spreading in large cities were the first municipal efforts to regulate the social environment. Prior to the 1830s and 1840s, city governments had assisted businesses within their borders but had no structure in place to provide for its citizens directly.¹³⁷

Beginning with the English social reformer, Edwin Chadwick, who noted a connection between disease and poverty in the 1830s, cities across the western world began taking measures to halt the progression and likelihood of spreading diseases through urban areas. The “sanitary idea” Chadwick promoted gained the attention of

¹³⁷ Alan Marcus, *Plague of Strangers: Social Groups and the Origins of City Services in Cincinnati* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991), xix-xx.

English physicians—most notably Doctor Thomas Southwood Smith—then spread throughout other European nations and into the United States.¹³⁸

Although they were beginning to understand more about the effects of particular ailments, professionals were still uncertain of the initial cause of diseases and often blamed the spread of contaminants on miasmas. Miasmas were thought to be particles of dangerous matter that could infect the air or water and potentially harm those who encountered them. Many scientists and laypeople believed that healthy air and water could literally become infested with these dangerous molecules, and that they held the potential to spread diseases such as cholera, yellow fever, tuberculosis, and others. People believed that the air itself was actually carrying the diseases, and, if ingested, could change the physical makeup of the human body thereby spreading the illnesses and harming the organs.¹³⁹

With the sanitary idea in place and their beliefs in the danger of miasmas, cities began making efforts to prevent the spread of epidemic diseases, especially when cholera arrived on American shores. Cholera was one of the most prominent diseases of the nineteenth century. The distinct comma-shaped bacteria spread through water supplies that had been contaminated by the feces of someone with the disease. Once ingested, the victim's body would purge all forms of liquid until they eventually succumbed to dehydration. Unfortunately for nineteenth century Americans, cholera spread quickly through water supplies that still lacked proper sanitation, and inadequate knowledge about the bacteria led to mistreatment and the death of many who contracted the disease.

¹³⁸ Porter, *Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, 409-411.

¹³⁹ Conevery Bolton Valencius, *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 114.

Cholera first came to the United States in 1832, and would eventually become a particular problem for the Hollywood Cemetery Company. According to historian Charles E. Rosenberg, when rumors of cholera in Europe first reached the United States, many New York citizens believed they could not be affected by the plague. They believed that American citizens were heartier than their European counterparts. They often thought that poverty and intemperance or depravity attracted the plague, and Rosenberg argues that mid-nineteenth century Americans believed they had “no class to compare with the miserable slum-dwellers of Paris and London or with the brutalized serfs of Nicholas’ Russia,” therefore the disease would not attack them as harshly. However, if there were any Americans who *could* bring the disease to their shores, it would be those within the cities. For this reason, the New York City government implemented year-round quarantines on goods coming from England in 1831 and 1832.¹⁴⁰

Rumors of dreaded disease in Europe reached North America before the bacteria itself. With these rumors both Canadians and Americans placed restrictions on boats coming into the countries. However, this did not prevent the disease for long. In June the first reported case of cholera emerged in Canada.¹⁴¹ New Yorkers panicked and began placing more restrictions on immigration from their northern neighbors.¹⁴² Again, however, this did not prevent the disease for long. Cholera soon appeared in New York and from there, cases continuously developed in cities along the east coast.

¹⁴⁰ Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 15–16.

¹⁴¹ House of Representatives, *The Cholera Epidemic of 1873 in the United States* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1875), 563-565.

¹⁴² Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 16.

Doctors believed that *any* decaying matter could contaminate the air with cholera or other diseases. In Mobile, Alabama in 1820 committee members appointed to investigate the causes and spread of yellow fever in their city argued that logs and other decomposing plant materials clogging the wharves emitted contaminants that could have infected the citizens.¹⁴³ Additionally, the English physician Thomas Southwood Smith argued that “the decomposition of dead organic substance, whether vegetable or animal” produced a “poison . . . when in a state of high concentration is capable of producing instantaneous death by a single inspiration of the air in which it is diffused.”¹⁴⁴ In the minds of those in the nineteenth century, the foul smells emitted from decaying objects indicated that they were giving off these dangerous vapors. These particles, once ingested by humans became consumption, fevers, and other maladies that could wipe out vast percentages of the population.

Although they believed that all decaying matter posed a threat, medical professionals argued that human corpses were particularly dangerous to the living. Physicians filled medical journals with tales of those who had the misfortune of breathing in the hazardous gases by coming into too close contact with decaying bodies. The Massachusetts Medical Society argued that gravediggers often lived shorter lifespans

¹⁴³ Jacob Ludlow, Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate the Causes and Extent of the Late Extraordinary Sickness and Mortality in the Town of Mobile (Philadelphia: S. Potter and Co., 1820), 3.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Southwood Smith, “Report on Some of the Physical Causes of Sickness and Mortality to which the Poor are Particularly Exposed, and which are Capable of Removal by Sanatory Regulations; Exemplified in the Present Condition of the Bethnal Green and Whitechapel Districts, as Ascertained on a Personal Inspection,” in *Papers Relating to the Noxious Effects of the Fetid Irrigations around the City of Edinburgh*, Adam and Charles Black, [eds.] (Thomas Allan & Co.: Edinburgh, 1839), 78-79.

than others, citing their constant interaction with corpses as the cause.¹⁴⁵ They believed that, like other decaying matter, once a person died, the process of putrefaction gave off harmful gasses “known to be deleterious” to the living. Similar secretions, physicians argued, emanated from living bodies when the sick simply breathed or perspired, but these harmful discharges were more potent and dangerous from the dead, especially when crowded together in cemeteries.¹⁴⁶ Just as disease spread when living bodies were packed together, harmful miasmas posed greater threats when concentrated.

Nineteenth-century Americans’ understanding of the atmosphere helped shape their views of how miasmas spread. A writer in the 1830s described the atmosphere as similar to water, “immediately [taking] up, and [becoming] the vehicle of all soluble matters that it can meet with.”¹⁴⁷ Gases emerging from the decaying material escaped into the air where they could be carried for miles. Anything from the direction of the wind to the potential for rain or lack thereof could spread the miasmas. Often they believed, the thicker the atmosphere—the more humid a place—the more likely it was to spread the miasma.

Many even argued that water itself could spread miasmas throughout the population. The Massachusetts Medical Society argued that as water helped breakdown particles during the decomposition process, it would also “filter through the earth, and dissolve and carry with them the juices, and soft solids of animal bodies” thereby further

¹⁴⁵ A Fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society. *Remarks on the Dangers and Duties of Sepulture: Or Security for the Living, with Respect and Repose for the Dead* (Boston: Phelps & Farnham, 1823), 10.

¹⁴⁶ A Fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society, *Dangers and Duties of Sepulture*, 13; Louis Mackall, *Oak-Hill Cemetery, or A Treatise on the Fatal Effects Resulting from the Location of Cemeteries in the Immediate Vicinity of Towns* (Washington: Henry Polkinhorn, 1850).

¹⁴⁷ Henry Belinaye. *The Sources of Health and Disease in Communities, or, Elementary Views of “Hygiene”: Illustrating Its Importance to Legislators, Heads of Families, &c* (Boston: Allen and Ticknor, 1833), 54.

dispersing the miasmas given off during decay. In addition, they argued that it was almost impossible “to determine to what distance around, the matter extricated during the progress of putrefaction may spread, and by pervading the ground, tainting the waters, and perhaps emitting noxious exhalations into the atmosphere, do great mischief.”¹⁴⁸ So the fluids of putrefaction could spread a few to several feet away from the corpse, possibly infecting a great distance of the ground once the liquid from decay was picked up by water flowing through the Earth.

Rural cemeterians made this same argument to promote their projects. They claimed that because bodies were dangerous, inner-city cemeteries posed a tremendous threat to the citizens of the city, and cemeteries must, therefore, be removed to the outskirts of metropolises. Despite that this argument was supposed to favor rural cemeteries, Richmonders placed the same fears of the dead and decaying matter onto Hollywood. They did not envision a peaceful, healing landscape; instead they saw heaps of dead bodies decaying into the ground, ready to harm the living.

For the Hollywood Cemetery Company, the idea that emanations from decaying matter could infect both the air and water gave their opposition ample ammunition to argue against the project. Despite that the proprietors had taken measures to build their cemetery on land sufficiently outside of the city to prevent the potential interaction of Richmond’s citizens with harmful air, Richmonders still argued that the cemetery would “injuriously affect the health of the citizens.”¹⁴⁹ Some argued that the cemetery was still too close to the city, while others claimed that the numerous trees might concentrate the

¹⁴⁸A Fellow of the Massachusetts Medical Society, *Dangers and Duties of Sepulture*, 33, 51.

¹⁴⁹Hollywood Cemetery Company (Richmond, Va), Minute book, 1847 June 23-1868 March 26, Hollywood Cemetery Company (Richmond, VA) Records 1847-1929, Mss3 H7298 a, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter cited as Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes), 149.

miasmas and harm any visitor to Hollywood. The oppositions' most significant argument, however, related to one of the major elements of the cemetery's appeal and one of the Richmond's most significant landmarks: the James River.

When the English arrived in the Chesapeake Bay, they, like the Native Americans before them, chose a location along the water for the many benefits it could potentially provide. Theoretically, the James River would allow for easy access to transportation, fertile soils, and plentiful drinking water for the colonists. However, the river was often brackish and caused numerous problems for the settlers in Jamestown; many of them became ill and died from disease and salt poisoning brought on by drinking the water.¹⁵⁰ However, once they overcame these issues and established themselves in the location they began to push further up the James looking for other areas they could claim and locations where they might develop settlements. Luckily for the English, they encountered many friendly Native American groups. However, they still often feared attack from the local Indians and other European nations. In 1645 the first English efforts to establish themselves on the land where Richmond would eventually develop began when, fearing attack from the Indians, the Spanish, or the French, English settlers located a fort along the fall line of the James River. This did not last long, however, because the next year the colonists decided that the fortification would be better along the opposite side of the river and they moved the structure, leaving open the area that would eventually become Richmond.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Steven G. Davidson et al., *Chesapeake Waters: Four Centuries of Controversy, Concern, and Legislation*, 2nd ed. (Centreville, MD: Tidewater, 1997), 3.

¹⁵¹ Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 2–6.

Later developers, however, saw the fall line as an ideal place to begin a settlement. In 1659 and over the next few years, Thomas Stegg, Jr. purchased over fifteen hundred acres around the location of the abandoned fort and established what came to be known as the “Falls Plantation.” Stegg, who died without an immediate heir in 1671, left the lands to his sister’s son, William Byrd. Over time, Byrd acquired more lands that he then bequeathed to his son, William Byrd II, upon his death in 1704. In 1737, the younger Byrd provided the land along the river to build the city of Richmond, and according to him, he and others chose the spot because “being the uppermost landing of the James . . . [it was] naturally intended for marts where the traffic of the outer inhabitants must centre.” Byrd believed the river would bring business, and the city would easily grow from there.¹⁵²

After providing the land for the city, Byrd appointed a man named William Mayo to begin laying out plans for a town on the site.¹⁵³ The town steadily grew from there. In 1742 when the Virginia General Assembly officially incorporated the town, Richmond had only about 250 inhabitants. But spurred by tobacco manufacturing and milling of wheat and corn, the population grew steadily. It became the official capital of Virginia in 1780, and by 1800, the city had a population of over 5,000 people.¹⁵⁴

Five years after the Virginia General Assembly designated Richmond the capital, an endeavor that increased the strength of the entire state began. During the mid-

¹⁵² William Byrd, *The Westover Manuscripts: Containing the History of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina* (Petersburg: E. and J. C. Ruffin, 1841), 107.

¹⁵³ Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City*, 13; Robert Lee Traylor, *Some Notes on the First Recorded Visit of White Men to the Site of the Present City of Richmond, Virginia. Saturday and Sunday, May 23 and 24, 1607* (Richmond: W. E. Jones, 1899), 16.

¹⁵⁴ Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City*, 61–64; Gregg Kimball, *American City, Southern Place: A Cultural History of Antebellum Richmond* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 15–16.

eighteenth century, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson both championed the idea of building a canal system from the James that would assist farmers in transporting their goods to market. According to the National Park Service, Washington envisioned linking the James River to the Kanawha River in order to open access to the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. This venture began with the James River Company in 1785 and proved successful at first. However, the company struggled in the early nineteenth century, and the state of Virginia purchased the charter from the association in the 1820s.

During the Virginia General Assembly's tenure over the canal project, the Richmond City Council worked to contract with at least two local citizens to establish a system to bring water to the city population via the canal. One of these individuals was Jacqueline B. Harvie who had inherited his father's land and would eventually sell a portion to the Hollywood Cemetery directors. The other was John Clarke, whose land would also play a significant role in the establishment of Hollywood in the coming decades.

On May 10, 1830, council members reported that James Rawlings, President of the Farmers' Bank of Virginia, had presented them with four petitions "signed by many of the citizens and property owners of the City of Richmond" requesting that the city hire an engineer to come up with a plan to bring "an abundant supply of good and pure water" to Richmonders. Previously, the city had worked to bring water into the city for extinguishing fires, but the petitioners now requested the water "for all purposes."¹⁵⁵ Richmonders wanted water to not only provide them safety, but also to drink.

¹⁵⁵ Richmond Common Council, May 10, 1830, "Petitions for the appointment of an engineer to make an estimate etc. for introduction of water into the city for all purposes referred," Richmond Common Council, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA, 9:219 (Hereafter referred to as Richmond Common Council).

The council agreed to survey the various wards throughout the city and estimate the volume of water necessary to supply its citizens. Richmond mayor Joseph Tate reported in June that 4, 886 people lived on the streets they proposed to water. 472 of these were heads of household, but only about half stated they would be willing to pay to receive a supply of water to their homes. Although, the mayor assured the committee that the low number did not reflect “a full expression of opinion on the subject” because many of those they interviewed did not have an opinion on the subject, and there were numerous citizens out of town who did not participate in the survey.¹⁵⁶

After estimating the number of people they proposed to supply, the city began working with individuals to negotiate agreements for constructing a reservoir and pipe system to bring water from the canal into the city. They first attempted to contract with John Clarke and the two sons of Edwin Harvie—Jacqueline Harvie’s brother. Clarke immediately rejected the City’s proposal. It was also impossible for the city to contract with the Harvie brothers as one was underage and the other was away from Richmond.¹⁵⁷ The council instead contracted with Jacqueline Harvie to build a canal and a pump house on his land to bring water “for the purpose of driving and propelling any wheel or wheels which may be needful to work the necessary machinery for raising into a reservoir six hundred thousand gallons of water per day and also to furnish as pure as it can be procured from James River six hundred thousand gallons of water per day for each and every day for the purpose of watering the said City of Richmond.” The emphasis the

¹⁵⁶ Richmond Common Council, June 25, 1830, “Letter of Mayor communicating report of number of families and laid on table,” 9:229-230.

¹⁵⁷ Richmond Common Council Aug. 7, 1830 “Report of respecting passing pipes and locating reservoir on lands of J. Clarke and sons of E. Harvie dec. Committee to enquire into best [] of []ving objections stated in said report and necessary contracts not to be delayed, etc.,” 9:239-240.

council and citizens placed on purity in their petition showed some understanding that drinking water should be clean. They were aware that water could spread unpleasant illnesses.

The contract that the city made with the colonel said that Harvie was to provide the land and the city would build a piping system to bring water from the canal to the reservoir then from the reservoir into the city where Richmond citizens could use it.¹⁵⁸ The population by this time had grown to over 16,000, and the city estimated that each family of four would use about 100 gallons of water per day. The reservoir they constructed had a capacity for one million gallons of water, and the pump system would bring in 400,000 gallons of water per twenty-four hours.¹⁵⁹

Despite their grand plans, however, the city had problems holding Harvie to his contract. The common council estimated that they would have the reservoir built and the pipes laid by October 1831. In January 1832, the engineer reported that everything was ready once Harvie provided the water necessary. However, Harvie showed no signs of completing the task to which he had agreed. Without the canal, the city had constructed a useless reservoir. They petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for the power to condemn the lands in order to take them from Harvie, but it seems that this plan fell through.

Harvie either had some issue with the James River Company or wanted more ownership in the water works, which was his reason for abandoning his contract with the city. The councilmen resolved to petition the James River Company to pressure Harvie to

¹⁵⁸ Richmond Common Council, August 10, 1830, "Deed between Jacqueline B. Harvie and Watering Committee of the Richmond Common Council"

¹⁵⁹ Charles Bolling, "Description of the Water Works at Richmond, Virginia," *Journal of the New England Water Works Association* IV (1890): 39.

allow the city to use his portion of the canal. However, the documents do not illuminate how the city ultimately resolved the problem. In 1839, Harvie offered to sell the land around the canal and pump house to the city for 47,000 dollars to be paid in part in stocks, but they rejected the offer. Later that year, however, the city decided to purchase the land for 25,000 dollars and completed the transaction in 1840.¹⁶⁰

Along with the pump house and reservoir that were central to the city's conflict with Harvie, Richmond built the country's first filtration system in an attempt to combat the issues with drinking the water. Despite not understanding precisely how germs spread, nineteenth century Americans learned from their eighteenth century ancestors that dirty water was problematic. Writing on the colonial history of colonists' relationship with the Chesapeake waters, historian Sarah H. Meacham called the liquid "unhealthy at best" and stated that the "shallow wells that the colonists dug were contaminated easily and bred typhoid fever."¹⁶¹ The filtration bed sat in the reservoir and forced the water through gravel and sand layers to supposedly remove impurities. When first constructed in the 1830s, Alfred Stein, a Philadelphia resident and designer of the Richmond system, stated that the filtration bed was the largest in the United States. However, he also expressed doubtfulness of its success. The city abandoned the filtration system by 1835 and the citizens went on drinking the polluted liquid.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Richmond Common Council, May 13, 1839, "Proportion of, for sale of his privileges etc. on James River rejected," 432-433; Richmond Common Council, December 17, 1839, "Report of watering committee, recommending purchase of his lands etc. on James River, and substitute proposed therefor, laid on table," 475-477; Richmond Common Council, April 22, 1840, "Report made by counsel, deed approved and to be executed," 501-502.

¹⁶¹ Sarah H. Meacham, *Every Home a Distillery: Alcohol, Gender, and Technology in the Colonial Chesapeake* (JHU Press, 2009), 12.

¹⁶² Bolling, "Description of the Water Works at Richmond, Virginia," 39.

In 1847, the men of the Hollywood Cemetery Company contracted with General Harvie to purchase around 42 acres of land in the town of Sydney, Virginia adjacent to his canal along the James River and just a few miles east of Richmond's reservoir. They, like so many others throughout Richmond's history, sought to harness the power of the river. However, unlike the majority of those who looked to the waterway for industrial or municipal purposes, the Hollywood company saw utility in the river's natural aesthetic. John Notman, the cemetery's landscape architect, said the river made Hollywood "equal to the best [grounds] in the country." During his speech dedicating the cemetery, Oliver P. Baldwin praised the river for its "natural grandeur and beauty."¹⁶³ But the river often proved to be an obstacle to the HCC's goals, rather than an asset. It caused them two major problems: (1) their proximity to the river caused a greater potential for flooding; and most importantly, (2) the people of Richmond argued that bodies in the cemetery could infect their water supply with toxins. The men of the HCC tried to prepare for the former, but their efforts were often in vein. The latter problem, however, took the men by surprise.

Rumors of cholera began to spread in Richmond in August of 1832. The *Richmond Enquirer* had already reported several instances of the disease in both Norfolk and Portsmouth, but the Board of Health maintained that no instances of Asiatic Cholera had yet reached their city. The *Enquirer* officially reported the first case of the disease on September 11 with a statement from the Board of Health. Like other Americans during this time, the citizens of Richmond believed that lowly people of supposed "weak constitution" were more susceptible to contracting the disease. In this case, the first

¹⁶³ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 134.

victim was an 11-year-old African-American slave boy, named Robin Hill, whose owner reported him as being “subject to fits, and to have eaten imprudently of pears.” The young boy died within five hours.¹⁶⁴ After this initial case, others began to emerge around the city. The next three reported cases were of two African Americans—a 50-year-old woman named Jemima and a slave man named Herbert—and a 30-year-old mulatto man who worked in the same factory as the first victim. Each of them died on or before September 13.¹⁶⁵

As each new report came in, Richmonders searched for the causes of the spreading scourge. The Board of Health provided the public with information on everything from what the person drank, their living conditions, location, and even the last meal they ate before others realized they had contracted the disease. The newspaper often included letters from other cities providing advice for Richmonders on what precautions to take to prevent the disease. A letter from Baltimore advised citizens to

wear a flannel shirt or jacket, flannel drawers, and yarn stockings—keeping in at night. Never dine or eat away from home—(at home you can command your diet)—never permit any fruit all to be in your house, or any vegetable, except rice and well-cooked potatoes. Fresh beef and mutton are your best meats, but bacon may be used. Use water moderately; a little brandy or port wine mixed with it a dinner is advisable.¹⁶⁶

Because they could not pinpoint the cause, they experimented with all manner of things to try and prevent it.

The people of Richmond even began to blame the weather for the increase in cholera cases in their city. On September 28, the *Enquirer* stated that 29 people had succumbed to the disease in the previous week and that the “constant rain on Monday and

¹⁶⁴ “Cholera,” *Richmond Enquirer*, September 11, 1832.

¹⁶⁵ “The Cholera: Report of the Board of Health,” *Richmond Enquirer*, September 14, 1832.

¹⁶⁶ “Precautions,” *Richmond Enquirer*, September 14, 1832.

the cool weather on Tuesday have contributed to its [cholera's] fatality.” They even began to fear days when it rained before they knew the number of deaths. On the 28th, the paper warned that it had “rained yesterday slightly, and the atmosphere and Earth are both very damp. So . . . unless there be due care shown, we fear that the number of victims may be increased.”¹⁶⁷ The next week, the *Enquirer* claimed that the cases of cholera in the city would not decrease until Richmond was “favored with a fair, dry, and more bracing atmosphere.”¹⁶⁸ Maybe they saw the rain as unclean or maybe not, but they feared that the damp atmosphere somehow helped the disease spread.

In early October, the *Enquirer* began to report that cholera was abating, and on October 19 the paper reported that the disease had almost entirely disappeared from the city. Although the epidemic only lasted a few months in Richmond, it was enough to frighten the citizens for many years in the future. Despite that the cholera left the city fifteen years before Hollywood Cemetery existed, the idea of the disease plagued the men of the cemetery company when Richmonders learned that their water flowed beneath the cemetery lands.

While cholera may not have been Richmonders’ only concern with the proximity of corpses to their water, it certainly contributed to their fears. Unfortunately for the people of the city, cholera had not finished with them in the 1830s. In 1849, rumors once again began to spread that the pestilence was in the area and fears increased quickly. Members of the city, including those in the government, fled in hopes of escaping the disease. This, unfortunately, was the same day that the HCC had placed lithographs of the cemetery on the legislatures’ desks in hopes of convincing them to place the Washington

¹⁶⁷ “The Cholera,” *Richmond Enquirer*, September 28, 1832.

¹⁶⁸ “The Cholera,” *Richmond Enquirer*, October 2, 1832.

Monument within Hollywood. This did not help the cemetery gain any popularity with Richmonders.

In August 1849, Thomas Ellis, president of the HCC, reported that he had become aware of an editorial in the *Richmond Whig* that expressed opposition against the cemetery due to its proximity to the City Water Works. The article author addressed a rumor that a man had recently been found in the city reservoir. While he admitted that the rumor was false, it was enough to cause “the flesh of many a citizen to crawl, their blood to curdle, and their stomachs to give signs of sympathy.” If even the thought of something like this made people react this way, the author argued, what would happen when they found out that Ellis and the other men of the HCC were going to bury hundreds of corpses right over the pipes that supplied their water? “An immense burying ground, filled, as this will be, in the course of time by hundreds, and possibly thousands of dead bodies, in every possible stage of decomposition, lying directly above the source from which they draw the water that quenches their thirst, every class of it being more or less saturated with the drainings!” The author ended his letter by begging the reader to thwart the HCC’s project by buying the men out.¹⁶⁹

After reading this, Ellis invited several men from the city to come to the cemetery and make their own assessments on the validity of the writer’s claim.¹⁷⁰ Ellis addressed this letter to Walter Gwynn, the president of the James River and Kanawaha Canal Company; Charles S. Morgan, superintendent of the Virginia State Penitentiary, which was located close to the city reservoir; and Garland Hanes, superintendent of the City

¹⁶⁹ “Hollywood Cemetery,” *Richmond Whig*, July 20, 1849.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas Ellis letter to Walter Gwynn, Charles S. Morgan, and Garland Hanes, August 31, 1849 in Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 143-144.

Water Works. In January of the next year, Ellis wrote to Dr. John A. Cunningham, a local physician and Albert Michaels, superintendent of the city's cemetery on Shockoe Hill requesting their opinions on the issue in hopes that their professionalism would be enough to convince city officials that the cemetery was not harmful.¹⁷¹

Cunningham and Gwynn answered his request. Cunningham, in fact, wrote back the very same day saying that the “drainings” did not flow toward the canal and could, therefore, not infect the water in that area. Additionally, he stated that it was ridiculous to assume that iron pipes would absorb any secretions in the surrounding ground. Gwynn made a similar argument, stating that the very idea that bodies could infect the water in the pipes was “preposterous and absurd.” Gwynn argued that iron “possessed of sufficient density and tenacity to resist the heavy pressure of the water in the pipes, prevent its escape, and convey it without loss or diminution into the reservoir, would effectually resist the commingling of the watery portions of a human body, enclosed in a coffin, four feet beneath the surface of the earth, and thirty feet from the pipes.” If the pipes could keep water in, Gwynn argued, they could also keep bodily fluids out. He went on to say that even if the pipes began to leak the water pressure flowing from the container would be powerful enough to keep out any contaminants.¹⁷²

As Ellis tried to gather support against the water-infection claim, the Hollywood men prepared for their second attempt at gaining a charter from the Virginia General Assembly. However, Ellis expressed his belief that “an unexpected and violent opposition has been started in the House of Delegates” and he feared that this would

¹⁷¹ Thomas Ellis letter to John A. Cunningham, January 7, 1850 in Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 147.

¹⁷² Walter Gwynn to Thomas Ellis, January 7, 1850, Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA, 8.

thwart their attempt.¹⁷³ Ellis consistently denied that he and the other members of the HCC would do anything to harm the city. In addition, he firmly repudiated the logic that the buried bodies could contaminate the city's water. Like Cunningham and Gwynn, Ellis explained that the water drawn from the James and Kanawha Canal traveled to the city reservoir through iron pipes, which he believed protected the substance from contamination by dead bodies.

Furthermore, Ellis argued that other obstacles lay between the cemetery and the city's water. The dam near the cemetery, designed to direct water into the James and Kanawha canal, extended "700 feet lower down the river than the western boundary lines of the cemetery" Ellis explained. Therefore the water was gathering at a sufficient distance from the cemetery, and, on top of that, Ellis argued, the liquid was "walled in with granite 4 feet thick." Besides this, the canal itself stood between the river and the cemetery lands, which rose "abruptly in a bluff . . . having an elevation varying from 28 to 40 feet above the canal, and an elevation varying from 58 to 70 feet above the level of the water in the pond below." He even made it clear that the water from the cemetery would run in the opposite direction, "into the river at a considerable distance below the water works." The main line of pipes passes through an angle of the cemetery the distance of 500 feet in going to the reservoir, and through another angle the distance of 238 feet from the reservoir to the city.¹⁷⁴

He also explained that, despite the irrationality of the opposition's worries, the cemetery company would nonetheless take precautions to prevent any contamination of the pipelines. At their meeting on March 26, 1850, the HCC resolved to sell up to five

¹⁷³ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 154.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Ellis, January 10, 1850, address, Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 152.

acres of the land within their holdings to the city in order to appease the complainants. They made their offer to the city that May, but requested that they be able to retain the land if possible and promised the city that they would not place burials close the pipes.¹⁷⁵ In June the city appointed a committee to look into the matter, and to the HCC's surprise, the committee submitted a report in favor of the cemetery project. In October, the committee reported that they were "disinclined to do or propose anything calculated to thwart [the cemetery] plan" and they approved of an agreement with the cemetery company to distance all interments away from the underground pipes.

Despite their efforts to resolve the various claims against them, the city council overwhelmingly, according to Ellis, rejected the Hollywood Company's proposal for incorporation again in 1850. After being informed of this, Ellis sent a special report to the Hollywood members asking if they wished to continue. Collectively the members had now spent about 16,000 dollars on improvements to the grounds and had only sold 13 lots.¹⁷⁶ Despite this, however, the men once again resolved that they would continue.

By their next annual meeting, held May 6, 1851, Ellis reported to the subscribers that the cemetery was doing somewhat better. He stated "that while the success of the past year has not been as great as [the Board of Directors] could have desired, it has been encouraging." This encouragement likely came from the sympathy and support they had received in the city council. Ellis went on to claim that the community was now beginning to accept the project, but they still did not sell many plots. Between May 1850

¹⁷⁵ Ellis, address, Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 151-152; Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 167-168.

¹⁷⁶ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 161-162.

and May 1851, they sold 39 plots, giving them a total of 50 in all.¹⁷⁷ But attitudes toward the cemetery were softening, and some Richmonders began to see the landscape in a different manner, and the later 1850s would turn out much differently for the Hollywood Company.

¹⁷⁷ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 191.

CHAPTER V

“A FAVORABLE FEELING TOWARDS THE CEMETERY:” GROWTH IN THE 1850S

Even after the numerous controversies the developers and subscribers had faced with the cemetery they remained committed to making the project work. As Richmond grew, however, citizens had to decide what was best for their city. Was it more important to have a bourgeois cemetery or growth and sanitation? Or could these two ideas somehow exist together? Previously, Richmonders would have chosen to protect the growth of their city and the health of their citizens, but in the progress of the 1850s they began to relinquish the idea that the cemetery was in opposition to their goals for the city and took on a new vision of Hollywood.

In April 1852, the *Enquirer* printed a poem penned by an anonymous author after a visit to Hollywood. It began

I stood beneath the dark green trees
That deck thy hallowed ground
And wave o'er many a treasured one
Whose rest had there been found.

I listened to the murmuring rill,
Whose gentle music stole
In softest cadence to my ear,
And wrapt my inmost soul.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ “Lines on Visiting Hollywood Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia” *Richmond Enquirer*, April 9, 1852.

The visitor's words demonstrated that he/she saw the cemetery as a place of rest and remembrance rather than a danger to the city. These were the ideas the Hollywood developers had claimed their landscape could invoke in visitors. They argued that the picturesque cemetery would bring emotional responses that would comfort the living. The poet saw the land as a sacred place of memorial. Hollywood was becoming an attraction for the people of Richmond just as the developers had envisioned.

Despite their second failed attempt at incorporation, things began to look up for Hollywood Cemetery through the 1850s. Once their controversy with the water works was over, Richmonders began to accept the cemetery. Some citizens still held objections to the project, but support for the cemetery began to outweigh their complaints. More people began purchasing plots and opposition in the city council seemed to fade. Additionally, the Virginia General Assembly finally granted incorporation to the company in the second half of the decade. The Hollywood Company even became involved in a scheme to bring the remains of one of Virginia's most prominent citizens to the cemetery, further tying the location to the state and making it a popular tourist attraction. By the end of the decade, Richmonders seemed to fully accept Hollywood's "natural" setting as a fitting place for their deceased loved ones.

Opposition slowly eroded after the company agreed to distance burials away from the water pipes. The Hollywood Company believed that if bodies were not near the pipes then Richmonders would see that the developers did not intend any harm toward the city. Although Richmond citizens might still believe that decaying corpses released harmful fluids, the Hollywood developers hoped that promising to distance the bodies away from

the pipes could help the people of the city forget the image of putrefaction and concentrate instead on a pleasant view of the cemetery.

And it seemed to help. In 1851, Thomas Ellis, still president of the cemetery company, reported “that there is at this time decidedly a favorable feeling towards the Cemetery; a feeling which manifests itself not only in the expressions of the community, but in the preparations which are making for the purchase and improvement of lots.” More Richmonders were beginning to buy plots the cemetery and the company sold almost forty between May 1850 and May 1851.¹⁷⁹ While still not a resounding success, the cemetery was gaining some popularity in the city.

Just two years later, the company reported significant improvements in sales. At the fifth annual meeting of the subscribers, held on May 3, 1853, Ellis reported that they had sold 100 plots in the last year, exceeding the total number of lots they had sold in the previous four years combined. The company also saw 148 interments take place in the grounds during the year, which exceeded the previous four years combined by more than fifty burials.¹⁸⁰ It seemed that Richmonders were finally beginning to accept the cemetery as something useful to their city.

Those who purchased lots in 1853 were members of the upper and middle classes of Richmond society. James B. Southall, a local physician, purchased one plot for twenty-six dollars. Simon Cullen, a capitalist, spent over sixty dollars on his portion of land in the cemetery. Samuel Reeve, a lawyer and member of the board for the Farmers Bank of Virginia, purchased five plots. William Barret, a wealthy tobacco manufacturer,

¹⁷⁹ Hollywood Cemetery Company (Richmond, VA), Minute book, 1847 June 23-1868 March 26, Hollywood Cemetery Company (Richmond, VA) Records 1847-1929, Mss3 H7298, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereafter cited as Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes), 191-192.

¹⁸⁰ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 226-227.

bought six. George F. Holmes, a professor at Richmond College and William and Mary, and Charles and James Talbott, owners of an iron manufactory called Talbott and Brother, each purchased a plot for their families. The increase in purchases by members of the upper classes showed that Hollywood was becoming part of the social currency in Richmond. People around the city were beginning to see that Hollywood provided them the opportunity to display their wealth and prestige in the city. Their purchases also demonstrate that they literally and figuratively bought into the idea that the landscape was high culture.¹⁸¹

The cemetery became a place for the middle and upper classes of Richmond to participate in mid-nineteenth century conspicuous consumption. It was becoming a place to show wealth and status in the city, and as more people purchased plots and more visitors came to the cemetery, Richmond citizens gained greater opportunity to display their families' prestige. Many began decorating their lots with iron fencing and monuments showing their prominence.¹⁸² Additionally, the picturesque nature scene allowed the upper classes to connect themselves with what many understood as a work of art. Throughout the decade, more and more citizens of the city wished to be part of the cultivated atmosphere that the cemetery presented.

Some opposition to the cemetery still remained, but as the decade progressed, the complaints against Hollywood became less fervent and were instead replaced by expressions of the cemetery's beauty. At the end of May 1853, the *Richmond Daily Dispatch* printed an article about Hollywood illustrating that while some locals still believed that the cemetery might retard the growth of the city, the landscape was, in fact,

¹⁸¹ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 230-231.

¹⁸² Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 229.

beautiful. The editorial stated that opposition to the cemetery permeated the *Dispatch* office from the beginning because members of the paper believed that the land where Ellis and the others placed the cemetery could be used for so much more. The writer argued that “that portion of the suburbs of Richmond will, in truth, be the very heart of the city, and the ravine which runs through the centre [sic] of the burying ground, presents advantages for a system of sewerage which it is impossible to find any where in its neighborhood.” These were not new complaints, but the author continued by explaining that while the cemetery was in the way, it was actually a beautiful site and the location had long been “a favorite resort of those who love the picturesque” even before it was a cemetery.¹⁸³ The land was a perfect, romantic spot befitting of a rural cemetery.

The argument that Hollywood was unhealthy for the city had even eroded by 1854. In August, the *Richmond Enquirer* began reporting the number of interments in Hollywood from cholera deaths. Every few days the paper reported that there were anywhere from four to more than ten burials of those who had succumbed to the disease in Hollywood.¹⁸⁴ Despite the fight many citizens had previously put up before they even knew that people who died from cholera were being buried in the cemetery, no one raised any objections this time. Evidentially, distancing the burials away from the city water pipes had been enough to appease the citizens who had protested because they believed the cemetery would spread diseases into the city. Many still feared the dangers of cholera, but their impression of the cemetery had moved away from images of rotting, disease-ridden corpses, to a peaceful and serene picture of a calming landscape.

¹⁸³ Richmond Daily Dispatch, May 31, 1853.

¹⁸⁴ “Health of Richmond,” *Richmond Enquirer*, August 15, 1854; “Health of Richmond,” *Richmond Enquirer*, August 25, 1854; “Interments for the Week,” *Richmond Enquirer*, August 29, 1854.

Visitors began flocking to the cemetery, so much so that a local citizen began running an omnibus route to Hollywood from the inner city. The cost of a trip to Hollywood on the “Belle of Richmond,” as the transit was named, cost twelve and a half cents to anyone “desirous of visiting this picturesque city of the dead.” By 1855, Ellis reported that the cemetery board needed to contribute funds to repair the road into the entrance because it had been “very much used by funeral processions and pleasure excursions to the Hollywood grounds.”¹⁸⁵ The road had only been in use for three years and already required major repairs. While the men were not happy that the road had fallen into disrepair, they were also aware that it benefited the cemetery and resolved to fix the issues.

The cemetery had become so popular that the Hollywood Company was even able to achieve a goal that had eluded them since the beginning. On Tuesday, December 11, 1855, the Virginia House of Delegates—the lower house of the Virginia General Assembly—once again took up the issue of incorporating the cemetery company. The next March, the *Richmond Dispatch* announced that the legislature had finally granted incorporation to the Hollywood Cemetery Company.¹⁸⁶ By 1856, opposition had decreased so much that the company was finally able to obtain their charter from the Virginia General Assembly.

The act of incorporation provided protection to the grounds under city law and stated that no construction could pass over the cemetery. Under incorporation, the Hollywood Cemetery Company would pass to other parties once the original developers

¹⁸⁵ “For Hollywood Cemetery,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 4, 1855; “Ho’ for Hollywood,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 3, 1855; Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 281.

¹⁸⁶ “House of Delegates,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, December 12, 1855; “Hollywood Cemetery,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, March 22, 1856.

retired or died.¹⁸⁷ Gaining incorporation gave Richmonders confidence that the cemetery would endure. It also ensured that anyone who disturbed the graves would face punishment. This provided citizens with assurances that their loved ones could eternally rest in peace amidst the picturesque landscape.

Protection for the graves and the cemetery was becoming even more crucial as more visitors flocked to the grounds. Hollywood was becoming an attraction just as the developers had hoped. However, with the increase in traffic to and in the cemetery, the Hollywood Company had to contend with new issues. In 1855, Ellis reported that some visitors to the cemetery participated in “rude and unseemly conduct” when they broke trees or flowers, rode horses too quickly, or even shot off guns in the cemetery.¹⁸⁸ While the Hollywood Company argued that the cemetery should be a peaceful escape, some saw it as a place of recreation just as the *Whig* had predicted. Some visitors seemed to forget that the dead were beneath their feet and instead treated the landscape much like a park further demonstrating their separation from the gloom of death.

To other visitors, the location displayed Richmond’s urbaneness. Guests marveled at and wrote into the local papers about the lush greenery and elaborate memorials that were a “spot attractive alike to the lover of nature and the contemplative mind.” Some called Hollywood “magnificent,” and Northerners even included the cemetery in their tales of visits to Richmond.¹⁸⁹ By 1857, the cemetery was a staple of the Richmond landscape.

¹⁸⁷ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 302-303.

¹⁸⁸ Hollywood Cemetery Company Minutes, 254.

¹⁸⁹ “Hollywood Cemetery,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 3, 1856; “Hollywood Cemetery,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, June 2, 1856; “Richmond,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, January 24, 1857.

In 1858, the Hollywood Cemetery Company embarked on a project to bring even more prestige to their cemetery. Earlier that year, stirrings began to rumble about the possibility of celebrating the birth of the nation's fifth president and noted Virginian, James Monroe. When Monroe died in July 1831 during a stay at his youngest daughter's home in New York City he was buried in an inconspicuous vault in the city's Marble Cemetery with only his name adorning the outside. In May 1858, the *New York Herald* decried this, especially because the former president shared his tomb with another. However, the *Herald* and other New York newspapers praised the Virginia Legislature for committing funds to remove the body from the humble tomb and move it to a site more befitting of Americans' love for their former leader.¹⁹⁰

Twenty-seven years after Monroe's death, the Virginia government requested that they be allowed to remove the ex-president's remains to the state of his birth. Governor Henry A. Wise was eager to accomplish the task and handed off the particulars to William Munford, who just happened to be the nephew to Hollywood Cemetery's president.¹⁹¹ Wise chose a spot in the cemetery atop a hill overlooking the city—likely the same location that the cemetery developers had once hoped to erect a monument to George Washington several years earlier—a site that commanded an awe inspiring view of the James River where the ex-president could forever gaze upon the majesty that the subscribers of Hollywood Cemetery worked so hard to advertise and utilize, or so they

¹⁹⁰ "The Tomb of Monroe," *New York Herald*, May 2, 1858; "The Tomb of Monroe," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (New York), May 22, 1858.

¹⁹¹ Mitchell, *Hollywood Cemetery*, 36-37; John O. Peters, *Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery* (Richmond, VA: Valentine Richmond History Center, 2010), 40; "Programme for the Ceremonies of the 5th of July," *Richmond Whig*, July 2, 1858; "Gov. Wises Address at Hollywood Cemetery, on the Fifth of July," and "Obsequies of President Monroe," *Richmond Whig*, July 9, 1858.

claimed.¹⁹² If the Hollywood Company could not have their statue to Washington, they were delighted to receive the remains of another important figure in Virginia's history.

On July 2, a delegation of dignitaries gathered in New York for the opening of the former president's tomb. After lying in state for several hours, Monroe's remains traveled by steamship to Virginia and reached the state in the evening hours of Sunday, July 4. On Monday, the New Yorkers escorted the remains on another ship up the James River to Richmond. Richmonders welcomed the return of the famous Virginian with flags and parades. People gathered in windows and on balconies to catch a glimpse of the proceedings. The city overflowed with excitement despite that Monroe's descendants had asked for a quiet ceremony. At the cemetery, onlookers stood for hours in the Virginia heat awaiting the anticipated arrival of the funeral procession. To the delight of many, rain eventually cooled the atmosphere to a more comfortable state.¹⁹³

Six white horses coached by six slave men dressed in white brought the casket to the cemetery. Once the remains arrived, pallbearers, including William Macfarland, William Henry Haxall, and Thomas Ellis of the Hollywood Cemetery Company, brought the casket to an awaiting vault at the top of the hill. Governor Wise then addressed the crowd. He first spoke of Monroe's significance in American history and his life in general. He then thanked the New Yorkers for allowing the remains to return to Virginia and invited them to celebrate with the people of Richmond Monroe's return to "the land of his cradle."¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² "Remains of President Monroe," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, June 18, 1858.

¹⁹³ "The Translation of the Remains of President Monroe from New York to This City," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 7, 1858.

¹⁹⁴ "The Translation of the Remains of President Monroe from New York to This City: Gov. Wise's Address," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 7, 1858.

Removal of Monroe's remains from New York to Virginia brought national attention to both Richmond and Hollywood as various newspapers picked up the story, but the events also provided a national platform to address a major issue stirring in the late 1850s. The celebrations brought northerners and southerners together to celebrate a hero of the early republic, and speakers used the opportunity to encourage their fellow countrymen to come together. The *Richmond Daily Dispatch* argued that

whilst patriots and presidents of a former era die and moulder, the principles of patriotism, of love of country, and of the Union, continue indestructible, emanating from the minds and hearts of men, of North and South, of East and West, more powerful than party or section, triumphant over time and change, and amid the darkness of sepulcher shedding forth a brilliant illumination, and making the night more beautiful than the day.

Monroe's reburial encouraged onlookers and readers to recall their unified American spirit at time when political arguments over slavery threatened to tear the country apart. When Colonel George Munford of Richmond spoke to the New Yorkers, he addressed his hope that "the bones of our mighty dead shall prove a permanent cement to our Union . . . then will the Union be knit indissolubly together."¹⁹⁵ With the events in Kansas and Nebraska, debates in the Supreme Court and Senate, and increasing divisiveness throughout the country, Monroe's reburial could bring Americans back together.

The events of the reburial did not conclude Hollywood's and Richmond's emphasis on the importance of bringing Monroe's remains to their city. The governor determined that a simple monument would not be enough to memorialize the ex-president, so he commissioned an imposing iron birdcage-like structure to cover the grave. Contractors

¹⁹⁵ "The Translation of the Remains of President Monroe from New York to This City," *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, July 7, 1858.

from Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, and Richmond placed bids for constructing the memorial.¹⁹⁶ Ultimately, the Philadelphia firm Woody & Perot received the project and began construction over the grave in September 1859.¹⁹⁷ According to Richmonders, the iron memorial was much more appropriate than a simple monument. Plus, once the monument was in place, the Hollywood Company could boast of a grand attraction that all Americans could visit and appreciate.



Figure 5.1 Birdcage monument over James Monroe’s grave in Hollywood. Monroe Monument. N.d. Vertical Files, Monroe, Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA.

¹⁹⁶ “The Monroe Monument,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, December 30, 1858.

¹⁹⁷ “Gothic Temple,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, May 30, 1859; “Monroe Monument,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, September 16, 1859.

After Richmonders erected the monument over Monroe's remains, burials continued at a steady pace in Hollywood for the next few years. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Hollywood was perfectly poised to receive soldiers' remains. They had already become an established part of the Richmond landscape, and due to the slow progress of selling plots in the beginning the cemetery still had ample room for burials. During the war, Hollywood received the remains of numerous soldiers. By its conclusion, the rural cemetery was the final resting place for over 18,000 Confederate soldiers who died in the war, including J.E.B. Stuart. Later, the cemetery would receive the remains of Jefferson Davis, George Pickett, and Joseph Reid Anderson, whose Tredegar Iron Works played a crucial role in arming Confederacy. Just after the war, Hollywood also housed at least 388 Union soldiers, but these men were removed to the Richmond National Cemetery when it opened in 1866.¹⁹⁸

In the end, Hollywood became a staple of the Richmond landscape and attracted visitors from across the nation to its gates. While the Hollywood Company initially struggled, Richmonders eventually became excited to have the luxurious spot amidst their city. But it took convincing. Many nineteenth century Americans believed that "nature" was only useful in as far as it could be put to work. Others feared what they saw as a chaotic conglomerate of elements, any of which might bear the component for a man's final undoing. Combining nature with a cemetery did not help this image, initially, but as Richmonders, and Americans in general, reoriented their ideas of nature to appreciate its

¹⁹⁸ "Hollywood Cemetery," <https://www.hollywoodcemetery.org/confederates>; "Richmond National Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia" https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/national_cemeteries/virginia/Richmond_National_Cemetery.html

artistic elements, rather than the need to use it or its potential for harm, they began to see new value in the natural world.

The men of Hollywood spent years trying to convince Richmonders to understand their landscape in a different light, but they continuously faced a mound of opposition. However, the Romantic image they pushed slowly seeped into Richmond's culture as the city grew. Growing industry and the chaos of the city eventually convinced Richmonders that the cemetery could be a useful for them.

By refocusing the idea of a cemetery away from abject grief, the loss of human life, and the dread of mortality, Hollywood helped Americans relinquish their old ideas of nature. Instead, they began to see that communing with picturesque natural elements might benefit the country's citizens, especially as urban areas grew larger and industrialization became the focus of labor in many parts of the county. Nature could be useful in other ways as long as people could remove the human element and instead focus on the aesthetic value of the landscape.

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSION



Figure 6.1 Pyramid erected by the Hollywood Memorial Association of the Ladies of Richmond to the Confederate dead buried in Hollywood. Photograph by author.

On November 6, 1869, Richmonders watched in awe as Thomas Stanley, a convict laborer from Lynchburg, scaled the almost completed ninety-foot pyramid

dedicated to Confederate soldiers buried in Hollywood to help place the final stone at the top. The monument, erected by the Hollywood Memorial Association of the Ladies of Richmond, commemorated the burial of thousands of Confederates buried in the cemetery both during and after the Civil War.¹⁹⁹ The massive pyramid ensured that the cemetery would become a shrine to the South, but the antebellum history of the landscape set up the cemetery to both receive the southern dead and to become a place of remembrance.

After the Civil War, Hollywood became a testament to the Lost Cause, but the cemetery had already become a staple of Richmond by the time the war began. Despite the myriad objections posed against the project in the beginning, the Hollywood developers and subscribers continuously argued that their cemetery could be a useful addition to the Richmond landscape. They claimed that the cemetery would be more healthy for Richmonders than the inner-city cemeteries that could potentially cause the release of dangerous toxins in close proximity to the city citizens, and that the picturesque landscape would elevate the hearts and minds of visitors while also comforting them. The Hollywood men also believed that their cemetery would demonstrate that Richmond was a sophisticated city at the height of modernization and, thereby, attract tourists and customers to the city. The cemetery could only benefit Richmond's economy as it attracted national and international attention to the city.

Rural cemeteries such as Hollywood were supposed to help the citizens of growing cities to connect to the world outside of their urban atmosphere. Urbanization, many argued, caused immorality, corruption, and generally made people weaker.

¹⁹⁹ Mary H. Mitchell, *Hollywood Cemetery: The History of a Southern Shrine* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1985), 74.

Communing with “nature” in rural cemeteries, however, could elevate their minds and restore the living to a better existence. When the developers of Hollywood Cemetery visited Mount Auburn, they believed that these sophisticated and enlightened ideas could benefit Richmond both in improving the health of their citizens and demonstrating Richmond’s ability to keep up with the culture of the time.

However, their vision did not develop as planned because some Richmonders held to older traditions about cemeteries and the natural world. First, many believed that setting aside land for a bourgeois graveyard would limit the growth of the city by using valuable lands for an unnecessary endeavor. These opponents argued that the city did not need another cemetery because the city had already appropriated land for burials within Richmond. Furthermore, the city did not need a burial site that required citizens to pay money to private individuals for plots. The land, they argued, could be used to help expand the city or to develop new industries that would benefit the city’s economy.

Second, opponents held that the cemetery would actually do more harm to Richmonders than healing. They maintained that the environment was dangerous and could potentially spread all kinds of diseases to the city. Those that espoused this argument were especially afraid of cholera, as they had seen the disease take several Richmond citizens during the 1830s. The proximity of the city’s water works and the pipes that brought water into Richmond also exasperated these arguments as Richmonders had some understanding that the water they drank should be clean. With the bodies so close to the water supply, some Richmonders worried that the essence of the dead would contaminate their water and spread harmful particles to the citizens.

Although the cemetery was meant to relieve problems associated with urbanization, many Richmonders did not believe it would actually accomplish this. Their growing city needed more industry and better conditions for its citizens rather than a fancy cemetery that would occupy land and put Richmonders in danger. For many years, they did not literally or figuratively buy into the arguments made by the Hollywood Company. While their city was becoming more industrialized, Richmond was still without many of the issues northern cities faced.

Eventually, however, Richmonders began to acquiesce to the idea that Hollywood could benefit their city. Romantic impulses that framed “nature” as enlightening helped foster a new vision of the cemetery, and Richmond citizens began buying plots amidst the grounds. This happened as nineteenth century Americans distanced themselves from the process of death, especially in urban settings. While men and women on the frontier or in rural areas may have had to deal with their own dead, people in the cities were becoming less acquainted with the dead as doctors handled the dying and sextons took care of burials. This “dying of death” allowed Richmonders to reorient their image of the cemetery from one of decay to visions of reverence for the people buried amongst the trees.

As they began to accept the idea that “natural” cemeteries were calming places of peace, Americans were also able to get a new vision of the environment. Rather than holding to the idea that environmental elements could only be cultivated or controlled, they instead saw use in “nature’s” aesthetic qualities. It could be beneficial for citizens to commune with the environment, but only when it was of a picturesque arrangement as in rural cemeteries. “Nature” had to be beautiful and without corruption in order to be useful

to humans and worthy of preservation. As Americans gained a new concept of cemeteries they also found a new understanding of a portion of the environment.

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