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Into the Wild:

Hollywood and the Rural Cemetery Movement

Established in 1847, Hollywood Cemetery offers a striking example of a mid-19th century rural cemetery, with its winding paths, mature trees, and panoramic views of the James River. The natural beauty of the area, originally known as Harvie's Woods, informed the design of the cemetery by John Notman. The Philadelphia architect also designed one of the nation's first rural cemeteries, Laurel Hill (1836), located on the banks of the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia.

"Much has been written on the rural cemetery movement, which developed after city and church cemeteries became full. Mount Auburn [in Boston] is considered the mother of the rural cemetery movement. In fact, the concept of this type of cemetery in Richmond was inspired by Haxall and Frye, two Richmond businessmen who visited Mount Auburn," said David Gilliam, General Manager of Hollywood Cemetery, who has visited Mount Auburn as well as Spring Grove in Cincinnati.

Rural cemetery designers drew from the aesthetics of 19th century English Landscape Movement, which cultivated a more meandering, natural garden set against a backdrop of wilderness. With their soothing streams, lakes, and rivers, rural cemeteries provided places of quiet retreat from the stresses of overcrowded cities. Families often spent their Sundays visiting with the departed, and picnicking near their graves. They are often considered our first public parks—and contain works of art such as towering obelisks, mausoleums with Tiffany and other stained-glass windows, neoclassical temples, and magnificent statuary.

By 1861, the rural cemetery movement began to decline, due to the high cost and difficulty of maintaining the plots. Cemeteries began to create lawn areas—as did Hollywood in 1893—which feature markers flush to the ground with a family monument on each lot and no curbing, so that the grass could be easily mowed. But rural cemeteries are still cherished and maintained today throughout the U.S. Here are a few of Hollywood's notable contemporaries.

Mount Auburn (1831)

The Massachusetts Horticultural Society purchased 72 acres of woodland near Boston to create the first rural cemetery in the United States. A crowd of more than 2,000 gathered for the dedication ceremony in the natural amphitheater known as the Dell on September 24, 1831.

Today, over 100,000 individuals are buried and commemorated in Mount Auburn Cemetery, located in Cambridge. One of the cemetery's most famous landmarks is the 62-foot Washington Tower, built in 1852. The tower offers a commanding view of the cemetery's 174 acres and downtown Boston.

Monuments to luminaries such as poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, U.S. Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, Christian Science founder Mary Baker Eddy, Pulitzer Prize winning author

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Rural Cemetery (continued)



*Mount Auburn Cemetery
Cambridge, Massachusetts*

Bernard Malamud, Behavioral Psychologist B.F. Skinner, and artist Winslow Homer are set amidst the cemetery's lush landscape and bucolic ponds.

One of the most dramatic monuments in the cemetery is The Sphinx by sculptor Marin Milmore. Created from a single piece of granite, the half-man, half-lion was built as a Civil War Memorial in 1872.

Spring Grove (1844)

Cholera outbreaks in the 1830s and 1840s led to overcrowded church cemeteries in Cincinnati. Recognizing the need for additional burial grounds, members of the Cincinnati Horticultural Society formed a cemetery association in 1844. Society members traveled throughout the U.S. and Europe to gain inspiration for their design. The stops included the Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, built in 1804, and considered the first rural cemetery.



*Spring Grove Cemetery
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Today, Spring Grove encompasses over 700 acres. One of the most beautiful monuments in the cemetery is the Fleishmann Mausoleum, which features a Doric Temple reminiscent of the Parthenon. Stained glass windows inside depict the three Fates. The mausoleum is set on a tranquil setting, with its reflection captured in the waters of a nearby lake.

Bonadventure (1846)

Live oaks draped in Spanish moss provide an eerie setting for Bonadventure, a rural cemetery located atop a dramatic bluff over the Wilmington River, outside of Savannah, Georgia. Bonadventure became one of the world's most famous rural cemeteries when it was featured in the 1994 novel *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* by John Berendt, and in the movie that followed.



*Bonadventure Cemetery
Savannah, Georgia*

“Bird Girl” is the bronze statue featured on the book’s cover and movie posters. The statue depicts a serene young woman balancing two bowls in her hands, her head slightly tilted to one side. In 1936, Sylvia Shaw Judson sculpted the statue, which for years oversaw a family burial plot in the historic cemetery. After the book made “Bird Girl” famous, the cemetery decided to move it to the Telfair Museum of Art in Savannah to keep it safe. While many assume the bowls represent the scales of justice, or a measurement of good and evil, they were intended to hold water or seeds for birds.

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Rural Cemetery (continued)

Sleepy Hollow (1849)

Just outside New York City lies the peaceful town of Tarrytown and the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. The area's quiet beauty, and its rural cemetery, inspired Washington Irving to write about the adventures of schoolmaster Ichabod Crane in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Historic markers throughout the cemetery indicate the real-life locations that appear in the story, including the Headless Horseman Creek and Bridge and the Old Dutch Church, circa 1685.

The Sleepy Hollow Cemetery is set amidst rolling hills and overlooks the scenic Hudson River Valley. Washington Irving is buried here in his family plot, which is surrounded by wrought iron fencing. Visitors frequently place pumpkins near the plot's gate.

Other highlights of the cemetery include a larger-than-life bronze lady said to wander amidst the gravestones at night and an immense mausoleum for the family of William Rockefeller that soars nearly four stories tall. Other notables buried in the

cemetery include business titans Andrew Carnegie and Walter Chrysler, labor union leader Samuel Gompers, and cosmetics chief Elizabeth Arden. Amidst the opulent mausoleums, philanthropist Brooke Astor has a surprisingly simple grave marker.

Infamous hotelier Leona Helmsley, by contrast, is laid to rest in an extravagant \$1.4 million mausoleum that features classic columns and a stained-glass image of the New York skyline. The mausoleum must be washed or steam-cleaned at least once a year, per her instructions. Her husband, Harry, is also buried there, and it is assumed that beloved Maltese, Trouble—to whom she left \$12 million in her will—is as well.



*Sleepy Hollow Cemetery
Tarrytown, New York*

Other Notable Rural Cemeteries

Allegheny Cemetery (1844), Pittsburgh, PA

Laurel Hill (1836) Philadelphia, PA

Mt. Vernon (1856) Philadelphia, PA

The Evergreens (1849) New York, N.Y.

Current Hollywood Projects:

Preserving Green Space and Restoring Fences

Friends of Hollywood Cemetery's current work focuses on the 4.5-acre green space known as Long Bottom as well as a property-wide fence restoration.

As one enters through the main cemetery gate and descends the first hill, one sees the expansive open area, known as Long Bottom, fanning out to the south from the Glade's benches, fountain and memorial wall. The park-like setting offers a quiet respite, a soft juxtaposition from the cemetery's stones, statues and other architectural landmarks. Inspired by the rural garden cemetery movement, Hollywood was created to be a place of retreat and contemplation, and Long Bottom, its last undeveloped green space, is an integral component.

Formerly a lake, Long Bottom became a mosquito haven and expensive insurance liability so it was drained in the 1950s and morphed into a grassy green. "It's is a wonderful asset to Hollywood Cemetery and the city of Richmond," said Kelly Willbanks, Friends of Hollywood Cemetery Executive Director. "I see people sitting there often, sometimes picnicking, sometimes playing with their animals or sitting on benches." It has also been used to host events, such as Hollywood's annual picnic and Sesquicentennial celebration.

The first phase of the Long Bottom project, estimated at \$300,000, includes 16 new parking spaces, adding handrails to its cracked and worn cement steps and replacing them with granite. It also calls for building two opposing wider sets of granite steps with handrails that provide access from the road to the middle of the grassy area.

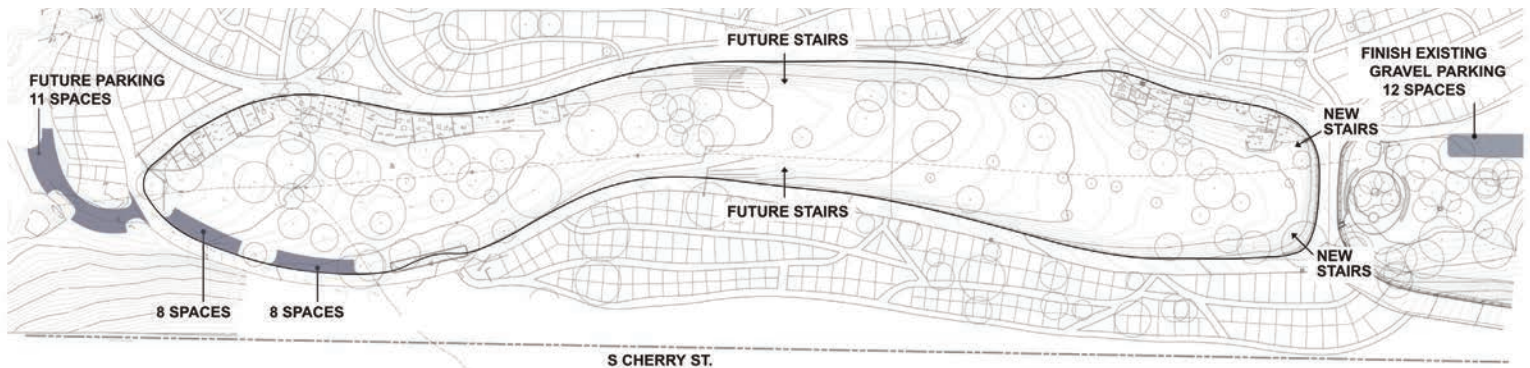


Existing steps to Long Bottom limit access

Potential future plans call for a memorial with niches for cremains and native plantings.

As fences deteriorated through the decades, Hollywood offered to split restoration costs with family plot owners in the 1980s, but 90% of those contacted preferred to tear them down. "We decided we would take care of them as best we could as an important part of the aesthetics and beauty of the cemetery," said David Gilliam, Hollywood General Manager. This meant taking a repair, stabilize and maintain approach in recent decades until Friends of Hollywood committed to full fence restorations to preserve the original beauty of the ornamental iron.

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Schematic of Long Bottom enhancements

Current Projects (continued)

Friends will restore all fences in need of repair in the next 10 years or so with costs estimated over \$1 million. More than 100 fences are currently in need of attention.

Last year's projects included the Crenshaw family plot, home to the cemetery's historic musk rose that dates back to the mid 1800s. Work included restoring 443 linear feet of cast iron fence, fabricating missing gates and replacing missing rails, posts, lower frieze

panel castings, diamond ornamentation, rosettes and pickets. The Womble fence, which had collapsed entirely, was also resuscitated in 2021.

Next year, Friends will replace the chain link fence with black fencing on the western perimeter of the cemetery to match what is on the northern boundary at Idlewood Avenue. Estimated cost for this work is \$400,000, the expense to be split between Friends and the cemetery.



Existing gate and fence to be replaced on Dobson Street

Gate and fence to be installed



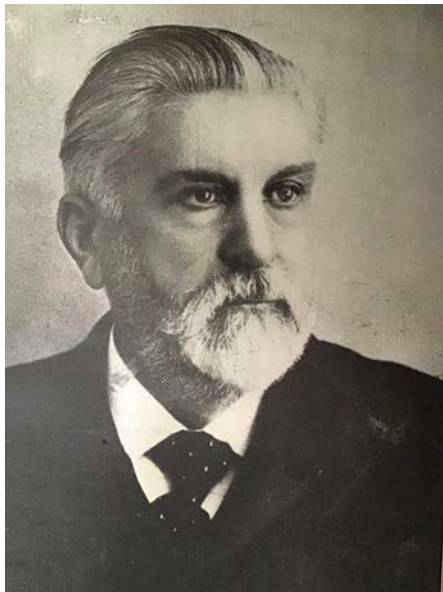
Digital Mapping Update

The \$40,000 new and improved digital mapping directs online queries to specific plots rather than the general vicinity that the previous program provided. Graves can now be accessed through the genealogy section of the Hollywood Cemetery website. The website also has the capability to design tours for visitors seeking to visit multiple sites.

“Live in the present and for the future...”

The Legacy of J.L.M. Curry

In 2001, the Alabama Legislature approved the removal of the statue of J.L.M. Curry from the U.S. Capitol where it had been since 1908. Curry had fallen victim to obscurity! In 2009, a bronze statue of a young Helen Keller received the place of honor and Curry’s marble statue, which weighs 2,200 pounds, was up for bids. From 2009-18, it stood in the student center at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. Curry had been president of the school in 1865-68 when it was known as Howard College. Today the Curry statue is consigned to storage at the Alabama Department of Archives and History.



*J.L.M. Curry
(1825-1903)*

Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry was once a household name. In the post-Civil War South, and even far beyond, he was well known as an orator, educator and diplomat. His greatest service was as a promoter of free public schools. Few people did more to aid education in the South.

The Early Years

Born in Georgia in 1825, Curry spent most of his early life in Alabama. He was educated at what is now the University of Georgia and also at Harvard University where he received a law degree. His roommate at Harvard was Rutherford B. Hayes, and they remained lifelong friends. He joined the Texas Rangers in the Mexican War. In 1847, he married Ann Bowie and the couple had two children Susie Lamar Curry (Turpin) and Manly Bowie Curry. In 1857, he was elected to the U.S. Congress where he served until Alabama seceded from the Union. He was a member of the Confederate Congress in both Montgomery and Richmond, serving from 1861-63. He

also was an officer in the Confederate army.

In early April 1865, Curry’s world collapsed. On April 2, the Confederate capital fell. Six days later, on April 8, Ann Bowie Curry died at age 36. The next day, Lee surrendered to Grant. While many grieved the Lost Cause, Curry set his sights to the future. He once told his son: *“Let us live in the present and for the future, leaving the dead past to take care of itself.”*

On June 25, 1867, the widower Curry, married Mary Wortham Thomas, the daughter of a wealthy Richmond couple, Mary and James Thomas. The evening wedding in the First Baptist Church at Twelfth and Broad Streets was one for the society pages. It included the services of nine ministers. Later that same evening, the newlyweds embarked on a European honeymoon accompanied by a large traveling party of friends. For four months, they enjoyed a grand tour of England and the Continent.

Richmond College

Curry resigned the presidency of Howard College; and while he declined the presidency of Richmond College (now the University of Richmond), he gladly accepted a professorship. He held the chair of English and also taught philosophy and law. He was among the founders of the Richmond College School of Law in 1870. Curry also was an ordained Baptist minister; and although he never held a regular pastorate, having declined numerous opportunities, he was in great demand as a guest preacher, some years filling pulpits over 40 times.

In 1873, the Baptists of Virginia celebrated the 50th anniversary of their General Association. Their school, Richmond College, had lost everything in the Civil War; and in their own post-War poverty, the Baptists celebrated the anniversary by sacrificially raising funds to re-endow the college. Curry was the main speaker for the occasion; and before an outdoor audience estimated at 10,000 persons, he held his hearers spellbound for two hours, telling of the struggle of 18th-century Virginia Baptists to secure religious liberty for all. When the collection was

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Curry (continued)

gathered, there was an outpouring of financial aid for the college.

His Partner in Good Works

Mary Thomas Curry reared her stepchildren; and for ten years, she led what was known as “the Infant Class” at First Baptist Church. The word “infant” was a misnomer because it included all of the children of the church. She developed the “class” from 30 to 225 members. In the 1870s, as a philanthropist, Mary and another Baptist woman leader, Kate Jeter, led a campaign to begin the Baptist Home for Aged Women which provided housing for elderly women with little financial resources. (A century later, in 1975, its assets were merged into the new Lakewood senior adult community and its residents moved into the new facility.)

Educational Visionary

In 1881, Curry resigned his position at Richmond College to serve as the general agent for the Peabody Fund, established with an initial gift of \$3 million from George Peabody, to promote education in the South. In addition, in 1890, he led the Slater Fund for the Education of Freedmen which was aimed at establishing schools for Blacks across the South. In these capacities, Curry addressed every Southern state legislature, urging the establishment of free public schools for both races albeit segregated. He encouraged industrial training for Blacks and two schools which received support were Hampton Institute and Tuskegee Institute. In 1901, Booker T. Washington said of Curry: “I do not believe there is a man in the country who is more deeply interested in the welfare of the Negro than Dr. Curry, or one who is more free from race prejudice.” (It must be noted that racial integration in Southern public schools did not begin until over a half-century after Curry’s death.)

Curry also promoted co-education for women. He asserted: “Girls ought to have equal advantages with boys for higher education.” Among the schools which benefited from Curry’s interest was Longwood University in Farmville. In 2020, Longwood changed the names of several campus buildings including Curry Hall. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro also benefited and continues to have a building named Curry Hall.

Curry recognized the great need of training teachers; and the Peabody Fund aided what became known as George Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville (now a part of Vanderbilt University) which produced generations of educators. Included among the Southern schools which received aid because of Curry were Northwestern State University in Louisiana and Winthrop University in South Carolina. Curry hobnobbed with the movers and shakers of the North and South, financiers of the Gilded Age, and several U.S. presidents including Buchanan, Grant, Hayes, Cleveland, and Theodore Roosevelt.

Diplomatic Service

From 1885-88, Curry served as the U.S. Minister to Spain. He was among those present as witnesses to the birth by the Spanish queen of a male heir. Curry reported that the new-born was placed in a silver basket “which was passed around, *in puris naturalibus*, for our inspection; but I did not see the divinity which hedges in a king.” Curry added: “He soon proved his common humanity by crying and was withdrawn to be clothed.” When the king died and the young prince ascended to the throne, Curry and his wife were invited to the coronation.

The Currys enjoyed touring Europe, visiting museums and art galleries. On their trips, they secured items - including the mummy of an Egyptian “princess” - which they envisioned as the nucleus of a museum for Richmond College. The museum occupied part of Thomas Hall, a memorial to Mary Curry’s father on the campus at Grace and Lombardy Streets.



Mary Thomas Curry
(1843-1903)

J.L.M. Curry died in February, 1903. Mary followed in April. Two years later, John D. Rockefeller, Sr., pledged a large gift to the University of Virginia to establish a school
(continued on page 8)

Curry (continued)

for education with one condition: it was to be named for J.L.M. Curry. Today, the Curry School of Education continues to prepare teachers and other educators. J.L.M. Curry's legacy can be found wherever there are public schools across the South.

The Curry lot is easily located. If a visitor is standing in the Davis Circle and standing beside Jeff Davis' statue, the Curry lot is just across the road to the visitor's right. The visitor will have a commanding view of the James River which John Peters in his book, *Richmond's Hollywood Cemetery*, identifies as an *exedrae*. It and the accompanying gravemarker have been cleaned and restored and now are as bright and gleaming as they were when installed. The inscription reads "They that wonder shall reign and they that reign shall rest." JLM Curry's daughter, Susan Curry Turpin, and her husband, Rev. John B. Turpin, are buried in Section 2, Plot 9.

Fred Anderson
Executive Director Emeritus
Virginia Baptist Historical Society

"The public free schools are the colleges of the people; they are the nurseries of freedom...[they are] the paramount duty of a republic." - J.L.M. Curry



The Curry Monument
Hollywood Cemetery

McGuire Boyd, Jr. Joins Friends Board



Friends of Hollywood Cemetery welcomes J.P. McGuire Boyd, Jr. to its board, effective June 2022.

McGuire is a trial attorney at Williams Mullen since graduating cum laude from Washington and Lee University School of Law. He received his undergraduate degree from W&L as well. He now defends financial service

companies against federal and state law claims, including individual and class-action suits related to loans, from origination and servicing to collection and enforcement.

McGuire was named a rising star by *Virginia Super Lawyers* magazine from 2012 to 2016 and has been listed in *The Best Lawyers in America* for litigation in banking and finance since 2019.

He and his wife Jenni have three children: son McGuire, 16, and daughters Finley, 14, and Maggie, 12. In his free time, he enjoys splitting firewood, playing golf and relaxing on his front porch.

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Capturing Hollywood Cemetery:

Bill Draper Photographs Beauty in the Sacred Grounds

Dressed in black and neon athletic gear and his signature compression knee socks, carrying a 20-pound backpack loaded with camera gear, Bill Draper is a regular at Hollywood Cemetery.

Security guards pass him through any time day or night, getting some of his most stunning photographs just as the sun rises or fades. Draper captures color and beauty in fauna, flora, sculptures and architectural structures. He sometimes sets the camera up for high-speed shots taking 30 pictures per second. "I call it shoot and release hunting," he said of the urban wildlife captured including foxes, deer, wild turkeys, beavers, otters, muskrats, minks and bald eagles.

He has donated thousands of shots for Hollywood Cemetery's use. They grace employee offices, our website, newsletters and social media sites. He does the same for the 600-acre James River Park System. His book, *A Photographic Journey Through the James River Park System*, has sold almost 2,000 copies, raising money to support the parks. He also supplies WTVR and NBC-12 with photographs of Richmond, which the stations often feature during their daily news shows.

Draper exudes enthusiasm for his work and for life. "If it's not pretty, I don't want to take it," he said. "I want to take pictures that put Richmond and Hollywood Cemetery in their best light. If you keep looking at negatives, you don't see the positives."

One of his social media followers, a homebound woman, wrote that she couldn't wait to see his posts, her way of getting out and seeing what was going on. Followers often comment, "You never disappoint."

It's this kind of feedback that motivates the former medical salesman and owner of a company that negotiates medical product contracts. In 2016, he was sidelined from

the travel his work required due to debilitating pain from a degenerative disk. Three surgeons recommended spinal fusion, but Draper resisted and took a year of medical leave to focus on core fitness, exercising six to eight hours a day. In the next six months, he went from struggling to complete 25 half sit-ups per day hanging upside down to cranking out 1,000 per day. He retired permanently in 2016, and in recent years his herniated disk unexpectedly self fused. Since 2016, he has run one marathon a year, most recently in Dublin in early November. This year, he captained SportsBackers' first Richmond Marathon walk team.

Draper credits his photography passion that involves walking, and even some light jogging, four to twelve miles most days with keeping him in shape. Hollywood is a home away from home as he constantly traverses different paths and angles. "I have great respect for this place," he said during an interview sitting on a bench in Hollywood's recently restored Glade section. "Every time I come here I see something different."



*William Draper
An extraordinary Richmond photographer at work*

2022 Contributors to Friends of Hollywood Cemetery

We are indeed grateful to the following donors for their generous support of Friends through November 4, 2022. You have enabled us to raise awareness of Hollywood and to continue vital monument and fence restoration. Thank you for helping us to preserve Hollywood Cemetery for generations to come.

Ed

Edward M. Farley, IV
Chair, Friends of Hollywood Cemetery

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