

Bostonians founded Mount Auburn in 1831 for both practical and aesthetic reasons: to solve an urban land use problem created by an increasing number of burials in the city and to create a tranquil and beautiful place where families could commemorate their loved ones with tasteful works of art in an inviting and natural setting. The public flocked to the new cemetery and Mount Auburn quickly became the model for the American "rural" cemetery movement. Recognized as one of the most significant designed landscapes in the country, Mount Auburn was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2003.

Mount Auburn Cemetery was the expression of a new idea.

Before 1831, most Americans were buried in isolated plots or in crowded town graveyards. Mount Auburn's founders had a new vision. They designed a tranquil, natural setting, well outside the city, to bury and commemorate the dead and to inspire and comfort the living. This principle continues to guide the Cemetery's management and use today.

Over time, Mount Auburn responded to changing ideas about burial, mourning, and even death itself. The Cemetery's landscape illustrates customs in American society over nearly two centuries.

Over time, Mount Auburn responded to changing ideas about burial, mourning, and even death itself. The Cemetery's landscape illustrates customs in American society over nearly two centuries.

Our Historic Eras

1830s - 1850s

The design of Mount Auburn in this early period reflected a romanticized view of death. The Cemetery's founders wanted to create a balance between nature and art. They saw it as a place to console and inspire the public and encourage a healing connection with nature.

The early landscape retained the original natural contours of hills, valleys, and ponds. Trees covered much of the site. In this era, when few cities had public parks or museums, Mount Auburn served as a park and a "museum without walls."

For Further Reading