

Jennifer Sharp

May 6, 2010

AMST 825

Prof. Mel McCombie

### **The City that Always Sleeps: Cedar Hill Cemetery and the Rural Cemetery Movement**

A place, usually a ground, set apart for the burial of the dead.

**a.** Originally applied to the Roman underground cemeteries or CATACOMBS.

**1855 CARD. WISEMAN** *Fabiola* II. ii, The very name of cemetery suggests that it is only a place where many lie, as in a dormitory, slumbering for a while.

**†b.** The consecrated enclosure round a church; a churchyard. *Obs.*

**c.** A burial-ground generally; now esp. a large public park or ground laid out expressly for the interment of the dead, and not being the 'yard' of any church.

~ Cemetery, Oxford English Dictionary

Cedar Hill Cemetery brought the rural cemetery movement to Hartford, Connecticut. Founded in 1864 by an elite group of Hartford citizens, the cemetery is a de-facto museum, exhibiting nature, sculpture, architecture, and design. It has retained much of its nineteenth century character, yet remains an active place of burial and cultural enjoyment.

There are several ways in which Cedar Hill demonstrates the tenets of the rural cemetery movement. Kenneth L. Ames suggests five characteristics of the material culture of the nineteenth century American cemetery: specialization and the separation of function, an emphasis on symbolic and visible manifestations of hierarchical social order,

a fascination with variety and height, the glorification of family and kinship, and a search for permanence and the denial of death (642). All five are quite apparent on a visit to Cedar Hill. As the cemetery demonstrates Ames' characteristics, it also reflects the voices of high and low culture, gender, and religion that were so vocal in the Victorian era.

This paper will examine Cedar Hill Cemetery in relation to Ames' characteristics and as a cultural institution. Today, in the twenty-first century, Cedar Hill is physically and financially maintained much in the way the cemetery founders envisioned. As a museum-like institution, it has developed a way to attract a modern day audience to its historic grounds without compromising the quality of the display.