
The Fences of Laurel Hill

Conditions and
Possibilities

Sarah L. Wade
Dec. 18th, 2007

Like any element of a historic site, fences need to be transparent as well as apparent, protecting Laurel Hill Cemetery from unlawful entry, but also giving visitors a sense of safety and permanence as they circulate through its walkways. They need to be as inconspicuous as possible, being the most prominent visual element of Laurel Hill and the first feature presented to visitors, whether enter from the Hunting Park Avenue gate or through the gatehouse on Ridge Avenue . The overall condition and appearance of the fences should be an object of concern for these reasons, but also to reconnect with neighboring communities and attract visitors.

Many different types of fencing have been used to protect the site and enclose it during its varied history. However, high and protective fences were not a part of that until very recently. Over the last twenty to thirty years, ten-foot-high fences were built by the LHCC along parts of the eastern and western borders in the late 1980's to protect from vandalism and other kinds of crime.¹ Their decision had several unintended side effects. First, the new chain link fences topped with barbed wire isolated the cemetery from its surroundings, creating a seeming island of Gilded Age culture in the midst of three post-industrial neighborhoods—Allegheny West, Strawberry Mansion and East Falls. The fence sections facing west no longer address these neighborhoods in a positive way, tending to overwhelm and ward off neighbors, who might otherwise be drawn into the site as a green space. Second, they blocked many of the views into the cemetery. Third, they gave the entire site a forbidding presence and appearance which discouraged new visitors as well as

¹ E-mail from Ross Mitchell, Executive Director of Laurel Hill Cemetery, Nov. 20th, 2007

repeat visitors from entering the site. Fourth, it added to the workload of the already overburdened groundskeeping staff and as a result, the fences, especially the chain link, have deteriorated rapidly and some sections, especially those along the northern border of the site, have begun to sag and rust. This deterioration adds to the forbidding aspect of the site and compromises the security of its historic monuments and materials.



Fence one hundred yards north of the Gatehouse. Photo taken by the author, 11/11/07



Fence in Central Laurel Hill, facing Ridge Avenue. Taken by the author, 11/11/07

The reasons that Laurel Hill, in spite of its famous decedents and remarkable architecture, is almost unknown amongst its neighbors and the citizens of Philadelphia have complex roots. It is in some part because of its physical isolation, which the borders and fences contribute to by cutting off physical access and blocking viewsheds into and out of the site. It is difficult to see through to the monuments and pathways, it is difficult to access on foot or by car and once reached, its fences ward off rather than protect or welcome. The east side, for example, is almost completely buttressed with tall earth embankments supported by granite retaining walls approximately twenty-five feet high. According to Mitchell, the retaining walls along Ridge Avenue were built in the 1880s when the Reading Railroad Company lowered the grade of the railroad trestle north of the

cemetery.² These walls and embankments give LHC almost the appearance of a fortress or castle, with few pathways available to access the interior of the site. Approaching up Kelly Drive, a jogger or bicyclist has few visual cues as to what may be behind the embankments or that there is a jogging path available just inside the Hunting Park Avenue entrance, which was just re-opened in October 2007. The granite wall gives way to chain link fences, which line much of Hunting Park Avenue, bisecting the cemetery from east to west. The bridge area was originally walled.³



Kelly Drive Retaining Wall, approx. 1900. It was rebuilt in October 1906. LHC Archival Photo

² Personal communication, Ross Mitchell, Nov. 19th, 2007

³ Personal communication, Ross Mitchell, Nov. 20th, 2007

The first task of restoration is simple: removing inappropriate forms of fencing facing Kelly Drive and along Hunting Park Avenue, as well as placing large signs to indicate that the gate on Hunting Park Avenue is open to the public. These small changes would go a long way towards bringing joggers and bicyclists back into Laurel Hill. If they have a sense of place and can easily locate an open gate, they will probably feel more inclined to enter and explore South Laurel Hill, which begins only a few hundred feet from the newly opened HPA gate.

The variety of fencing types reflects different phases of the cemetery's history. For example, the types of fence that currently enclose Laurel Hill are six-foot-high iron pickets with milled points, gray granite rubble walls, uncoated aluminum chain link topped with strands of barbed wire and iron picket fences cemented to the top of granite block walls. At the height of Laurel Hill's prominence as a visitor attraction, there were small, widely-spaced wooden pickets on the lawn in front of the gatehouse in approximately 1870.⁴ According to the Halverson site analysis from 2000, the picket fencing that makes up about 1,500 feet of Laurel Hill's perimeter is cast iron, which is softer and easier to mold than wrought iron, which made it a more economical choice, however, its malleability made it weak and brittle.⁵ It is extremely prone to rust and to acid conditions in the air or soil and requires much more maintenance than other types of iron or aluminum fencing, needing to be scraped and repainted every five to ten years. However, restoration or replacement is an immediate need, as some of the pickets along the northern perimeter are dripping rust into the stone and mortared joints of the granite blocks to which they are mounted. Based on

⁴ Historic photo, undated, Laurel Hill Cemetery archives, Folder 4

⁵ Halverson Report, pgs. 64-67

the amount of staining present, the pickets have been depositing rust for five to ten years, causing the stone to delaminate and encouraging the growth of microflora on top of it and down in between the joints of the blocks. “....Another problem occurs when ironwork is anchored in damp stonework. As the iron rusts it expands to many times its original size, exerting pressure on the stone and ultimately shattering the stone. Often the ironwork was mounted into the stone using molten lead -- this combination, too, can cause serious corrosion. Another, even greater, problem is found when iron was mounted using molted sulfur -- this causes very rapid corrosion.”⁶ Based on a visual examination of the pickets’ anchor system, it appears that they were mounted by means of molten metal. Many of the pickets and blocks have also suffered due to the weather and corrosion from dripping rust from above and from inside the block, where metal directly contacts the stone.



The Chicora Foundation of South Carolina is a non-profit organization concerned about the growing black market in stolen iron work, fences, gates and decorations in the eastern and midwestern U.S. They strongly recommend that any iron work not actually attached to a fence or gate—for example, decorative elements that have broken off or fence posts no longer being used—should be secured against theft, whatever their provenance or

⁶ *Cemetery Ironwork: Painting.* www.chicora.org Accessed Nov. 18th, 2007

age.⁷ The section of fence standing on a terraced area just a few yards away from Old Mortality has been left out in the open, making it an ideal target for theft.



Unattached iron elements behind the Gatehouse, Nov. 2007. Taken by the author.
See perimeter map.

However, high fences are not the only method of securing sites littered with unattached ironwork, stone fragments from monuments and other materials. They could be placed in a locked storage shed, which would protect them from further deterioration due to acid rain and from opportunistic thieves. It would be more difficult to deter professional robbers, of course, but then, professionals who steal architectural elements for dealers do not appear to be a major security issue. Based on the findings of the Laurel Hill studio group, it seems that the site is more of a target for vandalism and petty theft than other types of crime. The simplest and least expensive way to secure these items is

⁷ Trinkley, Michael. *Securing Cemetery Plot Gates* www.chicora.org/cemetery_fences.htm accessed Nov. 18th, 2007

first, to make it as unattractive as possible for casual or opportunistic thieves and second, to increase daily visitor presence on the site.

Overall, the Mitchell administration's plan for wall and fence maintenance since 2004 could be characterized as conservative. "We maintain the walls on an as needed basis. I don't believe any work has been done on the exterior walls in the last 5 years. We rebuild some portion of the interior walls every year in a small way."⁸ There are many possibilities for preserving or replacing the enclosure, as new fencing technology becomes available on the market. There are also excellent arguments on either for why a rusty old fence should be torn down or why another should be respectfully maintained as part of the cemetery's historic character. Considering the LHCC's limited budget and manpower, it might be best to continue with the Ross Administration's renovation efforts, i.e. to remove all barbed wire from the perimeter, to scrape and repaint all cast iron elements and to install new fencing and gates only when original historic iron or stone elements cannot be saved.



Picket fence, Central Laurel Hill,
approx. 1880. LHC Archives

⁸ E-mail from Ross Mitchell, Nov. 20th, 2007

Based on a visual examination, the chain link fences seem to be in the worst condition of any fencing on the site. Some of it, especially in the northeast corner, has rusted and twisted. A stretch of several hundred yards long the gatehouse has also deformed and rusted. However, since replacing it is not feasible financially at this time⁹, then it might be better to make do with the current fence in the short term with repairs. The mesh and posts of the most damaged sections could be dug up, sprayed with a protective anti-rust paint in a matte black, dark green or other dark color, then re-anchored in newly dug postholes with fresh cement. The fence could then protect on-site material resources for another one to three years, until sufficient funding could be secured for purchasing replacements in a less visually intrusive style.



Hunting Park Avenue Gate,
Oct. 2007. Taken by the
author.

⁹ E-mail from Ross Mitchell, Nov. 20th, 2007

If the LHCC should decide in future that replacing deteriorating fence is their only option, then there are a number of choices available to them, however, its director has expressed strong interest in using vinyl fencing, which is extremely durable and light and does not need to be repainted, scraped or rustproofed. Husker Vinyl of Humphrey, Nebraska sells vinyl picket fencing in 3 ½ foot long sections 6 ½ feet high is priced at \$109.99.¹⁰ Bufftech, a brand of fencing sold by Academy Fencing of Orange, New Jersey prices white picket vinyl at \$113.00 for a 6 ft. long section 4 ft. high.¹¹ The Hoover Fence Co. of Newton Falls, Ohio manufactures and sells aluminum decorative fence, four ft. high in six ft. long sections, at \$87.00 per section plus the cost of posts. Their vinyl fencing ranges in price from \$153.00 to \$169.00 for each six ft. high, 8 ft. high section, depending on the style.¹² This disparity in cost is due to the much higher maintenance costs associated with aluminum as well as its shorter lifespan. However, based on the styles, heights and colors presented on their websites, the vinyl and aluminum products are made primarily for residences and businesses. None are intended to enclose historic sites or to blend inconspicuously into the landscape. None of the brands available would fulfill any of the current functions required of any historic site fencing, namely, to protect the visitors and material resources of the cemetery and contribute positively to its appearance.

The damaged sections total approximately one thousand, five hundred feet of fence that need to be taken down, scraped and treated with rust removing chemicals and repainted, or as a last resort, replaced. Steel is maintenance-heavy and more expensive than aluminum. Aluminum is approximately half the cost of wrought iron, as well as being more

¹⁰ Husker Vinyl official site, www.huskervinyl.com Accessed Nov. 21st, 2007

¹¹ Academy Fence official site. www.academyfence.com Accessed Nov. 21st, 2007

¹² Hoover Fence official site. www.hooverfence.com Accessed Nov. 21st, 2007

durable.¹³ However, the extant aluminum fence has proven to be a liability. Wrought iron would be the most historically accurate material for repairing or replacing the fence. While much more durable than cast iron, it is the most expensive fencing of all. It also requires intensive rust-proofing and repainting every five to ten years.

A historically appropriate restoration effort for the damaged and rusted fencing sections, especially those in North Laurel Hill along Kelly Drive, is a complex issue, not only because of the financial commitment, but also because of the biannual maintenance that restored sections would need in order to justify LHCC's investment. Over the coming year of 2008, it might be helpful for the Board of Directors, the Executive Director and LHC staff to evaluate their fencing needs, consider starting a comprehensive photographic documentation of current conditions and start feeling out major sponsors for seed money to start a capital campaign in early 2009. Hopefully, the object would be to raise enough money to repair (or replace what cannot be saved) 25% of their perimeter in 2010 and another 25% the following year. Donors and sponsors could be rewarded with plaques placed prominently on plinths along pathways inside and outside of the main entrance, or perhaps along the new fence itself.

Whatever measures the Laurel Hill Company decides to take to renew the perimeter of their property, they do need to take action by gathering support for a capital campaign to help reverse the physical decline of the site, as well as the decline in visitorship. It would also help bring back their viability as a community resource and as a non-profit organization which has something to contribute to the future of heritage


¹³ Personal communication, JES Fencing Company sales representative, Nov. 19th, 2007

tourism in Philadelphia. Taking action would also help to protect their investment in restored tombs, mausoleums, stone copings, ironwork and other historic materials.

Overall, renewing Laurel Hill's borders, whatever form that may take, can help the site to expand in many ways. It could, as part of a larger effort of preservation and community outreach, attract visitors to the site and help them feel more comfortable exploring the site's unique sculptural, historic and cultural offerings, leading to greater reconnection with the neighborhoods that surround it as well as more public recognition. It could become a locus for fundraising as well as a way to beautify the site. Most of all, it would present Laurel Hill Cemetery's best face, as a shining example of the early rural cemetery movement in America, to the world.

Perimeter Map Legend


Photos are keyed to their general location within the site.

Stone Walls Topped with Chain Link Fencing 

Stone Walls 

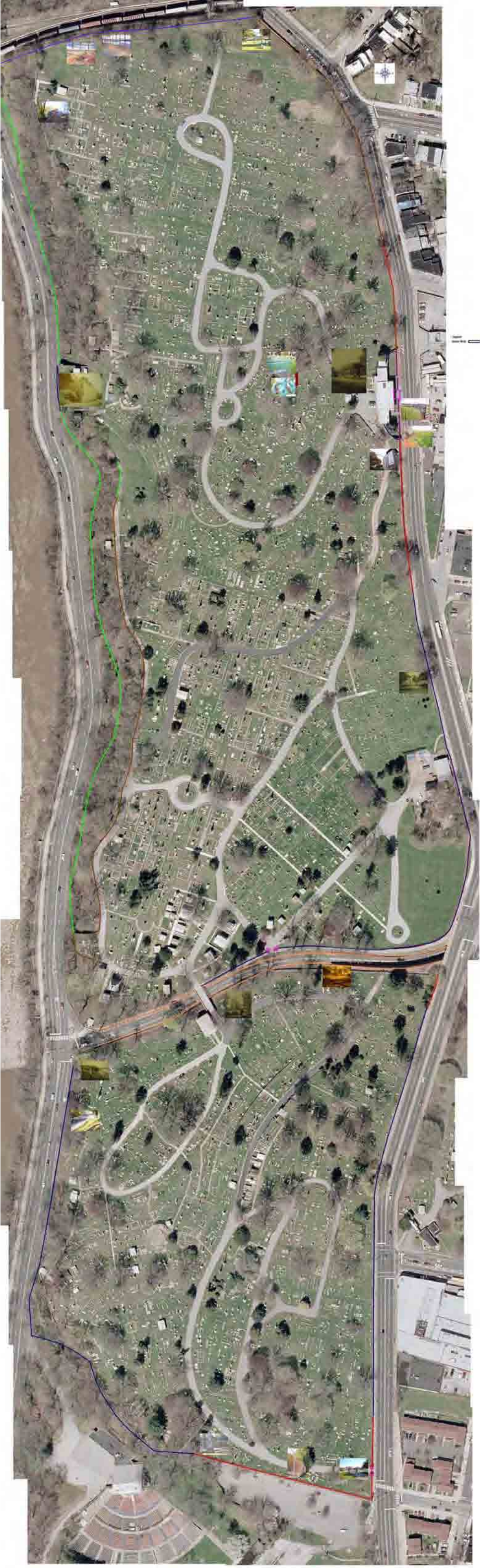
Chain Link Fence 

Iron Pickets 

Concrete Walls 

Gateways In Use 

Earth Embankments 



Preliminary Interpretive Exhibit

Individual Studio Project
Laurel Hill Cemetery

Andrew J. Remick

Fall 2007

This project consists of three panels that document through text and images the history of Laurel Hill Cemetery from its origins in 1835 to the present. The panels roughly correlate with five eras identified in the visual chorology developed in the first part of the semester with the final three eras condensed into one panel. In addition each panel contains a section detailing a feature of the cemetery that does not necessarily correlate with the era of the particular panel. These topics are: profiles of key figures in Laurel Hill's creation; common funerary symbolism; and qualities and the locations of rural cemetery.

While certainly not an exhaustive exhibit, these panels are intended to serve as an interim programming measure and as a basis for creating a more comprehensive exhibit over the next two years in accordance with our recommendations. In the course of designing this project a number of locations for installation were considered, including the main office, elsewhere in the gatehouse, or even as outdoor placards along the retaining walls near the main entrance. Ultimately, it is recommended that these panels be installed in the main office. This conclusion was reached for two reasons: it would be easiest to install them in the office— if necessary placing them on easels if no wall space is available—as well as currently being the primary location for visitors to seek out information on the site. These panels were created to address a specific need identified in the course of this studio project: the lack of passive interpretive materials to inform visitors about the history and significance of Laurel Hill Cemetery.

1835-1870: ESTABLISHMENT & EXPANSION

IN 1835, John Jay Smith along with several prominent Philadelphia citizens joined together in an effort to improve the options available in the area for interment. The result of this collaboration is where you are now standing: Laurel Hill Cemetery, the city's first rural cemetery. Although it may not seem very rural today, the Cemetery's landscape and monuments are a testament to the customs of the Victorian Age and a valuable cultural and natural resource for present day Philadelphia.

The first step in the physical creation of Laurel Hill was the acquisition of the former estate of Joseph Sims overlooking the Schuylkill River in 1836. Of this 32-acre parcel, 20 were set aside for burials. Next, the founders of Laurel Hill took the unprecedented step of commissioning an architect to design the grounds. John Notman's proposal of a picturesque landscape for the cemetery took advantage of the natural features of the location to create a reflective and peaceful atmosphere filled with plants and trees—a dramatic departure from the crowded graveyards found in the city.

Over the next 35 years Laurel Hill acquired three more parcels, increasing the size of the site to its present 78 acres.

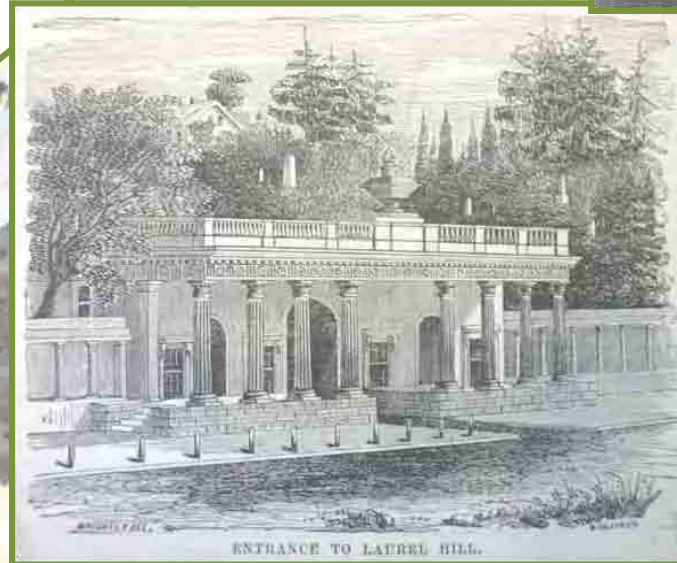
Notman's
1836 design
for Laurel Hill
Cemetery



Original held by The Library Company of Philadelphia



From Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book, 1844



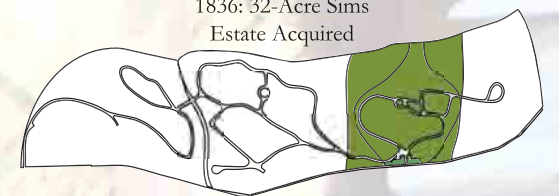
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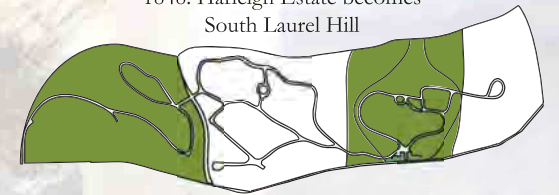
From Fine Arts Image Collection, University of Pennsylvania

LAND ACQUISITIONS

1836: 32-Acre Sims Estate Acquired



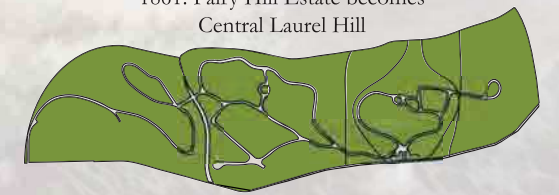
1848: Harleigh Estate becomes South Laurel Hill



1855: 10-acre Stoevers Tract extends North Laurel Hill

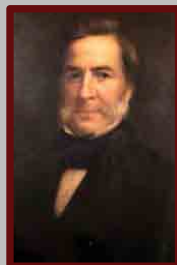


1861: Fairy Hill Estate becomes Central Laurel Hill

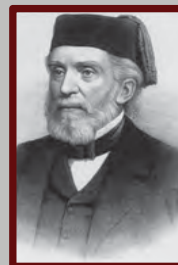


JOHN NOTMAN (1810-1865)

Born in Edinburgh, Scotland John Notman came to Philadelphia in 1831. He is credited with introducing and popularizing the Italianate villa the United States. Noted landscape designer A. J. Downing referred to Notman as one of the finest practitioners of the picturesque method of design in the nation. Other major works in Philadelphia include: The Athenaeum, Saint Mark's Church, the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, and numerous residences.



From Philadelphia Architects and Buildings



From Philadelphia Cemeteries and Cemeteries

JOHN JAY SMITH (1798-1881)

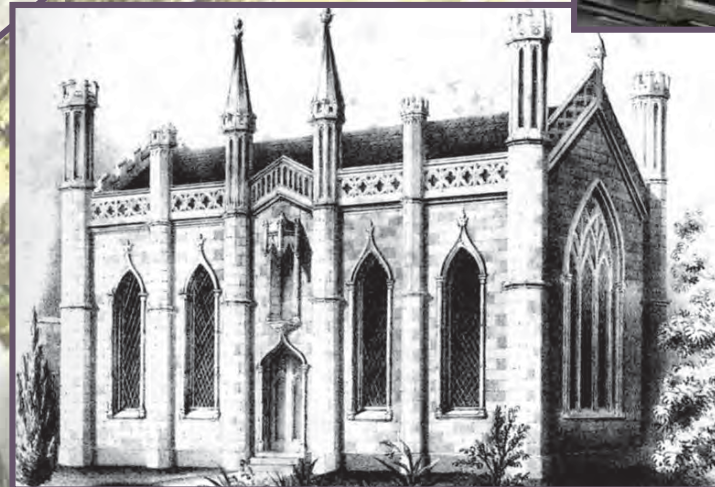
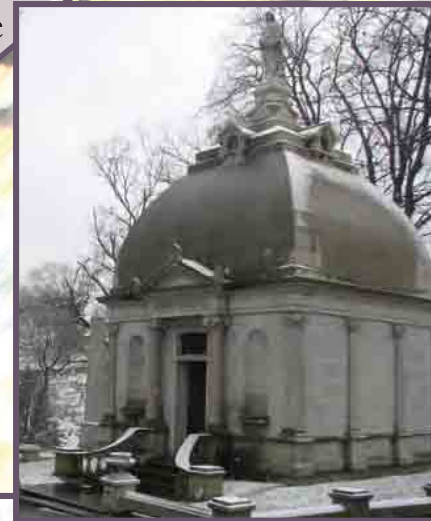
A librarian by training with a strong interest in horticulture, Smith was the leading founder of Laurel Hill. His desire to reform the city's burial conditions came from the poor physical state of his daughter's grave at the Arch Street Meeting House. Thus, he was convinced that Philadelphia needed a "suitable, neat, orderly" place for internment and to this end worked to create the city's first rural cemetery.

1871-1915: ADMINISTRATIVE SHIFTS & BUILD OUT

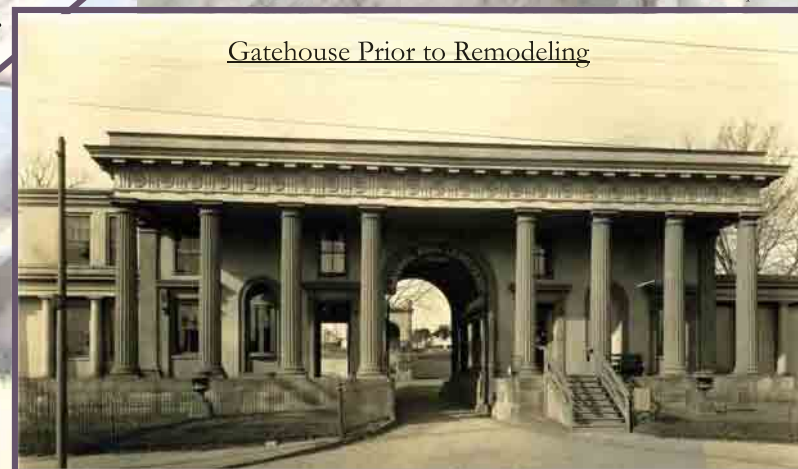
By 1870 the physical boundaries of Laurel Hill Cemetery were set and the cemetery was well established as one the premier sites for burial in the city. During the Gilded Age several members of Philadelphia's elite purchased plots and built impressive mausoleums to serve as permanent memorials and statements of wealth and influence. The most impressive of these tombs make up today's "Millionaires Row."

The administration of the cemetery changed significantly over these years. The major catalyst for change came in 1874 with the resignation of John Jay Smith, after nearly 40 years of service. The new management reversed some of Smith's policies by taking steps to unify the three sections of North, Central, and South Laurel Hill which to this point had been administered as separate units. More changes in running the cemetery arose as the company's primary source of income shifted from sales to a providing long-term care services by 1915.

Among changes in Laurel Hill's built environment were the demolition of Notman's chapel around 1885, the building of the receiving vault in 1913, and the alteration of the gatehouse to house new offices for the cemetery company.

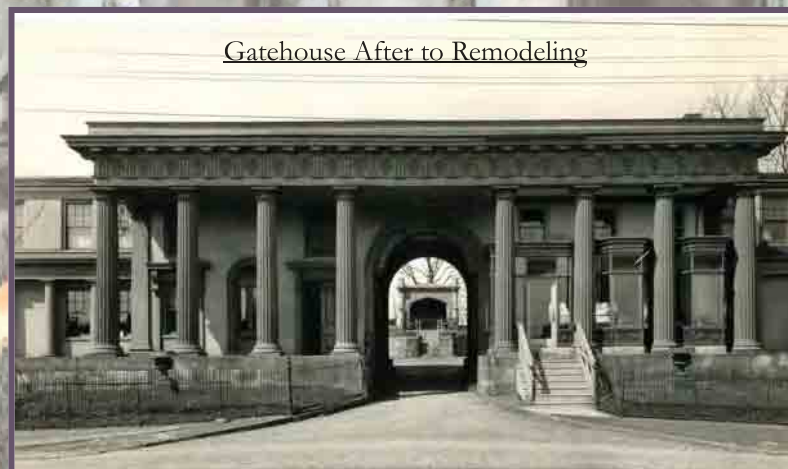


From Philadelphia Graveyards and Cemeteries



Gatehouse Prior to Remodeling

From LHC Archives



Gatehouse After to Remodeling

From LHC Archives

THE SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOODS



Circa 1925 Aerial Photograph of Laurel Hill Cemetery. From The Library Company of Philadelphia

During the second half of the 19th century and early 20th century the neighborhoods around Laurel Hill experienced dramatic industrialization and population growth as Philadelphia grew, greatly diminishing the rural character of the site. By 1930, it had become a dense working and middle class neighborhood

In addition to the mills and factories in the area, the number of burial related business, such as marble yards and florists, grew over this period, as several other cemeteries developed nearby.



FUNERARY SYMBOLS IN LAUREL HILL



BROKEN COLUMN

These monuments indicate a life cut short or a premature death. A variation of this type of memorial is a smashed column which is shown with debris at the base; such columns indicate a violent end to the person's life.



OBELISK

With Egyptian and Roman roots, the obelisk symbolizes both eternity and republicanism. Due to its high popularity in the early years of the cemetery, managers actively encouraged patrons to use other types of markers to prevent monotony in the landscape.



URN

The urn's association with funerary functions dates to ancient Greece where they were used for holding ashes. Urns later came to represent the body as the vessel for the human soul. Some urns are shown draped with cloth which often denotes death in old age.



ANGEL

Rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, angels are regarded as messengers of God and guardians of the living. Among the variants seen in funeral monuments are kneeling angles, which represent mourning, or angels escorting a person's soul to heaven.

THE remainder of the twentieth century were relatively quiet years for the cemetery in terms of shifts in management structure and capital changes. The primary focus of these years was maintaining the cemetery's resources as it gradually fills to capacity and the annual number of burials diminishes. In order to build support for the its future, beginning in the latter part of the century, Laurel Hill began creating interpretive programming and promoting itself as a heritage destination; an effort that continues today through the development of new tours and community outreach programs.

During World War II, much of the ornamental iron fencing found around the cemetery's perimeter and some family plots was lost to scrap drives. The middle of the century was a time of decline as the cemetery management struggled to maintain the cemetery in the face of increased vandalism, limited funds, and an aging site.

Starting in the 1970s the public once again expressed curiosity in rural cemeteries. This renewed interest resulted in the creation of the Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery in 1978. The Friends remain an important source of support for the preservation of Laurel Hill.



From Philadelphia Graveyards and Cemeteries



A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

LAUREL HILL CEMETERY

HAS BEEN DESIGNATED A

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

THIS SITE POSSESSES NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE IN COMMEMORATING THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THIS CEMETERY WAS DESIGNED IN 1836 BY JOHN NOTMAN AND IS ONE OF THE FINEST EXAMPLES OF A RURAL BURIAL GROUND WHICH ILLUSTRATES THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE.

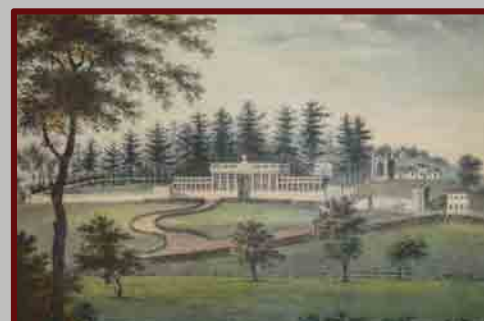
1998

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

In 1998 Laurel Hill Cemetery was the first of the nation's rural cemeteries to be designated a National Historic Landmark. This recognition puts Laurel Hill among the most significant places in the United States as Landmark status is the highest level of designation available from the National Park Service and thus reserved for only a select number of properties.

WHAT IS A RURAL CEMETERY?

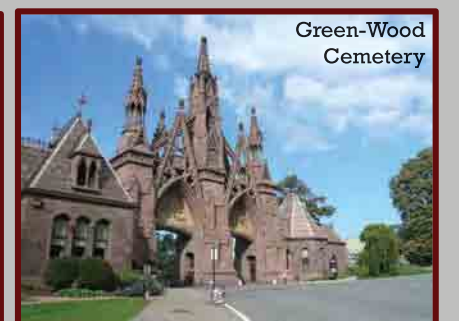
The concept has its roots in 19th Paris where in response to the citizens' efforts to move cemeteries outside the city as a way to improve sanitation and urban health led to the creation of Pere Lachaise in 1804. All rural cemeteries share certain characteristics. Aside from their location outside the central urban core, they are identified by their picturesque landscapes which, at least initially, contained curving paths and lush plantings. In addition, these cemeteries bore no religious affiliation. Laurel Hill's founders were motivated by the same sentiments seen in Paris: the desire to create an antidote to the crowded and unhealthy graveyards of city.



From Free Library of Philadelphia Image Collection

OTHER NOTABLE RURAL CEMETERIES

- Mount Auburn, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1831)
- Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York (1838)
- Greenmount Cemetery, Baltimore, Maryland (1838)
- Spring Grove, Cincinnati, Ohio (1844)
- Allegheny Cemetery, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (1844)
- Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, Virginia (1847)
- Oak Hill Cemetery, Washington, D.C. (1848)



Green-Wood Cemetery

The Reuse of the Receiving Vault at Laurel Hill Cemetery



John Nelson

December 19, 2007

Historic Preservation Studio, 2007

University of Pennsylvania

Introduction

Laurel Hill Cemetery has always been more than simply a cemetery. It has served as a park, a tourist attraction and place of retreat since its creation in the 19th century. Now, with the space available for burial diminishing, and the revenue which those sales subsequently created, drying up, Laurel Hill must rely on both its storied past and current capabilities to transform itself into a viable and successful cultural heritage destination. Making full use of all their existing resources, such the Receiving Vault located in South Laurel Hill, are vital to making sure the transformation of Laurel Hill is a complete and utter success.

Receiving Vault



South Exterior of the Receiving Vault

Located in South Laurel Hill, just south of Hunting Park Avenue, sits the Receiving Vault. Built in 1913, the current Vault replaced an existing structure which had existed as part of John Notman's design for a gothic chapel, designed and built on the site sometime between 1836 and 1839. However, in order to make room for more burials plots, the chapel had been removed by 1875, leaving the cemetery without a permanent structure in which to temporarily store cadavers when "emergencies and

delays" prevented the corpses from being immediately buried. It was not until 1913; when the Conkling Armstrong Terra Cotta Company designed and built the new Receiving Vault, that the cemetery had permanent means to store the bodies of the deceased should such an occasion arise. Built of terra cotta

and concrete, the design was unusually formal and elaborate, designed as a Doric Temple with a hip roof, portico supported by columns and one window piercing the north elevation of the building. The interior contained a series of ventilated crypts designed for the temporary housing of bodies. While the central vault was meant to be all inclusive, offering space which could contain the remains of loved ones from multiple families at the same time, the other four vaults were designed to be more secluded and private,

allowing families to keep their dead away from the general population, therefore allowing the Cemetery to charge more for these vaults, creating a sense of social stratification even after death.¹



Window, North Elevation

1 Historic American Buildings Survey, "Laurel Hill Cemetery", HABS No. PA-1811

With the shift from active burial location to cultural heritage destination, the original purpose with which the receiving vault was built is no longer feasible or necessary. However, the building is both attractive, and in relatively good shape, with the roof undergoing repairs in 2005. Currently serving as storage, the iron gates from the portico to the interior are locked with heavy chains, preventing potential visitors from further utilizing the space, and serving little function for the site itself, beyond the basic task of being a receptacle for supplies. Therefore, a new use should be determined for the Receiving Vault, one that both bolsters the appeal of the site and serves a viable and necessary function for the new future of Laurel Hill Cemetery.

Feasibility Study

Undertaking and finding a new use for an existing building can be a difficult process. Donovan Rypkema, in his feasibility assessment manual for reusing historic buildings published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, defines the term feasible, as related to structures, as being “when the agent determines that there is a reasonable likelihood of satisfying explicit objectives when a selected course of action is tested for a fit to a context of specific constraints and limited resources.”² He continues by stating that “the purpose of the analysis is to define the objectives, identify the constraints and opportunities, and to objectively reach a conclusion as to feasibility.”³

In identifying the objectives for the potential reuse of the Vault, policies which have been developed throughout the course of this studio and are contained in this volume, were consulted. As these policies were created to guide, grow and sustain Laurel Hill, a new use for the Receiving Vault that is in line with these policies would continue to create new opportunities for the future of the Cemetery. The two policies which seemed most applicable to potential reuse were those dealing with Economic Viability and Visitor Experience. Found below, short studies were conducted, attempting to define the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats inherent in both of these policies when applied to the reuse of the Receiving Vault.

2 Donovan Rypkema, Feasibility Assessment Manual for Reusing Historic Buildings (Washington D.C.: NTHP, 2006), 2.

3 Rypkema, 3.

Economic Viability

Develop new and creative fundraising operations as well as profit-generating resources that will finance a sustainable level of operations, maintenance, and conservation.

Laurel Hill Cemetery is in need of finding new and creative ways in which to raise unrestricted funds which can be applied to the general maintenance and upkeep of the entirety of the site. While the recently purchased industrial lot located on Ridge Avenue presents an interesting opportunity, the Receiving Vault could also be potentially transformed into a business or venture that could produce substantial revenue for the site.

Laurel Hill is currently zoned R-4 by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, limiting the



Zoning Map of Philadelphia
Courtesy of the Philadelphia City Planning
Commission

amount of commercial activity that can occur at the site. Expansion and reuse of the building into a substantial commercial venture would more than likely require a variance from the city government. Obtaining such a variance is possible, precedent existing in Fairmount Park with the change of the Ohio House into a fully functional café.

While possible to open the Vault up for commercial use, it would be difficult and expensive to wire the site for electricity, wire and other necessary utilities. Though located near Hunting Park Avenue, the building has never been connected to any utilities, resulting in a major expense for Laurel Hill to incur if they were to establish a venture in the building which would require such.

The space within the site is also quite limited and fragmented, removal of the existing and historic crypts almost necessary to create a space in which it would be feasible to house a business. The strength of Laurel Hill is founded on their possession of an immense amount of historic resources, including monuments, buildings and archives. Protection and maintenance of these resources should be paramount, and work should not be undertaken which would detract from the current integrity of the Vault. Costs incurred from such work may not make financial and economic sense in the short term, especially as visitorship remains relatively low, hitting a nadir in the winter months, effectively forcing any business which may be located in the Vault to



Interior of the Receiving Vault

close for 4-6 months out of the year.

Potential reuse of the Vault as a simple gift shop or bookstore would seem to be more cost effective, requiring only sufficient security and protection from the elements, both of which are already in place. However, with the current gift shop currently located in the gatehouse, no additional employees are required, something that would not be possible if the gift shop were to be relocated to South Laurel Hill. Also, as the winter months present a challenge to the site in attracting visitors who are willing to brave cold temperatures and falling snow, revenue from the gift shop may drop off.

Visitor Experience

Develop a consistent and comprehensive interpretation of the cemetery which is effectively communicated to visitors, and instate visitor amenities to ensure adequate visitor comfort levels.

With the reopening of the Hunting Park Avenue gate, the Receiving Vault could potentially serving as a locus for new visitors gaining access to the site from that specific entrance, if the site were to become both better known in terms of its history, location and access points. While not located immediately



View of Hunting Park Avenue and Entrance from Receiving Vault

adjacent to where when one enters the site from the Hunting Park Avenue entrance, the Receiving Vault can be visually seen and has a presence which would undoubtedly draw visitors. With the current lack of signage, a visitor entering at this entrance would be hard pressed to navigate themselves across the cemetery and to the gatehouse in order to retrieve materials and information.

Locating materials, both printed pamphlets and guidebooks that visitor could pick up upon arriving and interpretive panels telling the history of the site, at the Receiving Vault would make it both more convenient and likely for the casual visitor of the site to have access to such information. The building itself also acts as a potential attraction, the wooden crypts and mausoleums, serving as a curio which would draw visitors. By having such material out in the open and easy to access, visitors would gain a better and more intimate understanding of the site, as well as having the added benefit

of attracting more visitors to Laurel Hill South, traditionally the least visited portion of the entire site. Placing of the materials at the Receiving Vault would require no additional staff, requiring only that the materials are well stocked and ready to be picked up by potential visitors.

While many bathrooms and comfort stations, and the lack of them, serve to detract from the overall visitor experience, the reworking of the Receiving Vault into some sort of restroom does not seem feasible or appropriate. While the site located immediately to the northeast of the Vault historically served as a restroom, that area has since been transformed into plots for burial, having been sold and occupied since the demolition of the restroom. Installation of a restroom and other facilities in the Vault would require installation of toilets, sinks and more which would not only be expensive, but which would require substantial change to the building, destroying the integrity of the building in such a way so that it loses much of its character and charm.



1925 Map of Laurel Hill Cemetery
Courtesy of Laurel Hill Cemetery

Recommendation

While both uses for the site could potentially be viable; the reuse of the building to a use that supports and sustains the visitor experience should be pursued. Installation of panels and holders would require little cost, and the site would attract visitors from the new Hunting Park Avenue gate, making it much easier for these visitors to become acclimated to the site. Proposed changes to the building would support the historic integrity of the building, preventing any loss from occurring. By reusing the Vault for interpretive purposes, visitorship will increase, bringing in new members, donors and dollars. The key to economic vitality seems to rest in visitorship of the site. Through minimum change of the current status quo, Laurel Hill can take steps to enhance the experience of all visitors through the Receiving Vault, allowing Laurel Hill to continue to travel towards the ultimate goal of making themselves into a sustainable cultural heritage site

Laurel Hill Occupant/Tomb History Database

Individual Studio Project
Laurel Hill Cemetery

Cathy Rossetti

Fall 2007

The Problem

Currently, Laurel Hill's interpretive materials are incomplete and accessibility can be problematic. Although Laurel Hill staff are quite knowledgeable and eager to help and guided tours are offered periodically on weekends, several factors contribute to the interpretive dilemma at the site. First, available maps for self-guided tours are outdated and the published interpretive documentation is limited. In addition, if staff need to step away from their desks, the office must be closed and even the limited interpretive materials that are available become inaccessible to visitors. While guided tours cover a wide variety of themes, each themed tour is given only once or, at most, twice a year. If a visitor just misses a tour of interest, it may be more than a year before the opportunity arises again. Because the tours depend upon the volunteers who guide them, some may not be repeated if that guide moves on.

Given all of these factors, enabling easy visitor access to accurate interpretive information is a critical need for Laurel Hill. Ideally, this would be managed via a method that is customizable to each visitor's personal interests and would be available without dependence upon Laurel Hill staff.

The Goal

The intent of this Studio project is to develop an example of an electronic system to meet that need. The Occupant / Tomb History Database project serves as a prototype, demonstrating the kind of information that might be captured and disseminated by an electronic interpretation system.

The prototype that has been completed includes sample data entry and reporting functionality. There are three main types of data captured. The first is occupant information. That is, biographical information about those who are buried at the site. In order to better align specific tours with each visitors' interests, occupants' stories are categorized by type. For example, types include Arts, Politics, Civil War, and the like.

The second type of data captured by the system concerns the tombs on the property. Of course, each tomb is related to the occupants at Laurel Hill and their stories, but many are notable in their own right for their architecture, sculptural or historical significance. Elements of these features are maintained and reported for interested visitors.

This portion of the database is not only useful to the casual visitor, but it has the potential to be useful as permanent record for Laurel Hill staff as well. Condition and conservation information might easily be captured in such a system. The prototype contains the data entry mechanism to illustrate the types of information that might be captured.

The third component is the location information that places the occupants and tombs within the landscape at Laurel Hill. This allows visitors to more easily find their way to the stories of interest to them.

The Prototype

The interface that has been developed is intended for use by Laurel Hill staff. To begin, one enters the system through a main form. From here, the staff can add or edit occupant, tomb and location data, perform maintenance on the pick-lists used in data entry forms or run reports on data that has been entered.

For the purposes of demonstration, the database has been populated with a preliminary set of tour stops based on those identified by the group designing the audio tour for Laurel Hill.

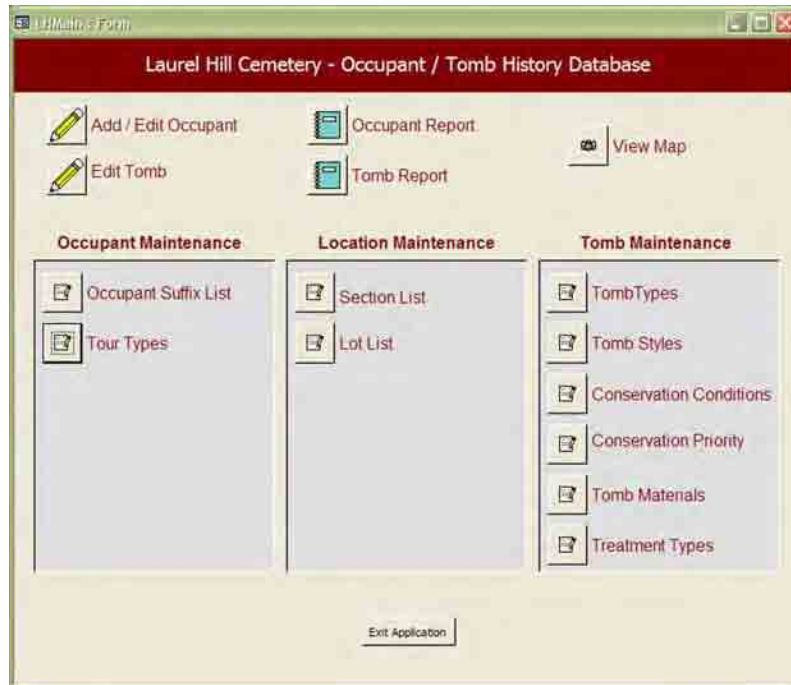


Figure 1 - Occupant / Tomb History Database Main Form

Data Entry - Occupants

Occupant information is broken into three parts: the occupant's biographical information; their location within Laurel Hill; and assignment to a particular tomb on the site.

Figure 2 – Adding / Editing Occupant Data

To begin, the biographical information is entered. For the purposes of this prototype, biographical information includes their name and profession, as well as birth and death information. An occupant's personal history can be documented in detail. This information becomes the foundation of the interpretive experience for visitors.

Along with the personal histories, one or more selections must be made to associate the occupant

with particular types of tours. For example, is the occupant a noted historian or a civil war hero? This is the criteria that will allow the visitor to personalize their interpretive experience at Laurel Hill.

Once the biographical experience is documented, the occupant's location within the site's landscape must be registered. This will allow them to be pinpointed on the map provided to visitors. As the cemetery staff currently tracks this information by designating Sections and Lots, a similar convention is followed here. In cases where a section or lot number has not previously been included in the list of the database's available options, a facility is available to add it from both here in the data entry forms and in the Maintenance forms.

After identifying the location, the next step is to identify the tomb within which the occupant's remains are interred. In many cases, a single tomb at Laurel Hill contains a number of occupants' remains. Typically these are family members.

To simplify data entry, when associating an occupant with a tomb, the Occupant / Tomb History Database will provide a list of tombs within that occupant's assigned section. If a family tomb exists for the occupant, it can be selected and the link is completed. If no relevant tomb exists, one must be added.

Figure 3 – Assigning an Occupant's Location

Figure 4 - Selecting the Appropriate Tomb

Data Entry - Tombs

As was mentioned earlier, there are two types of tomb information captured. The most important information from a visitor's perspective is the aesthetic and historical information. This includes when it was built and by whom, notable artists or architects involved in its design, descriptive information, documentation of the monument's inscriptions and a catalog of the tomb's history. Like the occupant's history, this is the backbone of the interpretive experience for the visitors. It is the primary place where Laurel Hill's story is told.

Figure 5 - Capturing / Editing Tomb Information

The second key type of data captured by the Occupant / Tomb History Database is conservation information. It is here that Laurel Hill staff may find a tool to help prioritize

Figure 6 - Capturing / Editing Tomb Conservation Information

conservation and maintenance activity for the site's treasures. Aside from documenting measurements and construction materials, notes can be kept about treatments used on each monument. In addition, conditions can be described and a remediation priority assigned. One could imagine that photos might eventually be added to document changes in status over time. It may also be helpful for Laurel Hill staff to have specific reports designed that would display a map of tombs with higher priority conservation issues. For the moment, however, the prototype simply captures the pertinent information.

Reporting - Occupants

Although data entry is a critical component of a system like the Occupant / Tomb History Database, the primary intent is to improve the interpretive experience for visitors. That means dissemination of the information contained within the system. For Occupants, the experience can be customized to a visitor's interests through the selection of the aforementioned tour types. By selecting one of the available categories, a report can be produced which lists the relevant individuals and their personal histories as well as a map identifying their location within Laurel Hill. Alternatively, all occupants can be listed and their tour types and locations indicated on a map of Laurel Hill (See Appendix B).



Figure 7 - Selecting a Tour Report

Reporting - Tombs

The Tomb Report is quite simple, providing a list of each tomb, along with its descriptive information, history and inscription (See Appendix B). Future work would have this report associated with a map, as in the Occupant Report. An additional report would also be useful to indicate conservation information for Laurel Hill management and staff.

Next Steps

Several tasks must be undertaken before the Occupant / Tomb History Database can be released for production use, either by laurel Hill staff or the visiting public. First, existing functionality must be made more robust, with error handling and exceptions managed in a user-friendly manner. The ability to associate photographs with both occupants and their tombs is also a necessary next step. Photographs are an important part of the interpretive experience, giving the visitor a feel for the people and their stories. They can also help guide the visitor to the appropriate tomb in a very complex landscape. Additionally, as more information is captured within the database, it may become clear that existing assumptions in the prototype no longer hold true. For example, the assumption that one occupant is located in one section and in one lot has proven to be false. Assumptions of this type must be tested and exceptions managed where necessary.

Once the database is made more robust and user-friendly for Laurel Hill staff, a suitable user interface is required which allows visitors to filter on tombs of interest. This may be made available via the web or through a computer or handheld device available on-site. Regardless of the technology, it is important that the visitor be able to customize his or her own experience at the site, identifying the most important aspects, making their stories available and plotting their locations onto an easy to follow map.

Appendix A – Occupant Report (All Types)

Occupant Information

Laurel Hill Cemetery Audio Tour Highlights



Story Type

-  Arts
-  Education
-  Industry
-  Military - Civil War
-  Military - Revolutionary War
-  Other
-  Politics



Occupant ID 21 **Tour Category:** Arts

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Louisa K Curtis

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 4 /13/1910 US 58

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 Terrace and landscape – mausoleums built into hillside, vista south along River
 Curtis/Bok Pergola – the great story of Louisa Knapp Curtis
 Elisha Kent Kane – explorer and spiritualist
 Charles Thomson – Signer removed from Harriton and into LHC

Comments

Occupant ID 16 **Tour Category:** Military - Civil War

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Capt Percival Drayton

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 Captain 8 /25/1812 40 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 8 /4 /1865 11/18/1865 US

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 The impact of the Civil War on one family
 William Drayton of SC left it for Phila. He disagreed with SC's stand on state's rights
 Son Percival served in US Navy
 Son Thomas served in Confederate Navy. Fought his brother in Battle of Port Royal
 Drayton family correspondence details the family's trials during the Civil War

Comments

Occupant ID 17 **Tour Category:**

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 William Drayton

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 12/30/1776 St. Augustine 9 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 5 /24/1846 Philadelphia 38 US

Profession

Personal History

Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories

The impact of the Civil War on one family

William Drayton of SC left it for Phila. He disagreed with SC's stand on state's rights

Son Percival served in US Navy

Son Thomas served in Confederate Navy. Fought his brother in Battle of Port Royal

Drayton family correspondence details the family's trials during the Civil War

Comments

Occupant ID 18 **Tour Category:** Other

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Capt Frank Furness

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 11/12/1839 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 7 /27/1912 US

Profession

Personal History

Architect and military hero

Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories

Simple marker for one of Philadelphia's greatest architects, Frank Furness

Comments

Occupant ID 31 **Tour Category:** Education

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Simon Gratz

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 8 /25/1925 US 87

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive cluster and cell phone stories
 Simon Gratz – Jewish philanthropist (20th century story)

Comments

Occupant ID 23 **Tour Category:** Military - Revolutionary War

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Isaac Hull

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 3 /9 /1773 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 2 /13/1843 US

Profession

Personal History
 Commander of the USS Constitution Cell phone stories
 Hull: War of 1812 hero
 Hull: Conservation efforts at LHC
 Iconography of Hull and Sparks markers

Comments
 Lot 241 and West part 243

Occupant ID 26 **Tour Category:** Other

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Elisha Kent Kane

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 2 /3 /1820 Philadelphia 38 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 2 /16/1857 Havana Cuba

Profession

Personal History
 Arctic explorer– Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 Terrace and landscape – mausoleums built into hillside, vista south along River
 Curtis/Bok Pergola – the great story of Louisa Knapp Curtis
 Elisha Kent Kane – explorer and spiritualist
 Charles Thomson – Signer removed from Harriton and into LHC

Comments

Occupant ID 22 **Tour Category:** Arts

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Mr Henry C Lea

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 9 /19/1825 Philadelphia 38 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 10/24/1909 Philadelphia 38 US

Profession
 Historian

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 Beautiful sculpture by Alexander Stirling Calder marking grave of Henry Charles Lea

Comments
 Lot 36 North 1/2 and 40

Occupant ID 25 **Tour Category:**

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Joseph S Lewis

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 5 /9 /1778 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 3 /13/1836 US

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 Joseph Lewis – the Water Works, coal, navigation
 Iconography of the monument, including image of Water Works; John Notman
 Stump: the sign of the first preservation effort of Friends of Laurel Hill

Comments

Occupant ID 24 **Tour Category: Education**

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 John Francis Marion

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 US

Cause of Death
 Brain Tumor

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 12/30/1992 1 /3 /1992 Philadelphia 38 US 69

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 Preservation and interpretation of LHC in 20th century (Marion)
 Ongoing burials at LHC in 20th century (White)

Comments

Occupant ID 33 **Tour Category:** Politics

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Thomas McKean

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 3 /19/1734 New London 38 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 1 /24/1817 Philadelphia 38 US

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 The Signers and their families
 Thomas McKean
 Children of Benjamin Rush – Richard Rush
 Connections with other Rev War and Patriot stories in LHC

Comments

Occupant ID 28 **Tour Category:** Military - Civil War

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Gen'l George Gordon Meade

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 General 12/31/1815 Cadiz Spain

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 11/6 /1872 11/12/1872 US 57

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 General George Gordon Meade and Gettysburg
 Civil War connections with others in LHC

Comments

Occupant ID 19 **Tour Category:** **Military - Revolutionary War**

Prefix General **First Name** Hugh **Middle Name** **Last Name** Mercer **Suffix**

Title General **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** Aberdeen **Birth State** **Birth Country** Scotland

Cause of Death

Day of Death 1 /12/1777 **Date Buried** 11/26/1840 **City of Death** **State** 38 **Country** US **Age At Death**

Profession

Personal History
 Born 1721– Interpretive cluster and cell phone stories
 Hugh Mercer – Rev War general moved to LH to build credibility for the place (18th and 19th century stories)

Comments

Occupant ID 27 **Tour Category:** **Other**

Prefix **First Name** Matthew **Middle Name** J **Last Name** Miller **Suffix**

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country** US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** US **Age At Death** 77

Profession

Personal History
 Rosette layout of the original North cemetery (visible from here)
 Beautiful monument marking the grave of a child – infant mortality
 William Strickland and the Greek Revival – look for more of that as walking around

Comments
 1892 burial. A 68-69-76-77 and north part 67

Occupant ID 14 **Tour Category:** Politics

Prefix Hon. **First Name** Richard **Middle Name** **Last Name** Rush **Suffix**

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** 8 /29/1780 **Birth City** Philadelphia **Birth State** 38 **Birth Country** US

Cause of Death

Day of Death 7 /30/1859 **Date Buried** 8 /3 /1859 **City of Death** **State** **Country** US **Age At Death** 79

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 The Signers and their families
 Thomas McKean
 Children of Benjamin Rush – Richard Rush
 Connections with other Rev War and Patriot stories in LHC

Comments

Occupant ID 32 **Tour Category:**

Prefix **First Name** Thomas **Middle Name** **Last Name** Sparks **Suffix**

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country** US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** 5 /18/1855 **City of Death** **State** **Country** US **Age At Death**

Profession

Personal History
 Cell phone stories
 Hull: War of 1812 hero
 Hull: Conservation efforts at LHC
 Iconography of Hull and Sparks markers

Comments
 north half of G 219

Occupant ID 29 **Tour Category:** Other

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Robert R Stewart

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 US

Profession

Personal History
 Cell phone story
 The particulars of the person
 The iconography of this remarkable monument

Comments

Occupant ID 15 **Tour Category:** Politics

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Charles Thomson

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 11/1 /1789 Ireland

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 8 /15/1824 8 /13/1838 US

Profession

Personal History
 Reburied from his estate, "Harriton", in Upper Merion. Now interred beneath the Thomson Monument in the Circle Section River.– Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 Terrace and landscape – mausoleums built into hillside, vista south along River
 Curtis/Bok Pergola – the great story of Louisa Knapp Curtis
 Elisha Kent Kane – explorer and spiritualist
 Charles Thomson – Signer removed from Harriton and into LHC

Comments
 Thomson Monument

Occupant ID 35 **Tour Category:**

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Wharton

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 US

Cause of Death

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 US

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive cluster and cell phone stories
 Wharton/Lovering/Perot Family lot – families spend eternity together in one of the best preserved family lots in LHC (largely 19th c story)

Comments

Occupant ID 30 **Tour Category: Politics**

Prefix **First Name** **Middle Name** **Last Name** **Suffix**
 Ronald A White Esq.

Title **Nickname** **Birth Date** **Birth City** **Birth State** **Birth Country**
 US

Cause of Death
 Cancer

Day of Death **Date Buried** **City of Death** **State** **Country** **Age At Death**
 11/10/2004 US 55 yrs 11 mos

Profession

Personal History
 Interpretive clusters and cell phone stories
 Preservation and interpretation of LHC in 20th century (Marion)
 Ongoing burials at LHC in 20th century (White)

Comments

Appendix B – Tomb Report

Tomb Information

Family Name			Bok			Tomb ID			65					
Location / Subdivision														
Tomb Type			Tomb Style			Year Built			Architect			Sculptor		
Monument - Other														
Length			Width			Height								
0			x 0			x 0								
Description														
Tomb Story														
Tomb Inscription:														

Family Name			Curtis			Tomb ID			64					
Location / Subdivision														
Tomb Type			Tomb Style			Year Built			Architect			Sculptor		
Monolith														
Length			Width			Height								
0			x 0			x 0								
Description														
Tomb Story														
Tomb Inscription:														

Family Name **Drayton**

Tomb ID 62

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Obelisk

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name **Furness**

Tomb ID 71

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Ledger

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name **Gratz**

Tomb ID 57

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Monument - Other

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Simon Gratz August 19, 1837 - August 21, 1925 His wife Caroline Steer Gratz 31 December, 1863 - July 2, 1925 A life devoted to good works

Family Name **Hull**

Tomb ID 60

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Sarcophagus

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Commodore Isaac Hull United States Naval Officer 09 March 1773 - 13 February 1843 A defender of American freedom and pioneer of a new nation. He lifted the spirits of an entire nation by defeating the British on the high seas, while commanding the USS CONSTITUTION "Old Ironsides" in battle with the HMS Guerriere on 19 August 1812. He is an American hero who dedicated his life to his country.

Family Name **Hull**
Location / Subdivision

Tomb ID 60

Tomb Type

Sarcophagus

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Isaac Hull.

Family Name **Hull**
Location / Subdivision

Tomb ID 60

Tomb Type

Sarcophagus

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

February IX , MDCCCXLIII. In affectionate devotion to the private virtues of Isaac Hull his widow has erected this monument.

Family Name Kane

Tomb ID 66

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Mausoleum

Tomb Style

Egyptian Revival

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name Lea

Tomb ID 70

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Ledger

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Family plot with ledgers. Central bronze statue at the center

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name **Lewis**

Tomb ID 68

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Sarcophagus

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name **Marion**

Tomb ID 72

Location / Subdivision

Tomb Type

Monolith

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

Length

Width

Height

0

x 0

x 0

Description

bench at foot of lot

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name Meade**Tomb ID** 69**Location / Subdivision****Tomb Type**

Monolith

Tomb Style**Year Built****Architect****Sculptor****Length****Width****Height**

0

x 0

x 0

Description

Simple white marker among other family markers of the same type

Tomb Story**Tomb Inscription:**

George Gordon Meade Major General U.S. Army Born at Cadiz, Spain Dec. 31 1815 Died at Philadelphia Nov. 6, 1872 He did his work bravely and is at rest

Family Name Mercer**Tomb ID** 15**Location / Subdivision****Tomb Type**

Monument - Other

Tomb Style**Year Built****Architect****Sculptor****Length****Width****Height**

0

x 0

x 0

Description**Tomb Story****Tomb Inscription:**

Family Name **Miller**

Location / Subdivision

Tomb ID 14

Tomb Type Tomb Style Year Built Architect Sculptor

Monument - Sculpture

Length Width Height

0 x 0 x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name **Rush**

Location / Subdivision

Tomb ID 9

Lot 37 & 40, Subdivision 1 - Vault

Tomb Type Tomb Style Year Built Architect Sculptor

Urn Gothic

Length Width Height

0 x 0 x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name			Sparks			Tomb ID			61		
Location / Subdivision											
Tomb Type			Tomb Style			Year Built		Architect		Sculptor	
Sarcophagus											
Length		Width		Height							
0		x 0		x 0							
Description											
Tomb Story											
Tomb Inscription:											

Family Name			Stewart			Tomb ID			63		
Location / Subdivision											
Tomb Type			Tomb Style			Year Built		Architect		Sculptor	
Monument - Sculpture											
Length		Width		Height							
0		x 0		x 0							
Description											
Tomb Story											
Tomb Inscription:											

Family NameThomson

Tomb ID67

Location / Subdivision

Tomb TypeObelisk

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

LengthWidthHeight

0x 0x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family NameWharton

Tomb ID11

Location / Subdivision

Tomb TypeMonolith

Tomb Style

Year Built

Architect

Sculptor

LengthWidthHeight

0x 0x 0

Description

Tomb Story

Tomb Inscription:

Family Name			White			Tomb ID		73		
Location / Subdivision										
Tomb Type			Tomb Style			Year Built		Architect		
Monument - Other									Sculptor	
Length		Width		Height						
0		x 0		x 0						
Description										
Tomb shaped like a bench										
Tomb Story										
Tomb Inscription:										
His Grace is Sufficient										

Family Name		White			Tomb ID		73			
Location / Subdivision										
Tomb Type			Tomb Style		Year Built		Architect		Sculptor	
Monument - Other										
Length		Width		Height						
0		x 0		x 0						
Description										
Tomb shaped like a bench										
Tomb Story										
Tomb Inscription:										
WHITE										

Family Name		White			Tomb ID		73
Location / Subdivision							
Tomb Type		Tomb Style		Year Built	Architect	Sculptor	
Monument - Other							
Length	Width	Height					
0	x 0	x 0					
Description							
Tomb shaped like a bench							
Tomb Story							
Tomb Inscription:							
Ronald Avon White Sept. 14, 1949 - Nov. 4, 2004							

Finding Funding Through Membership Programs at
Laurel Hill Cemetery

Betsy Kleinfelder

Finding Funding Through Membership Programs

In order for Laurel Hill Cemetery (LHC) to truly become the cultural heritage site that it strives to be, it needs to become financially viable without depending on the income of burials. Currently, grants are the largest source of funding for major projects. Grants are very beneficial to the site, but come with restrictions and can not be used for overall operating costs, employee salaries and maintenance. One method of fundraising that is used at many sites is a membership program. LHC already has a paying member program that has attracted many to the site. This program has much room for improvement and could prove to be a great funding base for the cemetery to draw from in the future.

One of the most important improvements that can be made is to strengthen the renewal process. According to Jessica Kelley Garrett, Director of Development at Drayton Hall, a site of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) that has a very strong and well established membership program, most money in a membership program will be made when members renew. Kelley Garrett explained that the membership fee the first year largely covers the cost of printing the member newsletter, paying staff and the silver plated rice spoon, which is the member gift given as incentive to join. Therefore, to make a real profit, it is essential to have renewals. According to Laura Beardsley, member of the LHC Board of Directors, there is currently no active recruitment of membership renewals. Just by simply sending out a renewal letter a month or more before a membership is set to expire, will hopefully boost the percentage of members who stay committed to the site. While staffing is an issue, this is the type of activity that could easily be done by volunteers. One standard letter can be written and address labels printed up and quickly distributed.

Both new and current members would be attracted to an increased number of “Members Only” Programs and discounts. These events should be free to members and allow them to get to know one another, forming a stronger social network of stakeholders. A simple and cost efficient program could be summer evening cocktails overlooking the river. This would be an event that would require few staff members and little more than the cost of wine and cheese to serve guests. There does not need to be a set program or tour offered, but should be advertised just as something exclusive, members have the site to themselves at night and get a scenic overview of the river during a summer evening sunset. If the program were to be expanded it could include musicians, possibly a string quartet playing songs from the Victorian Era, food from the time period could also be served. If there is a demand for it, tours could be added and could focus on the natural and artistic beauty that would be highlighted in the summer evening hours. This type of program may also work to reiterate the idea of the cemetery being an open green space.



Figure 1: An example of the evening beauty of LHC that can be used to further entice members.
Photo: by Ross Mitchell, <http://theundergroundmuseum.org/>

Another group of stakeholders that could be tapped are the family members of those buried there. While many visitors surveyed in the course of this project said that they were coming to visit family members, it is unknown how many of those people are members of LHC. In order to draw these people in, there could possibly be a distinction in membership levels for family of the deceased. This would bolster the connection between the cemetery and the

families and create a stronger bond between them. Another program, probably an annual event could be held that would be specifically geared to these families. A possible model could be the Candle Lighting Service at Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This is an annual event that is free to the public, where people are invited to come in and light a candle for either a person buried there, or someone they choose to remember regardless of where they are. For the membership program this could be adapted to be exclusively for friends and family of the deceased. It should again be free, with advanced registration required.

Within the management of LHC, there is a push to bring the residents of the local area in, and get them more involved with the site. The neighborhoods of East Falls, Roxborough and Manayunk have been growing quickly in recent years and are now home to many young professionals and families that may have an interest in the site. It would be valuable for LHC to investigate ways to recruit members from these areas. This could include offering free memberships for local community auction prizes or having a community day where anyone living in these areas could come on a free tour to raise interest and encourage further contribution.

The natural beauty of the Schuylkill River and the preserved parkland around it could also be enjoyed by working with partner sites. There could be a tour developed with the Water Works and or Lemon Hill to pay tribute to the historic use of the river and these sites being the major tourist attractions of the nineteenth century. This program may not have to be limited to members but would open the doors to working with partner sites such as these to give reciprocal passes to one another's members and combine interests to offer more programming. Other partner sites could include Eastern State Penitentiary, which also represents an early example of institutional reform in Philadelphia. The Water Works, Eastern State and LHC all share another important quality, as they are the sites that Charles Dickens visited when he came to Philadelphia. Just that commonality presents a great opportunity for partnership.

As for the tours themselves, a great way to boost membership would be to have each guide give a short pitch at the end. Each guide could develop their own method of phrasing but should include the perks of membership. While it is fresh in visitors minds is the best time to recruit them, if they are only given a brochure with a form to fill out and mail in, many will

forget or put it off and never get back around to it. Taking immediate action will have a greater effect. This is also true for the website. Currently on the website to become a member one must print out a form, write a check and mail it in. This is too involved, if people can instantly grab their credit card and submit their membership it is much easier and will also capitalize on the instant gratification factor. This would not be difficult to do; programs such as *PayPal* are available online and are simple and easy to set up. Online payment is available on the Drayton Hall website, with a note saying “it only takes 90 seconds” this quick and efficient process will allow many to renew who previously would have not.

To build off of this instant gratification factor, an immediate present could be given to visitors who join on site. As previously mentioned, Drayton Hall has a silver plated rice spoon that is given to each new member. These members get a membership in the Friends of Drayton Hall and also the National Trust, which includes a tote bag with the NTHP logo. Each guide carries the spoon through his or her tour. It is used as a tool to point out elements of the house that are being discussed and builds intrigue with the visitors as they progress through the tour. Drayton Hall has one of the highest rates of on site membership subscriptions out of all the National Trust sites and many credit that to the spoon. The real test of the spoon’s significance came this summer, when the manufacturer stopped producing spoons. It took from the middle of July to the end of September for the spoon to return. Visitors were offered a substitute guide book to take immediately, or a spoon to be sent to them when they arrived in stock. According to Kelly Garrett, membership sales were down 4% in August and 6% in September, despite a rise in overall visitor numbers. In October, when the spoon was back in stock, the memberships were up by over 20%.



Figure 2: Interpreter at Drayton Hall with the rice spoon in hand.
Photo: http://www.draytonhall.org/support/renew_membership/

While this is only one brief example, and many factors could contribute to the rate of membership, it seems that the spoon makes a difference. A gift like this could also be used at LHC to entice visitors to become members. Suggestions include a tote bag with the new logo on it. Tote bags are a giveaway at many sites, but prove to be popular again and again. They will also serve as continued advertising as members carry them around town and to the grocery store (with many stores cutting back on plastic bags, totes are becoming more and more necessary). An item more similar to the spoon could also work in this case. Suggestions from the LHC studio group have included headstone paperweights or a small silver plated shovel. The shovel would serve in the same purpose as the rice spoon; it could be carried by guides and used as a pointer. It would raise intrigue and visitors may wonder if they are going to have to start digging at some point in the tour! Regardless, the shovel would start conversation and encourage guides to talk about the benefits of membership or ongoing projects that need support.

Supporting projects is another way to show people where their money is going. If a constant list of work is provided on the website and on the site itself, it will allow members and potential members to see how important it is to donate, and that the money will not go to waste. This can also tie into plans for gifting already in place, if there is a goal for number of trees planted, or benches placed and a graphic representation of how close the goal is from being met it will also reinforce the need for funding.



Figure 3: Example of the damaged gutter and roof line at Drayton Hall, used to demonstrate the current damage to the site and the need for funding. There is a form on the website for immediate donation.

Photo: <http://www.draytonhall.org/support/campaign/>

One point of confusion that was seen at LHC is the lack of a clear division of supporting the annual fund versus supporting the membership program and becoming a member. This division needs to be clarified and a distinction has to be made. Or it needs to be decided if it is economically feasible to give a membership with a donation to the fund. If donors are confused as to what they are donating to it will reduce the amount of people comfortable with giving. This does not mean that existing members can not be asked for more money; in fact that is the goal. Once a member is in and is seeing the benefits of their donation, they are more likely to continue donating more in the future.

Overall, the goal of the membership program needs to be clearly defined. A set of priorities for the use of funds must be clearly stated. It does not need to be any particular project, if it is used for general operating expenses, that is fine, but it must be clearly stated as such. This will give members comfort in knowing that they are funding something worthwhile and that they know where their money is going.

Currently, many people are interested and feel invested in LHC and attention is growing. The site needs to be prepared to capture this momentum and be sure to carry it into the future. Stakeholders must be identified, valued and appreciated so that they will remain contributing factors in the future of the site. This is a goal that is obtainable and will not take much funding to implement. If done well it will be a big step in securing the financial and emotional investment in the site that will keep it going for years to come.



Re-Developing 3801-21 Ridge Avenue

Laurel Hill Cemetery Studio
Supporting Project
December 2007

Paula Kulpa

Property Background

The Laurel Hill Cemetery Company purchased the industrial property located at 3801-21 Ridge Avenue, across the street from the gatehouse, in August 2006. While this land originally belonged to Laurel Hill Cemetery, all of its property to the east of Ridge Avenue was parceled and sold off in the 1870's to avoid city charges related to the construction of the roadway¹. The current building was constructed in the mid-twentieth century and originally housed a yoghurt distribution company. In the following years there was a series of subsequent owners and occupants. Most recently the space was used as a floral arrangement and party favor shop². The property has remained vacant since the previous owner sold it to the Laurel Hill Cemetery Company.

The total land area is approximately 17,000 square feet³. Currently, a portion of the open lot space is used as overflow parking for visitors to the cemetery, although it is not marked as such. The building itself is over 8000 square feet of mostly unused space, which had been divided into several smaller rooms to better meet the needs of the previous occupant⁴. It includes offices, warehouse storage, showrooms, washrooms, and chiller rooms that had been used for storing cut flowers. It appears to have retained full utilities connections for water, electricity, and heating/cooling.

The land is zoned as L4, a "Limited Industrial District"⁵. The area regulations allow for 100% building occupancy of the total lot area, with a maximum height of 60 feet (approximately 4-5 stories). Total floor area of lot improvements can be up to 500% of the lot area, which in the case of this property is approximately 85,000 square feet. Zoning permits a variety of uses, with the exception of residential space⁶. However, the ability to obtain zoning variances from the Philadelphia Zoning Board of Adjustment is relatively easy.



Examples of interior spaces at 3801-21 Ridge Avenue (P. Kulpa, Fall 2007).

Addressing Laurel Hill Cemetery's Policy Objectives

This property was purchased with the intent of implementing recommendations from the interpretive programming strategy completed in 2003 by the Cherry Valley Group, which included creating an interpretive center and additional site parking. A request for updated strategic plan proposals, put forth by the Friends in July of 2006, had the project for the development of the Ridge Avenue site and the creation of a Visitor/Education Center and Museum as the focus⁷. Two of the goals for this aspect of the project are interesting to note. Any construction work on the facility must attempt to utilize any possible “green” building design and construction, explicitly stating that the reuse of the existing building be considered before demolition and reconstruction⁸. Also, to ensure that the project contributes to the progression of revitalized economic development now occurring in the East Falls neighborhood and along Ridge Avenue.

It has been recognized that the Friends of Laurel Hill Cemetery would benefit from the establishment of an administrative center, separate from the offices of the Laurel Hill Cemetery Company. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, this distinct physical separation for the Cemetery's profit generating entity would assist the organization's ability to apply for grants and other forms of funding. Furthermore, it could be argued that additional interpretive and museum space would assist in better reaching some of the goals set out in previous and more recent policies regarding Visitor Experience. However this may not be the most appropriate location for such a resource.

The preliminary study conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Preservation Planning Studio during the fall of 2007 has helped to reveal the importance of the cemetery as a cultural landscape; a site with a strong potential to serve as a recreational green-space within the dense urban environment that Laurel Hill Cemetery finds itself. Considering this, it seems counterintuitive to bring visitors into a building to interpret a landscape, rather than encouraging exploration through outdoor interpretation and programming.

Moreover, while money could be raised for the initial construction or conversion of the site through the use of capital campaign, ultimately regular operation and maintenance would become an additional financial burden to a site that is currently struggling to maintain the resources that it has.

Instead, it is suggested that the board consider either mixed use that includes space for interpretation or solely a rental occupant. The opportunity to secure a revenue-generating use for the property would assist in achieving many of the goals put forth in the policy recommendations developed and outlined in the beginning of this volume. A source of unrestricted income permits obvious flexibility in how it can be used by the site; be it for general resource maintenance and management, programming, or public image and relations.

In addition, filling vacant properties along this industrial corridor would better contribute to the continued progress of the East Falls/Ridge Avenue economic development renaissance. The research into the social context of the neighborhoods adjacent to the site, and an exercise to determine the urban morphology of the area underscored how isolated Laurel Hill is from its surroundings⁹. As a result it was decided that partnerships and social outreach to these neighborhoods were not priorities at the moment. With this said, being a catalyst in long-term plans of stabilization and transition of this area is one way Laurel Hill can better serve these communities.

Site Context

Although this area has been for a long time an industrial corridor, recently there has been some residential and commercial development. North of the site in the East Falls neighborhood, Westrum Development is nearing completion on the construction of condominium residences located just north of Roosevelt Parkway. Between the Parkway and railroad tracks the establishment of Sherman Mills, an old mill property adapted to house a collection of mixed uses, has opened in the last few years. Further south along Ridge Avenue, the East Falls Market Place opened late this fall, and a private gym operates at the corner of Ridge Avenue and Hunting Park Avenue.

While this transition has been slow to occur, this conversion in use from industrial to commercial appears to be dominant. Encouraging development, consistent with this trend, to continue past East Falls further south along Ridge Avenue will help to make Laurel Hill Cemetery less isolated. Creating more of a destination location in the area will increase traffic through the area, which ultimately has the potential to influence “drive-by” visitors to enter the site.

Although the situation is optimistic, there are a number of issues that complicate and limit the possible uses that could occur on this property. The neighborhoods of Allegheny West and Strawberry Mansion have a considerably weaker economic base than East Falls, which makes supporting high-end commercial uses difficult. Furthermore, Ridge Avenue is a busy thoroughway that is not conducive to pedestrians and cyclists, but instead is more suited to businesses relying on vehicle-dependent consumers.

*Recommendations*¹⁰

Keeping in mind the assets and liabilities of the property and existing building, as well as the context for development, two series of guidelines for development have been created. The first is geared towards the reuse of the existing structure for strictly consumer use. The second set is geared towards mixed use that includes an interpretive center. It is possible and even likely that in this case the existing building be demolished and a new structure built.

The follow should be considered in determining appropriate strictly revenue generating uses for the building and property:

- Considering the size of the building, vendors requiring large areas should be considered over multiple users
- Uses can and should be geared towards consumers owning personal vehicles, and on-site parking should be maintained, although organization of lot does not need to remain as is, but can be adjusted
- Considering the ease of vehicular access and opportunity for parking, unique and specialty uses that will draw customers from areas beyond the adjacent neighborhoods, potentially even the Greater Philadelphia Area, are the most desired
- High-end uses and the sale of high-end products are not appropriate as it will be difficult to draw that type of audience into this area of the city
- Uses that in some way reflect or capitalize on the significant values of Laurel Hill Cemetery

The following should be considered in determining appropriate mixed-use options to combine with an interpretive center facility:

- Focus on how to make Laurel Hill Cemetery a larger destination point by having *services* over retail goods that augment the visitor experience by providing a range of options
- Uses that further market Laurel Hill Cemetery as a recreation destination and help to connect it to the Schuylkill River front by raising awareness of what lies just beyond Kelly Drive and the riverfront path

While both modes of development are possible, at this point in time it seems more realistic to get a business to lease the property that will begin to bring in money to help pay off the mortgage, and therefore not worry about additional maintenance costs associated with a use related to the cemetery itself. By supporting the process of stabilizing and transitioning this area, there is the potential to create opportunities in the future for development that can address some of the long term visitor experience recommendations, along with the desires of the Friends of Laurel Hill.

Potential Uses

The following is a list of suggested strictly revenue-generating uses that have potential to adequately meet the guidelines stated above.

Specialty Garden Supply Store

The large amount of space and the relatively low importance of aesthetics are what would help to easily adapt the building to this use. While some plantings could be available, the focus would instead be on all other gardening and landscaping supplies such as: soil and mulch, tools, gadgets, planters, decorative stones, and other accessories. The regular availability and accessibility of these products, combined with the potential for Laurel Hill to purchase goods at a reduced cost is a small, but nonetheless additional benefit of such a use. On-site parking is ideal for a business selling larger-sized products and customers looking to purchase many items in a single visit. Additionally, placing advertisement for interpretive programming geared towards the landscape of Laurel Hill could introduce the site to a whole new subset of visitors.

Specialty Architectural Embellishments

Similar to the previous use, both the available space and low importance of aesthetics make the property ideal for many such “warehouse” retail stores. This distinctive use would combine the sale of historic as well as newly manufactured but traditional architectural detail work would certainly have the potential to draw visitors from a broad geographical area. Furthermore, this compliments the aesthetic and historical values of the site and therefore would appeal to those who would appreciate what Laurel Hill Cemetery has to offer. Again, placing advertisement for historic interpretive programming and events could entice customers to visit the site.

Dog Grooming, Walking, Supplies, and Private Kennel

The gentrification occurring in East Falls and the current lack of such a facility anywhere in the area provides a great opportunity to develop a unique and much needed service. The larger areas of open space would easily facilitate the installation of kennels. Conversely, the range of additional spaces would also permit a collection of different, but closely related and interdependent uses. Having all these services available in one location could help to build a strong customer base. The lack of adjacent residential development means that associated noise levels would be of little concern. The proximity to the open space and pathways in Laurel Hill is also an assured advantage, although having to cross Ridge Avenue is a recognized concern. Additionally, seeing the cemetery used regularly for passive recreation may help to combat contemporary social stigmas regarding cemeteries as places of leisure, eventually encouraging more people to explore the landscape of Laurel Hill.

Sporting Goods Retail and Rental Store

The new, nearby fitness center could provide a prospective customer base for a sporting goods store. Programming such as weekly or monthly organized group runs and cycling outings, both for leisure and for training could encourage further recreational use of Laurel Hill Cemetery. Rental bicycles could be promoted as an alternative way for individuals, families, or school groups to tour the site. Additionally, the store and cemetery could partner with organizations in East Falls to organize an annual charity race which takes participants through the cemetery, East Falls, and along Kelly Drive and the riverfront path.

¹ Aaron Wunsch, *Historic American Buildings Survey: Laurel Hill Cemetery*, (HABS No. PA-1811, 1998) 67-68.

² Conversation with Ross Mitchell, December 5, 2007.

³ Board of Revision of Taxes website, property search, http://brtweb.phila.gov/brt_apps/Search/SearchResults.aspx?id=6828003801.

⁴ Laurel Hill Cemetery currently uses the garage area at the north end of the building to store a leaf-blower, a backhoe and a car.

⁵ Philadelphia Zoning Map website, <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoning/>

⁶ The Official Philadelphia Code, Section 14-506, American Legal Publishing: Online Library website, <http://www.amlegal.com/>

⁷ RFPs were submitted by three firms: Venturi Scott Brown & Associates, Ueland Junker McCauley Nicholson LLC, and Kise Straw + Kolodner.

⁸ Specifically, they would like the building to achieve Silver LEED certification.

⁹ *Laurel Hill Cemetery Studio Research Report*, University of Pennsylvania Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, Fall Preservation Planning Studio (2007).

¹⁰ Both John Grady of the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation and Gina Snyder of the East Falls Development Corporation were contacted and provided opinions on appropriate and realistic recommendations for development in this area, and the site specifically.

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Compelling Image for the Potential Visitors
of Laurel Hill Cemetery

Individual Studio Project
Laurel Hill Cemetery

Wan-Lin Tsai

Fall 2007

Compelling Image for the Potential Visitors of Laurel Hill Cemetery

Wan-Lin Tsai

One of the challenges Laurel Hill has to confront is the low visitation figures. In order to ensure Laurel Hill's future while facing its internal and external changes, it is necessary to increase public awareness of Laurel Hill, and to encourage the public to recognize all the assets of the site, and it is possible then to obtain more public support.

Based on the survey carried out about the visitors on site, some factors were revealed, including:

1. Most visitors are in middle age.
2. Most visitors are from the Philadelphia Area.
3. Most visitors are first-time visitors.

Therefore, another survey was carried out for the purpose of understanding general perception about Laurel Hill. The survey was focused among Penn campus students since the University of Pennsylvania is the biggest pool of people from diverse fields in Philadelphia, although this pool is strictly among educated individuals.

There are some questions seeking for answers through this survey:

1. In order to realize what the minority of Laurel Hill's visitors think, all the individuals are in their twenties.
2. They come from various backgrounds and departments such as City Planning, Architecture, Art History, American History, Finance, Computer Science, Economy, Business, etc., that means no specific group was targeted, and the result should represent the general thoughts. But they do have one thing in common that they all live in the Philadelphia Area, and this makes them potential visitors of Laurel Hill.
3. Moreover, due to the fact that most people are first-time visitors, it would be very useful to know what can make the potential visitors come back to the site, so the survey also tried to find out the expectations toward a historic cemetery.

The results of this survey shows some factors about public perception of Laurel Hill:

1. Most people never heard about Laurel Hill. (Fig. 1)
2. Interested features of a historic cemetery are the famous residents, the history of the cemetery, the landscape, the tombstone art; some people also want to experience the serenity of the cemetery. (Fig. 2)
3. When asking about what kind of place will make them want to go outside Center City and University City for a visit, more than fifty percent chose a place with beautiful scenery and fresh air, where they can relax, as the first choice. (Fig. 3)

These factors might help to understand public perception and thus make efficient public image of Laurel Hill toward a positive direction. It is obvious that Laurel Hill is not well known, and although young people show their interest in the significant history and residents of the cemetery, the number one attraction which really makes them have a motive to go for a distance for a visit is the enjoyable and pleasing natural environment.

This is good news to Laurel Hill for it has the advantage of natural scenery; Laurel Hill is not just a significant “underground museum” displaying historic pieces for people to see and to learn, it is also

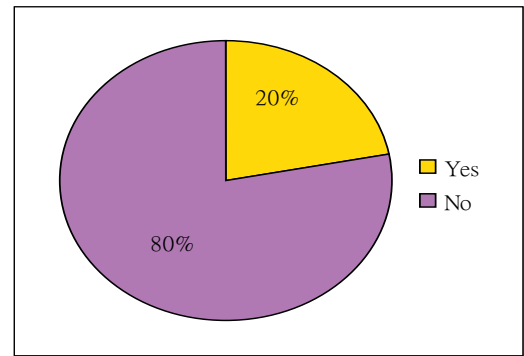


Fig. 1. Awareness of Laurel Hill

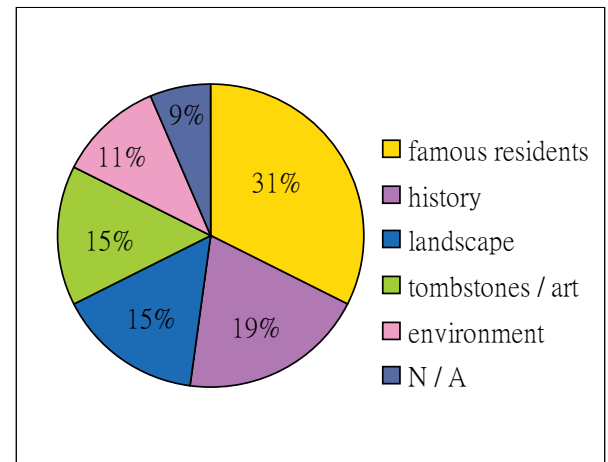


Fig. 2. Features of interest at a historic cemetery

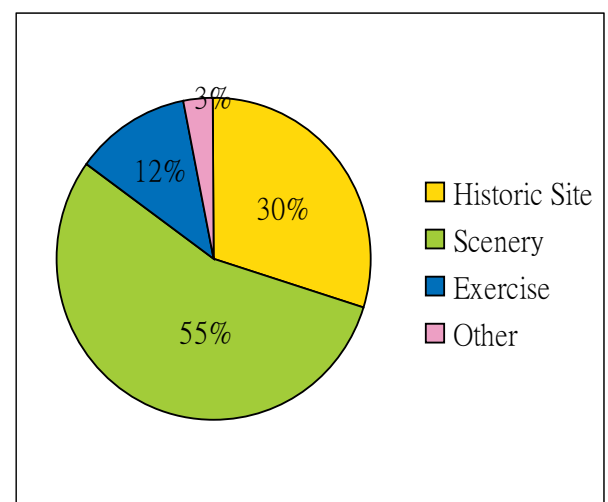


Fig. 3. Sites of interest outside Center City and University City

a good place for people to enjoy as a park, just the same as it was in the first place.

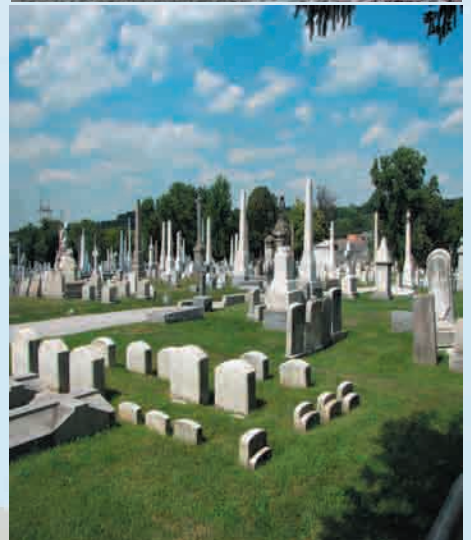
Once the public perception is uncovered, it would be appropriate to combine the historic and natural resources of Laurel Hill and to make it a cultural heritage site, where visitors go for different purposes, and for pleasure. The following brochure tries to point out Laurel Hill's unique scenery while telling its historic significance. The brochure will remain to be a digital version which can be added to the Laurel Hill Cemetery official website as a compelling material for its potential visitors. The effort is made to increase Laurel Hill's visitation figure and thus help its sustainability.

Dialogue between Eternity and the Nature

*THE ONLY ghost I ever saw
Was dressed in meeklin,—so;
He wore no sandal on his foot,
And stepped like flakes of snow.
His gait was soundless, like the bird,
But rapid, like the roe;
His fashions quaint, mosaic,
Or, haply, mistletoe.
His conversation seldom,
His laughter like the breeze
That dies away in dimples
Among the penstive trees.
Our interview was transient,—
Of me, himself was shy;
And God forbid I look behind
Since that appalling day!*

— Emily Dickinson

Laurel Hill Cemetery



National Historic Landmark, Philadelphia



Eternity rests in the Nature

Laurel Hill is a historic landscape cemetery built in 1836; it has been a resort of Philadelphia since the beginning when the famous 19th-century architect, John Notman, set its layout beside the Schuylkill River...

Today, Laurel Hill is located in the East Falls section of Philadelphia, comprising 78 acres of land bordering Fairmount Park and overlooking the Schuylkill River.



One of the finest scenic spots in Philly

The Eternal Glory of Philadelphia



The birth of Laurel Hill was closely related to the development of the city of Philadelphia and its wealthy citizens. When Philadelphia was in its glouris period, the prominent Philadelphians were looking for a place outside the crowded city center as their destination for eternity. Laurel Hill was thus chosen.

Because of the residents' dignity, Laurel Hill is important as a witness of American history, while the sculptures and tombstones in Laurel Hill are valuable for presenting the ultimate accomplishment of art in their time.

3822 Ridge Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19132
215-228-8200



Laurel Hill Cemetery

RECONNECTING TO THE RIVERFRONT: AN ANALYSIS OF THE SITES AND COMMUNITIES OF THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER HERITAGE AREA



Image of the Schuylkill River looking upstream to the Manayunk Bridge taken from Lower Merion Township Open Space Planning Project www.lowermerion.org.

Analyzing Norristown, East Falls, and Fairmount Park and their efforts to reconnect to the river through the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area.

Matthew Shields

Rivers were always important to civilization. Great cities grew on the banks of these waterways, because they were central to human life and commerce. Rivers were great sources of fresh water, and they replenished the ground water, which was essential in providing drinking water for the growing cities and towns. Rivers also acted as sewer systems washing away the waste and diseases of civilization far from the settlements. The commercial aspects of rivers often centralized on transportation and the shipping of goods. Cities and towns grew adjacent to these transportation hubs, and society and culture flowed from the river into these settlements. These waterways often brought people along with the goods, and the populations of these areas swelled with new immigrants. Manufacturing and industrial processes were located directly adjacent to these rivers in order to utilize their power and to be close to their transportation systems.

The importance of these waterways, however, waned as human cultures discovered other more effective and predictable transportation methods. Rivers became polluted from industrialization and human waste, and their significance as sources of drinking water was nearly forgotten. Societies, which once embraced the river, turned their back to these waterways as they became less central to human existence and seen more as a nuisance. The valuable land adjacent to the river began to decline, and these districts were wrought with abandonment and decay. Misguided attempts to modernize the riverfronts often destroyed its history as society built its railroads and expressways on this seemingly useless land, which replaced its most significant feature, transportation. This infrastructure disconnected civilization from the riverfront by creating a nearly impenetrable man-made boundary.

Until recently, most riverfronts remained in this dysfunctional state, but as these rivers were cleaned up, their importance was once again realized. Their significance, however, was not only commercial but was

rather recreational. People began to realize that these riverfront areas were excellent places for leisure activities, and they could also act as a regional connection, which could promote the heritage that was once associated with these waterways. Society began to feel a desire to reconnect to the water. Projects and public spaces began to turn towards the riverfront as these areas were seen for their beauty and history.

Philadelphia's history has been centered on two rivers, the Delaware and the Schuylkill. The Delaware was strategically important. Its deep waters brought William Penn and his fellow Quakers to Philadelphia and Penn's Colony. The banks of the Delaware River grew in importance as the city began to grow and commercial interests were coming to fruition. The lively area along the Delaware River was the home to the regions first settlers, and many settlers built businesses and residences along the waterfront. Society in Philadelphia was centered on the Delaware where the highest valued land was located, and throughout much of the city's earliest history, urban growth never extended much beyond a few blocks from the river.

The Schuylkill River was not initially viewed as overwhelmingly important. It was not navigable, and it did not provide much in benefiting Philadelphia's economy. However, as the Delaware River became more polluted and the city's water pumps became sources of sickness and disease, the Schuylkill River began to be viewed as the savior of Philadelphia. Through an ingenious plan water from the Schuylkill River was pumped into the city of Philadelphia for drinking water, but the growing city's demand for water swelled with the population, and the pump was soon not meeting the demand. In 1812, the Fairmount Water Works was built in order to pump freshwater out of the Schuylkill and into a reservoir above the pumping station. This provided water for the growing and rapidly industrializing city. However, problems with the water soon arose. Several factories and mills

opened upstream from the waterworks on Schuylkill River and the Wissahickon Creek, which feeds into the river in between the neighborhoods that are known today as East Falls and Manayunk. The manufacturing that grew in this era threatened the freshwater supply for Philadelphia. In order to protect the city's drinking water, Philadelphia began purchasing the estates along the Schuylkill River in order to prevent the industrialization of the area. The lands eventually became Fairmount Park in 1855.

The industry that was once prevalent upstream from the city and along the Wissahickon Creek dwindled as the area along these waterways became parklands. However, the water did not stay as clean as the city intended. Industrial growth was prevented along the Schuylkill in most of Philadelphia County, but further upstream in Montgomery, Chester, Berks, and Schuylkill Counties industry was not prevented, and these areas began to flourish in industries such as manufacturing and mining, which polluted the water as it traveled downstream to Philadelphia. The eventual solution was to close the Fairmount Water Works and find other water sources. However, this was detrimental to the river. Railroads were built along the river, which isolated the communities from the water. This did not help the river, but rather turned many of the communities adjacent to the river and rail roads into industrial areas. Even Fairmount Park, which was once well known for its vistas and views of the river, allowed vegetation to grow, which closed many once prominent river views. The construction of the Schuylkill Expressway on the western banks of the river further isolated the city from the Schuylkill, and it became increasingly difficult to access much of the river. This period also saw the rapid decline of many riverfront communities in Philadelphia as the middle classes left these urban areas for suburban homes in surrounding counties.

For the past two decades, these urban communities were rebounding into popularity. Many older buildings were restored and new developments

occurred. The new residents in these areas developed an affinity for the river and used the riverfront regularly for leisure and recreational activities. The communities began to see the significance of their location on the riverbanks of the Schuylkill, and began exploring alternatives to realign and connect their communities with the breathtaking scenery of the river. These communities began to see the importance of these areas as recreational centers and parks, which would attract new residents to the rebounding neighborhood. However, these communities only were interested in small portions of the river that were located directly adjacent to the neighborhoods. In 2000, the United States Congress designated the entire Schuylkill River as a National Heritage Area, because its “natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape.” The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area aimed to boost tourism and recreation in the region by exploring the river in its entirety. They aimed to turn the disjointed history and cultures along the river into one cohesive story, which would create tourism outside of the famous sites of Philadelphia. The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area organized the many sites and communities along the river by helping them understand their location and place along this historic river. Creating plans and providing grants for community improvement and revitalization was the primary work for the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area. They tied these sites and communities into a cohesive entity that has helped not only the communities but visitors to the region. In providing funding and direction, the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area sought to create a region tied to the river with tourism centered on this unifying characteristic. Many communities and sites have utilized the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area’s funding to realize riverfront revitalization projects that would have never been possible before the Heritage Area’s inception.

Laurel Hill Cemetery is located on a bluff directly above and adjacent to the Schuylkill River. Being a historic site on the river, the Cemetery has utilized some of the benefits of Schuylkill River National Heritage Area. However, the site has not fully embraced the river. While it is slowly moving toward reconnection with the river, Laurel Hill Cemetery has yet to fully realize all of the opportunities that the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area provides. Many of the former views and vistas of the river from within the cemetery are closed because of overgrowth, and it is not possible to see the river from many locations within the cemetery. In order to fully understand the benefits of participating in the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area, it is important for Laurel Hill to see how other sites have utilized the Heritage Area in realizing their goals and plans. An analysis of the plans and progress of other communities and sites along the river will provide a set of guidelines for the cemetery in order for them to fully realize the benefits associated with the Schuylkill River and the National Heritage Area.

Norristown, East Falls, and Fairmount Park are all organizations and communities that have participated with the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area. They have received funding and conducted plans in order to fully realize their connection with the riverfront, and their progress is in varying stages of progress. These communities and organizations are remarkably different but they are all located along the Schuylkill River. Seeing their reconnection with the river is an important step in organizing a plan to better utilize and connect Laurel Hill to the Schuylkill River. These sites were chosen for various reasons, which were deemed important in the redevelopment of the riverfront. East Falls was chosen, because their community plan for the riverfront area is completed, and they are the neighborhood in which Laurel Hill Cemetery is located. It is important for Laurel Hill to understand East Falls plans in order to work with the

community rather than against it. Working with this community can save Laurel Hill time, effort, and money, because the cemetery is part of the overall plan. This will allow the cemetery's plans to enhance the reconnection of East Fall rather than detract from it. Fairmount Park was selected, because it is located directly adjacent to Laurel Hill Cemetery and is the owner of the cemetery's riverfront. The park, however, has begun to clear the brush in the park to reopen views that were closed by overgrowth. Fairmount Park has begun this project but it is not yet completed. Finally, Norristown, in Montgomery County, was chosen because it recently completed a Riverfront Master Plan. It is declining area that is trying to reclaim its former prominence by reconnecting with the economic and recreational aspects of the Schuylkill River. It is located outside of Philadelphia, which provides this analysis with a less Philadelphia-centric view of the Schuylkill, which is important to connect with visitors who are not simply touring the city but the region.

East Falls

East Falls is a vibrant, gentrifying neighborhood of Philadelphia. It was built as a working-class enclave adjacent to the river, and it was named for the falls of the river, which were evident before the damming of the river with the construction of the Fairmount Water Works. East Falls was comprised of two areas: the riverfront, which was the heart of the working-class neighborhood and the hill, which was a middleclass suburban neighborhood that was created in the early decades of the twentieth century. The houses on the hill differed greatly from the residences in the valley along the river. The riverfront area was filled with rowhouses and commercial buildings whereas the neighborhood on the hill was filled with large single family houses and large educational and medical institutions.

During the period of American suburbanization in the 1950s and 1960s, East Falls lost a large portion of its original population, which was replaced by many low-income residents that flocked to the new public housing projects being built near the river in the neighborhood. The neighborhoods on the hill remained relatively unchanged, because the middleclass and upper middleclass neighborhood remained virtually unchanged. During this time, the commercial district declined and many structures near the riverfront were demolished and replaced with small industrial buildings, gas stations, parking lots, and unattractive housing. These new structures were oriented to Ridge Avenue and their backs faced the riverfront. These new structures altered East Falls orientation away from the river and onto the congested Ridge Avenue.

In 1990s, Philadelphia metropolitan residents began to see the significance of East Falls and other neighborhoods in the northwest section of the city. The low housing costs and great housing stock attracted many new residents to the area, and they quickly overtook many portions of the neighborhood. These new residents displaced the older lower-socioeconomic groups that once populated the neighborhood. The housing project was demolished and eventually replaced with newer more neighborhood-friendly public housing development that was modeled on modern-planned smart-growth neighborhoods. The neighborhood also began to see the importance of the riverfront and the opportunities that Schuylkill could provide. East Falls decided to study the river within their neighborhood to try to better connect with the Schuylkill and with other communities within the region.

The East Falls Development Corporation conducted a study and produced a plan in 2004. The plan was titled the East Falls Reconnects to the River: A Public Improvement Plan for the Riverfront District. The plan seeks to reconnect the neighborhood to the riverfront through several different approaches, which strive to improve the neighborhood and undo

the problems created by unplanned development. The plan takes several small steps in creating the master plan. These include improvements in way-finding signage, gateway planning, pedestrian-oriented development, parking, beautification, lighting, and traffic planning. The plan was largely funded by the Schuylkill River Heritage Area and local residents and businesses.

Signage is important in the East Falls Master Plan. The district currently has limited signage, which does not point out any significant aspects of the neighborhood. The community has used the signage found throughout the city and region in order to create a signage plan that compliments the city but also sets the neighborhood apart with its own unique identity. The signage would direct visitors to important sites within the community, but they would also point out major arteries, parking, and recreational areas. There would be two types of signage placed in East Falls: pedestrian-oriented and vehicular signs. The community feels that both signing types are important, because they are trying to attract all kinds of visitors to the region. The pedestrian signs would largely be located on the major arteries and along the riverfront, because that is where pedestrians are largely found in the district. Vehicular signs would be found at all major access points into the neighborhood and would act as a guide for vehicles to parking areas and significant sites.

Gateway planning is another key feature of the East Falls Master Plan. There currently is no signage announcing the neighborhood. Unless a visitor is familiar with the area, they do not know they are in East Falls unless looking at the signage at the SEPTA Regional Rail Station. The community is interested in place signs to welcome people into the neighborhood at several key areas along Ridge Avenue, Kelly Drive, US 1, and Midvale Avenue. Some of the signs would be placed along the sides of the road others would

be painted on bridges, but these gateways are important in announcing East Falls as a separate neighborhood in Philadelphia. All of the signs would be located in the Riverfront District, and currently there is no plan to add them on the hill above the river.

Pedestrian-oriented development and parking are other areas of strategic importance in defining East Falls and its riverfront. New development in the area has been planned to include pedestrian amenities, such as wide sidewalks and better street furnishings. Parking is also important, but it is mainly included in plans for new development. The proposed buildings in the riverfront district have two orientations: the Schuylkill River and Ridge Avenue. Parking would be integrated into these structures to prevent unsightly parking lots that destroy the pedestrian character. New development in the area takes two forms: suburban sidewalk communities and urban-style mixed-use development in the business district. Improvements in street parking and enforcement are also discussed, because they create the current congestion problems within the district.

Beautification and lighting are also important improvements in the district. There is a major lack of plantings and street trees within the riverfront district in East Falls. Improvements include creating planting beds and replacing street trees, which disappeared long ago. These improvements would create a more pedestrian friendly neighborhood, and it would extend the beauty of the Schuylkill River Trail and Kelly Drive further into East Falls. Lighting is important as well, but it extends much further than streetlights. Pedestrian-oriented street lighting is a significant aspect of the lighting plan, because it is lower to the ground, and provides additional lighting near the sidewalks, which entices visitors and locals to walk around the neighborhood in the evening. The lighting would also provide better visibility, which increases safety in a neighborhood. The final

aspect of the lighting plan includes lighting the Falls Bridge, which is a gateway into the neighborhood over the Schuylkill River. Lighting the bridge will make its architecture more visible at night from the neighborhood and surrounding roadways, which will increase interest in this site and the trail that crosses in front of it.

Traffic planning is a crucial portion of the East Falls Master Plan, because this not only will improve access to the district but will also improve the pedestrian-oriented nature of the area. Reducing the width of streets to slow traffic will create a safer pedestrian zone within the business district. Retiming the traffic lights and placing turn restrictions will improve the flow of traffic and create a more walkable area. The creation of pedestrian islands will protect pedestrian as they cross wide busy streets within the district. They will also create a place to position plantings, which will increase the beauty of the neighborhood.

East Falls is reconnecting to the river by bringing the positive characteristics of the Schuylkill Riverfront into the neighborhood. Creating this plan enables the district to systematically control the outcome of tourism and development within the neighborhood, which will recreate East Falls into the community, which it was destined to be. Making small improvements to the infrastructure and signing welcomes residents and visitors into the district, which will increase the viability and longevity of the neighborhood. Capitalizing on the park that runs adjacent to the river can attract many people and patrons into the neighborhood. The projects outlined in the Master Plan for East Falls strive to achieve a more pedestrian oriented area that can attract visitors at all times of the day.

Fairmount Park

Fairmount Park was created in 1855 and is the largest municipal park within the country. The park fronts the Schuylkill River on both sides and occupies the majority of the riverfront in Philadelphia. The estates and villas that the park was created from were once was the choice destination in the summer for the wealthy of Philadelphia. These villas were built to take in the natural beauty of the river and were oriented to face the river in order to take in the views and the cool summer breezes. These houses faced the river to welcome visitors traveling by boat. They once possessed large open lawns to the river edge, which created these sweeping views of the area's natural beauty. After the city acquired these properties and converted them to public spaces, the views attracted Philadelphians into the park. The city residents were attracted to the views and the natural manicured setting of the park, these views were captured by many artists, which further escalated the beauty of the region and attracted more visitors from beyond the city. The park was central to the development of modern Philadelphia. The park provided recreation and open spaces, which appealed to the population that lived in dense urban neighborhoods. The wealthiest neighborhoods developed along the borders of the park, which created an idyllic image.

However, as the city declined in the Post World War II suburban boom, the park also declined. Many prominent features of the park were removed or closed, which decreased the number of visitors to the park. Many areas and structures within the park fell into disrepair. Maintenance of the grounds was a daunting task, which declined as city funding was decreased. Many of the viewsheds that were once a prominent feature of the park were lost with overgrowth of trees and plants, which isolated many sections of the park from the river. The loss of the views was detrimental to the park, because many sections and spaces of the park were no longer utilized since they lost their most prominent feature.

The loss of the viewsheds within Fairmount Park has not only obscured the original intentions of the park, but it has also lost a substantial amount of visitors because of this neglect. Many sites and structures within the park were once visible from the Schuylkill River and the streets and roads of the city. However, with the overgrowth of vegetation these sites were obscured not only from visions but from memory as well. Patronage to many of the villas that were once a prominent feature of the park dwindled as they were obscured from the river. The overgrowth not only threatened the visitor numbers and patronage, but it also was detrimental to the earthen trails, which were enclosed and blocked by these plants. The trails became unsafe and were hazardous to recreational users.

The Fairmount Park Commission has realized the detrimental effects of being isolated from the river. This realization takes form within the strategic plan of the park, "Bridge to the Future." Within the plan, the detrimental effects of overgrowth and closure from the river are discussed, but there is not enough funding to systematically restore all of the viewsheds within the park. However, two current projects are helping restore the riverfront views to the park. The Lemon Hill Viewshed Restoration and the Clearing of the Schuylkill River Banks are steps to reconnect the park to the river. If these small projects are successful, then park can muster further support and funding to recreate more viewsheds to better connect the park with its most prominent feature, the Schuylkill.

Lemon Hill is a villa in Fairmount Park. It was built in 1800 by Henry Pratt, a wealthy Philadelphia Merchant. It was built on the site of the Hills, which was a mansion of Robert Morris, financier of the American Revolution and Signer of the Declaration of Independence. Pratt was famous for his gardening, and Lemon Hill became one of the best gardens within the country. He was often credited for being one of the first individuals to use the lemon tree in America. The mansion became known as Lemon Hill

because of the presence of these trees. The house had a sweeping front lawn that went all the way to the river, which provided great views of the area now known as Center City. This was the first property purchased for the creation of Fairmount Park. However, over the years the lemon trees and the view were both lost, and the villa lost two significant aspects of its past.

Lemon Hill was once visible from the city, which was an important aspect of the villa. The Lemon Hill Viewshed Restoration Project aims to correct this problem. The overgrown vegetation will be replaced with native grasses, and all invasive species of trees and shrubs will be removed to facilitate this plan, which is already under construction. The overall goal of this project is to have the historic villa once again be visible from the city and to restore pathways that once connected the site with Kelly Drive below. The visibility will also create a safer area for the mansion, which was once hidden behind all of the overgrown vegetation. Funding for the plan and project was provided by Mr. H.F. Gerry Lenfest, Schuylkill River Heritage Area, and Fairmount Park.

Other organizations have sponsored the removal of trees to increase views and create safer pathways within Fairmount Park. The Fairmount Park Commission, in partnership with the Schuylkill River Development Corporation and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, is removing dead trees and non-native plantings along the banks of the Schuylkill River below Martin Luther king Drive. The goal of this project is to open up views and to make the trails more accessible and safer to recreational users. Native grasses are replacing the overgrown vegetation, which will be more historically accurate and prevent erosion of the trails and hillside from runoff.

These projects that are being undertaken within Fairmount Park are reconnecting the park with the river. The Schuylkill River was the central

feature of Fairmount Park, but it has been neglected and its viewsheds have been overgrown. Restoring the views of the river within the park is recreating the park in its former self. The loss of these views was detrimental and significant within the park, but the current goal of the Fairmount Park commission and its stakeholders is to restore the park to its former role by reorienting to the riverfront.

Norristown

Norristown is a municipality in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. It is the county seat and is located six miles from Philadelphia. It is located adjacent to the Schuylkill River, which once provided power to the industry that was prevalent in the area. The riverbank of the Schuylkill within the municipal limits of Norristown is not the picturesque setting that is prevalent within Fairmount Park or East Falls. The riverfront was largely industrial and the remnants of the factories and their infrastructure still remain in a decaying state. The river is barely visible from most of Norristown, because it is isolated from the city behind industrial buildings, railroads and highways. Norristown has suffered within the Post World War II period as it experienced large population loss to the surrounding wealthy suburbs of Montgomery County. The agriculture and industry, which was central to local economy has nearly vanished from the region.

Norristown is trying to recreate itself in order to conquer the ills of decay, abandonment, and urban blight, but the municipality has seen large demographic changes. The recent influx of many Hispanic residents has created tension among the residents of the city, who do not view these recent immigrants as an improvement to the urban decay. While the business district and residential neighborhoods of the municipality are experiencing growth and development, these improvements are not viewed

as positive by many of the citizens, because they are largely created by the Hispanic community. Norristown is trying to recreate a strong community around an improved business district, new residential development, and transportation improvements. However, the importance of the Schuylkill River is at the forefront of the discussion, because it is considered a major gateway into the city. Visitors to Norristown and the daily commuters on the rail lines are greeted by a decaying riverfront that is wrought with blight and abandonment.

The Master Plan for Norristown includes a large section on the improvement of the riverfront district. However, there are many challenges in recreating this district, because the district is comprised of many owners. The riverfront is also home to Regional Rail Lines, which connect this community with Philadelphia, but SEPTA's facilities are not viewed as a positive development on the riverfront, but they are a necessity for the survival of Norristown. However, a major aspect of the plan includes the creation of the scenic views along the rail corridors within the municipality, because most people view the area through the windows of a train. The plan's goals for the riverfront include creating a large accessible park along the river, which will connect the Schuylkill River Trail with the river and the municipality, and it will help beautify the riverfront area. However, the plan also includes precautions for flood control, which is a major problem along the Schuylkill in Norristown. The municipality is trying to use the riverfront as the beginning of a beautification and development project. The riverfront park will be the centerpiece of the development, which will extend up into the municipality along the Main Street/Ridge Pike Corridor. The park will beautify the city and developments will face the river and the views associated with it.

Norristown is experiencing large problems in enacting many aspects of the Master Plan, because the area along the river is not owned by the city.

SEPTA and private property comprises the vast majority of the river frontage. In order to achieve their goals, Norristown is working with SEPTA to improve their facilities located adjacent to the river. This includes the construction of much needed parking garages, which will replace the unsightly parking lots that currently exist near the river. The garages are also aspects, which will help develop the business district more fully by providing parking for the office structures and municipal buildings of the municipality. However, to fully realize their planned goals and development the city needs to acquire funds in order to condemn the flood-prone private property along the river to complete the flood controls and create the park, but other projects are deemed more necessary including creating more affordable housing. The project has stalled, but the Master Plan is crucial, because in order to become more than a commuter destination, Norristown needs to embrace the Schuylkill River. Creating the park will increase usage along the Schuylkill River Trail and will create interest in the slowly developing municipality. The recreation and beautification of the business district is currently under construction, but the central portion of the project, the riverfront, is not currently being undertaken. The community of Norristown is in need of a better recreation area, and the riverfront plan was central to this goal. Currently, Norristown is working with the County and Schuylkill River Heritage Area to find funding for this improvement and beautification project, which will also retell the history of the river in this dynamic community northwest of Philadelphia.

The problems associated with reconnecting Norristown with the Schuylkill River are common, because municipalities do not own large swaths of land near the business district. Norristown shows that plans need to be dynamic in order to reach the stakeholders' desires. Norristown needs to find funding to complete their riverfront project, but the eventual goal will create a park setting similar to the riverfront in Philadelphia, which will help

Norristown redevelop into a thriving community. The park will entice recreational users of the Schuylkill River Trail to spend time within Norristown, which will further the overall business development goals of the municipal area.

Findings

The Schuylkill River is a major artery within the region, and communities and sites are beginning to realize its importance. However, in order to embrace the riverfront it is necessary to seek out the significance of the river and the desires of the stakeholders, which are both important steps in order to realize the Schuylkill's full potential. Each portion of the riverfront is dynamic and changing, but the importance of the river lies within the scenic beauty and recreational aspects of the river. All of the sites and communities wish to reestablish their riverfront connection through creating access and views of the river, which can entice visitors to return and continually use the recreational aspects of the river. The Schuylkill was once the center of the region, and it is slowly returning to its former role, but through different aspects like recreational usage. The Schuylkill River Heritage Area is the facilitator and funding body for many of the projects along the riverfront, because these plans all aim to tell the story of the river and cultures that have surrounded it. Laurel Hill Cemetery needs to fully understand the Schuylkill River in its significance and history in order to achieve the full benefits of its proximity to it. In order to achieve these goals the cemetery need to examine the historic viewsheds of the cemetery, and recreate them. It also needs to embrace the recreational users of the river in order to gain more visitors and reconnect with the river. The heritage of the river and the cemetery also needs to be explored, and working with the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area can provide

guidance and funding for any project that will help the cemetery reconnect itself to the Schuylkill.

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