

**New Life for Old Cemeteries:
Connecting Communities and Open Space**

Thursday and Friday, November 4 and 5, 2021

Fee: \$65 for two days—includes tours
\$35 for one day—includes tours
\$20 per day student price—includes tours

Conference Focus:

Cemeteries in America date from the 1830s when increasingly, cities became too dense for respectable burials. “Rural” cemeteries were created outside city limits as eternal resting places for the dead. This was a time before there were public parks and art museums, and these rural cemeteries served as places for the living to escape the din of the industrial city and enter a space of peaceful contemplation amid winding roads and picturesque vistas. Cemeteries became destinations for families, where with picnic basket in tow, they would enjoy the sculptured monuments and beautifully designed botanical gardens.

Today, historic cemeteries continue to represent large portions of open space in many cities. Preserving this open space, particularly in an era of global climate change, is critical for the sustainability of urban communities. Cemeteries, especially during the recent pandemic, increasingly became places of refuge and recreation, peace, and connection. Caring for their living collections of canopy trees and shrubs, as well as the resting places of their dead, has never been more important.

Learn how cemeteries are an integral part of our urban infrastructure and ecosystem and how preserving and caring for these important open spaces are vital to the ecological, economic and social sustainability of communities today.

Who should attend: Staff and volunteers of primarily older/historic cemeteries, open space preservationists, historians, urban planners, and monument proponents who see the cultural value in commemorating people buried in cemeteries.

Day 1—Thursday, November 4

9:00 a.m.—Welcome and Introduction

9:10 a.m.—Green Spaces for the Dead and the Living—Elizabeth Milroy and Aaron Wunsch will provide an overview of burial practices in and around Philadelphia from the 17th to the 19th centuries, focusing the development of cemeteries and parks.

10:10 a.m.—Break

10: 20 a.m.—Quick Talks (10 minutes each)

Cemeteries as Commemorative, Cultural, and Historic Landscapes—
Monica Rhodes

**Cemeteries as Workforce Development Resources: The Bridge to the
Crafts Career Program—**Casey Weisdock

**10:45 a.m.—Panel: Neighborhood Eyesore to Neighborhood Anchor, Adaptive
Reuse of Cemeteries** *Moderator: Jessica Baumert, Executive Director, The
Woodlands*

As historic cemeteries run out of burial space, they often lack the resources needed to keep them in good repair. This can create unsafe and overgrown spaces. This panel will explore creative maintenance and preservation models being utilized to ensure historic cemeteries remain meaningful places that provide value to their communities, all while continuing to respect the original intent of these sacred open spaces.

Panelists:

1. **Projects, Partnerships, and Progress: Planning for Mount Moriah Cemetery's future—**Kate Benisek
2. **Tools available to help historic cemeteries confront neglect--**Thaddeus Squire
3. **What is possible: Hearing from a funder—**Cara Ferrentino

12:15 p.m.—Closing Comments and Adjourn for Tours

**2:00 p.m.—Take a guided tour of Historic Eden Cemetery (Collingdale, PA) or
Laurel Hill Cemetery (Philadelphia, PA) See descriptions below**

Day 2—Friday, November 5

9:00 a.m.—Welcome and Introduction

9:10 a.m. —Panel: Becoming A Multi-Purpose Cemetery—Moderator, Nancy
Goldenberg, *Executive Director, Laurel Hill and West Laurel Hill Cemeteries*

Traditions surrounding death, mourning and commemoration are changing rapidly. Attitudes that fueled the American mortuary and cemetery businesses in the 19th and 20th centuries are taking a back seat to emerging interests in storytelling, green practices, authentic experiences, and technology. More and more, and especially since COVID appeared, cemeteries are simultaneously fulfilling the role of museum, library, arboretum, nature sanctuary, and venue for active and passive recreation. Hear from three panelists how they are working with others to re-engage traditional audiences and attract new ones in relevant and dynamic ways, while continuing to offer restorative space and nurturing experiences.

Panelists:

- 1. Historic Fair Hill Burial Ground: Partner for neighborhood revitalization**
Jean Warrington
- 2. Working with partners including universities and scientific institutions**
Joseph Charap
- 3. How horticulture can bring new life to cemeteries—Aaron Greenberg**

10:30 a.m.—Break

10:45 a.m.—Quick Talks (10 minutes each)

Growing community with The Woodlands Grave Gardeners Program—Robin Rick

When Your Community Doesn't View Burials as Sacred: Beer, Building, and Burials. Quakers have a unique lens for sustainability by reusing their land for burial grounds since they don't want burial grounds to be a sacred places stuck in the past.-- Sean Connolly

11:15 a.m.—Does the Cemetery Have a Future?—Dr. David C. Sloane

The cemetery is an ancient and long honored cultural space. Yet in contemporary America, many have drawn away from it. This talk considers why the cemetery has become a conflicted space, endearing to many, less meaningful to many others. We will consider current reforms that threaten the cemetery, such as cremation and recomposition, as well as those being used by cemetery managers to update the cemetery's role in society, such as cremation scattering gardens, natural burial sections,

and diverse technologies. Finally, the talk will consider the place of death in American society -- should it be located only in the cemetery or allowed to be present on the streets and front yards in everyday memorials?

12:15 p.m.—Closing remarks and adjourn for tours

2:00 p.m.—Take a guided tour of Historic Arch Street Meeting Burial Ground (Center City Philadelphia) or The Woodlands (West Philadelphia)

Speaker Bios

Kate Benisek is a civic ecologist, urban horticulturist, and landscape architect in academic practice. Kate is an assistant professor of instruction and faculty member at Temple University's Tyler School of Art and Architecture. Kate has worked as a landscape designer in New England and upstate New York on projects focused on urban stormwater management. Kate holds a master's degree in landscape design from the Conway School and a master's degree in landscape architecture from Cornell University.

Joseph Charap is Green-Wood Cemetery's Director of Horticulture and Curator. At Green-Wood since 2015, Joseph is responsible for curating and developing the arboretum's living collection, managing horticulture operations, and establishing research and programmatic initiatives. He graduated from the New York Botanical Garden School of Professional Horticulture and has a master's degree in English literature from Brooklyn College.

Sean Connolly is Executive Director of Arch Street Meeting House Preservation Trust. He formerly held positions at Pennsbury Manor where he oversaw the Education Department and at Historic Philadelphia, Inc. Sean has a MA in Theater and Non-Profit Management from Villanova University.

Cara Ferrentino is a Program Officer at the William Penn Foundation. Cara's work supports Philadelphia's public spaces - parks, libraries, recreation centers, plazas, gardens and public pathways - and the communities they serve. Cara holds graduate degrees in city planning and land economy from MIT and the University of Cambridge, and an undergraduate degree in environmental science and policy from Harvard.

Aaron Greenberg is the Arboretum Manager at West Laurel Hill Cemetery and Funeral Home and Laurel Hill Cemetery. He is an International Society of Arboriculture Board Certified Master Arborist. Aaron is the state coordinator for the Pennsylvania Champion Tree Program, a register of the largest trees of each species in the Commonwealth.

Elizabeth Milroy teaches courses in the history of Western art with a specialty in art and material culture in North American from the colonial period to the 20th century. Her research focuses on the history of cultural spaces, specifically public parks and historic

sites in Philadelphia. Her book, *The Grid and the River: Philadelphia's Green Places, 1682-1876* was published in 2016. She co-edited the anthology *Reading American Art*, which is now a standard textbook in the field. Elizabeth earned her Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

Monica Rhodes is nationally known for spearheading efforts to connect communities around the country with historic places. A 2022 Loeb Fellow, she holds degrees from the University of Tulsa, Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania. As the Director of Resource Management at the National Park Foundation (NPF), Rhodes oversees grantmaking to historic properties and develops strategies for preserving cultural heritage specifically representing communities of color.

Robin Rick is Facility and Landscape Manager at the Woodlands. She earned a Certificate of Horticulture at the Barnes Foundation Arboretum School. At The Woodlands Robin helps maintain the site's historically significant features - buildings and trees - while welcoming daily use by the community and visitors. Supporting the Grave Garden volunteers is one of her favorite aspects of helping to interpret The Woodlands' historic landscape while growing a present-day community.

David Charles Sloane is a professor in the Sol Price School of Public Policy at the University of Southern California. Dr. Sloane is best recognized as a leading expert on the history and contemporary issues in mourning, commemoration, and public space. His first book, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (1991), has been called a classic in the field. His recent book, *Is the Cemetery Dead?* (2018), is an exploration of our current innovations and conflicts around everyday and formal commemorations while considering how we mourn in public and online.

Thaddeus Squire has more than 20 years of experience in the nonprofit management field, focusing on arts and cultural heritage including being the founder of Hidden City Philadelphia. His significant work in nonprofit resource sharing began as founder of CultureWorks Greater Philadelphia, the first comprehensive fiscal sponsor focusing on arts and heritage, which manages more than 120 independent organizations. Thaddeus holds degrees from Princeton University, the University of Leipzig (J. William Fulbright Fellowship), and the Mendelssohn Conservatory of Music & Theatre.

Jean Warrington is the executive director at Historic Fair Hill. She has worked with the non-profit board and neighbors to develop partnerships to use the historic burial ground as a base for history education, partnerships with schools for early literacy, and community gardening. The burial ground has been recognized by the Religious Leaders Council of Philadelphia as a Zone of Peace.

Casey Weisdock is a Director of Industry Development and Technical Services for the International Masonry Institute (IMI). Casey supports the local construction industry of Eastern Pennsylvania and Delaware and supports the construction industry nationally on masonry restoration topics. She is an Architectural Conservator by training. Her

professional experience focuses on the preservation of historic structures and monuments through research of traditional materials/methods and development of contemporary restoration and repair strategies. Casey is a developer and instructor of the Historic Masonry Preservation Certificate training offered through IMTEF. Casey is also the Vice-Chair of the Association for Preservation Technology– Delaware Valley Chapter (APT-DVC).

Aaron Wunsch is an assistant professor in historic preservation at the University of Pennsylvania. He earned a doctorate in architectural history from the University of California, Berkeley. Aaron is a scholar of the American built landscape, particularly its meaning and relevance in design practice, with a focus on nineteenth-century Philadelphia cemeteries.

Featured Tours

Historic Eden Cemetery--Historic Eden Cemetery, 53 acres of the former Bartram Farm, is a unique cultural landscape and site of conscious. Composed of Philadelphia's earliest African American burial grounds and cemeteries, monuments throughout the cemetery memorialize the lives of those who reflect a broad spectrum of community, heritage, and history. Eden, an active cemetery, offers tours and events that connect the past with the present and the future. **Located at 1434 Springfield Rd. Collingdale, PA 19023.**

Laurel Hill Cemetery--Founded in 1836, is 78 acres and one of the few cemeteries to be designated as a National Historic Landmark. Many prominent Philadelphians are buried at Laurel Hill including General Meade and 39 other Civil War-era generals. Laurel Hill's natural beauty and serenity continue make it a bucolic retreat within the city limits overlooking the Schuylkill River. Magnificent old trees, beautiful sculpture and architecture can be found here. **Located at 3822 Ridge Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19132.**

The Woodlands' 54-acre undulating landscape is at once a one-of-a-kind 18th-century English pleasure garden, 19th-century rural cemetery, and a modern green oasis for its neighbors in bustling West Philadelphia. The cemetery, still active today, is the burial site of some of Philadelphia's greatest thinkers, civic and business leaders, artists and problem solvers whose fascinating life stories inspire us to reflect upon how we can address the issues of our time. Creative place-based programming and partnerships, such as the Grave Gardeners volunteer program, have brought new life to the cemetery in recent years. **Located at 4000 Woodland Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19104.**

Arch Street Meeting House—Located in the heart of Old City, Philadelphia, Arch Street Meeting House is a museum, National Historic Landmark, and active Quaker

place of worship. Constructed in 1804 on two acres of land deeded by William Penn as a burial ground to the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Arch Street Meeting House has had an estimated 20,000 burials occur on its historic grounds! Visit this active Quaker meeting house to learn more about the stories of the people, the building, and the grounds of Arch Street Meeting House. **Located at 320 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.**