A Place Not Entirely of Sadness and Gloom

Oak Hill Cemetery and the Rural Cemetery Movement

by Cathy Ambler

Great attention has been paid for the last quarter of a century to the adornment of several cemeteries. The grave itself is robbed of half its terrors as one steals through such elysiums of the departed as Mount Auburn, Greenwood and Laurel Hill. It is not only, however, in such great cities as Boston, New York and
Philadelphia that an interest has been excited in this question but smaller towns in proportion to their means, have not been backward in furnishing a pleasant resting place for the dead. And we are more than pleased to be able to claim that Lawrence has been worthy of herself in this respect. —*Daily Kansas Tribune*, 1873
As reflected in the 1873 quote, Lawrence was indeed proud of its beautiful cemetery; and, as indicated, there can be no doubt that Oak Hill Cemetery followed the eastern "rural cemetery" tradition in landscape planning. With the site's hills and natural wooded beauty, the landscapers emphasized curving roads, single family memorials, and large lots that invited artistic monuments. With rules and regulations modeled after established rural cemeteries, Lawrence residents had created their own Mount Auburn. Founded after William C. Quantrill's August 1863 raid, Oak Hill became an important facet of the city's history; but it was more than just an institution to promote local civic pride or to honor raid victims. The history of the cemetery's development and design indicates the importance of persistent cultural values in a frontier settlement area that could be used to create a sophisticated and cultured community image for use in town promotion.

Cultural persistence is the retention and diffusion of cultural values as people move from one location to another, and geographer Fred Kniffen's research into the tenacity of housing traits in settlement patterns established the importance of studying persistence. The notion of persistent cultural values is important in the study of town development. Since 1893, when Frederick Jackson Turner postulated that a constantly moving frontier and the availability of cheap land molded the American character, scholars have studied and debated the

1. Daily Kansas Tribune, Lawrence, October 10, 1873. From 1855 to 1883, this newspaper was variously named the Kansas Tribune, Kansas Daily Tribune, Daily Kansas Tribune, Daily Tribune, and through a merger, the Republic Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune.

2. Although these landscaped eastern cemeteries were located in major urban centers such as Boston and Philadelphia, they were commonly referred to as "rural" cemeteries because they were laid out in the natural or picturesque style of landscape gardening. For the purposes of this article, "rural" refers to urban landscaped cemeteries and should not be confused with the smaller cemeteries that served rural communities throughout Kansas and the United States.

validity of the so-called “frontier thesis.” Turner's theory included the idea that in the settlement process, the environment gradually weakened inherited culture and forced settlers to create new institutions and new values appropriate for a new country. Old cultural values were stripped away, and new cultural forms evolved in their place. The frontier was similar to the idea of a “melting pot,” from which came the American character. The Turner thesis has profoundly influenced many scholars and the way in which they approach western history. For the theory's detractors, the vast majority of late twentieth-century historians, Oak Hill's establishment as a rural cemetery provides one more example that in new settlement areas, not all aspects of culture were recreated.

Nancy Volkmann, who has written about the history of Highland Cemetery in Junction City, Kansas, has noted another reason for the significance of cultural persistence. Not only were eastern cultural traits important in promoting communities, but existing values provided a sense of continuity and elements of order to settlers' lives. In Kansas, they could not recreate the vast wooded landscapes from which many of them had come, but they could and did create bits and pieces of it in selected important ceremonial landscapes such as home yards, public parks, cemeteries, and institutional grounds. These sites and their designs thus held both functional and psychological values as they helped provide a link for settlers between their former homes and the Kansas landscape. Other settlement community research supports similar conclusions. Settlers tended to retain cultural values because they provided security and a sense of order in evolving communities with unsure futures. These retained values caused conflicts, and frontier communities did not evolve a strong sense of community with a new unified culture in the manner suggested by the Turner thesis.

The persistence of the rural cemetery tradition evident in Oak Hill helped boosters promote the community. They believed that evidence of eastern values in institutions such as Oak Hill would make it easier for them to raise investment capital. Boosters competed with neighboring towns and, if they were successful, it was generally at the expense of their rivals. Local newspaper editors and city officials played crucial roles as boosters, and they devoted their attention to this parochial pursuit of local interest, as literature that enough enterprising public spirit would inevitably boost the community toward a self-determined future of prominence; Lawrence's considerable manufacturing is evidence that the community successfully attracted investors.

The booster mentality equated progress with unity, however, and boosters warned against the dangers of a divided and contentious community. Factionalism and jealousy, whether sectarian, political or personal, would lead to disgrace and failure of the town. As local editors controlled what their papers reported, when community dissent occurred, it frequently remained out of the public realm. Factionalism, normal in frontier towns, eventually occurred over Oak Hill's management, and because the newspaper recorded the disagreement, the articles provide an unusual opportunity to study the economically and socially revealing situation.

Oak Hill's history is part of the eastern rural cemetery tradition and a brief background of the movement's history provides context for Oak Hill's landscape patterns. The movement was, as noted by the introductory Daily Kansas Tribune passage, a trend in cemetery planning initiated in the United States with the establishment of several significant cemeteries in the East. Boston's Mount Auburn was the first, established in 1831. These rural cemetery landscapes represented design, artistic concerns, careful planning, and a change from the tradition of placing the dead inside crowded ill-kept churchyards. Several factors enhanced the movement's success in the United States: a belief that old methods of burial in graveyards or churchyards were unsanitary; the rejection of an industrial cityscape as hurried, dirty, crowded and commercial; and the popularity of transcendentalism and romanticism that affected society's attitude toward death and the individual human being.

7. Ibid., 63; Kenneth A. Middleton, “Manufacturing in Lawrence, Kansas 1854-1900” (Master’s thesis, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1940).
Rural cemeteries were garden cemeteries landscaped to reveal human manipulations of nature.10 Planners chose sites that could provide wooded hills and valleys for lakes or ponds, and they used curving lines in laying out avenues and paths that conformed to the topography. Cemetery plats often show circular or oval drives conforming to the rounded tops of hills. Plots were reasonably large for the display of grand monuments. Access to the grounds was frequently through large, gated entrances, and fences surrounded the site. Larger cemeteries that could afford the cost built chapels and furnished houses on the grounds for their sextons.

The number of sightseers visiting these rural cemetery landscapes indicates their popularity. So many people used Mt. Auburn, for example, that the Garden and Cemetery Committee eventually controlled access to the grounds. Sunday crowds became so large that they admitted only proprietors and their families and guests.11 Printed guidebooks included maps, recommended routes, presented historical data, and sometimes featured prints of unusual stones or the graves of famous people.12 Rural cemeteries were, for some time, a kind of public park, and they served to inspire the formation of New York City’s Central Park and other urban parks.

Mount Auburn’s success encouraged civic leaders in other cities to create their own rural cemeteries. In 1849, Andrew Jackson Downing, one of the country’s most well-known horticulturalists, pomologists and landscape gardeners, noted that “there is scarcely a city of note in the whole country that has not its rural cemetery... Philadelphia has, we learn, nearly twenty rural cemeteries at the present moment.”13 As Downing observed, “the idea took the public mind by storm.”14 Rural cemeteries spread throughout the nation and talented landscape designers and architects planned sites, buildings, and entry gates.

After the Civil War, however, interest in and visitation to these rural cemeteries began to decline in the East. Many cemeteries had lost their original planned pastoral look as lot embellishments made by owners and negligent maintenance caused nature to become disordered. People seeking the landscape planning once provided by rural cemeteries now found these qualities, for example, in new public parks, but without the graves and funerary monuments. Rural cemeteries had eliminated the sordid churchyard and provided relief from industrial cityscapes, but city parks and zoological gardens now provided the landscaped gardens once found in rural cemeteries. Ideas about nature had also changed from one of nature controlled by man to nature defined by wilderness settings. Museums now fulfilled the need for art, taste, culture, and architecture once evident in the marble and granite monuments.

The fact that a rural cemetery was just being founded in Lawrence, Kansas, in 1865, as the popularity of these cemeteries declined elsewhere, suggests that a combination of factors existed that compelled the city to plan and maintain such a cemetery. One important ingredient was Quantrill’s raid, an event that profoundly affected the small town and provided the catalyst for the cemetery’s founding.

Lawrence, like most other towns established on the frontier, began as a planned settlement.15 Although slavery was an issue in the establishment of the town, founders wanted to ensure that Lawrence prospered and grew. Free-staters from the New England Emigrant Aid Company settled the town, and by October of 1854, they had covered the townsite with tents and crudely constructed buildings. But slavery supporters from Missouri looking for better farm land also moved into Kansas when the territory opened for settlement. In the effort to determine the state’s status as free or slave, skirmishes resulted between the two factions in Lawrence and elsewhere. In January 1861, residents finally were able to celebrate their new free-state status, but soon renewed confrontations with Southern supporters erupted with the outbreak of the Civil War. Unfortunately, Lawrence’s free-state position made it vulnerable to attacks by factions supporting slavery.

William Quantrill and his men entered Lawrence on August 21, 1863, with a list of free-stater names. By the time the raiders left town, they had killed at least 143 persons and burned nearly all of Lawrence. Four eastern men, each to become Lawrence community leaders and influential in Oak Hill’s development, had different experiences during the raid.

Holland Wheeler (1836–1912), an engineer born in Saxton’s River, Vermont, came to Lawrence in

14. Ibid.
1858. He was in Baldwin on the eve of the massacre surveying and did not return home. In the morning, he saw the smoky haze in the sky and knew that something grim had happened in Lawrence.\textsuperscript{16} Wheeler was the first to survey and plat Oak Hill.

R. W. Ludington (1827–1905), an active free-stater, born in Holyoke, Massachusetts, came to Lawrence in 1857. On the day of the raid, Ludington and his family were visiting in Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{17} Ludington served as mayor twice and, during his first term, saw that the city purchased land for Oak Hill.

John Speer (1817–1906) from Kittanning, Pennsylvania, came to Lawrence in 1854 and was the publisher and editor of the \textit{Kansas Tribune}. Speer lived on the far east side of Lawrence, had some warning of Quantrell’s approach, and hid in a corn field. Although Quantrell’s men set fire to the field, Speer’s wife extinguished the flames. Two of his sons were less fortunate and died, but Speer never lost his enthusiasm for Lawrence, and he saw in Oak Hill’s establishment a symbolic image that stood for the city’s refinement and taste.\textsuperscript{18}

Gurdon Grovenor (1830–1914), born in Suffield, Connecticut, came to Lawrence in 1857. Yelling and shouting in his neighborhood aroused him from sleep, and he thought the army recruits camped west of his house were quarrelling. He quickly realized bushwackers were in town and, by his account, decided to stay with his family instead of flee and therefore witnessed much of the devastation and murder. Quantrell’s men shot at him twice with a gun that failed to fire and subsequently decided not to kill him. He then stayed in the cellar of his burning house until the fire forced him out of hiding. The day’s cruelty, destruction, and killing affected him

\textsuperscript{16} Holland Wheeler, III, conversation with author, September 1999. Wheeler recalled his father’s location on the day of Quantrell’s

\textsuperscript{17} Portrait and Biographical Record of Leavenworth, Douglas and Franklin Counties (Chicago: Chapman Publishing Co., 1889), 631–33.

\textsuperscript{18} William Elsey Connelley, \textit{Quantrell and the Border Wars} (Cedar Rapids, la.: Torch Press, 1910), 356.
strongly, and the raid became a factor in his remaining lifetime commitment to creating and planning Oak Hill.

Wagons carried the raid victims to Lawrence’s first cemetery, Oread, two miles west of town and up what townspeople described as almost inaccessible hills. In an effort to prove that Lawrence would survive in spite of the raid, John Speer printed a special issue of the newspaper in Topeka four days later. “Lawrence is not to ‘wink out.’ We have a glorious record, and a destiny. We are to be one of the largest cities West of the Missouri. There is no possibility of mistaking that.” His words of defiant pride and determination let the world know that Lawrence would survive, but he was also admonishing his readers to be farsighted and rebuild, as he worried that Lawrence would lose the race to become the railroad hub in the Kansas River valley to Topeka, Leavenworth, or Kansas City. Lawrence had already lost once to Topeka in a competition for the state capital.

Shortly after the raid, R. W. Ludington made the first plea for a new cemetery in his May 1864 mayoral inaugural address. He cited the need for a site with “sepulchral fitness for sacred reminiscences where departed friends could be remembered.” Speer joined in to support the need for a new cemetery and described in his paper how raid victims had been just thrown into an open ditch and forgotten. He chided the town by saying that “cattle browse the herbage above them and careless teamsters irreverently drive over them.” Lawrence had been prosperous since the raid and the rundown state of the cemetery was a blot on the town’s character. “It shows us to be unfeeling, uncivilized and unchristian.” Raid victim treatment concerned Speer, but boosterish views also edged his pleas, as he tried to goad the townspeople into action by comparing Topeka’s beautiful cemetery to the sorry state of the one in Lawrence. These efforts paid off, and early in 1865 the city purchased a forty-acre site east of downtown. The Kansas State Journal lauded the city for finally purchasing a site and also mentioned for the first time the prospect of moving the raid victims to the new cemetery.

The early progress of Oak Hill was recorded in a series of stereoscopic views (above and right) taken in 1871 to promote a cultured image of Lawrence.
Gurdon Grovenor, elected mayor in 1865, also congratulated the city in his inaugural address for purchasing such an appropriately beautiful cemetery site, but he stressed that it would need improvements if it were to achieve importance. The city council indicated its serious intent to provide the appropriate and necessary landscaping for the cemetery when they authorized Grovenor to seek professional help from outside Lawrence.²⁷ While Grovenor began to search for the appropriate landscape designer, Holland Wheeler platted the site for the first time in the summer of 1865. The city offered 250 lots for sale and the proceeds paid for the surveying and fencing.

The newspaper, quick to notice, supported the city's actions, stating that the cemetery would bring pride to the community, and simultaneously that the "most beautiful resort" would attract "all intelligent and refined people visiting or settling among us."²⁸ The "resort" references indicated a recognition of the traditional use of cemeteries for visitation, as well as the boosters' perception of the attraction value of the cemetery.

The cemetery's history shows how the rural cemetery tradition provided guidance in determining such things as governance. The city council ordered a committee, with Holland Wheeler as a member, to draft rules and regulations for the cemetery. Early in 1866, the committee submitted a draft version of the rules that was nearly identical with those of Spring Grove, a rural cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio. Even though the records do not indicate that the committee borrowed already written rules for a model, it would be a reasonable means of assuring similar successful cemetery management. The city also followed the common rural cemetery tradition by providing a house for the sexton or caretaker.²⁹ While choosing a name for Oak Hill, the council borrowed several name possibilities from established eastern cemeteries such as Mount Hope, Mount Auburn, Belview, Fairmont, Mount Pisgah, Mount Pleasant, and Richland.³⁰ The Kansas Daily Tribune also helped to create the proper rural cemetery image by discussing appropriate tombstones. As plot owners erected suitable marble monuments the paper gave careful and lengthy descriptions of them.

In at least one important respect, however, Oak Hill differed from the eastern cemeteries; visitors and the general public generally did not use the cemetery for Sunday afternoon touring or excursions. Boosters, as noted above, were aware of the visitation tradition in the East, and its potential for attracting visitors and new residents. But Lawrence citizens did not need the cemetery to escape from an industrialized landscape, as the town and country-

²⁷ Lawrence City Council Minutes, May 3, July 2, 1865. City Clerk's office, Lawrence City Hall. [Hereafter cited as City Council Minutes.]
²⁸ Kansas Daily Tribune, November 16, 1865.
²⁹ City Council Minutes, December 13, 1865.
³⁰ Ibid., January 1, 1867.
side surrounding the city encompassed many suitable settings for public, club, and private outings.

Nevertheless, the cemetery continued to be a civic institution to which city fathers could point with pride, proving just how refined Lawrence was in taste and culture. Lawrence also had experienced much growth and considerable prosperity in the wake of the Civil War. On New Year’s Day in 1870, the Republican Daily Journal gave a brief history of the community and boasted of the manufacturers, stores, businesses and the university, and invited outside capitalists to be part of the prosperity.\(^31\)

In 1870, Lawrence reelected Mayor Gurdon Grovenor, and, even while serving as mayor, the city council appointed him the superintendent of cemeteries. Holding this job as well meant Grovenor could direct all aspects of the cemetery’s management. His inaugural speech indicated that he indeed had further plans to enhance the cemetery’s image.\(^32\)

Other factors spurred continued interest in the improvement of Oak Hill. One took the form of town competition between Lawrence and Junction City, which hired H. W. S. Cleveland, a well-known Chicago landscaper, to design its rural cemetery; another was Decoration Day, established to honor those who died in the Civil War. The former occurred in 1870, and was an important investment in the development of Junction City’s image as Cleveland and his partner, Robert Morris Copeland, had competed for the design of New York City’s Central Park. While they lost to Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, it was Olmsted who recommended Cleveland to Junction City. The Junction City Weekly Union proudly announced, that “Mr. Cleveland stands high for taste in this line [landscape design], and we are assured that Highland, under his direction, will become the finest cemetery in the State.”\(^33\)

The establishment of Decoration Day as a national holiday provided a second reason for a renewed focus on continued development of Oak Hill. Decoration Day began in 1868 and Gen. John A. Logan, then president of the Grand Army of the Republic, declared May 30 would be a day to decorate with “flowers the graves of comrades who

\(^{31}\) Republican Daily Journal, Lawrence, January 1, 1870.  
^{32}\) City Council Minutes, May 1, 1871.  
^{33}\) Junction City Weekly Union, July 9, 1870, quoted in Volkman, “Landscape Architecture on the Prairie,” 93.
died in defense of their country during the late rebellion."" For Lawrence, the holiday became an outlet for lingering emotions about the 1863 raid, especially for the survivors. Many residents believed Quantrill's raid had caused Lawrence to suffer more than any other Kansas town, and yet, the town survived and prospered. The day provided a formal occasion to give Oak Hill validity and purpose, and for those who cared about honoring the dead, the occasion gave a reason to improve the cemetery, maintain it, and promote its importance.

Lawrence celebrated its first Decoration Day in 1870. The Republican Daily Journal registered its editorial approval, but apologized for missing previous observances, reporting that "in the West . . . men are too busy making history." Committees planned the program and on that day, businesses closed and a parade wound around to visit the graves of the raid martyrs. Because they were in three locations, it meant a long distance to walk; from the river, to Oak Hill, and then up Mount Oread to the old cemetery.

Gurdon Grovenor chaired the committee that arranged the day's activities. While planning their first Decoration Day, the committee advertised in the newspaper for information about victims of the raid. They were looking for any facts or information about the dead and their names and ages so an appropriate monument could be erected at Oak Hill. "This matter has been neglected too long. It is becoming not simply a neglect but a disgrace to the city that no more respect should be shown the victims of that cruel massacre.""

Shortly after the event, John Speer petitioned the city to move the bodies of four raid victims buried on the Kansas River bank to Oak Hill. The city council then instructed the committee on cemeteries to reinter all the raid martyrs in Oak Hill. Grovenor was in charge of moving the bodies, which he completed in January of 1872."

Grovenor remained superintendent of the cemeteries after his last term as mayor and worked constantly to enhance the cemetery. The Daily Kansas Tribune lauded Grovenor's attention and praised the cemetery as a mark of an advanced civilization.

Our cemetery is really a beautiful spot. It commands a delightful ravine and its pleasant elevation and natural groves, to say nothing of the taste displayed in its arrangement make it an attractive place of sepulture. . . . We beg of our city fathers to be extremely careful how they handle our cemetery. We beg of them to remember that it is one of the best things we have."

Although the newspaper conveyed its pride and satisfaction with the cemetery's sepulchral fitness, it also reported on other issues of concern to town residents; the most worrisome at this particular time was the amount of city indebtedness. In 1872, signs of financial stress began to show in newspaper grumbling that reviewed the bonded indebtedness of Lawrence incurred primarily in the purchase of railroad bonds. In its boosterist push to become the railroad hub of eastern Kansas, Lawrence had made major financial commitments for purposes of self-promotion, while simultaneously developing civic institutions like the cemetery."

Grumbling about the city's financial condition did not deter the city's commitment to the cemetery, however. Through changes in city administrations, Grovenor remained cemetery superintendent. His long-term goal was to bring in an outside professional to landscape the cemetery, so when the cemetery needed new sections added, Grovenor either contacted Cleveland, or, perhaps when the designer was working in Junction City, he stopped in Lawrence."

Regardless of the means, Grovenor solicited the Chicago firm "in relation to the cost of laying out and landscaping a plan for completion of Oak Hill Cemetery."

Although concerns about the city's indebtedness had surfaced, in 1872 the city had no reason to doubt its future. The newspaper, always ready to demonstrate the town's accomplishments, boasted about the new building at the university (Fraser Hall), a new bank, new churches, and several new elegant houses."

36. City Council Minutes, June 12, 1870; Republican Daily Journal, January 16, 1872.
37. Daily Kansas Tribune, October 10, 1873.
38. The total indebtedness of the county, township, city and school districts amounted to $1,148,605.27; the percentage of indebtedness to assessed valuation, 23.4; Kansas State Board of Agriculture, First Biennial Report, 1877-8, 2d ed. (Topeka: 1878), 193.
39. It seems likely that Grovenor contacted the firm of Cleveland and French, although French did some promotion for the firm. William Tishler, correspondence with author, November 7, 1989; Nancy Volkman, correspondence with author, November 1989.
40. City Council Minutes, November 2, 1874.
41. Daily Kansas Tribune, January 1, 1873.
In May occurred one of the city's last bright events before the 1873 depression; Lawrence held a Decoration and a Soldiers' Reunion Day simultaneously. The city put out its best hospitality and citizens proudly hosted many Civil War soldiers who gathered to renew acquaintances and reminisce.

By September, however, the paper was describing the financial panic as it hit New York, and, not surprisingly, Lawrence's economic buoyancy diminished. Nationally, speculators and promoters overreached themselves in building more railroads, mines, and factories than the markets could bear. Bankers in turn, had made too many imprudent loans to finance those enterprises. When profits failed to materialize, loans went unpaid, and the whole credit-based system failed.

Lawrence had been a player in railroad speculation that was characteristic of the boom. The newspapers reported a few positive economic developments toward the end of 1873, but 1874 brought more bad news in drought and the appearance of grasshoppers. Kansas and Lawrence suffered and the optimistic, upbeat, positive community had to reevaluate itself and its future.

The city's bonded indebtedness was disillusioning. Residents realized that the railroads' initial promise for prosperity was not enough help in this period of crisis. They had issued bonds for railroad lines that were not going to survive or even going to be built. The community's enthusiasm and willingness to make further improvements vanished, and Lawrence's population declined during these years.42

G rovenor, despite the town's bad economic period, had continued his efforts to hire a landscape professional with readily available funds from the sale of cemetery lots. However, just before Decoration Day in 1876, the Daily Tribune revealed a change in Grovenor's original plans to hire Cleveland and French. On May 18, the Daily Tribune noted that "Mr. Levi Wiltz [sic], of Wilmington, Ohio, is in town for the purpose of furnishing designs for the completion of Oak Hill Cemetery. Mr. Wiltz is one of the Ohio State Centennial Commissioners, and is a landscape architect of fine ability." The paper did not give any explanation for the change from Cleveland to Leo Weltz.43

How Grovenor contacted or learned of Leo Weltz is unknown, but Weltz was a skilled professional who belongs to a group of lesser-known landscape designers working in the United States when landscape architecture was evolving as a profession. Weltz (1825-1890) grew up in Prussia and studied horticulture and landscaping on the palace grounds of King Frederick Wilhelm in Berlin. He spent several years employed by Czar Nicholas I of Russia, managed a park at Magdeburg, Germany, and subsequently became familiar with many botanical gardens in southern Europe. He was a student of Alexander von Humboldt, a German explorer, naturalist, author, and statesman.44

In 1851, Weltz came to the United States, eventually to Wilmington, Ohio. In 1855, he went into business for himself, often shipping nursery stock to neighboring states. The Sugar Grove Cemetery Association in Wilmington employed him in 1857 as a landscape designer to lay out its new cemetery. Widely recognized in Ohio, Weltz was an authority on horticulture and landscape gardening. He planned other cemeteries in London, Springfield, Martinsville, Hillsboro, and Corwin, Ohio.

City council minutes indicate Weltz worked about a month at Oak Hill and while in Lawrence, boarded with Mayor Ludington. In July, the Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune expressed considerable delight with Weltz's work and proudly suggested that visitors should see the improvements.45 The Topeka Commonwealth claimed that the handsomely located and improved cemetery was evidence of the intelligence and enterprise of Lawrence's inhabitants:

Probably fifty out of the eighty-five Topekans who went to Lawrence last Sunday went to the cemetery and we think every one of them was ashamed of the Topeka cemetery. As we have before stated, the Lawrence cemetery covers forty acres of land. A ridge runs nearly through the center and each side slopes off at about the right angle, and one side and the top are covered with a natural growth of young trees. It is a beautiful and worthy of the historic city... Mr. G. Grovenor

42. David Dary, Lawrence. Douglas County Kansas: An Informal History (Lawrence: Allen Books, 1982), 144. Census records indicate that the population of Lawrence in 1870 was 8,520 and in 1875 it had declined to 6,226.

43. Daily Tribune, Lawrence, May 18, 1876.

44. History of Clinton County Ohio (Chicago: W. H. Beers and Co., 1882), 917-18; and Mrs. Charles Kirk of Wilmington, Ohio, unpublished biographical information. The Beers biography says Alexander III, Czar of Russia (1881-1894), but he was Czar after Weltz came to the United States. Nicholas I (1825-1855) was Czar during the period that Weltz was in Europe.

45. City Council Minutes, June 5, 1876. The payment period indicates that Weltz was in Lawrence during May, Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune, July 30, 1876.
has been its superintendent. . . . It has been a labor of love with him to see that art helped nature to make it a beauty spot.\footnote{46}

In the twelve-year history of the cemetery, this was the first-known mention of sightseers at Oak Hill.

In contrast to the activity at the cemetery, Mayor Ludington's reelection speech in 1877 reflected the fiscally conservative tone of the community, for he declared that nothing should be started in matters of public improvements that was not absolutely necessary. The normally boosterist newspapers even supported this conservative approach. In this period of economic conservatism, residents worried about all city expenditures, from the salaries of city employees to the cost of running the schools.\footnote{47}

One positive result from the depression was in respite from the relentless pursuit of town development, which gave townspeople a chance to realistically assess the community's potential for growth. Signs of returning economic prosperity appeared only gradually, but a little optimism came as early as 1876 when the county fair started up again after two successive years of crop failure.\footnote{48} Kansas as a state began to be more optimistic about the future. The state participated in the United States Centennial celebration in Philadelphia, displayed Kansas fruit, and won a gold medal.

Weltz's plat and design, based on the changes he made and proposed during his previous summer's work, arrived at the city clerk's office in July of 1877. As the council considered paying Weltz, a letter reached the council from Holland Wheeler, who initially platted and landscaped Oak Hill. Wheeler publicly revealed his displeasure with Weltz and his plat in two letters to the \textit{Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune}.\footnote{49} Wheeler criticized the cemetery management and expressed his anger about "acts of the individuals' involved and "their judgement and good taste or want of them." His comments were aimed at Gurdon Grovenor and Mayor Ludington. Wheeler even accused the city of squandering more than $20,000.\footnote{50} Community disagreements rarely received

\footnote{47. Ibid., May 8, 1877.}
\footnote{48. Ibid., August 27, 1876.}
\footnote{49. Ibid., September 29, 30, 1877.}
\footnote{50. The report from the Oak Hill Cemetery secretary/treasurer for 1876-1877 indicates $1,740 had been spent and that the salaries were, for the superintendent $50, the secretary/treasurer $200, and the sexton $93.33. Lawrence city clerk to mayor and city council, year-end report, August 4, 1877, cited in \textit{Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune}, August 18, 1877. As best can be determined from City Council Minutes from 1865-1877, costs on the cemetery were under $17,000 for this twelve-year period.}
such coverage in newspapers as the boosterism ethos worked against exposing a divided community.

His first letter to the editor gave the cemetery's early history and the second addressed the subject of designing a rural cemetery. He elaborated in detail his design of the Oak Hill site and then compared his work to Weltz's. He criticized Weltz's design decisions for the cemetery, declared the new plat entirely useless, and challenged the readers to compare it with any plat of other rural cemeteries in the country to verify its quality. *The Daily Tribune* noted:

> And now comes Holland Wheeler and surprises us all with his vigor and intelligence and literary skill he goes for the management of our cemetery. Truly our city affairs are getting a thorough ventilation. Mr. Wheeler's statements are those of a man who knows what he's talking about and will command the attention of every citizen of Lawrence. The end is not yet.\(^{53}\)

Holland Wheeler, as an experienced engineer and surveyor, knew that Weltz's plat was incorrect. His letters to the newspaper responded to criticism of his early work on Oak Hill and questioning of his professional credibility. He alluded to criticism made about a drive that he designed: "I am told that this drive is too steep to be practicable. I defend it by saying its declivity is its beauty; its utility makes it a necessity."\(^{54}\) Feeling that he knew what characteristics of rural cemeteries should be present at Oak Hill, he was injured, insulted, and distressed with the changes that Weltz had made.

Perhaps another issue contributed to this furor. Wheeler had resigned in April of 1876 from city employment. In May of 1877, he wanted to return to work for the city and was turned down. This situation appears complicated as Wheeler's bid for the job he wanted was the best offer, yet the city hired two men at a higher cost and there is no explanation of the council's actions.\(^{55}\)

Lawrence residents responded to Wheeler's angry letters in a series of public exchanges, and the *Daily Tribune* admonished, "If some of the citizens of Lawrence don't take care they will be calling one another hard names very soon, in the discussion of the city taxes, officers, grades, streets, cemeteries, etc., etc."\(^{56}\) Residents had taken up sides over the cemetery's design.

The city council, struggling to cope with the now controversial situation, published a notice for all interested parties to meet at the cemetery to decide what to do.\(^{57}\) Unfortunately, nothing more appeared in either the paper or the council minutes until December when the minutes show that the council rejected Weltz's plat and recommended a new, corrected plating of cemetery lots.\(^{58}\) Also, during this city council meeting, Gurdon Grovenor resigned as superintendent of cemeteries.

Weltz had provided an inaccurate plat but Wheeler's charges of a general squandering of city money on the cemetery appeared unwarranted. Grovenor's token salary of fifty dollars a year does not indicate that he wanted to take advantage of the city. In fact, his reaction to the charges of mismanagement was reflected in one of Wheeler's letters: "the guardians of the institution stand by through all of this with gaping mouths."\(^{59}\) The mayors and

\(^{51}\) *Daily Tribune*, October 1, 1877.

\(^{52}\) *Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune*, September 30, 1877.

\(^{53}\) City Council Minutes, April 17, 1876, May 7, May 23, 1877; *Daily Tribune*, August 2, 1877.

\(^{54}\) *Daily Tribune*, October 2, 1877.

\(^{55}\) City Council Minutes, October 1, 1877.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., December 17, 1877.

\(^{57}\) *Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune*, September 30, 1877.
city councils since 1871 had supported Grovenor's endeavors to upgrade the cemetery, and the cemetery had its own income from the sale of plots and the opening and closing of graves.

Weltz's design for the cemetery probably would never have become a major issue without the outspoken comments of Wheeler. But the hiring of the landscape designer from Ohio, in the midst of a nationwide depression, had no doubt captured the attention of the citizens who were watching for excessive city expenditures. The community, it appears, respected Ludington, Grovenor, and Wheeler and if the disagreement had stayed out of the newspapers, the cemetery's history would be less complete and the community's concern over its financial affairs less apparent. After 1877, Grovenor eventually returned to his job as cemetery superintendent, and Holland Wheeler designed the Egyptian-style holding vault still present in Oak Hill.58

Quantrell's raid clearly affected Lawrence's interest in establishing Oak Hill. The raid not only created many dead heroes and martyrs, but also affected the survivors. Gurdon Grovenor is an example; he spent nearly his entire life after the raid committed to the cemetery's improvement and care. Ludington, Speer and Wheeler, leaders committed to the surviving community, were instrumental in supporting, promoting, and in Wheeler's case, designing the cemetery.

When Decoration Day became nationally recognized, it only further emphasized the cemetery's value in the formalized rite of honoring the dead. The day's elaborate ceremonies, parades, speeches, and grave decorating emphasized Oak Hill's purpose and necessity, and cemetery supporters promoted its importance.

The site choice, with its wooded hills and valleys, aided Wheeler's and Weltz's landscaping designs as they conformed to the rural cemetery tradition. Unfortunately, no plats remain of either man's designs for Oak Hill, although letters, newspaper accounts, city council minutes, and residents' visual descriptions have provided some record of their work. The curving lanes and paths took advantage of the natural rise and fall of the land. The circular drive at the top of the main hill provided a northern panorama of the Kansas River valley. Their arrangement of large lots were planned to emphasize family monuments, and they used the natural beauty of the location, along with the trees, shrubs and flowers that they added, to create the effect they desired. Oak Hill became, as Weltz had once described, "as much a place for the living as for the dead... a place not entirely of sadness and of gloom, but a place where the living may repair with pleasure."59 The city added other elements to enhance Oak Hill's traditional rural cemetery appearance, governance, and maintenance.

The motivations for establishing Oak Hill in Lawrence, however, were different from what stimulated the infant movement early in the century. The unsanitary conditions in old graveyards in the East, and the commercial and industrial urban environments were not relevant in rural Kansas. Lawrence was more concerned about the image that Oak Hill created in the eyes of others as their cemetery was an indication to the world of Lawrence's taste and culture despite its frontier town setting. In the period of intense town promotion, this evidence was important. Many communities never survived past their platting. Competition was fierce and at times participants were devious in winning contests to attract businesses, investors, or state institutions such as colleges and universities. It was a matter of pride and necessity, from the booster's perspective, that the town had paved streets, gas street lights, the lyceum circuit, and a rural cemetery; these amenities added to the general air of sophistication that would ensure the town's success over its competitors. As Andrew Jackson Downing noted, rural cemeteries took the public mind by storm; any city of note would have its rural cemetery and Lawrence's boosters had determined to make Lawrence a city of note.

Notably, Oak Hill is evidence that cultural values persisted through a landscape design tradition in a settlement community. Not all cultural values were to be recreated in another form as the Turner thesis proposed. The cemetery's history contributes to the current literature on and our understanding of cultural persistence: Oak Hill cemetery provided a sense of social order and continuity, and it helped create a necessary sophisticated and cultured community image.
