



## PLEASURE GROUNDS OF DEATH

The Rural Cemetery in Nineteenth-Century America

By Joy M. Giguere

Rural cemeteries—named for their expansive, picturesque landscape design rather than location—were established during the middle decades of the nineteenth century in the United States. An instant cultural phenomenon, Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, was the nation's first such burial ground to combine the functions of the public park and the cemetery, becoming a popular place to picnic and go for strolls even for people who didn't have graves to visit. It sparked a nationwide movement in which communities sought to establish their own cities of the dead.

*Pleasure Grounds of Death* considers the history of the rural cemetery in the United States throughout the duration of the nineteenth century as not only a critical cultural institution embedded in the formation of community and national identities, but also as major sites of contest over matters of burial reform, taste and respectability, and public behavior; issues concerning race, class, and gender; conflicts over the burial of the Civil War dead and formation of postwar memory; and what constituted the most appropriate ways to structure the landscape of the dead in a modern and progressive society. As cultural landscapes that served the needs of the living as well as the dead, rural cemeteries offer a mirror for the transformations and conflicts taking place throughout the nineteenth century in American society.

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"*Pleasure Grounds of Death* is beautifully written and deeply researched. It explores not just how people were supposed to use rural cemeteries but also how they actually behaved when they visited. The resulting argument that these spaces were sites of cultural contest makes this book of interest to those who study cemeteries and to anyone interested in the social and cultural history of the nineteenth-century United States."

- Erik R. Seeman, author of *Speaking with the Dead in Early America*

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