

ABOUT CEDAR HILL CEMETERY

Cedar Hill Cemetery's reputation as one of America's finest "rural" cemeteries is clearly defined by its historic landscape, memorial artworks and natural resources. Cedar Hill is the final resting place of a number of distinguished individuals. Its historic structures and many of its beautiful monuments were designed and executed by prominent artists. The grounds encompass 270 acres of woodlands and watercourses and provide a natural habitat for Cedar Hill's wide variety of wildlife. George Keller, a prominent 19th century architect, designed the cemetery's historic gateway buildings: the Northam Chapel in 1882 and the Gallup Memorial Gateway in 1888. The chapel and gateway buildings were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 and, in 1997, the entire cemetery also was listed on the Register.

The Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, Inc. is a not-for-profit entity created to enable the cemetery to expand its contributions to the community through the care and preservation of its historic buildings, memorial artworks and natural resources. Your generous donation to the Foundation can provide funding for wildlife protection, tree care, historic building, monument and sculpture preservation and educational materials such as this brochure. Gifts of any amount are welcome and tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Your check payable to the Cedar Hill Cemetery Foundation, Inc. can be sent to

Cedar Hill Cemetery

453 Fairfield Avenue

Hartford, CT 06114.

Thank you for your support.

Defining



WALLACE STEVENS

at

CEDAR HILL CEMETERY

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Called a "grumpy genius," and even characterizing himself as the "hermit of poetry," Wallace Stevens definitely did not fit the vision conjured up by his elegant and revolutionary poetic style.

Although he wrote poetry at Harvard (1897-1900), Stevens didn't take it up seriously until 1914 and his first book was not published until he was 43 years old. An enigmatic figure, Stevens was unwilling to starve romantically in a garret for his art. He wanted a steady income that would provide him with fine food, good books and the ability to write what he wanted without having to please anyone but himself. And so, each day Stevens dressed in a steel-gray suit and walked to his job as a vice-president of The Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company on Asylum Avenue.

Taciturn and reclusive, his talent virtually was unrecognized in the town where he composed the greatest part of his literary output. Deliberately rebuffing any attempts at friendship or socializing, Stevens allowed few people to cross the threshold of his home at 118 Westerly Terrace. When he did mix with his artistic counterparts, it was in New York City or Key West, Florida—not in Hartford. Nor were all of his artistic encounters friendly. Once, he scuffled with Ernest Hemmingway and came away with a black eye and a broken hand.

Stevens' relationship with his wife, Elsie, fared little better than others in Hartford. Poles apart emotionally and intellectually, the couple essentially was estranged except for a common interest in gardening and their daughter, Holly.

At the end of his life the poet said, "My final point, then, is that imagination is the power that enables us to perceive the normal in the abnormal, the opposite of chaos in chaos."

In recent years, a group of people known as The Hartford Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens has been working to resurrect Stevens' memory in Hartford. Daniel Schnaidt, Computing Manager for the Arts and Humanities Program at Wesleyan University, spearheaded this effort. About five years ago, Schnaidt, who was new to the Hartford area, could find almost no trace of either the man or the poet. Then he attended an exhibition in New York City conceived by Glen MacLeod, a UConn-Waterbury English professor

and author of a book exploring the mutual lines of inspiration between Stevens and modern painting. Called "Painting in Poetry, Poetry in Painting: Wallace Stevens and Modern Art," the exhibition featured works by Picasso, Klee and Dali, among others. Inspired himself, Schnaidt wrote an op-ed piece for the Hartford Courant asking why the city was ignoring its most renowned 20th century artist. MacLeod, who had tried without success for five years to interest a Connecticut museum in his subject, quickly joined Schnaidt and several others in the task of resurrecting Wallace Stevens in Hartford.

The impressive results include bringing UConn's prestigious annual Wallace Stevens poetry program to Hartford as well as Storrs, where it was founded in 1964. The Hartford Friends has a website at www.wesleyan.edu/wstevens/. It features a cyber-tour of places associated with the poet and follows the two-mile walk from his Westerly Terrace home to his Asylum Avenue office. Other information includes upcoming events and links to other Stevens' sites.

