

The Influence of Surroundings

by Sidney J. Hare

Editors note: Among the most influential planners in Kansas City and national was Sid Hare, founder with his son Herbert, of the landscape and city planning firm of [Hare and Hare](#). This speech before the eleventh annual convention of the Association of American Cemetery Superintendents held in Cincinnati OH September 14th-17th, 1897 was abstracted in the Association's Park and Cemetery journal [VII#7 (September 1897): 156-157.] Unfortunately the full text of the speech may not have survived. Reportedly Hare's speech was one of the earliest articulated links of landscape design and cemetery design which would influence two decades of refinements in cemetery design and ambience.

In his paper Mr. Hare said in part:

Show me a city without parks and boulevards and I will show you a people far behind the times in every way.

Parks educate the people in an art equally as grand as the art of painting or sculpture, or art fancy work. It influences people to adorn their home grounds, to plant trees and shrubs, and to study nature, the mother of all true art.

This study leads them to see the beauty of a modern cemetery, with its vistas, well kept lawns and bright foliage, and makes them shun the old style grave yard.

As one of my friends said to me recently, the sight of a beautiful cemetery drove from his mind all thought of death, while a country cemetery with its uncared for graves and broken down monuments sent a shudder over him and made him think death was a horrible thing.

In many of our cities we see wonderful transformations, we see blocks of dilapidated buildings torn down, graders set to work, trees and shrubs planted in groups along gracefully curved walks, large stretches of ground sodded, and the whole transformed into a lovely park. All this is done under the guiding hand of one who has, made a study of landscape gardening and knows the uses and beauties of trees and shrubs when planted according to a well studied design.

Have you ever thought how a park would look if the city had invited the lotowners adjoining this ground to come and plant as they chose, to lay out walks, and to fix it up to please themselves.

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In our cemeteries everything done should be toward adornment of the ground as a whole.

I would like to see the cemetery more beautiful than the most handsomely laid out park. To do this lotowners must learn two things, namely: All cannot direct in the landscape work, and all cannot plant as they choose, and have good results.

Better let one plan, one carefully studied plan, govern all planting of trees and shrubs, and this alone will make harmony and beauty of landscape.

When you find a prospective purchaser who wishes to do as he pleases, and plant as he pleases, better make no sale to him.

You can well afford to lose a sale now and then rather than have the beauty of the whole cemetery marred.

Could some of our lotowners see the best parks of our country with their velvety lawns, walks with lines of beauty in every curve, mirror lakes and groups of ornamental trees and shrubs, so set on the beautiful lawns as to give long vistas and delightful scenes, then could we by magic but turn the whole scene into a cemetery!

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The features that add the greatest beauty to a cemetery are the trees and shrubs, and well kept lawns, and well made drives, and we should know more about them.

We should have at hand the value of each tree and shrub used in general landscape work, and it should be in such form that we are not required to spend hours in looking through volumes to find it. We should know their value either for flower or foliage for spring effects, summer and fall effects on the lawn.

Their rapidity of growth, height and spread, winter effect of stem and bark, whether they form suckers or not, when and how to prune, best soil adapted, best location to insure success, whether open or protected, sunny or shady, high or low, moist or dry, etc. Then how to propagate, and lastly, yet first to us, how to use them, whether simply or in groups of the same, or with groups of others and with what others.

For several years I have been compiling such data of the trees and shrubs adapted to landscape work.