

37 Cady Mausoleum

Town of West Windsor, Windsor County, Vermont

Your final resting spot. Is it in the mountains or near the sea? A plot surrounded by family? Or secluded in the one place you've always found peace and tranquility. For native son Daniel Leavens Cady, known as "The Poet Laureate of Vermont," the last place he rested his head was high atop a hill in his hometown of West Windsor, Vermont.

But this was no pine box underneath a wooden whittled cross. During the Great Depression, when most were seeking food and shelter, Cady spent \$38,000 to replicate Napoleon Bonaparte's final resting place. With a coffin crafted from Florida cypress and a mausoleum nestled within the cow pasture where he played as a boy, Cady would be laid to rest in a spot visible to many areas in town, void of his wife or any family.

Some might have considered his actions the height of arrogance. Fate, it seemed, had a sense of humor. Cady died on April Fools' Day in 1934, at the age of 73, having lived a full life of professionalism for the law and passion for his Vermont.

Born March 10, 1861 in West Windsor, Cady attended Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, New Hampshire, followed by Montpelier Seminary and the University of Vermont. He graduated from UVM in 1886 with a degree in philosophy. By 1890 he was admitted to the Bar and practiced law for 22 years, serving as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Courts of New York and New Jersey.

At age 50 Cady retired from the professional aspect of his life in pursuit of his passion to write about the beauty and uniqueness of Vermont. He relocated to Burlington, marrying widow Mary (Tanner) Wells in 1913, reported to have been worth over \$1.5 million.

His first book of poems, "Stray Breaths of Northeast Song," was published in 1905, followed by "Maize and Milkweed: Fifty-Two Stalks" in 1916. Cady's most critically acclaimed series was his "Rhymes of Vermont Rural Life," in four volumes, published between 1919 and 1934, in which he wrote of the climate, habits, scenery and everyday routines as he remembered them.

By the late 1920's and early 30's, Cady's ailing health would be marked by the building of his mausoleum. Today, large pines and brush hide the mausoleum from public view.

Visitors seeking an off-the-beaten path adventure must first drive just beyond the local elementary school on the Hartland-Brownsville Road to park at the first driveway of the Sheddsville Cemetery. (Visitors during the school day may want to stop in and let staff know you will be parking and hiking behind the school.) Walk down the driveway between the two Pierce headstones to the next to the last row of gravestones. Continue to the end of the drive and turn right, like you're walking towards Ascutney Mountain. Travel down a steep incline onto a gravel track at the school. The overgrown trail is on the left. This may be a snowmobile trail as the wooden bridge you soon cross would indicate. After crossing the bridge this path goes into the woods and up a steep hill, coming out onto a dirt road where you turn left and once again go uphill.

When the road turns sharply left, you will see a stone wall on the right. Follow this wall into the woods and up a hill. When the hill levels out, you'll see spaces in the wall. Veer to your left and start looking for a stone building surrounded by a black iron fence. This is the mausoleum with a bronze plaque on the ground in front of the door, notifying you that Daniel Leavens Cady is resting in peace.

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