

PLACE

COMMENTARY ABOUT WHERE WE LIVE

SITES FOR SORE EYES / BY CHRISTINE PALM



Good Fences, Good Neighbors

Before Sgt. Amory L. Allen was killed in action on Feb. 6, 1864, at the age of 28, he carried his regiment's colors into several battles, including Gettysburg. His body made its way back home to Hartford, and rests in Zion Hill Cemetery in Frog Hollow. For years, an ugly gray stretch of chain link was all that protected Allen's grave (and hundreds like it) from the noise and bustle of the mortal world.

Today, a lovely black wrought-iron fence wraps around the southern and western edges of the graveyard like a benevolent arm, lending both protection and dignity to that hallowed ground. The 28-acre Zion Hill was established in 1842, and like most old cemeteries, is filled with lore: It's said that after World War II, the Japanese government sent the city of Hartford dozens of cherry trees as a gesture of

reconciliation.

Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance, working with Trinity College, erected the fence in July as part of a "comprehensive neighborhood upgrade," says SINA Executive Director Luis Caban. SINA and Trinity paid for two-thirds of the cost of the fence, and the city of Hartford picked up the rest of the tab.

In Robert Frost's poem "Mending Wall," a neighbor famously tells the narrator, "good fences make good neighbors." The narrator wonders "what I was walling in or walling out, / And to whom I was like to give offense."

It's unlikely this graceful, sturdy and architecturally appropriate fence will offend anyone. SINA, Trinity and the city all deserve credit for their neighborly vision.