

Let This Story Rest in Stone:
The Marble Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery

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Figure 1. The Marble Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery. Photograph taken by Lily Garcia.

I. The Not-So Silence of a Grave

I keep my eyes focused on the paved road christened with the name Whitewood Avenue. Dappled sunlight splotches the ground, creating a patchwork pattern, but eventually congeals to the dimmer light of the shade. Looking up, there is a grand silver Linden tree¹ stretching its limbs wide, acting like an umbrella, over what is now an intersection. What a suitable sentinel for the entrance to Linden Avenue. Turning onto the new path allows for the first view of the target destination. It is a tall stone building that gives the impression of being house-like. However, this building, as well as all its neighbors, are not the homes of the living. Mausoleums are what they are, and the street is within the Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York. While well-known celebrities and complex architectural masterpieces reside at this cemetery,² the mausoleum of focus is the eternal resting place of a family whose memory has drifted below the conscious mind. The following essay is a resurrection. Through extensive archival research, field observations, and visual documentation, I attempt to bring William Allen Marble and his family, as well as the mausoleum itself, to life.

II. Setting the Groundwork

Facing west on Linden Avenue, the mausoleum is setback 12' from the street line.³ It is symmetrical and rectangular in shape with dimensions of 12'-2" wide, from side to side, by 14'-8" long, from front to rear, by 13'-3" high. In other words, it is comparable in size to a large backyard shed. Unlike some Do-It-Yourself storage shed that could be purchased at any Home

¹ "Tilia tomentosa-Linden, silver," Woodlawn, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.woodlawn.org/arboretum/tilia-tomentosa-linden-silver/>.

² Andrew Dolkart, "Designing Woodlawn: Buildings and Landscapes," in *Sylvan Cemetery: Architecture, Art and Landscape at Woodlawn* (New York: The Woodlawn Conservancy, 2014), 55.

³ Location Plan of Marble Mausoleum, 1908, Drawer MM 3.1., Folder 21, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999, Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

Depot in the country, the mausoleum is constructed in a “thoroughly workmanlike and firstclass manner.”⁴ Starting with the front elevation, there are two high steps leading up to the recessed entryway where an oxidized pair of bronze doors await. Spanning just 3’ wide across, the individual doors are rather narrow, yet possess an impressive amount of decoration and iconography. In the center of bottom panels, framed like a picture, are lit inverted torches that protrude slightly outward. While the careful curves of the burning bronze flames are awing, the symbolic meaning of the torch is even more kindling. According to the book, *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography*, “the inverted torch with flame burning, which while symbolizing death, suggests that the soul (fire) continues to exist in the next realm.”⁵ By just studying the door and looking at this symbol, the building is communicating that its entrance leads to the resting place of the dead.

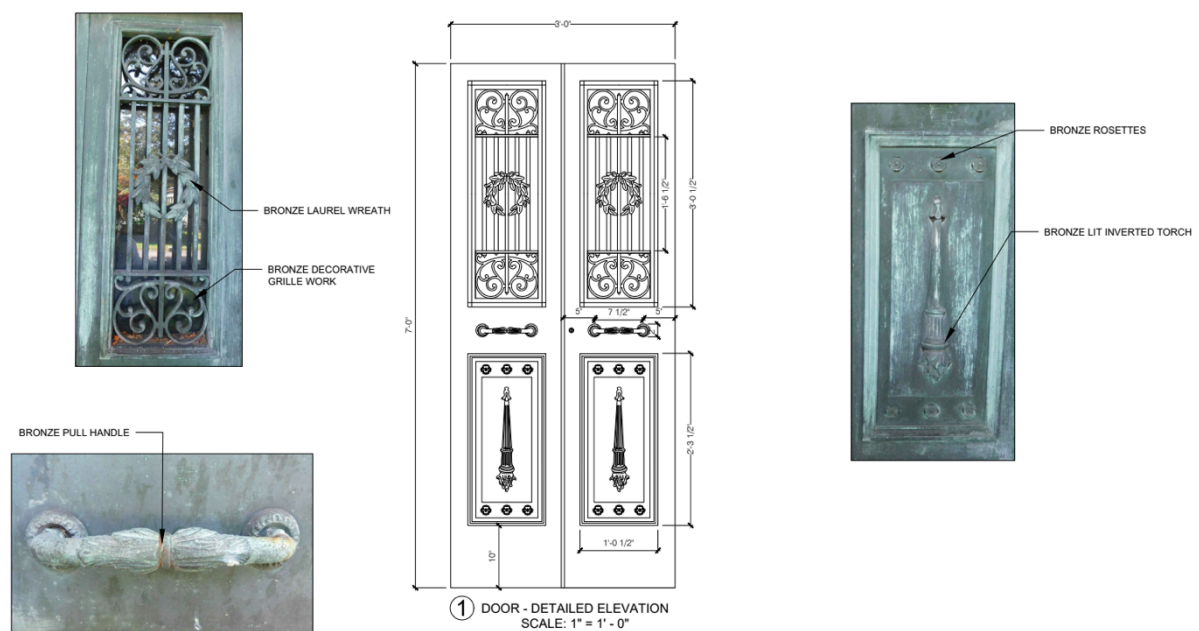


Figure 2. Detailed measured drawing of door with annotations. Created by Lily Garcia.

⁴ Specifications for the Manufacture & Completion of a Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999.

⁵ Douglas Keister, *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2004) 136-137.

Below and above the torches, still within the trim of the bottom panels, are also trios of rosettes. They represent all things under God and inevitable change.⁶ Once again, such a small detail that could easily be overlooked holds a plethora of symbolism that allows the building to express itself. Not only is it telling people what resides inside of it, but the mausoleum is additionally reminding all living visitors who enter of the inevitability of death, which is the peculiar way it is trying to be welcoming. Though it is closed and made of bronze, the door can be opened; it is not a wall. What is required is a key, which is like a waiver for entering the space of the dead. Not anyone can just enter, they need permission and when figuring out how to carefully turn the wafer tumbler lock, they are forced to pause and acknowledge the existence of these symbols. Once those conditions have been met then a person is welcome to enter.

On the lock rail of the door are two pull handles. Above them are the upper panels. Decorative grille work overlays the glass.⁷ On the bottom and top ¼ of the panels is scrollwork that mirrors each other, forming a simple heart-like shape. In the middle of the panels, there are vertical lines of bronze with a laurel wreath centered in front of them. Like the panels on the bottom, this is another example of iconography. Keister describes the multifaceted meanings of the foliage: “Laurel, usually in the form of a wreath, can represent victory, eternity, immortality, and chastity in funeral arts. Its association with eternity and immortality comes from its leaves, which do not wilt or fade. Its link with victory comes from ancient contests where the triumphant winner was crowned with a laurel wreath.”⁸ By nature of the mausoleum, its inhabitants were wealthy.⁹ Such a symbol embodies how affluence is culturally associated with success and allows people to build structures that ideally should last for eternity.

⁶ Northport Historical Society, “Symbols in the Cemetery,” Northport Historical Society, May 20, 2021, accessed 5 October 2023, https://www.northporthistorical.org/symbols_in_the_cemetery.

⁷ Specifications for the Manufacture & Completion of a Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999.

⁸ Keister, *Stories in Stone*, 48.

⁹ Dolkart, “Designing Woodlawn,” 64.

Stepping back puts the dominating material of the overall building back into focus. Granite is used for the entire exterior. The water table is rusticated or “rock faced with a hammered wash,”¹⁰ with all the walls composed of ashlar in the same fashion. Such a rough surface creates a lot of visual interest while also adding a natural look that compliments the tranquility of the lush cemetery. Only a few features interrupt the ashlar work. On the sides of the entryway by the door, the edges are “rounded and fine hammered”¹¹ with small volutes at the top. Both side elevations of the building have small bronze grilles covering ventilation openings near the top. Lastly, the back has a lovely stained-glass window in its center that allows for the lingering rays of the setting Western sun to illuminate the design. The upper portion of the mausoleum, consisting of a frieze and pediment, are granite with a machine finish (planer). On the front, there are raised letters identifying the mausoleum as the “MARBLE” family’s. In addition, there is also a tympanum with a relief carving. To top off the building, there is a roof made up of two pieces of granite.¹²

Now, with a mental blueprint of the elevations of the building laid out, it becomes necessary to discuss who built the Marble Mausoleum before moving to the interior. The contractor and architect of the building is the C.E. Tayntor Granite Company.¹³ While the company erected mausoleums throughout the United States, Woodlawn and Green-Wood cemeteries served as the primary locations of their constructions.¹⁴ They had an office and studio at 29 West 34th Street in New York City, but had quarries in Barre, Vermont and Hallowell, Maine.¹⁵ Granite is the primary stone found in these areas. Charles E. Tayntor “entered the

¹⁰ Specifications for the Manufacture & Completion of a Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999.

¹¹ Specifications, Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

¹² Specifications, Woodlawn Cemetery Records.

¹³ Deed No. 15705, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999.

¹⁴ “Tayntor Granite Company,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, NY), Oct. 26, 1916.

¹⁵ Letterhead, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999.

granite business”¹⁶ around 1887. However, an obituary describes how near the end of Tayntor’s life, in approximately 1907, he began to favor Hallowell granite and closed the office in Barre.¹⁷ Based on an archival document, the Marble Mausoleum was scheduled to be completed July 15, 1908.¹⁸ Given the circumstances and timeline of what was going on in the company when the building was being erected, it is possible to conjecture that the granite of the Marble Mausoleum is no other than Hallowell granite. Consulting *Material Order*, an academic research collection of design materials, corroborated the theory. It is described as “light and fine-grained, with a high feldspar content.”¹⁹ When staring closely at the water table, ashlar, pediment, and other granite features of the mausoleum, it is apparent how light in color it is. Even in the specifications document, it notes, “This Mausoleum is to be made of C.E. Tayntor Granite Company’s Finest light granite.”²⁰ Granite truly was the hallmark of the company, and the exterior material of the Marble Mausoleum, therefore, serves as a reminder of who built it.

¹⁶ “Charles E. Tayntor Died Saturday,” *Barre Daily Times* (Barre, VT), March 6, 1911.

¹⁷ Tayntor Died Saturday,” *Barre Daily Times*.

¹⁸ Deed No. 15705, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999.

¹⁹ A sample of Hallowell Granite, Call number 30-1, Avery Library, Columbia University, <https://materialorder.org/collection/materials/material/60e90c9f-2048-4844-ab8e/>.

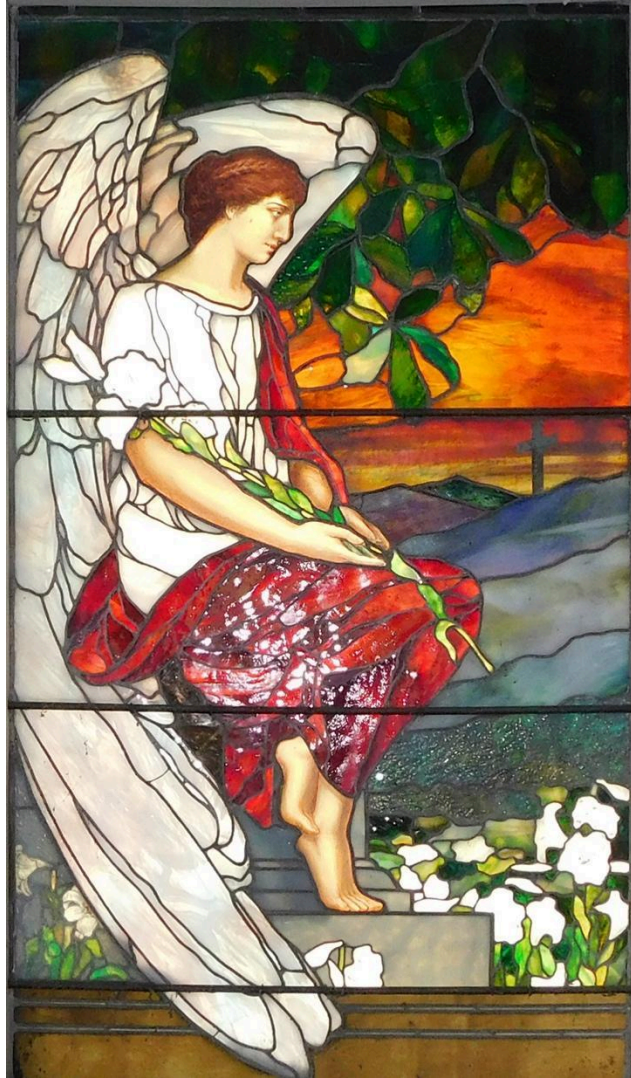
²⁰ Specifications for the Manufacture & Completion of a Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999.



Figure 3. Hallowell Granite Quarry. 1850-1930 (Courtesy of the New York Public Library Digital Collections).

Pushing in the bronze doors reveals a chamber of white Italian marble with an ornate stained-glass window at the center. Stepping inside and closing the door, gives the impression of being in a different realm. The interior is rather narrow with the crypts making up the side walls. Adorning the crypts are bronze rosette handles and the carved names of the Marble family. Watching over this sacred space, ensuring those at rest are granted a peaceful eternal slumber, is an angel embodied in glass. This guardian is sitting on a stone pedestal holding a bouquet of innocent white flowers (see fig. 4). Their eyes are focused, and their posture conveys a sense of ease, like someone prepared for a long shift. Behind them is a twilight sky on the verge of either setting or rising, representing liminality. Such a backdrop further accents the idea inside the mausoleum is a separate realm. It is a space where the barriers between the living and the dead break down, for when one of those carved names are read or spoken aloud, that person is brought

back into existence by entering someone's consciousness. With that, it is now time to resurrect the person who commissioned the mausoleum: William Allen Marble.



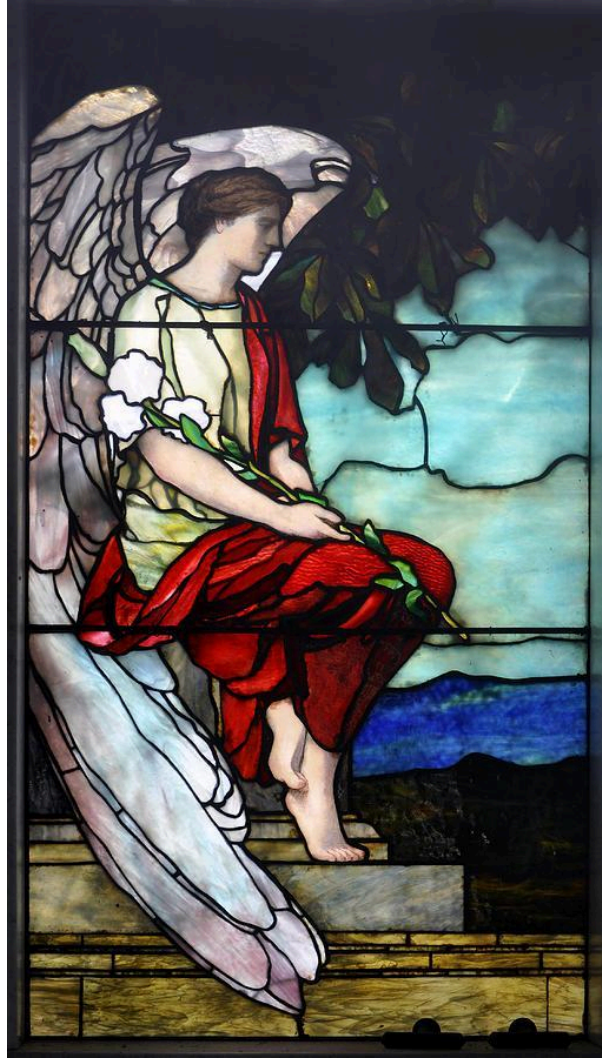


Figure 4. Stained glass in Marble Mausoleum (left) compared to photograph (right) from an unidentified location²¹ (Right photograph by Sally Rockefeller, “Stained Glass Angel with

Flower Interior View,” 2012, *Fine Art America*,

<https://fineartamerica.com/featured/stained-glass-angel-with-flower-interior-view-sally-rockefeller.html>).

er.html).

III. Catching a Breath

²¹ Unfortunately, not much more is known about the photograph. Sally Rockefeller was attempted to be contacted but to no avail.



Figure 5. Portrait of William Allen Marble (Courtesy of National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution).

William Allen Marble was born in Rhode Island near Providence.²² He came into the world in the year 1849. The son of a scythe maker,²³ Marble was exposed early on to the influence of industry. Rhode Island was rapidly changing by the time he was a young man. The book, *Historic and Architectural Resources of Smithfield, Rhode Island*, describes the world he experienced:

The United States was transformed by the upheavals of the Industrial Revolution. In the nineteenth century, the United States became a major industrialized nation and Rhode Island became the most heavily industrialized state, with the textile industry setting the pace. The process of industrialization had important social and economic consequences

²² Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, *Register of the Sons of the American Revolution* (Washington D.C.: Sons of the American Revolution, 1899), 271, <https://ia802802.us.archive.org/7/items/registerofempire00sons/registerofempire00sons.pdf>.

²³ U.S. Census Bureau, *1950 United States Federal Census*, Providence, RI, Smithfield Districts 1 and 4, pp. 92. Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

but it also modified the visual character of towns like Smithfield; the town's landscape was transformed from a rural area, dotted by farming homesteads and minor mills to a series of discrete manufacturing villages.²⁴

The textile industry was the wave of the future. It was noted that, "Throughout the nineteenth century, new factory construction was associated with good economic times."²⁵ The association of industry with success was being reinforced by the changing landscape. Surrounded by such influences, it seems understandable why Marble then chose a career in an industry related to textiles. At eighteen, he started working as a salesman for the Roth & Goldschmidt (R&G) Corset Company.²⁶ This was a somewhat unconventional choice given "the majority of small and medium-sized corset manufacturers and retailers were women."²⁷ A brief analysis of the cultural history of the corset offers insight to why Marble may have purposely selected such a company. Steele writes, "In order to be 'decently' dressed, women had to wear corsets..."²⁸ Corsets were a social convention of the time. They were perceived as a necessary garment for everyday life. Thus, Marble was selecting a company which provided an essential good that most of the population *had to* purchase. A steady customer base for well-past his lifetime was practically guaranteed. In addition, new technology was revolutionizing the production process of the corset, making it a modern product:

Edwin Izod invented the steam moulding process in 1868...Mass-produced corsets became increasingly inexpensive and well made. Some corset manufacturers proudly

²⁴ *Historic and Architectural Resources of Smithfield, Rhode Island* (Washington D.C.: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1992), 7.

²⁵ *Resources of Smithfield*, 9.

²⁶ Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, *National Year Book* (Washington D.C.: Sons of the American Revolution, 1910), 5.

²⁷ Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 40-41.

²⁸ Steele, *The Corset*, 40-41.

displayed images of smoke-belching factories on their trade cards and stationery, linking their products to notions of technical innovation and progress.²⁹

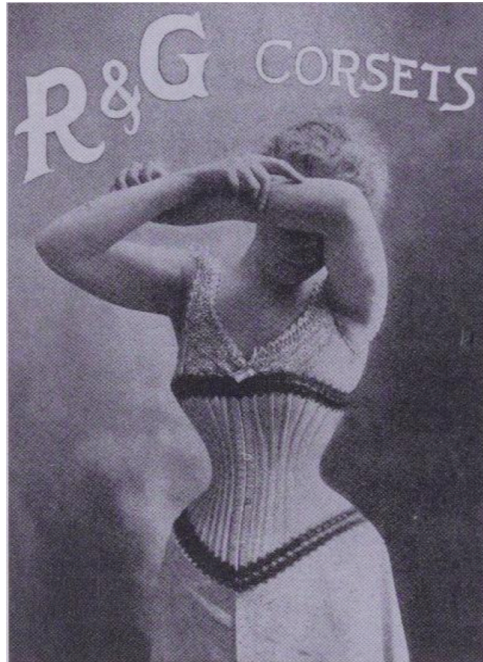


Figure 6. An advertisement of R & G Corsets (In *The Corset: A Cultural History*. By Valerie Steele. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001, 62).

There was a sense of pride in the success of such a company and Marble's career choice ended up being a financially wise decision that supported his family and his future generations. Marble worked his way up in the company for twenty-five years, eventually becoming Vice President and General Manager.³⁰ During this time, he left Rhode Island for New York City where he married Catherine A. and became a father to three sons.³¹ Tragically, Russel, the first-born, passed at eight months.³² He resides in the mausoleum. By 1900s, Marble started becoming involved in organizations such as the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution,

²⁹ Steele, *The Corset*, 40-41.

³⁰ Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, *National Year Book*, 5.

³¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *1860 United States Federal Census*, Providence, RI, pp. 323, Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.; U.S. Census Bureau, *1900 United States Federal Census*, Manhattan, NY, NY, ED 0852, sheet no. 19, pp. 39. Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

³² Based on reading the carvings inside the mausoleum.

which he would serve as President of in 1910.³³ Premature death was sadly a theme among the youth of the Marble family and in 1918, another one of Marble's sons, James, died, as well as his ten-months-old granddaughter.³⁴ From 1910 to Marble's death in 1930, he lived with Catherine at the Hotel Bretton Hall.³⁵ After his passing on September 12, he was interred in the mausoleum where he could rest in peace.

IV. **Laying the Story to Rest**

When I first visited the Marble Mausoleum, I felt a need to pay my respects. In lieu of flowers or other objects, I brought a broom and swept out the interior. A thick layer of dust had settled on the floor, showing the amount of time that had passed without a visitor. When I was finished, the white Italian marble floor was smooth and bright again like a clean slate. Upon retrospection, I have come to understand this project as analogous to the act of cleaning the mausoleum. Memory is cyclical. People and their stories are forgotten, left to accumulate dust. Until, one day, someone remembers, sweeping away that layer of passed time. For a moment, a story is alive again by being at the forefront of a present mind. However, people quickly forgot again and the cycle repeats. My essay has temporarily resurrected the story of the Marble Mausoleum and those inside, but it will soon drift again out of the conscious mind. By having this documentation archived, it ensures the story is set (or rather rests) in stone. The Marble Mausoleum will be forgotten, however, let this essay be a memory cue for its story and inspire the remembrance of others.

³³ Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, *National Year Book*, 5.

³⁴ Based on reading on carvings inside the mausoleum.

³⁵ *1900 United States Federal Census*; U.S. Census Bureau, *1920 United States Federal Census*, Manhattan AD 7, NY, NY, ED 0577, sheet no. 6B, pp. 12. Ancestry.com, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.

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U.S. Census Bureau. *1910 United States Federal Census*. Ancestry.com. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Census Bureau. *1920 United States Federal Census*. Ancestry.com. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Woodlawn Cemetery Records 1863-1999. Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural

and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York, NY.

A sample of Hallowell Granite. Call number 30-1. Avery Library, Columbia University.

<https://materialorder.org/collection/materials/material/60e90c9f-2048-4844-ab8e/>