

Canda Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery
Project 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis
Fall 2012 HP Studio I: Reading Buildings
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Beata Sasińska : October 15, 2012

On June 23, 1916, Ferdinand E. Canda, the principal owner of the Canda Realty Company, a patent holder, and a stockholder and former president of the Chrome Steel Works in Chrome, NJ, bought a plot at Woodlawn Cemetery which would soon become the Canda Mausoleum.¹ He hired Joseph E. Mosel, a designer and builder from Yonkers who worked on a number of other Woodlawn mausoleums, to realize an Egyptian Revival style mausoleum that contained a total of six catacombs.² Unfortunately, little is known of Mosel.

Ferdinand Canda's family history is a complicated one. Ferdinand and his first wife, Angela O. Mora, had a son named after both his parents, Ferdinand Mora Canda.³ Angela Mora died in the same year that he was born, at the age of nineteen, possibly in childbirth. Since her death came before the time of the mausoleum, she was buried elsewhere. The first interment in this mausoleum was Louise Sewall Canda in 1919, Ferdinand's second wife and also a widow by her first husband.⁴ Ferdinand's death soon followed in 1920 because of a "lingering illness".⁵ The next interment was of Marion Grace Canda, the first wife of Ferdinand Jr., in 1924.⁶ Ferdinand Jr. was interred two years later in 1926. The last person to be interred in this mausoleum was Dolcie Margaret Canda, Ferdinand Jr.'s second wife and widow, in an unknown year.⁷ The sixth tomb was left empty. No evidence has been found that Ferdinand Jr. had children.

Ferdinand E. Canda was born to a French father and Italian mother in New York in the August of 1942.⁸ He had two known brothers, Charles J. Canda and Felix F. Canda.⁹ He started out as a contractor, later becoming a civil engineer, and finally a wealthy New York City businessman with an office on Madison Avenue.¹⁰ He and his wife were involved in numerous benefit functions throughout New York City, suggesting an active social life and deep, charitable pockets.¹¹ Ferdinand died at the age of 78 on October 14 at his residence on 667 Madison Avenue, with his funeral taking place two days later at the Church of St. Vincent de Paul.¹² At his death, Ferdinand was generous with his fortune, distributing it between the children of his deceased brother, Felix, his wife's children by her former husband, his own son, and other

friends and family members.¹³ Ferdinand Jr. was also a civil engineer after his father, an officer of the Chrome Steel Company, and holder of multiple patents.¹⁴ He was also generous in his will, donating \$100,000 to St. Vincent's Hospital in honor of his late wife, Marion.

The mausoleum constructed for the Canda family is a symmetrical structure that has battered walls culminating in cavetto cornices, a stepped pedimented roof, and a door surround that very nearly mirrors the shape of the façade. It is quite clear in its invocation of Egyptian temple architectural language (Cover Image).

The mausoleum consists of walls made from Green's Landing Granite with the interior walls polished, a concrete foundation, Pennsylvania Slate catacombs, bronze metal doors and details, a leaded stained-glass window, an altar made of White Veined Bianco P. Italian Marble, and granite floors with marble slabs over the catacombs.¹⁵ The materials chosen were relatively costly, which suggests that while the mausoleum was modest in size compared to some of the others in the cemetery, the Canda family used the best materials they could afford to construct it.

There is a strong theme of lotiform designs in this mausoleum. The lotus, a flower that opens in the day and closes at night, was a popular ancient Egyptian symbol of rebirth. Therefore, its use as a motif on the doors, window, and etched into the walls is appropriate in a mausoleum (Figure 1). The sun disk or winged sun on the exterior above the door is emblematic of the sun god, symbolizing the duality of creation and death (Figure 2). Considering the importance of the afterlife in Egyptian architecture, a mausoleum is the ideal building type in which to manifest the Egyptian Revival that was popular during the late 19th century. One peculiarity, however, is the quatrefoil altar with Doric colonnettes, which seems more Gothic than Egyptian in form (Figure 3).

The mausoleum uses ancient Egyptian forms to achieve monumentality, but with some changes. The material used is a light-colored granite that is relatively uniform in appearance and is used in large blocks with few mortar joints. This gives the building a massive appearance. The battered walls accentuate its verticality, and coupled with the simplified cavetto cornice, create a

pylon form that is reminiscent of the entrance to an ancient temple. A propylon used as a door surround is also a familiar form. Together, these stacked pylons draw attention to the main entrance (Cover Image).

The roof also contributes to the idea of monumentality central to this façade. While ancient Egyptian roofs are traditionally flat, this roof has a series of two steps that form a sort of podium for the pediment that crowns the building. These additions give the roof verticality, drawing the eye upwards. Together with the battered walls, these elements give an illusion of greater height and monumentality. The wider base of this structure also makes the entire mausoleum seem more grounded, permanent.

The landscaping dictates how one is to approach the mausoleum. Even though it is on a small plot close to a main road, the only access to the structure is on a straight axis. This would also be consistent with Egyptian temple models that often featured a long dromos. The four shrubs and two trees are symmetrically arranged in the corners of the building, suggesting that they were deliberately placed in those spots. While these seem insignificant, they do impede access to the mausoleum from the side. Even though the steps wrap around the corner of the building and the road is perpendicular to the main entrance, the placement of the wide shrubs at each corner of the steps makes it nearly impossible to pass through them and enter at a diagonal from the road (Figure 4). Entering from the front is not only impressive because of the presence of the pylons and large bronze doors, but also because the front façade is visually larger than that of the side view. This sends a clear message: this mausoleum must be approached head-on, portraying prominence and monumentality of form.

This mausoleum is of particular interest because of its clever use of Egyptian forms to portray monumentality and symbolism, as well as the use of the landscape in order to dictate how the mausoleum is meant to be approached and experienced. Ferdinand E. Canda clearly wanted to be remembered as a prominent figure in New York, and ensured that his final resting place was worthy of that status.

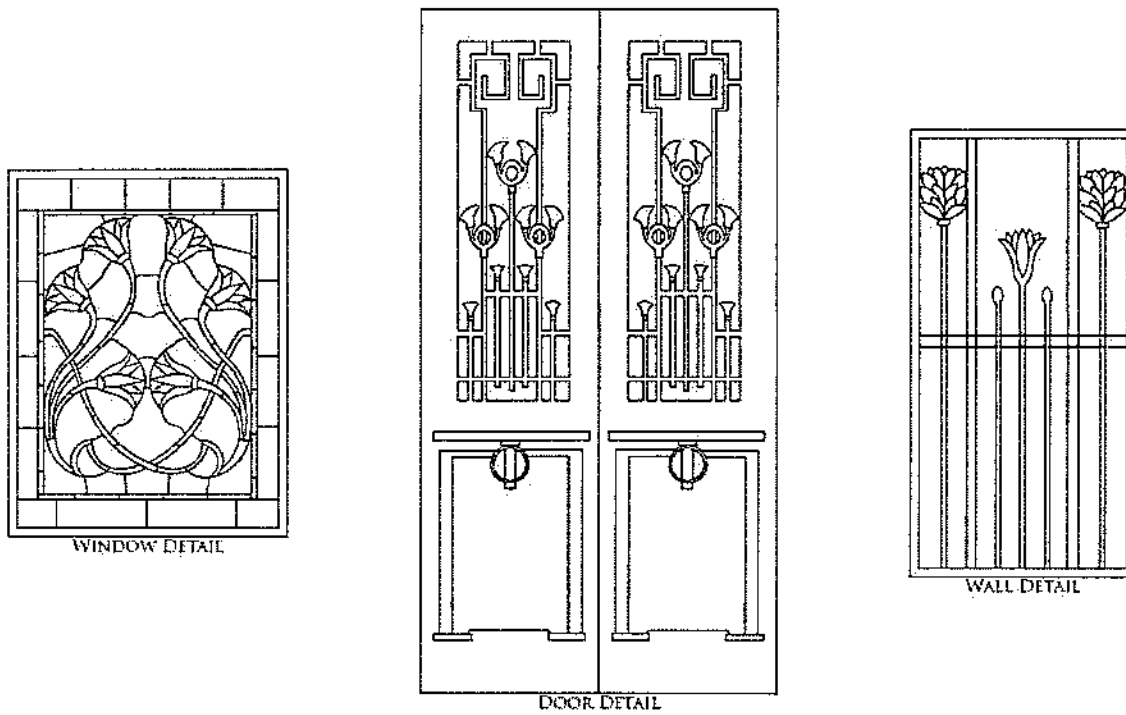


Figure 1

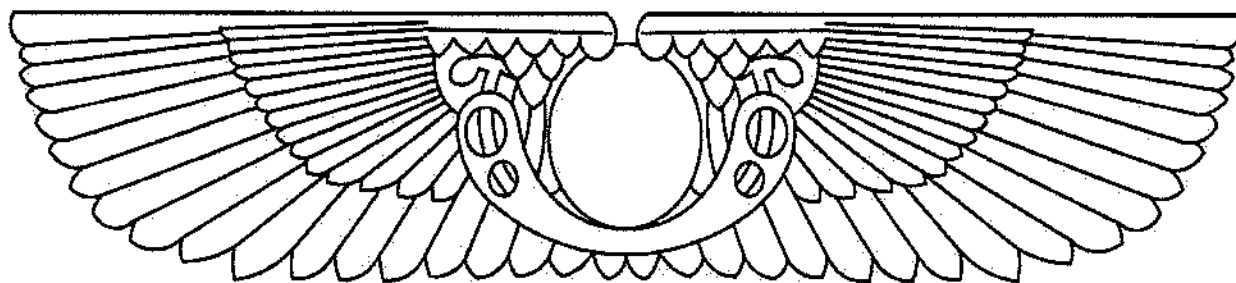


Figure 2

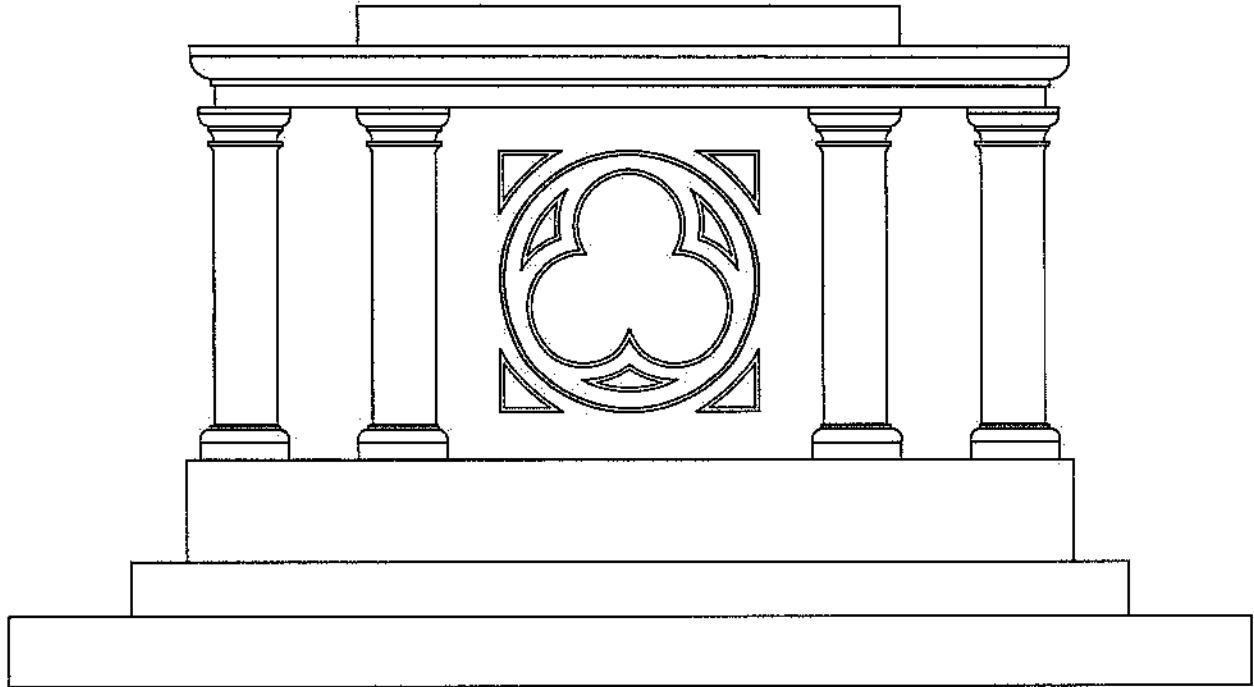


Figure 3

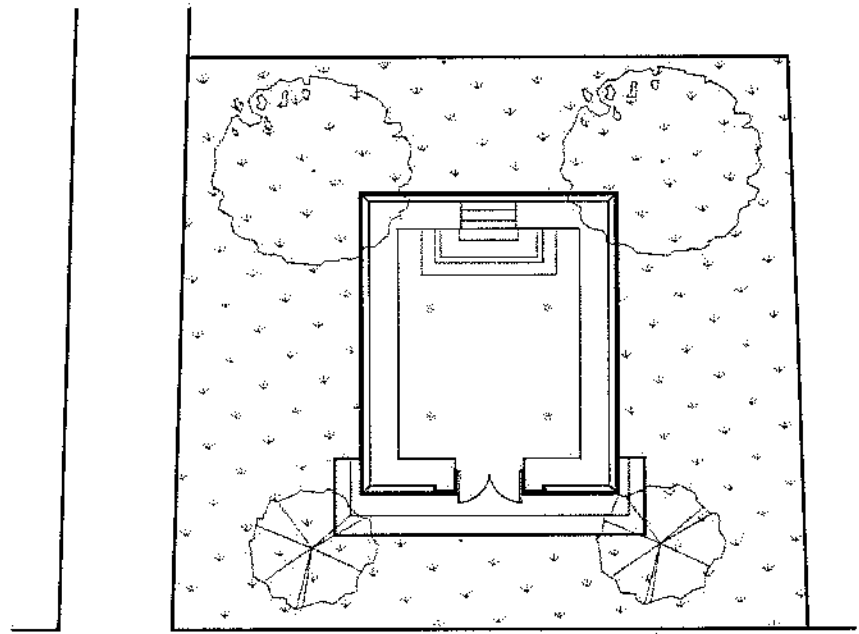


Figure 4



Photograph, Front Façade

Photograph, Side Façade and Road



Notes

- ¹ "Obituary 4 -- No Title." 1920. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Oct 15, 13-13. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ² *Canda Mausoleum*, Woodlawn Cemetery Archives, Avery Library Classics, Columbia University.
- ³ "Died." 1866. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Sep 30, 5-5. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ⁴ "Ferdinand E. Canda's Will found." 1920. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Oct 24, 23-23. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ⁵ "Died." 1866. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Sep 30, 5-5. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ⁶ "F.M. Canda Left \$552,811." 1929. *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Nov 19, 13. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ⁷ "F.M. Canda Left \$552,811." 1929. *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Nov 19, 13. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ⁸ Year: 1910; Census Place: Manhattan Ward 19, New York, New York; Roll: T624_1043; Page: 134; Enumeration District: 1141; Image: 275; FHL microfilm: 1375056.
- ⁹ "Obituary 4 -- No Title." 1920. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Oct 15, 13-13. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- "Ferdinand E. Canda's Will found." 1920. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Oct 24, 23-23. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ¹⁰ Ancestry.com. *New York City Directories 1916* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: The Generations Network, Inc., 2005.
- ¹¹ "St. Vincent's Hospital Dance." 1912. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jan 09, 13. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ¹² "Deaths." 1920. *New - York Tribune (1911-1922)*, Oct 16, 9. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ¹³ "Ferdinand E. Canda's Will found." 1920. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Oct 24, 23-23. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ¹⁴ "F.M. Canda Left \$552,811." 1929. *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Nov 19, 13. Proquest Historical Newspapers.
- ¹⁵ "Specifications". *Canda Mausoleum*, Woodlawn Cemetery Archives, Avery Library Classics, Columbia University.

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Year: 1910; Census Place: *Manhattan Ward 19, New York, New York*; Roll: T624_1043; Page: 13A; Enumeration District: 1141; Image: 275; FHL microfilm: 1375056.

Harris, Cyril M.. *Illustrated dictionary of Historic Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications, 1977.

