

## Biographical Research on The Proctor's Mausoleum

### The Designer: Tayntor Granite Company



Figure 1. *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 26, 1916. Newspaper.com



Figure 2. The Exterior of the Proctor Mausoleum. Photo courtesy of Woodlawn Cemetery

The mausoleum building belonging to the Proctor family was designed and constructed by the Tayntor Granite Company (Figure 1). This company was a specialist in designing and constructing mausoleum and monument

buildings in New York City. By 1916, they had erected 400 mausoleums in the United States, 130 of which were in Woodlawn Cemetery in New York. Their design was generally derived from Egyptian, Greek and Italian memorial architecture.<sup>1</sup>

The Proctor's mausoleum (Figure 2) is in a Greek style with a pediment entrance and four Doric columns. It was 12 feet wide, near 20 feet long, and near 14 feet high. The building

was constructed with fine grain granite, which was processed as rock face on the ashlar walls and fine hammered on other exposed surfaces on the roof, steps, columns, frieze and pediment.<sup>2</sup>

For the plan of Proctor's mausoleum, it consists of two portions: a front room with stained glass on the two sides, and a rear group of twelve catacombs. The two stained-glass windows have different motifs (Figure 3). They both have a Greek architectural frame and a bunch of narcissus. The difference is, on the narcissus, one window has a crown and the other has a Christian cross. Narcissus generally stands for purity, the crown for power and wealth and the cross may stands for

<sup>1</sup> Newspapers.com, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 26 October 1916: Page 56.

<sup>2</sup> Woodlawn Cemetery Records, "Specifications for the Manufacture & Completion of a Granite Mausoleum to Be Erected in Woodlawn Cemetery for F. F. Proctor by C. E. Tayntor & Co." Avery Drawings in Columbia University.

the commissioner's belief. The exact relationship between the family and stained glass is still a puzzle. For the mausoleum's rear part, catacombs are arranged as four layers with three in each group (Figure 4). Catacomb 12 is still vacant and the other eleven catacombs have been occupied by ten Proctor family members and one person whose relationship to the Proctor's family is not known. Outside of the mausoleum is a surrounding lawn, which has one statue on the ground and twenty-three underground burials occupied by people who had some relationship with the Proctor family.



Figure 3. Two Stained-Glass Windows in the Front Room.

Photo courtesy of Woodlawn Cemetery

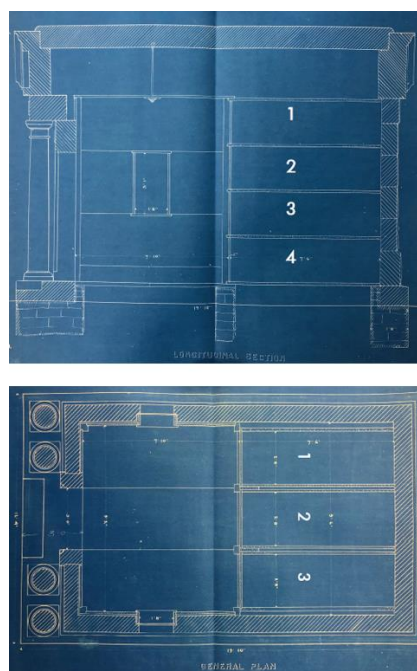


Figure 4. The Section (above) and Plan (below) of the Proctor Mausoleum. Woodlawn Cemetery Records, Avery Library

## The Owner: Frederick Freeman Proctor

The Proctor mausoleum was commissioned by Frederick Freeman Proctor (1851-1929), whose name was abbreviated as F. F. Proctor on the frieze of the mausoleum. He was hailed as “the Dean of Vaudeville”. F. F. Proctor was a millionaire who engaged in the theater business first in New York and finally all around the United States. Born to a physician named Dr. Alpheus Proctor and Lucy Ann Tufts in 1851 in Dexter, Maine, Frederick was the youngest of the five children of this

family.<sup>3</sup> He married twice, had four children and moved twice during his 78-year life.

At first, F. F. Proctor was a bundle boy in a Boston dry goods store where he spent his lunch break time practicing his interests: acrobatics and juggling. In the 1870s, during his twenties, he traveled the United States and Europe with the L.B. Lent Circus using the stage name “Fred Levantine” (Figure 5). During this period, F. F. Proctor met and married Mary Ann Daly, a young vaudeville performer. In the 1880s, through the tour, he earned and saved money.



Figure 5. F. F. Proctor as Fred Levantine in 1870s. Theater Historical Society of America

He and his partner Henry Jacob opened and operated cut-rate vaudeville houses in many places, including Albany, Schenectady, Rochester, Utica, Buffalo, Syracuse, Brooklyn, Troy, New Haven, Bridgeport, Hartford, Lancaster, Lynn, Wilmington and Worcester.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 6. Proctor's 23rd Street Theatre. Museum of the City of New York

But in 1889 their partnership broke up and Proctor moved his family, which included his wife, two daughters and one son, to New York City and continued to open more theaters. The same year he opened Proctor's 23rd Street Theatre (Figure 6) in New York City as a legitimate house, which is now regarded as his most famous theater. In 1892, Proctor switched the performances inside from legitimate plays to vaudeville. At that time, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Theater was the first vaudeville theater in New York. “He offered continuous performances from noon to midnight six days a week. For the price of admission a patron could stay all day and New Yorkers

became familiar with his marketing slogan ‘After Breakfast Go to Proctor’s, After Proctor’s Go to Bed.’”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> FamilySearch.com, “Frederick Freeman Proctor,” FamilySearch, <https://ancestors.familysearch.org>

<sup>4</sup> Theatre Historical Society of America, “The Dean of Vaudeville, F. F. Proctor,” Theatre Historical Society of America, <https://historictheatres.org/blog/2017/09/24/the-dean-of-vaudeville-f-f-proctor/>

<sup>5</sup> Tom Miller, “The Lost Proctor's Theatre - Nos. 139-145 W. 23rd Street,” <https://daytoninmanhattan.blogspot.com/search?q=The+Lost+Proctor%27s+Theatre+-+Nos.+139-145+W.+23rd+Street>, 2013.

Proctor was a far-sighted businessman. He kept his theaters current with the public taste and technology. By 1895 he was trying to offer early "moving pictures" in his theaters. In 1899, he even developed cooperation with the filmmaker William Paley to show motion pictures at Proctor's theaters. He was so successful that by 1900, F. F. Proctor (Figure 7) had opened his second vaudeville house, the



Pleasure Palace on East 58th Street and then third one, the 5th Avenue Theatre.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 7. Frederick F. Proctor, 1900. Theater Historical Society of America

As expected, the days of live shows at Proctor's 23rd Street Theatre were quickly drawn to an end. Motion pictures were the new rage. F. F. Proctor also observed society carefully and seized the opportunity to invest in the economic prosperity and population explosion in New York. He continued to expand his chain of theaters and eventually owned, leased or rented over 50 theatres from Delaware to Canada, and from Boston to Cleveland in the United States.<sup>7</sup>

In 1929, F. F. Proctor retired and sold nearly all his theaters for an estimated sixteen million dollars.<sup>8</sup> On September 4, he died of congestive heart failure at his home in Larchmont, NY. In his will, F. F. Proctor gave generous amounts of money to the Actors' Fund, which provided financial assistance to retired actors. Interviewed on radio in 1986, a grandniece of F. F. Proctor, Marjorie Proctor described her "Uncle Freddy" as "very quiet, reserved—extremely clever—and devoted to his employees, as they were to him."<sup>9</sup> From his successful business experience, he can be also described as self-discipline and far-sighted. In sum, F. F. Proctor played a significant role in the vaudeville and theater development of the United States.

Radio Keith Orpheum (RKO) Corporation purchased Proctor's theaters in New York including the 23rd Street Theater. RKO showed motion pictures for only about seven years. In 1937 a big fire destroyed the 23<sup>rd</sup> St theater.<sup>10</sup> The Proctor's 125<sup>th</sup> St theater and 58<sup>th</sup> St theater were also removed afterwards. Nowadays, there are organizations making endeavors to protect Proctor's

<sup>6</sup> Tom Miller, "The Lost Proctor's Theatre - Nos. 139-145 W. 23rd Street."

<sup>7</sup> Theatre Historical Society of America, "The Dean of Vaudeville, F. F. Proctor."

<sup>8</sup> Ginny M., "Frederick Freeman Proctor," Find a Grave, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/14751082/frederick-freeman-proctor>

<sup>9</sup> Theatre Historical Society of America, "The Dean of Vaudeville, F. F. Proctor."

<sup>10</sup> Tom Miller, "The Lost Proctor's Theatre - Nos. 139-145 W. 23rd Street."



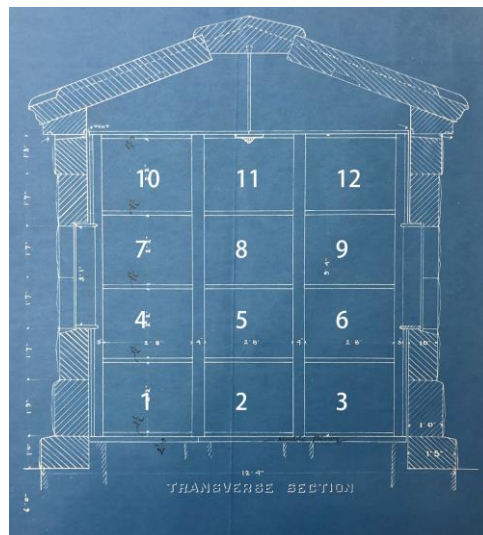
theater heritage having restored surviving theaters such as the Proctor's theater in downtown Schenectady, which is now a lively performing arts center.<sup>11</sup>

## The People Interred in the Mausoleum: The Proctor Family

### The First Generation

In New York, the Proctor family first lived in Mamaroneck, Westchester in 1900 and by 1918 they had moved to Larchmont, Westchester, where F. F. Proctor lived until his death.<sup>12</sup> Mary died in 1901 in Larchmont, so there was possibility that Proctor moved to Larchmont to commemorate Mary, his first wife.<sup>13</sup>

Ten members of the Proctor family were buried in



the Proctor mausoleum, containing four generations. The first generation buried in the Proctor's

mausoleum refers to Frederick Freeman Proctor (Figure 8, Catacomb 5), his eldest sister Louisa Tufts Proctor (Catacomb 2) and brother-in-law Theron J. Cummings (Catacomb 3), his first wife Mary Ann Daly (Catacomb 4), and his second wife Georgina Eliza Mills (Catacomb 6). Mary was the mother of Proctor's four children. Three years after Mary's death in 1901, Frederick married Georgina; they never had any children.<sup>14</sup>

### The Second Generation

<sup>11</sup> at PROCTORS, "FROM VAUDEVILLE TO BROADWAY AND BEYOND," at PROCTORS, [https://www.proctors.org/our-history/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1608364092.0067369937896728515625](https://www.proctors.org/our-history/?doing_wp_cron=1608364092.0067369937896728515625)

<sup>12</sup> Ancestry.com, "Frederick Freeman Proctor's Facts,"

<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/164118133/person/412135020760/facts>

<sup>13</sup> Ancestry.com, "1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line], Census Place: Mamaroneck, Westchester, New York; Page: 34; Enumeration District: 0075; FHL microfilm: 1241175," Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2004.

Ancestry.com, "Mary Ann Daly's

Facts," <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/164118133/person/412135021242/facts>

<sup>14</sup> Ancestry.com, "Frederick Freeman Proctor's Facts."

As for the second generation of the Proctor family, there were three daughters and one youngest son. The eldest daughter, Ellenor Susan Proctor (Figure 9) was born in 1873 and married twice. She and her first husband, Joseph R. Gibson, left each other for some reason. Her second husband, Lester Howard Riley, and their only daughter, Etelka Berrien Riley, both died earlier than she, in 1920, because of pneumonia and birth difficulty respectively. Ellenor was lonely during her old life and died in her 62<sup>nd</sup> year in 1935.<sup>15</sup> She was buried in Catacomb 9 (Figure 8) of the Proctor's mausoleum.



Figure 9. Ellenor Susan Proctor, 1873-1935. Ancestry.com

Compared to Frederick's other children, the second eldest daughter, Henrietta Freeman Proctor (Figure 10) was the luckiest. Born in 1874, Henrietta was one year younger than her elder sister Ellenor and lived a long life of 90 years. She also got married twice. The first time, in 1903,



Figure 10. Henrietta Freeman Proctor, 1874-1963. Ancestry.com

Henrietta married Frank O' Donnell in St. Augustine's Church in Larchmont, New York and received her rich father's gift, a villa in Larchmont. However, unfortunately, Frank died in 1922 when Henrietta was 48 years old. In 1934, Henrietta was an heiress with the millions left by her father, F. F. Proctor.<sup>16</sup> At this moment she was honeymooning with John Francis Reilly, a hairdressing shop owner who was twenty years younger than her. Henrietta died in 1963 and was buried in Catacomb 10 (Figure 8) in her family mausoleum. She survived all her family members but had no children. During her final twenty years, she lived alone with no family.

Frederick's third daughter, Emma Proctor, died young, but was not buried in the Proctor's mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery. Frederick's only son, Frederick Freeman Proctor Jr., died young, too. He was the youngest in his family but died ahead of his father when Frederick Freeman Proctor Jr. was 42 years old, which was probably the reason why F. F. Proctor let

<sup>15</sup> Ancestry.com, "Ellenor Susan Proctor's Facts."

<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/164118133/person/412135021245/facts>

<sup>16</sup> Ancestry.com, "Henrietta Freeman Proctor's Facts,"

<https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/family-tree/person/tree/164118133/person/412135021246/facts>

Henrietta inherit his assets. He was buried in Catacomb 1.

### **The Third and Fourth Generation**

Frederick's only granddaughter, Ellenor's only daughter, Etelka Berrien Riley, died on October 1, 1920. Her still born infant died the same day, who was Frederick's great-grandchild. The third and fourth generation were buried in one catacomb (Figure 8, Catacomb 8) in Woodlawn Cemetery.<sup>17</sup>

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