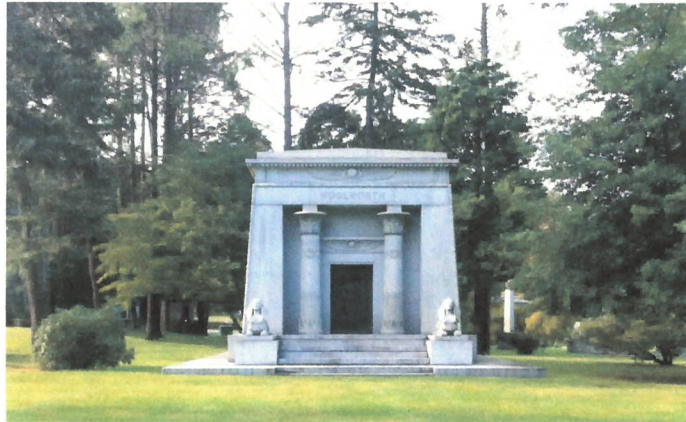


Fernanda Sotelo – 17 October 2011
Project 3: Field Documentation and Formal Analysis
Francoise Bollack, Ward Denis, Andrew Dolkart



Frank Winfield Woolworth, born in 1852, was the founder of the “five-and-ten-cent” discount stores, which bare his family name. From rural New York State, Woolworth grew up working on the family farm. At the age of 21 he left the farm to work at a dry goods store, “his willingness to work... coupled with his initiative, stamina, and determination, endeared him to the proprietors”.¹ Woolworth took the idea of selling discount goods at a mass level and created an empire of stores throughout the United States and Europe. As described in his obituary in the New York Sun, “He won a fortune, not showing how little could be sold for much, but much could be sold for little”²

Woolworth commemorated his success with the construction of a company headquarters, a 792-foot tower in New York City. At the time, the Woolworth Building was the tallest building in the world³. The 24th floor housed Woolworth’s office, the “Empire Room” which was regarded as the “most,

¹ “From Farm to Mansion”, New York Times, May 8, 1977.

² “From Farm to Mansion”.

³ “From Farm to Mansion”.

important architectural interior of his “city” within a city”⁴. The marble-clad space was furnished in Napoleonic “Empire Style” and functioned as a museum-like setting⁵ for Woolworth’s Napoleonic memorabilia⁶ and rare Egyptian figures⁷.

Having lived a lavish life, on April 8, 1919 Frank Winfield Woolworth passed away at his home in Glen Cove, New York. The cause was attributed to stones in the gall bladder, nervous exhaustion and septic poisoning.⁸ Memorial services were conducted at his home in New York City as well as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Washington D.C.⁹. Frank Winfield Woolworth was buried in Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, New York.

Woolworth Mausoleum Formal Analysis

Within the expansive, designed lawn of Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York rests the Woolworth Mausoleum. Located in the most exclusive location in Woodland¹⁰, Woolworth Mausoleum is situated on Central Avenue amongst many majestic monuments in honor of distinguished people who have passed. While the Woolworth Mausoleum may not be the largest mausoleum amongst its neighbors, it successfully projects as an imposing sepulcher.

Commissioned by Frank Winfield Woolworth for the internment of himself and his family, the Woolworth Mausoleum was designed by John Russell Pope. The plans were begun during F. W. Woolworth’s lifetime but with his sudden passing on April 8, 1919, the final design was carried out after his death¹¹.

⁴ Gail Fenske, The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) 241.

⁵ Fenske, 293.

⁶ Fenske, 293.

⁷ Monica Randall, Winfield: Living in the Shadow of the Woolworths, (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2003) 122-123.

⁸ Jean Maddern Pitrone, F. W. Woolworth and the American Five and Dime: A Social History, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2003) 54.

⁹ Pitrone, 65.

¹⁰ Ernest Stevens Leland, “Planting the Mausoleum: IV – The Woolworth Mausoleum”, Park and Cemetery Gardening 1900 – 1931, April 1922, 32, 2: 2.

¹¹ Leland, 4.

Farrington, Gould and Hoagland finalized the design in August 1919¹² and constructed the mausoleum that currently sits in Woodlawn Cemetery. However, it is believed that Woolworth's original plan had called for a structure twice the size¹³.

Near the Jerome Avenue entrance of the Woodlawn Cemetery, the Woolworth Mausoleum is centered on a large 1/3-acre lot among grand neighbors that include Geo Ehret and John G. Gates. The landscape design firm of Brinley and Holbrook, from New York, utilized a formal scheme to project the Woolworth Mausoleum from the surrounding larger structures¹⁴. The strategically planted evergreens to either side of the entrance and in the back of the lot draws in the architecture of the building. The landscaping picks-up and highlights the lines and strength of the building mass while the overall design screens the mausoleum from its neighbors and enhances its scale¹⁵. With its' elegant architecture framed by well-thought out landscape, the Woolworth Mausoleum is defined from its neighbors and commands attention.

Cut of Barre Granite by N. Pellagi and Co., of Northfield, VT, the Woolworth Mausoleum is a symmetrical building with a robust, monolithic presence. Battered walls flourished with torus moldings, a cavetto cornice of vertical leaves, and decorative Egyptian motifs recall the mystique of ancient Egypt. The Egyptian revival sepulcher is perched atop two plinths that are reached by stairs. The stairs, flanked by sculptures of female sphinxes, introduce the central axis and ascend to the top of the plinths. At the summit of the stairs the axis is reinforced by the architecture with the an exterior vestibule that is set back in between two lily-topped (bell capital) columns. The vestibule and columns lead you to the front gate/entrance.

Embraced by columns, the entrance surround is detailed with torus molding and a cornice decorated with lotus leaves, a winged-globe and uroei

¹² J. R. Gould, letter to Woodlawn Cemetery, August 8, 1919, Woodlawn Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University (New York, NY).

¹³ Leland, 4.

¹⁴ Leland, 3.

¹⁵ Leland, 4.

(snake heads). The gate/door is made of sculpted bronze door, by Julius Loester¹⁶, and portrays three Egyptian figures exchanging the ankh (symbol of life).

Through the threshold, the interior space contrasts with the muscular exterior. The use of granite on the exterior is exchanged for Italian Marble and creates a light, intimate space where F.W. Woolworth and his wife, Jennie C. Woolworth lie in marble sarcophagi and seven Woolworth Descendent rest in catacombs. The interior is lit with stained-glass windows depicting scenes from ancient Egypt. The walls are detailed with delicate marble reliefs, portraying motifs of flowers and leaves. The original sarcophagi were Egyptian inspired from Evans of Boston¹⁷. However they were replaced in 1941 by sarcophagi designed by Gregory B. Webb, Architect¹⁸.

The Woolworth Mausoleum is credited with having been designed by John Russell Pope, famous for the design of the Jefferson Memorial. Pope was an architect classically trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, France. Pope is known to have traveled Europe and to have spent time at the American Academy in Rome. Through his professional training and work he explored neo-classical modes. John Russell Pope was highly influenced by classical architecture in which he "found precedents and inspiration in 18th century and 19th century folios of measured drawings and restorations of ancient buildings"¹⁹. For funerary monuments Pope was inspired by antiquity and attempted to "create forms that inspire the viewer to contemplate death"²⁰. Hence, it is not surprising that Pope would look to Egyptian revival for inspiration.

Ancient Egyptian architecture tends to be regarded as funerary since most of the remaining structures are related to death and the after life. The late 18th century was an age of revivals and Ancient Egyptian architecture became part of

¹⁶ Leland, 4.

¹⁷ Leland, 4.

¹⁸ Architectural Drawings, May 29, 1941, Woodlawn Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University (New York, NY).

¹⁹ Steven McLeod Bedford, "John Russell Pope Architect of Empire" (New York: Rizzoli Press 1998) 8.

²⁰ Bedford, 206.

the movement. European interest in the style was supported by archeology and documentation. Images of Egypt conjured up by the likes of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's (1720-1778) fireplace designs²¹, and the Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798-99 inspired the understanding and exploration of Egypt.

The vocabulary for Egyptian architecture was well documented by the late 18th and early 19th century. Napoleon Bonaparte's commission of the publications "Description de L'Egypte" (1809) fed the architectural minds of designers with its folio-sized drawings of Egypt, temples, reliefs, ornaments, tombs, and maps²², Architectural guidebooks in both America and Europe began to include Egyptian and "Oriental Styles". Hence, the numerous documentation of ancient Egyptian architecture and its natural association of death and funerary imagery established by the 19th century an Egyptian Revival Movement in American commemorative arts.²³

Pyramids, Temples, and obelisks are iconographic Egyptian building types that inspired designers of the 19th century to design tombs. Egyptian architectural features and ornamental motifs were borrowed²⁴ and appropriated to contemporary plans and construction methods. The F. W. Woolworth Mausoleum is one of many mausoleums inspired by Egyptian Revival. It elegantly uses the traditional architectural vocabulary and "egyptianized" accessories, such as gates, Egyptian motifs, and battered walls.

John Russell Pope, prior to designing the Woolworth Mausoleum, turned to ancient Egypt for the design of an unbuilt mausoleum for the McLean family at Woodlawn Cemetery. The mausoleum was designed in the shape of a squat, monolithic obelisk with Egyptian sculptural motifs and figures. It was regarded as a beautiful and inventive use of Egyptian Revival. His design for the Woolworth

²¹ Richard G. Carrott. The Egyptian Revival – Its Sources, Monuments, and Meaning (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978) 22.

²² Peggy McDowell and Richard E. Meyer, The Revival Style in American Memorial Architecture (Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994) 133.

²³ McDowell, 133.

²⁴ McDowell, 148.

Mausoleum seems to have been more prescribed and “stilted”²⁵ in comparison to the McLean design. However, the elegant use of proportion and materials results in a structure that stands out amongst the many grand mausoleums of the Woodlawn Cemetery.

It seems unlikely that the erected Woolworth Mausoleum is the intended design of John Russell Pope and F. W. Woolworth. With his unexpected death, it seems that the design was left unresolved. However, from Pope’s exploration of the Egyptian style and Woolworth’s inclination for pomp and grandeur, it can be deduced that both parties agreed to the use of Egyptian architecture as the best style to express Woolworth’s legacy on earth and in the afterlife.

²⁵ Bedford, 206.