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Study of Life of Henry Clay Berlin & Analysis of Berlin Mausoleum



Photo of Berlin Mausoleum- Doei Kang

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The Berlin Mausoleum has stood in Woodlawn Cemetery in Bronx, New York with a century long worth of history while commemorating Henry Clay Berlin and his family members. Henry Clay Berlin obtained the deed of the plot for his mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery on August 10 of 1904¹, and the order of the materials was carried out on August 30th of 1904. Henry C. Berlin died on May 12th of 1921; therefore, it is fair speculation that Henry Berlin or his family members bought the plot almost 20 years before his passing. The Berlin Mausoleum is situated in ‘section No.123 on Pine Plot’, facing north on Pine Avenue, with its size being 800 square feet. There are eight marble catacombs in the mausoleum; five of them are occupied; specifically, Henry C. Berlin, his wife Sarah Weeks, his two sons Harry W. and Thomas Berlin and his daughter Laura Berlin Shaw. The Berlin Mausoleum project was carried out by ‘C.E. Tayntor &



Co’. C.E. Tayntor was a granite company based in New York during the 19th century.

Figure 1. Photograph by Doei Kang

¹ Henry C. Berlin, United States Federal Census, 1850, New York Ward 13, Series Number: *M432*, Roll: *550*; Page: *400b*

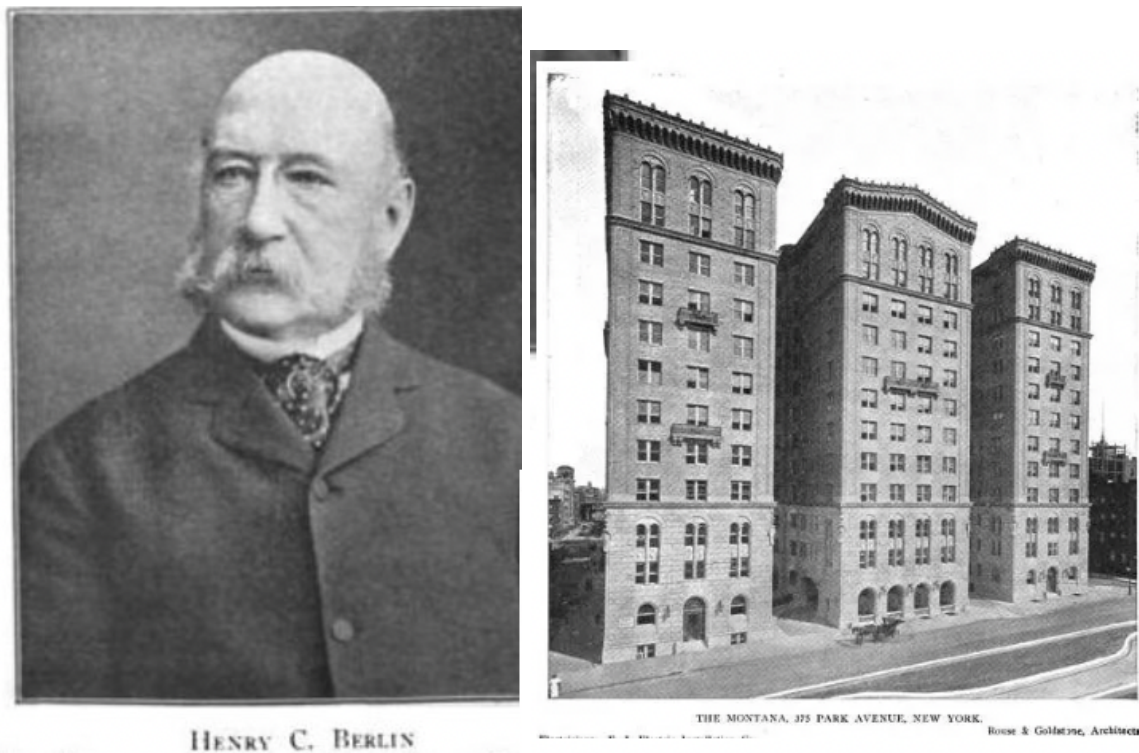


Figure 2. Photograph of Henry Clay Berlin

Walden's Stationer and Printer. United States: n.p., 1921.

Figure 3. The Montona Apartment on Park Ave

February 28, The Editors, and 2014 11:00 Am. 2014. "Old New York: The History of 375 Park Avenue." Commercial Observer. February 28, 2014. <https://commercialobserver.com/2014/02/from-the-vault-375-park-avenue/>.

Henry Clay Berlin's Biography

With various sources of biographical information about Henry Clay Berlin, it is speculated that he was born in July in the year of 1839 or 1836. Henry Clay Berlin was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where Emily Johnson, his mother, and Jacob Berlin, his father was born. Henry Berlin had an older sister, Josephine Virginia Berlin, younger brother, Charles J. Berlin, and two younger sisters, Amanda E. Berlin and Emily Frances Berlin. At the age of 74 in

1879, Emily Johnson Berlin passed away and was buried in Green-wood Cemetery², and Jacob Berlin was also buried at Green-Wood Cemetery after his 90 years of life that ended at Bloomfield, Essex, New Jersey³ in 1895. Jacob Berlin started a paper and envelope manufacturing business called Berlin & Jones Envelope Company. Henry Clay Berlin followed his father's footsteps, as he began to expand the firm in New York City⁴, locating the company on 547 W 27th St. On October 15th of 1856, Henry Berlin married Sarah Weeks in New York. Weeks was born in the year of 1836 in New York City⁵. Similar to Henry Clay Berlin's parents, Weeks' father, John A. Weeks, passed away on September of 1880 and was buried at Green-wood Cemetery⁶. Following her father's death, her mother Charlotte S. Weeks passed away in June of 1881 and was buried at Green-wood Cemetery⁷. The Berlin family grew as Henry and his wife welcomed their first daughter, Laura Berlin, in 1857, first son, Henry Berlin, in 1861, and youngest son Walter Berlin in 1862. The Berlin children were all born in Manhattan, New York.

In 1899, there was a fire that damaged Berlin's company at 134 and 136 William Street, which prompted Berlin to build a two storey building on Tenth Ave and 27th Street in Manhattan. Henry C. Berlin became one of the most significant and successful people in the envelope business. By 1901, Berlin's firm produced about 85 percent of the envelopes in the

² New Jersey, U.S., Deaths and Burials Index, 1798-1971

³ Ibid.

⁴ Walden's *Stationer and Printer*. United States: n.p., 1921.

⁵ New York State Archives; Albany, NY, USA; Census of the state of New York, 1855

⁶ .S., Find a Grave® Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012.

⁷ Ibid.

United States The monopolistic nature of Berlin's success caused legal complications when a court case 'Cohen vs Berlin & Jones Envelope Company'⁸ arose. Other than his thriving business

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ventures, Henry C. Berlin had many hobbies, such as fishing, hunting, and golf while being part of various hunting clubs in the South.⁹ With Berlin's avid monetary success, he was part of the "trusteeship of the Bowery Savings Bank, and he was also one of the original stockholders of the Knickerbocker Trust Company."¹⁰ The Berlin household made a mark in the New York newspapers when their family experienced a burglary incident in 1906. During the youth of Berlin's four children at 31 West 51 St, an armed man with a revolver threatened one of the workers at home in order to steal silverware¹¹. Henry Clay Berlin spent his last few years of his life at his home 375 Park Ave, New York, NY with his eldest daughter Laura Berlin Shaw. The layers of memories during the Berlin family's lives that permeated through the walls of their residence have disappeared. Now on 375 Park Ave, the Seagram Building stands tall being the skyscraper that was built by architect Ludwig Mies Van Der Rohe. Originally, 375 Park ave during the early 20th century was a luxury residential building called The Montana Apartments, designed by Rouse & Goldstone.¹²

Physicality of Berlin Mausoleum

⁸Marketing Laws Survey Series: v. 1-6. United States: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940..

⁹ *Walden's Stationer and Printer*. United States: n.p., 1921.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Burglar Puts a Gun to Girl's Head and Escapes with Silverware." *New York Times*(1857-1922), December 13, 1906

¹² Zach L, "The Montana Apartments," n.d., <http://www.beyondthegildedage.com/2012/02/montana-apartments.html>. *Beyond the Gilded Age*, 2012,

The mausoleum for Henry Berlin and his family is a mixed usage of masonry and metal, specifically the granite is “C.E. Tayntor & Co’s finest Barre Vermont Granite”¹³. The simple and grand structure has a granite step with hammered finish, and one can be led into the interior of the mausoleum with its bronze double doors that retain their green patina hue from the oxidation

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of copper. The mausoleum has mixed usage of rock faced and polished granite. The two columns are polished, and have a fluted top with moulded caps. The surface behind the two columns are fine hammered and the nameplate of Berlin is also fine hammered with raised letters that have been polished, giving a similar tone and texture as the columns. The contractors ensured that the roof of the mausoleum, which is difficult to see from eye level, was fine hammered. The ashlar is rock faced.

Detail 1- Door

There seems to be a uniform oxidation pattern on the bronze doors, as the green and blue hue is fairly even throughout the overall surface of the doors. The decorative door frames have intricate details, with the upper part having a botanical design with twisted vines in wrought bronze, with wreath medallions in the center. The door pull handles are swiveled handle curves that have small flower medallions that mark the end of each handle. The bottom half of the doors, under the handles, has small flower medallions on each four corners and there is an ornamentation detail of a torch placed in the center around the flowers. The beauty of the botanical ornamentations on the door is amplified with the copper oxidation.

¹³ Henry C. Berlin, Major Monuments folder, Woodlawn Cemetery Archive, Avery Architecture Library Columbia University, BOX MM 02, Folder 6.

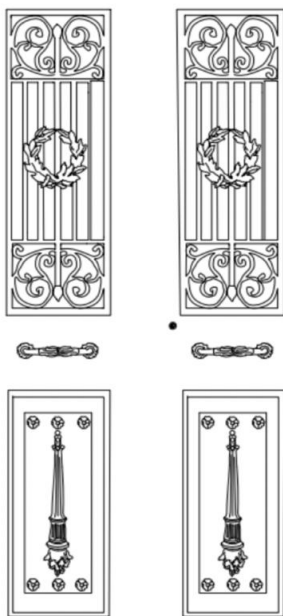


Figure 5. Drawing of Bronze Doors(Doei K.)



Figure 5. Photograph of Bronze doors(Doei Kang)

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Detail 2- Stained Glass

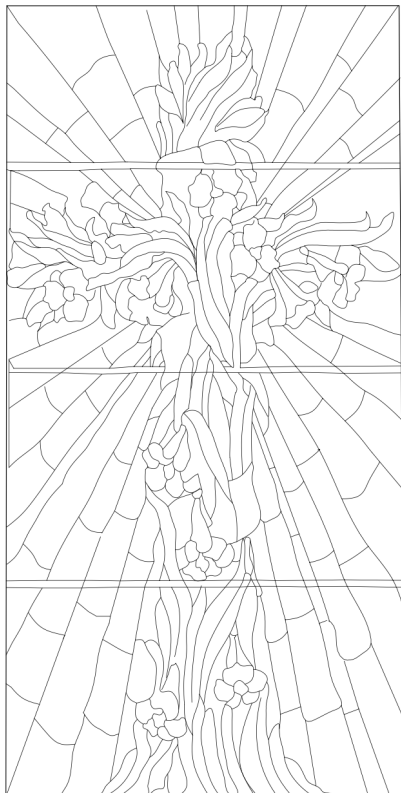


Figure 6. Drawing of stained glass (Doei.K)

Figure 7. Photo of stained glass (Doei K.)

Entering inside the mausoleum , there are eight catacombs, four catacombs on the left and the other four on the right. Interior exudes a different atmosphere than the rough granite ashlar, as the fine quality of the Carra marble with its light colour is illuminated by the light coming through the stained glass. As the sun beams through the stained glass inside the mausoleum, the light shining through the glass provokes tranquility and stillness with the radiance of light yellow and naturalistic details of the cross. Flower and stem motifs that make up the cross create a scenery of nature. The green, hint of red, and white parts of the cross provide vibrance and sensibility for the spectator to see and feel the sunshine illuminating the colorful cross. With the rough texture of the granite ashlar blocks that provoke a sense of

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naturalistic elements of erosion and toughness of the earth, it creates an interesting dichotomy between the interior and exterior.

Material Condition

The contrast of colour and tone of the different materials and their reaction to time has created a narrative of its own. The stained glass is in pristine condition with gleaming light. There is minor biological growth on the granite and light soiling present in the exterior on the hewn granite blocks. The exterior is in fair condition, but the interior of the mausoleum calls for attention as the marble slates of the catacombs are pushing outwards.

C.E. Tayntor & Co

The contractor designated for Berlin's mausoleum was C.E. Tayntor & Co, and the firm was known for its superb quality of Barre granite that was from quarry in Vermont. The firm expressed that they "quarried the largest obelisk ever quarried in the state of Vermont, and unquestionably the largest one ever quarried in America, it being 51 feet long and free from imperfections."¹⁴ Charles E. Tayntor, the owner of the company, was known for many years "leading monument and mausoleum man"¹⁵ in America, as he built twenty one mausoleums in year of 1898¹⁶ in various locations in the country. By 1899, the "third tallest shaft of granite" in United States was Tayntor's "single block of granite, being 51 feet high and 4 feet square at the base"¹⁷.

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The beauty of Berlin Mausoleum stems from the simplicity in style, of materials, and the grandness of the granite blocks.

¹⁴ The Monumental News. United States: R.J. Haight, 1896.

¹⁵ Granite Marble & Bronze: A Monthly Publication Devoted to the Interests of the Monument Trade and Allied Branches. United States: A. M. Hunt Company, 1918.

¹⁶ Stone. United States: D. H. Rauck, 1899.

¹⁷ Stone. United States: D. H. Rauck, 1899.

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