

THE HARKNESS MAUSOLEUM

INHABITANTS: EDWARD S. HARKNESS AND MARY S. HARKNESS

ARCHITECT: JAMES GAMBLE ROGERS

LANDSCAPE: BEATRIX FARRAND

METALWORK: SAMUEL YELLIN | SCULPTURE: LEE LAWRIE



HARKNESS MAUSOLEUM

Tonia Sing Chi
FALL 2014 HP STUDIO I: Reading Historic Buildings
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The Harkness Mausoleum, in its textured granite exterior, its secluded walled garden, and its refined Gothic interior, emerges as a synergistic expression of the nature of its inhabitants and the stylistic expanse of its architect. The building is approached from the corner of Hickory and Goldenrod by a slate path, roughly cut and set into the ground. The path curves with the topography of the site and leads the viewer to a wood and metal doorway covered with a hipped slate roof resembling a Lych gate found at the entrance to a traditional English churchyard. This gate is the entrance to a sunken walled garden, the Mausoleum's own close. Though the garden is visible from the outside, it is inaccessible without a key, indicating its private nature. At the center of the garden is a boxwood lined lawn that is not meant to be traveled across; rather, the slate path continues to lead the viewer around the inner circle of the walled garden to reach the front door of the mausoleum.

The main facade is somewhat hidden from the road, as it faces inward towards the center of the walled garden. Though the approach to the building is non-axial, there is a strong axis and an obvious symmetry to the space. The garden includes a pair of benches facing inward, and perpendicularly positioned to the axis of the entry gateway and the Mausoleum. The façade of the mausoleum displays a modest compacted form, with an exposed pitched slate roof. A cross is formed above the entrance by a primitively carved niche flanked by two friezes ornamented with relief sculpture depicting eleven figures. The door to the mausoleum is heavily recessed, expanding upon the nature of a threshold as its own physical space. The slate path further extends into the building past the wrought iron doorway into a chapel that entombs Edward S. Harkness and Mary S. Harkness. The Mausoleum is very much intended to be a dictated physical experience. The procession is apparent in elevation changes as well as architectural elements that divide the increasingly private spaces.

When Edward S. Harkness inherited his father's fortune from Standard Oil, he made a profession out of philanthropy. His interest was in patronizing art in neglected fields and original efforts in social welfare. By the time he died in 1940, he had given his money to construct major medical and educational institutions, most designed by his close friend and favorite architect, James Gamble Rogers. Many of his gifts were in amounts that were kept anonymous. Though he patronized many high

profile projects, Harkness sought consistent retirement from the public.

Harkness was heavily guided by Rogers in the design of his buildings, and his 1924 mausoleum was no exception. Architectural elements in the building are visible in many of Rogers' work at the time including one of the most impressive collaborations between Rogers and Harkness, the Yale Quadrangle, completed in 1921. The mausoleum references many of these elements, including the English Gothic style evident in the vaulted and arched interior, the walled courtyard garden, the non-axial approach, and the similar use and treatment of materials. As with the Yale Quadrangle, Rogers collaborated with Beatrix Farrand for landscaping, Samuel Yellin for metal work, Lee Lawrie for sculpture, and Owen Bonawit for the stained glass.

The Harknesses originally bought a lot closer to the entrance of the cemetery, but Rogers convinced them to move to a plot that was set further in, which allowed for more privacy. The ground is covered in large rock outcroppings and the site was heavily wooded with large eastern pine trees. It is evident that Rogers, in collaboration with Farrand, incorporated the interesting topography and natural elements into the design of the building, giving it the effect of a chapel in the woods. The design reveals that Rogers had a profound understanding of the character of his clients, and their desire for a modest, yet dignified memorial.

The exterior of the building references the vernacular architecture of the "cottage". Rather than being elevated on a leveled platform, it incorporates the uneven topography into its form, allowing the earth to rise and fall along its exterior walls. The walled garden is angled slightly and the stones are rough and variegated in their yellow, brown, and dark grey tones—a sharp contrast to the surrounding expanse of polished white marble buildings. The mortar joints are large and the carvings adorning the main facade of the Mausoleum display primitive influences, while the battered walls and low profile buttresses reference the Romanesque style. It humbly sits in its surroundings, accepting and responding to its natural environment. Originally, the site had a number of large pine trees that were integrated into the landscape plan of the building, though they were later cut down during the building's recent restoration. The interior of the building references the architecture of

the “temple”. It is very symmetrical and formal in its expression as it seeks to control its surroundings and its material palette. In this sacred space, the stones are polished, and the mortar joints are precise, the sculpture and stained glass impressively refined. The ceiling displays gothic vaults, and though modest, they represent a resistance to gravity and a reference to the ethereal.

Rather than a polarized example of this architectural dichotomy, the building displays an amalgamation of styles that was characteristic of Rogers, who was less concerned with stylistic correctness and more driven by the appropriation of various styles in the creation of picturesque yet pragmatic spaces. The temple and the cottage meet at the floor of the entry to the chapel, as the slate path extends into the chapel to cover a floor that is slightly sloped, indicating that the natural world would be brought in to maintain a connection with the built world.

The walled garden displays an interesting social geometry referencing ancient place types. It is a congregation of the surrounding mausoleums, which face the street, and therefore the building. The circle has primitive references, resulting from the radial arrangement of people sitting around a hearth, and acting as a symbol of human community. As the plot exists as an island delineated by curved roads, the mausoleums on surrounding plots face the street and therefore the circular garden of the Harkness mausoleum as well. Rather than being the center of the garden, the Harkness mausoleum sits along its edge, indicating membership with its encircling mausoleums rather than centrality to its surroundings.

In 1932, the Mausoleum was extended and the sarcophagi sunk underground. Aside from the architectural appeal of creating a clear line of sight to the altar, the decision to be entombed underground seems fitting with the Harknesses discrete persona and their many anonymous public interest philanthropic efforts. Rather than being the object within the space, the sarcophagus becomes an element that defines the space, much as the mausoleum, in its inclusion on the edge of the walled garden becomes part of its natural and built environment.

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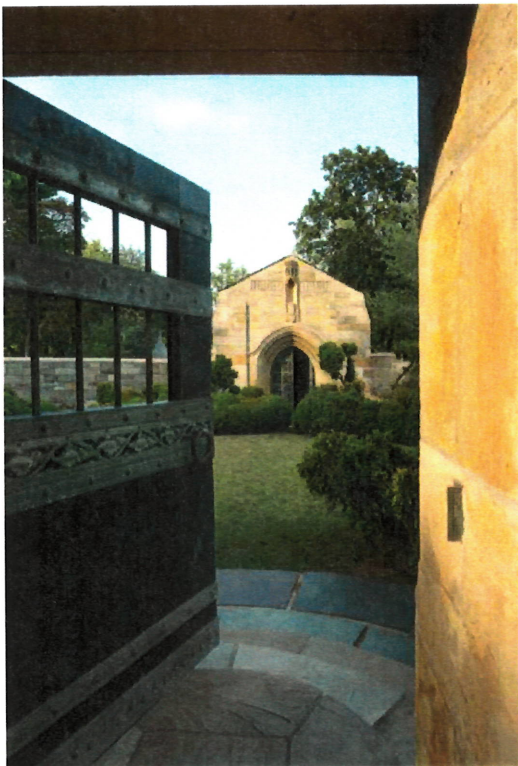
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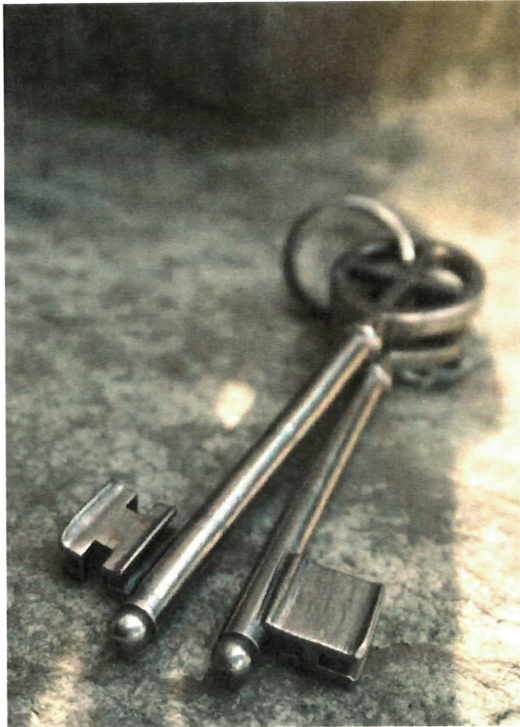
ENTRANCES: GATE (LEFT) + DOORWAY (RIGHT)



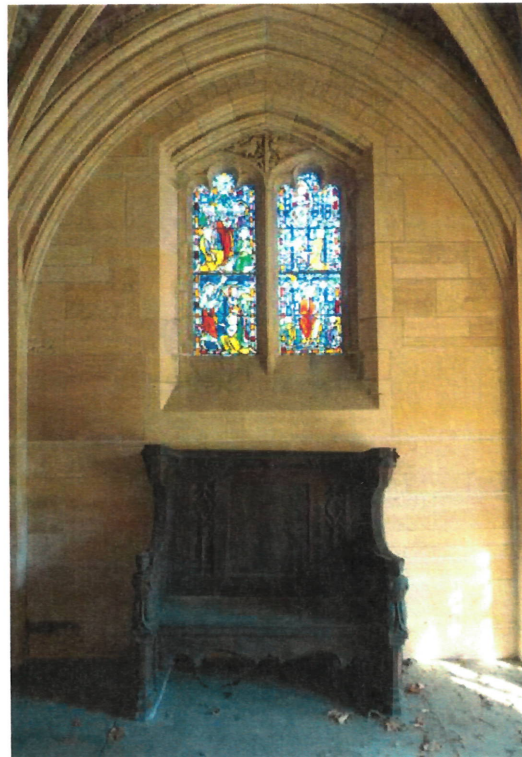
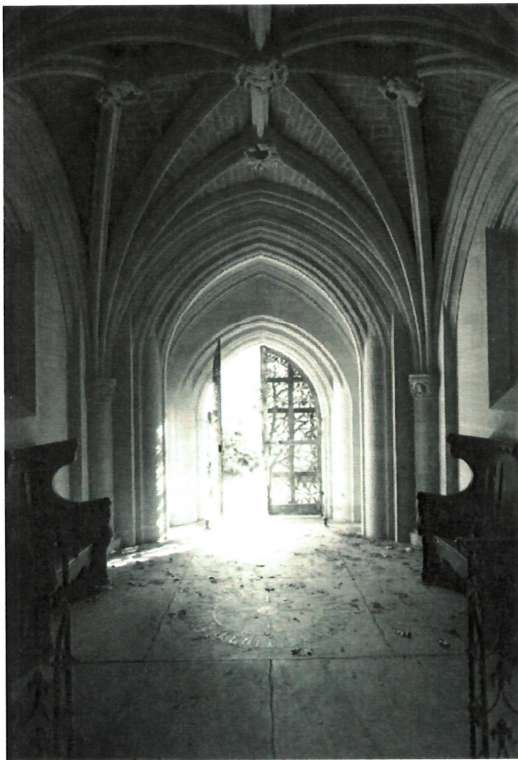
WALLED GARDEN: WEYMOUTH GRANITE



GATE KEYS: H FOR HARKNESS



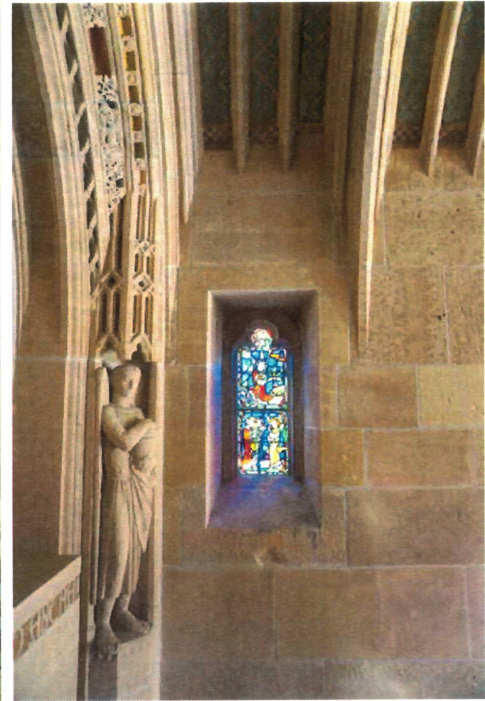
MAUSOLEUM INTERIOR



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