

Introduction

The Hurd Mausoleum is the final resting place of Natalie Rathbone Jones Hurd Ward Jennings (1887-1965) and her three husbands, who all predeceased her: James Daniel Hurd¹ (1879-1928), James Lakeman Ward² (1882-1945) and Robert E. Jennings II³ (1885-1965). J. L. Ward was cremated and his brass urn placed in a wall shelf. All the others were interred within the mausoleum in zinc lined caskets. The mausoleum was designed by the architect John Robertson 'Happy' Ward (1898-1988)⁴ and it was built in 1929 by the Harrison Granite Company of Fifth Avenue, New York.

Building Siting

The mausoleum is situated on the Whitewood Plot, Section 132, Lot 15760 of the cemetery, just south of the Jerome Street Entrance along the western border. The building is oriented west-east in the middle of the lot, with the entrance facing Tulip Avenue, and is composed of the mausoleum proper and a garden forecourt. The forecourt has a low stone wall and bench extending at a slight angle from the south west corner of the mausoleum and runs parallel to the southern lot boundary rather than the mausoleum itself. There are mature plantings of hemlock and yew trees around the lot with two Japanese yew bushes flanking the entrance. Other shrubs include lily of the valley, mountain laurel and rhododendron screening the bench from the road. The lot is bounded to the north by a circular footpath which separates this from the Walker lot. The lot slopes slightly from the northern side towards the south.

Like other mausolea along Tulip Avenue, the Hurd Mausoleum is perpendicular to the road, which in some sections look very ordered. However this part of the plot is slightly has smaller memorials to the south and east, giving the area a more spacious appearance.

¹ Hurd came from a Massachusetts publishing family (Hurd and Houghton), he went to Harvard and was President of the New York Steam Company.

² An engineer, J. L. Ward was Vice President of Goethals, Wells and Co, who constructed a number of public and private structures in and around New York City, including the Maine Memorial at the entrance to Central Park.

³ Jennings was from Washington DC, studied at the Harvard School of Metallurgy and was an executive of the Carpenter and Eastern Steel Companies.

⁴ It is likely that J. R. Ward knew J. Hurd, as both were contemporary members of the Seawanhaka Corinthian Yacht Club in Long Island. Ward was from Boston, studied mathematics at MIT unsuccessfully before switching to architecture at Harvard and Columbia. Ward also designed the Velma B. Woolworth Chapel in Woodlawn Cemetery. He practiced in Boston, New York and New Canaan before working extensively in London, Bermuda and the Caribbean, specializing in private homes and resorts. His firm Robertson Ward Architects still exists today.

A Christian east-west orientation is maintained and the morning light can stream through the stained glass window on the eastern elevation. However, by orienting the bench at an angle enables a seated view through the garden forecourt to the landscape beyond, rather than a view of the Walker memorial directly to the north.

Plan and Section Design

Approaching from Tulip Avenue through the garden setting of the forecourt, the mausoleum stands at the center east half of the lot. The mausoleum proper has a symmetrical rectangular plan with a gabled roof. It has three sets of angled buttresses with amortizements flanking the north and south elevations. The building is pierced by several openings, the primary one being the sole entrance: a set of decorated bronze doors forming a dropped arch in the center of the west elevation. Above the door is a carved stone cross with decorated clover vents above the horizontal arms and small, leaded, arched glass windows below. Along the north and south elevations, two sets of small carved stone vents are situation between the buttresses. On the east elevation is a large three paneled stained glass dropped arch window.

The interior of the mausoleum is also symmetrical in plan and it can be divided into three sections: the short entrance passage, the main section flanked by the interment chambers and finally a raised platform at the base of the window.

Above the bronze doors is a small chamber ending in the cross containing the vents and small leaded glass windows. The interior ceiling is a dropped arch vault, following the same proportions as the stained glass window and the entrance. While the ceiling is vaulted, it is not large enough to require buttresses, which are ornamental. The original plans show concrete fill between the interior and exterior walls, as well as vertical voids in each corner.

The symmetry of the plan is disturbed by the single low wall and bench along the southern boundary in the garden forecourt. The angle of the wall however is very similar to the angle of the buttresses, but this may be coincidental and the main reason may be to improve the view of from the bench, as noted above. There is little evidence of further architectural planning and perhaps this is of itself an intentional design as the mausoleum retains the scale and form a small vernacular structure. Ward himself said he tied his designs "into the atmosphere and

character of the good earlier architecture..."⁵ Indeed he excelled at such with his work in Bermuda working in the Bermuda Vernacular Revival Style.⁶

Façade Design

The mausoleum's walls are composed of rustic, random ashlar masonry made of Mankato Stone, a dolomitic limestone. The buttresses as well as the door and window surrounds are made out of larger sandstone blocks with a tooled finish. It is interesting to note that one of the sandstone blocks on the west elevation to the right of the entrance has 'Hurd' inscribed in relief and its eye level asymmetrical placement, as well as the irregular masonry, subtly counters the symmetry of the plan. Indeed the name focuses attention to the right of entrance, which is where the seating is located. It is interesting to note that the bronze door is decorated with stylized oak leaves and double acorns, as befits such an arboreal setting. Twin acorns can symbolize "the truth and the power of the spirit that is obtained by two sources: the natural world and the world that is to be revealed."⁷ The wooded forecourt outside a final resting place provides a perfect setting to contemplate such a sentiment.

Many of the same materials are used for the interior: the ceiling is Mankato stone, the floor is slate and sandstone is used for various opening surrounds. But these stones are less rustic in a way that cannot simply be explained by protection from weathering. Furthermore, polished limestone panel doors are used for the internment chambers and polished granite and gabbro are used for the raised platform by the window. The interior, therefore, seems more formal than the rustic exterior.

It is interesting to note that the final construction differed slightly from Ward's original design⁸, which called for the main structure to be built out of granite. Furthermore, the design of the stained glass window and the bronze door decorations do not follow the original plans, which are more ornate than what was actually built.

⁵ Ward, J. R. *Unpublished Autobiography* ca. 1980s

⁶ White, D. 2010

⁷ Keister, 2004, p. 61-62

⁸ Woodlawn Collection

Conclusion

The slate shingles of the roof, the dropped arches and the buttresses, the irregular exterior masonry indicates that this is a neo-Gothic style that had a revival in America during the late 19th and early 20th century. These elements all combine to give the romanticized appearance of an English Gothic country chapel. Indeed the Hurd Mausoleum was featured in the October 1932 issue of *American Landscape Architect*⁹ for its well-designed setting, although the current planting dates from 1952 according to the cemetery records. The Hurd mausoleum resembles the Harkness Mausoleum, which is also made from Mankato Stone and has a more elaborate, formal attached garden. This was built 5 years before the Hurd Mausoleum, so it might have been an inspiration for the design.

The mausoleum is in relatively good condition, despite two missing roof tiles at the top of the south eastern portion of the roof, and two small missing panes at the base of the stained glass window. The main conservation issues are entirely biological, as several of the 1952 trees were planted very close to the structure. The roots of the Canadian hemlock have caused large crack to appear through the mortar of the low stone wall in the garden forecourt. Furthermore the structure is in heavy shade for most of the day and so there is extensive moss growth, particularly on the buttresses. Finally the sandstone shows pitted signs of weathering. The 'Hurd' inscription and the decorative scrollwork of the door surround have all deteriorated badly over the last 80 odd years.

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⁹ Plumb, J. 1932

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