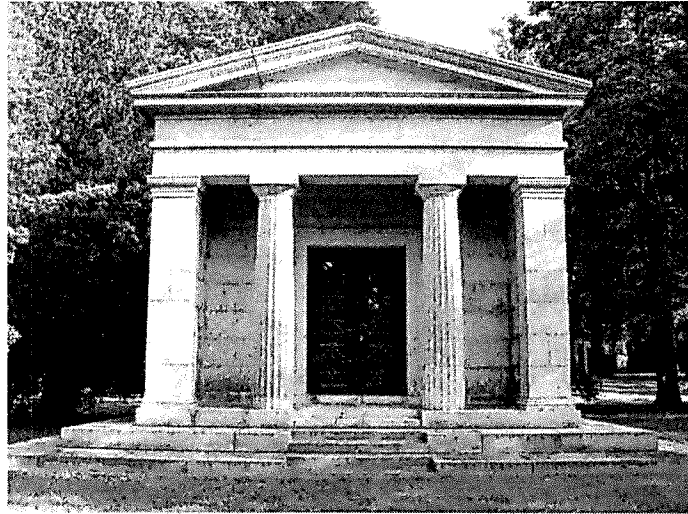


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Problem 3: The Daniel S. Lamont Mausoleum

In May of 1903, the Lamont family signed deed number 12889, claiming a circular plot in Woodlawn Cemetery, at the corner of Central and Walnut Avenues.¹ In the coming years, a mausoleum would be constructed on the rather large plot of land. The architecture firm commissioned to design the Lamont mausoleum was Little & O'Connor, a firm that was well known for the design of the Columbia University College of Pharmacy, but that had, just two years before, also designed the Lamont family's home on Fifth Avenue.²

The specifications of the mausoleum were precise. Only Portland cement mortar and concrete were to be used. The whole of the exterior and interior of the structure were to be Pink Milford granite. The stone was to be accentuated by

¹ "Lamont Mausoleum Deed." Woodlawn Cemetery Archives. Avery Library Archives, Columbia University.

² Office for Metropolitan History. "Manhattan NB Database 1900-1986," 10 October 2011. <<http://www.MetroHistory.com>>.

bronze doors and window sashes and a copper roof.³ The original architectural drawings for the mausoleum were equally precise, though between the drawings and the finished construction, there were two obvious changes to the plan that fundamentally altered the experience of the visitor in the mausoleum. These alterations will soon be discussed in greater depth.

Upon completion of the mausoleum, daughter Julia, who was 19 at the time of her passing in August of 1902⁴, was the first to be interred in one of the 16 catacombs of the mausoleum. The construction of the mausoleum, which one can assume was prompted by Julia's death, proved even more timely, however, as Colonel Daniel Scott Lamont, the patriarch of the family, passed away suddenly in July of 1905 at the age of 54. Col. Lamont had been very well known in his time. After graduating from Union College in 1868, Daniel Lamont became involved in the political arena. When working within the Democratic Party of New York, Lamont was credited with "knowing a greater number of members of his party by name and sight than any other man."⁵

It was the election of Grover Cleveland to Governor of New York in 1882 that further cemented Lamont's position in the political realm. At that time, Cleveland made Lamont his military secretary, hence Lamont's title of "Colonel".⁶ Once Cleveland advanced to the White House, so too went Lamont, as he was named President Cleveland's Secretary of War. After his tenure in Washington had met its

³ "Lamont Mausoleum Specifications." Woodlawn Cemetery Archives. Avery Library Archives, Columbia University.

⁴ "Miss Julia Lamont Dead". *New York Times* 27 August 1902. Print.

⁵ "Daniel S. Lamont Dies After Drive." *New York Times* 24 July 1905. Print.

⁶ Ibid.

end, Col. Lamont remained in the public eye, having moved back to New York City and been elected Vice President of the Northern Pacific Railway Company.⁷ It is only fitting that following a life of such power and prominence Colonel Daniel Lamont was laid to rest in a mausoleum that conveyed a power of its own.

The Daniel S. Lamont mausoleum is an excellent example of Greek architecture, similar to many other such temples that can be found around Woodlawn Cemetery. At first sight, a visitor's eyes are immediately drawn to the sheer scale of the mausoleum, which, while smaller than some of its neighbors, fully occupies the rather small space in between the foliage that encircles three sides of the building. Four such features that instinctively recall Greek architecture further are a stepped podium, Doric orders and piers, a prominent portico, and decorative pediment.

The Lamont family mausoleum is meant to be experienced from the front. When walking down Walnut Avenue, a road perpendicular to the Lamont plot, a visitor can only see a hint of the rather large structure, which is almost totally obscured surrounding foliage. Turning the corner onto Central Avenue, the main road through the property, however, reveals a break in the foliage. The mausoleum sits with nearly 40 feet lying between the main street of the property and the foundation of the building. The layer of trees surrounding the sides and back of the mausoleum grants a sense of privacy to the mausoleum; one may behold the front elevation, but must walk closer to view the rest of the property (Figure 1).

⁷ Ibid.

Besides the foliage leading a visitor to focus on the front of the building, the actual architecture leads one to do the same. The building blocks of the mausoleum, specifically the blocks of granite and the stepped podium, give the side and back elevations of the mausoleum a sense of horizontality. The horizontal lines of the joints and the foundation draw the eyes side to side. Furthermore, the sides of the mausoleum have no windows or particularly interesting features, such as the stained glass window in the back that would lend it any air of interest or importance (Figure 2). The front elevation, while containing these same architectural components, further features steps carved into the layers of foundation, two Doric columns and two obtrusive Doric piers, all of which draw the eyes upward, creating a sense of verticality. Through landscape and architecture, the visitor knows that the front of the building is important and should remain the focal point (Figure 3).

Once the visitor has focused on the front of the building, the architecture leads him to his next location. Besides drawing the eyes upward, the steps carved into the stepped podium and the Doric columns frame the doorway and draw the visitor up the steps and onto the portico, facing the double brass doors. After breaching the entranceway, the visitor is faced with what feels like a hallway. The 16 catacombs surround him on either side, but directly facing the front door is a large stained glass window. As there are no windows on the sides of the mausoleum, the visitor is drawn toward the light, meaning he now walks through the "hallway", passing by the Lamont family, reading the inscriptions until he has reached the back of the structure.

As briefly mentioned in the introductory paragraphs, there were two alterations to the structure of the mausoleum that occurred between the architectural drawings and the final product. These two changes are highlighted at the back of the interior of the mausoleum. On the original drawings the back wall featured a relatively small window, to allow for light to enter. The finished product features a large stained glass window by famed producer John La Farge, as well as a well-sized granite bench directly beneath. The rarity of La Farge windows in mausoleums (as opposed to those produced by Tiffany), the complexity of the design, which features “literally thousands of pieces of glass... many very tiny, in the borders and drapery,” and the sheer size of the window, makes the window fairly magnificent if not unique.⁸

The design of the interior, that upon entrance one is immediately faced with a beautiful stained glass window and a bench, nearly instructs the visitor to walk through and sit down in order to appreciate the space. The additional knowledge that this piece of the structure was not originally intended and happened organically implies that it was clear to the family and architects that there needed to be an important focal point to the interior. This decision makes the interior, which would have been very stark and cold, almost inviting. There is beauty and a place to rest, surrounded by the Lamont family. It is a place for one to sit and reflect, not just a place that someone should pass through quickly.

While the Lamont Mausoleum may not immediately stand out as distinctive to a visitor of Woodlawn Cemetery, the landscaping, architecture, and interior

⁸ Sloan, Julie, “Re: GSAPP – Stained Glass.” Message to the author. 10 October 2011. Email.

design create a unique space to honor the Lamont family. After having been constructed with care, the mausoleum still provides a welcoming space where visitors can relax and reflect. While the exterior architecture is relatively common within Woodlawn Cemetery, the homey interior featuring the La Farge stained glass window makes the Lamont Mausoleum stand out from its compatriots.

Addendum:

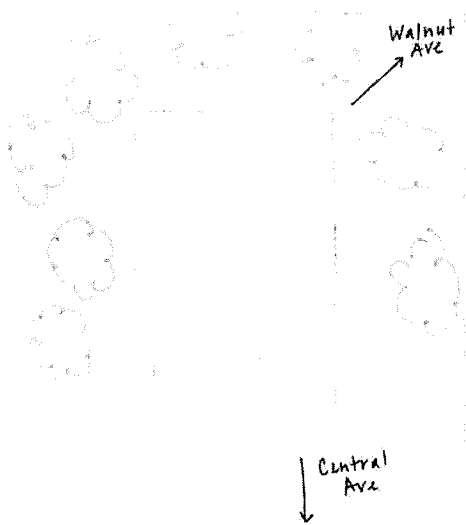


Figure 1, Aerial View

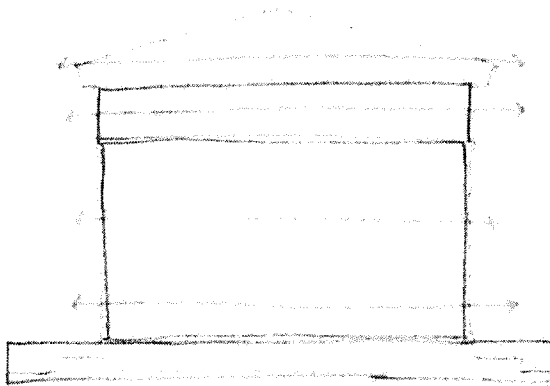


Figure 2, Rear Elevation

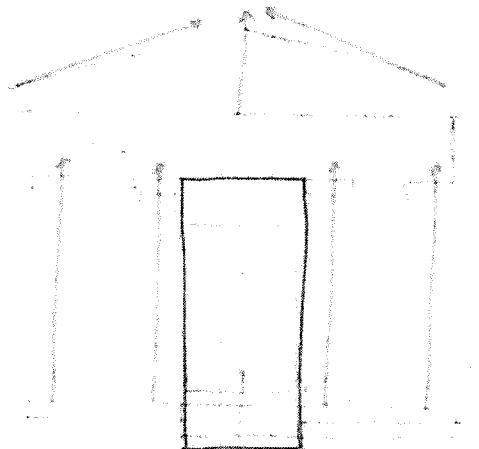


Figure 3, Front Elevation