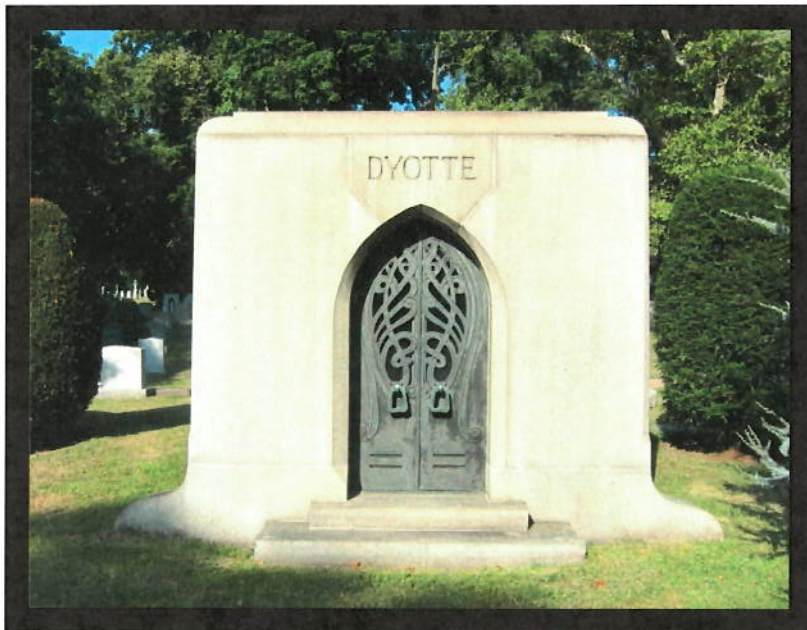


THE MARY ESTRELLA &
EUDICE JOSEPH DYOTTE
MAUSOLEUM



AN EXPRESSION OF INTIMACY

GSAPP M.S.
HISTORIC PRESERVATION:
STUDIO 1
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From the intimacy and privacy of their resting place, it appears that Eudice Joseph Dyotte and Mary Estrella (Warren) Dyotte were very much in love. While it is difficult to connect the style of the structure to the wishes of its inhabitants, as the mausoleum was built by their estate after their deaths, it is apparent that the plan of the structure is intended to illustrate the close relationship of those interred there.

Eudice Joseph and Mary Estrella Dyotte were married in 1888. Both had grown up in Springfield, Massachusetts, and both came from working class families of skilled carpenters (U.S. Census Bureau 1900; National Archives and Records Administration 1883). Eudice worked for most of his life as a steel polisher at the Springfield headquarters of Smith & Wesson, the prominent American gun manufacturers, but managed to set money aside to invest in a farm in Agawam, in the Springfield metropolitan area (U.S. Census Bureau 1880; U.S. Census Bureau 1890; U.S. Census Bureau 1900; "Eudice J. Dyotte" 1885; "Town of Agawam" 1894). His investment paid off, as from 1900 to 1940 Agawam experienced a significant population increase that created great demand for land (Department of the Interior 1910).

Tracing the connection of Mary and Eudice to the New York metropolitan area is much more tentative. In 1907, Eudice purchased a number of lots in Queens, yet the couple remained in Agawam (*New York Tribune* 1907; U.S. Census Bureau 1910). In 1916, the Dyottes travelled to Bermuda and returned through the port of New York, but it was not until the time of Eudice's death in 1928 that any concrete evidence of their residency in New York can be found ("Eudice Joseph Dyotte & Estelle Dyotte" 1916).

At the time of her death, Mary had only a thousand dollars in the bank and twenty-three cents in her home, yet the yearly income from property holdings in Agawam sustained her thrifty lifestyle and the estate was valued at thirty thousand dollars once these property assets were liquidated. This money was intended to meet any of her debts and to provide for the construction and perpetual maintenance of a "gray granite mausoleum" at Woodlawn (Dyotte 1929). The only caveat to this division of assets was in the amount of one hundred dollars to be given to her brother, Edwin Beecher Warren. It is clear that there had been a falling out within the family, and she went as far as to specify in her Last Will and Testament (1929) that:

I limit my gift to him to that amount for reasons of which he is fully aware, and should he file objections to this Will or contest the probate thereof, I direct that he shall receive no part of my estate.

However, Mary's wishes were not followed; her brother contested the will and ultimately received over ten thousand dollars from the estate (Dyotte 1929). In the course of the court's proceedings, specific amounts were set aside for the purchase, construction, and upkeep of the mausoleum that would amount to a little over a third of the estate's value. It remained clear however, that the primary importance of the mausoleum was that it would be a private and intimate resting place for "only Eudice Joseph and Mary Estrella [...] and no others" (ibid).

While it is difficult to connect the siting and design of the mausoleum to the wishes of those interred there, the focus on privacy and life-long companionship that pervades both Mary's will and the final court agreement is an element that carries through the design of the interior quite clearly.

The interior of the structure is quite small and entirely focused on the visual and physical interaction of any visitor with those buried there. Even before entering, when standing in front of the open double doors, the visitor's gaze is directed through the central gothic arched doorway at the names and floral trellis designs etched into the marble directly opposite the entrance. Here, there is nowhere to sit or rest, no place to leave flowers or remembrances; stained glass windows sit in both side walls, but the patterns are stylized and generic. While these elements briefly draw the eye, primary focus rests on the names of the deceased and the way in which they affirm the relationship of Mary and Eudice. In light of the fact that they were not survived by children or close family, the lack of preparation for visitors heightens the sense that this structure was intended as a container, a private and peaceful space, for those inside.

This basic focus on the primacy of the mausoleum as a vessel, instead of a sacred space meant for visitors, assists in the interpretation of the exterior. As the plot was selected by the estate based on monetary concerns and not for its particular siting, the lack of landscaping to control the visitor's approach seems less unusual. Laurel Avenue passes the front of the Dyotte mausoleum on a perpendicular axis and despite the structure's extreme frontal qualities it is difficult to approach in that manner. Instead, all viewers

approach at an oblique angle, never viewing the structure straight on unless they intentionally stop and reorient themselves.

In many ways, although the design of the interior sympathetically meets and explores the creation of an intimate and protected space, the exterior confuses the simplicity of that message with a strange mix of symbolism and style. The façade reads as Art Nouveau at first glance with a strong central pointed arch

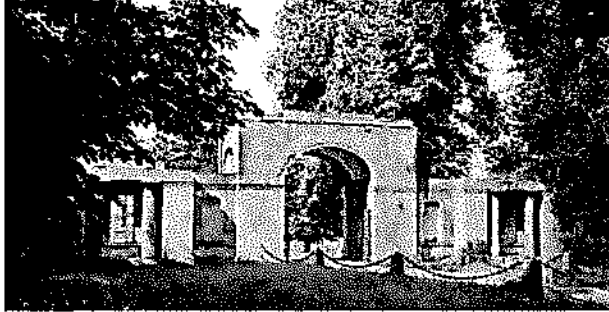


Figure 1: Sir John Soane, Gatehouse at Tyringham Hall (c. 1795)

filled with highly decorative vegetal patterned double doors, typical of the Art Nouveau design aesthetics. The large, smooth stone of the façade, with the only decoration being that of the bronze doors, creates a frontal focus that is assisted by the

placement of projecting feet to the left and right

that curve down into the ground; symbolically tying the building into the earth. However, once the Art Nouveau doors are pushed open and out of sight, and the curved feet are ignored momentarily, the classical forms of massing and proportion are exposed. The façade is square and divided in thirds with a central doorway that recalls the central elements of much of classical architecture. The gatehouse at Tyringham Hall (Buckinghamshire, England) by Sir John Soane has a similar proportionality and the articulation of the roof, with its bevel and set back, is a markedly similar feature.

From the 1900s through the 1930s in the United States, a reinterpretation of classical forms and massing was underway. Structures of international and national importance illustrate this trend, and due to Woodlawn's place within the five boroughs, the interpretation of these elements in construction of the 1920s would have had some impact on the designs of local funerary architecture, despite the difference in scale.

On the international stage, Eliel Saarinen's Helsinki Railway Station's entrance (1907-1914) presents a similar square massing with a massive, yet simple and streamlined, arched window that carries the entryway two-thirds of the way up the façade. In addition, the articulation and stepping of the structure's



Figure 2: Eliel Saarinen, Helsinki Railway Station (1907-1914)

roofline and sides can be seen as an early step towards the later taste for chamfered corners and simple rooflines that became popular in Art Deco construction.

Saarinen's building, despite being in Helsinki, had real influence on American design, specifically through the designs of Bertram Goodhue (Oliver 1983). Goodhue was active across the United States, and one of his most admired structures, the Nebraska State Capitol (1922-1932), influenced the design of quite a few of the buildings constructed in New York in the 1920s and 1930s (including Raymond Hood's 1924 American Radiator Building and Rockefeller Center, which began construction in 1930) (ibid). The Nebraska State Capitol is a massive structure, featuring a central tower, with sprawling wings reaching laterally.

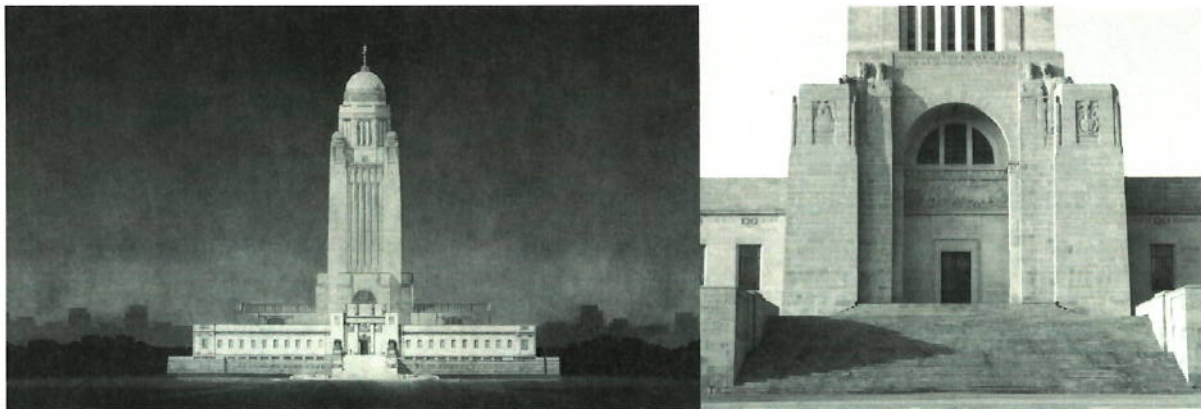


Figure 3: Bertram Goodhue, Nebraska State Capitol (constructed in stages, 1922-1932)

However, its main entrance illustrates a use of classical massing and battered geometry that helps to explain the greater forces at work in architecture in that era. Frank T. Lang, the designer of the Dyotte Mausoleum would most likely have been unfamiliar with the international precedents he appropriated, but he would have been influenced by the resulting architectural trend reflected in the built environment of the city around him. Goodhue was not an art deco architect, nor was he a classicist, however his interpretations of various styles from classic to gothic created his own “strange style, or lack of style” that others found so compelling and influential (Oliver 1983). Lang would have most likely seen an interpretation of these style elements in a more vernacular setting that could be more easily condensed into a small scale mausoleum design.

It also cannot be ignored that this style of Art Nouveau decoration, with classical massing, can be seen in a few other mausolea at Woodlawn built by monument companies other than Frank T. Lang’s and can even be found in cemeteries across the United States. In general however, the other mausolea at



Figure 4: The Lang Mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery - a design that typifies the other Art Nouveau mausoleums at Woodlawn

Woodlawn are larger, their walls are more battered, and their roofs feature a more curved silhouette than the Dyotte mausoleum. Additionally, the chamfered corners and beveled Gothic arch surround that are so geometric in the Dyotte Mausoleum are softened with curved bases at the chamfered corners and a more curved silhouette incised in the detail around the central doorway. These features result in a more cohesive

Art Nouveau feel than Frank Lang’s interpretation. At the Dyotte mausoleum the very strict chamfering and the articulation of the bevel and setback pattern at the roofline – so similar to Soane’s gatehouse – makes it read as a more classical structure than the Holmes, Lang, or Sonn mausoleums.

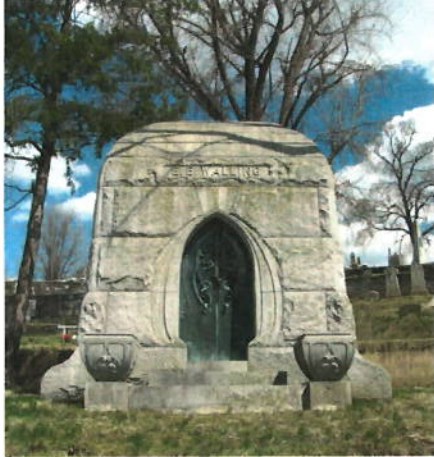


Figure 5: E.E. Walling mausoleum at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia - a design that typifies the Art Nouveau mausoleums discussed. The Whitney and Maxwell mausolea are identical in shape, with differences in specific decoration.

In other parts of the country, including the E.E. Walling mausoleum at Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia, the Clark Whitney mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery in Detroit, and the Maxwell mausoleum at Lindenwood Cemetery in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Art Nouveau mausoleums expand their focus on curved surfaces and feature an almost beehive profile with a curved roof. This highly curved profile makes the projecting feet at the base of these structures seem more fitting than on the more square and planar façade of the Dyotte mausoleum. The focus on curves is carried into the corners of these mausolea and the chamfered

edges here are defined more by a change in texture to smooth stone with carved patterning than as a change in plane. Instead of the clean and smooth exterior finish of the Dyotte Mausoleum and others at Woodlawn Cemetery, the Walling, Whitney, and Maxwell mausolea are extremely decorated in the vegetal patterning so integral to the Art Nouveau style. It is through this comparative study that the classical features of the Dyotte mausoleum begin to stand out and it becomes too reductive to understand it as purely an Art Nouveau structure.

The Dyotte mausoleum is an odd hybrid of the various influences on architectural design of the early 1930s; it is part classical at its roots, nearing Art Deco in the chamfering of its corners, and oddly Art Nouveau in its detailed flourishes. Lang had great ambition in melding a series of styles together for the Dyotte mausoleum, and while no purity of intention results, Mary Estrella and Eudice Joseph Dyotte are left with a striking monument to their lives that contains exactly what they wanted, a symbol of their devotion and an intimate setting for their final resting place.

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