

Columbia University GSAPP

Historic Preservation - Fall 2021

Studio 1 - Project 4B

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### Woodlawn Cemetery: Kane Mausoleum

My mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery is the Andrew Kane mausoleum located on lot no. 15049 in the Lotus section of the cemetery. The mausoleum includes Andrew Kane and some of his immediate family, his wife Eliza (Lizzie) Gerlach Kane, his son Andrew Kane Jr, two of his daughters, Anne Kane Scott and May Kane Corvan, and his grandson Thomas Corvan Jr. Starting with the head of household and namesake of the mausoleum, Andrew Kane was born in 1857 in Ireland and immigrated with his family to the United States in 1863. His wife Eliza Gerlach Kane, frequently referred to as “Lizzie” was born in England in 1865 and immigrated to the United States with her family in 1867, where she later married Andrew Kane in 1883. Living in New York City, primarily in Harlem, Morningside Heights, and the surrounding areas, they raised five children, three of whom were also laid to rest at the Kane mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery.

Andrew Kane initially worked as a butcher in the early 1900s<sup>1</sup>, until he started his own real estate insurance business by the 1920s<sup>2</sup>. During this time, his real estate insurance dealings were primarily in the Harlem area<sup>3</sup>. At the time of his death in 1938, Kane lived at 315 West 106th Street, a Rosario Candela designed apartment building. Reports of his death claim that Kane, who was previously under close doctors care for mental illness, fell out of his

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<sup>1</sup> United States Census, 1900; Census Place: *Manhattan, New York, New York*; Page: 13; Enumeration District: 0566; FHL microfilm: 1241106

<sup>2</sup> United States Census, 1910; Census Place: *Manhattan Ward 12, New York, New York*; Roll: T624\_1022; Page: 2B; Enumeration District: 0558; FHL microfilm: 137503

<sup>3</sup> *Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*. v. 41, no. 1,034 (Jan. 7, 1888), 49.

ten-story window despite police discouragement at the scene<sup>4</sup>. The Kane family included four daughters, the eldest being Lillian Kane Kissling, born in 1886. Upon marrying Louis Kissling, Lillian and her family lived in Westchester County before relocating to Humboldt County, California<sup>5</sup>. Similar to her father, her husband Louis was involved in the real estate industry, as a real estate agent, and this involvement continued to their son who was a real estate broker<sup>6</sup>.

The next eldest daughter of Andrew and Lizzie Kane was Emily Kane Mertens, born in 1888. Emily (Emma) Mertens resided in Morningside Heights with her husband, William Mertens, and their son William Mertens Jr. Her husband ran a real estate management firm, and after his passing, Emma operated the firm until a few years before her passing in 1951<sup>7</sup>. Unlike most other members of the Kane family, her son did not continue to operate within the real estate industry as he became a New York City Court Justice. The following daughter, Anna Kane Scott, born in 1891, lived with her husband George Scott Jr. in Morningside Heights until she passed in 1961. Anna and her husband were one of the few family members not involved in the real estate industry as her husband operated an office equipment business in New York City<sup>8</sup>.

Andrew Kane's youngest daughter was May Kane Corvan, born in 1891. May was briefly married to Thomas G. Corvan and they had a son together, Thomas Corvan Jr., born in 1928. May was heavily involved in socialite activities in New York City, such as event planning and club committee boards until her death in 1990<sup>9</sup>. Thomas Corvan Jr worked as an insurance broker and passed away in 1973, allegedly in a domestic dispute that led to a shooting in the Upper East Side<sup>10</sup>. His father, Thomas G. Corvan Sr., is also buried at Woodlawn in a separate

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<sup>4</sup> "Policemen's Pleas Fail to Halt Man's Fatal Drop: Stopping to Phone, they See Man on 10th Floor Sill." *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962), Sep 25, 1938.

<sup>5</sup> California State Library; Sacramento, California; *Great Register of Voters, 1900-1968*

<sup>6</sup> United States Census, 1940; Census Place: *Mount Vernon, Westchester, New York*; Roll: *m-t0627-02807*; Page: 2B; Enumeration District: 60-169A

<sup>7</sup> "Mrs. William Mertens." *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962), Apr 23, 1951.

<sup>8</sup> United States Census, 1930; Census Place: *Manhattan, New York, New York*; Page: 9B; Enumeration District: 0515; FHL microfilm: 2341295

<sup>9</sup> "Benefit May 12 to Assist Fund of Holton-Arms: School in Capital to Add to Scholarships with Alumnae Luncheon." *New York Times* (1923-), May 01, 1959.

<sup>10</sup> Ralph Blumenthal. "Man Slain in a Hallway on W. 81st St.: Wore Pork-Pie Hat." *New York Times* (1923-), Apr 28, 1973.

mausoleum of similar design to the Kane mausoleum, both by Benisch Bros., in the Lotus section of the cemetery as well. The final member of the Kane family buried in the mausoleum was their son Andrew Kane Jr., born in 1894. After briefly serving in the National Guard in 1918, Andrew Kane Jr continued his father's real estate business until his death in 1961<sup>11</sup>.

The Kane family lot at Woodlawn Cemetery was purchased in June 1921 with the mausoleum design and contract confirmed between Andrew Kane and the Benisch Bros. by April 1922. At the time, the Benisch Bros. Monumental Works company was very well known for monument design, including being contractors for many other mausoleums at Woodlawn Cemetery and the grand entrance structures at Prospect Park in Brooklyn<sup>12</sup>.

The Kane mausoleum is situated on a site that slopes downward from west to east and from south to north. The concrete foundation accommodates for the slope to create a level granite floor, as per the Benisch Bros, contract drawings. The mausoleum is designed in a Neoclassical style with features such as Tuscan columns on the east entry facade, a pointed, triangular pediment, and architrave that bears the name of Andrew Kane. The mausoleum exterior is completely made of granite, with a smooth finish, including the columns, one foot thick blocks, and door enframement.

On the mausoleum there are signs of biological growth mainly on the roof, stairs, and north facade. However, it does not seem to be significant and it can be addressed with maintenance of the mausoleum. One of the other main materials included in the mausoleum is the white marble with a smooth finish featured on the interior for the catacombs and ceiling. The marble panels at the face of the catacombs are slightly bowed but there are no imminent or significant signs of other issues with moisture shown on the ceiling of the mausoleum or at the vents located at the exterior of the mausoleum. The third main material of the mausoleum is the bronze on the entrance doors. The doors have a similar design to others in Woodlawn Cemetery, which indicates that it was likely a common design used by the Bensich Bros.

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<sup>11</sup> New York State Archives; Albany, New York; *Abstracts of National Guard Service in World War I, 1917-1919*; Series: 13721; Box: 3; Volume: 7

<sup>12</sup> "Monumental Entrances to Brooklyn Park." *Park and Cemetery and Landscape Gardening (1900-1931)* 19, no. 1 (Mar 01, 1909): 6.

Structurally, the bronze doors are in good condition, but they have slightly naturally corroded over time. There has been some intervention as some parts of the door appear to be scratched with an attempt to clean them or to address the corrosion, but a significant amount of the natural green patina is still present. Finally, the mausoleum includes a stained-glass window on the west facade by artists A.L. Brink and S.D. Walsh. This stained-glass window features a Christian image of Jesus herding sheep, imagery that appears in other Benish Bros. mausoleums. In general, the mausoleum is in good condition, the minimal biological growth can be addressed with consistent maintenance and the previous intervention to the patina of the bronze doors can possibly be addressed to solve this cosmetic issue.





Kane Mausoleum, Northeast View, 2021 (Photograph by Kerrian France)



Kane Mausoleum, East Facade, 2021 (Photograph by Kerrian France)



Kane Mausoleum, West Facade, 2021 (Photograph by Kerrian France)





Kane Mausoleum, South Facade, 2021  
(Photograph by Kerrian France)



Kane Mausoleum, North Facade, 2021  
(Photograph by Kerrian France)



Kane Mausoleum, Interior View, 2021  
(Photograph by Kerrian France)



Kane Mausoleum Doors, 2021  
(Photograph by Kerrian France)

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