

The Guggenheim Mausoleum

Simon Guggenheim, son of the successful Meyer Guggenheim, followed in his father's footsteps, and earned his fortune in mining and smelting throughout the Western Hemisphere. He also tried his hand in politics and served as Senator of Colorado (1907-1913) where he met and married his wife, Olga Guggenheim.¹ Mr. and Mrs. Guggenheim shared their time between Colorado and Washington D.C. until about 1914 when they settled in New York City with their two sons, John Simon and George.

Although both Mr. and Mrs. Guggenheim are both known for their wealth and philanthropy, they are perhaps best recognized for the establishment of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation in 1925. The fellowship foundation was established in memory of their eldest son John Simon (1905-1922), who at 17 passed away just months before his entrance into Harvard University. Modeled after the Rhodes Scholarships, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation was created to "add to the educational, literary, artistic, and scientific power of this country."²

The Guggenheim mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery was also built for the Guggenheim's son and was erected in 1923 by the Mausoleum Company Presbrey-Leland Inc.³ The structure is a columbarium and holds the remains of John Simon, his younger brother George who died at his own hand (1907-1939), Senator Guggenheim (1867-1941), and Olga Hirsch Guggenheim (1877-1970).

The structure measures 10'x10' on a lot (roughly) 24'x30', located one row away from Myosotis Avenue and behind the sprawling Strauss Mausoleum. The Guggenheim Mausoleum conveys a sense of privacy and seclusion due to its location set apart from the public right of way, and diminutive in size in relation to its lot and the Strauss mausoleum,.

The mausoleum is constructed of Bedford Limestone, with a bronze door, travertine flooring and a stained glass window.⁴ Measuring just over 11' in height, the building has a bulky, squat mass that

is offset by the verticality of its Neo-Gothic design. The building is symmetrical and is dominated by a center rectangular block flanked by two slightly shorter "wings"--narrow rectangular forms to each side. The three distinct masses are further emphasized by a narrow band of carved limestone that frames each of the three parts of the façade. Each "frame" curves or cusps in slightly to accentuate the delicacy of the framing and provides a softer form to the bulky mass. The verticality is further accentuated two narrow vertical slits located just above eye-level in each wing. A highly decorated, grape and shield carving of limestone frame frames the door and adds an additional sense of height and verticality.

When approaching the mausoleum the door appears to be a dark void, located in the center of the façade, recessed from the face of the building, and made of a dark bronze material with plate glass behind. Upon opening the door, the bulky, mass of the strong limestone building shrinks away in the silent and enclosed space of the room, large enough to fit only one person comfortably; further emphasizing a place of privacy and seclusion. Upon entering, the visitor is immediately confronted with a sacred space as the eyes are drawn to a stained-glass window of Jesus portrayed as a teacher, and an altar like vestibule that holds the cremated remains of the family. The window provides the only light in the room, which illuminates the altar and shelf below. The window and altar are located at the center, back wall of the room and are enclosed by a delicately carved frame of shields and grapes (matching the exterior frame). The columbarium altar is approximately a 3'2" high and 1' deep shelf made of Bedford limestone and carved with gothic-inspired foliage and script. The altar holds nine square niches for remains, three rows of three; John Simon occupies the center niche. The room is square in shape and the floor is made of travertine and the walls, carvings, and altar of Bedford Limestone.

A strong Christian theme runs throughout the building, in addition to the altar-like columbarium and the Christ figure inside the mausoleum, the exterior is further decorated. At the top of the middle portion of the exterior façade is a early Christian symbol, the "Chi-ro," meaning "Christ." The symbol is flanked by a foliage carving as tall as the central symbol and almost as wide as the central massing of the

façade. The bronze door is highly decorated with foliage and Gothic lettering that reads "Thou Art the King of Glory in Christ." The cast bronze door has a glass plate behind allowing light to shine through and balancing the massive, bulky material and color the door. The bronze framing around the window is decorated with a foliage relief and the door framing is shaped in a cross-like pattern. This cross shape is located directly center of the building massing, but due to its integration into the door frame, and its recessed location within the building façade, the cross does not dominate the front elevation. The

According to the Presbrey-Leland contract and related documents, the mausoleum design, including door and window, were all conducted in house and chosen to Mrs. Guggenheim's specifications.⁵ The mausoleum is featured in two of Presbrey-Leland's catalogues (1939 and 1952) and is described as building with "Gothic decoration" and its forms and massing resemble other featured "Gothic" structures in the catalogues.⁶ Gothic stylistic decorations are further explored with the distinct Gothic script above the entrance declaring the Mausoleum's name.

Although, both Mr. and Mrs. Guggenheim were raised in Jewish households they later converted to Episcopalian. They attended church regularly and were members of the St. Thomas Episcopal Church on 5th Avenue in New York.⁷ St. Thomas was built in 1914 in a highly decorated, ornate Gothic Style whose form, shape and religious overtones may have influenced the Guggenheim's mausoleum selection.

¹ Conarroe, Joel. "Guggenheim, Simon"; <http://www.anb.org/articles/15/15-00298.html>; American National Biography Online Feb. 2000.

² www.gf.org/history-people/history-of-the-fellowship, as quoted from the initial Simon Guggenheim's Letter of Gift (March, 26, 1925)

³ Guggenheim, Woodlawn Archives, Avery Classics Holdings for Woodlawn Cemetery Sepulchral Monuments

⁴ Guggenheim, Woodlawn Archives, Avery Classics Holdings for Woodlawn Cemetery Sepulchral Monuments

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ *The Book of Presbrey-Leland Memorials*. Presbrey-Leland Inc., Avery Classics Holdings for Woodlawn Cemetery Sepulchral Monuments, Woodlawn Gift Box 1, 1929
Commemoration: The Book of Presbrey-Leland Memorials. Presbrey-Leland Inc., Avery Classics Holdings for Woodlawn Cemetery Sepulchral Monuments, Woodlawn Gift Box 2, 1932
Commemoration: The Book of Presbrey-Leland Memorials. Presbrey-Leland Inc., Avery Classics Holdings for Woodlawn Cemetery Sepulchral Monuments, 1952

⁷ Davis, John H., *The Guggenheims: An American Epic*. 2nd Ed. New York, NY: S.P.I. Books, 1994. P236
Unger, Irwin, and Debi- Unger. *The Guggenheims: A Family History*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Haper-Collins, 2005, p. 206

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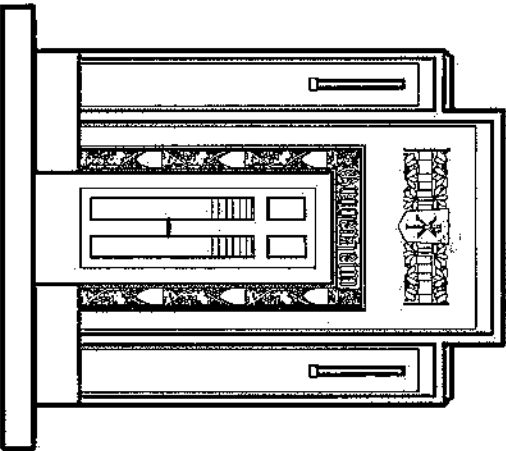
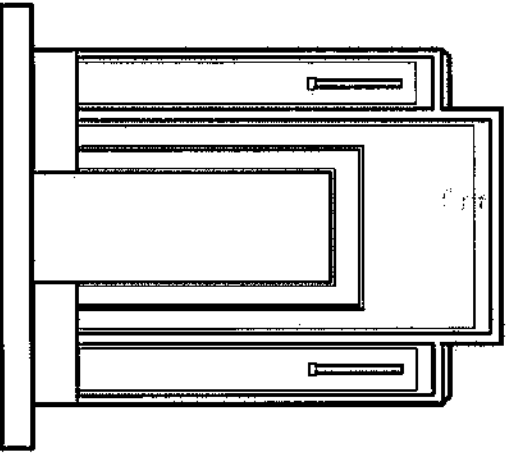
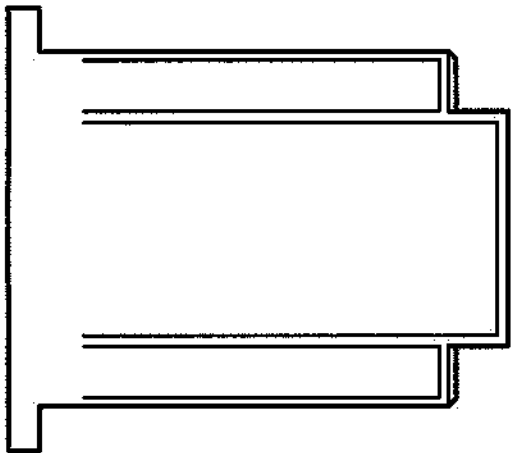
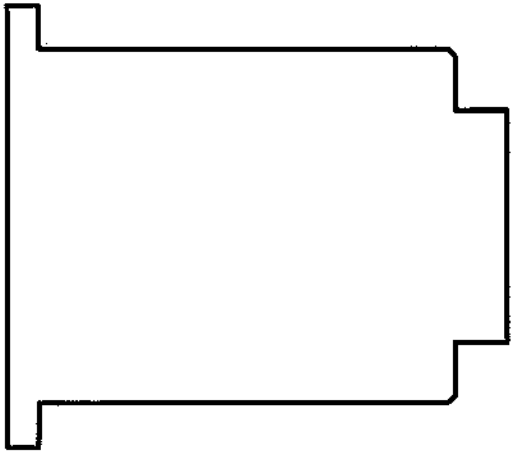
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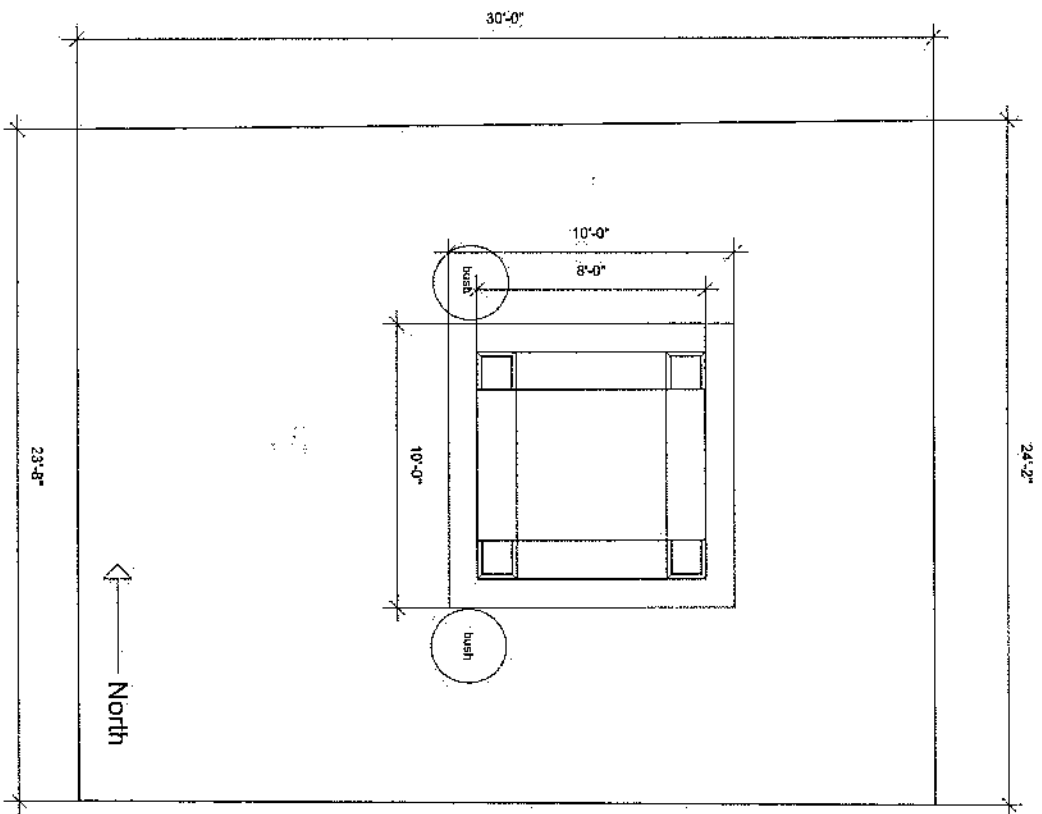
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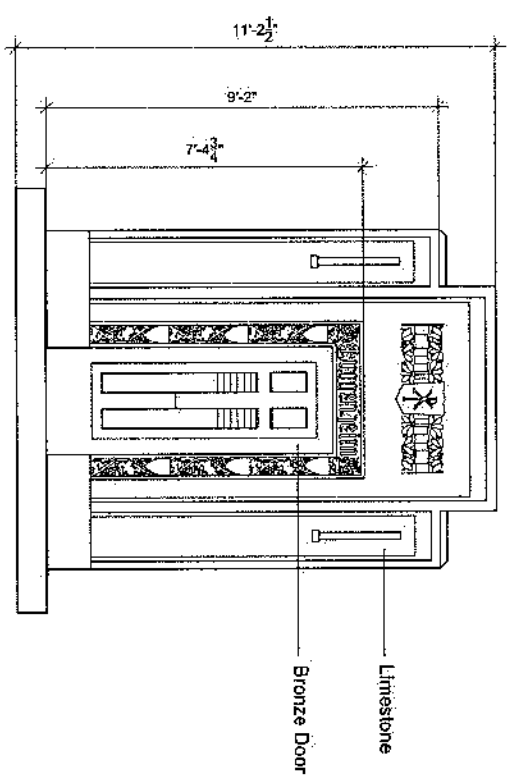


Front Elevation

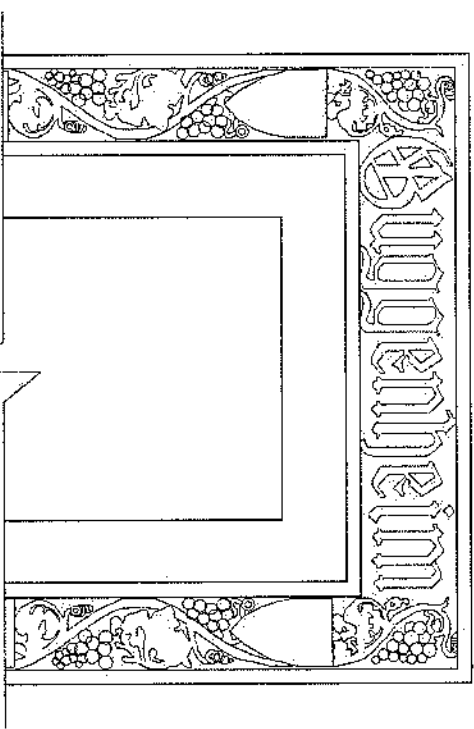


Site Plan
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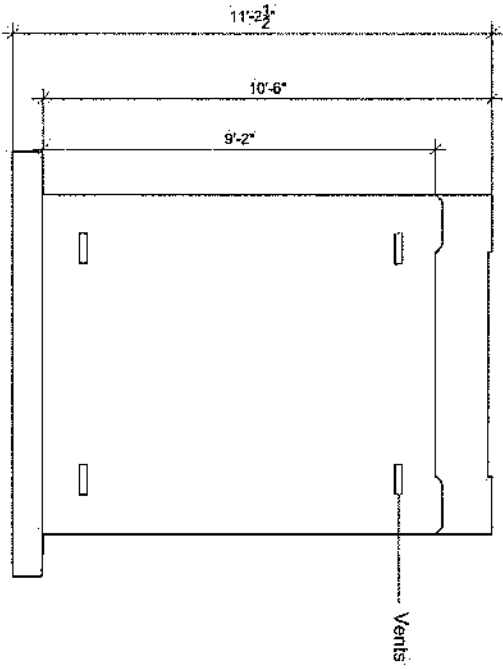
Problem 3: Field Documentation & Formal Analysis: GuggenheimMausoleum
Fall HP Studio 1: Reading Historic Buildings// Faculty: F. Bollack, W. Dennis, A. Dolkarr, C. Larkin
Michelle Taylor Oct. 18, 2010



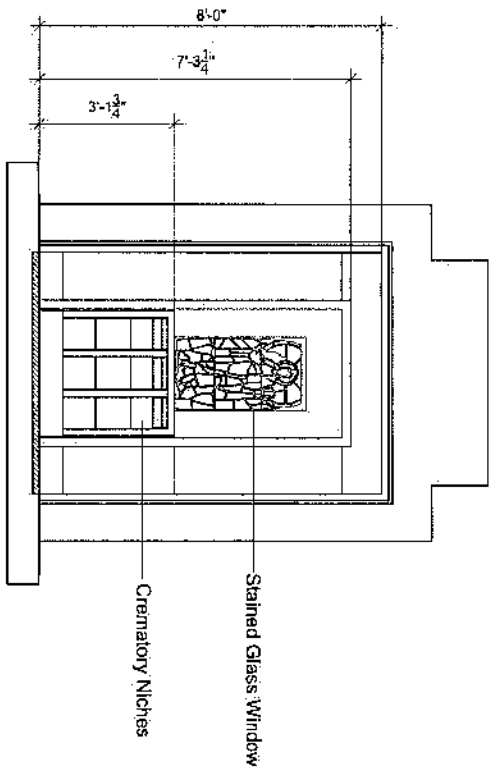
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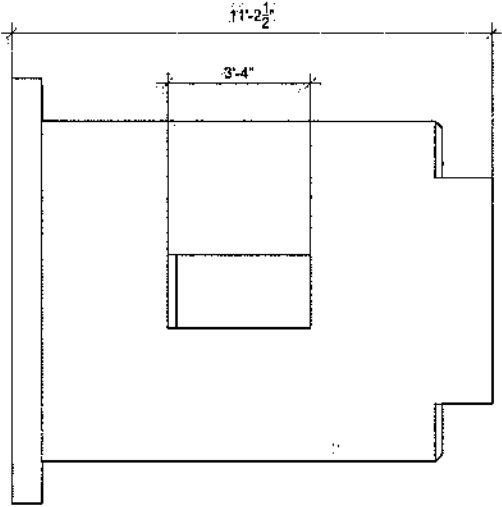
Door Detail
Scale: 3"=10'



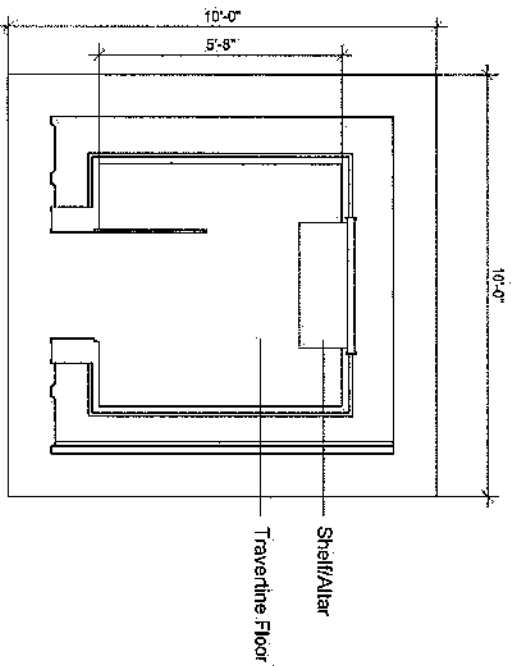
Side Elevation
Scale: 3/4"=1'0"



Section
Scale: 3/4"=1'0"



Rear Elevation
Scale: 3/4"=1'0"



Plan
Scale: 3/4"=1'0"

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