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McGrorty Mausoleum

Introduction

The McGrorty Mausoleum (*Fig. 1*) is located on Lawn Avenue in the Heather Plot of Woodlawn Cemetery. This paper mainly focuses on the biography, design and current condition.

Biography

First of all, the biographies of the McGrorty family cannot be found in almost any of the existing biographies. Only the US Federal Census Data of 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930 and the obituaries in newspapers can give a brief overview of the life trajectory of the McGrorty family (*Fig. 2*).¹

James J. McGrorty was born in New York in 1849. His mother was a native New Yorker and his father was from Irish. He devoted his whole life to the furniture industry. His company was located on 2270 3rd Avenue (named Ace Furniture Company).² And there were many furniture stores nearby at that time.³ The building is now used by Exodus Transitional Community (an NGO) and there are no furniture stores around. The first half of his life is unknown due to the lack of documentation. To some extent, hee was relatively wealthy in his later years. Maybe it's because the furniture business

¹ Ancestry.com. 1900 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: *Ancestry.com Operations Inc*, 2004; see also, Ancestry.com. 1920 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: *Ancestry.com Operations, Inc.*, 2010. Images reproduced by FamilySearch; see also, Ancestry.com. 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: *Ancestry.com Operations Inc*, 2006; see also, Ancestry.com. 1930 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: *Ancestry.com Operations Inc*, 2002.

² "New York City Dictionary", *New York Public Library*:979.

³ "Street View of 1940s New York", *New York City tax photo* <https://1940s.nyc/map/photo/nynyma-rec0040-1-01788-0004>

was done well before and accumulated a fortune. Around 1900 he rented a house at 110 West 116th Street in Manhattan for a period of time, and had a Finnish servant named Hilda Matson who had emigrated to the United States that year. In 1910, residence was located at 233 West 137 Street, NY and was looked after by an Irish servant named Margaret Sheehan. 137 Bruce Avenue, Yonkers, NY was the last place he lived during his life with his kids. He died on October 29, 1913 there.

His wife, Lavinia H. McGrorty, was born and raised in Toronto. It is speculated that she came to New York when she was young (the specific time is unknown). At the age of 27, she married her husband and remained a housewife. She died at 233 West 137 Street on October 4, 1910 before the family moved to Yonkers. They had six children.

The eldest son, James B. McGrorty, was born in New York in 1868. In his early years, he worked together with his father and his younger brother, Frank E. McGrorty, who was four years younger, in the furniture business. After their father died, they inherited the company, working together as partners in the business of carpet and rugs for the whole life. The Census Data of 1930 shows that they lived in 162 Warburton Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, Westchester, NY with two single sisters. It is a very beautiful modernist house built in 1914 (*Fig.3*). It is worth mentioning that the elder brother got married before he died in 1946, while the younger brother never married. The elder brother died in 1946 and the younger brother died in 1943 in Worthington, New York.

The third son, William G. McGrorty, was born in 1873 and worked as a lawyer at

the Surety and Guaranty Company. He also lived with his family before marriage. He married Kathryn Byrne on September 28, 1910 and died at their home "Pine Acres" on November 4, 1948.

The eldest daughter, Emily E. McGrorty, remained unmarried all her life, had no job, had no education, and lived with several brothers and sisters until she died at "Pine Acres" on January 1, 1939.

Lavinia C. McGrorty, the second daughter, was born in 1879. The 1905 New York State Census shows that she lived in White Plains at that time and never moved to other places throughout her life. However, she had a house in East Irvington, Westchester, NY.⁴ The specific information about this house and whether she lived there for a period of time are unknown. She was also unmarried all her life. She received high school education in her early years. In her later years, she lived in a ward in White Plains, NY until her death on March 5, 1959.⁵

The youngest daughter, Florence E. McGrorty, was born on February 4, 1881. She was educated in her early years, worked as a teacher in a public school all her life, and was also single all her life. Finally, she died on June 27, 1948 at "Pine Acres".

About the mausoleum

The owner of mausoleum is undoubtedly James J. McGrorty. According to the archives of Avery Library, the mausoleum was built in 1911, two years before James

⁴ Ancestry.com. *New York State, U.S., Death Index, 1957-1970* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2018.

⁵ Ancestry.com. *1950 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2022.

died.⁶ The architect was Joseph Havender, who was 48 years old at that time. He was also the owner of Monument Default & Statuary Company (later named Bronx Monument Concern) (*Fig. 4*).⁷ He had extensive engineering experience because he had been exposed to stone carving in his early years. The business was founded in 1895 by himself. He passed away in 1952 and the firm passed to his son, Joseph Jr.⁸ It is worth mentioning that his own mausoleum is also located in Woodlawn (*Fig. 5*).

Joseph made a lot of engineering calculations when he designed the mausoleum of the McGrorty family. From his existing manuscripts, it can be seen that he paid great attention to the material. In the existing archives, he listed a great deal of important information, such as the design size of mausoleum (12'-6" long, 14'-9" wide) and the basic information of materials. According to the field observation and existing documentation, the footprint of this mausoleum is roughly consistent with Havender's design size. Eight existing catacombs are located below grade and are lined with slate and laid in the mortar cement. All slate are 2" thick except covers for catacombs below the floor, the backs of all catacombs and the tops of the upper catacombs all slate, are well fastened together and have brick pier at each corner to support slate, the fronts of the six 2" slabs are checked out to fit marble. The catacombs are closed with marble slabs which are removable. All marble covers of catacombs are provided with bronze fixtures for lifting. The whole of the interior of the Mausoleum is also lined with marble. The marble used is the White Italian Marble, blue veined and highly polished, the floor

⁶ Box MM 12 Folder 28, Major Monuments, Avery Library.

⁷ New York Herald Tribune (1926-1962), New York, N.Y, 14 Dec 1952:74.

⁸ Thomas X. Casey and Bill Twomey, Northwest Bronx, (*United States: Arcadia Pub.*, 2011).

is Vermont or Lees Marble (the exact name is unknown) and provided with bronze fixtures for lifting to permit opening to the catacombs under the floor. However, according to the existing data, the underground catacombs are empty. The removable part of the floor is supported by a granite girder. All marble cladding are laid in plaster and Le Farge cement.

Current Condition

In the elevation, the current condition and material of mausoleum have been marked in detail. For example, through observation, there are obvious blistering phenomena on its pediment, eaves and roof, which is due to the detachment of an outer stone layer.⁹ Other parts, such as the rear elevation facade, have the deterioration of "soiling", which may be due to the deposition of pollution in rain. In addition, there is biological growth, namely lichen.

When entering the mausoleum, most of the space is reserved for the placement of catacombs. Therefore, its corridor is very narrow. As soon as entering the door, there will be a rectangular space and two Chinese style vases at the far end (*Fig.6*), painted glass is located above the bronze framed windows inside the room, which is very beautiful. The painting is well preserved, and its frame has no obvious defects, which shows that the production process is excellent. Some marble surfaces have yellow dirt, which may be due to the iron minerals inside the marble. When iron contacts with oxygen, iron oxide will be produced, so rust will be formed, resulting in pale brown.

⁹ ICOMOS-ISCS, "Detachment" in *Illustrated Glossary on Stone Deterioration Patterns*, (Marne, France, 2008): 24.

The ventilation system adopts the principle of natural ventilation. The air flow often affects the temperature and humidity, and natural ventilation can produce good air flow, thus obtaining a stable microenvironment. The natural ventilation here is carried out by air pressure and temperature difference. The air distribution dominates above, which plays a certain role in indoor ventilation. Among them, the upper vent plays a leading role. Because the room is small, this design is enough to meet the indoor ventilation needs, which means the air distribution here is very uniform. However, it has also brought in suspended particles from the air, causing the accumulation of indoor dust, especially in the corners.

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"STREET VIEW OF 1940s NEW YORK", <https://1940s.nyc/map/photo/nynyma-rec0040-1-01788-0004>

Figures



Figure 1. The façade of the McGorty Mausoleum. Imaged by author.

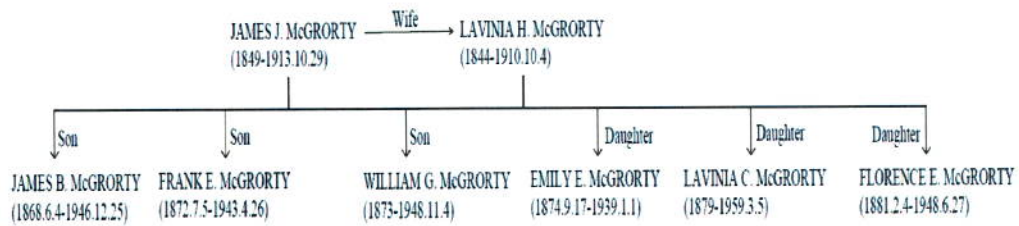


Figure 2. People Relationship Diagram. Imaged by the author.



Figure 3. 162 Warburton Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, Westchester, NY, Zillow: https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/162-Warburton-Ave-Hastings-On-Hudson-NY-10706/33021758_zpid/



Figure 4. This photograph of Havender's Monumental Works was taken around 1903 at their plant located at 3686 Jerome Avenue across the street from Woodlawn Cemetery. Note the 20-sided stone called an icosahedron at the extreme right, which is considered a masterpiece by stonecutters. Courtesy of the John McNamara collection.

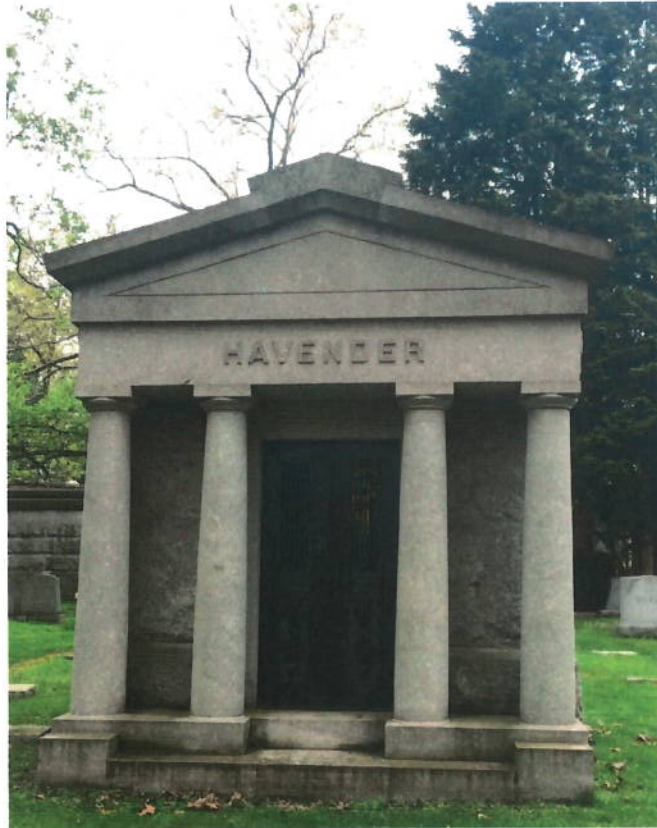


Figure 5. The mausoleum of the Havender in Woodlawn Cemetery:
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/210779980/james-havender>.



Figure 6. Vases in McGrorty Mausoleum. Imaged by author.