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O. J. Schwarzler Mausoleum

Introduction

The O. J. Schwarzler mausoleum is located on North Border Avenue in the Aster plot of Woodlawn Cemetery. This mausoleum has a very simple yet compact design bringing a sense of tranquility and nature to the well-design landscape. This paper will examine three main issues; a biography of the owner and the family within the mausoleum, the design, and the current conditions the mausoleum is in.

Biography

Otto J. Schwarzler was born on December 12, 1873. Born and raised in New York, he invested his time in real estate and built, bought, and sold properties all over New York City. He worked alongside architects on certain projects and grew his business. He was secretary, treasurer, and director of the A.F & O.J Realty Co; secretary and director of the Cliff-Walt Realities Inc.; secretary, treasurer, and director of the Poe Garage Inc.; and vice-president of the Tremont Webster Building Co. He was found dead unexpectedly on March 20, 1929, at his home located at 1882 Grand Concourse in the Bronx.

He was married to Elizabeth Schwarzler and had two children, one daughter and one son. The daughter, Beatrice, died a tragic death at the age of seventeen being the first in the

family to be placed in the mausoleum. Beatrice was killed instantly by an electric shock in the basement of the family's summer home located at 185 Rochelle Street, City Island. She was with her mother and friend George Steinmiller when the electric current passed through her body and she dropped dead at her mother's feet. Elizabeth died years after in 1971 and was placed in the mausoleum with her family.

The Schwarzler's son Albert lived a long life. He learned real state and building from his father. Albert became a well-known Manhattan contractor who built, among other projects, a six-story building at 461 West 159th street/545 Edgecombe Ave at the northwest corner of west 159th street. He married his wife Florine but she passed away years before he did in 2007. Albert was the last to join his wife and the rest of his family in the mausoleum, in 2013.

Design

The mausoleum is located on North Border Avenue in the Aster plot with a north-facing front façade. It is placed on the end of the road accessible for anyone passing by. Its location is in a circular plot of land which bears a strong contrast to the surrounding rectangular lots. The company that Schwarzler contacted with to design and build this mausoleum was the Presbrey-Coykendall Co. The circular plot is quite large in comparison to the rectangular plots next to it. Looking at the designs of the mausoleum, there are two sets of drawings. One resembles the current state of the mausoleum, another is a more intricate version of the executed design done with large rough granite stones with larger arched steps. It is possible that this design was the original plan before the unexpected death of Schwarzler's daughter. The design might have changed due to the higher cost. Once his daughter passed, this simpler design was completed.

The current design of the mausoleum is symmetrical in composition and very simple with only a few detailed elements. These details including two ornamental planters alongside the stairs with a leafy pattern on each of them. This leafy pattern is also found on both sides of the name on top of the north (front) façade as well as around the bronze double doors. The bronze doors have a star-shaped pattern on the bottom half secured with two intricate bronze handles. This whole outer mausoleum is constructed of granite with marble accents on the inside.

As you climb the four steps leading inside the structure you are presented with a very intricate and colorful stained-glass window lined with lead with a reinforced bronze border. The stained glass is of Christ surrounded by his angels in heaven, with a reference of the Bible verse in Matthew Chapter 11 that states “Come unto me”. Seeing this detail suggest that the family might have been religious but my research couldn’t lead me to any conformation. Below the stained glass, is a curved marble window sill with a bouquet of fake flowers and a cross that seems to be left by the decedent’s visitors. Below the still, you have a curved marble seat facing the north.

Looking to the west and east of the inner mausoleum walls, you will see four rectangular burial chambers where the decedents are placed. These areas are made up of marble to match the rest of the interior. The floors however are made up of polished granite, which appears to be is the same granite as the exterior of the mausoleum. I don’t believe there is a specific style this mausoleum was made after like the Egyptian and Greek styled ones that’s surrounding it. Its very simple style brings out the beauty of the landscape and that’s what I believe the

architect here tried to do. Seeing the intricate leafing details on the north face façade, has me believing that a natural calming element wanted to be emphasized.

Conditions

Although this mausoleum was created in the early 1900s, it is in quite good shape. Seeing that the most recent death is in 2013, I strongly believe that this mausoleum was recently restored. Starting with the bronze doors, I examined that the exterior face was cleaned and polished but the inside was untouched leaving a green cast residue. There are no signs of leaks or staining inside the mausoleum but quite a bit of biological growth of the outside.

Along the bottom west and east-facing façade, you see that there is some biological growth following up to the north, front-facing façade. Along the stairs, large planter ornaments, and the bottom half of the mausoleum right by the doors also show intense biological growth.

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