

**Charles and Helen Poore Mausoleum**  
Woodlawn Cemetery – *Wistaria*

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The Poore Mausoleum, located on the Wistaria plot at Woodlawn Cemetery, was constructed in November of 1912 for Mrs. Helen Poore by the Smith Granite Company, a Rhode Island based producer of finished granite and monuments in Westerly Granite. The structural elements are carved from Red Westerly Granite; however, the structure of the catacombs and the four suspended ceiling panels are in Gray Tennessee Marble, and the front covers to the catacomb shelves are in Pink Tennessee Marble<sup>1</sup>. All of the metal ornaments—doors, vent covers, window brackets, ceiling support, rosette tension plates—are in bronze, and the two windows on the side façades are in Tiffany-style stained glass, but list no craftsman. The mausoleum is unique in the repertoire of the Smith Granite Company, being the simplest and smallest gothic style monument in all of their documented structures.

The purchase of the plot and the construction of the mausoleum were prompted by the sudden death of her husband, Dr. Charles Talbot Poore—the “C.T. POORE” emblazoned on the frontispiece of the mausoleum—in April of 1911 at the age of 71. Dr. Poore, an orthopedic surgeon and faculty member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University, as well as one of the founders of St. Mary’s Free Hospital for Children<sup>2</sup>, was a noted physician and author in his specialization, deformities and osteopathy of the lower extremities<sup>3</sup>. According to his obituary in the *Tribune*, his sudden death was due to an aneurysm; this was referenced by *The Washington Post* in their article “Americans Whose Pace Led to the Road of Death,” hypothesizing that stress and a demanding work schedules result in unexpected passing<sup>4</sup>. Upon

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<sup>1</sup> (Specifications for the Construction and Completion of Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery for Mrs. Helen T. Poore of New York City 1912)

<sup>2</sup> (Dr. Charles Talbot Poore 1911)

<sup>3</sup> (Poore 1884)

<sup>4</sup> (Americans Whose Pace Led to the Road of Death 1911)

his death. Poore left \$259,461 in estate to his wife, an amount consisting of real estate and shares of the American News Company and Mohawk Mining Company<sup>5</sup>.

According to census data, the couple married later in life, with no previous marriages, and no children. Helen Poore, née Talbot, was from a family native to the Providence area in Rhode Island<sup>6</sup>. Her father, Charles N. Talbot, Esq., was named as Poore's uncle in the dedication of his 1884 book, Osteotomy and Osteoclasts<sup>7</sup>. Under her instruction, the graves of Robert Bancker Talbot (1852-1921) and his wife Mary Charlotte Talbot (1851-1928) were placed on the site<sup>8</sup> (it is unclear how exactly they are related to Mr. & Mrs. Talbot-Poore). Helen Poore passed in January of 1943 at the age of 94<sup>9</sup>.

### Visual Analysis

The mausoleum sits centered on the plot, three feet from the rear boundary. This provides additional space at the front to view the façade, and offsets it from the linear alignment of adjacent monuments oriented to crowd the front boundary, closest to the road. In the approach to the mausoleum, the first view of the structure is just a brief glimpse through the mausoleums set at the south corner of the Wistaria plot, and only comes fully into view as you progress up Filbert Avenue (fig. 1). The corner view of the structure is interrupted by how the setback draws your view to the front façade. The progression from the corner view to the head-on view results in a dual viewing standpoint and provides a churchyard setting fitting to the structure and reminiscent of medieval provincial English chapels. This is accentuated by the surrounding smaller monuments and the very large tree in the foreground of the perspective.

<sup>5</sup> (Dr. Poore left \$259,461 1912)

<sup>6</sup> (Federal Census 1910)

<sup>7</sup> (Poore 1884)

<sup>8</sup> (Correspondence 1924)

<sup>9</sup> (Deaths: Poore 1943)

As one approaches the building, due to its setback from the street and the prominence of the DuPont monument between the street and the Poore plot, a slightly meandering pathway has to be chosen to get a direct view in line with the symmetrical center of the front façade. In the measured analysis of the space and of the construction documents, it appears that the structure is very simple in minimalized gothic style bearing wall construction; relying on the mass of the stone to provide stability and using the corner buttresses to give stylistic form to the exterior.

In summary, the mausoleum was designed specifically to attract attention to the entryway through orientation, texture, and ornament. The principal element of the façade is the defined difference in texture between the façade elements. The door surround, the trefoil ornament, and the edge lines of the major shapes composing the design are flat and finely finished; in juxtaposition to the rough and three dimensional texture of the walls (fig. 2). The busy texture of the exterior is in stark contrast to the flat interior finish and simple cube shaped interior, drawing one's attention directly to the overwhelming mass of the two bay catacomb directly opposite the entrance and then to the stained-glass windows to either side.

The contrast of the powerful exterior and the simplicity and minimalism to the interior décor relates to what we know of the patron, Mrs. Helen Poore, a grieving widow who wanted to honor her unexpectedly deceased husband. The ornament also lends to this, with the heavy protestant Christian iconography including the Calla Lily, the symbol of beauty and marriage<sup>10</sup>, and the Star of David, a symbol in Abrahamic religions—predominantly Zionism and Judaism<sup>11</sup> (fig.3). Because of the history of the occupants, it can be recognized that the design of the structure is specifically oriented towards being honorific of Dr. Charles Poore, and a place for his wife Helen to mourn. This doesn't look towards future generations or any family being interred

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<sup>10</sup> (Keister, Calla Lily n.d.)

<sup>11</sup> (Keister, Star of David n.d.)

in the space, nor does it have an imposing scale or structure to dominate the space. The aesthetic and quaintness of the mausoleum as a whole depict a private memorial for a devoted couple separated 30 years in death.

#### **Current Condition Assessment**

In the century of its existence, the mausoleum has held up very well with little damage and degradation. There is a damaged bronze ventilation plate on the northern face of the mausoleum, and a minor shift in the ceiling panels, but the largest issue is biological surface growth (lichens and moss) on the exterior and intrusion of vines into the chamber. Aside from a good cleaning and the repair of the ventilation cover plate, this structure requires very little to return it to a pristine condition.

## Bibliography

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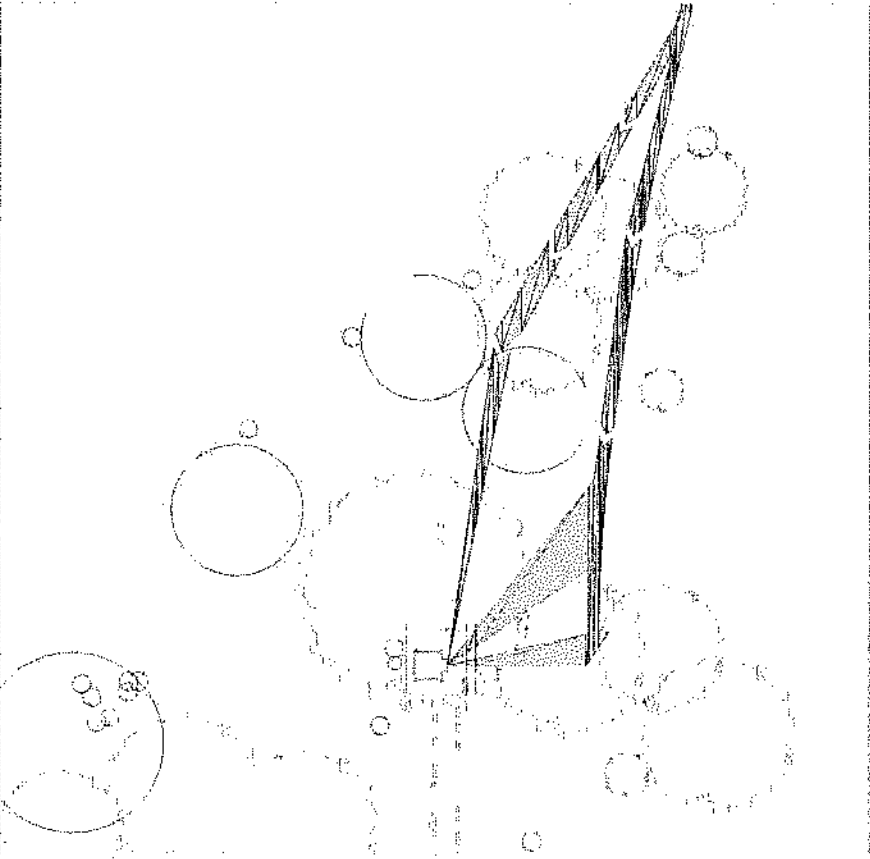


fig. 1

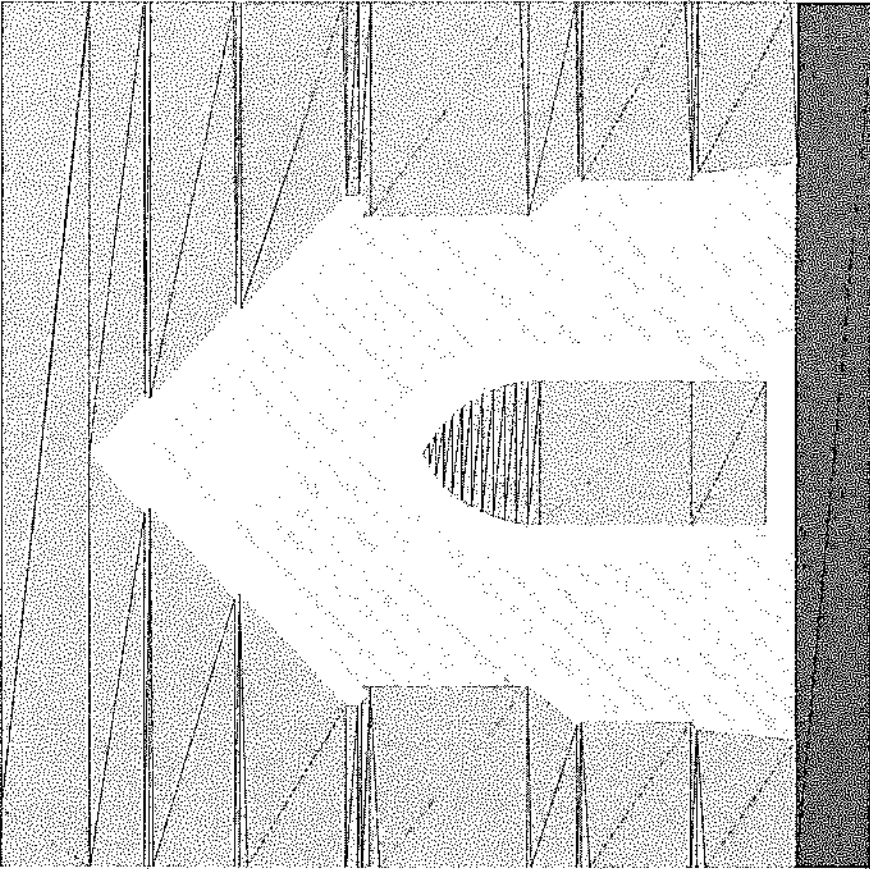


fig. 2