



Rich – Weil Mausoleum

Valentina Angelucci

15 October 2015

Problem 3: Field Documentation & Visual Analysis
Faculty: Françoise Bollack, Ward Dennis & Andrew Dolkart

On the south west corner of Hickory Knoll at Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, New York sits the Rich-Weil Mausoleum. It was built in 1907 by C. E. Taylor Granite Co. for owners Emanuel Adolph Rich and his son-in-law Milton Weil. The mausoleum houses four sarcophagi, only two of which are occupied; the top left by Helena Frizzell and the bottom left by her husband Emanuel Rich. The other two sarcophagi, on the right, remain empty. I believe these empty sarcophagi were intended to be the resting places of Henrietta Lander Weil, daughter of Helena Frizzell, and her husband Milton Weil, however for reasons unknown they did not return to Woodlawn.

Little is known about the family as few records of theirs remain. Emanuel Adolph Rich was born in London, England in 1847 to Russian parents.¹ He moved to the USA in 1884 and later worked as a dry goods merchant.² Helena Frizzell was born in Maine, USA in 1849.³ It is unknown when she moved to New York, what her occupation was and when she was married to Emanuel. They had a child, Henrietta, who was born in 1874 in Georgia, USA. She was married to Milton Weil in 1899.⁴ Milton was born in New York in 1872. Records indicate that he worked as a newspaper publisher and later a treasurer. Milton and Henrietta did substantial travelling to destinations including London and Paris.⁵ Records of this travel are confirmed by the correspondence to Woodlawn from Weil as

¹ Year: 1920; Census Place: Atlantic City Ward 2, Atlantic, New Jersey; Roll: T625_1015; Page: 18A; Enumeration District: 13; Image: 622. Accessed through Ancestry.com

² National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington D.C.; NARA Series: *Passport Applications, January 2, 1906 - March 31, 1925*; Roll #: 40; Volume #: *Roll 0040 - Certificates: 34614-35513, 05 Jun 1907-13 Jun 1907*. Accessed through Ancestry.com

³ Year: 1860; Census Place: Waterville, Kennebec, Maine; Roll: M653_440; Page: 765; Image: 247; Family History Library Film: 803440. Accessed from Ancestry.com

⁴ Ancestry.com. *New York, New York, Marriage Index 1866-1937* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014.

⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington D.C.; NARA Series: *Passport Applications, January 2, 1906 - March 31, 1925*; Roll #: 1516; Volume #: *Roll 1516 - Certificates: 1-375, 05 Mar 1921-08 Mar 1921*. Accessed from Ancestry.com

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most of it is written on note paper with various hotel letterheads. After 1934 correspondence between Milton and Woodlawn ceases, perhaps because the Weils did not return to the USA after their last trip.⁶

The Rich – Weil mausoleum is made of *C. E. Tayntor Granite Co.'s finest quality Granite*. It is Egyptian Revival in style, however it also has neo-classical elements. The mausoleum is a cube with rusticated walls and a pitched roof topped by a cavetto. Centered on the cavetto is a winged disk, an Egyptian symbol of heavenly protection.⁷ The door is made of *U.S Bronze*, a type of copper alloy, with a glass panel, and has lotus flower ornament. The door is surrounded by a frame of battered sides and another cavetto on top. Directly in front of this frame, masking it from view stand two columns with papyriform capitals. These columns frame the door a second time and support the cavetto roof above. Guarding the entrance to the mausoleum are a pair of Middle Terrain Sphinxes. These are one of the defining features of the mausoleum.

In the specifications letter from C.E. Tayntor to Mr Rich and Mr Weil, finalizing design and construction, it states that the sphinxes should replicate those of the Arents mausoleum (built by C. E. Tayntor Granite Co. in 1904 at two thirds their size.⁸ Unfortunately that particular Arents mausoleum no longer exists, it was demolished and replaced in 1978 by the younger George Arents.⁹ It is believed

⁶ Rich-Weil Mausoleum - Woodlawn Cemetery records. Located in the Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

⁷ Curl, James Stevens, and James Stevens-Curl. *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West*. Abingdon [England: Routledge, 2005.

⁸ Rich-Weil Mausoleum - Woodlawn Cemetery records. Located in the Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

⁹ Arents Mausoleum - Woodlawn Cemetery records. Located in the Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

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that the Arents' sphinxes were originally carved by an Italian artist, Carlo Baratelli.¹⁰ (Images 2 & 3)

The two sphinxes sit alongside a path leading into the mausoleum from the road. This path is a special feature because not many mausoleums of this size at Woodlawn have one. This is where the Egyptian motifs stop and the classical take over. (Image 1) The walls, unlike other Egyptian Revival buildings are straight and not battered. This could be because straight walls were more affordable for the family. A cavetto sits above a sloped roof structure, as opposed to a cavetto capping the entire building as seen in the Arents mausoleum. And finally, at the beginning of the path leading to the mausoleum, sit two granite vases, clearly classically inspired.

The rear wall of the mausoleum holds a stained-glass window, with a lotus ornamented grille matching the door. This stained glass window is one of the mausoleum's other defining features. Seen from the light-veined-marble interior, the stained glass is a portrait of Helena Frizzell who is interred within. The portrait is surrounded by a wreath with her name and a quote at the bottom, "Her life with triple virtues blended love, faith and sympathy. When mortal so endowed is wrought an angel on earth is brought." This portrait is eerily life-like, particularly when the sun shines through it, illuminating her eyes. (Image 4) The artist of the stained glass is unknown.

I believe this family had no particular religious affiliation due to the lack of religious insignia and therefore chose an Egyptian inspired mausoleum due to its

¹⁰ "Untitled Document." "Untitled Document." Accessed October 15, 2015.
<http://www.baratellifamily.com/arentsmausoleum.html>.

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common association with funerary architecture and possible spiritual appeal. Other mausoleums built by C. E. Tayfnor Granite Co. at the time include other Egyptian Revival pieces, as well as classical ones that are on the same scale as Rich-Weil.

After reading extracts of Simon Unwin's *Analysing Architecture* I chose to do my visual analysis following his concept of transition, hierarchy and heart as I believe the Rich-Weil mausoleum embodies this idea.¹¹ Beginning with the plan, the mausoleum is symmetrical; this axis is the first tool to focus our attention to the heart within. The plan can be divided into three sections of increasing height; semi-public on the path, semi-private between the sphinxes and the doorway, and private within the building. These different spaces are defined by architectural elements that frame the procession from outside in. (Image 5) The first framing devices visitors cross are the granite vases when stepping off the road onto the path, this immediately lets the visitor know that he has stepped into revered space. The second frames are the sphinxes. In Egyptian tradition they are regarded as benevolent guardians, protecting the space and the people interred beyond. The third frame is composed of the two columns and roof structure above. This space encloses visitors, blocking off peripheral vision of the surroundings and focusing their attention to the door and the heart that sits on the other side. The fourth and final frame to traverse is the door, which itself has a battered frame and is capped with a cavetto. This is the most intimate frame to move through before entering the final resting place of Helena and Emanuel. Once within, visitors are rewarded with the heart of the mausoleum, the stained glass portrait of Helena Frizzel. (Image 4) The portrait itself has a battered frame and cavetto atop it, this creates an altar where visitors can pay

¹¹ Unwin, Simon. *Analysing Architecture*. London: Routledge, 2003.

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their respects. The portrait is most striking in afternoon light, this is when the sun shines through it, bringing Helena to life. These physical and temporal frames can be clearly seen in the longitudinal section. (Image 6)

From this analysis we can conclude that Helena had a particularly special place in her family's heart. This is not only confirmed by the prime position of her portrait and the procession to reach it, but also by the seasonal decorations and planting the family ordered to embellish her tomb. ¹²And judging by the ostentatious ornamentation of the mausoleum it is clear that the family wanted to honor her through it. So although awkward in its proportions and arrangement this shrine stands as a symbol of maternal love, still venerating Helena Frizzell over one hundred years after her death.

¹² Rich-Weil Mausoleum – Woodlawn Cemetery records. Located in the Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

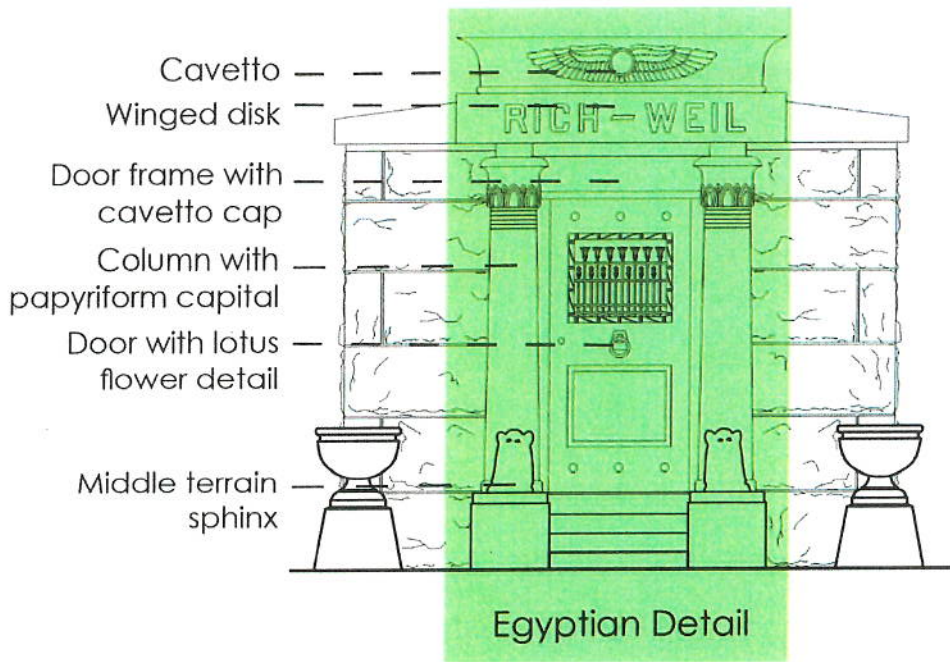


Image 1 – Egyptian Detail



Image 2 – Arents Mausoleum ¹³



Image 3 – Rich-Weil Sphinx

¹³ Accessed October 15, 2015. http://www.baratellifamily.com/media/arents_memorial_bliss.JPG.

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Image 4 – Stained glass portrait of Helena Frizzell

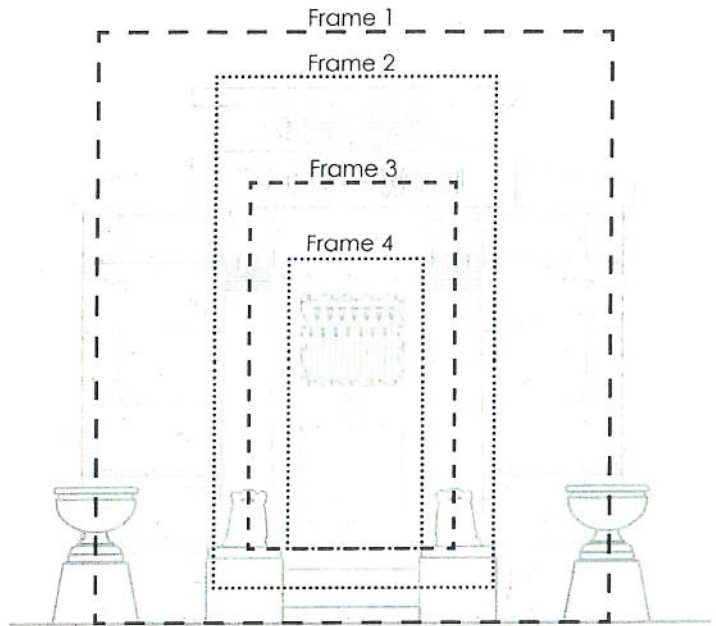


Image 5 – Framing devices, elevation

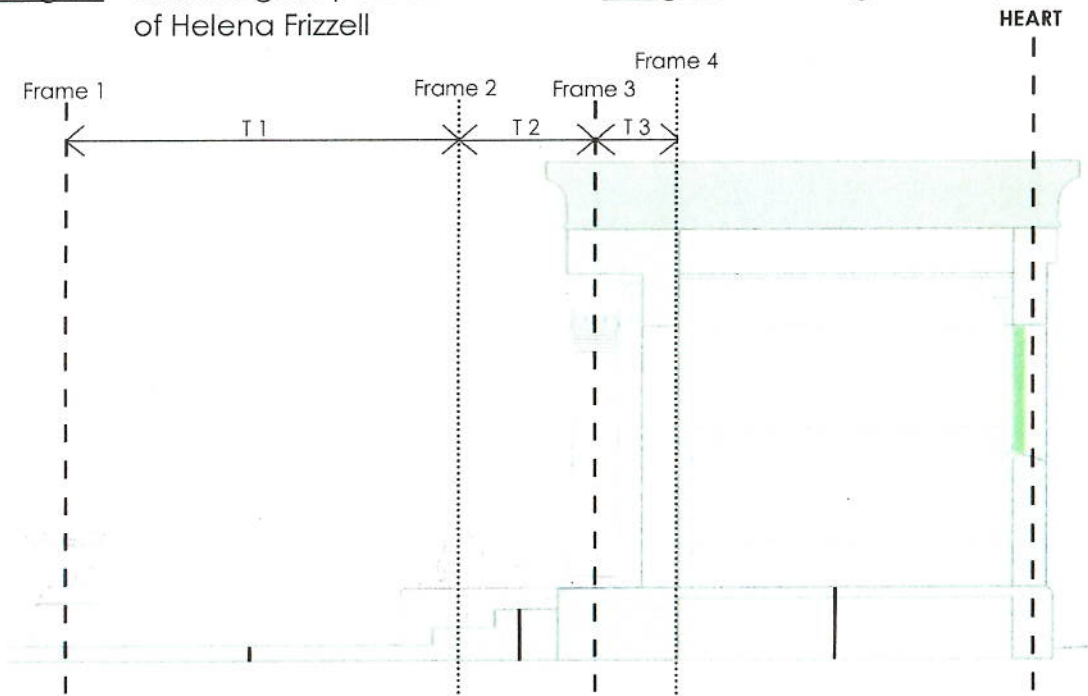


Image 6 – Framing devices, section

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