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Problem 3: Formal Analysis
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Joseph Raphael De Lamar Mausoleum

At the time of his death, Joseph Raphael De Lamar was considered one of the wealthiest men in New York. Born in Amsterdam, Holland in 1843, De Lamar spent nearly sixteen years at sea, where he visited many of the world's ports ('His Rise to Riches'). At the age of 23, De Lamar made his way to America, where he began raising sunken ships for profit. Shortly thereafter, Capt. De Lamar's interest in the Colorado gold rush moved him west making his most of his fortune. De Lamar eventually moved to New York where he tested his luck in the stock market. During his lifetime De Lamar was the president and director of at least a half dozen companies. His primary New York City estate was located on Thirty-seventh Street and Madison Avenue, opposite of J.P. Morgan. He also owned an extravagant home in Glen Cove, Long Island. At age 50, De Lamar married 17-year-old Nellie Virginia Sands and had one daughter, Alice De Lamar. The two subsequently divorced and Sands went on to marry at least twice more. On December 2nd, 1918 Joseph Raphael De Lamar died of pneumonia developed after surgery. Prior to his death De Lamar left ten million dollars in his will to be split evenly between Columbia, Harvard and Johns Hopkins Universities medical programs, and the rest to his only daughter. De Lamar is remembered as a well-traveled and immensely successful businessman who enjoyed and displayed his lavish wealth.

The subsequent design of De Lamar's mausoleum was entrusted to architect Edward I. Shire. Shire, born in 1880, may be most well known for his 1908 and 1928 Anshe Chesed synagogue designs. Although there is little biographical information on Shire, a study of his architectural accomplishments affirms his skill as a professional.

De Lamar's mausoleum, unlike his private residences, is subtle and understated in its beauty. Built around 1919 by Shire, De Lamar's mausoleum is accented with rectangular symmetry, an

exemplification of its Greek Doric inspiration. The mausoleum itself is situated on a generous westward facing corner plot. The intentional positioning and close proximity to the roadway makes it the unmistakable focal point of the intersection. Rising over eighteen feet in height, it is also one of the tallest mausoleums within sight. Shire's own landscaping plans¹, combined with the mausoleums simplistic and column-less sides and back suggest that the buildings façade was to be its predominant feature. Furthermore, the length of the mausoleums exterior suggests the overall depth of its interior.

Granite, marble and bronze are the only three materials used throughout the building. The granite that creates the buildings entire exterior is used in generous portions. The columns and capitols, carved from a solid piece of granite create a sense of verticality while the granite building blocks create a complimenting horizontality. Standing in between these columns² you are made to feel small amongst the architecture. Slightly ahead lies an ornately decorated and recessed double door made of bronze. Moving beyond the door you are immediately confronted by De Lamar's marble tomb and bust, which rests directly ahead. This feature is quite unique in mausoleum design and is a verification of De Lamar's enduring legacy. White marble constructs the buildings entire interior, save the floor, in an elaborate vertical and horizontal fashion. This marble framing not only extends the rooms depth and height, but also confirms what the buildings exterior suggests. On each side there are also four additional spots for burials, two of which are taken by De Lamar's ex-wife, and her daughter from another marriage, Consuelo Hatmaker Sides.

Taking a step back, there are a few elements of this mausoleum that deserve further discussion. Unlike most Ionic columns, Shire's Dorically influenced monoliths contain twenty flutes and appear quite robust, yet contain little elaboration. The robustness is created by the entasis of the columns, which acts as a visual stimulant rather than a structural necessity. Another feature attesting to Shire's

¹ Shires 1919 landscaping plans showed heavy landscaping around the sides and back of the building, which may have largely obscured these sides from viewing.

² The two center columns are spaced further apart than the end columns making a wider and more open entrance.

knowledge and appreciation of Greek form lies in the absence of a column base. This absence was common in Greek architecture and was one that was sometimes defied by architects looking for aesthetic value (Worsely, 329).

Next we have the architrave and frieze, which are proportioned well within each other. The triglyphs and metopes located on the frieze are also well proportioned and create an authentic visual element. The absence of intricate sculpture within these metopes, however, keeps with the buildings restrained style. Furthermore, the positioning of the triglyphs fit perfectly within Greek architectural norms and is a good example of Doric Corner Conflict.

My research has led me to conclude De Lamar's mausoleum is a unique, well-conceived and well-executed piece of architecture. Although, I could not make a definitive comparison between it and a true Greek temple, there do exist analogues worth mentioning. One such building is the famous Propylaea, or gateway to the Acropolis due to its use of column spacing. Interestingly, Propylaea was seen as the entryway into the Acropolis, both metaphorically and physically as De Lamar's mausoleum could be seen as an entryway into the afterlife. However, Shire's choice may also reflect a possible decision to adapt Greek form into a functional American model.

Overall, Shire's use of granite and white marble can be seen as a subtle gesture to De Lamar's wealth and style. While on the other hand the lack of ornate detail is a gesture towards the Greek temple. I would also strongly suggest that this design was entirely of Shire's accord as De Lamar's taste tended towards the extravagant. Nevertheless, this building by no means understates De Lamar's wealth, success, or place in society. Howard Colvin described it best by stating, "In Antiquity, however, the primary purpose of the funerary monument was to address the living and to inform them of the rank and achievements of the deceased: in other words to preserve his memory as well as his physical remains" (15). And maybe more important that, "Tombs should be conceived in the likeness of the temples of the Gods" (21).

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