

James J. Bradley Mausoleum



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The James Bradley family, although not widely well known to most people today, was extremely influential in the early 1900s in Manhattan. In conjunction with his older brother William, James founded the Bradley Contracting Company, which is responsible for a majority of the subway lines that New Yorkers utilize still.¹ The brothers did extremely well for themselves, also dabbling in the construction on apartment buildings and other structures throughout Manhattan. Unfortunately, in 1918, their company took a turn, and eventually they each declared bankruptcy,² Their company offices were relocated to James' Morningside Heights mansion where he, his wife Lillian, and some of their children still resided.⁴

During their peak time of fame and wealth, the Bradley brothers bought and commissioned mausoleums in the famed Woodlawn Cemetery for their families. Choosing plots relatively close to the main gates on Jerome Avenue and the cemetery chapel, the two sites are situated across from one another on a prominent intersection of streets. Surprisingly, despite the fact that they owned a contracting company, the Bradleys commissioned other firms to design and build their mausoleums. James' mausoleum, built by Stone, Gould, and Farrington in 1912, is constructed entirely of St. Barre, Vermont granite.³ It reflects Greek temple-like aspects, much like many of the Stone, Gould, and Farrington designs.

¹"J. Bradley, Builder, Dead." *New York Times* (1923-current file); August 21, 1925; Proquest Historical Newspapers; New York Times. P. 13

²"Receivers Named for Bradley Firm." *ProQuest Historical Newspapers*. Proquest, 6 Oct. 1918. Web. 5 Oct. 2012.

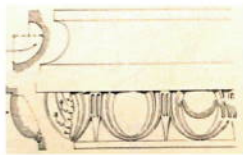
³Examination Sheet: James Bradley Mausoleum. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University.

⁴Derrick, Peter. *Tunneling to the Future: The Story of the Great Subway Expansion That Saved New York*. New York: New York UP, 2001.

In the cornice, a laurel wreath with a flaming torch can be found repeating around the entire structure, resembling the same icon found on one side of a Greek coin dating to around 300 B.C.⁵



The wreath is the symbol found in the ancient Olympic Games, the flame symbolizes life after death, and the torch is a symbol of enlightenment and freedom.⁶ The bronze doors are stamped with decorative elements also found in



ancient Greek temples, as illustrated in Banister Fletcher's book on the history of architecture.⁷ Christian features can also be found in the construction. The stained glass on the interior

contains a figure in biblical clothing, holding a dove with a quote stating, "My Peace I Give Unto You." James Bradley had his catacomb engraved with a motto he lived by his entire life, "Be Good Christians – Love One Another." The Bradleys were prominent members of St. Paul and St. Andrew's Methodist – Episcopal Church in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and James was a 32nd Degree Mason.⁸

The most interesting aspect of this mausoleum is the relationship to William Bradley's across the street. The two structures, built less than a year part from each other and by different design firms, are situated on their plots directly facing one another. They each show aspects of Greek influence and are made of the same

⁵"Laurel Wreath." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 6 Oct. 2012. Web. 15 Oct. 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurel_wreath.

⁶Anderson, William J., Richard Phene Spiers, and William Bell Dinsmoor. *The Architectural of Ancient Greece: An Account of Its Historic Development, Being the First Part of the Architecture of Greece and Rome*. New York: AMS, 1978.

⁷Fletcher, Banister, and Dan Cruickshank. *A History of Architecture*. Oxford: Architectural , 1996.

⁸"Miss Bradley Engaged." *New York Times* (1923-current file); February 20, 1925; Proquest Historical Newspapers; New York Times. P. 17

material. However, James' plot and structure are smaller than William's. This may be a reflection of the fact that William was the eldest, and more superior.

Conversely, the mausoleum of James is situated higher in elevation than William, alluding possibly to be James' retort to William insisting on having the larger plot. At some point, William's plot was sold to the Paterno family, breaking the family bond between the two mausoleums. Today, the relationship cannot go unnoticed to anyone standing in the intersection, but without further investigation, one would not understand it.

Although the Bradley's once lived a wealthy life, they died relatively poor and broken. But despite their financial issues, James continued maintenance on his mausoleum. This shows how important the funerary process and thoughts about life after death were to families, and still are today. The Bradleys fame and fortune is directly integrated into the design of their mausoleum by its grandness and siting. However, their modesty shows in the use of a single, common material and lack of flashy ornamentation.

"Deaths". New York Times (1923-current file); October 29, 1956; Proquest Historical Newspapers; New York Times. P. 29
"1900 United States Federal Census." Ancestry Library n. Ancestry Library. Web. 5 Oct 2012.
"1910 United States Federal Census." Ancestry Library n. Ancestry Library. Web. 5 Oct 2012.
"Question 2 on Suicide." New York Times (1923-current file); April 14, 1928; Proquest Historical Newspapers; New York Times. P. 40