

### **The Belknap Mausoleum**

When entering from Jerome Avenue through the wrought iron gates of Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, it does not feel like we are still in New York City at all. The grandeur of the entrance alone, with its towering stone columns and beautiful and intricate carvings, hinted at the history and significance held within the sacred grounds (Fig. 1). The crunch of fallen leaves echoed through the silence as we wandered along the paths, each one lined with big trees that had witnessed the passage of time. The gravestones and mausoleums, some weathered with age while others meticulously maintained, told stories of more than 300,000 lives that had once thrived in this bustling city. The blue sky and the air were filled with a sense of peace and contemplation. It was indeed a gentle reminder of the beauty that can be found in the most unexpected places, including a cemetery.

The Belknap Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery stands as a striking architectural gem nestled on the serene landscape. Positioned on the Woodbine Park View plot (Fig. 2), not far behind the Urn Garden at the intersection of Pine Avenue and Chestnut Avenue, facing south east, this mausoleum attracts attention with its presence. It is strategically located on an elevated plateau, offering every visitor a breathtaking vista of the surrounding cemetery grounds (Fig. 3). The influence of Art Deco design style, with its massive columns, curved sidewall, and intricate carvings positioned to catch the play of sunlight throughout the day to its visual beauty. Surrounded by lush foliage, the Belknap Mausoleum releases an air of timeless elegance and serves as a prominent landmark within Woodlawn Cemetery. Inside of the Belknap Mausoleum, lay Frank L. Belknap (1881 – 1933) and Jane Collins Belknap (1884 – 1934).

## Biographical Information

Frank L. Belknap was born on December 3, 1881, in Manchester, Delaware County, Iowa. He was a man of distinct physical characteristics, standing at 5 feet 9 inches tall with striking blue eyes and red hair, and high and broad forehead.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of James Lumley Belknap (1849 – 1898) and Christina L. Belknap (1852 – 1936), they both are buried in the same grave at Oakland Cemetery, Manchester, Iowa.<sup>2</sup> Some census records show that they had a pretty close family, which included two younger brothers, William Joseph Belknap of Detroit and Charles B. Belknap of Toledo, Ohio, both of whom were patent attorneys.<sup>3</sup>

During his life, Frank Belknap lived a life marked by both professional success and personal challenges. Frank's early years were characterized by his academic dedication, culminating in his graduation from the law school of the University of Michigan in 1905. He played football during his college years and later became interested in baseball, keeping his own records of most of the important games of the century. His passion in the field led him to become a patent attorney, a role that would define much of his career. His dual law offices in both Chicago (also the city where he lived at the Drake Hotel) and Washington, D.C., reflected the extent of his legal expertise.<sup>4</sup>

During his career, he was engaged in numerous prominent patent lawsuits, with the most notable being the Universal Oil Company case. In 1913, he secured the oil-cracking patents of C. P. Dubbs for this company, and it was primarily these patents that played a

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<sup>1</sup> "U.S., Passport Applications, 1795-1925 - AncestryLibrary.Com," accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/1347066:1174>.

<sup>2</sup> "Iowa, U.S., Births (Series) 1880-1904, 1921-1944 and Delayed Births (Series), 1856-1940 - AncestryLibrary.Com," accessed October 5, 2023, [https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/302448333:61441?tid=&pid=&queryId=a6e2f113790e8f0068a416b95487c990&\\_phsrc=Dqr10&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/302448333:61441?tid=&pid=&queryId=a6e2f113790e8f0068a416b95487c990&_phsrc=Dqr10&_phstart=successSource).

<sup>3</sup> "1900 United States Federal Census - AncestryLibrary.Com," accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/1970396:7602>.

<sup>4</sup> "Frank Belknap Dead; Noted as Patent Lawyer: Attorney Became Ill Here on Return From Europe Won Universal Oil Fight Built Fortune for Armour Scored Victory in Steel Case From His Sickbed Had Noted Career in Law," *New York Herald Tribune (1926-1962)*, May 11, 1933.

pivotal role in the corporation's development under the late J. Ogden Armour. Over the course of eighteen years, he vigorously defended the company's numerous patents in protracted and complex legal battles. The litigation culminated on January 6, 1931, when the corporation was acquired by the Shell Union and the Standard Oil Company of California for \$25,000,000. This transaction substantially restored a significant portion of the late Chicago manufacturer's depleted fortune to Mrs. Lolita Sheldon Armour, J. Ogden Armour's widow.<sup>5</sup>

Frank Belknap earned \$755,350 for his role in winning this case, a substantial amount of money, especially considering that period of time.<sup>6</sup> Even after falling ill in 1932, Frank achieved another legal triumph when his client, the International Rustless Iron Corporation, prevailed in patent litigation against the American Stainless Steel Company. Additionally, he served as the patent counsel for the Flintkote Corporation.<sup>7</sup> During his prime, he was a member of esteemed clubs such as the Illinois Athletic Club, the Congressional Club of Washington, the Westchester Country Club, and the Montecito Club of Montecito, California. He also made regular visits to European cities such as London, Paris, and Berlin nearly every year for business purposes (Fig. 5).<sup>8</sup>

His personal life was marked by two marriages. He first wed Jane Tucker Belknap in Santa Barbara, California. Together, they had two children, Letitia Belknap and Jane Frances Belknap (Fig. 6) However, this marriage ended in divorce on September 29, 1925.<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, Frank got married once more with Jane Collins Belknap of East Windsor, New York, who was born on July 25, 1884.<sup>10</sup> They got married in San Francisco on October 20,

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<sup>5</sup> "Frank Belknap Dead; Noted as Patent Lawyer."

<sup>6</sup> "Times Union 07 Jan 1931, Page 1," Newspapers.com, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://bklyn.newspapers.com/image/557116058/>.

<sup>7</sup> "Frank Belknap Dead; Noted as Patent Lawyer."

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "Frank Belknap, Lawyer, Leaves \$750,000 Estate: Widow and First Wife Are Given Incomes.," *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963)*, May 18, 1933.

<sup>10</sup> "U.S., Find a Grave® Index, 1600s-Current - AncestryLibrary.Com," accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/169466005:60525>.

1926.<sup>11</sup> During their marriage, they travelled for quite some times, at least to France and Honolulu.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, their marriage only lasted less than seven years before Frank's passing.

Tragically, Frank's life was cut short at the newly opened Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in Manhattan, New York City on May 10, 1933, when he succumbed to a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of 51. He had been ill since November 1932, when he returned from abroad that fall, and was on the way to California, where he passed the winter, and he just scored victory in the steel case. He had been confined to his apartment since that time.<sup>13</sup> After his death, Frank left an estate of \$750,000. The will directed that one-third of the estate go to the widow, Jane Collins Belknap. The remainder was left in trust, part of the income to go to Frank's first wife, Jane Tucker Belknap, in accordance with their separation contract. The residual income from the trust was divided equally between his two children by his first wife. A newspaper stated that the two children would receive the principal from the trust when they are 35 years old.<sup>14</sup>

Frank passed away before a mausoleum could be erected for him, which shows that he might be buried somewhere else until in 1933, Jane Collins Belknap, his wife, commissioned a mausoleum for them both at Woodlawn Cemetery. She followed Frank in death on the age of 50 on April 10, 1934 in Manhattan, New York City, marking the end of their brief but eventful union of love that they shared till death did them apart.<sup>15</sup> Before Jane Collins Belknap died, she hired H. K. Peacock Memorials, Inc., that was run by H. K.

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<sup>11</sup> "U.S., Newspapers.Com™ Marriage Index, 1800s-Current - AncestryLibrary.Com," accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/102698591:62116>.

<sup>12</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (Including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 - AncestryLibrary.Com," accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/2003582573:7488>; "Honolulu, Hawaii, U.S., Arriving and Departing Passenger and Crew Lists, 1900-1959 - AncestryLibrary.Com," accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com/discoveryui-content/view/152107:1502>.

<sup>13</sup> "Frank Belknap Dead; Noted as Patent Lawyer."

<sup>14</sup> "Frank Belknap, Lawyer, Leaves \$750,000 Estate."

<sup>15</sup> "U.S., Find a Grave® Index, 1600s-Current - AncestryLibrary.Com."



Peacock himself, and the office was located at 745 Fifth Avenue, New York City.<sup>16</sup> The design and build for monuments and mausoleums business was founded in 1927, and is still running to this day (October 5, 2023), but they moved the office to 3 Railroad Avenue, Valhalla, New York.<sup>17</sup>

### The Mausoleum

Finding the Belknap Mausoleum is relatively straightforward, as it is strategically positioned within the Woodbine Park View plot, not far from the entrance gate on Jerome Avenue and the Woolworth Chapel of Woodlawn Cemetery.<sup>18</sup> Situated in the southeast direction, the Belknap Mausoleum is located at the back of the Urn Garden. To its left, it faces the Frederick M. Woolworth mausoleum, and to its back, it is adjacent to the Joseph Murphy Mausoleum, meanwhile on its right side, it is positioned across from the George McMacus Mausoleum (Fig. 7).<sup>19</sup>

Despite being surrounded by more grandiose, ornate, and larger mausoleums, the Belknap Mausoleum stands firmly but also humbly on its plot. The monument's floor level is elevated approximately fourteen inches above the ground on a solid Quincy granite base, a common material used in many mausoleum projects in Woodlawn and other architectural works in New York City during that era.<sup>20</sup>

Above the pair of steps leading up to the entrance, there are two granite columns designed featuring tiers that progressively recede in both widths and heights. The columns are decorated with decorative engravings of curves and lines that shaped like a sword or shield

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<sup>16</sup> "Woodlawn Cemetery Records, 1863-1999," *Series I: Major Monuments ## Belknap, Jane C. (Parkview: Lot 17154)* Drawer MM 1.1 Folder 56, no. 6665518 (n.d.), Avery Library, Columbia University.

<sup>17</sup> "Peacock Memorials Inc | (914) 949-3240 | Valhalla, New York," AllBiz, accessed October 5, 2023, <https://www.allbiz.com/business/peacock-memorials-inc-914-949-3240>.

<sup>18</sup> "Woodlawn Cemetery Records, 1863-1999," *Series I: Major Monuments ## Belknap, Jane C. (Parkview: Lot 17154)* Box MM 01 Folder 94, no. 6665518 (n.d.), Avery Library, Columbia University.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "Where Is Quincy Granite?," Quincy Quarry and Granite Workers Museum, accessed October 5, 2023, <http://www.quincyquarrymuseum.org/where-is-quincy-granite.html>.

on their upper surface. On each side of these columns, there is a side wall with a curved form and a decorative engraving with a repetition of curved lines.

Between the columns, there is a granite wall designed with a similar tiered pattern, mirroring the column's receding levels and widths. In the center of this wall, there is a single bronze door with a distinctive blue-green patina, which adds a beautiful pop of color and contrast to the otherwise monochromatic stone façade. The door is decorated with a repeated motif of beautiful curved line ornamentation that echoes the design found on the side walls. Above the bronze door, a block of granite bears the mausoleum's name, 'BELKNAP', and crowning the frontal façade is another solid granite block serving as the roof of the mausoleum. This roof features a gentle slope angle to facilitate the runoff of rainwater and foliage. These geometric ornaments, sleek lines, and opulent materials that this mausoleum has, encapsulate the spirit of Art Deco movement from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Belknap Mausoleum is a completely symmetrical. The side facades of this monument look almost simple and plain. There are several lines that tell how the granite blocks formed the walls of the mausoleum. There are two bronze vents with blue-green patinas to circulate the air inside of the catacombs and a 1'-2 ¼" by 2'-9 ¾" stained-glass window with foliate motifs on each side façade (Fig. 8). The same elements are found in the back elevation of the building, only without the stained-glass window.

The interior of the Belknap Mausoleum is quite unusual in comparison to other mausoleums in Woodlawn. Visitors can only enter 3 feet deep and face the catacomb doors directly, while in other mausoleums, there are paths to the back of the room and the catacombs are located on each side. The uniqueness does not stop there because the interior of the Belknap Mausoleum uses slabs of rosa Portuguese pink marble for its interior clads. On the catacomb doors, visitor can see the name of Frank L. Belknap and Jane Collins

Belknap engraved on the pink marble slab, which are also decorated with bronze ornaments. On each side of the interior, there is a column-like ornament that is also decorated with sword/shield-like engraving on its pink marble cladding (Fig. 9).

### The Mausoleum's Current Condition (2023)

Historical correspondences between the year of 1953 to 1957 (Fig. 10 and 11) reveal a connection between Mrs. Philip Dater Shaul, potentially a descendant or relative of the prominent Frank L. Belknap and Jane Collins Belknap, and John C. Plumb, the dedicated superintendent of Woodlawn Cemetery during the 1950s. These letters shed light on a crucial matter: the ongoing care and maintenance of the Belknap Mausoleum. John C. Plumb approached Mrs Shaul with a request for endowment funds, securing the financial support needed for the maintenance of the mausoleum, started from 1953 (almost two decades after the death of Jane Collins Belknap) to 1957.<sup>21</sup> However, after that year, historical records fail to provide any evidence of continued care and attention from either Frank or Jane Belknap's descendants or relatives towards the Belknap Mausoleum. This intriguing historical anecdote raises questions about the legacy and fate of this architectural gem, which still stands as a testament to the Belknap family's prominence and significance in the Woodlawn Cemetery.

On September 2023, the Belknap Mausoleum, which was constructed from durable and enduring granite, continues to witness the resilience of its materials. However, this mausoleum still requires regular maintenance so that it continues to look beautiful and solid. The current condition of the mausoleum faces some challenges. The front façade, shielded from direct sunlight due to nearby trees, results in water and moisture stain, along with some soiling. Meanwhile, the left façade, in addition to moisture issues, has fallen victim to biological growth in the form of moss and mildew. Similarly, the back façade also suffers

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<sup>21</sup> "Woodlawn Cemetery Records, 1863-1999," *Series II: Masoleum Owners Correspondence ## Belknap, Jane Collins* Box MOC 02 Folder 20, no. 6665518 (n.d.), Avery Library, Columbia University.

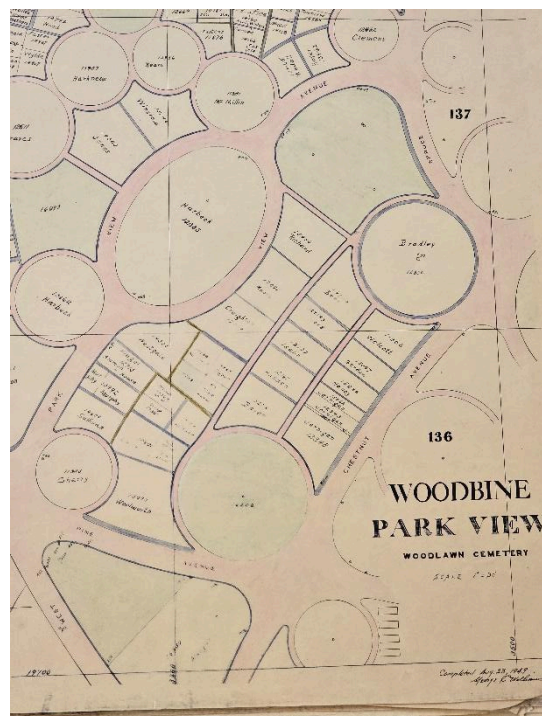
from the same issues. An interesting observation shows that the granite surface below the bronze ventilation grills on this side remains relatively unaffected, which is caused by the biocidal properties of bronze, which appears to have contributed to eliminating biological growth. On the right façade, the absence of sunlight, primarily due to an enormous tree on the eastern side of the mausoleum, has taken a toll, making it the most severely damaged part of the mausoleum with the same salt, water, soiling damage, and the manifestation of biological growth issues.

To address these challenges and preserve the Belknap Mausoleum for future generations, several measures can be taken. Firstly, it is essential to carefully clean and remove the moisture and soiling from the granite surfaces. Specialized cleaning techniques, such as gentle power washing with a neutral pH detergent and water can be considered. Furthermore, the biological growth on each façade should be meticulously removed and preventive measures implemented to inhibit its return. This could involve the application of a biocidal treatment or the installation of bronze or other biocidal materials as flashing on the edges of the mausoleum, which could alter its appearance. However, any alteration should be avoided or carefully considered as a last resort. Additionally, tree trimming can be considered as well to provide much-needed sunlight to the facades to prevent further damage. Regular inspections and maintenance will be crucial to ensure the long-term preservation of this historic mausoleum, allowing it to continue to tell the story of the Belknap family for more generations to come.

**Appendix**

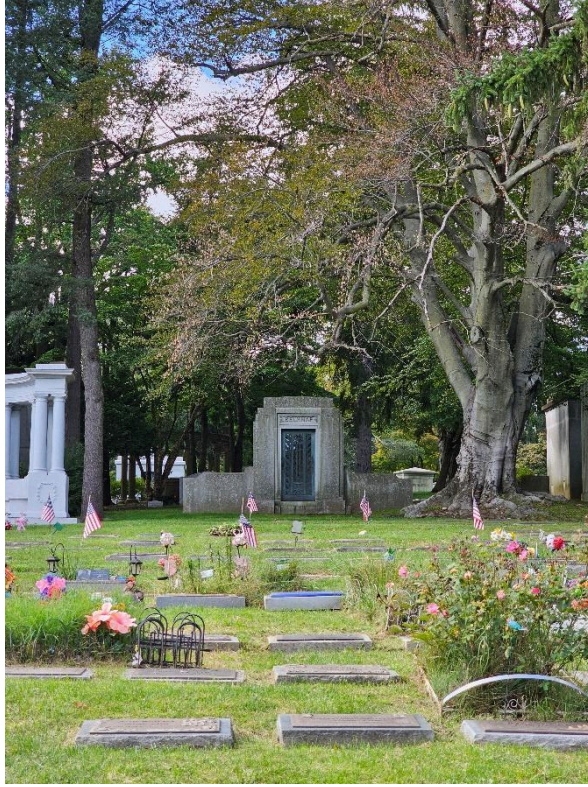


*Figure 1-Hand Sketch of Woodlawn Cemetery Jerome Avenue Gate. Avery Library.*

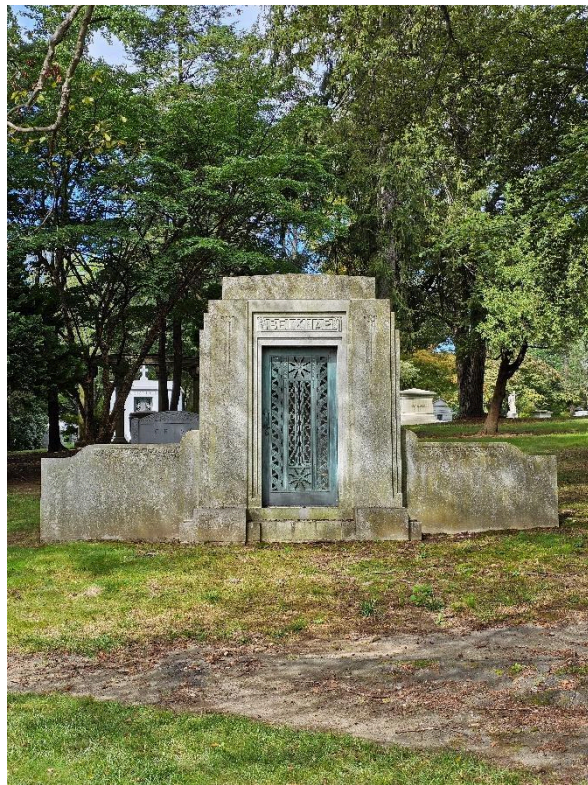


*Figure 2-Woodbine Park View Plot Plan Drawing. Avery Library.*





*Figure 3-Site Context Photo of The Belknap Mausoleum. Frederick, 2023.*



*Figure 4-Front (South East) Elevation of The Belknap Mausoleum. Frederick, 2023.*

## Frank Belknap Dead; Noted as Patent Lawyer

**Attorney Became Ill Here  
on Return From Europe;  
Won Universal Oil Fight**

**Built Fortune for Armour**

**Scored Victory in Steel  
Case From His Sickbed**

Frank L. Belknap, international patent lawyer, with offices in Chicago and Washington, died of a cerebral hemorrhage yesterday morning in the Waldorf-Astoria, where he had been ill since last November. He was fifty-one years old. His permanent home was at the Drake Hotel, Chicago.

A patent attorney for large corporations whose interests extended to Europe, Mr. Belknap visited London, Paris and Berlin nearly every year. He had just returned from abroad last fall and was on the way to California, where he passed the winter, when he became ill. He had been confined to his apartment since November 27.

Mr. Belknap had been involved in many famous patent litigations, the most famous of which was that of the Universal Oil Company. In 1913 Mr. Belknap obtained for this company the oil-cracking patents of C. P. Dubbs and it was largely around these patents that the corporation was built by the late J. Ogden Armour.

For eighteen years he defended the numerous patents of the company in long and involved court fights. The litigation ended on January 6, 1931, when the corporation was sold to the Shell Union and the Standard Oil Company of California for \$25,000,000. The sale brought back to Mrs. Lolita Sheldon Armour, widow of the Chicago manufacturer, a large part of her husband's shrunken fortune.

Mr. Belknap won another victory after his illness began when his client, the International Rustless Iron Corporation, succeeded in litigation over patents with the American Stainless Steel Company. He also had been patent counsel for the Flintkote Corporation.

Mr. Belknap was born in Manchester, Iowa, on December 3, 1881, and was graduated from the University of Michigan in 1905. He played football during his college years and later became interested in baseball, keeping his own records of most of the important games of this century. He was a member of the Illinois Athletic Club, the Congressional Club, of Washington, the Westchester Country Club, and the Montecito Club, of Montecito, Calif.

Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Jane Collins Belknap, two daughters by a previous marriage, the Misses Letitia and Frances Belknap, all of New York; his mother, Mrs. C. L. Belknap, of Detroit, and two brothers, W. J. Belknap, of Detroit, and C. B. Belknap, of Toledo, Ohio.

*Had Noted Career in Law*



Herald Tribune photo—Acme  
William M. K. Olcott

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Figure 5-Obituary of Frank L. Belknap. New York Herald Tribune, May 11, 1933.





*Figure 6-Family Passport Application Photo of Frank L Belknap and His First Wife, Jane Tucker Belknap and Their Children, Letitia and Jane Frances. Ancestry Library.*



*Figure 7-Site Plan of The Belknap Mausoleum. Frederick, 2023.*





*Figure 8-Stained Glass Windows at The Belknap Mausoleum. Frederick, 2023.*



*Figure 9-Interior Elevation of The Belknap Mausoleum. Frederick, 2023.*

BEKNAP, MRS. JANE COLLINS  
 PARK VIEW # 17154

THE WOODLAWN CEMETERY  
 WEBSTER AVENUE & 23rd STREET  
 NEW YORK 70, N.Y.  
 Kingsbridge 7-5488

ESTIMATE June 22, 1953  
 'SPECIAL CARE FUND'

Mrs. Philip Dater Shaul  
 213 Gay Park Avenue  
 Amsterdam, New York

Re: Endowment of lot 17154, Park View Plot, and mausoleum  
 thereon, original owner Mrs. Jane Collins Beknap

Dear Mrs. Shaul:

At the present cost of labor and materials, and at today's return  
 on our investments, we estimate that the trust fund required to provide suffi-  
 cient income will be as follows:

To provide for the weekly interior cleaning of the mausoleum, and  
 for the necessary cleaning and repairs to both the exterior and interior that may  
 eventually be required, with special care to the turf of the lot, to provide for  
 care of the overgrown planting (including the pachyandra), with a reserve for  
 suitable replacement when necessary, a fund of Eleven Thousand, Four Hundred and  
 Fifty Dollars (\$11,450.) will be required, or Eighty-nine Hundred and Fifty Dol-  
 lars (\$8,950.) in addition to the fund of Twenty-five Hundred Dollars (\$2500.)  
 which we now have.

If the interior of the mausoleum is to be cleaned less frequently,  
 the fund required will decrease accordingly. To provide for semi-monthly inter-  
 ior cleaning, reserve for future repairs, care of lot and overgrown planting, a  
 fund of Ten Thousand, Three Hundred Dollars (\$10,300.) will be required, or Seventy-  
 eight Hundred Dollars (\$7800.) in addition to the fund of Twenty-five Hundred Dol-  
 lars (\$2500.) which we have at present, or, to provide for weekly interior clean-  
 ing etc., a fund of Eighty-seven Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$8,750.) will be required,  
 or Seventy-four Hundred and Fifty Dollars (\$7,450.) in addition to the fund of Twenty-  
 five Hundred Dollars (\$2500.) which we now have.

If you need any further information, we shall be pleased to hear from  
 you.

Very truly yours,  
 THE WOODLAWN CEMETERY

John C. Plumb  
 Superintendent

The estimate of the amount required to establish a fund to provide sufficient income to give the above special care  
 is based on today's cost of labor and materials and today's return on our investments.

Figure 10-Correspondence Between Mrs. Philip Dater Shaul with John C. Plumb of  
 Woodlawn Cemetery in 1953. Avery Library.

BEKNAP, Mrs. Jane Collins  
 PARK VIEW PLOT, Lot #17154  
 THE WOODLAWN CEMETERY

INTER-OFFICE MEMO

RI6136-37 - 7/18/57

TO: Mrs. Sophie D. Beknap, Secretary DATE: July 17, 1957

FROM: Mr. John C. Plumb, Assistant General Manager July 17, 1957

SUBJECT: Endowment of lot #17154, Park View Plot - Request #269  
 Original owner: Mrs. Jane Collins Beknap

Mrs. Philip Dater Shaul  
 213 Gay Park Avenue  
 Amsterdam, New York

Re: Lot #17154, Park View Plot - Mrs. Jane Collins Beknap

Dear Mrs. Shaul:

We have received your letter of July 15 accepting our estimate  
 for the removing of the overgrown planting and the regrading and seeding  
 of the lot, and your check for \$267.00 to cover the cost of this work. This  
 will be taken care of just as soon as possible.

We are pleased that you have decided to add to the present  
 endowment of Twenty-five Hundred Dollars (\$2500.), an additional endowment  
 of Seventy-five Hundred Dollars (\$7500.). The income from the total fund will  
 then be applied toward the care of both the lot and the mausoleum and the care  
 of the planting.

Upon receipt of this additional endowment, we will issue a Trust  
 Receipt and Agreement in your name.

As soon as the work has been completed, we will advise you, and  
 if you visit Woodlawn later, and would like to discuss any of the details,  
 please let us know.

Very truly yours,  
 THE WOODLAWN CEMETERY

John C. Plumb  
 Assistant General Manager

JCP:00

Figure 10-Correspondence Between Mrs. Philip Dater Shaul with John C. Plumb of  
 Woodlawn Cemetery in 1957. Avery Library.

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