

LOWE MAUSOLEUM

Joe Lowe and Emily Lowe

Joseph Lowe, more commonly known as Joe Lowe, was born in 1882 in Syracuse, New York. He was the owner of Joe Lowe Corporation which manufactured supplies for the bakery and ice-cream industry. In 1925, Joe Lowe bought the patent from Frank Epperson in Oakland to sell popsicles. Besides "Popsicle", "Fudgsicle", "Creamsicle" and "sicle" were registered trademarks of his Corporation. As of 1964, Joe Lowe Corporation had sales of fifty-two million dollars and had plants in Chicago, Baltimore, Toronto and Los Angeles.

Lowe had married three times. His first wife was Mattie B. Lowe with whom he had his only daughter Rea Lowe. The Lowe family had taken residence at Marlborough Road in Brooklyn as early as 1913. They were served by a maid and a chauffeur and from time to time there were boarders staying at their house. In 1943, Joe Lowe, who was sixty-one years old at that time, married the forty-eight-year-old Emily Lynch in Palm Beach, Florida. The couple lived in an apartment at 785 Park Avenue, a twenty-story luxury residential building that is still extant today. After Emily's death in 1966, Joe Lowe married a woman named Alice. In 1969, he passed away at the age of eight-seven at Mount Sinai Hospital of heart ailment.

Emily Lunch Lowe was born in 1895 in New York. She was a student at Columbia University between 1921-1925 and received her art education from the Art Students League in New York and Academic Julien in Paris. Emily was a painter by profession and was a member of the National Association of Women Artists, Artists Equity Association and the Union des Femmes Peintres et Sculpteurs in Paris. Her works were included in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, Modern Art Museum in Paris and other private collections. She passed away at the age of seventy-one at Mount Sinai Hospital.



Emily Lunch Lowe (1895 - 1966)

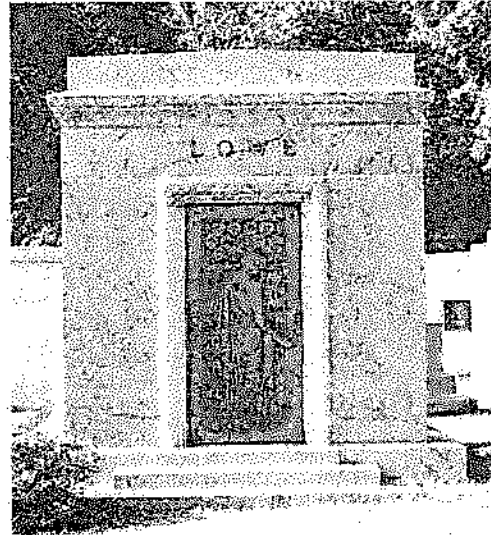
Art Patronage and Legacies

The couple had avidly patronized artists and art education. In 1949 they founded the Joe and Emily Lowe Foundation. Through the foundation, Mrs. Lowe had supported young artists and underprivileged children with artistic potential. The foundation had sponsored a full-scaled art school at Forest House in the Bronx. It had also supported the annual Emily Lowe Award Competition in which winners would received generous subsidies to further their careers establishing galleries at institutions in 1951. Beneficiaries included Syracuse University, Hofstra University and University of Miami. Aside from being great art patrons, the couple had also supported laboratories at Lenox Hill Hospital and Mount Sinai Hospital.

Around the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Lowes had started thinking about establishing their legacies and planning ahead for their afterlives. Before the establishment of the foundation, neither Emily nor Joe Lowe seemed to have connected to any charitable activities. It was roughly in about 1951 the couple hired Presbrey Leland Inc. to design a mausoleum for them. In the same year, Mrs. Lowe had painted an exquisite stained glass for the Lowe mausoleum which is now hung in the middle of the burial chamber. Joe and Emily passed away more than a decade later after the erection of their mausoleum. Probably, certain driving actors during this time

period had motivated them to start making decisions for their afterlives. However, with the lack of biographical information in hand, these facts are yet to be determined.

Mausoleum



Building Siting

The siting of the building has defined the mausoleum itself as a private sepulcher of the deceased couple. The lot that the Lowes owned is a twenty-five by forty feet rectangle in plan, comprising a total area of one thousand square feet. The mausoleum occupies only half of the land of the lot. Such siting of the mausoleum leaves quite a vast space between the façade and the avenue that the building sits along. The mausoleum is about eighteen-and-a-half feet away from the side boundaries of the lot. Thus there is considerable space to separate the mausoleum from other buildings in its vicinity.

Landscaping

There are no records of any landscape design on the site back in the time when the mausoleum was erected. However, satellite image of 2004 retrieved from Google Earth showed that there were four shrubs, lined up in two rows, formed an intangible boundary that marked the Lowes' lot from its neighbors. One pair of shrubs flanked the mausoleum and the other pair was about four feet away from the road. The shrubs would have their branches and leaves blocking partial view of the mausoleum. Visitor arriving at the lot would be greeted by a path enclosed by the shrubs and would be led further up to the front façade of the mausoleum. Today the configuration of landscape remains the same, but the overgrown shrubs have been trimmed.

Façade Design

The exterior of the mausoleum reflects a modern adaption of classic temple form. The non-columnar mausoleum is symmetrical in composition. It is assembled with large rectangular pieces of Stony Creek granite. The veining of the polished pinkish granite adds a layer of splendor to the plainness of the façade. Decorations on the exterior are confined to the bronze door and the curvy moulding surrounding it. On top of the burial chamber are a simple cornice and a monolithic roofstone modified into a reduced form of a

classical pediment. The simplicity and clarity of form of Lowe mausoleum certainly carry the characteristics of modern architecture. But this reduced handling of classical form does not prevent the building from retaining the qualities of a classical temple form.

Interior of the Burial Chamber

The burial chamber is symmetrical and bilateral in plan. The sarcophagi are identical in size and appearance and are placed on either side of the room. There is an altar between the two sarcophagi and a low bench in front of it. Every element is very densely arranged on the surface of the burial chamber and leaves almost no negative space in between. As there is not enough light entering the building, the interior of the burial chamber is quite dim. The only opening in the burial chamber is a stained-glass window on the back wall. Nonetheless, because the painter, Mrs. Lowe herself, had applied a layer of opaque paint on the stained glass, the stained-glass window is not translucent enough to allow sunlight to go through. In addition, as the back wall faces north, the stained-glass window cannot receive direct sunlight per se, even if it is translucent. The interior of the chamber has remained intact and there is no sign of any additional lamination that has once been installed. Lighting of the interior space is hence not a concern in the design of the mausoleum.

Design Precedents

Since the Renaissance, architects started having creative interpretation of classical forms of ancient Greek temple and incorporating them into mausoleum design. Shifting away from the conventions of mausoleum design, architects experimented with simplified classical forms, in a gradual trend of non-columnar mausoleum with plain surface and utter simplicity of detail. At the same time, architects also started using a variety of materials. Coarse-grained and color-stones like Stony Creek granite were employed to add interest to the plainness of mausoleum facades.

As early as 1921, Presbrey Leland Inc. had also begun designing modern mausoleums that adopted reduced classical forms. Featured in the 1929 Presbrey Leland trade catalogue, the Denison mausoleum in New York City is an example of modern variant of the classic temple type designed by the company. The Denison mausoleum, which was built prior to 1929, is similar to the Lowe mausoleum in terms of composition. Both buildings sit on a plinth with three steps. They are both symmetrical with a sculpted bronze door in the middle. They both feature a simple cornice with a monolithic pediment-like roofstone on top. Unlike Lowe mausoleum, the Denison mausoleum was assembled with smaller rectangular pieces of masonry. Though it is also a non-columnar building like Lowe mausoleum, the four corners of the

Denison mausoleum are ornamented with pilasters in place of columns.

Observation

Perhaps the reason for limiting decorations to the door on the façade is to emphasize it as a gateway to an otherworldly realm. The layers of curvy moldings that frame the door are very prominent on the plain façade. They look as if they were accentuating the importance of the door of the mausoleum. The bronze door is embellished with a sculpted relief of a woman dressed in ancient classical fashion. With her hand placed below the doorknob, the lady is in a gesture of opening the door for visitors. The sculptor had also sculpted the back of the lady on the back of the door and had given her a complete form. It is not certain whether the relief is allegorical, but the completeness of the female figure prompts one to imagine that there is a lady standing at the threshold gently opening the door for the guests and welcoming them into the undisturbed abode of the deceased couple.