

The Coburn Carter Mausoleum

When looking at the Coburn Carter Mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery, it is easy to forget you are still in New York City. There, resting beneath two towering maple trees, far from the sirens and crowded sidewalks, eight members of the Coburn and Carter families take their eternal rest in seeming harmony with nature. Located mid-block on Prospect Avenue at the northern edge of the Heather plot of Woodlawn Cemetery, this funerary monument is a single-chambered, tetrastyle neoclassical mausoleum (Fig. 1). Punctuated by carved garlands on its frieze are the surnames of those interred: Coburn and Carter. In 1911, the Harrison Granite Company designed this monument for the family of Lena May Coburn (née Carter) and her husband Hewitt Coburn Jr.

This mausoleum was erected across two plots; the former owned by Lena's Mother, Hannah M. Carter (née Youngs), and the latter by the Coburns; additionally, this structure may have been designed in concert with the directly adjacent Bowne mausoleum, which belonged to Lena's aunt, Henrietta 'Nettie' Bowne (née Youngs).¹ Interred in this structure are: Robert K. Carter (1839-1904), Hannah M. Carter (1848-1908), Clarence M. Carter (1873-1917), Lena M. Coburn (1869-1913), Hewitt Coburn Jr. (1859-1926), Hewitt Coburn (1904-1904), Robert Bowne Coburn (1906-1983), and Elizabeth Mohun Coburn (1906-1988). Unlike the monuments of other multigenerational families, the addition of a married surname is not a later addition etched below the name of the parents here, but rather the names adorning the frieze are in line with one another and original to the design, reflecting the importance of the Coburn and Carter families' matrilinear connection.

the judge ruled in favor of Jennie Youngs, ordering Hannah Carter and Nettie Bowne to relinquish their father's property, and with it, their inheritance.⁸

Fortunately for Hannah and Nettie, this loss did not financially compromise the small family, however, for several years afterward, the couple shared a home on East Sixty-Fourth Street with the newlywedded Nettie and her husband Samuel Bowne.⁹ Both Bowne and Robert Carter were industrious men and would soon make fortunes that would compensate for the loss of their wives' inheritance. Bowne was a chemical manufacturer, most famous for selling Cod Liver Oil Emulsion.¹⁰ Robert Carter worked in several hardware firms before opening his own company, R.K. Carter & Co., which dealt in the wholesale trade of hardware, iron, steel, mill, mining, and railway supplies.¹¹ The company became quite successful, and the Carters were able to commission a house at 40 East Seventy-Fifth Street by the prominent architects Thom and Wilson for the grand total of \$40,000.¹² At the age of 66, Carter died of a months-long affliction of Bright's Disease.¹³ In the 1904 issue of *The Iron Age* trade catalog, Carter is given a lengthy tribute, heralding him as "one of the pioneers" in hardware wholesaling who possessed a "marked ability" for this trade.¹⁴ When he died, his business partners assumed control of his company.¹⁵

The Carters' youngest child and only son, Clarence, graduated from Columbia University School of Arts in 1893; however, little else is known of his life. According to the New York State and Federal Censuses, Clarence lived much of his adult life at his parent's home on Seventy-Fifth Street, but his employment was never recorded.¹⁶ Clarence's name was mentioned in the papers on one interesting occasion. On January 25, 1905, the *New York Tribune* reported that the lawyers of Harry Kendall Thaw challenged the selection of Clarence as a Juror for the

undergarments (Fig. 5). By World War I, Coburn was appointed as the chairperson of the US War Service Underwear Committee, which no doubt was a boon for Glastonbury.²² In 1920, Sadie White Coburn died and was buried in the White family plot at Union Cemetery in North Smithfield, Rhode Island.²³ Coburn died in 1926 and was interred alongside his first wife, Lena.

Now orphaned, twenty-year-old Yale sophomore Robert Bowne Coburn undoubtedly turned to the support of his great-aunt Nettie. The pair seem to have remained close; in 1929, Robert Coburn married Elizabeth Mohun, a Barnard graduate from New York (Fig. 6) in 1929 and Nettie was the only surviving family member in attendance.²⁴ Nettie died soon after in 1930, bequeathing to her only blood relative, R.B. Coburn, over \$1,000,000 in cash, stock, and trust funds.²⁵ As stipulated in Bowne's will, Coburn served as a director on the board of the Samuel and Nettie Bowne Hospital in Poughkeepsie until its closure in the late 1950s. In 1959, Bowne Hospital became Bowne Hall, after the board of directors transferred the property to the State University of New York (SUNY) for the construction of Dutchess Community College.²⁶ Coburn established a career for himself as a stockbroker in Connecticut and founded the investment firm Coburn & Meredith.²⁷ Robert and Elizabeth Coburn had three children:

In 1983, Robert Bowne Coburn sustained severe burns from a fire in his garage and shortly thereafter died of complications.²⁸ Elizabeth passed away five years after her husband; both were interred in the last crypts in the family mausoleum.

The Mausoleum

From Prospect Ave, the viewer is presented with a welcoming yet seemingly austere facade; nestled beneath two large maples, the monument offers perhaps respite from the harsh summer sun and extends an architectural invitation with its granite platform, a later mid-twentieth century addition leading from the street to the structure's portico. The monument is

this mausoleum sits at the back of the chamber, above a small marble mantle. There, the afternoon sun filters through the maple's leaves and into the south-facing frame of colorful art glass (Fig. 8). The pane is thematically simple, depicting a young woman in heavenly exaltation against a backdrop of clouds, clasping her hands and expressing a calm yet pure happiness. The window consists of opalescent drapery glass and reverse-painted glass in hues of blue, purple, and pale yellow, creating a three-dimensional and tactile piece. The window shares a striking similarity in color, material, and composition, to that in the Bowne Mausoleum (Fig. 9), which is signed by Lederle Studios.

Louis J. Lederle was a German immigrant and glass artisan who worked for well-known decorative glass makers, such as the Belcher Glass Company and, most famously, Tiffany Studios. Lederle was a skilled glass painter and often worked under Louis Comfort Tiffany's direct supervision.³¹ Excellent examples of his work can be found in the Tiffany windows at **Saint Michael's Church in Manhattan** (Fig. 10).

Interestingly, the woman depicted in the Coburn Carter mausoleum is not painted in the idealistic humanist manner often used in religious glasswork, as seen in the Bowne window's depiction of Jesus; the woman here is drawn in a more contemporary style, with features that bear a familial resemblance to later photos of Nettie Bowne (Fig. 11), suggesting the window may be based on an image of Hannah or Lena, Nettie Bowne's close relationship with her sister and niece along with her documented concern for both mausoleums' maintenance throughout the last two decades of her life suggests she had influence in the commission of the Coburn Carter mausoleum and in the commission of the glass window. This assumption coupled with the material and stylistic resemblance between both monuments leads to the reasonable attribution of the glass window to Lederle Studios.

Appendix

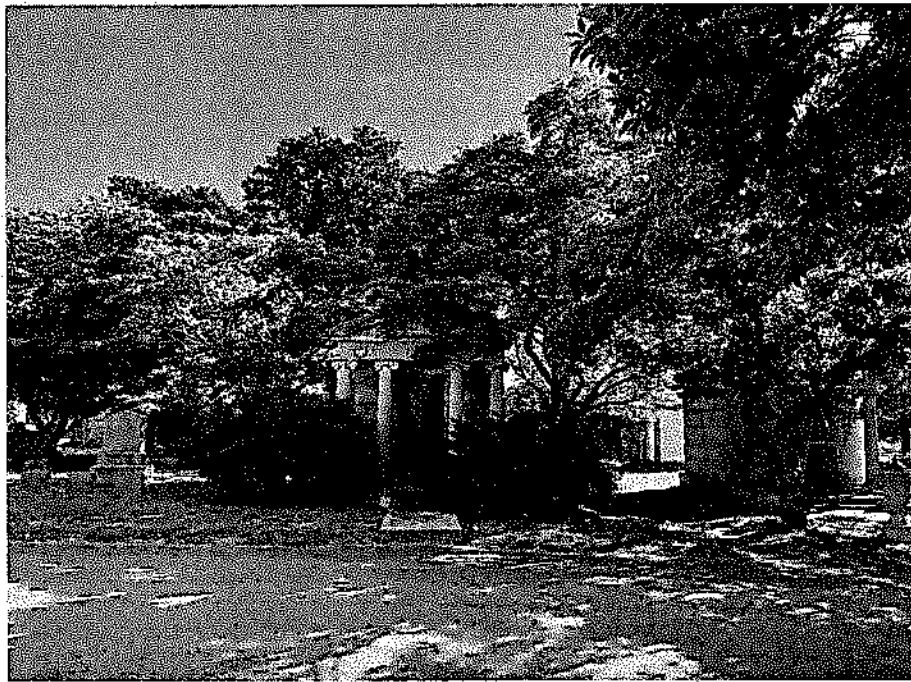


Figure 1—Coburn Carter Mausoleum (center) and the Bowne Mausoleum (right). Danforth, 2022.



ROBERT K. CARTER.

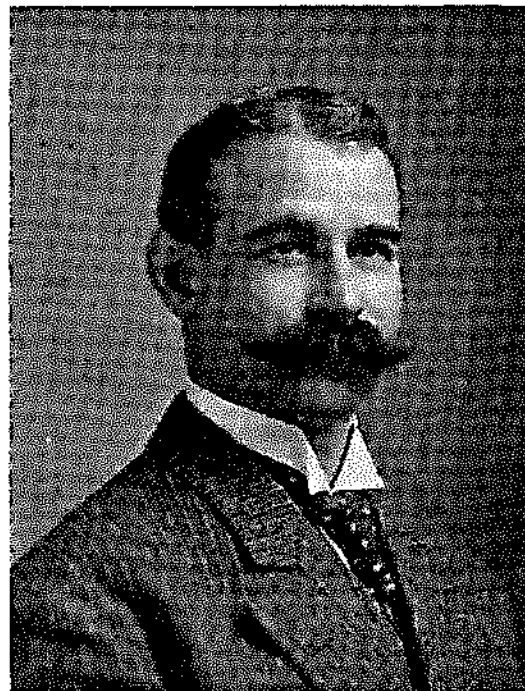


Figure 2—Left: Portrait Photo of Robert K. Carter, The Iron Age, 1904. Right: Photo of Hewitt Coburn Jr., William Harrison Taylor, 1908.


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Figure 5—Advertisement for Glastenbury Health Underwear circa 1900. Image by Connecticut Digital Archive.



MRS. ROBERT HOWE COBURN

From a portrait by Miss M. M. ...

Mrs. Coburn was born in ...

Figure 6—Elizabeth Mohun Coburn. Hartford Courant, 1914.

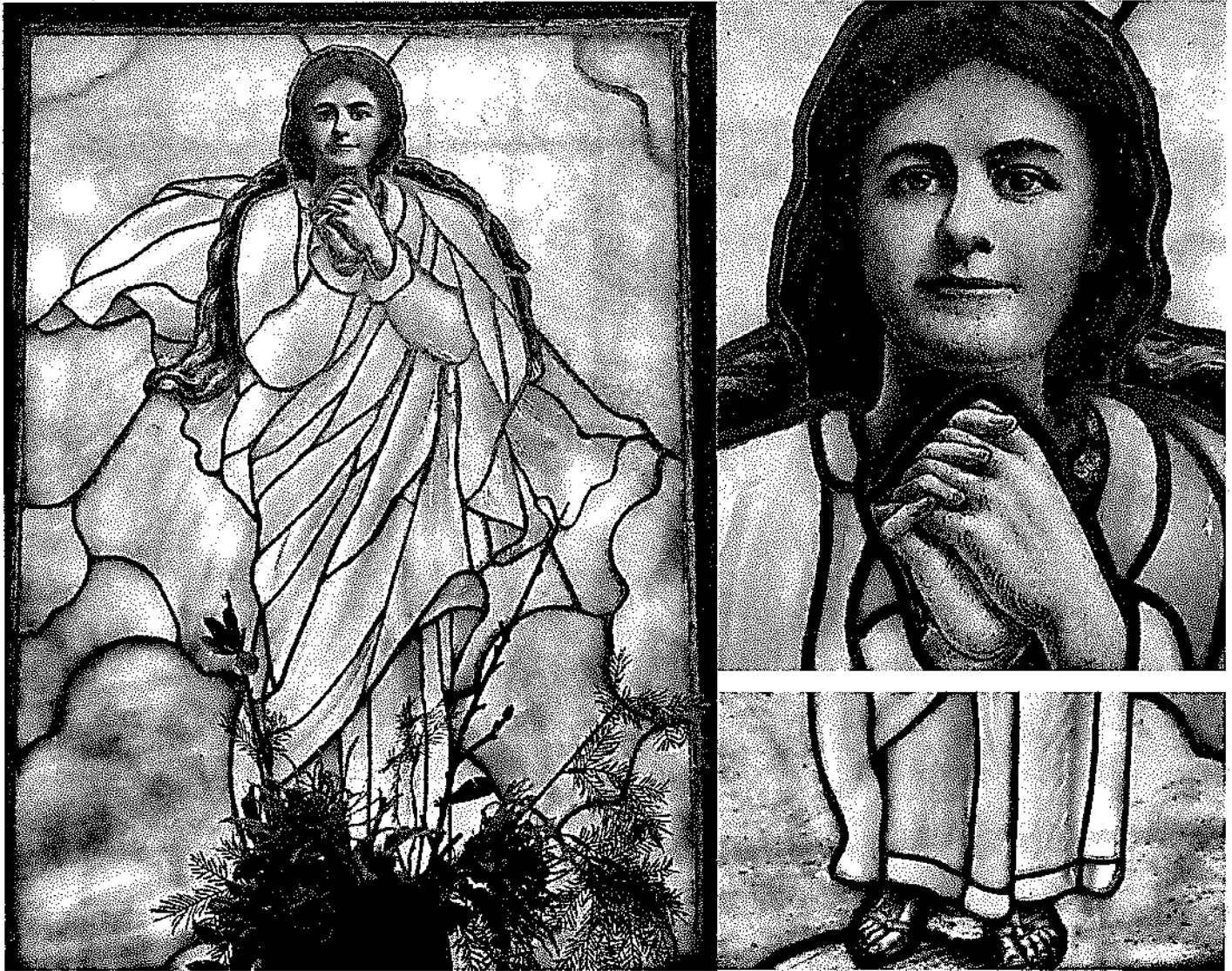


Figure 6—Window in Coburn Carter Mausoleum. Danforth, 2022.



Figure 9—Photo of Henrietta “Nettie” Bowne (née Youngs) from Passport Application, National Archives and Records Administration.

¹ “Map of Lot No. 11199 + 11402.” Woodlawn Cemetery records. Located in the Dept. of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University. Major Monuments, Box 3: Fol 87. Coburn-Carter 2006.009.

² U.S. Census, 1860, New York County, New York, population schedule, New York Ward 20 District 2, p. 195 (stamped), dwelling 536, family 1624, Daniel S. Youngs; Roll: M653_816; Page: 379; Image: 380; Family History Library Film: 803816

³ *Ibid.*: “New York City directory,” Irma and Paul Milstein Division of United States History, Local History and Genealogy, The New York Public Library, New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed October 13, 2022; Carter v. Youngs, 42 N.Y. Super. Ct. 169, 10 Jones & S. 169 (1877).

⁴ U.S. Census, 1850, Stephensburg, Frederick, Virginia, population schedule, Roll: M432_945; Page: 346B; Image: 299.

⁵ Brown, Katharine L., *Robert “King” Carter: Builder of Christ Church*, United States: Lot’s Wife Publishing, 2001.

⁶ “Death of R. K. Carter.” *The Iron Age*, v.74: no. 14-15. Pp. 57

⁷ Carter v. Youngs, 42 N.Y. Super. Ct. 169, 10 Jones & S. 169 (1877).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ U.S. Census, 1880 New York County, New York, population schedule, New York City, District 1, p. 22 (stamped), dwelling 121, family 161, Robert K. Carter; Roll: 895; Family History Film: 1254895; Page: 494B; Enumeration District: 586; Image: 0390.

¹⁰ “S.W. Bowne Left \$1,976,976.: Widow Receives Nearly \$1,000,000.” *New York Times*, May 18, 1912.

¹¹ “Death of R. K. Carter.” *The Iron Age*, v.74: no.14-15. Pp. 57

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ New York State Census, 1905, State Population Census Schedules, A.D. 29, E.D. 16; Manhattan, New York, p. 45.

¹⁷ “Another Juror in the Box.” *New-York Tribune*, New York, NY, January 25, 1907.

¹⁸ New York State Census, 1905.

¹⁹ “Coburn-Carter” *The New York Times*, New York, NY, Dec. 16, 1895.

²⁰ “Obituary.” *The Hartford Courant (1887-1922)*, Mar 17, 1913.

²¹ “Hewitt Coburn Jr. Dies in Hartford.” *The Boston Globe*, Boston, Massachusetts, Jan 15, 1926.

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— "Death of R. K. Carter." v. 74; no. 14-15. Pp. 57

The Pittsburgh Press (Pittsburg, PA)

— "Black Memorial Window." Feb 24, 1898.

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— "Death Notices: Coburn, Robert B." Sept. 16, 1983.

— "W. Hartford Man Is Left \$1,140,765." Feb. 21, 1931.

— "Society." Jul. 14, 1929.

— "Obituary." Mar 17, 1913.

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— "Hewitt Coburn Jr. Dies in Hartford." Jan 15, 1926.

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— "Bowne Director to Propose Gift of Property to County for College." Oct. 21, 1956.

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