

Bronx Cowboys and City Island Socialites: The Carey Mausoleum and its Interred

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In his autobiography *Company of Heroes*, Harry Carey Jr. recalls his first visit to the Carey family mausoleum in the Spring of 1954. At Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, as Carey Jr. writes, “there is a granite mausoleum with an iron fence around it... CAREY over the door of that stone building.” He continues, expressing that he “had no idea [the mausoleum] would be so big. It made [him] feel like [he] came from a family worth a lot of money. It made [him] feel like [he] should have arrived in a horse and carriage.”<sup>1</sup> While the iron fence no longer surrounds the building, and it is easily overlooked—dwarfed by neighboring mausoleums and set back from the road among gravestones—the Carey Mausoleum still possesses an ability to, as Carey Jr. puts it, cast a “sort of spell” on its observer.<sup>2</sup> Built in 1906 by memorial architect Ferdinand Prochazka, the Carey Mausoleum was commissioned by family patriarch Henry DeWitt Carey. Made of what Prochazka describes as granite “of the best quality from Vermont,” its facades are symmetrical in dimension and feature a smooth, fine hammered front, and rock-faced back and sides.<sup>3</sup> Rectangular in shape, the mausoleum’s exterior is relatively simple, consisting of stacked granite blocks of various sizes, and a single step up to its door (see figure 1). It is the details of the brass double door and its stained glass transom, the bright white marble, and the complexity of the stained glass window that add dimension and liveliness to an otherwise plain structure. Peering through the glass of the door, the carved names of the interred family and the glinting metal urns perched on the window sill invite curiosity.

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<sup>1</sup> Harry Carey Jr., *Company of Heroes: My Life as an Actor in the John Ford Stock Company*, (The Scarecrow Press, Inc.: Metuchen, New Jersey, 1994), 138.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Specifications, 1906, 2006.009, Box 3, Folder 48, Woodlawn Cemetery Archive, Avery Library, Columbia University, New York, New York.

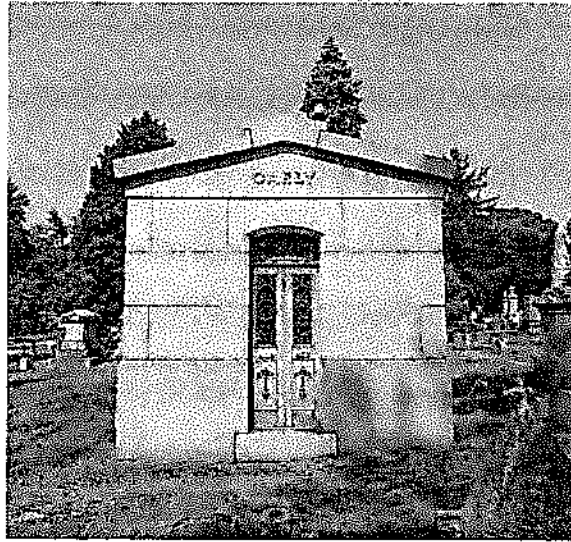


Figure 1., Front Elevation (South Facing),  
Carey Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery.

Judge Henry DeWitt Carey I (herein referred to as “Judge Carey”), the commissioner of the mausoleum, was a man of many titles. In 1880, Judge Carey lived with his wife Ella Josephine Carey and their two year old son Henry “Harry” DeWitt Carey II on 117th street in what is now East Harlem, where he worked for the New Home Sewing Machine Company.<sup>4</sup> His role at New Home was significant enough for him to amass a good amount of money, though there are differing accounts of his position—anything from “manager of the legal and foreign department” to president.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, Judge Carey served as a Judge of Special Sessions in White Plains, New York and as Justice of the Peace. He transitioned to private banking in 1900.<sup>6</sup> After moving his family to the City Island in the 1890s, both Judge Carey and his wife Ella Carey became executives of the Pelham Park Railroad Company and the City Island

<sup>4</sup> US Census Bureau, 1880 Census, New York City, New York, New York, 13.

<sup>5</sup> “Henry De Witt Carey Dead,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 16, 1908, 3. See also, Carey Jr., *Company of Heroes*, 44.; “Banker H.D. Carey Dead,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1908, 9.

<sup>6</sup> “Banker H.D. Carey Dead.

Railroad Company.<sup>7</sup> By 1901, Judge Carey had purchased the “King estate” on City Island which took up eight lots and had frontage on Beach Street, Main Street (now King Ave.), and Minneford Avenue.<sup>8</sup> His most interesting real estate purchase, however, was a pair of islands in Pelham Bay known as the “Chimney Sweep Islands” (fig. 2). The small islands, part of a chain called the Devil's Stepping Stones, were only accessible by boat and were largely undeveloped sans a few vernacular structures when Robert Moses and the city of New York purchased them as part of Pelham Bay Park for “fireworks displays” in 1939.<sup>9</sup> Judge Carey was as active socially as he was in business, becoming a thirty-three degree mason, a prominent member of the Sons of the American Revolution, and, interestingly, the president of the Tammany Hall Democratic Club of the Eleventh District.<sup>10</sup> Judge Carey was posthumously the subject of a trust case in 1913 wherein a child named Ethel Carey Grant was represented *ad litem*. According to the court records, Judge Carey was Ethel Carey Grant’s father, and her mother was a woman named Jessie Grant Reed. The court awarded Ethel with an astounding \$50,000 settlement. Because Judge Henry was deceased, it was left up to his widow, a woman who he was unfaithful to.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Henry Varnum Poor, *Poor's Manual of Railroads Vol. 31*, (H.V. & H.W. Poor, 1898), 1061.

<sup>8</sup> “In the Real Estate Field,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1901, 11.

<sup>9</sup> “City Planners Approve Taking Chimney Sweeps,” *New York Herald Tribune*, January 19, 1939, 36. For more on the Chimney Sweeps, see illustrated article about communist colonies, artist retreats, and respite from the urban environment: Eleanor Kellog, “Community Bathing Suits Spoil New Dawn,” *New York Tribune*, June 26, 1921, 3. See also, “Islet Lore: Soldiers, Prisoners, the Rich, the Dead and, Perhaps, the Devil,” *New York Times*, July 9, 1995, 113.; “The Islands of Pelham Bay,” *New York City Department of Parks and Recreation*.

<sup>10</sup> “Banker Henry De Witt Carey Dead.”; Application for the Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, June 10, 1897, ancestry.com.; “Want Hearst for Leader of Next Campaign,” *San Francisco Examiner*, October 16, 1903, 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Grant v. Carey*, 158 A.D. 903 (1913), New York Supreme Court, Appellate Division.

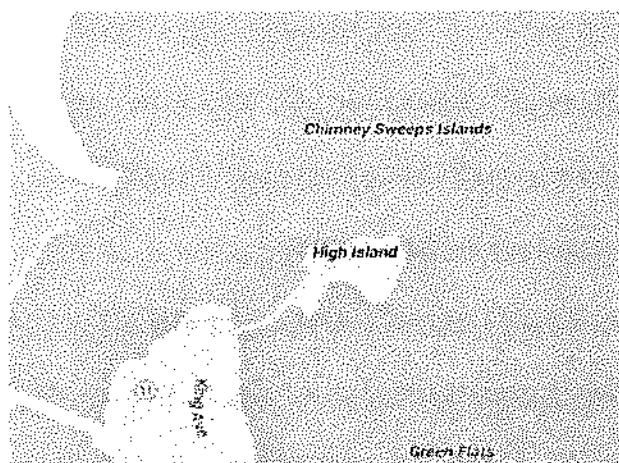


Fig. 2., Chimney Sweep Islands in relation to High Island, City Island, and the Bronx (green and yellow), Google Maps.

Ella Josephine Carey, born Ella Josephine Ludlum (herein referred to as “Ludlum”), was highly involved in her husband’s businesses, and remained exceptionally savvy until her death in 1946.<sup>12</sup> Ludlum was an executive of the Pelham Park and City Island Railroads, the only woman to be listed as director.<sup>13</sup> Ludlum also lent money to various people on City Island. In 1905, one of her lenders, William A. Lathrop, a grocer, filed for bankruptcy and ultimately owed

<sup>12</sup> In 1942, “Mrs. Ella J. Carey” was quoted in an article about war bonds saying, “I’m determined to live another ten years to cash my bonds when they mature.” The article helpfully points out that “Mrs. Carey is 85 years old. “War Bond Pledges by 1,500,000 in City Expected by Madden Before Campaign Ends,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1942, 8.; In a story column in 1937, Ludlum visits her son’s ranch in California and is outraged that he did not grow oranges. Despite her son’s protests, Ludlum demanded orange trees be planted and oversaw their planting. According to Harry Carey, he “received a telegram from his mother demanding to know where her oranges were.” He shipped her the oranges when they were slightly green, and two days later a frost destroyed California orange growers. As the article jokes, “And Mrs. Ella J Carey, of Washington Heights, New York City, is perhaps the only person who succeeded in saving her entire crop.” “Fiddler Persists in Snooping Out Gossip of Stars,” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 1937, 2.

<sup>13</sup> Poor, *Poor’s Manual of Railroads.*; “Documents of the Senate of the State of New York” *New York State Legislature*, Issue 10, Part 2, 1898.

Ludlum \$2,300.<sup>14</sup> In 1906, it was ruled that Claudio M. Grand owed Ella J. Carey \$1,320.<sup>15</sup> In 1910, Ludlum's "three-story frame building" on City Island was severely burned in an electrical fire. While most of the valuables were rescued, her son, Henry D. Carey, then a practicing playwright, devastatingly lost all of his manuscripts.<sup>16</sup>

The most famous of the mausoleum's residents, son of Judge Carey and Ella Ludlum, Henry "Harry" DeWitt Carey (herein referred to as "Carey"), was a silent film actor who starred in country western films. Born in 1878, Carey grew up in Manhattan and the Bronx, spending his most formative years on City Island before returning to Manhattan for school. Carey, a graduate of NYU law school, decided to, as one paper put it, "desert bar for footlights."<sup>17</sup> Starting out in a theater stock company, Carey soon began writing, publishing a play titled *Montana* after a brief stay at a relative's ranch "out West." Instead of going "ahead with his reading of Blackstone," one paper quipped, Carey became entranced by the myths of the West, quickly rising through the ranks of western theater and film.<sup>18</sup> It was in the early days of his acting career, still in New York City, that Carey met fellow actor Joseph Harris. Originally from Maine, Harris, born in 1870, moved to New York and began acting in the same circuit as Carey.<sup>19</sup> Cast in all of Carey's famous plays, including *Montana* and *The Heart of Alaska*, Harris joined Carey for traveling performances, traveling "the nation in melodramas."<sup>20</sup> During the summers, however, Harris and Carey retreated to the Chimney Sweep Islands that were owned by the Carey family until 1915.

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<sup>14</sup> "Petitions in Bankruptcy," *New York Times*, August 27, 1905, 15.

<sup>15</sup> "Business Troubles," *New York Times*, November 17, 1906, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Also saved in the fire was Harry Carey's "tame wildcat," that "was rescued with difficulty. It was taking a snooze and did not at all relish being waked up and forced to move in a hurry. The sight of the big cat being carried out kicking and struggling in the arms of a servant caused much amusement." "Mrs. Carey's Home Burned," *New York Times*, August 29, 1910, 7.

<sup>17</sup> "Chooses Stage Instead of Law," *New York Tribune*, February 1, 1905, 6.

<sup>18</sup> "Harry Carey Was Destined for the Law," *New York Herald*, June 7, 1925, 19.

<sup>19</sup> United States Census Bureau, 1870 Census, Town of Bremen, Lincoln County, Maine, 7.

<sup>20</sup> "Joseph Harris," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 14, 1953, 70.

One 1941 article writes that “during summer layoffs [Carey] and Joe Harris, a stage villain, lived in a shack on Chimney Sweeps.”<sup>21</sup> By 1910, Carey set off for Hollywood alone—though Joe was not far behind—determined to live the life his cow-roping, salt of the earth roles were based on.<sup>22</sup>

Just outside Los Angeles, Carey acquired a large tract of land in 1916 to homestead. By 1916, Carey had been in many films and had also married to an actress by the name of Olive “Ollie” Fuller Golden, who introduced Carey to the famous western director John “Uncle Jack” Ford who the Careys would work with for decades.<sup>23</sup> Despite having left New York and starting a new career and relationship in California, Carey called on Joe Harris to break ground on the homestead. Reporter John Chapman joked that “many a film star has acquired a “ranch” after he’s got his money. It is usually very fancy and it rarely makes any money. The Carey’s got their place the hard way—by homesteading it.”<sup>24</sup> The ranch would not be a mere facade of westernism; Carey wanted to understand the hard, gritty aspects of cowboy life. Reflecting on the difference between his onscreen and offscreen life, Carey once described “a real cowboy’s life is unromantic... But the cowboys in pictures are different: they don’t seem to have anything to do... The fans demand comic-opera cowboys.”<sup>25</sup> And so Carey was to become both: a real cowboy and a comic-opera cowboy. He was later penned the “Bronx Cowboy” due to his transformative adaptation to the West.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> John Chapman, “Hollywood News,” *Buffalo Courier-Express*, Saturday, June 7, 1941, 10.

<sup>22</sup> “Harry Carey, Veteran Film Actor, Is Dead,” *The Sun*, September 22, 1947, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Carey Jr., *Company of Heroes*, 45; Carey Jr. interestingly discusses a rift between Carey Sr. and John Ford. Carey Jr. claims that his mother “always said the split-up was caused by Joe Harris... and J. Farrell McDonald, an actor whom Jack Ford used in all of his movies. They were a couple of old busybodies who were jealous of Jack and Harry’s friendship. Each had a load of dirty gossip which, unfortunately, my dad and Jack believed,” 46.

<sup>24</sup> Chapman, “Hollywood News.”

<sup>25</sup> Grace Kingsley, “Fund of Knowledge Required,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 4, 1927, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth Henney, “Bronx Cowboy Who Made Good in Hollywood Now Worried About Plight of Small Ranchers,” *The Washington Post*, March 8, 1943, 4.

The Carey Ranch was a functioning ranch with a head of cattle, other livestock, limited agriculture, and trade goods.<sup>27</sup> Carey employed many Navajo laborers, ranch-hands, and craftspeople to live and work on the ranch, often capitalizing on tourism associated with the “cowboy and Indian” motif.<sup>28</sup> But Carey had a permanent hand at the ranch—Joe Harris. Once Harris and Carey had established the homestead together, Joe never left, living and working on the ranch, and acting opposite Carey in over twenty John Ford films. His first John Ford film, *Hell Bent*, was produced in 1919 and had Harris playing the villain to Carey’s hero (fig. 3). Harris was often referred to by the family and various newspapers as “the man who came to dinner,” “the original man who came to dinner,” or “our man who came to dinner,” a reference to the character Sheridan Whiteside in the play *The Man Who Came to Dinner* which humorously follows the eccentric Whiteside who, while visiting a friend’s house, is injured and confined to said friend’s house, thus overstaying his welcome.<sup>29</sup> In jest, the nickname reflects the close nature of Harris to the entire Carey family.

Passing in 1947, Harry Carey was survived by his wife, two kids, and Joe Harris who continued living with the Careys until his own death in 1953.<sup>30</sup> Harris lived with Harry Carey Jr., Carey Jr.’s wife Marilyn, and their children Steven and Melinda in Los Angeles, dying in their home.<sup>31</sup> Both Carey and Harris were cremated, and their urns now sit side-by-side on the marble window ledge of the Carey Mausoleum. Carey’s wife Olive is not interred in the mausoleum.

<sup>27</sup> Photograph titled “Flock of Sheep in Pen,” 1926, Harry Carey Jr. Photography Collection digitized by Santa Clarita Valley History (SCVH), [scvhistory.org](http://scvhistory.org); Photograph titled “Harry Carey and Raccoon at His Saugus Ranch,” n.d., SCVH.; Photograph titled “Horse Corral and Wooden Stables at Harry Carey Ranch,” 1926, SCVH.

<sup>28</sup> For more here, see Carey Jr., *Company of Heroes*, Chapter 3, 44-54.; Harry Carey Jr. Photography Collection.

<sup>29</sup> Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman, *The Man Who Came to Dinner: Comedy in Three Acts*, 1939.

<sup>30</sup> “Harry Carey, Veteran Film Actor, Is Dead.”; “Joseph Harris,” *New York Times*, June 13, 1953, 15.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 1950 Census, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California, 16.



Under his name, the engraving on Harris' urn reads "Harry's Friend" (fig. 4). Harry Carey Jr., on his trip to Woodlawn Cemetery, paid special attention to the boxes on the windowsill. He writes, "Two urns sat side-by-side on a stone shelf, apart from the rest. They looked so alone and separate. Harry Carey and Joe Harris, our own 'man who came to dinner.' Two men so different in nature, but so important to my being. . . I laid the lilacs between them and cried."<sup>32</sup> The Carey Mausoleum, sat back from the road, small and simple, hosts a bright and colorful family that was highly influential in the development of City Island and Pelham Bay. It also holds two famous stars, cowboys from the Bronx, who were laid to rest beside each other after almost fifty-years of living together.<sup>33</sup>



Fig. 3., Harry Carey (left) and Joseph Harris play opposite each other in *Hell Bent* (1919).

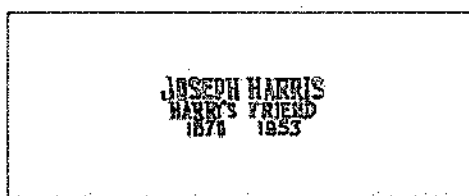


Fig., 4, Sketch of Joe Harris' Urn Engraving.

<sup>32</sup> Carey Jr., *Company of Heroes*, 138.

<sup>33</sup> The true nature of Carey and Harris' relationship is unknown, but that they lived together for nearly five decades, and were interred together, Harris' urn bearing Carey's name, invites speculation. For more on the relationship of Joe Harris and Harry Carey, see, Charles Estcott, "Harry Carey's Son Dobie is Chip Off the Old Block," *The Hartford Courant*, July 28, 1940, 8.; "Carey's Guest Stays for Mere 20 Years," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, May 29, 1941, 10.; Meyer Berger, "About New York," *New York Times*, May 7, 1940, 37.

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