



DAMMEL FAMILY
MAUSOLEUM AT
WOODLAWN CEMETERY

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The Dammel family mausoleum in Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York, was constructed in 1975 on Aster Plot, and houses three people; Frank Dammel, his younger brother Edward, and their mother Bertha. The entire family lived in Manhattan from 1900 until at least 1920 when the census records of the family stop, however Frank Dammel's World War II Draft registration card indicates that he, at least, was living in the Bronx in 1942.¹ By 1920, the family was working in various fields and the census recorded the death of Charles Dammel (Bertha's husband) by listed Bertha as a widow.² The whereabouts of Charles Dammel and his final resting place is unknown as he is not interred in Woodlawn Cemetery.

Edward Dammel nee Daniels, did not have the opportunity for a long life, dying on December 5, 1937 at the age of 36 of typhoid in Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan.³ According to the 1920 census, Edward was employed as an elevator construction helper at an elevator company in the city.⁴ At some point in his life Edward changed his last name from Dammel to Daniels and although the reason is unclear the stone in the mausoleum makes a point of showing this change (see figure 5). Edward, like his mother, died before the construction of the mausoleum and as a result was originally interred at Summit plot on Wednesday, December 7, 1937 in an individual lot, separately from his mother.⁵ It is unclear who originally bought this plot for Edward as the internment record does not list anyone as being the owner of this plot.

¹ U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942. Ancestry.com. https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=AIN22&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=kQrx8VM30QaXI10bQITO%3D%3D&gss=angsg&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=frank&gsfn_x=0&gsln=dammel&gsln_x=0&catbuket=rstp&MSAV=0&uidh=fph&successSource=Search&_phtarg=AIN21&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=8348055&dbid=1002&indiv=1&ml_rpos=11.

² United States Census, 1920: ED 1046, 1A.

³ Internment Order # 156103, Woodlawn Cemetery.

⁴ United States Census, 1920: ED 1046, 1A.

⁵ Internment Order #156103

Babetta Bertha Dammel nee Trautmann was born in Germany in 1878, immigrated to the United States around 1892, married Charles Dammel in 1897, and that same year Frank was born.⁶ While Charles was alive she was unemployed, however by the time the 1920 census was conducted she was widowed, the head of the house, and worked as a private house cleaner. Although she lived most of her life here in the United States, Bertha traveled back to Germany at least once with her son, Frank. They spent nearly three full months there, leaving on July 30, 1951 on a Pan American Flight from New York and not returning until October 31, 1951 on another Pan American flight from Frankfurt.⁷ Mrs. Dammel lived a long life, dying at the age of eighty on February 28, 1958 at Fordham Hospital in the Bronx.⁸ Due to the fact that she died nearly ten years prior to the construction of the mausoleum, Mrs. Dammel was interred independently from her husband, whose final resting place is unknown, at Fir plot in Woodlawn on Tuesday, March 4, 1958 by Frank, who bought the plot for her.⁹

Frank himself was born on August 21, 1897 and died in Germany on September 5, 1972 at the Hospital Krankenhausstiftung in Bamberg, at the age of seventy-five.¹⁰ By the time the 1920 census was taken, Frank was working as a draftsman in a stone yard, how long he was

⁶ United States Census, 1910: ED 0997, 11A.

⁷ "U.S. Departing Passenger and Crew Lists, 1914-1966." Ancestry.com.

https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=AIN10&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=x2HhQz%2BtWlJ41jZf7XdaWg%3D%3D&gss=angs-g&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Frank%20Nicholas&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Dammel&gsln_x=1&msypn__ftp=New%20York%20City,%20New%20York,%20USA&msypn=1652382&msbdy=1897&msbpn__ftp=New%20York,%20USA&msbpn=35&msddy=1972&msdpn__ftp=Germany&msdpn=3253&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=1&uidh=fph&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=5052041&dbid=60882&indiv=1&ml_rpos=7

⁸ Lot Card #720554, Woodlawn Cemetery. Internment Order #209751, Woodlawn Cemetery.

⁹ Internment Order #209751, Woodlawn Cemetery.

¹⁰ "Reports of Deaths of American Citizens Abroad. 1835-1974". Ancestry.com.

https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=AIN20&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=L1Rx8N6QkqtallWZl5Uo%2fQ%3d%3d&gss=angsc&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Frank+Nicholas&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Dammel&gsln_x=0&msbdy=1897&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=0&uidh=fph&pcat=34&h=15116&dbid=1616&indiv=1&ml_rpos=1

employed here is unknown, but in 1942 he was drafted into the military at the age of 46.¹¹ Very few records of Frank's life between this point and 1972, when he died from "heart and circulatory failure resulting from metastases in the lungs", exist and there is not much, reliable, information available.¹² It is known, however, that he was buried in a cemetery in Bamberg for three years, and on October 1, 1975 his body was cremated in the city of Schweinfurt, which is located about one hundred miles to the east of Frankfurt.¹³

It is unclear when, exactly, Frank's remains were sent to the United States, however the request for a mausoleum was placed with the cemetery on October 30, 1975 by Frank's estate.¹⁴ Correspondence between the lawyers handling Frank Dammel's estate and Woodlawn Cemetery began with the job order and continued until March 12, 1976. While the first letter, written on November 11, 1975, pertains to the estimated cost of the consistent upkeep of the mausoleum and surrounding grounds, the second from December 8, 1975 makes it clear that this mausoleum was at least endowed, and likely built, due to Frank Dammel's will. According to this letter the mausoleum was to be constructed "... in accordance with Article SECOND (e) of the Last Will and Testament of Frank Dammel, which says in part '...An agreement with said Woodlawn Cemetery for the perpetual care of the said plot and mausoleum.'"¹⁵

¹¹ U.S., World War II Draft Registration Cards, 1942. Ancestry.com. https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=AIN22&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=kQrx8VM30QaXII0bQITO%3D%3D&gss=angsg&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=frank&gsfn_x=0&gsln=dammel&gsln_x=0&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=0&uidh=fph&successSource=Search&_phtarg=AIN21&pcat=ROOT_CATEGORY&h=8348055&dbid=1002&indiv=1&ml_rpos=11.

¹² "Reports of Deaths of American Citizens Abroad. 1835-1974". Ancestry.com. https://search.ancestrylibrary.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?_phsrc=AIN20&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true&qh=L1Rx8N6QkqtallWZ15Uo%2fQ%3d%3d&gss=angsc&new=1&rank=1&msT=1&gsfn=Frank+Nicholas&gsfn_x=0&gsln=Dammel&gsln_x=0&msbdy=1897&catbucket=rstp&MSAV=0&uidh=fph&pcat=34&h=15116&dbid=1616&indiv=1&ml_rpos=1.

¹³ Internment Order #255781, Woodlawn Cemetery.

¹⁴ Job Card Order # 69153, Woodlawn Cemetery.

¹⁵ Dammel Mausoleum, Correspondence, December 8, 1975, Woodlawn Collection Major Monument Files, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library.

The mausoleum is situated on Aster plot, along North Border Road. The old auto entrance, no longer an entrance and now a visitor's center with restrooms for visitors, is just up the road and easily visible from the door of the Dammel mausoleum. Across the road from the mausoleum is the Lotus building, a columbarium (a building containing niches in the walls for urns to be stored and even displayed) with glass fronted niches that allow for family members to create small memorials to their deceased family members. There are no large trees close to the Dammel mausoleum, but there are a few bushes, as well as other structures, including other mausoleums and headstones. Immediately to the left, when facing the front of the mausoleum, is another family's mausoleum, to the right, however, is a small monument for a different family and in-the-ground graves. Surrounding this monument and graves are a few large bushes, with one sitting behind the Dammel mausoleum.

The Presbrey-Leland company, well known at Woodlawn for designing a vast number of mausoleums, was commissioned to build the Dammel mausoleum, and they built it in about a year. The mausoleum itself is rectilinear, the west (front facing) and east (back) facades are 11'2" long, while the north and south facades are 9'11" long, with all four sides measuring 10' in height and 10" in depth¹⁶. The entire exterior is made from light grey Barre granite while the interior is clad with Tennessee Pink marble (although technically a limestone and not a marble, this is the name used for this stone and as such will be used for the duration of this paper) with a number of metal accents, including the door and vents (made from a copper-metal alloy), and the rosettes on the interior (likely made from cast-bronze).¹⁷

¹⁶ Dammel Mausoleum, Architectural Drawing, Plan, Woodlawn Collection Major Monument Files, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library.

¹⁷ Dammel Mausoleum, Examination Sheet, Woodlawn Collection Major Monument Files, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library.

The west elevation contains the door and a number of carvings surrounding it. Above the door the family name, Dammel, is carved into the stone, while a repeating pattern of flowers, leaves, and berries is carved on either side of the door (see Figure 11). The door itself is made with a copper-metal alloy, the exact composition is unknown but due to the green patina seen at the bottom of the door where there could have been oxidization, thus, copper is the most likely metal used in the construction. It has a fairly simple, although very beautiful, design of rosettes and leaves that climb the length of the door, the only variation from this pattern are the small diamonds on both of the handles, one on each.

The interior walls are clad with Tennessee Pink marble with the floor being constructed with polished granite. When standing in the doorway, facing east, the walls on either side contain three catacombs with Frank (in the middle catacomb) and Bertha (in the bottom catacomb) interred to the north and Edward interred in the middle catacomb on the south wall. The east wall contains a leaded-glass window of simple design and colors; it is red and green-yellow, with a repeating diamond pattern, similar to that seen on the door handles. The catacombs themselves each have two cast-bronze rosettes, used to secure the cladding to the interior walls, that are reminiscent of the rosettes seen on the door, and there is a large cast-bronze rosette situated on the center of the ceiling (see Figure 12), although its purpose is unclear.

Overall the Dammel mausoleum is in good condition, there are no visible sections of the facade that are spalling or falling apart. However, there are a few major issues, the most prominent being the cladding over Frank Dammel's catacomb is not properly affixed to the wall and is very unstable as a result. If the cladding is truly unstable then it can, potentially, fall off the wall and shatter or even hurt someone if anyone is inside the mausoleum. Additionally, there is a large amount of biological growth all around the structure (see Figure 13) and even more on

the south facade, closer to the front of the mausoleum, where the growth is so thick it is black (see Figure 2). Beyond the biological growth there is the issue of insects entering the mausoleum through two small, but prominent, holes in the wall. The first one can be seen on the east facade on the bottom north corner of the window sill where ants have been able to enter the mausoleum (see Figure 14). The second hole can only be seen inside the mausoleum, it sits on the bottom northern corner of the back wall where spiders have been seen entering. The insects can cause damage to the structure itself by creating more holes in the walls or they could also be entering the catacombs where the Dammel members are interred.

The Dammel mausoleum is understated and humble, but still very lovely. The significance of the mausoleum lies not with the structure, despite its elegance and good construction, but with those interred within it. Theirs is a story of hard work, dedication, and the love of family, something that can be seen so very clearly within, with the mausoleum's focus on the family rather than the exterior beauty. However, that is not to say the beauty cannot still be enhanced without taking away from the family story; a simple cleaning, closing of some holes, and fixing the unstable liner can take this mausoleum from understated beauty to quiet grace.

Figures



Figure 1: West Facade



Figure 2: South Facade



Figure 3: East Facade



Figure 4: North Facade



Figure 5: Interior, Facing East

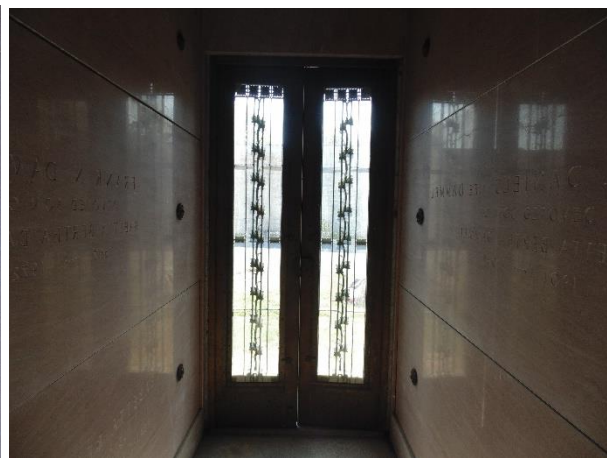


Figure 6: Interior, Facing West



Figure 7: Site Context #1



Figure 8: Site Context #2



Figure 9: Leaded-Glass Window
With the Flash



Figure 10: Leaded-Glass Window
Without the Flash



Figure 11: Detail → Door



Figure 12: Detail → Cast Bronze Rosettes



Figure 13: Detail → Biological Growth



Figure 14: Detail → Ants Entering Through Window

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