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STUDIO ONE: READING BUILDINGS

PROBLEM THREE: FIELD DOCUMENTATION AND FORMAL ANALYSIS

WOODLAWN CEMETERY, BRONX, NEW YORK CITY



JOHN GLACKNER FAMILY MAUSOLEUM - LOT No.11821, HOLLY PLOT

Standing in the Holly Plot at the cross roads of two major thoroughfares, Park Avenue and Chestnut Avenue, resides the John Glackner mausoleum, a monumentally static composition asserting power, firmness and permanence. West facing and comprised of three parts, the mausoleum telescopically advances towards the street front, reducing in size to two carved sentinel urns. To the most extent Classical in design and feeling, valuing order and rationality including the authoritative 'stubby' columns of the Tuscan order, the front facade incorporates something of the exotic picturesque in the feeling of an indescribable oddity, enriching and humanizing the firmness of the elevation.<sup>1</sup> The structure is no longer just Greek in plan, with its mixture of elements and materials together it overts an emotion of strength and confidence, creating a 'sense of place'.

Wielding dominance over its surroundings, dynamic, carved granite urns standing on protruding raised buttresses usher the viewer upwards into the attached portico, a semi-public space offering granite benches and a perforated carved stone grille, the portico hides the monumental, sacred space of the inner catacombs, contained by an apparently impenetrable stone mass. The feeling of openness is heavily juxtaposed with the closed space behind.

Surprisingly, the architect has gone to great lengths to invite viewers in towards the outreaching portico, and then to restrict them from the inner chamber. The culminating effect of the use of materials, geometry and structure encourages the viewer to dwell in the semi-public space immediately adjacent to the closed inner mausoleum, while still maintaining its heavily authoritative presence. The heavily carved, bulging urns generate a gateway, funneling viewers through the polished granite columns. Oversized and widely spaced blocks are spaced on the open pediment, running awkwardly into the horizontal entablature over the portico encouraging the viewer forward under its cover.

The mausoleum was commissioned and built in 1907 for John Glackner of New York City, and his family. Commissioned originally to contain eight catacombs, arranged four on each side and enlarged in 1939 to include two additional catacombs below the interior floor, the mausoleum holds ten family members from three generations of the

Glackner line.<sup>2</sup> Curiously commissioned almost twenty years after the deaths of his mother and youngest son, the Mausoleum holds a mystery of a family's life story.

Of German parents, John Glackner's wealth is a common tale of the 'gilded age'. A manufacturer of 'Havana and domestic' cigars, New York newspaper articles of the time cite real estate transactions throughout Manhattan and list horse racing pursuits and connections, hinting at a picture of prosperity and social pursuits, of confidence and success.<sup>34</sup> On his death in 1921, at 68 years old, John Glackner left his estate, estimated at 'near \$1,000,000' split four ways to his fiancée, and to the children.<sup>5</sup> Hence the mausoleum in its broader context directly reflects the opulence and grand gesture of the time, asserting conviction, authority and power.

Highlighting his wealth, Glackner commissioned an architect to work alongside the mausoleum construction company of C.E. Tayntor Granite Company.<sup>6</sup> The style of the mausoleum also clearly reflects the architect involved in the commission, Arne Dehli, a Norwegian architect practicing in New York in the 19th and 20th centuries. As both an architect and an author, Dehli produced an eclectic blend of architectural elements in the mausoleum. The former head of the department of architecture and fine arts of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, in his developing years Dehli worked under the prominent and influential work of R. H. Robertson and himself designed two extant churches in New York at the very end of the 19th Century: the imposing St. Jerome's Roman Catholic Church, in the Mott Haven historic district, Bronx, incorporating neo-Baroque elements and the neo-Gothic St. Philip Episcopal Church, in Brooklyn's Stuyvesant Heights Historic District.<sup>7 8 9 10</sup> His house designs in Brooklyn have been described as 'exotic compositions', combining elements from different architectural periods and styles.<sup>11</sup>

Dehli also worked as an architectural author; in addition to numerous articles, Dehli produced two folios of his drawings and observations, firstly of Byzantine Ornament and secondly the environs of Palermo.<sup>12 13</sup> In the preface to the latter, writing in 1892, Dehli articulates his theory of 'individual freedom of expression especially in Architecture; he believed that historical "styles" are no more the well defined (stereotyped) organisms they used to be. Architecture has... surely and steadily been working its way towards greater individual freedom of expression.'

Obvious links to the folios can be clearly seen in the Glackner mausoleum. The bronze door design is clearly a direct adaptation from the designs he drew from the bronze doors at Capella Palatina Palermo.<sup>14</sup> The carved stone grilles to either side of the portico are a simplified version of the perforated stone walls he drew, from the cathedral in Ravenna<sup>15</sup>

The building's context and siting brings up the most interesting design decisions and comparisons, and of course strongly reflects the common architectural strategy of portraying importance, wealth and power. Visible from three directions, the Glackner mausoleum is a strong presence from all vantage points. On approach, the mausoleum's portico protrudes out towards the viewer, dominating its neighbors. The portico is different in its context. It creates the mass reaching forward of the other mausoleums and dictates the viewer's eye to its molded forms. Central in its site, both the dominance of the portico and the site's landscaping work to restrict the viewer from the back, closed mass of the mausoleum.

In plan, the mausoleum clearly separates into three distinct uses and feelings. The elements of the plan including the dynamic urns atop the protruding buttresses and the four inner Tuscan columns urge the viewer into the portico space. While the stairs and urns form a completely open public space, the portico is intended to be partially screened, through using the polished column screen to the east and west and the perforated granite grilles to the north and south. Granite benches have been included to enhance the sense of idle belonging. The inner chamber is clearly delineated, closed and narrow. The entombment of two further family members under the mausoleum floor, the small table towards the back end, and the lower door frame head height, all convey a sense of a different space. A more personal, private and enclosed area, not for idling, or viewing. The plan is symmetrical along its east-west (long) axis and can be broken down into its basic square plan forms. The portico addition allows the main comparison to its neighbors, outright in showing its dominance.

The front facade is designed to be viewed and enjoyed; in materiality, molded forms and geometry it portrays the power while the back facade reveals its exclusiveness in its interior space, in direct juxtaposition to the front. The side elevations generate a thoughtful medium between the two extremes. Finally the mausoleum stands on a thick high base, elevated above its neighbors, an unmistakable claim to its power and wealth.

Through field documentation, site evaluation, a process of formal analysis, and documentary research, the mausoleum standing in the name of John Glackner, begins to reveal something more than received at first glance. Synthesizing the material reveals the underlying attempt and intent of the patron and the architect. Not only does it reflect the architect's contemporary theoretic principles, it chooses to adapt the standard 'classical' theme with a picturesque and dynamic quality, but it retains the patron's classical values showing wealth, dominance and strength.

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<sup>1</sup> Summerson, John. *The Classical Language of Architecture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966. p10

<sup>2</sup> - The late Balthaiser Glackner aged 87 years, died on December 23, 1913 and was interred in Lot #11821, Holly Plot, standing in the name of John Glackner, on December 23, 1913. The others interred in the "Glackner" Mausoleum are as follows: Catherine Glackner, 65 years, died in German Hospital on June 3, 1891, and was entombed on June 5, 1891. Edward J. Glackner, 55 years, died in Daytona Beach, Florida on February 17, 1938 and was entombed on February 21, 1968. Elizabeth Glackner, 60 years, died at Roosevelt Hospital on September 6, 1915, and was entombed on September 8, 1915. Ferdinand Glackner, 37 years, died at Preston Hollow, New York on August 21, 1900, and was entombed on August 24, 1900. John Glackner, Jr. 8 years, died at 189 West 101 Street, on January 20, 1890, and was entombed on January 23, 1890. John Glackner, 68 years, died in St. Augustine, Florida on April 4, 1921, and was entombed on April 8, 1921. Katherine Glackner, 51 years, died at Post Graduate Hospital on October 21, 1929, and was interred on October 23, 1929. Clarence Milan, 58 years, died at 17 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. on February 9, 1945, and was entombed on February 12, 1945. Violet G. Milan, 72 years, died at Amityville, New York on July 30, 1967, and was entombed on August 2, 1967.

*Dudley Clarke of Woodlawn Cemetery to Mr. George W. Macko of W.C. Cox and Company, May 16, 1968* Woodlawn Cemetery Records (John Glackner, Holly Plot), Department of drawings and archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York 1863-1999 accessed 10/04/2010

<sup>3</sup> Cited from letter head presented to Woodlawn in correspondence with John Glackner, 1914. *Woodlawn Cemetery Records (John Glackner, Holly Plot Correspondance)*, Department of drawings and archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York 1863-1999 accessed 10/04/2010.

<sup>4</sup> New York Times (1857-1922); *Gossip for the Horsemen*. Dec 27, 1897; ProQuest Historical Newspapers New York Times (1851-2006) w/ Index (1851-1993). p4.

<sup>5</sup> New - York Tribune (1911-1922); *Wills \$100,000 to Fiancee*. Apr 17, 1921. ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Tribune (1841-1922). p2.

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<sup>6</sup> *Woodlawn Cemetery Records (John Glackner, Holly Plot Correspondance)*, Department of drawings and archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library. Columbia University. New York 1863-1999 accessed 10/04/2010.

<sup>7</sup> New York Times (1923-Current file); *Arne Dehli*. Aug 13, 1942; ProQuest Historical Newspapers New York Times (1851-2006) w/ Index (1851-1993). p19.

<sup>8</sup> Dehli dedicates; 'To R. H. Robertson, esq. this study is dedicated by the author, both in recognition of his prominent connection with the revival of medieval architecture in the United States and in appreciative remembrance of the years spent in his office, and the kind interest taken by him in the present work'. Dehli, Arne. assisted by G. Howard Chamberlin. *Norman Monuments of Palermo and Environs*. Boston: Ticknor and company, c1892.

<sup>9</sup> St. Jerome's Roman Catholic Church, 230 Alexander Ave., SE cor. E. 138th St. 1900. Dehli & Howard. 1899. Mott Haven historic district, Bronx. 'St Jerome's is remembered here by some vigorous late 19th century neo-Baroque columns exuberantly breaking away from the body of the church, and of the church tower.' White, Norval and Elliot Willensky with Fran Leadon. *AIA Guide to New York City*, 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. p823.

<sup>10</sup> St. Philip Episcopal Church, Arne Dehli 1899 - Stuyvesant Heights Historic District. Postal, Matthew (ed.). *Guide to New York City Landmarks*, 4th edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009. p.266.

<sup>11</sup> Originally *Ludwig Nissen House*, 814 St. Marks Ave., bet. New York and Brooklyn Aves. S side. Crown Heights. ca.1905. Arne Dehli. Torn down for the Nursing home. This Guide's 1968 Edition called it "a miniature of the Potsdam Palace." White, Norval and Elliot Willensky with Fran Leadon. *AIA Guide to New York City*, 5th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. p691.

Originally *Paul Ames House*, 456 E. 19th St., bet Dorchester Rd. and Ditmas Ave. W side. 1910. Arne Dehli. In Spanish Mission style with a bracketed tile roof, intersected by a third-story stepped and rounded (Dutch?) pediment. An exotic composition by a Norwegian architect practicing in Brooklyn. *ibid*, p.716.

<sup>12</sup> Dehli, Arne. *Selections of Byzantine Ornament*. New York: W. Helburn, c1890.

<sup>13</sup> Dehli, Arne. assisted by G. Howard Chamberlin. *Norman Monuments of Palermo and Environs*. Boston: Ticknor and company, c1892.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, plate 16.

<sup>15</sup> Dehli, Arne. *Selections of Byzantine Ornament*. New York: W. Helburn, c1890. plate 34.