



Kate Reggev
Martin Mausoleum
Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx NY
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The Martin mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery, constructed in 1909 by the Bronx-based stone foundry Lazzari & Barton, is a Byzantine revival structure located only 300 feet from the Jerome Avenue entrance to the cemetery. Facing east and centered on a circular plot of approximately 56 feet in diameter, it is one of a series of smaller circular plots in the Fairview section that surround a larger monumental plaza-like mausoleum complex. Open land remains to the south and west of the Martin mausoleum, perhaps because of a lack of desire to be so close to the bustle of Jerome Avenue.

The mausoleum, with space for six catacombs, was constructed for the patriarch of the Martin family, John F. Martin (11/27/1853 - 4/25/1908), who was the son of Irish immigrants and made his fortune through the New York Stock Exchange as a stockbroker¹. At the time of his death in 1908, he possessed a fortune of over \$1 million dollars, the majority of which he left to his wife, Delia L. Martin and his only child, John Leon Martin². Like Martin, Delia Leon Martin, née White (7/31/2855 – 1/29/1941), was also born in New York to Irish immigrants³. For at least the last decade of his life, he and his family lived on the quickly developing Upper West Side in a stone and red brick rowhouse⁴ at 166 West 94th Street⁵; after his death, Delia split her time between their country seat in Stamford, Connecticut⁶ and the luxurious Ansonia⁷, a residential hotel on the Upper West Side.

Martin's son, John L. Martin, appears to have taken advantage of the wealthy lifestyle his father provided for him, and he was caught up in various scandals that were reported in newspapers nation-wide, especially pertaining to his love-life and finances. A stockbroker with the Consolidated Exchange and a part-time athlete at racetracks around the country⁸, in the span of ten years he was sued twice by two different women: one, his ex-wife, who when divorcing him charged him with maltreatment and extravagance, and the other, a former love interest who sued for \$50,000 in 1912 for breach of promise. Coral Maude Clarke claimed that Martin had proposed to her on many occasions, but to her surprise he eloped in 1912 with Maude Eddy, the seventeen year-old daughter of a wealthy Saskatchewan wheat

¹ Year: 1900; Census Place: Manhattan, New York, New York; Roll: T623_ 1105; Page: 10A; Enumeration District: 524.

² Jilted, Asks \$50,000: Bushel of Love Notes Basis of Suit Against Banker's Son." *New York Daily Tribune* (1911-1922); Dec. 29, 1912; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Tribune (1841 – 1922) pg. 6

³ (Year: 1900; Census Place)

⁴ Bromley, George W & Walter S. Atlas of the City of New York - Borough of Manhattan, Vol III, Plate 12. Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1898.

⁵ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington D.C.; Passport Applications, 1795-1905; ARC Identifier 566612 / MLR Number A1 508; NARA Series: M1372; Roll # 529.

⁶ "Stamford Estate Burned: Authorities Seek Careless Hunter, Believed Responsible." Special to the New York Times. *New York Times* (1923 - Current file); April 16, 1924; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851 – 2007) with Index (1851 – 1993) pg. 25

⁷ "Loses \$50,000 in Jewels: Mrs. J. F. Martin Believes She Was Robbed in a Paris Hotel." *New York Times* (1911-1922); July 11, 1913; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851 – 2007) with Index (1851 – 1993)

⁸ "Wife Sues J.L. Martin" *New York Times* (1857-1922); Sep 24, 1903; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2007) with Index (1851-1993) pg. 16

grower⁹. Although both of his wives were prominent, wealthy women in New York society, in 1914 Martin filed for bankruptcy, after losing the \$232,000 of his inheritance on gambling, Wall Street, an unsuccessful business venture, and the lawsuit brought against him that year¹⁰. With his second wife, Maude Eddy Martin, (1896 - 4/15/1999), he had two children, John E Martin (1/30/1913 - 12/3/1935) who died at the age of 22 at Camp Smith, a military installation of the NY Army National Guard in Cortlandt Manor near Peekskill, NY¹¹, and a daughter, Sheila Martin (10/8/1922 - 12/18/1999). At the time of her death at the age of 77, she resided in Darien, CT and was never married¹². She and her mother were the last two members of the Martin family to be interred in the mausoleum, and shortly before her death, Sheila informed Woodlawn that she did not wish to have her or her mother's names engraved on the catacombs¹³.

The mausoleum commands a presence from its height in comparison with the open lawn around it, from the ceremonial approach that leads up to the structure, and its massing. The raised stone walkway, flanked by two large stone statues of lions on either side of the bronze double-door, physically and visually pulls the visitor away from the paved street and towards the mausoleum. From the walkway, the structure is visually divided into four main parts: the projecting central front part with its pointed roof, the two side sections, and the domed roof. A sense of weightiness is felt in the bottom half of the structure – the thicker parts of the battered walls, the pointed roofs, and the urns that flank the walkway all keep the structure grounded. In contrast, the upper half of the mausoleum has a sense of lightness and movement upwards, towards the heavens: the battered walls are slenderer; the dome stretches up and culminates in an elegant, sky-reaching finial; even the ornamental details have an emphasis pointing upward. The emphasis here, like in many Byzantine structures, is on the difference between the heavy, earthly world and the celestial axis to heaven.

There is also a strong sense of proportion, rhythm and symmetry in the structure. In plan, it is a Greek cross and has both radial and vertical symmetry that can be seen when looking at any façade. The symmetry and cut-backs of the Greek cross plan activate the façade, emphasizing the central section that projects out as well as informing the viewer that this structure is symmetrical and well-balanced on all four sides. The proportions and shape of the dome are repeated in the arched windows on each side of the

⁹ (“Jilted, Asks \$50,000: Bushel of Love Notes Basis of Suit Against Banker’s Son.”)

¹⁰ “Admits He Spent \$232,000 Fortune: Nothing Left, John F. Martin Testifies.” *New York Times* (1851 – 1922); Jan. 19, 1916; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2007) with Index (1851-1993), pg. 22

¹¹ Camp Smith th Training Site. <http://dmna.state.ny.us/campsmith/index.php>, 4 April 2011.

¹² Connecticut Department of Health. Connecticut Death Index, 1949-2001 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2003. Original data: Connecticut Department of Health. Connecticut Death Index, 1949-2001. Hartford, CT, USA: Connecticut Department of Health.

¹³ Martin Mausoleum Site Plan. Martin Mausoleum Archives. Woodlawn Archives, Avery Library, Columbia University. 26 April 1999.

mausoleum; the distance from the ground to the top of the dome is double the distance from the ground to the top of the window arches, and the dome is also twice as wide as the window arches.

The Greek cross plan not only informs the visitor of the even proportions and symmetry of the structure but also recalls other Byzantine structures that use the same techniques to emphasize height and draw the eye upward, such as Hagia Sophia in Constantinople or the Tomb of Galla Placidia in Ravenna¹⁴. Hagia Sophia also uses similar proportions among its various levels of domes, and the smooth transition from the square plan to the circular dome is also handled in the same elegant, typically Byzantine use of a pendentive arch.

The decorative elements on the exterior of the mausoleum stem from a wide range of sources – Roman, Grecian, Celtic, and Byzantine. The arched windows are Roman, with their semi-circular form and equally sized stones, and seem somewhat blunt compared to the finely carved Grecian acanthus leaves on the acroteria and modified egg and dart moulding on the upper half of the structure¹⁵. The Celtic cross on top of the pointed arch, with its flaired edges, contrasts with the equal-sided Greek cross in the latticework in the arch. The volutes of the finial make it clearly Grecian, and the overall sensation is one of eclecticism, perhaps in an attempt at emphasizing the range and skill of craftwork of the foundry that designed and built the mausoleum, Lazzari & Barton, who called themselves “artists in stone”¹⁶.

While the exterior plays with different forms and origins with the decorative details, the interior is unmistakably Byzantine in decorative materials and motifs. Exquisite mosaic designs in light-catching gold, sea green, white, pink, red, and midnight blue dominate the interior, moving the eye through the arches and upward towards the cupola. Three of the four projecting areas from the square created by the Greek cross plan house the catacombs, two to a niche, and the walls are covered in a pink marble that balances the ornate mosaics in the upper part of the structure. Just as on the exterior, where the lower half is weightier and balances the soaring dome of the upper half, here too the lower half is more massive and blunt, with the marble meeting at perfect right angles and cut in large 1.5” slabs. The change in material from marble to mosaic occurs halfway up the windows, at the height of the top of the entrance doors.

A change in motifs in the mosaic designs reflects a structural and thematic transition in the mausoleum. Moving from the floor to the cupola, designs change from geometric on the floor pavement and undersides of the arches to floral on the column capitals to Biblical representations of the 4 Gospels (Matthew - angel; Mark – lion; Luke – ox; John – eagle) in the medallions on the pendentives and finally

¹⁴Fletcher, Sir Banister. *A History of Architecture*. London: The Athlone Press, 1975.

¹⁵ (Fletcher)

¹⁶ Letter to Judson A. Doolittle, Engineer. Martin Mausoleum Archives, Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University. 20 April 1909.

to celestial in the starry depiction of the midnight sky, complete with a crescent moon. This graphic differentiation ultimately resulting in the contemplation of the celestial powers and the heavens perhaps took its inspiration from the night sky at the tomb of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, where a mosaicked starry sky in dark blue and gold surrounds a Latin cross¹⁷. There, too, the four pendentives depict the 3 animals and angel associated with the 4 Gospels. In the Martin mausoleum, the transition in the themes of the mosaics – from floral to Biblical and holy, mimics the structural transition of the pendentive, which creates the celestial, upward-looking axis of the structure.

On the interior, the sense of proportion and rhythm seen on the exterior and similar to that of Hagia Sophia is changed dramatically. Unlike structures of antiquity, Hagia Sophia and the mausoleum of Galla Placidia included, where exteriors closely correspond with the interiors,¹⁸ the interior dome of the Martin mausoleum is much lower and shallower. Yet despite this incongruity, the space still works. This is perhaps due to two factors: the successful emphasis on upward movement as expressed structurally and decoratively, and the focus on proportions of the windows instead of the proportions of the cupola. By focusing the interior proportions on those of the windows, which, in turn, are based on the proportions of the outside dome, the same sense of space and proportion is maintained, and the cupola, because of its height and the celestial message, still achieves a heavenly sensibility.

The heavy Byzantine influence on the Martin mausoleum does not appear to have many contemporary parallels in other structures; even the well-known Saint Bartholomew's Byzantine-style church on 5th Avenue was constructed ten years after the mausoleum, and in fact Saint John the Divine in Morningside Heights was originally designed to be Byzantine but was changed during construction to neo-Gothic in 1907 due to changing tastes¹⁹. Due to the scarcity of other contemporary examples of Byzantine revival architecture, the Martin mausoleum provides an excellent example of a case where, due to emphasis on proportion in the right places and decorative details that emphasize an upward, heavenly-pointed axis, two different sensibilities and functions of the exterior and interiors come together as a successful whole.

¹⁷ (Fletcher)

¹⁸ (Fletcher)

¹⁹ David Kirby "St. John The Unfinished. Dean of Cathedral on Morningside.". *New York Times*. 10 January 1999. <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/10/nyregion/st-john-unfinished-dean-cathedral-morningside-heights-vows-fix-what-he-s-got-not.html?pagewanted=all>. Accessed 16 October 2011.