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Studio I
Project 3
Field Documentation and Formal Analysis

James Norman Hill was the eldest son of James Jerome Hill, founder of the Great Northern Railroad. Born February 13, 1870 in Minnesota, Hill was raised to follow his father in the railroad industry. After graduating from Yale in 1893, Hill went to work for the Great Northern Railroad and within twelve years became the company's president. He continued his involvement in the railroad industry until his death in 1932, in addition to joining the banking and finance industries, among others. At the time of his death, Mr. Hill was a director of the Texas Corporation, the Texas Company, Chase National Bank, the Colorado and Southern Railway Company, and Northern Securities Company. He was also president and director of the United Securities Corporation of St. Paul and a trustee of the Great Northern Iron Ore Properties. Mr. Hill was also known as a "clubman", belonging to at least fifteen social and professional clubs and societies. A bachelor until the age of forty two, Hill eventually married Marguerite Sawyer in 1912.ⁱ

Mrs. Hill had been married once before, and she probably had the most eventful social life of anyone buried in the Columbine plot at the Woodlawn Cemetery. Her marriage to the military doctor Clarence Fahnestock ended in divorce several years before she wed James Hill, to whom she was married for almost twenty years. One year after Mr. Hill died, Marguerite Sawyer Hill married Herbert Neal, who moved into the Manhattan and Long Island residences Mrs. Neal shared with her late husband. Mr. Neal was sued one year into their marriage by his ex-wife of four years for over \$40,000.ⁱⁱ Mrs. Hill's next wedding took place in secret in 1946. Her fourth husband was Charles Blevins Davis, a much younger man from Missouri who was a friend of the Truman family; the first lady even attended the wedding.ⁱⁱⁱ Davis, a former schoolteacher-turned-Broadway producer suffered from financial troubles and when Mrs. Hill died two years after they were married, he inherited nine million dollars of

railroad money.^{iv} Despite Mrs. Blevin's wishes, C. Blevins Davis was not buried with her in her second husband's plot.^v

There is a third person buried in the Columbine plot along with Mr. and Mrs. James Hill. James Gillison III was only eighteen years-old when he died in 1928. It is unclear how this young man was connected to the Hills, but the blueprints for the mausoleum were not drawn until a year after his death - three years before Mr. Hill himself died. Two women with the last name Gillison were connected to the Hill family and may have been his link: James Hill's youngest brother Walter, married a woman named Pauline Gillison, who accompanied him to America on the *Aquitania* in 1921. Pauline, who was 39 at the time, brought a fifteen-year-old girl with her named Marguerite Gillison.^{vi} In September of 1932, Mrs. Hill announced the engagement of her niece Marguerite Gillison to a Lewis Howser in the *New York Times* and the same niece is mentioned in James Hill's obituary.^{vii} I would guess that James Gillison III may have been Pauline Gillison's son by a previous marriage, but it would only be a guess, and there was no record of him being on the *Aquitania* with her.

Regardless of who James Gillison III was, the blueprints for the mausoleum were drawn up a year after his untimely death. The Hills commissioned the architectural firm of James Gamble Rogers, Inc. to design their mausoleum. James Gamble Rogers was a Twentieth Century architect who was famous for his work on prestigious educational and medical institutions throughout the United States.^{viii} Although an associate architect named Charles Kent, and not Rogers himself, designed the Hill mausoleum, the Hill family could still display its prestige and wealth by hiring Rogers' firm. And although Kent was not as famous as his mentor, he was a known architect who would later work with Rogers in designing the Butler Library on Columbia University's Morningside campus.^{ix} James Gamble Rogers Inc. secured the granite for the mausoleum from Adler's Monument and Granite Works and monel metal doors and a window from Samuel Yellin's metal company. Yellin was a famous blacksmith

of the Twentieth Century and by attaching doors with Yellin's signature to his final resting place, Hill was again displaying his wealth.

In addition to incorporating the best architects and craftsmen, the Hill mausoleum design was very stylish for its time. Art deco was a popular architectural movement in the United States in the 1920's and 30's and the mausoleum includes many art deco elements.^x There are subtle Egyptian themes throughout the monument including its battered walls, copper fire pots with Egyptian heads and clawed feet guarding the entrance, and gold-leaf etching on what was referred to as Egyptian granite by the architect. The mausoleum is constructed of enormous blocks of granite that are joined to form a severe, boxy, yet monumental structure. The massive character of the mausoleum is set against the significant void created around the entryway and the only decoration among the overwhelming austerity is found in the masonry lines that join the granite blocks and the extraordinary Monel doors Samuel Yellin provided. In fact, the sober look created by the stone allows the detail in the doors to stand out all the more. Despite the severity of Hill's mausoleum, it actually is inviting. The entryway contains the largest of the granite blocks in a sort of post-and-lintel design, marking the entrance as the largest and most significant feature on the front facade. In addition, a porch with two seating areas was installed with a walkway that leads all the way from the street to the porch. The Hill mausoleum is most interesting in the way its design encourages living interaction with the dead, and yet gives life its own unique space outside. The two spaces are delineated by fire, clearly marking the boundary between the private space for contemplation and the outer space for admiring the natural and built environments.

^x "James N. Hill Dead; Ex-Railroad Chief, *New York Times*, July 5, 1932, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=494&did=105868639&srchMode=1&sid=6&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1287359800&clientId=15403>

ⁱⁱ "Neal Sued by Ex-Wife: \$42,974 asked of husband of the former Mrs. J.N. Hill., *New York Times*, November 30, 1934. <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=2&did=101447255&srchMode=2&sid=1&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1287358811&clientId=15403>

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- ⁱⁱⁱ "J.N. Hill's Widow is Wed", *New York Times*, November 16, 1946.
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=16&did=91627249&SrchMode=1&sid=8&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1287375268&clientId=15403>.
- ^{iv} "Manners and Morals: The Beau from Mo", *Time Magazine*, September 10, 1951,
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,815319,00.html>
- ^v *Woodlawn Archives - James Norman Hill (Correspondence)*, Avery Archives, Columbia University.
- ^{vi} New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957, *Aquitania*, April 9, 1921.
http://search.ancestrylibrary.com/iexec?htx=View&r=5542&dbid=7488&iid=NYT715_2949-0039&fn=Marguerite&ln=Gillison&st=r&ssrc=&pid=4025280745
- ^{vii} "Other Engagements: Gillison-Howser", *New York Times*, September 21, 1932
"Miss Gillison's Bridal Today", *Ibid*, August 17, 1934.
<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&did=94557258&SrchMode=2&sid=7&Fmt=10&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=HNP&TS=1287375191&clientId=15403>.
- "James N. Hill Dead; Ex-Railroad Chief", *New York Times*, July 5, 1932.
- ^{viii} Henry J. Withey, A.I.A and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing, 1956).
- ^{ix} Michael Stoller, "A Library for the Twentieth Century: The Rise of South Hall", *Columbia Library Columns*, Autumn 1996, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/butler/renovation/south.html>.
- ^x Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, *The Thames and Hudson Encyclopedia of 20th Century Architecture*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), 17-18, 76, 348.