

Course: ARCHA4510_001_2020_3 Stuido I

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Exercise 5: Biographical Research

William Truslow Purdy (1850-1914) is the owner of the lot No. 10514-16 at Woodlawn Cemetery, New York. He bought this mausoleum for his wife Bel Buchanan Purdy, mother Anna Eliza Secor Purdy,¹ and younger sister Alida May Purdy.

William T. Purdy was the second child of James Seaman Purdy and Anna E. Secor Purdy, who were both born in New York City and moved to Virginia in 1840s. William has an elder brother Josephine Purdy (1849 -?), a younger sister Alida May Purdy (1857-1957) and a younger brother James Howard Purdy (1859-1941), all were born in Virginia.²



The family moved back to New York City when William was 20, and lived in Brooklyn. Short after, in the year 1876, James S. Purdy decided to open his own bakery with his two sons William and James on Third Avenue.³ The bakery was known as J.

1. "Obituary 3 -- no Title.", *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 27, 1914.

2. "Census Place: Brooklyn Ward 13, Kings, New York; Roll: M593_954; Page: 644A", *Family History Library Film: 552453*, 1870.

3. *Ibid.*

S. Purdy's & Sons.⁴ Around the same time, the family moved to 231 East 126th Street, very close to their bakery.

The business went well and the family was able to open subbranches. In the year 1887, according to the New York City directories, there were four Purdy's bakeries, all on Third Avenue. Their locations were: 1888, 1999, 2195 and 2320 Third Avenue.⁵



Fig. 1: *Façade of 2195 Third Avenue*. Walter Grutchfield, “Purdy's, 2195 Third Avenue. between 119th St. and 120th St., New York”, *waltergrutchfield*, 2014.

In 1890, James S. Purdy passed away, but the brothers decided to continue the bakeries. In 1891, James Purdy got married and moved from their father's house to 14 West 122nd Street. William still lived with his mother, sister, and a servant on East 126th Street and was now the head of this property.⁶

4. Grutchfield, Walter, “Purdy's, 2195 Third Avenue. between 119th St. and 120th St., New York”, *waltergrutchfield*, 2014.

5. “Wilson's Business Directory of New York City 1852-1853”, New York Public Library Digital Collections.

6. “1890 United States Federal Census,” under “James H. Purdy” and “William T. Purdy”.

In 1901, at the age of 51, William T. Purdy married Bell Buchanan. Bell was a native of New York City who was twenty years younger than William. Both her parents were born in Scotland. Short after the marriage, William bought a house at 9 Mt. Morris Park West and left that house on East 126th Street to his sister Alida and his mother.⁷

In 1906, William commissioned a ‘private mausoleum’ at Woodlawn Cemetery. The mausoleum was designed by C.E. Tayntor Granite Co.⁸ According to Purdy’s will, this mausoleum was bought for Anna E. Purdy, Alida M. Purdy, Bell B. Purdy and William himself:

I direct that after my interment therein my mother and sister may be buried therein and my wife Bel B. Purdy, and that after such interments there be no further interments in said plot or in any mausoleum I may hereafter and thereon, under of course, if children are born to my wife and myself such children and their wives or husbands may be so interred, and this prohibition as to future interments is not to apply to them.⁹

However, the couple had no surviving children (they had one who died shortly after birth).

In his will, he gave all money he had on deposits to his mother, forty percent of his stocks to his younger sister, the 2195 Third Avenue property to his younger brother, and all his other property to his wife.¹⁰

At the age of 65, William passed away on the day before the Christmas Eve. His obituary was announced in *New York Times*. His funeral services were held at St. James M. E. Church on Dec. 27, 1914.¹¹ One year after, Bell B. Purdy died at the age of 45. Alida had lived with her mother for another 3 years before Anna E. Purdy passed. After that, Alida moved from their family’s house on East 126th Street, and lived with a

7. “1910 United States Federal Census,” under “Bel. B. Purdy”.

8. “WCA Major Monuments”, *Woodlawn Cemetery records (1863-1999)*, under “box 14”.

9. Surrogate's Court (New York County), “Wills, 0994-0996, 1914-1915”, *Record of Wills*.

10. *Ibid.*

11. “Obituary 3 -- no Title.”, *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 27, 1914.

servant in a house she rent until she died at the age of 100.

After William's death, James H. Purdy ran the bakery for another few years. Today, the façade of the store at 2195 Third Avenue still has the name 'Purdy's' on a stone plaque set beneath the cornice.

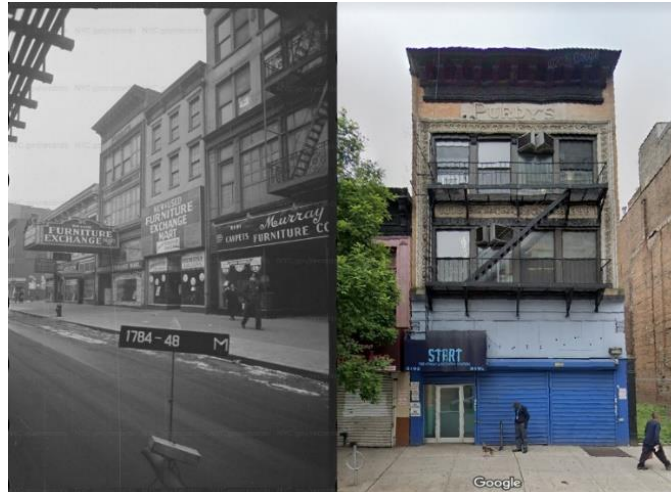


Fig. 2: *Façade of 2195 Third Avenue*. Left: 1920, Photo © NYC Municipal Archives; Right: 2019, Photo © Google.

The place where James S. Purdy (father of the family), Josephine Purdy (elder brother), and James H. Purdy (younger brother) are buried is unknown. The funeral of James H. Purdy was at Chapel at Woodlawn Cemetery,¹² so it is probable that he also located at Woodlawn.

Although the story of the Purdy family is not as dramatic as others in Woodlawn Cemetery, the family lived a successful and meaningful life in their own way. After all, though there were many bakers at the time, not many can own four shops at New York City at once or afford a mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery.

12. "Deaths." *New York Herald Tribune (1926-1962)*, Nov 22, 1941.

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PURDY

