

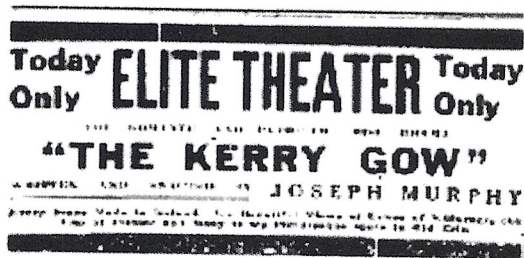


### **THE JOSEPH MURPHY MEMORIAL**

The Joseph Memorial is located in the Woodlawn Cemetery, in the Park View plot, section 146. This monument is dedicated to William Lawrence Murphy, who is better known as Joseph Murphy. The monument is a tribute to the career of Joseph as an actor and of his Irish heritage which is also very influential in the work he did as an actor and writer. He was married to Mary F. Murphy who is now buried next to him.

Joseph Murphy was born around 1839 in Brooklyn, it is said that he traveled to California between 1849-51 to work in the mining camps. Shortly after working in the mining camps a friend offered him a job as end man in a minstrel show, this job marked

the beginning of what would be a very long career in theater. He got the name Joseph Murphy because of an error in the play program where he was introduced as Joseph instead of William in his first appearance in San Francisco; after that the name stuck. He went on to become a very well-known and successful actor in his time; in the New York Times obituary from 1916, the author writes: "at the time he retired in 1902 he was said to be the wealthiest actor in the United States and to be worth about 3,000,000." To be called the wealthiest actor in the United States at that time is a very powerful statement, it's saying that his career in theater had been very successful, more successful than all other actors of his time.



Joseph Murphy is mostly known for two works, *The Kerry Gow* and *Shaun Rhue*, both of them being Irish dramas. The first is a three-reel film written and played by Joseph. It is described as a patriotic Irish romantic drama, with beautiful

authentic Irish locations. The Grand Opera House in London, Ont. describes it as: "a positively touching story of life and love everywhere, told in language, scenes and situations indigenous to every clime, which is immediately recognized as an everyday tale in every land" <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Grand Opera House (London, Ont.). Grand Opera House, London, Ont., Programme: Monday, October 28th, Engagement of Mr. Joseph Murphy Supported by His Own Company In the "Kerry Gow", a Positively Touching Story of Life And Love Everywhere .. [London, Ont.?: s.n., 1895.

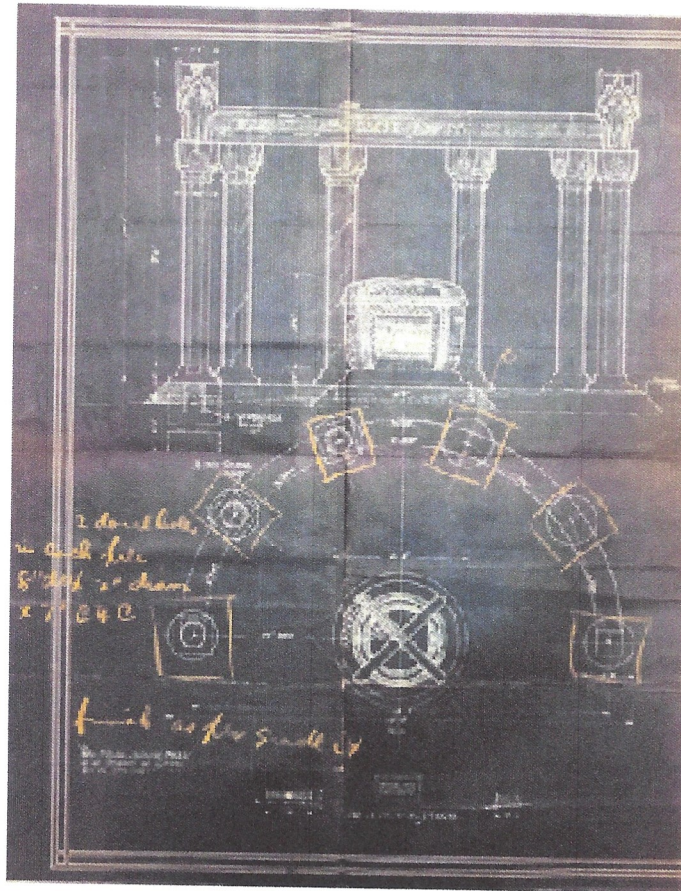
His other famous work was in *Shaun Rhue*, play by Frederick Marsden in which Joseph acted. Although not as famous as *The Kerry Gow* it is described as picturing humble domestic life in a romantic way. These two works become very influential in Joseph's life, *The Kerry Gow* goes on to play in different theaters for many years.

Joseph Murphy died on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, 1915 in his apartment at the Herald Square Hotel; he was approximately 76 years old and the cause of his death was pneumonia. After his death, his wife Mary begins the process of the construction of the Joseph Memorial.

The design of the Woodlawn Monument was commissioned from the architect William Henry Deacy in 1916, and it was approved by the Woodlawn Cemetery on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, 1916, almost a year after Joseph passed away. The construction of the monument started around September of 1917, according to a correspondence letter of Frank T Lang who was a designer and manufacturer of memorials in stone. In the letter he authorizes the commence of the foundation of the memorial, he writes to the Woodlawn Cemetery:

"Gentlemen: Kindly go ahead with the foundation of the Murphy Memorial as per blue print now on file in your office. Within twenty-four hours the Executor of the estate will mail you a written order from the owner. Kindly give me the final price of the foundation so that I can send you a check."

The lot on which the monument is located is rectangular and is accessed directly from Park View Ave. There is a lot in front of the Joseph lot where the head stones of Mary's parents and siblings are located.



ORIGINAL BLUE PRINTS OF JOSEPH MEMORIAL

The monument itself is composed of six equally spaced stone columns which create a half circle that encloses the basket like monument which is also in stone. The columns are about 8 feet tall, the base and shaft of the columns have a weaving-like design of vertical and horizontal carved lines. The capital of the columns is squared and has different designs carved on each face, all four faces of the capitals have a triumphant cross in the middle, what changes is in the carving inside the circle of the cross, it is either a dove, a crescent moon or a shamrock. The entablature throughout the columns reads:

The Kerry Gow 1839 Joseph Murphy 1915 Shaun Rhue

Joseph's life is represented in this one phrase. It is clear that to his wife and/or the architect it was important to emphasize on the fact that although his name was William Murphy, he was more comfortable with the name Joseph Murphy and to everyone who knew him, they knew him as Joseph. The phrase also represents the works that were influential in his career. On the end columns which are taller, there is a carving of St. Brigid to the right and St. Patrick to the left. These two are patron saints of Ireland.

The basket like monument in the middle is delicately carved also having a weaving-like design which is more elaborated than the ones not the columns. The basket is about 50 inches tall and 56 inches wide, and is placed in the middle of the columns. Each face of the basket has a different carving, the front view reads: William L. Murphy, loved by thousands who knew him as Joseph Murphy. The rear face has a carving of California Days, which is a reference to the early years of his career. The right view is a tribute to *Shaun Rhue* and the left view of the basket is a tribute to *The Kerry Gow*. This basket is also very representative of the same aspects represented in the entablature of the columns, it gives you an understanding of how influential his acting life was for him and his loved ones. The architect really brings importance to his acting career and to his Irish heritage, having various Irish symbols carved throughout the monument.

Although I did not find any information on the landscape architect, it looks like the monument has an intentional landscape design. There is heavy landscaping that also encloses the monument the same way the columns enclose the basket like monument. The landscape is composed of azalea and hemlock trees which are full grown now.

I think the Joseph Memorial was very thoughtfully designed to showcase the important aspects of Joseph's life, or the aspects of his life that were important to him. Just by understanding the monument, it becomes very clear that acting was his life, he retired when he was 63 years old, that also tells you that he enjoyed acting throughout his life. Also his Irish heritage was also very influential in his career, his most famous work being Irish.



JOSEPH'S SIGNATURE

## Bibliography

"JOE MURPHY, COMEDIAN, DIES." 1916. *New York Times (1857-1922)*, 11. <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/98036375?accountid=10226>.

"THE KERRY GOW" AT THE ELITE THEATER. (1912, Dec 03). *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American (1910-1920)* Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/908343055?accountid=10226>

Display ad 13 -- no title. (1912, Dec 03). *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American (1910-1920)* Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/docview/906800026?accountid=10226>

Grand Opera House (London, Ont.). Grand Opera House, London, Ont., Programme: Saturday, Nov. 7th, Mr. Joseph Murphy Supported by His Own Company Shaun Rhue .. [London, Ont.?: s.n., 1896.

NOTES OF THE STAGE. (1886, Oct 22). *New York Times (1857-1922)* Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/94447162?accountid=10226>