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HP Studio 1, Problem 3: Field Documentation + Formal Analysis

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William C. Gotshall Mausoleum

The William C. Gotshall mausoleum is located just south of the Jerome Avenue Entrance to the Woodlawn Cemetery on Central Avenue (see Image 1). The building was completed in 1937, two years after Gotshall died in 1935.¹ It is a classically designed granite structure with marble interiors and stained art glass. The north facing design allows for maximum lighting through the east, west and south facing windows and the Corinthian order columns exude a sense of prestige to the onlooker. At first glance one sees a typical, albeit sizeable, mausoleum, but after a closer look one begins to appreciate the intricate details and care taken into constructing the building.

The first thing I noticed about the building was the size and the classical design elements. The footprint of the building is approximately 40 feet long and 20 feet wide and sits in the middle of the site towards the back end, away from the street. The nearly 24 foot front facade exemplifies the tripartite design with a defined two piece granite base, a Corinthian ordered column middle, and an entablature with gabled-roof pediment on top. This same three-part design is followed throughout the exterior and interior of the building. The building facades are also symmetrical across the vertical axis while the interior plan is symmetrical in both north/south and east/west directions. The origin of the axis of symmetry rests in the middle of the sarcophagus and gives a clear impression that the middle of the mausoleum, where William Gotshall rests, is the more important part of the building and design.

The landscaping around the building is also an important element, although I believe in the past it was more carefully created than today. The original 1936 planting scheme called for \$15,000 in plants,

¹ Letter to Hon. James J Farren, executor under last will of William C. Gotshall. December 29, 1937. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

labor and soil with the majority of the vegetation being planted at the back of the site, behind the mausoleum (see Image 2).² From the plan drawing you can see that the intent of the design was to ensure a street entry to the front of the building thus emphasizing the procession into the mausoleum. The building was originally planned to sit toward the back of the site increasing the distance from the street.³ Obstructing the side and back paths to the mausoleum was also clear in the 1968 plan by Rosedale Nurseries (see Image 3). Taller trees were placed at the very back edge of the site with shorter bushes in front and low, ground-covering shrubs closest to the mausoleum.⁴ Today, the site hardly looks like the previous plans with the exception of some ground-covering shrubs on the east side of the site. Entrance to the site can be achieved from virtually any direction thus the emphasis on the front street-entry is lost.

Presbrey-Leland Studios sent full sets of plans to the cemetery in May 1936 and it was specified that this building was to be a duplicate of the John R Hegeman mausoleum which is located less than a quarter mile north-west of Gotshall's site (see Image 4).⁵ It was specified in a paper from Presbrey-Leland that the exterior was to be constructed out of the best quality light Barre Granite and cut to properly drain. A light colored polished marble interior (with the exception of polished granite flooring) was also specified with bronze work for the door, window frames, ventilators and ceiling rosettes. Art glass was manufactured by Tiffany Company and installed with a plate protection window in a cast bronze frame.⁶ A significant amount of information about the mausoleum was spelled out by Gotshall himself in his will. He stated that \$250,000-\$350,000 was to be spent in the purchase and construction of the mausoleum and that the interior was "to be beautiful and white, and so designed as to admit plenty of sunlight..."⁷ Today the mausoleum has a few cracks in the flooring with water damage visible on the floor and sarcophagus

² "Planting Suggestion, Lot No 14547." Spring 1936. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

³ Letter to Mr. Storms of Woodlawn Cemetery from Presbrey Leland Studios. May 29, 1936. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

⁴ "Renewal Planting Plan for Lot # 14547 Fairview Plot, Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, NY." Rosedale Nurseries Inc. Spring 1968. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

⁵ Letter for Mr. Richard Storms of Woodlawn Cemetery from FC Presbrey of Presbrey-Leland Studios. May 14, 1936. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

⁶ Note from Presbrey-Leland Studios regarding Gotshall Mausoleum. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

⁷ Letter for Mr. John C Plumb of Woodlawn Cemetery from Assistant Secretary Edmonds of Woodlawn Cemetery. September 27, 1935. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

and while the building has a history of maintenance issues with the cracked pediment being noted by 1938, chipped flooring and marble damage noted in 1951, the \$15,000 left for care of the mausoleum ran out by the 1960's when the new planting scheme was created.⁸

William Gotshall died in 1935 at the age of 65 in New York City. He is best known as a railroad engineer and president of the New York & Port Chester Railroad.⁹ He was married to Adelaide Gotshall who he eventually divorced, yet it was his housekeeper, Agnes Jurkulak, who is buried next to him at Woodlawn when she died at the age of 86 in 1976. Gotshall specified in his will that only Agnes could be placed there and if she wanted to be.¹⁰ Ms. Jurkulak was with the Gotshall's for many years as we can see from the 1910 census that she was already working for the family when she was only 20 years old, William was 50 and Adelaide was 39 at this point.¹¹ Also notable is the fact that Gotshall left Agnes three-tenths residue while his ex-wife Adelaide only received one-tenth of his estate.¹²

The William C. Gotshall mausoleum holds significant value not only for the history of the Gotshall family, but also for the classic design and landscaping plans integrated into the site. In a time when the design field was looking to the future with skyscrapers and modernism, this classic design references back to a time when buildings were constructed to be a place of honor and reverence. Presbrey-Leland exemplified this in the Gotshall mausoleum with the tripartite design and Corinthian order. The planting schemes and granite foundations leading to the door contribute to the entry sequence, adding to the grandeur of the space. Even though the funds for maintenance of the building ran out by the 1960s, the current condition of the mausoleum is quite excellent. With only a few cracks and minor damage you can easily see that this structure was built to last. The mausoleum exudes a level dignity for the Gotshall family and is a notable example of craftsmanship at Woodlawn Cemetery.

⁸ Letter to Mr. Caswell Smith from Herrick & Herrick, Attorneys and Counselors at Law. November 5, 1953. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

⁹ "WC Gotshall, 65, Engineer, is dead." *New York Times* 19 Aug 1935. 19. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

¹⁰ Letter to Mr. Caswell Smith from Herrick & Herrick, Attorneys and Counselors at Law. November 5, 1953. Columbia University Libraries, Drawings and Archives.

¹¹ United States. Department of Commerce and Labor- Bureau of the Census. *Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910- Population*. Manhattan Ward 22, New York. 1910. Web. <<http://search.ancestrylibrary.com>>.

¹² "Wills for Probate." *New York Times*. 13 Sep 1935. 44. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.



Image 1: William C. Gotshall Mausoleum

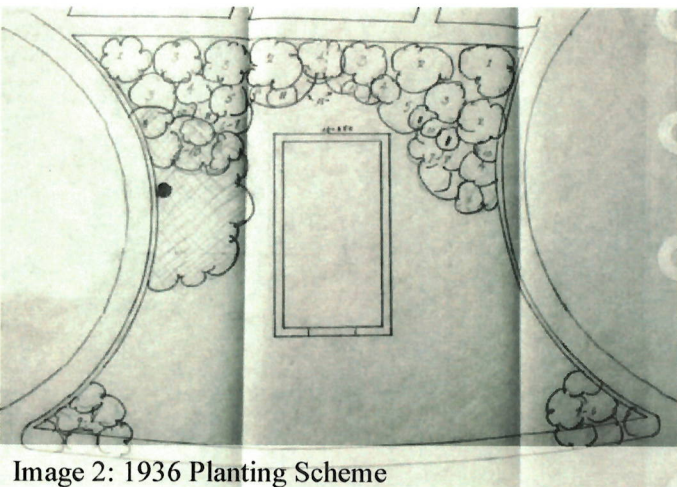


Image 2: 1936 Planting Scheme

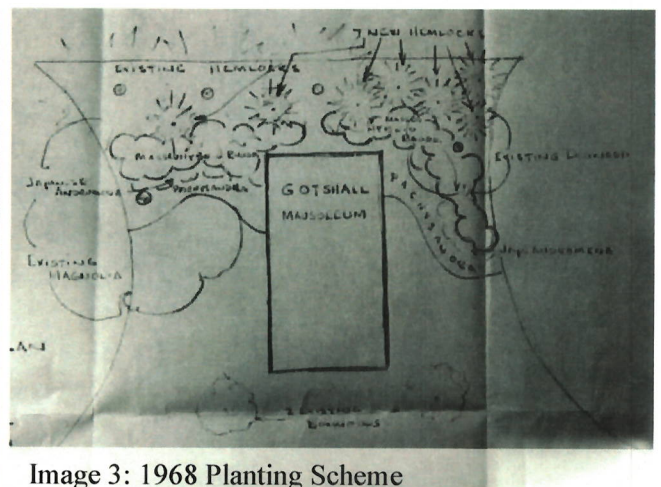


Image 3: 1968 Planting Scheme



Image 4: John R Hegeman Mausoleum