

Research on Amsinck Mausoleum, Woodlawn Cemetery

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Architect and Designer:

This Florence and Gustav Amsinck mausoleum was constructed by C.E. Tayntor Granite Company and designed by Henry Otis Chapman.

C. E. Tayntor Company was incorporated in 1896, and the first president was Charles E Tayntor, a prominent granite merchant, who started his work around the 1890s and was the pioneer in adding modern machinery into granite industry. Charles was the first to construct a large boom steel derrick, which was the only kind could erect on the quarries at that time. He bought Melvin quarry in Hallowell, which forms a muscovite-biotite granite with light-gray shade and even porphyritic texture, with the diameter of particles generally ranges from 0.25 to 1.25mm.¹ Its glaciated surface keeps it from sapping. This kind of stone could be suitably utilized for almost all exterior construction and was the granite used in Amsinck mausoleum. Charles acutely recognized the demand of memorial work for the upper class and C. E. Tayntor company mainly dealt in monumental construction. The profitable industry grew rapidly and in 1906, the Tayntor Company incorporated the Hallowell Granite Company, continuing the business with the new name C. E. Tayntor Granite Company.² By 1916, when Charles had already passed away and was succeeded by A. O. Tayntor, the company had erected over four hundred mausoleums through the whole nation, including 130 in Woodlawn Cemetery.³

Henry Otis Chapman was born in 1862 in New York State. After graduating from Cornell, he cooperated with John Stewart Barney in the firm of Barney and Chapman. Ending the partnership in 1908, Chapman served as a solo architect and became a major

¹ Emerson Benjamin Kendall, Joseph Hartshorn Perry. *The Journal of Geology* 16, no. 7 (1908): 669-70.

² *Granite: Published ... in the interests of the producer, manufacturer and retailer of granite as used for monumental or building purposes.* Boston. Vol.21(1911)

³ The Brooklyn Daily EagleBrooklyn, New York. Thursday, October 26, 1916, 26

member in Henry Otis Chapman & Son. United States Mortgage and Trust Company is one of his magnum opuses. His own estate, Henry Otis Chapman Residence was also designed by himself. Several of his work in New York City are office buildings on Fifth Avenue,⁴ and Amsinck mausoleum is his only project in the Woodlawn Cemetery. This unusual design indicates that there must be some link between Chapman and Amsinck. However, there's no evidence about it. Perhaps during his work, he had some connection or private friendship with Florence Amsinck, who also lived on Fifth Avenue in the early 1900s, and granted her favor of designing her mausoleum, just a guess.

Location :

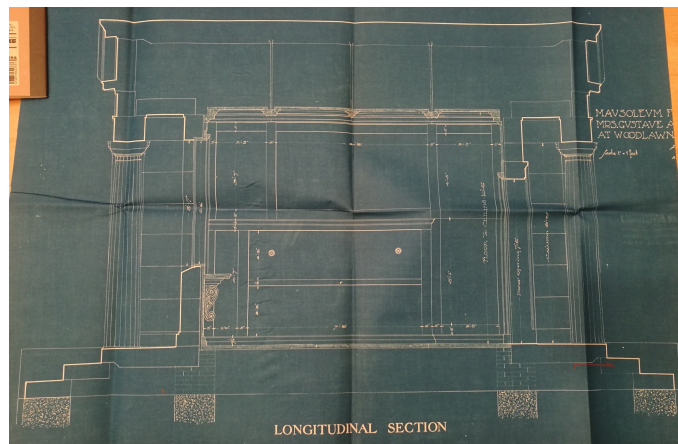
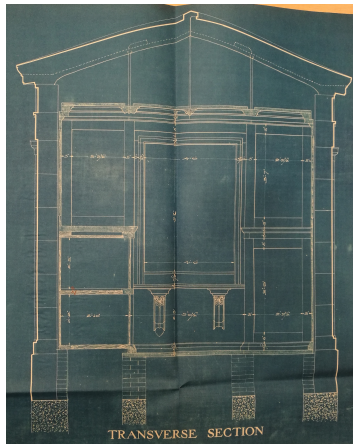
The Amsinck Mausoleum is located at the cross of Observatory Plot, Section 58, just beside the Woodlawn Observatory, which has never been built up and was occupied by several gravestones and monuments. It faces west and owns a whole circular space with 30.91ft radius. This special character of "circular lots defined by surrounding pedestrian paths"⁵ in Woodlawn was developed from 1868 to 1930s, and appears mainly on Central Avenue. Comparing to this one, the majority of its surroundings are cemeteries and tombs, quite lower and less visible, accentuating the visibility of Amsinck memorial. All of these features are showing the significant status of its owner.



⁴ "HENRY OTIS CHAPMAN." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 28, 1929. <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/104738073?accountid=10226>.

⁵ Lauren Meier ASLA, "DESCRIBE PRESENT AND HISTORIC APPEARANCE" in the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (2010), Woodlawn Cemetery

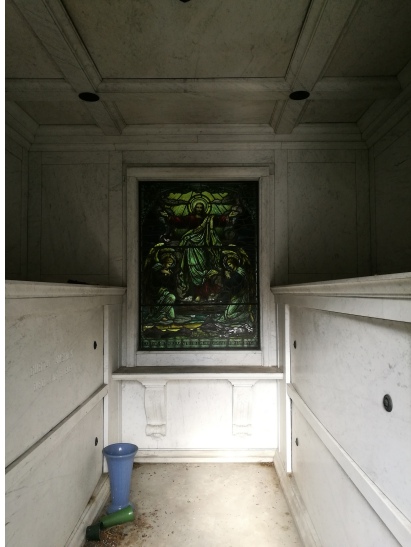
Mausoleum Description:



The mausoleum was built in a Greek Revival Style, based on a stylobate, having four brick walls deep in the earth to support the foundation. There are distyle fronts in antis at both ends, which is not common in memorials because of the costs. Two fluted Doric columns and pilasters support a lintel, a broad cornice and the pediment. The structure was constructed in Hallowell granite, and this façade is quite similar to an ancient Greek temple, the Athenian Treasury in Delphi, fabricated as the sanctuary of Apollo, in around 500BC. There are many parallels in the architecture style and structure. The carved decoration on the cornice and the use of Parian marble are the main differences. There is a decorated bronze double door with vertical panels installed in the memorial.



The interior of Amsinck mausoleum was made of marble, including the coffins, adding a pure and solemn atmosphere. The ceiling has been divided into nine uneven size but symmetrical rectangular shapes. Moldings are added to decorate the upper corners and the divisions.



The elaborate stained-glass window fabricated by an English firm, Heaton, Butler and Bayne, is the focus of the inner mausoleum. Clement Heaton, a glass painter, had partnered with James Butler, a glazier, in Clayton & Bell Company since 1855. Several years later, a Pre-Raphaelite artist Robert Turnill Bayne joined them and established this new firm in 1862. Bayne was the chief designer and was good at mixing vivid colors and linear designs, while Heaton researched a lot on medieval techniques. Clement J. Heaton, the son of Heaton, went into partnership with them since 1882. The polychrome of the stained glass was replaced by muted colors and artistic details in the late 1890s. In 1953, the firm closed and the major records got destroyed. Comparing this elaborate window with the grandeur exterior of Amsinck mausoleum, there is a speculation that this colorful window might be a new-added one.

Landscape:

Photographs record the variation of the landscape. In the 1990s, pictures taken by both camera and satellite show that there was a willow tree in the rear. However, in recent decades, it has been removed. Currently, four evergreen trees are planted in the front of the mausoleum, leaving a grassy lawn in its back. Based on the limited records, we can speculate this landscape has been designed both aesthetically and significantly, echoing the austere and vigorous elevation.



Biography of the Lot Owner:

The lot owner is Florence Delaplaine Amsinck, who was born in 1849 in New York and died in 1926 in New York. Her father was Isaac Clason Delaplaine, a Democratic-Republican United States Representative from New York during the Civil War. He graduated from Columbia University, majoring in law.

In Florence's early life, she lived abroad and was widely known in English and Continental society. Her first marriage was to James Hud Beekman, a merchant from an old New York family, in 1880. James passed away in 1902 and was buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

Two years later she was married to her second husband, Gustav Amsinck, who was buried with her in this mausoleum. Gustav was the descendant of an ancient Hanseatic family and born in 1837. His father owned a company operating trade with Portugal and its colonies, and his older brother ran a company in New York in 1850. Gustav came to help him in 1858. The Amsinck brothers were not only the managers of the import and export business but also merchant bankers as well as the co-founders of Commerzbank. After his brother left America in 1874, Gustav stayed here and became the Portuguese consul general in New York.⁶ During 1876 to 1878, he served as Portuguese ambassador in Washington. Besides, Gustav was fond of the arts and sciences. He offered financial support to many art institutions and was a founder of Hamburgische Wissenschaftliche Stiftung.⁷ He died in 1909, leaving most of his legacy

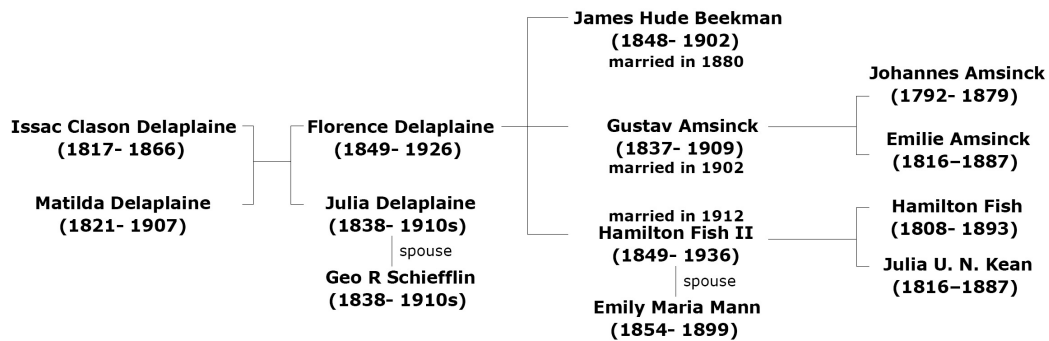
⁶ "Gustav Amsinck." 1912. *Proceedings of the New Jersey Historical Society* 7 (1): 42.

⁷ Wikipedia. "Gustav Amsinck." https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Amsinck

to Florence, including real estate, silver, art objects, horses and carriages, automobiles and other personal property in Hamburg, totally worth millions of dollars.⁸

In 1912, Hamilton Fish, a retired Assistant Treasurer of the United States married Florence. They lived on Park Avenue in later years. Florence Fish died in 1926 at her country home.

Florence was not only famous her excellent work in New York social activities, but also well-known for her collection of tapestries, which were exhibited at the Rains Galleries later.⁹ A beautiful stained-glass window in St. Thomas's Church was designed by John H. Hogan to commemorate her.¹⁰



⁸ "AMSINCK LEFT MILLIONS." 1909.*New - York Tribune* (1900-1910), Jun 20, 8.
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/572184585?accountid=10226>.

⁹ "Mrs. Hamilton Fish Dies at Country House on Hudson." *New York Herald Tribune* (1926-1962), Oct 23, 1926.
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1112641568?accountid=10226>.

¹⁰ "Stained Glass Window, St. Thomas's Church, New York City." 1931.*Architecture* 63 (1): 19.
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1300388621?accountid=10226>.

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