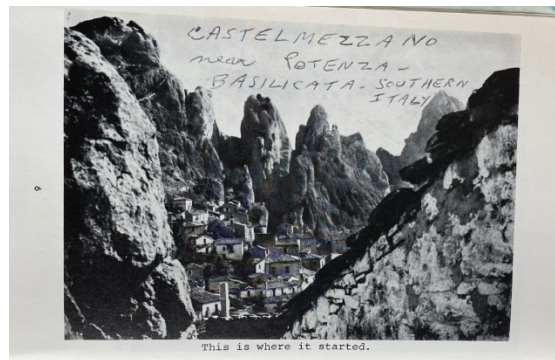


## John and Carolina T. Paterno Mausoleum

The mausoleum at the convergence of West Border and Fern Avenues at Woodlawn Cemetery stands distinguished from its surroundings. The pinkish hue of the external granite (likely an Atlantic or Canadian Pink)<sup>1</sup> contrasts boldly with the white and grey tones common of neighboring monuments. Even the front elevation, facing almost exactly due north, diverges from the East-West orientation of the neat street-lined rows of mausoleums around it. This is the final resting place of Giovanni “John” Paterno (1851-1899) and Maria Carolina Trivagno Paterno (1853-1925), an Italian immigrant couple whose name became known in New York for the prolific success of John and their sons in the Manhattan building industry. The structure and interior presence of the mausoleum bears many markings of culture, religion, and familial dedication. Through both its physical condition and associated archives, The John and Carolina T. Paterno Mausoleum at the Woodlawn Cemetery in New York offers a detailed perspective into the lives of the Paterno family through material, cultural symbolism, effects of natural weathering, and maintenance failures present at its site today.



*1 Photo of Castelmezzano near Potenza Basilicata - Southern Italy. <https://marabella.family/cmp-book-chapter-i/>*

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<sup>1</sup> “Stones of North America,” Natural Stone Institute, accessed November 28, 2021, <https://www.stonesofnorthamerica.com/>

John and Carolina Paterno were both born in Castelmezzano, Potenza Province in Basilicata, Italy and married there before immigrating to the United States with their (at the time) four children. Initially, John immigrated by himself as he could only afford the single trip. His devotion to his family, however, is best illustrated in a book written by John J. Campagna, one of John and Carolina's grandchildren, where he is described waiting for his family at the New York docks:

*“He went to the docks every day starting on the date their ship was due to arrive in New York. There were severe storms at sea and the ship was reported delayed and then lost. However, he never gave up hope and prayed, on his knees, at the dock every day week after week. His prayers were answered when the ship finally came into the harbor and he started jumping with joy. The workers at the pier, who knew him well by that time, were so impressed that they rowed him out to the ship for the long-awaited family reunion.”<sup>2</sup>*



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<sup>2</sup> Carlo M. Paterno, *My Family*, 9



2 *The John Paterno Mausoleum in context*

In the mausoleum (*Figure 3*), these themes of religious and familial devotion are evident in the many motifs present in the stained glass, altar piece, and bronze ornament on the doors and windows. Among these motifs there is also a single greeting card signed for Mothers Day to Carolina from one of her daughters. The symbols pay homage to their Catholic and Italian heritage. The two-foot cross that sits atop the apex of the pediment on the north face of the mausoleum projects the symbol of an overlaid I, H, and S, a Christogram which forms an abbreviation for the word “ΙΗΣΟΥΣ,” Greek for Jesus.<sup>3</sup> As one moves into the interior of the mausoleum, they are immediately met with a prominent altar piece sitting atop the catacombs. This five-panel element composed of both Sienna and Black & Gold<sup>4</sup> marbles with bronze tracery creates within the mausoleum a place of religious prayer and connection. The Sienna Marble also forms a connection back to Italy, where the marble was likely quarried. Two candles and a crucifix with a rosary necklace are placed on the altar surface; the candles show signs of having been burned. These physical components of spiritual connection were so central to the

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<sup>3</sup> Fr. William P. Saunders, “What Does IHS Mean?” last modified January 15, 2014, [https://www.catholicherald.com/opinions/what\\_does\\_ihs\\_mean/](https://www.catholicherald.com/opinions/what_does_ihs_mean/)

<sup>4</sup> “Yellow Siena Marble: an Italian Stone with an Intense Color,” Dedalo Stone, accessed October 9, 2021, <https://www.dedalostone.com/en/yellow-siena-marble-giallo/#the-yellow-siena-marble-quarries>

function of the mausoleum that their form and specifications were included in the architectural drawings of the altar. In this instance, faith and symbol converge with space.

The heavy use of symbolism is paralleled by a level of formality apparent in the exchanges and proceedings of both the initial construction and maintenance thereafter of the mausoleum. First, the building was not commissioned by John and Carolina, but their son Joseph. Joseph had already purchased a mausoleum with twenty spaces elsewhere in Woodlawn, but, evidently, he and perhaps his siblings believed it appropriate to build one separate for their mother and father. This was decided after the death of Carolina in 1925, so her remains were placed in Joseph's mausoleum until construction was complete. As for John, he passed away in Italy in 1899 and his remains were not brought back to the United States until 1929, according to an Order of Interment from Woodlawn's archive.<sup>5</sup> This extensive process of moving their remains both overseas and within Woodlawn points to a strong dedication of the heirs to honor the family. In addition, in a note from Joseph to Woodlawn, he requests that his father's body, once placed, be left uncovered "as some of the members of [his] family may want to hold a little service."<sup>6</sup> Joseph's note illustrates the family's value for formality, ceremony, and symbolism in the treatment of their parents' memory.

The mausoleum, finished in 1928, sits on a corner plot (16283) in the Clover section. The front of the structure faces north, where West Border Avenue and Fern Avenue meet. Four Tuscan columns along with a triangular pediment create a Greek Revival style consistent along the exterior. The bronze grill patterns on the doors and windows reinforce this style with Greek

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<sup>5</sup> Woodlawn Cemetery Order of Interment, 27 October 1929, Vault Archives, Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, New York, New York.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Joseph Paterno to Mr. Weston, 20 November 1929, Vault Archives, Woodlawn Cemetery, Bronx, New York, New York.



key patterning and wreaths likely modeled after olive or holly branches. The exterior is entirely composed of a pink granite, but variations in finish texture create contrast between structural elements.

The interior is intended to evoke emotion, memory, and spiritual connection. The altar piece is characterized by intricacy and opulence consistent with Gothic Revival style while the crucifix and candles emphasize religious ritual and formality. The stained glass contains elements of Biblical symbolism including a sword, shield, and cross. While both the stone on the exterior and interior contains pink coloration, the interior cladding is not a granite but Victoria Tennessee Pink Marble (limestone).<sup>7</sup>



Figure 3

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<sup>7</sup> Architectural Specification Drawing, Woodlawn Collection at Avery Library Archives, Columbia University, New York, New York.



*Figure 4: Southwest Corner: Lowest level step askew without mortar*





*Figure 5*

Today, the mausoleum still appears to be in very good condition with minimal structural damage and disturbance. On the northwest corner of the north face there is a small crack forming at the base of the pilaster. The most serious damage is to the four corner units of the steps at the lowest level that have open joints and have been pushed askew (*Figure 4*). It is not clear if the displacement of these blocks threatens the structural integrity of the mausoleum. However, they should be pushed back in to place in order to maintain proper drainage and ensure these settling effects do not ultimately reach higher steps and loadbearing elements. In addition, moss and other biological growth exist most prominently on the steps of the north face, where moisture tends to remain in absence of direct sunlight. On the interior of the mausoleum (*Figure 5*), the floor shows patterns of water staining – possibly from water leaking in under the door. The water has only left patterns of dust and does not appear to threaten the integrity of the floor or stone. Despite the original plans to include planting of four varieties around the site, today only three

plants survive. Two trees, speculated to be Kousa Dogwoods, flank the right and left corners of the mausoleum's face while one Boxwood shrub grows in front of the northwestern corner.

The "Heirs at Law of Carolina T. Paterno" commissioned the mausoleum and were responsible for the ongoing maintenance. Chiefly, Joseph, Carlo "Charles," and Anthony Paterno managed all correspondences with Woodlawn. Based on archived correspondences, the Paterno estate was paying a bequest of \$2,000 per year (except in 1933 when they were unable) for "the perpetual care of Lot No. 16283 and the mausoleum erected thereon."<sup>8</sup> This sum was invested in a trust, the surplus of which financed all necessary maintenance for the site and structure. In 1941, however, the surplus did not cover the necessary repairs, according to The Woodlawn Cemetery Superintendent, John C. Plumb.<sup>9</sup> According to a letter from Woodlawn to Charles Paterno in 1946, the problem persisted and the available fund, \$8.46, was not enough to cover necessary repairs. Later that year, rather than delivering the annual \$2,000 bequest, Anthony Paterno sent five separate checks amounting to the total funds needed for repairs. This is the last available documentation of the site's management. Based on the necessary repointing work, absence of original planting, and state of the interior floor today, it appears regular maintenance efforts, including cleaning, have largely ceased and have not been maintained by the current heirs of John and Carolina Paterno.

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<sup>8</sup> Letter from the Woodlawn Superintendent to Joseph Paterno, 5 May 1933, Woodlawn Collection at Avery Library Archives, Columbia University, New York, New York.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Woodlawn Superintendent John C. Plumb to Joseph Paterno, 28 July 1941, Woodlawn Collection at Avery Library Archives, Columbia University, New York, New York.





Figure 6

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