

Wooster Mausoleum

Research Paper



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Woodlawn Cemetery Graphics and Research

Historic Preservation Studio 1

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Woodlawn Cemetery, located in New York City's Bronx Borough, is a National Historic Landmark and one of the largest cemeteries in the city. Founded in 1863, Woodlawn quickly became one of the major cemeteries for New York City. It is the final resting place of many prominent New Yorkers including author Herman Melville, former New York City mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, and jazz musician Duke Ellington. Woodlawn also holds over 1300 private mausoleums, one of the largest collections in the country. The mausoleums range in size and design from grand, designed by prestigious architecture firms like McKim, Mead & White, to modest, designed and built by professional memorial firms.<sup>i</sup> One out of the over 1300 mausoleums located on the grounds is the Wooster Mausoleum.

The Wooster Mausoleum is located in the western half of the cemetery in section 121 of the Fairview plot. (See fig. 1) It sits in a small lot along Fairview Avenue, and two lots to the south is Whitewood Avenue. The lot is oriented westward (See fig. 2) and is roughly 1485 square feet and has an elevation change of roughly 2.75 feet.<sup>ii</sup> There is no landscaping associated with the lot outside of the well-manicured lawn. The mausoleum is set back on its lot, with a distance of roughly 22 feet from Fairview Avenue.

The mausoleum itself was designed and constructed by the Harrison Granite Company in 1919 at the request of Philip Wooster.<sup>iii</sup> The Harrison Granite Company was a memorial company founded in 1845, which had an office at 200 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York. They also owned a quarry and had a workshop located in Barre, Vermont. They produced mausoleums and other memorials for clients all over the country.<sup>iv</sup> The Wooster mausoleum is made out of two types of granite with a six-foot-deep concrete foundation.<sup>v</sup>

The exterior is Barre granite, (See fig. 3) from the contractor's quarry, that is specified to have a fine axed finish.<sup>vi</sup> The interior excluding the flooring, was initially planned to be Pink Tennessee Marble, however it was changed to Pink Milford granite (See fig. 4) by Philip Wooster in November of 1919.<sup>vii</sup> The interior floor is polished Barre granite, (See fig. 5) while the Pink Milford has a honed finish. The

mausoleum has bronze double doors with spiral and leaf motifs that open inward.<sup>viii</sup> (See fig. 6,7,8)

There are no foundry marking visible on the doors and they were likely picked from a memorial catalogue instead of being custom made for the mausoleum. A leaded amber glass-window (See fig. 9) is also present in the mausoleum.<sup>ix</sup> This is particularly notable because it differs from many of the mausoleums in Woodlawn, which have stained-glass windows that depict Biblical or natural scenes.

The exterior structure of the mausoleums is reminiscent of a Distyle temple with two Doric fluted columns without bases or plinths holding up a simple entablature. (See fig. 10) On the frieze of the entablature, "Wooster" is incised and centered above the entrance. The cornice is plain with no classical ornamentation, and is only located on the front façade of the building. (See fig. 10,11) Above the entablature are two parapets that run parallel along the length of the structure and a gable that is set back from the edge of the roofline. The roof has a simple pitch with a low slope. (See fig. 12)

The rest of the physical building is rather plain. There is fillet banding around the doorframe, (See fig. 13) but outside of that no ornamentation exists. A ten-inch tall granite band stretches around the whole building right below the roofline. (See fig. 14) The leaded amber-glass window is located on the east elevation in a three-foot-wide recess. Copper alloy bars protect the window from damage. (See fig. 15) Copper alloy vent grilles adorn the north and south facades as well. (See fig. 16) Overall the structure stands twelve-foot-two-inches tall from the top of its base to the top of the roof. The base of the mausoleum is divided into two parts, a level, axed finished granite base that sits on top of rusticated granite that follows the site elevation. (See fig. 17) This is most apparent on the north, south, and east elevations. The axed finished granite base protrudes out from the structure about four and a quarter feet. Stairs are centered on the portico leading up to the top of the base. The two treads are eight and a half feet wide and the risers are about five inches tall.

The interior of the mausoleum is small measuring just ten feet long by three-foot-nine- inches wide and ten feet tall. It has eight catacomb shelves divided into two stacks of four that are parallel to

the length of the room. Each shelf is seven and a half feet long by two feet and two inches tall. Cast-bronze rosettes adorn the catacomb shelves.<sup>x</sup> (See fig. 18) These rosettes are two and a half inches in diameter and are spaced a square foot from the edges of the shelf. Two rosettes adorn each shelf. Each shelf is also divided by a three-inch band that protrudes half an inch from the face of the wall. (See fig. 19) At the far end of the room is a counter. (See fig. 20) The counter is about three and a half feet tall, and protrudes from the back wall 9 inches. Right above the counter is the leaded amber-glass window that is recessed about nine and a half inches from the interior wall. The window recess is framed with banding that is two inches wide by three fourth of an inch deep. On the ceiling of the room, banding stretches around the whole interior in three stepped fillets. (See fig. 21) In the center of the ceiling is a hanging cast-bronze rosette air vent (See fig. 22) that is six and a half inches in diameter and two inches in depth.<sup>xi</sup>

The Wooster family's roots are from California. The head of the family, Philip Liscombe Wooster, was born on September 6<sup>th</sup> 1864 or 1866 in San Francisco, California.<sup>xii</sup> The 1900 Federal United States Census states that his father was from Maine, while the 1910 Census states he was from New York, while his mother was from either Maine in the 1900 Census or Massachusetts in the 1910 Census.<sup>xiii</sup> His wife Lillie Dore Wooster's information is also convoluted. She was born on March 24<sup>th</sup>, either 1855, 1861, or 1865.<sup>xiv</sup> The 1900 Census stated that she was from Massachusetts and her parents were both from Maine, while the 1910 Census states she was from California and her parents were from Maryland and Ireland respectively.<sup>xv</sup> As of the 1910 Census they had been married for 21 years putting their marriage at about 1889.<sup>xvi</sup> They presumably were married in California where they both lived at the time, and had four children. As of the 1910 census, three of their children were alive; Oroville D. Wooster, Edith D. Wooster, and Elizabeth L. Wooster. They were seventeen, fifteen, and nine years old respectively and all born in California.<sup>xvii</sup>

The earliest documentation of the Wooster family is of Philip Wooster's 1890 voter registration. He is registered in the 15<sup>th</sup> Precinct of the 41<sup>st</sup> Assembly District of San Francisco County. It also states he is 27 years old, which would put his birthday at about 1863 or 1864. He is also a merchant, and he lives at 2331 Fillmore Street.<sup>xviii</sup> Then between 1890 and 1896 he and his family move to San Mateo County, California. In his 1896 voter registration it states he is now 31 years old, which would put his birthday at about 1865 or 1866. He is also still an unspecified merchant, and now living in San Mateo proper.<sup>xix</sup>

The Wooster family next appears in the 1900 Federal Census still living in San Mateo, California. They rent a house with two Irish servants. They also have two children listed, "Ory" Wooster and Edith Wooster.<sup>xx</sup> Ory, which most likely is a nickname for Oroville is stated to be seven years old, while Edith is five.<sup>xxi</sup> These ages line up with the 1910 Census, unlike their parents where Philip Wooster's age is not listed and Lillie's age is stated to be 45, putting her birth year at 1855. Philip Wooster is listed as a speculator while his wife works as a house keeper. Both of their children also attend school.<sup>xxii</sup>

The next documentation of the family is in 1909. Philip Wooster is granted a patent with the United States Patent Office for an improved waterproof belting.<sup>xxiii</sup> The patent states that Philip Wooster was currently living in Yonkers, New York and was working as an assignor to the Duryea Manufacturing Company of New Jersey.<sup>xxiv</sup> It also states that he filed the patent application in 1905, meaning that the family had already moved to New York by then.

After the 1909 patent the next documentation of the family is the 1910 Census. Here it states that the family is living in a house at 18 Philips Place, Yonkers, New York.<sup>xxv</sup> They own the house, have two mixed race servants from Virginia and North Carolina living with them, and their youngest daughter Elizabeth L. Wooster was born in California, and was nine years old at the time of the census.<sup>xxvi</sup> This puts the move from California to the east coast between 1901 and 1905. Philip Wooster's occupation is listed as a sugar purchasing agent, and his age is listed as 44, putting his birth year at 1866.<sup>xxvii</sup> His wife

does not have an occupation listed and it states that she is 45 years old, now putting her birth year at 1865.<sup>xxviii</sup> After the 1910 Census information about the Wooster family becomes harder to find.

The next documented event of the Wooster family was the marriage of the Wooster's oldest daughter Oroville to Walter L. Richard of New York City in 1916.<sup>xxix</sup> The wedding took place April 24<sup>th</sup> in St. Thomas's Church in Manhattan.<sup>xxx</sup> However, the marriage was not to last and in 1933 Oroville sued for divorce in Reno Nevada.<sup>xxxi</sup> She was married at least one more time, because at the date of her death, she went by the name of Oroville Wooster Montgomery.<sup>xxxii</sup> The Wooster's younger daughter, Elizabeth was also married sometime after 1910 to William Harper and had at least one son, Alan Harper.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Currently only five of the eight mausoleum catacomb shelves are occupied. The first individual to be entombed in the mausoleum was the Wooster's middle daughter, Edith. She died at the age of 22 on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 1917,<sup>xxxiv</sup> and was interred once the mausoleum was finished. The second family member to be placed in the mausoleum was the head of the family, Philip. He died February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1923 and was interred two days later on February 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>xxxv</sup> Later that same year, Alice L. Richard was also entombed in the mausoleum. She was the mother-in-law of the Wooster's oldest daughter Oroville. She had died on May 6<sup>th</sup> and was interred on the 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>xxxvi</sup> It appears that she was initially entombed in the Wooster's mausoleum because the Richards did not have one built yet. After the Richard family had their own mausoleum completed in 1924, Alice's remains were uninterred and moved into her own family mausoleum in another section of Woodlawn.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The next individual to be entombed was Lillie who died October 22, 1935, and was interred the next day.<sup>xxxviii</sup> After Lillie, no one was interred for about 20 years, until 1953 when the Wooster's oldest daughter, Oroville, died. She was entombed June 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>xxxix</sup> The final individual to be entombed in the Wooster's mausoleum was Alan Harper on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1981. He was the grandson of Philip and Lillian Wooster through their youngest daughter Elizabeth.<sup>xl</sup>

There was semiregular correspondence about the mausoleums upkeep and maintenance between the family and Woodlawn Cemetery throughout the 1920s, '30s, and into the 1950s.<sup>xli</sup> After 1953, upkeep and maintenance correspondence between the family and Woodlawn appears to have stopped with no correspondence dated later than 1953 being present in the Avery Library archives. However, the mausoleum is still in good condition today. No cracking or spalls are visible on the interior or exterior masonry. The mortar joints are in good condition with no visible losses. Small amounts of blistering and flaking are present on the bottom granite blocks on the west elevation. (See fig. 23,24) This blistering is superficial in nature, and is more than likely caused by excessive moisture and the freeze thaw cycle of snow being left to melt on the mausoleum. Copper oxidation is visible on the exterior grilles, (See fig. 16) double doors, (See fig. 8) and window bars, (See fig. 15) but copper staining of the masonry is minimal around the grilles (See fig. 17) and window bars. The mausoleum is also covered in extensive biological growth, primarily on the roof, (See fig. 25) entablature, (See fig. 26) banding, (See fig. 27) and interior of the portico. (See fig. 28) The biological growth is more than likely being deposited on to the mausoleum from a nearby oak tree. The tree trunk is located off of the Wooster lot but the branches overhang the mausoleum and deposit leaves, seed pods, and other biologic debris onto the roof. The branches also block direct sunlight on to the roof of the structure which allows for moister and biological growth to proliferate. The biological growth is not aesthetically pleasing, but is currently not a threat to the structure. If Woodlawn wants to make their maintenance of the mausoleum easier I would suggest trimming the branches so they do not overhang the mausoleum. This would allow for more direct sunlight, and less biological debris being deposited on to the roof minimizing the potential for biological growth.

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<sup>i</sup> "About Us." The Woodlawn Cemetery, [www.thewoodlawncemetery.org/about-us/](http://www.thewoodlawncemetery.org/about-us/).

<sup>ii</sup> "Engineering Dimensions and Grade", Drawer 4.3, Box 41, 1919, Woodlawn Cemetery records, 1863-1999, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

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- iv Quarriesandbeyond.org. (2019). [online] Available at: [https://quarriesandbeyond.org/articles\\_and\\_books/pdf/harrison\\_granitc\\_co\\_catalog\\_of\\_clientele\\_and\\_monuments\\_1918.pdf](https://quarriesandbeyond.org/articles_and_books/pdf/harrison_granitc_co_catalog_of_clientele_and_monuments_1918.pdf) [Accessed 27 Sep. 2019].
- v "Foundation Depth Letter to Harrison Granite Company", Woodlawn Cemetery, Dec. 12<sup>th</sup> 1919, Drawer 4.3, Box 41,1919, Woodlawn Cemetery records, 1863-1999, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University
- vi "Specifications for Mausoleum for Philip L. Wooster", Harrison Granite Company, Page 4, Drawer 4.3, Box 41,1919, Woodlawn Cemetery records, 1863-1999, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University
- vii "Interior granite change order", Harrison Granite Company, Nov. 13, 1919, Drawer 4.3, Box 41,1919, Woodlawn Cemetery records, 1863-1999, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University
- viii "Specifications for Mausoleum for Philip L. Wooster", Harrison Granite Company, Page 6, Drawer 4.3, Box 41,1919, Woodlawn Cemetery records, 1863-1999, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University
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- xii *1910 United States Census, Yonkers, Ward 3, Westchester, New York*, Roll: T624\_1093, Page: 2B, Enumeration District: 0152, FHL microfilm: 1375106, "Philip L Wooster," Ancestry.com
- xiii *1910 United States Census, Yonkers, Ward 3, Westchester, New York*, Roll: T624\_1093, Page: 2B, Enumeration District: 0152, FHL microfilm: 1375106, "Philip L Wooster," Ancestry.com
- xiv *1910 United States Census, Yonkers, Ward 3, Westchester, New York*, Roll: T624\_1093, Page: 2B, Enumeration District: 0152, FHL microfilm: 1375106, "Lillie D Wooster," Ancestry.com
- xv *1900 United States Census, Township 2, San Mateo, California*, Page: 17; Enumeration District: 0039; FHL microfilm: 1240109, "Lillie Wooster," Ancestry.com
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- xxiii Wooster, P. (1909). *Belting*. 283,173. Ancestry.com
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<sup>xxvi</sup> 1910 United States Census, Yonkers, Ward 3, Westchester, New York, Roll: T624\_1093, Page: 2B, Enumeration District: 0152, FHL microfilm: 1375106, "Philip L Wooster," Ancestry.com

<sup>xxvii</sup> 1910 United States Census, Yonkers, Ward 3, Westchester, New York, Roll: T624\_1093, Page: 2B, Enumeration District: 0152, FHL microfilm: 1375106, "Philip L Wooster," Ancestry.com

<sup>xxviii</sup> 1910 United States Census, Yonkers, Ward 3, Westchester, New York, Roll: T624\_1093, Page: 2B, Enumeration District: 0152, FHL microfilm: 1375106, "Lillie D Wooster," Ancestry.com

<sup>xxix</sup> "MISS WOOSTER ENGAGED.: DAUGHTER OF MR. AND MRS. PHILIP WOOSTER TO WED W.. L. RICHARD." *New York Times* (1857-1922), Feb 01, 1916.  
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<sup>xxx</sup> "MISS WOOSTER A BRIDE.: NIECE OF MRS. CLAUS A. SPRECKELS MARRIES WALTER L. RICHARD." *New York Times* (1857-1922), Apr 25, 1916.  
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/97954424?accountid=10226>.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES. "SUES WALTER D. RICHARD.: DAUGHTER OF P.L. WOOSTER ASKS DIVORCE IN RENO." *New York Times* (1923-Current File), Aug 27, 1933.  
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/100903035?accountid=10226>.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Interment Order #197873, Montgomery, Oroville W., 8 June 1953, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Interment Order #264978, Harper, Alan, 26 May 1981, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xxxiv</sup> "Obituary 3 -- no Title." *New York Times* (1857-1922), Jan 18, 1917.  
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/98078764?accountid=10226>.

<sup>xxxv</sup> Interment Order #110894, Wooster, Philip L., 13 February, 1923, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Interment Order #11868, Richard, Alice L., 16 May, 1923, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Interment Order #49730, Richard, Alice L., 20<sup>th</sup> Nov., 1924, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Interment Order #150272, Wooster, Lillian D., 23 Oct., 1935, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xxxix</sup> Interment Order #197873, Montgomery, Oroville W., 8 June 1953, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xl</sup> Interment Order #264978, Harper, Alan, 26 May 1981, Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>xli</sup> Lot Owners Correspondence, Box 135, Woodlawn Cemetery records, 1863-1999, Drawings and Archives, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

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## Reference Photos

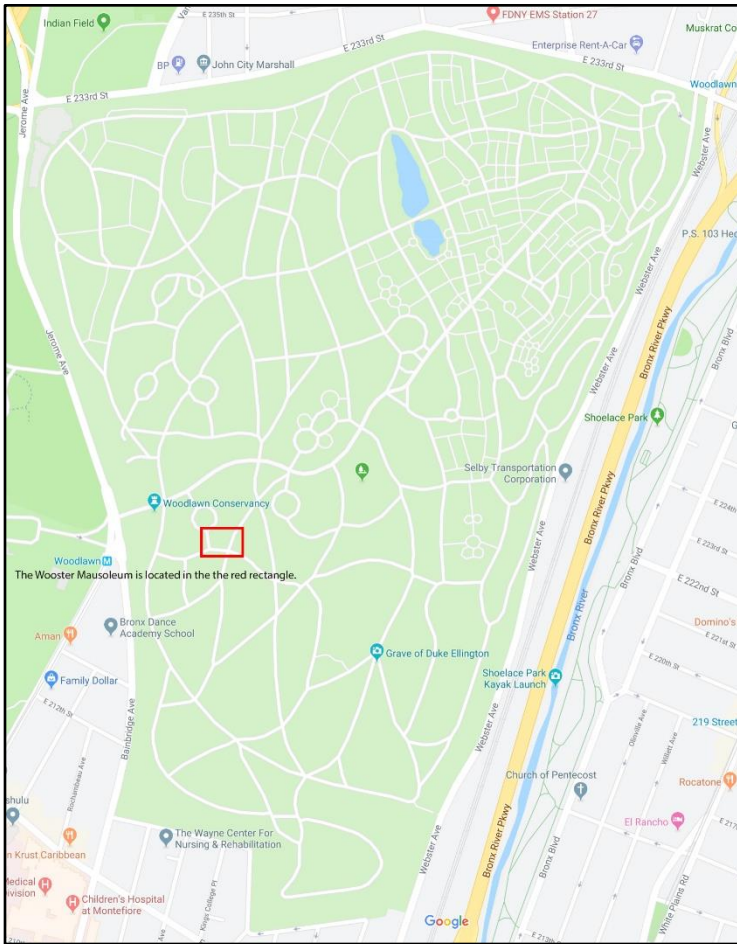


Figure 1: Map of Woodlawn Cemetery with the general area of the Wooster Mausoleum marked by a red rectangle.

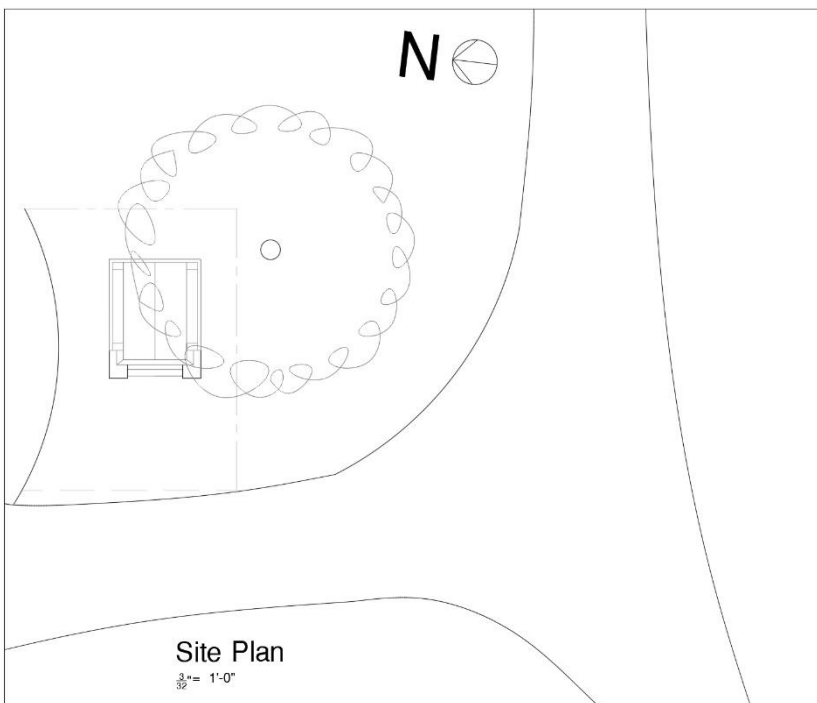


Figure 2: Site plan of the Wooster Mausoleum Plot.



Figure 3: Close up of exterior Barre granite.

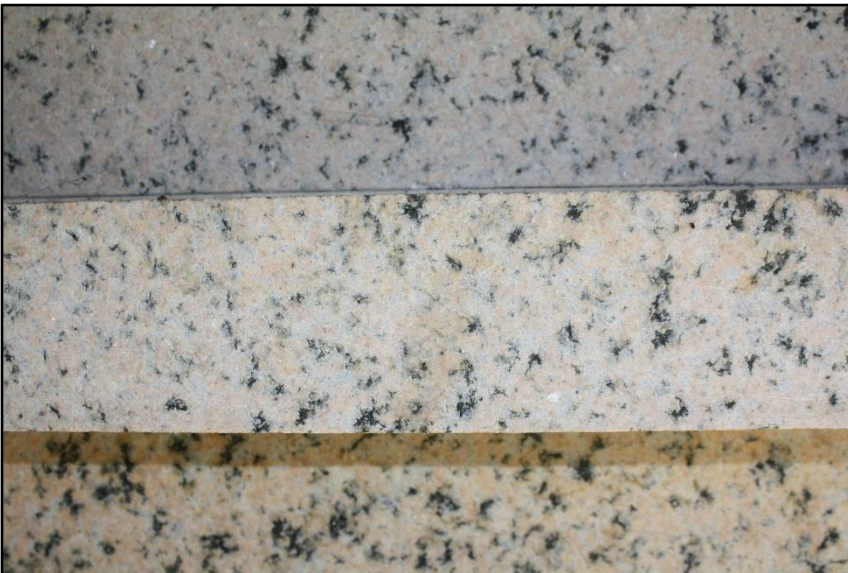


Figure 4: Close up of interior Pink Milford granite.



Figure 5: Close up of the interior polished Barre granite floor.



Figure 6: Bronze double doors.



Figure 7: Close up of the spiral motif on the bronze door.



Figure 8: Close up of the leaf motif on the bronze door handle.



Figure 9: Leaded, amber-glass window.



Figure 10: West elevation of the mausoleum.



Figure 11: Skewed angle of the west and south elevations of the mausoleum.

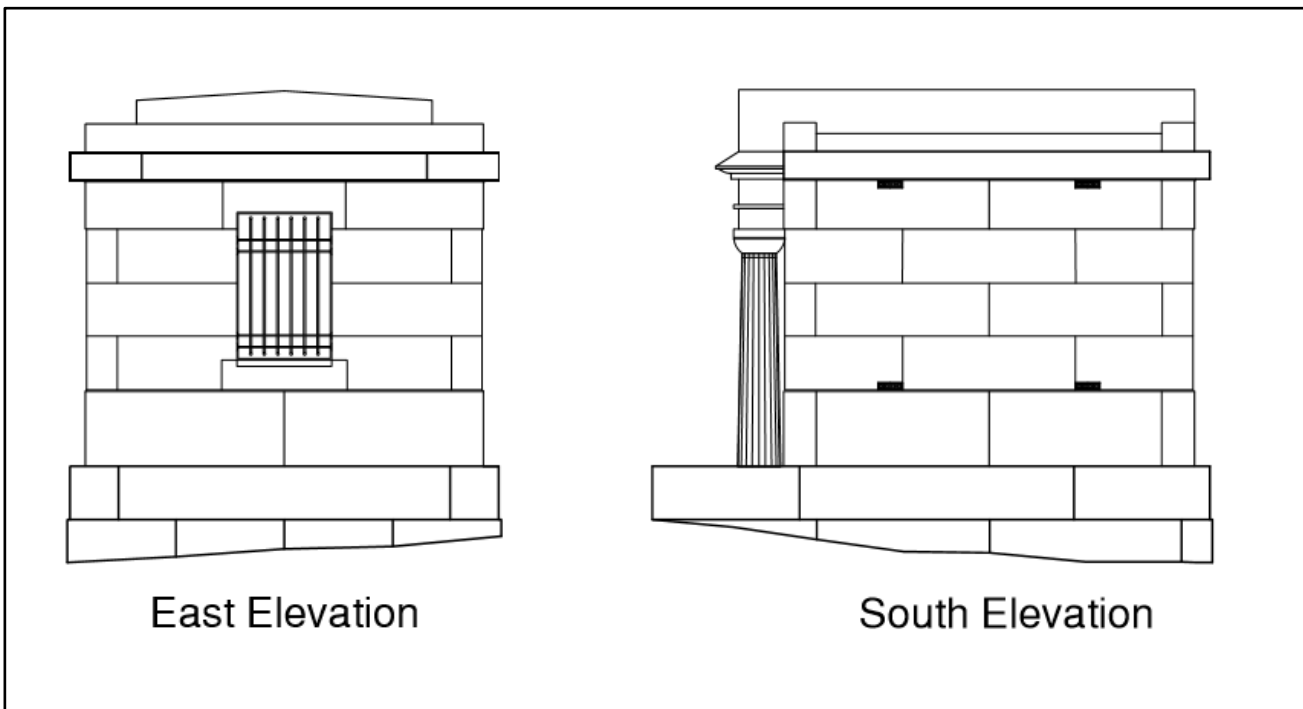


Figure 12: Scale drawings of the south and east elevations. It shows the parapet and slope of the roof.





Figure 13: Fillet banding around the doorframe.



Figure 14: Granite banding as seen from the south elevation.

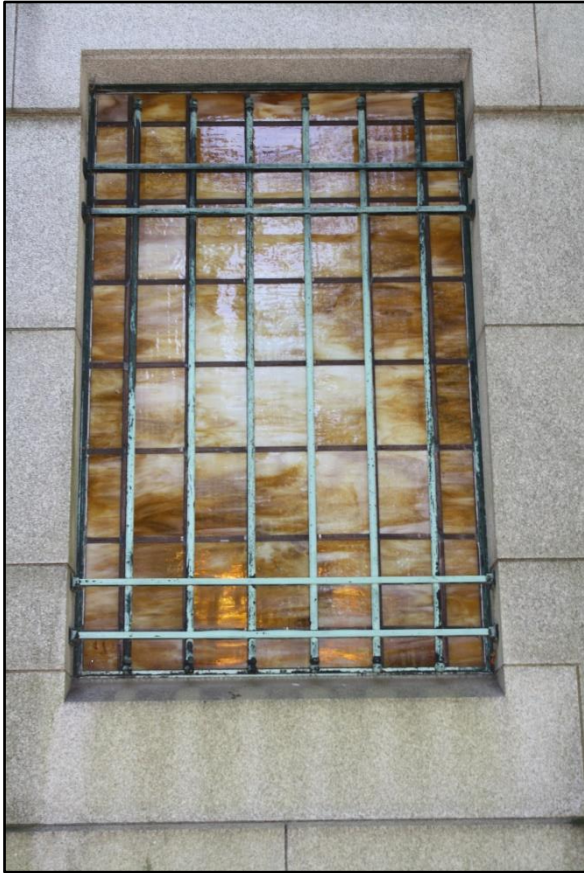


Figure 15: Copper alloy bars protecting the leaded amber-glass window.



Figure 16: Close up of a copper alloy vent grille.



Figure 17: The base of the mausoleum as seen from the south elevation.



Figure 18: Close up of a cast-bronze rosette.



Figure 19: Picture of one of the catacomb shelves.



Figure 20: Interior counter.

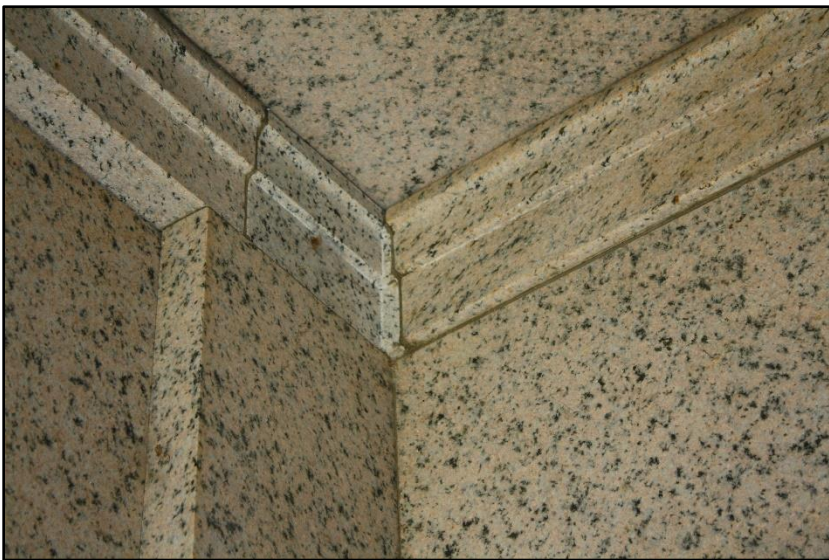


Figure 21: Close up of the interior fillet banding.



Figure 22: Cast-bronze rosette air vent.



Figure 23: Close up picture of blistering and flaking marks on the exterior granite.



Figure 24: Second close up picture of blistering and flaking on the exterior granite.



Figure 25: Biological growth located on the roof of the mausoleum.



Figure 26: Biological growth located on the entablature.



Figure 27: Biological growth located on the banding.



Figure 28: Biological growth located on the interior of the portico and column.



Figure 29: West elevation of the Wooster Mausoleum.



Figure 30: North elevation of the Wooster Mausoleum.



Figure 31: East elevation of the Wooster Mausoleum.



Figure 32: South elevation of the Wooster Mausoleum.