



Problem 3: McManus Mausoleum

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The George McManus mausoleum was built in September 1941 following the death of George's brother, Charles.<sup>1</sup> George, the youngest of three boys born to George Sr. and Katherine (Kate) McManus, was a popular cartoonist and his family was very involved in his work.<sup>2</sup> The mausoleum, while not a unique or original design of Robert Caterson, Inc., was personalized to reflect the McManus family and personality.

The mausoleum is slightly taller than it is wide and the front and rear facades are slightly longer than the side facades. The front façade of the mausoleum (Fig. 1) is symmetrical and upon closer inspection is really a double post and lintel construction. The outer pilasters support a lintel that makes up the first portion of the stepped roof. These pilasters are decorated with a geometric wreath and festooning that act as a slipped capital. The second post and lintel is comprised of the splayed door surrounds and the much exaggerated lintel above the door that is incised with George McManus's signature, which is balanced by the slipped capitals previously mentioned. The design places heavy emphasis on this center detail and draws you into the mausoleum. To enter the mausoleum, one must pass through bronze double doors which are emblazoned with the "M"s from Mr. McManus's signature.<sup>3</sup> The mausoleum is built of Barré Vermont Granite, in a hammered finish.<sup>4</sup>

The mausoleum is in the Art Deco style. The stepped roof and angular simplicity of the mausoleum invoke this style. During the rise in popularity of the Art Deco style, many Pre-Columbian tombs and temples were being discovered and highlighted in pop-culture. Tajin, Machu Picchu and the Pyramid of Zoser were all discovered and excavated from around 1910 through the

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<sup>1</sup> "Charles W. M'Manus: Brother of George, Idea Man for 'Brining up Father' Cartoon". *New York Times*, September 1, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> Ancestry.com

<sup>3</sup> "Bringing Up Father." *El Paso Herald*. June 31, 1920

<sup>4</sup> Estimation Sheet. George McManus Mausoleum. Woodlawn Archives. Avery Library, Columbia University.

1930s.<sup>5</sup> These structures are all stepped pyramids, and this same stepped profile is used in Deco design and this mausoleum. This was also the time when George McManus's career was taking off. The Art Deco architecture complements George McManus's signature with its streamlined linearity. The designer of the mausoleum, Robert Caterson, started his career building and or designing high-end mausoleums and memorials in New York with an office at Woodlawn. One of the most famous mausoleums he built was the C.P. Huntington Mausoleum also in Woodlawn Cemetery, which cost approximately \$250,000 in 1900.<sup>6</sup> This was his second most expensive monument at the time.<sup>7</sup> During the next few decades, there was a shift at the company, and it may have merged with another stone carver. The McManus's mausoleum design does not appear to be original as there is at least one other mausoleum at Woodlawn with the same design, built by Harrison Granite Co. in 1935 (Fig. 2).<sup>8</sup> Despite the un-original overall design, the McManus family selected the materials and personalized the mausoleum through details that reflect their unique family business.

The interior of the mausoleum, clad in Tennessee pink marble, is also very personal. George and his wife Florence's names are again engraved with his handwriting. On Mr. McManus's catacomb (Fig. 3), there is a stamp from 1995 featuring his cartoon which was picked to be among 20 highlighting great American cartoons.<sup>9</sup> The only item which seems out of place and not reflective of the McManus family is the stained glass window. The window features a nature scene of hand-painted stained glass (Fig. 4). Because of all the other personalization of the mausoleum and the influence of Mr. McManus's cartoon, "Bringing up Father," one expects to see a scene from the cartoon or other personalization.

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<sup>5</sup> "Tajin's Wonder Ruins Revealed; Cost of Rendering Access Easy Held Small." *Los Angeles Times*. July 24, 1931. , "The Mystery of the Past." *New York Times*. December 25, 1911., "New Rooms found in Pyramid Tomb: Alabaster Vessels and Beautiful low Reliefs Discovered in Tiled Chambers of Zoser." *New York Times*. March 5, 1928.

<sup>6</sup> "Monuments and Mausoleums: Artistic Work in Stone." *New York Tribune*. December 27, 1903.

<sup>7</sup> "Tomb Built Regardless of Cost: Robert Caterson Says Mr. Huntington Spent about \$250,000 for his Last Resting Place." *New York Tribune*. Aug 16, 1900.

<sup>8</sup> "Monuments Files Public." Avery Woodlawn collection.

<sup>9</sup> "Comic strip classics unveiled in Washington, D.C;" Anonymous. *Stamps*. June 3, 1995.

Mr. McManus's parents were already buried at Woodlawn Cemetery prior to 1941.<sup>10</sup> His father, who had already been moved to a new plot by his wife, was moved for a second time upon the completion of the mausoleum. It is clear that family was important to Mr. McManus and it was his desire to have his family surround him in death. The mausoleum has space for all three of his brothers and their spouses. His eldest brother and his wife were the last to occupy the mausoleum, though their catacombs remain un-engraved.

George McManus's family was pivotal in his professional life, which may be why he decided to construct the mausoleum after his brother's death. According to his obituary, Charles helped develop material for the "Brining up Father" cartoon. The cartoon about an Irish couple who is propelled into upper-class society and the struggles that ensue from a wife comfortable with their new position and a husband wishing it undone, is loosely based on the McManus family.<sup>11</sup> After his son got in trouble with a teacher for a doodle he drew of a classmate, George Sr., instead of punishing his son, saw the talent he possessed and took him to their local paper in St. Louis.<sup>12</sup> This reaction of his father both changed the direction of George McManus's life and may be the impetus behind wanting to take care of his family, even in death. The McManus Mausoleum is endowed for care and maintenance and has been since prior to George McManus's death in 1954.

While the mausoleum is currently in fair condition, there are a few small problems developing. There appears to be a leak above the window on the right-hand side. There is some chalkiness indicating where the water has run down the wall (Fig. 5). There is also a small crack in one of the stained glass panes. The crack does not appear to be causing any current danger to the window, but over time could cause it to buckle and cause further cracking. The exterior is also covered in organic growth and the trees nearby are encroaching on the mausoleum. Aside for the very large trees, there are no plantings in the area.

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<sup>10</sup> Plot notes provided by Woodlawn Cemetery

<sup>11</sup> "George McManus is Dead at 70; Cartoonist Created Jiggs Family." *New York Times*. October 23, 1954. Page 15.

<sup>12</sup> "George McManus." *Famous Artists and Writers*. King Features Syndicate. 1949.

Unlike other mausoleums, the George McManus mausoleum leverages the strong identity that George and his family built in the cartoon. From the engraved name above the door in George McManus's unique signature, to the doors bearing his trademark "M"s, the name engraving inside the mausoleum and even the stamp on George's catacomb, this mausoleum is uniquely personalized. It is these personal details that set this mausoleum apart from others in Woodlawn and make it unique for this family that supported and worked with George McManus on his Cartoon, "Bringing up Father."

Appendix

Fig. 1

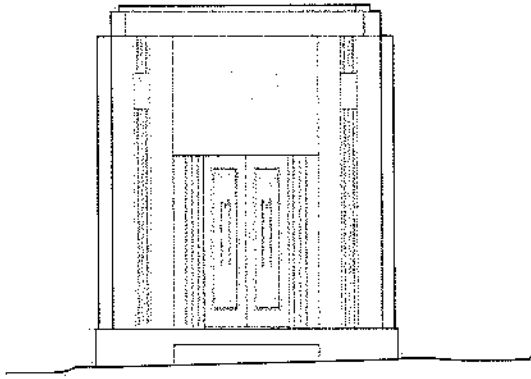


Fig. 4



Fig. 2

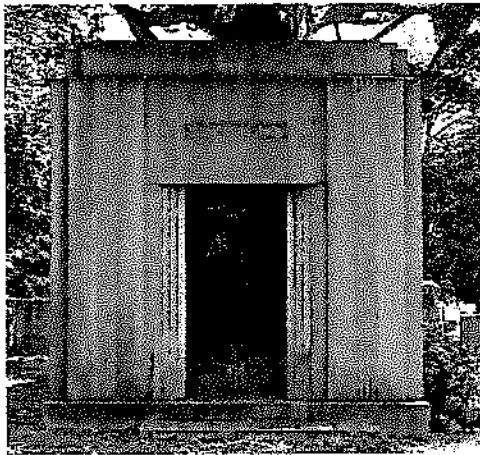


Fig. 5

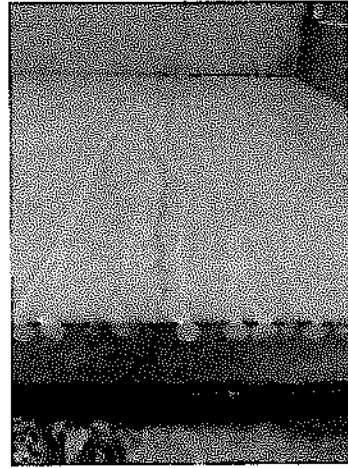


Fig. 3

