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HP Studio I: Project 3  
Field Documentation and Formal Analysis

### **John T. Kelly Mausoleum**

John T. Kelly was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of two Irish immigrants<sup>1</sup>. He married his wife, Anna, in 1875<sup>2</sup>. Before her passing in 1907, the couple had eight children<sup>3</sup>. During Anna's life, the family lived in Brooklyn<sup>4</sup>. By 1900 the family moved to 203 Berkeley Place, Brooklyn and the eldest son, Joseph, had joined his father in the manufacturing business, and the family had added a second servant to the household, a sign of their growing wealth<sup>5</sup>. In March of 1907, Anna passed away and it was in October of that year that John Kelly commissioned the family's mausoleum at Woodlawn Cemetery<sup>6</sup>. By 1910 most of the children were grown and had moved out, but Lillian, Bradley, and John Jr. continued to live with their widowed father in Brooklyn<sup>7</sup>. Before long however, this changed. In 1911, Kelly & Jones, the Pittsburgh firm in which Kelly was a partner, which according to a company advertisement, worked in wrought iron pipe and fittings, plumbers supplies, pumps, boilers, and radiators, received an order for over 150 miles of piping for an oil refining company based in Pittsburgh<sup>8</sup>. In 1914 the New York Tribune wrote a short article on a house that Kelly was building in Scarsdale. Located on the corner of Cooper Road and Murray Hill Road, the home draws attention to the "details of health and comfort" that were considered in the design, from the heating system to the chauffeur's sleeping quarters located off the garage<sup>9</sup>. It is obvious by the custom-build house with twenty four bedrooms and eight baths and considerations of comfort in its design that Kelly's business is thriving<sup>10</sup>. It is likely that before this house was built, Kelly remarried, to Leslie McCune, a woman over 25 years his junior<sup>11</sup>. By 1915 the house is occupied by Kelly, his new wife, and her children Watts and Dean, and four servants<sup>12</sup>. In 1925 Kelly &

Jones was acquired by the Walworth Manufacturing Company of Boston, Massachusetts<sup>13</sup>. Kelly and his family live a quiet life, until his death in 1927<sup>14</sup>. In his will, he left his fortune of over \$1,000,000 and two houses to his wife and nine children<sup>15</sup>. The following year Mrs. Kelly sold the Scarsdale estate to a stock broker, for three times the amount that her husband built it for<sup>16</sup>. Leslie McCune-Kelly survived her husband until 1949, and upon her sudden death, she was interred with him and other members of the Kelly family at Woodlawn Cemetery<sup>17</sup>.

Without knowing where the Kelly Mausoleum is, one would find it difficult to locate. It is set back on an irregular plot near the intersection of Pine Ave and Park Ave, hidden by other structures from the main road. It is offset slightly from the buildings around it, so that the mausoleum has a north-facing axis. In 1907, the year the building was commissioned, the Kelly family had not risen as far as it would, and the plot placement does not reflect the wealthy businessman John Kelly would become, but the grieving widower seeking to bury his beloved wife.

As you approach the entrance to the mausoleum, you see a heavy Greek Classical Revival structure of unpolished granite with a bronze door. The heaviness of the building is exaggerated in the Doric order of the columns and pillars, supporting a large and unornamented triangular pediment. The exterior design and layout is a rectangular plan, in antis Greek temple (Plate 1). This design is consistent on all sides of the exterior of the building, giving it very distinct symmetry and sense of repetition. The rear façade (Plate 2) and the front façade (Plate 3) are strikingly similar, with the repetition of the triangular pediment, raking cornice, and acroterions at the corners and centers of the pediment. The door is surrounded by a protruding battered post-and-lintel door frame, and the rear window has the same frame recessed slightly into the wall.

The building exterior shows few hints of its interior design. The only hints are the Christian cross on the bronze door, which has green deposits in varying thickness, due to the oxidation of the bronze as a result of a lack of maintenance. It is particularly thick on the lower section of the door, obscuring a Latin motto, the other hint of the interior. Below the cross is the Kelly crest, (Plate 4), containing the phrase “Turris Fortis Mihi Deus”, which translated means “God is my tower of strength”<sup>18</sup>. Once you walk through the door into the interior, it seems as if you’ve stepped into a chapel, but instead of pews there are five catacombs on each wall. Every surface is faced in a white marble streaked with grey. At the back is an altar with a crucifix and painted-glass window. The image on the glass is of an angel telling three women, (likely Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary mother of James) that Jesus has risen from the dead. The center of the altar also contains a verse from the Bible, John 11:25. The sense of symmetry from the exterior is repeated in that the east side of the structure is a mirror image of the left side.

According to correspondence and the blueprints of the Woodlawn Archives located in the Drawings and Archives Collection at Avery Architecture and Fine Arts Library, Kelly commissioned an architect by the name of Thomas J. Moore, of Richmond Hill, New York, and the interior of the mausoleum, bronze door, and German painted glass window were done to Kelly’s specifications. However, there is no mention of the exterior design and Greek revival façade in the correspondence with Kelly<sup>19</sup>. Because of its likeness to many other mausoleums at Woodlawn, it is unlikely that this design was specifically requested by Kelly for a particular or significant reason.

While the exterior and interior of Kelly’s mausoleum seem somewhat at odds with each other, they were not uncommon at the turn of the twentieth century. About fifty years prior to the mausoleum’s construction, the Classical Revival was a very modern architectural trend,

appearing on everything from grand state buildings to everyday houses. It would have been a form easily recognizable to Moore and to Kelly. A quick stroll through Woodlawn also reveals that it was a common style applied to mausoleums of the day, with quite a few similar looking structures in the vicinity. The interior of the mausoleum is more unique and personal, as a reflection of the Catholic religious beliefs of the Kelly family, which are consistent with their Irish heritage. There are enough catacombs for twelve people to be buried, and in fact there are thirteen family members, with one of Anna Kelly's daughters buried with her. There are also an additional four graves and five people interred on the plot grounds.

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<sup>1</sup> 1880 U.S. Census.

<sup>2</sup> 1900 U.S. Census.

<sup>3</sup> 1900 U.S. Census.

<sup>4</sup> 1900 U.S. Census.

<sup>5</sup> 1900 U.S. Census.

<sup>6</sup> General Specifications for a Mausoleum for John T. Kelly, Esq., New York City. Woodlawn Archives at Avery Library.

<sup>7</sup> 1910 U.S. Census.

<sup>8</sup> "High Grade Oil Co. Orders Pipe." *Wall Street Journal* [New York City] 11 Oct. 1911: 8.

<sup>9</sup> "To Have Scarsdale Home: John T. Kelly's Dwelling House Will Cost \$75,000." *New York Tribune* 1 Feb. 1914: C3.

<sup>10</sup> "Stock Broker Buys Scarsdale Estate." *The New York Times* 19 May 1928: 30.

<sup>11</sup> 1920 U.S. Census.

<sup>12</sup> 1915 New York State Census.

<sup>13</sup> "Walworth Mfg." *Wall Street Journal* [New York City] 10 Oct. 1925: 3.

<sup>14</sup> "Obituary: Kelly, John T." *The New York Times* 7 Sept. 1927: 29.

<sup>15</sup> "Kelly Estate to the Family." *The New York Times* 24 Sept. 1927: 20.

<sup>16</sup> "Stock Broker Buys Scarsdale Estate." *The New York Times* 19 May 1928: 30.

<sup>17</sup> "Obituary: Kelly, Leslie McCune." *The New York Times* 7 Dec. 1949: 31.

<sup>18</sup> "The Kelly & O'Kelly Family Crest." *The Kelly Clan of County Armagh, Northern Ireland*. N.p., n.d. Web. 13 Oct. 2012. <<http://www.kelly-clan.com/kelly3.htm>>.

<sup>19</sup> General Specifications for a Mausoleum for John T. Kelly, Esq., New York City.

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